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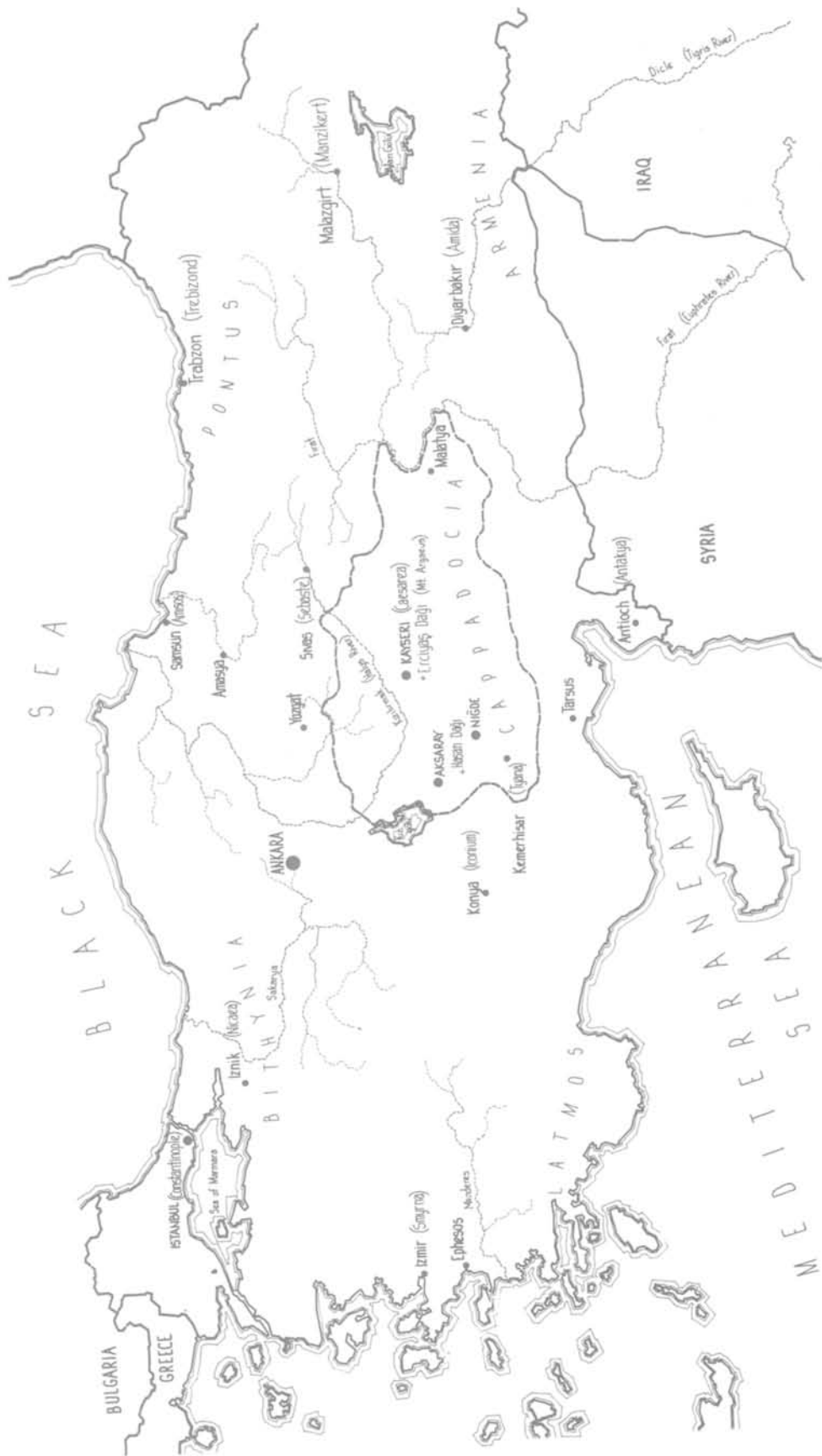
The Setting

The central part of Asia Minor, or Anatolia, has been called a "little Iran." It is a rocky plateau, naked and mournful, and like Iran it reaches up at its extremities to the verdant mountain chains with which it is ringed. The contrast of barren tableland and wooded mountain is, if anything, more poignant in Anatolia. For here, on three sides of the land beyond the mountain range, lies the openness of the sea whose long stretch of shore has bustled for centuries with urban activity. The fertile valleys of the Aegean coast to the west, the forest-clad slopes of the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, have drawn with steady rhythm colonists from abroad and invaders from the hinterland. They came for the mild climate and the freedom of the open waters and the great gift of the seaboard, trade. They settled down and prospered.

But prosperity comes hard at all times in the land bowl of Anatolia. Cities are exceptional. Life tends to the nomadic. It fights against the odds of a difficult soil, of inclement and capricious seasons, and the passage and movement of armies and peoples. Today as two thousand years ago, the cornfields are at the mercy of timely rains. But not uncommonly it will be torrential downpours instead, which build quickly into floods disastrous for the crops. These fast and useless waters are a mockery to the great plains which bake and crack under the blistering heat of the long summer months. They leave behind them swamps and malaria.

And sometimes the rains might not come at all. Nowadays relief from the government is relatively prompt, but this is recent. The drought of 1873 is said to have killed about 150,000 people. And as far back as there are documents the incident of drought is recorded. St. Basil the Great, bishop of Caesarea and the most renowned son of central Anatolia, attributed this costly unpredictability of the seasons to God's justice on a sinful people.¹ But even he lost patience at times when droughts, like the one of 368, ravaged his fold, or again when severe winters cut him off from neighboring districts and impeded his trouble-shooting expeditions. "Shall I give thanks," he would say, "even when frozen with the cold?"²

The land for the most part is flat. A few solitary mountains stand sheer on the monotonous expanse of the plains. They are naked but for dry aromatic scrub: wormwood, wild lavender. Their foothills comprise often fantastically shaped rock formations, accidents of volcanic action and the wear of the elements. These isolated mountains are the only solid reality on the dreary horizon, especially in the summer, when mirage effects are inescapable as one approaches, say, from the west, across the long stretches of salt deposits in the Plain of Konya



0 100 Miles

Figure 1

Sketch map of Turkey,
showing the boundary of
the province of Cappa-
docia.

(Fig.1). An occasional town may take shelter at the outskirts of one such snowcapped mountain, as does Kayseri (Caesarea) to the north of Erciyas Dağı, the ancient Mount Argaeus, the tallest in central Anatolia. But by and large it is small, sparse villages, unsheltered from the elements, sitting precariously at the side of a stream in the flatland or on the path of some roadway of the past.

This is then the beginning of the continent of Asia, just beyond the Aegean coast which represents the furthest reach of Europe. "It is Asia," as one of its greatest travelers, Gertrude L. Bell, has written, "with all its vastness, with all its brutal disregard for life and comfort and the amenities of existence; it is the ancient East, returned, after so many millenniums of human endeavour, to its natural desolation."³

Cappadocia, with which we are here concerned, lies on the eastern half of the Anatolian plateau. Its area formed one of the Roman provinces of Asia Minor: it has no administrative meaning in present-day Turkey. The name goes further back than Roman government of the province, which began at A.D. 17. It is at least as old as Herodotus, who used it first,⁴ and may be the Greek version of Katpatuka, which is what the region was called by the Persians when it became a satrapy of theirs a century or so before Herodotus' time. And before the Persians, by whatever name it may have been called, the region had been occupied by Medes, by Assyrians, and earliest of all by Hittites, an Indo-European people who arrived in Asia Minor about 2000 B.C. At sites like Alişar and Alacahöyük, settlements precede even the advent of the Hittites. Like every other corner of Asia Minor, Cappadocia has borne a long unbroken chain of occupants who moved in, established states, and saw them invaded and shattered.

Early Christianity

Our interest is in the more recent, Christian phase of Cappadocia's history. This began here, as throughout the Roman empire, with an invasion of faith first, and more than two centuries of struggling were necessary before the faith could be identified with the State. Christianity came early to Cappadocia. Most probably it traveled along a line which led from Syrian Antioch through the Cilician Gates, the only negotiable pass in the Taurus chain, and into Asia Minor (Fig. 1). The main route was across Lycaonia, the province to the west of Cappadocia, to Ephesus; and thence across the waters to Corinth and Rome. But a subsidiary route followed from the Cilician Gates to Tyana (the modern Kemerhisar) and Caesarea, the two chief cities of Cappadocia, and passed on to Amisos (Samsun) in the Pontus, which was then the great harbor of the Black Sea.⁵

We know that on his so-called "third journey" St. Paul traveled through Cappadocia, probably reaching Ancyra via Tyana, and that for a time he was held prisoner in Caesarea before being shipped off to Rome. An Anatolian himself, from Tarsus on the seaboard side of the Taurus mountains, he was carrying the message in Greek that for once and always would establish that Christianity was not to be an exclusive provincial religion of the Palestinian desert but a universal faith, open to all who will hear of it. "There is neither Jew nor Greek . . . for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28) And: "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God." (1 Corinthians 7:19)—passages well known and always worth quoting from the man who, in the words of Wilamowicz, unconsciously completed the legacy of Alexander the Great in uniting the known world by one strong and binding idea.

From the start the Word seems to have found sympathetic audiences in the terse Cappadocian land. The First Letter of Peter already mentions the Christian community here, together with those of the Pontus to the north and Bithynia and Galatia to the northwest. (1 Peter 1:1) In the second century A.D. there were reputed to be Christians in Legion XII of the Roman army, stationed at Melitene.⁶ About A.D. 200 a certain bishop Alexander traveled to Jerusalem from his see in Cappadocia.⁷ And very soon afterwards the province became a center of Christian theology. Yearly synods were organized. From here the Christianization of Armenia to the east was undertaken. Even Ulfila, the apostle of the Goths, was said to have originated in Cappadocia.⁸ Persecutions took their toll and created local martyrs: Hyacinthus, a *cubicularius* of the

emperor Trajan, who was martyred at Caesarea; Kyrillos and Merkurios “the Scythian”; Eustratios; Auxentios; the sisters Chreste and Kalliste; the three sons of Neonilla; and the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste.⁹

It is perhaps not surprising that Christianity should score here an early success. As a religion that appealed to the poor it could find no more propitious footing. Cappadocia lacked a great urban tradition. The Hellenism of the coast arrived late, and when it did it had no lasting effect. Strabo reported that at his time (the second century A.D.) there were only two cities: Tyana, and Caesarea, which was the seat of government.¹⁰ Instead, there were numerous forts where the landed gentry lived. In the days of the later Roman Empire a large portion of Cappadocia consisted of imperial estates, termed the *divina domus* and in the charge of a *comes divinarum domorum*. The land has some mineral resources, like crystal and onyx, and a highly prized white translucent stone called *phengis* which was discovered in the reign of Nero and used to rebuild the temple of Fortune within his Golden House in Rome.¹¹ But for the most part it was the production of grain that occupied the gentry’s attention, some cultivation of vine, and foremost of all the raising of the horses for which Cappadocia had always been renowned. The rich who owned the land and the livestock were very rich; the poor who worked for them very poor. St. Basil, of a notable family himself, could never say enough against the landowner and his luxury and greed. His anger swells at the hoarding of grain, at the arrogant display of wealth, the clothes and jewelry, the fancy carriages. He waxes pathetic when he takes on to describe the lot of the poor reduced by the existing social imbalance to a condition almost of slavery. And he pleads insistently for sharing. Like many a moralist before and since, he argues for just distribution of material things and the social contentment that will result from this. “For if each one, after having taken from his wealth whatever would satisfy his personal needs, left what was superfluous to him who lacks every necessity, there would be neither rich nor poor.”¹²

Now for some decades past a new movement, outside Church and State, was working to realize such communal equality. Monasticism was the child of the poor and pious East. Renunciation of the worldly way had begun, at first, as a matter of individual conviction. Since the days of St. Anthony, who fled civilization for the sobering wilderness of the Red Sea desert, hundreds of hermits had sought similar loneliness and self-inflicted tribulation. The eremitical ideal of Christianity, once started, never died out. But alongside it a trend toward organized

pietism was fast taking root. In the monastic centers of Egypt and the Holy Land groups of men and women came together to practice the teachings of the Scriptures for a life of basic necessities and of virtuous retirement from the distractions of citified life. St. Basil took note. He did try something of a hermit's isolation at one point in his life, secluding himself for a spell in a Pontic retreat by the river Iris (Yeşilırmak). But having traveled for nearly two years to observe firsthand the functioning of monastic communities, he grew convinced that "no one man is sufficient in himself to receive the gifts of the Spirit"; that the common life where "each man's gift becomes the common property of his fellows" was the only selfless way. The Rule he founded on his return was destined to become central to Eastern monasticism.¹³ It spread fast in his own land and beyond, and later was transplanted to the West by exerting a lasting influence on the monastic thought of St. Benedict.

The Land

The hermit and monk in Cappadocia did not have far to travel to get away from the worldly scene. Nowhere on “the great earth-sea” of the Anatolian plateau is the desolation of nature more pronounced. To the east, starkly dominant, stands Erciyas with its prickly pinnacles of red porphyritic rock. From its summit, so antiquity liked to believe, one could glimpse on a fine day both the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. Between this anchor of volcanic rock and another, Hasan Dağı to the southwest, the plain stretches inexorably—caked in the summer, muddy and slippery in the rain seasons, and in the winter frozen solid for several months under a sheet of ice and snow. Streams, briefly exuberant with the thaw, peter out before long in marshes or the dry land. Only Kızılırmak, the Halys river of antiquity, passes through the province and beyond. It winds through stripped countryside, now smooth earth, now escarpments of red and green rock. Its lazy loop, murky and unreliable for most of the year, is crossed here and there by a few picturesque bridges (Pl. 1).

But there is much more to the Cappadocian landscape. And this is unsuspected. One discovers upon crossing the river that the south bank and beyond is a vast rock sculpture of unlikely complication (Pl. 2). Much of the tableland here consists of tuff, a soft porous rock that readily yields to running waters. And Kızılırmak and its tributaries have been at work for centuries, since the land was formed by volcanic action in the late Tertiary period, cutting deep valleys, carving out fortlike crags above them, splitting and splintering the tuff into hundreds of small fragments which are then turned and polished into startling shapes (Pl. 3). Often as far as the eye can see there stretches the complex and calculated pattern of rock folds, its rhythm slack for a spell, then forceful and irregular like a tossed sea. The colors are shift, un-chartable. Around Ürgüp the dominant hue is red, but Nevşehir is white. These blaze or blur under the sun, with every cleft and recess catching streaks or pools of black, blue, green. Then the hour shifts: the scene is bathed in a mild pink. Lengthening, muted shadows change with them the associative powers of the rock formations. What seemed like elaborately folded drapery may turn out to be the giant paw of an unknown beast after all. And the water and wind will continue their obsessive carving until each toe is worked around, disengaged and rounded, so that a series of cones will shape up, each rising sharply to a point (Pl. 4).

The cone is the most frequent form in Cappadocia’s rockscape. A field of hundreds of them will suddenly open up to view as one gains the top of a ridge. They continue indefinitely, their

Plate 1
Cappadocian landscape,
near Avcılar (Maçan).
[Photo Carol Baldwin]

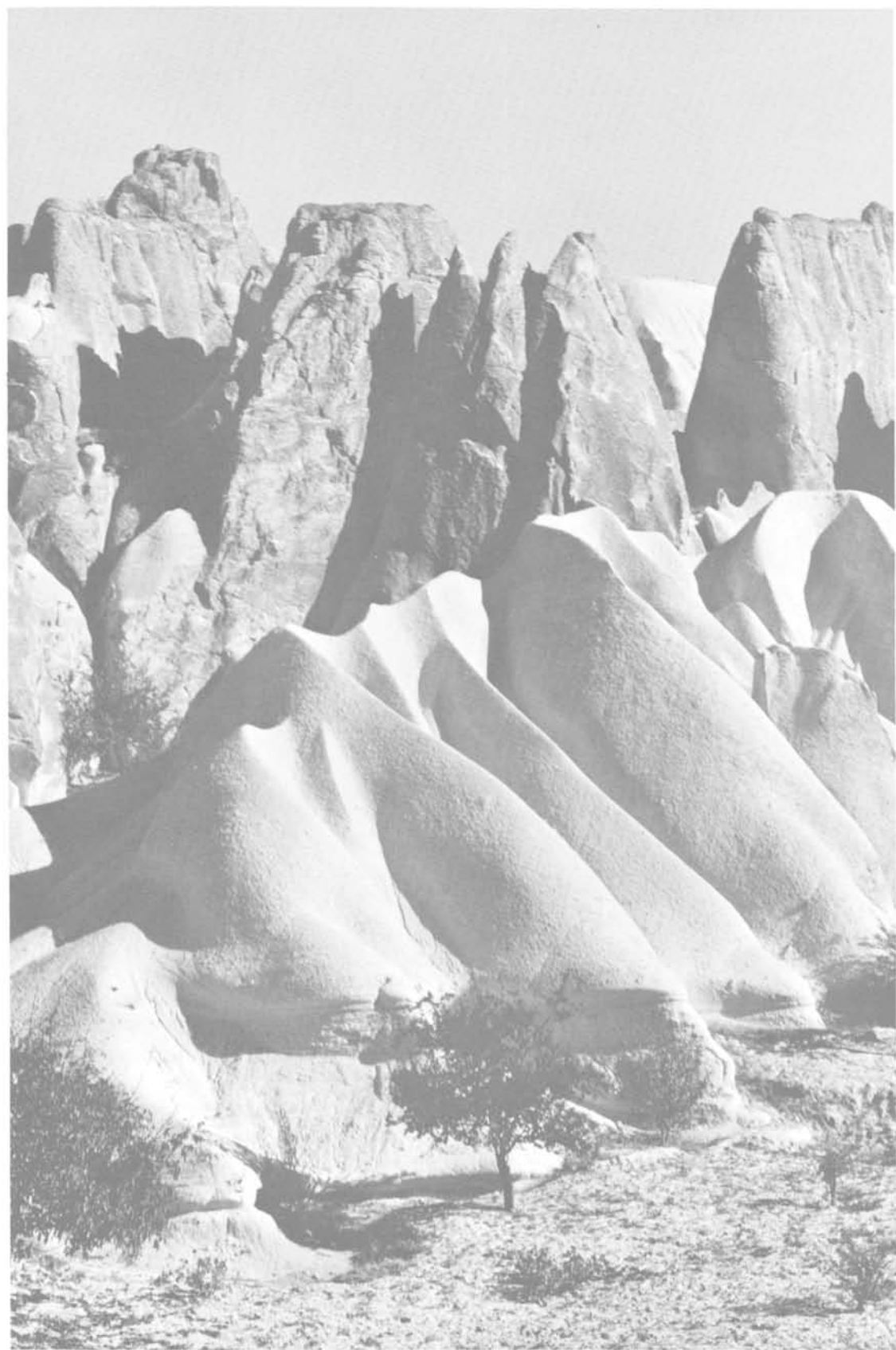




Plate 2
Cappadocian rockscape,
near Göreme.
[Photo Harold Stump]

Following pages
Plate 3
Ürgüp, rockscape.
[Photo Harold Stump]

Plate 4
Göreme, excavated rock-
cones.
[Photo Harold Stump]



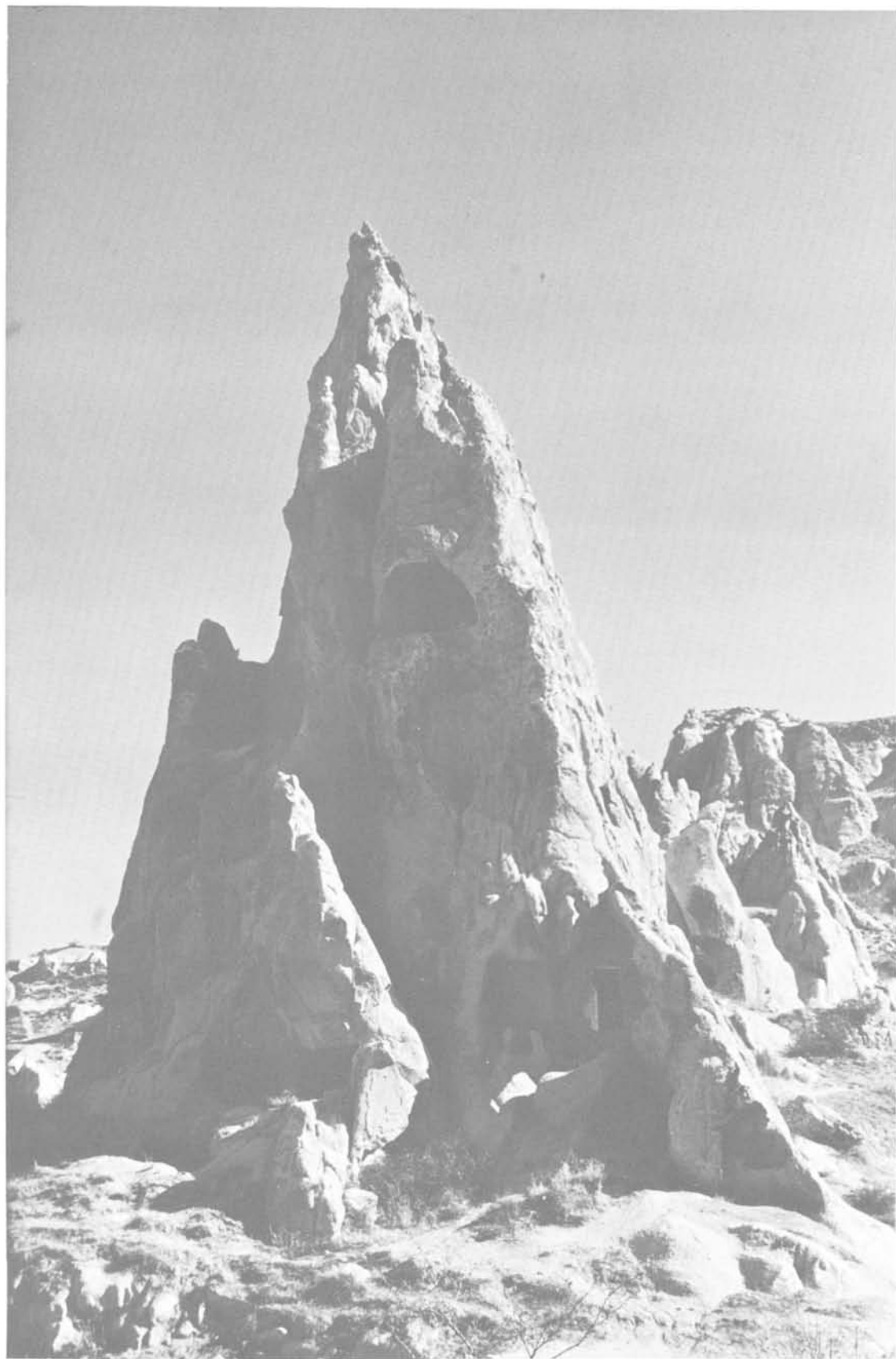


Plate 6
Ortahisar, rock formations
called "fairy chimneys."
[Photo Harold Stump]

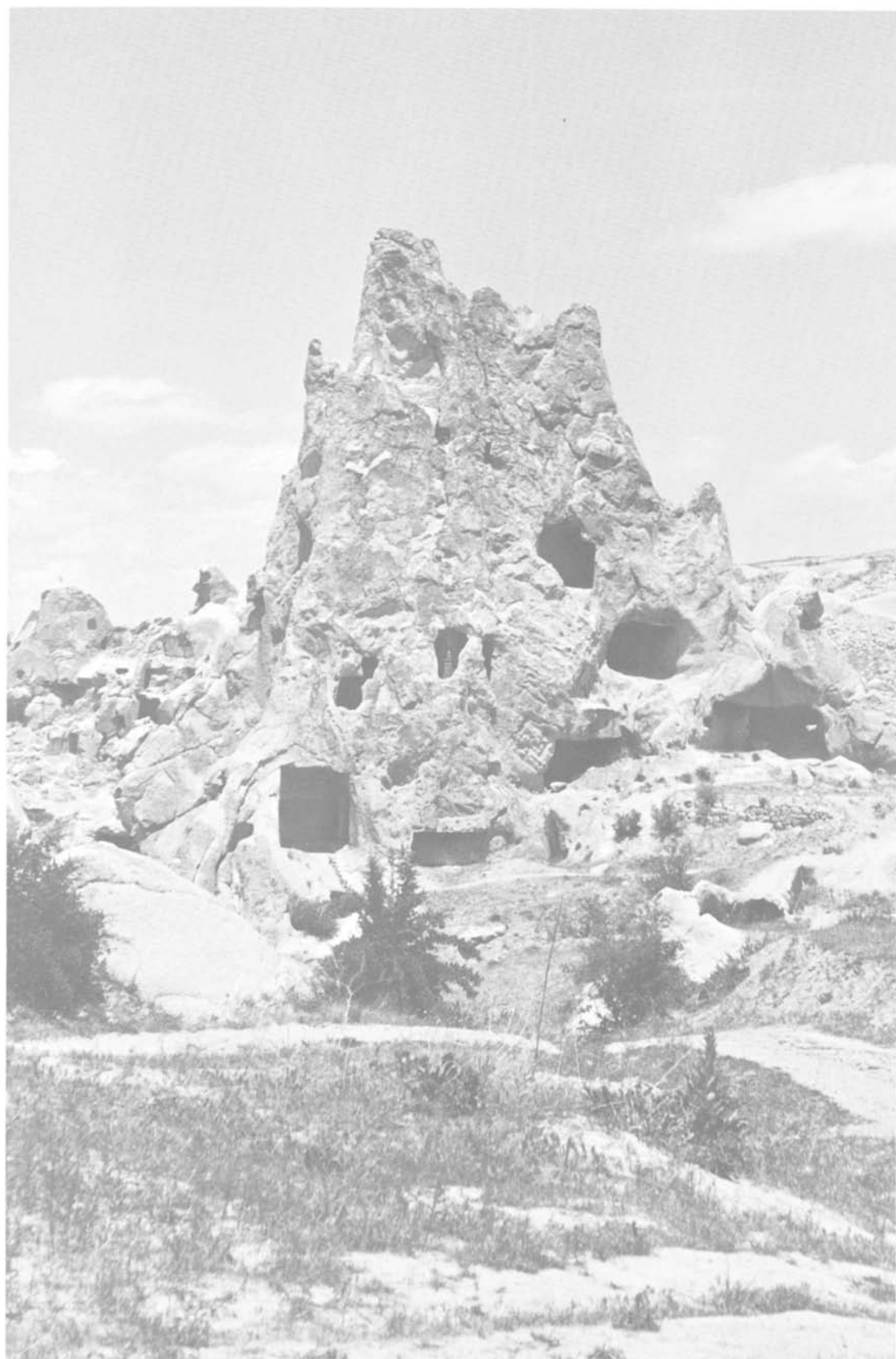
Plate 5
Avcılar (Maçan), cones.
[Photo Harold Stump]





shape echoed by the flat, black shadows they cast. Their bases touch—or miss barely. At other times there will be two or three lone ones, or simply one cone on a level stretch of land, like an unexpected tent in the wilderness. At Maçan (Avcılar) the thick bed of tuff has been so deeply undercut that a group of fat sturdy cones, the tallest among them about one hundred feet, stands out regularly on the horizon, amply spaced, and topped each one by a cap of hard rock, a bit of basalt, which has resisted the elements longer than its surroundings (Pl. 5). The caps stay put as the cones dwindle. The base is vulnerable, and now and again the cone will be cut sharply and made into a monumental slab like a manmade obelisk. Or it will be evenly and roundly eaten away as though thrown and thinned on a potter's wheel until nothing is left of it but an elegant upright pipe form with a rakish cap tentatively balanced at the summit (Pl. 6).

The peasants now call these *peri bacaları*, fairy chimneys. They are inhabited by spirits which must not be disturbed. Many myths in the region of Ürgüp attest to the harm that might come from them if loosely treated. There is in any case nothing to be done when one of the fairies, as happens from time to time, falls in love with a young man of Ürgüp and decides to take him. Like the shapes of the rocks so too their legendmaking powers seem limitless. They become the visual source for touching or ribald fantasy. They are named and renamed. Here is Three Towers, Midtower, the Valley of Swords: Üçhisar, Ortahisar, Kılıçlar. It is what children elsewhere depend on cloud formations to supply. But those images are fleeting: they move along and are dissipated within minutes before you could decide to call them camels or weasels. These stay. Or rather they change slowly, so that the nicknames of one generation may lose some of their warrant in the next, but are retained from habit (Pl. 7).



The Architecture

Not the least incentive to legendmaking is the knowledge that the cones and pleats of stone have from an early time been used for shelter, burial, and sanctuary. The tuff is easy to carve. As water and wind freed the larger shapes from sheets as thick as 4500 feet at places, so human hands burrowed in for small protective hollows to serve as homes for the living and the dead, and to ensconce divinity. The practice of scooping out an environment from natural features is a primeval one. At its simplest, advantage is taken of hollows in the earth like natural caves; but often too, and even in the most advanced of cultures, rural folk communities will make these hollows by cutting into natural matter usable shapes, mostly hidden from view, which are the exact opposite of much architecture as we have come to know it. They stress not *constructed form*, built up in defiance of the law of gravity, but rather form that is dug, i.e., created with interior space as the main objective. Columns and vaults, when they exist, are no more than structural symbols, liberated from natural matter in the same way a sculptor liberates the human form from a slab of limestone or marble. To speak of the columns as "holding up" entablatures, or of the vaults as "resting" on walls, is only to demonstrate the tenacity of the traditional view of architecture which centers on burdens and supports (Pl. 8).

Instances of this sculptured architecture, so to call it, are numerous, and the practice of making it universal. Written sources record excavated environments that we have lost. Agatharchides, a Greek geographer of the third century B.C., spoke of the rock dwellers of the Red Sea; Herodotus, of Ethiopia; and Xenophon, of Armenia.¹⁴ In the vision of Obadiah the Lord admonishes the land of Edom, "thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high." (Obadiah 3) And the Koran, in one of its several mentions of the wicked city of Thamoud, refers to its people as those "who hewed out their dwellings among the rocks of the valley." (89:9)¹⁵ But we have, of course, also actual remains. Rock tombs abound in the Near East. Those of Petra in the south of Jordan are famous.¹⁶ In Sicily whole towns are rockcut: Siciliano, Caltabelotta, Rafadalle, Bronte, Maletto. Further afield, in the loess belt of China, a large area comprising the Honnan, Shansi, Shensi, and Khansu provinces, about ten million people live in dwellings hollowed out of the silt that has been transported and piled up by the wind.¹⁷ The rock churches of Ethiopia, most notably those at Lalibela, were the subject of very recent books.¹⁸

When this anonymous architecture had its start in Cappadocia is hard to say. Of the thou-

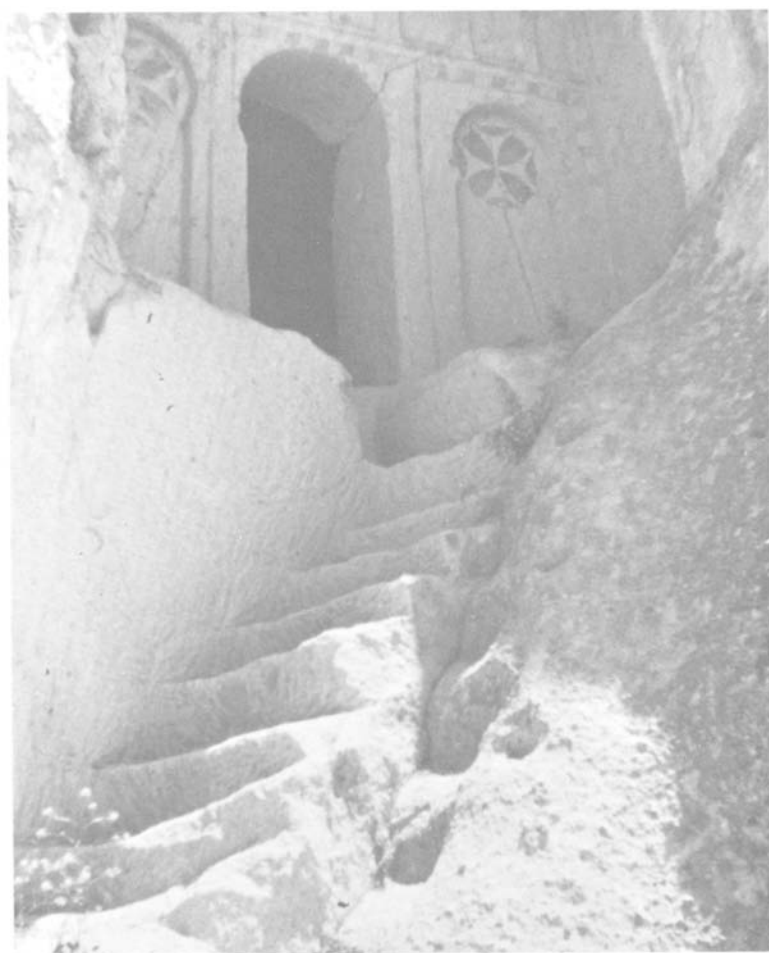
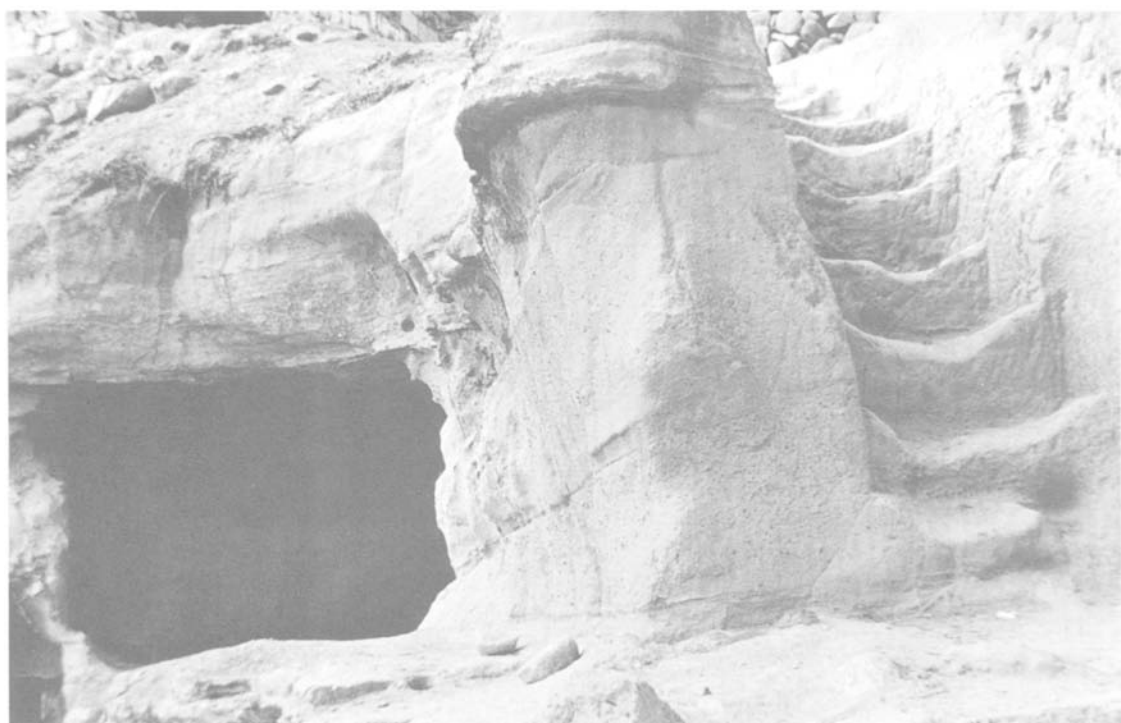
sands of burrowed spaces in the pliant tuff that have survived, few seem to antedate Christianity, and mature Christianity at that. But there is no reason to disbelieve that the practice was more ancient. From the seventh century onward, however, we have countless hermitages, monasteries, and independent chapels to prove that the land had become by then as holy as Mount Sinai or the desert of Sohag, and one of the most concentrated regions of Eastern monasticism.

There were also villages here and towns whose people chose to live apart from the small valleys and riversides, in dim caverns carved in the native rock. This arrangement made architectural sense in the absence of wood, and it had the advantage over constructed housing of being cool in the summer and relatively sheltered when the formidable Anatolian winter came around. Wood was used only for doors and, on occasion, as flooring between superposed rooms.¹⁹

Two such towns are specifically mentioned in the first written record we possess on the rock-cut architecture of Cappadocia. They are Korama and Matianoï, the predecessors in fact of the present rock towns of Göreme and Maçan (Avcılar) in a region where many of the churches we will be reviewing are to be found. The towns are referred to in the *Acts of St. Hieron*, a document which in its existing form dates from about A.D. 600. But the actual martyrdom of this local saint took place during the Diocletianic persecutions at the end of the third century A.D. The existence of the two towns in the tuff landscape could therefore probably be postulated for this early date. Hieron was a native of Matianoï. He was arrested by Roman soldiers, together with eighteen others, as he worked in the vineyards that comprised his regular occupation. He managed to escape from their hands and after a pursuit through the fields hid for a time "in a mighty cavern in the flank of a hill, which had been carved out of the rock with great skill."²⁰ The account has topical credibility even today. The name of still a third town in the region, Hagios Prokopios (present day Ürgüp), is referred to in relation to the Council of Chalcedon in 451: Among those attending was a certain Elpidius with the title of "memorophylax of Prokopiu" and a contingent of other monks.²¹

A parenthetical reference in Leo the Deacon's narrative of the years 959–975 shows how general excavated dwellings had become by the tenth century. The people of Cappadocia were once called troglodytes, Leo wrote, on account of their inhabiting caves, holes, and labyrinths.²²





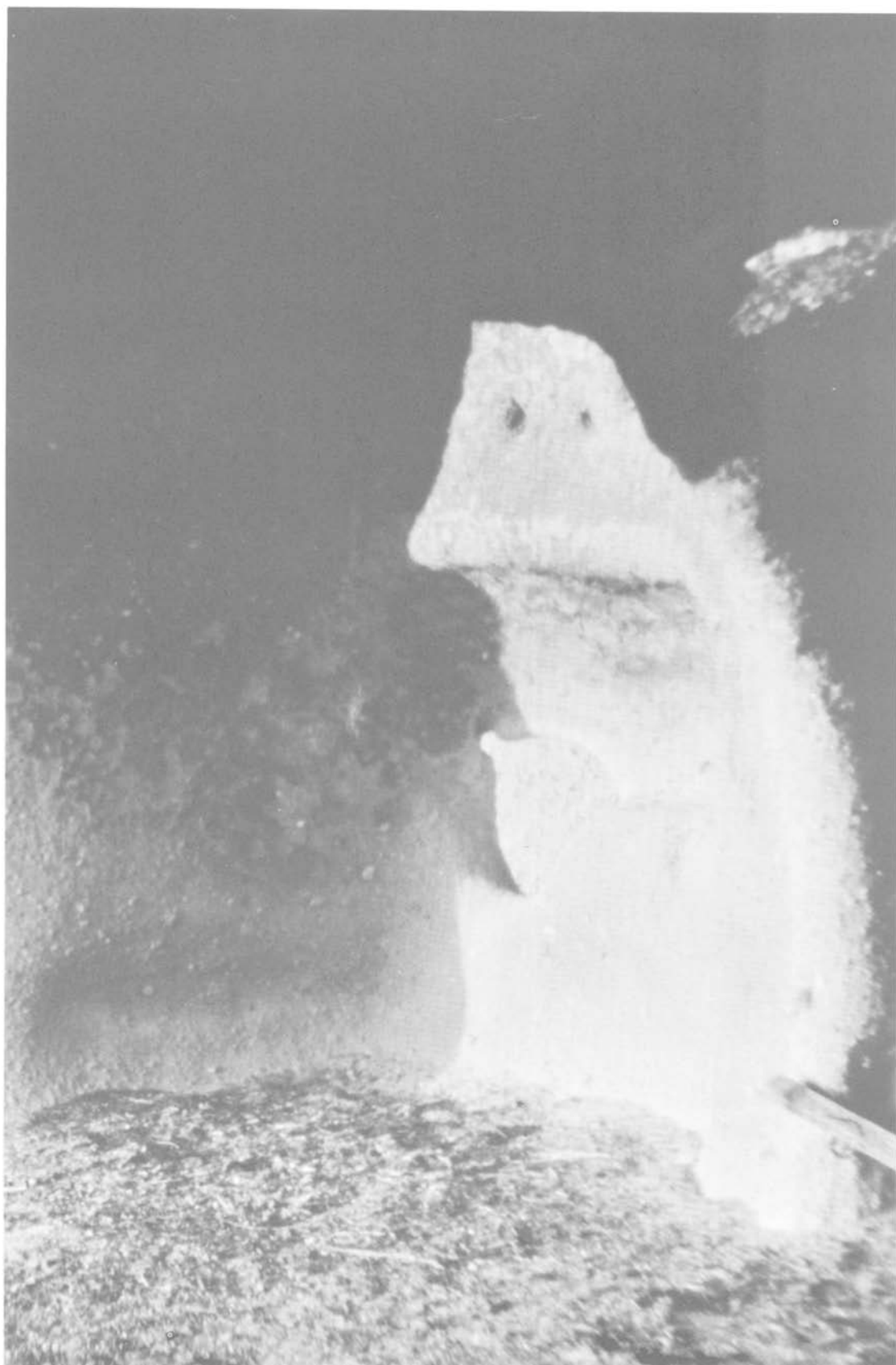


Plate 9

Ürgüp, rockcut house,
detail showing entrance
steps.

[Photo Harold Stump]

Plate 10

Göreme, entrance to
Chapel 27.

[Photo David Gebhard]

The anonymous writer of the *Synopsis Chronikē* in the thirteenth century commented more informatively that troglodytic dwellings were favored as protection against the winter and the snows.²³

He might also have said protection against man. For Cappadocia never remained safe from raids for long, and at least in the case of monasteries, and probably also for villages and towns too, troglodytic architecture was conceived of as shelter in more than an environmental sense. The houses often had one entrance only, high above ground level, and access to it was had by a removable ladder. If rockcut stairs were available they would be steep, narrow, and unobtrusive (Pl. 9). In monastic compounds, clearly vulnerable to non-Christian invaders, precautions are even more obvious. On the walls, grooves in the form of a Γ to hold large beams in place across the closed doors are still in evidence. Passages leading to stairs were often provided with large stones that could quickly be rolled into place, between the entrance and corresponding piers, to block the way. Behind these the rooms were ingeniously carved out on several levels and had labyrinthine interconnections. To reach some of them, one had to slither up or down narrow shafts or crawl along barely negotiable tunnels. Common too was the practice of situating the entrance hole not on the face of the rock overlooking the pathway, but further up beyond sight of the passers. In this case, having gained the hole by means of a rope ladder, you would have had to drop down through a chute.

Rock facades of architectural pretension, of which there are some, should probably be assigned to peaceful intervals in the turbulence of Cappadocia's frontier existence (Pl. 10). These were times when the Eastern Roman, or Byzantine, empire was able to keep bordering countries at bay and to maintain adequate defense for the east flank of the province and the breaches in the Taurus chain to the south. Until the middle of the seventh century the empire extended far enough beyond Cappadocia to surround it with buffer territory. Dozens of churches were built in this time, of cutstone masonry above ground. Their impact was felt as far afield as Armenia, where distinctly Cappadocian details can still be detected by the observant visitor.²⁴ Evidence for this jubilant building activity survives in fragments scattered throughout Cappadocia.²⁵ They are fast disappearing. The sixth-century cruciform basilicas of Forty Martyrs at Skupi²⁶ and of the Panagia at Tomarza, described by H. Rott in 1908, are now razed. So too is the impressive octagon at Sivas. Next to the site of Akkilise ("White Church") at Soğanlı Dere

one is now shown a house built of its materials: Rott's picture of the church has already become a historical document.

But our sources speak of many more, early churches connected with famous names like St. Basil, "light of the Cappadocians, or rather of the world,"²⁷ and the other two members of that splendid triad of Cappadocian theology in the fourth century: Basil's brother, Gregory of Nyssa, and his close friend and associate, Gregory of Nazianzus. There was the octagonal martyrium with cross arms that Gregory of Nyssa described in detail in a letter to Amphilochios, bishop of Iconium. There was the great complex of buildings that St. Basil built at some distance outside his see of Caesarea. It was named after him, Basileias, and included, besides a church and episcopal residence, hospitals and hospices for the poor, administered according to a precisely planned system of relief. When the saint died he was buried in a new basilica on the south of two peaks that gave Mount Didymos its name in antiquity. Not far off was the imperial estate at Macellum, where the princes Julian and Gallus were sent by their cousin the emperor Constantius II, ostensibly to be given a strict Christian education but more likely to be kept out of the way. To display their piety the boys built with their own hands a church there to St. Mamas; or they started to. But whereas Gallus' part was building wonderfully, Julian's kept falling down: a certain sign, it was thought, of his later treachery to Christianity when, now emperor himself, he would set about to revive the pagan gods whom Constantine the Great had given up for the Son of God a mere generation ago.²⁸ It was apostasy and heretical movements like Arianism, not foreign attacks, that the Church had to fight against in Cappadocia in these early Christian centuries.

Islam

The attacks, when they came, were another invasion of faith. Six hundred years after the lonely passage of St. Paul, a new religion—the last, it was said—sprang up with astonishing vigor in Arabia and in a matter of years was lashing the apostle's hard-won territories with fanatical and determined hordes of Believers. The first Arab raid came in 642, and from then on Cappadocia became the embittered frontier between two rival faiths. Islam was now the new East, Byzantium the beleaguered West. The capital, Constantinople, proved impregnable by two sieges, stood fast at the very tip of Christian Europe, and Anatolia became the battleground for the Western cause. Under the continual threat of annihilation and the long internal conflict of Iconoclasm, to which we will return, Cappadocia's church-building slowed down almost to a halt. It is thought that many thousands of monks fled to Italy in this dire period,²⁹ there to find peace in newly established monasteries.

For two hundred years the raids swept in, destructive as the floods and drought. Cities and castles were taken, abandoned, retaken; their inhabitants were carried into slavery. The people dug deep into the tuff. In 1965, three entirely rockcut towns were discovered in Cappadocia, of which one, penetrated through a single entrance, extended over an area of six square kilometers.³⁰ Thousands took refuge in the comfort of the earth. Monasteries fended for themselves or became headquarters of *akritai*, frontier knights to whom the defense of the land was left. The story of Omar al Neman in the *Thousand and One Nights* tells of a king of Caesarea, Hardovios, a terrible warrior and the father of a most beautiful girl, who had a monastery as a fortress.

It was a good age, from then on, for legends of valor. Border wars created heroes for both sides, and as always when the conflict is intimate, the praises of these legendary men were sung by both sides. The battling faiths were reconciled through single deeds whose standing was universal. At the same time a similar union of opposites was achieved in the popular mind by devising for the heroes mixed ancestry or mixed marriages. The great Seid el Batal el Ghazi, who was killed in battle at Akroenos and whose memory is hallowed in all parts of Anatolia but especially on the top of Erciyas Dağı, was married to a Greek princess. His Byzantine counterpart Digenis Akritas had for a father an Arab emir who had been a convert to Christianity. "Byzantium," the poet Sэфэris once wrote, "fashioned its own adversaries."³¹ So also did the Muslim raider fashion his Byzantine adversaries.

Signs of this alien Muslim presence in Cappadocia are not hard to find. In the paintings of the rock churches Arabic motifs like bands of Kufic ornament make their appearance before long. Kufic borders also line the edges of robes or liven the surfaces of objects like the shields of the soldiers guarding the Tomb of Christ or Salome's ewer in the Nativity. A new type of long narrow overgarment with a frontal slit at the skirt, seen here as well as in the art of Armenian churches, seems to have been common for the dominions of the Abbasid caliph at Baghdad. We must note, too, while on this subject, the Christ in the west arm of Yılanlı Kilise (Cat. no. 31) in the valley of Peristrema, not properly enthroned as he should be but seated cross-legged on the floor in the Arab manner.³²

Middle Byzantine Renaissance

In the second half of the ninth century the tide turned in favor of Byzantium. First under Petronas, the general of Michael III, and then under Basil I, Byzantine armies began to hold the Arabs at bay. With the conquest of Cilicia by Nikephoros Phokas and the victories of John Tzimiskes in Syria and Mesopotamia, once more Cappadocia was wrapped safely in new frontier lands. Church building resumed in earnest behind a triple line of defensive forts, some still visible, that was established to arrest raids across the Taurus chain.³³ The great majority of rock-cut churches in Cappadocia date from this time of extended peace between the reign of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitos and that of Constantine Dukas, that is from about 900 to 1070. This political lift coincided with the triumph of images throughout the empire, following upon the final defeat of Iconoclasm in 843. The numerous painted programs of the rock churches are proof that Cappadocia—"a Byzantine Pompeii," H. F. Tozer called it³⁴—participated in the general revival of monumental painting usually referred to by modern scholars as the Middle Byzantine period. At the same time, a school of manuscript illumination was also active in the region. At least five manuscripts have been assigned to this school by K. Weitzmann, two of them recording the owner and the date of execution. All five are characterized by extraordinary initial letters formed of interlocked beast designs.³⁵

The Church flourished as never before. Several new bishoprics were created to reestablish order in areas ravished by the Muslim onslaught. Of these, three were in the troglodytic area with which we are concerned; Hagios Prokopios (Ürgüp), Sobesos (Suveş?), and Matianoï. The number of suffragan bishops to the metropolitan of Caesarea increased, under Leo VI the Wise, from five to fifteen, and though it was reduced by his son Constantine Porphyrogenitos it remained at eight.³⁶ To underline the resurgence of Cappadocia, the great scholar Arethas was appointed bishop of Caesarea in 906. A native son, Nikephoros Phokas, rose later in the century to occupy the throne of the Empire. The only other emperor of Cappadocian origin had been Maurice at the end of the sixth century.

Some historians have seen in this period of renaissance and evident surge of population an influx of Armenian colonists from the east who settled newly rebuilt towns like Lykandos, Tzamandos, and Symposion.³⁷ There is no historical evidence that this Armenian colonization ever reached west of Caesarea. The attempt to identify Symposion with Suveş has not been universally supported. Nevertheless some circumstantial evidence is not lacking in the

churches themselves, and N. Thierry's recent rejection of any possible Armenian influence in the troglodytic region is needlessly negative. Belli Kilise at Soğanlı Dere (Cat. no. 24) has a pointed dome on a high drum, typical of Armenia; it is the only rockcut church in Cappadocia where the dome as an exterior form can be seen. Paintings in some churches represent similar building types that may betray the provenance of their executors. In the large church at Çavuşin (Cat. no. 38) a painting depicts an Armenian donor. He is one of two riders advancing, a lance supported on his shoulder, at the end of a line of standing figures who represent the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste (modern Sivas). An invocation gives his name and title: *Melias magistros*. He has been identified as a descendant of the great Armenian Melias, or Mleh, who founded the theme of Lykandos.³⁸ A frontier general in the employ of the Byzantine emperor, like his ancestor, this younger Melias fought hard and well against the Muslim, taking the cities of Nisibis and Malatya, and in 973 laying siege to Amida. But there he met with defeat. He was carried in chains through Amida together with his principal officers and later transported to Baghdad, where they were all put to death. There were forty of them, as there had been forty Christian martyrs who were left to freeze in the icy waters of a lake in Sebaste some centuries before. It is probably the painting of Çavuşin, in which Melias is shown in the company of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste, that inspired the chronicler Matthew of Edessa, who tells the story, or his source, to create the forty new martyrs of Amida—a beautiful case of a visual image inspiring an image of historical legend.

The Turks

But peace did not long endure in Cappadocia. It was broken anew with the sudden arrival of the Seljuk Turks. Actually their approach was not so sudden. They had been active in the eastern periphery of the Byzantine empire for at least two centuries. But an unexpected and decisive event, of one day's duration, trumpeted their entry into the Anatolian plateau and was branded in people's minds as a turning point. This was the pitched battle at Manzikert (Malazgirt) in 1071, where the emperor Romanos Diogenes, having arrived with a huge army to stop the infidel's progress into Byzantine territory, suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of a Turkish army led by Alpaslan, and became their prisoner. It was the most shameful day of Roman history since the emperor Valerian capitulated to Shapur I of Persia in 270 in these same parts of the empire.

The two dates show how long the struggle had been for possession of Asia Minor, how long fate had favored the Romans. But Manzikert marked the beginning of the end for Roman rule. It receded now, for the last time, as the Turks moved in and made for the shores. The passage of the First Crusade in 1097 brought no lasting relief. The business of the European knights was in the Holy Land. There were no famed relics or memorials of Christ in the Anatolian plateau, no cities of great wealth; the arid soil did not invite lordships. So they passed quickly on, through Iconium, Tyana, Caesarea, and headed for the lands beyond the Anti-Taurus range.³⁹ What Greeks and Armenians had not been dispossessed were left to the care of the Turks. Turkish states succeeded one another, and the few Christian cities of former renown in the great plains like Iconium, now Konya, and Caesarea (Kayseri) served them as capitals and metropolises (Fig. 1).⁴⁰ New towns were built and flourished. Aksaray, straddling the Melendiz in the midst of woods of white poplars, and Niğde to the southeast are Cappadocian examples. To the Roman roads others were added to take in the new towns. The Great Highway, Ulu Yol, led from the capital Konya to Kayseri, by way of Aksaray and İncesu; it forked at Kayseri to continue in one direction toward Sivas, Amasya, and the Black Sea, and eastward toward Malatya and Maraş. Alongside it vast caravanserais announced that the Seljuk Turks were come to stay.⁴¹ There were more than twenty between Kayseri and Sivas alone. The handful that survive—Horozluhan near Konya, Sultanhan, Zazadin Han—are imposing piles even in their dilapidation. At the same time dozens of funerary monuments, or *türbes*, were put up in honor of Muslim rulers and saints to exorcise the land, as it were, after the long Christian domination.

They stood simply and proudly, with their customary conical roofs and their brilliant decoration, next to Greek martyria in the old cities and the countryside. Mount Didymos was renamed Ali Dağ, and St. Basil had to share it with the prophet Ali as a resting place.

But the latest masters of Anatolia were a tolerant people. The Church, impoverished and on the decline, was allowed to survive nonetheless. Except for a brief reprieve which seems to have come when Sultan Keykhusrev was defeated and died at the battle of Antioch-on-the-Meander in 1210 and emperor Theodore Laskaris extended his authority perhaps as far as Cappadocia,⁴² the Christian communities learned to make their peace with the Turk and carry on under his rule as best they could. Many served in the Seljuk armies and were promoted to high office. A telling dedicatory inscription, in the rockcut church of St. George (Kirk Dam Altı Kilisesi; Cat. no. 64) recently discovered in western Cappadocia, illustrates the forbearing attitude of the Seljuk hierarchy toward their Christian subjects. It mentions as donors a certain lady Thamar, and a Basil who is dressed in caftan and turban and holds the Turkish title of *emir*; both Seljuk sultan and Byzantine emperor are hailed. "This most venerable church dedicated to the holy and great martyr St. George was magnificently decorated through the assistance, the high wish, and care of the lady Thamar, here pictured, and of her Emir Basil Giagoupes, under his high Majesty the most noble and great Sultan Masud at the time when Sire Andronikos reigned over the Romans."⁴³

The church held on even after the death blow had been dealt to the Byzantine empire with the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks, the successors of the Seljuks, in 1453. While the patriarchate in the great city, now called Istanbul, sustained the high tradition of the Orthodox Church with the Ottomans' blessing, the hinterland, whose spirit had always been demotic, barely kept alive a mongrelized Christianity. Greek as a spoken language was slowly being forgotten. The Bible was most often written in Turkish but with Greek characters. The old churches were abandoned where Greek population was absent; a few served on as needed. There was something debased, unheroic now, something essentially unedifying, even in the infrequent creation of a modern Christian saint. At Ürgüp one was shown the relics of one John the Russian, Ioannes Rossos. He had been taken prisoner during the Ottoman war with the Russians at the time of Peter the Great and was sent with many others to inner Asia Minor. In the face of general conversion to Islam among his companions, only he held fast to his faith. One day,

when his master was away on the pilgrimage to Mecca, the lady of the house said as she dined: "I wish my husband had, where he is now, his favorite dish to eat which you John prepared so well again today." John fell on his knees and prayed to Jesus, and at once the pot disappeared from the table. It was learned upon the husband's return that exactly at that same hour the pot had materialized in Mecca and all the pilgrims there were fed. John died in due time. Later, some miracles took place at his tomb.

A very few villages remained exclusively Greek. Such for example was Misli, whose population was relatively independent of the Turks and subject to the bishop at Niğde. They paid no taxes to the Ottoman government, and never married outsiders.⁴⁴ Sinassos was also predominantly Greek. It became rich through commerce with Istanbul, and came to be viewed as the chief center of an ephemeral revival of Orthodoxy in the nineteenth century. But more usually, Christian communities lived in separate parts of Turkish towns, more or less in harmony with the ruling majority. When an occasional new town was built it would be populated by Greeks and Armenians from neighboring villages, so that main centers of the older cultures became completely Turkish. This is what happened with Nevşehir for example, the only new town of importance in the troglodytic region of Cappadocia. It was founded in 1720 over the village which had been the birthplace of Ibrahim Paşa, son-in-law and grand vizier of Sultan Ahmet III. In populating it with Greeks from nearby, Christian tradition retired finally from such places of documented antiquity as the town of Matianoï, the birthplace of St. Hieron. Names were turkicized, by phonetic adjustment or direct translation. Matianoï changed to Maçan, Korama to Göreme, Melas remained the "Black River" in the new tongue: Karasu. Much was freshly renamed. The frequency of the Turkish words for "church" (*kilise*) and "fort" (*hisar*) in these baptisms attests to the unavoidable physical presence of the older, Christian, culture. The churches themselves were nicknamed by the Turkish peasants, perhaps in deference to that unwritten law that a fresh name is the greater part of the act of propitiation.

Western Travelers

A little before the time of the founding of Nevşehir, the first Western traveler passed through Cappadocia. He was Paul Lucas, a Frenchman on an investigation tour of the Middle East at the orders of the Sun King. His brief mention of the troglodytic architecture in the region of Kayseri and the thousands who lived in this manner must have been thought by some as one of the customary tall stories of pioneer travelers in the mysterious East. On a subsequent trip, published in 1718, Lucas asserted, for the sake of the incredulous, that the caves did indeed exist as he had initially noted but that he had underestimated their number, which he now put at 200,000.

No one in this century of Reason sought to verify these claims. But with the opening of the next century a line of travelers from France, England, Russia, and Germany braved acute discomforts and danger to recover and chart the legendary plateau of Anatolia. They moved from place to place excitedly, with compass, aneroid barometer, and Strabo's *Geography* in their pack, scaling altitudes, hunting down rumored marbles or inscriptions, bargaining with native boys for coins, and everywhere feverishly trying to identify past theaters of history. Was Soğanlı Dere the Soandus of Strabo? Where was Xanxaris, the famed watering place to which Gregory of Nazianzus repaired to seek recovery? And Nazianzus itself, called "Anathiango" in the Jerusalem Itinerary and placed on the road from Ancyra to Tyana? And Tyana? They were a motley collection of men, the now practically extinct race of the educated and curious generalist: at once geologists, geographers, archaeologists, classicists, epigraphists, and journalists—in short, Wandering Scholars, as one of their number put it. "With so many stepping stones to set in the stream of ignorance, the Scholar had best not take too professional a view of his ostensible calling: maps and political reports, customs and types and folklore, eggs and bulbs and butterflies and rocks—all these fill his day with amateur occupations for which his professional interest is probably not the worse . . . The 'Remains of Distant Times' are various enough, and the Wandering Scholar may neglect a coin as little as a city."⁴⁵

These twenty or so travel books of Anatolia, even the dullest among them, make good reading. They tell with relish of the trials of early scholarship: bandits, the plague, rapacious and shiftless officials like the local *mutessarif* Fekham Paşa, who not only ordered Ernest Chantre and his colleagues out of the country on some trumped-up charge but also forbade the natives from putting them up or selling them food. Most of the Wandering Scholars endure such hard-

ships philosophically, although not always with modesty. Some draw the astonishing moral lesson, that child of an undying Western chauvinism, that this rough-and-tumble land needs the civilizing hand of Christianity to set it on the right course again. One almost blushes to read today, at the end of the excellent account of Anatolia by William J. Hamilton, a fervent statement to the effect that the Turks' only hope lies in embracing Christianity so "that the shackles of the Koran may be unloosed—the religion of Christ be established from Constantinople to the far East—and that the countries which first saw the effects of the Word will no longer be behind the Gentiles in adoring His holy Name."⁴⁶

Hamilton's wish was, of course, the avowed Purpose of Christian missions. With the relative loosening up of the Ottoman East in the nineteenth century a number of them initiated proselytizing activities. Their work was at first encouraged by the Porte, presumably in the hopes of resolving the Armenian question with their help. It was hoped that by converting the Armenians of Asia Minor, and to a lesser degree the Greeks, into Protestants and Catholics the missions would succeed only in dividing the number of these peoples and frustrating their national aspirations. The Americans entered the field in 1820 with missionary operations throughout the Middle East administered by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in Boston. In 1826 the missionary Gridley visited Cappadocia as far as Kayseri, and died of fatigue after an attempt to climb Erciyas. Soon three main missions were established. Of these the Western Turkey Mission covered Istanbul, Edirne, most of Asia Minor until Cilicia, and also Sivas and Trebizond. Cappadocia was a crucial part of this Mission. Caesarea Station was founded in 1854. It included a boarding school for girls in Talas (the ancient Mutaske) which by the end of the century had ninety-one students, a high school for boys in Caesarea itself with fifty students, and another in Yozgat with thirty students.⁴⁷ Their success was considerable—but not along the lines that the Porte envisaged. Rather than being divisive, the effect of the Mission was to produce, slowly, a small educated class of minorities which transcended its differences and turned its attention against the abuses of the central government. And so, with perverse logic, the gains of the civilizing West contributed to the sad ultimate decision of the Porte to solve the Armenian Question with violence and blood.

At this time, when the Western traveler was most suspect and the missionary or priest anathema to the Turks, a young Jesuit, Father Guillaume de Jerphanion,⁴⁸ visited the troglodytic

area of Cappadocia in the company of Father Joannès Gransault. The year was 1907. This first visit marked for Jerphanion the start of a long and moving involvement with the rockcut churches and their paintings, an involvement that continued for more than three decades. By now the heyday of the generalist was passed. Travel books packed with incident, fact, and observation were making way for the special documented treatise. Systematic excavation was breathing life into the dim memory of the Hittites, whom the Turks would soon welcome as honorable ancestors. Jerphanion's period of interest happened to be the one that, in the mind of local and central authorities, had best be forgotten. It is to his lasting credit that he persevered tirelessly, recording each church with method and love in the few years before the outbreak of World War I.

Then no more visits were possible. After much trouble, the modest account of which can be read in his preface, Jerphanion's first volume of text and first portfolio of plates appeared in 1925. Two years later he somehow managed a brief hasty visit to the region, the first since the war. He found the last tenuous link of Cappadocian Christianity with the present broken. The "smooth-tongued Armenians" (Hamilton's phrase) were no more. Under the treaty of Lausanne in 1923 the newly founded Republic of Turkey had agreed to an exchange of minorities with Greece. The Greeks had left. Their villages and towns stood empty, awaiting new occupants. The metropolitan see of Caesarea, together with many other sees of Asia Minor, ceased to exist; the episcopal residence at Zencidere and the adjacent monastery of St. John were closed. New bishoprics in Europe and on the Greek islands were hastily being created by the Patriarch of Constantinople to take the place of the ones lost.

The rock churches themselves had registered the vicissitudes of the war and of the evacuation. Some were destroyed. Some were lost among the complicated folds of the rockscape: without the aid of Greek guides, Jerphanion, who had recorded them fifteen years ago, could not now locate them. Many churches were sealed up and transformed into pigeon houses, the guano of pigeons being an important commodity in the region. And Cappadocia became again inaccessible to the scholar and the curious until 1950.

The Present

Following pages

Plate 11

Üçhisar, general view from
Ürgüp.

[Photo Harold Stump]

Plate 12

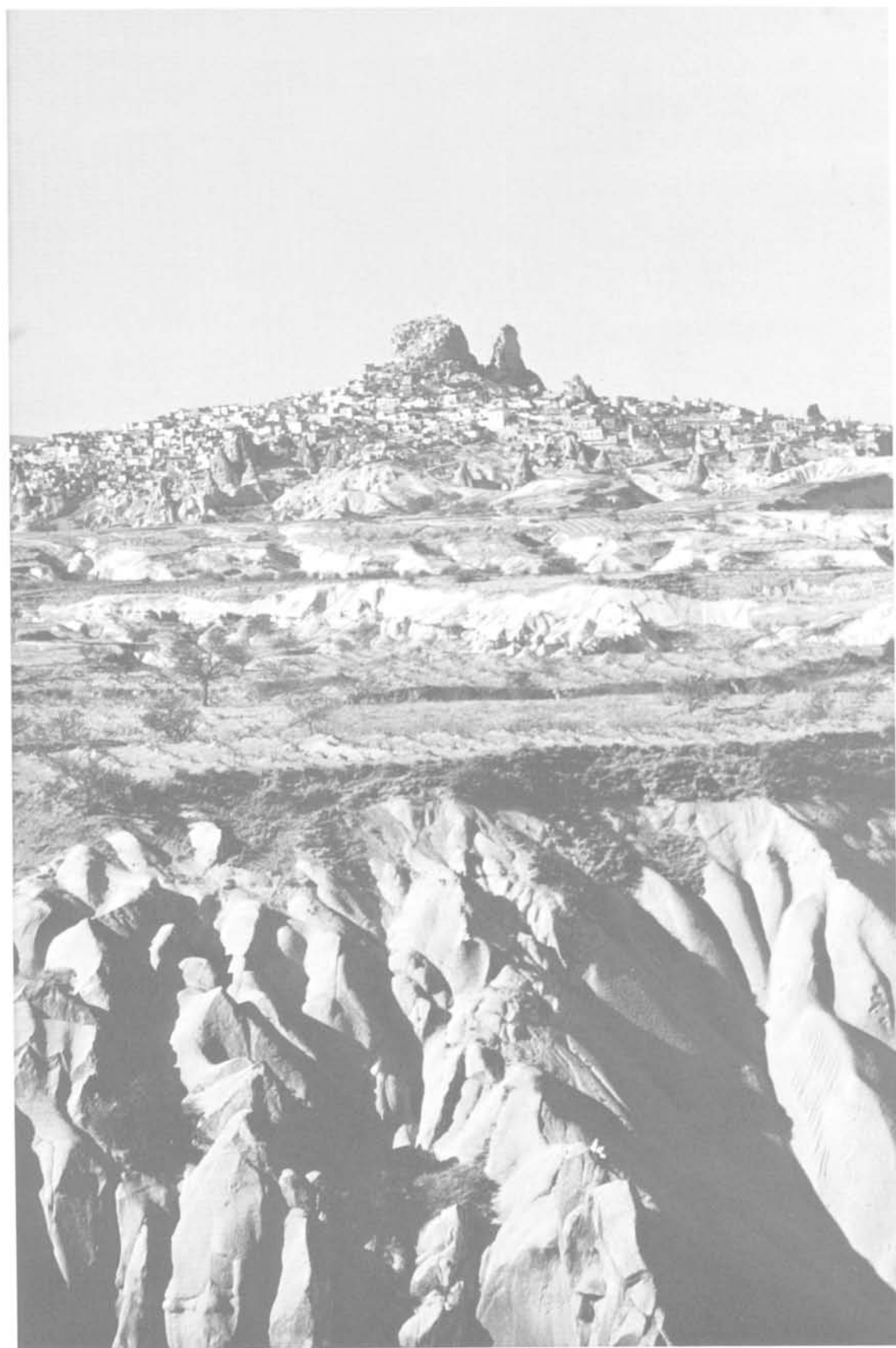
Çavuşin, view showing
part of the modern village
and the columnar porch
of St. John the Baptist (top
center).

[Photo Harold Stump]

The struggle for the spiritual possession of Asia Minor is now over. Today Christianity, and its architecture, have no live relevance in Cappadocia. After many centuries of more or less happy survival, the hollowed churches and monastic establishments can now disintegrate or adjust to new expedencies. In the last few years the luckier ones are being proclaimed archaeological monuments. By this process they are historically neutralized: they become things for dispassionate attention. Only chance objects, here and there, like the minarets at Zilve and Çavuşin in the form of Byzantine *ciboria*, serve as poignant reminders of the long episode of engagement between the two great faiths.

But in the cone colonies and bluff rock slopes, villages and towns go on as they have since early Christian times (Pl. 11). The houses are now more ambitious. They have rectangular projecting fronts built of regular blocks of tuff and neatly whitewashed, with one or more rows of small windows (Pl. 12). In contrast to the mud dwellings elsewhere in the Anatolian plateau, indistinguishable from the brown earth, these look cheerful, pert. An occasional arcade graces their facades. Sometimes an exterior staircase leads up to an open-air platform above street level from which the constructed front room is entered. Beyond this the house extends into the natural rock. Here grain is stored, as always, and animals kept, pots thrown and textiles woven. Yearly the layer of soot from the flueless chimney is chipped away from walls and ceiling, and a new coat of whitewash completes this sensible upkeep. And one carves as need arises. Vertically, the houses may go up to several stories.

If the prospect of these communities looks at first sight hopeless, in fact it is not so. The land has never been entirely arid. Wandering through the intricate rockscape, one comes upon vineyards and fruit trees, hanging on to the sides of valleys, as well as vegetable gardens hidden away in the bottoms of clefts and among the rock cones. Their green in season stands in happy contrast to the white or yellow tuff. The softness of the tuff land encourages excavation; its makeup helps to nourish such selected plant life. Being porous the rock absorbs and holds water easily. Within, mineral nutrients are loose, among them a high quantity of potassium. These conditions are excellently suited for the cultivation of fruit—pear, walnut, apricot—vegetables, and grapevine. So paradoxically, you can grow things more easily on the tuff than you can in the flatlands beyond, where corn-growing and cattle-raising are more at home. And so too the tuff landscape is more densely populated than the neighboring flatlands.





Cappadocia is now easily visited. One can go by jeep from Ankara and get a quick feel of the rockscape and its art in a day or two. Beginning at Gülşehir (formerly Arabsun), signs announce the more important of the monuments. Or one can make Kayseri the base for a profitable month, or more, of unhurried excursions. The troglodytic towns are a delight, the proverbial hospitality of the Turk intact (Pl. 13). There is a good hotel at Ortahisar, and at Ürgüp a comfortable new one has recently been built. A third at Üçhisar, partly rockcut, is under construction at this writing. At Göreme one has the luxury of taxi service, a refreshment stand, and souvenirs. Adequate roads join the Jerphanion territory with the region of Hasan Dağı, about ninety miles to the southwest, where a little-known group of rockcut churches, recently published by M. and Mme. Thierry, can be seen.

And above all, there is the landscape, naked and mournful as ever, with its Arizona-like desert plain and the few insular mountains. Here the political and social upheavals of past and recent history are, of a sudden, meaningless. As always the parched soil waits patiently for the rains which will usher in snow and freeze which then will yield, after some obdurate months, to flood the springs with gushing waters and force the rivers to reclaim their retired brooks again. All this is one's own. Despite the Wandering Scholars and the learned publications and the *Guide Bleu*, crossing the Plains remains a pristine experience. One is always the first outsider to enjoy it.

