

Development or Displacement?

Resettlement and Adaptation among the Cave Dwellers in Cappadocia

EDA ELIF TIBET
U KENT

Turkey has been exposed to a dramatic process of transformation since its proclamation as a republic in 1923. Right after the establishment of a new modern Islamic nation, industrialization was adopted as a powerful instrument to achieve higher currency revenues as part of Turkey's integration with the international community. Thus, enforced integration into the world economy, mechanization of agriculture, urbanization and migrations are just a few

neys), throughout centuries. In 1985, Cappadocia was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site and became a national park. Since then a steadily increasing number of cultural tourists have visited. However, over the last two decades the increase in cultural tourism has led to a problematic relationship between the key heritage attractions in the area, tourism and the local Islamic community (Tucker and Emge, in *Anatolia Journal* 21[1]).

Currently in local heritage museums Cappadocians are represented by wax figures, which is evidence of the degree to which the local community members

their own politics of accommodation and resist the development of international tourism (Bowman, in *The Tourist Image: Myths and Myth Making in Tourism*, 1996). Some Cappadocians reclaimed and restored their old homes for the purpose of setting up tourist accommodation businesses while most of them left the area in search of other opportunities.

In many cases, immigrants have not found adequate living conditions away from their homes, as many have moved to slums, locally known as the *gecekondur* ("the night settlers") in bigger cities such as Istanbul. With the fast transition from a farming



This moonlike landscape of rock cones with historic cave dwellings and Byzantine churches is in the heartland of the Anatolian peninsula.



Anatolian women in front of their stone house. Each woman has a *yemeni*, a head scarf typical for Anatolians decorated with beads of choice.



Mustafa, a local artist in the Babayan village, decorated an old Ottoman house as a work place and shop for tourists.

of the factors that have mainly contributed to the socio-economic transformation and influenced the worldviews of Turkish citizens. Above all, according to Paleczek (*Turkish Families in Transition*, 1996), "it was the intra-family, kin relations and household structures that have been affected the most" by this immense process of change since the last 87 years and little has been researched on the consequences of integration into the national or world economy for the families left behind in the village in rural areas.

After long-term economic instabilities during the 1980s, Turkey preferred tourism as a favorite sector to liberalize and stabilize the economy. One important site in Turkey that experienced such drastic changes and management problems is Cappadocia, a moonlike landscape of giant rock cones with historic cave dwellings and Byzantine churches, located in the heartland of Anatolian peninsula. People here have lived in these naturally formed rock structures, locally known as *peri bacalari* (fairy chim-

are undervalued as part of the overall heritage attraction. The people living in the center of Cappadocia were displaced from their caves and historical stone houses supposedly because of the threat of erosion and earthquakes. However, my fieldwork interviews indicate the main reason for displacement is the increasing tourism and market value of the caves, which are now bought by many financially empowered customers from all around the world.

The local community was moved to the AFET houses (natural disaster houses) as part of a government modernization program started in the 1970s that relocated the locals without respect to their traditional farming needs. The national tourism initiatives have thus resulted in increasing marginalization of locals from the economic opportunities associated with the industry. There are now hundreds of hotels and other tourism-related businesses functioning only in the village of Goreme. Most members of this host society are involved in

economy to tourism-oriented lifestyle, the younger generation in Cappadocia had to search for a new future within more modern infrastructures, which has prompted youth immigration to more industrialized cities and other tourism zones throughout the nation. The youth who remain in Cappadocia prefer to live in houses made of iron and concrete, designed differently from the caves. Houses with wide central courtyards and traditional Ottoman-style arches, known as *kemer*, are no longer built.

All photos courtesy of Eda Elif Tibet.

Eda Elif Tibet is currently a graduate teaching assistant and PhD student in the anthropology department at the University of Kent, specializing in social and visual anthropology. Her research investigates the local community's perceptions of being displaced by economic development of Cappadocia, a UNESCO World Heritage site in Turkey. 