

## ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL LANDSCAPE VALUES AND THEIR PROTECTION STATUS IN IHLARA VALLEY

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### **ABSTRACT**

*In this study, Ihlara Valley, which is rich in terms of cultural landscape values and formed as a result of the volcanic activities of Hasan Dağı and Melendiz Mountain in Central Anatolia and used by people for the purpose of sheltering and worshiping from the early days of Christianity was selected as the study area. In this study, it is aimed to determine the cultural landscape values in the area and their characteristics and to evaluate its state of protection and to compare it with the World Heritage Site of Göreme National Park and Cappadocia Rocky Sites in terms of protection and location.*

*Field studies were carried out in the Ihlara Valley and in its settlement areas in order to determine the cultural landscape values in the research area. In the study area, in compliance with the fossil landscape definition of UNESCO, there are some of the elements of the cultural landscape such as rock churches, cave paintings (frescoes), caves, underground caves, and cathedrals.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Cultural Landscape, Ihlara Valley, World Heritage Site, Rock Caves*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The study of the cultural landscape is one of the main traditions of geography (Tümertekin and Özgüç, 2006). The cultural landscape approach has been adopted as a basic approach for geographers since the definition of the term “*Kulturlandschaft*” by the human geographer Friedrich Ratzel in Germany in the 1890s as the area changed through human activities versus primitive natural landscape (Lennon, 2006). The introduction of the concept of cultural landscape to the American geography and the dissemination of the idea were realized with the work of American geographer Carl Orwin Sauer in 1925 (Ari, 2005; Lennon, 2006). According to Sauer's work “The Morphology of Landscape”, the cultural landscape refers to the shaping of a natural landscape by a cultural group. According to Sauer, in a natural geographical area shaped by the cultural life of a social community, culture is the cause, nature is the tool and cultural landscape is the result (Lennon, 2006).

There are various definitions proposed by nature conservation organizations for the concept of cultural landscape. Recognizing cultural landscapes as special resources in 1981, the United States National Park Service (US-NPS) defined the cultural landscape as “*a geographical area which includes cultural or natural resources, where there are wild or*

*domestic animals, which is integrated with a historical event or figure or which exhibits cultural or aesthetic values*" (O'Donnell, 1995). IUCN defines the cultural landscapes that it has added to the protection categories as Category V Marine / Land Landscape Protection as "*areas which have been changed as a result of human effects and where at the same time nature affects humans' living styles and settlement patterns*" (Phillips, 2002).

Cultural landscapes added as a new category to World Heritage Sites in 1992 are expressed by the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Committee as reflection of the joint work of nature and human beings and defined as "*the evolution of human society and settlements occurring through the influence of natural environment of mankind and social, economic, cultural internal and external forces*" (UNESCO, 2008a). UNESCO divides the cultural landscapes included in the World Heritage List into three main categories. The first and the easiest to define among these is the cultural landscape planned and created by humans. These areas, which are created with aesthetic concerns, usually cover the parks and gardens associated with a monumental and religious building or building complex (Fowler, 2003). The second type of cultural landscapes refers to ones organically developing over time. While social, economic and sometimes religious factors play a role in the formation of these areas, the characteristics of the natural environment are the main determinant of the formal and functional nature of the area. For these areas, two sub-groups have been defined; namely, fossil (relict) landscapes whose evolution ended at a certain time, and dynamic cultural landscapes whose evolution is still in progress (Fowler, 2003). The third group includes cultural landscapes that are considered part of the cultural heritage because they are identified with a religious, artistic or cultural reality. The entry of these areas into the list of world heritage is directly linked to the event or concept with which they are identified, and the existence of concrete cultural evidence is of secondary importance (Fowler, 2003).

First, Tongariro National Park in New Zealand in 1993 and Uluru Kata Tjuta National Park in Australia in 1994 was declared cultural landscape. In 2017, there are a total of 88 sites in the UNESCO cultural landscape list most of which are in Europe. In Turkey, the Diyarbakir Fortress and Hevsel Gardens Cultural Landscapes were put under protection within the category of UNESCO's cultural landscapes in 2015. Pergamon and its Multi-Layered Cultural Landscape were added to the World Heritage sites list in 2014. Apart from these, the World Heritage Site of Göreme National Park and Cappadocia Rocky Sites., which was accepted as a World Heritage Site in 1985, is evaluated in the 2a sub-category of the temporary list prepared by the World Heritage Committee where the cultural landscapes are influenced by social, economic and religious factors as well as the fossil landscape (Fowler, 2003). In addition, the Mardin Cultural Landscape is also one of the potential cultural landscapes in the UNESCO's cultural landscape list (Fowler, 2003). It is also emphasized that Hierapolis-Pamukkale, which is protected as a mixed World Heritage Site, can be considered a cultural landscape due to its features (Mitchell et al., 2009).

In the current study, the Ihlara Valley, which is rich in terms of cultural landscape values and formed as a result of the volcanic activities of Hasan Dağı and Melendiz Mountain in Central Anatolia and used by people for the purpose of sheltering and worshipping from the early days of Christianity was selected as the study area.

In this study, it is aimed to determine the cultural landscape values in the area and their characteristics and to evaluate its state of protection and to compare it with the World Heritage Site of Göreme National Park and Cappadocia Rocky Sites in terms of protection and location. To this end, the answers to the following questions were sought; "What are the characteristics of the cultural landscape values in the Ihlara Valley?", "Are the landscape values in the Ihlara Valley integrated with the World Heritage Site of Göreme National Park and Cappadocia Rocky Sites?", "What is the extent to

which the Ihlara Valley has been integrated with Cappadocia?”.

## **METHOD**

Raster images of “AKSARAY L32 - a2, L32 - b3, L32 - b3, L32 - b4, L32 - c1” map sections were obtained from the scale of 1 / 25,000 including the research area before the determination of the values in the research area. These map sections were coordinated in ArcGIS 9.2 environment, and vector data were created including elevation, hydrography and settlement layers. Field studies were carried out in the Ihlara Valley and in its settlement areas in order to determine the cultural landscape values in the research area. In these studies, values complying with the definition of the fossil cultural landscape accepted by UNESCO in the 2a category of cultural landscapes were addressed. The geographic coordinates of values such as rock church, cave, underground cave, old houses, which are located in the area and evaluated within this category, were taken with GPS and each value was photographed. All the GPS-coordinated values were transferred to the pre-built map in the ArcGIS 9.2 environment and maps of the cultural landscape values in the research area were created. The characteristics of the cultural landscape values in the area have been determined on the basis of the studies in the literature and field observations. In addition, this section has been enriched visually with photographs taken in the field.

## **FINDINGS**

The Ihlara Valley and its surrounding area have been formed through the effects of wind, flood, and streams on the materials produced by the volcanic activities of the old Hasan Mountain. These surface forms emerging have been used for residential and religious purposes especially from the first periods of Christianity (Gülkal, 1999). The people of the region from the first settlements to the present day have taken the advantage of the tuff material making up the rocks around that can be easily carved. The settlement in the surrounding area for centuries continued in the form of in-rock life due to geological formation. A local stone which is abundant in the region and easily processed has been used skillfully in the construction of houses (Gürler, 2007). Cultural landscape values emerged as a result of the interaction of natural structure and culture in the region. The cultural landscape values found in the Ihlara Valley have the characteristics of the fossil landscape according to the criteria of UNESCO as social, economic, administrative and religious factors have played a role in their formation and as the characteristics of the natural environment are the main determinant of the figural and functional quality of the area (Fowler, 2003).

According to Restle (1967); Ihlara Valley has always been a religious center rather than a settlement (Pehlivan, 2005). In the first period of Christianity; A.D. 4<sup>th</sup> century, some sectarian founders trained in the Aksaray and Cappadocia region laid down the rules of a different monastic life as different from the Egyptian and Syrian system, leading to the emergence of the Slavic and Greek system (Special Environment Protection Institution, 2005). According to Thierry (1968), with the settlement of Christians in the Cappadocia Region, it was used as a place of seclusion and worship suitable for the monks and priests due to the sheltered structure the Ihlara Valley and it was also suitable for hiding and protection during war periods. Hundreds of rooms and places of worship carved into steep rocks confirm this (Pehlivan, 2005).

In the study area, in compliance with the fossil landscape definition of UNESCO, some of the elements of the cultural landscape such as rock churches, cave paintings (frescoes), caves, underground caves, and cathedrals.

### ***Registered Churches***

Twelve rock churches and Selime Cathedral located in the valley were registered as 1<sup>st</sup>-degree archaeological sites by Konya Regional Council for the Conservation of Cultural and Natural Heritage.

**AğaçaltıChurch:** The church, carved into the wall of the Ihlara Valley and dated to between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries of the Byzantine age, is located in the entrance of the valley at the end of the stairs (Figure 1). The church is a T-type free cross-planned, domed, with a cradle vault and three apses. Inside the church are frescoes. The church dates back to the pre-iconoclasm period (AksarayValiliği, 2009).

**KokarChurch:** The church, carved into the south wall of the Ihlara Valley, dates back to the 9<sup>th</sup>-century Byzantine period (Figure 1). It is a single nave church with a cradle vault. Out of necessity, a funeral parlor was added to the nave by carving into the interior of the rock.

**PürenlisekiChurch:** It is a church carved into the rocks on the southern wall of the Ihlara Valley. It is dated to Byzantine period. The church consists of four sections carved into the rock.

**KaranlıkkaleChurch:** The church was carved into the northern wall of the Ihlara Valley. It is a rock church dating back to the 10<sup>th</sup> century. The entrance door of the church is arched and the rooms inside are separated by arched systems.

**EğritaşChurch:** The church was carved into the northern wall of the Ihlara Valley. It is a rock church dating to the second half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century (Figure 1). The church is planned as rectangular with a single nave. There are frescoes with different features in the church.

**SümbüllüChurch:** Inside the Ihlara Valley, the church is carved into the southern wall of the valley (Figure 1). The church has a flamboyant entrance in an arched structure (AksarayGovernorship, 2009). It has a triangular shape with a single nave. The monastery spaces were carved into two layers of the rock mass. The church is at the bottom. The church and its frescoes date back from the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> to the mid-11<sup>th</sup> century (Pehlivan, 2005).

**YılanlıChurch:** The church is located on a high point of the north wall of the valley (Figure 1). The church dates back to the 9<sup>th</sup>-century Byzantine period. The church is free Greek cross planned with a cradle vault and a single apse. The church was named after the four naked female sinners who were attacked by snakes in the fresco on the western wall of the church.

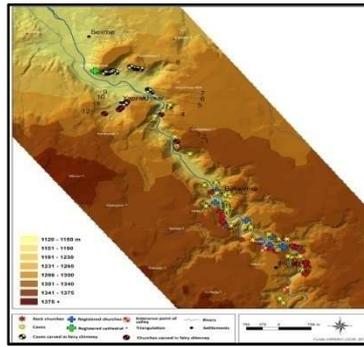
**KırkdamaltıChurch:** The church is in the southern wall of the Ihlara Valley, near the Belisırma entrance to the valley (Figure 1). The church, dated to the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, has an irregular hexagonal plan with a flat roof.

**Karagedik Church:** Church is located on the southern wall of the valley. According to Ötüken (1983), it is remarkable in terms of being a large structure built of cut stone.

**BahattinSamanlığıChurch:** It is located on the road leading down to Belisırma Village, on the southern wall of the Ihlara Valley. A single nave church with a longitudinal rectangular plan dates back to the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century. There are frescoes in the church.

**DirekliChurch:** The church is on the southern wall of the valley, at the entrance of Belisırma (Figure 1). The church with a central dome and three apses are in the form of a cross and are sitting on six poles. It is a monastery church and dated between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries (AksarayValiliği, 2009).

**Ala Church:** The church is located on the eastern slope of the valley, in the village of Belisırma. The church planned with cornered walls and as a closed Greek cross is dated to the 11<sup>th</sup> century. The church is covered by three domes. There are pictures of the apostles and saints on the top of the façade.



**Figure 1: Churches and Caves in the Research Area**

### *Unregistered Rock Churches and Caves*

While there are 12 churches and 1 cathedral registered in the Ihlara Valley, there are many non-registered churches and caves. In the field studies, other churches and caves which are not registered in the Ihlara Valley were determined by GPS and marked on the map. Many buildings cannot be reached due to rock falls in the valley. As some structures in the valley have been destructed, it cannot be determined whether they are churches or not. As they were carved into the valley wall, these structures are considered to be caves (Figure 1).

In the Ihlara Valley, a total of 27 churches carved into the valley walls and 8 churches carved into the fairy chimneys have been determined. Approximately 15 of the rock churches have been affected by rock falls.

A total of 68 caves carved into the Valley walls have been detected. Some of the caves in the valley wall cannot be reached due to rock falls, and only the windows of some of the buildings can be seen because of the collapses.

The detected caves and churches are concentrated in Ihlara-Belisırma section of the valley. The valley is narrow and deep between Ihlara and Belisırma, and therefore it is thought that there are more churches in this section because it is more suitable for hiding. (Figure 1).

Despite the fact that frescoed churches in the deep and narrow part of the Ihlara Valley between Ihlara and Belisırma are known, the cultural landscape values of the valley in Belisırma-Yaprakhisar-Selime section have not been discovered until recently. Therefore, the structures in this region other than Selime Cathedral have not been registered.

In the Belisırma-Yaprakhisar-Selime section of the valley, structures mostly carved into fairy chimneys are seen. A total of 22 caves carved into fairy chimneys have been detected in this region. Among the detected structures, there are those that have been destroyed and lost their properties, but also those that have survived up to the present. These structures are shown on the map with numbers (Figure 1).

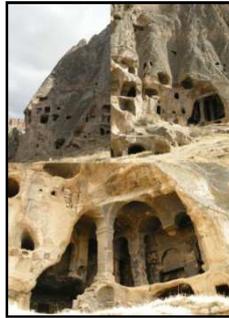
Structures shown with numbers 1 and 2 are interconnected churches carved into the wall of the valley. There are arched structures on the front façade of the church. The church, carved into the fairy chimney shown on number 3, has a front facade consisting of a door and two windows. The front façade of the church is decorated with embroidered arches. The areas making up the side surface of the church are decorated with arches. The church carved into the fairy chimney shown on number 4 is located in the region of the valley between Belisırma and Selime. The church is an interconnected church structure carved into the fairy chimneys along the valley wall. The church is similar to the Selime Cathedral in terms of structure and size.

According to Kalas (2006), the caves carved into the fairy chimney at Aleydinbasi site shown on the map with numbers 5, 6 and 7 are chapels in this region. In two of these chapels, graves with inscriptions dated 1023 and 1024 were found (Kalas, 2006). The characteristics of the caves carved into the fairy chimney located at the GüllükkayaTepe site, shown by number 8 on the map are described by Kalas (2006). All structures in this area face the river and the surrounding agricultural areas.

In general, four-façade structures are seen in the structures carved into fairy chimneys. The main wall of the building forms the main room wall and is decorated with niches. On the other hand, the openings between the rooms carved on the natural landscape form the courtyards of the buildings. Some rooms open to the courtyards. These rooms can be used as a kitchen, bath or barn. Other rooms are used as warehouses and living areas. Carved crosses and geometric patterns are seen in some rooms. There is a church annexed to all structures.

Many carvings in Aleydinbasi and Güllükkaya sites have been left unattended because they are not registered. These structures are not visited by tourists as they are not known to them and also there is no attempt for the protection of these structures.

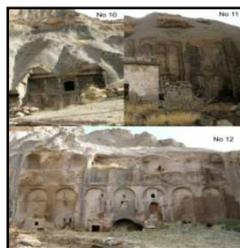
The areas shown with the numbers 9, 10, 11 and 12 on the map are churches carved into the fairy chimneys in the area forming the boundary of the Yaprakhisar Village of Ihlara Valley. These structures, according to Kalas (2006), are the most impressive rock-carved facades ever discovered in Cappadocia (Photo 1).



**Figure 2: The Structures Carved into a Fairy Chimney in Yaprakhisar (Map No 9)**

The building shown with number 9 is a complex structure carved into the large fairy chimney forming the hillside of Yaprakhisar. The structure consists of interconnected rooms and church. The church has the domed and arched structure on columns(Photo 1).

In the structures shown with the numbers 10, 11 and 12, the front facades are carved with ornaments. Unusually well preserved front facades have a monumental character with original lengths and widths. On the facades of the structures, there are carvings with symmetrically vertical arches (Kalas, 2006), (Figure 1; Photo 2).



**Figure 3: Facades Carved on Fairy Chimneys in Yaprakhisar (Map No 10-11-12)**

Outside this region, the facades of the other structures dated to the Byzantine period in Cappadocia have collapsed and only their interiors have survived. In Yaprakhisar, these structures which have not been destroyed are used by local people for storage purposes. Thus, they do not want doors to these structures. This allows structures to be destroyed not only naturally but also as a result of misuse (Kalas, 2006).

Especially the parts of the structures around Yaprakhisar are well preserved and have survived up to the present. All of these structures are within the borders of the village and there is no difficulty in terms of transportation. However, since none of these structures have been registered, there is no protective measure. These structures, which are used by the local people as a warehouse, are not noticed by tourists visiting this region due to the lack of any tourist activities.

### ***Protection Status in the Ihlara Valley***

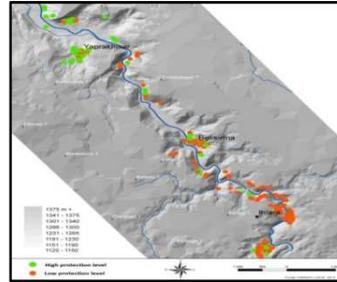
In the last thirty years, Turkey has become a party to many international treaties for the protection of biodiversity. The Convention on the Protection of Wildlife and Habitats of Europe, known as the Bern Convention, has been committed to the protection of endangered species. These species have been put under protection by the Barcelona Convention. One of the additional protocols of this convention is the "Establishment of Special Protected Areas in the Mediterranean". As a result of these conventions, in 1989 the Special Environmental Protection Agency was established with the Decree Law No. 383. The purpose of the establishment of this agency is to protect the environmental values in the areas determined and declared as "Special Environmental Protection Areas" by the Council of Ministers and to take the necessary measures in this direction.

Special Environmental Protection Areas are areas demonstrating integrity in terms of historical, natural, cultural etc. values and are of ecologic importance both at the national and international scale. The Ihlara Valley was declared as Special Environmental Protection Area with the decision of Council of Ministers dated 22.10.1990 and numbered 90/1117. As a requirement of this status, various protection and planning activities have been expected to be carried out to protect the natural and cultural values in the Ihlara Valley. It is stated that the solid waste recovery project in the region has been continuously in effect since 1994. However, one of the most important problems of the region is still the disposal of solid wastes. For this purpose, a landfill site has been identified and the wastes produced in the settlements in the region are planned to be disposed of here but this has not been put into practice yet. When the Ihlara Valley environmental plan is examined, it is seen that the valley itself is a 1<sup>st</sup>-degree site area and the close surrounding of the valley is a 2<sup>nd</sup>-degree site area. On the other hand, the remote surrounding of the valley is a 3<sup>rd</sup>-degree site area.

As the Ihlara Valley is a special environmental protection area and at the same time the inside of the valley is a 1<sup>st</sup>-degree site area, it is important to protect cultural landscape values; yet, not enough protection has been provided. Although some of the cultural landscape values in the area have been registered, they have been left mostly unattended and neglected. There are no works for the repair, maintenance and overseeing of churches and for their promotion as a tourist product.

When the cultural landscape values of the valley are evaluated according to their conservation status, caves carved into fairy chimneys around Selime Cathedral, structures in Yaprakhisar and some houses in settlements can be said to have high levels of protection. However, the protection status of other churches and caves is low except for a few registered churches in the valley (Figure 2). Frescos of the registered churches have been extremely ruined. Also, some of them have been considerably affected by rock falls. There are no works for the repair, maintenance and overseeing of churches and for their promotion as a tourist product. In addition, no measures have been taken against rock breaks, one of the major

problems in the valley. Within the scope of conservation statuses in the region, no studies are conducted on the use of the area for tourism purposes. The lack of a management plan for the area is one of the most important shortcomings.



**Figure 4: Protection Levels of Cultural Landscape Values in the Valley**

***The State of the Ihlara Valley In Comparison with the Göremental Park and Cappadocia Rocky Sites World Heritage Site:***

Cappadocia is the name given to an administrative district during the Byzantine Empire. Although its boundaries have changed many times over the centuries, it can be defined as the area covering today’s provinces of Nevşehir, Niğde, Aksaray, Kayseri totally and Sivas, Kırşehir, and Malatya partially (Pekak, 2009). Thus, it can be said that the Ihlara Valley is inside the Cappadocia Region. According to Ötügen (1983), the Ihlara Valley is one of the centers with 23 churches where the religious structures of the Byzantine period in the Cappadocia region are concentrated after Göreme (48 churches) and Güzelyurt (23 churches). Göreme National Park and Cappadocia Rocky Area World Heritage Site, which is among the 23 mixed types of world heritage sites in the world, is considered to be a potential cultural landscape (Fowler, 2003). Göreme, which was declared a world heritage site in 1985, is a magnificent landscape totally carved through erosion with its temples carved into rocks including unique evidence of the iconoclastic period of the Byzantine art. Remnants of traditional human life dating back to the 4<sup>th</sup> century can be seen there, such as houses, carved villages and underground cities (UNEP, 2007). As can be seen in the statements used by UNESCO to explain Göreme, Göreme and its surrounding have been shaped under the influence of the volcanic activities of Erciyes Mountain and the natural landscape that it has has been used by people from the early days of Christianity for the purposes of sheltering and worshipping; thus, the cultural landscape values of the area have been created. With these features, Göreme has similar cultural landscape characteristics with the Ihlara Valley, which has also been shaped by the volcanic activities of Erciyes Mountain and used by people for the purposes of hiding and worshipping.

In addition, the World Heritage Site of Göreme National Park and Cappadocia Rocky Sites is not composed of a single area rather consists of 7 different areas in the provinces of Nevşehir and Kayseri in Central Anatolia. Göreme National Park, Derinkuyu and Kaymaklı underground cities, Karain, Karlık, Yeşilöz, and Soğanlı villages are within the borders of the world heritage site (Somuncu and Yiğit, 2009), (Figure 3).



**Figure 5: The Location of the Ihlara Valley and Surrounding with Respect to Göreme National Park and World Heritage Site of Cappadocia Rocky Sites**

Soğanlı Village is 70 km away from Göreme National Park, which is the center of the world heritage site. While a village settlement at this distance lies within the boundaries of the world heritage site, the Ihlara Valley and its surrounding, which have similar features in terms cultural landscape characteristics and which are still approximately 70 km away, are not within the boundaries of the world heritage area (Figure 3).

The Ihlara Valley is located in the Cappadocia Region and is close to Göreme. Besides, it has characteristics similar to those of Göreme in terms of cultural landscape features. However, the protection status of Ihlara Valley is not international and the existing attempts are insufficient to protect the values in the valley. For these reasons, the Ihlara Valley needs to be included in the potential Göreme Cultural Landscape Area and be protected within the world heritage areas or protected as a separate cultural landscape area as a world heritage site.

## RESULTS AND SUGGESTIONS

In response to the research questions of the current study aiming to evaluate the cultural landscape values in the Ihlara Valley and their status of protection, the following results have been obtained:

***“What are the Characteristics and Protection Status of the Cultural Landscape Values in the Ihlara Valley?”*** Ihlara Valley is rich in values that satisfy the fossil landscape definition in the cultural landscape category of UNESCO. Twelve rock churches and Selime Cathedral located in the valley were registered as the 1<sup>st</sup>-degree archaeological sites by Konya Regional Council for the Conservation of Cultural and Natural Heritage. On the walls and ceilings of the registered churches are frescos. However, although the churches and the frescoes inside them are under protection, they are extremely damaged and neglected.

Aside from the registered values, many churches or caves have not been detected in the Ihlara Valley. In the area between Ihlara and Belisırma more rock carving structures are seen; yet, some of them cannot be reached due to rock falls. The structures between Belisırma and Selime are mostly in the form of structures carved into fairy chimneys. Especially in the vicinity of Yaprakhisar, there are well-preserved but unregistered structures which are not open to tourists. As the structures in this area are not open to the visit of tourists, they are used as a storage area by local and they are destroyed due to misuse.

The Ihlara Valley is under protection as Ihlara Special Environmental Protection Area. Moreover, inside the valley is protected as a 1<sup>st</sup> degree archeological and natural site and settlements in the valley are protected as 3<sup>rd</sup> -degree site areas. However, during the field studies, the protection works and practices in the area were found to be inadequate.

***“Are the landscape values in the Ihlara Valley integrated with the values in the World Heritage Site of Göreme National Park and Cappadocia Rocky Sites.?”***, ***“What is the extent to which the Ihlara Valley has been integrated with Cappadocia?”*** and ***“What is the place and importance of the Ihlara Valley in the tourism sector when compared to the Cappadocia Region?”*** The cultural landscape values in the Ihlara Valley and the cultural landscape values in the World Heritage Site of Göreme National Park and Cappadocia Rocky Sites have structural similarities. The fact that both areas were formed as a result of volcanic processes and the use of rock carvings by people for worship and shelters show the similarity of the areas in terms of cultural landscape. In addition, although it is in the mixed category of the world heritage site, it is in the temporary list of the category of cultural landscape, showing that it is a cultural landscape. Thus, it can be concluded that the Ihlara Valley is a cultural landscape. Besides, Ihlara Valley is located 75 km away from the world heritage site by road and in this sense, it shows a spatial integrity. However, in spite of these features, the Ihlara Valley is

not within the borders of the world heritage site.

As a result of the current study, the following suggestions can be made for the area:

After the determination of the cultural landscape values in the area at the national management scale, a database based on geographic information systems should be established. This database will help planners in monitoring, protection, and zoning. In addition, this database can be transformed into a tourist information system that can be used by stakeholders in the field and especially by tourists in subsequent processes.

The second important suggestion for the field is to get the area to gain an international protection status. To this end, after determining the cultural landscape values in the field by experts from different disciplines such as geographer, landscape architect, art historian, archaeologist and completion of the inventory studies, required applications should be made to the concerned organizations for the inclusion of the Ihlara Valley into the UNESCO World Heritage Cultural Landscape category or the World Heritage Site of Göreme National Park and Cappadocia Rocky Sites.

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