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BÜCÜRLÜ PINAR ROCK PAINTINGS IN CONTEXT: A NEW CONTRIBUTION TO THE STUDY OF ANATOLIAN TURKIC ROCK ART[1]

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ABSTRACT

The tradition of tamga, which holds a deep-rooted place in Turkish cultural history, began in the pre-Christian era and was applied to inscriptions, tombstones, rock surfaces, and animals. Tamgas functioned as symbolic markers used to indicate individual or collective ownership and affiliation. Although tamgas found in rock art may appear visually similar, each exhibits distinct formal characteristics. These symbols have served as significant sources for documenting cultural identity, social structures, and settlement patterns since the earliest periods of Turkish history. In numerous instances, the locations bearing tamga inscriptions can be interpreted as territorial markers, functioning in a manner comparable to land deeds. As symbolic phenomena, tamgas provide significant evidence for the examination of the religious and artistic discourses of societies. Originating in Central Asia, this tradition gradually spread throughout Anatolia and further into the Balkans over time. Although the original users clearly comprehended the meaning and symbolic value of tamgas, these may have undergone formal transformations or lost their significance for subsequent generations. The prolonged use and widespread presence of shared tamgas suggest their integration of religious, cultural, and symbolic layers associated with extended tribal and clan affiliations. This study aims to systematically analyze the tamgas identified in the rock paintings of Bücürlü Pınar, located within the borders of Burdur Province, and to contribute to the broader body of research on Turkic rock art in Anatolia.

Key Words: Anatolia, Turkey, Burdur, Ancient History, Rock Art, Petroglyphs

BÜCÜRLÜ PINAR KAYA RESİMLERİ IŞIĞINDA: ANADOLU TÜRK KAYA SANATINA YENİ BİR KATKI

ÖZ

Türk kültür tarihinde köklü bir yere sahip olan tamga geleneği, MÖ dönemlerden itibaren yazıtlar, mezar taşları, kaya yüzeyleri ve hayvanlar üzerine uygulanmaya başlanmıştır. Tamgalar, bireysel ya da topluluk temelli mülkiyetin ve aidiyetin simgelenmesinde işlevsel bir gösterge sistemi olarak kullanılmıştır. Kaya resimlerinde karşılaşılan tamgalar görsel benzerlik taşısa da her biri kendine özgü biçimsel özellikler sergilemektedir. Bu işaretler, Türk tarihinin erken evrelerinden itibaren kültürel kimliğin, sosyal yapının ve yerleşim izlerinin belgelenmesinde önemli bir kaynak niteliği taşımaktadır. Tamgaların uygulandığı alanlar, söz konusu kültürel sistemin yerleşim sahalarına ilişkin birer tapu işareti olarak değerlendirilebilmektedir. Damga geleneği, dinî ve sanatsal söylemlerin çözümlenmesinde sembolik düzeyde analize elverişli bir veri seti sunar. Orta Asya menşeli olan bu geleneksel uygulama, tarihsel süreç içerisinde Anadolu'ya, oradan da Balkanlara kadar yayılım göstermiştir. Başlangıçta anlamı açık ve temsil gücü yüksek olan damgalar, zamanla biçimsel evrilmelere uğramış ve bazı durumlarda sonraki nesiller için anlamsızlaşmıştır. Uzun süreli kullanım ve ortak sembolik sistemler, damgaların geniş boy-soy birliklerine ait dinî, kültürel ve simgesel katmanları barındırmasına zemin hazırlamıştır. Bu çalışmanın temel amacı, Burdur ili sınırlarında yer alan Bücürlü Pınar kaya resimlerinde tespit edilen damgaları sistematik olarak analiz ederek, Anadolu'daki Türk kaya sanatı literatürüne katkı sağlamaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Anadolu, Türkiye, Burdur, Antik Tarih, Kaya Resmi, Petroglifler

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Introduction

Throughout the course of human history, individuals and communities have utilized a wide range of symbolic expressions to articulate distinctions between themselves and others. These symbols have served not only as instruments of communication but also as visual embodiments of complex concepts such as collective belonging, sanctity, territorial sovereignty, and social identity (Ceylan, 2015, p. 27; Güler, 2020, p. 36). The images inscribed by early human groups on cave walls and rock surfaces gradually evolved into a more systematized visual language, ultimately becoming foundational tools for the preservation of communal memory and the intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge. Within this framework, rock art—commonly referred to as petroglyphs—ought to be understood not merely as the outcome of aesthetic or artistic endeavors, but rather as significant repositories of historical, cultural, and anthropological insight. Typically composed of figurative or geometric motifs, rock art frequently features depictions of elements from the natural world, animals, human figures, and abstract forms. These images, often created within ritualistic contexts, offer critical reflections of the cosmological views, belief systems, daily practices, and ecological interactions of the societies that produced them. The repeated appearance of specific symbols across various regions and periods suggests that they were not arbitrary, but instead formed within coherent semiotic systems that encoded shared social meanings. In this light, petroglyphs may be seen as a form of visual communication that preceded and, in many ways, prefigured the development of oral traditions and written language. Far from being silent artifacts, these engravings speak to the intricate relationship between image, meaning, and memory in early human civilizations.

These rock carvings not only embody the mythological narratives and spiritual beliefs of particular groups but also served multiple socio-cultural functions—such as affirming the sanctity of specific locations, designating hunting grounds, or demarcating the territorial boundaries of a given community. In this regard, rock art functioned simultaneously as a medium of individual expression and a mechanism for constructing and reinforcing collective identity. From an anthropological standpoint, such visual representations offer critical insights into the cognitive frameworks, social organizations, and cultural values of ancient societies. Over time, the repeated use of certain symbols and their gradual abstraction contributed to the development of increasingly structured visual languages. This evolution mirrors the advancement of human cognition and symbolic reasoning, ultimately culminating in the development of written scripts. Within this conceptual framework, petroglyphs may be regarded as occupying an intermediary position—representing a form of semiotic continuity between oral tradition and formal writing systems. Each figure or motif carved into the rock surfaces was not merely an aesthetic embellishment, but also functioned as a bearer of historical memory, a vehicle of sacred narrative, or a marker of social organization.

Notably, the recurrence of similar symbolic themes in petroglyphs across the Eurasian steppes, Central Asia, and Anatolia points to the diffusion of shared visual motifs among culturally interconnected populations. This widespread distribution suggests the existence of a trans-regional symbolic vocabulary—a shared visual language that traversed geographical and temporal boundaries, facilitating both cultural transmission and collective memory across diverse Turkic and proto-Turkic societies. Rock paintings are regarded as one of the earliest forms of communication in which symbols were employed in a systematic manner. Based on

direct observation, this visual language—developed through depictions of nature, animals, human figures, and abstract images—gradually evolved into a symbolic code structured around conventional meanings (Gülensoy, 1989, p. 13-15; Ceylan, 2015, p. 17). Prior to the invention of writing, this symbolic system functioned as a supportive medium for oral culture, playing a crucial role in the preservation of historical memory and the transmission of knowledge across generations. In this way, rock art became not only an artistic expression, but also a component of cultural heritage imbued with ritualistic, didactic, and sociopolitical significance (Aslan, 2020, p. 1379).

Rock paintings ought to be interpreted as symbolic articulations of humanity's relationship with the cosmos, nature, and the overarching cosmological order. These visual records are imbued with multilayered meanings that transcend the boundaries of art history, occupying critical positions within the interdisciplinary domains of religious studies, mythology, anthropology, and archaeology (Somuncuoğlu, 2011, p. 13–14). Carved or pecked into rock surfaces, such images represent more than depictions of the external environment; they serve as material manifestations of human engagement with the natural world, encapsulating the intellectual paradigms, ritual behaviors, and sacred perceptions of the societies that produced them. Depictions of vegetation, wild fauna, celestial bodies, and natural forces in rock art are not to be read solely as empirical representations, but rather as components of a symbolic visual lexicon grounded in mythopoeic worldviews. The recurrent portrayal of figures such as horses, mountain goats, deer, predatory animals, and mounted warriors reveals their integral role not only in the quotidian existence of these communities but also within their spiritual and metaphysical frameworks (Gülensoy, 1989, p. 14-15). Within this symbolic system, such beings are often interpreted as embodiments of spiritual power—protective spirits, ancestral entities, or totemic intermediaries between the human and the divine. These figures thus operate at the nexus of ecology, cosmology, and identity, encoding sacred narratives into the landscape itself.

The techniques employed in the production of these images—such as pecking, engraving, incising, and painting—varied not only in accordance with the technological capacities available to the societies in question, but also in response to the formal structure and thematic intent of the narratives the artist aimed to convey. This diversity in technique provides critical insight into the artistic sensibilities and ritual codes of the cultural milieus in which the petroglyphs emerged. Far from being mere artistic embellishments, these visual expressions were imbued with communicative and functional value, operating as crucial instruments for encoding and transmitting collective memory during periods that preceded the establishment of oral tradition. Of particular analytical interest are the *tamgas/damga*—tribal emblems frequently encountered in rock imagery, especially among communities of Central Asian origin. These symbols, many of which have been attributed to various Oghuz tribal groups, should be interpreted not only as markers of communal identity but also as instruments of symbolic cohesion, reinforcing a shared sense of belonging within the internal structures of the tribe or clan. Functioning as visual manifestations of both individual and collective memory, tamgas provide a valuable window into the hierarchical organization, symbolic lexicon, and cultural infrastructure of the societies that produced them. In this context, they represent more than simple identifiers; they are visual artifacts of memory, ideology, and territoriality—capable of conveying complex sociocultural meanings across time and space.

Although petroglyphs are typically categorized within the framework of "pre-literate communication systems," their precise chronological placement and comprehensive interpretation within their respective cultural contexts remain a considerable challenge—even with the aid of contemporary technological methodologies. In particular, the notable resemblance between certain Anatolian rock art examples and the Runic script traditions of Central Asian origin provides critical insights into their possible ethnic and cultural affiliations (Map 1). Rock carvings identified in various regions of modern-day Turkey—including Ordu-Mesudiye (Esatlı), Kars-Kağızman (Geyiklitepe), Erzincan-Kemaliye (Dilli), Ankara-Güdül, and Artvin-Yusufeli (Bakırtepe)—should be analyzed in direct connection with the iconographic and symbolic traditions of Central Asian petroglyphs, given the thematic and formal parallels they exhibit (Pekşen et al., 2024, p. 460).

The deciphered Runic characters and symbolic motifs not only illuminate the sociocultural structures of prehistoric societies, but also provide compelling evidence of long-standing historical and cultural ties between Anatolia and Turkic groups originating from the Central Asian steppe. Viewed through this lens, rock art emerges as a unique and indispensable resource for reconstructing both the deep cultural continuities and the stratified historical landscape of Anatolia. Petroglyphs thus occupy a liminal space at the crossroads of nature, belief, identity, and communication, preserving a stage of symbolic cognition and visual memory that predates the codification of written language. As carriers of a symbolically charged visual lexicon, rock paintings transcend their aesthetic dimension to become articulations of historical discourse. This discourse acquires its full significance at the convergence of cosmological perception, the interplay between the sacred and the profane, and the dialectic of nature and culture. Petroglyphs, in this sense, should not merely be "read" as ancient images, but interpreted as enduring testimonies of human engagement with the metaphysical dimensions of existence.

1. Central Asian Rock Art Tradition and Turkish Stamp Culture

The tradition of producing images on rock surfaces in Central Asia should be regarded as an ancient cultural practice, the origins of which extend back to the Paleolithic era. Far from being merely a form of visual artistry, this tradition represents a multilayered symbolic system of expression—one that encapsulates the cognitive models, cosmological beliefs, and quotidian experiences of prehistoric societies (Ceylan, 2018, p. 164–165). Rock art, or petroglyphs, initially functioned as one of the most fundamental modes of nonverbal communication and, over time, accrued artistic, symbolic, and sociocultural significance. In this process, rock art became instrumental in the formation and transmission of both individual and collective memory. Accordingly, these images should not be evaluated solely on the basis of aesthetic merit, but rather as visual articulations of cultural identity, communal cohesion, and historical continuity.

The rock art tradition in Central Asia began its formal development in the Paleolithic period and, over successive epochs, evolved thematically and stylistically into increasingly systematic and symbolic forms of representation. The depictions of wild horses identified at Shishkin Rock in the Upper Lena region have been dated to the Paleolithic, while the animal, bow, and arrow motifs found in Sakta Cave are attributed to the Mesolithic period. Comparable figures discovered in the Candaman region of Mongolia are believed to originate from the Neolithic (Üngör, 2016, p. 360; Günaşdı, 2016, p. 393). These archaeological findings are of particular

significance as they demonstrate both the historical continuity and the cultural diversity inherent to the Central Asian rock art tradition. Beginning with the Chalcolithic period, there was a notable intensification in petroglyph production. By the time of the Hun and Göktürk periods, rock art had reached a high degree of technical sophistication and thematic complexity, reflecting not only advanced artisan skills but also the deep symbolic and ideological frameworks of these early Turkic societies (Çoruhlu, 1997, p. 20–21).

The presence of rock paintings dating to the Mesolithic and Early Neolithic periods in the Karatau Mountains of Kazakhstan illustrates that this artistic tradition reflects not only localized visual practices, but also a broader cultural continuity that spans multiple epochs (Musabayev, 1998, p. 1–3). This visual mode of expression—extending from the Paleolithic period through to the Göktürk era—permits the tracing of the iconographic and iconological foundations of early Turkic artistic expression (Ceylan, 2018, p. 164). Frequently recurring themes in Central Asian petroglyphs—such as hunting scenes, stylized depictions of animal combat, mounted warriors, combatants, wheeled tents (*yurts*), various breeds of horses, wolves, mountain goats, deer, geometric patterns, architectural forms, and directional symbols—constitute an invaluable corpus for understanding the sociopolitical organization, cosmological beliefs, and ritual practices of the societies that produced them (Çoruhlu, 2006, p. 12).

Within this symbolic framework, *tamgas*—tribal insignia and one of the most emblematic visual elements of the Central Asian cultural landscape—serve to deepen the semantic and ideological dimensions of rock art (Roux, 1997, p. 66). In the regions and cultural environments in which they were employed, tamgas functioned as potent symbols of tribal and genealogical unity, expressions of social belonging, claims to ownership, markers of sacred space, and visual representations of cosmological systems. Moreover, tamgas operated as symbolic instruments through which individuals and communities could assert rights over objects, land, or abstract domains (Duran, 2017, p. 683). In this capacity, they may be understood as cultural inscriptions functioning akin to signatures—codified emblems of identity, status, and territoriality. The act of affixing a tamga to a given surface or item signified not only ownership but also integration into a larger socio-symbolic order, thus playing a crucial role in the visual construction and perpetuation of socio-cultural identity (Gömeç, 2024, p. 679).

In the study of the historical presence and movement of Turkic tribes, *tamgas/damga* function as far more than ornamental or symbolic signs; they represent powerful visual markers of social identity, genealogical affiliation, and cultural continuity. Their systematic documentation in historical sources provides scholars with an invaluable corpus for reconstructing tribal structures, identity formation, and symbolic representation across centuries. Among the most comprehensive and authoritative sources on Turkish tamgas is *Dīwān Lughāt al-Turk*, an encyclopedic treatise on the Turkish language and culture compiled by Mahmud al-Kashgari in the 11th century. In this foundational work, al-Kashgari meticulously records the tamgas associated with various Oghuz Turkmen clans and their livestock, noting explicitly that he included this information "so that people may know them" (Ercilasun et al., 2014, p. 10; Gülensoy, 1989, p. 59-60). By enumerating the names and sociocultural functions of tamgas belonging to twenty different Turkic tribes, he underscores that these emblems were not only identifiers of individual or tribal membership but also carriers of collective memory and cultural meaning.

Within *Dīwān Lughāt al-Turk*, the term *tamga* is employed with a remarkable semantic fluidity, assuming multiple meanings depending on its contextual application. Mahmud al-Kashgari does not limit the concept to political or social insignia; he also integrates it into references to everyday material culture. In various instances throughout the text, *tamga* denotes: "the seal of the Khagan and similar authorities," "a tributary flowing into seas or lakes," "a bay or inlet of the sea" (Gülensoy, 1989, p. 59-60; Ercilasun et al., 2014, p. 184), "to affix a seal to a written document" (Ercilasun et al., 2014, p. 489), and even "a small ewer" or "a dining tray" (Hallaçoğlu, 1993, p. 454-455; Ercilasun et al., 2014, p. 229). These diverse usages reveal the term's deeply stratified semantic field and its integration into both elite and domestic spheres.

The association of tamgas with household objects likely derives from the widespread practice of inscribing these symbols onto material possessions as a form of ownership designation. This, in turn, reveals the dual function of tamgas—not only as political and genealogical insignia but also as instruments that affirmed personal and communal identity within the domains of both public status and private property (Kutluer, 2023, p. 192). Thus, tamgas emerge not merely as visual signs but as complex semiotic tools embedded in the social, material, and symbolic life of Turkic communities.

The systematic use of *tamgas* is likewise prominently recorded in the *Jāmiʿ al-Tawārīkh*, a seminal 14th-century historical chronicle authored by the renowned Ilkhanid historian Rashid al-Din. In this work, Rashid al-Din notes that each of the twenty-four Oghuz tribes was assigned a specific nickname and was permitted to mark its livestock with a distinct tamga (Toğan, 1982, pp. 36–37). This practice illustrates that tamgas were not solely transmitted through oral tradition; rather, they were institutionalized symbols recognized in written records, playing a regulatory role in matters of property, tribal identification, and social organization. The act of branding animals with tamgas offers valuable insights into the economic systems, nomadic pastoralism, and herd management practices of these communities.

Within this context, tamgas must be understood not merely as aesthetic motifs or symbolic tokens of Turkic cultural identity but as enduring cultural records of profound historical, ethnographic, and sociological significance. Each tamga functioned as a visual instrument for articulating identity, affirming collective belonging, and preserving intergenerational continuity. Their documentation in textual sources such as *Dīwān Lughāt al-Turk* and *Jāmiʿ al-Tawārīkh* further reinforces their cultural legitimacy and historical continuity. As such, interdisciplinary inquiry into the origins, transformations, and applications of tamgas offers critical potential for constructing a more nuanced and holistic understanding of Turkic history across both spatial and temporal dimensions.

The tradition of rock art, which began to take form in Central Asia during the Paleolithic period, stands as one of the earliest and most enduring modes of visual expression in human cultural history. This tradition transcends aesthetic production and instead constitutes a symbolic projection of humanity's attempts to comprehend nature, encode belief systems, and render social identities visually intelligible. Characterized by hunting scenes, animal depictions, geometric motifs, and abstract symbols, these images open windows onto the cognitive paradigms, sacred geographies, and ritual practices of the communities that created them. Among early nomadic societies in particular, rock art operated as a crucial medium for encoding and transmitting collective memory prior to the emergence of structured oral culture. In this light,

petroglyphs should not be approached solely as visual artifacts, but as material witnesses to the symbolic and epistemological foundations of early Turkic civilization.

During the Hun and Göktürk periods, the tradition of rock art not only expanded in formal complexity but also emerged as a potent vehicle for political expression and cultural representation. Motifs commonly encountered on rock surfaces from these periods—such as mounted warriors, scenes of combat and hunting, depictions of sacred animals, and *tamgas*—are widely interpreted as symbolic signifiers of social stratification and the exercise of both political and spiritual authority. In the Göktürk era in particular, such visual compositions transcended their documentary function and assumed ideological significance, serving as emblematic expressions of state power, tribal hierarchy, and institutional identity. Within this framework, rock art evolved into a distinctive medium of cultural memory—an enduring system of nonverbal communication that has preserved and transmitted the intellectual, ritual, and symbolic frameworks of pre-literate Turkic societies into the present.

Among the most salient and enduring components of this symbolic repertoire are *tamgas*, which functioned not only as tribal or individual insignia but also as powerful visual markers of property ownership, collective affiliation, political legitimacy, and cultural transmission. These signs—found on stone surfaces as well as on objects made of leather, ceramic, and wood—demonstrate their widespread utility across both public and domestic spheres. The geographic dispersion of tamgas, from the Central Asian steppes to the Anatolian highlands, reflects the mechanisms through which Turkic tribes preserved, performed, and reproduced their identities across time and space. Rather than passive symbols, tamgas should be understood as dynamic cultural tools, embedded in the everyday practices, ceremonial expressions, and ideological narratives of Turkic polities.

Even in the present day, *tamgas* that remain visibly inscribed on numerous rock surfaces across Central Asia function as symbolic bridges connecting the past to the present, offering compelling visual testimony to the enduring continuity of Turkic cultural history. Each tamga illuminates not only the social and political structures of the era in which it was produced but also encapsulates a rich semantic universe, serving as a vessel for layered cultural memory and identity. In this light, the tradition of rock art and the symbolic system of tamgas—spanning from the Paleolithic period through the Göktürk era and extending into elements of contemporary folk culture—must be understood as visual articulations of the processes of identity formation, sociocultural resilience, and historical continuity that have defined Turkic societies across centuries. These enduring symbols attest to a sophisticated visual language that continues to shape collective memory and cultural consciousness within the Turkic world.

2. Rock Paintings as Traces of Settlement of Oghuz Tribes in Burdur and Surroundings

Situated in the Mediterranean Region of Turkey, the province of Burdur forms a natural transitional corridor between Central Anatolia and the Aegean region. Owing to this strategic geographical position, Burdur has historically functioned as a dynamic nexus of cultural interaction and transmission. Consequently, the region has witnessed continuous human habitation since prehistoric times and possesses a rich repository of historical, archaeological, and cultural heritage. Among the most noteworthy components of this heritage are rock paintings, which hold a distinctive position due to both their symbolic content and technical attributes.

Surveys conducted in Burdur and its environs have identified rock art at several significant locations, including Kümbet Pınar (Sazak village, Yeşilova district), Baynaz Tepe (Başkuyu village, Yeşilova district), Yankı Taşı (Alan village, Yeşilova district), and Bücürlü Pınar (Düğer village, central district). These artworks not only provide insights into the history of visual culture but also reflect the symbolic repertoires of Central Asian traditions as transmitted and localized in Anatolia.

Recent archaeological and philological research has revealed that the arrival of Turkic groups in Anatolia cannot be confined solely to the Battle of Manzikert in 1071; rather, their presence extends much further back in time. Evidence suggests that the Turkic presence in Anatolia can be traced as far back as the 8th century BCE. During this period, the Saka (Scythians) were known to have established dominance across the Caucasus, Azerbaijan, and Eastern Anatolia (Aşan, 1992, p. 24). The Saka were not only a regional power but also played a significant role as cultural and military intermediaries between Asia and Europe.

The interactions between Turkic-origin groups and Anatolia were not limited to the Saka. Historical sources record that the Huns, at certain periods, launched incursions into Anatolia via the Caucasus. Notably, between 363 and 373 CE, Hun armies crossed the Caucasus and advanced as far as Southeastern Anatolia, even reaching the vicinity of Urfa (Németh, 1982, pp. 53–54; Kurat, 1972, p. 16–17; Ceylan, 2008, p. 30; Ceylan, 2010, p. 216). These incursions are significant as they demonstrate the interest and influence of nomadic groups from northeastern regions upon Anatolia.

Following the Huns, another prominent Turkic group active in the north of the Black Sea and the Caucasus were the Sabirs. Like the Huns, the Sabirs conducted raids into Anatolia, and according to Iranian and Byzantine sources, in 516 CE they advanced as far as the Konya region (Baştav, 1941, pp. 61–65). The Sabirs' involvement in Anatolia was not limited to military campaigns; it also had important implications for the regional balance of power.

Another notable Turkic group that entered Anatolia prior to the rise of the Seljuk Empire were the Khazars. The Khazars, at times invited by the Byzantine Empire, settled in Anatolia and played an active role in regional power struggles. For example, during the reign of Byzantine Emperor Heraclius in 626 CE, 40,000 Khazar cavalry settled in Anatolia and fought alongside the Byzantines in the Byzantine-Arab wars (Togan, 1981, pp. 30–35). This example is significant not only as a case of military collaboration but also as evidence of the multifaceted Turkic presence in Anatolia.

During the Abbasid period, Turkic soldiers began to assume increasingly prominent roles within the Islamic armies. Under the leadership of notable commanders such as Afshin, Inak, Buga al-Kabir, Bilgecur, Wasif al-Turki, and Yarman, Turkic troops conducted raids into Anatolia, marking one of the key developments of this era (Yıldız, 1976, pp. 134–135). The rising influence of Turkic soldiers within the Abbasid armies further strengthened the political and military dimensions of Turkic impact on Anatolia.

Considering this historical trajectory, it becomes clear that the arrival of Turkic groups in Anatolia cannot be dated solely to the mid-11th century Battle of Manzikert. On the contrary, archaeological, philological, and historical evidence demonstrates that Turkic interest in and influence on Anatolia stretches back to periods well before the Common Era, with various Tur-

kic groups entering the region at different times. In this context, the study of the Turkic presence and its traces in Anatolia has gained increasing scholarly importance, revealing a much older and more complex historical background than previously assumed.

Among these, the Bücürlü Pınar rock paintings—located near the village of Düğer in the central district of Burdur—stand out for their prominent figurative representations. Depictions of horses, mounted figures, and the Tree of Life are particularly noteworthy, not only for their aesthetic value but also for their iconographic links to Central Asian symbolic systems. These images serve as tangible evidence of cultural transmission processes associated with the westward migration of Turkic populations. From the Göktürk period onward, the Oghuz played a central role in the formation of Turkic state structures and social institutions. The appearance of the names "Türk" and "Oghuz" side by side in the Orkhon Inscriptions—among the earliest written records of Turkic history—attests to the integral role of the Oghuz in early political and communal organization.

It is well established that the Oghuz tribes migrated and settled across a vast territory stretching from Central Asia to Anatolia and the Balkans. Beginning especially in the 10th century, numerous principalities and states in Anatolia were founded by Oghuz-affiliated groups, underscoring the enduring sociopolitical impact of these migratory movements. Following the pivotal Battle of Manzikert (1071), large-scale migration waves resulted in the concentrated settlement of various Oghuz tribes in Anatolia. Among these, the Çepni, Iğdır, Salur, Düğer, and Bayat tribes are particularly prominent (Koçıbay, 2016, p. 5). In contrast, the Anatolian presence of other Turkic groups such as the Karluk, Halaç, Çiğil, Kanglı, Uyghur, and Kipchak appears to have remained relatively limited in scope.

An analysis of 16th-century Ottoman *tahrir* registers—comprehensive tax and population surveys—reveals that the names of numerous villages in and around the province of Burdur directly correspond to Oghuz tribal affiliations. Settlements such as Bayındır (in the districts of Gölhisar, İrle/Yeşilova, Ağlasun, and Burdur), Büğdüz (Burdur district), Aşağı-Çavdır and Çavdır (Gölhisar and Yeşilova districts), Düğer (Burdur district), İğdir (Yeşilova subdistrict), Kayı (Gölhisar district), Salur (Burdur district), Yavılar/Yıva (Gölhisar district), Yuva (Yeşilova subdistrict), Yazır (Gölhisar, Yeşilova, and Ağlasun districts), and Yüreğir (Gölhisar and Yeşilova districts) all bear the names of prominent Oghuz clans (Koçıbay, 2016, p. 5). Remarkably, many of these toponyms have survived to the present day and are still officially in use. Contemporary settlements such as Bayındır (central Burdur and Yeşilova), Büğdüz (central Burdur), Çavdır (a district center), Düğer (central Burdur), İğdir (Yeşilova), Yazır (Ağlasun and Çavdır), Yüreğil (Bucak), and Yuva (Bucak and Tefenni) continue to reflect Oghuz tribal nomenclature (Koçıbay, 2016, p. 6).

Further evidence from official records dating to 1928 suggests that the village of Kara Evli, located in the Belönü subdistrict of Burdur's central district, may have been inhabited by members of the Karaevli tribe—an Oghuz group descended from the Gün Han lineage within the Bozok branch (Koçıbay, 2016, pp. 5–6). Additionally, the presence of a mountain pass locally known as *Peçenek Beli*, situated between the towns of Çeltikçi and Ağlasun, lends support to the interpretation that the Peçenek tribe, a subgroup within the Üçok division of the Oghuz, may have settled in the area during the Byzantine era, possibly in the context of military service as mercenaries (Koçıbay, 2016, p. 5).

Taken collectively, this corpus of historical and cultural evidence positions Burdur not only as a geographic crossroads but also as a significant site of Oghuz tribal settlement, identity consolidation, and cultural reproduction in Anatolia. When examined alongside the region's rock paintings—which visually reflect Central Asian symbolic traditions—these tribal place names contribute to a multilayered interpretation that integrates archaeological data, documentary sources, and oral history. Such a multidisciplinary perspective enhances our understanding of Burdur's long-standing cultural continuity and its complex ethnic mosaic, offering a more holistic view of its role within the broader framework of Turkic history in Anatolia.

The first academic study focusing on Turkic rock art in and around Burdur Province was conducted by Alime Çankaya in her 2015 article titled *The Reflection of Cultural Interaction in Rock Art*. In this work, Çankaya examined the rock paintings at Kümbet Pınarı and Çağmanönü, proposing that these examples could be dated to the Prehistoric or Protohistoric periods. Her assessment emphasizes that these rock art examples are significant representations of cultural interactions and artistic expressions in Anatolia dating back to prehistoric times. Another important contribution to the field came in 2019 through the research of Cengiz Saltaoğlu. Saltaoğlu's comprehensive investigations demonstrated that the Kümbet Pınarı and Çağmanönü rock paintings provide not only archaeological or artistic insights but also offer important clues regarding Turkic cultural history. Notably, in the Çağmanönü rock paintings, Saltaoğlu identified depictions of the *Ulug Ab* (Great Hunt) scene and the tamga (tribal emblem) of the Dodurga clan (Saltaoğlu, 2019, s. 3). Based on the Turkic linguistic features and symbolic elements observed in these rock paintings, Saltaoğlu proposed that they could be dated between the 6th and 9th centuries CE.

These studies reveal that the rock art in the Burdur region should be approached not solely from archaeological or artistic perspectives but also in terms of ethnogenesis and historical identity formation processes. Moreover, detailed examinations of the connections between these works and the Central Asian Turkic rock art tradition are of great importance for tracing the early presence of Turkic groups in Anatolia. Future interdisciplinary research, supported by epigraphic, iconographic, and archaeometric analyses, will help further clarify the historical, cultural, and artistic contexts of these remarkable artifacts.

3. Cultural Identity and Symbolism in Petroglyphs in Burdur Region

The Bücürlü Pınar rock paintings stand as a rare and significant visual record reflecting the historical migration routes of Turkic populations from Central Asia to Anatolia (Map 2). This significance is especially evident in the presence of motifs such as mountain goats, mounted warriors, various animal figures, and tamgas affiliated with Oghuz tribes—all of which are also attested across a broad expanse of the Turkic world. From the standpoint of stylistic coherence, these rock images exhibit notable parallels with petroglyphs documented in various regions of Anatolia, suggesting a shared visual and symbolic tradition. This points to the existence of a deep-seated cultural memory that was transmitted and preserved across different geographical landscapes and historical periods, ultimately materializing in iconographic patterns of remarkable continuity.

The rock paintings are situated in a hilly terrain within the Bücürlü Pınar locality, approximately 3.3 kilometers west of Düğer village, 4.4 kilometers east of Yarışlı village, and roughly 450 meters from Lake Yarışlı, in the central district of Burdur Province (Map 3). These

images were discovered in 2024 during the "Protohistoric Period Surface Survey in the Province of Burdur," conducted under the direction of Dr. Aslı Ünar (Photographs 1–2). The documented rock panels include depictions of mountain goats, mounted warriors, and numerous tamgas associated with Oghuz tribal groups (Photograph 3; Table 1; drawing 1). While most of the figures were executed using linear incisions, several examples exhibit the combined application of both linear engraving and incision techniques, reflecting a degree of technical variation.

The rock surface on which the images appear is believed to have once formed part of a cave or rock shelter. However, due to illicit excavations and the use of explosives, the original cave-like morphology has been disrupted, and the formation now resembles a natural outcrop (Photograph 1). Despite this damage, the primary rock panel bearing the images has remained largely intact. In contrast, a secondary rock mass has fallen approximately 1.8 meters in front of the slope. On both panels, the figures are oriented toward the right, and the larger surface in particular displays a high concentration of tamgas attributable to various Oghuz tribal lineages.

Equine figures are also prominently featured among the rock paintings at Bücürlü Pınar. Within Turkish cultural history, the horse is far more than a utilitarian means of transportation; it is a revered symbol deeply embedded in both social status and political identity (Durmuş, 2021, pp. 2–4). Frequently represented across Turkish visual traditions, oral epics, folk songs, and funerary monuments such as *kurgans*, the horse motif occupies a central place in the symbolic lexicon of the Turkic world. At Bücürlü Pınar, the horse is depicted in the form of four vertically arranged mounted warriors, rendered from top to bottom. These images, located on smaller rock panels, exhibit a notable degree of stylization (Photograph 4).

During surface surveys conducted in front of the cave-like formation where the Bücürlü Pınar rock paintings are located, ceramic fragments dating to the Chalcolithic period were unearthed. These findings suggest that the site may have functioned either as a habitation area or as a location designated for ritual activities during the Chalcolithic era. In this context, the possibility of a functional or spatial relationship with the nearby *Yağlıyurt Höyük* should not be excluded (Map 2).

Equally significant are the mountain goat figures depicted on the main rock panel at Bücürlü Pınar, which represent a core symbolic motif within Turkish cultural history (Radloff, 1892, pp. 1–3) (Photograph 3; drawing 1-2). This image, widely attested in petroglyphs stretching from Central Asia to Anatolia, holds mythological and political resonance in Turkic cosmology, where it is associated with loyalty to the *kaghan* and imbued with sacred meaning (Ceylan, 2018, p. 165). The mountain goat motif at Bücürlü Pınar exhibits striking iconographic similarities to figures found in other Anatolian rock art sites, including Korkuteli/Yazılıkaya, Yankıtaşı, and Çağmanönü—locations where this image likewise recurs as a cultural constant.

The mountain goats depicted on the large panel appear as a central symbol in Turkic cultural history (Radloff, 1892, pp. 1–3) (Photograph 3). This motif, which is encountered in numerous petroglyphs from Central Asia to Anatolia, represents loyalty to the khagan and sacredness within Turkic mythology (Ceylan, 2018, p. 165). The examples found at Bücürlü Pınar bear significant similarities to those observed in the rock paintings at Korkuteli/Yazılıkaya, Yankıtaşı, and Çağmanönü, where the mountain goat figure is similarly used as a common symbol. In Old Turkic, the mountain goat figure was referred to as "sıgun-keyik," and it is known to have

been used extensively during the Göktürk period (Graç, 2008, 210-211; Somuncuoğlu, 2008, p. 36; Dalkesen, 2015, p. 61). Mountain goats were associated with the sanctity of mountains and also served as dynastic emblems (Gökçe et al., 2022, p. 507).

In the rock paintings of Bücürlü Pınar, various Oghuz tamgas created using the engraving technique have been identified (Ceylan, 2002, p. 425-426). In particular, on the large panel, tamgas belonging to Oghuz tribes such as Kayı, Salur, Çavındır, Karaevli, Karkın, and Eymür are distinctly visible (Photograph 3-4; Table 1; drawing 1-2-3). However, due to human interventions and natural factors over time, some figures have been severely damaged and have become indistinguishable. Similar examples to the tamgas found at Bücürlü Pınar have also been observed in the Cunni Cave located in Erzurum. Through studies conducted by A. Ceylan, various damgas belonging to the Beçenek, Çuvaldır, Çepni, Salgur, Eymür, Alayuntlu, İğdir, Büğdüz, Avşar, Yazır, Bayat, and Kayı tribes (Photograph 6-7-8-9; Table 1; drawing 1-2), along with examples of runic inscriptions, have been recorded in this cave (Ceylan, 2002, p. 425-426; Ceylan vd. 2018, p. 627; Gökçe vd. 2020, p. 34). These findings provide significant data for the study of Turkish cultural history.

Moreover, the Kayı tamga has also been identified among the rock paintings in the Asmalıyatak area of Güdül district in Ankara (Photograph 8). In addition to this tamga, the presence of kurgans and cavalry depictions in the region have been considered by researcher Servet Somuncuoğlu as important evidence of early Turkic presence in Anatolia. According to Somuncuoğlu, these figures not only predate the Battle of Manzikert in 1071 but may also reflect cultural layers extending back to as early as 3000 BCE. The Kayı tamga found among the Asmalıyatak rock paintings provides crucial clues regarding the early Turkic culture in Anatolia (Somuncuoğlu, 2012, p. 75). The presence of Turkish-type kurgans near Salihler village, where these rock paintings are located, further enhances the historical and cultural significance of the region. The largest of these kurgans, approximately 30 meters in diameter and featuring a two-chambered structure, has been identified by Somuncuoğlu as a "Khan's Kurgan" (Somuncuoğlu, 2012, p. 74). Based on the characteristics of the rock paintings and the kurgans in the area, Somuncuoğlu suggests that this region may have served as the center of one of the early Turkic states in Anatolia.

An examination of the construction techniques of the Öngöt burial complex indicates that it was built during the period of the First (Kök) Turkic Khaganate (Mert, 2008, p. 5). The presence of the Oghuz tamga (tribal mark) on the tombstones within a complex in Mongolia, and its appearance in rock engravings thousands of kilometers away in Erzurum and Burdur, serves as a striking example of how the cultural heritage formed in the Turkic homeland was carried to Anatolia through migratory movements (Photograph 9; Table 1; drawing 1-2). This phenomenon not only sheds light on processes of migration and cultural interaction but also holds significance in terms of revealing the reflections of early Turkic art, identity formation, and collective memory in Anatolia. Therefore, the finds from both Mongolia and Anatolia provide valuable evidence for understanding the cultural continuity and interaction networks of early Turkic communities.

The Kayı tamgas found at Asmalıyatak and at the nearby Deliklikaya locality are significant in documenting the historical presence of Turks in Anatolia. According to Somuncuoğlu's assessments, these tamgas date back to a period before the Battle of Manzikert in 1071, indicating that the Turkic presence and cultural activity in Anatolia began earlier than traditionally

thought (Somuncuoğlu, 2012, p. 248). One particularly noteworthy figure among these rock paintings is a mounted cavalryman depicted holding a shield in one hand and a sword in the other. Somuncuoğlu proposes that this cavalry figure may date back to around 3000 BCE, thereby suggesting that the cultural history of the region extends to much earlier periods (Somuncuoğlu, 2012, p. 248).

Another significant motif encountered among the Bücürlü Pınar rock paintings is the figure of Umay Ana (Photograph 4; Table 1; drawing 2). In the inscriptions of the Göktürk period, Umay Ana is described as "the protector of all living beings on earth, the bearer of sacred fortune (kut), the mediator between Heaven and Earth, between the material world and the divine realm, the guardian of souls, the keeper of eternal life, and the source of abundance" (Avşar, 2012, p. 3). In Turkish mythology, she is closely associated with the concepts of the Tree of Life and fire. In the depiction at Bücürlü Pınar, Umay Ana is portrayed as a Tree of Life made of fire (Photograph 8). This depiction vividly reflects both her protective and life-giving aspects and the perception of nature and sanctity in the early Turkic belief system.

The Kümbet Pınarı rock paintings are located within the borders of Sazak village in the Yeşilova district of Burdur province, situated in Turkey's Mediterranean Region, on the northern slope of Büyükdamık Mountain, southwest of Yarışlı Lake (Map 3). These rock paintings constitute a highly significant document for understanding the historical and cultural heritage of the region and serve as an important source for both archaeological and ethno-cultural research. On the rock surface, approximately two meters high on the northern slope of the lake, four head-butting mountain goats and a long-horned deer figure were identified, engraved using the pecking technique. The deer figure, in particular, measures approximately 31 cm in height and 20 cm in length. The stylized depiction of these figures provides important insights into the aesthetic understanding and symbolic universe of the period (Çankaya, 2015, p. 50).

Within the Turkish cultural sphere, the deer is not merely a natural being but also a powerful mythological figure that, together with the sacred tree, represents the creative goddess (Dalkesen, 2015, p. 59). In this context, it can be argued that the deer figure at Kümbet Pınarı holds profound significance in terms of belief systems and symbolic narratives. Moreover, in early steppe cultures, the deer was regarded as an element symbolizing the origin and evolution of the universe, the emergence and disappearance of clans, as well as the formation of river and mountain sources (Jacobson, 1993, pp. 46–47). These symbols should be considered not only as aesthetic elements but also as expressions of collective memory, identity, and cosmological understanding. When examined from this perspective, the rock paintings reveal the relationships established between nature, humanity, and the sacred by the communities inhabiting the region, shedding light on both local and regional cultural history.

Additionally, the Kümbet Pınarı rock paintings are noteworthy in that they carry traces of possible cultural interactions between Central Asian steppe art and the early artistic traditions of Anatolia. This suggests that the routes of migration and interaction stretching from Central Asia to Anatolia can be traced at the level of artistic and symbolic practices, pointing to the region's cultural diversity throughout its historical process. In conclusion, the Kümbet Pınarı rock paintings should be evaluated not merely as works of art but as indispensable archaeological and anthropological resources for understanding the historical and cultural layers of the region (Map 3). Advanced interdisciplinary studies on these works will contribute significantly to the more holistic reconstruction of Anatolia's early cultural map.

The Baynaz Tepe rock paintings were discovered at a prehistoric settlement site east of Başkuyu village in the Yeşilova district (Map 3). On a prominent monolithic rock at the site, three mountain goat figures executed using the pecking technique are especially noteworthy. These images measure approximately 20 centimeters in height and 14 centimeters in length (Çankaya, 2015, p. 50). In addition to these animal depictions, two unidentified symbols are also present on the rock surface. Although their precise meanings remain undeciphered, it is hypothesized that these signs may carry cultural, symbolic, or ritualistic significance, warranting further investigation.

The Yanıktaşı rock paintings are located within the territory of Alan village in the Yeşilova district, inscribed upon a rock-cut tomb dated to the Roman period (Map 3). On the surface of this tomb, wild goat motifs have been engraved using the incision technique. Additionally, a series of stylized mountain goat figures created using the pecking method are observable on the surrounding rock formations. These images range in size from 14 to 18 centimeters and reflect both the artistic sensibilities and symbolic orientations embedded in the region's visual culture (Çankaya, 2015, p. 50). Collectively, these rock paintings contribute valuable data for contextualizing the historical, cultural, and archaeological dynamics of the Burdur region.

The rock paintings discovered in Burdur province and its surrounding areas share remarkable similarities with those found in the Çağman region of Kozağacı village, located within the Korkuteli district of Antalya. In this region, which also contains Roman-period necropolis remains and Turkmen burial sites, mounted warrior figures holding bows are carved onto a monolithic rock surface using the pecking technique. In addition to these figures, a mountain goat motif has been identified, which exhibits clear stylistic parallels with examples from Bücürlü Pınar, Yanıktaşı, Kümbet Pınarı, and Baynaz Tepe. The *tamgas/damga* found in these rock paintings are interpreted as symbols of identity for Turkic tribes. The meanings of these signs vary depending on the surfaces on which they appear. When inscribed on animals, *tamgas* are understood to signify ownership, while those appearing on rock surfaces are interpreted as marking the area as "Turkish land." The presence of nearby villages bearing the names of Oghuz tribes further supports the notion that these symbols were used as indicators of ethnic affiliation.

The dating of rock paintings remains a significant challenge in contemporary archaeological research. Given that most petroglyphs in Central Asia and Anatolia were produced using incision and pecking techniques, direct dating methods are often insufficient in providing conclusive results. Consequently, relative dating methods, based on stylistic comparisons and supported by historical documentation of nearby settlements, are typically employed (Baysal, 2017, p. 13). In this context, the mention of Düğer village, located near the Bücürlü Pınar rock paintings, in 16th-century Ottoman records offers an important clue for the chronological interpretation of the site.

Within the framework of stylistic comparisons, flag-bearing cavalry figures—analogous to those observed at Bücürlü Pınar—are also present in the rock paintings at Yazılıkaya and Çağmanönü. These figures are predominantly dated to the Göktürk period and are associated with the Tagar culture (Esin, 1978, p. 12). The depiction of mounted warriors holding flags is particularly linked to the Göktürk era. For instance, the flag-bearing cavalry figure at Yazılıkaya has been dated to the Early Medieval period (6th century CE and beyond) (Gökçe et al., 2022, p. 511), a time coinciding with the resettlement of the Bulgars in Anatolia by the Byzantines. Such

motifs are not limited to Yazılıkaya and Çağmanönü but also appear on the façade of the Temple of Zeus at Aizanoi. Additionally, equestrian or horse-related motifs are found across several rock art sites in the Kars-Erzurum region, including Cunni Cave, Şenkaya Çağlayan, Dereiçi, Kömürlü, Geyiklitepe rock panels, and Doyumlu (Karageçi, 2018, pp. 571–572).

Among the Sayan-Altai tribes, mountain goat and deer motifs rank among the most widely used totemic symbols (Mannay-Ool, 2003, p. 174). Images of mountain goats discovered in the Tuva Autonomous Republic are dated between the 7th and 1st centuries BCE, and this stylistic tradition closely mirrors rock art found across Kazakhstan, the Altai region, Khakassia, and other Central Asian territories (Mannay-Ool, 2003, p. 174). This stylistic and symbolic continuity points to a deep cultural and artistic interconnection that transcends geographical boundaries.

The wolf holds a significant position within the Turkic cultural sphere, serving as a central motif in myths, rituals, and at times, epic narratives. Far beyond its zoological identity, the wolf is often portrayed as a sacred and ancestral figure—one that offers protection, guidance, and spiritual resonance. The frequent appearance of wolf depictions in rock art from Central Asia to Anatolia testifies to its enduring symbolic role across a vast geographical and cultural landscape. In this context, the presence of a wolf figure among the rock paintings at Bücürlü Pınar, located in the central district of Burdur Province, is particularly noteworthy (Photograph 5; drawing 3). This depiction likely relates to a ritualistic scene or a hunting narrative. Although the wolf figure remains discernible on the rock surface, the surrounding imagery is no longer clearly identifiable due to extensive surface weathering and erosion. This deterioration hinders a comprehensive interpretation of the scene but does not diminish the symbolic importance of the wolf itself. Within Turkic mythology, the "Bozkurt" (Grey Wolf) figure often functions as a mythical ancestor and a guide, representing lineage, survival, and sacred continuity. In this light, the wolf imagery in rock art should not be seen merely as a depiction of fauna, but rather as a visual expression of deep-rooted mythological and symbolic thought (Kahraman Çınar, 2022, p. 129-130).

As part of our ongoing research initiatives, we aim to carry out digital documentation and scanning of Turkic rock art sites in Burdur Province and its surrounding regions. Through the application of advanced imaging technologies, it will become possible to reduce the interpretative limitations caused by surface degradation, allowing for more detailed analysis and broader iconographic comparisons. These efforts are expected to yield a more comprehensive understanding of the region's visual heritage and contribute meaningfully to the study of early Turkic cultural expressions in Anatolia.

Conclusıon And Evaluatıon

Rock paintings, as one of the most distinctive and tangible manifestations of the cultural continuity extending from Central Asia to Anatolia, are not merely artistic creations of aesthetic value; they also serve as invaluable historical, sociological, and anthropological records. The rock art sites identified in Burdur Province—such as Bücürlü Pınar, Kümbet Pınarı, Baynaz Tepe, and Yanıktaşı—attest to the enduring symbolic traditions that originated in Central Asia and were transposed onto the Anatolian landscape, providing insight into the deeper layers of Turkish cultural history. The recurring motifs found across these sites—mountain goats, mounted warriors, horses, deer, the Tree of Life, and particularly the tamgas of Oghuz tribes—

serve as clear indicators of a shared cultural memory and a long-standing tradition of symbolic visual expression.

These rock paintings, which are frequently encountered throughout regions historically inhabited by Turkic peoples, function as essential visual documents of cultural identity and collective memory. They extend beyond mere artistic endeavors, representing anthropological traces through which concepts of settlement, belief, identity, and cultural continuity have been visually articulated across time. Spanning a vast geographic expanse from Central Asia to the Balkans, these artworks—imbued with recurring symbolic motifs—stand as significant historical testaments within the broader framework of Turkic cultural heritage. Particularly in Anatolia, with its multilayered history of habitation, rock art created across different periods highlights both the temporal depth and continuity of this cultural legacy. In this context, the rock paintings found in and around Burdur exhibit remarkable stylistic and iconographic similarities with other examples of Turkic rock art from both Turkestan and Anatolia, contributing significantly to the understanding of cross-regional cultural transmission and identity formation.

The rock paintings at Bücürlü Pınar are significant not only in the context of art history but also as layered cultural evidence that offers historical testimony regarding the early presence of Turkic peoples in the Burdur region. The figurative representations identified at this site—particularly depictions of mountain goats, mounted warriors, and *tamgas* associated with various Oghuz tribes—visually reflect both individual and collective identities. *Tamgas*, historically utilized across Central Asia and Anatolia, served not only as indicators of ownership or affiliation but also as boundary markers of sacred spaces and instruments of communal identity. The coexistence of these symbols at Bücürlü Pınar underscores the region's significance as a focal point of cultural continuity and symbolic communication.

Among these elements, the four mounted warrior figures are particularly noteworthy, reflecting the sacred horse motif that frequently appears in Turkic mythology, oral narratives, and funerary traditions. The horse was not merely a means of transportation but symbolized social status, spiritual power, and political legitimacy. Comparable figures have been identified at various other rock art sites, including Kozağacı and Yazılıkaya in Korkuteli, Çağmanönü, Cunni Cave in Erzurum, and Asmalıyatak in Güdül (Ankara). These figures—many of which depict standard-bearing cavalry, mountain goats, and tribal *tamgas*—demonstrate strong parallels with the cultural layers from the Göktürk and Tagar periods. The presence of the Kayı *tamga* and mounted warrior figures at Asmalıyatak, in conjunction with the nearby *kurgans*, provides both archaeological and symbolic evidence for the existence of Turkic cultural elements in Anatolia prior to the Battle of Manzikert (1071 CE).

Animal motifs are among the most prevalent figurative elements in the Turkic rock art tradition. Among these, the mountain goat stands out as a symbol with both mythological and totemic significance, appearing in stylized and symmetrical forms throughout Central Asian and Anatolian petroglyphs. The mountain goat figures at Bücürlü Pınar are no exception; rather than being mere representations of nature, they are interpreted as visual markers of power, sanctity, and communal belonging. Additionally, the *tamgas* inscribed on the rock surfaces are considered indicators of historical continuity, revealing that the tribes associated with these symbols once inhabited the region.

Iconographic comparisons reveal significant parallels between the mounted warrior figures at Bücürlü Pınar and those recorded earlier in the Kayabaş and Kozağacı neighborhoods of Korkuteli district, Antalya. These figures, in terms of composition and symbolic content, provide a basis for associating the imagery with Early Medieval Turkic art. Notably, the presence of similar motifs on structures dating to the 2nd century CE Roman period in Korkuteli suggests that such images were likely created sometime after that era. However, historical and textual analyses more convincingly date these figures to the 6th century CE and beyond. This chronological alignment strengthens the argument that the Bücürlü Pınar paintings should similarly be dated to the post-6th-century period.

Considering all these factors, the rock art at Bücürlü Pınar can be regarded as compelling visual evidence of an early Turkic presence in Anatolia. While the settlement of Turkic groups in the region following the Battle of Manzikert is well-documented, these paintings suggest that Turkic settlement and cultural expression in the area may date back to the Early Medieval period, or even earlier. The motifs and symbols found in the rock art are not merely aesthetic choices but rather serve as carriers of collective memory, spiritual cosmology, and social structure.

In conclusion, the Bücürlü Pınar rock paintings represent a multi-layered cultural heritage that links the Turkic rock art tradition of Central Asia with its Anatolian counterparts, while also shedding light on the ethnographic continuity of the region. Future interdisciplinary studies—including archaeological, epigraphic, and iconological analyses—will be essential in clarifying the period, cultural context, and tribal affiliations associated with these depictions. Such efforts will help anchor the early Turkic presence in Anatolia within the framework of scientific evidence, thereby making a substantial contribution to the historical understanding and documentation of Turkic cultural memory.

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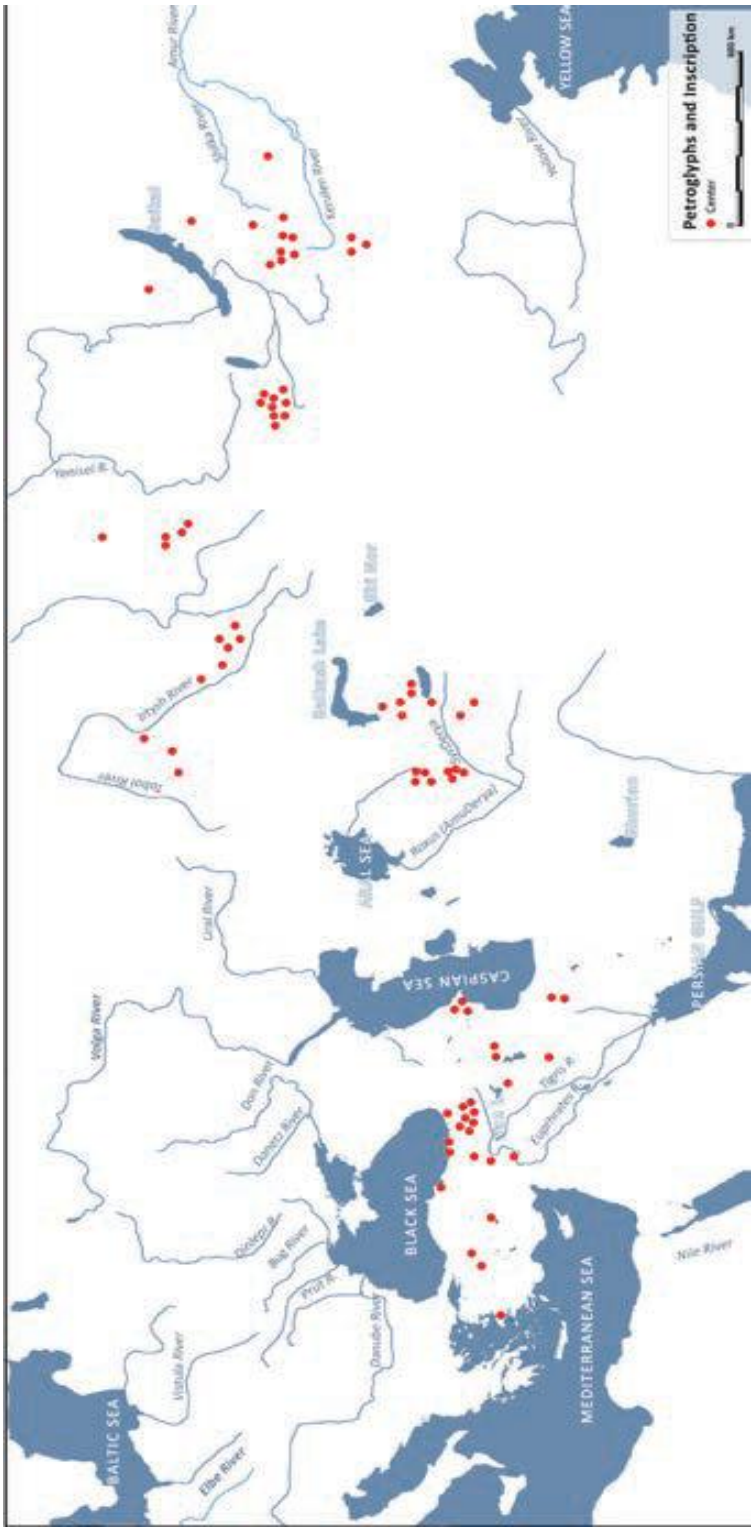
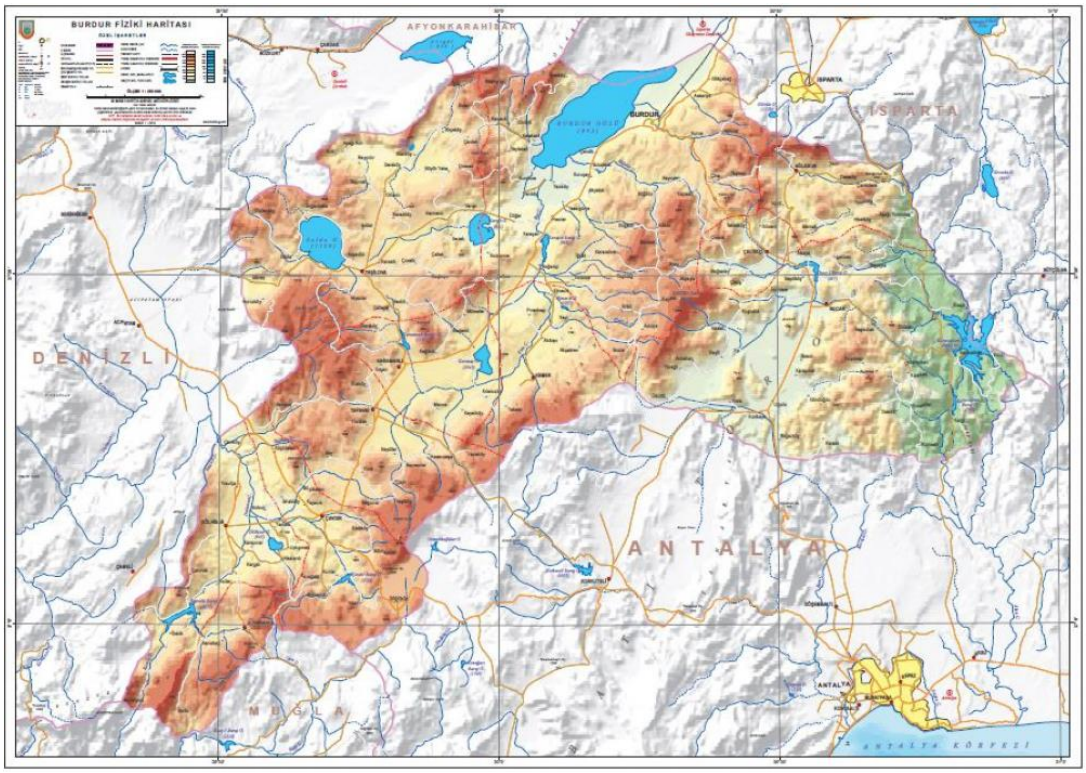
EKLER



Harita 1: Asya ve Anadolu'da kaya resimleri/Petroglif dağılım Haritası (Pekşen vd. 2024, p.462).



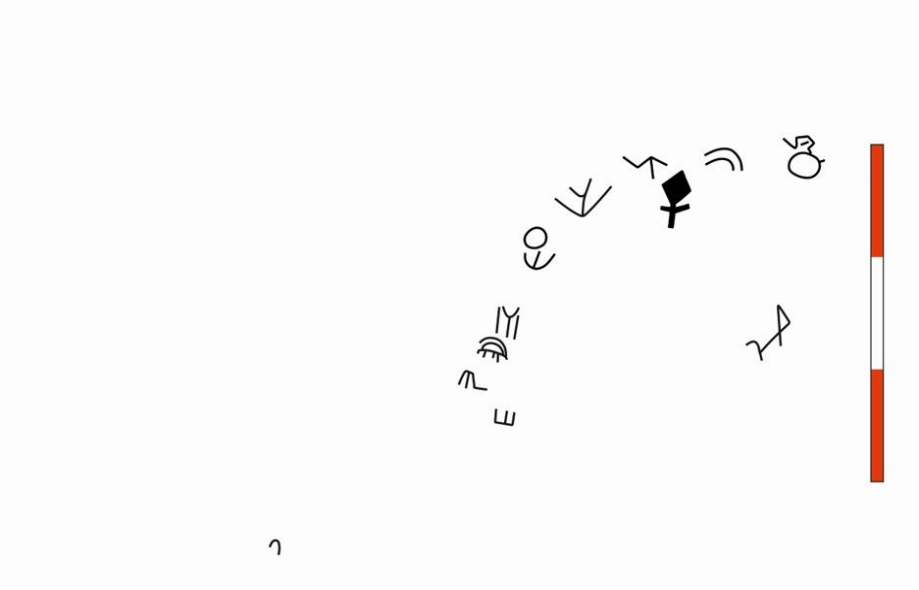
Harita 2: Burdur fiziki haritası (https://www.harita.gov.tr/urun/burdur-fiziki-il-haritasi/432)

Harita 3: Burdur ilinde yer alan kaya resimleri

Fotoğraf 1: Bücürlü Pınar genel görünüm.

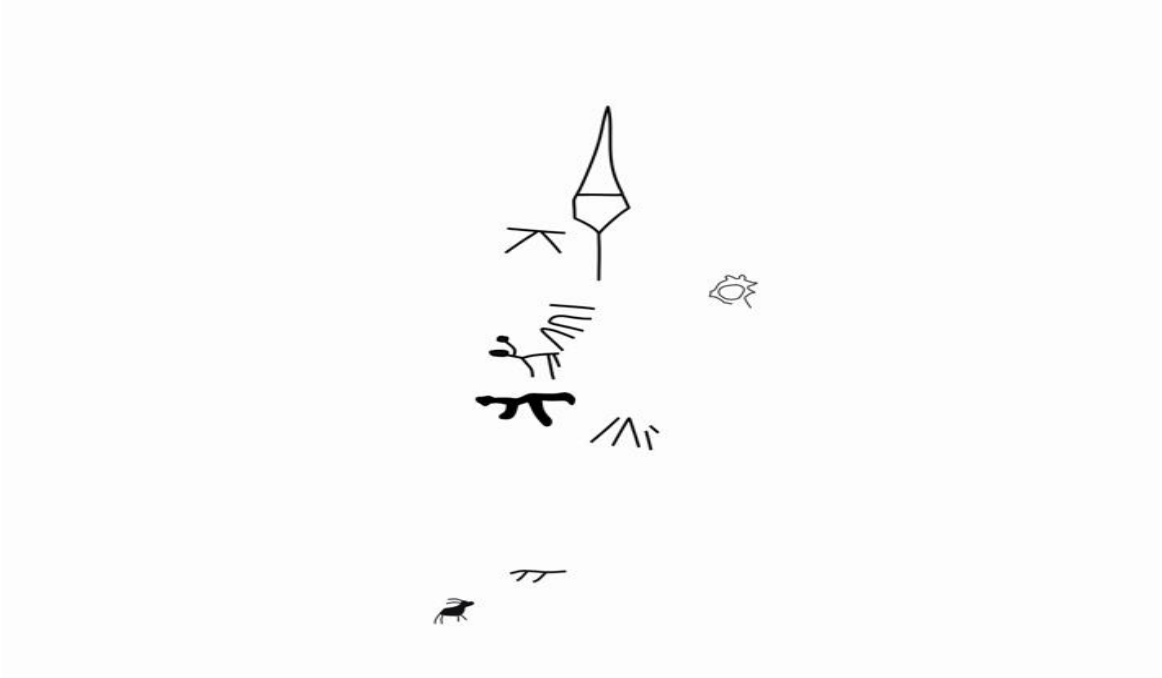
Fotoğraf 2: Bücürlü Pınar'dan Yarışlı Gölü

Fotoğraf 3: Bücürlü Pınar Ana Panodan görüntü



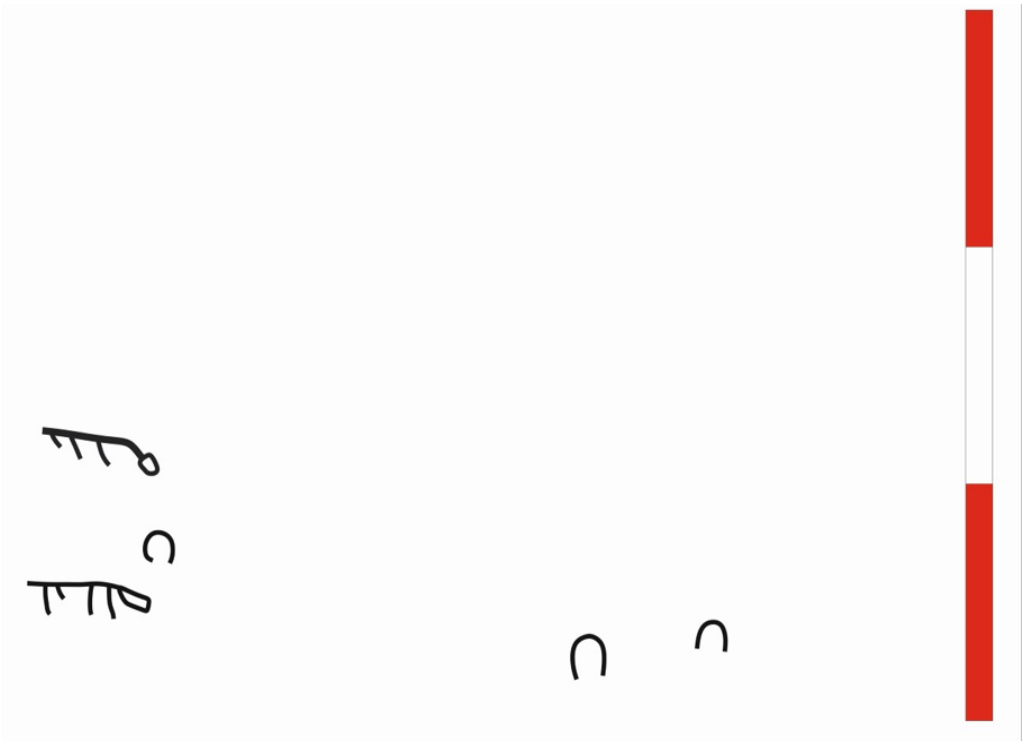
Çizim 1: Bücürlü Pınar Ana Pano: Kayı, Yıva, Salur, Alka Evli, Çavındır, Büğdüz, Eymür ve Bayat tamgaları ile dağ keçisi figürü

Fotoğraf 4: Bücürlü Pınar Alt Pano: Bayat ve Karkın tamgaları, at ve dağ keçisi figürü, Umay Ana figürü

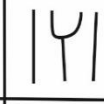
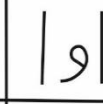


Çizim 2: Bücürlü Pınar Alt Pano: Bayat ve Karkın tamgaları, at ve dağ keçisi figürü, Umay Ana figürü (?)

Fotoğraf 5: Bücürlü Pınar ana pano yan kısım kurt figürü



Çizim 3: Bücürlü Pınar ana pano yan kısım kurt figürü

Boyun Adı	Yazıcıoğlu, Tarih-i Al-i Şelçuk	Reşidü'd-din Câmiu't-Tevârîh	Kaşgarlı Mahmud Dîvânu Lugâti't-Türk	Hüner-Name	Ebul Gazi Bahadır Han Şecere-i Terakime	Burdur Bücürlü Pınar
Kayı						
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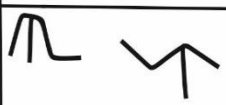
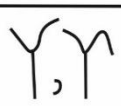
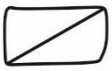
Alka-Evli						
Çavındır						
Yazır						
Salur						
Eymür						
Yıva						
Büğdüz						
Karkın						

Tablo 1: Türk Tamgaları ve Bücürlü Pınar'da tespit edilen tamgalar

Fotoğraf 6: Erzurum Cunni Mağarasındaki Oğuz damgalarından bazıları (A. Ceylan, 2010, Resim 2)

Fotoğraf 7: Konya/Obruk Handa ve Bücürlü Pınar'da tespit edilen Bayat damgası

Fotoğraf 8: Ankara Asmalı Yatak (Aksoy, 2018, p. 207), Hatay/Kırıkhan/Narlıhöpür mahallesindeki mezar taşlarında (https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/hatayda-kayi-boyu-damgali-mezartaslari erişim tarihi: 15/05/2019) ve Bücürlü Pınar'da Kayı Tamgası

Fotoğraf 9: Erzincan Sarıgüney köyü mezar taşında (Aykan, 2016), Öngöt'te mezarın doğu cephesinde ve Bücürlü Pınarda Salur boyu damgası