

## Iconographic and Symbolic Evaluations of the Belt Buckle Found in Eleke Sazı, Kazakhstan, From the Point of Turkish Art

Jale Özlem OKTAY ÇEREZCİ<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

This article aims to analyze the iconographic and symbolic dimensions of two golden belt buckles unearthed at the Eleke Sazı complex in Eastern Kazakhstan, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of the visual language of early Turkish art. Although modest in size, these artifacts encapsulate central motifs of rulership and sovereignty. The composition, featuring a Sovereign-Alp figure seated on a two-headed horse throne and holding a libation cup, is enriched with significant details such as the lotus or tricorn crown, flowing ribbons, and attendant figures making offerings. These elements embody themes of divine power, celestial legitimacy, and political authority, while also revealing the impact of Shamanistic traditions, as well as Buddhist and Manichaean influences, on Turkic visual culture. The study demonstrates that the belt buckles of Eleke Sazı are not isolated artistic products but part of a long-standing iconographic continuum within the Turkic world. Comparable motifs in Göktürk, Uyghur, Khazar, and Seljuk material culture underscore the enduring nature of visual codes associated with rulership, including the horse, crown, belt, and ritual vessel. By situating the Eleke Sazı belt buckles within this broader tradition, the article underscores their significance as artifacts that criticize both the symbolic language of sovereignty and the intercultural dynamics shaping early Turkish art. So as mentioned above, this study examines the symbolic and iconographic significance of these belt buckles within the context of Turkish art and iconography.

*Keywords:* Eleke Sazı, Kazakhstan, belt buckle, ruler, Turkish art

### Kazakistan Eleke Sazı'nda Bulunan Kemer Tokalarının Türk Sanatı Açısından İkonografik ve Sembolik Değerlendirmeleri

#### Öz

Bu makale, Doğu Kazakistan'daki Eleke Sazı kompleksinde ortaya çıkarılan iki altın kemer tokasının ikonografik ve sembolik boyutlarını incelemeyi ve böylece erken devir Türk sanatının görsel dili üzerine daha derin bir kavrayışa katkıda bulunmayı amaçlamaktadır. Boyut olarak mütevazı olmalarına rağmen, bu eserler hükümdarlık ve egemenlik temsillerini merkeze alan temel motifleri bünyelerinde barındırmaktadır. İki başlı at tahtına oturmuş ve elinde sunum kâsesi tutan bir Hakan/Hükümdar-Alp figürünü betimleyen kompozisyon, lotus ya da üç dişli taç, uçuşan şeritler ve sunular yapan yardımcı figürler gibi dikkat çekici ayrıntılarla zenginleştirilmiştir. Bu unsurlar, ilahi güç, kozmik meşruiyet ve siyasi otorite temalarını somutlaştırırken aynı zamanda Şamanist geleneklerin yanı sıra Budist ve Maniheizm etkilerinin de Türk görsel kültürü üzerindeki izlerini ortaya koymaktadır. Çalışma, Eleke Sazı kemer tokalarının münferit sanat ürünleri olmadığını, bilakis Türk dünyası içinde uzun süreklilik arz eden bir ikonografik geleneğin parçası olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Göktürk, Uygur, Hazar ve Selçuklu dönemi materyal kültüründe görülen benzer motifler; at, taç, kemer ve ritüel kap gibi hükümdarlıkla ilişkilendirilen görsel kodların kalıcılığını vurgulamaktadır. Eleke Sazı kemer tokalarını bu geniş geleneğin içinde konumlandırarak makale, onların hem egemenlik sembolizmini kritize eden hem de erken Türk sanatını şekillendiren kültürlerarası dinamikleri yansıtan eserler olarak önemini ortaya koymaktadır. Dolayısıyla, bu çalışma söz konusu kemer tokalarının Türk sanatı ve ikonografisi bağlamındaki sembolik ve ikonografik değerlerini incelemektedir.

*Anahtar Kelimeler:* Eleke Sazı, Kazakistan, kemer tokası, hükümdar, Türk sanatı


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<sup>1</sup> Doç. Dr. – Mimar Sinan Güzel Sanatlar Üniversitesi, Fen Edebiyat Fakültesi, İstanbul, Türkiye, [jale.ozlem.oktay@msgsu.edu.tr](mailto:jale.ozlem.oktay@msgsu.edu.tr),

 ORCID: 0000-0002-5345-1935

## Introduction

Two golden belt buckles, one complete and the other fragmented, were discovered during the archaeological excavations which was led by Professor Dr. Zainolla Samashev at the Eleke Saız complex in Eastern Kazakhstan. Although these artifacts are small, they bear substantial significance for early Turkish art history. Samashev proposes two possibilities regarding the owner of the belt buckle. The first possibility is that the buckle belonged to one of the khagans of the late 8th century, while the second suggests that it was given to a Tudun, a local governor under the Khagan of Ötüken or Suyab, as a symbol of dominion over the ruler's son (Samashev, 2023, pp. 240-242).

When we examine the belt buckles in general, we encounter a characteristic depiction of a Sovereign-Alp figure seated on a throne in the shape of a horse, positioned in the center with its head turned in opposite directions. One hand rests on his knee while the other holds an oath or libation cup; he wears a three-lobed lotus crown (depicted on the other as a tricorn). The belt detail stands out, with his body encircled by a sash. On either side, male figures are shown kneeling with plates in their hands extended towards the sovereign. These belt buckles have an apple-slice appearance (Ill. 1).



İll. 1. Eleke Saız, belt buckle. (Samashev, 2022, ris.5).

First and foremost, the fact that the belt buckles are made of gold highlights rulership, sovereignty, and power. In other words, gold, as among other Turkish communities and states, was associated with the sun and, consequently, the sky among the Göktürks as well. In this context, it symbolized immortality, nobility, dignity, wealth, and power. Records indicate that in the same century, the Turks used the term "kurkapın," meaning "belt of possession." This belt was believed to be made of gold and used by the ruler. It was characteristic of great rulers among the Turks to possess a golden throne, crown, and belt (Oktay Çerezci, 2020a, pp. 180, 184-185).

## Details of the Belt Buckles

**Throne:** When examining the details on the belt buckles one by one, the one of the first symbol of rulership, the throne, stands out. The throne is in the shape of a two-headed horse. The heads, bodies, and front legs of the horses with pointed ears and manes are depicted in detail. The horses' bodies are joined

together from their rear halves, with each horse facing opposite directions. This arrangement may have been designed to maintain the form of the belt buckle. Additionally, it should be noted that the two-headed animals oriented east-west may be associated with dominance, power, strength, nobility, and eternity in Turkish symbolism (Öney, 1993, pp. 139-140, 145-156, 164-172).

The horse held an essential role in the lives of early Turks; as early as approximately 8000-4000 BCE, the Turks domesticated the horse and utilized its meat, milk, and strength (for warfare, hunting, and migration), even using its meat for medicinal purposes (Shatinova, 1995, p.319). In short, the horse was a vital element for the Turks. Chinese sources also contain statements that support this; when referring to the Turks, the Chinese would say, “Their lives depend on their horses” (Esin, 2004, p. 258). In other words, the horse was sacred to the Turks.

In this context, it is also necessary to mention the Shamanistic traditions of the Turks. During the shaman’s journey to the heavens, the horse serves as his steed; thus, it is possible to occasionally find horse depictions on shaman drums (Ill. 2a). The shaman’s drum itself has often been referred to as a horse (Çoruhlu, 2020, pp. 85-92). Since the horse enables the shaman to ascend to the sky, it was sometimes imagined as winged. As in the early periods, the horse continued to symbolize royal power in the Middle Ages and beyond. Linked to this, horseback ceremonies took precedence; for instance, during the ascension ceremonies of the Göktürks, horseback rituals were performed. Moreover, the horse symbolized various values among the Turks, such as goodness, righteousness, honesty, loyalty, friendship, sovereignty, bravery, endurance, agility, strength, and power (Oktay Çerezci, 2018). Therefore, all these elements can be seen as a doubled collection of power and symbolism embodied in the throne shaped as a two-headed horse.

On the other hand, a few examples of anthropomorphic thrones can also be found in Turkish art. One of these is the rock carving from Hungut-Hyas, Mongolia (Ill. 2c). Here, deer facing opposite directions serve as the throne. On a carpet or rug spread over the throne sits a Göktürk ruler holding a vessel in his right hand. Another example is found on coins from Uzbekistan. A coin inscribed with "Yabgu-Kagan" is notable for its depiction, showing a similar scene with a figure on an anthropomorphic throne (Ill. 2b). Additionally, a few early examples from Northern Russia should be noticed (Ill. 2d) (Tolstov, 1948, p. 186).



**İll. 2a.** Shaman drum.  
(Çoruhlu, 2020, ris.13).



**İll. 2b.** Gokturk Period coin. Çağ, 6-8.th cent.  
(Babayar, 2007, ris 37).



**İll. 2c.** Hungut-Hyas, Mongolia,  
(Samashev, 2023, ris.259).



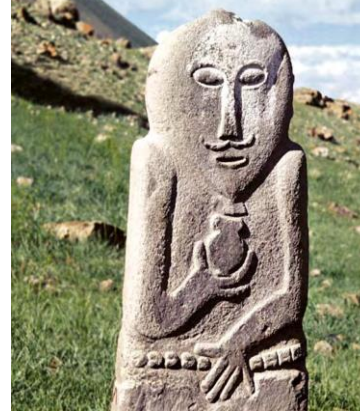
**İll. 2d.** N. Russia (Tolstov, 1948, ris.111.3).

**Cup:** The ruler holds a libation cup in his right hand. It is noteworthy that the cup resembles a globe or pearl, symbolizing sovereignty in its spherical form. Cups held in the right hand, frequently seen in stone statues from the Göktürk period, are not only symbols of rulership but are also associated with the themes of “oath-taking” and “libation” (Kubarev, 2012, pp. 99-120). Additionally, such cups are connected to the ruler's *kut* (sacred power) (Samashev, 2023 p. 240).

The depiction of a ruler holding a cup (mashraba) or goblet in his right hand is a recurring motif throughout early Turkish and Turkish-Islamic art, allowing it to be traced iconographically. This suggests the profound significance of the composition. The ruler depicted holding a cup on the belt buckle we are examining has several comparable examples both in his own era and later periods. For instance, a stone statue from the Göktürk period found in the Altai (Ill. 3a) depicts a figure with his right hand raised to chest height, holding a cup between his thumb and forefinger, a pose similarly found on two belt buckles from Elek Sazı. During the Great Seljuk period, particularly in 13th-century plates, this motif reappears. On one of these plates, the ruler is shown in nearly the same position as on the belt buckle, with his left hand on his knee and a cup in his right hand (Ill. 3b).



İll. 3a. Seljukid, 13th cent. (Usta, 2005, kat.23).



İll. 3b. Gokturk Period, Altai (Samashev, 2023).

**Crown:** The lotus-shaped crown symbolizes power, might, and nobility, whereas the tricorn headgear is a special crown also found in sculptures, as well as in depictions of warriors and shamans (Oktay Çerezci, 2020c, pp.765-770). Tricorn crowns should not be associated solely with Umay (the mother goddess). Such headgear appears in representations of both warriors and shamans.

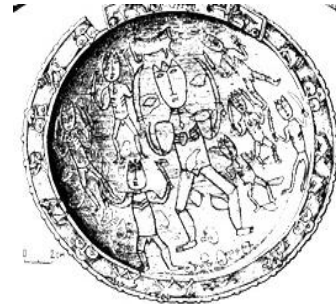
This perspective is also relevant for the male and female stone statues from the Göktürk period, frequently depicted with tricorn headgear (Ill. 4a). In a rock carving from Bayan Jurek Mountain, dated to the Göktürk period, a horseman draws attention with his tricorn headgear and a trident-flagged spear (Ill. 4b). A depiction on a silver plate from the Khazar period, discovered in the city of Kotsk, shares similarities in the headgear but differs in composition. In the center stands a likely shamanic figure with a warrior-like appearance, depicted frontally, raising his arms and holding curved swords, wearing a tricorn crown. Around the central figure, smaller figures resembling him are shown (Ill. 4c).



İll. 4a. Son Gol, (Oktay Çerezci, 2020c, ris. 5.8).



İll. 4b. Kazakhstan, (Oktay Çerezci, 2020c, ris. 8.1).



İll. 4c. Kotsk, Khazar Period. (Oktay Çerezci, 2020c, ris.5.2).

A similar lotus crown is found in the archaeological discoveries and depictions of the Bilge Khagan Treasure (Ill. 4d). This lotus crown is particularly notable for its resemblance to the crown on the head statue of Kul Tigin and the crown worn by the prince in Temple 9 at Bezeklik from the Uyghur period (Ill. 4e-f). The frequent appearance of lotus depictions during this period also offers insight into the influence of Buddhism (Yılmaz, 2019, pp.393-402).



İll. 4d. Crown, Bilge Khan treasure  
([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golden\\_Crown\\_of\\_Bilge\\_Qaghan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golden_Crown_of_Bilge_Qaghan)).



İll. 4e. Kültigin, head statue  
<https://iie.kz/?p=25991&lang=en>.



İll. 4f. Bezekliq 9,  
Temple, Uyghur prince,  
(*Le Coq*, 1913, tabl.38).

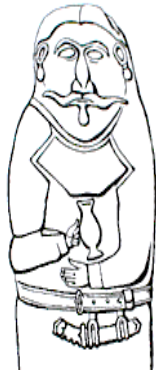
**Ribbon:** The ribbon, with ends pointing upward and shaped like a fish tail, rises from the ruler's elbows and upper arms, looping behind the crown and emerging from the other arm. This gives the impression that the ruler and ribbon are flying, a motif often seen in Uyghur painting art, which conveys ascension to the heavens, symbolizing sacredness. In other words, it reflects the ruler's *kat* (divine power) and celestial roots (Samashev, 2023, p.239). Additionally, silk ribbons are mentioned as war emblems attached to warriors and their horses (Esin, 1978, p.105).

As noted earlier, “ribboned” figures are frequently depicted in Uyghur art, mainly in scenes related to Buddhism and Manichaeism. One such scene appears in a miniature from Kocho. In the miniature titled *Buddha and His Devoters*, reflections of Manichaean art on Buddhist artists are evident. On a blue background, the Buddha figure is shown on the right side of the composition. In front of the Buddha, a figure is depicted kneeling reverently, either worshipping or petitioning him. The figure, whose garment edges are gold-colored, has an upper body encircled by a ribbon that flows around it as if in flight. Behind his head, there is a circular, halo-like element, with hair parted in the middle and extending down his shoulders. On his head is a large, crown-like headpiece with a flower shape at its center (Ill. 5) [Aral Bahtiyaroğulları, 2021, p.433]. The features of this figure, such as the crown, ribbon, and hair design, are notably similar to those of the ruler within the scope of our subject. In other words, these details illustrate the influence of Buddhism and Manichaeism on the belt buckles from Eleke Sazı.



İll. 5. *Buddha and Devetors*, miniature, Kocho. (Aral Bahtiyaroğulları, 2021, ris. 25).

**Alp Type:** The rulers depicted on the belt buckles embody the "Alp Type" characteristic of Turkish art. The almond-shaped eyes and broad nose of the figure are complemented by hair braided or twisted on both sides, extending to the shoulders. The expression is powerful and proud. Similar examples of this type can be found both in the figure's own period and in subsequent Turkish iconography. Particularly in Göktürk period statues (Ill. 6a), the Alp depiction appears frequently, as well as in terracotta figurines (Ill. 6b). A mounted figure from Dandanqilik, dating to the Uyghur period, resembles the ruler depictions from Eleke Sazı not only in the Alp representation but also in the lotus crown and the ribbon flowing from the upper body (Ill. 6c). As mentioned above, many features in Turkish art can be traced throughout centuries. The same applies to the Alp depiction. In one of the Great Seljuk terracotta figurines, the depiction of a warrior reiterates the Alp type once more (Ill. 6d) (Esin, 1970, pp.712-720).



**Ill. 6a.** Stone statue, Jaysan (Dosimbayeva, 2006, ris.9).



**Ill. 6b.** Terracota, male figurine, 6-7.th cent. Semerkant Museum. (Pugachenkova, 1965, ris.148).



**Ill. 6c.** "Alp" representations Dandanqılıq, Uyghur Period. (Palmeri, 2021, ris.13).



**Ill. 6d.** Great Seljuk. (<https://art.thevalters.org/detail/13647/standing-/>).

The belt buckles of Eleke Sazı show similarities with the depictions of the "mustached alp-ruler" on coins originating from Uzbekistan, such as those of Fergana and Samarkand, as well as with an important group of Göktürk Period statues. A prominent feature in these is the thinness of the mustaches, which in some cases form an inverted "V" and in others extend toward the cheeks. This feature appears in many Göktürk Period works made of terracotta, wood, as well as in rock carvings and wall paintings. Similar representations of these mustached figures are also found in Uighur Period art, particularly in mural paintings. On a group of wooden panels, it is noteworthy that the same person is depicted multiple times. In this way, it is possible to state that the depictions of men with thin mustaches continued both in Turkistan and in Anatolia during the Turkish-Islamic Period. Although rare examples exist from the Karakhanid Period, such depictions became common in the Anatolian Seljuk Period. Apart from being mustached and/or bearded, one of the most striking features of early Turkish depictions of alps is that they had braided or tied long hair. The helmets are generally conical or rounded at the tip; on some of them, locks of hair—symbols of alp status—emerge from tubes numbering between one and three (Table 1a).

From the earliest periods onward, when we examine the bearded and/or mustached depictions spreading from the Turkistan region to Anatolia, in terms of their periods and compositional features, it is possible to state that the alp-ruler type refers not only to warrior qualities but also to their representative power in ritual and spiritual life. The Göktürk Period depictions reflect features where alp and ruler figures are in the foreground, carrying connotations of worldly authority and the heroism cult. The inverted "V" mustache, long hair, caftan, and lamellar armor stand out as typical features of these figures, while objects such as spears, cups, or musical instruments point both to their warrior and ceremonial identity. The halo placed above the rulers' heads shows the combination of worldly authority and sanctity.

In the Uighur Period, while the tradition of the Göktürk Period was preserved, iconographic diversity increased under the influence of Manichaeism and Buddhism. In this period, the figures were depicted not only as alps and rulers but also as semi-divine or religiously significant characters. Objects such as flowers or predatory birds held in their hands reveal the reflection of religious symbolism in visual language. Lotus-like and toothed crowns emphasized the distinct iconography of Uighur art shaped by Buddhist influences. In the Karakhanid Period, depictions are limited both in number and variety compared to earlier periods. Here, ruler-centered and more realistic representations come to the fore. Although the inverted "V"

mustache tradition continued, beards were depicted in finer lines, and the dimension of realism was enhanced. Symbolic objects such as weapons or globes held in their hands were used as emblems of worldly authority. In this context, Karakhanid iconography displayed a simpler and more worldly character compared to the religious diversity of the Uighur Period.

In the Anatolian Seljuk Period, iconographic diversity reached its highest level. The beard, mustache, and clothing elements of the Göktürk and Uighur traditions were preserved; however, under the influence of Islam, symbols such as the pomegranate, flower, and predatory bird were added to the iconography. From a social perspective, the depiction of nobles, rulers, warriors, and religious figures together reflects the multi-layered nature of the society of the period. The emergence of segmented crowns and turbans in headgear shows the direct reflection of Islamic culture in Seljuk iconography. The halo motif was not limited to rulers and nobles but was also attributed to religious figures, thereby expanding the emphasis on sanctity.

In comparison, the Göktürk and Karakhanid periods emphasized worldly authority and realistic ruler depictions, whereas in the Uighur and Seljuk periods, religious and symbolic elements became more diverse. The ideal of the alp and ruler in the Göktürks was enriched by religious influences among the Uighurs; it was simplified and became ruler-centered in the Karakhanids; and in the Anatolian Seljuk Period, it reached the broadest symbolic repertoire by encompassing noble, ruling, teaching, warrior, and religious figures. This shows that although male depictions in the Anatolian Seljuk Period were generally portrayed beardless and mustacheless, within the iconographic process, it is still possible to encounter depictions of bearded and /or mustached men in Turkish art from early periods in Turkistan to Anatolia (Table 1b).

**Table 1a:**























	Göktürk Period	Uighur Period	Karakhanid Period	Anatolian Seljuk Period
				
Arrow-shaped beard				
Full beard merging with cheeks and temple				
Drop-shaped or line-shaped beard				
Dot-shaped beard on the chin				

Table 1b:

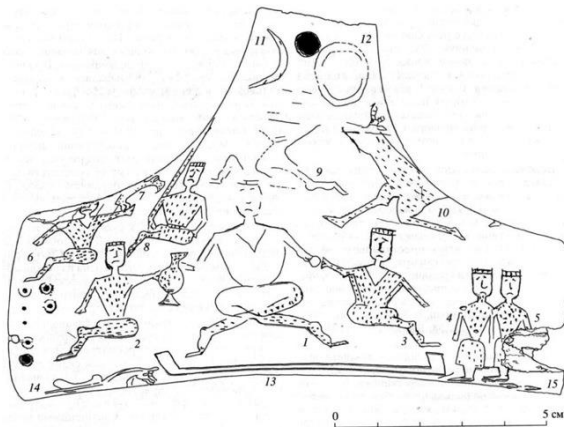
	Göktürk Period	Uighur Period	Karakhanid Period	Anatolian Seljuk Period
				
Inverted "V"-shaped mustache				
Short and small mustache				
Mustache extending toward the cheeks				

**Other Figures:** On either side of the belt buckle (the other buckle is damaged and partially unclear) are figures kneeling (the figure on the right kneels on one knee) and holding what appears to be a libation vessel or, more precisely, a plate. This composition thus represents an "offering," symbolizing respect and possibly the validation of the ruler's sovereignty. Similar scenes in early Turkish art support this interpretation. For example, a stone slab from the Altun Tamgan Tarhan memorial tomb depicts such a theme (Ill. 7a) (Oktay Çerezci 2020b, pp.297-302; Ünal, 2015, pp.271-294; Voytov, 1996). In the depiction on the inscribed slab, the central figure, larger than the others, is seated cross-legged, holding a vessel in his right hand raised to his chest, presumably Altun Tamgan Tarhan (given the context of the inscription). On either side are figures (likely his sons, Torgul and Yelgek, according to the inscription) standing, each holding a vessel raised to chest height, with heads slightly inclined toward the central figure.

Although not an exact match, a T-shaped bone vessel from the Khazar period also shows a similar arrangement: kneeling figures on either side offering a jar and a globe-like object to the central "greater" person, providing a point of comparison (Ill. 7b) (Oktay Çerezci, 2024, pp.105-109).



İll. 7a. Stone grave plate of Altun Tamgan Tarhan. (Oktay Çerezci, 2020b, ris. 3a).



İll. 7b. T shaped bone object, Christi's Collection, Khazar Period (Oktay Çerezci, 2024, ris. 54a).

**Form of the belt buckles:** The two belt buckles found at Eleke Sazı relevant to our topic have an apple-slice shape. Although not very common, apple-slice belt buckles also appear in the Göktürk period, such as at Yustyd I, Kurgan 8. However, the composition on the examples from Eleke Sazı forms a particularly rare group. Additionally, the apple-slice shape evokes the lotus form frequently encountered in the Göktürk period. Notably, a group of memorial tomb stone blocks from the Göktürk period are decorated in this style (Ill. 8) (Oktay Çerezci, 2020a, p.245).



İll.8. *Apple-segment belt fragments, Göktürk period (Oktay Çerezci, 2020a, tabl.15.e.5).*

## Results

The golden belt buckles discovered at Eleke Sazı represent far more than decorative accessories; they encapsulate a highly codified visual language of sovereignty, spiritual legitimacy, and cultural interaction within the Turkic world of the 8th century. Their iconographic program, centered on the depiction of a Sovereign-Alp figure enthroned upon a double-headed horse, situates them within a long-standing continuum of Turkic rulership imagery. The deliberate combination of key motifs—throne, libation cup, crown, ribbon, and attendant figures—reflects both the continuity of indigenous traditions and the receptivity of the Turks to external religious and cultural influences. However the composition in question also evokes some details found among the Hephthalites (White Huns) and the Sasanians. But since we will address the point we have mentioned in another study, we would like to state that we have not gone beyond the framework we defined under the present heading.

The throne in the form of a two-headed horse underscores the centrality of the horse in Turkic society—not merely as an economic or military resource but as a sacred, cosmological, and royal symbol. The libation cup, a recurrent feature in Turkic art, highlights themes of oath-taking and kut, the divine power legitimizing rulership. Meanwhile, the three-lobed lotus crown and the tricorn headdress connect the imagery to broader religious currents, notably Buddhism, Manichaeism, and Shamanism, while also affirming the sovereign's celestial mandate. The presence of flowing ribbons further emphasizes ascension, sacredness, and the divine nature of authority.

These symbolic elements converge in the portrayal of the Alp type, with its distinct physiognomy and heroic bearing, thereby reinforcing the association of rulership with martial virtue, strength, and spiritual potency. The kneeling attendants presenting offerings validate the central figure's status, embedding the buckle within a ritualized framework of respect, hierarchy, and legitimacy. Equally significant is the apple-slice form of the buckles, a relatively rare but symbolically charged choice that resonates with lotus symbolism in Turkic funerary monuments. Through this form, the belt buckles embody not only aesthetic refinement but also the spiritual and political aspirations of their age.

Taken together, the Eleke Sazı belt buckles must be regarded as a crystallization of multiple layers of meaning: royal insignia, shamanic cosmology, Buddhist and Manichaean iconography, and the heroic ideal of the Alp. They testify to the dynamic interplay between indigenous Turkic traditions and external cultural influences, illustrating how rulership was represented, sanctified, and perpetuated in material culture. In doing so, they contribute significantly to our understanding of early Turkish art history and the broader symbolic vocabulary of sovereignty across Inner Asia and beyond. Shortly we can say that this composition has emerged as an essential part of an iconography that spans centuries, both iconographically and symbolically, in early Turkestan and East European Turkish art as well as in Turkish-Islamic art.

## Ethical Declaration

During the writing process of the study “*Iconographic and Symbolic Evaluations of the Belt Buckle Found in Eleke Sazı, Kazakhstan, From the Point of Turkish Art*” scientific rules, ethical and citation rules were followed. No falsification was made on the collected data and this study was not sent to any other academic publication medium for evaluation. Ethics Committee Permission is not required.

## Etik Beyan

“Kazakistan Eleke Sağı’nda Bulunan Kemer Tokalarının Trk Sanatı Aısından İkonografik ve Sembolik Deęerlendirmeleri” bařlıklı alıřmanın yazım srecinde bilimsel kurallara, etik ve alıntı kurallarına uyulmuř; toplanan veriler zerinde herhangi bir tahrifat yapılmamıř ve bu alıřma herhangi bařka bir akademik yayın ortamına deęerlendirme iin gnderilmemiřtir. Bu arařtırma da etik kurul kararı zorunluluęu bulunmamaktadır.

## Declaration of Conflict

There is no potential conflict of interest in the study.

## atıřma Beyanı

alıřmada herhangi bir potansiyel ıkar atıřması sz konusu deęildir.

## Funding

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## Finansman

Bu alıřma iin herhangi bir kurum veya kuruluřtan destek alınmamıřtır.

## Statement of Use for Artificial Intelligence and Its Types

Artificial intelligence and its various types were not used in the writing of this article.

## Yapay Zeka ve Trleri Kullanım Beyanı

Bu makalenin yazımında yapay zeka ve trleri kullanılmamıřtır.

## Data Sharing Statement

I declare that, upon reasonable request for the purpose of verifying the findings, I can share the data of this study according to the conditions specified in the relevant section of the "ethical principles and publication policy".

## Veri Paylařım Beyanı

Bu alıřmanın verilerini bulguların doęrulanması amacıyla makul bir talep zerine “etik ilkeler ve yayın politikası”nın ilgili kısmında belirtilen řartlara gre paylařabileceęimi beyan ederim.

## Note

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## Not

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## GENİŞ ÖZET

Bu çalışma, son yıllarda Samashev ve ekibi tarafından Kazakistan, Eleke Sazı'nda ele geçen elma dilimli iki kemer tokası üzerinde yoğunlaşarak, söz konusu eserlerin ikonografik ve sembolik boyutlarını Türk sanatı perspektifinden değerlendirmektedir. Kemer tokaları, biçimsel özellikleri ve zengin kompozisyonlarıyla yalnızca bir süs eşyası olmanın ötesinde, erken Türk topluluklarının siyasal, dinsel ve kültürel değerlerini yansıtan simgesel objeler olarak ortaya çıkmaktadır. Tokaların merkezinde, birbirine zıt yönlerde bakan iki başlı at şeklinde bir taht üzerinde oturan hükümdar figürü dikkat çeker. Figürün sağ elinde bir kap ya da kadeh, sol eli dizinin üzerinde yer almakta; başında üç dilimli lotus veya üç dişli taç bulunmaktadır. Bu betimleme, "Hükümdar-Alp" tipinin karakteristik niteliklerini yansıtır. Figürün gövdesini çevreleyen kuşak, başının arkasındaki kurdele ve kompozisyonun iki yanında diz çökmüş figürlerin hükümdara tabak uzatması, sahnenin hükümdarlık, kutsallık ve meşruiyet temaları etrafında kurgulandığını göstermektedir. Kullanılan sembollerin her biri, Türk sanatı ve inanç sistemleri açısından çok katmanlı anlamlar taşır. Altının madde olarak tercih edilmesi, Göktürklerden itibaren güneşle, gökle, ölümsüzlükle ve soylulukla ilişkilendirilmiştir. İki başlı taht biçimi, doğu-batı yönelimine atıfla evrensel hakimiyet, kudret ve süreklilik sembolizmine işaret eder. At figürü ise Türk kültüründe kutsallık, sadakat, yiğitlik ve göğe yükselişin aracı olarak merkezi bir rol oynar. Nitekim Çin kaynakları da Türkler için "hayatları atlarına bağlıdır" ifadesini kaydetmiştir. Şaman davullarında ve taş heykelerde görülen at tasvirleri, tokalardaki ikonografinin bu köklü gelenekle bağlantısını

kanıtlamaktadır. Hükümdarın sağ elinde tuttuđu kap, hem and içme hem de sunu temalarıyla ilişkilidir. Küre biçiminde tasvir edilen bu kap, aynı zamanda evrensel hakimiyetin sembolü olarak değerlendirilmektedir. Göktürk ve Uygur dönemlerinden taş heykellerde, Selçuklu seramiklerinde ve çeşitli metal objelerde benzer kadeh ya da maşrapa tutan hükümdar tasvirlerine rastlanması, bu ikonografinin uzun süreli devamlılığını göstermektedir. Taç betimlemeleri, kut'un (tanrısal meşruiyetin) en güçlü göstergelerindedir. Eleke Sazı buluntularında lotus biçimli ya da üç dişli taçlar kullanılmıştır. Lotus biçimi Budist etkileri, üç dişli başlık ise hem şaman hem savaşçı tasvirleriyle bağlantıları yansıtmaktadır. Bu durum, Türk sanatında dinî çeşitliliğin ve farklı inanç sistemlerinden etkilenmelerin görsel dile yansımalarının önemli bir örneğini oluşturur. Nitekim Bezeklik fresklerinde, Bilge Kağan hazinelerindeki taç buluntularında ve Hazar dönemine ait gümüş tabaklarda bu unsurların paralelleri görülebilir. Kurdele motifi ise hükümdarın göksel kökenini ve kutsallığını vurgular. Uçuşan şeritler, figürü adeta göğe yükselen bir varlık olarak sunar. Bu ikonografi Uygur resim sanatında ve Maniheizt-Budist sahnelerde de sıklıkla görülmektedir. Eleke Sazı tokaları, bu kurdele detayı ile Budizm ve Maniheizm'in erken Türk ikonografisine yansımaları ortaya koymaktadır. Figür tipolojisi bakımından, tokalardaki hükümdar "Alp tipi" ile özdeşleşir. Badem gözlü, basık burunlu, saçları omuzlarına kadar örülü ya da burgulu inen bu figürler, Göktürk heykelleri ve Uygur dönemi figürleriyle doğrudan benzerlik taşır. Selçuklu döneminde de devam eden Alp tasviri, Türk sanatında sürekliliğin önemli bir göstergesidir. Tokanın iki yanında diz çökmüş halde hükümdara tabak uzatan figürler ise sunu ve itaat temasını yansıtır. Bu tür sahneler, Altın Tamgan Tarhan anıt mezarı taş levhalarında ve Hazar dönemine ait bazı eserlerde de görülmektedir. Böylece Eleke Sazı örnekleri, hükümdarın yüceliğini ve otoritesinin toplum tarafından onaylandığını betimleyen ikonografik bir şema sunar. Form açısından ise bu tokalar, nadir görülen "elma dilimli" yapıya sahiptir. Göktürk döneminde Yustid I, Kurgan 8'de benzer bir örnek bulunmakla birlikte, Eleke Sazı'ndaki tokalar üzerindeki kompozisyon olağanüstü özgün ve nadir bir gruba işaret eder. Elma dilimli formun lotus biçimini anımsatması, Göktürk dönemi mezar taşlarındaki dekoratif düzenlemelerle paralellik arz eder. Sonuç olarak Eleke Sazı'ndan ele geçen kemer tokaları, yalnızca maddi kültür unsurları değil, aynı zamanda Türk hükümdarlık sembolizminin çok yönlü yansımalarıdır. Bu eserlerde Şamanizm'in göğe yükseliş teması, Budizm'in lotus sembolizmi ve Maniheizm'in ikonografik etkileri iç içe geçmiştir. Altın malzeme, taç, taht, at, kurdele ve sunu sahneleri, hükümdarlık ideolojisinin görsel kodlarını oluşturmaktadır. Tokalar, Türk sanatının erken dönemlerinden Türk-İslam dönemine kadar süregelen ikonografik sürekliliğin en güçlü örneklerinden biridir. Böylelikle Eleke Sazı buluntuları, Türk sanatında hükümdarlık ve kutsallık temalarının görsel olarak nasıl işlendiğini göstermesi bakımından önemli bir değere sahiptir.