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Prehistoric Paintings in the Keçe Cave (Kahramanmaraş-Elbistan)

İrfan Deniz YAMAN*

Abstract

The Keçe Cave is located about 40 km north of the district of Kahramanmaraş/Elbistan. One of the most important features of this cave is that it contains traces of life belonging to different archaeological periods. The Paleolithic chipped-stone tools and other archaeological data uncovered around the cave revealed that this cave was a place where excavations should be carried out. The paintings found on the interior walls of one of the small caves are of great significance. All of these images are made by painting technique, and they describe a life story. There are various figures of human depictions, symbols, and signs in the paintings between the dotted bands. The color of the paint used in the paintings usually belongs to different shades of red, which is in shades of ocher. A small number of paintings feature different colors similar to purple and black. In this study, firstly the Keçe Cave will be mentioned, and then the emergence and types of the concept of art will be explained. Secondly, examples of the paintings identified in Anatolia will be mentioned. In the last section, the general features of the pictures in Keçe Cave will be explained.

Keywords: Keçe Cave, Painting, Prehistoric Art, Elbistan-Kahramanmaraş.

Öz

Keçe Mağarası, Kahramanmaraş İli, Elbistan İlçesi'nin yak. 40 km kuzeyinde yer almaktadır. Bu mağarayı önemli kılan unsurların başında, farklı arkeolojik dönemlere ait yaşam izlerini barındırması gelmektedir. Çevresinde ele geçen Paleolitik yontmataş alet topluluğu ve diğer arkeolojik veriler, bu mağaranın kazı çalışmaları yapılması gereken bir yer olduğunu göstermiştir. Bu alanın önemli özelliklerinden bir diğeri de, küçük boyutlu mağaralardan birinin iç duvarlarında tespit edilen resimlerdir. Bu resimlerin tamamı boyama tekniği ile yapılmış olup, bir hayat öyküsünü anlatmaktadır. Boyalarla oluşturulan noktalı iki bant arasında yer alan resimlerde, çeşitli insan figürleri, semboller ve işaretler yer almaktadır. Resimlerin yapımında kullanılan boya rengi, genellikle aşı boyası tonlarında olan kırmızı ve bu rengin değişik tonlarına aittir. Az sayıda boyalı resim örnekleri ise mor ve siyah rengi andıran daha farklı bir görünümde dirler. Çalışmada öncelikle Keçe Mağarası'ndan bahsedilecek, daha sonra sanat olgusunun ortaya çıkışı ve türleri açıklanacaktır. İkinci bölümde, Anadolu'da tespit edilen resim örneklerine değinilecektir. Son bölümde ise Keçe Mağarası'nda yer alan resimlerin genel özellikleri anlatılacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Keçe Mağarası, Boyalı Resim, Prehistorik Sanat, Elbistan-Kahramanmaraş.

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The Keçe Cave is located near a small village about 40 km north of the district of Elbistan. The cave was first visited in 1959 during İ.K. Kökten's surveys in and around Maraş.¹ Subsequently, there was no research about the cave for a long time prior to the survey conducted under the direction of C.M. Erek in 2012, when the cave was visited again.² The Paleolithic stone tool finds uncovered in the immediate vicinity are evidence of the potential of this cave. Another feature that makes the Keçe Cave important is that it features not only Paleolithic Age finds, but also settlement traces dating to between the Early Bronze Age and Rome. During the survey, it was understood from the translation of an inscription found near the cave that this was an area where a military unit had been located during the Roman period. On the hill at the eastern part of the Keçe Cave, there are architectural traces and small finds belonging to the Early Bronze Age settlement. Excavations in the cave were started in 2015 and are still continuing. In the cave and the terrace section of the cave, finds from different archaeological periods were identified. With the excavations to be carried out in subsequent years, the cultural deposits that will allow for period separation can be determined. Because the excavation work has not yet reached sufficient depth, a mixed group of finds has been found in general.

The Keçe Cave consists of a large space. Because of the collapse of the ceiling at the entrance of this large space, it looks to have once been much smaller than it is now. In addition to the main section in the cave, there are other small caves below the terrace section. These caves were used by local people as an animal shelter before the excavations, and some of them are still used for this purpose. The caves consist of four small spaces side by side and natural chimneys on the ceiling. It is thought that the intense water flow that occurred in the interglacial periods of the Pleistocene served as the main force in shaping these caves. It was observed that there are various paintings on the cave wall in the space located in the southernmost section of the caves facing east (fig. 1). Thanks to this discovery, which took place in 2012, the area where the paintings are located was investigated in more detail.

Before discussing the details of the Keçe paintings, this article will first present general information about the emergence and types of this variety of art.

Pleistocene art is represented by a large and varied corpus of paintings and engravings on the walls, floors, and ceilings of various caves and rock shelters throughout regions of Australia, Africa, and Europe that predate the Holocene. Also among the artwork of this period are beads, pendants, bracelets, rings, and engraved and incised stones, bones, and antlers, all of which can be considered personal adornments. Human and animal sculptures made of ivory, and more rarely of clay, are also important examples of this era's art. There are many caves, rock shelters, and open-air settlement deposits related to this art. In earlier studies, it was thought that the first examples of such artwork arose in Western Europe. However, with discoveries made in such disparate parts of the world as South Africa and Australia, the previous opinion that this art emerged from a particular center has changed.³

One of the biggest problems in Paleolithic art is the dating of these works.⁴ Although there are several examples of art dating back to previous periods,⁵ it is known that examples of

¹ Kökten 1960, 46.

² I am grateful to C.M. Erek for allowing me to study the paintings of the Keçe Cave.

³ Nowell 2006, 239–40; Conkey 1995, 49–64; White 2003; Chazine 2005, 219–30.

⁴ Bahn and Vertut 1988.

⁵ Barnard 2014, 29–30.

true works of art date from the Upper Paleolithic period.⁶ In the Franco-Cantabrian region in northern Spain and southern France, the producers of the art were the *Cro-Magnon* type of modern *Homo sapiens*, but there are other examples of the art in Europe, Africa, and many other parts of the world.⁷ The first artwork produced by *Homo sapiens* in Europe dates back approximately 40 thousand years. This date corresponds to the beginning of the Aurignacian in Europe. This cultural phase was followed by the Gravettian, Solutrean, and Magdalenian, in turn.⁸ In all these Paleolithic culture periods, art was produced and has been found.

In studies on Paleolithic art, it is observed that in the older literature, the artwork was mainly divided into two principal forms: engraved and sculptured objects. This distinction arose as a result of studies carried out in more than one hundred caves in Spain and France, as well as discoveries in excavation areas scattered from the Urals to the Atlantic coast. There are also those who argue that the material and spiritual aspects of the art produced by Paleolithic artists should be considered together with their subheadings as a whole.⁹ Paleolithic art is divided into various subgroups by different experts. Işın Yalçınkaya, in her classification, examined the art under three techniques: painting, engraving, and sculpture.¹⁰ Some researchers have criticized such classifications of Paleolithic art as being both incomplete and incorrect.¹¹

There are quite different opinions about the earliest emergence of art. Despite such differences of opinion, however, researchers agree that the first artwork was made by hunter-gatherers.¹² In the twentieth century, certain hypotheses were proposed about cave paintings, which had been discovered in large quantities. These hypotheses focus on hunting magic, increasing fertility and abundance, and ceremonies like shamanic rituals.¹³ In these studies, the data of ethnoarchaeological studies were taken into consideration and the hypotheses were extended to all Paleolithic artwork. In addition to those researchers who argue that art was produced for specific purposes, there are also those who argue that these works were produced with completely aesthetic concerns in mind.¹⁴ Moreover, there are also ecological approaches that attribute the creation of the artwork to environmental conditions.¹⁵ In fact, the thousands of Paleolithic paintings and works such as engraved figurines and incised paintings are not thought to have a single meaning. Furthermore, it is very important that from the 1980s prehistoric art began to be considered from a more global perspective, because, instead of interpreting the art belonging to a single region, interpreting different examples produced in different places during the same period brought a new approach to the art.¹⁶

The most common group of examples in the field of Paleolithic art are wall paintings. These paintings can be located at the entrance, in the central parts, or in the deeper areas of caves. Scenes with animals are the most frequently depicted subject, as, for example, the large-scale paintings in the Lascaux Cave in France and the Altamira Caves in Spain. Human forms

⁶ Pike et al. 2012, 1409; Leroi-Gourhan 1968, 59; Valladas et al. 2001.

⁷ Halverson 1992, 389.

⁸ Pike et al. 2012, 1409–10.

⁹ Leroi-Gourhan 1968, 59.

¹⁰ Yalçınkaya 1979, 69.

¹¹ Bahn 1995, 231; Forge 1991; Lorblanchet 1992, 13.

¹² Bahn and Vertut 1997; Moro Abadía 2006.

¹³ Bahn and Vertut 1997.

¹⁴ Halverson et al. 1987, 63–89; Heyd and Clegg, 2005.

¹⁵ Mithen 1991, 103–14.

¹⁶ Conkey 1987, 414–15.

are depicted in the wall paintings as well. The most commonly depicted animal species are bison, wild cattle, horses, deer, mountain goats, mammoths, rhinoceroses, lions, and bears. In terms of human and animal figures together, analytical studies have noted that in more than eighty percent of the wall paintings of female figures, depictions of bison and wild cattle are observed together.¹⁷

Paleolithic art, which is the starting point of known human art, has different interpretations in different regions of the world. It has also been observed that art production continued at the end of the Paleolithic Age as a continuation of its early examples. Many finds in Turkey can be considered examples of such art. Among the first identified rock images in Turkey were introduced to the academic world by İsmail Kılıç Kökten. The images in question are located on the borders of Camuşlu village in the Kağızman district of Kars. These works, called the “Yazılıkaya Rock Images,” are composed of two panels. These images feature human figures in addition to various animal figures, such as deer and mountain goats. Kökten states that these images belong to the end of the Upper Paleolithic period.¹⁸ Nonetheless, the date of the paintings has not been precisely determined. Kökten visited the same area again in 1969, when he found engravings made with a different technique than the Yazılıkaya engravings and located in the Kurbanağa Cave to the southwest of Camuşlu village. These images do not belong to the Paleolithic Age.¹⁹ Other examples of engravings discovered by Kökten in Kars are located in the Borluk Valley. The first scientific research in the Borluk Valley was made by Kökten in 1942.²⁰ Another study made in this valley was by Oktay Belli, who discovered about 200 rock engravings during his visits to the area.²¹

Kökten mentions the artwork uncovered in 1957 during the excavations in the Karain Cave, section B (known as Chamber B). Before examining these works, Kökten discussed various rock images and portable artwork previously discovered in Europe, emphasizing that such works are the finest examples of prehistoric art. He states that, at the beginning in 1947, he tried to compare some striped engravings in Karain with the human and horse head, but did not focus much on the subject since the similarity seemed very doubtful. He reports that studies in the cave continued for about 10 years, covering the entire space of the cave. It was in 1957 that he first discovered works of art, two of them in that year and the other in 1958. The first of these works is a pebble stone with an engraving of a human wielding a spear. The human body on the pebble stone is described as having a rectangular shape, with the feet, head, and arms depicted laterally. Although made with simple incised lines, the spear-throwing process is done in a manner that is very natural and anatomically suitable. Kökten mentions how humans are generally depicted with arrows in prehistoric hunting and ritual scenes in Europe and Africa. The second work is a broken animal rib with an embossed human head at the epiphyseal end. Kökten emphasizes how, in this work, the head, mouth, and nose are beautiful and there is a beard that attracts attention. He also mentions that closely observed characteristics, such as eyes and eyebrows, are imprecise, as in contemporary examples from Europe and Africa. In the excavations of 1958, a broken pebble stone with mixed, thin, deep, short, parallel lines was recovered from Chamber B. All these works were found in the Aurignacian

¹⁷ Leroi-Gourhan 1968, 60–1.

¹⁸ Kökten 1948, 194–204.

¹⁹ Kökten 1975, 95–104.

²⁰ Kökten 1948.

²¹ Belli 2007.

level, in the Upper Paleolithic deposits.²² Another important Paleolithic artwork discovered by Kökten is located in the Öküzini Cave. The ox image discovered on the wall of this cave in studies carried out in 1960–1961 is described as engraved and slightly embossed. Kökten comments how the artwork identified in both the Karain Cave and the Öküzini Cave were documents of Paleolithic art. At the same time, though, he also mentions the special importance of Karain and the surrounding caves, including Öküzini, in connection with human and animal paleontology, various industrial and artistic works, Pleistocene fauna and flora, and a certain Paleolithic chronology.²³ The Öküzini image is also important in that it gives its name to the cave.

O. Belli's study on the cave paintings in Put village in the Güzelsu district of Van province is noteworthy. Belli states that he carried out studies in this area in 1971 on the advice of the local primary school teacher, and he reports on the paintings, which feature various human and animal figures in more than one cave, in detail. Perhaps the most remarkable part of his study is the general evaluation of the paintings in the conclusion, where Belli states that it would be inappropriate to take up the issue of dating, especially because of the insufficiency of studies related to the prehistory of this region. It is thought that the local Yedisalkım Caves were used as a cult site by nomadic societies engaged in animal husbandry from the earliest periods. The differences in style and subject observed in the rock engravings reflect different stages and dates. Belli also emphasizes how this situation applies not only to this area, but also to images found on the Tırşın-Gevaruk plateau.²⁴

Among the most interesting examples of archaeological studies and discoveries in Anatolia is Çatalhöyük in the Çumra district of Konya. Many of the wall paintings identified in this Neolithic center provide clues about the daily life of the people of the period. In those works that are done in the style of small figurines, it is mostly female forms that are used, while in the wall paintings, it is mostly male hunter figures that are observed.²⁵

Another set of examples of early art in Anatolia comes from Göbekli Tepe, a center that not only hosts quite important work, but also changes some of the known and established facts regarding hunter-gatherer communities. The most important elements of this cult area place are the T-shaped stones. These stones, which weigh tons, were assembled over a circular area with a diameter of 10 to 20 meters, with 10 to 12 pillars arranged side by side. The stones feature paintings of animals such as wild predators, bulls, wild boar, foxes, ducks, birds, gazelles, wild asses, snakes, spiders, and scorpions. It is noteworthy that the mammals depicted are male. There is some question as to whether the forms depicted in this relief style are a sign or symbol of the stones or part of a mythological cycle. These animal reliefs are realistic and compatible with the fauna of the period.²⁶

The rock paintings in the area known as the Beşparmak Mountains are among the most important rock paintings identified in Anatolia. In these paintings, human beings serve as the main theme, including socially oriented scenes representing relationships between men and women, family, and the continuation of the family. The area where the paintings were discovered was interpreted as a cult center by researchers. One of the most important aspects of

²² Kökten 1959, 10–6.

²³ Kökten 1962, 41, Plate XXXI.

²⁴ Belli 1975, 1–40.

²⁵ Hodder 2004, 82.

²⁶ Schmidt 2010, 239–56.

these paintings is that there are absolute dating results, indicating that the rock paintings of Latmos belong to the period between 6000 and 5000 BC. These results indicate that, during this time, the people who made the paintings were engaged in farming and animal husbandry. The paintings have also been interpreted as symbols associated with the belief systems of a settled society.²⁷

It is possible to give more examples of wall paintings in Anatolia. These include prehistoric cave paintings in the Tavabaşı Cave²⁸ near the ancient city of Tlos (Muğla, Seydikemer) and the Gülnar Akyapı Cave in Mersin.²⁹ Another example of rock paintings was found during surveys in the vicinity of Balıkesir. These paintings, found in 2015, are located in the cave called Baltalıin as well as the İnkaya Cave. In the latter, it is reported that those in the southwest section are about life, while those in the north section are about death. In the former, on the other hand, hunting scenes are primarily observed. When the two caves were evaluated, one was interpreted as being used for hunting rituals and the other for rituals related to beliefs. These caves are said to be a planned cult center serving different functions. The similarities of the paintings to the paintings of Çatalhöyük are notable, and were probable contemporary considering the similarities in the belief structure, featuring scenes of a death cult, and the drawing, which has the same expression and style. Currently, the Late Neolithic period is recommended as the creation phase of these paintings.³⁰

Kızların Cave is located 76 km southeast of the province of Van. The canyon where the caves with paintings are located starts at the end of a village called Yedisalkım, with the caves being labeled Cave I and Cave II. The paintings in the Cave I are scattered over a 5-meter area, and all of the figures are red. Ten of the 30–35 images here have been erased through erosion (snow, rain, etc.). The remaining images include stylized human figures, prey trapping scenes, goddess figures, a god figure standing on a deer, and a large number of male mountain goats and deer. Approximately 60 figures were found in Cave II. The pictures in this cave are light red and dark brown. The four male figures in the cave are depicted with exaggeratedly large sexual organs and their arms are held in the air as if the figures were dancing. There are no details such as hands, faces, or feet. It is thought that these four male figures are related to a fertility cult and hunting magic. The other figures in this cave consist of a large number of goddesses, mountain goats, sun motifs, and unidentified animal figures.³¹

Deraser Cave is located in the province of Batman near the Tigris River. There are no precise dating results for the cave paintings, but an approximate dating to the Neolithic Period can be given based on the depictions of festivals and celebrations, which are considered part of collective settlement and agricultural culture and bear similarities to the paintings of Çatalhöyük. The Deraser Cave paintings were made with red and black paint.³²

Sinek Çayı is a rock shelter located in the district of Çermik in Diyarbakır. On the surface of the rock, 16 animals and 11 humans can be identified. Different techniques were used in drawing these figures. The main subject in these rock paintings is hunting animals and human

²⁷ Peschlow-Bindokat 2006.

²⁸ Korkut et al. 2016, 37–49.

²⁹ Girginer and Durukan 2017, 1–15.

³⁰ Yalçıklı 2017, 417–34.

³¹ Belli 1979.

³² Soydan and Korkmaz 2013, 665–67.

figures hunting these animals with bow and arrow. These pictures are thought to belong to the Upper Paleolithic and Mesolithic period.³³

Prehistoric wall images, of which some of the Anatolian examples have been listed above, are generally made on cave interiors and rock surfaces. The only exception to this is the Çatalhöyük settlement, where the paintings appear on the interior walls of houses.

The Keçe Cave, located near the Elbistan district of Kahramanmaraş province, is another center where prehistoric paintings are observed (fig. 2). In the cave, which has a diameter of about 4 meters and an oval shape, the paintings describe the life stories of a group of people and are bordered by dotted lines. Located opposite the cave entrance, they cover the cave walls in a semicircle from north to south. The fact that the paintings are at a height that can be reached by a person of normal height shows that there is not too much deposit in the layers inside the cave. The rock tomb in the area to the north of the cave's entrance section shows that this area was used in different periods.

The dotted outer frame is not visible in some parts of the painting sequence. In addition to some clearly distinguishable figures, there are also some figures that have started to fade under the effects of time. In general, the forms are drawn in light brown and red tones, and only rarely in shades of pale black and purple. Some other areas that use brown and red tones in Turkey are the Kızların Cave, Deraser Cave, Beldibi Rock Shelter, Çatalhöyük, Latmos, Akyapı Cave, Baltalı Cave, and İnkaya Cave. Places in Turkey that use the less common darker colors include Beldibi, Deraser, and Çatalhöyük. The paintings that can be seen as human figures in Keçe Cave are often depicted as long t-shaped lines. The arms and legs can be distinguished, though the head and other bodily details are not clearly depicted. Similar examples of such human figures are abundant in Turkey, such as at Beldibi, Deraser, and Latmos. In some of the human figures, the presence of a phallus distinguishing gender is noteworthy, such as a male figure depicted with an exaggeratedly large phallus (fig. 3). Male figures in this style can also be seen in the Kızların Cave, Latmos, and Deraser. There are no specific traits related to the female gender. The other paintings considered to be human figures are depicted with a kind of clothing hanging down from their arms in addition to being t-shaped (fig. 4). This recalls shamanic clothing used in religious ceremonies, and the different appearance, which is not observed in the other human figures, also emphasizes how such figures may have had different characteristics and functions within society. The paintings in the southern part of the cave show a three human figures stretching their arms towards one another's shoulders. It can be said that these figures depict members of the society performing a celebration or feast. Similar examples of such figures have been found in the Deraser Yazılı Cave.

Apart from the human figures, animal figures are also observed. Some of these have features indicating their species, while others present only a very general view (fig. 5). In one example that can be considered a rare example of its type, it is very difficult to understand to what species the four-legged animal depicted belongs. In the Keçe Cave, there are no depictions of animal hunting scenes such as can be observed in other prehistoric paintings. Furthermore, due to the small number of animal drawings, it is impossible to distinguish between domesticated or wild animal species. Another group of paintings in the cave consists of various signs and symbols. While these symbols can sometimes be understood and interpreted and there are similar examples, here it is difficult to understand the meaning of some of them. One of the most remarkable symbols among the wall paintings of the Keçe Cave is the one

³³ Belli 2005.

showing an eye or the sun. In this, a total of three symbols were drawn in close proximity to each other in the middle, consisting of a pupil-like dot in the center and seven dots around it (fig. 6). These clearly had a symbolic meaning for the people who made the paintings. The surrounding dots may reflect the time cycle associated with a particular subject. Another interesting symbol is a square shape with four dots inside (fig. 7). It is difficult to say exactly what this highly geometric symbol might represent. There are also other, similar signs and symbols that are equally difficult to understand and interpret.

Overall, the most important detail in the wall paintings of the Keçe Cave is their depiction of the life story through symbols. Symbols that are different from the others and have distinct features might be interpreted with the help of similar examples. However, there is still doubt concerning what some of the symbols, similar examples of which have not been seen before, mean. It is necessary to proceed cautiously in making inferences about the depicted human life. Although it is certainly not exactly clear in what period this life story was depicted or what period it was meant to depict, it can be said that the triangular painting is like a kind of tent. This raises the question as to why these people might have needed a tent when near a rather large cave like the Keçe Cave. Perhaps the groups of people living here would move away from this cave at different periods of the year and built such temporary shelters in other areas. This would accord with the phenomenon of movement within certain time cycles that serves as the basis of nomadic life. Another possibility for the triangular shape is that it may represent a trap. In prehistoric paintings, roof- or tent-like shapes are generally interpreted as traps. Overall, it might be said that, even though no definitive comment can be made about the period in which the paintings were made, they belonged to nomadic people.

Conclusion and Discussion

In archaeological studies, it is more difficult to understand the lives of the people studied, especially in prehistoric times. The interpretation of the material and spiritual cultural remains of these people is nonetheless of great importance in understanding the period in question. In the absence of writing, people's lifestyles, subsistence economies, burial rituals, and everyday tools can only be understood with the help of excavations. But for the thought structures of prehistoric peoples, the works of art produced by the people of the period can be considered the most important data in that they reflect such structures relatively clearly. Among these works of art, the group that best reflects the daily life of the people of the period are images, symbols, and portable art objects. Although the earliest such works date to earlier periods, we can say that real diversity only emerged in the art from the Upper Paleolithic period on. In particular, the interpretation of prehistoric images has helped to clarify issues that could not be detected by excavations. At this point, however, an important question emerges: to what extent can we, as "modern" people, be successful in interpreting images made in prehistoric times? We necessarily evaluate the images drawn by people who lived thousands or even tens of thousands of years ago through today's conditions and perception. Lines that sometimes seem to be just simple symbols and shapes may have had very different meanings for the people of the period. Interpretations made with such issues in mind are more open to possibilities.

Interpretations of the figures, symbols, and signs in the images are usually made by comparison with similar examples. At the very start of this interpretive process, personal evaluations come to the fore. For example, we interpret the t-shaped lines observed in prehistoric paintings as human figures, since they are often compared to human beings. However, in some situations it is very difficult to understand what these depictions signify. Among the most

common subjects of images during these periods are a hunting group of people, prey animals, and various symbols associated with nature. In the paintings found in the Keçe Cave, a life story belonging to the people of the period is thought to be depicted. The paintings are arranged in a band defined by dot sequences and made up of various different depictions. The drawings considered to represent human figures were done in a stylized manner and contain little detail. Only one figure depicts a person standing with an erect phallus, and in this sense it might be said that there is no drawing of a woman. One of the human depictions is a painting representing three people standing side by side. These people are shown performing a kind of dance, stretching their arms out towards each other's shoulders. This may depict a celebration belonging to the people of the period. In the animal forms at the Keçe Cave, only two can be distinguished. Possible misinterpretation of doubtful drawings has been scrupulously avoided. Perhaps one of the most special sections among the Keçe wall paintings is that containing sun-shaped depictions. The common feature of these symbols, which are all close to each other, is that there are seven dots around a circular shape with a dot in the center. It is clear that these seven dots are no coincidence, and must have had a special meaning. Unfortunately, some of the images could not be interpreted because they have faded. In the images, the color of ocher (shades of red) is the one most frequently observed, though there are also a few examples done in darker shades. The possibility that the wall paintings were produced in different periods should not be ignored.

Considering other wall paintings found in Anatolia, it can be said that those of the Keçe Cave belong to prehistoric periods. The stylistic similarity to Chalcolithic and Neolithic paintings is noteworthy. However, it should not be forgotten that this evaluation is only a relative approach. All of the Keçe Cave images were painted on the surface; there is no trace of the pecking and engraving technique. Although the figures and symbols in the Keçe Cave are very important, their dating remains controversial. For this reason, comparisons in terms of both technique and the figures and symbols used should serve as aids in the dating process. Other local prehistoric paintings in Turkey include the Beldibi Rock Shelter, Yedisalkım (Van), Latmos (Beşparmak Mountains), Tavabaşı (Muğla), Gülnar Akyapı (Mersin), Baltaini and İnkaya Caves (Balıkesir), Kızların Cave (Van), and Deraser Yazılı Cave (Batman). The oldest of these examples is Epipaleolithic, while the latest is dated to the Chalcolithic. It is thus thought that the paintings of the Keçe Cave may belong to the Epipaleolithic at the earliest and the Chalcolithic at the latest. The fact that the paintings were found in a small cave in an isolated place away from the cave where the excavations were carried out indicates that the paintings were accorded a special value by their producers. Moreover, the rock tomb located to the north of the cave entrance indicates that the cave where the paintings are located was seen as a sacred area in later periods. Perhaps the wall paintings of the Keçe Cave also served as a cult place where a kind of ceremony was performed.

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Fig. 1 General view of the Keçe Cave



Fig. 2 General view of the cave



Fig. 3 Human depiction and detail drawing



Fig. 4 Human depiction and detail drawing



Fig. 5 Animal depiction and detail drawing

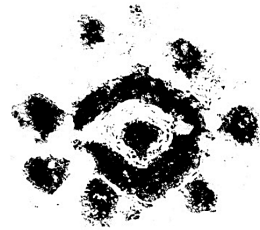


Fig. 6 General view and detail drawing of sun-shaped symbols



Fig. 7 Geometric shape and detail drawing