

RELATIONS BETWEEN THE GÖKTÜRK ALPHABET AND CAVE PAINTINGS



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İSTANBUL, 2023

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SUBMITTED TO GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT

OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

IN

DEPARTMENT OF

OF HISTORY

YEDİTEPE UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

İSTANBUL, 2023

PLAGIARISM

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ÖZET

Türk tarihinde çok önemli bir yer tutan Göktürk Kitabeleri; içinde birçok Türk kültürü unsurunu barındıran, bize Türklerin dünyaya bakış açılarıyla ilgili bilgiler veren çok önemli bir eserdir. Değeri bunca büyük olan Kitabelerde kullanılan alfabenin kaynağında da yine Türk kültürünün izlerini aramak ve bunu taşıdığını düşünmek, bizim için öncelikli olmaktadır. Kökeni birçok bilim adamı tarafından tartışılan Göktürk alfabesinin mahiyetine baktığımızda bütünüyle bir Türk kültürü izlerini görebilmek mümkündür. Bu bütünlüğün oluşum sürecinde bizi ilk karşılayan olarak; kaya resimlerini, onun takipçisi tamgaları ve onun da zirvesi sayabileceğimiz Göktürk alfabesini görmekteyiz. Bu üç kültür unsurunun (kaya resimleri, tamgalar ve Göktürk alfabesi) birbiriyle devamlılık açısından bağı, benzetme yoluyla örneklendirecek olursak ne iki şeyi birleştirmek için araya tutturulan tutkal gibi yapaydır ne de aralarında keskin ya da belirgin çizgiler vardır. Aksine tamamen doğal, bir ağacın kökünden gövdesine kadarki bölümü gibi bir bütünlük teşkil etmektedir. Tezimizin asıl amacı da bu bütünlüğün kanıtlanmasına yöneliktir. Yapmış olduğumuz araştırmalarımızın sonucu olan çalışmamızın, bu doğrultuda tamamen kapalı olmasa da hafif aralık kalmış kapıları daha da aralayacağı ve yeni ufuklar açacağı kanaatindeyiz.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Orhun Yazıtları, Türk Tarihi, kaya resimleri, tamgalar, Göktürk alfabesi

ABSTRACT

The Orkhon Inscriptions, which hold a vital place in Turkish history, is a significant work that contains many elements of Turkish culture and provides us with information about the Turks' worldview. It is essential for us to search for traces of Turkish culture in the origin of the alphabet used in these inscriptions, which have such great value and significance. Considering the nature of the Gokturk alphabet, which has been debated by many scientists regarding its origins, it is possible to find traces of Turkish culture entirely. The primary elements of the establishment of this entirety are rock paintings which evolved into tamgas leading to the Gokturk alphabet, which can be regarded as the end product. Considering the continuity of connection among these three cultural elements (rock paintings, tamgas, and the Gokturk alphabet), it can be said that it is neither certainly intersecting nor a coincidental relationship. Instead, they form a natural unity, similar to the entire section of a tree from its roots to its trunk. Therefore, the primary purpose of this paper is to illustrate this unity. We believe that our study which has been concluded through the results of our elaborative research will elucidate certain questions that have been slightly unanswered and encourage further discussions.

Keywords: Orkhon Inscriptions, Turkish history, rock paintings, tamgas, Gokturk alphabet

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I owe thanks to my dear supervisor Ahmet TAŞAĞIL, who never withheld his support, always kept my curiosity and enthusiasm alive, and showed me new horizons in the direction through the execution of this study; to my dear friend Hakan DİNÇ, who helped me to examine my work on-site and whom I have trusted in his knowledge and comments during my intense studies; to another friend Serhan TATLI, whom I met recently and admired his work and determination, which reminded me again how significant the different perspectives are; to my friend Neslihan SOYSAL, who helped me a lot with words and meanings during the writing phase of my study; to a friend I met recently, Nurlana GASIMLI, whose ideas and worldview I value and literary conversations I enjoy listening to. I dare no doubt that she will achieve great things for the Turkish world in the future; to Tunahan TEKİN, who is both my former student and current friend and future friend; finally, I owe thanks to everyone who helped me from a single letter to the whole of my work.

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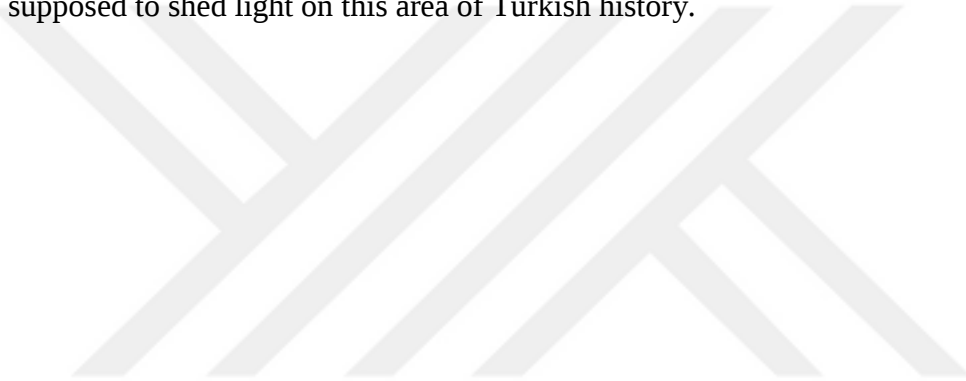


Introduction

The origin of the Gokturk alphabet has been a topic of debate among scholars for many years. Some of the ideas suggested on this topic may be presented as: Otto Donner suggests that the letters in the Gokturk alphabet were derived from the Lycian and Carian alphabets; Thomsen, who deciphered the inscriptions, indicates that the Gokturk alphabet may have originated from the Sámi (Aramaic) alphabet; Russian linguist Polivanov points out that it was largely influenced by the Aramaic -Sogdian and Pahlavi alphabets; and Sir Gerard Clauson, an English Turkologist, suggests that the origin of this script was the Sogdian and Greek alphabets. However, Russian scholars Aristov and Mallitskiy traced the origin of the Gokturk alphabet to the Turkic tamgas and their evolved forms. Ultimately, even Thomsen comes to conclusion to agree with Aristov and Mallitskiy's view in terms of possibilities. A. Cevat Emre, a Turkish linguist, suggests that the Gokturk alphabet had an ideographic aspect as well.¹ Based on the research particularly carried out by Servet Somuncuoglu, our opinion also indicates that the Gokturk alphabet originated from rock paintings and tamgas. In this regard, considering the result of our research and on-site inspections on this matter, we believe that rock paintings have evolved into tamgas and tamgas into alphabets. In this context, while determining the headings included in the study, it is aimed to focus on not only rock paintings and tamgas, but also Turkish mythology, the formation of languages around the world, astronomy, Turkish art from past to present, and its use in fields such as carpet-weaving, kilim-weaving, and architecture. These headings will be included in our study without hesitation; however, rather than a form of general information, it is aimed to present these headings by referring to the subject without detaching them from the contextual perspective.

¹ Talat TEKİN, Tarih Boyunca Türkçenin Yazımı, p. 21-22.

Our research shows that the history of almost each Gokturk letter dates back to very ancient times as well as allowing us to establish strong connections among Turkish mythology, belief system and rock paintings; rock paintings and tamgas; tamgas and letters. In this regard, the fact that tamgas refer to possession allows us to assign different meanings to Gokturk letters beyond simply resembling them to some types of shapes. In other words, we strive to reveal this aspect of tamgas and letters that contain different meanings. Our aim is thus to establish a solid foundation for the long-debated origin of the Gokturk alphabet and to lead further discussions, which are supposed to shed light on this area of Turkish history.



First Traces of Turkish Culture

Turkish history can be traced back to 14,000 BC thanks to rock paintings. This can be observed in the Lena Rock Paintings area in Russia, where the inscription written by Russian scientists on the entrance indicates “14.000-12.000 BC”.² The fact that these rock paintings, which we see hundreds of examples of in different regions of the world in both prehistoric and post historic periods, are the products of a common culture and serve as representative elements of culture; overlaps with the migration routes of the Turks and the regions where they settled. Even though the work of researchers is complicated since the rock paintings and tamgas are both so ancient and widespread, the unifying and integrating reality of the Gokturk alphabet also emerges.

When we look at the migrations that the Turks have carried out throughout history, we can trace the 7 great migrations BC and 13 migrations AD. These are not simple, insignificant migrations; they are migrations carried out in masses. Through these migrations, Northern China, Mongolia, Kyrgyzstan, Tien Shan Mountains, East Turkestan, India, West Turkestan, Khwarezm, Ural Mountains, western steppes of Eurasia and Balkans have been Turkified. It is even possible to say that places such as Syria, Iran and Anatolia have also been Turkified.³ As mentioned above, these migrations are not insignificant; they take place in the form of settlement and leave a mark. We understand this from rock paintings and tamgas.

The Gokturk alphabet is one of the most fundamental representatives of Turkish culture. This is because this alphabet is not composed of a simple and shallow system of letters, but rather is the result of a unique belief and cultural accumulation

² Servet SOMUNCUOĞLU, Sibirya'dan Anadolu'ya Taştaki Türkler, p.12.

³ Servet SOMUNCUOĞLU, Damgaların Göçü-Kurgan Ankara-Güdül Kaya Resimleri, p.86.

of many letters, as we can deduce from what we have been able to identify. If we consider the evolution of a vast concept like culture, we can see that the foundation of everyday social behaviors of humanity was laid 100,000 years ago, long before the invention of writing, which dates back to 5,000 years ago. For Turkish culture, the primary products that carry out the transmission throughout the in-between period are rock paintings and tamgas, which meet the fundamental beliefs and daily life. With archaeology, it has become increasingly possible to find answers to questions such as where, when, how, why, among whom, and by who this transmission took place.

To better comprehend the historical development of the Gokturk alphabet and its relationship with rock paintings and tamgas, it is necessary to mention and understand the worldwide development of “writing” as a concept. In this regard, it should be taken into consideration that one of the most crucial factors, regarding the use of writing, is its facility to store information and present it again when the time and place is settled for reuse. This is due to the fact that human memory has a perfect structure in terms of storage, yet it has certain limits in terms of retaining information. Considering this fact, in Turkish history, retention of information was sustained through rock paintings and tamgas before writing was invented. The task here is to establish a strong foundation for the connection that is to be built between the concept of writing and the concept of visuality, relying on strong sources, opinions, and interpretations.

To emphasize the history of the Turkish language, it should be also noted that the Sumerians were the first civilization to use writing in the world, and there are more than 160 words that overlap with Turkish⁴, which shows how far the Turkish language can date back among the languages in the world. This information provides

⁴ Ahmet B. ERCİLASUN, Başlangıçtan Yirminci Yüzyıla Türk Dili Tarihi, p.36.

us with data not only culturally but also geographically. It can be seen that Turkish has been named in different ways throughout its 1300-year history that we can trace through written sources. For Gokturk, because its characters resembled runic (mysterious, unknown) writing, it was called Siberian Run letters, Yenisei Run letters, Runic alphabet, and Turkish Run script.⁵ According to our research, it seems possible to express the centuries in which Gokturk was used and the limits of its usage area in the light of written sources as follows: It was actively used by many Turkish states from the 7th century AD to the 11th century AD; Its usage covered an area of approximately 30 square kilometres from western Central Europe to the Pacific Ocean, from Central Afghanistan to Northern Siberia.⁶ In terms of political and social purposes, Gokturk script was used particularly on rocks in high-altitude areas, on coins minted by the state, on metals with non-monetary value, on weapons of war, on tableware and utensils used for eating, drinking, and decoration, as well as in different parts of clothing items, and they were processed in carving, drawing, and cutting. In addition, there are Gokturk texts depicted on paper as well.

Gokturk Khaganate and Its Place in History

In this study, we deem it appropriate to provide information about the Gokturk Khaganate not in a detailed and chronological order, but based on events and situations that we consider influential and important.

In the middle of the 6th century in Central Asian history, the “Göktürk Khaganate” was established, which carried the name “Türk” for the first time, explicitly mentioned as the continuation of the Huns. It lasted for approximately two hundred years and was an exemplary state. Their neighbors referred to them as

⁵ Hatice ŞİRİN, Başlangıçtan Günümüze Türk Yazı Sistemleri, p.25.

⁶ Hatice ŞİRİN, Başlangıçtan Günümüze Türk Yazı Sistemleri, p. 28-29.

“Türks” in their works in reference to this newly formed political structure. In their works, known as the “Orkhon Inscriptions”, they used the term "Kök Türk" for themselves and left their mark in history as the "Gök Türks."

The Gokturks sustained their livelihood by engaging in blacksmithing in the vicinity of the Altai Mountains, under the authority of the Juan-Juans. After subjugating the Toles tribes, they defeated the Juan-Juans and established their own independent state. Over time, they ruled over a vast area from the Black Sea to Korea, experiencing occasional setbacks but maintaining their existence until 745 AD. Afterwards, they faced disintegration and migrations, leading to the emergence of great states such as the Karakhanids, Seljuks, Ghaznavids, and Ottomans. Prior to the Göktürk Empire, there had been a Turkish presence in history in various names and communities. However, it was through the Gokturk Khaganate that the name "Turk" and their culture and political existence became known to different nations.⁷

The origin of the Göktürks appears in sources intertwined with legends. The first legend is about their descent from a wolf, while the second is about their emergence from the Suo country in the north of the Huns.

Just before the establishment of the Gokturk Khaganate, Bumin sent an envoy to the ruler of the Juan-Juan Empire, expressing his desire to marry his daughter after he had gained control over the Toles tribes. Bumin received the reply, “You are a slave working in my ironworks, and how can you make such a proposal?”⁸ Over time and subsequent developments, in 552, Bumin launched a surprise attack on the Juan-Juans, officially declared the independence of the Gokturk Empire, and assumed the title of Il Kaghan. Following the surrender of the western part of the country to

⁷ Ahmet TAŞAĞIL, Kök Tengri'nin Çocukları, p. 124.

⁸ Ahmet TAŞAĞIL, Kök Tengri'nin Çocukları, p. 128.

Bumin's brother Istemi Yabgu, and subsequent deaths and developments, Mukan Kaghan, known for his intelligence, knowledge, and tactical skills, rose to power and ensured the rise of the state. After Mukan Kaghan's death, his brother Taspar Kaghan succeeded him and elevated the country to the level of a world empire. However, Taspar Kaghan's desire to change the religion had a negative impact on the fate of the country, and before his death, he bequeathed the throne to Mukan Kaghan's son, Tallo-pien. The council opposed this decision, and She-t'u ascended to the throne, assuming the title of Işbara. Meanwhile, Istemi Yabgu contributed to positive developments in the West and even reached Crimea in 576 AD, capturing the Kerch Fortress. This was the farthest point reached by the Gokturks in the west. The Eastern Gokturk Khaganate, however, continued to prepare for its demise. Chang Sun-sheng, a skilled and important diplomat sent by the Chinese emperor⁹, approached Işbara to gather the necessary information to divide the Gokturk Khaganate. Particularly due to famine and hunger, the power of the Gokturks diminished day by day.

As a result of the events, Il Kaghan assumed leadership of the state but made wrong decisions that led to the downfall of the country, despite having significant power. At the same time, severe winter conditions caused the death of animals, famine ensued, and as a result, the Gokturk Khaganate faced rebellions and the separation of tribes. Through all these events, in 630, Il Kaghan was captured by the Chinese and taken to China, and the Eastern Gokturk Khaganate disappeared. The Western Gokturk Khaganate, under T'ung Yabgu's rule, grew stronger, but Yabgu was assassinated by his uncle in 630. After this event, the Western Gokturk Khaganate could not recover and remained in a state of turmoil.

⁹ Ahmet TAŞAĞIL, *Kök Tengri'nin Çocukları*, p. 139.

Between 630 and 681, a period of anarchy occurred, and hundreds of Turks were forced to live under Chinese control. Despite several rebellion attempts during this period, no satisfactory outcome was achieved. The independence of the Second Gokturk Khaganate was finally secured by Kutlug Kaghan in 681, who persevered in suppressing the rebellions. By appointing Tonyukuk, who had been captured by the Chinese, as the Apa Tarkan, the Gokturk Khaganate became even stronger. The raids continued uninterrupted, and after the death of Kutlug Kaghan, his brother Kapgan Kaghan succeeded him. Kapgan Kaghan engaged in great battles, conducted campaigns deep into the north, and introduced innovations in the organization, even requesting agricultural tools from China. These efforts by Kaghan aimed at rebuilding and renewing the state. During this process, some tribal rebellions occurred, and the state was shaken. While these events were unfolding, Kapgan Kaghan was lured into an ambush and killed by the Bayirkuls. Although Kapgan Kaghan had entrusted the leadership of the state to his young son, Inel, Kul Tegin disagreed and had Inel and his supporters killed, bringing his brother Bilge to power. Bilge Kaghan elevated Tonyukuk to a higher position, and with the strategic and rational actions taken by the trio of Kul Tegin, Bilge Kaghan, and Tonyukuk, the country was restored to prosperity. Tonyukuk, in particular, persuaded Bilge Kaghan not to implement certain misguided proposals that would not benefit the country.

After the deaths of Kul Tegin and Tonyukuk, Bilge Kaghan himself was poisoned by his vizier and died in 734. The subsequent rulers either died prematurely or made wrong moves, causing the country to plunge into chaos without any apparent reason. Taking advantage of this chaos, the Chinese, eager to exploit the situation, incited the Uyghurs, Karluks, and Basmils to attack the Gokturks. In 745, the Uyghurs declared their independence and established their own state. Although it is known that

the Gokturks collapsed or were eliminated in that period, they continued to exist until approximately 941 (for about 200 years), and they were mentioned in Chinese sources.¹⁰

The Term “Tamga” and Fields of Its Use

When we examine the historical journey of tamgas from the past to the present, we encounter interesting and striking information. As known, tamgas are shapes that indicate the affiliation of a tribe, clan, or person. These shapes are made by carving, hitting, scraping, cutting, painting, burning, or forging. Turks, as mentioned earlier, have stamped their tamgas on almost everything that exists in their social life. Especially in nomadic-herding societies, they stamped tamgas on their animals to prevent them from mixing with other herds and to identify to whom they belonged. These tamgas first emerged as a requirement of belief, and later became a manifestation of a sense of social identity. “We know that the word “tamga” was used as “tamka” in Old Turkish, and as “tamga” in Kutadgu Bilig, Middle Turkish and Chagatai, “tamna” in Kumuk Turkish, “tanma” in Oirat and Soyon Turkish, and as “tamga” in Kazan Turkish.”¹¹ It is also an indisputable fact that although the Orkhon inscriptions are accepted as the first written works in the world of science, before that, the Turks used writing and frequently used tamgas in their daily lives.

Turkish tamgas are still used in different meanings by some families, tribes, clans, lineages, or tribes both in Central Asia and in some parts of Anatolia. Although some tamgas are known to represent meanings such as courage, bravery, strength, abundance, and prosperity, the meaning of some tamgas has been forgotten, and they are made only according to tradition. The places and ways in which tamgas are made

¹⁰ Ahmet TAŞAĞIL, *Kök Tengri'nin Çocukları*, p. 173 .

¹¹ H. N. BEĞİÇ, H. Ö. ÇAPIK, *Anadolu kültüründe Damga/Tamga/Dövme: Mardin Örneği*.

contain different meanings. For example, tamgas made on the surfaces of high rocks are processed in accordance with beliefs such as praying to God, asking for health, and sacrificing to Him. However, as they are considered through their social life (such as to the edges of the sheepfold, daily objects, etc.), they have expressed ownership and sent messages of belonging to those outside the social structure.



Figure 1: Altay-Üstkan Müzesi, Eski Türk Yazıtları Atlası (Üzengi)

The text on the left side of the Acura Inscription reads as follows: “... tamkalıg yılkı bunsız erti...” It is clearly understood from the part “tamgalık yılkı” that Turks used to mark their horses with a “sign, symbol, or stamp,” which they called “tamga.” Moreover, it is observed in the inscriptions that the words “tamgaçı” (stamp maker, seal maker), “tamgalamak” (to stamp, to seal), which are derived from the word “tamga,” are used as nouns and verbs. In the Kutadgu Bilig, a book written in the 11th century, the word “damga” was used as “tamga, damga, mühür, tamga urmak, damga vurmak, tamgaçı, damgacı, mühürdar, tamgalamak, damgalamak, mühürlemek”. As Ali Shir Nevai used the word “tamgaçı” in Muhakemetü'l-Lugateyn, it can be understood that the word was still in use in the Eastern Turkish of that era.

Turkish tamgas are still used in Anatolia under the names of “damga (seal), im (mark)” in the following places: on horses and cattle, on the ear or nose of rams and sheep, on the back-tail or head of rams or sheep, in beehives and wheat or flour stores,

on tombstones or wooden boards replacing tombstones, on carpets and rugs, on felt and cloaks, on bags and sacks, in embroidery, in jewellery, in amulets, on the doors and walls of houses, on pots and pans, in tattoos made on hands-face-forearms and chest, in horse harnesses... Turks recognized many animals as *ongun* (living and inanimate beings believed to carry a spirit and considered sacred). They did not hunt or eat them, considering them sacred.

Tamgas were not only engraved on rocks, animals, and objects but they were also drawn on the human body as tattoos. Tamgas and symbols belonging to Turkish culture were found on the bodies of humans unearthed from graves dating back to the Hun or Scythian period. The figures used in these tattoos are generally wild animals such as deer, goats, cats, dogs, wolves, horses, bears, and birds of prey. Some of the tattoos on the bodies of humans found in certain kurgans -a kind of ancient grave mound- depict hunting scenes. Tattoos of ram figures, which hold a significant place in Turkish culture, are especially prevalent on the bodies of humans found in Hun graves. It is understood that this tattooing tradition, which was especially practised by heroes during the Hun period, continued in the traditions of the Kyrgyz and Kazakh Turks as well. In his work "Divan-ı Lügat'it Türk," Kaşgarlı Mahmut stated, "Oghuz is a Turkish tribe. The Oghuz are Turks. They are divided into 22 sections, each with a separate emblem and animal mark. They recognize each other by these symbols."¹²

Considering the sources, it is possible to say that tamgas also indicate ethnic names. We can see this more clearly in Kyrgyz society. If it comes to why tamgas present such large numbers, one of the biggest reasons is that there are many signs belonging to *urugs* and tribes. We mentioned before that they considered these tamgas as their own and sacred; that they branded their animals, and especially the theft of

¹² A. Bican ERCİLASUN, Ziyat AKKOYUNLU, Kaşgarlı Mahmud-Divanu Lugâti't-Türk, p. 26.

animals of steppe communities was considered a great crime; that animal thieves were executed; that even Altai people left their horses, which carried tamgas, free, and the theft of these horses was still considered a very big crime.

Among the public, these tamgas, which are so sacred, so widespread, and so well-preserved, also ensure that literacy (reading-writing), which is considered to belong to the high class, becomes widespread among the people and is easily understandable and learnable. Those who do not know how to read and write are well aware of the purpose, meaning, and importance of these tamgas. One of the important conclusions we can draw from this is that tamgas also have the task and assistance of providing both intellectual and physical practicality and agility to the urug-tribe-bodun they belong to. Among the purposes of use of tamgas, it can be shown that it distinguishes between what is essential and what is not, shows that everything imposed on it belongs to a certain place or someone, facilitates the transition from general belonging to private belonging, indicates the occurrence of political-religious events or wars when they are frequently encountered in a region, serves as a document describing the person and the society in which the person lives, symbolizes obedience and protection, and regulates time. The reason why some tamgas resemble each other despite cultural and geographical differences is that people show parallels in their adventure of discovering themselves and their surroundings (Moon-Earth-Human-Source of Life, etc.). Trying to explain this parallelism only through a cultural exchange also complicates research, from our perspective.





The tamgas above belong to the Kyrgyz people living in different geographies.¹³ The two shapes at the top (the tamga of the Kyrgyz tribe of the Bashkirs) are almost identical to the letter of the thin “l” sound in the Gokturk alphabet. Below them, the shape on the left (the general Kyrgyz tamga) also evokes the thick “g” and the thin “r” letters in the Gokturk alphabet. At the bottom, the picture on the right is a tamga belonging to the Kyrgyz people in Khakassia, and it can be thought of as the previous form of the aforementioned letters and tamgas.

An Overview of the Formation of the Gokturk Alphabet

When we question the reasons for the emergence of the Gokturk alphabet and search through history, we first encounter tamgas and then rock paintings. The underlying cultural and belief accumulation presents us with the archetype of the Gokturk alphabet, which carries symbolic meaning. The archetype is a kind of subconscious that presents the fundamental reasons behind a person's behavior and thoughts from the embryonic stage to the last age. Based on this example, the archetype of the Gokturk script is the tamgas, whose archetype is rock paintings, and rock paintings mostly reflect social beliefs and totemistic approaches. First, humans started to depict their kind, and then they adopted the idea that they were not alone in nature, and even that nature itself was a source of life for them. Following this, by realizing the universe as a tertiary source, they included it in their thinking as well. Rock paintings, which are based on a belief system and attribution of sanctity,

¹³ Olcabey KARATAYEV, Kayrıkan JANIBEKOVA, Damgalar ve Onların İşlevleri(Fonksiyonları)

gradually turned into tamgas and continued to be used in different areas and thoughts. It started to become a coded agreement system, such as a sense of belonging, defining borders, trading, and making prayers and wishes. With the formation of writing, it evolved in completely different dimensions and became a part of writing, which became a common tool used by people. This idea is based on some proof, one of which is that the Gokturk alphabet is seen on everyday items such as knives, plates, bowls, leather, carpets, cups, earrings, rings, bracelets, grips, belt buckles, horse saddles, etc. In addition, the top executives of the state that erected the Gokturk inscriptions encouraged their people to read the inscriptions. Barthold interpreted this statement as the style that a speaker should have and stated that the expression is metaphorical; nevertheless, this interpretation has not been emphasized because there is not enough evidence. Nowadays, the increasing number of findings written in Gokturk script supports that the Gokturk was also known and used among the folk. The main scientists who support this view are A.N. Bernstam, S. V. Kiselev, Lev Gumilev, S. E. Malov, Dimitri Vasilyev, O. F. Sertkaya...

One of the mistakes we believe is made during the examination phase of the transition process from rock paintings to tamgas, and from tamgas to the alphabet, is expecting a rock painting which expresses a meaning to evolve into a tamga in a way that expresses the same meaning, and then into a letter, meeting a similar or suggestive meaning rather than the exact meaning. Otherwise, the tendency to look only through this perspective persistently is a mistake, too. It was not known that a rock painting drawn thousands of years ago would turn into a tamga. Nor was there any thought or necessity for it to turn into a tamga by the people of that time. The same situation applies to the transformation from tamgas to letters as well. Especially, a tamga that emerged during and after the transition process from rock painting to

tamga was used in every aspect of social life. Some people were only drawing these symbols so that their animals would not mix with others and did not feel the need to think about it. Some were using them for accounting purposes in a transaction and were musing over them to prevent mistakes and confusion. Imagination and aesthetics occurred in the production of clothing, utensils, etc., and changes on tamgas were inevitable. Those who had similar tamgas were making slight changes to prevent confusion. For example, by adding a dot inside a circular tamga, or the tamga of the Karkin tribe being in the shape of VI, but the tamga of the Kayi tribe being in the shape of IVI... This versatility in tamgas, although it seems to make proving our topic difficult, actually reveals the abundance of evidence in order to prove it.

The book “Defter-i Cengizname” contains seventeen tamgas, which were given by Genghis Khan to his nobles. It is also said that Genghis Khan gave an “uran” along with the tamgas.¹⁴ In the Mongolian-Turkish dictionary, the word “uran” means "artist, master, craftsman," and we believe that it comes from the Old Turkish word “ur-“ “vurmak (to hit)” and means “a person who hits or marks with a tamga.” However, since there is not much explanation about this word in the mentioned book, it is not possible for us to present a certain opinion about whether “uran” refers to a tamga craftsman, an object, or a symbol (like tamga). Nevertheless, as a result, we have reached the conclusion that this word is related to tamgas. The expression “açamay tamga” mentioned in the book means “a wooden piece placed in the shape of a fork” and reminds us of the “tree of life” motif that holds great importance in Turkish culture.



¹⁴ Funda TOPRAK, Defter-i Cengiz-Nâme’de Boy Nişanları ve Damgalar

Also, the expression “karagay ağacı (karagay tree)” mentioned in the book refers to the “çam ağacı (pine tree)” in terms of its usage and meaning in different texts. The meaning of this word as “pine tree” still exists in Kumyk Turkish. The tamga shown above also resembles the needle leaves of a pine tree. According to a belief in Altai epics, “There is a pine tree at the center of everything”. This tree is the largest of the trees and extends to the house of Bay Ulgen” and it is considered as the “tree of life.” In addition, one of the most important features of pine trees is that they do not shed their leaves in summer or winter. They are known as the only type of tree that does not shed leaves. Another feature is that they are long-lived and durable. We believe that it is a reasonable justification to accept the pine tree as the “tree of life” figure because of these characteristics. In the following pages, we intend to explain the influence of mountain goat horns and the whole or parts of mountain goats on tamgas and then on the alphabet as a source point of the "tree of life" concept.

The same work also mentions the “evirne tamga”. The “evirne tamga” symbolizes two intersecting sticks and represents this meaning. It is similar to the oz tamga, the Tengri tamga, and the “𐰸” letter in the Gokturk alphabet.



The possibility that the word “evirne” means evir- çevir-, dön (turning or rotating) is high and this is related to the content of the mentioned tamga.

Another tamga mentioned in the work is the “Ay tamga”. It resembles the “ay-ya” letter in the Gokturk alphabet in terms of shape, pronunciation and meaning.

Rock Paintings and Nature of Tamgas

The geographic boundaries of rock paintings cannot be defined as a narrow area or a specific region where they are clustered. Rock paintings belonging to Turks can be found in various regions such as Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Russia, Anatolia, China, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Palestine, Kosovo, Scandinavia, and even deep into Europe.¹⁵ These regions are areas that have been identified through research. As support and interest in this field increase, we are confident that the number of areas with rock paintings belonging to Turks will increase as well. Especially in Kyrgyzstan, Saymali Tas is the richest area in terms of rock paintings. There are around 100,000 paintings on more than 10,000 stones. Rock paintings are found intensively wherever Turkish communities have lived throughout history. However, if we are to demonstrate where the most intensive rock painting areas are, we can present the followings: Southern Siberia, Mongolia, Southern Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Eastern Anatolia, the Caucasus, and Azerbaijan. In Türkiye, rock paintings belonging to Turks can be found in Ordu-Mesudiye-Esatli village, Erzurum-Karayazi-Salyamac village, Hakkari-Yuksekoa-Gevaruk Plateau, Kars-Kagizman-Saban village, Kastamonu, Sivas, Erzincan, Isparta, Burdur, and Samsun-Salipazari. One of the most important areas is Ankara-Gudul-Salihler village where a lot of rock paintings belonging to Turks can be found.¹⁶ The fact that there are so many rock paintings belonging to Turks in Anatolia raises questions about whether Turks came to Anatolia before 1071. However, we leave these questions to other studies not to deviate from the main topic of our thesis.

Rock paintings appear as a form of communication used by the ancient Turks. In fact, it is possible to say that all rock paintings in the world emerged for the purpose of forming communication. The first traces of humanity's abstract or concrete

¹⁵ Servet SOMUNCUOĞLU, *Sibirya'dan Anadolu'ya Taştaki Türkler*, p. 16.

¹⁶ Servet SOMUNCUOĞLU, *Damgaların Göçü-Kurgan Ankara-Güdül Kaya Resimleri*, p. 105.

search were carved onto these rocks. This communication was attempted to be established with each other, future generations, and abstract entities or at least this was the intent. None of these rock paintings, except for those randomly drawn and destroyed recently, were randomly drawn. They were always drawn with the search for meaning and in a composition that would convey a general message. The abundance of rock paintings is related to Turkish culture, life, and traditions. Egypt developed its civilization on papyrus, China on silk, and the Sumerians and Assyrians were suited to writing or drawing on clay tablets. Their civilizations developed in this way. On the other hand, Turkish civilization and understanding were suited to carving their culture onto rocks. If the mystery of rock paintings can be fully deciphered, we believe that it could have a very different impact on Turkish history. If we accept that rock paintings have turned into tamgas and tamgas into alphabets over time, it is also possible to say that rock paintings serve as a bridge between unknown and known history.

The rock paintings generally contain a composition, and reaching or connecting with God is stated at the beginning of these compositions, which is achieved with the help of a shaman. These can also be considered tangible evidence of Turkish mythology. Additionally, there are rock paintings depicting birth, reproduction, entertainment, hunting, and belief. When we examine the symbols that emerge from these collective compositions, we encounter the elements of Turkish mythology and culture: the animal chariot with sun-like wheels, curves, snakes, rivers, wild animals, rams, goats, wolves, humans, tailed humans, sun, earth... There are also legends about flying humans that we encounter in rock paintings belonging to the Altai Turks. According to the legend, there was nothing before (neither the moon nor the sun), and people used to fly in the air shedding light. A similar example applies to the Deer

Stones in Mongolia's Arhangay region. The deer on these stones, numbering around 600, are drawn as though they fly in the air. It does not seem possible to encounter these figures in any culture other than Turkish culture. The meaning of these illustrations is related to dead people ascending to the sky by taking the form of an animal and moving on to the afterlife. Another composition is found in the Gobi Desert representing: horses nursing their foals, hunters shooting arrows, people training their dogs, images representing sexuality, wild boar hunts, people harnessing horses, and fairy tale humans shooting arrows at giants... What makes this area special for us is the presence of inscriptions containing prayers and wishes, written in the Gokturk alphabet. The most extreme and striking example of this is the mountain goat tamga on the Kül Tigin Inscription. The mountain goat tamga found in many rock paintings is interpreted as a symbol of death and eternity. On the rock paintings found in Ankara-Asmalıyatak, we can see people fighting, riding horses, praying, performing ceremonies with shaman drums, engaging in sexual activity, wielding swords, shooting arrows, engaging in duels, and ruling in front of a large khan panel. We can also see flying horses in some rock paintings and remember Kaşgarlı Mahmud's words, "The horse is the wing of the Turk."

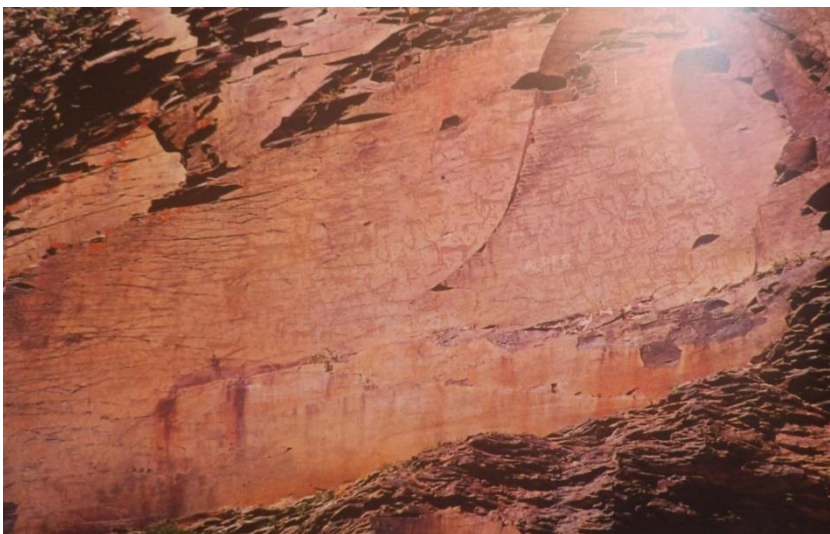


Figure 2: Türkiye-Kars-Kağızman, Camuşlu Köyü, Taştaki Türkler

When we examine rock paintings and put them in chronological order, we see that the first paintings are concrete. In other words, nature has been taken as it is and engraved on the rock. Over time, these concrete paintings have been replaced by paintings with abstract meanings, and humans have begun to accept that they are a part of nature. This process did not happen suddenly or in a short period of time. It took place over a period of 10,000 years between 15,000 BC and 5,000 BC. In other words, a mountain goat drawn on a rock through these periods describes the concrete concept of the animal while it began to express death and eternity in an abstract sense as we moved towards 5,000 BC to the present day (until 1000 AD). Therefore, it is possible to say that what is depicted is not what is seen but what is thought. The most significant evidence of this situation is that the concrete images are drawn in the same size as the object being depicted. In other words, they are drawn with large shapes and lines. During the transition to the abstract phase, these shapes and lines began to shrink and become more stylized. In this respect, mountain goats, deer, horses, and humans became smaller and almost took the shape of a letter. This is where the transition from rock paintings to tamgas begins. This transition is accelerated by the increase in both the number of people and animals, thus the emergence of a sense of belonging. Rock paintings have not only brought about the formation of the writing and alphabet culture, but many other cultures have also formed and continued to change and develop to the present.

The graves of deceased government officials or respected individuals in society were also brought to the areas where rock paintings were considered sacred, and the tradition of “Monumental Tomb” emerged. The first texts read in these areas were prayers and wishes. Initially, these writings were randomly scribbled on a corner of a large rock, but over time, they began to be written on tombstones. Along with

prayers and wishes, the heroic acts of individuals were also narrated over time. Later, the description of geography, events, and people was established, and the Orkhon/Gokturk Inscriptions emerged as the pinnacle, where the main theme of prayers, wishes, history, and heroism are beautifully depicted. It is possible to consider the Gokturk Inscriptions as the finest examples of this tradition that has risen from ground zero to this level.

We consider the transformation of the rock painting areas into the burial sites of important figures and statesmen as a significant issue since it can provide us with information about how a tradition began and how it developed over time. The “Monumental Tomb” tradition mentioned above can be seen in the form of small and large mounds in Central Asia (and also in Anatolia). The evidence of the “Monumental Tomb” tradition does not only consist of rock paintings and tamgas. The culture of the Turks is also mentioned in sources belonging to different nations. In Chinese sources, the expression “On certain days of the year, they climbed to the high points of the mountains and held ceremonies, sacrificing to the spirits of their ancestors,” is used many times. In Cuveyni's “Tarih-i Cihan Guşâ”, the expression “They engraved marks on stones by holding ceremonies in the mountains with their Khagans” is mentioned.

Although the wide distribution of rock paintings and tamgas raises doubts about who made them, these doubts disappear regarding the common cultural characteristics. For instance, rock paintings found in Anatolia and those found in the Altai region show similarities. Oghuz tamgas (especially Kayi and Avsar tamgas) can be seen in different regions many times. Similarly, the carpet motifs in Central Asia and those in Anatolia are identical. Many of these motifs also appear in rock paintings and as tamgas themselves. The drawing of a man standing on a running horse in rock

paintings is one of these examples, too. This has not been limited to just rock paintings, but it has also taken its place in our culture as a traditional game (Gokboru game). In addition, many of the rock paintings and tamgas we encounter in different regions face east. This reminds us of the “Güneş (Sun cult) kültü” specific to the Turks. The “Güneş kültü” is related to greeting, respecting, and considering the sun sacred, and it is a tradition which comes from this cult that the entrance of the tents of Turkish khans is opened towards the east. In this regard, the fact that people living in such diverse geographies adhere to the same style can be explained by a common past, social character, and social DNA.

One of the extraordinary examples of the transition from rock paintings to tamgas, and from tamgas to writing (the Gokturk Alphabet) can be seen in the “Bickti Boom” rock painting area in Russia’s Altai region. In this area, which means “Written Rock,” we can see that the size of the rock paintings has greatly become smaller, and there is a vague transition to writing. We consider the gradual shrinking of rock paintings and their increasingly stylized appearance as pre-writing experiments and accept them as a sign of transition. The paintings in the Kurbanaga Cave in Kars-Kağızman are more in the form of geometric shapes. We regard this as a method of expressing thought rather than action, as we have previously mentioned. Therefore, it is remarkable evidence of the search period of transitioning from concrete to abstract.

Rock paintings and tamgas can be demonstrated to be sacred not only by different evidence but also by being made in sacred areas or by being considered sacred themselves. None of the rock paintings or tamgas made in these areas has been damaged or defaced by individuals who came to the area for the same purpose. In other words, they were not defaced because the subsequent paintings or tamgas were

also considered sacred by the next generations. However, in recent times, many damages have been caused by treasure hunters.

The tradition of engraving rock paintings and tamgas in sacred areas continued until the 1000s AD. Afterwards, with the spread of Islam and Christianity, writing started to be used by the masses rather than being used only by religious officials, which caused the tradition of rock paintings and tamgas to come to an end.

When we look at all these developments, rock paintings, tamgas, abstract or concrete actions, and how they have developed from past to present, it emerges how the consciousness of being able to become a nation has meticulously proceeded. The formation of a language, which is indispensable for a nation, and the wide and different geographic areas where the unifying power of this language is strongly felt, are evidence that the roots of the Turkish language date back to ancient times.

Mountain Goat and Its Similarities with Some Gokturk Letters

The first drawings that we encounter in rock paintings are animal figures, and in the early stages, these animal drawings are as big and as shaped as the real animal. As time passes and we approach the present day, the size of the drawn shapes begins to shrink and become more linear. These animal figures are engraved on rocks with different techniques called forging, carving, and drawing from the first time until the present day. Forging is the first technique and we can see this technique in these early rock paintings. Furthermore, these techniques do not sharply separate from each other at certain times. The forging technique covers the time between 10,000 BC and 1000 AD. The fact that animal figures play such an effective and important role in Turkish history, art, culture, and especially writing is directly related to the geography where the Turks lived.

It is now widely accepted in the academic world that there were significant Turkish migrations from Central Asia during both prehistoric and historic periods. The Altai Mountains are considered to be the main source of these migrations. This is because the Altai Mountains contain plateaus at an average elevation of two thousand meters and are surrounded by steep rocks and mountains up to four thousand meters high, providing a natural fortress-like structure. As a result, the Turks living there were able to reproduce freely and protect themselves from external threats, while also hunting wild game during the summer months to provide for their livelihood. The most important game animal hunted for food and as a source of life was the “mountain goat”. Over time, the mountain goat began to be regarded as sacred by the Turks and its image was engraved on rocks. Eventually, other animals that were considered sacred were also included in these engravings.

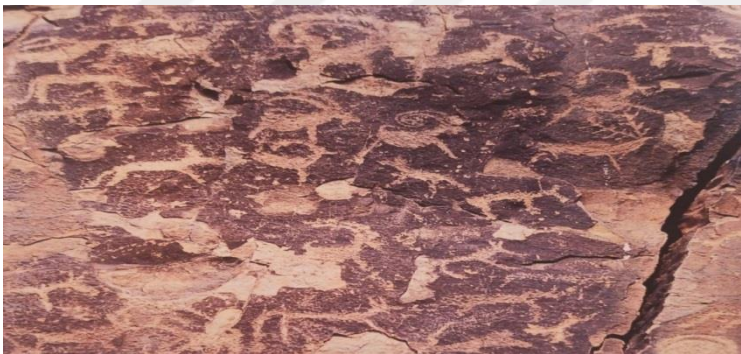


Figure 3: Moğolistan-Arhangay, Taştaki Türkler

In the picture above, we see one of the collective animal compositions in the Arkhangai region of Mongolia. With mountain goats being predominant, there are also shapes of deer, horses, and wolves. In the later sections of our thesis, we will extensively discuss the “deer antler”, which extends towards the sky and forms the basis of the “tree of life” figure. As seen here, the mountain goat and its antler are depicted in different shapes, thicknesses, and fineness.

This composition tells us about the animals that exist in nature and are particularly important for Turks, rather than a hunting story. We understand that the figures in these images carved into the stone are a part of nature and carry vital importance for humans, and thus are considered sacred. If we examine the mountain goat figures in the picture, we can see that the horns are in the shape of a half-circle, concentric circles, and a bow. It can be said that variations also exist in the body shape of these animals. In some figures, the legs of the animals are drawn farther apart and crosswise, while in others, their legs are drawn parallel and straight. Some figures have been worked on more extensively and shaped to resemble real animals, while others have been simplified more linearly. This is due to the occurrence of abstract thinking, with which the importance of the meaning conveyed through the paintings becomes the primary target rather than the depiction of the image.

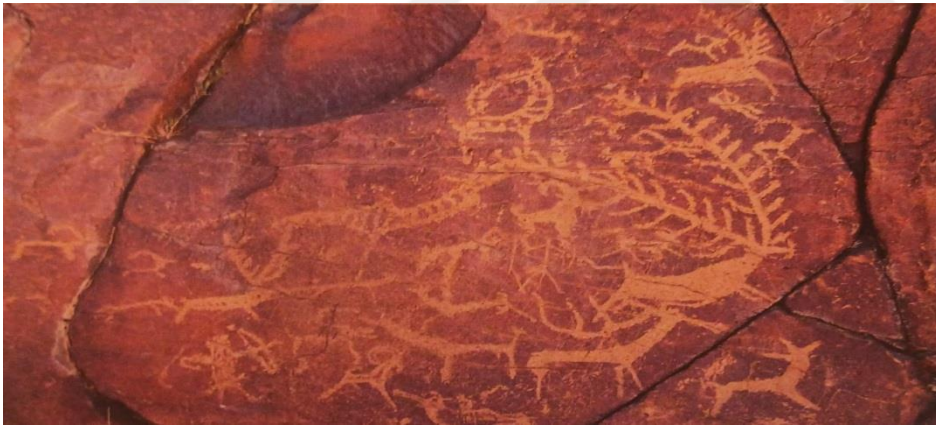


Figure 4: Moğolistan-Mandal Hayrhan, Taştaki Türkler

In another rock painting created by a collective animal composition, we can see men shooting arrows this time. And again, we can observe that the deer antlers that symbolize the tree of life, which is grown even longer and branched out. This painting, reminiscent of a group hunt, also indicates the sacredness of such hunts since, as expressed before, the elongated and branched deer motifs, which symbolize the sacred tree of life, are frequently placed within the painting. A hunted animal is

considered important and sacred to a large community after a group hunt, just as an animal is important and sacred to an individual after an individual hunt. Another noteworthy aspect is the increasing stylization of the mountain goats found in many parts of the rock painting. To focus on a single point, we can take the example of the two mountain goat figures placed one after the other in the middle left of the painting. We believe that the mountain goats here are entirely abstract concepts, represented in a linear way. In other words, the person who created this painting did not draw a mountain goat but rather shaped the statement “I was here too, and this is my sacred symbol!” in a way that corresponds to the purpose and meaning of the rock painting. In this regard, it is possible to see this example as the beginning of the tamga tradition.

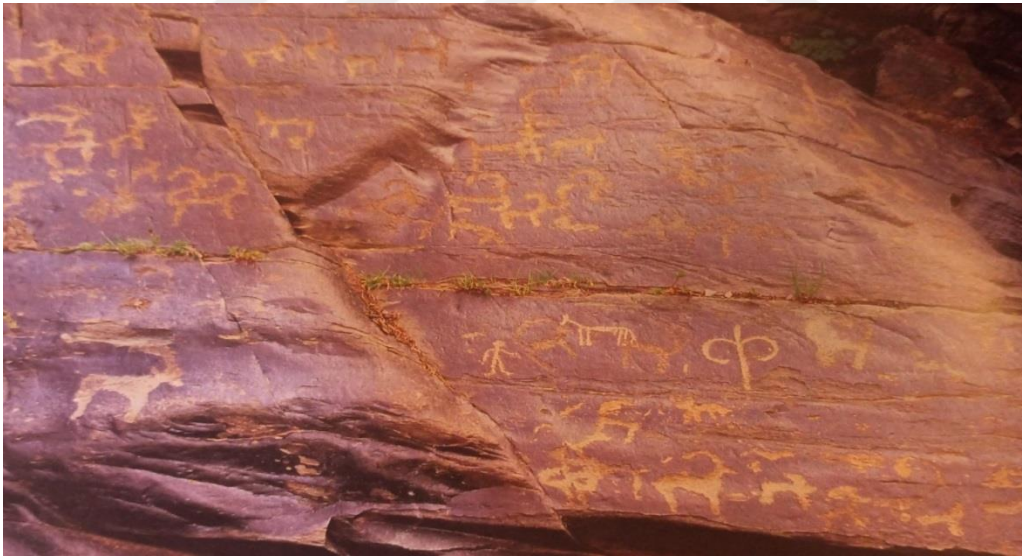


Figure 5: Kırgızistan-Talas-Çiğimtaş, Taştaki Türkleri

It is possible to consider the mountain goat figures seen especially in the upper middle and upper left parts of this rock painting as one of the most significant examples of transitional products in tamga culture. When we compare the thick k (**ḱ**), thin k (**ḱ**), thick r (**ṛ**), thin t (**ṥ**), and the double-pronounced (**ṛṥ**) letters in the Gokturk alphabet with the mountain goat figures we mentioned above, we can immediately

notice the linear similarities. However, it should be noted here that there are omissions in the prominent mountain goat figures during the transition to tamga process. This also serves as another proof that the rock painting, which has now lost its true meaning of a mountain goat, begins to become abstract and imply different meanings. For example, the thick k letter is just a mountain goat consisting of legs, body, and neck. Its horns extending backwards are missing. The thin k letter is a mountain goat with only a neck and two horns. The thick r symbolizes the upside-down shape of a mountain goat consisting only of legs, body, and neck, which we mentioned for the thick k letter. The thin t is indicated with the shape looking to the other side, like the reflection of the thick k letter. The ök-ük letter indicates that a mountain goat has completely transformed into a letter with its legs, body, neck, and horns.



Figure 6: Moğolistan-Gobi Çölü, Taştaki Türkler

One of the most significant examples of the linearized mountain goat figure can be seen in this rock painting found in the Gobi Desert in Mongolia. The painting not only depicts a mountain goat in its entirety but also shows us an example of the variation of the letters we mentioned above through addition, subtraction, and turning in different directions.



Figure 7: Moğolistan-Gobi Çölü, Taştaki Türkler

When we look at the picture on the left side, we see a mountain goat whose two horns have extended backwards and almost merged with the back. When we take the body of the mountain goat and

leave only its horns, the shape that emerges resembles the tamgas of the Karaevli and Chavındır tribes, according to Kaşgarlı Mahmud.

If we pay attention to the letter “𐰽” in Gokturk, which corresponds to the sound “ny”, it is possible to say that this letter also resembles the shape of the mountain goat mentioned above. The difference is that the horns are not intertwined in a crescent shape but rather extend backwards in a parallel crescent shape.

We aim to show and explain the transformation of the mountain goat that is turned into a linear form and given different meanings through taken apart in sections and then formed into first tamgas and then letters. Our statements are not insistent but rather a part of natural development and change. Therefore, it would not be misleading to give an example of this development and change as follows:

If we take the invention of the telephone, there have drastic changes in its size, shape, function, and function regarding its present and past states. Its size has shrunk considerably; its shape has changed, differentiated and become thinner; its function has gone beyond the communication between two people and has now become a gateway for trade and a device for entertainment and its function has been enriched by tens of times compared to its original production content. In other words, its first form and meaning hardly overlap with its current form and meaning. Similarly, rock

paintings have lost their one-dimensional meaning and evolved in terms of shape, function, and content over time by transforming rock paintings into tamgas and from tamgas into letters. Therefore, It is not a surprise that the mountain goat, which holds such an important place in Turkish culture, has also undergone a similar transformation from a picture to a tamga and then to an alphabetic symbol. The tribe tamga of the Gokturk Khaganate, which holds a very important place in Turkish history and concerns all Turks in the world today, is also a mountain goat.

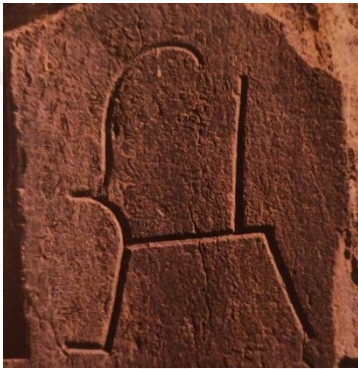


Figure 8: Moğolistan-Orhun Anıtları, Taştaki Türkler

The tamga located at the top of the Kül Tigin monument is a completely stylized mountain goat. If we look at the perfection in the shape, it can be seen how important sharp and oval lines are in Turkish culture. We will restate this importance in the following headings and try to show how much they influenced which tamga and which letter. These shapes are also found in different

cultural elements, not just in tamgas and letters.



Figure 9: Türklerin Kozmik Sembolleri Tamgalar



Figure 10: Altaylardan Tuna Boyuna Türk Dünyasında Ortak Motifler

In the first photo, we see that the mountain goat eventually became a tamga and found its place on the Gokturk coin over time. This tamga is also used by the notables of Gaziantep. The picture next to it shows the horns of a mountain goat on a bag in the Kazakhstan State Museum. At the same time, since this shape also resembles ram horns, we will cover it separately in the following sections.

Letter 𐰇 (z) and Its Formation Process

The letter z (𐰇) in the Gokturk alphabet, which is frequently used in rock paintings and tamgas, is one of the common expressions. However, in tamgas, it appears as a 𐰇 symbol, and we see its final form in the Gokturk alphabet. The commonly known name of this tamga is accepted as the “Tengri Tamgası” (Tamga/Stamp of God).¹⁷ The underlying idea behind this naming is interpreted as reaching God or considering everything around, including oneself, as a part of God. We see this mentality in many places in Turkish culture and life. In pre-Islamic times, the tradition of burying valuable items, swords, bows, arrows and even horses in the grave with the deceased people comes from the understanding of being resurrected by God after death. In the Islamic period, the “devriye,” a Sufi thought, is also evidence of this view. We believe that the earliest form of this mentality, which is frequently used by Sufis and means constantly returning or circulating, is the Tengri Tamga. When we investigate how this tamga emerged and its first form in rock paintings, we encounter astronomy.

As known, the sky and the beings in the sky have been the focus of interest for Turks throughout history, and over time, they have attributed holiness to them as well.

¹⁷ Nuray BİLGİLİ, *Türklerin Kozmik Sembolleri-Tamgalar*, p. 15.

This has even entered mythology and epics over time, and as we intend to explain, it has been incorporated into tamgas and writing. This also shows how important the beings in the sky are for Turks.

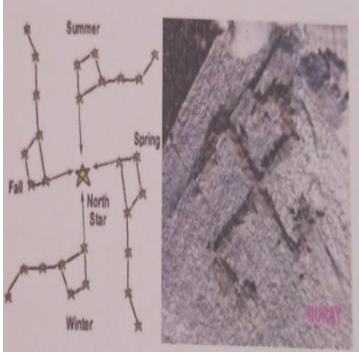


Figure 11: Türklerin Kozmik Sembolleri



Figure 12: Türklerin Kozmik Sembolleri



Figure 13: Asmalıyatak, Damgaların Göçü

The shape to the left of the first image above represents the annual movement of the Big Dipper constellation around the North Star, depending on the seasons. The shape to the right of the same image represents the Tengri tamga, which is found in the Saymalytaş monument. One of its common names dedicated in the later periods is the "swastika." We can see that these two shapes resemble each other quite closely. The image in the middle above shows astronomical drawings of the sun (sun wheel), moon, and Tengri tamga. It is not only a coincidence that these three are together, but also the Tengri tamga was drawn together with the celestial bodies because of its connection to the sun and moon. What is the reason for the Turks to internalize and attribute so much sanctity to the sky and celestial beings in their daily lives? We try to answer this question rationally and in the healthiest way possible: Turks are a nation that has lived in the vast steppes for centuries. It is the place where they were born, grew up, slept, fought, thought, got angry, loved... As people who lived and interiorized the steppe, it is impossible to imagine them being independent of the sky, because, in the steppe, the sky and the earth are very close to each other. What we are

trying to say with this expression is that since the horizon line is generally visible, people tend to think or imagine that the earth and sky are close to each other.

On the other hand, we believe that this situation is also closely related to nomadic and settled lifestyles. A person living a settled life would confine themselves within certain limits (house, field, garden, etc.), and over time, these artificial and physical boundaries would also affect their thought structure. As a result, things outside these limits would seem unessential and meaningless to the person. On the other hand, nomadic people who are constantly seeking new pastures for their herds, using the sky to navigate during the day and especially at night in the Central Asian steppes, standing guard at night to prevent their herds from being attacked by wild animals, and being unable to remain indifferent to the beauty of the sky during their watch, would certainly be affected by all of this and over time, would assign sacredness to these things by deriving meanings from them. Thus, this would become a habit of society, and individuals who are particularly interested in the sky and its entities would emerge. Therefore, the sky would be constantly monitored, and the answers to questions such as when and how the shape of a star or star cluster changes, and what are the annual movements of the moon (crescent, full moon, etc.) would be found and passed down from generation to generation.

When we examine the mythological perspectives of the Turks, which give personality to natural beings and events, we see the constellation of Ursa Major. We will not go into the details of Turkish mythology, but it is essential to mention the mythological perspective to understand why this tamga has such an important place in national memory and how it entered our alphabet. According to a belief in Turkish mythology, the Little Bear constellation was drawn by two horses pulling a cart, while the Ursa Major constellation had seven wolves that were constantly chasing these two

horses.¹⁸ This belief shows us that the Turks decorate the meanings they attribute to the stars with figures they choose from their own lives. Star knowledge holds a very important place for warrior tribes. For example, at night, star knowledge is the only solution for telling time. In Anatolian villages, even the time of specific hours can be estimated with star knowledge. They are so good and confident in this regard that in the folk song “Kervan Kırın”, the fault is not attributed to a person's incorrect knowledge of the stars, but to the stars rising at the wrong time. The relationship between stars and daily life is not only about finding time and direction but also about cold and hot weather. From a mythological perspective, according to the Yakut Turks, the main reason for the formation of cold weather is that it descends from the holes of planets to the Earth. In the northeast of Asia, according to another belief, the tail of the Ursa Major determines the seasons. Winter comes when the tail is located in the north, autumn when it is in the west, summer when it is in the south, and spring when it is in the east. All of these show us how closely mythological thinking and legends are intertwined with daily practice.

According to another belief of Kyrgyz Turks, the constellation Ursa Major is considered the guardian of the constellation Ursa Minor. The Altai Turks call this star "the seven horses", while some Kyrgyz Turks refer to it as "the seven mountain sheep". Another group calls it "the seven bandits", and Western Siberian tribes have given it various names such as "four elks, three hunters". However, the name generally given to this star by the Turks is “Yediger”,¹⁹ which is considered to be one of the oldest Turkic names. In Anatolia, it is called "Yedi Kör (Seven Blind Men), “Yedi Ker (Seven Sons)” and sometimes “Yedi Eşek (Seven Donkey).” In coastal

¹⁸ Bahaeddin ÖGEL, *Türk Mitolojisi I*, p. 53.

¹⁹ Bahaeddin ÖGEL, *Türk Mitolojisi II*, p. 257.

areas, some call it “Gemi Yıldızı (Star of the Ship)” or “Kömük”. It is known that the name “Yedigen” began to be used after the 11th century. Yusuf Has Hacıp’s work “Kutadgu Bilig” also contains abundant information and examples about astronomy.

We can see that the celestial beings in the sky eventually helped the steppe people, especially in determining directions. On a full moon night, it is not even necessary to say that we can easily find our way once our eyes get used to the brightness of the earth. The Turks saw all of these as help and grace from the God they believed in. The fact that their God used “Gök (sky)” as their greatest support gave birth to the expression “Gök Tanrı (Sky God)” as an epithet. The Turks, who were aware that God created everything in the universe in a cycle of repetition, saw it appropriate to call this symbol the “Tengri tamga” in line with their long observations and assigned meanings. This tamga, also known as the “oz” tamga in Turkish culture geography, corresponds to the letter “𐰆” (z, ze) in the Gokturk alphabet, as we mentioned above.

The Oz or Tengri tamga, or the Wheel of Fortune, not only appears in rock paintings and tamgas but also in Turkish carpet and kilim motifs.



Figure 14: Altaylar’dan Tunaboyuna, Türk Dünyasında Ortak Motifler

As seen in the photo on the left side, we witness that the shape of the “z” letter in Gokturkic or the Tengri tamga is embroidered on a carpet. We can observe examples of such carpets in different regions of Anatolia, as we have seen in Tunceli-Pertek. This shows us

how resilient of a nation we are in terms of transferring cultural data to future generations.

Letter “𐰏” and Letter “𐰓” (ık-k-kı, ok-uk) and Their Formation Process

The letters “𐰏” that represent the sounds “ık-k-kı” and “𐰓” representing the sounds “ok-uk” in the Gokturk alphabet are rare letters that are not very open to interpretation in terms of their form, the sound they represent, and the tamga they are represented with. Firstly, the bow and arrow have a very important place in Turkish cultural history, in addition to being a defence and attack tool. The bow, “yay” in Turkish, and arrow, “ok” in Turkish, are important symbols that constantly appear in the meanings of power, might, strength, and sovereignty, showing that a special state understanding is adopted. The bow represents the ruler; the arrow represents the ruled ones. In other words, the ruler holds the bow and, when necessary, sends arrows to other Turkish communities to indicate that the time has come to unite. This is a call for gathering made before the war. Therefore, the “ok” (arrow) has the power to bring together. Those who do not comply with this call are considered rebellious and can be punished as soon as possible. Thus, the bow and arrow are given a value that reaches the level of sanctity.

One thing we cannot ignore in this regard is the name Oghuz (Oğuz). The name Oghuz corresponds to a tribe in historical sources, and when “ok” is combined with an old plural suffix “-uz”, the expression “okuz, oğuz” is formed and represents tribes or clans.²⁰ The main character of the Legend of Oghuz Khagan, which is one of the oldest Turkish epics, Oghuz Khagan, shared the bow with his children, taught them how to govern the state, proved that no one could break them by combining dozens of bows to form a unity, and provided information about the names of the 24 Oghuz tribes. When we consider all of these, we see that the “ok” has an important

²⁰ Ahmet TAŞAĞIL, İlk Türkler-Bozkurdan Dünyaya Yayılanlar, p. 210.

place in Turkish history. In addition, the bow is also present in the tamgas of some tribes. According to Rashid al-Din, following the will of Oguz Kaghan, his son Kun Han took over and implemented reforms together with Irkil Hoca. Irkil Hoca stated, “After your father's passing, four infants were born as children of his six sons. Later, when they grow up, they will engage in disputes among themselves to possess their grandfather's wealth and the people. Therefore, the name, lineage, and slogan of each one of them should be written separately, and each should be given a sign or 'tamga' to identify their decree, treasury, and livestock. These measures should be taken for the unity and solidarity of the state.”²¹ As can be understood, the mention of tamgas even during the explanation of an important matter to the significant individuals of the

state can be considered as a consequence of the significance of tamgas.

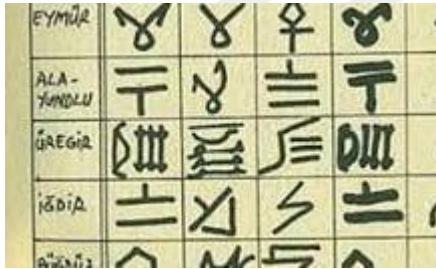


Figure 15: Oğuzlar, Tarihleri, Boy Teşkilatı, Destanları

As seen in the figure, the tamga of the Uregir or Yuregir tribe is in the form of a bow and

three arrows. Some tamgas of other tribes also resemble arrows with their body and metal and

pointed tips called "temren". However, we think it would be unfair to attribute the origin of many tamgas to “ok” just because they resemble them. Therefore, we have the obligation to process and express the reliable information we currently possess.

In conclusion, the fact that the “ok” has such an important place in Turkish culture and is reflected in both tamga and the alphabet is not a coincidence but can be explained by a strong belief and language evolution. Therefore, it is natural to accept

²¹ Olcabey KARATAYEV, Kayrıkhan JANIBEKOVA, Damgalar ve Onların İşlevleri(Fonksiyonları)

that the parts belonging to the arrow (such as the metal at the end and the sharp temren) also participate in this evolutionary cycle.

Stars, Astronomy, and Formation Process of Letter “Y” (iç-çi) and Letter “A” (ç)

We have previously mentioned the significant role of stars or celestial objects in Turkish culture. We will delve deeper into this topic and provide explanations where necessary, as we believe that some rock paintings, their subsequent forms as tamgas, and the current forms as letters have a direct or indirect connection to astronomy. It is not very convincing that the Turks only benefited from the sun, the moon, and a few prominent stars, and did not make use of the other constellations, especially considering the stories, documents, and names mentioned in the language and culture of the time. It is evident that they had an undeniable wealth of knowledge in the field of astronomy.

The fact that so many constellations have entered Turkish culture is not a coincidence, as we have expressed above. However, it would be unfair to say that they were included in Turkish culture in a haphazard way by ordinary people. There were individuals within the community who were interested in them, who were knowledgeable about the movements of celestial bodies, and who knew where each star was and what it meant. Based on the information available to us, these individuals could only have been spiritual leaders known as “Kam”. They also practiced divination, foretold the future, and interpreted dreams, and in doing so, they undoubtedly made extensive use of the stars in the sky. For a nation that had attached so much importance to the sky, and even exclaimed God as the Gök Tanrı, Sky God, it is not surprising that they had such extensive knowledge about the sky. We consider

this as something that should not be viewed as strange or surprising. As an example of this, we can mention that some numbers, especially the number 7, are considered sacred and meaningful for Turks. We think that this is related to the number of star clusters. It is also remarkable that the Ursa Major constellation consists of seven stars.

First of all, the letter “Ÿ” which represents the sounds of iç-çi in Turkish has been interpreted as the verb “uç-“ (to fly) by many scientists, based on the expression “uçmağa varmak” (to die), and has been explained with the figure of a man raising his hands to the sky. We cannot say that this explanation is entirely wrong, but it seems to be open to different interpretations as well. One of these interpretations is based on the numerous shapes resembling this letter in rock paintings and suggests that it resembles a figure of an animal's foot.

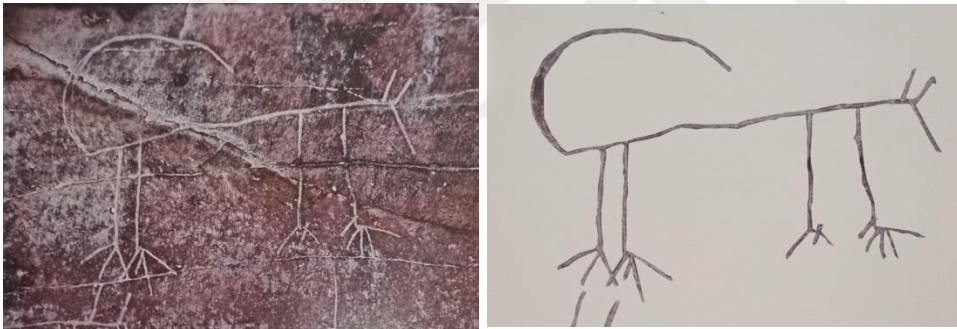


Figure 16: Damgaların Göçü-Kurgan, Ankara Gündül Kaya Resimleri

As seen in the rock painting above, animal feet are drawn upside down with three or four short lines. This is found in many rock paintings. Based on the old Turkish idiom “Nalları dikmek”, the upward position of a dead animal's, especially a horse's, feet or the perception of it has been associated with the action of “uçmağa varmak (reaching for the sky)” and thus the idiom “Nalları dikmek” has come to mean death. We think it is fair to show these drawings in rock paintings as the source of this. The letter “Ÿ”, which only represents the “ç” sound, is also represented in the Yenisei inscriptions as the separation of two lines upside down from a single body, as

in this case. Also, it is represented with the shape of three lines separated from a single body upside down. In addition to these two views on the origin of the letters Υ and Λ in Gokturkic, which are the open-handed man and the animal feet drawn with three or four short lines, we believe there is a third view that we can rely on. This is the symbolic representation of the Cancer constellation related to astronomy.

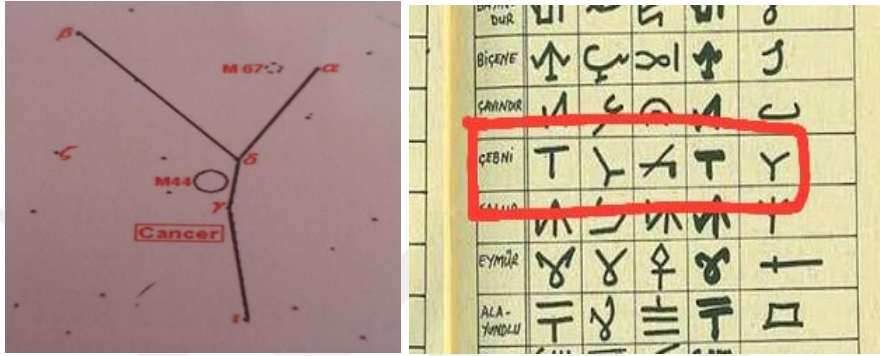


Figure 17: Türklerin Kozmik Sembolleri, Tamgalar, Nuray Bilgili

As we have previously expressed, astronomy developed significantly among the Turks. We will refrain from repeating the examples we gave earlier here. However, it should be noted that the Υ and Λ letters, which represent the “ç” sounds mentioned in the Gokturk alphabet, are an inevitable manifestation of both social life and stars. We also see in the tamgas of the Chepni tribe that the same style is presented with changes in direction over time, albeit similar to each other.

Letter “ $\mathfrak{Z}$ ” (nç) and Its Formation Process

The letter ($\mathfrak{Z}$) that represents the “nç” sound in the Gokturk alphabet appears in many rock paintings and tamgas. There are multiple views regarding this letter, but first of all, we think it is worth stating that the fact that letters did not emerge from just one source (a fixed rock painting, tamga, or idea) does not necessarily mean that the information we present about it is unreliable. On the contrary, the variety of ideas presented regarding the emergence or formation of letters stems from the dynamic and

mobile structure of Turkish culture. As known, Turkish is a verb-based language, and many words are based on actions. Thus, it is natural for a language in motion and its values (symbols, images, tamgas, etc.) to undergo certain changes. What is to be focused on and delineated here is whether these differences belong to Turkish culture or not. Rock paintings or tamgas that are exposed to cultural migration may have different meanings in another Turkish community and thus be interpreted differently. Therefore, when we consider the emergence of letters in this way, based on different sources but molded in their own culture, the resulting interpretation shows not an inconsistency but rather multiple pieces of evidence leading to a conclusion, which presents an increase in the level of reliability.

First of all, different written variations of the nç (𐰽) letter in Gokturk can be observed in the table below.

(a/e)z	𐰽𐰽𐰽	𐰽	𐰽𐰽𐰽	𐰽𐰽𐰽𐰽	𐰽𐰽	𐰽𐰽𐰽
(a)tc	M			M M	M	
(a/e)nç	𐰽 𐰽	𐰽	𐰽𐰽	𐰽𐰽𐰽𐰽		𐰽𐰽𐰽
(a/e)nc	𐰽𐰽𐰽	𐰽		𐰽	𐰽𐰽	𐰽𐰽
oq/uq qo/qu	↓	↓	↓	↑		

Figure 18: Tarih Boyunca Türkçenin Yazımı

The spelling of the “nç” sound in the Orkhon, Yenisei, Talas, Hoyto-Tamir inscriptions, and some manuscripts is shown in the table. It can be understood from this table that there is a zigzag or bend in the formation of the letter that produces the “nç” sound. When looking at the shapes, the reference to a mountain peak or the horns of a mountain goat might establish. This letter also resembles the tamga of the Dogher tribe.

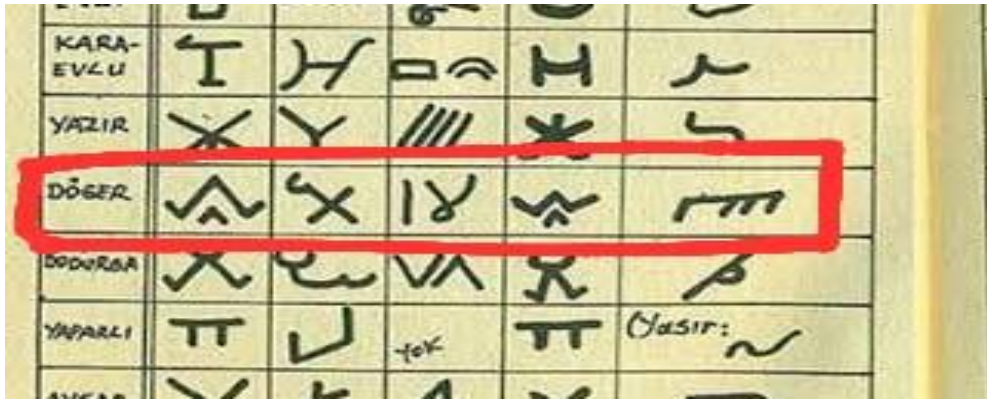


Figure 19: Türklerin Kozmik Sembolleri, Tamgalar, Nuray Bilgili

Considering the tamgas belonging to the Dogher tribe, different shapes can be seen. The tamga at the end is an example from Ebu'l Gazi Bahadır Khan's work called “Şecere-i Terakkime”. Although it cannot be said that Ebu'l Gazi Bahadır Khan's works presenting the transfer of tamgas are very reliable, we feel the need to pass them through our research filter. Four short lines downward from a straight line remind us of a mountain goat's body and four legs, except for its horns and head. This horizontal tamga may have turned into a vertical one over time, and its four short lines may have also turned into a zigzag shape. However, the tamga of the Dogher tribe that most resemble the “nç” sound is the first and fourth tamgas from the beginning. We again consider astronomy as their archetypal development or their reflection in rock paintings. However, it is essential to show a rock painting as the first step.



Figure 20: Moğolistan- Gobi Çölü, Taştaki Türkler

The rock painting above is crucial in terms of being an example of the transition from concert to abstract as well as presenting various meanings within it.

Here, we can see the horns resembling the tree of life of a mountain goat and its tail extending in curving lines, which contains a celestial or abstract meaning. In Turkish cultural thought, we know from mythological or epic narratives that the ground and the sky are actually a whole or that there is a connection between the two. Here, this unity is taken into account and the tail of the mountain goat is carved into the rock in a zigzag shape. This could be related to the stars and could be a reflection of an event on the rock painting. Over time, starting from the idea of expressing complex things more simply, this could be the source of both the tamga of Dogher tribe and the “nç” sound in the Gokturk alphabet.

Letter “𐰚” (nd, nt) and Its Formation Process

Firstly, it is believed that the letter “nt” in the Gokturk alphabet is represented by the symbol of the “ant kadehi (oath chalice/cup)” and is known to correspond to the sound value of “nt”. In the ancient Turkic political culture, it is known that the rulers used to clink cups during inter-state agreements. Therefore, we believe in this perspective of the origin of the “nt” sound and think that it is considered sacred since it was performed especially in the upper echelons of society. This is because during the investigation of rock paintings, tamgas, and the alphabet, the expression of “sacredness” emerges as a continuity that provides meaning. In other words, these valuable and tangible cultural elements that the Turks have left from thousands of years ago to the present day also serve as a significant fingerprint. We believe that rock paintings and tamgas, which possess characteristics such as recognizing the identity of a nation, carrying this identity through different geographies, and being recognized by others, should be regarded as fingerprints in different shapes just as found in humans.



Figure 21: Türklerin Kozmik Sembolleri Tamgalar

In the image above, the Ak-Hun coin can be seen on the left. On the coin, there is a tamga that we interpret as the “oath cup” representing the “nt” sound in the horse's girth. On the right side of the image, there is an iron tool used for marking (to tamga) horses found in Mongolia. At the same time, in the fine arts of the Turks (such as sculpture, painting, miniature, etc.), human figures holding a cup can be observed frequently.

Letter “𐰇”, Letter “𐰆” (thick and thin b) and Their Formation Process

As known, the letter 𐰆 (eb-be) in the Gokturk alphabet has been related to the felt tent, which is also a part of Turkish culture. Also, since the word “eb” is similar to the word “ev” meaning “home” in Turkish, the origins of this letter are derived from the meanings and shapes of “ev (home)”, “çadır (tent)” and “kıl çadır (felt tent)”. Even Thomsen, who connects the origins of the Gokturk alphabet to the Sami (Aramaic) language, mentions that some letters in the Gokturk alphabet (such as “ay” in the shape of “yarım ay (crescent)”, “ok” in the shape of “ok (arrow)”, “eb” in the shape of a tent) can be ideographic. Considering these, we believe that this view is on point and provable, and we can say that it belongs to the Turks. In addition, we can observe that this letter does not show much variation in written documents since

variations of letters or tamgas sometimes make it difficult for researchers to find their origins or the ideas from which they were created. The lack of similarity or connection between letter **𐰚** (eb-be) and letter **𐰚** (ab-ba) in the Gokturk alphabet does not inhibit the idea we have defended above. One reason for this is that there is no such word as “ab or ba” in Old Turkic. Moreover, each letter does not necessarily have to correspond to a meaning that is a standalone word according to its pronunciation. Therefore, there is no obligation to consider expressions that we have no knowledge about regarding their time and place. We also see that the letter “be” in Gokturk does not correspond to a single-word meaning. However, we can say that the letter appears in its current form inspired by the horns of a mountain goat. As we have mentioned before, the mountain goat has a very important place in Turkish culture. Therefore, even though the meaning of the expression “ab” remains a mystery, the meaning of its form can be derived as the horn of the mountain goat. This letter also shows similarity to the tamga of the Pechenek (Bechenek, Bichene) tribe.

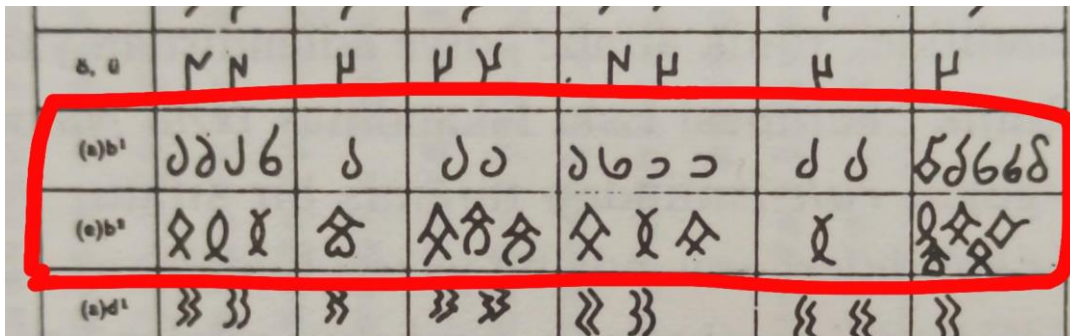


Figure 22: Tarih Boyunca Türkçenin Yazımı

In the Orkhon, Yenisei, Hoyt Tamir, and Talas inscriptions, as well as in some written works, we see different writing styles for the letter **𐰚**. Apart from minor differences; it is generally an undistorted linear letter. This letter is of great importance to Turks because, from the past to the present, they have surrounded their homes with intersecting wooden or metal objects and covered them with felt

materials. This contains significant meaning that cannot be ignored in terms of both nomadic understanding and cultural continuity. Tamgas or similar letters formed by intersecting two lines will appear on the following pages. The symbol, known as the cross (X) mark, is one of the foremost signs of ownership or possession. In a sense, the sacredness of the place that is owned or possessed is highlighted. Both the cross mark within the letter **⌘** in Gokturk and the cross-shaped poles and ceilings in tents are actually manifestations of this abstract sense of ownership or possession and the associated sacredness since, in Turkish culture, the concept of homeland is as important as the tents, which is the place where the family lives, grows, and shelters. Therefore, these tents are also referred to as “yurt”, a concept that is frequently used as a synonym for the homeland.

This letter can be observed on our carpets and rugs, which are an inseparable part of our culture and still exist as a craft in our culture.



Figure 23: Ağrı-Patnos, Altaylardan Tunaboyuna Türk Dünyasında Ortak Motifler

As seen in the picture above, the letter **⌘** in the Gokturk alphabet is depicted as a pattern on a rug without any changes.

Letter “**⌘**”, “**⌘**” (thick ve thin d) and Their Formation Process

The letter “X” in Gokturk reminds us of the letter 𐰄 which we previously intended to explain as the “Tengri Tamga” and which represents the sound “z” in the Gokturk alphabet since we see this tamga in different shapes in various rock paintings.



Figure 24: Türklerin Kozmik Sembolleri Tamgalar

Considering the picture above, on the left, the tamga found inside a deer horn in Uzbekistan; and on the right the tamga found in Kyrgyzstan-Saymalitas are shown. We know that this tamga, which has many examples, is frequently used by the Turks in rock paintings. Based on the example above, it is likely that this tamga evolved from the previously mentioned Tengri Tamga, and we can trace its root to the Big Dipper or even to the North Star as it holds an important place in Turkish cosmology. In order to provide a meaningful context, we need to first provide some information about the North Star.

There are widespread beliefs related to the North Star in Turkish mythology, and even today, in Anatolia. The most well-known and fundamental belief is that the North Star is the "pole of the sky". This is generally referred to as the “Demir Kazık (Iron Peg)”.²² One of the biggest reasons for this naming is also based on an ancient belief. Each Turkic horseman has a peg to tie their horse in front of their house. Based on this tradition, God (and companions he created) also had horses, which they tied to this star. There are also designations such as “Golden Peg”. Turks believed that God

²² Bahaeddin ÖGEL, Türk Mitolojisi II, p. 223.

tied the Earth to the sky with the North Star, and therefore, they wanted to depict this star with different symbols. One of these symbols is the letter “X” in the Gokturk alphabet. Some Turkish communities living in different geographies have given the following meanings to this star: hatching, rising copper to the sky, an iron tree, the gate of heaven... The idea that the top of the “World Tree” touches the North Star is also a widespread belief. All of these given meanings reveal a stable and abstract or concrete settlement and thus emerges the idea of both sanctity and the maximum protection of the sacred.

The belief that “whatever is in the sky is also on earth” is present in the traces of the oldest Turkish culture. Based on this belief, there is no obstacle to accepting the North Star, that is the tamga or letter X, as the tamga of the sky. It is also possible to consider it as the tamga of the earth, based on the same belief. It is also possible that the archetypal nature of this symbol has given rise to the understanding of stamping, claiming, possessing, determining ownership, and the sacredness of belonging since there is a word in Old Turkish, “ed”, which means “property, possessions”. The Turkish understanding of tamga has emerged primarily to indicate who owns the property or possessions.

Also, we can observe examples and variations of the X tamga through Turkic tribes: Kayi, Yazır, Doger, Avshar, Kızık, Cephni, Eymur, Alayuntu.

It is essential to point out that the X letter resembles the “tree of life” motif we mentioned earlier. Through rock paintings and tamgas, we can observe that the deer antlers abstractly extend towards the sky and over time, they change shape and take on sharp forms.

The meaning of the word “ad”, which corresponds to the “d” sound in the Gokturk alphabet (as in “ad-da”), is given as a work of art, a symbol of goodness, and a sign of fortune in Divan-ı Lügat’it Türk Dizini. Regarding the meanings of “goodness” and “fortune”, it is possible to establish a connection between the tree of life and this letter since the tree of life is a sacred tool used by religious leaders (Kam, Shaman) in their celestial journeys among the ancient Turks as it can be observed through the rock paintings. This sacredness has found a counterpart in all segments of society as, according to a belief, people are connected to the tree of life with a sacred bond, and this tree undertakes a kind of spiritual path between the earth and the sky. The sky is an important factor in establishing the connection since the Turks believed that both punishment and reward came from the sky (God). At this point, punishment should not be taken into account as we do not encounter any negative thoughts or beliefs regarding the tree of life in the narratives. Therefore, only goodness and fortune remain in this context. We encounter the motif of the tree of life in the creation of humanity, receiving grace from God, and their descent, which are important issues for the Turks resembling goodness. At the same time, it also overlaps with the concept of “fortune.” In ancient Turkish culture, this concept was perceived as a privilege received from God rather than the “luck” belief in today’s society.



Şekil 25: Malatya, Altaylardan
Tunaboyuna Türk Dünyasında Ortak
Motifler

In the picture, we see different variants of the letter «. It is even possible to say that it dominates the overall design of the kilim. This kilim, which belongs to the Malatya region, shows us that some of our sacred values still live on in our national memory as motifs. This letter, which appears in other works as

well, also manifests itself in the tattoo culture that exists in Anatolia. When asked about the meanings of tattoos, it is generally said that they bring good luck or are intended for protection from evil spirits, but we understand that many of their meanings have been forgotten and are now only based on adhering to tradition. This motif can be seen in many places and fields of the Turkic world in similar forms.

Letter “𐰪”, Letter “𐰪” (thick ve thin g) and Their Formation Process

The letter that represents the “g” sound in Gokturk resembles a stylized deer antler. This is also a motif that belongs to Turkish culture and can be traced back to the earliest times in history considering its variations. The size and shape of the letter do not vary much in inscriptions. Three short lines pointing in the same direction may sometimes be written with four lines. We think this variation emerged from a desire among clans or tribes to use the same tamga to make minor changes to avoid confusion. We previously mentioned how important the deer is in Turkish history; how its antlers evolved into more elaborate designs in rock paintings; and how the concept of the tree of life emerged from the deer antler over time. When we copy and paste this letter's shape to the other side, a tree figure with branches leaning downward emerges, which we believe can only be the tree of life. When we examine the architecture of the Yakutiye Madrasa in Erzurum, we can see the tree of life with leaning branches. Additionally, the Old Turkic verb “eg-“ means “eğmek” to bend or curve downward.

When we focus on the shape, pronunciation, and meaning of this letter, we can see how the rock painting evolved into the tamga and how the tamga evolved into the letter both in terms of shape and meaning in the light of the interpretations and information we have expressed above.

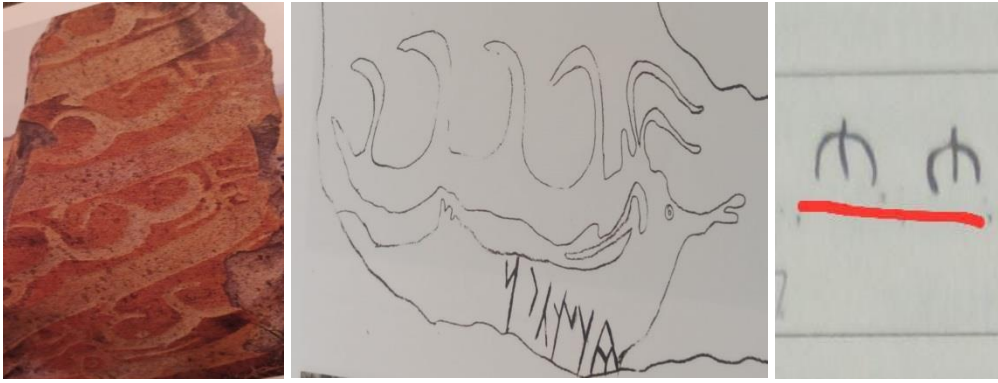


Figure 26: Moğolistan-Şatırçulu Yenisey Yazıtları-Tuva Müzesi Dongoyın-Şiree Anıtı

As seen in the pictures above, the letter is illustrated as a painting and a tamga. Also, we can encounter shapes similar to this letter as patterns in the carpets and kilims in Turkish culture.

Similarly, the Gokturkic letter “𐰽” representing the sounds “ag-ga” can also be encountered through different shapes in different places.

dem		⊗	
g¹	𐰽 𐰽 𐰽	𐰽 𐰽 𐰽 𐰽 𐰽 𐰽 𐰽	𐰽 𐰽 𐰽
g²	𐰽 𐰽	𐰽 𐰽 𐰽 𐰽 𐰽 𐰽 𐰽	𐰽 𐰽 𐰽 𐰽

Şekil 27: Tarih Boyunca Türkçenin Yazımı

First of all, this letter resembles the tamgas of the Kayı, Karaevli and Yıva tribes. The word “ag” also corresponds to the meanings of “the space between two legs, thigh; and as a verb, to rise, to mount”. Based on the above table, it can be said that the letter resembles the space between a person’s legs. Eventually, this is not convincing evidence on its own. However, when we consider the meaning of “binmek (to mount)”, we can highlight the connection between these two meanings and prove the letter's shape and meaning. In other words, the space between two legs becomes important when mounting a horse just as one also rises from the ground. In addition,

this letter appears in different variants in carpets and kilims, which are visual memories of Turkish society.

Letter “J”, Letter “Y” (thick ve thin l) and Their Formation Process

First of all, this letter, which represents the sound “l”, does not appear as a separate symbol in the pre-writing periods. We exclude any that we may have missed from this discussion. We can also say that the thick and thin “l” sounds remained almost unchanged in different written works. However, we can see the thick “l” letter as part of a rock painting or tamga. Tamgas of tribes such as Dogher, Dodurga, Kızık, Pechenek, Cavındır, Salur, and Yıva can be regarded as examples of this. The first result we can draw from this is that since it is part of many tamgas, it is not a concept that is used alone and has a meaning. It has been subjected to the culture's add-drop method over time and has taken its place in the alphabet in this way.

The meanings of the word “al” in Old Turkish are “the bottom of something, red and shades of red, orange silk fabric (flag, cover), the verb to take (almak), and deceit.” The meaning of “the bottom of something” draws attention here as the shape of the letter is a short notch on the left side of a long and straight line's bottom. Thus, we can assume that the notch was added to indicate the bottom of something long/tall and straight, such as a pole, tree, person, or horse. Additionally, questioning whether the word “al” as a color originated from the meaning “the bottom of something” is not unreasonable since in those days, the bottom of something meant the part close to the ground. In Kazakh Turkish, “el” which is the other pronunciation of the letter “al” means “soil and homeland”. Furthermore, due to its color, the word “ateş (fire)” also got its name after the word “al”, which means red today. In Anatolia, verbs derived from roots such as “alazla-, ateşi alıştır-” meaning to make fire burn stronger are still

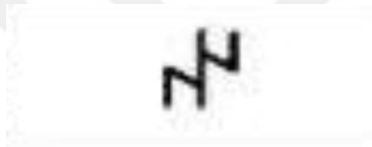
in use, and the meaning mentioned above is the source of this use since the fire was lit on the ground, which reflects even on the source of our "hearth" culture. In many parts of Anatolia, this hearth culture continues today. Even if the house is multi-story and made of wood, a part of the living room is built with heat-proof adobe or mortar; a thick chain ring is hung from top to bottom; pots, etc., are hung on that ring to cook food or boil water. All of these indicate that there is a connection between the meaning and the nature of the letter "al, al-" with fire, ground and earth.

The letter that represents the sound "el" is explained by scholars as a human figure with raised hands. This view has some degree of accuracy, but we believe that citing only this view as a source would be insufficient, as it is based solely on the similarity in shape. The pronunciation of the letter corresponds to meanings such as "people", "nation", "homeland", and "country" in the Kazakh language. This letter appears in many rock paintings and especially in tamgas, either in the same shape as the raised hands or as part of a whole or in a similar form. Examples of tribes that use this letter in their tamgas include Kayı, Bayat, Yazır, Doger, Avshar, Kızık, Begdili, Eymur, Alayundlu, and Yıva. It is clear from this that the appearance of this letter or shape in many tamgas that represent the identity, place, and homeland of these tribes is not a coincidence, but rather a conscious choice that has taken on the name and shape of "el" and has taken its place in Turkish culture and history.

Letter “ŋ”, Letter “𐰽” (thick ve thin n) and Their Formation Process

These letters have shown little variation over the years and appeared as parts of tamgas and rock paintings. The shape of the letter “n”, whether thick or thin, also resembles certain parts of the mountain goat. The thick “n” resembles the horns of the mountain goat, while the thin “n” resembles the mountain goat itself (the two

intersecting parallel lines represent its legs, the two parallel lines extending upwards represent its horns, and the parallel lines in the middle represent its body and neck). The fact that two letters that are not similar in shape have the same sound value (whether thick or thin) suggests that they were used by different groups or tribes as tamgas or parts of tamgas in various social contexts. The main factor in this is that the sound and meaning of “an” and “en” had different connotations during those times. Additionally, the two short lines intersecting the vertical line in the middle are not parallel to the ground. They are parallel to each other but inclined. In other words, they create an impression of a ladder in terms of appearance.



This impression of a ladder is a significant detail because it involves the verb "in-" or, in Old Turkish, the verb "en-," which coincides with the sound value of this letter, "en." The verb “inmek” (to come down) still exists as “enmek” in many parts of Anatolia. We have previously stated that Turkish is a language of action/function, and this is one of the finest examples of it.

It appears possible to consider the letters **X** and **h** as the starting point for the sound of the thin “n” as well. In other words, many concepts that we express for these two letters’ archetypal development are also applicable to the sound of the thin “n.” However, as the number of studies on this matter increase, we believe that more detailed information will be obtained, and thus the verifiability of interpretations regarding this letter will become stronger.

Letter “ŷ”, Letter “l” (thick ve thin s) and Their Formation Process

The thin "s" letter in the Gokturk alphabet has been interpreted by scholars as "sünüg" or "süngü." Based on historical sources, the writing style of this letter has undergone very little or no change. In terms of shape, it is indeed a correct description and interpretation that it resembles the "süngü" (bayonet), which holds significance in Turkish culture. We can understand this from its unchanged formation as mentioned above. Similarly, the bayonet itself has also remained unchanged over time. If the bayonet, used as a weapon, had undergone changes, we believe that this letter would likely have undergone changes in the same direction. Additionally, this letter is a component of many tamgas or it is the tamga itself. We can observe this in the tamgas of tribes such as Kayı, Bayat, Alkaevli, Dogher, Karkın, Pechenek, and Kınık.

In contrast to thin "s" letter, it can be observed that thick "s" letter have different written formations regarding different time periods.

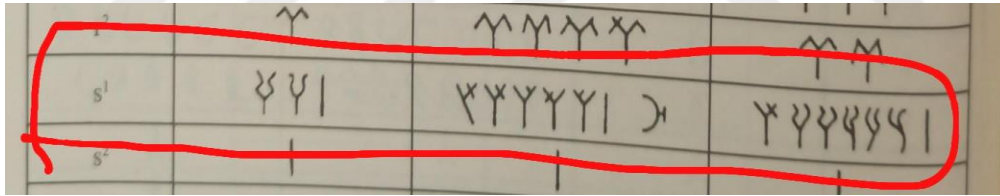


Figure 28: Tarih Boyunca Türkçenin Yazımı

As seen above, this letter resembles the **Y** letter in Gokturkic, which we have previously intended to explain; however, it is not exactly the same. It appears with occasional curved lines and, in some instances, a small notch is added to its two short lines that are facing upwards and crossed. While we believe that it draws inspiration from the archetypal²³ development of the **Y** letter, its curved lines in many parts remind us of a rope hanging around a horse's neck. In fact, the lines that diverge from the intersection and extend upwards narrow in the middle and widen again, as if drawing the shape of a horse's head. The significance of the horse figure in Turkish

²³ Arketip: Archetype, first example. (Dictionary of Turkish Language Association (TDK Sözlük))

In the table above, different written versions of the letter are illustrated through various sources which support the idea that the initial occurrence of this letter is derived from “mountain”.

One of the sensitive points we realized while preparing our work is that there are certain values which carry vital importance for the Turks, are considered sacred, and have become indispensable products of both physical and intellectual work, and these values have been incorporated into rock paintings, tamgas, and ultimately into the alphabet. For this reason, we believe that simply reading and memorizing the alphabet is not enough and that making quick and simplistic inferences would also be insufficient. Therefore, it is essential to elaborate further to comprehend the underlying reasons for this letter’s appearance in the alphabet rather than solely focusing on its resemblance to the term “mountain.” It is well known that “mountain” holds a significant place in Turkish mythology which is supported particularly by Chinese sources in this regard. Chinese sources mention a mountain without trees or vegetation and it is indicated to be located 500 li (a Chinese expression to indicate distances) away from the west of Otuken.²⁴ The Huns considered this mountain sacred and the protective spirit of the country. For them, the spirit of the God who protects the nation and homeland resides in that mountain. The fusion of cave and ancestral cults has resulted in a significant synthesis. It is known that Altai-Yenisei and Yakut Turks also perform important ceremonies for the sacred mountains and their spirits. According to Altai Turks, mountain spirits are so sacred that they have no connection with other spirits; they are independent.

This letter and its variants have been reflected in our culture and have been embroidered on traditional products without undergoing any changes.

²⁴ Abdulkadir İNAN, *Eski Türk Dini Tarihi*, p. 21.

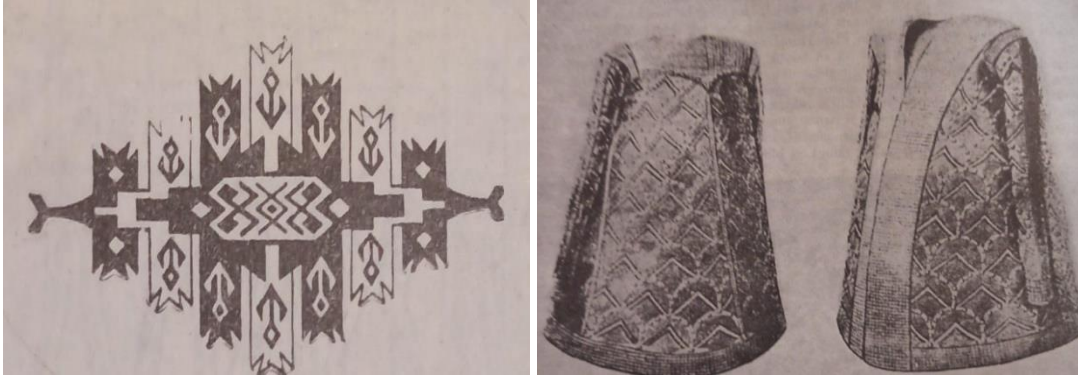


Figure 30: Hun Sanatı

In the left picture above, we can see the thick “t” letter in the Gokturk alphabet. The picture on the right, on the other hand, depicts a coat found in Hun kurgans. Through its embroidery, we witness a different writing style of the letter “t”.

Letter “D”, Letter “Q” (thick ve thin y) and Their Formation Process

Firstly, it is necessary to mention the significance of the “Ay” (Moon) and the “Yay” (Bow) in Turkish culture. This is because the thick “y” letter in the Gokturk alphabet is associated with these two and shows similarity in shape.

As known, in the epic of Oğuz Kagan, one of the oldest epics, the Moon and the Bow emerge as important motifs. One of Oğuz Kagan's sons is named Ay Han (Moon Khan). Oğuz Kağan calls his sons together and sends them to the east and west directions. On their way, they find a golden bow and three silver arrows according to the order they received. The symbolic meanings and essence of these objects in Turkish culture are already known in academic circles. The point we need to highlight here is the depiction of the bow as golden. In other words, it implies that it is made of the most valuable metal. The fact that the arrows are made of silver indicates that they have a high value as well; however, since the bow is more prominent in the subconscious of society, the highest value is attributed to the bow. We can clearly see this arrow-bow symbol in the tamga (clan emblem) of the Yüregir tribe. Considering

the pronunciation of the letter as a “ya”, the letter values also correspond to the meaning we emphasize, except for the “y” at the end of the word “yay” (bow). According to Radloff, the ancient pronunciation of the expression “yay tamga” is also “ya tamga.”

Ok-Yay (Bow-Arrow) can also be observed through rock paintings and tamgas. This can be seen not only in Central Asia but also in the Ankara-Gudul rock paintings area in Anatolia, where we observe the bow-arrow tamga on a large panel, and even above it, a drawing of a mountain goat. In addition, tamgas consisting of bow-arrow can also be encountered in different regions of Anatolia. From a mythological perspective, in an Altai Turk epic, God raises a hunter up into the sky, and the Libra constellation is formed from the hunter's bow and arrows.²⁵ The idea that the Sun and the Moon do not possess their own powers and derive their light from God is also attributed to the Altai Turks. According to some beliefs, shamans liken their drums to bows. Therefore, it is known that their drums are referred to as “yay ağacı” (bow tree).

Although it is plausible to consider the second pronunciation of the thick “y” sound as the starting point of the “ay” letter, it is also a possibility that it originated from “Ay” (Moon) as well. While its writing resembles a bow in many sources, it is also represented as a circle in some sources. This shape, which we frequently encounter in both rock paintings and tamgas, is associated with the Moon which is also considered sacred for the Turks. In addition, it has been used side by side with depictions of the Sun in many places. In the rock paintings found in Khakassia, drawings that are pronounced as both “ay” and “yay” can be observed. Furthermore, on a drum belonging to a Yakut shaman in Khakassia, it is possible to see a flying

²⁵ Bahaeddin ÖGEL, *Türk Mitolojisi II*, p. 260-261.

human, the Moon and Sun wheels, and a Crescent represented by two lines or strings.²⁶ In Western Siberia, we can see the Tree of Life and the Moon-Sun drawing together. In other words, the Moon has not been advanced in a single direction in our culture but has been manifested in every aspect of life.

According to ancient Turkic beliefs, the Sun symbolized the east, while the Moon symbolized the west. However, according to the Teleut Turks, the Moon was considered the symbol of the north, and the Sun represented the south since the Moon symbolized the night filled with darkness for them. This belief is also similar to the Gokturk ideology. As a different expression, the Moon is regarded as masculine, while the Sun is considered feminine. This belief is also obtained in Anatolian folk literature. As an example, the widespread saying “Ay Dede” (Moon Grandfather) emerged due to its color (white) and it is regarded as masculine. In the Mamluk Sultanate, a legendary belief considers the Moon as the first ancestor of the Turks. There are many similar beliefs in Turkish culture related to the Moon. Therefore, these examples support the archetype of the **D** (ay-ya) letter in the Gokturk alphabet.

Öncelikle Göktürk alfabesindeki ey “**𐰚**” harfinin farklı kaynaklardaki yazılışlarına baktığımızda ay “**𐰚**” harfinin yazılışıyla benzerlik gösterdiğini görmekteyiz.

y ¹	𐰚 𐰚	𐰚 𐰚 𐰚 𐰚 𐰚 𐰚 𐰚 𐰚	𐰚 𐰚 𐰚 𐰚
y ²	𐰚	𐰚 𐰚 𐰚 𐰚 𐰚 𐰚 𐰚 𐰚	𐰚 𐰚

Figure 31: Tarih Boyunca Türkçenin Yazımı

As seen in the table above, the letter “ay” is also used in place of the letter “ey”. Based on the fact that these two letters are used interchangeably, it can be said

²⁶ Nuray BİLGİLİ, Türklerin Kozmik Sembolleri-Tamgalar, p. 28.

that they carry the same meanings within the same logic of development. The presence of the interjections “ay” and “ey” in Turkish also supports the possibility that these two sounds originate from the same source. The other pronunciation of the thin “y” sound is “ye” which reminds us of the verb “ye-” (to eat) and the myth of “wolves devouring the Moon”²⁷ in Turkish mythology. Regarding the different writings of the letter “𐰆” in the table provided above, it can be seen that they are fragmented, reduced, diminished, or “yenmiş” (eaten) versions of the letter “𐰇.”

Letter “𐰆” (m) and Its Formation Process

The starting point for this letter can be considered as 𐰇 tamga, the “d” letter from Gokturkic since the letter “m” is a new variant that has been formed by additions to the sign of the letter “d” just as the letter 𐰇 (b). As we have previously mentioned, the starting point of certain letters bears similarities, which are applicable to this letter as well. Also, we have previously discussed the intense connotation of belonging for the letter “d” in the Gokturk alphabet in previous sections. Therefore, when the origin of the letter “m” and the letter “d” are considered as same, it is possible to say that letter “m” emerged in line with the same meaning. The Turkish word “im” means “sign”. The addition of an arrowhead to the tip of the letter 𐰇 must have aimed to indicate direction. Especially in military matters, determining direction is an important issue. Therefore, it is highly probable that our letter 𐰆 indicates the possession of the indicated direction. Additionally, when we look at the different forms of writing this letter, it is observed that it sometimes resembles an arrow, and sometimes a sharp metal piece at the end of a spear, which are also important materials for determining direction.

²⁷ Bahaeddin ÖGEL, Türk Mitolojisi II, p. 243.

Letter 1(p) and Its Formation Process

As we mentioned before, many letters have been formed through additions and reductions, and they have taken shape based on a main tamga. The letter, which represents the sound “p” in the Gokturk alphabet, is one of the letters that emerged through the addition to a main tamga. Regarding “l” tamga the main body, it can be indicated that there is a high possibility that the letters **l**, **↓**, **↘**, **↙**, **l** and **1** (i, l, ok, ü and p) have derived from this tamga. It is possible to evaluate the other letters in this context as well (through addition, reduction, changing direction or structure). In this case, a question establishes: Could there be a relationship between the agglutinative nature of the Turkish language and the perspective we mentioned above? In this regard, the transformation of a sun drawing found in rock paintings into a “sun chariot” and then into a "sun man" drawing by adding arms and legs, or the transformation of a mountain goat into a letter through the same method, supports the idea we emphasized in this section, which may find a scientific basis. It is also necessary to consider that there is a tradition and a self-attractive relationship between agglutinating the Turkish language and agglutinating tamgas and letters.

The mindset and the way of perceiving life of the Turks have undoubtedly been reflected in their social life, rock paintings, tamgas, and letters. This can also be understood from the expression that Turkish is a language of verbs/functions since the Turkish culture, has generally developed within a context of action/movement. Even the sedentary ones have constantly experienced the movement between the highlands and the winter quarters.

We can consider the resemblance of the letter **1** to a rope as a reflection of a social habit and its constant appearance in the culture. The diagonal and downward

protrusion on the left side of the long, straight line can be interpreted as the rope being hung somewhere. Although the rope may be perceived as a simple object, it holds an important place in many aspects of life. For example, the crescent shape on a shaman drum found in Khakassia is believed to be represented by two lines or a rope. According to Eliade, the motif of the rope is related to shamanic connections with the sky.²⁸ We can see the best examples of this in the Equestrian culture. Shamans believe that during some ceremonies of ascent to the sky, they draw the celestial path by hanging black, blue, white, red, and yellow cloths on a rope.

As a result, we can observe that this letter is among the signs, which are sacred or serving the sacred. On the other hand, we are cautious not to draw a conclusion that all the letters in the Gokturk alphabet must be sacred or have to be considered sacred, and those that are not considered sacred have not or cannot be regarded as a part of the alphabet. It is not possible to reach such a definite judgment based on present information and literature. However, through research, it is understood that many letters have associations with sacred entities, and their sources can be traced back to rock paintings and tamgas. It is also possible to see this letter and its variants in many rock paintings and tamgas(especially as part of a whole). Examples can be observed in tribes such as Kayı, Bayat, Alkaevli, Doger, Avshar, Karkın, Pechenek and Salur.

Letter ʏ (ş) and Its Formation Process

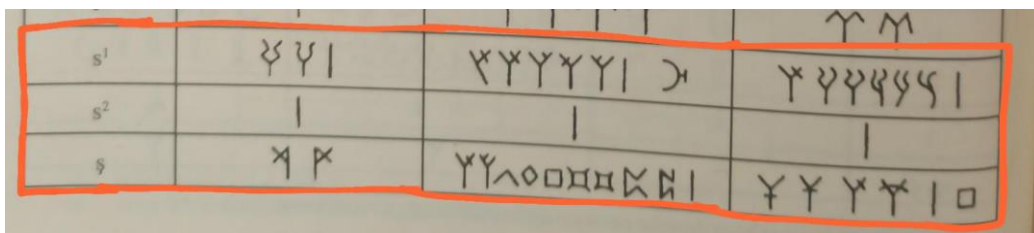


Figure 32: Göktürk Yazısının Evreleri, Başlangıçtan Günümüze Türk Yazı Sistemleri

²⁸ Nuray BİLGİLİ, Türklerin Kozmik Sembolleri-Tamgalar, p. 29.

As seen in the table above, we can observe that the letter representing the sound “ş” in the Gokturk alphabet varies over time, and at times, the letter representing the sound “ş” is used interchangeably with the letter representing the sound “s,” or vice versa. The interchangeability of the letters “ş” and “s” can be explained by the close similarity in the articulation of the sounds. As the pronunciation and the resulting sound have close sound values, we believe that it should not be surprising that they are illustrated interchangeably. An example of this is the presence of a notch on one of the arms of the letter **Y** to indicate either of the two letters, “ş” or “s.” Another example is the use of the straight line extending upwards, known as the letter “s,” to represent the sound “ş”. Additionally, in Old Turkish, the words “es” and “iş” are used to mean “eş-dost” (companion or friend).

When explaining the letter “s” in the Gokturk alphabet, we made a connection with the verb “as-”. However, it does not seem quite possible to establish a connection between the sound “ş” and verbs or nouns such as “aş”, “aş-“, “iş”, “eş”, or “eş-“ based on the current knowledge. This indicates that the letter **Y** is a letter formed through addition to distinguishing similar letters and sounds, as we have aimed to explain earlier.

We can see the variants of this letter or its use as a part of the whole in the clan tamgas such as Yazır, Dogher, Avshar, Eymur.

The Letter "ng" and Its Formation Process

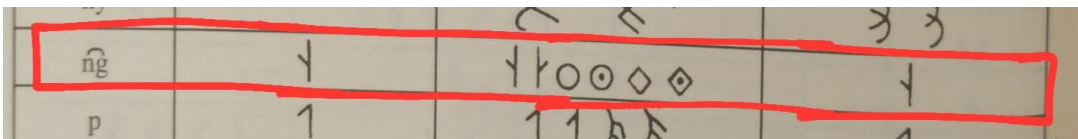


Figure 33: Göktürk Yazısının Evreleri, Başlangıçtan Günümüze Türk Yazı Sistemleri

As seen in the image above, the letter representing the “ng” sound has undergone very little change. However, considering its inscription in the Yenisey Inscriptions (middle row on the image), we can observe written forms of the “ng” sound in the shape of a round character with a dot inside, a square, and a square with a dot inside. It can be seen that these two different forms consisting of shapes with or without dots and the letter representing the “ng” sound do not resemble each other. The reasons for some letters having different formations in the same or another source, or the formations of some letters that represent the same sound not resembling each other, stem from our inability to clearly distinguish transitional periods. While one Turkish community may use the shape and meaning of a tamga or letter without much change for a long time, another Turkish community may follow drastic changes in terms of the shape and meaning of the same letter. On the other hand, even if it is the same community, the shapes of tamgas or letters may diverge over time due to cultural interactions or external reasons. The point we intend to emphasize here is that these transitions are not sharp as we mentioned earlier. An old formation of tamga or letter may be used alongside a new one, either with the same meaning or with a different meaning. As an example, the word “mother” was “ög” in Old Turkish; however, nowadays we use the words “ana” and “anne” instead. Nevertheless, the word “ög” is not completely extinct as the word “ög(k)süz” is still used today to refer to people whose mothers have passed away. These two words, “anne” and “ög”, are present consignificantly, yet one's meaning has been completely forgotten and remains only in the community's memory based on rote learning. Therefore, it is quite natural for transitions not to be sharp. We can give many examples in many areas both literary and cultural. As we mentioned before, the way rock paintings were depicted was by engraving - carving - scratching. To refer to the dating of these techniques, the

engraving technique was used from 10,000 BC to 1000 AD, the carving technique was used from 3000 BC to 1000 AD, and the scratching technique was used from 1000 BC to 1000 AD.²⁹ It is a significant detail that these techniques do not intersect with each other sharply. When the carving technique started to be applied, it was performed along with the engraving technique. Similarly, when scratching technique was begun to be applied, it did not affect the application of the other techniques. Examples showing the independent use of these techniques can be seen on panels in the rock painting areas located both in Central Asia and Anatolia.

The letter “ng” sound in Gokturk is a good example of the concept that we have intended to explain above. It is also possible to distinguish this letter among the words added to the main body that we mentioned previously. Through our research regarding this letter, we encounter the word “engi (enki)” which presents the “ng” sound. This word is used among today's Turkmen-Yoruk people to indicate or show an object.



Figure 34: Türklerin Koz. Sem. Tam. N. Bilgili

The other variations of the letter, represented by a circle, a circle with a dot inside, a square, and a square with a dot inside, are also tamgas used to indicate or show a direction. These expressions are

symbols used to indicate the position or mark a place. On the left, we can see a rock painting depicting a water well found in Kyrgyzstan-Saymalıtas.

Letter ↑ (thin r) and Its Formation Process

²⁹ Servet SOMUNCUOĞLU, Damgaların Göçü Kurgan- Ankara-Güdül Kaya Resimleri, p. 300.

Being one of the rare letters whose formation does not undergo much change in different texts, this letter has been compared to a person with broad shoulders in the field of research as it represents the sound “er”. Thus, based on the meanings of “er = male, man”, the long, straight line in the middle is perceived as the body along with the feet of the person, and the protrusions on the sides as the shoulders. It is possible to accept this idea, which is based on analogy and the meaning of the word, as an appropriate expression. However, while adapting this idea, we do not solely rely on analogy and the meaning of the word since we must also emphasize that the concepts such as “man, warrior, soldier” in Turkish culture form unity. Turks have attributed sacredness to everything they consider a source of life for themselves. These sacred things have taken their place in their social life and beliefs, not only in abstract terms but also in concrete manifestations.

As it is well-known, the Turkish nation is not a nation with an army; it is a structure where the nation itself is the army. It is a well-known fact that this includes women as well as men, and men have a greater share in it. In other words, a man is born to be a fighter in Turkish society and from childhood on, he develops this mentality as a habit. According to information obtained from historical sources, the Turkish people learn horse riding from a young age by riding sheep, and they learn archery through aiming practices at rabbits and field mice. This has been a tradition repeated for centuries to enable a man to survive and maintain the social structure (tribe, clan, and region) he lives in. Since the quality of the people is emphasized more than quantity considering the wars fought in the light of historical sources, we see the attention paid to how effective a small group can be. Therefore, even one person within the social structure needs to be equipped with the most efficient preparation. In this regard, when we consider the Turkic history of Central Asia, the

number of enemies the Turks fought was always greater than their own. Although tactics and strategies are key elements of victories, it is apparent how well-equipped individuals are the Turkish fighters. One of the best examples of this individualistic quality can be given through wars between the Chinese and Hun Turks. In ancient times, the ancestors of the Chinese could not defeat the Hun Turks for a long time despite their advantage of quantity. Therefore, they reformed their army training to teach their soldiers how to use swords and how to shoot arrows like the Huns. Historical sources also inform us that in Turkish society, importance is given to martial arts and physical strength, and individuals who are not equipped with these skills are not considered worthy of respect. It is also reported that elderly people in Turkish tribes treated young people very well and presented them with good food and clothing as they were the guardians and warriors of the society. As a result, it can be understood that a person's, especially a warrior's, status within Turkish culture has great importance and is nearly regarded as sacred. We understand this from the human figures in rock paintings such as archers, horse riders, and those hunting wild game. We believe that it is a natural process that "er", who has so much quality and importance to sustain the society in Turkish culture, has reflected on tamgas and later on the alphabet.

Letters **ﺉ, ﺋ, ﻭ, ﻧ, ﻩ** (a-e, ı-i, o-u, ö-ü) and Their Formation Process

ﺉ = ɒ	ﺉ	ﺉ	ﺉ ɒ ɒ	ﺉ ɒ ɒ	ﺉ ɒ	ﺉ ɒ
ﺉ (ɒ)				ﺉ		
ﺉ (kapalı ɒ)				ﺉ		
ﺉ, ɒ	ﺉ	ﺉ	ﺉ ɒ	ﺉ	ﺉ	ﺉ ɒ
ﺉ, ɒ	ﺉ ɒ	ﺉ	ﺉ	ﺉ ɒ	ﺉ	ﺉ
ﺉ, ɒ	ﺉ ɒ	ﺉ	ﺉ ɒ	ﺉ ɒ	ﺉ	ﺉ

Figure 35: Tarih boyunca Türkçenin Yazımı

a, e	1 1	1 1 1 X	1
ı, i	1 1	1 1 1 X X X	1 1
é		X	
o, u	> <	> <	> } {
ö, ü	N N	N N P P Y Y Y Y	N N N N

Figure 36: Göktürk Yazısının Evreleri, Başlangıçtan Günümüze Türk Yazı Sistemleri

The pictures taken from different sources above contain the writings of the vowel letters in the Gokturk alphabet. The first picture, from left to right, indicates the letters and writing styles taken from the Orkhon Inscriptions, Manuscripts, Yenisei Inscriptions, Talas Inscriptions, and the Hoyt Tamit Inscription. The second picture shows letters from the Talas, Yenisei, and Orkhon inscriptions from left to right. The formations illustrated in both sources are almost identical to each other.

Regarding the letter of “a-e”, it is possible to say that the letter is similar to the transformed version of “4” letter in the Gokturk alphabet. As previously mentioned, the letter that represents the sound “z” in the Gokturk alphabet was interpreted as the projection of some celestial events. We believe that the letter “a-e” was separated from this tamga which is also defined as “oz tamga”. It is seen that the letters of thin “e” and “ı, i” have intersected over time as symbols of two opposite halves of a circle or two opposite arrowheads, which provides their present form. At the same time, it is possible to say that all the vowels shown above resemble other letters in the Gokturk alphabet: 4 (r), 1 (k), 3 (ny), 4 (z), 1 (s), 3 (nç), 1 (p). It is a matter of question whether these letters are the source of the vowels or vice versa in the Gokturk alphabet. On the other hand, it is unlikely consider the letters not influence each other in an alphabet which is regarded as the peak of Turkish symbolism based on a common culture and a common line from social life to communal mentality.

From another perspective, there are some two-letter words in Turkish. When we look at the consonants of letters such as “al, en, es, ır, il, ip, is, ok, ol, on, ön, ör, öt,” we encounter with the letters **↓**, **⌄**, **l**, **↑**, **Y**, **1**, **↓**, **ɔ**, **4**, **h**, and **t**. When we examine the shapes of the consonants, it is possible to indicate that there is a similarity with the shapes of the vowels and that they have changed over time by adding, removing or evolving. As an example, we can refer to a topic we previously explained. Just as we considered the “**⌘**” letter, which corresponds to the “eb” sound and resembles houses in the Turkish culture’s”, to be the source of the consonant “b”, it is possible to apply a similar perspective to provide implications for vowels as well. The **↓**, **⌄**, **l** letters that correspond to the sounds “al, en, es” have shape similarities with the **↙** letter of (a-e) sounds. Also, the letter of “al” sound possesses only one notch below. On the other hand, the letter of “a-e” has a similar notch in the top right corner in addition to the same notch. Over time, the notch on the top was either added or removed to create the vowel “a-e.” In a way, the consonant “l” of “al” in the word was reduced and the vowel “a” remained. Alternatively, “a-e” might have been formed by changing the protrusions at the bottom left and top right of the letter “en” or adding notches to the letter “es”. The **↑**, **Y**, **1** letters of “ır, il, ip” sounds have similarities with the letter **↑** (i-i). Regarding the straight and upright line as the main body, it is possible to say that the formation of the “ı-l” letter is achieved by rearranging, reducing, or modifying the protrusions in other consonant letters. The same idea applies to the letters **↓**, **↓**, **ɔ**, **⌘** representing the sounds of “ok, ol, on, ot” due to their similarities with the letter **ɔ** (o-u) and the letters **⌄**, **4**, **h** representing the sounds “ön, ör, öt” due to their similarities with the letter **⌄** (ö-ü).

Tamgas Used in Anatolia and Their Comparisons

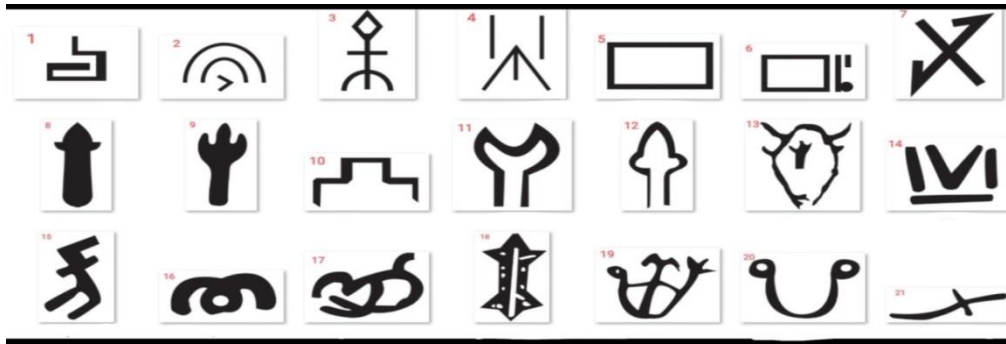


Figure 37: Bursa, Orhaneli, Karacabey, Mustafakemalpaşa Damgaları

The aim of this section is to determine the tamgas used in Anatolia and the tribe they belong to or the tamgas of the tribes they resemble. Also, it is aimed to determine which letter of the Gokturk alphabet they resemble.

Tamga at Number 1: Tamga of Bayindir tribe, letter **ᠳ** in the Gokturk alphabet

Tamga at Number 2: Tamga of Cavindir tribe, letter **ᠳ** in the Gokturk alphabet

Tamga at Number 3: Tamga of Eymur tribe, letter **ᠳ** in the Gokturk alphabet

Tamga at Number 4: Tamgas of Kayi and Salur tribes, letter **ᠮ** in the Gokturk alphabet

Tamgas at Number 5 and 6: Tamgas of Bugduz and Karaevli tribes, -----

Tamga at Number 7: Tamgas of Eymur, Kızık, and Avshar tribe, letter **ᠬ** in the Gokturk alphabet

Tamgas at Number 8 and 9: Tamgas of Bayat and Begdili tribes, letter **ᠶ** in the Gokturk alphabet

Tamga at Number 10: Tamga of Bugduz tribe, letter **ᠬ** in the Gokturk alphabet

Tamga at Number 11: Tamga of Begdili tribe, letter **ᠶ** in the Gokturk alphabet

Tamga at Number 12: Tamga of Bayat tribe, -----

Tamga at Number 13: Tamga of Dodurga tribe, -----

Tamga at Number 14: Tamga of Kayi tribe, letter **ᠮ** in the Gokturk alphabet

Tamga at Number 15: ----- (mountain goat figure), letter 𐰃 in the Gokturk alphabet

Tamga at Number 16: Tamga of Eymur tribe, letter 𐰄 in the Gokturk alphabet

Tamga at Number 17: Tamgas of Pechenek and Yuregir tribes, letter 𐰅 and letter 𐰆 in the Gokturk alphabet

Tamga at Number 18: Tamga of Bayat tribe, letter 𐰇 in the Gokturk alphabet

Tamga at Number 19: Tamga of Alkaevli tribe, (as seen within the tamga from left to right) letter 𐰈, letter 𐰉, letter 𐰊 in the Gokturk alphabet

Tamga at Number 20: Tamga of Alkaevli tribe, letter 𐰋 in the Gokturk alphabet

Tamga at Number 21: Tamga of Eymur tribe, -----

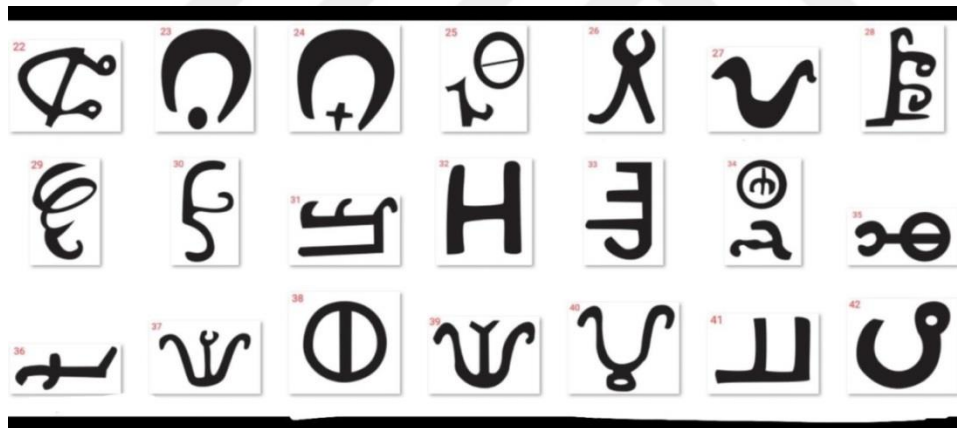


Figure 38: Bursa, Orhaneli, Karacabey, Mustafakemalpaşa Damgaları

Tamga at Number 22: Tamgas of Alkaevli and Bayat tribes, letter 𐰈 and letter 𐰉 in the Gokturk alphabet

Tamga at Number 23: Tamga of Alkaevli tribe, letter 𐰊 and letter 𐰋 in the Gokturk alphabet

Tamga at Number 24: Tamga of Alkaevli tribe, letter 𐰌 in the Gokturk alphabet

Tamga at Number 25: Tamgas of Alkaevli and Kızık tribes, letter ☉ and letter **h** in the Gokturk alphabet

Tamga at Number 26: Tamga of Dodurga tribe, letter **X** in the Gokturk alphabet

Tamga at Number 27: Tamga of Alkaevli tribe, letter **Ÿ** in the Gokturk alphabet

Tamga at Number 28: ----- (horns of mountain goat and a part of tree of life), letter **R** in the Gokturk alphabet

Tamga at Number 29: Tamga of Pechenek tribe, letter **ǰ**, letter **Œ**, and Letter **q** in the Gokturk alphabet

Tamga at Number 30: Tamga of Pechenek tribe, letter **Œ** in the Gokturk alphabet

Tamga at Number 31: Tamga of Bügdüz tribe, -----

Tamga at Number 32: Tamga of Karaevli tribe, -----

Tamga at Number 33: Tamga of Doger tribe, letter **Ბ** in the Gokturk alphabet

Tamga at Number 34: Tamga (the one at the bottom) of Kızık tribe, letter ☉, letter **Ÿ**, and letter **R** (the circle, the sign in the circle, and the one below the circle) in the Gokturk alphabet

Tamga at Number 35: Tamga of Dodurga tribe, letter ☉ and letter **Ÿ** in the Gokturk alphabet

Tamga at Number 36: Tamga of Eymur tribe, -----

Tamga at Number 37: Tamga of Karaevli tribe, letter **Ÿ** and letter **Ÿ** in the Gokturk alphabet

Tamga at Number 38: Tamga of Alkaevli tribe, letter ☉ and letter **l** in the Gokturk alphabet

Tamga at Number 39: Tamga of Karaevli tribe, letter ʏ and letter ʏ in the Gokturk alphabet

Tamga at Number 40: Tamga of Karaevli tribe, letter ʏ in the Gokturk alphabet

Tamga at Number 41: ----- (a mountain goat without its head), letter ʏ and letter ʏ in the Gokturk alphabet

Tamga at Number 42: Tamga of Alkaevli tribe, letter ʏ and letter ʏ in the Gokturk alphabet

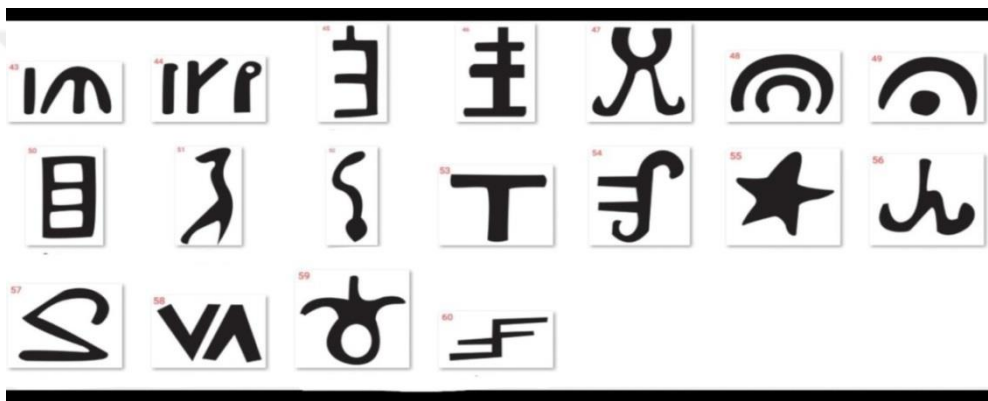


Figure 39: Bursa, Orhaneli, Karacabey, Mustafakemalpaşa Damgaları

Tamga at Number 43: Tamgas of Karkan and Salur tribes, letter ʏ in the Gokturk alphabet

Tamga at Number 44: Tamga of Kayi tribe, letter ʏ, letter ʏ, and letter ʏ in the Gokturk alphabet

Tamga at Number 45: Tamga of Doger tribe, letter ʏ and letter ʏ in the Gokturk alphabet

Tamga at Number 46: Tamga of Alayundlu tribe, letter ʏ in the Gokturk alphabet

Tamga at Number 47: Tamga of Dodurga tribe, letter ʏ in the Gokturk alphabet

Tamga at Number 48: Tamga of Cavındır tribe, letter ʏ and letter ʏ in the Gokturk alphabet

Tamga at Number 49: Tamga of Cavındır tribe, letter 𐰇 and letter 𐰝 in the Gokturk alphabet

Tamga at Number 50: Tamga of Bugduz tribe, -----

Tamga at Number 51: Tamga of Pechenek tribe, letter **ng** in the Gokturk alphabet

Tamga at Number 52: Tamga of Kızık tribe, letter 𐰇 in the Gokturk alphabet

Tamga at Number 53: Tamga of Chebni tribe, -----

Tamga at Number 54: ----- (mountain goat), letter 𐰢 in the Gokturk alphabet

Tamga at Number 55: Tamga of Yazır tribe, letter 𐰇 in the Gokturk alphabet

Tamga at Number 56: Tamga of Yıva tribe, letter 𐰢 in the Gokturk alphabet

Tamga at Number 57: Tamgas of Bugduz and Salur tribes, letter 𐰇 in the Gokturk alphabet

Tamga at Number 58: Tamga of Dodurga tribe, letter 𐰇 and letter 𐰇 in the Gokturk alphabet

Tamga at Number 59: Tamga of Eymur tribe, letter 𐰇 and letter 𐰇 in the Gokturk alphabet

Tamga at Number 60: Tamga of Igdır tribe, letter 𐰢 in the Gokturk alphabet

These tamgas are used in the following places: on walls, on kufis, on household items, on amulets, on tiles in mosques, on marble surfaces in mosque walls, on oxen foreheads, inside caps, on stamped marks on horses, on water jugs, on the left rump of a horse, on the right rump of a cow, on the top of a tomb, on certain tribal stamps, on the cheeks of a cattle...

As seen above, only a few tamgas are not directly associated with tribe tamgas or letters in the Gokturk alphabet. The majority of them are either identical or closely

resemble tribe tamgas or letters in the Gokturk alphabet. Also, many of the tamgas mentioned above are either the same as or highly similar to the tamgas found in Central Asia. One of the best examples is the tamgas found in the Dongoyın-Şiree monument in Mongolia. Additionally, these tamgas and inscriptions on the monument are believed to belong to those who were forced to leave their homeland after the fall

of the Second Gokturk Khaganate.

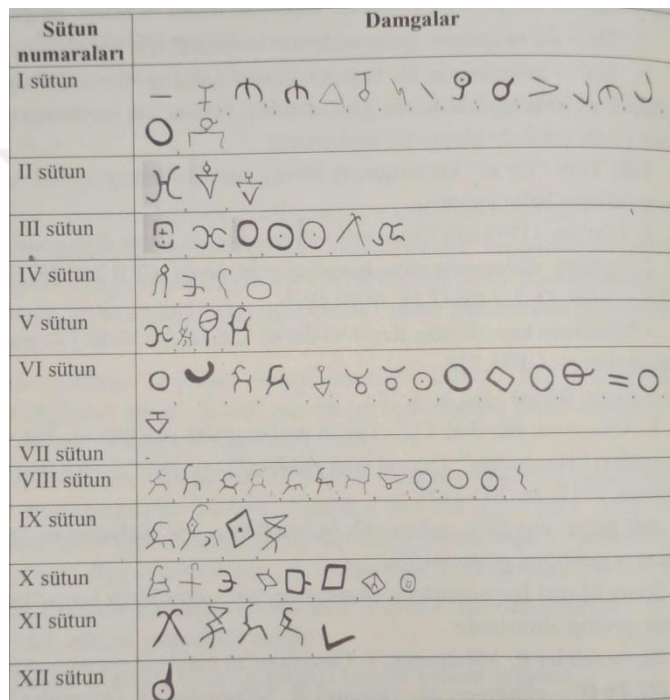


Figure 40: Bozkırın Oğlu Ahmet Taşağıl'a Armağan

Eymür-Bügdüz Alkaevli tribes in the first column, the tamga of Karaevli in the second column, the tamga of Pechenek in the third column, tamga of Dodurga in the fourth column and the rest in the fifth column (and others in subsequent columns) directly resemble the tamgas in the Kul Tigin Inscription. The tamgas in the sixth column, Bügdüz-Karaevli in the eighth column, Alkaevli in the tenth column, also show clear similarities.

Tamgas in the Yenisei Inscriptions and Some Kyrgyz Tribes - Some Letters in the Gokturk Alphabet

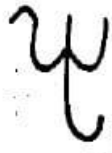
In the adjacent photo and the aforementioned Dongoyın-Şiree inscription in Mongolia, we can see how similar the tamgas are to the ones mentioned above in Anatolia. Some of them are even identical to the tamgas. For example, the tamgas of

We will compare some of the tamgas found in the Yenisei inscriptions with those belonging to Kyrgyz clans³⁰ and explain their similarities with some letters in the Gokturk alphabet.

The tamgas on the left side of the images we provide below belong to the Yenisei inscriptions, while the ones on the right side belong to Kyrgyz tribes:



These tamgas resemble “n” and “y” letters in the Gokturk alphabet. Also, the tamga of the Kyrgyz tribe is called “Ay tamga (Moon Tamga)” as well.



These two tamgas resemble each other in terms of shape and curvature. The tamga on the left, belonging to the Yenisei inscriptions, resembles the thick “s” and “iç-çi” letters in the Gokturk alphabet, while the Kyrgyz tamga resembles the letter “z”.



These tamgas are identical, representing the upper part of the letter “ş” in the Gokturk alphabet.

³⁰ Olcabey KARATAYEV, Kayrıkán JANIBEKOVA, Damgalar ve Onların İşlevleri(Fonksiyonları)



The tamga from the Yenisei Inscriptions resembles the letter “nt”, the thick “g”, and “r” letters in the Gokturk alphabet, while the Kyrgyz tamga resembles the thick “g” and “r” letters.



Both of them resemble the thick “s” letter in the Gokturk alphabet. Additionally, the Kyrgyz tribe tamga also evokes the letter “b”.



These identical tamgas resemble the letter “l” in the Gokturk alphabet.



The tamga from the Yenisei inscriptions consists of two parts, with the shape on top resembling the inverted and rotated version of the letter “ng” in the Gokturk

alphabet, and the lower part resembling the letter “p”. The Kyrgyz clan tamga resembles both the rotated version of the letter “ng” and the letter “g”.



These identical tamgas resemble the letter “r” in the Gokturk alphabet.



The tamga from the Yenisei inscriptions resembles the letter “k” in the Gokturk alphabet, while the Kyrgyz clan tamga resembles its mirrored version. Additionally, the Kyrgyz clan tamga also evokes the letters “a-e, ı-i, and u-ü” in the Gokturk alphabet.



Both tamgas resemble the thick “n” and “y” letters in the Gokturk alphabet.



These two highly similar tamgas resemble the thick “b” and the thin “y” letters in the Gokturk alphabet.



These tamgas resemble the “nç” and “ny” letters in the Gokturk alphabet.



These tamgas resemble the thick “d” letter in the Gokturk alphabet.



Initially, both tamgas resemble the “nt” letter in the Gokturk alphabet. The intersecting two-line shape within the tamga in the Yenisei inscriptions appears as a part of many letters in the Gokturk alphabet. It particularly resembles the rotated form of the letter “o-u.”

As mentioned earlier, we discussed that tamgas may change, both intentionally and spontaneously, in terms of size and form. Aristov's explanations regarding tamgas support this statement. Aristov examined tamgas and highlighted the differences between special tamgas and tribe tamgas. For example, within the Turkic system of *oguş* (family in old Turkish), *urug*, *boy* (tribe), and *budun* (nation), when an individual separated from their *urug*, they could make slight modifications to their specific tamgas. Additionally, the development process of special tamgas and clan tamgas function from general to specific. In other words, initially, only the tamgas regarded as sacred or protective for the clan were present, and later, over time,

specific tamgas began to emerge. Aristov also stated that the Gokturk alphabet originated from tamgas.



Conclusion

We have intended to explain the relationship between rock paintings and tamgas with the Gokturk alphabet by scanning numerous sources, which form the basis of our research. During this process, we realized that rock paintings may vary within their process before transforming into tamgas. The same situation applies especially to tamgas and letters in the Gokturk alphabet. These situations are presented with their evidence in the process of writing this thesis. We believe that the variations within these processes stem from the fact that Turkish society is both a mobile and has an exceptional sense of belonging. Consequently, attempting to establish a foundation for the letters in the Gokturk alphabet solely based on obvious, tangible objects, or suggesting that it has derived from another language unless it resembles a certain object is a result of premature judgment and an attempt to maintain a tunnel vision. We believe that pursuing the meanings of tamgas and the smaller components of the alphabet and determining the essence of repetition of these smaller components will shed further light on our current subject. Involving different scientific disciplines in the research on this topic will also be part of the clarifications.

Previously, we mentioned the understanding in the Turkish mentality that states "whatever is in the sky is also on earth." We believe that this is not a simple understanding or belief. In other words, it can be indicated that the actions and thoughts of the Turks on earth are shaped by this belief. The reason is that in the Turkish belief system and mythology; the sacred beings, spirits, God, and those close to God are related to the sky. Tamgas are the earthly reflections of abstract or concrete objects in the sky. Therefore, the Gokturk alphabet, which is the final form and pinnacle of tamgas, should be perceived not only as a means of communication but also as a continuation of a sacredness that stems from tamgas. The carving of tamgas

on stone and their extension towards the sky are some of the most significant pieces of evidence for this perspective.

When additions or subtractions were made to tamgas to prevent confusion, was it a random method or a sacred thought process that was followed? To what extent did the strengthening urugs or tribes have an influence on the permanence of these changes? Especially in animal drawings and drawings related to the sky, how long did the original meaning of the tamga persist, and when did it evolve to reflect a customary sacredness phase rather than conveying a specific meaning? Regarding Turkish communities with their distinct ways of life in terms of culture, politics, society, etc., why wouldn't it be possible for them to have a unique tangible means of communication? Therefore, we do not see any problem in stating that pursuing all these questions and similar ones is equivalent to finding the key to a significant gap in Turkish history. Considering the contributions of our esteemed scholars in this field, we have no doubt that this area, which is not very illuminated in Turkish history, will come to light even more.

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