ADALYA 21, 2018

Two Neolithic Ritual Centers in East Mysia (NW Turkey): The Baltalıin and İnkaya Caves

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Abstract

The social and belief systems in Western Anatolia during the Neolithic and Chalcolitic periods constitute an important question in Anatolian archaeology. Examination of the wall paintings in the Baltalıin and İnkaya caves near the village of Delice in the district of Dursunbey in Balıkesir province may provide some important answers. There appears to be a conscious effort behind the planning of these caves for use as cult centers in regards to hunting and religious rituals. These pictures reflect the beliefs and rituals of the Neolithic Age and includes themes such as life, death, and hunting.

Keywords: Western Anatolia, Mysia, Neolithic, Cave Painting, Shaman

Öz

Neolitik ve Kalkolitik Çağlarda Batı Anadolu Bölgesi'nde mevcut olan toplumsal ilişkiler ve inanç sistemleri, Anadolu arkeolojisinin önemli problemlerinden birini oluşturur. Balıkesir-Dursunbey İlçesi, Delice Köyü sınırları içinde yer alan Baltalıin ve İnkaya Mağaralarında saptadığımız duvar boyaları, bu eksikliğin telafi edilmesinde önemli bir rol oynayacak niteliktedir. Bir kült merkezi niteliğine sahip olan mağaraların planlamasında av ve inanç ritüelleri için mekanların bilinçli olarak ayrıldığı görülmektedir. Neolitik Çağ'ın inanç sistemini konu edinen resimler, içerdikleri yaşam, ölüm ve av konuları ile özgün örnekler arasında yerini almıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Batı Anadolu, Mysia, Neolitik, Mağara Resimleri, Şaman

Our knowledge about rock and wall paintings has increased considerably thanks to recent research. Among the data we now have is the well-known image in Anatolia depicting a bull and created by use of incisions in Öküzini Cave, SW Anatolia[1]. Other examples include pictures made using both paint and incisions in Beldibi Rock-shelter, Antalya[2]. In Eastern Anatolia, we have pictures created with paint in Kağızman-Camuşlu Cave, Kars as well as incised pictures on the surface of rocks in the Hakkari-Van region[3], which all show us that the practice of incising pictures onto rock surfaces has existed since the beginning of the Palaeolithic Age.

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Our research team consisted of Research Assistants F. Yılmaz, Y. Kaptan, and E. Can, to whom I extend my gratitude. Our expedition was supported and assisted by Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Turkey (BAP Project SBA-2015-626), the Turkish Historical Society (Türk Tarih Kurumu), Balıkesir Kuva-yi Milliye Museum and Dursunbey Municipality. REGIO Cultural Heritage Management Consultancy Co. greatly contributed to our research. I would also like to thank all the institutions who supported our research.

1 Kökten 1962, 41, fig. XXXVII, pl. 1,2; Otte et al. 1995, 941, fig. 9; Kartal 2009, 93, fig. 25.

2 Bostancı 1959, 132-134, pl. 1,2.

3 Alok 1988.

The number of paintings found in Anatolia dating back to the Neolithic Age has risen in recent years, and such findings appear on the walls of houses and rock surfaces.

We find paint applied to the walls and floor surfaces inside houses in Çayönü[4], Pınarbaşı[5], Boncuklu Höyük[6], Aşıklı Höyük[7], Musular[8], Köşk Höyük[9], Canhasan III[10], and Çatalhöyük[11]. Most of these wall paintings are in a single color. Çatalhöyük deserves special mention since the pictures reflect the belief system of the inhabitants and their perception of life as well as depicting experienced events.

We can cite Çatalhöyük-West[12], Canhasan[13], Değirmentepe[14], Pirot Höyük[15], Norşuntepe[16], and Aslantepe[17] amongst the examples showing us that inner wall painting was in use during the Chalcolithic period. In these centers, there are walls made of plastered and sun-dried bricks overlain with pictures of human and animal figures as well as geometrical shapes, all drawn with red paint on tinted backgrounds.

The other group of wall paintings consists of cave paintings found in Anatolia in increasing numbers. Among the important findings are cave pictures discovered over a wide area under rocks and in caves of the Latmos Mountains to the northwest of Bafa Lake (Aydın-Söke)[18] These pictures depict variously-sized groups of people engaged in religious rituals and daily activities. Another find was in Tavabaşı Cave in Lycia near Tlos (Muğla-Seydikemer)[19]. Here, there is a badly-damaged picture painted on a large block of rock outside one of the two Aşağı Mağara caves. On the undamaged part, it is possible to see human figures, animals, buildings, and scenes from daily life. Finally, a small picture was found at the Kanlıtaş Rock-shelter in Salihli, Akçeşme Village[20].

Expedition to Dursunbey Caves

A large part of the Troas and Mysia, which have interested researchers since the 18th century, today lie within the province of Balıkesir. Dursunbey county in the district of Olympene and close to the border of Bithynia and Phrygia is one of the least-explored areas in terms of archeological interest. The same can be said for towns such as Balya, Savaştepe, Kepsut, and Sındırgı, which are all situated among the mountainous parts of Balıkesir province. That they

4 Özdoğan 2007, 65.

5 Baird 2007, 296.

6 Baird – Baysal 2012, 266.

7 Esin 1994, 30; Esin – Harmankaya 2007, 263.

8 Özbaşaran 2003, 365; Özbaşaran et al. 2007, 277-78.

9 Öztan 2007, 225.

10 French et al. 1972, fig. 3; Düring 2006, 117.

11 Mellaart 1967; Hodder 2006; 2007, 315.

12 Erdoğu 2009, 137.

13 French 1962, 33, pl. II.a,b.

14 Esin – Harmankaya 1987, 107.

15 Karaca 1983, 73.

16 Hauptman 1976, 54, fig. 42.3.

17 Frangipane 1997, 64-66.

18 Peschlow-Bindokat 2003, 2006; Peschlow-Bindokat – Gerber 2012.

19 Korkut 2012, 465; 2013, 196, fig. 14; 2014, 109-10; Korkut et al. 2015.

20 Akdeniz 2010, 6.

are found within mountains and forests away from the alluvial plains and coast is among the reasons for the lack of interest in Dursunbey so far by researchers.

Our survey, undertaken in the counties of Çanakkale-Yenice, Balıkesir-Karesi, Altı Eylül, Gönen, Savaştepe, Balya, and Dursunbey over five seasons beginning in 2009 was titled "Routes and Settlements between the Aegean and Marmara Regions during the Neolithic, Chalcolithic and Bronze Ages". Results of the survey have made an important contribution to the history of the region[21]. During this surface survey, a total of 193 areas of archaeological interest were examined. In 32 centers, important data was found for settlements dating from the Prehistoric Age. So far Dursunbey county has especially been little researched and covers a large area in the Marmara region. The detailed study of the wall paintings found in the two caves near Delice village was begun in the 2015 season and completed in 2016.

The Alaçam Mountains to the southeast of Balıkesir expand both westward and eastward, covering a wide area on the southern side of Dursunbey. Mount Papaz lies to the north of Dursunbey and constituted a major location in our survey. Delice village is north of Dursunbey town, and the geological structure around it resembles the Neogene Volcanic Facies found in the northern part of Western Anatolia. The two caves in which our survey was conducted, namely, Baltalıin and İnkaya, are situated in this area (Fig. 1).

1. Baltalıin Cave

Baltalıin Cave is situated near Delice village in Dursunbey county, 5.5 km from the village and west of Emet stream (Figs. 1-2). It is surrounded by Çataldikmen Hill to the north and Kepez and Gedikli Hills to the south. The cave itself is on the slope of Çataldikmen Hill and 100 m below a forest road, 317 m above sea level, and 7-8 m from the bed of a stream.

The entrance to the cave, which faces Balıklı Dere (stream) to the west, is 19 m long, 9 m wide, and 4.5 m high. The cave consists of a carstic formation inside limestone, which narrows downward and expands horizontally (Fig. 3a). It has a flat floor that starts from the entrance and bends slightly upwards. Calcification due to water flowing down the walls and the ceiling continues, and stalactites and stalagmites are also observed. The higher section of the cave has a rock floor whereas the lower section, due to its previous usage as a sheepfold, is covered with animal droppings. There is no cultural deposit on the floor, but there is soil on the hillside outside the cave entrance descending down to the stream. As a result of intensive research inside and outside the cave, we found pieces of pottery belonging to the Middle Ages, which show us that this cave was in use during its late period. There were no findings to indicate earlier periods.

Location of the Picture: On the east wall of the cave there is a wall picture that occupies a large space with dimensions of 7.60 x 4.50 m (Figs. 4-5). While 4.60 m of this picture is inside the cave, 3 m of it is outside the cave. The picture was drawn on the rough cave surface, and there is no evidence of tampering with the backdrop or space of the picture itself. The outer part has deteriorated due to weather conditions. Apart from the cave being used as a sheepfold for a long time, the picture has also suffered human-inflicted damage. Streams of water observed on the cave walls are the reason for furring of some parts of the picture and the surface of the rock.

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[21] Yalçıklı 2011, 2014, 2017a, b.

We encountered several difficulties in documenting the pictures on the walls of the Baltalıin and İnkaya caves. The method used in this study was as follows. Without spoiling the pictures, the details of the parts that had survived were transferred at a ratio of 1/1 onto acetate, then converted into digital images on the computer. Primary among the difficulties we faced were color fading and distortion of parts that were damaged or destroyed. After transferring the existing data onto acetate and after dampening the surface under different light levels in different colors, high-resolution digital photographs were taken and drawings made. After this work was completed in the laboratory, digital image enhancement of the photographs was carried out with a commonly-used method[22] in this kind of study, and several missing parts of the image were completed.

Colors and Theme: The picture depicts a hunting scene including humans and deer (Fig. 5). The deer in the picture are painted red (Munsell Solid Card 10R3/4-4/6) and brown (2.5YR6/6), whereas the human figures are in red and pale orange. The paint used in the painting was produced from hematite.

The lines depicting the figures in the picture are 3 to 4 cm thick. These thick lines were probably drawn with leather or cloth-made brushes with a broad surface.

The human depictions mostly consist of simply-drawn and same-color silhouettes (Fig. 5.1-3). The heads and bodies of the deer are bordered with thick contours, and the insides are left empty. Antlers and tails are drawn with a single line without adding any further details. The human depictions on the north side of the picture are similar. The intact deer figure we were able to detect is 0.45 x 0.37 m in size, and it is thought that the other deer figures are of similar dimensions. The human figures drawn as silhouettes are found in the middle and lower parts of the picture. Human depictions at the top of the picture cover a rather large area measuring 1.54 x 1.40 m, and all these figures are painted in red (Fig. 5.1). The human figure in the middle section has been damaged by falling rocks, and only its head and parts of its body are preserved (Fig. 5.2). It is possible to follow the rest of the figure due to absorption of the paint by the rock and the broken part on the lower side and its release of red paint. These figures covered an area of 1.30 x 0.53 m. The head of this human figure is drawn over the deer. The overlapping of humans and animals only appears in this instance.

There are deer figures among the drawings of human figures between the two sides of the picture. These deer are placed towards the north and are inside the cave. The theme of the picture starts with humans drawn outside the cave, which are larger than the other figures. The human figures are seen to be herding deer towards the entrance to the cave. This same action is also repeated by the human figures in the middle of the picture (Fig. 5.2). The aim of this image must be to depict groups of people engaged in herding deer. We distinguished a group of at least four human figures with rectangular-shaped heads and rectangular bodies. Due to the existing remnants of paint being absorbed into the stone in the damaged parts of the rock, it is assumed that there were originally more of these figures.

The deer are lined up facing the same direction. Along with traces in the damaged parts, this herd seems to consist of at least seven deer. Inside the cave, at the northern tip of the picture, there are two small human figures with bows illustrated in the same style (Fig. 5.3). One of them is well-preserved, but the other is mostly covered with a sheet of calcite, therefore very little is visible. Only two bows are drawn, which indicates the existence of two persons.

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[22] Clogg et al. 2000

The fully visible human figure is depicted with, as in other figures, a rectangular-shaped head and body. The subject of the picture is driving the herd towards a trap by two hunters armed with bows and arrows.

Another important detail of the manner in which the picture was drawn is that the nearest figures are emphasized by drawing them larger, whereas the distant figures of the trappers and deer are drawn considerably smaller. This shows the artist's effort to provide depth of perspective. The large area above the deer is filled with red dots.

Style and Iconography: Pictures depicting hunting scenes are known from Europe's Palaeolithic and Mesolithic Ages. Some recent examples from the Neolithic can be found on the Göbekli Tepe reliefs and Çatalhöyük wall pictures. However, depiction of a hunting scene that includes setting a trap has never been seen before. At Çatalhöyük, we have pictures of a hunting scene in which a group of people are either chasing or encircling a bear or deer. The practice of filling spaces with red dots is frequently seen in Palaeolithic wall pictures and probably refers to mountainous or forested terrain as the setting of the hunt.

In the Baltalıin picture, we see the human figure placed towards the center of the scene and drawn over a deer figure. The question of whether this practice was first utilized during the creation of the picture or added during a ritual ceremony can be debated. The way the human figure is depicted and the harmony of the color with the overall picture indicate that this picture was likely created in one sitting.

2. İnkaya Cave

The İnkaya Cave is situated 2.5 km north of Dursunbey-Delice village (Fig. 1). It is 807 m above sea level and 5.5 km from Baltalıin. The cave is located west of Çanakçı stream, which runs between two high hills and the eastern slope of Kızıltepe. The entrance of the cave faces Çanakçı stream (Fig. 6). The front façade consists of multiple rock gullies and bears the characteristics of a limestone cave, with dimensions of 27.5 m in length and 10 m in height (Fig. 3b). The cave's opening is 5.7 x 3.5 m wide, and its inner and outer floors consist of rock and are on different levels. The inner rock floor has no soil and is 3 m higher than the outer floor, as well as being an oval-shaped living area 5.4 m deep and 8 m wide. The ceiling, which is 4.4 m high, unites with the floor in a curve. With this shape, the cave gives the impression of a dry, protected place, higher than the outer floor. To make it easier to climb to the upper level, eight steps – each 3 cm deep – were carved into the rock surface.

A few amorphous shards of pottery alongside pieces of tools (blades and scrapers made of flint) that could be dated back to the Neolithic were collected from the floor of the cave and its environs (Fig. 6). Scrapers and blades made from flint constitute the largest group. Amorphous pieces of burnished pottery belonging to handmade pots were found. It was also observed that there was a certain amount of medium-density thin lime in the poorly-baked paste of the pots.

The damage inflicted to the cave over time is severe. Due to the use of explosives, the entrance to the upper level has been destroyed. There are visible holes at the entrance to the cave where explosives were planted. This may indicate that there exists an ongoing threat to preserving the cave intact.

Location of the Panels: There are two pictures in front of the entrance to the cave, one on the north side and another on the southwest side (Fig. 7). The existence of panels on the outer part of the cave's entrance is similar to Baltalıin. There are no pictures inside the cave. The surface of the rock has been smoothed over in order to provide a better setting for the pictures.

Colors: The pictures in question consist of human, animal, and plant figures as well as many different symbols. As for the human figures, those with thin body lines were drawn using red and brown. Yellow, red and deep brown (10R3/4-4/6) were employed for contours, and the inside was filled with yellow and white (7.5YR8/1-8/2). The inside of the snake is painted black. The colors used in the figures on the southwest panel were made from hematite for the red and brown, limonite for yellow, and pale orange (2.5YR6/6-5YR6/6) and lime for the white.

The application of the paint differs from picture to picture, which are more detailed than those in the Baltalıin Cave. The human and animal figures in both panels show us that a great deal of care was taken during their creation; background fillings in various colors also enforce this meticulousness. Diversity in the thickness of drawings shows us that different brushes were used during their creation.

Southwest Panel

This smaller panel measuring 1.43 x 0.87 m was drawn on a roughly-evened surface at the southwest side of the entrance to the cave, while a small damaged picture is located on the west side of the entrance. It was observed that red, deep-brown, yellow, pale-orange, and white colors were used in drawing the figures (Fig. 8.9). Four human figures are clearly discernible. The garments on these figures tell us that it is a scene of movement. The figures drawn with a red contour in the center of the scene are especially noticeable for wearing clothes different from the other human figures.

In the 0.90 x 0.45 m picture in which two couples are shown dancing, the floating fringes of the dancing women and other body movements are well depicted (Fig. 9.1). Another interesting point is that the male figures have stout bodies (0.37 x 0.19, 0.34 x 0.26 m). One of the figures has a foot with three toes resembling a bird's webbed foot, whereas another figure is wearing a fur coat with four red buttons on his neck and chest and has large feet resembling a bear or lion's claw (Fig. 9.2). Another figure is seen with two arms in the air as if performing a dance. The two male figures are depicted with tall and muscular bodies while the two women are smaller. In contrast to the men's lackluster dancing, the women's dances are animated. The woman in the middle also has a webbed foot with three toes; in other words, the feet and hands of the human figures are shown with three fingers or toes. We see a similar picture of couples dancing in the Latmos rock drawings[23].

To the right side of the dancing group is a small figure painted in the same colors (Fig. 9.3). Starting with this small figure and covering an area of 0.85 x 0.73 m on the west side of the panel, there is a stylized scene depicting a baby in its mother's womb and various phases of its development.

The image begins with the depiction of the moment in which semen – colored in white – flows out of the penis into the woman's vagina (Fig. 9.4). A large dot in this fluid has a symbolic meaning that expresses life/existence/vitality in a single drop motif without drawing a scene of sexual intercourse. The general form of this motif is a large, curved, contour line that symbolizes the belly of the pregnant mother. In her stomach lies a fetus parallel to the abdominal region (Fig. 9.5). The white-colored part around the fetus indicates it is covered with amnioma water. In the lower part of the fetus is depicted placenta in the form of eaves instead of feet (Fig. 9.6). The child is connected to its mother with an umbilical cord in the middle of the

[23] Peschlow-Bindokat 2003, fig. 83; Peschlow-Bindokat – Gerber 2012, 72, fig. 20.

motif. Both the child and umbilical cord are drawn in deep brown, whereas the inside of the cord and the child are depicted in pale orange, probably to indicate blood. Under the image of the drop, between the fetus and cord, a female figure is seen lying on her back, probably in a cave or living space, and holding a newly-born baby in the air with her arms (Fig. 9.7).

In the same image, apart from reflecting the phases of conception and development of a child, the moment of birth is also presented symbolically. It is possible to assume that the eleven white fingerprints (Fig. 9.8) on the belly belong to those who assisted the birth, and the four circles joined to each other in a single point refer to the newborn baby. The red lines below indicate amniotic fluid effusing during the intranatal phase (Fig. 9.9).

Similar pictures found at Çatalhöyük have the same quatrefoil motifs showing four dots in circles connected to each other with single lines[24]. Lewis-Williams states that these motifs at Çatalhöyük reveal the relation between the Mother Goddess and childbirth[25]. Mellaart[26] too thinks that the relief of the goddess at Çatalhöyük with concentric circles in her stomach and the wall decorations consisting of concentric circles signify pregnancy and the fetus[27]. It can be said that this scene depicting birth and life is a celebration and sanctification of propagation.

This picture signifies the level of Neolithic people's knowledge concerning human biology. Another point worth mentioning is the depiction of the mother's belly as transparent, showing the inside and fetus. This technique, similar to examples from the Palaeolithic Age, is defined as "realisme intellectual"[28]. One of the rare examples of this type of drawing, showing a mammoth and its heart, is located at Pindal Cave in Spain. In our picture, there is both advanced symbolic expression and much more detail than other examples from the Palaeolithic Age. Thus it constitutes a pioneering role for Anatolian painting art.

North Panel

The long panel on the north side of the entrance to İnkaya Cave has dimensions of 7.37 x 2.58 m and is badly-damaged (Fig. 10). There are several holes in various parts of the panel which were used for placing explosives. Large blocks of rock scattered along the inner part of the cave as a result of detonations indicate that this particular panel was saved from the same fate. Apart from the explosions mentioned, the easily-worn rock surface also contributed to peeling of the picture when exposed to various weather conditions. The picture is better preserved where it is close to the cave entrance. It is difficult to follow parts of the picture when they are separated from each other.

Main Scene: The western part of the panel, which is well-preserved and situated close to the entrance of the cave, constitutes the main scene of the picture (Fig. 11.1). Here we see a human figure on a tree (?) with raised arms and a defeated (or victorious?) snake opposite him. The tail of the snake crosses under the human figure and extends towards the left. Thus, the human figure is framed by the snake on both sides. The inner part of the snake's body is painted in black. The human figure above it is also framed with a black line. Another interesting figure in this scene is a person to the left covered with (possibly) an animal pelt and extending his arms towards the other human figure.

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24 Mellaart et al. 1989, 16, pl. IV.1, 2.

25 Lewis-Williams 2004, 44.

26 Mellaart 1967, pl. VII.

27 Mellaart et al. 1989, 13, pl. III.4.

28 Yalçınkaya 1979, 80.

This scene may reflect the moment of dying, and the snake represents an animal of the underworld as well as a symbol of death. The application of black used only in the filling of the snake's body and framing of a dying individual show us that black is associated with death. The figure wearing a pelt is in a trance and intervenes at the moment of death. Considering this figure's placement in the picture, it can be seen that he possesses special powers. Lewis-Williams[29] provides information on Shamanism: these figures with special powers exist and have influence over the spirit world, can change the weather, divine the future, and control animals. Hoppál[30] states that these figures are able to arrange the voyage of spirits to the land of the dead and provide easy access for spirits of the newly-born into the community. These explanations and the stance of the pelted figure seem consistent. Therefore, it can be said that we are looking at a shaman figure who mediates between the souls of dead people and the land of the dead. Another figure that stands right behind him, holding possibly an incense-burner in his hand used during the ceremony, probably symbolizes an assistant to the shaman or a relative of the dying person.

In the section in which the shaman stands, the ring motifs are intertwined (Fig. 11.2). Lewis-Williams, Clotes, and Pearce[31] see the shaman's trance as an hallucination and claim that vortex/tunnel symbols are frequently seen in cave paintings from the Palaeolithic Age. Taking this interpretation into consideration, we see that the symbols placed under the shaman during the hallucination stage most likely depict the shaman's spirit during its astral travel.

There is a resemblance between this figure and one in the southwest picture wearing a similar pelt and situated to the right of the dancing group. It is understood that the shaman at the center of the southwest picture is easing the passage of a newly-born spirit into its community. These two figures, wearing the same type of garment in two separate scenes, clearly indicate the importance of the shaman, who plays an influential role in life and death rituals.

Many scholars have suggested evidence for shamanistic belief existing in Anatolia during the Neolithic Age. Although Schmidt[32] set forth a belief system for Göbekli Tepe, no shamanistic figure has yet been found in its vicinity. We see a similar situation at Çatalhöyük, where there are important wall paintings[33]. However, the rock paintings in Latmos were analyzed by Peschlow-Bindokat and Gerber[34] who argue that, since some figures are drawn larger than others, it is possible these figures could be classified as shamans. In the İnkaya Cave pictures, taking their clothing, position in picture, and movements into consideration, the likelihood of these figures being shamans becomes more plausible.

Underworld (Land of the Dead): On other preserved parts of the picture, the depiction of the long and slithering body of the snake and its scales show us that the snake originally covered a large part of the picture (Fig. 11.3). We already know of the existence of pastoral scenes populated with plants and insects from the wall paintings of Çatalhöyük[35]. Our depiction by the Neolithic artist is different from Çatalhöyük in that there are branches, reeds, tree roots, insects, and grass that might symbolize whirlpools, and the symbol of death, a snake, is present

29 Lewis-Williams 1991, 158.

30 Hoppál 2014, 45.

31 Clotes – Lewis-Williams 1998; Lewis-Williams – Pearce 2005.

32 Schmidt 2006, 241.

33 Lewis-Williams 2004, 36-46; Lewis-Williams – Pearce 2005, 73, fig. 34c.

34 Peschlow-Bindokat – Gerber 2012.

35 Mellaart 1967, 162-63, fig. 46.

in every section of this scene. The skin left behind in the underworld accords with the character of decay in the land of the dead.

The Vulture and Headless Corpses: When we approach the east side of the panel, we see the preserved image of a bird's head in the center (Fig. 11.4). Even though its bill is discernible, it is difficult to tell whether a dark spot at the back of its head belongs to another bird or not. In front of the bird, there is the lower body of a human figure. The bird in question is a vulture, which has already eaten the upper part of the body and has started to eat its lower part. On top of the bird and to the east, we can detect nineteen headless corpses with their hands and legs open that cover the scene. The lower part of the human body is in pale orange, whereas the head of the bird and other human bodies are in red. It is understood that there were other headless corpses in the damaged middle part. If we estimate there was the same number of figures equally in the whole picture, then there may have been at least thirty individuals in this particular scene. It is observed that the excarnated bones to the left of the vulture have started to become jumbled, and the skeletons have begun to turn into a pile of bones. On the left side of this scene, which we interpret as the land of the dead, the unidentifiable lines of various shapes – shown as piled up on the skin of the snake –might represent bones belonging to human bodies (Fig. 11.5). If we suppose that there are also heaps of bones in the damaged sections, then it is possible that the whole land of the dead was covered with human bones.

This particular flesh-eating scene along with vultures and corpses is important in Anatolian Neolithic beliefs. The scene described above is analogous to a similar theme found in Çatalhöyük wall pictures[36]. Even though there are differences between the two in regard to style and expression, the excarnation of the corpses shows us the existence of the same belief system.

It is difficult to determine whether the depiction of these corpses shows us the aftermath of some mass death or a gradual departure. One possible clue to resolving this question is the possible depiction of women figures to the east of the bird and separated with zigzag lines in pale orange with their arms and hands open (Fig. 11.6). These figures, one of which is well-preserved, number at least three. Right in front of these figures stands a person with arrow-like hair or a hat with open arms who appears to command this group. Every one of the figures is seen in a praying or elegising stance with open arms and three-fingered hands pointed towards the sky. It is also difficult to tell whether the figure who seems to directing the ceremony is an old woman or another shaman. It is also possible to assume that the zigzag pale-orange lines, which divide the praying/wailing women from the land of the dead, are signs designating geographical differences.

The Hand: Another small but well-preserved portion of the north panel is in the uppermost section (Fig. 11.7). Here, a hand painted in pale orange is extended towards a symbol/object standing a little aloft. Underneath the hand, in the damaged section, a tree in a mountainous region can be seen. On top of the hill are a few lines drawn that resemble the sun's rays.

The hand motif is often seen in Palaeolithic cave paintings. There are hand figures to be found in Neolithic Anatolian caves such as at Çatalhöyük[37], in the Latmos rock paintings[38], and at Tavabaşı[39], as well as other examples from Late Neolithic-Early Chalcolithic in the Göller

36 Mellaart 1967, figs. 46-49; Mellaart et al. 1989, 58-60, pl. XIII.1-5.

37 Mellaart 1967, fig. 41.4; Mellaart et al. 1989, pl. III.1-3.

38 Peschlow-Bindokat 2003, 73, fig. 67.

39 Korkut et al. 2015, 48, fig. 17.

Yöresi (Pisidia, Lake District, Central Anatolia) area[40]. It is generally believed that the hand means "a living hand, vitality, life or a signature"[41]. We believe that the hand depicted in the İnkaya cave has a different meaning from those mentioned above. The preserved hand image on the upper part of the picture and the object it is trying to touch constitute an important question. Similar designs exist in the Çatalhöyük wall pictures[42] and Latmos rock paintings[43] (Fig. 12). Pointing to the similarities between the two centers, Yakar[44] also cannot find a plausible explanation for this particular image. Lewis-Williams's approach to these hand signs – that "they could be interpreted as an attempt to make a connection with the other world"[45] – can be applied to our particular picture as well.

To summarize, this picture on the north side contains an attempt to show at the same time a scene in which, under the control of a shaman, the moment of death symbolized by a snake, the land of the dead, scraping of flesh from the bone, and the rising of spirits into the sky are all depicted as part of a death cult.

Use of Space and Evaluation of Pictures

When we compare the pictures in both caves, the existence of different styles becomes obvious. Although there is no shading in the Baltalıin pictures, an effort had been made to provide perspective by drawing figures in the foreground bigger and those in the background smaller. This kind of difference is also seen in both caves regarding color usage. In the Baltalıin paintings, human and animal figures are shown in different colors, whereas in the İnkaya pictures those in the foreground are shown in different colors. The figure wearing a colored garment in the southwest panel and the shaman and his assistant in the north panel are painted the same color. It is difficult to distinguish the gender of the figures in the north panel, but it is relatively easy to distinguish them in the southwest panel. The wailing/praying women in the north panel, dancing women in the southwest scene, depiction of hands with three fingers, and usage of different symbols with circles filled with dots or concentric circles – these all reflect a similar style and the existence of the same artist. It is thought that due to a similar style apparent in the İnkaya pictures, the same artist could be responsible for both of them; whereas a different style, therefore a different artist, is seen in the Baltalıin pictures.

The panels on either side of the entrance to İnkaya Cave show differences in terms of the themes they show. The southwest panel contains the theme of birth and celebration of birth, which constitutes life. The north panel reflects the theme of death by including the moment of dying and other ceremonies related to funeral practices. This arrangement in İnkaya Cave shows us that the themes were determined before the actual drawing process took place. Another important detail to be mentioned is the fact that the theme of death is embroidered on the north wall. Mellaart[46] mentions that scenes dealing with the concept of death and involving vultures in Çatalhöyük were placed on the east and north walls. Hodder[47] formerly stated

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40 Mellaart 1970, pl. LXIX.4.

41 Mellaart et al. 1989, 12, pl. III.1-3.

42 Mellaart 1963, 54, fig. VIIb.

43 Peschlow-Bindokat 2003, fig. 31c.

44 Yakar 2005, 111-12, fig. 2a, b.

45 Lewis-Williams 2004, 44.

46 Mellaart 1967, 102-03, 111, 167-68, fig. 46-49.

47 Hodder 1999, 190; 2010, 16.

that young males were buried in the northwestern corner of the houses. However, this view has changed due to later excavations which placed the burials of young infants in the southern section of the houses. A similar situation is seen on the İnkaya southwest wall that has birth scenes. Pictures containing the birth scene of the mother goddess at Çatalhöyük are also depicted on the north walls of dwellings[48]. The hunting scenes at Çatalhöyük were painted on the walls of houses in Layers IX-VIA. The hunting scene in Baltalıin Cave is on the northeast side as a result of the layout of the cave and can be compared with hunting pictures in Çatalhöyük.

In his study on Shamanism while evaluating wall pictures, societal beliefs, and describing the shamanistic universe, Bischoff[49] suggested that the figures of women, leopards, bulls, and rams symbolize the earth/overground, whereas vultures and snakes symbolize the underworld. He dubbed this the "Shamanist Cosmos". This view is supported by the snake and vulture images being illustrated together on a plate found at Jerf el Ahmar, Syria[50] and dated to the PPNA (Pre-Pottery Neolithic A) period. Similar findings are found on various plates at Göbekli Tepe[51]. A snake relief engraved over a statue in Nevali Çori can also be seen as a reflection of this belief. Hauptmann[52] has stated that this is a common motif in Neolithic iconography symbolizing the underworld in relation to its evil spirits and associating the vulture with death. The depiction of a snake is only seen on the handle of a dagger at Çatalhöyük[53], whereas it appears on pieces of jug grips found in the Malkayası and İsa caves in the Latmos region[54]. These findings and interpretations are in a complete accord with the pictures in İnkaya Cave: scenes of a vulture and snake on the wall of death as well as the birth and celebratory scenes on the wall of life.

Alongside the symbolism regarding life and death in the Neolithic Age, the perception of an underground (underworld) and overground reflects Shamanism and its relationship with these worlds. It is important to see the shaman as the principal figure in these pictures. Peschlow-Bindokat[55] asserts that a figure in the picture at Karadere Cave dated to the Neolithic and Chalcolithic Ages, drawn considerably bigger than other figures and without any other significant characteristics, is a shaman. Hodder[56] evaluates scenes in which there are depictions of vultures with human feet as people dressed up as vultures[57]. Lewis-Williams[58] views it as reflecting an early form of shamanistic belief. In the death scene picture at İnkaya Cave, we see both figures – one in a trance and wearing different garments while extending his arms to a dying figure; the other attending to a birth and easing the entry of the newly-born spirit into the world and celebrating its existence. These figures are placed in the center of the picture, which shows us their importance and the existence of the shaman. They both constitute, for now, the earliest depictions of shamans in Anatolia.

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48 Mellaart 1967, 102-03, 111.

49 Bischoff 2002, 241.

50 Stordeur – Jammous 1995.

51 Schmidt 2007, 123, fig. 12.

52 Hauptmann 2007, 145-46, fig. 10.

53 Mellaart 1967, 156, 213, fig. 52, pl. XIV.

54 Peschlow-Bindokat 2003, 85, 92, fig. 81a, 94d-e.

55 Peschlow-Bindokat 2003, 64-65, fig. 58b.

56 Hodder 2006, 49.

57 Russell – McGowan 2003.

58 Lewis-Williams 2004, 41-42.

When we analyze the use of space in these two caves, we see a conscious attempt to divide spaces according to whether they will be used for hunting or faith-based rituals. The Baltalıın Cave has a picture of deer hunting and was reserved for hunting rituals. It is understood that İnkaya Cave was reserved for the death cult, which includes pictures involving birth, celebration of a new infant spirit joining the community, and moment of death, including the intervention of a shaman. Hermansen[59] divides rituals into two kinds, hunting and social relations, and accordingly, the spaces in which such rituals are realized. This classification involves different utilizations, and our caves overlap completely with Hermansen's description, since they were reserved either for hunting (nourishment) or social (belief) rituals. The rituals of these activities were different. Since two separate caves were allocated for the rituals, it shows us that they took place in different spaces during the Neolithic Age in Anatolia.

It is logical that the rituals conducted in İnkaya Cave would have taken place at the semi-open entrance in front of the cave where the pictures were found, depending on the season. The interior of the cave, 3 m above the semi-open entrance, poses an important question regarding its purpose. It could have been used as living quarters. Alternatively, the two shaman pictures – one right in the center and the other with its back to the cave placed on either side of this space – bring to mind the possibility that it was a holy space belonging to and used by a shaman. These caves are located in a steep and inaccessible area. İnkaya Cave, in particular, is well-positioned halfway up a high hill and gives the impression that it was especially chosen for this purpose. The structure of this cave reminds us of a picture of the mother goddess sitting in a cave, complete with drawings of stalactites, inside a mountain at Çatalhöyük[60]. Due to the fact that this picture depicts the mother goddess giving birth, it could be assumed that such caves were believed to be holy spaces associated with the mother goddess in Neolithic beliefs. However, we do not have sufficient data to be certain of this assumption.

Another difficult question – who utilized these caves? – still remains unanswered. The site we are studying, in light of current knowledge, is the only Neolithic site in this mountainous region. To the best of our knowledge, the two nearest Neolithic centers to our caves are at Aktopraklık, 55 km to the north, and İncedere Höyüğü, 95 km to the southwest. Çatalhöyük in Central Anatolia is 420 km away and the Latmos region lies 260 km away. As opposed to the peoples of Southeast and Central Anatolia who carried out ceremonies and rituals within their respective spaces, the peoples of Western Anatolia, as in Latmos and Dursunbey-Delice, appear to have preferred seasonal cult centers such as caves and semi-open areas. Clottes and Lewis-Williams[61] suggest that the caves were used by shamans, and the impressive images produced there were drawn by them. This opinion regarding caves of the Palaeolitic Age may also apply to our caves.

Dating of the Pictures

During our research in the Baltalıın and İnkaya Caves, we observed that the floors of the caves consisted of rock, and there was no culture medium that had survived to the present day. We also observed pottery remains in front of and in the vicinity of the Baltalıın Cave that dated back to the Middle Ages as well as to the present. The only material we have to date this cave to an earlier period is the wall picture. A few amorphous pieces of pottery alongside fragments

59 Hermansen 2005, 29.

60 Mellaart et al. 1989, pl. XII.2.

61 Clottes – Lewis-Williams 1998.

of tools such as blades and flint scrapers dating from the Neolithic were collected from the surroundings and floor of İnkaya Cave.

As mentioned in the introduction, wall paintings were extensively used during the early period in Anatolia. The earliest wall pictures found in Western Anatolia – at Öküzini and Beldibi – were created using either paint and/or incisive techniques; sometimes both were applied together. These two caves have many cultural layers dating back to the Palaeolithic, and this makes exact dating of the pictures difficult.

The Çatalhöyük findings, dated to the Late Neolithic (layers of structures for pictures X-V, ^{14}C 6940-5480 BC, according to Wright[62] by their context), are the closest examples that could be found to compare with our pictures[63]. The Latmos rock pictures, by using archaeological data from their surroundings, have been dated to the 6th and 5th millennium BC (Late Neolithic-Early Chalcolithic) and show similarities with our pictures. In recent years, signifying the existence and number of pictures waiting to be discovered in Anatolia, some damaged cave paintings were found on the facade of Tavabaşı Cave in the Tlos region. These pictures were dated to the Middle Chalcolitic by means of pottery fragments[64].

Apart from wall paintings, some important developments in polychrome pottery-making took place in that era. In the Pisidia region (Lakes District), ornamental figures have a large repertoire. Findings at Hacılar[65], Höyücek[66], and Kuruçay[67], all dating to the Late Neolithic-Early Chalcolithic, present good examples of the tradition of painting on ceramics.

It is possible to evaluate the artful applications we see on the walls and facades of caves as reflecting a symbolic expression of developed and differentiated belief coming from the tradition of Palaeolithic cave pictures. Such pictorial representations started to increase from the Late Neolithic and continued into the Late and Middle Chalcolithic.

The image below the relief on a pillar at Göbekli Tepe[68] has been interpreted Hodder and Meskell[69] as a headless human body and birdhead. One of the themes, death, in the Çatalhöyük pictures – the vulture scene – constitutes proof for the existence of the same belief system due to its thematic analogy. The simple expression in its symbolism and the similarity of its theme is striking. At Çatalhöyük, we see representations of death cults with vultures present in the dwellings on Levels VIII and VII, VII and VIB, and also of the mother goddess giving birth in houses on Levels VII.-VIA. To have pictures dealing with these themes in the late period of Çatalhöyük is remarkable. Thus, themes similar to the paintings in İnkaya and Baltalıin Caves are known from dwellings in Levels VIII-VIA at Çatalhöyük.

Other important data of relevance relate to the skull cult, which we see in Syria in the PPNB (Pre-Pottery Neolithic B) phase. It is also found at Çatalhöyük[70] and Köşk Höyük[71] in Late Neolithic Central Anatolia. One pictorial representation of the belief system in the skull

62 Wright 2014.

63 Peschlow-Bindokat 2006, 96; Peschlow-Bindokat – Gerber 2012, 76.

64 Korkut et al. 2015, 49.

65 Mellaart 1970, pl. LXIX, LXXII-CXI.

66 Duru – Umurtak 2005, pl. 85-92.

67 Duru 1994, pl. 53-56, 78-86, 109-17.

68 Schmidt 2010, fig. 10.

69 Hodder – Meskell 2010, 54, fig. 2.6.

70 Hodder 2005; 2006, 210, 260.

71 Öztan 2002, 57-58.

cult is stripping off the flesh. Another practice in the cult of the dead, similar to vultures ripping off the flesh, is daubing with paint the skull taken out of the grave after the stripping the flesh. Some good examples of this process can be found in graves with headless skeletons at Çatalhöyük[72], Köşk Höyük[73], and Tepecik-Çiftlik[74]. Headless burial could be considered a different version of the headless figures seen in the death scenes at İnkaya Cave. Özbek[75] states that this kind of practice was limited to the Late Neolithic and can be seen in Layers II-III at Köşk Höyük, but is not to be found in layers belonging to the Chalcolithic. A similar situation applies to the Çatalhöyük graves[76].

Taking the Çatalhöyük and Köşk Höyük findings into consideration regarding the belief system of Neolithic Central Anatolia, they provide an insight into the date of the İnkaya pictures. It can be suggested that these pictures were created in the Late Neolithic Age. Currently, it is not possible to make a conclusive statement about the period. We assume that, since the pictures show one single production phase and were not drawn over and over again, this could be a sign of possible use during the Early Chalcolithic period. One of the findings that supports this assumption is the figure of an extended hand among the Latmos rock paintings that has been dated to the Late Neolithic-Early Chalcolithic period, which had the same belief system.

Results

The three picture panels in Baltalıin and İnkaya Caves contribute to a better understanding of the belief system that existed in the last period of the Neolithic Age in Anatolia and the use of caves for this particular purpose.

We are dealing here with a ritualistic center planned for performing ceremonies in keeping with society's social (beliefs) and vital (feeding) needs.

Another important insufficiency of information regarding the faith system in Neolithic Anatolia is the existence of shamanistic belief. The life and death pictures in İnkaya Cave, apart from presenting the most distinct and earliest shaman depictions known to us up to now, also offer an insight into the shamanist world. The shaman is placed right in the center of the life scene and helps ensure the safe arrival of a newborn baby in the community. A shaman who is tasked with assisting the voyage of a dying man's spirit to the land of the dead is also shown in the corner of the death scene. This supports the view that shamans, according to shamanist belief, could travel to the land of the dead while in a trance or could communicate with souls. Here, the snake, as an animal of the underworld, is the symbol of death which takes humans from life. Both the vulture and snake are important animals symbolizing death and appear in every death scene in depictions from the Neolithic Age in Anatolia and the PPNA phase in the Syrian Euphrates.

In the picture, the manner in which the snake's dwelling is shown along with the image of the underworld as a place of chaos help us understand how the artist conceived their world. The vulture scene at İnkaya Cave saves the Çatalhöyük pictures from being singled out as the

72 Hodder 2006, 147-48; Hodder – Meskell 2010, 53.

73 Özbek 2009, 383-84.

74 Bıçakçı et al. 2012.

75 Özbek 2009, 385.

76 Hodder 2006, 251; Hodder – Meskell 2010, 52.

sole example, and at the same time shows us that it is a wide-ranging belief covering inner Western Anatolia. This painting also demonstrates that there was a common usage of expression and symbols to portray the same themes, and also that there was some interaction between Central Anatolia and the Marmara region.

Another important point, besides the creative ability of the artists who drew the pictures, is their highly-developed ability to think in abstract terms. Another question that remains unanswered is the absence of wall paintings and cult areas inside dwellings of the Late Neolithic in Western Anatolia. The Delice caves appear to be an important cult area in relation to this period, and they suggest there may be similar cult centers outside other habitable areas in Western Anatolia. Thus, the view that widespread ceremonies existing during the Neolithic Age gradually diminished from east to west, propounded due to lack of data and adequate research, may not be accurate. The longevity, prevalence, and exclusory characteristics of the Neolithic belief system in Anatolia have been advanced thanks to the discovery of these caves and filled a gap in our knowledge.

In evaluating the drawings in this study, the most important sources consisted of other pictures discovered from the Palaeolithic and Neolithic Ages and studies carried out on them. Except for a few comparative examples of the themes shown in our pictures, the obstacle we faced in explaining the representations was the lack of adequate analogies found up to now. In some sections, possibilities are proposed that might be viewed as speculative. These should be treated as tentative suggestions based on available data. We are of the opinion that the Baltalıin and İnkaya Cave drawings and archaeological finds, together with their assessment and suggestions regarding their interpretation, should be considered in the future as forming part of the basic data set relating to beliefs in the Neolithic Age.

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Makale Geliş / Received : 18.12.2017

Makale Kabul / Accepted : 14.03.2018



Fig. 1 Map showing location of Baltalıin and İnkaya Caves



Fig. 2 Baltalıin Cave

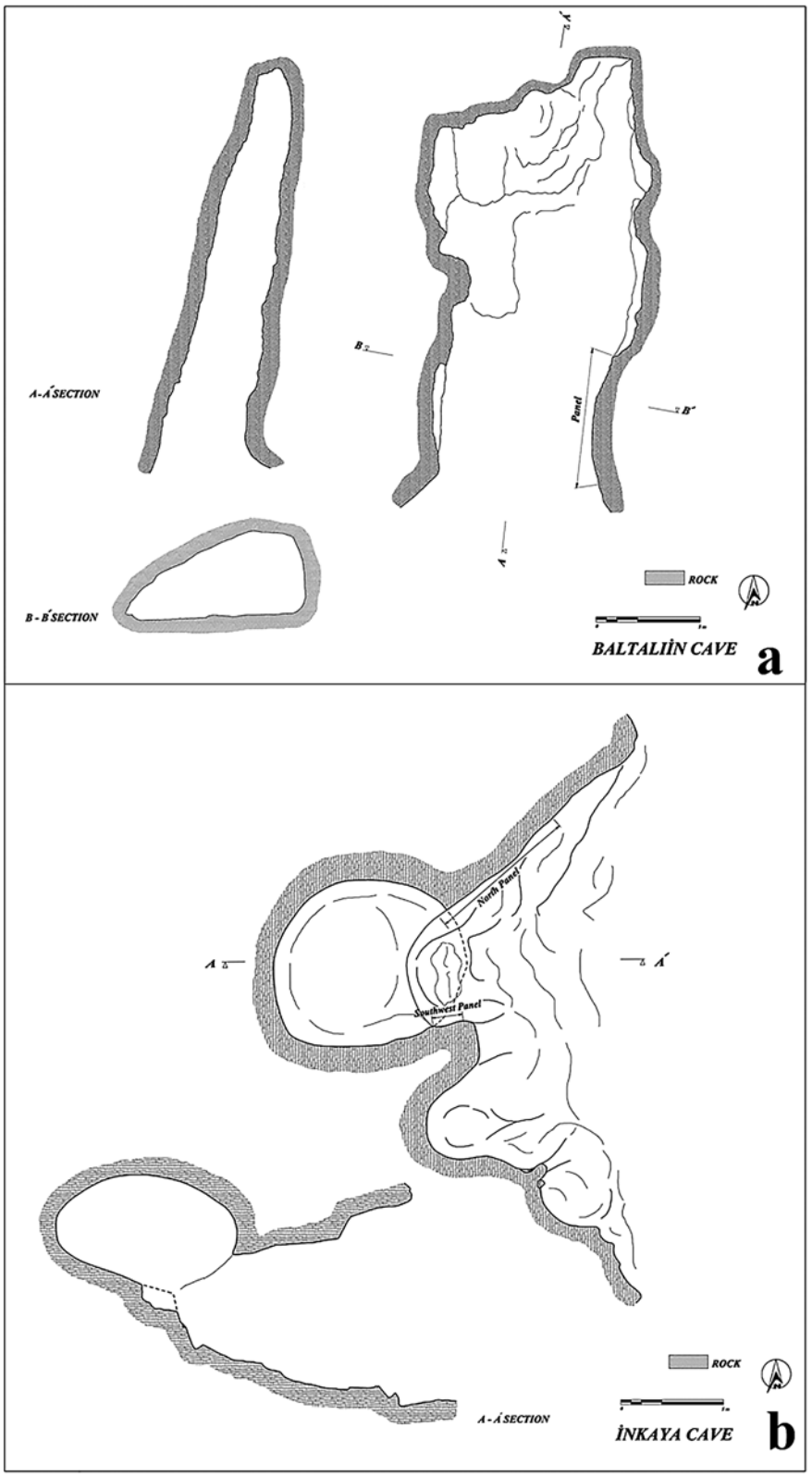


Fig. 3 Plans and sections of a) Baltalıin Cave and b) İnkaya Cave



Fig. 4 Baltalıin Cave, Panel



Fig. 5 Baltalıin Cave, Panel



Fig. 6
İnkaya Cave and
artifacts found



Fig. 7
İnkaya Cave



Fig. 8
İnkaya Cave,
Southwest Panel

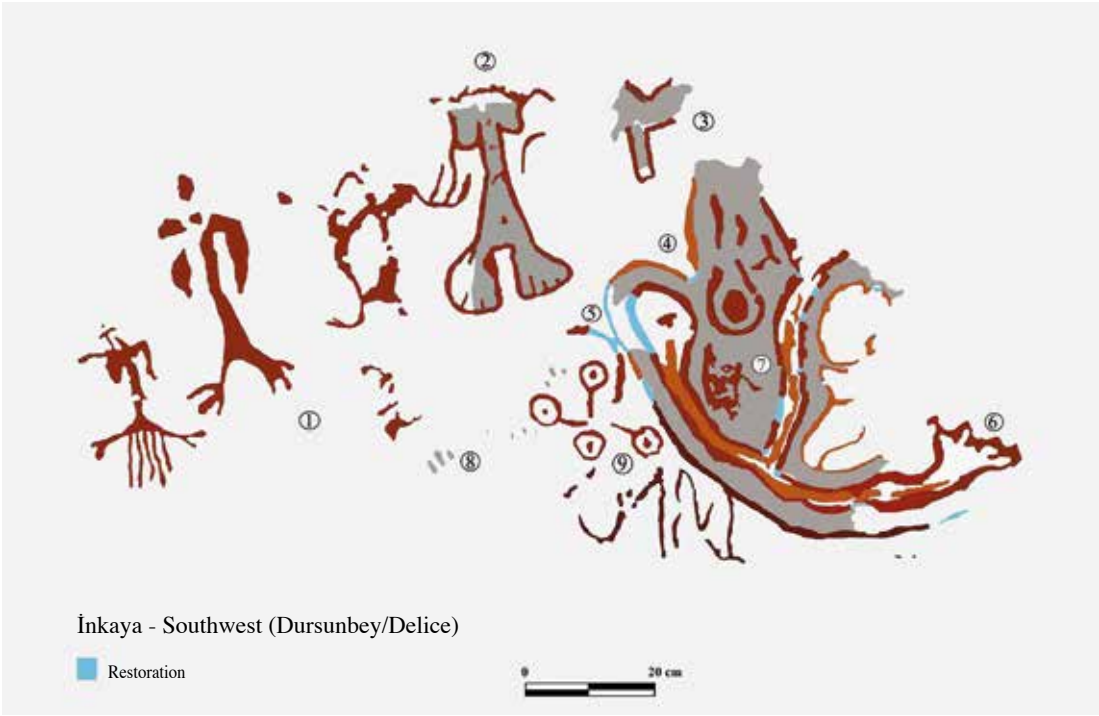


Fig. 9 İnkaya Cave, Southwest Panel

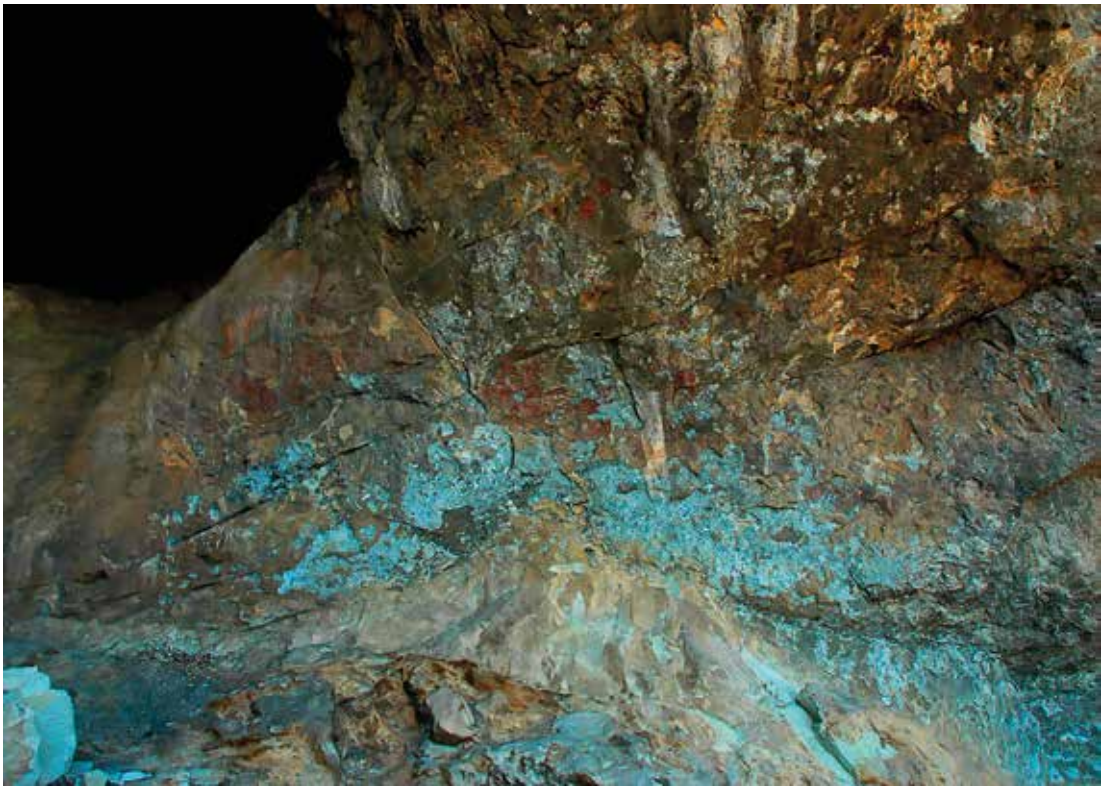


Fig. 10 İnkaya Cave, North Panel



Fig. 11 İnkaya Cave, North Panel

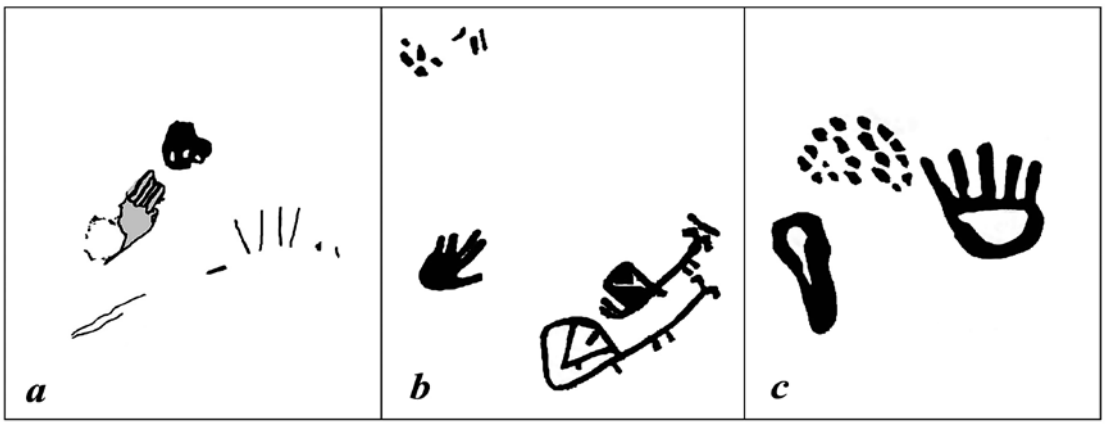


Fig. 12 a) İnkaya west; b) Latmos (Peschlow-Bindokat 2003, fig. 31c); and c) Çatalhöyük (Mellaart 1963, fig. VIIb)