VOLCANIC CAVES AND PETROGLYPHS OF BORLUK VALLEY - KARS (EASTERN TURKEY)

Ali Yamac

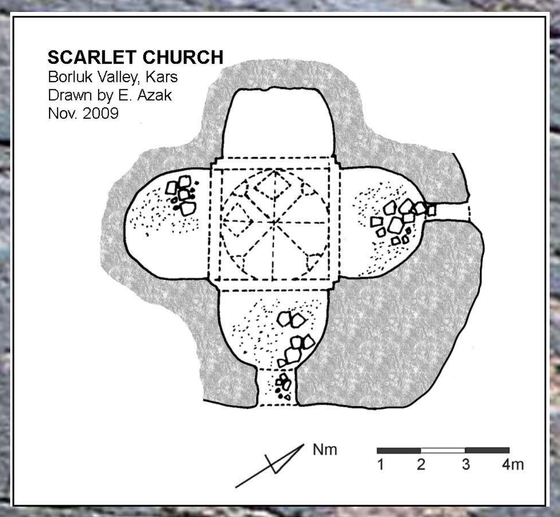
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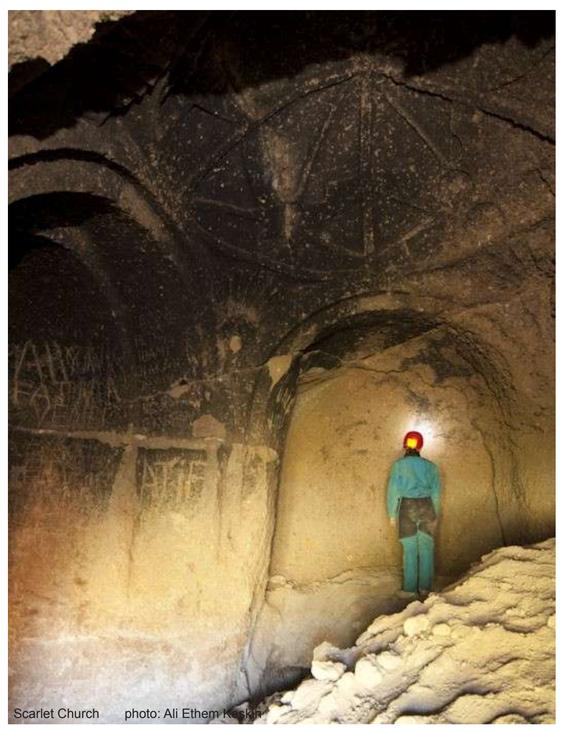
Abstract

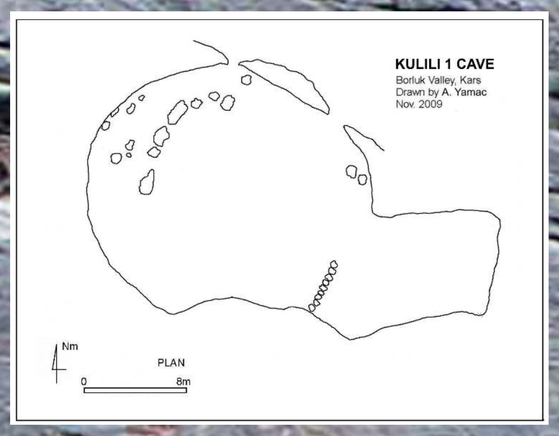
Borluk Valley which continues 6 kilometers towards the east of Magaracik Village of Kars, eastern Turkey had long been known by its petroglyphs, rather than its caves.

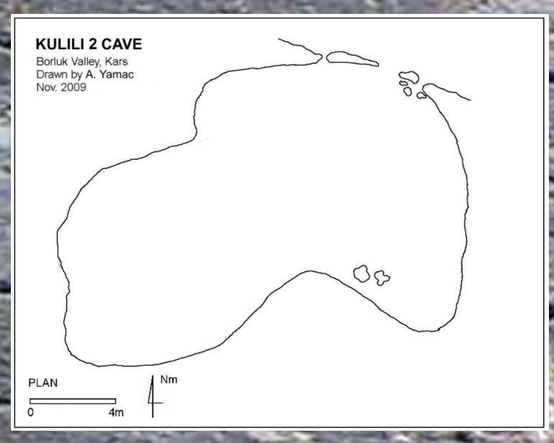
However, in 1942 in some caves of that valley, an archaeological survey had been carried out by Prof. Kılıç Kökten and some prehistoric findings had been documented. According to microliths and scrapers that he had found in the caves around Azat and Magaracik villages, Mr. Kokten claims in his article that those caves were all Paleolithic settlements.

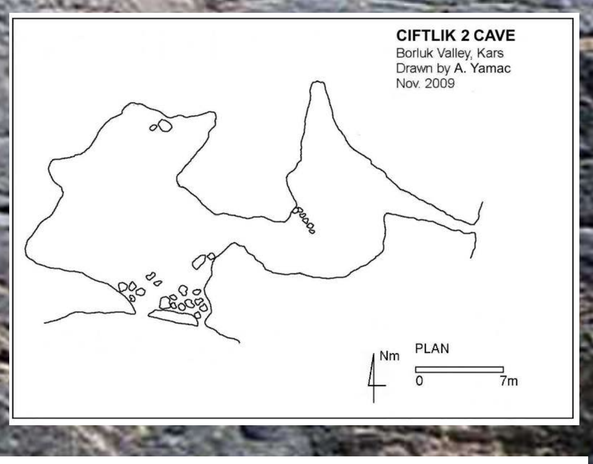
In this poster presentation, Borluk Valley of Kars, which has an archaeological and cultural importance, will be explained in details, in addition to the caves that were explored. Magaracik Cave, which Prof. Kokten searched 70 years ago and wrote about the importance of findings in detail but had not indicated the exact location, was also found, measured and mapped.

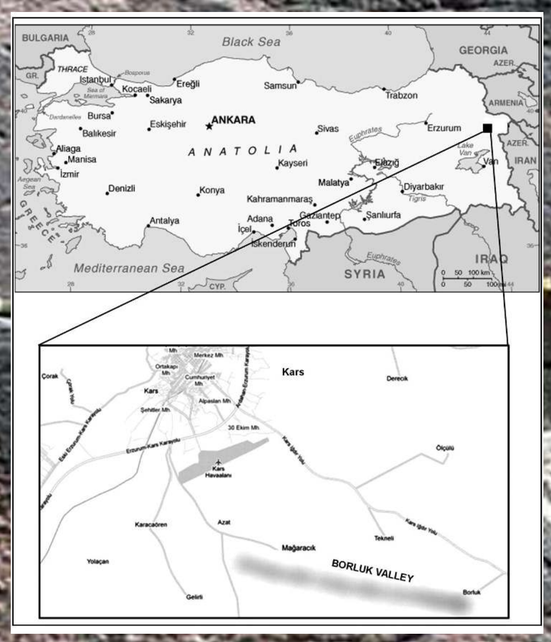




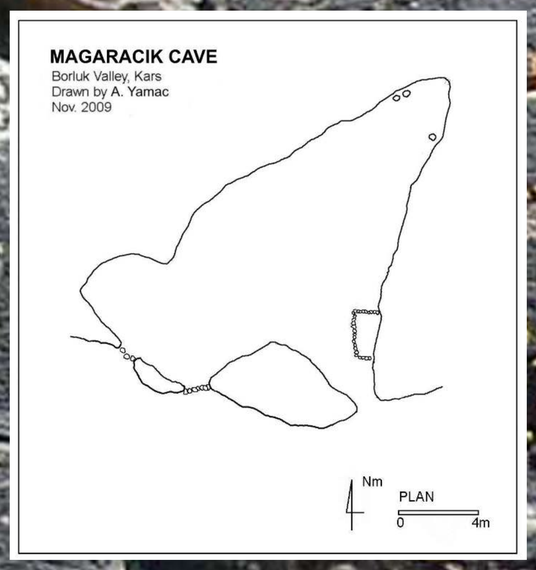




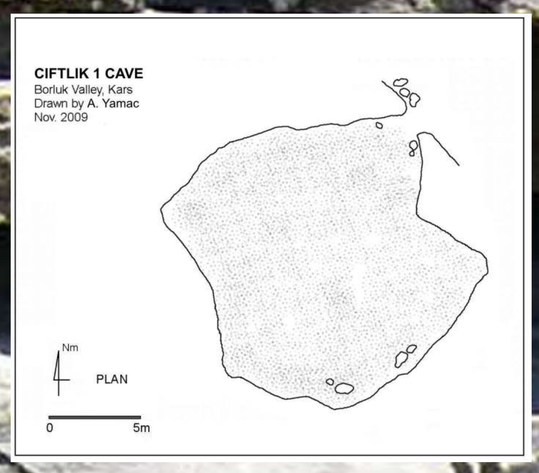


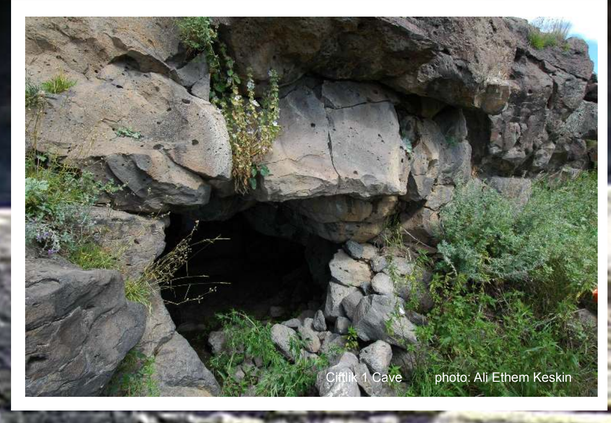


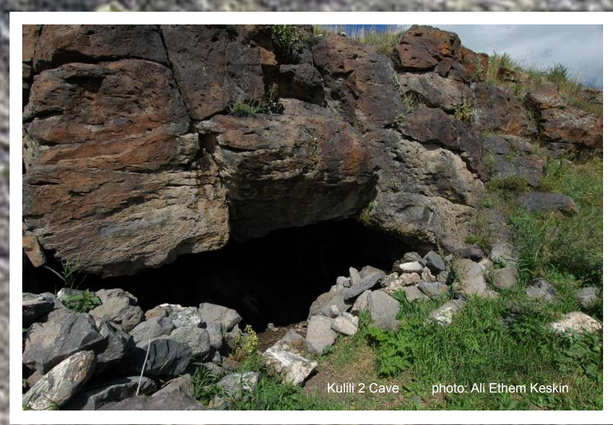












Petroglyphs of Borluk Valley

Some of the human and animal figures drawn on rock surface, which were done with scraping and pounding techniques, have been erased by natural circumstances or mostly were damaged by people. A large part of the animal figures are mountain goats, deer and the wild boar. In addition, the figures of a small number of wild cattles are also available.

The most drawing congested part of the valley is Azatkoy vicinity. On the other hand, some of the rock paintings here were too pale and ravaged that they could not be seen if not shown to us by our guide. From the village to the south, in the Tasocagi region, there are many rock drawings. Prof. Oktay Belli has determined the presence of a total of 186 petroglyphs in the valley.

In the andesite under rock shelter pictures of non-existing varieties of deer, wild cattle, wild boar, mountain goat, mountain sheep along with a variety of kinds of animals that cannot be percieved precisely and figures of the Mother Goddess, hunter shooting an arrow to animals, drawn using scraping the rock surface and line-pounding emphasis techniques, can be seen. More than two thirds of these hunting animals are wild sheeps and goats.









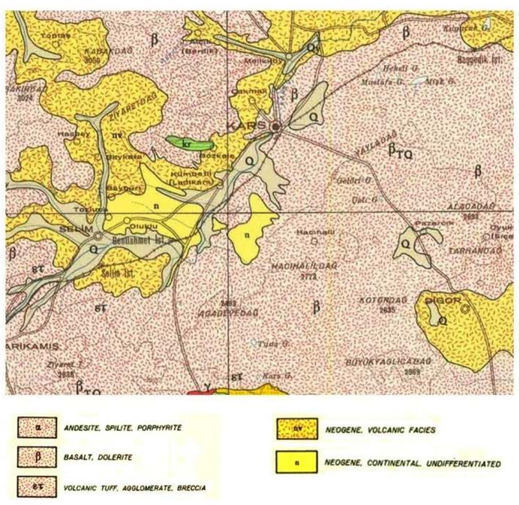
Introduction

Borluk Valley was formed as the result of thousands of years of Borluk Stream erosion which starts 18 km southeast of Kars traverses Magaracik and Azat villages. The stream mingles into Kars Stream at a point a little more north-west, close to Karacaoren Village.

Prof. Kilic Kokten made the first scientific research in Borluk Valley in 1942. He published an article where he drew attention to the caves of the region and gave information about the prehistoric materials found in the area. When he went to the region two years after his first research, he made an excavation of a drilling at the entrance of Magaracik Cave and by looking at the finds he wrote that this cave was most probably a Palaeolithic settlement. Nobody had ever went to the mentioned Magaracik Cave nor had anybody known of its exact location. Another research study made in this valley is by Prof. Oktay Belli. About 200 rock pictures were found out during his recent visits to the area.

We found five caves and one church carved into rocks during our exploration at the valley. None of them were ever researched nor published before, other than Magaracik Cave. Today we know that there are very few caves that are composed of andesite and ignimbrite in Turkey. So, these five volcanic caves are of great importance.

About 3 kilometers to the southeast of Borluk Valley there is a church carved into the rocks which was named Scarlet Church by the villagers. It is far from all the settlements in the midst of a deserted place. In spite of the long time elapsed and the damage that men have given, some embroidery can still be seen in the dome and on the walls. During the same exploration, a detailed measured drawing of this structure, which was never investigated nor published, is made.



Geology of the Area

It is estimated that the most forceful stage of volcanic activity lived in this region is about 6 - 7 million years ago. This stage is charactarized by widespread rhyolitic - dacitic pyroclastic products and interval lava additives on the surface. It is thought that this material has been driven to the surface from different volcanoes by Sub-Plinia and Plinia high-energy explosions rather than by flow. It is observed that there is ignimbrite and obsidian besides pumice / ash rubble spread over large areas on the surface. Domes and massive lava sequences were formed in southern Kars by ascending of andesitic lava to the surface again 5 - 6 million years ago. Volcanic activity has been active, especially in western Kars, and has caused the formation of plateaus in the region mostly in this period. Volcanics of Khorasan, which are widely located in northern Khorasan, were formed 4.1 million years ago. Where as, Aladag volcano was formed 3.5 million years ago, which is more to the eastern region. However, the basaltic and andesitic lava flows observed in a large area from north to south of Kars Kagizman continued, until the last eruptions occurred 3 million years ago.

Photo: Ali Ethem Keskin