



## Ram-head Tombstones in and around Iğdır and their place in art history

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### Abstract

In this research, a total of 16 ram tombstones, including 6 ram headstones in the open-air museum of the Karakoyunlu district municipality, which is 15 km away from Iğdır, and 10 ram-head tombstones in the Kadim Çaybaşı Cemetery in Melekli town, 6 km away from the city center of Iğdır, has been studied. Since many of the tombstones have suffered various destructions over time, only those that have survived to the present day and are in readable condition have been identified and studies have been carried out on them. A total of 37 tombstones were identified during the field survey. Only 16 of these tombstones have been studied. The research started with a literature review in order to create a source for the study, then the ram-head tombstones in Iğdır and its surroundings were seen in person, the photographs of these tombstones were taken and their measurements were taken. In line with the available data, the tombstones were marked and read. As a result, the materials used in the construction of the ram headstones seen in and around Iğdır, the stamps, depictions and embroideries on the shaping techniques are documents that clearly show that they were created by the Turkish communities who settled in Anatolia and dominated these regions.

## 1. Introduction

The concept of death, which directs human life, has been questioned in all beliefs and human beings have been busy answering whether there is another life after death (Arslan, 2018). In Turkish belief, death is not the end, on the contrary, it is an inevitable fact and a phenomenon that is accepted as a natural process. Turks, who believe that everything in nature has a soul and that they will die (Eroğlu, 2017), have given great importance to graves and tombstones since history (Bodakçı, 2017). The fact that Turks bury them with their valuables and believe that there will be another life after death shows the belief in death and burial traditions (Aslan, 2019).

Tombstones, which are an important part of cultural history, are documents that provide information about the traditions, customs and beliefs of that nation in the cultural relations that a nation has made on the geography of its area (Sili, 1996). Gravestones can be considered as a language that reflects the belief, state of mind and perspective of the person they are in, as well as the economic, cultural and social situation of the environment in which that person is located (Kuru, 2014). In this respect, tombstones appear as the primary source of information about the cultural and social structure of the region (Çaylar, 2016).

In the Turks, the tradition of burial and erecting stones for the dead, which continues for thousands of years with the belief that life continues after death and that the dead person will be resurrected, began to emerge primarily in their homeland, Central Asia. This practice continued in various ways under the influence of different ethnic groups during the temporary or permanent settlement of Turks in many parts of the world (Karamürsel, 2002). In this sense, the Balbals, which have the tradition of erecting stones on the graves, are both important works of Turkish sculpture art and the beginning of the tombstone tradition (Aslanapa, 2019). Although “balbals” continue as tombstones in the Göktürks, there are also large stone erection practices called Bengütaş, which has an inscription on it and means eternal life (Tunçel, 1996).

In Turkish states such as Hun, Göktürk, Uygur, stone sculpture and balbal practices, which are the tradition of pre-Islamic tombstones, have changed with the acceptance of Islam, the understanding of burial, grave and tombstone has changed, and this situation has transformed into different forms. Especially common in Central Asia, ‘balbals’ and ‘stones with tamga’ started to be replaced by new forms with Islam (Çetin, 2019), but the old forms were not abandoned after Islam and continued by adapting to Islamic culture (Kaya, 2021).

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The presence of tombstones such as rams, sheep, and horses are an indicator of Turkish nomadic culture and belief in the sky god, as well as the presence of balbals in regions under Turkish domination (Borisenko & Khudyakov, 1998). Turkish communities, who lived in tribes in various periods of history, have integrated animals such as rams with themselves due to their lifestyle and have frequently included this subject in many literary genres, besides, they have made ram-head tombstones for the grave of the deceased (Alyılmaz, & Alyılmaz 2017). It is known that among the ancient Turks, people sacrificed mountain sheep or rams to protect themselves from evil spirits, as well as drawing ram horns or making ram statues (Diyarbakirli, 1972).

The tradition of making ram-sheep sculptures in Central Asian Turkish culture has continued to be used as tombstones, especially with Akkoyunlu and Karakoyunlu people who settled in the Eastern Anatolia region, and has survived to the present day (Yaşa, 1992). These works provide important documents in the field of history, art, literature and culture of Turkish communities in regions where Turkish communities live, such as Central Asia and Anatolia (Berкли, 2007).

The fact that ram and sheep tombstones in Anatolia are seen in the Eastern Anatolia region, where Akkoyunlu and Karakoyunlu states lived in the region since the 13th century, establishes the belief that these works belong to the Akkoyunlu or Karakoyunlu tradition (Küçükahmet, 2009).

Gravestones with ram, ram head and horse figures, which were revealed by integrating with local characteristics in various regions of Anatolia, are important in terms of revealing the Central Asian traditions of the Turks (Danık, 2004). The works with ram, sheep and horse figures are listed on the roads where Turks migrated from Central Asia to Anatolia (Esin, 1972). Nomand Turkish tribes carried the Central Asian burial tradition to Anatolia. The Turks who immigrated to Anatolia preserved and continued their old traditions here for a long time. With the acceptance of Islam, they adapted these traditions to Islam. It can be said that the gravestones of horses, rams and sheep, which are still available in Anatolia, are frequently used by immigrant Turks during their conversion to Islam (Kahya, 2022).

Among the tombstones with horse, sheep and ram figures seen in different parts of Anatolia today, it is a common belief that especially ram-head tombstones were made during the Akkoyunlu and Karakoyunlu period. The fact that the inscriptions and dates on many tombstones found in and around Iğdır province belong to the recent period raises some questions about the period and date of these tombstones.

Coruhlu uses the following expressions on the subject:

“In the studies we have mentioned, it has been accepted that the tombstones (for Anatolia) belong to the Akkoyunlu and Karakoyunlu people.....When the tombstones in general are considered, we believe that these views may be partially correct. As a matter of fact, there are very few examples whose dates coincide with the Akkoyunlu and Karakoyunlu periods. Many horse, ram/sheep tombstones could not be dated. We also know

that these stones have not been identified and cataloged throughout Turkey. Existing artifacts are samples discovered by chance or during another study or obtained by scanning a region. On the other hand, the presence of examples of these statues in places such as the Caucasus, Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Siberia, and Mongolia shows that they are widely used because of their meanings related to death (Çoruhlu, 2019).”

Again, according to Çoruhlu: Another source thought to be based on ram-shaped statues is "deer stones": "These deer stones are probably the source of ram/sheep shaped stones. Because ram, sheep and horse are symbols of the dead in Turkish art and culture as symbols of many things. The Aries animal is also a symbol of protection from evil. For this reason, it is quite normal to make a ram/sheep or horse shaped tombstone.

When we look at the stylistic technical materials and forms in the sculpture of ram and sheep, their continuation until today depends on belief (Nergis, 2019).

In the cities located in the eastern regions of Turkey, there are hundreds of tombstones made in the shape of a ram, varying in size and type. Some of these tombstones can be in the form of lambs, some in the form of sheep and some in the form of rams. The tombstones in the form of lambs may have been made for a child, the tombstones in the form of sheep for women, and the tombstones in the form of a ram for men. The ram-shaped tombstones are mostly depicted with war tools such as swords, daggers or arrows, as well as motifs related to ancient beliefs such as hunting scenes with figures and amulets (Buğrul, 2016).

Iğdır and Tunceli are among the provinces where ram-head tombstones are commonly seen in Turkey, especially in the Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia regions (Aksoy, 2019). Apart from these provinces, it is possible to come across ram head tombstones in provinces such as Erzurum, Erzincan, Kars, Ardahan, Van, Rize Tokat, Hakkari, Elazığ, Amasya, Bitlis.

Due to its strategic location, Iğdır province, which is the border city of Eastern Anatolia, which has hosted many civilizations, contains many different artistic, historical and cultural artifacts with the cultural interaction that took place in the historical process. Undoubtedly, ram-headed tombstones are at the forefront of these works that have witnessed from the past to the present. The artifacts that are the subject of our study among the tombstones spread over different points of Iğdır province today are the tombstones found in Karakoyunlu district and Melekli town.

## 2. Method

It is aimed to determine the historical ram-head tombstones in and around Iğdır province, on which much research has not been done until today, and to reveal their importance in the history of art. For this purpose, the tombstones that are the subject of our research consist of 6 ram headstones in the open-air museum of the municipality of Karakoyunlu district, which is 15 km away from Iğdır, and 10 ram-head tombstones in the Kadim Çaybaşı Cemetery in Melekli town, 6 km away from the city center of Iğdır.

In the field research, ram-head tombstones in and around Iğdır province were examined on site. Since many of these tombstones have been deformed over time for various reasons, only tombstones that have survived to the present day and whose writings and motifs can be examined were selected and the studies focused on these tombstones. A total of 37 tombstones were identified during the field survey. Only 16 of these tombstones have been studied.

The research was started with a literature review in order to create a source for the study, then the ram-head tombstones in and around Iğdır were personally seen on site, photographs of these tombstones were taken and their measurements were taken. In line with the data obtained, the tombstones were marked and read.

### 3. Results

In this section, ram-head tombstones found in the field are mentioned.

#### 3.1. Ram-head Tombstones in Melekli Town of Iğdır Province

Melekli town ram-head tombstones, which is 6 km away from the city center of Iğdır, are located in the Kadim Çaybaşı Cemetery belonging to the town. We visited Melekli town of Iğdır province on 05/11/2021. We took pictures in the area and chatted with the local people. According to the data we have obtained, the following information is presented.

##### 3.1.1. Number 1 Ram-head Tombstone

The properties of Number 1 ram-head tombstone are given in [Table 1](#).

**Table 1.** Properties of Ram-Head Tombstone-1

Property	Value
Location	Melekli town of Iğdır province
Type	Ram-head Tombstone
Inscription and/or History	Not available
Situation	Head-trunk solid, no pedestal
Material	Red stone
Width	75 cm
Length	53 cm
Base	No

The ram-head tombstone number 1, which is approximately 75 cm in width and 53 cm in length, is located in the cemetery of the municipality of Melekli, 6 km away from the city center of Iğdır. This tombstone has no pedestal and was carved from red hard stone, and its head and body have survived intact ([Figure 1](#)).

It is seen that the feet of the ram-head tombstone were not chipped, and the body and foot part were left as one piece. The ram-head tombstone, standing upright and without a pedestal, is made quite simply, and the horns on the head are made up of two intertwined folds. By giving the nose structure on the front of the ram-head tombstone, the general headlines of the ram animal were tried to be given.

The neck part, which is approximately 77 cm in diameter, is separated from the body by a contour and

highlighted. The ram-head tombstone was made in a very simple way, without any ornaments or writings on it. The head of ram headstone number 1 was shaped as a single piece in a round form. There is no clear information about the construction date of the tombstone, which is located in an unprotected open area and has no inscription or date on it.

##### 3.1.2. Number 2 Ram-head Tombstone

The properties of Number 2 ram-head tombstone are given in [Table 2](#).

**Table 2.** Properties of Ram-Head Tombstone-2

Property	Value
Location	Melekli town of Iğdır province
Type	Ram-head Tombstone
Inscription and/or History	Not available
Situation	Head-trunk solid, no pedestal
Material	Red stone
Width	75 cm
Length	53 cm
Base	No

The number 2 ram-head tombstone is approximately 75 cm wide and 53 cm high. No ornamentation or date was found on the tombstone, which seems to have worn out over time ([Figure 2](#)).

Number 2 ram-head tombstone, which is carved from red hard stone and without a pedestal, which is not known exactly as a result of human destruction or natural causes, is in a broken state from the neck to the head. Since the head is detached from the neck, it is not possible to distinguish between a sheep or a ram-head tombstone. However, the fact that it is big like other ram-head tombstones in Melekli town stands out as a great similarity with the others. It is seen that the feet of the tombstone were carved, and the body and foot part were left as one piece without separating. This tombstone, which has a detached head and does not have any motifs or writings on it, was made in a very simple way. The ram-head tombstone number 2 is shaped in a round form, unlike the tombstones shaped in rectangular forms.

##### 3.1.3. Number 3 Ram-head Tombstone

The properties of Number 3 Ram-head tombstone are given in [Table 3](#).

**Table 3.** Properties of Ram-Head Tombstone-3

Property	Value
Location	Melekli town of Iğdır province
Type	Ram-head Tomstone
Inscription and/or History	Not available
Situation	Head and trunk intact
Material	Andesite stone
Width	99 cm
Length	51 cm
Base	No

The ram-head tombstone number 3, which is in an unprotected condition, has no pedestal and was carved from andesite hard stone, and the head and body have survived to the present day. In the examination carried

out on the tombstone, which is 99 cm wide and 51 cm long, it is seen that the feet of the form were not carved, and the body and foot part were left as one piece (Figure 3).

The ram-head tombstone was divided into two between the body and the neck, and the neck of the tombstone was highlighted by contouring from the body. The ram-head tombstone, standing upright and without a pedestal, was made quite simply. The horns on the head, which is located on the neck, which is approximately 95 cm in diameter, consist of two folds inside each other. On the tombstone, which is shaped in a rectangular form, there is a depiction of the the BUĞDAYIK bird figure, which is a mythical bird species mentioned in Turkish and Altai mythology and is considered to be the ancestor of all birds, in low relief technique on the front of the neck (Karakurt, 2012). Since there is no inscription or date on it, clear information about the date of the tombstone is not available.

### 3.1.4. Number 4 Ram-head Tombstone

The properties of Number 4 Ram-head tombstone are given in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Properties of Ram-Head Tombstone-4

Property	Value
Location	Melekli town of Iğdır province
Type	Ram-head Tomstone
Inscription and/or History	Available
Situation	Head-trunk solid, no pedestal
Material	Andesite stone
Width	83 cm
Length	61 cm
Base	No

The ram-head tombstone number 4 is located in the Kadim Çaybaşı cemetery. The tombstone, which is in an unprotected condition, has no pedestal and was carved from andesite hard stone. The tombstone, which is approximately 83 cm wide and 61 cm long, was shaped by dividing the body and head into two. The body, which is shaped in a rectangular form, is separated by a contour with the neck (Figure 4).

The ram-head tombstone, standing without a pedestal, was made quite simply, and the horn of the right side of its head was broken. Another horn of the left side of its head is intact indicates that the tombstone belongs to a ram headstone. number 4 ram-head tombstone was carved in one piece without making any separation of the foot and body, without chipping the feet. While there is no embroidery or writing on the left side of the ram-head tombstone, there is a date and writing written in Arabic letters on the right side. It is estimated that the date (1361 in the Hijri calendar) and (Hüseyin Ferac) were written in this manuscript, which is not fully read due to the destruction that occurred over time.

### 3.1.5. Number 5 Ram-head Tombstone

The properties of Number 5 ram-head tombstone are given in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Properties of Ram-Head Tombstone-5

Property	Value
Location	Melekli town of Iğdır province
Type	Ram-head Tombstone
Inscription and/or History	Not Available
Situation	Head-trunk solid, no pedestal
Material	Red stone
Width	170 cm
Length	80 cm
Base	No

The ram-head tombstone number 5, which is approximately 170 cm in width and 80 cm in length, is located in the Kadim Çaybaşı cemetery. The tombstone has no pedestal and was carved from red hard stone, and the head and body have survived to the present day. It is seen that the feet of the tombstone, which was shaped in a round form, were not chipped, and the body and foot part were left as one piece (Figure 5).

The neck, which is approximately 99 cm in diameter, is highlighted by contouring from the body. It is seen that the head is tried to be kept above the body. The horns on the head consist of two folds inside each other. By giving the nose structure on the front of the tombstone, the general headlines of the ram animal were tried to be given. Standing and without a pedestal, the ram-head tombstone is made in a very simple way and there is no ornament or writing on it. Since the ram-headed tombstone number 5 was found on a newly built tomb, it is understood that the actual location of this tombstone was changed and moved to another tomb. It is seen that the head of the tombstone was separated from the body by treasure hunters and then the head of the tombstone was fixed to the body with iron rods by the local people.

### 3.1.6. Number 6 Ram-head Tombstone

The properties of Number 6 ram-head tombstone are given in Table 6.

**Table 6.** Properties of Ram-Head Tombstone-6

Property	Value
Location	Melekli town of Iğdır province
Type	Ram-head Tombstone
Inscription and/or History	Not Available
Situation	Head-trunk solid, no pedestal
Material	Andesite stone
Width	94 cm
Length	70 cm
Base	No

The ram-head tombstone number 6 is located in the Kadim Çaybaşı cemetery. The tombstone, which is approximately 94 cm in width and 70 cm in length, has no base and was carved from andesite hard stone, and its head and body have survived intact (Figure 6).

The horns on the head of the ram-headed tombstone, which is standing and without a pedestal, consist of two intertwined folds. The neck, 86 cm in diameter, is separated from the body by a contour and the body is carved in a rectangular form. It is seen that the feet of the tombstone were not carved, and the body and foot part were left as one piece.



There are 6 medallion reliefs, 3 on the upper part of the body and 3 on the left, on the ram-headed tombstone numbered 6. It is seen that the middle one of these reliefs located on the same horizontal axis is larger. We consider that these relief figures, the meaning of which is not fully known, may have been made to show that the deceased was an important person.

### 3.1.7. Number 7 Ram-head Tombstone

The properties of Number 7 ram-head tombstone are given in [Table 7](#).

**Table 7.** Properties of Ram-Head Tombstone-7

Property	Value
Location	Melekli town of Iğdır province
Type	Ram-head Tombstone
Inscription and/or History	Not Available
Situation	Head-trunk solid, no pedestal
Material	Red stone
Width	103 cm
Length	50 cm
Base	No

The ram-head tombstone, which is approximately 103 cm in width and 50 cm in length, has no base and was carved from red hard stone, and the head and body have survived to the present day. It is shaped into a round form. The neck with a diameter of 88 cm is outlined from the body and highlighted ([Figure 7](#)).

It is seen that the feet of the ram-head tombstone were carved, and the body and foot part were made separately. In this respect, it differs from another ram-head tombstone in the town. The horns on the head of the ram-head tombstone, which is standing and without a pedestal, consist of two intertwined folds. Since there are no ornaments or writings on it, clear information about its age and the period it was made is not available. Since the ram-headed tombstone number 7 was found on a newly built tomb, it is understood that this tombstone was moved to another tomb by changing its original location like the tombstones numbered 5 and 8 in the area.

On the right and left sides of the ram-head tombstone number 7, there is a relief made in low relief technique, which brings the body to the fore. Similarly, on the right and left sides of the tombstone, a medallion-like carving, centered on the body, draws attention.

### 3.1.8. Number 8 Ram-head Tombstone

The properties of Number 8 ram-head tombstone are given in [Table 8](#).

**Table 8.** Properties of Ram-Head Tombstone-8

Property	Value
Location	Melekli town of Iğdır province
Type	Ram-head Tombstone
Inscription and/or History	Not Available
Situation	Head-trunk solid, no pedestal
Material	Andesite stone
Width	90 cm
Length	70 cm
Base	No

The tombstone, which is approximately 90 cm in width and 70 cm in length, has no base and was carved from andesite hard stone, and the head and body have survived to the present day. The neck, which is 80 cm in diameter, is highlighted by contouring from the body. The head part of the tombstone is tried to be held higher than the body, it is made in a very simple way, there is no ornament or writing on it. It is seen that the feet of the tombstone were not carved on the body, which was shaped in a rectangular form, and the body and foot part were left as one piece ([Figure 8](#)). The horns on the head of the ram-head tombstone, which is standing and without a pedestal, consist of two intertwined folds. On the upper part of the neck, there are sharp-lined lines that cannot be fully understood due to the destruction that has occurred over time. The ram-headed tombstone number 8 is located on a newly made tombstone. For this reason, it is not known to whom the tombstone belongs, since there is no inscription of the tombstone, which is understood to have changed its original location later on.

### 3.1.9. Number 9 Ram-head Tombstone

The properties of Number 9 ram-head tombstone are given in [Table 9](#).

**Table 9.** Properties of Ram-Head Tombstone-9

Property	Value
Location	Melekli town of Iğdır province
Type	Ram-head Tombstone
Inscription and/or History	Not Available
Situation	Head-trunk solid, no pedestal
Material	Andesite stone
Width	89 cm
Length	70 cm
Base	No

The ram-head tombstone number 9 is located on the roadside in Melekli town of Iğdır province. The tombstone, which is in an unprotected condition, has no base and was carved from andesite hard stone, and the head and body have survived to the present day. In the examination carried out on the tombstone, which is approximately 89 cm wide and 70 cm tall, it is seen that the feet of the tombstone were not carved, and the body and foot part were left as one piece. The ram-head tombstone was evaluated by dividing it into two between the body and the neck, and the neck of the tombstone was highlighted by contouring from the body ([Figure 9](#)).

The standing ram-head tombstone, which is without a pedestal, is made quite simply, its neck is approximately 85 cm in diameter, and the horns on the head consist of two folds intertwined. On the tombstone, which is shaped in a rectangular form, there is a depiction of the BUĞDAYIK bird figure in low relief technique on the front of the neck. Since there is no inscription or date on it, clear information about the date of the tombstone is not available. Kadim Çaybaşı cemetery is similar to other ram-head tombstones found in the cemetery.

### 3.1.10. Number 10 Ram-head Tombstone

The properties of Number 10 ram-head tombstone are given in [Table 10](#).

**Table 10.** Properties of Ram-Head Tombstone-10

Property	Value
Location	Melekli town of Iğdır province
Type	Ram-head Tombstone
Inscription and/or History	Not Available
Situation	Head-trunk solid, no pedestal
Material	Red stone
Width	65 cm
Length	55 cm
Base	No

The ram-head tombstone number 10 is located on the roadside in Melekli town of Iğdır province. The tombstone, which is in an unprotected condition, has no pedestal and was carved from red stone, and the head and body have survived to the present day. The tombstone, which is approximately 65 cm in width and 55 cm in length, differs from other ram-head tombstones in terms of size. During the Karakoyunlu period, they gave a special value to the sheep they took their name from, and they made sheep tombstones for women and rams for men (Sümer, 1992).

Since the tombstone number 10 is smaller in volume than the other tombstones, it brings to mind the thought that it may have been built for a child's grave (Figure 10). In the examination, it is seen that the feet of the tombstone were not chipped, and the body and foot part were left as one piece. The ram, standing upright and without a pedestal, is made quite simply. The horns on the head, which is located in the upper part of the neck, which is approximately 35 cm in diameter, consist of two folds inside each other.

### 3.2. Ram-head Tombstones in Karakoyunlu District of Iğdır Province:

Ram-head tombstones of Karakoyunlu district, which is 15 km away from Iğdır province, are in the open-air museum of the municipality.

#### 3.2.1. Number 11 Ram-head Tombstone

The properties of Number 11 ram-head tombstone are given in Table 11.

**Table 11.** Properties of Ram-Head Tombstone-11

Property	Value
Location	Karakoyunlu town of Iğdır province
Type	Ram-head Tombstone
Inscription and/or History	Not Available
Situation	Head-trunk solid, no pedestal
Material	Andesite stone
Width	103 cm
Length	59 cm
Base	No

The tombstone, which is approximately 103 cm in width and 59 cm in length, has no base and was carved from andesite hard stone, and the head and body have survived to the present day. The ram-head tombstone was divided into two between the body and the neck, and the neck of the tombstone was highlighted by contouring from the body. Standing upright and without a pedestal,

the ram-head tombstone is made quite simply (Figure 11 and Figure 12).

The horns on the head, which is located on the neck, which is approximately 95 cm in diameter, consist of two folds inside each other. On the tombstone, which is shaped in a rectangular form, there is a depiction of the BUĞDAYIK bird figure in low relief technique on the front of the neck. Since there is no inscription or date on it, clear information about the date of the tombstone is not available.

#### 3.2.2. Number 12 Ram-head Tombstone

The properties of Number 12 ram-head tombstone are given in Table 12.

**Table 12.** Properties of Ram-Head Tombstone-12

Property	Value
Location	Karakoyunlu town of Iğdır province
Type	Ram-head Tombstone
Inscription and/or History	Not Available
Situation	Head-trunk solid, no pedestal
Material	Andesite stone
Width	96 cm
Length	60 cm
Base	No

The ram-head tombstone, measuring approximately 96 cm in width and 60 cm, it has no pedestal and was carved from andesite hard stone, and the head and body have survived intact. The ram-head tombstone number 12 was evaluated in two parts between the neck and the body, and the neck of approximately 106 cm in diameter was highlighted with sharp contours. In this tombstone, in which the body was shaped in a rectangular form, the head was tried to be kept up. It is seen that the feet of the tombstone were not carved, but the body and foot part were left as one piece (Figure 13).

Standing upright and without a pedestal, the ram-head tombstone is made quite simply, the horns on the head consist of two intertwined folds. On the front of the neck, there is a depiction in low relief technique, which is estimated to be the BUĞDAYIK bird figure, which is a legendary bird in Turkish and Altai mythology. A sun motif, which symbolizes the universe, is also embroidered on the upper side of the neck. It has been known since ancient times that there were sun and moon cults in Turkish communities from Central Asia (Ersürel, 2019). In fact, depictions of the sun, trees, birds, etc., many of which are based on mythological sources, appear as frequently used elements in Turkish Art and culture.

#### 3.2.3. Number 13 Ram-head Tombstone

The properties of Number 13 ram-head tombstone are given in Table 13.

The tombstone, which is approximately 110 cm in width and 61 cm in length, has no base and was carved from andesite hard stone, and the head and body have survived to the present day. Standing upright and without a pedestal, the ram-head tombstone is made quite simply, the horns on the head consist of two intertwined

folds. The neck part, which is approximately 127 cm in diameter, was separated from the body with a contour and tried to be kept up. On the left side of the body, which is shaped in a rectangular form, there is an inscription in Arabic script (1318, *Haza Merkad El-Merhumpenah İbn Kerbalai İbrahim*) in Turkish *Bu Kerbelai İbrahim Oğlu Merhum Penah'ın Mezarıdır*, in English (1318 in the Hijri calendar) (This is the Grave of the Deceased Penah, Son of Karbalai İbrahim) (Figure 14).

**Table 13.** Properties of Ram-Head Tombstone-13

Property	Value
Location	Karakoyunlu town of Iğdır province
Type	Ram-head Tombstone
Inscription and/or History	Available
Situation	Head-trunk solid, no pedestal
Material	Andesite stone
Width	110 cm
Length	61 cm
Base	No

It is seen that the feet of the ram-head tombstone were not carved, but the body and foot part were left as one piece. On the front of the neck, there is a depiction in low relief technique, which is estimated to be the BUĞDAYIK.

### 3.2.4. Number 14 Ram-head Tombstone

The properties of Number 14 ram-head tombstone are given in Table 14.

**Table 14.** Properties of Ram-Head Tombstone-14

Property	Value
Location	Karakoyunlu town of Iğdır province
Type	Ram-head Tombstone
Inscription and/or History	Not Available
Situation	Head-trunk solid, no pedestal
Material	Andesite stone
Width	116 cm
Length	62 cm
Base	No

The tombstone, which is approximately 116 cm in width and 62 cm in length, has no base and was carved from andesite hard stone, and the head and body have survived to the present day. The neck part, which is 132 cm in diameter, was separated from the body with a contour and tried to be kept above. The horns on the upper part of the head consist of three intertwined folds (Figure 15).

It is seen that the feet of the tombstone, which was shaped in a rectangular form, were not carved, and the body and foot part were left as one piece. On the front of the neck, there is a depiction in low relief technique, which is estimated to be the BUĞDAYIK bird figure.

### 3.2.5. Number 15 Ram-head Tombstone

The properties of Number 15 ram-head tombstone are given in Table 15.

**Table 15.** Properties of Ram-Head Tombstone-15

Property	Value
Location	Karakoyunlu town of Iğdır province
Type	Ram-head Tombstone
Inscription and/or History	Not Available
Situation	Head-trunk solid, no pedestal
Material	Red stone
Width	105 cm
Length	61 cm
Base	No

The ram-head tombstone number 15 is located in the cemetery area belonging to the municipality of Karakoyunlu district of Iğdır province. The tombstone, which is approximately 105 cm in width and 61 cm in length, has no pedestal and was carved from red hard stone, and the head and body have survived to the present day. The neck part, which is 80 cm in diameter, was separated from the body with a contour and tried to be kept higher. The horns on the upper part of the head consist of three intertwined folds (Figure 16). It is seen that the feet of the tombstone, which was shaped in a rectangular form, were not chipped, and the body and foot part were left as one piece.

Two crescents carved inwards on a rectangular structure on the upper part of the tombstone body and three crescents made in low relief technique; that is, there are five crescents in total. In addition, there are 2 crescents made in low relief technique on the right and left sides of the tombstone. Standing upright and without a pedestal, the horns on the head of the ram-head tombstone consist of two intertwined folds. The ram-head tombstone number 15 differs from the other ram headstones found in Karakoyunlu district, both in terms of the material used and the carving technique. Since there is no inscription or date on it, there is no clear information about the construction date of the tombstone.

### 3.2.6. Number 16 Ram-head Tombstone

The properties of Number 16 ram-head tombstone are given in Table 16.

**Table 16.** Properties of Ram-Head Tombstone-16

Property	Value
Location	Karakoyunlu town of Iğdır province
Type	Ram-head Tombstone
Inscription and/or History	Available
Situation	Head-trunk solid, no pedestal
Material	Andesite stone
Width	105 cm
Length	60 cm
Base	No

The tombstone, which is approximately 105 cm in width and 60 cm in length, has no base and was carved from andesite hard stone, and the head and body have survived to the present day. Standing upright and without a pedestal, the ram-head tombstone is made quite simply, the horns on the head are composed of two intertwined folds (Figure 17).

The neck part, which is approximately 135 cm in diameter, was separated from the body with a contour and tried to be kept up. On the front left side of the body, which is shaped in a rectangular form, there is an inscription written in Arabic (*Haza Merkad El-Merhum Kurban*) in Turkish (*Bu Merhum Kurban'ın Mezarıdır*) in

English (This is the Grave of the Deceased Kurban). It is seen that the feet of the tombstone were not carved, but the body and foot part were left as one piece. On the front of the neck, there is a depiction in low relief technique, which is estimated to be the BUĞDAYIK.



Figure 1. Number 1 ram-head tombstone



Figure 2. Number 2 ram-head tombstone



Figure 3. Number 3 ram-head tombstone



Figure 4. Number 4 ram-head tombstone



Figure 5. Number 5 ram-head tombstone



Figure 6. Number 6 ram-head tombstone





**Figure 7.** Number 7 ram-head tombstone



**Figure 8.** Number 8 ram-head tombstone



**Figure 9.** Number 9 ram-head tombstone



**Figure 10.** Number 10 ram-head tombstone



**Figure 11.** Number 11 ram-head tombstone



**Figure 12.** Number 11 ram-head tombstone



**Figure 13.** Number 12 ram-head tombstone



**Figure 14.** Number 13 ram-head tombstone



**Figure 15.** Number 14 ram-head tombstone



**Figure 16.** Number 15 ram-head tombstone



**Figure 17.** Number 16 ram-head tombstone

#### 4. Conclusion

As a result of the concept of death, burial culture and the tradition of erecting stones on these graves appear as an important concept in Turkish culture both in the pre-Islamic and post-Islamic periods. These stones, which are especially the witnesses of history and erected on the

graves, are not only important works of the period, but also appear as a very important primary source that shows the belief structure, literary life, social and cultural relations of that period.

The ram-head tombstones in and around Iğdır, which are the subject of our research, and the motifs and decorations on them reveal the social, cultural, religious

and artistic understanding of our ancestors living in this region, both historically and plastically. Today, there are hundreds of inscribed and unwritten ram-head tombstones in and around Iğdır. When we look at the embroideries, stamps or depictions, which are both epigraphic elements and construction techniques, on these tombstones, we come across as important evidence that these tombstones reflect the Turkish belief and lifestyle and belong to Turkish communities.

The Turks, who came to Anatolia in tribes, continued their beliefs and lifestyles in this new geography. Ram-head tombstones found in and around Iğdır are generally associated with the Akkoyunlu and Karakoyunlu periods who settled in this region. Most of the ram headstones found in Karakoyunlu district of Iğdır province and the ram-head tombstones found in Melekli town (1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15 numbered ram-head tombstones) no inscription and date can be found. This situation makes it difficult for us to reach a clear knowledge about the history of the tombstones in question. On the tombstones on which there are inscriptions or dates, information about the deceased person is given in the inscriptions (4, 13, 16 numbered ram headstones), and the dates used belong to the recent period. This situation raises the suspicion that the writings on the tombstones were made later.

As a material, red tuff stones and andesite type stones, which are frequently preferred as many building materials, were used in the construction of ram-head tombstones in the province of Iğdır and its surroundings.

It is possible to consider two groups as the materials used in the ram-head tombstones in Iğdır and its surroundings, which are the subject of our research, and the chipping techniques. The first group of ram-head tombstones are tombstones carved from andesite stone. These (1, 4, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16) ram headstones were shaped in a rectangular form and the neck and body were evaluated in two parts. The neck parts were highlighted with a contour and the head part was tried to be kept up. The sun motif is embroidered on the upper part of the neck of the tombstone number 12. The common feature of the tombstones in this group is the presence of a BUĞDAYIK bird figure carved in low relief technique on the front of the necks. The other group of ram headstones are tombstones carved from red tuff stones. These (2, 3, 5, 7, 10, 15) ram headstones were shaped in a round form. Another remarkable feature is that they were made quite simply way. Only on the ram-head tombstone number 15, a crescent moon pattern was engraved. The tombstones in both groups are standing without a pedestal and standing upright. The horns on the head of the tombstones are clearly carved in inward folds.

It has been determined that an inventory record has been made of the ram-head tombstones found in and around the province of Iğdır. In this sense, all ram-head tombstones in and around Iğdır should be identified and documented by making an inventory record.

In our research, it is seen that no protection measures have been taken especially for the tombstones in Melekli town. These tombstones, which were almost abandoned to their fate, have also been invaded by treasure hunters many times. Therefore, these

gravestones, which are seriously damaged, should be taken under immediate protection.

It has been determined that the ram-head tombstones found in the cemetery and other areas in and around Iğdır were removed from their original places for various reasons. Gravestones should be accepted as a deed of the areas where they are located and these gravestones should be kept in their original places.

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### Conflicts of interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

### Statement of Research and Publication Ethics

Research and publication ethics were complied with in the study.

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