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Prof. Dr. Turan YAZGAN - Doç. Dr. A. Mertol TULUM - Doç. Dr. Enis ÖKSÜZ - Doç. Dr. Mustafa E. ERKAL - Doç. Dr. Ahmet GÖKÇEN - Yard. Doç. Dr. Ahmet YÖRÜK - Dr. Taner KARAHASANOĞLU.

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THE ORIGIN OF THE TRADITION OF CARPET
WEAVING AMONG TURKIC PEOPLES AND
THE PROBLEM OF THE ORIGIN OF THE CARPET
FOUND IN PAZYRYK IN THE ALTAI REGION

Prof. Nejat DİYARBEKİRLİ *

Excavations under the supervision of Rudenko, of the mounds in the Pazyryk region of the Soviet Altai range, have revealed forty graves belonging to members of the aristocratic classes among inhabitants of the region during the third century B.C., together with important artistic finds belonging to the period. The great majority of these are now in the Hermitage Museum. Among these finds, the one which caused the most dispute on its discovery, and still, after twenty five years is the subject of altercation, is undoubtedly the Pazyryk carpet which has excavated in the fifth Kurgan at Pazyryk and is exhibited in the Hermitage Museum. (Fig 1, 2) It measures 1.89x2 m. and dates from the third century B.C., although others have given it an earlier date. The closely woven carpet, with a composition containing equestrian figures, elks and the griffon, among other fantastic figures, is considered by Rudenko to have been woven in the Achaemenid period and exported to the Altai region¹. Joanna

* President of the First International Congress on Turkish Carpets.

¹ Rudenko; Kultura naselenija gornogo Altaya V. Szkifoszkoe. Vremja. Moskova, 1953.

Zick-Nissen, however, is of the opinion that this carpet could have been woven in an area extending as far west as Anatolia. Historians of art concerned with Iranian studies, such as Ghirsmán and Jettmar did not believe that it could have been made in an area not influenced by city culture. The technique and decoration is highly sophisticated and they were convinced therefore that it could not possibly have been created by mounted Turkish tribes, by the peoples of the Steppes. It is obvious that these art historians were not aware of the art of carpet weaving practiced by Turkish communities of the Steppes in an area stretching from Anatolia as far as Eastern Turkestan. They ignored the fact that rugs of excellent quality which had evolved from an ancient tradition were woven in Central Asia by Turkoman tribes such as the Teke, Yomut, Sarık, Ersarı, Salur, Beluch, Göklen and Beşir, as well as Turkic groups such as the Karakalpaks, Qashqai, Kaçar, Avshar and Azeris, Turkish Caucasian tribes and by local Turkish weavers in Anatolia. They seem also unaware of the fact that various examples of very early carpets were found in regions inhabited by Turkic peoples up to the Christian era, in for example, Stein's excavations in Eastern Turkestan, in the shaft grave at Lou-Lan and in a stupa at Lop Nor, and those found by Von Le Coq in his Turfan excavations². It seems that they were also unaware of fragments found by Carl Lamm at Fustat and of Seljuk carpets and fragments exhibited in the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art in Istanbul. All these examples are considered by the experts to be among the world's oldest and most beautiful carpets. We must also emphasise here that, although the area between the Altai mountains, Eastern Turkestan and Mongolia has always been considered by scholars as a felt making region, this should not lead to misunderstanding. Turkestan was without any doubt an important weaving centre since the pre-Christian era, as can be seen from the afore-mentioned discoveries of Auriel Stein, between 1906 and 1908 at Lou-Lan

² Chinese sources of the early or pre-Christian era state that carpets were exported from Eastern Turkestan to China at that period.

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and Lop Nor. Pazyryk is not a great distance from here, and today, the carpets of Kashgar, Khotan and Urumshi in Eastern Turkestan continue the ancient tradition of the region³. These historians also ignored the thousands of objects belonging to the aristocrats of the Pazyryk valley and considered that the Pazyryk carpet was a totally independent and unique work of art which had been imported from elsewhere. It is thanks to the theory that this grave is Hunnic, put forward by the Russian scholars Kiselov and Smirnov, as well as to the articles of Rene Huyghe, Vadime Elisséeff, Mario Bussagli and others, which support the views of the Turkish historian Abdulkadir Inan (presented to the Second Turkish Historical Congress; that the state of the horses in the Pazyryk graves, showed a character compatible with traditions of Turkish mounted culture, this is repeated in other publications) and those of Prof. Bahaeddin Ögel; (in his «Turkish Pre-Islamic Cultural History», that these graves were undoubtedly a part of the culture of the Great Hunnic Empire) that I am now able to proceed with my own theory. The subject that we shall discuss here, is that the famous carpet was not imported from Achaemenid territory to the Altai, but was woven locally by the Turkish community, and that it throws light on the Turkish traditions which are preserved to this day. Kurt Erdmann considered it to be a saddle cloth, whereas Carl Jettmar presented it as an imported game carpet⁴.

It has two wide and three narrow borders; the field is divided into equal squares, in the form of a chequer board, with the edges of the squares enclosed by a narrow frame. The squares contain cruciform, star-shaped flowers. The narrow band surrounding the chequerboard field contains a tri-colour chain motif and the wide band surrounding this contains a row of elks, facing one direction, apparently grazing. The two guard bands surrounding the main field and the wide band contain a conti-

³ Bicurin;— Researches on Central Asian Peoples of the Early Period.

⁴ Carl Jettmar

nuous pattern of squares within which are to be found the figures of lion-griffons, with heads reversed, and tongues hanging from open jaws. The head, upturned wing and tail of this fantastic creature have been adapted to the limited space of the square. In the widest border are mounted and foot soldiers both following, in a single line, a direction opposite to that of the elks. The tails of the horses are plaited in the same way as those found in the tombs, all the horses have bridles, some of which are adorned with decorative plaques. A felt blanket is placed on each horse's back. This kind of cover, used to collect the horse's sweat, is known in Central Asia as Çaprak or Şaparak, in Anatolia as terlik or ter keçesi.

There are no saddles to be seen on the horses but only the bridles, which are clearly depicted and in any case no wooden saddle was discovered at Pazyryk. A kind of cushion was discovered however, filled with straw and covered with leather which was placed on the horse's back, as well as blankets with buckles. This is an important proof that the Pazyryk carpet reflects the local customs of the peoples buried in the Altai region. The wooden saddle appears however, at Noin Ula three centuries later, this shows that the blankets with buckles and the cushions filled with straw decorated with representations of animals in combat found at Pazyryk had finally been discarded. The decoration of the horses's bridles, as well as the objects from similar Kurgans point to the fact that the accessories to be seen on the carpet belong to the same period and culture. Among these accessories, the tassles on the saddle cloth should attract our attention. Saddle cloths with suspended decoration can be found to this day, and are in common use among many Turkoman tribes. For instance, among the Yomut Turkmen, the Qashqai, the Turcoman tribes of Anatolia and the Yörük oymaks among the Taurus mountains of Anatolia. An example of the tasselled saddle cloth belonging to the Hunnic period, was discovered by Rudenko in the Pazyryk excavation as can be seen here. It can also be seen in some

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Seljuk miniatures, such as this example from the Tale of Varka and Gülshah, a manuscript of the early 13th. century. In the wide border of the carpet, the horsemen are depicted schematically; those who are on foot advance on the left hand side of the horse, their right hand is placed on the bridle, on the horse's saddle cloth. They are clothed in tight, close-fitted trousers. The art historians who thought that this carpet, the field of which is divided into 24 squares like a chequerboard, was a carpet used for playing games, based their views on the fact that such a game existed in ancient Mesopotamia, which would have supported the theory that this carpet was exported from Iran to the Altai. However, in those areas, and especially among the persian carpets, there is not a single example of a textile showing this type of pattern. We can find the squared arrangement on the decoration of other artifacts from the same Kurgan, such as the cushion filled with whit hay which is decorated with a variation of the squared pattern or on the felt stockings from the second Kurgan. This shows that such decoration must have been quite widespread in this area; we see the same geometrical division on felt covers from other Kurgans. There is no doubt that this arrangement of the field was a source of the decoration of the Anatolian and Turcoman carpets woven in later times. In later periods horse cloths can be found decorated with square patterns; such cloths, belonging to Turkish communities can often be seen in Turcoman miniatures. These patterns, formed by star-shaped flowers and diagonally arranged leaves are the same as designs found on Seljuk carpets which are divided in a similar way, each square cutting the star motif into four, each quarter square containing three diagonal foliate elements. They are also the forerunners of the octagonal floriate motifs of Turcoman carpets. There is no doubt that the Pazyryk carpet, with its square divisions, numbering horizontally and vertically 4x6, is the source of the main composition on the carpets woven by the Oguz and other Turkish tribes. The diagonal floriate motifs within the squares

being the basis for the octagonal Seljuk patterns and the Turcoman «GÖL» in contemporary Turcoman carpets. If the corners of the squares decorating the field of the Pazyryk carpet were cut off, it would be sufficient to transform them into an octagon. In some cases, if one divides the field into squares of equal size, like those in Teke Turkoman carpets, one would obtain a pattern very like that of the Pazyryk carpet. When single motifs replace these squares, a composition consisting of plain rows of repeated motifs appears, if two alternative motifs are arranged in place of the squares, a composition of offset rows would appear. We do not, however, have the time to describe all the similarities between the carpets of Central Asia and Anatolia, and their debt to the Pazyryk carpet. In short, if we were to examine the development of the motif in Turkish carpet art, we would find that the earlier animal motifs were later transformed into foliate motifs but that all motifs were arranged within squared divisions. Just as this arrangement of motifs was commonly seen in metal ornaments of the nomad mounted Steppe culture, so is it to be seen in Seljuk stone carved facades.

While Turkish peoples were still using animal and bird figures in weaving at the end of the Middle Ages, the change in beliefs wrought by the Islamic period undoubtedly has its effects on this aspect of weaving. However, in the XIV and XVth. centuries, carpets with main field divided into small or large squares, the squares filled with stylised animal figures are still to be found. These carpets are divided by art historians into various groups, which however, began to disappear towards the ends of the XVth. century. Although in some Turkish societies, such as the Azeris and Qashqais, animal figured carpets and kilims are seen to be woven to this very day. The division of the field into squares has been developed in Anatolia, in the form of the Ushak, and linked to it, the Holbein types, and later, the Bergama type. A representation of a carpet to be found

in a miniature of the Herat school belonging to the Timurid period, shows the same squared composition, with diagonal floral motifs filling the squares. This kind of composition is still to be found among the carpets and felts of the Turkish tribes living in Eastern Turkestan, such as the Kazak and Kirgiz. Similarly, the carpets woven by the Kazak and Uyghur communities of Eastern Turkestan, Kashgar and Hotan, generally contain the same basic division of the field as in the Pazyryk carpet, with the Hotan Göl in place of the Hun göl, of the Pazyryk carpet. The Karakalpaks of Hiva also wove carpets containing the same arrangement of squares, with local motifs arranged within them. This type of arrangement is most often seen in the carpets of the Turcomans, such as those of the Teke, and the Ersari of Afghanistan and continued to occur for centuries. Besides this, an arrangement of motifs in offset rows can also be seen in the carpets of the Beluchs of Afghanistan, alongside their more common arrangement in simple rows of motifs on the central field. The Göklen Turcomans of Iran also have a carpet composition based on offset rows of alternate motifs, while the Iranian Yomud and the Tekes of Bukhara employ the same elements, as do the Salur Turcoman. It can thus be seen that Turkic communities stretching from Central Asia to Anatolia have preserved the same approach to carpet decoration, using squared divisions to enframe a system of motifs. As to the motif within this chequered arrangement, the 'Göl' motif has preserved its place despite the modifications of time and the variations of each community. These common motifs of Turcoman carpets are the «Bukhara Göl», to be seen on Teke carpets as an octagonal «göl», together with another motif, the 'Neben Göl' consisting of a star-shaped florette with leaves. These motifs, together with others seen on Turcoman carpets, have been employed up to the present day in Anatolian Turcoman carpets, as has with the 'Turcoman Göl', giving the Salur, Bukhara, Neben and the Anatolian Turcoman Göl an existence of two thousand years.

It can easily be seen that carpet making is one of the essential arts of Turkic cultures, a folk art bearing their traditions. While Iranian carpet composition and style bore a somewhat different character, developing quite differently. The main motif in Iranian carpets being the medallion, usually arranged in the form of one central medallion, and four quarter medallions, one in each corner.

The Pazyryk carpet can thus be said to have been the work of local weavers of Eastern Turkestan for the following reasons :-

- 1) the use of the Elk motif, a type of reindeer belonging to inner Asia (Alcas Machlis) which is found in neither Iran nor in the Near East.
- 2) The elk figures are decorated with comma, stipple and horse-shoe motifs seen on other objects found in the tombs, also an animal motifs.
- 3) Other carpets, felts and woven fabrics found in the Pazyryk valley contain traditional motifs, which continue to occur to this day.

Finally, as we have displayed with a number of examples, the carpet found in the Pazyryk grave contains elements parallel to other Hunnic motifs which occur throughout their historical development, in variations bearing great resemblance to these prototypes, within Turkic societies. It is our opinion that the other characteristics to be found in the Pazyryk carpet are entirely in accordance with the tradition of Turkish carpets that therefore cannot have been woven in Anatolia or Iran but that it was the work of weavers within the Hunnic Confederation. Our aim has been to support this thesis by pointing out that the carpet in question carries the stylistic characteristics of the period, as can be seen among the finds from the tombs at Pazyryk, Shibe, Katanda, Berel and Noin-Ula.

The art of carpet weaving, developed as a necessity

within the functional existence of those Turkic tribes of the mounted Steppe culture, affected a scheme of decorative elements which became the prototype of a style reminiscent of this culture. So that although carpets woven within Turkic communities, may have been woven at considerable distances from their counterparts elsewhere, there existed a parallel notion of composition in carpets; firstly in the division of the field into squares, secondly in the filling of these squares with various motifs. One must emphasise that this is the focal point in the Turkish carpet, and indeed, a basic element of all Turkish decorative arts. The thick woven cloths of Turkic tribes were essential for their existence in the Steppes, which they inhabited, within an area stretching from Central Asia, from Transoxania and Eastern Turkestan to what is now Mongolia in a semi-nomadic fashion. The development of the technique of carpet weaving among these peoples and of compositional and stylistic traditions to such an extent was undoubtedly aided by the fact that it was a continuing art of the area over a period of two thousand five hundred years. The function of the carpet within the daily life of these peoples can be seen in the artifacts of their tents, many of which are made from carpets and felts; various covers, sacks and containers, covering the walls and floors of the nomad tent contained both the functional and decorative elements required by their users. Thus, the life style and culture of the nomad Steppe peoples is reflected in the minor arts of the Turkic peoples of the period.

Both Uhlemann⁵ and Kurt Erdmann have pointed out that climate and geographical necessity have established the home of the technique of carpet weaving to be Turkestan, from its Western tip to the Eastern border with Mongolia, ie. the Steppes.

While the art of carpet weaving had always been a folk art among Turkic peoples, it was very much a part of city culture among the Persians and it is unlikely that

⁵ Uhlemann; *Geographie des Orientteppichs*, Leipzig, 1930.

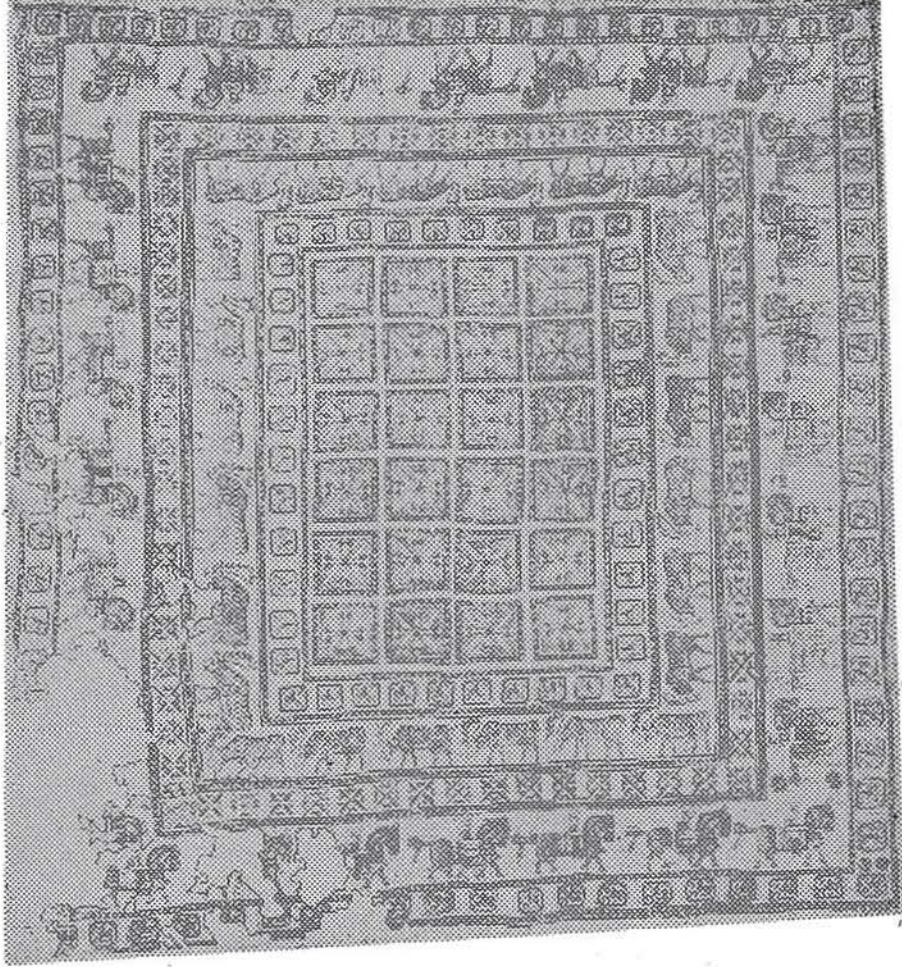
the latter had any influence on Turkic folk art. The research of Lydia Rasonyi on this subject indicates that 'Carpet terms show the ancientness of the tradition among the Turks as well as its prolifity'. According to Menghin⁶ and Koppers⁷, Iranian nomads of Indo-Germanic origin usually kept cattle, who's hair was unsuitable for making carpets. Further, Kremer Geiger is of the opinion that the art of carpet making was not autochthonic to the Persians, and that it was introduced to them from the Eastern regions of Iranian territory.

There are various raw materials used in the making of carpets, although the best is undoubtedly sheep's wool, the material used throughout history by the Turks.

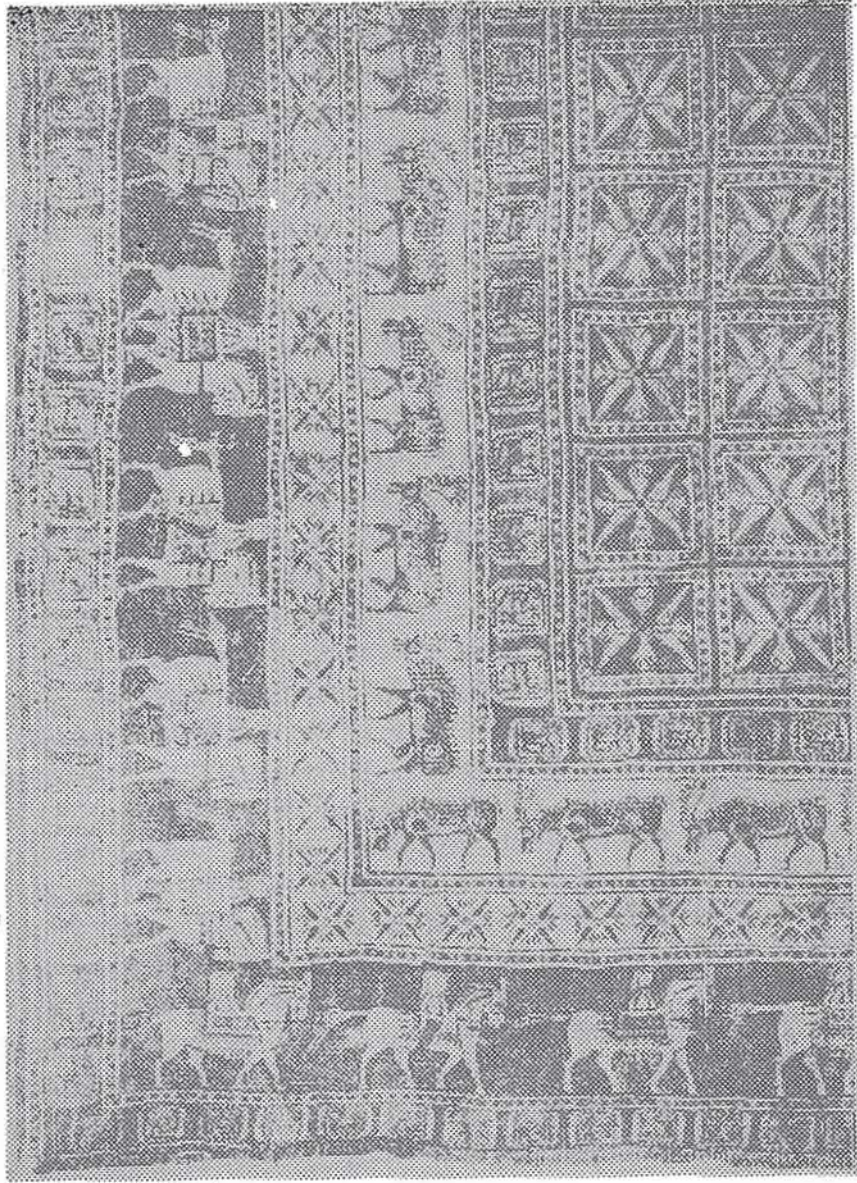
The theory that the history of carpets developed alongside that of the Turkic peoples, through the most historically undocumented period of history, to be presented to other cultures by them, can thus be seen to be gaining strength with some justification.

⁶ Oswald Menghin; Die Rolle der uralaltaischen Völker in der Weltgeschichte; Archeologiai Értésítő XLIII (1938)

⁷ W. Koppers; Urtürkentum und Urindogermanentum, Belleten V., 501.



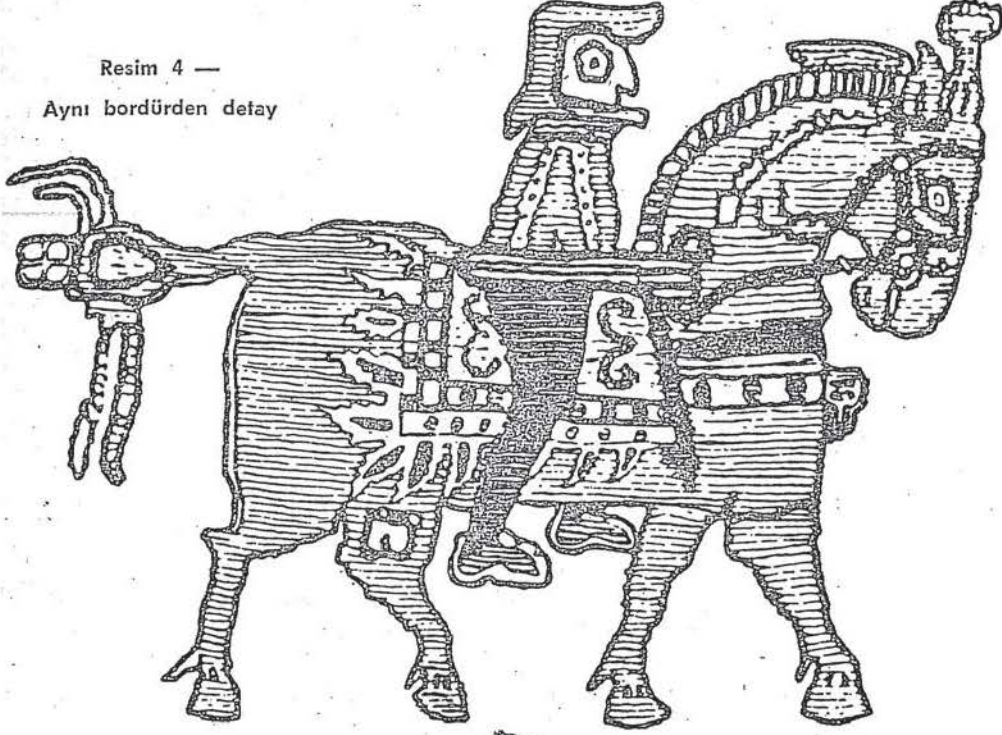
Resim 1 — Beşinci Pazırık kurganından çıkartılan Hun halısı 1.89x2 m ebadında halen Leningrad Hermitaj müzesinde teşhir edilmektedir. Gördes (Türk) ilmesi ile dokunan bu ilk Türk halısında, bir desimetrekareye tesadüf eden ilme sayısı 3600 olup, bu sayı halının bütünü üzerinde 1.250.000'lik bir ilme miktarına tekabül eder.



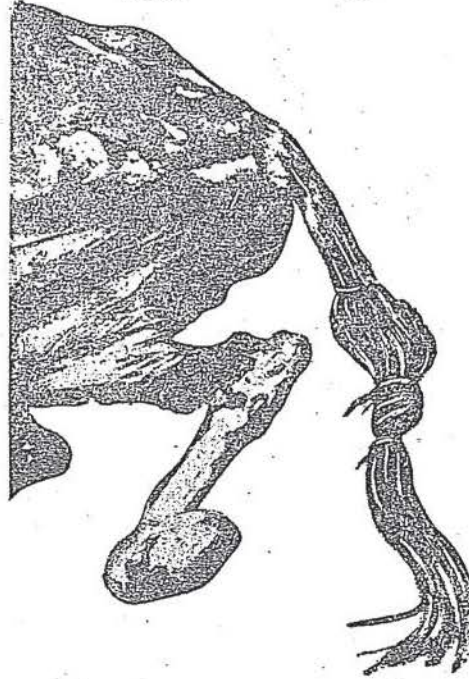
Resim 2 — Sanat tarihinde bilinen ilk Türk halısı. Beşinci Pazırık kurganından çıkarılan Hun halısından detay. Orta Asya ve Anadolu'da tecrübeli bir halı dokuyucusunun mükemmel bir halı için günde 2000 ilâ 3000 ilme attığını kabul edecek olursak bu ilk Türk halısını dokuyan Hun kadınının yalnız başına çalışmasıyla halıyı tamamlamak için on sekiz ay göz nuru döktüğünü kolaylıkla açıklayabiliriz.

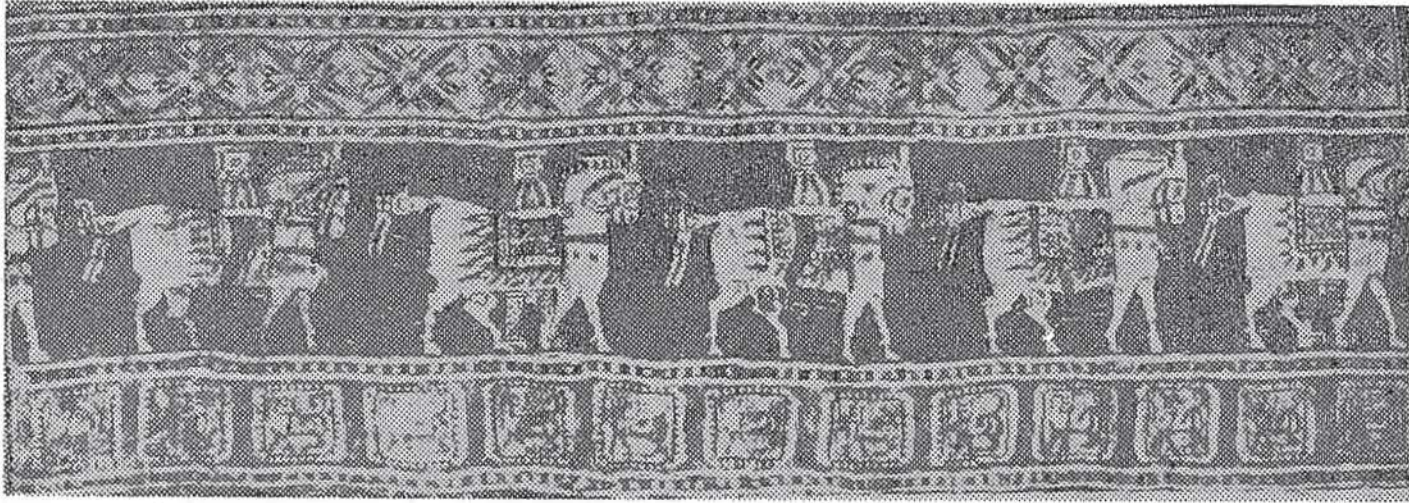
Resim 4 —

Aynı bordürden detay



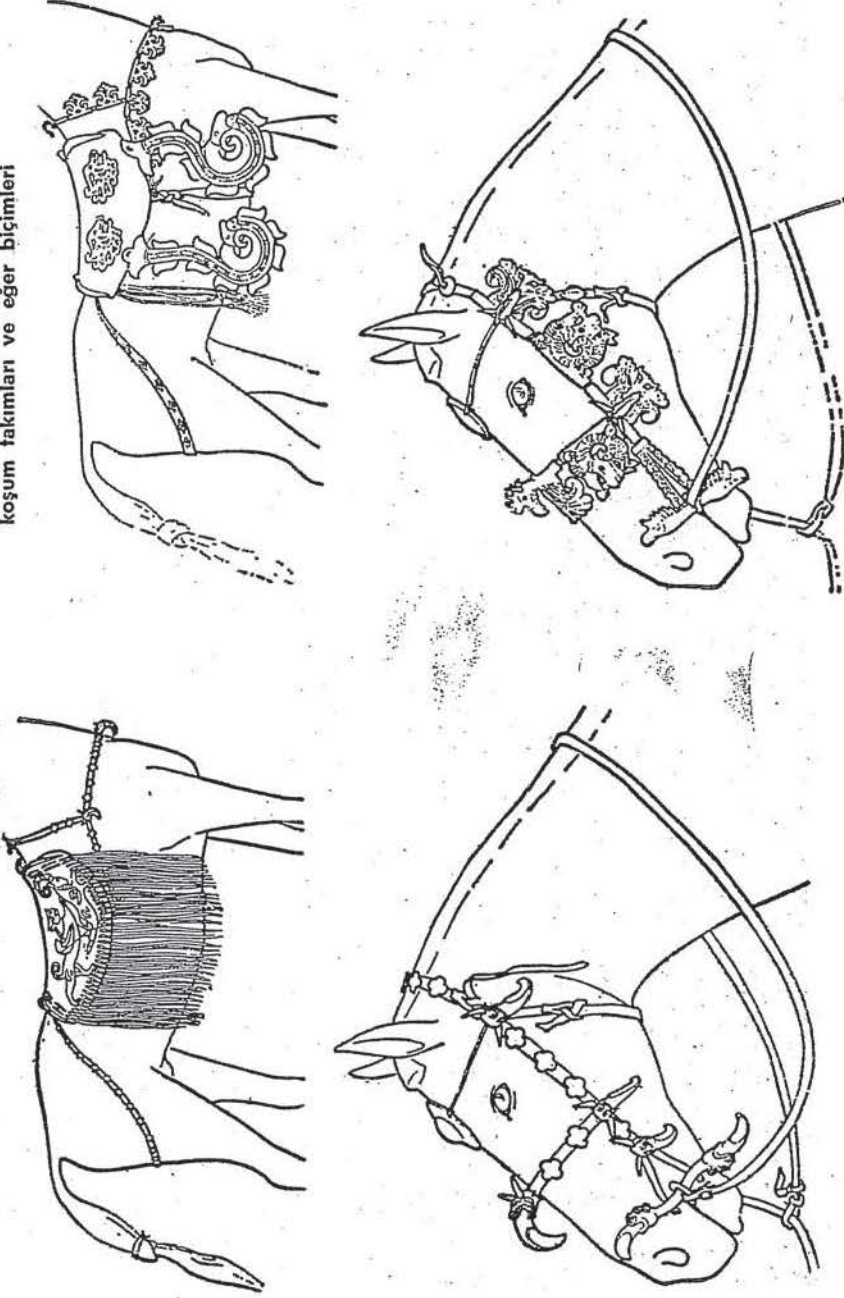
Resim 5 — Birinci Pazırık kurganından çıkan bir af cesedinin düğümlenmiş kuyruğu. Eski çağlardan beri Türkler arasında ölenin bindiği atın kuyruğunu kesmek veya bağlamak değişmez bir yas geleneği olmuştur. Türk milletinin en büyük kültür varlıklarından biri olan Dede Korkut hikâyelerinde bu matem geleneğinin bariz hatları ile karşılaşırız. Meselâ; Millî destanımızın «İç Oğuz Dış Oğuz asî olup Beyreğin öldüğünü beyan eder» bölümünde yiğit Beyrek ölürken, «Yiğitlerim yerinizden kalkın, Ak boz atımın kuyruğunu kesin.» der.

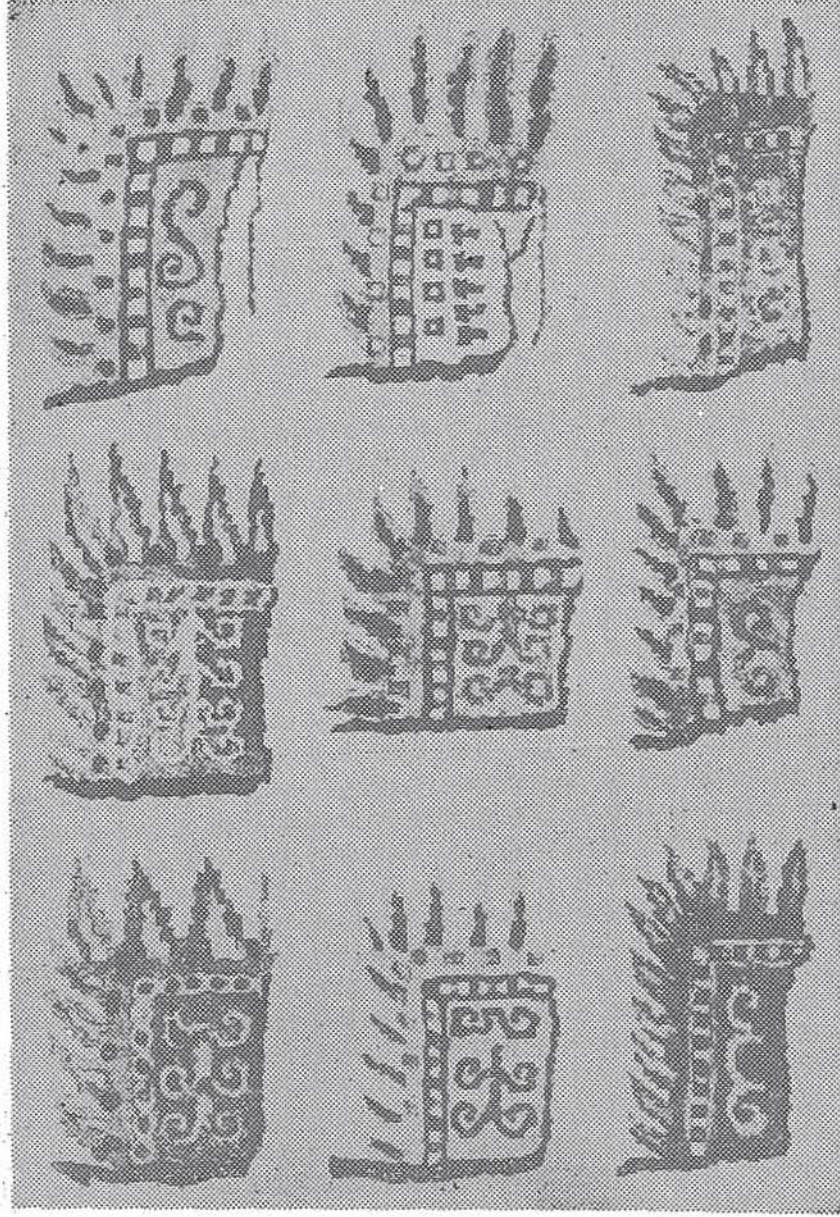




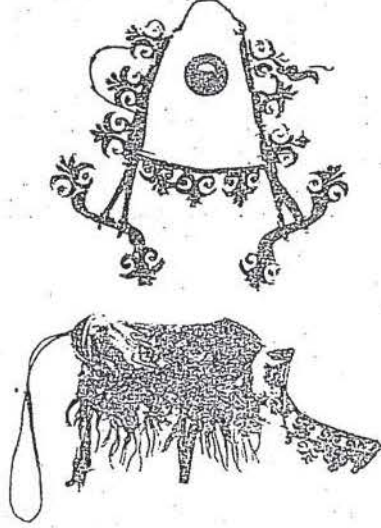
Resim 5 — Hun halısının dış kenar geniş suyunda Süvariler geyiklerin ters istikametinde ilerlemektedirler. Bir kısmı ise yaya olarak atlarının yanlarında yürümektedirler.

Resim 6 — Pazırık kurgunlarından çıkan
koşum takımları ve eğer biçimleri

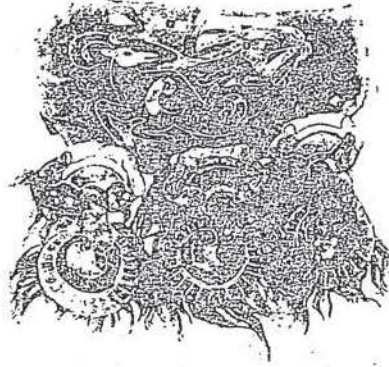




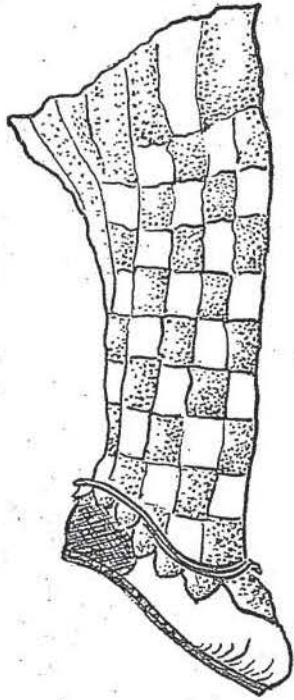
Resim 7 — Bir friz gibi, halının dış geniş suyu üzerinde ilerleyen atlıların eğer örtüleri. Bu örtüler üzerinde «S», bitki ve koç boynuzu nakışları müşahade edilmektedir. Ayrıca sarkıntılı süsleri de dikkatimizi çeker. Bu tarz süsleri olan, eyer altı örtüsü kullanma alışkanlığına bugün İç Asya'da birçok Türkmen aşiretlerinde tesadüf edilir. Bilhassa Yomudlar ve Kaşkay'lar arasında çok yaygındır.



Resim 8 — Pazırık kurganından
1 — Ahşap Yular, 2 — Eyer



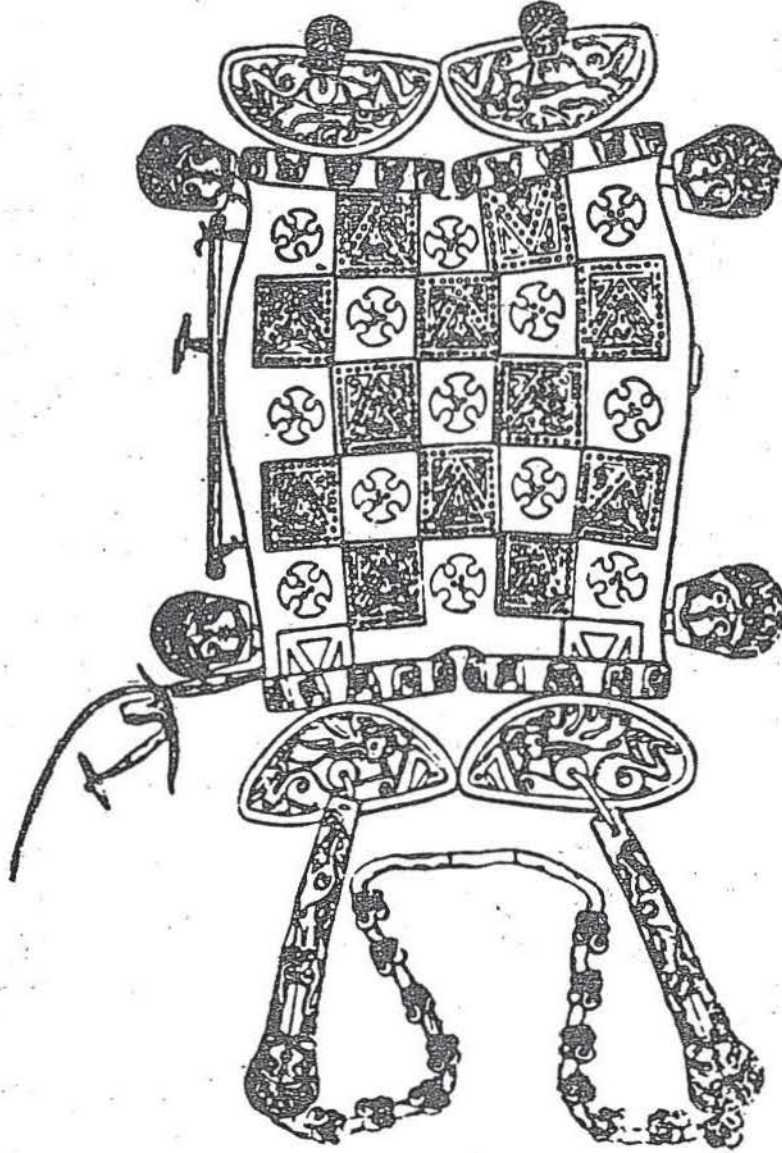
Resim 9 — Birinci Pazırık kurganından bir eyerin yandan görünüşü. Eyerin koyun başı biçiminde sarkan üç sarkıtı görülmekte.



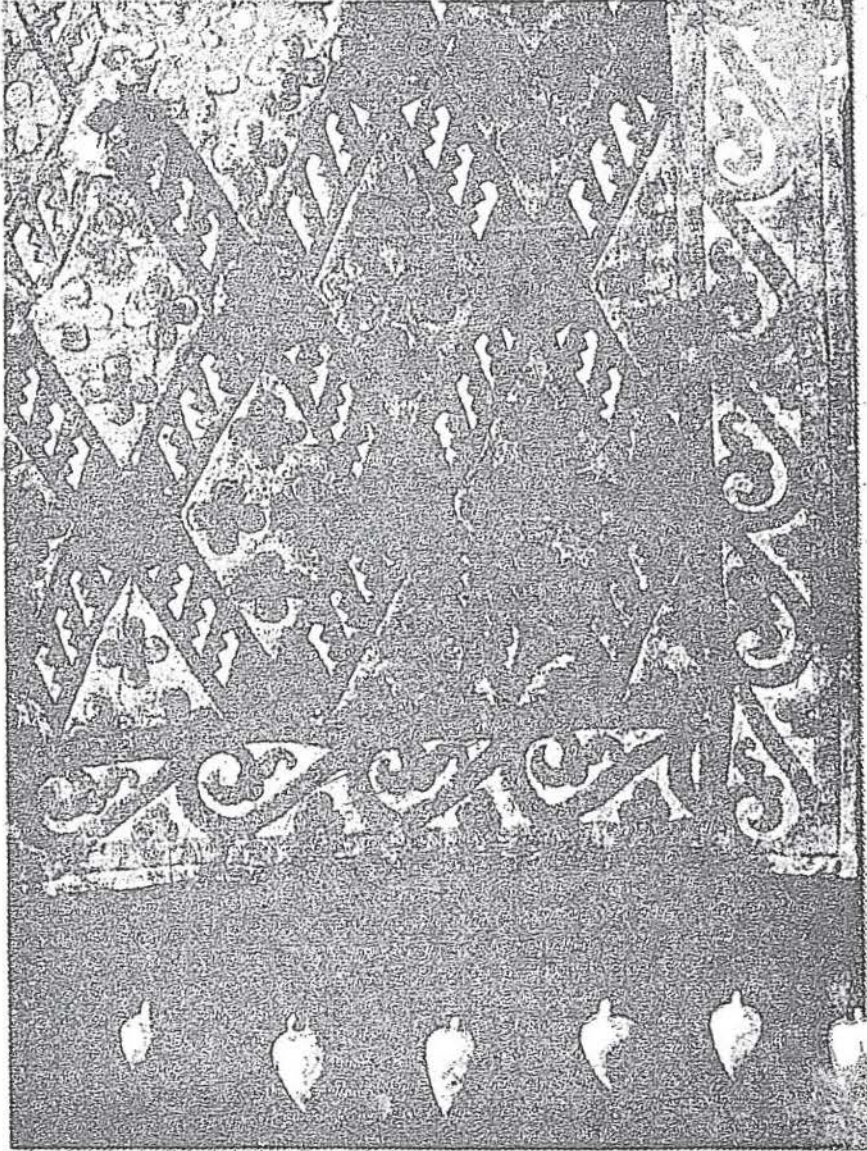
Resim 12 — Pazırık kurganından keçe çorap. Zemin karelere bölünmüş olarak çorabın dekoru meydana getirilmiştir.



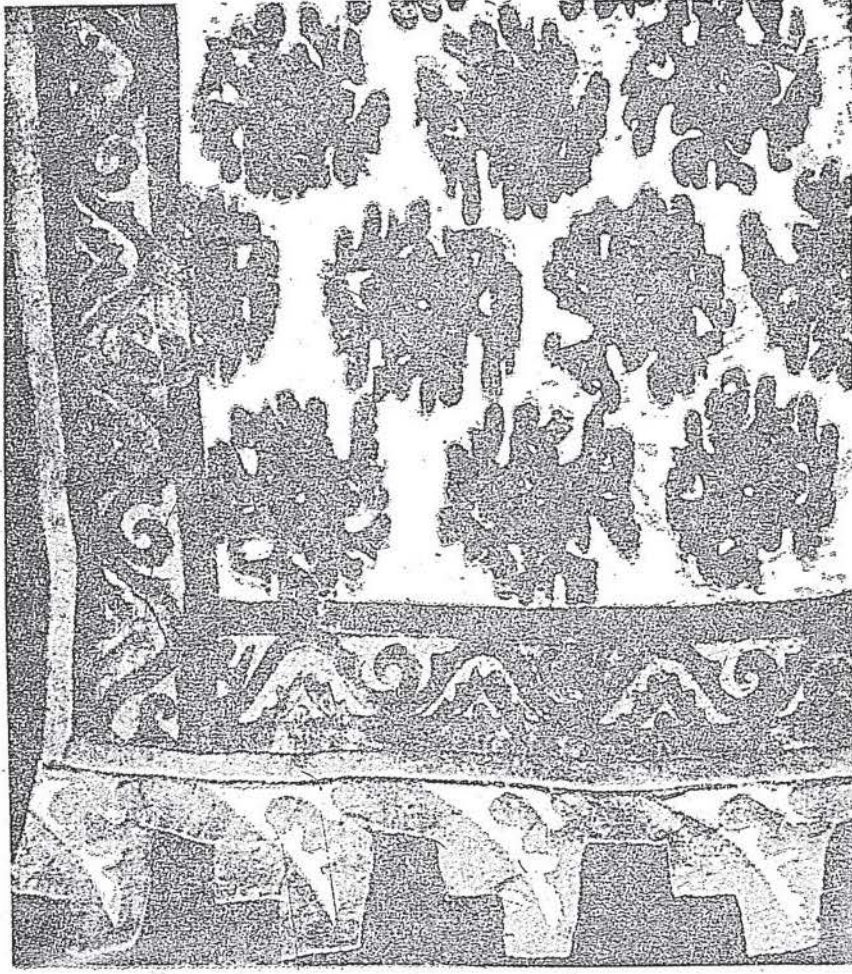
Resim 10 — Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesinde Hazine 841'de kayıtlı Varaka ve Gülşah nesnevisinde, Selçuklu minyatür ekolünün en eski örnekleri bulunmaktadır. Varak 26 b.'de görülen at'ın terini almak üzere sırtına vurulmuş çul Orta Asya'da «Şabrak veya Çaprak» denir. Tıpkı Hunlarda olduğu gibi hayvan figürü ile süslenmiştir. Bugün de Azerî, Kaşkay vs. gibi birçok Türk toplulukları bu anlayışta yapılmış at sırtına vurulan Çul'u kullanırlar.



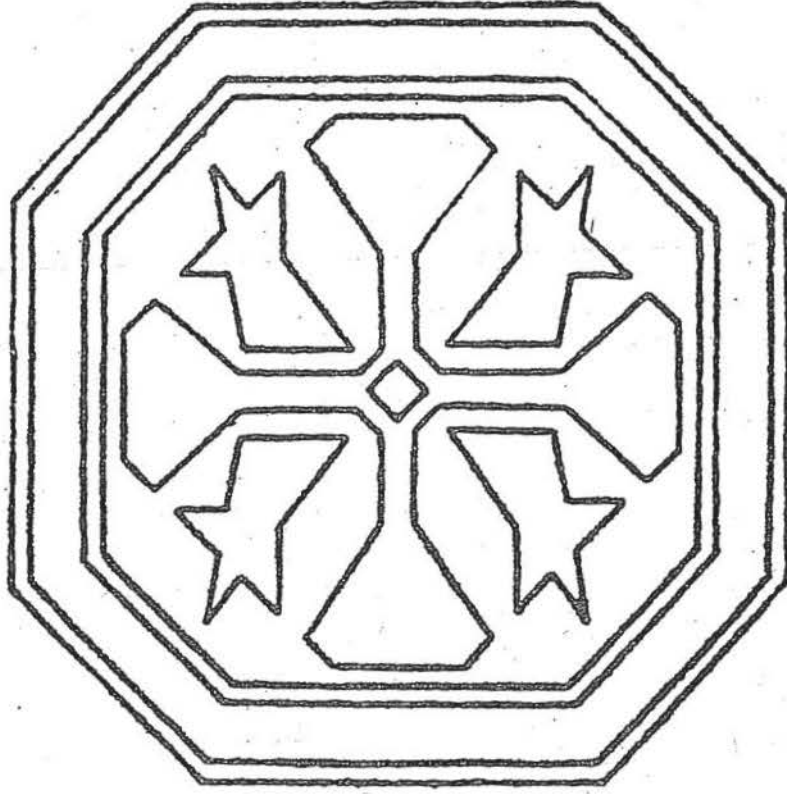
Resim. 11 — Birinci Pazırk kurganından süslü bir eyer. Yastık eyer'in zeminini karelere bölünmüş, alternatif sıralama ile içerlerine madeni çiçek plâkaları yerleştirilmiş; ahşaptan «meyilli yontma tekniği» ile yapılmış hayvan figürleri ile süslü aksesuar ise eyer'in süslerini meydana getirmektedir.



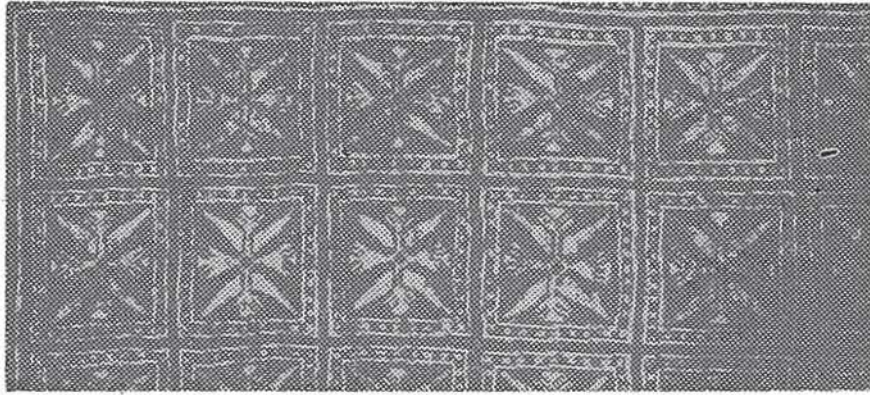
Resim 13 — Pazırıkta bulunmuş geometrik nakışlarla süslü keçe yaygı.



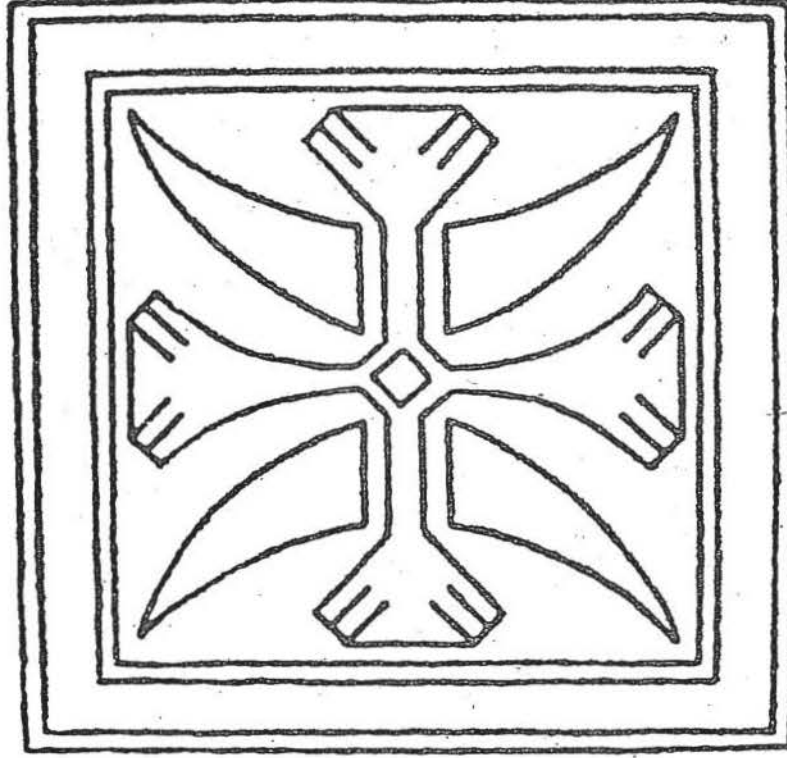
Resim 14 — Pazırıkta bulunmuş geometrik desenli keçe yaygı.



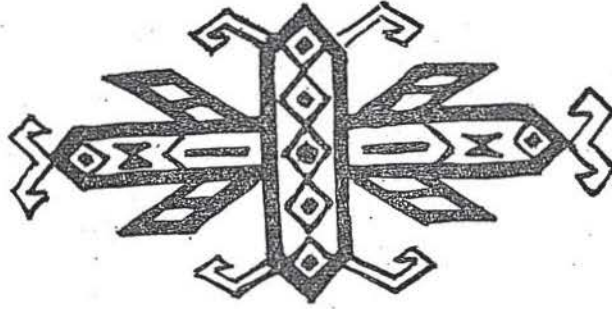
Resim 15 — Kare-gül'ün Selçuk ve Türkmenlerde «sekizgen-gül» motifine dönüşü.



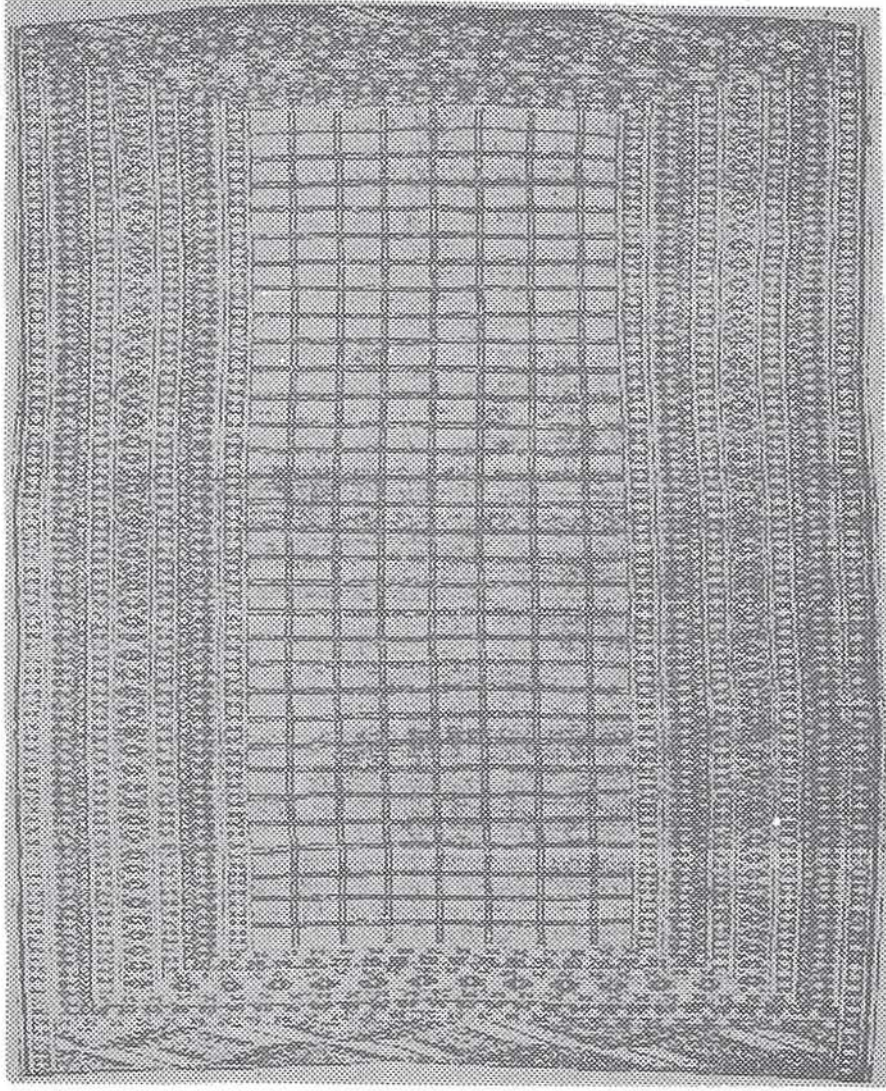
Resim 16 — Pazırık Halısı'nın orta zeminini kaplayan «Hun Gülü» motifleri.



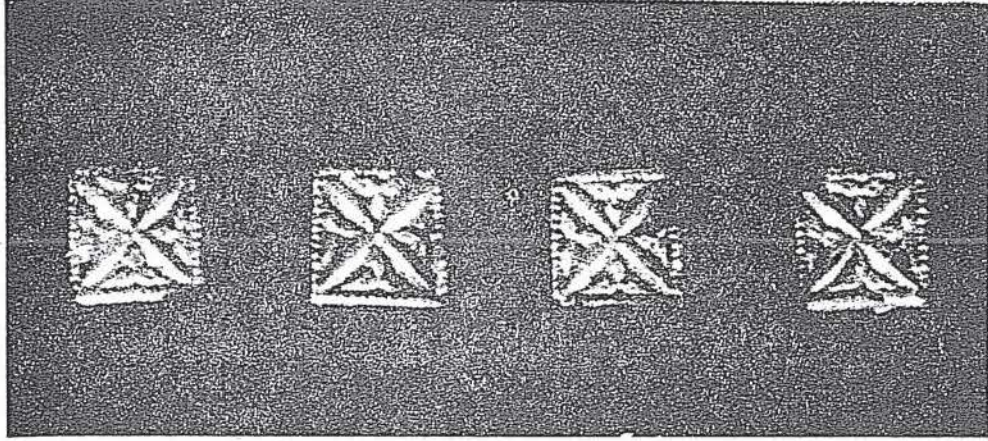
Resim 17 — Pazırık Halısının çapraz çiçeklerle ve yapraklarla süslü «kare-gölü» (Hun gölü) motifi. Pazırık halısının zemininde görülen yirmidört kare'nin içine yerleştirilmiş Hun gölü nakışı.



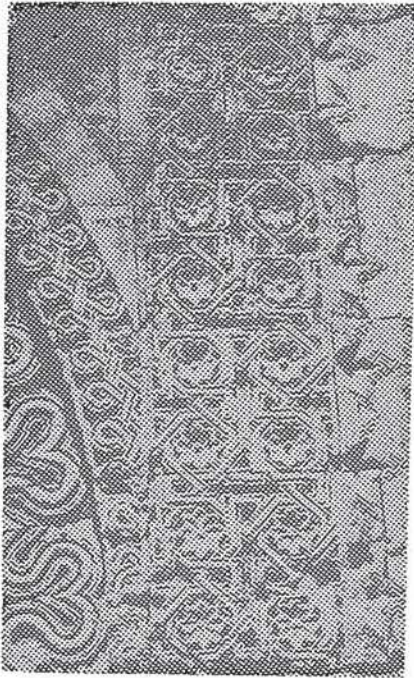
Resim 18 — Teke Türkmenlerinin çapraz yapraklı yıldız biçimindeki çiçek nakışı, «Çömçe gölü». Yüzyıllar sonra Pazırık halısının çapraz çiçek ve yapraklarla süslü nakışı ile büyük bir benzerlik gösteren bu motif, ananevî nakış anlayışının geometrik bir biçimde devam ettiğini aksettiren en değerli örnektir.



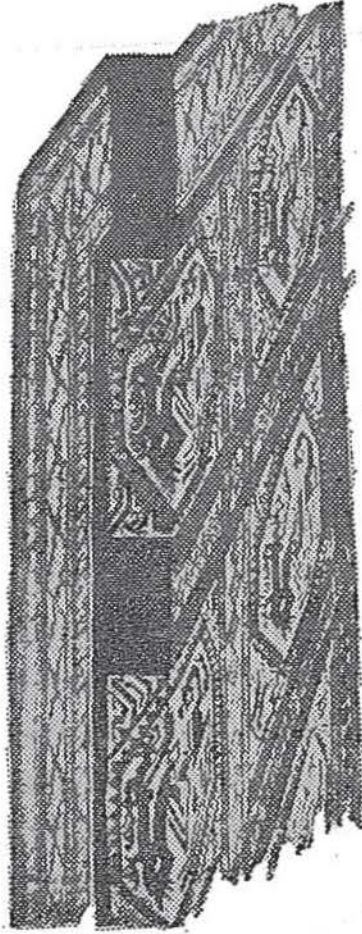
Resim 19 — Türkmen halılarında kare bölmeli zemin



Resim 20 — Orta Asya steplerinde yaşayan Türklerin kullandığı deri kemerlere bağlanan metal levhalardaki motifler, Pazırık halısı motifleri ile benzer özellikler taşırlar.



Resim 21 — Sultan Han'da Selçuklu taş işçiliği. Burada da zemin tıpkı halı raporlarında, kompozisyonlarında rasladığımız gibi karelere bölünmüş ve içerlerine çiçekler yerleştirilmiştir.



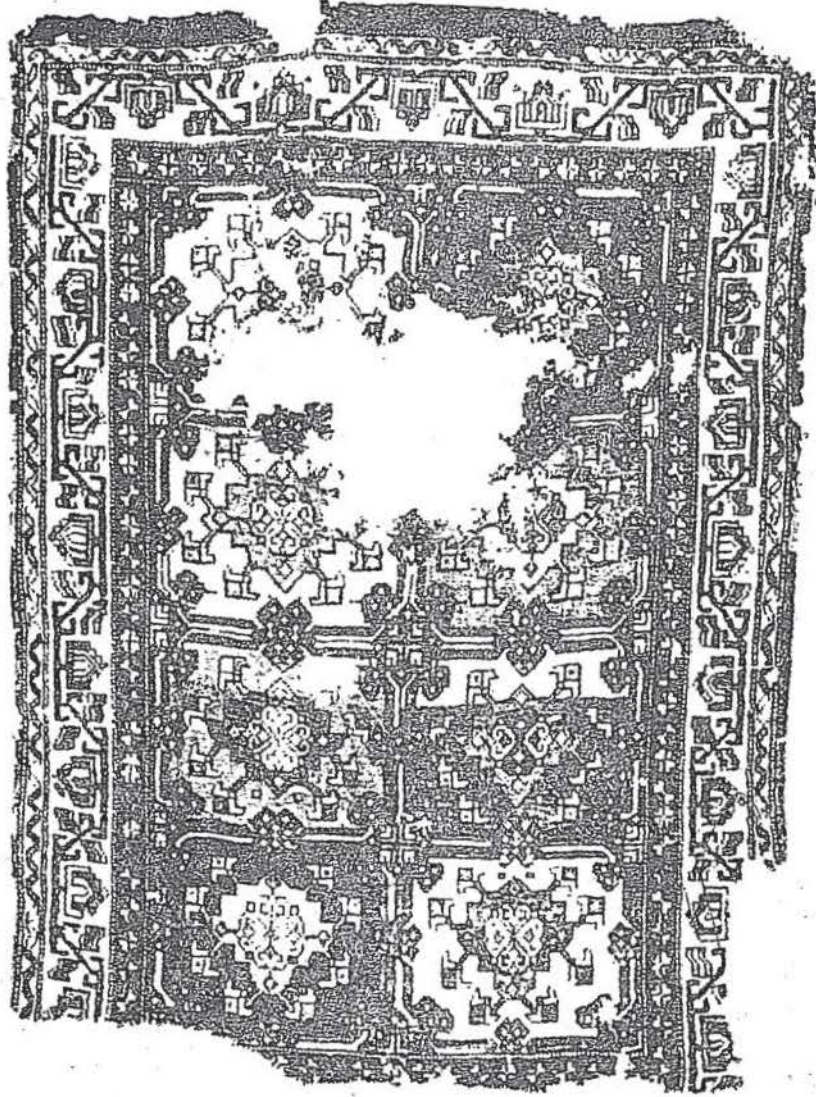
Resim 22 — XIV. yy. hayvan figürlü Türk halılarında karelere bölünmüş zemin.



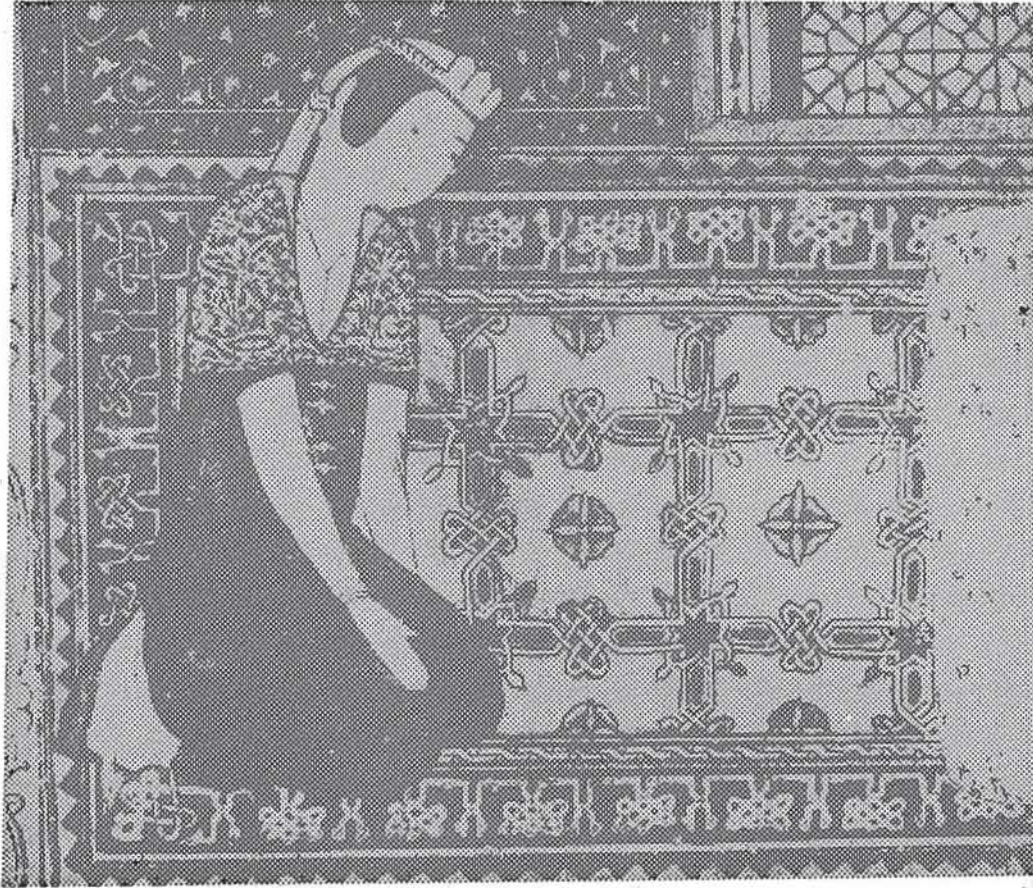
Resim 23 — Vakıflar Halı Müzesinde bulunan XV. yy. ait hayvan figürlü halı.



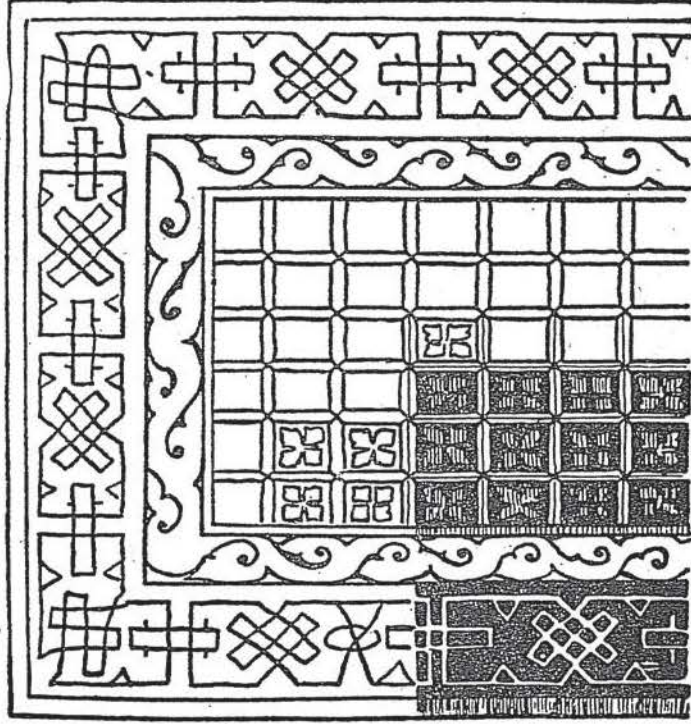
Resim 24 — Kafkas bölgesinden hayvan figürlü kilim. Zemin karelere bölünerek figürler ortalarına yerleştirilmiştir.



Resim 25 — Zeminin karelere bölünerek ortalarına nakışların yerleştirilmesi.
Orta Anadolu halısı, XVIII. yy.



Resim 26 — Timur devri minyatürlerinde yer alan Türk halılarında karelere bölünen zemin ve ortalarına yerleştirilen çiçek nakışları.



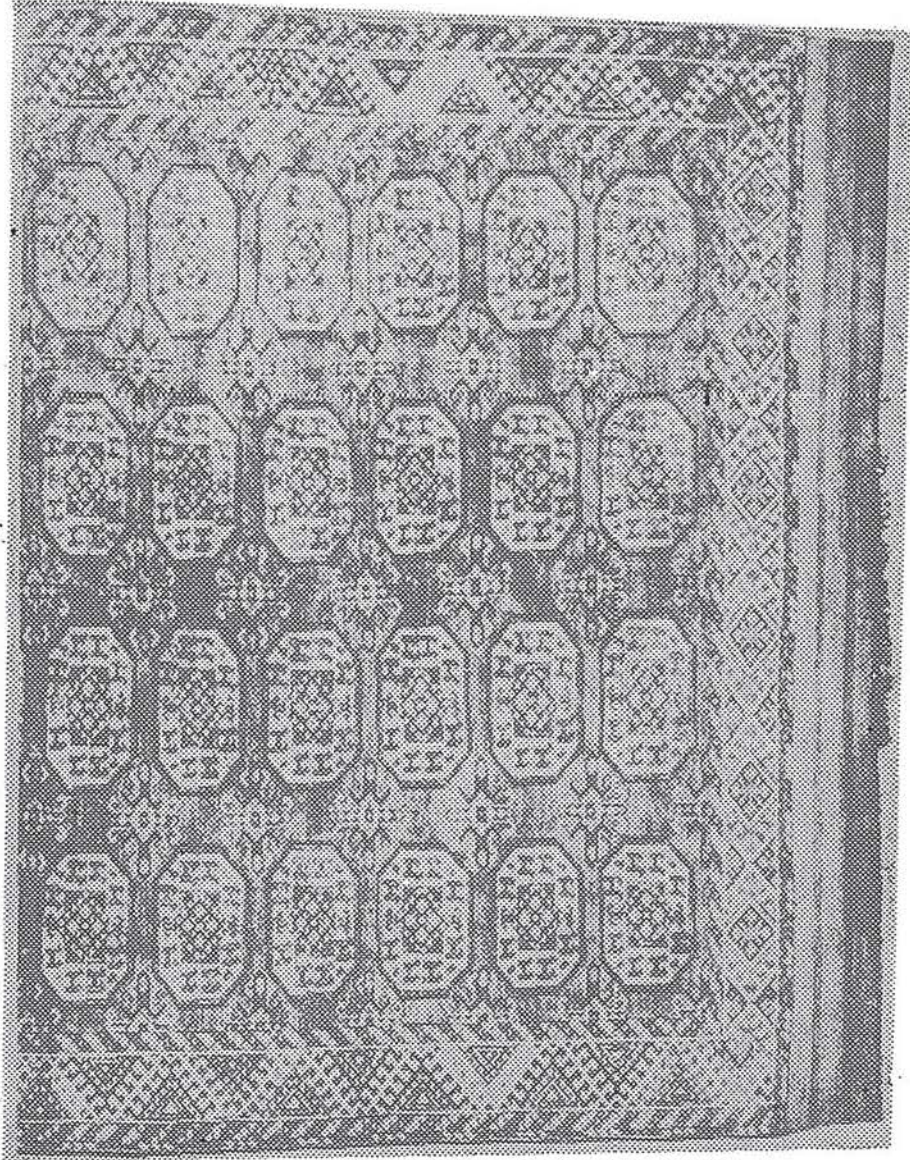
Resim 27 — Timur devri minyatürlerinde yer alan Türk halılarında karelere bölünen zeminler.



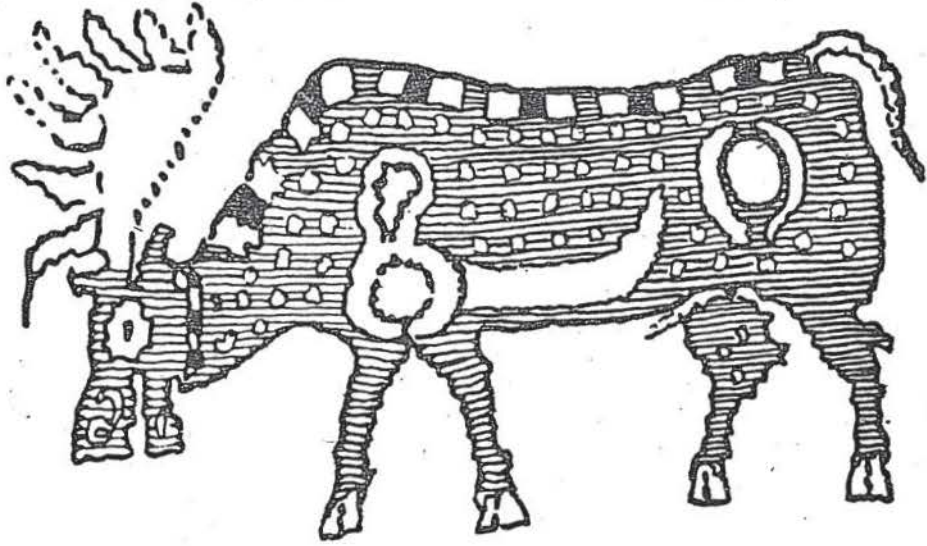
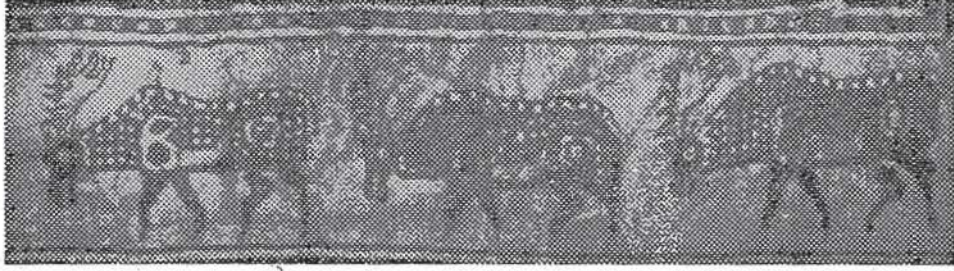
Resim 29 — Doğu Türkistan'da Hoten halısı. Zeminin karelere bölünmesi ve bölünen kompartımanlara nakışların yerleştirilmesi.



Resim 28 — Kazak keçelerinde zemin kompozisyonu. Zemin karelere bölünmüş, içlerine nakışlar yerleştirilmiştir.



Resim 30 — Teke Türkmenlerine ait bir halı. İçinde Çömçe Göl nakışı görülmektedir ki bu nakış Hun-Göl'ü nakışının aynısıdır. Bak. res. 18.



Resim 31 — Pazırık Hun halısının iç geniş suyu üzerinde birbirini takip ederek otlayan sığır figürleri takriben 10x30 cm. Güney Sibirya'da ve Kuzey Amerika'da yaşayan bir geyik cinsidir. (Alces Machlis) son derece kuvvetli olan bu geyiğin uzunluğu 3 m. boyu da 2 m.yi bulur. Boynuzları yassı ve kudretlidir. İri kulaklı uzun kafasının ucunda şiş bir burun, geniş ve sarkık bir üst dudağı ve sakalı vardır. Bu özellikleri, dokuma tekniğinin verdiği imkânlar dahilinde halı üzerine aksettirilmiştir. Geyiklerin gövdelerinde Altay kurganlarından çıkan buluntularda da görüldüğü gibi noktalar, virgüller ve at nalları çizilmiştir.



Resim 32 — T'ang sülâlesinin kraliyet sarayındaki kazılar sırasında Şansi bölgesindeki eski Çang-an şehrinde (bugün Şian şehri), saray dekorasyonunda bulunan motifler. Pazırık halısı motifleri ile benzer özellikler taşımaktadırlar.

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