**F. Gogel'**
**The Turkmen Carpet Exhibition**
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The study of the rug production of Turkmenistan has behind it deep, profound, and varied roots. The high quality of Turkmen rugs is universally recognized both here and in the West, and the study of them has long been a regular task of science in the cultural-historical plan. Science, however, almost neglected this area of the people's art of the East.

There are also important reasons in favor of such a study from the point of view of social-cultural interest. The best and most effective route toward a cultural drawing-together with the peoples of the East is a knowledge of their culture, their cultural achievements. In Turkmenistan , rug-making deserves primary attention - this enormous labor-intensive process which, in the course of centuries, has served to satisfy both the basic daily necessities as well as the artistic demands of the nomadic population of the country.

The scientific study of rugs has also a short-range, purely utilitarian significance, which is closely connected with the question about the development of the productive forces of the country. The decline of rug-making in the last decade has evoked in places an entire series of measures directed to the widening of production and the improvement of the quality of production. Besides measures of technical significance, it is extremely important to clarify, by means

of systematic study, the compositional and ornamental character of rugs as well as the typical traits distinguishing old examples from later ones.

The current, small exhibition only partially presents the collection of Turkmen rugs of the museum, systematically collected since 1918. The plan of the exhibition is based directly on the scientific research work which I am doing in the area of Eastern rugs as part of the cultural-historical and production plan over the course of several years using materials located both in the museum and outside it.

According to contemporary scientific information, rug production most likely originated in the wide-open spaces of the Central Asian steppe, where since ancient times there has existed the exceptionally favorable natural and material-economic pre-conditions for it.

The conditions of nomadic life demanded furnishings from a material which was easily transported from one camp to the next, and which protected the nomads from the sharp changes in temperature of the continental climate; a material which was durable and was able to be manufactured under the conditions of a natural economy. Rugs satisfied all these demands; the wool for them was provided by the flocks of the nomads, and dyes were found in the surrounding environment. Some rugs served to cover the floor while others ("ensi") were curtains over the entrance to the kibitka; rug bags ("chuvali" and "mafrachi") hanging on the walls of the yurt held clothes, substituting for commodes and wardrobes; a rug ("namazlyk")

was laid down for prayer; small rugs of a five-cornered form ("osmolduki") adorned the camel during a wedding procession; long and narrow rug strips ("iolamy") tied up the posts of the easily dismantled kibitka.

The work process, briefly outlined, consists of the following: - knots of short strands of wool are tied on the threads of the foundation (the threads are often visible at the ends of the rug, making up the fringe). The ends of the knots are cut and make up the nap - the visible velvet surface of the clipped rug. The knots, which tie the threads of the foundation together in pairs, alternate rows with threads of the weft, which divide and strengthen the rows of knots. On the wrong side of the rug the knots can be recognized in the form of tiny dots.

The extremely difficult technique is further complicated by the necessity of continually changing the color of the material making up the knots in order to obtain a multi-colored rug design which conforms to the ornamental conception of the master.

These most detailed and painstaking techniques are based solely on centuries of tradition and rely on the most primitive means and tools of production. In combination with the exceptionally artistic and technical abilities of the peoples of the East, they make possible the infinitely complicated and varied rug designs.

While working, the master does not have in front of him a drawing or design, to serve as a model for making the rug.

He creates the whole composition and decorative design with only the help of imagination and memory, varying and combining the designs into new arrangements, thereby creating a new treatment in each separate case.

An analysis of the production and ornamentation of Turkmen rugs shows that ornamental motifs which appear to be repeating themselves in one and the same rug, are constantly, although insignificantly changing in their size and form. The overall compositional balance is the result of the decorative flair of the workmanship and does not come from mechanical repetition done according to a strict accounting of tied knots. Thus in production, it is not the assembly line, but the creative principle which rules.

The study of Eastern rugs places one fundamental problem before anything else: - what is the essence and nature of rug composition and decorative design and what is their meaning and origin? This question is one of the first to be faced by beginning students of rugs. It remains the main element of a more thorough exploration into rug production, and opens up an infinitely vast field for analysis and subsequent general conclusions.

Western science concentrated its attention in large part on the rugs of Persia, whereby a large place was always devoted primarily to the luxurious examples from Persian court life. The relatively modest products of Central Asian folk creation were usually considered only in passing in works of a general nature, which did not call for special study. It is

true that Western authors have done justice to the rugs of Central Asia, especially Turkmenistan, recognizing in them high production quality. At the same time one occasionally came across observations that it is surprising how such perfect products were produced by "fierce and wild" nomads. Opinions similar to this are also found in Russian literature.

Russian science has brought relatively little to the study of Turkmen rugs. The works of A. Bogolyubov and A. Felkerzan give remarkable illustrative material, but unfortunately little of the accompanying text is illuminating. The brochure of the Ethnographic Section of the Russian Museum "Rugs of the East" (Leningrad, 1924) contains a few appreciations about the ornamentation of Turkmen rugs.

In general the authors agree that the basic decorative designs of Turkmen rugs are geometric forms, which in fact constitute their most characteristic feature. They consider that the ornamental motifs in the rugs of Turkmenistan are distinguished by their constancy and that rug production consisted only in the repetition of one or another motif, established once and for all at a definite and remote historical moment.

Even on the basis of general considerations, such judgments would seem erroneous. We know of no examples in folk creativity, when the same forms have been repeated slavishly through the course of centuries, showing neither progress nor deterioration of productive capability. If this were true, it would mean that production was unconnected with the material-

economic forms of life.

But it is quite obvious, that with scientific study, it is impossible to confine oneself either to general considerations or to general impressions from available material. Only by means of careful and systematic research of this material is it possible to acquire data having actual scientific meaning.

The composition of decorative motifs in different parts and types of Turkmen rugs shows that groups of ornamental elements exist, which occur only in specific parts of the rug composition, as if they were an inherent part of that composition, while in other parts they are met relatively seldom if at all. On the basis of this indication it is possible to break down the composition of Turkmen rugs into basic parts - the central field, its border which encloses the central field, and the skirt.

The following review of rug decoration will conform to these compositional divisions.

## UPPER LANDING OF THE VESTIBULE

Viewing of the exhibition begins with the upper landing of the vestibule, where in systematic succession there are sketches, drawings, and photographs, illustrating different features, characteristic of the individual compositional and ornamental groups of Turkmen rugs. In the remainder of this brochure these materials will be referred to as "summaries."

First of all one should familiarize oneself with the diagram which shows several types of Turkmen rugs with their

divisions into the aforementioned compositional parts.

In large rugs, serving to cover the floor, all parts of the composition are usually clearly pronounced. This division is especially accentuated in Yomud rugs, by the white ground of the border of the central field, which separates the field from the skirt. In Tekke rugs, this division is less clear, since the ground of all the parts is usually of one color.

As a general rule small pieces - Yomud osmolduki, five-cornered decorations worn by camels for a wedding procession, wall bags - chuvali and mafrachi - present the same characteristics which play the same role as the white ground of the border of the central field in Yomud rugs. Chuvali - larger and wider all bags - have all the compositional parts sufficiently clearly defined, in which the skirt is for the most part assymetrical. The lower skirt is significantly wider than the upper and is distinguished by a more completely and elaborately developed design. In mafrachi - narrow wall bags - the skirt is almost absent; the same is observed in osmolduki. As in those, so in others the absence of a clear lower skirt is often compensated for by a wide fringe, which was later rarely preserved. Among those shown at the exhibit there are only several examples of the latter.

The curtains over the entrance to the kibitka - ensi - differ significantly from the types of rugs examined. Their central field is usually divided into four parts by vertical and horizontal stripes intersecting in a cross shape. The borders of the central field are relatively wide, as is the

lower skirt. The main difference between this and other compositional types is this division of the central field into four roughly equal parts.

Moving on to a clear meaning of the ornamentation of the rugs, it is interesting to note, what the masters themselves - the Turkmeni, who produced the rugs - said in this connection. In this regard there is a very clear explanation about one of the types of ensi - such an example is found on the same wall as the summary. According to this explanation, the five-cornered form in the upper border (done in white lines) represents a kibitka; the little figures in the middle of the vertical stripes forming the central field are camels and buffalo; the figures with two horns that turn up at the ends and which go in horizontal rows in all four sections of the central field are herds of rams; and the ornamental designs in the remaining parts of the rug are plant forms found in the environment.

In this example we see that rug decoration strives to reflect all the surrounding conditions of nature and the life of the nomads, for despite the conventionality of representation, it is possible to recognize the realistic basis of the decoration. At first glance the representation of the surrounding vegetation appears less obvious, but we will return again to this part of the ornamentation in a further analysis of the motifs of the skirt.

We move on now to an examination of the ornamental design in the main compositional parts of the rug - the central field,

its border, and the skirt.

CENTRAL FIELD

The most common motif of the central field of the large Tekka rugs as well as of the wall bags is the "gul" or rose. This is, for the most part, an eight-cornered figure, filling the field in regular horizontal and vertical rows. Even the researchers who consider the basis of the ornamental design of Turkmen rugs geometric, don't doubt the plant origin of this ornament, calling it "rose" or "rosette." I, who also don't doubt its plant nature, ought to mention that it is not possible here to consider the question of the exact meaning of this motif to the full extent. That would require a detailed analysis, going far beyond the limits of this small brochure. Is this form a little stylized flower or a more complex plant composition? Here it is possible to confine oneself to establishing its plant origin.

The figures, which fill the spaces between the "guls," often consist of more or less compact centers with branches bending in four directions. These figures are extremely varied in their details. One of the varieties is presented here in a reproduction of a fragment of a Tekke rug attributed to the beginning of the 19th century (ill. 1). To clarify the meaning of these figures, it is very informative to compare them with a sketch presented in the summary, which I did in 1915 from an old Yomud rug. According to both the ornamental design and all the production marks, this rug is without question older than the 18th century, but a more exact dating of it is made

difficult by a scarcity of material for comparison.

The present sketch of a rug fragment is done in life-size and shows part of the central field and its border. The figure between the "guls" is seen in the sketch several times and undoubtedly portrays a spider-like insect with bent extremities, with bulges at the ends.

Thus in this case we observe the representation of living creatures among the plant forms of nature.

The osmolduk, located on the same wall as the summary, gives another view of the filling of the central field. A comparison is made in the summary between two sketches of fragments of the central field - this osmolduk and another which is not in the museum. This second is attributed to the 18th century, whereas the example in the museum is dated as the beginning of the 19th century. A photograph of the first rug is given in ill. 2. An examination of the sketches in the summary and the photograph reveals in both cases the completely clear representation of a bird, but with different interpretations.

A comparative analysis of both sketches convinces us that all the motifs in the 18th century treatment are more real. Poses of running birds (pheasants or bustards) are reproduced very vividly and testify to the master's outstanding power of observation. The whole composition, which also includes small figures of animals - goats - sometimes two-headed and heavily stylized, is distinguished by its freedom and balance.

In the 19th century rug the figures of animals totally disappear; the treatment of birds becomes less free and more schematic. Thus we see, that even though old, the later example in comparison with the earlier bears obvious traces of the forms of nature becoming geometric and schematic. Some realistic features totally disappear, others take on a more monotonous, simplified character.

As a result of this survey of the ornamentation of the central field, we see that its make-up consists of forms of nature. In some cases their origin is completely obvious, in others it is more or less hidden by the increasingly geometric and schematic nature of the forms.

BORDER OF THE CENTRAL FIELD

Framing the central field is a closed border, which as already indicated, stands out quite distinctly in Yomud rugs, thanks to its white ground on which the design appears clearly.

The osmolduki, which have just been examined, serve as very illustrative examples of this type of border, and to a certain extent are the prototype of many others. The design on the white ground represents a curving stem, from which saw-tooth leaves bend alternately to either side, obviously curling plants, possibly grapevines. A comparison of this motif in both osmolduki does not reveal any significant difference in the treatment, such as was the case in the central field. Nevertheless the simplification and the increasingly geometric forms are also noticeable here - the lines of the stem in the later example are straightened, losing their more compli-

cated curves (photographs of both borders are found in the summary).

That very motif, but with a more geometric look, is seen in the border of the central field of the large Yomud rug of the beginning of the 19th century (ill, 3). The leaf already takes on the character of a six-sided figure with saw-tooth edges, but still preserves an inner spiral and its link with the stem.

Fragments of two Yomud rugs (ill. 4) present the next stage of deviation from the realistic base - in both cases the leaf loses its link with the stem, although it preserves the spiral form. In ill. 5 the stem becomes unrecognizable, turning into a continuous two-sided frame, inside which the leaf is treated in the shape of a six-sided figure with the residual form of the spiral inside. In the same illustration we also see the subsequent stages as the leaf becomes more geometric. In one case the residual spiral becomes drawn out and distorted, in another it completely disappears, and the six-sided figure becomes solid. In between these last two is the residual form of the spiral shown in ill. 6.

The present group of consecutive comparisons demonstrates that one and the same form of ornamentation evolves gradually, moving from an obvious, realistic treatment to a clear geometric one, whereby the last stage is so far removed from its prototype, that its plant origins may be discovered only by means of a progressive analysis of the preceding transitional steps.

The borders of the central field of the entrance curtains of the kibitka - ensi - are distinctive for their originality, as is the whole composition of this type of rug. These borders consist not of one, but of several parallel stripes, sometimes three. The two outside ones are usually on a white ground, the middle one on a dark ground. In Pendeh ensi these middle stripes are very close in their ornamental design to the vertical stripes which divide the central field in half.

In the Pendeh ensi which are displayed in the exhibition, the vertical straight stem, from which branches extend to either side, serves as the basis of the ornamentation both in the borders and in the stripes of the central field. The branches have plant forms hanging on them, which spread downward and are possibly little bells.

The lower horizontal part of the border of the central field of these Pendeh ensi is filled with the same design, but in a slightly different, widened treatment. The same plant motif is seen, but its branches spread more freely and are not restrained by the production task - as is the case with that which is inserted into the narrow vertical border.

And so an analysis of the border of the central field reveals a whole group of forms of nature, which makes up a complete and coherent composition; it reveals motifs which are adopted from surrounding life. By means of such complete evidence the presence of the evolution of ornamental motifs, in the sense of their gradually becoming more geometric and more schematic, is clarified.

SKIRTS

The meaning of the decoration of the skirts is in considerable measure illuminated by a sketch of the skirt of the Yomud rug already mentioned. A sketch of a fragment of its central field (with spider-like figures) has already been examined. The design in life-size, which has been executed with the greatest precision, presents an unquestionably magnificant flora composition in the form of a stem with protruding leaves and branches, variously treated and variously curved. The borders of the later, large Yomud rugs often have a common resemblance with these motifs, but in significantly simplified form. There is such a border for example in ill. 5, where the stem is clearly distinguished and has curved branches which extend to the sides with bulges in the ends. In this way attention is drawn to the curvilinear, circular character of the branch.

In small rugs one also comes upon a similarity with the border just described, which is apparently a prototype of many later decorations.

Of the two chuvali from the end of the 18th century which hang one below the other, the lower one has repeated in its bottom skirt the motif of a stem with saw-tooth leaves extending to the sides. The characteristic feature of this motif is the obvious tendency toward a smooth curve.

An ensi with the representation of Kibitki and the animals of nomadic life has already been examined above. A sketch of the lower skirt of this rug is presented in the summary, and

in it we recognize the same plant with widened forms which hang from the branches and are apparently bluebells.

The conclusions from the survey of the skirts are in general analogous to the previous ones; here the stylized forms of vegetation are also found in different stages of geometric development, with a general tendency toward simplification in the later patterns.

A survey of the wall with the summary concludes with a small Yomud mafrach of the 18th century, ill. 7. Its composition is distinguished by its originality - the central field is divided by vertical stripes into three even parts with a repeating decorative design consisting of vertical stems, which in the center take a large saw-tooth form. Above it and below it branches extend to both sides of the intricate design. Both the stripes of a dark ground which separate these parts and the closed continuous border have stems with offshoots extending to the sides and down.

SIDE WALLS OF THE UPPER VESTIBULE

On the side walls of the upper part of the vestibule rugs of two groups are hung; to the left (from the upper landing) - the Yomud group, to the right - the Tekke and Pendeh group. An ensi of a design similar to the one examined above hangs over the door on the left. It differs in many details. There are different motifs for the border, for the central stripe; all are treated differently and are in other colors. Over the right door is a Pendeh ensi. In the center a plant stem is clear. In other parts it is less different because of

the similar tones of the colors. In successive Pendeh ensi the fine details will be more obvious.

Of the large Tekke rugs the first in order is reproduced in part in ill. 1. Its comparison with the remaining ones enables us to determine, that in spite of the more general outward similarity, there are in all the basic compositional parts differences in form, in the sizes of the "gul," in the figures which are located between them, and even in the central field borders and skirts. Of those remaining the highest in quality of production is the first and oldest of them, which in terms of workmanship is the most compact and most delicate. In a similar way its composition is also distinguished by its great clearness and balance.

The large Yomud rugs on the opposite wall are in a similar sequence. The reproduced fragment in ill. 3 is from the first of them, where the leaf of the border preserves its connection with the stem. The next rugs reveal the transitional stages of the border of the central field, and the last of them shows the final form of the geometric stylization of the leaf of the border on a white ground.

THE MIDDLE LANDING OF THE STAIRWAY

Pendeh ensi are arranged on the landing of the stairway under the balcony. Generally similar in design, they are distinguished by the quality of production. The difference in the color of the ground as well as some of the motifs is especially significant. As a result the decorative effect is substan-

tially changed. The largest of these is distinguished by its basic ground - its deep, dark, violet color is obtained from a scale insect. In separate parts of the rugs, motifs fimiliar from a review of the summary, are recognizable.

LOWER VESTIBULE

Here small rugs are found, mainly wall bags - chuvali and mafrachi of the 18th and 19th centturies. In the wider of the chuvali the lower skirt presents different plant motifs, analogous to those examined above. The central field of the Tekke group and part of the Pendeh group reveal varieties of the "gul," designs which in spite of outward similarity are extremely diverse. Over the doors are hung Pendeh mafrachi, some of which preserve their long fringe.

Between the doors on a narrow wall is an Ogurdzhalin namazlyk - a prayer rug, of high production quality and dated the end of the 18th century. In the vertical stripes of the central field is a white design, done on a red field, which has the distinctive treatment already known from previous motifs - stylized stem with plant forms which dangle to the sides. (ill. 8)

The distinctive feature of the shape of this rug consists in the fact that the contour of the upper end, which is cut along inclined lines, corresponds to the design of the recessed area.

A comparison of the ornamental design produced by the rug technique with examples of Central Asian embroidery shown at the exhibit is extremely illustrative. In it the workman-

ship is not constrained by the technique of using horizontal rows, and we see space filled with motifs, in which the plant life is perfectly obvious from the first glance. Once again the same motif with bells dangling from the central stem is recognized, but here in a much more realistic and varied treatment which can be accounted for by the freer production method of embroidery.

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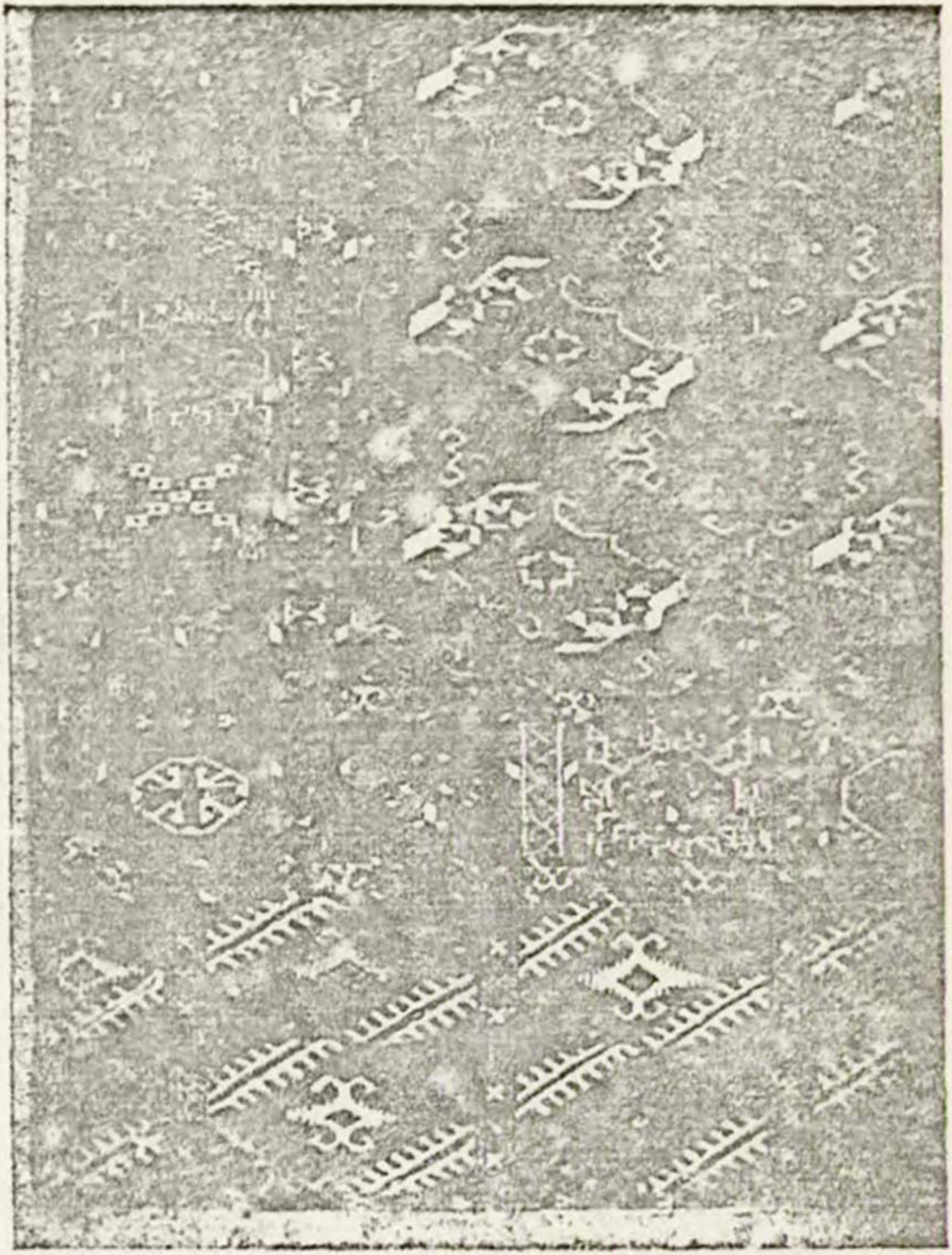
The extremely limited space of this brochure deprives us of the possibility of touching on many substantive questions; the rest have to be treated in a brief, summary manner. Nevertheless, on the basis of the present very short analysis there is the possibility of making a few general conclusions.

1. The rug production of Turkmenistan has as its foundation a living, creative beginning and borrows decorative motifs from surrounding life. In a whole group of rugs, forms of plant life, animals, and birds form the basis of all rug ornamentation.

2. Many geometric designs have their prototypes in forms of nature, the original meaning of which and their subsequent geometric evolution may be revealed only by successive systematic comparison.

3. Joint study is necessary in both ancient rugs as well as in subsequent periods up to and including our time. Only in this way is it possible to carry out research in the cultural-historical plan, the task of which is the establishment of

the cultural achievements of the past through their connection to the present.



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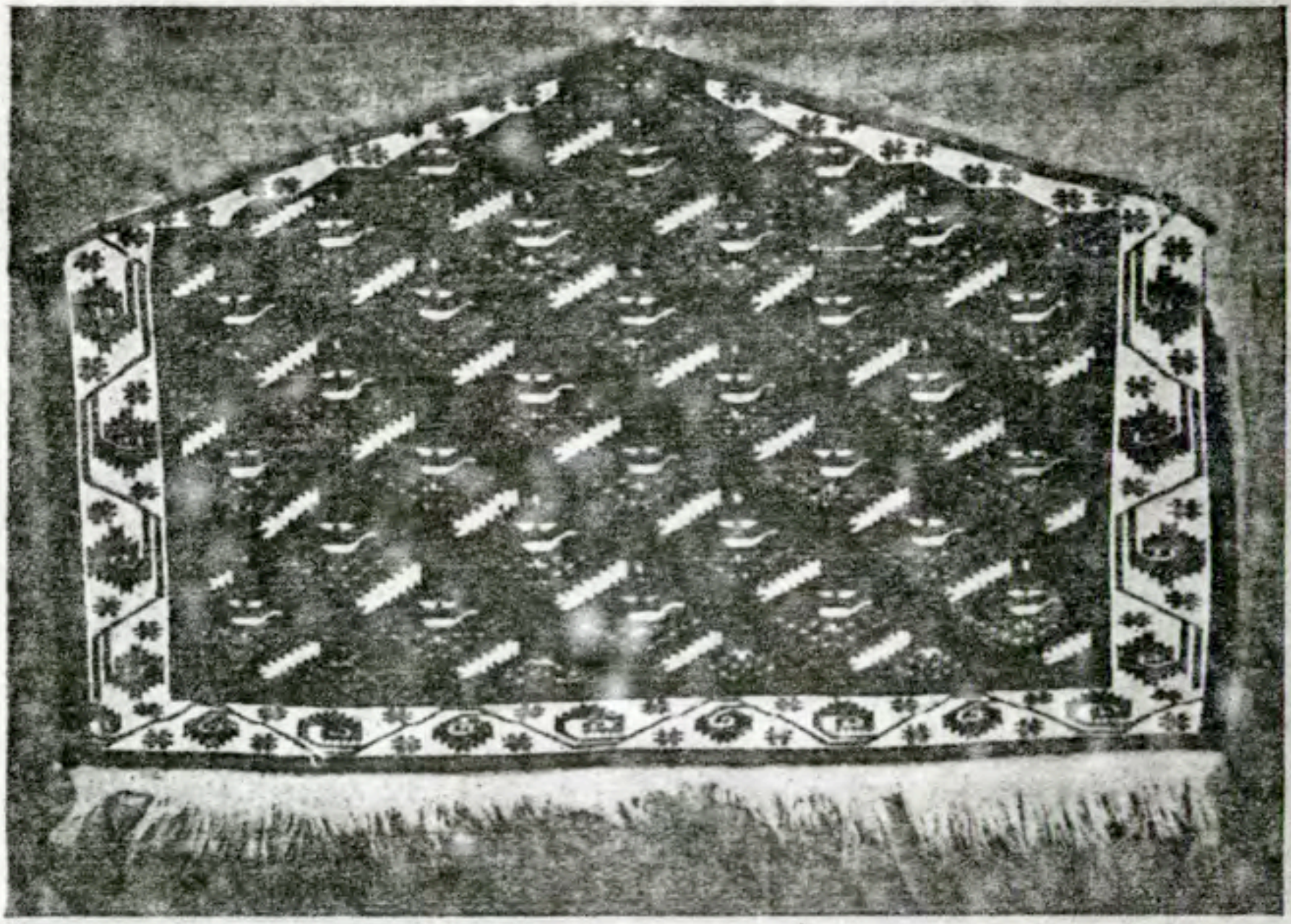

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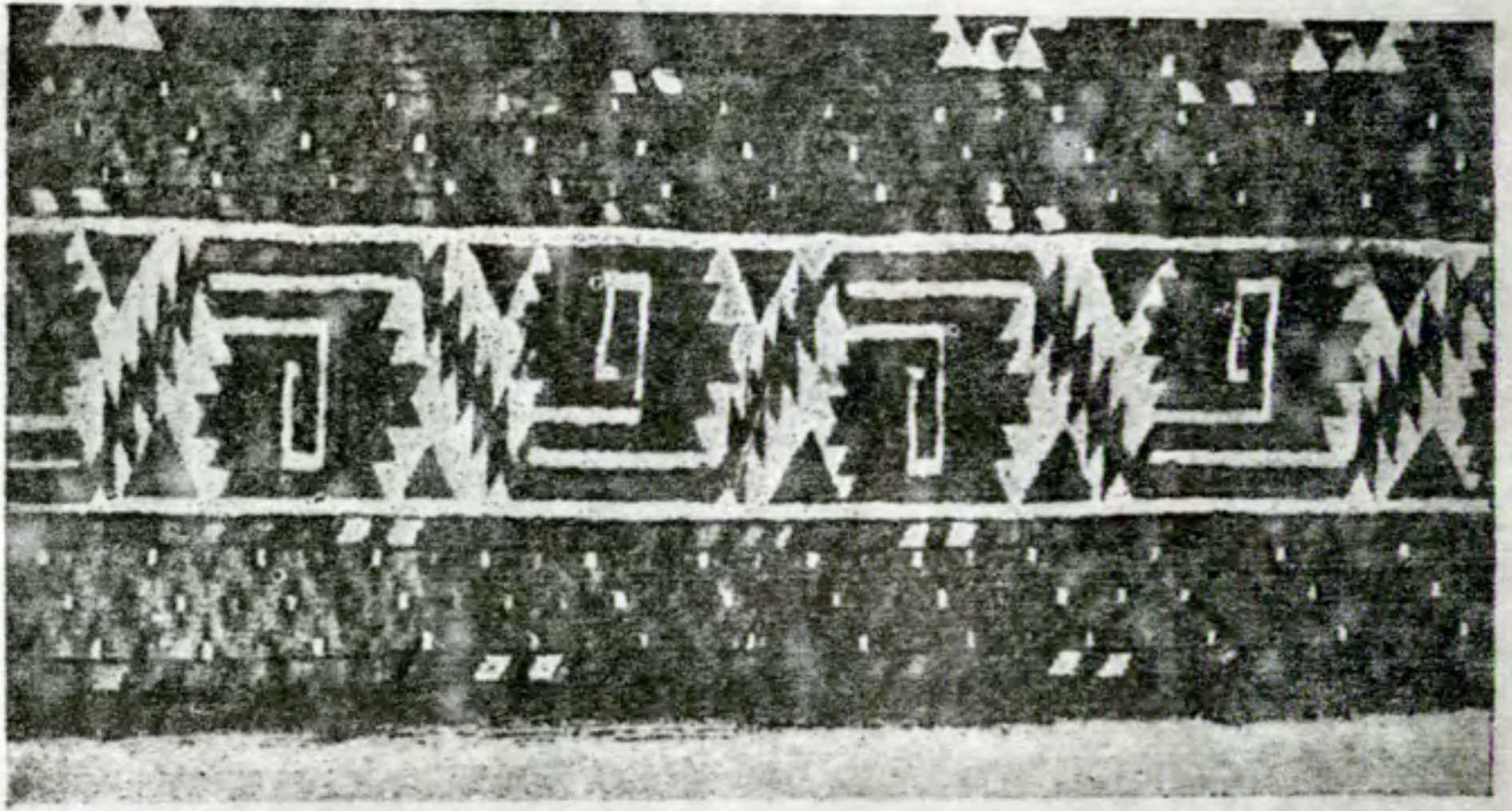

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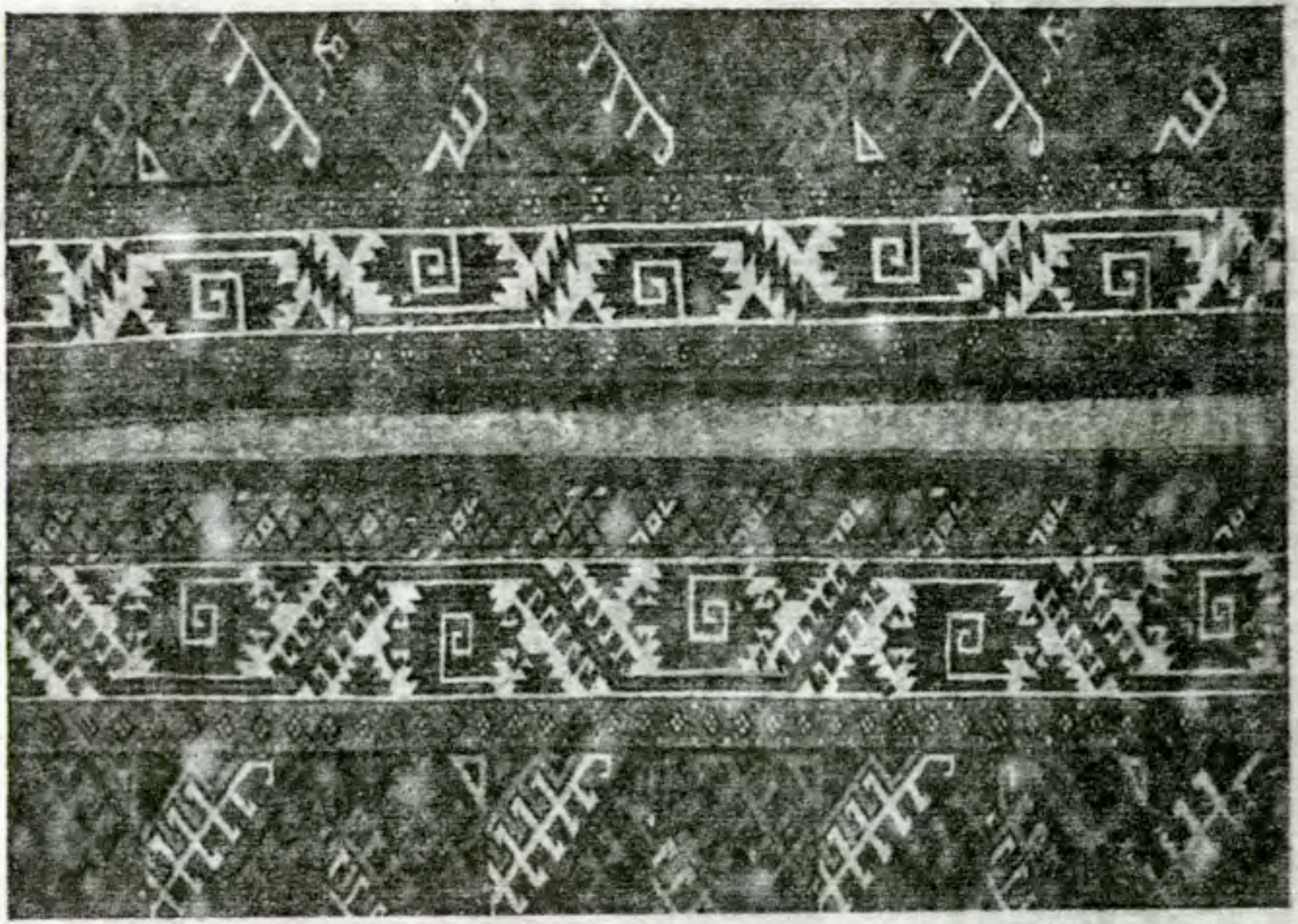

Илл. 4.

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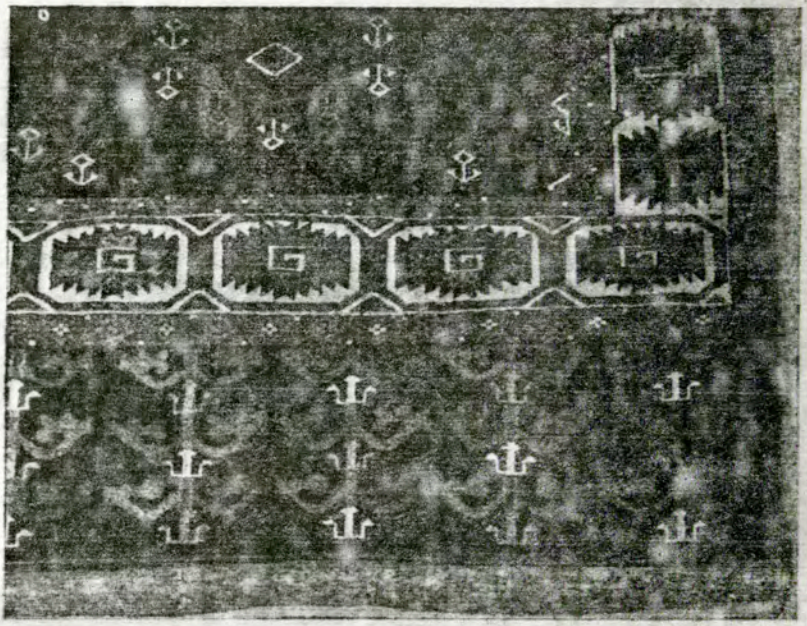
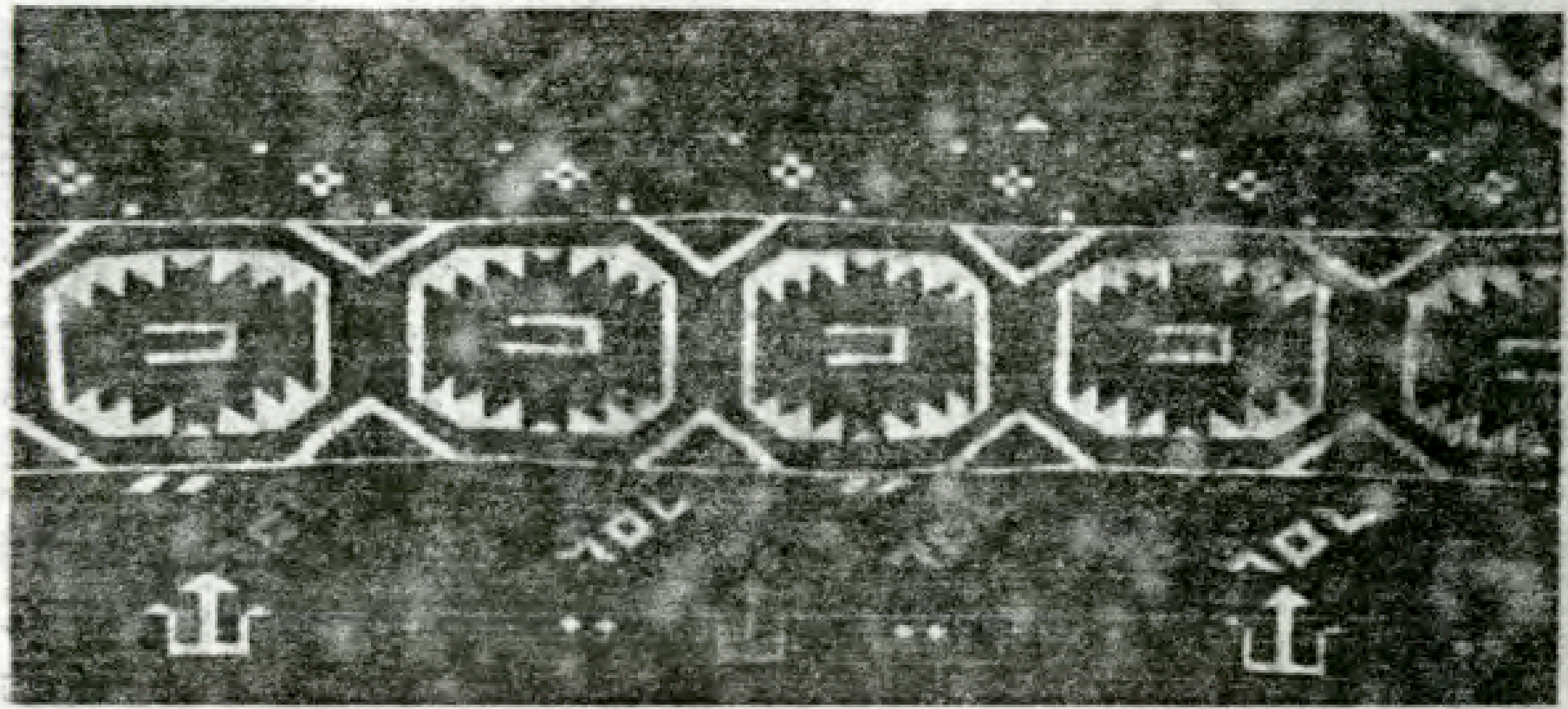


Илл. 5.

Фрагменты двух иомудских ковров (илл. 4) представляют



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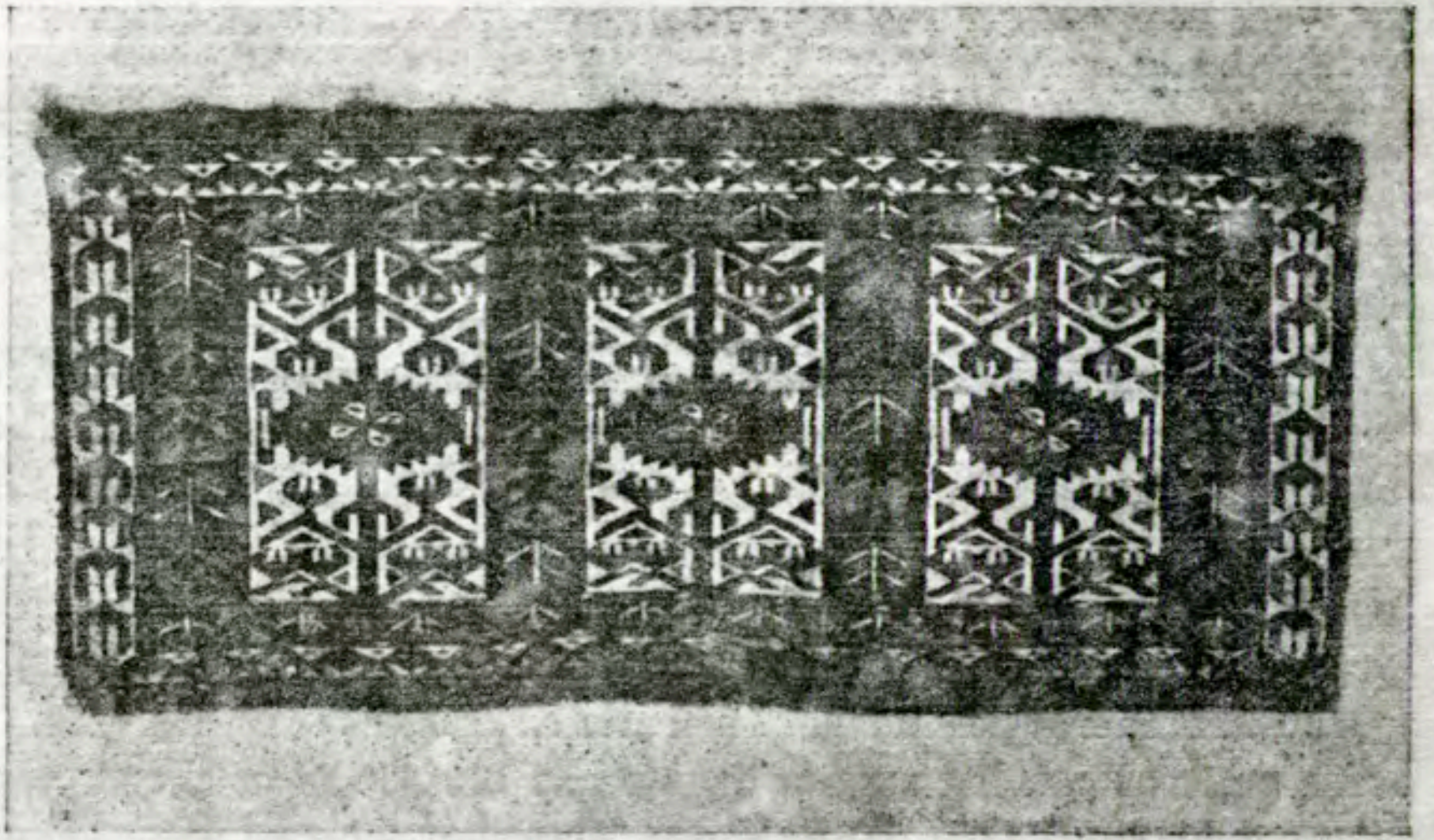

Илл. 7.