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THE TUĞRIL AND THE SUNĞKUR
ICONOGRAPHY OF TWO HERALDIC TURKISCH PREY-
BIRD MOTIFS /



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THE TUGRIL AND THE SUNGKUR

THE ICONOGRAPHY OF TWO HERALDIC TURKISH PREY-
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The prey-bird, particularly the tugril and sungkur appear in various aspects in Turkish art. They may be realistically represented as illustration of the sport of falconry, in which case the research should be conducted on stylistic grounds. The prey-bird can also take place in an emblematic effigy, displaying tribal, dynastic or personal heraldry. Symbolic interpretations of the prey-bird motif must naturally be checked through historical data. The purpose of this paper is to attempt a research on the tugril and sungkur, in stylistic, iconographic, as well as symbolic aspects, within the frame of Turkish art.

The tugril is described in early /VIII.-IXth century/, Abbasid sources in features which confirm the conclusion of modern scholars on its identification as the largest bird of the accipitridae species. In Arabic sources the tugril /tugr'il/ is a royal bird from the Hazar land. However the mention of the tugr'il and of the use of the word as princely emblem or name occurs not only in the West, as far as

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Hungary, and amongst the Selçukids and Ottomans, but also in the East, in Uygur and Hakanid culture. The fantastic aspects of the tugri may sometimes be linked with legends on qara-kus /garuda/. This is however true of all reports on prey-birds of Turkish lands, in Arabic sources.

The ak-sunğur /white hierofalco-gyrfalco/ was a northern bird, often reported in the land of the Kirgiz. In the early arab sources, the related qarr species is more often cited. In later texts, particularly in the Mongol period, the sunğur became the royal prey-bird par excellence. In its fabulous aspects, the sunğur had connections with the Chinese feng-huang.

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