

An Evaluation of the Erzincan Cengerli Kilim as a Geographical Indication and Cultural Asset

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Article Type

Research Article

History

Received: 04.11.2025
Accepted: 26.12.2025
Published: 30.12.2025

ABSTRACT

It is crucial to acknowledge handicrafts, which have been used as a silent language from the past to the present, the value they deserve and ensure their preservation before they disappear. It is necessary to reveal the cultural values of local people living in geographically disadvantaged areas and to evaluate them to ensure economic sustainability. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the color motifs and structural characteristics of the Cengerli kilim (rug), a cultural asset that has been forgotten in the Refahiye district of Erzincan, to ensure its transmission to future generations. Qualitative research methods were employed in the research. Field research was conducted in the village where the rug was produced, and information was obtained and presented from two local people (total population sampling) familiar with this craft using face-to-face interviews. Based on the information obtained, the Cengerli kilim primarily features geometric patterns and is also adorned with floral motifs. In addition to cultural motifs, technological advancements were also reflected in the motifs. The radio motif serves as an interesting example. Another feature that distinguishes the Cengerli kilim from other rugs is that one short edge is interwoven, while the opposite short edge is bound with a macrame technique, leaving a fringe. The study highlighted its potential economic value, and its production in various versions (bag, keychains, saddlebags, wallets, etc.) as a tourist product was suggested to industry stakeholders.

Keyword: Cengerli Kilim, Geographical Indication, Tourism, Culture, Erzincan.

Erzincan Cengerli Kiliminin Coğrafi İşareti ve Kültürel Bir Değer Olarak Değerlendirilmesi

Makale Türü

Araştırma Makalesi

Süreç

Gönderim: 04.11.2025
Kabul: 26.12.2025
Yayın: 30.12.2025

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ÖZET

Geçmişten günümüze sessiz lisan olarak kullanılan el sanatlarının hak ettiği değerin verilmesi ve günümüze yok olmadan kazandırılması önem arz etmektedir. Coğrafi olarak dezavantajlı bölgelerde yaşayan yerel halkın kültürel değerlerini gün yüzüne çıkararak ekonomik sürdürülebilirliği sağlamak amacıyla değerlendirilmek gerekmektedir. Bu çalışmanın amacı, Erzincan Refahiye İlçesinde unutulmaya yüz tutmuş bir kültürel değer olan Cengerli kiliminin gelecek nesillere aktarılması için renk motif ve yapı karakteristiğinin değerlendirilmesidir. Araştırmada nitel araştırma yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Kilimin üretildiği köyde alan araştırması yapılmış ve yüz yüze görüşme tekniği kullanılarak yerel halktan bu el sanatını bilen 2 kişiden (tam sayım) bilgi elde edilmiş ve sunulmuştur. Elde edilen bilgiler sonucunda, Cengerli kiliminde çoğunlukla geometrik desenler kullanılmış, yanı sıra çiçek motifleri ile süslenmiştir. Kültürel motiflerin yanı sıra, teknolojik gelişmelerin de motiflere yansıdığı görülmüştür. Radyo motif ilginç bir örneği oluşturmaktadır. Cengerli kilimini diğer kilimlerden ayıran bir diğer özelliği bir kısa kenarının iç içe geçirilerek dokunması, karşı kısa kenarının ise saçak bırakılarak makrome tekniği ile bağlanmasıdır. Çalışma sonucunda, ekonomik değeri görülmüştür ve turistik ürün olarak çeşitli versiyonlarda (çanta, anahtarlık, heybe, cüzdan vb.) üretilmesi sektör paydaşlarına önerilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Cengerli Kilimi, Coğrafi İşaret, Turizm, Kültür, Erzincan.

İlter, N., & Şen, N. (2025). An Evaluation of the Erzincan Cengerli Kilim as a Geographical Indication and Cultural Asset, *Journal of Culture, Society and Communication*, 1(2), 104-111. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.18095124.

Introduction

Carpets and rugs have been woven in Islamic lands for centuries and adorn the private collections of numerous museums worldwide. They were used as floor coverings and surface coverings in villages, and were displayed in palaces as works of art that symbolized status and economic power and reflected the spirit of the artists (Serrano et al., 2021). Today, carpets and rugs are among the most important handicrafts that support rural development. They can be utilized in cultural tourism and as souvenirs, contributing to the local economy (Alavion & Taghdisi 2021). They are frequently used as decorative elements in interior design (Kartal, 2025). The patterns on rugs and carpets carry meanings, contributing to the continuation of cultural transmission (Ergen & Sıktaş, 2025). Tourists want to contribute to socio-cultural sustainability by purchasing handmade products (Guha et al., 2025).

The Cengerli Kilim is a rug woven in the village of Cengerli, Refahiye, Erzincan province, using black, white, red, orange, green, blue, yellow (pale yellow and straw yellow), navy blue, and pink on a dark and light black, burgundy, and red background in the center (Türk Patent, 2025). The Cengerli kilim appears as a forgotten cultural product of Erzincan. The rug's fate was changed by the registration of a geographical indication. It was registered with the Erzincan Municipality on June 24, 2025, with registration number 1748. Identifying the rug's distinctive features, establishing production standards, and obtaining a geographical indication constituted a significant step towards its protection. Geographical indications create value in products that differentiate themselves from similar products, maintain production standards, and prioritize sustainability (Kaya, 2023). Therefore, the benefits of geographical indications for reducing migration and rural development are quite clear (Şeker et al., 2023). Factors such as quality and reliability, economic support, attitudes toward culture and tradition, and consumer ethnocentrism have been observed to influence consumer purchase intentions (Tabanlı and Akdoğan, 2022; Arslan, 2023) and explain economic benefits. It is known that geographical indications contribute to tourism potential in various examples based on gastronomic value (Arslan, 2023; Güleç and Cömert, 2022). However, cultural products other than food need to be integrated into the economy. In light of this information, the importance of the Cengerli kilim has been recognized, and trainees are receiving instruction in Cengerli kilim making at the Vocational Training and Education Courses (Meslek Edindirme ve Eğitim Kursları- ERMEK) operating under the Erzincan Municipality. In this way, important steps have been taken to ensure the rug's transmission to future generations.

In Turkish culture, carpets and rugs not only possess socializing properties but also form a vital element of the home. They require maintenance to ensure they endure the test of time and are valued as works of art or objects. Examining the significance of a product can provide new insights into its meaning and sustainability (Gurel & Çelikoğlu, 2022). There are limited resources available internationally for rugs and carpets (Gattia & Seccaroni, 2023). In a study conducted in Turkey, Şahin and Akova reported that there were 23 carpets and 3 rugs with geographical indications in 2018, but this number has increased significantly. As of August 2025, the Turkish Patent and Trademark Office reported 48 products with geographical indications in the carpet or rug group. 18 of these are rugs. The Cengerli Kilim has taken its place among these rugs. The reason for focusing on the Cengerli Kilim in this study is to evaluate existing information to increase national awareness of this product, which is little known even in Erzincan. In this respect, the aim of this study is to reveal the geographical indication features of this product produced in the Cengerli village of Refahiye District of Erzincan province and to ensure that the knowledge of two women who produce in the village is recorded.

Conceptual Framework

There are various differences in the literature between the meanings of carpet and rug (kilim) (Klobučar, 2022). Tkalcic used the term "kilim" for flat kilims with the same surface on both sides and for carpets with a flat underside produced using various knotting techniques (1922). He defined the term "rug making" to encompass both kilim and carpet making. However, contemporary literature distinguishes between carpet and rug (kilim) (Klobučar, 2022). The Turkish Language Association (TDK) (2025) defined kilim as "a thick, hair or woolen, generally patterned, pileless, and woven fabric spread on floors, divans, etc." Bozkurt (2002) in the Encyclopedia of Islam stated that "rugs with the same surface, napless, and woven with vertical threads called warp or arış and horizontal threads called weft, tuck, warp, intergeçki, or argeç, depending on the region, are called kilims." The oldest surviving rug was excavated from the tomb of Tuthmosis (1425-1408 BC) in Egypt. Fragments of Phrygian textiles (1200-600 BC) were found at Gordion in Anatolia. It is possible to find the Pazyryk carpet (5th-4th century BC) found in Southern Siberia, as well as carpets scattered around the world. Although Seljuk rugs have not survived to the present day, the existing patterns and motifs reflect the characteristics of that time. The oldest examples of rugs in museums today mostly date back to the 18th century. In addition to general names such as Turkmen, Yoruk, and Kurdish rugs, there are rugs named according to their place of production and their areas of origin and motifs (Bozkurt, 2002).

Refahiye District, after the Battle of Çaldıran in 1514, was given to the Beylerbey of Erzincan and Bayburt, and Gercanis was connected to the Erzincan-Bayburt province/Kemah sanjak under Ottoman rule. While it had the status of a township together with settlements such as Orçol, Dignasor, Düğünlü and Kuruçay - until 1912, when it became a district - in the census books dated 1516-1518 (Başibüyük, 2012), it was given the status of a district in 1881 with its approximately 200 villages and hamlets (Bulut and Tozlu, 2008). According to the 1864 regulations, a township is not a district formed by the merger of several villages, but a settlement annexed to districts (Gençoğlu, 2011). After the Republic, Gercanis; It is listed as a district comprising the central township of Refahiye, with 25 villages; the township of Alakilise, with 25 villages; the

township of Cengerli, with 29 villages; and the township of Zevker, with 62 villages (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 1927). Today, Refahiye is one of the districts of Erzincan. Cengerli is also a village within Refahiye. The village's livelihood consists of agriculture and animal husbandry. It is also known for the Cengerli kilims produced in the village.

As of August 2025, the Turkish Patent and Trademark Office (Türk Patent) reported 48 products with geographical indications in the carpet or kilim group. Thirty of these are carpets and 18 are rugs/kilims. The Cengerli Kilim was added to this list in 2025. It has been observed that the literature on the Cengerli Kilim contains limited resources.

Table.1 Carpets and Rugs/Kilims with Geographical Indication

Number	Year	Geographical Indication (GI) Name	Scope
1	2019	Akçadağ Carpet	Malatya
2	2024	Alaca Mosque Kilim	Corum
3	2001	Bayat Turkmen Kilim	Afyonkarahisar
4	1997	Bergama Handmade Carpet	Türkiye
5	2024	Beytüşşebap Jirki Kilim	Sirnak
6	1997	Bunyan Handmade Carpet	Kayseri
7	2025	Cengerli Kilim	Erzincan
8	2020	Dazkırı Carpet	Afyonkarahisar
9	2021	Döşemealtı Handmade Carpet	Antalya
10	2021	Emirdağ Kilim	Afyonkarahisar
11	2025	Emirgazi Carpet	Konya
12	1997	Eşme-Yörük Kilim	Servant
13	2020	Fethiye Rock Carpet/Fethiye Kayaköy Carpet/Fethiye Carpet	Mugla
14	1997	Göğdes Hand-Knitted Carpet	Manisa
15	2023	Hakkari Kilim	Hakkari
16	2025	Helvacı Kilim	Izmir
17	1997	Hereke Wool Hand-made Carpet	Kocaeli
18	1997	Hereke Wool Silk Handmade Carpet	Kocaeli
19	1997	Hereke Silk Carpet	Kocaeli
20	1997	Jirkan Rug	Van
21	2021	Karatepe Kilim	Osmaniye
22	1997	Kars Handmade Carpet	Kars
23	2019	Kelkit Zilli Kilim	Gumushane
24	1997	Kula Handmade Carpet	Manisa
25	1997	Milas Handmade Carpet	Mugla
26	2025	Nuzumlu Bed Rug	Konya
27	2017	Sinkhole (Arısama) Carpet	Nigde
28	1997	Pazırık Handmade Carpet	Afyonkarahisar
29	2020	Seydiler Kilim	Mugla
30	1997	Simav Handmade Carpet	Kutahya
31	2020	Sincik Hand-Woven Carpet	Adiyaman
32	1997	Sivas Handmade Carpet	Sivas
33	2022	Sivrihisar Kilim	Eskisehir
34	1997	Sumer Kars Handmade Carpet	Kars
35	1997	Super Thin Rug	Afyonkarahisar
36	2023	Taşkale Carpet	Karaman
37	1997	Taşpınar Handmade Carpet	Aksaray
38	2024	Tokat Kızık Rug	Slap
39	1997	Turkmen Handmade Carpets	Afyonkarahisar
40	2012	Uşak Carpet	Servant
41	2019	Vezirköprü Tahtaköprü Rug	Samsun
42	1997	Yahyalı Handmade Carpet	Kayseri
43	1997	Yağcıbedir Handmade Carpet	Balikesir
44	1997	Yuntlağı Handmade Carpet	Manisa
45	2020	Çameli Rug	Denizli
46	1997	Canakkale Handmade Carpet	Canakkale
47	1997	Fine Isparta (Hasgöl) Hand-woven Carpet	Isparta
48	2019	Şarkışla Kilim	Sivas

Source: (Turkish Patent, 2025).

The term "kilim" can be defined in many ways. However, it can be broadly defined as a floor or surface covering created by interweaving warp and weft threads in various ways. Because kilims have a lighter texture compared to carpets, they have been used for a variety of purposes in daily life. Some of these include sacks, saddlebags, wall hangings, closets, daybeds, pillows, bags, dowry bags, door curtains, and upholstery. The most common forms of use, compared to other examples, are tents and prayer rugs (Ögel, 1973).

A rug is generally rectangular, with two short sides and two long sides (Salt, 2006). Wool and hair-mohair are used as materials in its production. Warp threads are double-ply, heavily twisted, a wool-hair blend, solely wool, or solely hair-mohair. Weft threads, including those used in kirtme rugs, finger-woven rugs, and buttonhole rugs, are always wool. In these weavings, the weft creates the pattern and surface. Also called ornamental thread, the thread is finely spun and double-twisted on the spindle, but it has less twist than the warp thread.

The distinctive features of the Cengerli Kilim: The central section features dark and light shades of black, burgundy, and brick red, with a red background featuring black, blue, green, red, white, yellow (pale yellow and straw yellow), orange, navy blue, and pink. Plain and buttonhole rug techniques are used. Its most distinctive feature, distinguishing it from other Anatolian rugs, is that only one short side is fringed. The other short side is generally flat and wide. The fringes are made using muska and macrame techniques.

Cengerli Kilim production and motif characteristics: Cengerli kilims are woven on kerkit looms, known as "kemk (istar)," along the geographical border. While geometric motifs predominate, floral motifs are also used. A floral motif placed on branches, a plant motif, is used as a border ornament on the edges of the rugs. The motifs are generally complemented by a black saw motif. To extend the life of the yarns used, the yarn is twisted evenly, thickening and strengthening the yarn. This extends the life of the rug. When the surviving products of traditional Cengerli kilim production are examined, it is revealed that madder was used to color the yarn (Türk Patent, 2025). Although an examination of the geographical indication registration indicates that cotton yarns were also used, only wool yarns were used in our products, not cotton.

In Anatolia, natural dyes were often used to color threads in weaving. The naturally dyed threads that adorned the carpets and rugs of the period are notable for their durability and vibrant colors. With the abundance of plants native to Anatolia, root dyes were used in traditional art to convey emotions and give deeper meaning to the product. Today, with the

decline of hand weaving, the use of naturally dyed threads prepared using traditional methods has diminished. As in other handicrafts, the 25 motifs and colors used as a means of conveying people's feelings, thoughts, and emotions are arranged side by side, one under the other, and diagonally, in no particular order, and the entire surface is adorned with motifs of all sizes (Türk Patent, 2025).

Method

It has been determined that information about the Cengerli kilim is limited. The study's geographically indicated product information was obtained from the Turkish Patent Institute's source information as a secondary data source. However, the aim of the study is to obtain and evaluate information about the Cengerli kilim — a geographically indicated product — from the women who produce it in their village. The study was structured within the framework of the Qualitative Research Method. Purposive sampling was used, and Cengerli village was visited and, with the guidance of the headman, two women (full census) who produce the rug were interviewed. The sample size was limited to two individuals due to migration from the village population and the lack of a young population. Furthermore, only two individuals with knowledge and practices related to traditional production were reached. The purpose of the interviews was to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences, opinions, and knowledge. The participants were comprised of individuals directly related to the research topic. The interviews were conducted at a time and location deemed convenient by the participants. In addition to questions regarding demographic characteristics (age, gender, education, occupation), the participants were asked to respond to the following questions. Research questions:

1. *When did you start weaving?*
2. *From whom did you learn rug weaving?*
3. *Was it important to be able to weave among the young people around you?*
4. *Could you give us information about the spinning and dyeing process of yarns?*
5. *Are you interested in other crafts?*
6. *Could you give us information about the colors and motifs?*
7. *What are the materials used?*
8. *What is the distinguishing feature of the rug?*

Findings

In Cengerli Village, only two individuals were found to have knowledge and practice in rug making. One of these two individuals had practiced the craft in the past but is currently unable to due to his age. The other individual was identified as the only person currently practicing. The demographic distribution of these individuals is shown in the table below.

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics

Demographic Characteristics	P1	P2
Age	83	70
Gender	Woman	Woman
Education	Primary school 3 dropout	Primary school graduate
Job	Housewife	Housewife

Participants were asked eight questions using a face-to-face interview method. The first question, "When did you start weaving?", was answered as follows.

P1: I learned it when I was 14 years old and became a bride.

P2: I learned to weave when I was single and I still continue to weave.

The answer to the question "Who did you learn rug weaving from?" is given below.

P1: I learned it from my mother-in-law.

P2: I learned from my peers.

The following answer was given to the question: "Was it important for young people in the area to be able to weave?"

P1: Knowing and teaching weaving gave prestige.

P2: Of course, being the only individual who weaves is important today.

Could you please provide information about the spinning and dyeing process of yarns? The answer to the question was received as follows.

P1: The washed and combed wool is twisted using a spindle and spun into yarn. The karamuk root is washed, finely chopped, and boiled. The yarns, which have reached the desired twist count, are then soaked in warm water (the process is called "aqlama"), then removed and dried. They are then placed in cauldrons where ready-made madder dyes of the desired color are boiled and cooled.

P2: I use ready-made spindles available in the market.

The question "Are you interested in other handicrafts?" was answered as follows.

P1: No

P2: No

The question "Can you give me information about colors and motifs?" was answered as follows.

P1: We used whatever colors we had on hand, and the motifs were: small kindik (persiiz), large kindik (perl), sun (güneş), large and small earring (büyük/küçük küpeli), bukümet, flower (çiçek), bızar, altar, bird's eye (kugözü), sulu ve susuz cami, radio motif (large/small variations), ram's horn (koç boynuzu), gülbeyaz, Fedime Hanım, pitchfork (yaba), earring (küpe). We would weave the motifs I learned, including large and small altar and carnation, side by side,

one under the other, leaving no gaps, without their meanings. I don't know what the motifs mean.

P2: I apply the patterns I know according to the size of the area where the motif will be made.

The answer to the question "What are the materials used?" is given below.

P1: Weaving loom, weft and warp threads, comb

P2: Loom, weft and warp threads, warp, warp iron, comb, pen.

The question "What is the distinguishing feature of a rug?" was answered as follows.

P1: The threads of one of the two short sides were intertwined to create a wicker weaving, and the fringes on the other short side were tied and decorated using macrame techniques.

P2: I apply fringes to the two short edges while one edge is fringed, and the other is woven plain.

Cengerli kilims are listed below. Photographs of examples are provided below.



Photo 1. Küçük Kındık



Photo 2. Büyük Kındık



Photo 3. Güneş



Photo 4. Küçük Küpeli



Photo 5. Büyük Küpeli

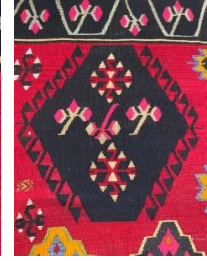


Photo 6. Hükümet



Photo 7. Çiçek



Photo 8. Hızır Dişi-1



Photo 9. Hızır Dişi-2



Photo 10. Mihrap



Photo 11. Kuşgözü



Photo 12. Susuz Cami



Photo 13. Sulu Cami



Photo 14. Büyük Radyo



Photo 15. Koç Boynuzu



Photo 16. Çiçek



Photo 17. Gülbeyaz



Photo 18. Fadime Hanım



Photo 19. Yaba



Photo 20. Küpeli



Photo 21. Mihrap-2



Photo 22. Büyük Mihrap



Photo 23. Radyonun İçinde Fadime Hanım

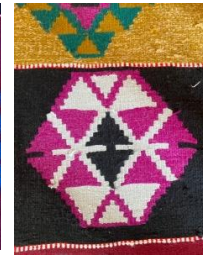


Photo 24. Karanfil



Photo 25. Kilim Weaving



Photo 26. Loom



Photo 27. Loom with Rope



Photo 28. Tool Uesd-Pen



Photo 29. Tool Used-Weaving Comp

Conclusion

Study presents information and includes photographs from two artisans who produced the forgotten Cengerli Kilim, woven in the village of Cengerli. The research was conducted using individual interviews. The findings revealed that the participants were of advanced age, and information about the craft was recorded for future generations to ensure its preservation. It was determined that the makers of the Cengerli kilim were women. It can be assumed that the individuals were primary school graduates, as girls were not educated at the time. Unable to continue their education at school, they were directed to home production. Furthermore, they learned rug weaving from their peers at a young age. This knowledge has shown that young people contribute to the family economy at an early age. Questions focused on the characteristics of the motifs used in the region, the tools used in weaving, yarn twisting techniques, and the distinguishing features of rugs from other rugs. "The *Cengerli kilim* is woven into a mat by interweaving the threads of one of the two short edges, and the fringes on the other short edge are tied and decorated using macrame techniques." This statement has been determined to be the most important feature that distinguishes the Cengerli kilim from other rugs.

Traditional handicrafts not only meet daily needs but also constitute a visual treasure, drawing on aesthetic values. Handicrafts, which serve as a means of communication in their own language, have become a field that has gained a place in social and economic life. In this context, their economic contribution makes them of significant importance in many areas. Traditional handicrafts, which encompass products created with simple hand tools and with little or no machinery, have survived to the present day through the master-apprentice relationship. Kilim-making is one of the many traditional arts that have been produced in Anatolia for many years and are attracting attention. Unfortunately, because this art form requires time to produce properly, it has lost its function in our time and is almost on the verge of extinction. A small number of skilled individuals are striving to preserve it in various regions of the country. Traditional handicrafts, which have gained importance as cultural representatives of their time, are being preserved despite production challenges. The positive results of these efforts contribute to the sustainability of the art form. Therefore, it is crucial that the original technical and production stages are unearthed, supported by existing technological advancements, and passed on as a cultural heritage to future generations. This project, undertaken to preserve all the characteristics of culture, a vital branch of tourism, while ensuring its production in forms appropriate to the evolving era, and to pass on our heritage to future generations, aims to ensure that

existing values take their rightful place. As long as this work continues, the art of rug making will continue to thrive.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, recommendations were made for academics, residents, local governments, and business managers. This study represents an important area of study for future studies, as resources on the Cengerli kilim/rug are limited. This study is one of the pioneering studies. Academic studies on production and marketing can be conducted. Production can be increased through collaboration with businesses to support the economic development of local communities, a key stakeholder within the framework of sustainable development criteria. Production for tourism and personal use should be encouraged. Because production is time-consuming, smaller, souvenir-oriented products (keychains, bags, saddlebags, wallets, magnets, etc.) can be produced, contributing quickly to the economy and cultural sustainability. Local governments have completed the necessary work to obtain a geographical indication for the rug. They should continue their production, promotion, and marketing efforts in the future.

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Ethics committee approval was not sought in this study because it was not a clinical or experimental study on humans or animals that required an ethics committee decision.