

CLASSIFICATION OF KIRKITLI (BEATER-BASED) WEAVING SAMPLES İN AKSARAY PROVINCE AND THE CREATION OF A DIGITAL AND PRINTED CATALOG

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Abstract

Throughout history, Aksaray has been home to numerous civilizations and cultures, functioning as a significant center where knowledge, craftsmanship, and cultural traditions have intersected. Its geographical location enabled the coexistence of diverse tribes, religious groups, and cultural communities, thereby contributing substantially to the development and enrichment of the region's weaving traditions. The weaving culture that emerged in Aksaray acquired a distinctive cultural identity due to the abundance of plant-based dyes available in the surrounding area, the favorable climatic conditions for sheep breeding and wool production, and the local community's sustained commitment to preserving traditional craft-based weaving practices. The aim of this research is to examine the art of kirkıtlı (beater-based) weaving in Aksaray and its surrounding districts in a comprehensive manner. A total of 173 woven samples were collected during the field research. Among these, 100 kirkıtlı woven samples exhibiting diverse pattern compositions and color schemes were selected for detailed analysis and classified into groups according to their design and chromatic characteristics. The compositional features of the patterns were analyzed, the motifs were identified and interpreted, and schematic drawings were prepared to support the visual documentation process.

Furthermore, detailed information was provided regarding the general characteristics, technical structures, and current conditions of the weavings. As a result, a systematic classification was established, forming the basis for the creation of both a digital and a printed catalog intended to contribute to the preservation and documentation of Aksaray's weaving heritage.

Keywords: Aksaray, kirkitli weaving, traditional textiles, carpet, rug, cultural heritage

1. INTRODUCTION

Aksaray is in the center of Anatolia and has been a crossroads of different cultures and civilizations throughout history. This geographical location has made Aksaray a strategic center not only for settled communities but also as a crossroads for nomadic groups and trade routes. This situation has been particularly decisive in the development of the art of loom weaving. Loom weaving is based on the principle of compressing warp and weft threads in a specific order. This technique has not only produced products that meet functional needs in Aksaray but has also allowed for the creation of various woven products such as carpets, rugs, prayer mats, pillows, and sacks, shaped by aesthetic considerations. This form of production, which is as strong in aesthetics as it is in technical aspects, has become a tool that concretizes the cultural ties between the producer and the user

1.1. History of Aksaray's Kirkitli Weaving Art

There is no definitive information about where and how the history of kirkitli weaving art began. The Pazyryk carpet, the oldest known example of weaving today, shows us, when examined in terms of knotting technique and pattern, that kirkitli weaving art began and spread with the Turks. Even in accessible written sources, it is seen that kirkitli weaving art dates back to very ancient times. The color and pattern composition of the weaving reflects the cultural values of the region.

Aksaray has a very rich history in terms of kirkitli weaving art. Aksaray, which was among the places known as kirkitli weaving centers during the Seljuk and Ottoman periods, has registered Taşpınar weaves. In Aksaray province and its surroundings, kirkitli weaving was known as one of the most important sources of livelihood until the beginning of the 20th century. In Aksaray and its surrounding villages and towns, traditional loom-woven textiles have been produced for several reasons since ancient times, including economic income, home display, wall hangings, and dowry purposes. These textiles can be classified into groups such as bases, double rugs, pillows, cushions, saddlebags, and bags. Loom-woven textiles are divided into two groups: pile (knotted) and plain (knotless) patterned textiles. Pile textiles are those woven using the Turkish knot, either without a pattern or with patterns created by knotting

colored threads on the warp and compressing them with the weft, resulting in a high pile. Plain textiles, on the other hand, are those without knots, either patternless or with patterns created by colored weft threads on the warp, resulting in a low pile. Furthermore, color and pattern composition characteristics should also be considered when classifying these textiles.

Aksaray and its surroundings have a long-standing tradition of carpet weaving. Despite its past production capacity, the region is not sufficiently well-known due to the absence of ancient carpets whose character can be explained (Deniz, 2013, p. 177). Aksaray has been a famous carpet center since the Seljuk period. This tradition continued during the Ottoman period as well (Aslanapa, 1972, p. 12).

Since the Seljuk period, Aksaray has been considered one of the leading centers in the field of carpet weaving and textile production. The existence of organized production areas in villages and towns during this period contributed to the systematic development of the weaving art. This tradition continued during the Ottoman period, and carpets woven especially in the Taşpınar region stood out in terms of quality and value.

The first written source mentioning Taşpınar in relation to carpets is the 2nd Konya Yearbook of 1869-70. While providing extensive information about Aksaray in the yearbook, it mentions kilims and prayer rugs, noting that the carpets woven in Taşpınar were among the best (Kaya, 2009, p. 232).

1.2. General Characteristics of Aksaray Loom Weaving Art

Among the characteristic features of Aksaray loom weaving, the richness of motifs and the symbolic meanings carried by these motifs stand out. Motifs such as ram's horn, tree of life, amulet, hands on hips, and shackles are commonly seen in the carpets and rugs produced in the region. These motifs are not only aesthetic decorative elements but also serve as documents in the transmission of social and cultural values. For example, the ram's horn motif is considered a symbol of power, fertility, and masculinity; while the hands on hips motif symbolizes values such as femininity, fertility, and abundance. Each of the motifs functions as a cultural memory reflecting the aesthetic tastes, social roles, and belief systems of the producing women.

Motifs are one of the most distinctive features of Aksaray weaving. Geometric forms, stylized plant motifs, and animal figures are of great importance both aesthetically and in terms of meaning. Some of the motifs originate from Central Asia and have been enriched with new interpretations in Anatolia. The world of meaning of these motifs; It encompasses concepts such as fertility, abundance, protection, strength, and continuity. Motifs such as ram's horns, the tree of life, and amulets, in particular, have reinforced the social and cultural context of the textiles. This functionality of the motifs can be considered not only as a means of decoration

but also as a form of communication that transmits social codes and belief systems from generation to generation.

In Aksaray, hand-woven carpets have served both an aesthetic and economic function. In the villages, women have earned income by weaving rugs and carpets to contribute to the family economy. This demonstrates that hand-woven carpets are not only works of art but also an integral part of social life. Women's labor, in particular, has not only increased the social and economic value of these textiles but has also played a role in preserving local identity and social solidarity.

Aksaray has various types of hand-woven carpets. Carpets, rugs, *cicim* (a type of woven rug), *sumak* (a type of woven fabric), *zili* (a type of woven rug), pillows, and cushions vary according to their intended use. Carpets are rich in central medallion designs and compositions, showing significant differences between villages. Rugs, on the other hand, are mostly produced using a flat weaving technique and are notable for their variety of motifs and colors. This diversity is linked to the use of yarns and dyes obtained from the region's rich natural resources, as well as to communication and cultural transmission processes between villages. Researching and examining the raw materials used in obtaining the warp, weft, and warp threads used in weaving, as well as the natural dyes used to color the weaving threads, is also important for determining the quality of the textiles.

Another striking aspect of Aksaray's traditional weaving art is the emergence of diverse weaving traditions due to geographical and social variations. For example, carpets and rugs produced in the villages of Kutluköy, Yeşilova, and Amarat differ in their compositions, such as central medallion designs and chest-shaped sections. This diversity reveals not only aesthetic differences but also information about the social structures, economic conditions, and cultural interactions of local communities. Aksaray's traditional weaving art has a rich historical past encompassing technical, aesthetic, social, and cultural dimensions. The region's geographical location, nomadic and settled lifestyles, cultural interactions with neighboring provinces, and social functions have been decisive in the development of this weaving art. Each motif, color, and pattern is not merely a decorative element but also a tangible expression of the values, beliefs, and cultural memory of the people of the region. In this respect, Aksaray's traditional weaving art should be considered an important and unique part of the Anatolian weaving tradition.

2. CLASSIFICATION OF AKSARAY TEXTILES ACCORDING TO THEIR USAGE AREAS

The Aksaray region has historically stood out as an important weaving center in the interior of Anatolia. The weaving culture that developed in this region not only offered practical functions to meet the needs of daily life, but also served as a carrier of cultural identity, aesthetic understanding, and social memory. In particular, the loom weaving tradition has found a wide range of uses in the Aksaray region, from floor coverings to saddlebags, from pillows to bed covers. When classified according to their usage areas, floor coverings, double coverings, pillows, cushions, saddlebags, bags, rugs, and bed covers stand out. Each has different dimensions, production techniques, and cultural functions.

2.1. Floor Coverings: Floor coverings are one of the most common and functional types of textiles in the Aksaray region. Produced to cover the floors of houses, these textiles were used both to provide warmth in winter months and to add an aesthetic appearance to the interior. Aksaray woven fabrics are generally woven in sizes of 2x3 meters, 2.5x4 meters, or 3x4 meters. The yarns used are usually obtained from sheep's wool and colored with natural dyes.

In these woven fabrics, two central medallions, Civil and Akgöbek, are typically used in the central section (Kılıç Karatay, Oyman, 2017, p. 400).

2.2. Double (Quarter) Weavings: Double weavings hold great importance in Aksaray's life, which is intertwined with agricultural production and animal husbandry. These weaves were used in field work, animal care, and product transportation and storage processes. Double sacks were generally woven in sizes of 70x120 cm, while large bags used for carrying straw and grain reached 100x150 cm. Saddlecloths and covers produced for animal saddles were 90x130 cm in size.

Double carpets are known by this name because two carpets are woven end-to-end. They are also known as "middle carpets" among the people. When two carpets are laid side-by-side, they occupy an area the size of a floor carpet. They are characterized by their civil center, chapar foot, jingled and vest-like corner, and wedge and closed chest patterns (Kılıç Karatay, Sert, 2018, p.16).

2.3. Pillow Weavings: Pillow weavings are an indispensable element of Aksaray home decor. Pillows used with cushions provided comfort in both sitting and sleeping areas. Pillow fabrics were generally woven in sizes of 50x70 cm, 60x90 cm, and 70x100 cm for larger guest pillows. Small decorative pillow covers prepared for a trousseau were 40x60 cm in size.

2.4. Cushion Weaving: Cushion weaving is an integral part of seating arrangements. It has been used especially at low tables, for entertaining guests, and in daily life. Cushions are

generally square in shape, measuring 80x80 cm, and rectangular in shape, measuring 70x100 cm. Cushions prepared for larger rooms can reach sizes up to 100x120 cm.

Cushion rugs are woven to be placed on the floor or under guests arriving at the house. Cushions filled with wool are generally 70x70 or 60x60 cm in size (Kılıç Karatay, 2018, p. 445).

2.5. Saddlebag Weaving: Saddlebags are frequently seen weaving examples in the Aksaray region's loom-woven textiles. They are an indispensable part of plain weaving examples in particular. These products, with their two-compartment structure, were hung on the backs of animals and became functional elements of nomadic and semi-nomadic lifestyles. Saddlebags generally consist of compartments measuring 40x50 cm or 50x60 cm. The total length of two compartments can reach 100-120 cm. Some smaller saddlebags, designed for children, are 30x40 cm in size. Saddlebags ensured the safe transport of belongings. They were used for market shopping, travel, and migration.

2.6. Prayer Rug Weavings: A prayer rug is a woven product, usually small in size, that marks the area where prayers are performed during worship in Islamic culture. Aksaray prayer rugs are woven in different sizes according to their purpose of use. Prayer rugs are carpets woven for the purpose of praying on. They are usually 75 cm x 130 cm or 80 cm x 100 cm in size. The motifs used in Aksaray prayer rugs generally consist of a combination of geometric and floral motifs. The mihrab motif placed in the center of the prayer rugs helps the user determine their direction during worship.

2.7. Plain Weaves: Aksaray plain weaves stand out within the Central Anatolian weaving tradition for their technical robustness and aesthetic balance. These weaves are mostly produced using kilim, cicim, and zili techniques. Their dimensions vary depending on their intended use. For examples woven as floor coverings, the dimensions are generally 120×180 cm, 160×230 cm, 200×300 cm, or 90×140 cm. The quality of the weaves largely depends on the quality of the yarn used. Warp yarns are generally made from stronger, high-twist, and durable wool.

3. TECHNICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF AKSARAY WEAVINGS

The Aksaray region has been one of the important cultural centers of Anatolia throughout history and has attracted attention with its rich weaving tradition. The textiles produced in this region are not only a form of aesthetic expression but also one of the most concrete indicators of technical skill, regional knowledge, and cultural transmission. When the technical characteristics of textiles in the Aksaray region are examined, the existence of a highly developed system is revealed, from the types of knots used to the weaving sequence, from the

warp-weft compression applications to the plain weaving techniques and the methods of transferring patterns.

Weaving is based on the principle of preparing the warp threads under a certain tension and passing the weft threads through these warps. Warp threads are generally adjusted to a certain quality with a certain frequency. Wefts are placed on the warp by passing them from the bottom and top after each row of knots. This technique ensures the compression and integrity of the fabric. The purpose of weft insertion is to increase the strength of the fabric. The relationship between warp and weft also contributes to keeping the area where the patterns will be applied smooth and firm.

Wefts are usually laid in two rows; one passing over and the other under, bringing the warp threads closer together. This practice not only increases the technical durability of the fabric but also helps keep the surface smooth and taut. The presser thread is an additional thread placed between the wefts. This thread ensures that the weft is fully positioned in the fabric, making it tighter and giving the loops a more even appearance on the surface. This technique increases both the durability and aesthetic integrity of the fabric.

In the Aksaray region, not only knotted weaves but also plain weave techniques have been used. These techniques are particularly evident in *cicim*, *zili*, and *kilim* weaving examples. In plain weaves, the basic ground is created using the plain weave technique. Plain weave is the simplest weaving technique, where the warp and weft threads follow each other regularly from above and below. Patterns are created on this ground with threads of different colors. In the *cicim* technique, threads are thrown over the warps to create motifs on the surface. In the *zili* technique, threads are slid over the warps in a specific system to create linear effects in different directions.

Density and tightness are quite important in the technical structure of Aksaray regional weaves. The density of the warps, the density of the knots, and the compression of the wefts are factors that determine the overall quality of the weave. The tight tying of the *Gördes* knot, the compression of the wefts, and the use of intermediate yarns affect the quality of the weave. The average size of carpets woven in the Aksaray region is 30x30 cm, 28x29 cm, and for plain weaves, 30x30 cm and 32x32 cm. The weaves feature pattern repetition, generally using the report technique, with 1/2 or 1/4 report patterns. Pattern compositions are created by juxtaposing different motifs, sometimes also by repeating the same motif.

4. PROCESS STEPS AND TOOLS USED IN OBTAINING WEAVING YARNS IN AKSARAY PROVINCE

Aksaray province and its surroundings have historically stood out as an important center in Anatolia's weaving culture. This study will provide information about the process of obtaining weaving yarns and the tools and equipment used in the pre-weaving preparation stage, based on field research conducted in villages and towns affiliated with Aksaray province. Yarns, the basic material of weaving in Aksaray, have been obtained for many years using entirely handcrafted methods. In traditional methods, the first stage of yarn production begins with shearing the sheep. Shearing is usually carried out in the spring months. The obtained wool is separated according to the fiber structure coming from different parts of the animal's body in terms of quality.

First, the wool is washed with water to clean it; this process removes dirt, dust, and oils from the wool. After cleaning, the wool is dried and then fluffed up using a traditional tool called a "carding machine" or, more commonly used today, carding machines, separating the fibers. This beating process helps create homogeneous wool balls (wool balls) necessary for the spinning process. The spinning process, which has been carried out by hand for many years, utilizes spinning wheels, spindles, and a spinning wheel. Traditional weaving yarn production in the Aksaray region is the product of a wealth of historical knowledge and experience. In the traditional production process, the yarns spun using spinning wheels, spindles, or a spinning wheel are carefully separated by female weavers according to their fineness and thickness. Weft yarns are mostly twisted twice, while warp yarns are twisted three or four times, thus increasing their strength. Fine yarns are spun in single or multiple strands on a spinning wheel to achieve the desired strength.

Warp and weft yarns undergo an intensive twisting process on a twisting wheel to ensure resistance to the stresses that may be encountered during the weaving process. This process minimizes the risk of the yarns breaking during use and ensures the structural integrity of the fabric. Depending on their thickness and quality, the weaving yarns are prepared in single or double strands and are used in untwisted and colored forms for patterning purposes in woven fabrics.

6. METHODS OF OBTAINING NATURAL DYES USED IN AKSARAY KIRKITLI WEAVINGS

Natural dyeing is one of the oldest techniques in human history and has been used to colour many different surfaces such as textiles, leather, stone, wood and paper. This technique

is not only a colouring process but also a form of cultural expression. The motifs and colours obtained with dyes reflect societies' aesthetic understanding, belief systems and ways of life.

Since ancient times, people have used plants for dyeing, first using flowers and later parts such as leaves, fruits, stems and roots to obtain dye (Harmancıoğlu, 1955, p. 212). The process of using colours obtained from nature is also an indication of that society's relationship with nature. Historical records show that natural dyes were widely used in civilisations such as Mesopotamia, Egypt, China and India. It is known that natural dyes, particularly in shades of blue and red, were used in paintings on papyrus in Ancient Egypt. Anatolia is one of the most important regions for the development of natural dyeing, due to its plant diversity and geo-ecological richness. Dyeing practices in Anatolia have been documented since the Hittite period and date back thousands of years.

Since prehistoric times, natural dyes have been used in various fields such as textile fibres (wool, cotton, silk, leather, etc.), murals, and paintings (Cristea, Vilarem, 2006, pp. 238-245).

As is well known, nature is a repository of colours. Trees, flowers, garden plants, and even some unusual plants offer incredible natural colours. During the Seljuk and Ottoman periods, natural dyeing became an important commercial and artistic pursuit (Ateş, 1993, p. 30).

The parts of dye plants used to obtain dye are dyed either directly or with the addition of an extra substance. This is called 'mordanting'. Many plants that grow naturally in the wild are used not only as dye plants but also as medicinal aromatic plants (Güngörmez, 2015, p. 61).

In the Anatolian tradition of root dyeing, wool yarns are dyed in two ways. The dyeing substances of some plants pass directly into the wool, while others require a substance. Chemical mordants are alum, madder, potassium dichromate, cream of tartar and sodium sulphate (Uğur, 1988, pp. 11-12).

The centuries-old tradition of natural dyeing is of great importance in terms of both preserving cultural heritage and maintaining healthy production processes. With the impact of industrialisation, the use of synthetic dyes became widespread from the 1950s onwards, but in recent years, with the increase in demand for organic products, there has been a return to the traditional methods used since ancient times.

Additionally, fabrics dyed with natural dyes are environmentally friendly, have low allergenic effects, feature softer colour transitions that harmonise with nature, and possess aesthetically rich tones. They are non-allergenic and non-toxic. When mixed with soil and water, they do not harm the environment. They are biodegradable. They can be safely used in

food and cosmetic products. They have a higher sales value and cultural authenticity. Colours obtained from natural dyes are generally pastel, 'faded' or earth tones. Synthetic dyes are more saturated and vivid. However, natural dyes form a patina that becomes more beautiful as they age, rather than fading; synthetics, on the other hand, show colour deterioration. The natural dyes used in Aksaray kirkit weaving are as follows.

6.1. Rubiatinctorum (Madder Root): The madder root plant, which grows in fertile soils, is one of the most important natural sources for obtaining red colour. The root part of the plant, which emerges from the ground and resembles a carrot, has green leaves. It grows wild in many regions of Anatolia and is used in traditional weaving, especially for obtaining the Turkish red colour.

6.2. Mountain Cherry: Mountain cherry, which grows naturally on the slopes of Mount Hasan, produces reddish-brownish tones, especially when boiled with alum. Coloured threads are rinsed and then dried in the sun. Naturally growing mountain cherries are collected and dried during the summer season.

6.3. Bark: Bark obtained from the chestnut oak is used to obtain brown and black tones. It is the upper part of the chestnut oak, which resembles a cap. It is separated from the chestnut, crushed, and used as a dyeing agent in the dyeing process.

6.4. Grapevine: The leaves of the grapevine are used as a food product and are also dried and ground into powder to be used as a natural dye. It is an important dye, especially in rural areas. Grapevine leaves are boiled together with alum to obtain light yellowish and green tones.

6.5. Walnut: Walnut, especially its outer shell and leaves, is an old and widely used natural dye for obtaining brown tones. Walnut shells and leaves are an important natural dyeing element not only for colouring woven threads but also for textile and hair dyeing.

6.6. Chamomile: Yellow colour is obtained by mordanting with dried and ground chamomile flowers. Orange tones are obtained with root dye, and green tones with indigo.

6.7. Marigold: This plant, which can even grow on roadsides, has been used in fabric and wool dyeing from ancient times to the present day. Yellow, orange and green colours are obtained in particular from this plant. The plant grows naturally in the wild and blooms yellow flowers that follow the sun during the summer months. The plant is collected, dried and ground into powder. It is one of the important natural dyes found in nature. It is known as the love flower in the vernacular.

6.8. Mint: The fresh and dried leaves of the mint plant, more commonly known as a spice in the vernacular, are a dyeing agent used to obtain green and its shades. Mint varieties that grow naturally in the wild are particularly used in the colouring process.

6.9. Onion Skin: The outer skins of dried onions contain dye and are used to obtain shades close to yellow and brown.

6.10. Geven Plant: The Geven plant, which grows naturally in the wild, is a natural dye. In addition, the milk found in its root section is dried in layers and used as gum in the art of marbling. Furthermore, dried geven thorns are used as fuel in rural areas during winter.

Table 1. Comparison of Natural and Synthetic Dyes

Natural Dye		Synthetic Dye
Characteristic	Pigments obtained from plant, animal or mineral sources.	Pigments produced in a laboratory environment through chemical processes, synthesised from organic or inorganic substances.
Source	Plant based, animal based mineral based	Petroleum derived chemicals
Production process	Labour-intensive, time-consuming	Mass, industrial, rapid production
Labour force	Skilled labour, with manual work at the forefront	Mechanised, technical knowledge sufficient

One of the fundamental characteristics of natural dyeing is that it is a craft passed down from generation to generation. This knowledge transfer has taken place not in writing, but orally and through practice. As in many regions of Anatolia, dyeing knowledge in Aksaray has generally been passed down among women, forming a chain of learning from mother to daughter. Especially in rural areas, dyeing processes using plants gathered from nature have contributed to the formation of social memory and local identity. The colours used in products such as kirkitli and kilim reflect the local people's perception of nature, seasonal cycles and themes of belief. Red represents vitality and power; green represents fertility and nature; yellow represents the sun and hope.

Plant-based dyes are produced from various parts of plants, including roots, stems, leaves, branches, fruits, flowers, seeds, and bark. These substances contain natural pigments and tannins. The most commonly used plant-based dyes include the following. *Rubia tinctorum*

– madder root, chamomile, onion peel, mint, walnut shell, acorn, sumac and woad. Plant-based dyes generally exhibit high compatibility with natural fibres such as wool, cotton, linen and silk. However, as their direct binding capacity is low, the use of mordants is essential. Dyeing practices in Aksaray and its surroundings are based on plant sources. For natural dyes to bond permanently to textile fibres, auxiliary substances called mordants are required. Mordants contain metal salts and form a bridge between the fibre and the dye, increasing the fastness of the dye. The mordanting process is carried out using aluminium sulphate, known as alum, and sulphuric acid.

The production of natural dyes is a multi-stage process that requires not only the collection of plants, but also knowledge, skill and attention. Steps such as harvesting the plant at the right time, drying, storing and processing are crucial for the quality and durability of the resulting dye. Plants containing natural dyes must be harvested at the right time to be used effectively. In the Aksaray countryside, these processes are usually carried out by women who possess traditional knowledge about the plants. Roots are harvested in spring or early autumn. For example, *Rubia tinctorum* roots reach their highest alizarin content after flowering. Leaves and flowers are harvested during full bloom. Chamomile, mint, and marigold belong to this group. Fruits and bark are harvested when ripe. Mountain ash and walnut are examples of this.

The collected plants are usually dried in the shade, in well-ventilated environments. This process is critical in terms of preventing pigment degradation and ensuring colour stability. Plants exposed to direct sunlight may suffer colour loss. Leaves and flowers are spread out in thin layers on cloth or paper to dry. Roots and bark are dried by being chopped or sliced. Dried plants are stored in airtight cloth bags or glass jars in dry environments. Dried dye plants, especially hard parts such as roots and bark, are ground into powder. This process allows the dye to dissolve more easily in water. In some applications, they are pounded in a mortar, while in other cases they are crushed by hand in a mill or on a sieve. Dyeing is usually done in large cauldrons over a wood fire. The mordant and dye are placed together in the cauldron and heated until the water reaches boiling point. The woven threads are placed in the cauldron and stirred continuously to ensure even dyeing. Once the threads have reached the desired colour, they are removed, rinsed thoroughly with water and dried. The length of the dyeing time, the temperature and the amount of mordant used affect the colour intensity.

Yarns dyed with natural dyes are not merely an aesthetic choice; they are also the product of a conscious practice in terms of the environment, health and cultural heritage. In the villages and towns of Aksaray, natural dyeing is mostly carried out using traditional methods, relying on women's labour. The dyeing process takes place in cauldrons set up in homes or

gardens. This knowledge, passed down from generation to generation among women, is not merely a technical process but also a way of life and a model of social solidarity.

7. TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT USED IN LOOMED WEAVING

Weaving has held a central position in shaping cultural life and economic organisation as one of the oldest production areas in human history. The tools and equipment used in this transformation process have not only determined production techniques but have also influenced societies' ways of life, value systems, and modes of cultural expression. Horizontal and vertical looms are generally used in the weaving of warp-knitted fabrics. The horizontal loom is a type more commonly used in fabric production. It has a more complex mechanism than vertical looms and requires a fixed production area. Warping is one of the most critical stages of the weaving process. The warp-shedding process is carried out through the cooperation of several people; the warp threads are passed in turn by people standing at the front and back and threaded onto the warp beam. The design of the loom and complementary tools has contributed to the diversification of production techniques, the emergence of regional differences, and the reflection of cultural identity in the art of weaving. Therefore, examining the tools of weaving also means understanding a society's cultural memory. The tools and equipment used in loom weaving are key elements of a production world where technical, cultural, social, economic and aesthetic dimensions are intertwined. Every tool, from the loom's frame to the smallest hand tools, is a carrier of thousands of years of accumulated knowledge, experience and cultural memory. The study of weaving tools contributes not only to understanding a production technique but also to deciphering humanity's cultural heritage. For this reason, the study of weaving tools continues to be a common subject of different disciplines such as ethnographic studies, art history, sociology, and anthropology.

8. MOTIFS USED IN AKSARAY KIRKITLI WEAVINGS AND THEIR MEANINGS

The traditional motifs used in Kirkitli weavings are among the most powerful symbolic means of expression in Turkish folk art. These motifs are not merely visual decorative elements, but also symbolic elements that reflect the cultural memory, belief systems, social values and way of life of the community. For Anatolian women, weaving is a silent but profound form of expression; the patterns created with threads carry traces of the past and the cultural heritage to be passed on to the future. Each motif is part of a tradition spanning thousands of years, a common language passed down from generation to generation. Therefore, kilims should not be regarded merely as technical works but as symbolic texts carrying cultural memory.

Motif is defined as the name given to each of the parts that make up the whole in decoration and ornamentation, and the Turkish word ‘Örge’ is used as the equivalent of motif (Sözen and Tanyeli, 2012, p. 214). In Anatolia, different names such as *yanış*, *nakış*, and *örnek* are given to patterns depending on the region (TDK, 1969, p. 4164). This linguistic diversity also reveals the identity of the geography to which the textile belongs.

Kirkit weaving has been practised in Anatolia for centuries, and the motifs used not only provide an aesthetic appearance but also reflect the weavers' history, beliefs, perspectives on the environment, creativity, and identity (Ortaç, 2010, p. 142). For every piece of woven fabric is a document that spans from the past to the future, reflecting the beliefs, views and cultures of the communities they touched. Like other works of art, examples of Kirkit weaving provide information about the period and communities in which they were produced in terms of their patterns and compositional features.

8.1. The Elibelinde Motif: One of the most deeply rooted and widespread symbols in the tradition of loom weaving. This motif represents women, fertility, productivity and the continuity of life. In Anatolian society, women are symbols of fertility, domestic order and the continuation of the family line.



Figure 1. Elibelinde motif (Kılıç Karatay, 2025)

8.2. Ram's Horn Motif: One of the oldest symbols in Turkish culture representing masculinity, strength, courage and protection. In Kirkit weavings, the ram's horn motif emphasises the concept of ‘strength’ in both an individual and social sense.

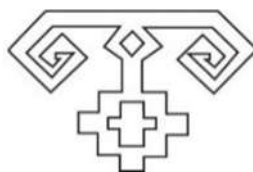


Figure 2. Ram's horn motif (Kılıç Karatay, 2025)

8.3. Tree of life motif: One of the most meaningful symbols in Turkish decorative art. The tree of life represents rebirth, the continuity of life, the continuation of generations, and the desire for immortality. This motif is a symbolic testament to the cultural continuity stretching from Central Asia to Anatolia.

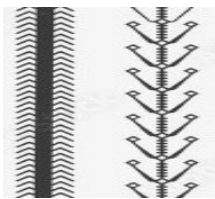


Figure 3. The tree of life motif (<https://mnghalicilik.com/patterns/> 12.09.2025).

8.4. Amulet Motif: A type of written talisman believed to possess magical and religious power to protect its owner from dangerous external factors (Oyman, 2016, p.51). It is one of our motifs that has persisted in Anatolia and is still used today as a sign of belief.



Figure 4. Amulet motif (<https://mnghalicilik.com/patterns/> 12.09.2025).

8.5. The Eye Motif: Is one of Anatolia's oldest and most powerful protective symbols. In popular belief, it is believed that an evil eye can harm people and homes; therefore, the eye motif frequently appears in textiles with the purpose of warding off evil.

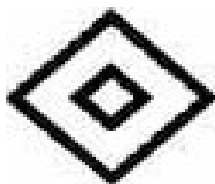


Figure 5. Eye motif (<https://mnghalicilik.com/patterns/> 12.09.2025).

8.6. The Fertility Motif: This is one of the symbols that form the essence of Anatolian textile art. It represents the fertility of the soil, the growth of herds, the abundance of crops, and the continuity of life. The fertility motif is derived from the combination of the hand and ram's horn motifs. This combination represents the universal balance of fertility and productivity.

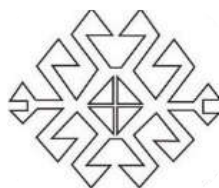


Figure 6. Fertility motif (Kılıç Karatay, 2025)

8.7. Waterway Motif: Symbolises the continuity of life and purification. The flow of water represents the cycle of nature and the passage of time. In Kirkit weavings, the waterway is usually zigzagged, representing the ebb and flow of life, as well as the purity and cleanliness of water, and is also woven without a pattern.



Figure 7. Waterway motif (<https://mnghalicilik.com/patterns/> 12.09.2025).

8.8. Burdock Motif: This motif is obtained by stylising the thorny structure of the burdock plant, which grows naturally in the wild. This motif is an image believed to ward off evil spirits and negative energies. The easy dispersal of its seeds is interpreted as a symbol of fertility and the continuity of life.



Figure 8. Thistle motif (<https://mnghalicilik.com/patterns/> 12.09.2025)

8.9. Bridle Motif: signifies attachment, unity and loyalty. In real life, the bridle is used to restrain animals, while in textiles it represents the spiritual bond between people.



Figure 9. Bukağı motif (Kılıç Karatay, 2025)

8.10. Star Motif: a universal symbol of light and guidance. Representing the connection with the sky, this motif carries meanings such as finding direction. In Kirkit weavings, the star is usually woven in an eight-pointed form; this shape expresses wholeness, balance, and the order of the universe. ‘The eight-pointed star is generally used in zili and cicim weavings and is applied by placing an eye motif at the centre of the motif’ (Soysaldı, 2017, p. 426).



Figure 10. Star motif (<https://mnghalicilik.com/patterns/> 12.09.2025).

8.11. Hook Motif: Used in Turkish weaving art as a symbol of protection and power. The hook shape is a sharp, dynamic form designed to ward off evil spirits. In Kirkit weavings, the hook motif is mostly stylised with geometric forms; intersecting lines and angular turns symbolise movement and defence.



Figure 11. Hook motif (Kılıç Karatay, 2025)

8.12. Chest Motif: The chest motif is a geometric motif used to express the idea of marriage in young girls. It is used very frequently in Kirkit weaving examples, especially in carpet weaving examples. It reflects the desire for marriage.

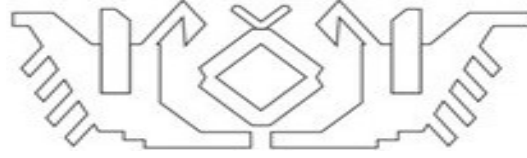


Figure 12. Chest motif (Kılıç Karatay, 2025)

9. EXAMPLES OF AKSARAY KIRKITLI WEAVING

9.1. Base Weaving



Image 1. Example of base weaving
(Kılıç Karatay, 2025)

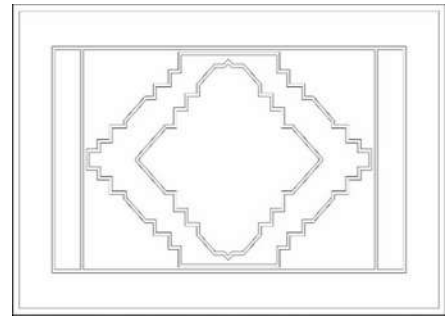


Figure 13. Schematic drawing of base weaving (Çilingir, 2025)

Example: 1

Location: Aksaray Centre

Date of Examination: 13. 08. 2025

Type: Base weaving

Dimensions: 180X240 cm

Quality: 32X32

Weft: Wool

Warp: Wool

Pattern thread: Wool

Technique: Gördes knot

Colours Used: Green, brown, blue, red, yellow

Motifs Used: It is an example of the Taşpınar carpet native to the region.

Pattern Composition Feature: Taşpınar border pattern, known locally as the tetir border, which is brown in colour, has been used in the border pattern section of the weave. The reason it is called tetir border is because it comes from the light brown colour obtained from the cevt plant. Around the weaving sample, strips have been created with the waterway motif on the inner and outer edges of the borders. On the ground, there are belly motifs that start with the

head motif and are subsequently intertwined. The patterns inside the bellies are obtained from botanical motifs.

9.2. Double Weaving



Figure 2. Example of double weaving
(Tarman, 2025)

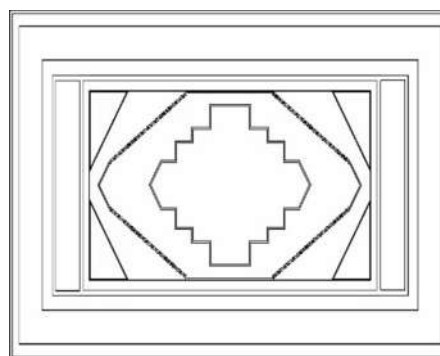


Figure 14. Schematic drawing of
double weaving (Çilingir, 2025)

Example: 2

Location: Aksaray Centre

Examination Date: 21.07. 2025

Type: Double (Quarter) weaving

Dimensions: 120 x 180 cm

Quality: 30x30

Warp: Wool

Weft: Wool

Pattern thread: Wool

Technique: Gördes knot

Colours used: Green, brown, blue, red

Motifs used: Chest, claw, leaf

Pattern Composition Feature: The woven sample features a central motif comprising claw, leaf, and branch motifs from the botanical motif group on the ground. The border section also features claw and leaf motifs from our botanical motifs. The chest motif forms the pattern composition at the beginning and end of the ground in the border section of the weaving.

9.3. Pillow Weaving

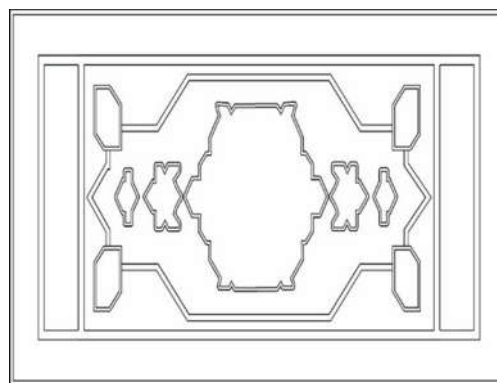


Figure 3. Example of pillow weaving
(Yadigaroglu, 2025)

Figure 15. Schematic drawing of pillow
weaving (Çilingir, 2025)

Example: 3

Location: Aksaray Centre

Date of Examination: 17 August 2025

Type: Cushion weave

Dimensions: 65X160 cm

Quality: 30X30

Warp: Wool

Weft: Wool

Pattern thread: Wool

Technique: Gördes knot

Colours used: Red, brown, blue, yellow

Motifs used: fertility, chest, star

Pattern Composition Feature: The ground pattern composition features an eight-pointed star motif and geometric motifs. The border pattern section features botanical claw and leaf motifs. The chest section and the edges of the fabric are surrounded by a waterway motif in the form of strips. At the very centre of the fabric's belly section is a fertility motif containing an eye motif.

9.4. Prayer Rug Weaving



Figure 4. Example of prayer rug weaving
(Bülbül Can, 2025)

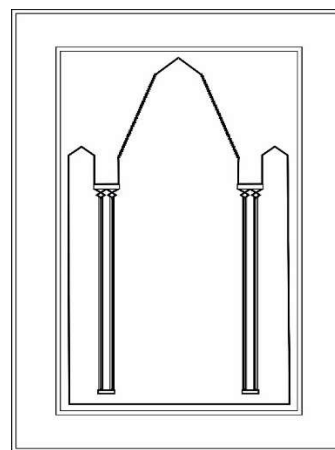


Figure 16. Schematic diagram of rayer
rug weaving drawing (Çilingir, 2025)

Example: 4

Location: Aksaray Centre

Date of Examination: 17. 08. 2025

Type: Prayer rug weaving

Dimensions: 120 X 180 cm

Quality: 30X30

Warp: Wool

Weft: Wool

Pattern thread: Wool

Technique: Gördes knot

Colours used: Red, green, white

Motifs used: Mihrab, oil lamp, claw

Pattern Composition Feature: Flower and leaf motifs are used on the border of the prayer rug weaving sample. On the ground, there are two tree of life motifs on the right and left. The tree of life motif merges at the end of the ground to form the mihrab motif. There is a hanging lamp motif from the mihrab, decorated with botanical motifs. The weaving was woven for worship purposes.

9.5. Cicim Bag Weaving



Figure 5. Example of a cicim bag
(Kılıç Karatay, 2025)

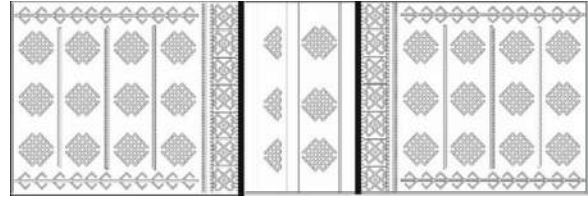


Figure 17. Schematic drawing of cicim bag weaving (Çilingir, 2025)

Example: 5

Location: Aksaray Centre

Date of Examination: 17.05. 2025

Type: Cicim Heybe

Dimensions: 60X160 cm

Quality: 33X33

Weft: Wool

Warp: Wool

Pattern thread: Wool

Technique: Cicim

Colours Used: Green, brown, yellow, red

Motifs Used: Thistle, Tree of Life, Waterway

Pattern Composition Feature: The warp, weft, and pattern yarns of the Cicim Heybe weaving sample are made entirely of wool and dyed with natural dyes. The pattern composition was achieved by placing the thistle motif within the strips separated by the waterway motif in the weaving. Although the front side of the bag weaving is patterned and woven using the cicim technique, the back side is woven using the plain weave technique without any pattern. It is generally sturdy.

9.6. Cushion Weaving Sample



Figure 6. Cushion weaving sample
(Çilingir, 2025)

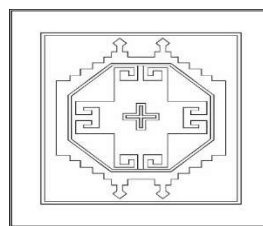


Figure 18. Schematic drawing of cushion weaving (Çilingir, 2025)

Example: 6

Location: Aksaray Centre

Date of Examination: 10. 08. 2025

Type: Cushion weaving

Dimensions: 65X160 cm

Quality: 30X30

Weft: Wool

Warp: Wool

Pattern thread: Wool

Technique: Gördes knot

Colours Used: Red, green, blue, yellow

Motifs Used: Hand in hand, eye, fertility

Pattern Composition Feature: The pattern composition features a hand-in-hand motif within an intertwined eye motif at the centre of the weaving's background. The border section features the tree of life and amulet motifs. The eye motif is used in different forms on the background. The amulet motif is used in square form in groups of four at the corners of the background. A thin waterway motif surrounds the edges of the fabric.

10. CONCLUSION

Located in the heart of Anatolia, Aksaray has been not only a centre throughout history, but also a place where knowledge, labour and identity converge. The region's thriving weaving culture, the abundance of plant-based dyes in the surrounding area, the favourable climate conditions for wool production, and the people's preservation of the craft-based weaving tradition have contributed to a rich cultural identity. In this context, natural dyeing is not merely an act of colouring but also an expression of a lifestyle in harmony with nature. The colour of each plant, the scent of the soil and water, have been embedded in the cultural memory of the people of Aksaray, teaching them to benefit from nature at the right time. The shades obtained from plants such as madder root, walnut shell, onion skin, chamomile, love-in-a-mist and broom

have been produced using the same methods for centuries, preserving their essence despite the changes brought about by time.

Natural dyeing practices also hold an important place in the context of gender relations. In Aksaray, yarn dyeing was largely carried out by women, a process that ensured both their participation in economic production and the transmission of cultural knowledge. Every step, from gathering and drying the plants to boiling them and dyeing the yarn, required experience and observation skills. The tools and equipment used in the region are labour-intensive. Tools such as the kirkit, spindle, distaff, twisting spindle and gelep are important pieces used in the process of making yarn by hand. The motifs used in kirkit weaving are symbols that express the weaver's feelings and thoughts. Motifs such as ram's horns, hand-in-hand, amulets, fertility, the tree of life, eyes, stars and waterways are not only aesthetic decorative elements but also cultural symbols. For example, the hand-in-hand motif represents women's productivity, fertility and central position within the family, while the ram's horn motif symbolises male power, protection and endurance. The tree of life motif is an expression of humanity's connection with nature and the universe. These symbols are not merely decorative; they are a visual expression of social identity.

Today, handwoven textiles produced in Aksaray are regarded as both artistic and economic assets. However, this value lies not only in the material worth of the product but also in its cultural significance. For every handwoven textile is also a document of social memory. The transformation of rural life under the pressure of modernisation has also affected traditional production. Kirkit weavings from the Aksaray region constitute one of the most important examples of Anatolia's rich weaving tradition that have survived to the present day. These weavings include both rugs and flat weaves, which are woven using different techniques. Both types of weaving are made entirely from wool yarn, and the quality of the yarn directly affects the quality and aesthetic value of the weavings.

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