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Shushtar kilim

This is a very finely woven kilim made by a tribe called Bakhtiari. The winter home of the Bakhtiari is in the plains of Khuzestan, around Shushtar at the head of the Persian Gulf. In summer they migrate through the Zagros Mountains to the Chahar Mahal valley to the west of Esfahan. The Bakhtiari live in an area where until recently there were no roads or modern means of communication. They are not known for their commercial weaves, but mainly produce kilims for domestic use.

To weave the kilims the Bakhtiari women use the double interlock tapestry weave technique. In this technique, the weft yarns, instead of forming slits at each color change, are linked to one another at every passage and so each colour appears in the other colour area and a marked ridge is produced on the working face of the fabric. Thus, it creates dissimilar faces. Undyed brown camel hair is used for the warps. The colours are not as vibrant as we find in Qashqa'i kilims, a neighboring tribe. The weave is loose and there are no strong selvages. The soft and light fabric is too delicate for heavy use, although they were used in daily life. If the kilim is worn out, it is just replaced by a new one.