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IRAN - BAKHTIARI COSTUME G159

The Bakhtiari are a group of people from southwest Iran that traditionally lived a nomadic life. A nomad does not live in one place but move their homes and cattle during the winter and summer months in search of water and food for their animals. Their survival is dependent upon their cattle, sheep and horses.



Most of the Bakhtiari have given up the nomadic life and live in villages or towns. The opportunity to make money through industries such as oil provides a more regular income.

Shirt



The shirt worn by Bakhtiari men is similar to those people in Britain wear to work. In the major Iranian cities like Tehran the men would often wear shirts and smart trousers.

Men's trousers



Look at how baggy the legs of these trousers are! The trousers are fixed around the ankles with embroidered bands and at the waist with a cloth band.

Wearing these trousers is a source of pride for Bakhtiari men. It represents the tribe the people belong to. Visitors who do not wear these trousers were often called 'shawlar-tang', meaning straight trousers. This was considered an insult.



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Hat



The hat is made from felt. A Bakhtiari hat does not usually have holes in the top. Can you guess why? It is used as a cup for drinking water. When the group are walking their cattle to a new area they can scoop up a drink from the river. They don't need to search for a cup that has been left at the bottom of the bag! The hat is also waved like a flag to attract attention across distances.



The hat's shape is said to have been adapted as a protest against the headwear worn by a rival tribe called the Pahlavi. They led the country and in 1928 had instructed everyone to wear a particular style of hat. The Bakhtiari wore this felt hat as a sign of defiance against them.



Horse browband



Horses are very important to nomadic people. They carry possessions quickly and easily up mountains and across the land. Some of the nomads are now using trucks to transfer their animals and belongings.

A horse wears this over the eyes. The browband runs from just under one ear, across the forehead, to under the other ear. The long, thin leather strips cover the horse's eyes. Can you guess why? The horse would still be able to see where it was going but it keeps flies and sand out of the eyes.

Headband



Headbands have a social importance. The greater the decoration, the richer the wearer. Those with wealth have time to make new items and keep the headband clean.

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Head shawl



Unlike many Muslim women in larger towns and cities, the Bakhtiari women do not wear a head shawl to cover their face for religious reasons. Instead it has a practical use. It covers the face and hair from the dust that is blown around as they move. The women of the tribe have greater freedom than many other Muslim women. They look after the family money as well as cooking and feeding the family.



Shawl



The shawl covers the head and shoulders. Women like to show off their best brightly coloured clothes on the migration trip. It is the time of year, other than weddings, when they are seen by many other people.

Skirt



The skirt is full of brightly coloured flowers. Flowers, grass and land are important to the Bakhtiari. They move their animals thousands of miles so there is fresh vegetation for them to eat. When they are moving through the mountains these would be some of the few bright objects seen. It has had an influence on the design of clothing.



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Tunic



A young girl would wear this tunic whilst on the move. She is expected to work whilst travelling. This means helping milk the animals and then churning the milk to make yoghurt, called doogh. Doogh is taken on the trip. It can be left in the sun to harden and produce little biscuits called kashk.

Women's trousers



The trousers match the skirt and would be worn underneath. The black bottoms of the legs have been cut to make the wave shape. Can you see the frayed material? It has been stitched on over the legs. Sometimes material is recycled from older items of clothing to add to the design of newer clothing. Have you ever had your clothes patched up?

