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## Symbolic Study of Color in Bakhtiyari Textiles with Emphasis on Veris (Card Weaving)\*

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### Abstract

Veris is a narrow weaving with a width of 2-10 cm. and a length of 1-8 m., often woven with woolen yarns by simple tools known as cards. This woven has a variety of applications, in the past for decorating clothes, the collar, the edge of the skirt, the belt, baby wrapping, hat bands, saddles and many other uses, the handmade strips were used. But today, more is used to decorate clothes. For the Veris weaving, the Bakhtiyari tribes<sup>4</sup> use many motifs and designs most of which are based on their customs, habits, perceptions, insights, environment and their culture. In this textile, geometric, human, animal, herbal, inscription, positive and negative motifs are used. Red, black, blue, yellow, and dark green are main color in Bakhtiyari hand woven. Each of the colors in the Bakhtiyari tribes symbolizes an event. For example: red Veris for happy event, green Veris is for fastening infant and black tent, yellow Veris for expensive objects, blue Veris for fastening ordinary objects, black and white Veris for mourning events. In short, the composition of colors in the Veris depends on the type of application. This research, by examining the current literature and applying a fieldwork, implements a descriptive & analytical methodology to analyze and understand the "symbolism" in card weaving. The study will examine different motif shapes and explain the meaning of the motif among the Bakhtiyari tribes. For this purpose, different car woven samples will be illustrated and pictured for the reader. The study concludes that card weaving has decorative and functional meanings.

**Keywords:** Veris, Color, Bakhtiyari, Card weaving, Nomads.

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\* This article has been extracted from M.A. thesis of writer.

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4 Bakhtiyari is a tribe from the Lor (Lor is told to a large part of the ethnicities living in the foothills of Zagros mountain). Lors are scattered in the west and south-west of Iran to the provinces of Luristan, Hamadan, Isfahan, Fars, Kuhgiluyeh and Chaharmahal. Large parts of the Bakhtiyari continue their nomadic life, their winter pasture mostly in Khuzistan and their summer pasture is in Chaharmahal Province. The population of the Bakhtiyari nomads is almost five hundred thousand.

## **Introduction**

Card weaving is to weave a robust woven with a simple weaving with cards and fixed tools. In time, symbolic motifs have been influenced by the memories, sufferings and beliefs of these people in confronting and fighting the nature of their lives. Nowadays, despite Bakhtiyari Veris is losing its functional role, it can be considered as an ethnic handicraft with authentic artistic and cultural values. Therefore, this feature became one of the most important factors in the analysis of this product.

## **Research Objective**

The main objective of this study is to identify, document, and define the characteristics of this art among the Bakhtiyari tribes. The main question of this research is about the color characteristics of Bakhtiyari card weaving. In such matters, registration and documentation at the first level and thinking about the functions at the second level is important. In addition the need for further examine this seemingly simple and primitive style handicraft is considered to identify and document its connection with the nomadic culture and the relationship between the visual elements in it and their beliefs and customs.

## **Research Background**

So far various studies have been carried out in the field of Bakhtiyari handicrafts, including the books by Tanavoli titled "Bakhtiyari's Sack" (1998), "Bread and Salt" (1991), "Nomadic and Rural Jols of Iran" (1998), Ghaziani (1997) in her book titled "Bakhtiyari, Textiles and Patterns", Franchis and Wertime (1976) in "Lori and Bakhtiyari Flatweaves", Alavi (2010) in "Gabbeh Motifs in Bakhtiyari tribe", Ebrahimi Naghani (2014) in "An Introduction to the Aestheticism of the Motif and Color of the Bakhtiyari Tribe Kilims". However, few studies have been conducted on card weaving of Bakhtiyari nomads such as Hossein Yavari and Fatemeh Erfani (2016) in "Card Weaving Art as Old as Textile History", Fatemeh Erfani (1999) in "A Study on Card Weaving", Abbas Rahimi (2016) in "A Research on Khuzestan's Card Weaving" and Shahla Amini (2005) in an article titled "Iranian Woven Strips" in which the evolution of strip of Iran has been studied. The present research can lead to a new approach to card weaving of Bakhtiyari nomads, which is a new step towards knowing Veris beyond the conducted studies.

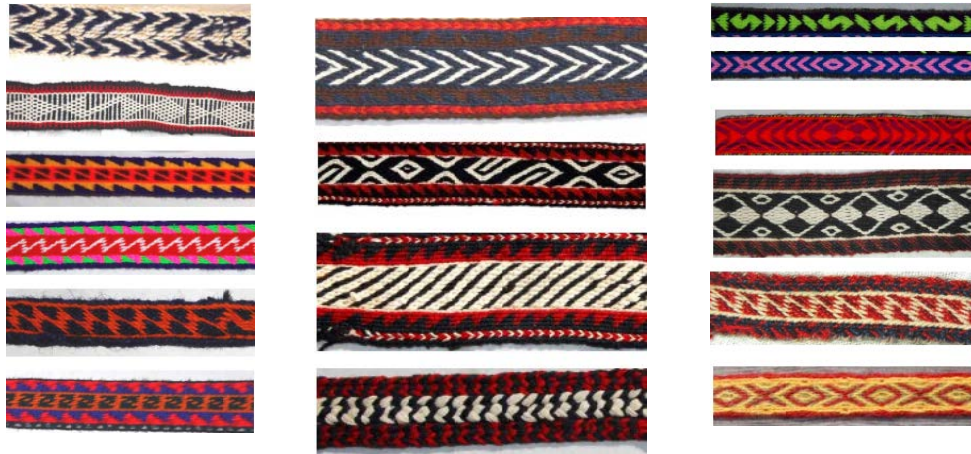
## **Research Method**

This research is an analytical-descriptive study that attempts to study the color and motif of Bakhtiyari Veris. The paper is arranged in four main sections: First, it discusses about Veris and then addresses card weaving in Iran. In the third section, the design and motif in Veris weaving is studied and finally while studying the prominent colors in Veris, they are considered in terms of conventional motifs and common colors based on Bakhtiyari culture.

## **What is Veris?**

It is a striped fabric made of woolen yarns that are woven with a variety of card weaving tools with various widths and has various applications (Figure 1) (National Standard Organization of Iran, 2016: 2). Card weaving is a very ancient art that has been common among the majority of nations with a cultural background (such as Egypt, Syria, Greece, Iran, etc.). Since there was no ribbon, lace etc. to decorate the clothes, the collar, the edge of the skirt, the belt, baby wrapping, hat bands, saddles and many other uses, the handmade strips were used (Figure 2, 3). Unfortunately, today this art is going to be abandoned due to the abundance of ribbons and lace.

These woven strips, which have been seen in many of the old countries of the world and in most provinces of Iran, have been named by various names such as *Verisbafi*, *Wirisbafi*, *Davalbafi* (Chahar Mahal and Bakhtiyari province) *Modakhelebafi* (Khorasan province), *Verisbafi* (Ilam province), *Panbafi* (Qazvin province). They are woven by passing colorful woolen threads through the holes of square-shaped cards made of animal skin or wood that has four holes used to satisfy the needs of the people (Yavari & Erfani, 2016: 1).



**Figure 1.** Card woven samples (National Standard Organization of Iran, 2016: 4)



**Figure 2.** Veris weaving



**Figure 3.** Veris for fastening load on animals

### Card Weaving in Iran

In reviewing the technique to weave Iranian decorative strips, there is a special weaving technique called card weaving, which is woven by cards with holes in the absence of any weaving machine. Arthur Upham Pope mentions in his book, the history of card weaving in Iran to the late third millennium and the early second millennium B.C. Unfortunately, there is no fabric or card left from that period. The oldest examples of Iranian card weaving fabrics belong to the nineteenth century, which is before the emergence of Kilim weaving in western Iran. These samples are kept in Department of Ethnology of the Museum of History of the City of Bern-Swiss under the codes MT102-MT103-MT104, MT105 (Pope, 2008: 2150).

The punched clay tablets made of pottery and ivory, which are named by Roland de Mecquenem and Georges Cotenau in the reports of the Susa excavations, are a reason for the rise of Iran's card weaving. It

should be added that the idea of the emergence and invention of this technology by Iranians is realistic. The similarity of the reliefs and remnants of Iran's civilization with the modern card woven fabrics, the extensive use of bands and strips in former Iranian people, such as nomads, and the absence of a sign of tablets that in no other region of the Middle East or Asia are the proofs of this claim (Amini, 2005: 112). The raw materials, the motifs, designs and the color scheme are vary in each geographic region with other regions, and this difference depends on the materials and elements available, the tradition and culture of that region (Amini, 1995: 55).

### Card Weaving among Nomads

The oldest nomadic card woven fabrics was introduced in 1952 by S.J. Philberg in the book *Les Papiers*, which was the result of his trip to Iran and being settled with Papiers in the northwest region of Iran, then it was published in the book "Techniques des nomades Baxtyari d'Iran" by J. Pierre Digard (1977). The card weaving technique has always been popular among the Iranian tribes, but unfortunately, there is no sign of old tribal weaving cards. Amini points out that: During the research, the nomads who still have card weaving technique are Bakhtiyari, Lur (Luristan province) and Shabsavan. The only points that the villagers perform card weaving are Qala Zeh and Zavin (near Kalat Naderi), Laein village in Quchan (Dargaz Khorasan district) and Ferdows (Amini, 1995: 98).

### Application of Veris in Bakhtiyari Nomads

Card weaving products have always been used as decorative strips. The most prominent types of Iranian use of them can be seen in strips and bands with dual side weaving with very tight sides that date back to the nineteenth century (Amini, 2005: 114). Lifestyle of villagers and nomads has always necessitated the usage of a variety of strips and ropes, however, there are differences between the ancient card woven fabrics and newer strips in terms of application. Old works were used exclusively in religious ceremonies, celebrations, decorations, etc. but the recent strips that have the width of 4 to 15 cm play a major role in both functional and decorative groups. The first group has the following uses: carrying stuff (one head of the strip takes the form of a ring and the other end is attached to a wooden ring called *Hache*), the deployments of *Behoon* (black tent), hanging bags and packs to the tent, carrying cradles, moving waterskin, waterskin shaking, carrying firewood and burning fodder, frenum, headband, bellyband, barnacle, girth, breast band, trapping animals, saddlebag strip and so on. The second type includes decorative strips with elegance, quality and skillful technique, which is the logical continuation of the art to decorate garments with thousands of years of history. These stripes are both sided and since there were no ribbons and lace in the past, they were used decorate clothes, brace and black tents (Amirahmadian, 2008: 145-146). However, today, the production of plastic ropes, waterproof tents are used instead of these traditional fabrics and undermined the necessity and need for production of these strips, but the card woven strips are important in Bakhtiyari tribes by changing their dimensions and applications (Figures 4, 5, 6 and 7).



**Figure 4, 5.** Veris to fasten a child (National Standard Organization of Iran, 2016: 4) Packing with Veris



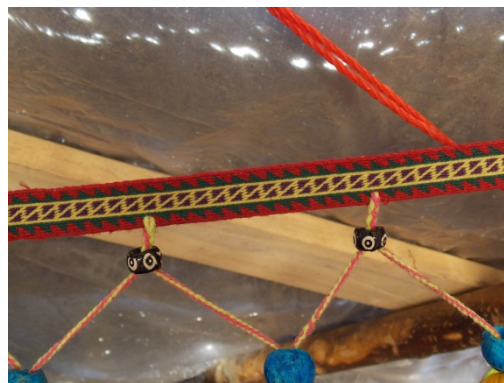


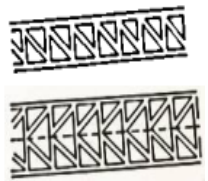









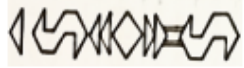

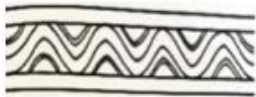







Figure 6, 7. Veris application in establishing black tent

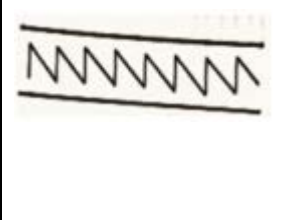



### Bakhtiyari Card Weaving Motifs

Bakhtiyari tribes use many designs and motifs most of which are based on their customs, habits, perceptions, insights, the environment and in general, their culture. They do not use a particular pattern at all, and because of this, disparity and uniqueness is among the privileges of their products (Dadvar and Moazen, 2009: 42). In Bakhtiyari Verises geometric, human, animal, herbal, inscription, positive and negative motifs are used and different woven motifs named: *Cheshm Khorus*, *Hasht Chapar*, *Modakhel*, *Nime Modakhel*, *Pichak*, *Bisto Nohchapar*, *Arre-i- Gol hacha*, *Achar* (drawn from the Dragon motif) *Chalipa*, *Shirdang*, *Tatelāsh* (Ghaziani, 1997: 131). These symbolic motifs are occasionally used with other decorations such as bells, coin, tassel, wolf tooth, and bead. They are primarily dependent on the type of "application" of the strip. For example, "if they were to donate the strip in honoring the birth of a child, to use it to fasten him, the weavers weaves Qur'anic verses such as In-Yakad and Ayat-ol-Kursi to protect him again evil eye and wish him a long life with the image of a tree and blessing of his life with the birds sitting on the trees, or the flowers in the pot, which is a symbol of joy" (Amini, 1995: 113).

Table 1. Popular Motifs in Card Weaving of Bakhtiyari Nomads

Motif name	Motif shape	Card woven	The meaning of the motif among the Bakhtiyari tribes
Mavshāyiju			The name of a woman with the diamond on both sides as her eyes and other diamonds as her hands and legs
Shirdang			A sacred motif against evils which is a blessing for the owner. Shirdang is formed of the words Shir and dang which means the roaring of the lion to frighten the evils

<p>Gol-e gushar Gol-e gazdin</p>			<p>Its one flower is like an earring and when both of them are woven along the strip, it forms a ship head with two ears. Sometimes it is woven as gazdin which indicates an scorpion</p>
<p>Xāl-e nāl</p>			<p>In most parts of Iran, it is the disposer of bad omen. On the one hand it has a spiritual content on the other hand, it used because of the special position of the horse in the nomadic life</p>
<p>Boti shāyi Chār goli</p>			<p>It is formed of the two terms Boti which means aunt and shāyi or the king. It might be the name of the first person who created this motif</p>
<p>Gol hacha</p>			<p>It is inspired by a device called hacha to fasten the stuff. Hacha is the speed factor in packing and displacement</p>
<p>Māri</p>			<p>Mār in persian means snake,the snake can be considered as a treasure guardian woven on verises used to pack the thing and it is an indicative of valuable property.</p>
<p>Gol-e gandom</p>			<p>The dominant diet of Bakhtiyari tribes is the whole wheat or Gol-e gandom the size of which is consistent with veris and used alot</p>
<p>Ta telāsh Balg-e bidi</p>			<p>Ta telāsh is similar to the pieces of wood used to drive animals. Balg-e bidi indicates the leaves of the same branch. The term is used because of ease of weaving this motif</p>
<p>Gade gāyi Go-e ārbizi</p>			<p>This motif is taken from the cow's tripe (Gade gāyi) and once a device called ārbizi was used in the life of the tribes</p>

Arra			It is inspired by the ribs which is called Band-Arra on the sides. Ax is replaced by Arra among the Bakhtiari, and it is important in providing their fuel
Gonāt			It is woven on the edge of the veris and called "Be re". They are also called Tataei, which means single flowers

### Factors Influencing Veris Motif and Design

One of the most important factors influencing the development of the features of Veris motif and design are environmental factors (chart 1), which has led to the formation of a large part of the woven motifs. Among the man-made characters that have a long history in the culture of tribe, the role of so called *mustache and al-Buri* are noteworthy on the border of most hand woven. Also, on the motifs of belief that over the generations of the mysteries of mothers to girls have been added to the number of narrations based on the narratives, they can be added to the role of the nails or daggers, which vary in different ways among the tribes, the work was taken away and the nanny was distracting (Majidi, Borazjani & Hatami, 2011: 265-262).

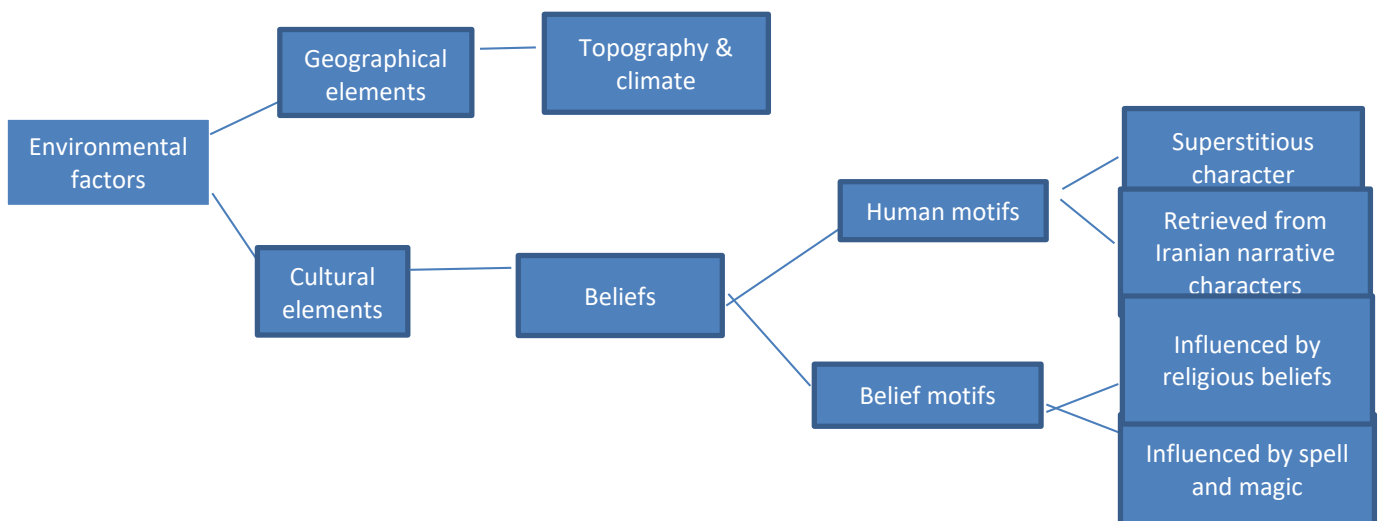


Chart 1. Motifs Influenced by Environmental Factors

### Indicative Colors in Card weaving

The colors in the spiritual and emotional life of humans have undeniable effects. Choosing the color and combining it with other colors may be based on the sample, or as nomadic band weaving without the sample and the artist's mind. Color always preserves its design, color, value, concept and meaning in a set of designs and at the same time creates a set of common concepts. In other words, the color in a color scheme is first separated from the layout and form (Daneshgar, 1997: 249). It has always been mentioned

that in Bakhtiyari woven fabrics, red, black, blue, yellow, and dark green are often used. It is possible to say that the classification is of a conventional cultural color scheme and members of other cultures use the spectrum differently. Bakhtiyari tribes use colors that are necessarily perceptual, even if reproduction is completely unlikely. The ancient weavers of the year suggest that the Bakhtiyari tribal nominees from time immemorial reflected their specific colors, themes and content, which, like the book, were readable, but due to the long passage of time, Drawings and repetitions of neglect of the meaning and even the combination of some of the motifs with other motifs that led to their readability and meaningfulness have already lost their a priori visual expression (Ebrahimi Naghani, 2014: 24). However, in staining the Bakhtiyari tribal nomads, creativity, individual taste, traditions, local beliefs, and the nature of each tribe play an essential role. Nomadic weavers do not have a limited choice of color, and in color the inspiration is inspired by their minds, for this reason, disparity and uncertainty are among the concessions of their productions, and it happens less that the weaver produces two or more products of the same size and role in a single color (Dadvar & Moazen, 2009: 42-43). The only restrictions that exist are the use of a particular technique, the use of its original material, or the pursuit of a long tradition in its texture. For example, if Veris is woven in cardboard, its colors do not exceed two colors, often white, black, blue, red, black, green, pink and even brown. Nomads have diminished this limitation by selecting different colors on the border of these woven fabrics. In some weavings, they also have to use wool and self-colored hair (Amini, 1995: 136).

The colors of the Veris, like the motifs used in them, are closely related to their application (Table 2, Figure 8). If, for bridal dowries, it is woven with dazzling colors, if it is for mourning ceremonies, it has dark colors to indicate sadness and grief, and if it is expensive to close things expensive, red, yellow and ... And if it is for ordinary things, it is simple and with blue, oil, and so on (Kabiri, 2009: 59).

In general, in the Bakhtiyari nomadic Veris, there are three groups of colors: the color of the paintings, the background color and the color of the border, whose range varies from 2 - 5 colors according to the points mentioned. Most of them have a white or creamy color (neutral), and the colors of the motif and the border are also shaped to the color of the weavers. Accordingly, the traditional palette can be used to paint each of them without dependence on any pattern.

Background	Motif	Border	

**Table 2.** Color Variation Palette



**Figure 8.** Variance Pattern according to the color palette



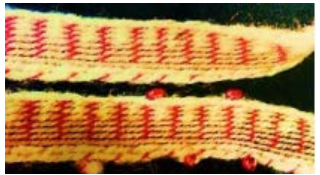
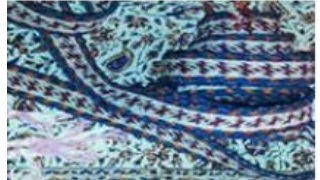
### **Symbolic and Analysis of Indicative Colors in the Veris**


Specifying the reason for using certain colors in the hands woven like Veris is difficult, but among the three natural uses of color in the art, including "referenced, coherent and pure", we can say that the colors used in the Bakhtiyari Veris is kind of referenced. In this way of use, the color is used to express its symbolic meaning, like a child who chooses the color, and always paints the tree green and the sky is blue, while the tree may be brown and gray heavens (Read, 2001: 38). Hence, the colors in the Bakhtiyari Veris are often obeying the fix rules that are not only the weaver, which is the current pattern, nature, material, and decisive use. Although this idea is also being developed in us that the nomadic women may not be familiar



with all of these concepts correctly, but a statement by Johannes Itten leads us to point out that "the only ones who love color are beauty and permanent presence. They are accepted, the color is in the hands of everyone, but the deeper mysteries are only open to their lovers" (Itten, 2007: 12). It is also worth mentioning Herbert Read's saying: "All people who have a normal mindset and mood are enjoying color. The colors of the highest creation are full of color, and the color is a clear sign of their perfection. The color of life in the human body, with light in the sky, with purity and hardness depends on the soil of death, night and pollution of all kinds, all are colorless" (Read, 2001: 41).

**Table 3.** Dominant Colors in Bakhtiyari Nomads Card Weaving

Color semantics	Application	Dominant color	Veris
Shows of youth and passion, Fire, Sentimental, excitement and life Earthly	For happy events such as tying and tocher decorating	Red	
Represents greenery, Blessings, Freshness and endless meadows	Green for decoration black tent and rocker baby	Green	
Retrieved from the jaundice of the sun and Wheat germ	Closing objects and Expensive supplies	Yellow	
The sign of the sky, the sea of water Generosity rain	Closing appliances and objects Ordinary, decoration clothes and necessities Home	Blue	

<p>Expressing spiritual and social concepts.</p> <p>White is a sign of purity, hope and vitality</p> <p>And black show the darkness and despair.</p> <p>Apply these two colors together</p> <p>Illuminated from light and brightness</p> <p>Behind the darkness</p>	<p>At the mourning or</p> <p>Prefabricated textile</p> <p>Mare</p>	<p>Black &amp; White</p>	
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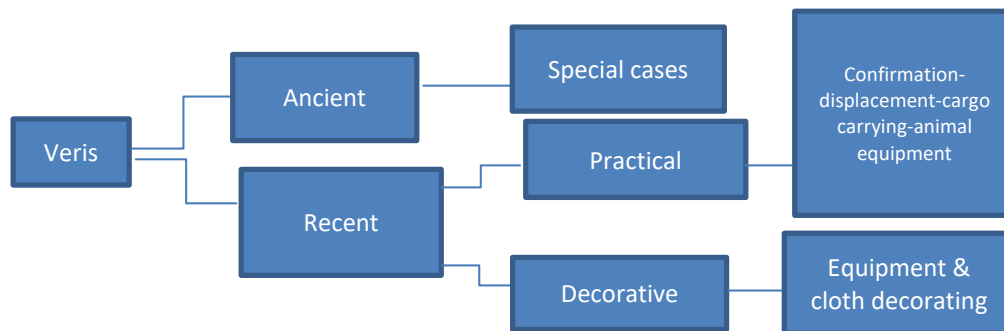
### Conclusion

In each culture, special signs are found from its people, as the folk art and culture of the Bakhtiyari nomadic tribes are embodied in their hands. Veris, as one of these woven fabrics from the late third millennium and early second millennium B.C., did not tangle cotton, wool or cotton warp and weft, without the use of a special weaving machine, and only by spinning and twisting a few cards. It has always been popular among the tribes. The proper field and application needs of weavers are considered to be the main factors in the context of the Veris weaving. If the woven wool is highlighted among the Bakhtiyari tribes, it has borrowed the same fields and needs, although it is due to the fact that the production of these products is due to the taste of weaver women and girls. One of the most important aesthetic factors of a work of art, such as Veris, is that by examining the products of small cultural communities, such as the tribes' style, it can be seen that their style initially was characterized by a kind of social interaction, religious belief, aesthetic motivation or technical requirement communication has been. What is also known in the Veris style of the Bakhtiyari nomads is the style of the geometric class (schematic), which can be said to be used with two purposes: one reproduction of designs that determine which woven is related to its cultural characteristics.

The second is the description of the ancestral events that simultaneously allow multiple meanings to relate to each of the motifs. As a result, the style of Bakhtiyari Veris is the motif, design and colors used in it. These motifs are largely derived from natural environmental factors that can be divided into two groups of geographical elements and cultural elements. The shape of these motifs, despite being geometric, can be changed, and this has created many compounds. In choosing the colors used in Veris, the use of several special colors, including black and white, red, blue, yellow and green, symbolically and under the influence of climatic conditions, applied and the use of the primary color of the color of the tribe and the region has added to its index. These colors do not exceed three color groups: motif color, background color, and border color.

In terms of application, recently Veris can be distinguished as a card weaving in two groups; the decorative and functional groups (Chart 2). In this research, Veris weaving of Bakhtiyari nomads with color approach

was studied and a step in its documentation was tried. Future research can be used to apply it in today's living conditions.



**Chart 2.** Veris Application

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