Mobile Pastoralism and The Development of Complex Societies in Highland Iran: The Evidence from Tall-I Bakun A

by

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The fifth recipient of Foundation for Iranian Studies' annual award for the best Ph.D. dissertation in the field of Iranian Studies was Abbas Alizadeh. He received the 1988 prize for his work entitled "Mobile Pastoralism and the Development of Complex Societies in Highland Iran: The Evidence from Tall-i Bakun A," submitted to the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago in Chicago, Illinois. The following is an abstract of the dissertation prepared by the author.

The second half of the fourth millennium B.C. was a period of remarkable changes in the socio-economic and political life of the ancient Near East. In this period, less complex societies of the earlier prehistoric time developed state organizations which were centered in large areas such as Ur, Uruk, Nippur, Susa, Chogha Mish, and Malyan.

Archaeologists and anthropologists agree now that the pristine states did not rise precipitously from the earlier prehistoric communities which were centered in small sites. Though considered as precursors of the later urban societies, nevertheless, little work has focused on complexities and direct links of the predecessors of the urban communities of the ancient Near East.

In this respect, Fars, one of the largest and richest regions on the Iranian plateau in natural resources, has been neglected. This thesis is devoted to demonstrate a prehistoric example of that differential control of economic resources which resulted in social stratification in the later complex societies. Recent studies have suggested that ancient mobile pastoralists may have had some measure of influence in the development of such societies, particularly in south and southwestern Iran; thus, the nature of the interactions between
mobile and sedentary communities, the mechanisms through which these interactions operated, and the possible role of these mobile pastoralist may have had in the processes of primary state formation have been also investigated.