



ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

The north Iranian central plateau during the fifth millennium BCE: Societal change before and after the environmental crisis

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Abstract

The Transitional Chalcolithic across the north Iranian central plateau, 5250 to 4300 BCE (divided into Transitional Chalcolithic I and II based on ceramic chronologies), comprised the emergence of a political economy, significant population growth, increased specialization of craft activities, intensification of administrative activity, differentiation of mortuary practices, and long-distance trade. The archaeological evidence for such cultural complexity comes from excavations at important sites such as Zagheh, Cheshmeh-Ali, Sialk, Moeinabad, and Ebrahim Abad, in the Qazvin, Tehran, and Kashan plains. Since 1996, I have conducted archaeological surveys and excavations in these regions and established a regional chronology, identifying cultural hiatuses across the archaeological sites. Recent geoarchaeological research has revealed a clearer picture of regional environmental fluctuations during the Late Neolithic and the Chalcolithic periods, indicating a regional collapse in the Qazvin, Tehran, and Kashan plains around 4900 BCE. Only after some decades, the Transitional Chalcolithic sites resurged with a greater degree of elaboration in ritual activities and economic intensification with highly competitive socio-economic differentiation. This paper reviews current research in the region and considers environmental impacts on the social context of prehistoric Iran during the fifth millennium.

Keywords

Transitional Chalcolithic, environment, collapse, Iranian central plateau, cultural collapse

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