



NOMADISM IN IRAN

FROM ANTIQUITY TO THE MODERN ERA

D. T. POTTS

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PREFACE

In his *Ṣūrat al-arz* (*Configurations of the Earth*), written in the late tenth century, Ibn Hawqal asserted that the nomads of Iran “amount to near five hundred thousand families... Summer and winter they pass on the feeding or pasture lands... and I have heard that this people consist of above one hundred tribes; but I only know between thirty and forty of the tribes.” So struck was Sir William Ouseley by this passage that, in anticipation of an incredulous readership, he inserted a disclaimer in his English translation of the text in which he stated, “That the reader may satisfy himself, on the subject of this extraordinary people, I have given the original Persian of the whole passage, in the Appendix.”¹

Until very recently, most visitors to Iran who left the cities for the countryside would have encountered one or more nomadic groups in their travels. Some of them might have been known to Ibn Hawqal but most would have been of much more recent creation, for tribes are impermanent agglomerations of people, not rigid, immutable social units with an unbounded history and temporal dimension. As the Norwegian anthropologist Fredrik Barth noted, even the tribes of the 1950s did not necessarily exist thirty or forty years earlier since tribes are political, not ethnic constructs.² The likelihood of a traveler encountering tribes in the

1. Sir W. Ouseley, *The Oriental Geography of Ebn Haukal, an Arabian traveller of the tenth century* (London: Wilson & Co., 1800), 92–93.

2. F. Barth, *Nomads of South Persia: The Basseri tribe of the Khamseh Confederacy* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1961), 119, wrote, “Recent South Persian history can report on large tribes and confederacies, such as, e.g. the Lak Lurs of Fars on which Karim Khan Zand based his power in the late 18th century... tribes which today have left no visible trace in the local nomad population. I found that tribal maps and lists of tribal names, collected and compiled at the time of the First World War, caused great mirth when I showed them to the Basseri, since, as they said, contemporary tribes and tribes long since defunct were there listed side by side.” For a list of Shahsevan tribes that have disappeared since 1900, and others that have only coalesced since that time, see R. Tapper, *Frontier nomads of Iran: A political and social history of the Shahsevan*, Cambridge Middle East Studies 7 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 373–374. X. de Planhol, *Les Fondements géographiques de l’Histoire de l’Islam* (Paris: Flammarion, 1968), 238, also noted that, in Anatolia, “Les listes de tribus qui nous ont été conservées pour le XVIII^e siècle n’ont plus que de rares points communs avec celles que nous fournissaient les registres fiscaux du XVI^e siècle.” For more on the notion of tribes, see, e.g., R. Tapper, “Anthropologists,

recent past depended very much on the season, and nomadic groups have become less and less visible in recent years. Yet even in the twenty-first century it is not uncommon, when driving on the smaller roads in the southwestern part of the country, to see families of Bakhtiyari, Qashqa'i, and other groups.

Memories of nomads making their way across the landscape in what is often deemed a “timeless” tradition have had a marked effect on many observers. One need not be a historian, or indeed have read a great deal about Safavid, Qajar, or Pahlavi era politics, to have gleaned something of the aura (if not the actual history) of the great nomadic confederacies, and to have heard stories of often brutal government attempts, during the twentieth century, to break the power of the nomadic tribes and to sedentarize them. In addition, some Western visitors to Iran have probably got tucked away, somewhere in the backs of their minds, some memory of what Herodotus said about the nomadic tribes of the Achaemenid era. Iranian nomadic groups, of course, have always operated in a very different environment from that of the north Arabian bedouin who, if anything, are better known in popular circles than their Iranian counterparts. But the sheer number of references to Iran's nomadic groups in European travel literature confirms that Western awareness of nomadism in the Iranian world is not a recent phenomenon.

Since 1973, when I made my first visit to Iran as a student, I have watched academic interest in nomadism in pre-modern Iran (and the ancient Near East more generally) grow steadily. For many years I paid relatively little attention to this issue. I did not quite ignore nomadism, but wherever I undertook fieldwork, I found myself dealing with the remains of sedentary communities and thus nomadism had no particular relevance to my own research. This situation changed in 2003, however, when Cameron A. Petrie, Lloyd R. Weeks, and I, in collaboration with archaeologists at the Iranian Center for Archaeological Research, began a research project in the Mamasani region of Fars Province,³ precisely one of those areas in which, according to some scholars, nomadic groups were supposed to have been very significant, if not dominant, in prehistoric times.

Having a real reason to engage with the literature on nomadism, I found myself at first tolerant of the view that it had been an important phenomenon in prehistoric Iran, while remaining unconvinced by the evidence said to confirm its presence. Many archaeologists have asserted that a study of contemporary or recent nomads in Iran can provide useful insights into the nature of nomadism in the remote past; that given similar ecological conditions and constraints, there is no

historians, and tribespeople on tribe and state formation in the Middle East,” in *Tribes and state formation in the Middle East*, edited by P. S. Khoury and J. Kostiner (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), 48–73; and “Change, cognition and control: The reconstruction of nomadism in Iran,” in *When history accelerates: Essays on rapid change, complexity and creativity*, edited by C. M. Hann (London: Athlone Press, 1994), 196–206.

3. D. T. Potts, K. Roustaei, C. A. Petrie, and L. R. Weeks, *The Mamasani Archaeological Project, Stage One: A report on the first two seasons of the ICAR—University of Sydney Expedition to the Mamasani District, Fars Province, Iran*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2009).

reason to suggest that land-use and economic behavior in the remote past were any different than they were in the recent, preindustrial past. Little by little, however, my reading began to suggest to me that far too many unverified assumptions, too much spurious reasoning, and an alarming ignorance of history underpinned many of the arguments made in support of the thesis that a substantial nomadic population lived in prehistoric southwestern Iran. Nor did it take long before I realized that this conflation of historically recent demographic realities with those of the past betrayed a profound ignorance of what historians of the medieval and early modern periods have always known, namely, that during the course of the past thousand years, Iran's demographic profile has changed out of all recognition from what it was in antiquity. Iranologists and Iranians themselves are well aware that large numbers of the nomads inhabiting Iran since the eleventh century have not been native Iranians, often called Tats or Tajiks, but immigrant, predominantly Turkic- and Arab-speaking nomads, Iliyats in the terminology of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature, who originated outside the country or were descendants of ones who had (see ch. 7). As John Masson Smith, Jr., wrote a number of years ago, "The last millennium of Iranian history has been what might best be called the 'Turanian period,' a time of Turkish and Mongol rule and nomad domination."⁴

Moreover, the current geographical distribution of Iran's nomadic tribes bears no relation whatsoever to any putative ancient patterns. Rather, the modern locations of nomadic groups reflect territorial allotments made and mass deportations initiated in the sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries by Safavid and Qajar rulers who moved nomadic groups around like pieces on a chessboard, with the aim of depopulating specific areas (e.g., the Ottoman frontier in Azerbaijan); punishing rebellious tribes (e.g., the Chahar Lang Bakhtiyari who were deported to Khorasan by Nader Shah); and defending border zones from attack (e.g., the northeastern frontier, where Uyghur incursions were feared). Just as Barth found that many of the tribes in the 1960s did not even exist at the time of World War I, so too is the recent distribution of nomadic groups anything but the outcome of organic processes of cultural evolution. Moreover, the growth of Iran's nomadic sector has been so great in recent centuries that, by 1800, the ratio of nomads to sedentaries in Iran stood at about 1:1, according to some estimates. The "division of Iran into two economic and cultural worlds—one the world of the sedentary village; the other, the world of the pastoral camp"⁵ may be an oversimplification, ignoring both the sedentary fishermen of the Caspian Sea, Persian Gulf, and Arabian Sea coasts and the inhabitants of the mediaeval and later urban centers, but it expresses a broad truth about Iranian demography.

4. J. M. Smith, "Turanian nomadism and Iranian politics," *IrSt* 9 (1978): 57.

5. I. Lapidus, *A history of Islamic societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 282; cf. D. Bradburd, "The influence of pastoral nomad populations on the economy and society of post-Safavid Iran," in *Nomads in the sedentary world*, edited by A. M. Khazanov and A. Wink (Richmond: Curzon, 2001), 129.

Nomadism has undeniably been an important phenomenon in Iranian history, but not in the way that most twentieth- and twenty-first-century archaeologists have envisaged it. The need to recast our understanding of nomadism in Iran, therefore, prompted me to write this book. My contention is that, far from constituting a natural adaptation on the Iranian Plateau, nomadism is a comparatively late introduction which can only be understood within the context of particular political circumstances. Since the early Holocene most, if not all, agricultural communities in Iran have kept herds (sheep and goat). But the periodic removal of those herds to higher pastures in the summer and lower ones in the winter—implying transhumance involving only a few shepherds—must not be confused with nomadism. In all cases, the communities to which those herds belonged were sedentary, and only a few of their members were required to move with the herds on a seasonal basis.⁶ Clearly entire groups were not compelled to follow a nomadic existence as a result of having herds, nor would this have been feasible when one considers the quantity of cereal harvested by early agriculturalists, not to mention the groundstone equipment needed to process it.

Something changed, however, by the time of Herodotus. This change, which may be considered the first great transformation in Iranian history, was almost certainly linked to the arrival of Iranian-speaking groups on the Iranian plateau. Not only do we see the evidence of this in Herodotus, but we find the later historians like Strabo, Polybius, and Livy, drawing on accounts from the era of Alexander and his successors, consistently alluding to the presence of nomadic groups in the region. Given their names, some of these groups must have been newcomers, Indo-Iranian speakers, while others may have been indigenous groups that were pushed off their land and, with little alternative, compelled to adopt a nomadic way of life. A few centuries later the traditions preserved about the family of Ardašir I include references to “kurds,” a generic term for nomads/herders that was in use long before it came to denote a specific linguistic group, and by the time of the Islamic conquest those references had multiplied.

The second great transformation in Iranian history began with the influx of Turkic-speaking Oghuz nomadic groups in the eleventh century. These “true” nomads of the steppe, of whom the modern Qashqa’i are perhaps their best-known descendants, began the modification of the demography of the Iranian Plateau that accelerated with the Mongol conquest. The massive and unprecedented violence of this invasion can scarcely be overestimated. In the opinion of many, it drove formerly sedentary groups in areas like Luristan out of their towns and

6. As A. M. Khazanov, *Nomads and the outside world*, 2nd ed. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994), 32, noted, “In Southwest Asia one shepherd can pasture a herd of 300–400 sheep even where the terrain is quite difficult” and although, “amongst the Bakhtiari a herd of small stock does not usually exceed 200.... Amongst the Turkmen of the not very distant past a herd of 400–800 head of small stock was tended by one shepherd and a herdsboy... [and] a flock of up to 800 head of sheep was thought to be manageable.”

villages and into the hills, effectively nomadizing a part of the formerly sedentary Iranian population.⁷

While the importance of the Turko-Mongol transformation is widely acknowledged, a third major transformation that began in the Safavid period was probably just as significant. This commenced when large numbers of largely Turkic-speaking, so-called “Qezelbash” tribes moved voluntarily from Anatolia and northern Syria to Azerbaijan, to support Shah Ismail, and then helped him conquer Iran and establish the Safavid empire. Throughout the length and breadth of the conquered Iranian territories the Qezelbash tribes were allocated pasturage. Later, entire tribes were deported from the border areas and the southern Caucasus to the more easterly parts of the country. This process, which continued under Nader Shah, Karim Khan, the Qajars, and Riza Shah, irrevocably altered the demographic profile of Iran, creating a pattern of land-use and ethnic distribution that bore absolutely no resemblance to anything in the medieval or more remote past.

Thus, what has been interpreted by some scholars as a timeless pattern of nomadic land-use is in reality, by archaeological standards of time-reckoning, really very recent. Iran’s demographic profile since the eleventh century and more particularly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has been invoked by some scholars as a proxy for ancient social and economic organization. In the following pages I shall argue that this modernist perspective distorts the historical reality of a land in which the rural population, while keeping herds, was overwhelmingly sedentary and in which most of the documented nomadic groups came originally from outside the region, mainly during the last millennium.

7. X. de Planhol, *Les Fondements géographiques de l’Histoire de l’Islam* (Paris: Flammarion, 1968), 211. Cf. J.-P. Digard, “Montagnards et nomades d’Iran: Des ‘brigands’ des Grecs aux ‘sauvages’ d’aujourd’hui,” *Dialogues d’Histoire Ancienne* 2 (1976): 265.

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Finally, my family—Hildy, Rowena, Morgan, and Hallam—has lived through the gestation of this work and heard me talk about nomadism now for almost six years. I hope the result will be of interest to them. My greatest thanks goes to my wife Hildy, however, who sustained me throughout the work on this project, helped proofread and copyedit many of the chapters after I had peppered them with revisions, and gave me the wherewithal needed to push through to completion. It is to her that I would like to dedicate this book, with deepest love and admiration. She is the only woman I have ever truly loved and she has helped me more than she will ever realize.

D.T.P.

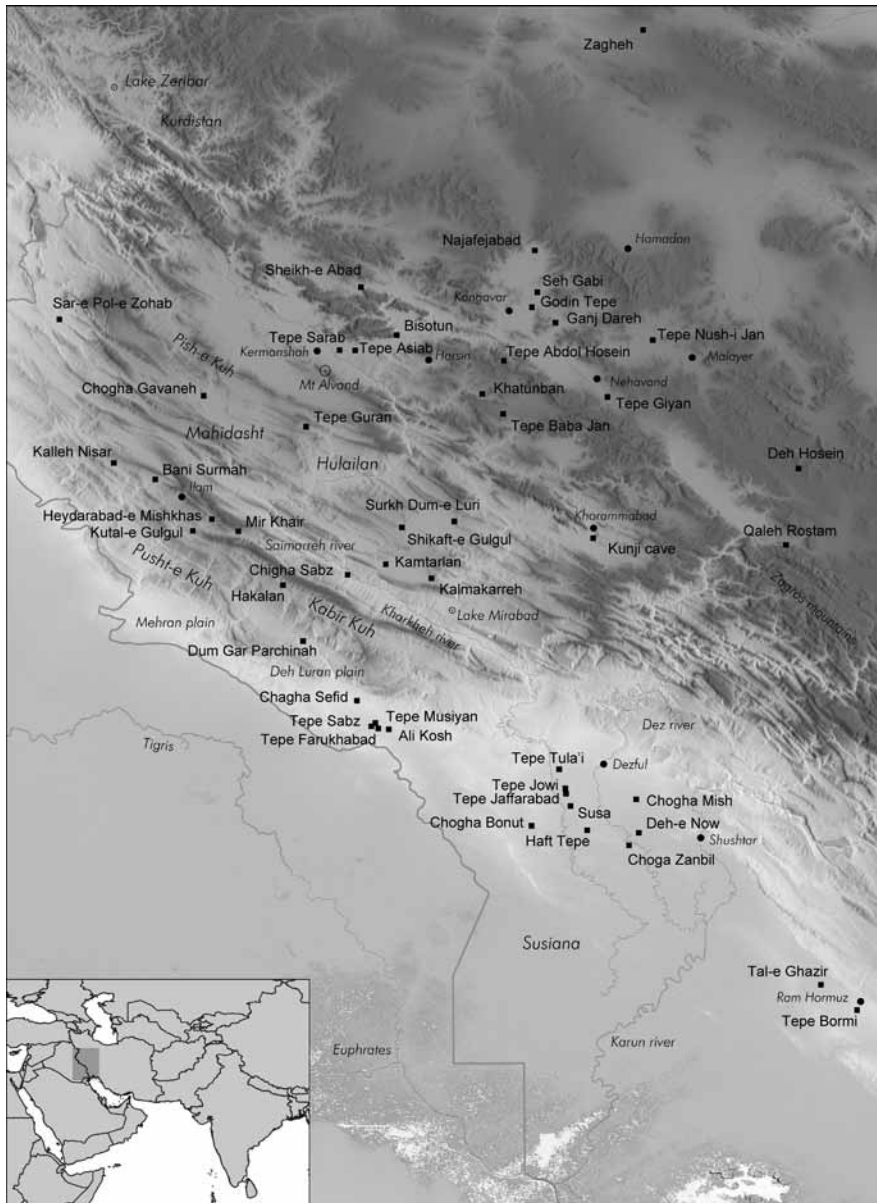
ABBREVIATIONS

AA	<i>American Anthropologist</i>
ACSS	<i>Ancient Civilizations from Scythia to Siberia</i>
AfO	<i>Archiv für Orientforschung</i>
AIUON	<i>Annali dell'Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli</i>
AJA	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
AJSL	<i>American Journal of Semitic Languages</i>
AKGWG	<i>Abhandlungen der Königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, phil-hist. Klasse, Neue Folge</i>
Akk.	<i>Akkadian</i>
AMI(T)	<i>Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran (und Turan)</i>
ANES	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Studies</i>
AOASH	<i>Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae</i>
AOAT	<i>Alter Orient und Altes Testament</i>
AoF	<i>Altorientalische Forschungen</i>
AOS	<i>American Oriental Series</i>
Arm.	<i>Armenian</i>
ArOr	<i>Archiv Orientální</i>
ASJ	<i>Acta Sumerologica (Japan)</i>
Av.	<i>Avestan</i>
BAI	<i>Bulletin of the Asia Institute</i>
BaM	<i>Baghdader Mitteilungen</i>
BAR	<i>British Archaeological Reports International Series</i>
BBVO	<i>Berliner Beiträge zum Vorderen Orient</i>
BJMES	<i>British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies</i>
BJVF	<i>Berliner Jahrbuch für Vor- und Frühgeschichte</i>
BSOAS	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</i>
CA	<i>Current Anthropology</i>
CHI	<i>Cambridge History of Iran</i>
CII	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum</i>
CQ	<i>The Classical Quarterly</i>
CRAIBL	<i>Comptes-rendus de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles lettres</i>

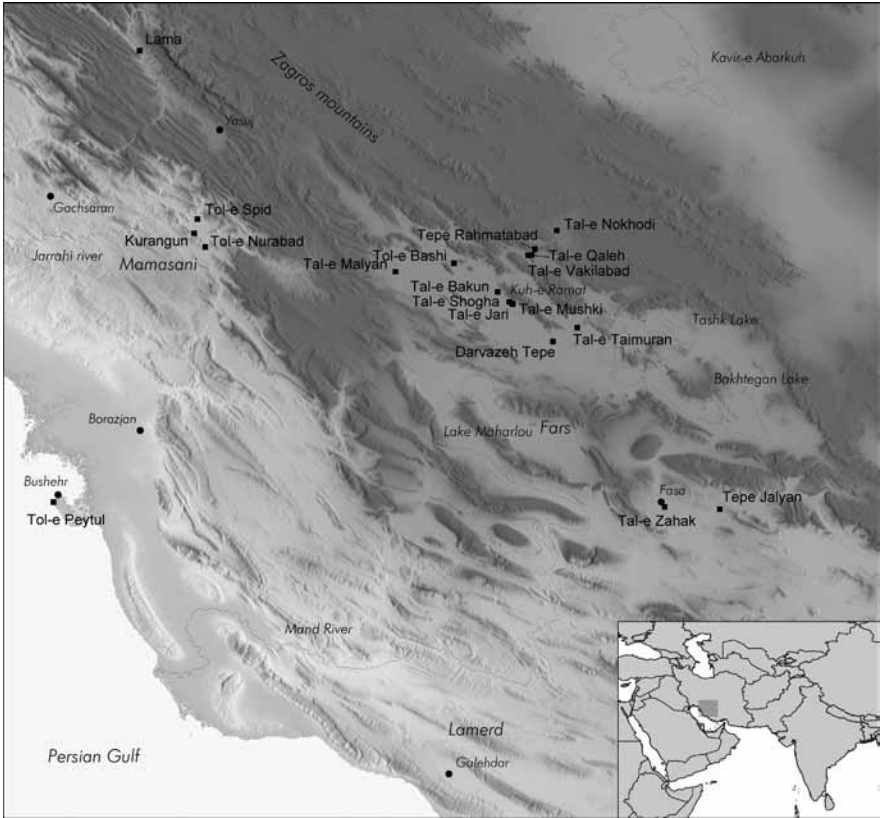
DÖAW	<i>Denkschriften der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, philosophische-historische Klasse</i>
DOP	<i>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</i>
EA	<i>Eurasia Antiqua</i>
EI ¹	<i>Encyclopaedia of Islam, 1st ed.</i>
EI ²	<i>Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2nd ed.</i>
El.	<i>Elamite</i>
EnIrOE	<i>Encyclopaedia Iranica Online Edition</i>
EW	<i>East and West</i>
Ger.	<i>German</i>
GJ	<i>Geographical Journal</i>
Gr.	<i>Greek</i>
HANEM	<i>History of the Ancient Near East Monograph</i>
HdO	<i>Handbuch der Orientalistik</i>
HJAS	<i>Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies</i>
HSCP	<i>Harvard Studies in Classical Philology</i>
IF	<i>Indogermanische Forschungen</i>
IJMES	<i>International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies</i>
IrAnt	<i>Iranica Antiqua</i>
IrC	<i>Iran and the Caucasus</i>
IrSt	<i>Iranian Studies</i>
IsMEO	<i>Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente</i>
JA	<i>Journal Asiatique</i>
JAA	<i>Journal of Anthropological Archaeology</i>
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JAS	<i>Journal of Archaeological Science</i>
JCS	<i>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</i>
JESHO	<i>Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient</i>
JESL	<i>Journal of the Ethnological Society of London</i>
JFA	<i>Journal of Field Archaeology</i>
JHI	<i>Journal of the History of Ideas</i>
JHS	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
JIAAA	<i>Journal of Inner Asian Art and Archaeology</i>
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
JPASB	<i>Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal N.S.</i>
JRAI	<i>Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland</i>
JRAS	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</i>
JRCAS	<i>Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society</i>
JRGS	<i>Journal of the Royal Geographical Society</i>
JSAI	<i>Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam</i>
JWH	<i>Journal of World History</i>
Lat.	<i>Latin</i>
LED	<i>Luristan Excavation Documents</i>
MDOG	<i>Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft</i>

MEJ	<i>The Middle East Journal</i>
MERIP	<i>Middle East Research and Information Project</i>
MES	<i>Middle Eastern Studies</i>
MP	<i>Middle Persian</i>
NINO	<i>Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten</i>
NZ	<i>Numismatische Zeitschrift</i>
OIP	<i>Oriental Institute Publication</i>
OJA	<i>Oxford Journal of Archaeology</i>
OLA	<i>Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta</i>
OLZ	<i>Orientalistische Literaturzeitung</i>
OP	<i>Old Persian</i>
Or	<i>Orientalia</i>
Pahl.	<i>Pahlavi</i>
PASARI	<i>Proceedings of the Annual Symposium on Archaeological Research in Iran</i> , edited by F. Bagherzadeh. Tehran: Iranian Center for Archaeological Research.
PBA	<i>Proceedings of the British Academy</i>
PBf	<i>Prähistorische Bronzefunde</i>
PNAS	<i>Proceedings of the National Academy of Science</i>
PRGS	<i>Proceedings of the Royal Geographic Society</i>
RE	<i>Pauly-Wissowa Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i>
RÉA	<i>Revue des Études Arméniennes</i>
RGTC	<i>Répertoire Géographique des Textes Cunéiformes</i>
RIA	<i>Reallexikon der Assyriologie</i>
SAA	<i>State Archives of Assyria</i>
SEL	<i>Studi Epigrafici e Linguistici sul Vicino Oriente</i>
SKAW	<i>Sitzungsberichte der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften (Wien), philosophische-historische Classe</i>
SKBAW	<i>Sitzungsberichte der Königlichen Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, philosophische-historische Klasse</i>
SKPAW	<i>Sitzungsberichte der Königlichen Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, philosophische-historische Klasse</i>
ŠKZ	<i>Shapur I trilingual inscription on the Ka'ba-ye Zardosht at Naqsh-e Rostam</i>
SMEA	<i>Studi Micenei ed Egeo-Anatolici</i>
SÖAW	<i>Sitzungsberichte der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, philosophische-historische Klasse</i>
Sogd.	<i>Sogdian</i>
SOR	<i>Serie Orientalia Roma</i>
SRAA	<i>Silk Road Art and Archaeology</i>
StIr	<i>Studia Iranica</i>
StIs	<i>Studia Islamica</i>
SWJA	<i>Southwestern Journal of Anthropology</i>
Syr.	<i>Syriac</i>

<i>TAVO</i>	<i>Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients</i>
<i>TPS</i>	<i>Transactions of the Philological Society</i>
<i>TŠ</i>	<i>Toḥfe-ye Šāhī</i> (M. Künke, <i>Nomadenstämme in Persien im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert</i> . Islamkundliche Untersuchungen 151. Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1991)
<i>VB</i>	<i>Vorderasiatische Bibliothek</i>
<i>VNK</i>	<i>Veröffentlichungen der Numismatischen Kommission</i>
<i>VzI</i>	<i>Veröffentlichungen zur Iranistik</i>
<i>WVDOG</i>	<i>Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen der Deutschen Orient- Gesellschaft</i>
<i>WZKM</i>	<i>Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes</i>
<i>ZA</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Assyriologie</i>
<i>ZDMG</i>	<i>Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft</i>
<i>ZII</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Indologie und Iranistik</i>



Map 2 Prehistoric archaeological sites in western Iran



Map 3 Prehistoric archaeological sites in Fars

Nomadism

Concepts and Archaeological Evidence

INTRODUCTION

In common parlance the term “nomad” is applied to backpackers, members of motorcycle clubs, and retirees who live for years on end in camper vans, traveling wherever and whenever the spirit moves them. Even though it is not uncommon in the scientific literature to read of mobile hunter-gatherers, such as Australian Aboriginal groups, leading a “nomadic” existence,¹ and of birds and mammals that are “nomadic,”² nomadism should not be confused with mobility.³ Anthropological discussions of nomadism, at least in Eurasia, have gradually come to exclude hunter-gatherers and fishers, reserving the term instead for mobile herders or *pastoral* nomads,⁴ just as Aristotle did when he first defined nomadism over two thousand years ago. The Greek root *nem-* (νέμω-) and the verb *nemein* (νέμειν), meaning “assign” or “allocate”—in reference to food or other goods distributed among people and of putting livestock out to pasture—were highly productive, and to them we owe the nouns *nomos* (νομός), meaning an “assignment of pasture to cattle, and more generally the habitat... of a community, with its cattle,” and *nomas* (pl. *nomades*), meaning “primarily a herder

1. R. Broadhurst, “Aborigines and crime in Australia,” *Crime and Justice* 21 (1997): 439.

2. e.g., O. Löfgren, B. Hörnfeldt, and B.-G. Carlsson, “Site tenacity and nomadism in Tengmalm’s owl (*Aegolius funereus* (L.)) in relation to cyclic food production,” *Oecologia* 69 (1986): 321–326; or C. R. Allen and D. A. Saunders, “Multimodel inference and the understanding of complexity, discontinuity, and nomadism,” *Ecosystems* 9 (2006): 694–699.

3. For an attempt to discuss mobility as an independent variable, see R. Symanski, I. R. Manners, and R. J. Bromley, “The mobile–sedentary continuum,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 65/3 (1975): 461–471.

4. Cf. P. Honigsheim, “Max Weber as historian of agriculture and rural life,” *Agricultural History* 23/3 (1949): 180 and 181 n. 2, who used the term “animal husbandry nomadism,” a direct and somewhat clumsy translation of the German “Viehzüchternomadismus.” R. Tapper, review of A. M. Khazanov, *Nomads and the outside world*, *BSOAS* 49 (1986): 245 criticized Khazanov for taking a “narrow economic view of nomads, finding only their pastoralism of theoretical interest and playing down or ignoring the cultural implications of their mobility and their tents.”

of cattle, and... secondarily a migratory herder without defined... pasture-land.”⁵ Greek colonists saw and interacted with nomadic groups in the circum-Pontic region—principally Scythians,⁶ Sauromatians, and Sarmatians⁷—and in the fifth century B.C. both Herodotus⁸ and Ps.-Hippocrates⁹ described Scythian nomads at length. It was, however, Aristotle (384–322 B.C.) who produced the first general characterization of nomads when he wrote, “there are wide differences of life among mankind. The idlest men are nomads [νομάδες], for to procure food from domesticated animals involves no toil or industry, but as it is necessary for the herds to move from place to place because of the pastures, the people themselves are forced to follow along with them, as though they were farming a live farm.”¹⁰

For our purposes, the main economic features of pastoral nomadism in pre-modern Iran were:

1. the paramount economic role of herding;
2. the extensive nature of herd-maintenance strategies and free-range grazing without the use of stables or the accumulation, storage, and transport of fodder;
3. periodic mobility within or between certain pre-determined grazing territories;
4. the participation of the vast majority of the group in seasonal migration;

5. J. L. Myres, “Nomadism,” *JRAI* 71 (1941): 20. Cf. the detailed study by E. Laroche, *Histoire de la racine νεμ- en grec ancien (νέμω, νέμεσις, νόμος, νομιζω)* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1949) and H. Frisk, *Griechisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1960), 2:302–304.

6. K. Neumann, *Die Hellenen im Skythenlande: Ein Beitrag zur alten Geographie, Ethnographie und Handelsgeschichte*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1855); E. H. Minns, *Scythians and Greeks: A survey of ancient history and archaeology on the north coast of the Euxine from the Danube to the Caucasus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913); D. Braund, *Scythians and Greeks: Cultural interaction in Scythia, Athens and the early Roman empire (sixth century BC–first century AD)* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2005); E. Petropoulos, *Hellenic colonization in Euxine Pontos: Early establishment, and the problem of the ‘emporion’ revisited*, BAR Int Ser 1934 (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2005).

7. M. G. Moshkova, “A brief review of the history of the Sauromatian and Sarmatian tribes,” in *Nomads of the Eurasian Steppes in the early Iron Age*, edited by J. Davis-Kimball, V. A. Bashilov, and L. T. Yablonsky (Berkeley, CA: Zinat Press, 1995), 85–87.

8. *Hist.* 4. Cf., in general, F. Hartog, *Le Miroir d’Hérodote* (Paris: Gallimard, 1980), esp. 207–219, “La Question du nomadisme.”

9. “There live those Scythians which are called nomades, because they have no houses, but live in wagons... In these wagons the women live, but the men are carried about on horses, and the sheep, oxen, and horses accompany them; and they remain on any spot as long as there is provender for their cattle, and when that fails they migrate to some other place” (*On airs, waters and places* 18; trans. C. D. Adams, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0248%3Atext%3Djusj>).

10. *Politics* 1: 1256a.

5. the orientation of most economic effort toward primary subsistence, rather than production for the market.¹¹

Throughout history, social institutions have varied widely across the spectrum of nomadic societies,¹² but the constellation of mobility,¹³ temporary, portable shelters (often in the form of tents), and having herds is generally constant. While these premises may not apply in all circumstances,¹⁴ they work well in the Iranian context and will be followed here in order to distinguish pastoral nomadism from other economic patterns such as:

semi-nomadic pastoralism, defined as “extensive pastoralism and the periodic changing of pastures during the course of the entire, or the greater part of the year” but which also involves “agriculture in a secondary and supplementary capacity”;¹⁵

11. A. M. Khazanov, *Nomads and the outside world*, 2nd ed. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994), 16.

12. Cf. A. M. Khazanov, “Specific characteristics of Chalcolithic and Bronze Age pastoralism in the Near East,” in *Nomads, tribes, and the state in the ancient Near East: Cross-disciplinary perspectives*, edited by J. Szuchman, Oriental Institute Seminars 5 (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 2009), 119–120: “Social organization. . . is based on kinship, and, in the case of the nomads of the Eurasian steppes and the Near and Middle East, also on various segmentary systems and genealogies, whether real or spurious.” R. Dyson-Hudson and N. Dyson-Hudson noted: “Recent studies clearly demonstrate that among groups who are principally dependent on livestock, and for whom spatial mobility is regularly employed as a survival strategy, there is an enormous variability in herd management strategies, in social organization, in land tenure, degree of dependence on agricultural products, interactions with outside groups, differentiation of tasks by sex and age, etc.” (“Nomadic pastoralism,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 9 (1980): 16).

13. While seasonal movement is principally dictated by the need to shift livestock from summer to winter pastures and vice versa, it also provides a means of avoiding areas of disease and insects, conflicts with other groups, and political authorities bent on taxation and/or conscription. See Dyson-Hudson and Dyson-Hudson, “Nomadic pastoralism,” 17–18.

14. Africanists, for example, find some of the parameters “too tightly drawn for the African circumstances.” See R. Oliver, review of A. M. Khazanov, *Nomads and the Outside World*, *Journal of African History* 27/2 (1986): 406. Cf. B. Spooner, “Towards a generative model of nomadism,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 44/3 (1971): 202.

15. Khazanov, *Nomads*, 19. The cultivation of crops by nomadic tribes, in particular, became much more widespread in Iran during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (see below). J.-P. Digard described the Bakhtiyari of the mid-twentieth century as semi-nomadic because groups moved, each year, according to an unchanging itinerary, from one summer to one winter camping area; “Il ne s’agit donc pas de nomadisme au vrai sens du terme (qui suppose, en principe, l’absence pure et simple de résidence) mais plutôt de mouvements entre plusieurs résidences, toujours les mêmes, où l’on séjourne plusieurs mois—c’est d’ailleurs cet élément, joint à d’autres (notamment au déplacement du groupe en son entier, pour éviter toute confusion avec la transhumance), qui caractérise le ‘semi-nomadisme’” (“Campements Baxtiyari: Observations d’un ethnologue sur des matériaux intéressants l’archéologie,” *StIr* 4/1 (1975): 118).

semi-sedentary pastoralism, defined as a pattern in which “agriculture plays the predominant role in the general economic balance” but in which “seasonal migrations and/or separate, primarily pastoral groups and families” involved in short migrations, both in time and space, occur;¹⁶ *yaylag pastoralism*, from Turkish *yaylāq*, ‘summer [highland] pasture.’¹⁷ As Khazanov stressed,

Yaylag pastoralism enables people occupied with agriculture in specific ecological zones to use other areas as seasonal pastures when they are at their most productive. During one part of the year the livestock is kept in mountain pastures and during the other parts is driven to lower zones [i.e., to winter pastures, or *qishlāq*]. In Western anthropology *yaylag* pastoralism more or less corresponds to the notion of transhumance. . . . However . . . many scholars often confuse transhumance with vertical variants of pastoral nomadism and semi-nomadic pastoralism; in doing this they ignore, on the one hand, the etymology of the term [Spanish *transhumancia*] which comes from Spanish and was first used to describe specific forms of pastoralism in the Pyrenees, Alps and other mountainous regions of Europe . . . and, on the other hand, the more essential fact that the vertical movement of livestock in itself signifies not a form of pastoral economy, but only some of its separate characteristics;¹⁸

herdsman husbandry or *distant-pastures husbandry*—described as a “situation in which the majority of the population leads a sedentary life and is occupied for the most part with agriculture, while the livestock or, more often, some of it, is maintained all year round on pastures, sometimes quite far from the settlement, and tended by herdsman especially assigned to this task.”¹⁹

Without population and herding statistics, it is often impossible to distinguish between semi-nomadic and semi-sedentary pastoralism, and many scholars consider the effort to make such a distinction pointless.²⁰ It is certainly not my intention to try to classify different groups in Iran along such lines. However, for the purposes of this study, the principles are fairly clear when it comes to defining what is meant in an Iranian context by pastoral nomadism, and in many cases written allusions to specific groups are specific enough to make it clear when

16. Khazanov, *Nomads*, 21–22.

17. J. Paul, “Nomaden in persischen Quellen,” *Orientwissenschaftliche Hefte* 3 (2002): 51.

18. Khazanov, *Nomads*, 23.

19. *Ibid.*, 22.

20. Dyson-Hudson and Dyson-Hudson, for example, have termed efforts “to classify these patterns of livestock movements into categories such as ‘transhumant,’ ‘semisedentary,’ ‘nomadic,’ etc. . . . an intellectually sterile enterprise” (“Nomadic pastoralism,” 18).

a nomadic group was semi-nomadic, like certain Bakhtiyari with agricultural holdings in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century; semi-sedentary, like certain Türkmen groups described in the mid- and late nineteenth century; or practitioners of *yalag* pastoralism, like most of the Mongol and Turkic groups, from the Saljuq through the Pahlavi era. Herdsman husbandry is a term that aptly characterizes most of the pre-first-millennium B.C. past, while production for the market, explicitly excluded above as a feature of “true” pastoral nomadism, grew during the nineteenth and twentieth century as the demand for taxes in cash rather than in kind grew and nomadic groups exploited an obvious mechanism for acquiring the funds necessary to fulfill their fiscal obligations.²¹

NOMADISM IN IRANIAN PREHISTORY?

Since the early Holocene epoch (c. 8000 B.C.), Iran has been a land of sedentary communities occupying villages and eventually towns and cities. In fact, however, sedentism based on intensive hunting and gathering, followed by agriculture but without pottery, is attested at a small but growing number of aceramic Neolithic sites,²² such as Tepe Guran,²³ Ganj Dareh,²⁴ Tepe Abdul Hosein,²⁵ Tepe Faizollah, Tappeh Chena, Sar Asiaban,²⁶ and Jani²⁷ in Luristan; Chogha Kulaman and Fasil

21. When Spooner wrote, “I define nomads as pastoral nomads” and “‘Pastoral’ and ‘pastoralism’ pertain exclusively to direct or indirect subsistence from the products of domesticated animals (primary products would be meat, blood, milk, hair, wool, hides, and secondary products—butter, cheese, ghee, cloth, rugs; by indirect subsistence I mean subsistence *via* a market economy)” (“Towards a generative model of nomadism,” 199) and further “most Middle Eastern nomads lay greater emphasis on the production of a marketable surplus of pastoral products, which they then trade for the greater part of their non-pastoral needs” (202), this really only applied in Iran to nomads from the nineteenth century onward.

22. For a recent overview, see L. R. Weeks, “The development and expansion of a Neolithic way of life,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Ancient Iran*, edited by D. T. Potts (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 50–53.

23. J. Meldgaard, P. Mortensen, and H. Thrane, “Excavations at Tepe Guran, Luristan,” *Acta Archaeologica* 34 (1964): 97–133.

24. P. E. L. Smith, “Reflections on four seasons of excavations at Tappeh Ganj Dareh,” *PASARI* 4 (1976): 11–22.

25. J. Pullar, *Tepe Abdul Hosein: A Neolithic site in western Iran, Excavations 1978*, BAR Int Ser 563 (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 1990).

26. P. Mortensen, “A survey of early prehistoric sites in the Holailān Valley in Lorestān,” *PASARI* 2 (1974): 34–52.

27. K. Abdi, “The early development of pastoralism in the Central Zagros mountains,” *Journal of World Prehistory* 17 (2003): 395–448; R. Matthews, Y. Mohammadifar, W. Matthews, and A. Motarjem, “Investigating the Early Neolithic of western Iran: The Central Zagros Archaeological Project (CZAP),” *Antiquity* 84/323 (2009): Project Gallery.

near Mehran;²⁸ Tepe Ali Kosh in Deh Luran;²⁹ Chogha Bonut in eastern Khuzestan;³⁰ Tepe Rahmatabad in Fars;³¹ Tell-e Atashi in Kerman;³² and Sang-e Chakhmaq in Semnan.³³ Sedentarization was an unavoidable consequence of intensive wild cereal collection by late Pleistocene and early Holocene hunters and gathers. Experimental wild wheat harvests have demonstrated that a nuclear family is capable of harvesting 1 metric ton or more of grain in three weeks, more than it could consume in a full year.³⁴ When the physical bulk of the harvested cereals is added to the weight and bulk of the groundstone equipment needed to process them, it becomes clear that enormous, inexorable pressure to limit group movement was generated by a regime of intensive gathering and this pressure only increased once communities began to practice agriculture. There was simply too much equipment and agricultural produce on hand for groups to continue to be mobile.

At the same time, however, villagers in Iran have kept herds since the domestication of sheep and goat, nearly 10,000 years ago,³⁵ and the introduction of cattle about 8,000 years ago.³⁶ About forty years ago archaeologists began suggesting that nomadic groups could be identified in the prehistoric and Bronze Age archaeological record of Iran. Over time nomadism has become a cardinal element in

28. H. Darabi and H. Fazeli, "The Neolithic of the Mehran plain: An introduction," *Antiquity* 83/322 (2009): Project Gallery.

29. F. Hole, K. V. Flannery, and J. A. Neely, *Prehistory and human ecology of the Deh Luran Plain: An early village sequence from Khuzistan, Iran*, *Memoirs of the Museum of Anthropology* 1 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1969).

30. A. Alizadeh, *Excavations at the prehistoric mound of Chogha Bonut, Khuzestan, Iran: Seasons 1976/77, 1977/78, and 1996*, OIP 120 (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 2003).

31. R. Bernbeck, S. Pollock, and H. Fazeli Nashli, "Rahmatabad: Dating the aceramic Neolithic in Fars province, Iran," *Neo-Lithics* 1/8 (2008): 37–39.

32. O. Garazhian, "Darestan: A group of Pre-Pottery Neolithic (PPN) sites in south-eastern Iran," *Antiquity* 83/319 (2009): Project Gallery.

33. C. P. Thornton, "Sang-e Chakhmaq," *Enlroe* (2010).

34. J. Harlan, "A wild wheat harvest in Turkey," *Archaeology* 20/3 (1967): 197–201; K. V. Flannery, "Origin and ecological effects of early domestication in Iran and the Near East," in *The domestication and exploitation of plants and animals*, edited by P. Ucko and G. Dimbleby (London: Duckworth, 1972), 80.

35. M. A. Zeder, "A metrical analysis of a collection of modern goats (*Capra hircus aegargus* and *C. h. hircus*) from Iran and Iraq: Implications for the study of caprine domestication," *JAS* 28 (2001): 61–79; "Domestication and early agriculture in the Mediterranean Basin: Origins, diffusion, and impact," *PNAS* 105/33 (2008): 11597–11604; M. A. Zeder and B. Hesse, "The initial domestication of goats (*Capra hircus*) in the Zagros mountains 10,000 years ago," *Science* 287 (2000): 2254–2257; D. E. MacHugh and D. G. Bradley, "Livestock genetic origins: Goats buck the trend," *PNAS* 98/10 (2001): 5382–5384.

36. R. W. Redding, "First report on faunal remains," in *Excavations at the prehistoric mound of Chogha Bonut, Khuzestan, Iran: Seasons 1976/77, 1977/78, and 1996*, by A. Alizadeh, OIP 120 (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 2003), 137–148.

scholarly treatments of prehistoric Iran. Moreover, nomadic groups, we have recently been told, were not merely present in the past. Rather, they accounted for the dominant mode of production. Rejecting the predominance of agriculture over herding, it has been alleged that “in southwestern and south-central Iran, settled farming villages were fully integrated into the nomadic pastoral economy and... farming villages became direct economic dependencies of the pastoral confederacies.”³⁷ Further, it has been suggested that a “diachronic analysis of the archaeology and history of southwestern and south-central Iranian plateau suggests the important role of the region’s mobile pastoralists in state formation.”³⁸

The challenge for those who hold such views, or who wish to persuade others of their veracity, is to marshal evidence of nomads in the archaeological record of Iran. Yet, as Elizabeth Bacon observed in 1954, “Since nomads leave few remains for the archaeologist to study, and the Asian pastoralists were late in acquiring writing, any attempt to reconstruct the development of Asiatic pastoral nomadism in its varying aspects must necessarily be inferential, and to some extent speculative.”³⁹ Almost half a century later, Tony Wilkinson observed that, “despite the large number of enthusiastic references to the importance of the nomadic element, they continue to be underrecognized in the survey record... Although considerable advances have been made in recent years in locating nomadic settlements, it is still extremely difficult to recognize, estimate, and date these with any precision.”⁴⁰ There is no denying that the existence of nomadism in prehistoric Iran has often been asserted. There has been, however, little attempt to test those assertions through a critical examination of the evidence adduced by their proponents in order to determine whether nomadism in the archaeological record of Iran is real or imaginary. The remainder of this chapter is devoted to an assessment of the published instances of alleged nomadism in Iranian prehistory, chronologically and by region, from the Neolithic through the Bronze Age.

37. A. Alizadeh, “Prehistoric mobile pastoralists in south-central and southwestern Iran,” in *Nomads, tribes, and the state in the ancient Near East: Cross-disciplinary perspectives*, edited by J. Szuchman, *Oriental Institute Seminars 5* (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 2009), 129. The notion of “confederacies” is a direct (and anachronistic) reflection of the influence of the Bakhtiyari and Khamseh of the late nineteenth and twentieth century. See chs. 8–9 for details.

38. Alizadeh, “Prehistoric mobile pastoralists,” 130.

39. E. E. Bacon, “Types of pastoral nomadism in Central and Southwest Asia,” *SWJA* 10 (1954): 44.

40. T. J. Wilkinson, “Archaeological survey and long-term population trends in Upper Mesopotamia and Iran,” in *Yeki bud, yeki nabud: Essays on the archaeology of Iran in honor of William M. Sumner*, edited by N. F. Miller and K. Abdi, *Cotsen Institute of Archaeology Monograph 48* (Los Angeles: Cotsen Institute of Archaeology, University of California, 2003), 50.

THE NEOLITHIC

Northern Khuzestan

In May 1973, Frank Hole spent nearly two weeks (May 7–18, 1973) excavating the small site of Tepe Tula'i, c. 15 km. south of Andimeshk in northern Khuzestan. With a diameter of c. 60 m, the site stood 1.5 m above the surrounding plain and comprised 2.6 m of archaeological deposits. Hole's principal aims were as follows: "1) obtain a stratified series of artifacts to use for relative dating in comparison with other sites; 2) obtain a series of animal bones and seeds, both of which would expand our knowledge of early subsistence practices, especially of their variation among sites; 3) take advantage of a leveled area to obtain broad horizontal exposures of architecture; and 4) obtain charcoal for C-14 dating."⁴¹ Although quantities of pottery, stone tools, groundstone, and animal bones were recovered, the absence of standing architecture, apart from some alignments of large river cobbles, was noteworthy. Of apparently greater interest to the excavator than the architecture, stratigraphy, and finds recovered were the insights of Hole's Lur workmen who told him that

The stones were the *chul* or platform on which bedding is placed in a tent or *Koola*, a summer shelter built of poles and reeds.... The men we employed had camped in this very area themselves in years past, using structures identical to the ones we were digging.... When I asked where the rocks to make the *chul* came from, the men said that they could be found along the Karkheh river, some 4–6 kms distant.... The men also discussed their diets in years past. Formerly they ate little grain, obtaining most of their flour from acorns which were harvested in the mountains and stored for use during the year.⁴²

41. F. Hole, "Tepe Tula'i, an early campsite in Khuzistan, Iran," *Paléorient* 2 (1974): 219.

42. In addition to the ancient sources mentioning the grinding of acorns by the Kossaeans (Diodorus 19.19.3), we have the testimony of travelers like William Hedges who recorded in his diary for January 30, 1686, written at Aslan Chesmesi in northwestern Iran, "Here I saw bread made of Acorns and Barley." See R. Barlow and Col. H. Yule, *The diary of William Hedges, Esq. (afterwards Sir William Hedges), during his agency in Bengal, as well as on his voyage out and return overland (1681–1687)* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1887), 1:216. Cf. Baron de Bode, "Extracts from a journal kept while travelling, in January, 1841, through the country of the Mamáseni and Khógilú (Bakhtiyári), situated between Kázerún and Behbehan," *JRGS* 13 (1843): 97–98, describing the messenger of a Bakhtiyari chief whose "only provision for the journey was a bag filled with the moist flour or raw paste of the acorn.... In the Bakhtiyári mountains it forms the principal food of the wandering tribes. Their women gather the acorns as they drop ripe from the trees, and bruise them between two stones in order to extract the bitter juice, they then wash and dry the flour in the sun, and this is the whole process. They bake the cakes of it or eat the paste raw, and find it very palatable and nutritious." See also E. R. Durand, *An autumn tour in western Persia* (Westminster: Archibald Constable & Co. Ltd., 1902), 217; W. Floor, *Agriculture in Qajar Iran* (Washington, DC: Mage Publishers, 2003), 148. Note also the Bakhtiyari "Song of the acorn" recorded by D. L. R. Lorimer, "The popular verse of the Bakhtiári of S.W. Persia—II: Specimens of Bakhtiári verse," *BSOAS* 17/1 (1955): 110.

I inquired what the mortars were used for and they said, “for smashing spices and salt.” The few mortars we found in the site may well have been used for the same purpose.⁴³

Turning to the animal remains, Hole noted that Jane Wheeler (Pires-Ferreira) had identified 95% of the 9,210 excavated animal bones as goat, sheep, or gazelle. He speculated that, as goats would have been outside of their natural habitat at Tepe Tula'i, the identification of the site as a herding camp seemed likely. Judging from the ceramics recovered, the site dated to c. 6200–5900 B.C. and was, in Hole's opinion, a “campsite of pastoralists.” Its existence at this date, in the ceramic Neolithic, suggested to him

that some pastoral peoples were detached from farming villages rather earlier than most archaeologists had expected. We do not know as yet how far these people may have ranged from the agricultural plains but... the pastoralists must have journeyed seasonally at least into the lower reaches of the Zagros mountains... Thus it seems highly likely that patterns of transhumance which took people and their herds from the Khuzistan plain into the pastures and forests of the mountains seasonally were already developed in the seventh millennium.⁴⁴

Two years after Hole's report appeared, Wheeler published her own, detailed report on the Tepe Tula'i fauna in the same journal. After an exhaustive analysis of the material and, in particular, of the ages at death of the specimens, Wheeler concluded that the animals kept at Tepe Tula'i constituted a “fallow herd” of “non-lactating females, breeding males, subadult males and females and old animals,” which are typically “pastured at herding camps located up to several days journey from the village.” She noted, “The advantages of this system are to prevent overgrazing in the area immediately surrounding the village while maintaining some animals in the area for immediate utilization,” and she concluded,

The almost total absence of animals under 1 year of age at this site is unique and seems to be explicable only in this framework. Given the fact that goats in this area give birth during every month of the year, only the absence or near absence of pregnant and lactating females in the herd could produce such a survivorship curve. The composition of modern pastoral nomad herds includes pregnant and lactating females and their young producing an entirely different survivorship curve from that recorded for Tepe Tula'i... Thus it seems clear from the faunal remains that the campsite at Tepe Tula'i was a village based fallow herd campsite and not a true pastoral nomad camp.⁴⁵

43. Hole, “Tepe Tula'i,” 227.

44. *Ibid.*, 236.

45. J. (Wheeler) Pires-Ferreira, “Tepe Tula'i: Faunal remains from an early campsite in Khuzistan, Iran,” *Paléorient* 3 (1975–77): 270.

At a School of American Research seminar held in November 1975, Hole expanded on the subject of nomadism in Iran. Reporting on the results of “several months” spent visiting nomad camps and carrying out an archaeological survey of their territories in Luristan in the spring of 1973, Hole was silent on Wheeler’s evaluation of the faunal evidence that directly contradicted his own interpretation of the site. Instead, he noted simply, “The actual archaeological evidence of pastoralism is meager. Only one excavated site, Tepe Tula’i in Khuzistan, Iran, has been identified as the camp of nomads.”⁴⁶ Further on, under the subheading “Another Look at Origins,” he suggested, “pastoralism may be as old as agriculture and may have arisen quite separately from it in some favorable locations,”⁴⁷ but he qualified this by noting,

Herding in early prehistory was probably not clearly distinguished from settled agriculture, on the one hand, and migratory hunting and gathering, on the other. . . . people took advantage of local circumstances and retained a great deal of flexibility in their adaptation year by year and generation by generation. Specialized forms of pastoral nomadism which involve long treks through chiefly grazing land, and consequently require inputs of agricultural products, are probably a relatively late development whose origins have yet to be documented.⁴⁸

In 1976 Hole presented his findings at the 75th annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association in a symposium entitled *Ethnoarchaeology: Implications of Ethnography for Archaeology*. There he noted, “It took only one day’s work to show conclusively that we were dealing with a nomad camp. Our workmen, former nomads themselves, testified to that point” and went on to hail the site as “a notable refutation of the idea that ancient nomad camps cannot be found and identified.”⁴⁹ In her role as discussant in the symposium, Patty Jo Watson, herself the author of a major ethnoarchaeological work on western Iran,⁵⁰ characterized Hole’s paper, and some of his recent publications, as “an ethnoarchaeological attack on the problem of the origins of pastoralism in western Asia.”⁵¹ She unhesitatingly referred to the “success of his project” and

46. F. Hole, “Pastoral nomadism in Western Iran,” in *Explorations in ethnoarchaeology*, edited by R. A. Gould (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1978), 137.

47. *Ibid.*, 159.

48. *Ibid.*, 160.

49. F. Hole, “Rediscovering the past in the present: Ethnoarchaeology in Luristan, Iran,” in *Ethnoarchaeology: Implications of ethnography for archaeology*, edited by C. Kramer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 210–211.

50. P. J. Watson, *Archaeological ethnography in Western Iran*, Viking Fund Publications in Anthropology 57 (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1979).

51. P. J. Watson, “The idea of ethnoarchaeology: Notes and comments,” in *Ethnoarchaeology: Implications of ethnography for archaeology*, edited by C. Kramer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 278.

called it “an excellent example of the possible rewards resulting from the practice of ethnoarchaeology in a region where cultural continuities are numerous and extraordinarily long-lived.”⁵² To Watson’s mind Hole’s work was so persuasive that she wrote, “It used to be thought that pastoral nomadism was much more recent than the earliest agricultural or horticultural communities because all known pastoral nomads are rather heavily dependent on village farmers. However, recent evidence suggests that transhumance, and true pastoralism as well, may be very nearly as old as the village farming community.”⁵³

Three years later Hole made a further presentation of his ethnographic work in Luristan in which the excavations at Tepe Tula’i were somewhat recast. He wrote, “I was able to test the proposition that herding camps were distinct and separate from villages at the end of the seventh millennium,”⁵⁴ although this proposition was not listed as one of Hole’s research objectives in his original report on Tepe Tula’i. Noting that, “At Tula’i we found that the shelters 8000 years ago were arranged in the same way as they are today by people who live in the same area,” he then asked, “Is it merely coincidence, however, that over the great temporal ‘distance’ of 8000 years—in spite of regional diversity among tribal people, and of a turbulent history during which states and empires emerged and fell, and when nomads are entirely absent from both history and archaeological trace for long periods—that there is this identity of domestic arrangement?”⁵⁵

In 1987 the papers were published from a seminar on *Patterns of Settlement and Cultural Development in Western Iran*, convened by Hole in 1977 at the School of American Research. In one of his own contributions, Hole gave a more measured appraisal of Tepe Tula’i in light of Wheeler’s analysis. Now describing the site as a “herder’s camp,” he went on,

Whether it represents full-scale nomadic life completely separated from villages is problematic, but at the least, it is a seasonal camp. Pires-Ferreira (1975–1977) suggests that it was a “village based fallow herd” camp where a group of livestock were kept separated from the “subsistence herd” at a village. Her interpretation was based upon the survivorship curves of animals at Chagha Sefid and Tula’i, in particular the low infant mortality at Tula’i. The small number of bones in her analysis from Tula’i are, unfortunately, lumped from several loci, and Pires-Ferreira is evidently not aware that livestock in

52. *Ibid.*, 279.

53. Watson, *Archaeological ethnography in Western Iran*, 246–247.

54. F. Hole, “The prehistory of herding: Some suggestions from ethnography,” in *L’archéologie de l’Iraq du début de l’époque néolithique à 333 avant notre ère*, edited by M.-T. Barrelet (Paris: Éditions du CNRS, 1980), 129.

55. *Ibid.*, 130.

Iran can have two distinct breeding seasons. The implication that Tula'i represents a nomad fallow camp is, therefore, suspect.⁵⁶

Since Hole's original publication, very little criticism of his essential conclusion has appeared in print. In 1983 Allan Gilbert noted,

Tepe Tula'i appears likely to have been some kind of temporary, reusable pastoral site. . . . The image of a pastoral nomad camp is feasible but is based precariously on the rarity of plant-processing equipment and on the undocumented assumption of an 8,000-year continuity in the specialized character of groups inhabiting a similar site form. . . . For this writer, Tepe Tula'i remains inscrutable. The proposed solutions represent plausible first-hand assessments of a puzzling site, but the evidence is still equivocal about the role of Tepe Tula'i in the regional economy.⁵⁷

In 1991 Roger Cribb published a discussion of Tepe Tula'i. Although he referred to it from the outset as "the only site securely identified as a nomadic—or at least pastoral—campsite," he did pose the question, "Was Tula'i a campsite?" In his view, the evidence marshaled by Wheeler "need not threaten the identity of Tepe Tula'i as a pastoral campsite, though it certainly casts doubt on the extent to which it can be regarded as 'nomadic.'"⁵⁸ Obviously wanting to believe in the campsite identification, whether nomadic or pastoral, Cribb cited Hole's description of "the mound portion of the site" that Hole had called "clearly a focal point of activity" at Tepe Tula'i.⁵⁹ But Cribb had to admit that such an observation did "not match up with what is now known of campsite organization" for, "By their very nature, campsites do not have 'focal points.'"⁶⁰

A year later Reinhard Bernbeck published a reanalysis of Tepe Tula'i based on a more scrupulous division of material found in different trenches, offering "an interpretation which accords well with Wheeler's conclusions."⁶¹ Specifically, Bernbeck noted that the question of determining Tepe Tula'i's nature is not one of confirming or rejecting "the presence or absence of mobility"—though one

56. F. Hole, "Archaeology of the Village Period," in *The archaeology of western Iran: Settlement and society from prehistory to the Islamic conquest*, edited by F. Hole (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1987), 39.

57. A. S. Gilbert, "On the origins of specialized nomadic pastoralism in Western Iran," *World Archaeology* 15 (1983): 109. In fact, groundstone tools, including a mortar and three pestles, were found in Hole's excavations. See Hole, "Tepe Tula'i," fig. 16a–d.

58. R. L. D. Cribb, *Nomads in archaeology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 215.

59. Hole, "Tepe Tula'i," 71.

60. Cribb, *Nomads in archaeology*, 215.

61. R. Bernbeck, "Migratory patterns in early nomadism: A reconsideration of Tepe Tula'i," *Paléorient* 18/1 (1992): 77–78.

could argue that a site with 2.6 m of stratigraphic deposit is not ephemeral—but rather “the kind of mobility.”⁶² Based on ceramic parallels, he suggested that herders originating both to the east, in Susiana, and to the west, in Deh Luran, used the area, bringing with them their distinctive painted ceramics as well as their fallow herds, as identified by Wheeler.⁶³

In 2004 Abbas Alizadeh et al. suggested, with reference to Hole’s work at Tepe Tula’i and Louis Vanden Berghe’s excavations at Hakalan and Dum Gar Parchinah (on which, see below), that these sites attested to the “emergence of socially autonomous, mobile pastoralists similar to the Luri and Bakhtiyari who inhabit the region today.” Moreover, they continued, “Such groups figure ever more prominently in archaeological explanations for a wide range of observed phenomena, such as instabilities in 5th millennium settlement patterns, the spatial centralization of populations in the 4th millennium, the expansion of interregional exchange networks, and the spread of distinctive ceramic types across large areas of southern and western Iran.” They noted further, apropos Tepe Tula’i, “There is . . . much evidence from Upper Khuzestan to indicate that the traditional archaeological emphasis on mound sites is misplaced. The small, accidentally exposed, early prehistoric site of Tappeh Tula-i at the northwest edge of the alluvial plain has been analyzed plausibly as a specialized herders’ camp, raising the possibility that settlement surveys have missed an entire sector of the productive economy.”⁶⁴

The Bakhtiyari Mountains

In the autumn of 1974 Allen Zagarell undertook a survey in the Bakhtiyari mountains with the express aim of investigating “the rise of pastoral nomadism and the ties between mountain and lowland in the late Neolithic-Chalcolithic periods.”⁶⁵ A decade later, he set out the following “evidence.” Noting that many sites were located “at points where various pastoral, agricultural, hunting and gathering activities might all have been pursued,”⁶⁶ he inferred from this that the region’s Neolithic inhabitants “seem to have been engaged in a multi-resource exploitation of the highland valleys.” He then asserted that “mobile pastoralism can already be discerned during the Neolithic phase.”⁶⁷

62. *Ibid.*, 82.

63. *Ibid.*, 85.

64. A. Alizadeh, N. Kouchoukos, T. J. Wilkinson, A. M. Bauer, and M. Mashkour, “Human–environment interactions on the Upper Khuzestan plains, southwest Iran. Recent investigations,” *Paléorient* 30/1 (2004): 71.

65. A. Zagarell, “Nomad and settled in the Bakhtiari mountains,” *Sociologus* 25/2 (1975): 130.

66. A. Zagarell, “Pastoralism and the early state in Greater Mesopotamia,” in *Archaeological thought in America*, edited by C. C. Lamberg-Karlovsky (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 287.

67. *Ibid.*, 294.

Evaluation

Interpreting the prehistoric remains of Tepe Tula'i from the perspective of a twentieth-century Lur workman is somewhat akin to accepting at face value a folk etymology: the explanation may be entertaining, but it is almost certainly incorrect. Nevertheless, this is effectively what happened in the case of Tepe Tula'i where less than two weeks of excavation spawned an entire body of studies asserting that nomadism is nearly as old a phenomenon in Iran as caprid domestication. In the case of Hole's claims about the nature of Tepe Tula'i, one is struck by several changes in his interpretation of the site through time. Early on, scant attention was paid to the evidence marshaled by Wheeler which, while confirming that a fallow herd of sheep and goat was kept at the site, clearly undermined the theory that the herdsmen were nomads. On the other hand, working from the artifactual rather than the faunal evidence, Bernbeck's analysis of the ceramics from Tepe Tula'i suggested the existence of very strong ties to sedentary sites like Chogha Sefid, Chogha Mish, and Chogha Bonut, any of which could have been the permanent homes of the shepherds who brought their fallow herds to graze around Tepe Tula'i. Hole's most recent discussion of the site, however, displays a different attitude to Wheeler's evidence as well as to the artifactual content of the deposits excavated. It seeks to replace what Hole considers a purely semantic issue—the definition and identification of prehistoric nomadism—with a far different one, namely the identification of Tepe Tula'i as a site that was temporarily occupied. Unable to refute the notion that the faunal profile reflects the presence of a fallow herd rather than a “normal” nomadic group's livestock, Hole has fallen back on the presence of a “full complement of village artifacts” as evidence that this was not just a campsite used by male herders attached to one of the village sites identified by Bernbeck on the basis of ceramic evidence.

In fact, the episodic or impermanent nature of occupation at Tepe Tula'i has never been questioned. Rather, it is the identification of nomads in seventh millennium B.C. Iran that should be queried. That shepherds minding a fallow herd used the site, on a seasonal basis, seems highly likely. It was not, however, Hole's original aim to demonstrate that the “site was occupied temporarily during seasonal visits.”⁶⁸ On the contrary, it was to identify nomads in the archaeological record thousands of years before anyone had thought they existed, apart perhaps from Elizabeth Bacon whose writing on the topic of nomadic origins had little or no resonance among archaeologists in the 1970s. By 2004 the “full complement of village artifacts” identified by Hole in the Tepe Tula'i assemblage was being interpreted counterintuitively, not as evidence of sedentism, but rather of the notion that “a viable and complete life was carried on in the tent sites with all members of the nuclear family present.”⁶⁹ This new interpretation is no sleight of hand but a

68. F. Hole, “Campsites of the seasonally mobile in Western Iran,” in *From handaxe to khan: Essays presented to Peder Mortensen on the occasion of his 70th birthday*, edited by K. von Folsach, H. Thrane, and I. Thuesen (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2004), 67.

69. *Ibid.*, 80.

wildly different view of Tepe Tula'i than had been promulgated over the course of the preceding three decades. Why the extensive range of ceramics; groundstone (mortars, pestles, choppers, discs, abraders, and "sashweights"); baked clay animal figurines; and sling balls reflects the presence of all members of a cluster of nomadic nuclear families is nowhere explained. Certainly it seems a highly selective assortment of artifacts. As Bernbeck showed, moreover, the ceramic types present simply do not support an interpretation of vertical transhumance, since the decorations are not characteristic of sites located at higher elevations in the Zagros which might represent the summer quarters of the group resident at Tepe Tula'i during the winter, but rather of lowland sites like Chogha Bonut, Chogha Sefid, and Chogha Mish.

In 2004 Hole published the substance of a previously unpublished manuscript, made available many years earlier to Cribb and used in his 1991 discussion of Tepe Tula'i, in the *Festschrift* for Peder Mortensen. Hole took the occasion as "an opportunity to clarify some points."⁷⁰ Under the rubric "the archaeological issues," he sought to "dispel a semantic issue, the distinctions among mobile, transitory, or nomadic," arguing that "the main question is whether a site was occupied temporarily during seasonal visits, or whether it was occupied continuously, in the sense of being permanent."⁷¹ After describing his ethnographic observations of Lur nomad tents, he contended that "the excavation of Tula'i... was the first test of principles learned in the ethnographic study."⁷² He contended, further, that "had Tula'i been a village like many contemporary sites in Khuzistan, it would have been built of mud and taken on the characteristics of a typical compact, mounded village like Choga Bonut... That it did not testify to its essential difference in spite of the close similarity of artifacts in the two types of sites. The suggestion that Tula'i was a pastoral camp thus seems well supported."⁷³ Summarizing the conclusions drawn by Wheeler to the effect that Tepe Tula'i was "a specialist appendage of a village," Hole admitted, "It is hard to refute this notion." But he qualified this by saying, "In fact, it is not possible to tell, based on present ethnographic and archaeological information, whether Tula'i or similar sites were closely tied to a village," but he tended to feel it was "not just a camp composed of male herders living in tents" because of the fact that, "with the exception of harvesting and grinding tools, a full complement of village artifacts is present at Tula'i."⁷⁴ Interestingly, in his review of Cribb's *Nomads in Archaeology*, Hole noted, "This work, and others that attempt to use the present as a model for understanding the past, face daunting gaps in information, economic systems that bear little resemblance to

70. *Ibid.*, 67.

71. *Ibid.*

72. *Ibid.*, 78.

73. *Ibid.*, 80.

74. *Ibid.*

those of prehistory, and enormous changes in sociopolitical organizations.”⁷⁵ Truer words were never spoken.

In the case of the Bakhtiyari mountain sites documented by Zagarell, the “evidence” of Neolithic era pastoral nomadism is entirely speculative. Pastoralism, among other things, might have been practiced in areas where Neolithic sites were documented; pastoralists therefore seem to have engaged in the exploitation of highland valleys; ergo mobile pastoralism can be discerned in the Neolithic of the Bakhtiyari region. The entire chain of reasoning demands blind faith in the suitability of this area for use by pastoral nomads, yet completely ignores the many large, permanent, mounded settlements in the region around Lordegan and Khana Mirza, such as Tol-e Afghani, Qaleh Gelli and Tol-e Boland Aloni, documented by Zagarell himself.⁷⁶

THE CHALCOLITHIC

Luristan

The first attempt to identify a nomadic element in ancient Iran through excavation was made by the Belgian Archaeological Mission, which conducted fifteen campaigns of survey and excavation between 1965 and 1979 in the Pusht-e Kuh, the westernmost portion of Luristan, under the direction of Louis Vanden Berghe. Although the initial aim of the project was to determine the origins and date of the “Luristan bronzes,” Vanden Berghe’s explorations led to some influential speculation on the possibility of early instances of nomadism in the Zagros region. Excavations at Hakalan (1971, 1972) and Dum Gar Parchinah (1973) identified both sites as Chalcolithic cemeteries. Parallels between pottery recovered in the tombs at Hakalan and at sites further south in the Deh Luran plain (Tepe Sabz, Tepe Farukhabad, and Chogha Sefid) prompted Vanden Berghe to suggest, on analogy with contemporary Lurs, that Hakalan was a cemetery of nomads who migrated between the two regions.⁷⁷ This view was bolstered, in his mind, by an apparent lack of settlement near Hakalan and Dum Gar Parchinah.

By 1978 these sites were being hailed as “strong indications for a ‘nomadic,’ a more mobile, way of life” inasmuch as they were “highland grave sites divorced

75. F. Hole, review of R. Cribb, *Nomads in archaeology*, *AA* 94 (1992): 1013.

76. These sites were visited by C. A. Petrie, L. R. Weeks, and the author in 2002. For a photo of the imposing mound of Qaleh Gelli, see D. T. Potts, “Bevel-rim bowls and bakeries: Evidence and explanations from Iran and the Indo-Iranian borderlands,” *JCS* 61 (2009): fig. 4.

77. L. Vanden Berghe, “Le Luristan avant l’Âge du bronze: La nécropole de Hakalan, VII (1971) et VIII (1972) campagnes,” *Archéologia* 57 (1973): 58: “Comme aujourd’hui encore, dans leur migration annuelle, ils recherchaient de nouveaux pâturages pour leurs troupeaux. Ils les faisaient transhummer de la région chaude, c’est-à-dire de leurs quartiers d’hiver ‘les Qishlah’ dans la plaine de Deh Luran, vers les pentes de la montagne du Kabir Kuh au nord où ils établissaient leur campement d’été, les ‘Yeilahs’ [i.e., *yaylag* pastoralism noted above].”

from settlements.”⁷⁸ The presence of heavy mortars and pestles at these sites did not constitute evidence of their having supported sedentary communities, Zagarell argued, and “should not in itself be surprising, as we know that nomads of these regions frequently also cultivate grains.”⁷⁹ Five years later similar views were expressed by E. Henrickson who speculated that “Samarran-ware-carrying pastoralists” were responsible for diffusing Samarran-style pottery “from winter grazing grounds in the Deh Luran area, where such pottery is known in Choga Mami Transitional times, up into the southern and central Pish-i Kuh valleys” where they went to graze their herds during the summer.⁸⁰ In a more westerly direction, Henrickson also suggested that Early Chalcolithic nomads might have effected “stylistic ‘information transmission’ between the lowland Halaf tradition [of northern Mesopotamia] and the artisans living in the Mahidasht” valley of Luristan.⁸¹ During the Early Middle Chalcolithic, she suggested, “the presence of a few ‘intrusive’ Dalma Impressed ware vessels in piedmont areas west of the central Zagros may be best explained as the result of a process of intermittent long-distance exchange, most likely instigated by pastoralists migrating along the Khorasan Road,” or possibly as gifts exchanged between distantly separated “highland families and piedmont cousins who emigrated from the Zagros.”⁸²

In 1988, however, during the discussion following Henrickson’s paper on Mesopotamian Ubaid interactions with the central Zagros region at the Elsinore Ubaid conference, the characterization of Hakalan and Dum Gar Parchinah as the cemeteries of nomadic groups was challenged. After Henrickson asserted that “migrating pastoralists must have had an effect on the distribution of material culture between highlands and lowlands at least as early as the Middle Chalcolithic,” Michael Roaf queried, “Is there any evidence for that?” At which point Frank Hole suggested, “Well, I think that there is evidence in a sense in the cemeteries of Parchinah and Hakalan. There’s very little question that this area was occupied by pastoralists,”⁸³ a position which he articulated again two decades later.⁸⁴ A similar

78. A. Zagarell, *The role of highland pastoralism in the development of Iranian civilization (proto-and prehistoric Iran)* (Inaugural dissertation, Free University of Berlin, 1978), 155.

79. Zagarell, *The role of highland pastoralism*, 155.

80. E. F. Henrickson, *Ceramic style and cultural interaction in the Early and Middle Chalcolithic of the Central Zagros, Iran* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms, 1983), 733.

81. *Ibid.*, 731.

82. *Ibid.*, 731, 746.

83. E. F. Henrickson, “Ceramic evidence for cultural interaction between the ‘Ubaid tradition and the Central Zagros highlands, western Iran,” in *Upon this foundation—the ‘Ubaid reconsidered*, edited by E. F. Henrickson and I. Thuesen, Carsten Niebuhr Institute Publication 10 (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum, 1989), 400.

84. F. Hole, “Cycles of settlement in the Khorramabad Valley in Luristan, Iran,” in *Settlement and society: Essays dedicated to Robert McCormick Adams*, edited by E. C. Stone (Los Angeles: Cotsen Institute of Archaeology, 2007), 73.

view was expressed by Henry Wright and his colleagues when they referred to Dum Gar Parchinah as the cemetery of a group of “transhumants.”⁸⁵

In keeping with this position, A. Alizadeh et al. wrote in 2006 that, “apart from the fifth-millennium B.C. isolated cemeteries of Hakalān and Parchineh in the Zagros Mountains, direct archaeological evidence for the presence of mobile pastoralists in the highlands is limited,”⁸⁶ calling the cemeteries at Hakalan and Dum Gar Parchinah “the earliest convincing evidence of the presence of... mobile pastoralists in prehistoric Iran,” largely because of their isolation and the lack of any obvious associated settlements.⁸⁷ Despite the fact that no evidence of equids (donkey, horse) was found at either site, Alizadeh declared that these “nomads” enjoyed “inherent military superiority over the settled farming communities by virtue of their mobility.”⁸⁸ More recently, he has stated that Hakalan and Dum Gar Parchinah “can be considered the oldest and most secure archaeological evidence of ancient pastoral people in the highlands of western Iran.”⁸⁹ Speculating on the social relations of the cemeteries’ ancient populations, he has gone further, suggesting that, “with nomads’ military superiority over the settled farming communities, it is not difficult to assume that a conflict of interest, presumably initially over grazing land, may have resulted in violent confrontations with the settled farming community.”⁹⁰ Whether this comment was prompted by the presence of copper and stone maceheads and stone axes in some of the tombs, or by other unspecified evidence, is not indicated.

Finally, writing of the late fourth to early third millennium cemeteries in the Pusht-e Kuh, such as Mir Khair, Bani Surmah, Kalleh Nisar and War Kabud, Ernie Haerinck declared in 1986, “Since nomadic pastoralism is still the most common way of life in Luristan Pusht-i Kuh, there is no danger in saying that the graveyards we dug belonged to tribal people,” describing them as “burial-places along the migration routes.”⁹¹

85. H. T. Wright, N. Miller, J. A. Neely, and R. W. Redding, “A Late Susiana society in southwestern Iran,” in *The Iranian world: Essays on Iranian art and archaeology presented to Ezat O. Negahban*, edited by A. Alizadeh, Y. Majidzadeh, and S. M. Shahmirzadi (Tehran: Iran University Press, 1999), 73.

86. A. Alizadeh, *The origins of state organizations in prehistoric highland Fars, southern Iran: Excavations at Tall-e Bakun*, OIP 128 (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 2006), 94.

87. *Ibid.*, 20.

88. *Ibid.* Cf. A. Alizadeh, “The rise of the highland Elamite state in southwestern Iran,” *CA* 51/3 (2010): 356. See ch. 2 on equids in Iran.

89. Alizadeh, “The rise of the highland Elamite state,” 364–365.

90. *Ibid.*, 365.

91. E. Haerinck, “The chronology of Luristan, Pusht-i Kuh in the late fourth and first half of the third millennium B.C.,” in *Préhistoire de la Mésopotamie*, edited by J.-L. Huot (Paris: Éditions du CNRS, 1986), 56. Two decades later Bruno Overlaet was more cautious, noting, “whether their society had a sedentary, semi-nomadic or nomadic character cannot be fully ascertained.” See

One further instance of alleged pastoral nomadism in the Chalcolithic of the central Zagros remains to be discussed. In 2002 Kamyar Abdi completed a dissertation on pastoralism in the western Zagros during the Middle Chalcolithic period⁹² and in the same year he and his colleagues published an article on Tuwah Khoshkeh, a site near Kermanshah described as a “mobile pastoralist camp-site.” Just as Hole had done, Abdi et al. cited the testimony of a native Lur informant and confidently asserted that “the role of mobile pastoralists in the history of the Near East—ancient and modern—is unquestionable.”⁹³ Furthermore, like Hole and his Lur workmen, Abdi et al. described their own confrontation with the ethnographic present, noting that they had “had the privilege of meeting a local nomad and learning his perspective on what was emerging from the ground... and without any prior knowledge of our research objectives, [he] immediately pointed out that this was part of a nomadic settlement!”⁹⁴ Summarizing their findings, Abdi and his colleagues went on to suggest, “These observations indicate, beyond a reasonable doubt, that Tuwah Khoshkeh was, in fact, a temporary campsite for people with a mobile way of life.”⁹⁵ A paper published in 2003, which distilled the main results of Abdi’s dissertation, referred to “the emergence of nomadic pastoralism sometime between 6500 and 5500 B.P., presumably in several locations including the Zagros Mountains,” noting, “While there is a consensus among archaeologists that the Zagros Mountains was one of several regions where nomadic pastoralism first emerged, estimates on the date when this took place range from the Neolithic... to the Late Chalcolithic.”⁹⁶

The Bakhtiyari Mountains

In addition to making a claim for nomadism in and around the Khana Mirza plain near Lordegan during the Neolithic, Zagarell noted an increase in both the number and size of sites during the Middle Chalcolithic period. This prompted him to suggest that, “since the settlements tend to concentrate around an area where there would have been natural accumulation of water, much of the surrounding

B. Overlaet, *Bani Surmah: An Early Bronze Age graveyard in Pusht-i Kuh, Luristan*, Acta Iranica, 3rd series, 28 (Leuven: Peeters, 2006 [= LED VI]), 68.

92. K. Abdi, *Strategies of herding: Pastoralism in the Middle Chalcolithic period of the West Central Zagros Mountains* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms, 2002).

93. K. Abdi et al., “Tuwah Khoshkeh: A Middle Chalcolithic mobile pastoralist camp-site in the Islamabad plain, West Central Zagros Mountains, Iran,” *Iran* 40 (2002): 43.

94. *Ibid.*, 69.

95. *Ibid.*, 70; cf. M. Mashkour and K. Abdi, “The question of nomadic campsites in archaeology: The case of Tuwah Khoshkeh,” in *Archaeozoology of the Near East V*, edited by H. Buitenhuis et al., ARC-Publicaties 62 (Groningen: Rijksuniversiteit te Groningen, 2002), 221.

96. K. Abdi, “The early development of pastoralism in the Central Zagros mountains,” *Journal of World Prehistory* 17 (2003): 397.

pasture land would have been open to pastoral exploitation.”⁹⁷ Pastoral exploitation, of course, could just as easily relate to village-based herds as those of nomadic groups. Several pages later, however, this fairly innocuous inference had become a hardened fact for we read that, in the Middle Chalcolithic, “there is evidence for herding activities as well as farming” and while “there is no real evidence of nomadic groups per se... a strong pastoral element is indicated,”⁹⁸ though quite how he did not say. Some years later Zagarell asserted that “mobile pastoral groups, alongside sedentary highland settlements, seem to begin to proliferate during the latter half of the Middle Chalcolithic and become very common during the Late Chalcolithic.”⁹⁹ No evidence of this trend was presented for the Middle Chalcolithic. The Late Chalcolithic indications of this phenomenon consisted of the appearance of what Zagarell termed “the slope site” showing “heavy sherdage patterns... associated with boulder accumulations, representing some type of limited construction,” which he compared to modern houses and sheepfolds on mountain slopes in the Bakhtiyari region.¹⁰⁰

Evaluation

Two sets of evidence are repeatedly adduced in making the case for Chalcolithic nomadism in Luristan, one positive and one negative. The positive evidence consists of ceramic parallels between this region and areas to the south (Deh Luran) and west (lowland Halaf and/or Samarran areas of northeastern Mesopotamia), implying mobility and communication between Luristan and neighboring regions. Quite obviously interaction occurs in many forms between settled communities and the diffusion of ceramics and other categories of material culture may be effected by a host of agents, of which nomads represent just one possibility. The negative evidence consists of an alleged absence of sedentary sites in the neighborhood of the cemeteries, implying an absence of settled population and, by default, the presence of a nomadic one. Even in cases where substantial sites do appear in Luristan, some scholars have still contended that they represent the remains of nomadic groups. Ignored in all of these discussions, for example, is Claire Goff’s important observation that the Tarhan, Kuh-e Dasht, and Rumishgan plains in western Luristan were each dominated by “one or more major tepes” (i.e., large, mounded sites).¹⁰¹ Further afield, near Mehran—a border zone that is culturally Mesopotamian and hence a potential source of some of the Halaf-like ceramics observed to the east—large sites exist as well.¹⁰² In fact, Deh

97. Zagarell, *The role of highland pastoralism*, 141.

98. *Ibid.*, 146.

99. Zagarell, “Pastoralism and the early state,” 288.

100. *Ibid.*, 291.

101. C. M. Goff, “Luristan before the Iron Age,” *Iran* 9 (1971): 145.

102. Ardeshir Javanmardzadeh, pers. comm.

Luran, which has ample evidence of a settled population in Chalcolithic times, is only about 50 km. from Dum Gar Parchinah. Hole has suggested that the sites in western Luristan noted by Goff represented “a pattern that could imply, using ethnographic analogy, forts/manors of semi-sedentary pastoralists,”¹⁰³ yet at face value one must ask why such sites were not simply interpreted as sedentary villages or small towns, since no evidence is adduced which justifies the inference that these were the sites of pastoralists rather than sedentary agriculturalists? Hole’s interpretation seems to have been influenced by the fact that some Early Bronze Age mounds “are at the locations of recent tribal forts as shown on the British Army maps.”¹⁰⁴ The simpler explanation, however, is surely that these, and other mounds not yet identified when Vanden Berghe was working, represent the settlements of sedentary agriculturalists, whose cemeteries included Hakalan and Dum Gar Parchinah. The necessity of associating these sites with a putative nomadic element thus evaporates under scrutiny.

In the case of Tuwah Khoshkeh, the testimony of a local Lur has the same degree of validity as that of Hole’s workmen at Tepe Tula’i. While the transient nature of the site is not in question, its association with nomadism has not been demonstrated. Tuwah Khoshkeh has been identified by its excavator as a “temporary campsite,” but it is just as likely that those camping there were shepherds attached to a sedentary settlement as full-time nomads. No evidence has been adduced in support of the latter determination, apart from the testimony of local Lur nomads.

In the final analysis, there is no archaeological evidence of nomadism and little evidence of pastoralism, beyond the Zagros mountain location of the fieldwork, in any of these studies. To infer the existence of pastoralism from the presence of settlements located close to water is purely an act of faith. If this is “evidence for herding activities,” then much of the interpretive literature of archaeology all over the world will need to be rewritten. The absence of evidence in the case of Hakalan and Dum Gar Parchinah is striking. Tuwah Khoshkeh is likely to represent a campsite, but an association with nomads as opposed to village-based herders has not been demonstrated. No archaeological evidence of nomadism was adduced in the primary publication of Zagarell’s material and the nomadic associations of the sites documented in the Bakhtiyari region are entirely speculative.

Fars: Bakun-related

In 1985 Abbas Alizadeh, then a PhD candidate at the University of Chicago, was urged by the late Helene Kantor to reassess the material from Tal-e Bakun A in the Oriental Institute,¹⁰⁵ with a view to developing a dissertation based upon it.

103. Hole, “Cycles of settlement,” 74.

104. *Ibid.*, 76.

105. A. Langsdorff and D. McCown, *Tall-i Bakun A: Season of 1932*, OIP 59 (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1942).

The results most relevant for the topic of nomadism in Chalcolithic Fars were published in preliminary form in an article and in greater detail in the revised dissertation.¹⁰⁶

Even before presenting the reader with any evidence of prehistoric nomadism in southwestern Iran, Alizadeh roundly declared, "It is my contention that socio-economic and political developments in Fars during the late fifth and early fourth millennia B.C. were influenced by pastoral nomads and their interaction with the sedentary population."¹⁰⁷ Two simple propositions were then advanced about the people who made the Bakun A-type ceramics during the Chalcolithic period in Fars.

1. "Bakun A is... a homogeneous culture in Fars represented by a widespread, highly sophisticated painted pottery," which has also "been found in northern Khuzestan... in the Bakhtiari mountains... and in the Behbahan and Zureh regions."
2. "The locations of summer/winter pastures of the tribes of Qashqai, Bakhtiari, Khamseh, Mamasani and Boyr-Ahmadi confederacies¹⁰⁸ correspond to the pattern of geographical distribution of the Bakun painted pottery."

Alizadeh suggested that the diffusion of "Bakun A cultural influences outside Fars in regions traditionally under the sway of numerous nomadic tribes" could be attributed to "nomadic tribes who dispersed Bakun A culture over vast areas."¹⁰⁹ Within Fars itself, Alizadeh suggested: "The size, location, lack of architecture, and midden deposits of ash and debris indicate that at least some of the sites [where Bakun A pottery was found] were seasonal. More important is the existence of flat sites in Fars. These camp-sites which Aurel Stein came across in his survey of southern Fars are sufficient to suggest the existence of pastoral nomadic sites there." Satisfied that he had proven his point, Alizadeh continued a few paragraphs later, "Now that we can reasonably demonstrate the presence of nomadic tribes"¹¹⁰ and then went on to discuss the production of surpluses by pastoral nomads that could be traded with sedentary communities for desired goods, alleging that, "because of the specialized and one-sided economy of nomads, they are more interested in

106. A. Alizadeh, "Socio-economic complexity in southwestern Iran during the fifth and fourth millennia B.C.: The evidence from Tall-i Bakun A," *Iran* 26 (1988): 17–34; Alizadeh, *The origins of state organizations*.

107. Alizadeh, "Socio-economic complexity," 27.

108. Neither the Mamasani Lurs nor the Boyr Ahmadi tribe were or are "confederacies." See chs. 7–9.

109. Alizadeh, "Socio-economic complexity," 28.

110. *Ibid.*

trade...than the sedentary people,” and suggesting that the prehistoric nomads of Fars traded with the population of Tal-e Bakun A.¹¹¹

In 1995, because of his “interest in the possible role of the ancient mobile pastoralists in the development of complex societies in Iran,” Alizadeh conducted a survey of the northwestern part of the Marv Dasht in order to identify “a settlement pattern of the Bakun A phase (late fifth millennium BCE) similar to the existing pattern of spatial distribution exhibited by the numerous villages inhabited by either the settled Qashqa’i or by a mixture of the Qashqa’i tribesmen and members of the local population.”¹¹² Reiterating the contention underpinning his 1988 paper, Alizadeh observed, “It is probably no accident that the locations of the summer and winter pastures of the Qashqa’i, Khamseh, Mamasani, and Boyr Ahmadi confederacies correspond to the pattern of geographical distribution of the Bakun A painted pottery,” since, even if “the political configurations and the ethnic makeup of these mobile tribes are the outcome of later historical and political developments...the geographical and ecological features of this region impose certain migration patterns between summer and winter pastures” and therefore “it is reasonable to assume that such features have remained more or less the same from the beginning of mobile pastoral life in highland Iran.”¹¹³ Noting that population estimates for the fifth and early fourth millennium B.C. in Iran “do not account for the ancient mobile pastoralist communities, though they seem to have coexisted for thousands of years with settled communities,” Alizadeh contended that “Tall-i Bakun A, with its evidence that anticipates later state organizations” constitutes “a *footprint* and material expression of the archaeologically invisible mobile pastoralist population of Fars in the late fifth millennium.”¹¹⁴ Further, we are told that “it is important to take into account the ancient mobile pastoralist population, even though they left little direct archaeological evidence,” and that such groups “would have generated internal reorganization in the lowland farming communities” of Mesopotamia and Susiana and precipitated the “westward shift of the fifth millennium settlements in lowland Susiana.”¹¹⁵

Adducing the same arguments outlined in his 1988 paper, Alizadeh also suggested that “archaeological investigations in the Behbahan-Zuhreh area...the Dasht-e Susan...and particularly in the Bakhtiari mountains...have indicated that in the fifth to fourth millennia BCE these regions were utilized by mobile

111. *Ibid.*, 29.

112. A. Alizadeh, “Some observations based on the nomadic character of Fars prehistoric cultural development,” in *Yeki bud, yeki nabud: Essays on the archaeology of Iran in honor of William M. Sumner*, edited by N. F. Miller and K. Abdi, Cotsen Institute of Archaeology Monograph 48 (Los Angeles: Cotsen Institute of Archaeology, University of California, 2003), 83.

113. Alizadeh, “Some observations,” 83–84.

114. *Ibid.*, 85.

115. *Ibid.*, as argued in A. Alizadeh, *Prehistoric settlement patterns and cultures in Susiana, southwestern Iran: The analysis of the F. G. L. Gremliza survey collection*, Museum of Anthropology Technical Report 24 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1992).

communities.”¹¹⁶ Trade in Bakun A-type ceramics, he suggested, would have been “neither feasible nor economical.” Hence, he interpreted its spatial distribution as a result of the movements of nomadic groups. Conflating the ancient with the modern, he spoke of “Bakun cultural influence outside Fars in regions traditionally under the sway of numerous mobile tribes,”¹¹⁷ despite the fact that the phenomena in question—Bakun cultural influence and mobile tribes in the same areas—were separated by 6,000 to 7,000 years. Moreover, Alizadeh contended that “political developments in Iran were shaped to a considerable degree by the mobile population of the highland,” suggesting that “this segment of the highland and lowland population... provided a durable political base and continuity for various dynasties, not only in ancient times but also in historical times until the end of the eighteenth century CE, when the Luri Zand dynasty was replaced by the Qajars.”¹¹⁸ Alizadeh also suggested that “all known Bakun A sites in Fars are too small to be considered towns in the sense that their inhabitants engaged in non-subsistence economy.”¹¹⁹

In 2006 Alizadeh published a revised version of his 1988 dissertation. In the introduction to the volume, he suggested that “there is no compelling reason to assume that at least in southwestern and southern Iran mobile pastoralist tribes could not have developed state organizations similar to those in the settled farming communities of lowland Susiana.”¹²⁰ Further, he asserted that, “regardless of when mobile pastoralism developed in Iran as a specialized way of life, from the beginning the mobile pastoralists must have had a much higher degree of interaction with the settled farmers of their winter haunts than those in agriculturally marginal regions” and that the pattern of having “semi-permanent villages with solid architecture both in their summer and, especially in their winter haunts in close proximity to the settled farmers and urban centers... obtained in late prehistory.”¹²¹

Turning to the question of pottery production by nomadic groups, Alizadeh cited ethnographic evidence suggesting that, around the world, fewer than 30% of all known “mobile societies make and use pottery” and when they do it is usually “technologically and aesthetically inferior” to that which is produced by sedentary groups.¹²² However, he argued, the relatively sedentary nature of nomads in the Zagros in the recent past meant that these generalizations might not have applied there. Moreover, Alizadeh alleged that, “since the geographical and ecological

116. Alizadeh, “Some observations,” 89.

117. *Ibid.*

118. *Ibid.*, 92.

119. *Ibid.*, 90.

120. Alizadeh, *The origins of state organizations*, 2–3.

121. *Ibid.*, 4.

122. *Ibid.*, 22–23.

features of this region impose certain migration patterns between summer and winter pastures . . . it is reasonable to assume that they have remained more or less the same from the beginning of mobile pastoral life in highland Iran,”¹²³ concluding, “In areas where mobile pastoralism has flourished for millennia, much can be gained from ethnographic data.”¹²⁴

As for actually finding sites of nomads, Alizadeh conceded that “direct archaeological evidence for the presence of mobile pastoralists in Fars is limited” but “small size, location, apparent lack of architecture, and midden deposits of ash and debris indicate that some Bakun A mounds were occupied seasonally.”¹²⁵ Further, he speculated that if Qashqa’i campsites “were left deserted long enough, they may form low mounds similar to the Bakun A sites we discovered in the region.”¹²⁶ Despite the fact that one of his main objectives was “to discover Bakun A sites in the intermontane Qashqaii territories,”¹²⁷ Alizadeh reckoned “the most important part” of his 1995 survey in northwestern Fars was not the addition of archaeological data but rather “the information . . . gathered on the modern demographic makeup of the Qashqaii territory and on the interaction between the nomadic tribes and farming villages in the valleys northwest of the Marv Dasht Plain.”¹²⁸ Of ten sites found with Bakun A type pottery, all but two were located “not at the bottom of the valleys, but on hillsides, a characteristic of settlements in predominantly mobile pastoralist territories.”¹²⁹ And to emphasize the nomadic nature of the majority of sites recorded in his surveys in highland Fars, Alizadeh pointed to an absence of “large and multi-period settlements,”¹³⁰ noting that most sites were between 1 and 3 ha, and represented, in his view, the campsites of mobile pastoralists rather than sedentary agriculturalists.

At the same time Alizadeh suggested, on analogy with the modern Qashqa’i nomads observed in 1995, that tribal elites in antiquity may have successfully acquired “land-based wealth and power” and argued “there is no good reason to believe” that similar behavior patterns did not exist in antiquity.¹³¹ Further, Alizadeh declared, “The locations of the summer and winter pastures of the tribes of the Qashqaii, Bakhtiyari, Khamseh, Mamasani, and Boyr Ahmadi confederacies

123. *Ibid.*, 95.

124. *Ibid.*, 26, cf. 95.

125. *Ibid.*, 51.

126. *Ibid.*, 53.

127. *Ibid.*

128. *Ibid.*, 52.

129. *Ibid.*, 54.

130. *Ibid.*, 26.

131. *Ibid.*, 25.

correspond to the pattern of geographical distribution of the Bakun painted pottery,¹³² a point already underscored in his 1988 paper.

The premise of geographical overlap between modern nomadic campsites and archaeological sites with Bakun A-type ceramics is made clearer in the photographic plates in the volume. These include, for example, a picture of a Bakun-related site, Tall-e Kharestan Soflan, with a Qashqa'i village "built on its slope",¹³³ the Bakun-related site of Tal-e Deh Sokheh with a Qashqa'i village "next to it";¹³⁴ a Bakun-related site near the village of Asupas with a "newly established settlement... of settled Qashqa'i tribesmen" just below it;¹³⁵ and a Qashqa'i "itinerant vender [*sic*] in Dasht-e Bakan, northwest of Marv Dasht."¹³⁶ We also learn that the "upper Kur River Basin (the Ujan Plain)," where "a number of flint sites were found... is traditionally used as a summer pasture by the mobile tribes of the Qashqa'i."¹³⁷

Evaluation

The principal justification for supposing the existence of nomads during the fifth to fourth millennium in Fars, as presented in Alizadeh's 1988 article, was the belief that only they could have effected the distribution of Bakun A-type pottery documented in southwestern Iran. Quite apart from the fact that there are countless examples, from Roman *terra sigillata* to Chinese celadon, of ceramic types that enjoyed a wide distribution in antiquity and were transported not by nomads but by traders, Alizadeh dismissed the possibility that Bakun A-type pottery was traded between sedentary communities, citing its fragility. Strangely, this factor was not considered an impediment for the nomads who allegedly transported it across the landscape. Furthermore, Alizadeh seems to have been unaware of the well-documented absence of pottery among the Bakhtiyari, one of the groups frequently invoked by him as an analogue of the putative Chalcolithic nomads of Fars.¹³⁸

Alizadeh has also asked his readers to accept a logical relation between the proximity of ancient sites, particularly those with painted Bakun A-type pottery, and modern Qashqa'i campsites and pastures. In essence, the locations of the latter are deemed relevant for our understanding of the distribution of the former. The proximity of an archaeological site to a feature like a watercourse may indeed

132. *Ibid.*, 95.

133. *Ibid.*, pl. 9A.

134. *Ibid.*, pl. 9C.

135. *Ibid.*, pl. 10A.

136. *Ibid.*, pl. 10B.

137. *Ibid.*, 51.

138. J.-P. Digard, "Campements Baxtiyari: Observations d'un ethnologue sur des matériaux intéressant l'archéologie," *StIr* 4/1 (1975): 120: "Les Baxtyári n'utilisent que des matières

prompt one to suppose that its location was anything but accidental and that the resource obtained, in this case water, was a determining factor in the site's location. Yet many parts of the world have been settled throughout the millennia and the relevance of the location of a modern social group or settlement for an understanding of an ancient site or monument is hardly a given. To cite another example of proximity that Alizadeh's logic would compel us to treat seriously, the city of Ardašir-Khwarrah (mod. Firuzabad) founded by Ardašir I in the early third century A.D. was at the center of the autonomous territory held by the Qashqa'i during the 1940s and early 1950s. It is highly unlikely, however, that any serious scholar of Sasanian history and archaeology would invoke the lifeways of those same Qashqa'i of the mid-twentieth century when attempting to make sense of the architecture and finds of Ardašir's capital at Firuzabad.

Fars: Tal-e Malyan-Related

William Sumner, the excavator of Tal-e Malyan, invoked the presence of ancient nomads in the Middle and Late Chalcolithic periods to account for perceived changes in settlement patterns. Sumner suggested that, whereas, in the Middle Lapui stage (early fourth millennium B.C.), "the strong pastoral element of production was in the main still tethered to villages occupied by a majority of the population throughout the year," overgrazing could have led to a process of nomadization, forcing "shepherds to travel farther and farther afield in search of new pastures; consequently, the duration of these trips increased until completely nomadic pastoralism became an attractive alternative to tethered pastoral production."¹³⁹ Such overgrazing, he suggested elsewhere, was a function of declining agricultural productivity, perhaps related to soil salinization, prompting increased reliance on herding and eventually nomadization, such that "the ranks of the herders swelled."¹⁴⁰ The result, he suggested, was nothing less than a "sedentary population crash," which may have involved emigration from the Zagros to southern Mesopotamia, decreasing birth rates, and/or increasing death rates (for unstated reasons), in addition to nomadization.¹⁴¹

Sumner inferred the presence of nomads in the later fourth millennium B.C. (Early Banesh period, c. 3400–3300 B.C.) based on the fact that "stone alignments of undetermined date," with "Banesh sherds as the major surface component on

premières d'origine végétale (bois) et, surtout, animale (laine, poil, cuir, etc., fournis par les troupeaux)—toutes matières qui sont par conséquent périssables. La poterie, par exemple, est *totale­ment absente* de la culture Baxtyâri (sans doute aussi, en partie, pour des raisons liées au genre de vie)."

139. W. M. Sumner, "Prelude to Proto-Elamite Anshan: The Lapui phase," *IrAnt* 23 (1988): 39.

140. W. M. Sumner, "Proto-Elamite civilization in Fars," in *Ĝamdat Našr: Period or regional style?*, edited by U. Finkbeiner and W. Röllig, TAVO Beiheft B 62 (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 1986), 207.

141. Cf. W. M. Sumner, "Maljān, Tall-e (Anšan)," *RIA* 7/3–4 (1988): 317.

some of these sites,” were located in “the region of the valley most commonly used today as the site of pastoral nomadic camps.”¹⁴² In spite of very limited evidence, Sumner contended, “Proto-Elamite civilization in central Fars was a pastoral nomadic civilization, a tribal society encompassing both tent dwelling pastoralists and sedentary administrators and farmer-craftsmen living at Malyan and in its hinterland.”¹⁴³ He argued that “a growing segment of society became full-time pastoral nomads, migrating freely between summer and winter pastures” as the Lapui period gave way to the Banesh. Speculating further:

Soon the political and military advantages of mobility became manifest. Friction between settled farmers and pastoral nomads was common and, as often as not, the pastoralists would disappear before a force could be mobilized to obtain compensation for trampled and grazed fields. Eventually this political chaos was resolved as villagers obtained protection from tribal leaders in exchange for allegiance. The khans settled, each in his village headquarters, for the serious business of dynastic intrigue and political maneuvering... village craftsmen began to cater to the needs of the pastoralists, and markets developed around village residences of the tribal khans.¹⁴⁴

In short, Sumner suggested, Tal-e Malyan and its hinterland represented “not... a state level organization... but rather a tribal polity,” noting that, in his opinion, “the situation described here finds many parallels in the recent history of Persian pastoral nomads,” citing Gene Garthwaite’s work on the Bakhtiyari of the nineteenth century and Fasā’i’s *Fārsnāma-ye Nāseri*, which chronicles the history of Fars from 1789 to 1883 (cf. ch. 7).¹⁴⁵ As one manifestation of a hypothesized “chiefdom ruled by a tribal khan whose power base lay with a large pastoral nomadic population,”¹⁴⁶ Sumner cited the massive mudbrick city wall of Tal-e Malyan, the c. 5 km long perimeter of which encloses an area of 200 ha. In his opinion, the population required to achieve such a construction would have been lacking unless “the Malyan ruler... exercised authority over a pastoral nomadic population.”¹⁴⁷

142. Sumner, “Proto-Elamite civilization in Fars,” 200.

143. *Ibid.*, 207.

144. *Ibid.*, 207–208.

145. G. R. Garthwaite, *Khans and Shahs: A history of the Bakhtiyari tribe in Iran*, 2nd ed. (London: I. B. Tauris, 2009); H. Busse, *History of Persia under Qājār rule* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972).

146. W. M. Sumner, “The Proto-Elamite city wall at Tal-i Malyan,” *Iran* 23 (1985): 160; cf. Sumner, “Maljān,” 317.

147. Sumner, “The Proto-Elamite city wall,” 159.

Evaluation

Sumner's reconstruction includes a number of unverifiable claims. Soil salinization, of which there is absolutely no evidence, is thought to have led to declining agricultural productivity. This, in turn, is said to have prompted more reliance on herding than farming. Larger herds, one assumes, were the cause of the overgrazing hypothesized by Sumner, and the quest for adequate pasturage, entailing longer and longer journeys away from villages, ultimately ended in the herdsmen abandoning their homes entirely in favor of full-time nomadism. There is, however, not a shred of evidence to suggest that this scenario has any validity: the hypothesized process of salinization, the decline in agricultural productivity, the growth of herds, and the extension of distances traversed in order to find pasturage, are all pure speculation. Like Alizadeh, Sumner was persuaded of a meaningful connection between the locations of stone alignments—which he admitted were “undated”—associated with Banesh sherds, and grazing areas used by nomadic groups in the 1960s and 1970s. Similarly, the military advantages of mobility (even without equids), increased friction between nomads and sedentaries, and ensuing “political chaos” are entirely speculative, as is the notion that tribal *khans* settled in their own headquarters, around which markets sprang up, served by craftsmen. Absolutely nothing in the archaeological record of Fars province supports these fantasies.

Finally, Sumner's use of the Turkic term *khan* to describe his hypothesized nomad chieftains is both anachronistic—comparable to using Arabic *shaykh* for the head of a “tribal” group mentioned in cuneiform sources¹⁴⁸—and replete with a host of implications derived from its use in the Qajar and Pahlavi era as a title (e.g., among the Bakhtiyari of southwestern Iran).¹⁴⁹ The term *khan* unavoidably colors our perception of a hypothesized office of social and/or political authority in the remote past, the existence of which in the remote past is purely speculative. Finally, the erection of a massive structure like the city wall of Tal-e Malyan by nomads, even if they had been coerced as a *corvée* labor force, is unprecedented in Iranian history and completely unjustified. Why it was not considered the work of a sedentary labor force inhabiting this enormous site is a mystery, particularly

148. R. Bernbeck, “An archaeology of multisited communities,” in *The archaeology of mobility: Old World and New World nomadism*, edited by H. Barnard and W. Wendrich, Cotsen Advanced Seminar Series 4 (Los Angeles: Cotsen Institute of Archaeology, University of California, 2008), 48.

149. Garthwaite, *Khans and Shahs*, 6. Nor should one forget its original application “to lesser Mongol princes who ruled the uluses (royal appanages which eventually became independent states).” See R. Amitai-Preiss, “Ghazan, Islam and Mongol tradition: A view from the Mamlük sultanate,” *BSOAS* 59 (1996): 6 n. 36. For the etymology and use of *qan/khan* and *qaqan/khagan*, both before and after the era of Mongol supremacy, see Sir G. Clauson, *An etymological dictionary of pre-thirteenth century Turkish* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 612, 630; and I. de Rachewiltz, “*Qan, Qa'n* and the seal of Güyüg,” in *Documenta Barbarorum: Festschrift für Walther Heissig zum 70. Geburtstag*, edited by K. Sagaster and M. Weiers (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1983), 272–281.

given the engineering and architectural know-how implied by what must have been, on analogy with similarly large works like the restoration of the Etemenanki (*ziqqurat* of Marduk) of Babylon or the construction of the *ziqqurat* at Choga Zanbil, a multi-year or even multi-decadal undertaking.¹⁵⁰

Khuzestan

In 1992 Alizadeh published the ceramics collected by Dr. F. G. L. Gremliza while working as a doctor in Khuzestan during the 1950s and 1960s. Having, to his own satisfaction, identified the existence of nomads in highland Fars during the Chalcolithic, Alizadeh explained ceramic parallels between Late Susiana 1 sherds and material from Tal-e Bakun A and Tal-e Gap in Fars as a result of “increasing contact between the lowland and the highland at the end of the MS [Middle Susiana] period. This unprecedented contact,” he suggested, could be “attributed to the development of mobile pastoralism in southwestern and southern Iran. . . a factor that may also have contributed to the gradual desertion and shifting of sites from the eastern part of the Susiana plain, traditionally the winter pasture of the mobile pastoralist groups, to the western sector of the plain.”¹⁵¹

Similar oscillations in settlement patterns involving putative nomadic groups were suggested in a 1984 study of the Behbahan-Zuhreh area in eastern Khuzestan, based on survey data from the early 1970s. René Dittmann proposed that an increase in the number of sites in the later fifth millennium B.C., coeval with the occupation at Tal-e Bakun B1 in Fars, could be attributed to the sedentarization of a formerly “mobile” portion of the population.¹⁵² Conversely, in the late Ubaid period, about a millennium later, a perceived drop in the number of sites in Fars, the Behbahan-Zuhreh area and Deh Luran plain was interpreted as a sign that the formerly sedentary population had reverted to a mobile existence, prompted perhaps by deteriorating climatic conditions that became less and less favorable for agriculture.¹⁵³

Conflict between nomads and sedentary villagers and an analogy with the modern movements of Bakhtiyari nomads have also been invoked by Alizadeh to account for the abandonment of Chogha Mish, a major site of the fifth millennium B.C. in Khuzestan.¹⁵⁴ Citing recent herding practices by the Bakhtiyari,

150. D. T. Potts, “Elamite monumentality and architectural scale: Lessons from Susa and Choga Zanbil,” in *Approaching monumentality in the archaeological record*, edited by J. Osborne (Buffalo: State University of New York Press, in press).

151. Alizadeh, *Prehistoric settlement patterns*, 26.

152. R. Dittmann, *Eine Randebene des Zagros in der Frühzeit: Ergebnisse des Behbahan-Zuhreh Surveys*, BBVO 3 (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1984), 73.

153. *Ibid.*, 76.

154. P. Delougaz and H. J. Kantor, *Chogha Mish*, vol. 1: *The first five seasons of excavations, 1961–1971*, OIP 101 (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1996); A. Alizadeh, *Chogha Mish II: The*

Alizadeh suggested, “The demise of Chogha Mish in the early fifth millennium B.C. may have been the result of the initial conflict of interest between the pastoralist and farming communities of the region... eastern Khuzestan, where Chogha Mish is located, has been used by a large number of the Bakhtiyari tribes as their winter grounds.”¹⁵⁵

Finally, excavations in 2002 at Dar Khazineh (KS-1626), c. 30 km southeast of Shushtar, revealed thin lenses of ash; badly preserved, burned mud walls; postholes; and fireplaces. For Alizadeh, these recalled the remains left behind by modern Bakhtiyari tribesmen who camped in the same area during the winter, suggesting that “KS-1626 might have been used seasonally by the prehistoric mobile pastoralists of the region.”¹⁵⁶ Several years later the “might have been” had disappeared and the site was flatly declared to be “a late sixth-fifth-millennium nomadic campsite.”¹⁵⁷ With respect to Dar Khazineh’s stratigraphy, Alizadeh speculated that, “when, in the main area of excavation, we factored out the alluvial levels from the cultural lenses, we were left with just over 30 cm of cultural deposit for perhaps the entire duration of the fifth millennium B.C. We believe that this type of stratigraphy can happen when a site lacks solid architecture and is repeatedly occupied (in winter) and left exposed to the elements for several months (in mid-spring and summer).”¹⁵⁸

And finally, speaking of the Susa III or Proto-Elamite period in Khuzestan (c. 3000 B.C.), Alizadeh has suggested, “Given the long-term cultural development in southwestern Iran as outlined here, a pastorally based polity could be the most likely force capable of producing sheep, goats and their products, and man-power, as well as conducting or controlling inter-regional trade.” However, given that “the large quantities of grains recorded in the Proto-Elamite tablets from Susa were produced by the Zagros agro-pastoralists,” he wrote, “it is perfectly possible for the Zagros mobile pastoralists to engage in farming without being attached to fixed settlements.”¹⁵⁹

Evaluation

Although indicated only obliquely, the suggestion that mobile groups from the highlands pushed out the sedentary inhabitants of eastern Susiana and appropriated

development of a prehistoric regional center in lowland Susiana, southwestern Iran: Final report on the last six seasons of excavations, 1972–1978, OIP 130 (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 2008).

155. A. Alizadeh, “Prehistoric mobile pastoralists in south-central and southwestern Iran,” in *Nomads, tribes, and the state in the ancient Near East: Cross-disciplinary perspectives*, edited by J. Zsuchman, Oriental Institute Seminars 5 (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 2009), 133.

156. Alizadeh, *The origins of state organizations*, 21.

157. Alizadeh, “The rise of the highland Elamite state,” 363.

158. Alizadeh, “Prehistoric mobile pastoralists,” 134.

159. *Ibid.*, 135.

their fields for use as winter pastures lies at the heart of Alizadeh's understanding of settlement pattern changes in Chalcolithic Khuzestan. Such an explanation has been viewed with skepticism by Gregory Johnson who observed, "The causes of late fifth millennium social fragmentation are obscure at best. . . . There is no evidence that pastoralist populations were either large enough or sufficiently organized to harass the occupants of large sedentary settlement systems out of existence."¹⁶⁰ Similarly, the oscillation between sedentarization and nomadization hypothesized in the Behbahan-Zuhreh and Deh Luran areas by Dittmann is a fine illustration of a point made by Reinhard Bernbeck who observed, "Interpretations of aggregate settlement data often resort to nomadism and mobility, as well as the opposite effect of sedentarization as a convenient *deus ex machina* whenever a sudden decrease or increase in sedentary populations cannot be easily explained otherwise."¹⁶¹

As in the case of Tal-e Malyan reviewed above, Alizadeh invoked conflict between sedentary and nomadic communities to explain the abandonment of Chogha Mish at the end of the fifth millennium B.C. No clarification was given as to why this explanation should be preferred to a host of other speculations, ranging from the exhaustion of the soils due to poor farming practices, necessitating an abandonment of the site, to the sort of plague that decimated many Iranian towns and villages on numerous occasions during the nineteenth century (see ch. 8). Finally, when Alizadeh cites manpower, large herds of sheep and goats, and large-scale cultivation of cereals in and around Susa as evidence that mobile pastoralists were responsible for their generation, one can only state that these are the very hallmarks of sedentary, urban settlements and their hinterlands in nearby Mesopotamia where "a pastorally based polity" and "mobile pastoralists" unattached to fixed settlements were most definitely not responsible for the development of civilization. Like the contemporary body of economic documents from Uruk, the Susa III herding texts reflect the economy of a stable institution—temple or palace—at Susa, without the slightest hint of any nomadic involvement in the management of its herds, let alone in the agricultural regime, underpinned by extensive irrigation, that was capable of delivering substantial surpluses.¹⁶²

The Central Plateau

Alizadeh has also asserted that nomadism was practiced on the Central Plateau during the Chalcolithic period. He based this on a combination of factors,

160. G. A. Johnson, "Nine thousand years of social change in Western Iran," in *The archaeology of western Iran: Settlement and society from prehistory to the Islamic conquest*, edited by F. Hole (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1987), 286.

161. Bernbeck, "An archaeology of multisited communities," 49.

162. J. Dahl, "Animal husbandry in Susa during the Proto-Elamite period," *SMEA* 47 (2005): 81–134.

including the presence (on at least six mounded sites c. 100 km south of Tehran) of Late Susiana I pottery, the observation that “mobile pastoralism is still practiced by some families in the region,” and the broad contemporaneity of the Late Susiana phase and the Chalcolithic cemeteries of Hakalan and Dum Gar Parchineh, which he attributes to nomadic pastoralists.¹⁶³ “The abandonment of Chogha Mish around 5000 B.C.,” he wrote, “roughly corresponds with the appearance of the ancient nomadic cemeteries of Hakalan and Parchneh and with the diffusion of the specific early fifth-millennium B.C. black-on-buff pottery of southwestern Iran into highland Fars, the central Zagros region, and surprisingly enough into the Central plateau,” concluding, “I am interpreting these events as connected with the region’s prehistoric pastoral nomads.”¹⁶⁴ Regarding the evidence from the Tehran area, he observed, “If the appearance of the typical southwestern ceramics in the Central plateau had anything to do with trade in copper ore and semi-precious stones (lapis and turquoise), Zagros mobile pastoralists would have been in the best position to take advantage of it.”¹⁶⁵

Evaluation

Consistent with his identification of mobile pastoralists as the agents responsible for the diffusion of Bakun A-type ceramics in Fars, Alizadeh has inferred that the distribution of a particular style of pottery far from its area of origin—in this case Late Susiana I ware—was effected by prehistoric nomads, and not a product of any other sort of interaction between sedentary communities such as trade. No justification is cited that might convince the reader why this explanation is to be preferred. The notion that nomads or mobile pastoralists were responsible for the diffusion of copper, turquoise, or lapis lazuli is not one that has otherwise been entertained in the voluminous literature on prehistoric trade in metals and semi-precious stones on the Iranian plateau. This, of course, does not invalidate it, but as it stands, this remains an unfounded speculation that is buttressed by no evidence whatsoever.

THE BRONZE AGE

Fars and Khuzestan

Bronze Age nomads in Fars have been invoked by a number of scholars. In his publication of the findings at the third millennium cemetery of Tepe Jalyan near Fasa, excavated in 1960–61 by F. Tavallali, Pierre de Miroschedji suggested that, in the absence of a nearby settlement, one was tempted to attribute the graves to a

163. Alizadeh, *The origins of state organizations*, 22.

164. Alizadeh, “Prehistoric mobile pastoralists,” 133.

165. *Ibid.*, 135.