

Anatolian Neolithic and its Transregional Relations with Western Iran

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Abstract

Transregional relations and interactions between societies have always been an important research topic in archaeology. Southeastern Anatolia and western Iran—the northern and eastern parts of the Fertile Crescent, respectively—had cultural interactions for millennia, with the Zagros–Taurus arc giving rise to shared cultural hubs in certain periods. Meanwhile, the study of Anatolia–Iran relations has so far been mostly influenced by Mesopotamian archaeology, with Mesopotamia always taking center stage. Undoubtedly, especially southern Mesopotamia played a central role in the fourth and third millennia BC, however, the situation was different in the Epipalaeolithic and Neolithic. Adopting a comparative approach, this article examines Anatolia’s transregional relations with western Iran during the Neolithic period, with a focus on Anatolia. It seems that the distribution of Anatolian obsidian generally played a key role in the coming into contact with Near Eastern societies. The discovery of obsidian with Anatolian origins in a great number of Near Eastern archaeological sites, especially those in Iran, suggests the existence of a vast distribution network involving different groups. Although the Iranian sites were inside a contact zone and the obsidian they received was much less than the sites within supply zones, obsidian is certainly a very important indicator of the relationships between Neolithic societies and it may have created a wide array of ties. A look at other elements of Neolithic life, such as funeral traditions, pottery, stone tools, and other small finds, reveals that each of the regions in question contributed to an aspect of the evolution of Near Eastern societies.

Keywords: Iran, Anatolia, Cultural interaction, Neolithic, Obsidian.

Citation: Aghalari B., 2021. Anatolian Neolithic and its transregional relations with western Iran. Journal of Iran's Pre-Islamic Archaeological Essays. 6(1): 1-14.

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Received: 2021/01/03 Accepted :2021/11/29