

Southwest Asia during the Iron Age from the perspective of climatic events

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Abstract

During the Iron Age, from 1500 to 550 BC, extensive migrations and socio-political conflicts have taken place, especially in Southwest Asia. Probably the main reason for these movements was related to the 3200 BP (1200 BC) and the 2800 BP (800 BC) climatic events. This study attempts to investigate the influential climatic events during the Iron Age in Southwest Asia, based on paleoclimate research of the Late Holocene. The main question is what (possible) link has there been between climate change and Iron Age socio-political change in the region? It is assumed that the escalation of arid climatic conditions has severely strained human societies. In this study, historical documents and archaeological evidence of Southwest Asia belonging to the Iron Age, along with the results of paleoclimate research of the Late Holocene from the region, the North Atlantic, and Greenland have been examined. According to paleoclimate research, several climatic oscillations are identified during the Iron Age: about 1500 - 1250 BC a wet period (Iron Age I), about 1250 - 950 BC a very dry period (the 3200 BP event), about 950 to 850 BC a relatively wet period (Iron Age II), about 850 - 750 BC a dry period (the 2800 BP event), and about 750 - 550 BC an unstable wet-dry period (Iron Age III). The results of this study show that periods of increasing violence and widespread human migrations during the Iron Age overlapped with times of climatic anomalies. Furthermore, it is emphasized that the survival of most prehistoric communities of Iran during the severe climatic events, especially in Iron Age, has certainly been compatible with the subsistence system of pastoral nomadism and hunting, a system in adaptation with the environmental potentials of many regions of Iran, which has been continued during historical and Islamic periods as well.

Keywords: Climatic Event, Iron Age, Southwest Asia, Paleoclimate, Late Holocene.

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