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A Middle Range Theory View on the Location of the Campsites in Western Iran: A Case Study of Bakhtiari Region

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Abstract

Southern Zagros mountainous region which is the country (Yelagh as local name) for Bakhtiari and a few of Qashqayi tribes, is resided during spring and summer due to suitable geographical and climate conditions such as sufficient water supplies, acceptable pastures and timing for the growth of plants. The mentioned tribes spend their winter quarters during fall and winter in some regions in the Khuzestan and the Fars provinces. In the country regions, the immigrants choose specific places to reside and camp depending on the climate conditions, the level of security for the people and the herd, protection from wind and raining, access to water supplies, and growth of plants in the pastures. This study aims to identify the ancient ways of choosing the locations for camping in the country regions and show where campsites can be easily located. This will be achieved through the Middle Range Theory (MRT) by studying and evaluating modern pastoral groups.

Keywords: Southern Zagros, Bakhtiari, Country, Winter quarters, Campsite, Middle Range Theory.

Article Type: Research Article

Introduction

Pastoral, which has its roots in the mountain dweller communities in the west of the country, plays important and different social and economic roles in the Middle East. This kind of lifestyle was of the most important economic activities before the land reform in both of the above mentioned regions and, from a socio-economical point of view, had a noticeable role in the development of ancient civilizations in the Middle East, especially western Iran (Alizadeh 2003: 83; Abdi 2002: 45; Abdi 2003). It must be mentioned that the role of pastoral communities in the formation of primeval states and societies is considered to have been marginal and indirect (Alizadeh 2003: 46). One can find the most populated and powerful pastoral communities, with the highest level of socio-economical complexity, within Bakhtiari tribes, residing in the Central Zagros, southeast of Fars and eastern region of Khuzestan to the east of Isfahan, and Qashqaei tribes in southeast of Zagros and central Fars (Alizadeh 2009:130, Ghorbani 2005: 122).

The pastoral groups travel through long and intolerable paths to reach cold or tropical regions and to find adequate pastures (Abdi 2002, Abdi 2003). The winter quarters of Bakhtiari tribes is located in Khuzestan (see: Potts, 2014: 3(and their

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country regions are in mountainous areas in the east of Khuzestan to the border of Isfahan (Sawyer 1894). Considering the residential pattern and system, immigrants have been residing in specific regions depending on the valley system in the region during several years. Therefore, all their country camps were located in submontane valleys, which, due to the slope and the way the tents had to be set up, the groups had to use stones and sometimes mud mortar. Additionally, due to the cold weather in the winter quarters, using stones and mud can help preserve the heat too. In the regions having

Middle Range Theory in Archaeology

Middle Range Theory (MRT) can be construed as an analogizing process, comparing specific behaviors to those of either similar cultures or to general principles. Used in archaeology, it is supposed to solve the issue of getting social dynamics from static material remains. Its main aim is to bridge specific actions and behaviors to high level theory. In archaeology, MRT refers to theories linking human behavior and natural processes to physical remains in the archaeological record. It allows archaeologists to make inferences in the other direction: from archaeological finds in the present to behaviors in the past. MRT is derived from ethno-archaeology and experimental research in combination with the study of taphonomic processes. MRT permit archaeologists to interpret the past through inferences made in the present. Therefore, MRT form links between the observed realities of the modern world and excavated traces of the ancient world as well as links between particular observations and general theories about the past (Mark Raab and Goodyear 1948, Levent Atici 2006).

A term developed in sociology by Robert K. Merton in the late 1940s (Levent Atici, 2006) as a way of connecting high-level social theory with empirically observable patterns. Similarly, in archaeology, it has become a way of seeking accurate means for identifying and measuring specified properties of past cultural systems. With the advent of new archaeology, there was a general concern about the scientific adequacy of archaeology and how the field can contribute to anthropology. To solve the issue of how to get social dynamics from static material culture, Binford proposes using MRT to inform site formation processes in the introduction to his Theory Building for Archaeology. The term was adapted from Middle Range Theory in Sociology by Lewis Binford (1977, 1982). He conducted Ethnographic fieldwork amongst modern Hunter-Gatherer peoples such as the Nunamiut Eskimo. MRT appears as a key concept in processual archaeology and in the work and writings of Binford. In contextual Archaeology Hodder (1986:12, 29) argues that this methodological association with natural science puts archaeology in with the wrong company.

MRT has been criticized in many ways, including those rather similar to the criticisms of analogy. Johnson (1999), for example, makes the common argument that MRT, like all forms of analogy, is improvable. In particular, he reminds readers that modern hunter-gatherer groups are not the same as those in the past. While he acknowledges that analogies between groups of cultural continuity tend to be more reliable, Johnson mentions the issue of establishing cultural continuity, with even simple processes such as refuse disposal and tolerable population density affected by culture. The other criticism is that MRT doesn't actually study why people do certain actions or have certain behaviors, but what behaviors are associated with particular material records. While Raab and Goodyear (1984) argued that this focus hinders theory-building, Hodder (1982) argues that that Binford's method in his Nunamiut work does not fully appreciate the meanings and context of actions, which cannot be reduced to maximizing and functional terms. As an example, Hodder's work on the Nuba indicate one tribe's distribution of pig bones is directly related to their association of the animal with women's impurity, resulting in a concentration of bones in female parts of the home. This line of criticism seems to be more about the application of MRT, instead of the concept. Indeed, Raab and Goodyear (1984) have stated their hopes of returning MRT to the way it was used in sociology, or doing away with the term while keeping the concepts behind. At the same time, a contextual approach can be used to investigate whether cultural forms are direct or distorted expressions of social, political and economic reality (Hodder 1987). Ethno-

archaeology is the Ethnographic study of peoples for Archaeological reasons, usually through the study of the material remains of a society (see David & Kramer 2001).

Ancestry of Bakhtiaris and Bakhtiari's Name

There is no written form of Bakhtiari origin history and come from (Curzon 1966: 273) and their origin is not clear where they come from. Some researchers expressed their ancestry from Balkh (Bakteria), Greece and some also Atabakan Loristan (Sardar Asad 2009:47-50) or some suggest that the Elamites are the ancestors of Lor (Hinz 1971: 644) Or some put forward that the the Kossaeans could be their ancestors, The Kossaeans were located in the mountains to the north of Susiana. According to Nearchus, the first Greek to provide firsthand knowledge of them, the territory of the Kossaeans neighbored that of the Medes, and the Persian king, in travelling from his winter capital of Susa to his summer capital at Ekbatana, had to cross the country of the Kossaeans (Strabo, Geog: XI.13.6) According to Diodorus (V.44.7) the Kossaeans dwelt along with the other tribes in the 'depressions and deep valleys' of Mount Zagrus (potts 2004: 274-275). However, Before the Safavid period, there was not a region called Bakhtiari, it Seems for the first time in the Tarikh e Gozide (1329 AD) has been recorded as the name of one of the tribes of the Great Lor(Lor-e –Bozorg)(Mostofi 1990: 540). The term of Lor became common in the Mongol period until Safavid, but before the eighth century the area was called Belad-o Al-Lor or Lorestan (Amanollahi Baharvand 1991: 88). Lors are divided into two groups: Great and small lor. Greater Lur includes Bakhtiari and small Lors consist of the current inhabitants of Lurestan province. Historically, the Bakhtiaris have been divided into two main tribal groups. The Chahar Lang are located in the northwest of the Bakhtiari country and until the middle of the nineteenth century retained the leadership of all the Bakhtiari tribes. The Haft Lang, the southwestern group, has been more closely associated with the modern Iranian politics than the Chahar Lang and in some instances have exercised significant influence.

From the beginning of the Safavid period, history of the Bakhtiari is clearer. During this period, one of the Bakhtiari families named Asteriki was the Ruling of Bakhtiari, by Shah Ismail I authority. From the middle of the Qajar period, Hossein Qoli Khan defeated Bakhtiari Khans and united all of the tribes, headed Haft Lang tribe and assumed responsibility of the Bakhtiari region affairs (Garthwaite 1972). Bakhtiari throughout history, always have played an important role in the Iranian political relations.

Bakhtiari Tribes: Geographical Region

In western Iran, Zagros Mountains act as a huge and wide-spread wall against the western wind flow including the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean moderate and humid air and prevent the desired humidity enter the central regions. It appears that the western slope, highlands and Foothills of Zagros receive more rain than the east ones (Jafari 1989: 20) Being located on Zagros Mountain, and due to its geographical longitude, latitude and situation, the areas having been resided by Bakhtiari tribes are hit by the humid air and receive the most rain within the region. Additional factors such as the angle of sunshine, ragged lands, altitude from the sea level, direction of the ragged lands, and direction of elongation towards the southern latitudes have caused the southern parts to receive more energy and experience a semi-arid and humid climate. The hottest months of the year are July and August, and the coldest ones are December and January. In these regions, the rain starts in November and the weather gradually gets cold and reaches its pick in December and January and until late April the weather will not be as much cold and the level of raining decreases and the temperature gradually goes up.

The yearly amount of raining reported in the aerological stations in a long period of time is estimated to be an average of 741 mm. Generally, there is a positive relationship between the amount of rainfall and altitude. The most amount of rainfall is reported in the highlands in the northwest of the region in Kuhrang. The dispersal of rainfalls shown in different stations reveals that the highest amount of rainfall is reported to be 1028.4 mm in Kuhrang station and the lowest is 181 mm in the east of Boroujen and the western regions of Isfahan (Shahriyar poor *et al*. 2012: 12). The

regions receiving the most amount of rainfall are the highlands located in the west wing with an average of 1600 mm a year. Other such regions can be Sabzkuh highlands with 1400 mm, and the ones in the southwest of the region with 900 mm. The region with the lowest rainfall is the eastern and northeast one with an average of 250-300 mm a year. This mountainous region is located in the southwest of Zagros which is the headspring of two big and important rivers Karoun and Zayenderoud. This part of Zagros heads from northwest to the southeast being composed of parallel valleys which is a combination of high mountains, deep valleys, and alluvial plains and provides several land uses. It also holds numerous highlands in the region such as 16 major peaks each being over 3500 meters high. Most of the highlands mentioned are located in the west heading from north to south. Zardkouh is the highest peak with an altitude of over 4421 meters. These mounts are the permanent headsprings of Zayandeh roud and Karoun and covered by snow most of the year long. The altitude falls down as we move towards east ending in open valleys and relatively wide pains which, due to being covered by sediments, provides a decent planting bed (Zagarell 1987: 32). Generally, the lands in this part of Iran are composed of limestone and woodland and, because of having rich water supplies, are also used as a pasture. As a whole, this region is composed of rivers, mounts, woodlands and valleys (Rafifar & Ghorbani 2008).

Zagros tribes move back and forth between two pastures in order to use them; the winter one in the warm low plains and the summer one in the mountainous region (Safinezhad 2001: 25; Nikkholgh & Noori, 1998: 27; Molaei Hashtjin 1998). Therefore, they set up camps for a short or long period of time during their movement (Hole 1979). Bakhtiari country region is surrounded by central of Esfahan on the west (Alizadeh 1988), by Golpaygan and Ramhormoz on the south, by Khuzestan plain on the east, and by Loristan on the north (Layard 1846 ; Minorsky 1945 ; Garthwaite 1978 ; Alizadeh 2003: 83 ; Moshiri 2004: 149 ; Amanollahi Baharvand 2005: 48 ; Nikkholgh& Noori, 1998: 84 ; Molaei Hashtjin 1998). The land hold by the Bakhtiari is divided into two parts: the first is the winter pasture (tropical/winter quarters) including regions in Fars and Khuzestan plain, and the second is the summer pasture (cold/country) in the east slopes or the west side of Iran plateau that holds Zagros mountains and the border between them (Garthwaite 1978) (figure 1). This region has several parallel valleys ranged between 1 to 5 km wide each being different from one another from the viewpoints of the number and quality of natural resources like water springs, rivers and timber supplies, and fertile land suitable for plantation and rich pastures (Alizadeh 2003: 87). This has affected the importance and the power of pastoral communities in different ways.

After the end of winter and the beginning of spring, during the warm season, the rainfall comes to an end and the temperature drops significantly that causes a dramatic increase in vaporization and the rivers start to dry out and the water supplies seem to be limited and scattered apart. In this period, the vegetation grows quickly but it soon starts to wither and disappear. There comes the time for the immigrants to move away now. The temperature in the region rises, the snow melts, and, at the same time, there can be found decent conditions for vegetation starting from lower lands up to the higher ones. The time this period is over, the warm season comes to an end, the cold season seems approaching, indecent conditions can be found in the mountainous regions, the plants in the pasture start disappearing, cold wind starts to blow and the time to reside is over. On the contrary, decent condition in the country is experienced, so the pastoral groups move to the winter quarters in the early fall. The time of the movement depends on such factors as climate conditions in the country and winter quarters, increase or decrease in the vegetation in the two regions, the quality of the paths, water and feedstuff supplies in the stations on the way, and the number of the cattle and the people (Molaei Hashtjin 1998).

Location of Ancient Campsites Based on MRT

During their lifetime, the nomads have undergone numerous changes in residence and movements in Iran. Due to environmental and geographical conditions, and economic, social and political reasons, they have first turned to semi-immigration and finally to sedentariness. It is worth mentioning

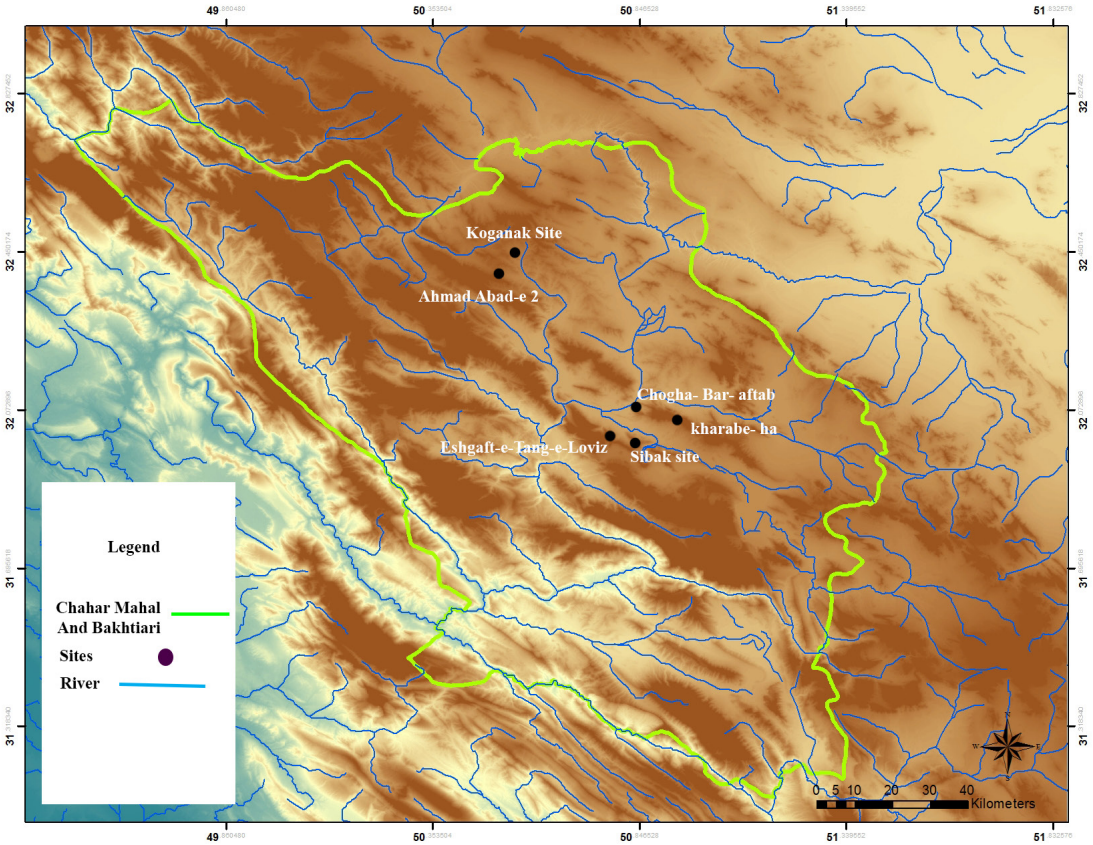


Figure 1: *Area of the Bakhtiari's Nomads country and location of sites*

that in some cases after habitation they turn back to nomadic or semi-nomadic and move back and forth between the country and the winter quarters (Nikkholgh & Noori 1998: 52).This is caused by climate changes threatening sedentariness which is highly dependent upon land. Nomadic people form their residence system based on specific conditions such as geographical conditions and personal decisions. Geographically speaking, Bakhtiari tribes set up their camps in places where there can be found enough security and decent pastures (Zagarell 1975). It is of considerable importance to find a campsite secure enough for the cattle. In other words, camps are set up in places much less accessible by the wild animals and bandits (Ghorbani 2005). In addition to Residing in a camp depends on the availability of forage and water in the pasture. (Danaeinia and Eilbeigipoor 2018: 72).

Situational problems and difficulties brought about by geographical and environmental conditions due to the lack of decent places and paths have caused dispersion in the residential places to set up camps (Zagarell 1975). Additionally, residence and immigration depends upon such other factors as economic benefit, and political and military reasons. Among the geographical and environmental factors, the immigrants pay close attention to some fundamental factors when setting up camps and choosing places to reside. Indeed, they chose places with decent inclination (Hole 1979 ; Beck 2003). They preferred places with high water penetrance so that they soon dry out after even heavy rains and can be used as a residential place again. Furthermore, the places should hold rich pastures often found in marginal regions especially in hillside (Amanollahi Baharvand 2001).

Considering what was mentioned and the differences between natural environments, the immigrants not always use one type of residence or tent and this depends on the natural characteristics

of the place of residence in different seasons. Some examples of Bakhtiari's campsites in country are described as follows:

1-Cave or shelter: Natural caves or shelters on the immigration paths, due to their size, are used during movement for only a short two- or three-day period of time in spring and fall when heavy season rainfall or considerable and instant drop in temperature at some nights are likely. In caves with considerable width and length, the cattle are settled inside the cave and the owners at the front of the door to keep the cattle safe. In small ones, the cattle stay outside and the owners stay inside (Figure 2). In other seasons like summer, the caves and shelters are likely to be used as well, especially when a family or the herd get separated from the others, and if this lasts for a long time, inside the cave or at the mouth walls of stone or stone and mud mortar are built up (Hole 1979). Using these places brings advantages like complete observation on the cattle, the children and the weaker ones against cold and heavy season rainfalls.

1-1-Eshgaft-e-Tang-e-Loviz (Tang-e-Loviz Shelter)

this shelter is 2800 meters far from Dastenaa in Tang-e Loviz located in the south and built at the hillside. This bottleneck has been a movement path since a long time ago used by the pastoral and nomad groups to move from country to winter quarters and vice versa. The shelter has two separate mouths both facing east with the smaller one being 3 meters above the other. The bigger shelter is of 3 meters depth being 2.5 meters high and 5.5 meters wide. The smaller shelter is of 6 meters depth being 1.5 meters high and 85 cm wide and Tang-e Loviz season river is located on its east 45 meters far (Figure 3). Discovered materials from this shelter are lithic artifacts and pottery belonging to the chalcolithic period.

2-Between two rivers, or a river and a mount: Residential places in these regions are mostly intended to provide protection for the cattle against bandits and wild animals and they may be used all year long which is because of the decent and



Figure. 2: *Nomadic settlements near Gap shelter (After: Niknami et al. 2009: Figure. 6)*



Figure 3: *Eshgaft-e-(shelter) Tang-e Loviz (View from the east)*

strategic situation of the region. On the other hand, there can be found enough water for the cattle, and other places may be too far from pastures. As these places are set up distant from villages or cities, they almost never get interrupted and destroyed and stay untouched after the immigrants are gone even after a long time.

2-1-Choqa-bar-Aftab: This site is 1270 meters to the north of Salm village in the south hillside of Choqa-bar-Aftab, 50 m from the Kiar River and 80 m from Choqa-bar-Aftab spring, being 95×85 meters in size. Within the area one can see several illegal excavations. The area might have been used as a protection for the residents because it neighbors the Kiar River in the south and the hills in the north. It must have been resided in the chalcolithic period (Figure 4).

3-In the hillsides of a hill ending to a plain: These places, which like the ones mentioned earlier were used mainly for protection of the cattle, are used during most of the seasons. On one hand, soring pastures are available to the immigrants, and on the other hand, they can be used by them after harvesting the crops by the farmers. Most of them have permanent springs and season water paths. From the security point of view, these regions are surrounded by highlands and cannot be easily reached for by wild animals and bandits. For example, as these areas are surrounded by hills on 2 or 3 sides, in case a wolf or any wild animal attacks the cattle, it cannot carry the prey to the high surrounding places.

3-1-Sibak site: Sibak, which is 85×50 meters in size, is 2200 m to the southeast of Dastenaa surrounded by three hills which continue to the agricultural lands (Figure 5). The area is inclined toward north and is now being used by the nomads and farmers



Figure. 4: *Chogha- Bar- Aftab Site between a river and a mount (View from the east)*

as a camp during summer. 100 m to the southeast, one can see Sibak garden spring, and 300 m to the north, there lays The Gav- kosh River. This site seems to have been resided in the Historical and Islamic period.

4-In flat agricultural lands: These places are resided in the second half of summer and fall after harvesting the crops and in the case the tribes are prohibited of using any of the places previously mentioned, they have no other choice but setting up



Figure. 5: *Sibak site in the hillsides of a hill ending to a plain (View from the north east)*

their camps in the agricultural lands. Most of the times it is impossible to find such places because, after leaving the place, the tribes clean up the spot they set their tent up and the sticks and timbers they brought to the area, and additionally, the farmers start plowing lands and so there will be trace of the tribe's devices left. The tribes generally prefer to set up their camps besides rivers or permanent water supplies.

4-1-Ahmad Abad-e 2: As stated, due to modern activities in agricultural lands, we are unable to find such site in agricultural lands, but little ceramic evidence could testify that the land was used as campsite during the Historical and Islamic period. (figure 6).

5-Besides to villages or cities:These places are resided mostly by nomads called Gipsy (koli or ghorbati). The Gipsy (koli) own a limited number of cattle, and, in some cases, no sheep and goats, and often practice handcrafts, singing, industrial products, smithy activities, handicraft, astrology and trade-off (Amanollahi Baharvand 2002). They set up camps near villages or cities to sell their artifacts or products (Nikkholgh& Noori 1998:30).

5-1-Koganak Site: The Koganak is located 30 m far from east of Koganak village (figure 7). This is a flat area being 50×45 in size. This area is used nowadays in the summer by the immigrants or Gipsy (koli). The area is near the Zayandeh- Roud River used by the immigrants residing here and seems to have been resided in the Historical and Islamic period.



Figure 6: *Ahmad Abad-e 2 in the flat agricultural lands (View from the south)*



Figure. 7: *Koganak Site Besides to Koganak village (View from the south)*

6-Other places: These places mostly include regions with decent inclinations that can be found everywhere and in case the tribes are facing limitations in space or pastures or it is their first time residing in a region, as the region is unknown to them, they have to choose the best possible place they can reside. Considering this, one can see that the sample campsites in Khan Mirza plain, that is 5 areas in the hillsides in the chalcolithic period, were located high in the valleys which is likely to be presenting the first cases of residence in such conditions in this region (Zagarell 1975). Other instances can be referred to as campsites near extremely big springs or near lagoons (Figure 7).

6-1-The ruins site (kharabe- ha)

The ruins are located 920 m far from the south hillsides in the east of Dastenaa in 150 m to the north of the Dastenaa River. It is a flat area being 50×70 in size (figure 8). This area is used nowadays in the late summer by the immigrants. The area is 100m far from Saleh Abad spring being used by the immigrants residing here. This area seems to have been resided in the Historical and Islamic period.



Figure. 8: *kharabe- ha (ruins site) with tent of nomad (View from the west)*

Conclusion

Bakhtiari people move back and forth between country and winter quarters to feed their cattle. Meanwhile, to reach the desired region, the time and the paths should be carefully studied in order for them not to interfere with the other groups of immigrants. When immigrating or staying in the country or winter quarters, Bakhtiari people use camps with special characteristics such as protection against regional wind and wild animals,

and easy access to pastures and water supplies. It should be mentioned that geographical and climate conditions in different seasons highly influence the process of choosing a campsite. It appears that the most influential factor in choosing a decent campsite is protection against wild animals, bandits and wind. Considering what was mentioned, one can see that the camps are not always set up near pastures or water supplies, but sometimes greatly distant from them. It is also worth mentioning that sometimes tribes have no other option but choose a place, which might not be useful, for a short time.

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