

FORCED DISPLACEMENT IN THE IRON AGE

Azer Keskin

Department of Anthropology

Binghamton University

Imperialist political entities have commonly displaced people in masses throughout history. In the Iron Age, the Assyrian Empire used mass deportations as a routine strategy for purposes of political domination. Assyrian deportations are studied almost exclusively through Assyrian historical texts and Biblical sources. Such studies are useful, but also complicated by ideological biases in the past and the present. Archaeological methodologies can complement analyses of historical sources, which are not interested in what happened to people after resettlement. More than 30 small single-period Iron Age sites dating to 9th to 7th centuries BC in Wadi Ajij in Syria are a point in case. Archaeological and historical data suggest that these were newly-founded sites in a marginal environment where deportees, likely from the west, were resettled. Spatial patterning of surface finds of various functional types of pottery from these sites is analyzed as impressions of the daily lives of deportees on the landscape. Similarities and differences between spatial patterning of various sites are examined to get a glimpse of the daily lives of their inhabitants, and to address processes of enculturation following deportations.