

MOBILITY AND MIGRATION AT THE END OF THE BRONZE AGE IN THE SOUTHERN LEVANT

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Living in 'an age of migration' has significantly affected how archaeologists, scientists and social scientists view this very complex phenomenon. Most archaeologists who study prehistoric migrations still believe that the main stimulus behind such movements was human agency, not climatic or environmental change. In fact, human migrations have multiple, complex and often historically specific causes, but archaeological explanations tend to be monothetic. This paper looks critically at migration scenarios proposed for the end of the Bronze Age in the southern Levant. After presenting a brief but critical examination of current archaeological views on the so-called Philistine migration around 1200 BC, I consider the current state of evidence from palaeogenetics (aDNA) and strontium isotope analyses related to this phenomenon. Although such analyses have enabled us to ask — but all too seldom to answer — questions that would never even have been raised a decade ago, in the case of the 'Philistine migration' most studies published to date have been inconclusive and are inadequately invested in the wider archaeological, social science and palaeogenetic literature. The conclusion attempts to look anew at this enigmatic period of mobility and connectivity, of transformation and social change, alongside the hybridised practices of social actors old and new.

Keywords

migration, southern Levant, palaeogenetics, mobility

Note/comment