



ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

The Silent Period: An Analysis of the Black Deserts Epigraphic Gap during the Seljuk/Fatimid ?Period

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Abstract

It was long held that southern Bilad al-Sham experienced settlement abatement from the Abbasid until the Mamluk period. The villages were abandoned, agricultural lands unworked, and population dispersed. Recently, many archaeologists have challenged this view as new evidence attesting to the contrary emerged, formulating a new picture of the region. However, what remains outside the picture is the Badiya itself. In this paper, the author will examine the epigraphic evidence from a specific Badiya landscape, the Black Desert (al-Harra), northeast Jordan, to shed some light on the periods in question. Through the epigraphic analysis of the Black Desert inscriptions, the inhabitants of the area and their interaction with settled communities around them are identified and explored. The epigraphic record, which accounts for all Islamic periods with the exception of the Seljuk/Fatimid period, corroborates the view that Bilad al-Sham has witnessed no population collapse. Furthermore, the evidence indicates that, during the Seljuk/Fatimid period, the Badiya population declined only to be replaced by new arrivals during the Mamluk period.

Keywords

Badiya, Harra, Seljuk/Fatimid, Abbasid, Epigraphy

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