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ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

Pottery Production Systems as Cultural Markers? Investigating the Variability of Economic Development Paths in Urban Societies (4th and 3rd millennium BCE)

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Abstract

In ancient societies studies, while economy is usually considered as an exogenous factor, related to environmental settings, demography, political leadership, exchange networks and specialisation, culture is defined as a set of endogenous values transmitted through vertical family ties and horizontal socialisation processes influencing individual behavior and decision-making. This frontier must be reconsidered. If cultural values shape human agency and the social nexus of relationships, we must question the cultural variability of production systems and the possibility to characterize culture through the organisation of the production. Between the 4th and the 3rd millennium BCE, the economic development of common pottery production does not manifest in a linear and uniform manner across the urban societies of Southwest Asia. We propose to analyse the technical and spatial organisation of the pottery production to track the distinct paths that economic development followed in each region. It appears that the distribution areas of specific firing traditions and organisation of crafting spaces delineate two macro regions, characterized by very different organisation of labour. Therefore, the variability of the production organisation could highlight distinct cultural zones that shaped the economic development of societies, sometimes leading to processes of proto-industrialisation.

Keywords

economy, pottery production, labour, firing, proto-industrialisation

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