



ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

An Entangled Landscape: The Archaeology of Medieval Rabati in Southwest Georgia

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Abstract

The South Caucasus is a landscape of diachronic change, transforming over millenia through various environmental, cultural, religious and political shifts. Sitting at the crossroads of Eurasia, Georgia has been marked by constantly shifting borders; often viewed as a peripheral region by the neighboring Byzantine, Persian, Islamic, Seljuk and Mongol empires. These interactions have produced a tangled web of exchange, as manifested in the landscape, its architecture and material culture.

The Georgian medieval period is significantly understudied in South Caucasian archaeology. Existing 'betwixt and between' the worlds of the Near East and the Mediterranean, the region reflects cultural entanglement in implicit terms. Focusing on the settlement of Rabati in the Samstkhe-Javakheti region of Southwest Georgia, this paper demonstrates how integrated methodologies (archaeological investigation, ceramic analysis, theoretical and ethnographic studies) can uncover the hidden layers of meaning within the archaeological context. Through this interdisciplinary approach, new ceramic typologies have been revealed, exposing localised modes of production and trade; as well as the interactive and symbiotic nature of human-environment relations. These lifeways show how the inhabitants of this medieval mountain village lived and created personal worlds in an environment caught between the counterpoints of Europe and Asia, Christianity and Islam, Occident and Orient.

Keywords

medieval South Caucasus, landscape, archaeology, ceramics, orientalism

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