



ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

Ceramics as Trade Proxies: Assessing the Indian-Islamic West Exchange Network

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Abstract

The debate regarding the potential scope of trade activity in the Persian Gulf and the Western Indian Ocean has presented several positions, which also consider the continuity of this trade from Roman to Islamic times. Ceramic data, as a proxy, provide a unique opportunity to test a range of assumptions related to the rise or decline in economic activity during specific periods. Through Network analysis, we can assess changes in the trade system that evolved from the early Islamic period to the Abbasid period. The analysis of findings in a pivotal trade hub like Oman facilitates the identification of a significant flow of goods from India to the Islamic West. These connections on both sides are well attested by ceramic finds: while imports on the western coast are easy to identify due to the type of pottery, Indian imports in Oman are less well known, as they are most often coarse ware. By conceptualising the exchange system as a network and utilising the findings from Oman, this study seeks to assess the existence of a return flow of goods from the Islamic West to India and initiate an evaluation of its volume and its impact on West Islamic economies.

Keywords

Persian gulf, ceramic, trade, indian ocean, network

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