



ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

Workshops and Markets as Social Hubs: Insights from Materiality Data Analysis into the Role of Economic Activities in Shaping Rural Social Spaces in the Late Medieval Southern Levant

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Abstract

From an archaeological perspective, clay refers to the raw material used for making pottery. Charting its mineralogical and chemical composition can unlock many details of the inner workings of ancient societies, such as technical knowledge transfer, culture-related reasons for clay selection, social networks, and human migration. Material culture characteristic of rural society such as pottery has, moreover, become one of the most informative sources concerning questions of cultural evolution due to its ubiquity as a material used by people and its post-depositional durability.

Exploring how villages in the southern Levant integrated into the political and economic frameworks of the Mamluk period can provide valuable insights. To comprehensively understand these communities, it is essential to examine daily life and the development of economic and social relations, which remain relatively obscure. This involves analysing the economic and social significance of pottery styles produced and popularized at the time. Additionally, it's crucial to investigate whether the consumption of specific pottery types was associated with particular social classes. Furthermore, considering the role of workshops and markets in shaping the social dynamics of rural villages can offer a clearer picture of their social spaces.

This paper is concerned with the archaeometrical study of Mamluk pottery. It combines materials (lab work) with archaeological records and textual analysis to reconstruct the social and economic ties and understand the evolution of these networks locally and regionally between late-medieval rural archaeological sites-Hisban and other archaeological sites in the southern Levant. Historical sources, such as chronicles, geographies, and tax registers, only indicate a village structure (village and family names, economics, locations and names of local markets, the configuration of road systems, agricultural land, and rural real estate), and they do not provide details on the intensity or nature of the relations between and within small communities (villages) alone. On the other hand, the archaeological record provides direct information on historically overlooked communities by allowing us to retrieve the rural material culture from various contexts (citadel/village, domestic/military, rural/urban, etc.). The analysis of written sources, archaeological fieldwork, and materials analysis (geo-chemical analysis) answer different kinds of questions about social behavior and rural societies. As they have rarely been combined in the context of Mamluk southern Bilad al-Sham, we expect a deeper understanding of the organisation of rural communities.

Keywords

Social network, Mamluk, Middle Islamic Ceramics, Archaeometry, Economic, Rural Society, Jordan

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