

Abstract for General Public

Sail South to Reach the East - Berenike and Red Sea as a Lacking Puzzle of Late Antique Indian Ocean Trade.

Since Hellenistic period Red Sea region played role of the middle between Mediterranean and Indian Ocean which continues through golden age of Roman rule until Late Antique. Blemmyes, people living in Eastern Desert in nowadays Egypt, were one of the most active participants of long-distance trade and prosperity of the region between 4th and 7th c. AD. They have managed to restore greatness of Berenike – Indian trade *emporium*, and Senskis – settlement in Wadi Sikait specializing in mining and exporting emeralds across the Ocean to India and Sri Lanka. Dwellers of those two ancient settlements left rich material culture and amazingly well preserved architecture.

Aim of this project is cross-section study of unique ceramic material collected during excavations at both abovementioned sites (between 2015 and 2022). Gathered assemblage of pottery will serve as a major tool to firge better understanding of economic dependencies of Eastern Desert settlements with world of Indian Ocean, and will help to explain dynamics between coastal and inland sites. Another goal of the project is to discover source of most needed and most common pottery (kitchen and utility ware). Advanced provenance study supported by XRF analysis will try to answer this scientific question.

Innovative method of full quantification of ceramic material and dividing material into classes aims to inquire how deep the economy of Red Sea was integrated with Indian Ocean market in the Late Antique. End result of this study will be creating integrated Red Sea ceramic classification – comprehensive elaboration on pottery appearing in archaeological sites dated between 4th and 7th c. AD. Study over this type of material decisively increase our knowledge about economic exchange in this period as well as will result in better understanding of Red Sea Late Antique history as a period preceding Early Medieval Arab rule.

Following project is designed to take part in the very actual scientific trend of research over influence of Indian Ocean trade on economy of regions engaged in long distance exchange and to discover yet unknown relations between world of *Mare Nostrum* and Far East in the end of Antiquity.