

TRACING CONNECTIONS

DAI Standort Commission for Archaeology of Non-European Cultures

Projektart Teilprojekt einer Verbundforschung

Laufzeit 2023 - 2025

Disziplinen Afrikanische Archäologie

METADATEN



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Disziplin Afrikanische Archäologie

Förderer Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG)

Projekt-ID 5964

OVERVIEW

The main goal of the project is to generate unbiased evidence of interregional contacts between archaeological areas and regions in western and Saharan Africa during the 1st to early 2nd millennia AD by means of comprehensive analyses of the chemical composition of pottery. Thus far, archaeological studies of interregional contacts within Africa have mainly relied on the archaeometric analysis of prestige goods or so-called exotica (e.g., glass beads) to trace such connections in an objective manner. For instance, a number of hitherto examined artifacts appear to corroborate the suggestions from written sources that various major historical places in West Africa and the Sahara – e.g., Gao, Essouk-Tadmekka and Marandet – were once connected to each other through trade routes from/to North Africa. Beyond this, however, we are still poorly informed about the interaction of those places with others in the wider region, either because there are no written sources on such traffic or because exotica are lacking or were not analyzed. The proposed project steps down from the pure analysis of exotica by demonstrating that pottery, as the most frequent artifact class in archaeological sites of the period, is equally fully suitable for tracing connections between sites and areas from adjacent regions. In fact, preliminary work has shown that chemical composition analysis

of archaeological pottery is a powerful tool for even highlighting thus far unknown interregional connections.

The project intends to uncover potential interregional interactions within a research area encompassing the Libyan Sahara to the north, the Middle Niger Valley to the west and the Lake Chad Basin to the east. The central objective of the project will be achieved within the scope of three successive research stages that include: 1) empirically determining the chemical “fingerprint” of local-made pottery from different areas and broad geographical regions within the research zone, encompassing the Libyan Central Sahara in the North, the Niger Valley in the West, and the Chad Basin in the East 2) mass-screening chemical composition analysis of pottery from selected 1st and early 2nd millennia AD archaeological sites within the research zone, which are known or thought to have been early involved in long-distance trade; 3) comprehensive and final statistical analysis of the data in order to source the broad geographical origin of non-local pottery identified in Stage 2 by means of the reference dataset established in Stage 1.

SPACE & TIME

RESEARCH

CULTURAL HERITAGE

TEAM





RESULTS



Magnavita, S. et al. 2024 LA-ICP-MS analysis of glass beads from Tié (12th–14th centuries), Kanem, Chad: Evidence of trans-Sudanic exchanges. In: *Archaeometry* 66 (1): 100–118.

PARTNER & FÖRDERER

FÖRDERER

Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG)

TEAM