

**Rapporti mediterranei, pratiche documentarie, presenze veneziane: le reti economiche e culturali (XIV-XVI sec.)**

**MEDITERRANEAN RELATIONS, DOCUMENTARY PRACTICES AND THE PRESENCE OF VENICE: ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL NETWORKS (14-16TH CENT.)**

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*Commercial and colonial expansion in the Eastern Mediterranean in the later Middle Ages*

**Abstract**

The expansion of commercial exchange and shipping in the Eastern Mediterranean, mainly powered by Italian maritime cities, began in the eighth century. Growing and increasingly diversified demand was the driving force behind this process. In addition to economic factors, political and military developments impacted on its course, volume, intensity, the range of traded commodities, ship tonnage, and navigation routes. Beginning in the later eleventh century, some maritime cities or states obtained commercial privileges and trading outposts, the nature of which widely varied, whether in Byzantium, the states of the Levant, or Egypt. Their privileged status, as well as the rule of Venice and Genoa over Eastern Mediterranean territories respectively from the early thirteenth and fourteenth century, furthered maritime trade, yet the citizens of other nations conducted commercial exchanges without these advantages. Eastern Mediterranean trade networks were partially restructured following major developments, namely the shift in the channeling of oriental commodities from the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea in the late tenth century; growing Western demand and the Fourth Crusade in the early thirteenth century; the expansion of Mongol rule in Eurasia until the 1240s; finally the fall of the Frankish states in the Levant and the papal embargo on trade with Mamluk territories in the late thirteenth century. The Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453 and the discovery of the navigation route to the Indian Ocean in the later fifteenth century also required adjustments, in view of the gradual reduction of Mediterranean maritime trade that they generated.

The emphasis of the paper will be on the period extending from the twelfth to the late fifteenth century.