

# Regionalisation and the Integration of the Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity

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## Abstracts

### **Mark Whittow, Corpus Christi College, Oxford: How much trade was local, regional and inter-regional? Comparative perspectives**

Regionalisation, integration and the Late Antique economy. The last forty years have seen a transformation in our knowledge of Late Antique trade thanks above all to the study of pottery. What picture of the Late Antique trade does it support? An economy driven by the fiscal demands of the state? Or a more commercial system? But if the latter, why does it seem to collapse from the fifth century?

This paper suggests the value of a comparative approach drawing on the very well documented case of the late medieval English economy which is illuminated by very rich archival and archaeological data, analysed in a well-developed and methodologically sophisticated historical literature.

In England we can see an economy based on peasant production, where towns were fully integrated into the world around them by a system of small rural markets.

What does this suggest about how to interpret the Late Antique economy? While political insecurity and the impact of the *annona* should not be ignored, the English evidence suggests that a key factor may be the existence or not of a substantial number of better off peasant farmers. Were they being squeezed in at least some parts of the Late Antique world? It is a question that deserves further exploration.

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