



Postal Systems in the Pre-Modern Islamic World (Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization)

Adam J. Silverstein

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
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Adam Silverstein's book offers a fascinating account of the official methods of communication employed in the Near East from pre-Islamic times through the Mamluk period. Postal systems were set up by rulers in order to maintain control over vast tracts of land. These systems, invented centuries before steam-engines or cars, enabled the swift circulation of different commodities - from letters, people and horses to exotic fruits and ice. As the correspondence transported often included confidential reports from a ruler's provinces, such postal systems doubled as espionage-networks through which news reached the central authorities quickly enough to allow a timely reaction to events. The book sheds light not only on the role of communications technology in Islamic history, but also on how nomadic culture contributed to empire-building in the Near East. This is a long-awaited contribution to the history of pre-modern communications systems in the Near Eastern world.

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