



## ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

# Projections of Power: Interpretations of Imperial Influence on the Ottoman Frontier

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### Abstract

Discussions of imperialism often overlook the Ottoman Empire and its relationship with its subjects. However, how the Empire manifested its power in its Arab provinces, and how this was perceived by the tribes, offers an original perspective on imperial systems and power relationships. Acceptance/rejection of new ideologies has been archaeologically interpreted through the movement of material culture between groups. This paper uses the material-cultural record of various sites along the Syrian Hajj Road to trace the legacy of Ottoman-Arab relations in frontier territories. Ethnographical and historiographical accounts are integrated into the problematization of this relationship. Results indicate that certain indigenous actors had more agency than postcolonial narratives traditionally imply; and the adoption/rejection of foreign material culture was usually motivated by the quotidian practicalities of existence in a desert landscape, not by ideology. Several case studies are discussed. My study of Hijaz Railway spoliation (2023) compliments a review of the 2024 Qal'at al-Mudawwara excavation, which I am participating in. The assemblage of this Jordanian Hajj fort offers insight into imperial-indigenous interactions. The paper presents the results of the field season—focusing on diagnostic material culture—and interprets these observations within a broader discussion of imperial-indigenous relationships on the Ottoman frontier.

### Keywords

Ottoman, Materiality, Bedouin, Postcolonial, Jordan

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