

THE EMPIRE IN THE HOUSE, THE HOUSE IN THE EMPIRE:
TOWARD A HOUSEHOLD ARCHAEOLOGY PERSPECTIVE
ON THE ASSYRIAN EMPIRE IN THE LEVANT

Virginia Rimmer Herrmann

The expansion of the Neo-Assyrian Empire throughout a large part of the Near Eastern world in the ninth to seventh centuries BCE is widely considered to have been a transformative epoch in the history of the region, profoundly altering its political and cultural landscape and ushering in an “Age of Empires.” The contrasting images of the *pax Assyriaca*, providing stability and enabling exchange, and of the destructions, deaths, and deportations vividly portrayed in Assyrian royal inscriptions and in the Hebrew Bible both contribute to this picture of sweeping change. In the past few decades, studies of regional settlement patterns in imperial provinces have succeeded in documenting the major demographic shifts brought about by the Assyrian Empire, and the excavation of Assyrian period sites throughout the region has increased dramatically. From the extant archaeological evidence, however, one would still be hard pressed to answer the question of whether and in what ways incorporation into the Assyrian Empire was transformative on the level of provincial subjects’ daily social and economic lives, and whether such transformations were imposed from above or emerged from below, despite the fact that this is a crucial element of the prevailing macromodels of imperial rule. Progress toward the resolution of this question will require the contextual and chronological detail offered by household archaeology, as has been demonstrated by several investigations of New World empires. This paper thus advocates a new emphasis on the careful investigation and analysis of ordinary domestic structures in Assyrian imperial provinces, aiming to identify changes and continuities in the domestic economies and social organization of its subjects. Such a program of household archaeology is planned for the new excavations of the University of Chicago at Sam’al (Zincirli Höyük), the capital of a small Syro-Hittite Kingdom that became an Assyrian province in the late eighth century BCE.

The Nature of Assyrian Rule

One of the major issues in the study of ancient empires has long been the question of the fundamental motivation for their expansion into and consolidation of new territories. The “basic philosophical differences” regarding this topic identified by Robert McC. Adams at a late 1907s symposium on ancient empires (1979: 400) still persist today.

On the one hand, there is a basically materialist viewpoint, according to which the motivation of resource acquisition underlies all imperial ideology and action, and imperialism is but one mechanism of interregional economic exploitation. This perspective has been articulated frequently as the core/center-periphery or world-systems model (derived from Wallerstein 1974), which predicts simultaneous economic development of the core polity and underdevelopment of peripheral areas (e.g., Ekholm and Friedman 1979; Smith 1995). On the other side, are those who grant imperial ideology and social structure primacy over the principle of economic maximization in determining ancient imperial activities, and see economic transfers as means to political ends, rather than ends in themselves (e.g., Kemp 1978, 1997; Finley 1978; Eisenstadt 1979; Schloen 2001). This viewpoint is skeptical of the notion of a systematic, long-term drain of wealth from the periphery to the imperial center and points to the often hefty debit side of the “imperial balance sheet” as evidence for economically “irrational” behavior. The most systematic expression of this more Weberian approach that emphasizes the culturally mediated motivations of different types of social actors is, perhaps, the “patrimonial/bureaucratic” imperial typology of the sociologist Eisenstadt (1979).¹ Recently, core-periphery and world-systems models have also been criticized from a post-colonial perspective for their centrist bias, whereby all change is initiated by the empire and “all power and control emanat[e] from the imperial core,” denying imperial subjects any agency to shape events (Sinopoli 2001: 465; cf. Webster 1996; Alcock 1997; Schreiber 2006).

¹ Eisenstadt makes a fundamental distinction between “patrimonial kingdoms,” which had “few symbolic and institutional differences between the center and periphery,” and “Imperial” bureaucratic regimes, such as China or Byzantium, which were characterized by “a high level of distinctiveness of the center” and a self-conscious “Great Tradition” (1979: 22–25).

Along these lines, a few studies of the Neo-Assyrian Empire have countered the notion of systematic economic “policies” toward imperial territories that is often implied by proponents of the core-periphery perspective, citing the inconsistency of Assyrian treatment of the economic base of different regions, and arguing that strategic and military concerns provide a better explanation for this (Na’aman 2003; Master 2003). In this view, increases in trade and market activity are better understood as responses to the new political stability and the opening of new markets than to deliberate Assyrian efforts (Mazzoni 2000; Na’aman 2003; Master 2003). Another perspective cites the “consensus to empire” of many individuals and groups across the Assyrian realm (Lanfranchi 1997) and focuses on the socially integrative elements (in particular, an imperial elite identity, the Aramaic language, and the imperial army) that held the empire together and transformed its society (Lumsden 2001). In this view, new divisions were created among people in the Assyrian Empire, but these were not between center and periphery.

These exceptions notwithstanding, the core-periphery viewpoint has become almost the conventional wisdom in the literature on the Neo-Assyrian Empire. The majority of scholars of the past few decades attribute the expansion of the empire to a desire to control natural resources and trade routes (e.g., Jankowska 1969; Oded 1974; Larsen 1979; Winter 1983; Grayson 1995). Gitin (1997) and Allen (1997), who espouse world-systems theory, and Parker (2001), who invokes the territorial-hegemonic model of empire,² argue that their survey and excavations at the periphery of the empire show that Assyrian imperial authorities selectively transformed their territories so as to extract the maximum revenues from them, and their work and conclusions are widely cited by historians (e.g., Halpern 1991; Fales 2001; Finkelstein and Silberman 2001; van de Mieroop 2003; Parpola 2003). In regions where Assyrian control was indirect (client kingdoms), the pressure to supply tribute to the Assyrian king is often credited with spurring widespread economic rationalizations, including the adoption of a

² The territorial-hegemonic model was developed originally by Luttwak for the Roman Empire (1976), but later developed and modified by Hassig (1985) and D’Altroy (1992) for the Aztec and Inca Empires, respectively. In the territorial-hegemonic model, the intensity of imperial control in different parts of an empire varies along a continuum from complete territorial control and annexation to political hegemony and influence, according to an imperial calculation of the economic and strategic benefits to be derived versus the costs of increased control (D’Altroy 1992: 19–20).

market economy (Frankenstein 1979; Olivier 1994; Byrne 2003; Routledge 2004).

This trend in the study of the Assyrian Empire has had the salutary effect of diverting attention away from the palaces and temples of the imperial capitals and toward social and economic questions and the study of the imperial periphery, but its conclusions deserve further interrogation. Thirty years ago, Adams issued a challenge to archaeologists to attempt to test the claim by advocates of the core-periphery model of simultaneous economic development of the imperial center and underdevelopment of the periphery for the Assyrian Empire in particular. He suggested that archaeologists actively investigate the following questions:

[H]ow did demographic and economic trends in the Assyrian heartland compare or contrast with those in the conquered territories, and what do those trends tell us of the aggregate flows of wealth from one to another?...to what extent [was] the Assyrian economy and quality of life[]transformed as a result of successive phases of external conquest? (Adams 1979: 396–397)

The study of trends in the regional settlement patterns of the Assyrian Empire, one key to answering Adams' questions, has progressed a great deal since 1979 and has identified real, and sometimes dramatic, demographic trends in its territories, at least some of which can confidently be attributed to imperial actions. Regional surveys in the extended "heartland" of Assyria (the Jezirah of northern Syria and Iraq and the Upper Tigris River Valley in southeastern Turkey) show a striking increase in the number and geographical spread of small sites during the Late Iron Age (e.g., Bernbeck 1993; Wilkinson 1995; Morandi Bonacossi 1996; Wilkinson and Barbanes 2000; Parker 2001). This is surely in part to be attributed to the settlement of large numbers of deportees from other parts of the empire in small farming villages in these areas, often interpreted as the creation of a breadbasket for Assyrian cities (e.g., Wilkinson 1995; Morandi Bonacossi 2000; Parker 2001; Wilkinson et al. 2005). Without more intensive study of these small settlements, however, there is not enough evidence to say whether or not agricultural surpluses were being siphoned off in great quantities to regional centers and imperial capitals, or whether heavy taxes and *corvée* requirements led to impoverishment and a lower standard of living for the inhabitants of these settlements. It has been argued that at least some of this new settlement could have emerged organically from the sedentarization of mobile populations and the dispersal of

the inhabitants of nucleated settlements due to the new peace brought by the empire (Wilkinson and Barbanes 2000); the lack of a refined pottery chronology for the Jezirah also adds uncertainty to the attribution of increases in settlement to Assyrian imperial policies.

The same problem in pottery chronology applies to the provinces of the northern Levant (Lebanon, western Syria, and South-central Turkey) (Akkermans and Schwartz 2003: 368), where regional surveys have generally shown increases in small settlements in the later Iron Age, though this is less dramatic than in the Jezirah (reviewed in Wilkinson et al. 2005). There is currently not enough evidence to confirm the frequent assumption that this region was composed of “provincial and impoverished backwaters” (Hawkins 1982: 425) in the Neo-Assyrian period, as is often assumed (e.g., Diakonoff 1969: 29; Winter 1983: 194; Grayson 1995: 967).³ In the very well-documented southern Levant (Israel, Palestine, and Jordan), by contrast, there is much evidence for the destructions and deportations that accompanied Assyrian conquest, and for the demographic recovery and even flourishing of some areas under Assyrian rule, while other areas remained relatively depopulated (Na’aman 1993). The settlement pattern in the southern Levant has been attributed by some to the deliberate development by the Assyrians of economically productive areas for imperial profit and the abandonment of less productive areas (Gitin 1997; Allen 1997), but it has been just as plausibly attributed to strategic and military concerns in a volatile border region by others (Na’aman 2003; Master 2003).

In order to engage fully the question of the impact of Assyrian imperial incorporation on subject populations, the broad brush of regional survey must be complemented by investigations with the finer spatial and diachronic resolution provided by the methodologies of household archaeology. Careful, contextual excavation or surface survey of households, large and small, in different kinds of settlements across the empire, can produce evidence for potential changes in prosperity among different social and ethnic groups, testing the frequent assumption of the economic exploitation of peripheral populations.

³ Recent publications of excavations of Iron Age II–III sites in the northern Levant demonstrate a variability in the fortunes of these settlements after Assyrian incorporation similar to that found in the southern Levant, ranging from abandonment (e.g., Tell ‘Acharneh, Cooper and Fortin 2004) or depopulation (e.g., Tell Mishrifeh, Morandi Bonacossi 2009) to continuity (e.g., Tell Tuqan, Baffi 2006, 2008) or flourishing (e.g., Tell Afis, Soldi 2009; Tille Höyük, Blaylock 2009).

This kind of investigation can also identify the potential development of economic rationalizations (such as specialization, intensification and market participation) and can provide evidence for the impetus behind them, whether top-down (imperialy sponsored) or bottom-up (locally initiated).

While there has been a substantial increase in the last few decades in the number of Neo-Assyrian period houses, large and small, excavated at provincial sites and even in the Assyrian capitals,⁴ analysis at the level of the household has so far been largely lacking for the Assyrian Empire, with a few exceptions, such as the investigation and comparison of both lower- and higher-status houses (including micro-archaeological analyses) at Ziyaret Tepe (Matney and Rainville 2005) and the study of activity areas in an elite household at Tell Ahmar (Jamieson 2000). Domestic areas at Neo-Assyrian period sites have rarely been approached from the standpoint of identifying trends in domestic economy and social organization accompanying imperial incorporation, however.⁵

Household Archaeology and Empire

The study of empires may have a problem of scale, as the spatial extent and quantity of data related to an empire become almost too large for an individual to handle and the complexity of the phenomenon becomes too great to be described adequately by general models and typologies (Sinopoli 2001: 447–448), but it is now almost a commonplace that issues of societal or interregional scope must be approached

⁴ E.g., Nineveh (Lumsden 1991); Aššur (Miglus 2000, 2002); Ziyaret Tepe (Matney et al. 2002, 2003, 2005, 2006); Tell Sheikh Hamad (Kühne 1989–1990, 1993–1994, 1994); Tell Ahmar (Bunnens 1999); Tille Höyük (Summers 1991; Blaylock 2009); Lidar Höyük (Müller 1999); Tell Afis (Mazzoni 1987, 2008); Tell Kazel (Capet and Gubel 2000); and Tel Miqne-Ekron (Gitin 1989).

⁵ An important exception is the comparison by Parker (2003) of the domestic economy of excavated houses at the pre-Assyrian Early Iron Age settlement of Kenan Tepe in the Upper Tigris River Valley with that of a partially excavated house at the Assyrian imperial period “colonial” settlement of Boztepe in the same region. His conclusion from the faunal data and evidence for metal and ceramic production was that Assyrian imperial period households had more specialized economies than pre-imperial ones, due to Assyrian demands and imperial monopolization of the ceramic and metal industries and the herding of sheep, goat, and cattle. The sample size of the later site is quite small (Parker 2003: 539), however, so these conclusions must be considered quite tentative.

archaeologically from multiple scales (e.g., Lightfoot et al. 1998; Stein 2002: 907), including the fine scale of the individual household and the activities that take place within it. There is a growing recognition, too, that the daily practices carried out in households can be the site of the most fundamental effects of profound political transformations, such as incorporation into a transregional empire, as well as the locus of response to these changes (Lightfoot et al. 1998; Wattenmaker 1998; Hastorf and D'Altroy 2001; Rainville 2005; Sinopoli 2001: 448; Stein 2002).

The *mélange* of imposition and opportunity, violence, and stability that accompanies incorporation into an empire inevitably alters the spectrum of choices available to its subjects in the mundane routines of household life. Changes in political economy have the potential to modify the material and labor demands on subject households, access to resources, and household task scheduling, while shifts in the political center can lead to new expressions of status and identity, and the institutions and enlarged borders of an empire can open new social and economic doors for some, while closing them off for others (Sinopoli 1994, 2001). Changing patterns in the debris of these household activities and in the structure and integration of houses can inform us about the impact of imperial incorporation on household production and consumption, economic and social relations between households, and the division of labor and allocation of status within the household. This evidence of the constraints and opportunities presented by an empire to subject households in turn provides a window into how that empire works, the goals of its leaders, the extent to which its propagandistic and ideological claims are enacted on the ground, and how much it involves itself in local affairs. At the same time, the local scale of household archaeology, allowing a focus on the context of actions and intrasocietal diversity, can redress the top-down biases of macro-models of empire by making space for the agency of imperial subjects and their potential to respond to changing conditions in varied ways.

In recent years, several studies of households in New World empires have illustrated the potential of a household archaeology approach to produce evidence of the real consequences of these empires for the daily lives of their subjects, and provide a new understanding of the empires themselves. Brumfiel's intensive surface surveys of several sites in Mexico under Aztec hegemony have found evidence of intensification and specialization in women's household craft and food production in certain regions, which she attributes both to increased

tribute demands and increased market participation (1991). She has also noted changes in the labor intensity of food preparation and in the foods consumed, as more portable foods were necessary for laborers working far from home on state projects (1991), and a decline in the status displays of local elites through decorated serving vessels, as local competition waned with imperial centralization of power (1987). The excavations and surface surveys of the Upper Mantaro Archaeological Research Project in Peru have produced studies of changes and continuities in the architecture, agropastoral production, diet, craft production and consumption, technology, and elite-commoner relations of households in a region that fell under the Inca Empire, with results that often contradicted the investigators' expectations and produced new insights into the nature, goals, and activities of that empire (Costin et al. 1989; Hastorf and Johannessen 1993; D'Altroy and Hastorf 2001). At sites in the Spanish-American Empire, detailed contextual studies of households have shown how intermarriages between Spanish men and Native American women created a creolized culture reflected in the mix of European and American material culture in different spheres of household life, while in other cases the adoption of European material culture followed class, rather than ethnic lines (Deagan 1998, 2001). Studies such as these, combining detailed analyses of artifact and ecofact patterning on a small scale with a comparative approach that identifies trends at an imperial scale, show how it is possible to approach fundamental questions about these early empires that have too long remained unaddressed, but from an analytical level that is appropriate to an agent-oriented perspective.

Household Archaeology on Assyria's Northwestern Periphery

From its beginnings in 2006, a major goal of the new excavations at Zincirli Höyük (ancient Sam'al) in southern Turkey by the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago (Schloen and Fink 2007, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c) has been the excavation of an extensive area of the city's lower town, which was left nearly untouched by the German expeditions of more than a century ago (von Luschan et al. 1893; von Luschan et al. 1898; von Luschan 1902; von Luschan and Jacoby 1911; von Luschan and Andrae 1943; cf. Wartke 2005), with the intention of exposing a substantial expanse of domestic architecture for the first time at this site (Fig. 1). The large lower town of this 40 ha site was

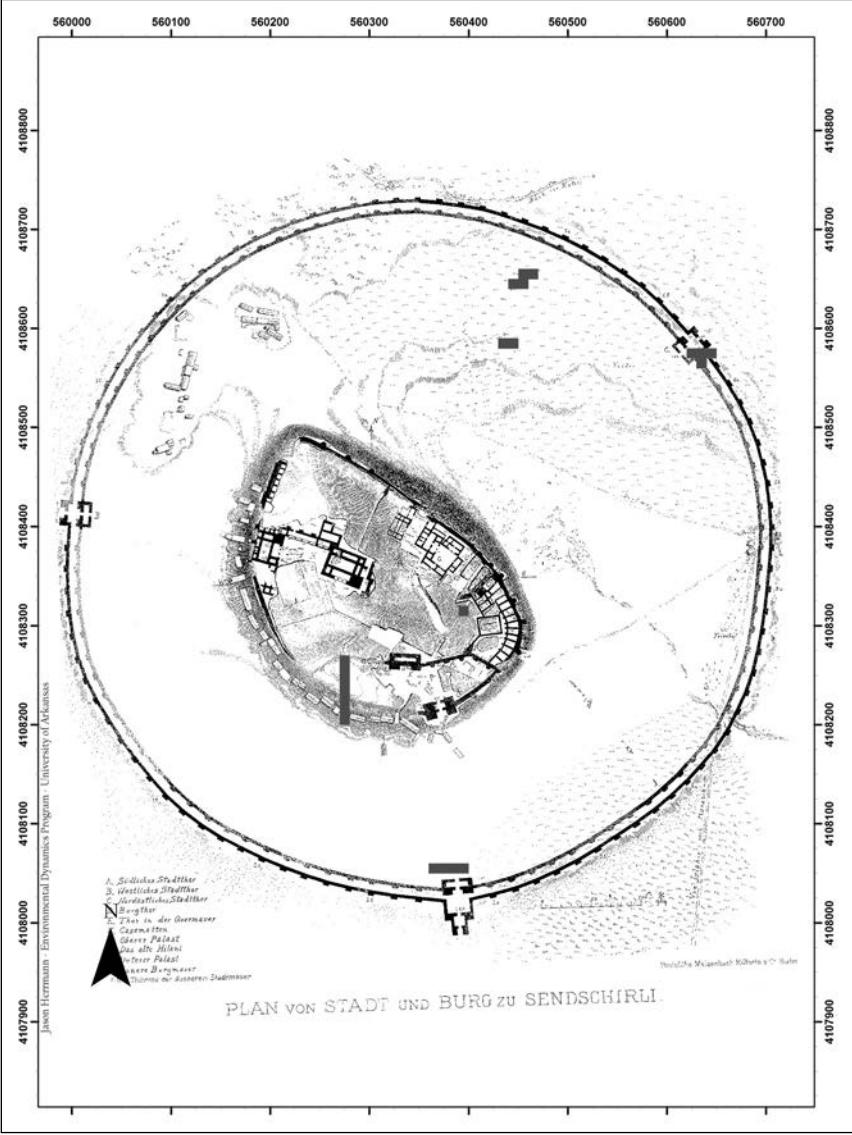


Figure 1. Plan of Iron Age remains at Sam'al (modern Zincirli Höyük) excavated by German archaeologists in the late nineteenth century (drawn by Robert Koldewey in 1894; from von Luschan et al. 1898: Tafel XXIX). Dark gray blocks represent the 2006–2008 excavation areas of the University of Chicago Expedition.

first occupied during the earlier part of the Iron Age II, when the city of Sam'al was the royal seat of Y'DY, a small Syro-Hittite Kingdom ruled by a West-Semitic-speaking dynasty. Although the citadel mound continued to be occupied as the seat of the Assyrian provincial governor after the kingdom came under Assyrian direct rule sometime in the late eighth century BCE, the fate of the lower town during the Assyrian period was unknown until the renewed investigations of the University of Chicago at the site, which were fairly quickly able to establish that the lower town continued to be inhabited under Assyrian rule in the seventh century and was never thereafter reoccupied. Consequently, the Assyrian period and earlier Iron Age II remains of the lower town are easily accessible beneath the modern surface, undisturbed by later occupation levels. This situation creates an excellent opportunity to investigate continuities and changes in domestic life between pre-Assyrian and Assyrian period levels and in this way to evaluate the fit of contrasting macromodels of Assyrian rule to this provincial city.

Any large-scale model of the way empires work is bound to be flawed, defeated by the complexity and diversity of these polities. Rather than abandon the attempt to understand broad historical processes, however, the contrasts between such models can be used as a heuristic tool in the interpretation of human-scale data. In order to bridge the inferential gap between these models of imperial scope and archaeological investigations of a necessarily more limited scale, though, it is necessary to tailor the research questions and methodologies of such a project very carefully. In order to assess the utility of the two models or perspectives on Assyrian rule broadly defined above, the *core-periphery* and its converse (called here the *patrimonial model*, after Eisenstadt 1979), by means of household archaeology, detailed sets of predictions for the domestic economy and social structure of provincial inhabitants that follow from the assumptions of each general model *and* can be expected to be detectable in the archaeological record must first be defined. These testable predictions should also incorporate what is known from the textual record of the economic organization of the Assyrian Empire (Postgate 1974, 1979; Grayson 1995) and in this case of the kingdom of Sam'al or Y'DY (Sader 1987: 177–178). The archaeological evidence will inevitably be less clear cut than we would like, but the creation of a heuristic framework such as this can help us to interpret the various trends displayed by the debris of domestic life in a potentially useful way.

Expectations of the Core-Periphery Model

The core-periphery model of empire posits an empire-wide, systematic rationalization of interference in imperial territories according to a principle of economic maximization. This is presumed to have worked to the benefit of the core population and to the detriment of the peripheral population. The key expectations of this model for the economy of the provinces are thus *intensification* (of production of craft and agricultural goods to meet heightened core demands), *integration* (greater individual and regional specialization, greater reliance on rations or the market for subsistence, less household and neighborhood self-sufficiency), and *impoverishment* (due to the increased material and labor demands of the state, the competitive advantage of Assyrian traders, and a decrease in access to productive resources) (cf. Parker's predictions for rural settlements in imperial provinces [2003: 553]; Matthews 2003: Table 5.1; Hastorf and D'Altroy 2001: 22–24, for the Inca Empire).

According to this model, the economic production of the city of Sam'al would be predicted to be targeted for development (cf. Gitin 1997: 83–84) by Assyrian administrators. Sam'al is strategically located with respect to mineral and timber resources, which we know from accounts of its tribute⁶ were highly valued by the Assyrians, and lies in a fertile agricultural plain with plentiful pasture land. The agricultural and "industrial" production (of timber and metals in particular) of the city would be expected to have been regionally specialized and intensified for export (in order to generate revenue) or to supply the Assyrian army or garrison, while the countryside would have been used as a breadbasket to support Assyrian elite and military endeavors. The provincial government would hold a monopoly on metallurgy, timber processing and export, and perhaps even ceramic production and herding (Parker 2003: 553) and would strictly limit the access of local inhabitants to valuable raw materials. Taxes in kind and in labor on government agricultural, construction, and resource procurement projects (as *ilku* service) would be harsh.

⁶ Received from Hayanu of Y'DY by Shalmaneser III in 857 BC: 10 talents of silver, 90 talents of copper, 30 talents of iron, 300 garments with multicolored fringe and linen garments, 300 cattle, 3000 sheep, 200 cedar trunks, 2 homers of cedar resin, and his daughter with her dowry. Annual tribute: 10 minas of silver, 100 cedar trunks, and 1 homer of cedar resin (Sader 1987: 153–154).

In the archaeological record of Zincirli/Sam'al, concomitant with intensification, specialization, and government monopoly, one would expect to find evidence for more concentrated, larger-scale ("factory") production and storage of agricultural and craft goods, such as grain, metals, ceramics, textiles, hides, and timber, probably connected in some way with Assyrian public buildings or with evidence for imperial control. At the same time, one might expect to see a sharp reduction in evidence for several types of small-scale craft production in households and dispersed workshops compared with the pre-Assyrian period. As urban inhabitants became more dependent on the state for their subsistence, relying on rations (in the case of "commoners") or rural estates (in the case of elites), and less self-sufficient, with reduced access to productive resources, evidence for agricultural activities and processing (in the form of grain storage vessels and installations, processing debris, and agricultural implements) in the household would also decrease compared with the pre-Assyrian period.

The onerous labor and produce taxes imposed by the Assyrian administration would engender a general impoverishment of provincial inhabitants. This might be reflected by a decrease in the size and quality of domestic architecture, with a reduced use of timber in construction, as access to this resource was restricted. The average diet might decline in quality, as reflected in botanical and faunal remains, with less variety of plants and animals and particularly less, or poorer-quality meat, due to government monopolies on herds and intensification and specialization in crop production. Vessels for cooking and serving might even change to accommodate less time-consuming or more portable foods, as more time was spent by household members away from the home performing state service (Brumfiel 1991). Access to craft goods and status items might also be limited, as is reflected in the small finds associated with commoner households. Assyria's commercial interests would dictate that evidence for trade connections in the form of imported artifacts would narrow to a main line with the Assyrian heartland, rather than reflecting trade with Phoenicia, Egypt, Cyprus, or Anatolia.

Finally, one would expect that before Assyrian incorporation, the residential areas of the city would have been organized into neighborhoods integrated by kinship and patronage networks, containing some shared facilities and consisting of households of various sizes, including a number of extended families (Stone and Zimansky 1992; Schloen 2001). The interests of the Assyrian government in higher tax revenues and labor efficiency (Hastorf and D'Altroy 2001: 23; Galil 2007: 347),

however, and the increased reliance of provincial inhabitants on the state, rather than on their traditional networks, for subsistence, would predict a reorganization of these neighborhoods into smaller, nuclear-family households (reflected in house size and installations) without obvious spatial or economic interconnection. In some parts of the city, though, one would expect a replacement of earlier neighborhoods by the large houses in imperial Assyrian style of Assyrian officials, compensated for their office and rewarded for their loyalty by large provincial landholdings and clustering in the provincial capital (Postgate 1979: 216).

Expectations of the Patrimonial Model

If we instead adopt a perspective that takes seriously the ideological statements of the Assyrian kings, we should not necessarily expect to see a geographically dichotomous drain of material benefits from the peripheral provinces to the core provinces, but rather that different social groups benefited or suffered across the empire. For, after the depredations of conquest, every newly incorporated province was on equal symbolic footing as part of the “Land of Assur” (as opposed to the client states, which constituted the “yoke of Assur”) (Postgate 1992), regardless of its proximity to the Assyrian core or the ethnicity of its inhabitants. It certainly “paid” to be on the side of the king of Assyria, but there were individuals and groups across the empire who took advantage of the opportunities for advancement presented by the imperial administration and army, sometimes at the expense of the king’s rivals in Assyria (Lanfranchi 1997; Lumsden 2001).

In Eisenstadt’s model of “patrimonial” versus “bureaucratic” empires, the expansion of a patrimonial empire such as Assyria would be accompanied by relatively little deliberate restructuring of its peripheral territories. Patrimonial kingdoms would intrude on “local...communities mainly in the form of administration of law, attempts to maintain peace, exaction of taxation and the maintenance of some cultural and/or religious links to the center” (Eisenstadt 1979: 23), and “insofar as the rulers of these regimes engaged in more active economic policies...these were first...mostly of expansive character—i.e., aiming at expansion of control of large territories, rather than intrinsic ones—i.e., characterized by intensive exploitation of a fixed resource basis” (Eisenstadt 1979: 24).

According to this perspective, then, we should expect to find only a fairly superficial, rather than thoroughgoing, restructuring of the provincial capital Sam'al, concentrated mainly in the citadel, in contrast to the intensive, calculated exploitation expected by the core-periphery model. The inhabitants of the province would now be subject to the authority, as well as the protection of the Assyrian king, and we should find Assyrian expropriations no more punitive or innovative in this peripheral province than they were in the imperial heartland. The expectation of the patrimonial model for Sam'al is thus one of fundamental *continuity* in household economic practices and social structure.

Such social and economic continuity should be reflected in a higher degree of continuity in the archaeological record of the site between the pre-Assyrian and Assyrian provincial periods, particularly in the urban plan and the location and scale of the evidence for productive activities. Most craft production would still take the form of household cottage industry or small workshops, even when performed part of the time at the behest of the administration or the army, and most households would still be self-sufficient in agricultural production. Access to natural resources would have remained a mixture of state controlled and private or communal, though through the greater labor power that it was able to command and the reduction in hostilities between neighboring regions, the empire might have opened up new natural resources and lands for imperial exploitation (Costin 1998b; Wilkinson et al. 2005). Though there must have been occasional extraordinary musters of labor and goods for the activities of the army, general levels of taxation in produce and labor would not have drastically increased from their pre-Assyrian levels in the kingdom of Sam'al. One would not, therefore, expect to find evidence for a general impoverishment of the non-Assyrian population, as reflected in the evidence for diet, domestic architecture, and consumption of craft and trade goods, though the fortunes of individual households might have gone up or down, depending on their place in the new political order. Trade in general would have been encouraged as a source of imperial revenue (from gate, harbor, and ferry tariffs), without favoring ethnically Assyrian merchants or products from Assyria (Radner 1999). Kinship and neighborhood networks would still be evident in residential patterns, and we might even see the formation of larger households as an attempt to lessen tax and labor duties (Hastorf and D'Altroy 2001: 23).

Two contrasting aspects of the nature of empires, however, would ensure that this basic continuity was not total. First, the devastations and deportations that the Assyrians carried out in many parts of the empire would have had a long-term impact in some areas, as their economic and demographic base was severely damaged. At a site that was destroyed and rebuilt and whose population was deported and replaced with other deportees, we would expect certain changes in domestic economies and neighborhood structure, as the newcomers would be more reliant on the state for their livelihood. We know nothing of the circumstances of Sam'al's transition from the status of client kingdom to Assyrian province, but it seems to have occurred peacefully sometime in the 720s BCE (Landsberger 1948: 77; Hawkins 1982: 415–416), as there is no textual or archaeological evidence for the destruction of the site or the deportation of its inhabitants. The lack of a destruction layer ushering in Assyrian direct rule at Zincirli and the level of preservation and clear chronological horizon it would provide have the disadvantage of making chronological and functional interpretations more challenging at this site. This is also, in a way, an advantage for an investigation of economic and social transformations caused by Assyrian administration, however, because it removes the factors of drastic disruptions, such as destructions and deportations, as possible sources for any changes that are evident and allows us to focus on the impact of Assyrian policies and attitudes instead.

Following the violence of conquest, incorporation into the Assyrian Empire brought an imposed peace with neighboring regions and internal stability that may have fostered economic prosperity, and presented new opportunities for production and trade (Eisenstadt 1979; Mazzoni 2000; Na'aman 2003). According to the inscriptions of its rulers, the kingdom of Sam'al/Y'DY had been plagued with internecine violence during the early eighth century BCE that had a disruptive and negative effect on the local economy. The inscriptions of the two last known rulers of Sam'al, Panamuwa II and Bar-Rakib, loyal Assyrian vassals appointed by Tiglath-Pileser III, boast of prosperity restored to Sam'al during their reigns (Troppe 1993). We do not know if this prosperity was general or restricted to followers of these kings, but it may have persisted for many years after the apparently seamless transition to Assyrian direct rule. Furthermore, by increasing interactions among strangers (Bloch and Parry 1989), some of the effects of political unification under the Assyrian Empire, such as an increase in trade and communications created by stability and the opening of new markets,

the reshuffling of landholdings, and the disruption of traditional local aristocracies, could have had the unintended consequence of creating the conditions for a greater degree of differentiation and depersonalization in economic and social life (Eisenstadt 1979: 26–27).

For this reason, one might expect to find certain changes in the households of Zincirli that do not imply imperial sponsorship, but are instead indicative of “bottom-up” processes of change (initiated by imperial subjects in response to changed conditions) that could include a measure of economic rationalization. An increase in inter-regional trade contacts with the expansion of economic networks and the opening of new trade routes and opportunities in a context of regional stability might be reflected in an increase in imported items and external stylistic influence from numerous sources within and without the empire, not only Assyria. With new markets and opportunities, we might also see an increase in economic specialization at a *decentralized, dispersed household level*, reflected both in changes in the evidence for craft and agricultural production in the household, and in an increase in the standardization of crafts not highly valued by imperial authorities, such as commonware ceramics, figurines, and amulets (Sinopoli and Morrison 1995; Lehmann 1998). Though these increases in specialization and economic integration are superficially similar to the predictions of the core-periphery model, the locations and types of materials in which these changes would appear would clearly distinguish them from state-sponsored initiatives.

Conclusion

The contrasts between the expectations of these two models of the Assyrian Empire for the fate of the inhabitants of the province of Sam'al may be somewhat overdrawn here for heuristic purposes, and the archaeological data will surely offer ambiguities, but looking at the domestic remains of Zincirli's lower town with these alternatives in mind can be a useful way of approaching the transition from pre-imperial to imperial rule at this site.

In the new excavations at Zincirli by the University of Chicago, an area of 400 m² that included domestic remains was excavated just inside the southern city gate (Area 4) in 2007, and in 2008, a 450 m² area in the northern lower town (Area 5) was selected for excavation based on the indications from a magnetometry survey of the lower town that

the area would span several smaller buildings (assumed to be small houses) and part of one larger building (assumed to be a larger, courtyard-centered house). The Area 5 buildings do seem to be domestic in nature, containing domestic items such as grindstones, spindle whorls, and loom weights, as well as installations such as ovens and mortars, and are stratified in two to three subphases from the seventh century back at least to the early eighth century BCE. One of the buildings housed the mortuary cult of a royal official named KTMW during the mid- to late eighth century BCE, as evidenced by the inscribed mortuary stele recovered there *in situ*, though it later changed function when the mortuary cult ceased (Struble and Herrmann 2009). There is a high degree of architectural continuity between the phases of Area 5 across the transition to Assyrian direct rule, but the analysis of activity areas in order to identify trends in the domestic economy is still ongoing. Area 5 will be doubled in size in 2009 and further expanded in future seasons in order to obtain a large data set and seek evidence of variability between households as well as over time. Future publications will detail the results of this long-term project.

In addition to standard excavation practices, a program of sampling for microartifact analysis and soil chemistry analysis (by means of ICP-AES) of living surfaces and installations in the lower-town excavation areas was initiated in the 2008 season. These kinds of microanalyses are becoming increasingly important in archaeological studies of households and can provide evidence for the presence, location, and intensity of different kinds of craft and food production, as well as traffic patterns and cleaning habits, supplementing inferences drawn from architecture, installations and (macro)artifacts (Sherwood et al. 1995; Middleton and Price 1996; Wells 2004; Rainville 2005; Özbal 2006; Barba 2007). Densities of microscopic materials indicative of different kinds of activities can then be compared between different phases and rebuildings of the lower-town architecture in order to identify changes and continuities in household practices.

Ideally, the application of this approach to the new excavations at Zincirli will provide an example of the potential of household archaeology for the study of broader issues in the Neo-Assyrian Empire. If this kind of investigation is adopted more widely, the results of this project will eventually be able to be compared with those from sites in different parts of the empire, from the Assyrian heartland to its provinces in the Jezirah, the southern Levant, southeastern Anatolia, and Babylonia, enabling an exploration of the extent to which inhabitants

of the core and the periphery had different experiences of the empire and how local histories and conditions might have affected these experiences.

The methods and questions of household archaeology can play an important role in the effort to better understand one of the key issues in the study of the Assyrian Empire and ancient empires in general. Adams' "basic philosophical differences" must be put into concrete terms that can be tested, for the implications of these differences would certainly have had tangible consequences for ordinary households. A focus on households in imperial transition can also help redress the top-down disposition of much work on the Assyrian Empire by providing an agent-oriented perspective of the empire "from below."