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At its height, the Neo-Assyrian Empire was the largest state the world had yet seen, uniting and administering disparate peoples and landscapes across the Near East for 300 years (934–612 BCE). From its heartland on the Tigris River, Assyria expanded to incorporate territories from western Iran to the Nile Valley, from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean Sea, and from the Taurus Mountains to the Arabian Desert, inhabited by millions of people of myriad tongues, ethnicities, lifestyles, and gods, with ripple effects on millions more beyond its borders. Its royal dynasty, unbroken for a thousand years, expressed a vision of universal kingship under the national god Aššur through propagandistic inscriptions and the construction of fantastically sculptured royal palaces and enormous imperial capitals, annual campaigns of conquest and subjugation, and the deportation and resettlement of countless of the conquered. Over the century and a half since the rediscovery of the Assyrian royal capitals, a great wealth of epigraphic, iconographic, and archaeological material from the period of Neo-Assyrian domination has been recovered in the cities and plains of the heartland, as well as the imperial provinces, vassal kingdoms, and peripheral adversaries.¹

The rich textual and archaeological record of Assyria, the prototypical world-empire, has great potential to contribute to cross-cultural study of the imperial political form and its motives, methods, and consequences. However, its size, diversity, and longevity tend

Introduction

The Construction of the Imperial Periphery in Neo-Assyrian Studies

VIRGINIA R. HERRMANN
(UNIVERSITÄT TÜBINGEN)
AND
CRAIG W. TYSON
(D'YOUVILLE COLLEGE)

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to frustrate attempts at synoptic comprehension and description of a key topic in the study of imperialism: the relationship between the imperial center and its shifting periphery. Was Neo-Assyrian territorial expansion driven primarily by defensive reactionism, politico-religious ideology, or the quest for wealth? What direct and indirect methods of control and administration were used by the Assyrian authorities, and to what factors can we attribute regional variation in the development of subject territories? What were the short- and long-term social, economic, and cultural effects of Assyrian subjugation and contact on peripheral societies? And how might Assyrian motives and methods have evolved as the imperial domain spilled over from its historical Upper Mesopotamian limits to include ever more foreign lands and peoples?

This chapter reviews efforts old and new to answer these questions and get to the heart of Neo-Assyrian imperialism. Shifting contemporary values have undoubtedly played and continue to play an influential role on the field of Neo-Assyrian studies, as have periodic surges in the quantity and diversity of available archaeological and textual evidence. Equally important has been the influence of a comparative approach that has attempted to comprehend modern and ancient imperialism alike through general principles, models, and typologies that take a panoramic view of these empires from the center (e.g., Ekholm and Friedman 1979; Eisenstadt 1963, 1979; D'Altroy 1992; see Sinopoli 1994; Steinmetz 2014). Despite the heuristic value of this approach that has motivated much groundbreaking analysis, unitary models of the definition and relations of imperial core and periphery have often been criticized as reductionist, centrist, static, or anachronistic (Alcock 1997; Morrison 2001; Sinopoli 2001a; Stein 2002; Schreiber 2006; Goldstone and Haldon 2009). However, the lasting legacy of this perspective is the widespread recognition that the interaction between imperial centers and their provinces and peripheries is crucial for understanding developmental processes in each.

The more recent turn in imperial studies toward a kaleidoscopic perspective that embraces themes of diversity, complexity, and negotiation (see Sinopoli 2001a; Stein 2002) aims at closer approximation of the contingent experiences of imperial subjects and administrators in lieu of universal explanatory and predictive frameworks. Recent comparative work on ancient empires has often concentrated on the meso- or micro-level of the strategies, processes, and types of actors identified in imperial societies.² A related development influenced by postcolonial and subaltern studies has been a shift of analytical focus toward the societies of subjugated areas and non-elite subjects that rejects the idea of the “passive periphery,” recognizes imperial center and periphery as mutually constituted, and decenters our idea of what empires are and do.³

The nine contributions that make up this book, outgrowths from three sessions (2011–13) at the annual meetings of the American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR) titled “Imperial Peripheries: Archaeology, History, and Society on the Edge of Empires,” form part of this ongoing dialogue, casting a fresh look at the Assyrian Empire with new evidence and syntheses from its periphery.

INTRODUCTION TO THE NEO-ASSYRIAN EMPIRE

After a period of relative weakness in Assyria, the Neo-Assyrian Empire emerged during the reign of Assur-dan II (934–912 BCE), who set out to reconquer old Assyrian holdings in Upper Mesopotamia (see Düring, this volume). His successors, Adad-nirari II (911–891 BCE) and Tukulti-Ninurta II (890–884 BCE), continued this activity into the early ninth century and gained a firm grasp on Upper Mesopotamia but without establishing a foothold west of the Euphrates. Ashurnasirpal II (883–859 BCE) and Shalmaneser III (858–823 BCE) continued to strengthen Assyria’s hold in the north and east and maintained control of areas in the west to the Euphrates. Following their reigns there was a period of relative weakness (823–745 BCE) without new conquests (Kuhrt 1995, 478–93; Van De Mieroop 2007, 238–45). It was the reign of Tiglath-pileser III (744–727 BCE) that brought the Neo-Assyrian Empire to its classic shape. Tiglath-pileser III and his successors launched a series of campaigns that would bring much of the ancient Near East under their control, either as provinces or as vassals (Kuhrt 1995, 493–501; Van De Mieroop 2007, 247–58). It was not until more than a century later that Neo-Assyrian power gave way to the Neo-Babylonian Empire.

THE ASSYRIAN HEARTLAND

The kings of Assyria made a significant imprint on the Assyrian heartland. Successive kings embarked on massive projects to rebuild old cities or found new capitals. The size of these building projects, especially the newly founded capitals with their elaborate palaces and temples, were fitting symbols of the power of the Assyrian monarch. One of the best-known examples is the building of Calah/Nimrud as a capital by Ashurnasirpal II (883–859 BCE). The city of 360 ha was enclosed by a city wall 7.5 km long and included several palaces and temples, including a large ziggurat (stepped pyramid temple) (Oates and Oates 2001, 27). The famous “Banquet Stele” found in the Northwest Palace lists Ashurnasirpal’s accomplishments, especially construction, and

commemorates the completion of the palace, including details about a massive party held to celebrate it. Full of pomp, Ashurnasirpal claims:

(20b–31) Aššur, the great lord, cast his eyes upon me and my authority (and) my power came forth by his holy command. Ashurnasirpal, the king whose strength is praiseworthy, with my cunning which the god Ea, king of the *apsû*, extensively wise, gave to me, the city Calah I took in hand for renovation. I cleared away the old ruin hill (and) dug down to water level. From water level to the top, (a depth of) 120 layers of brick, I filled in the terrace. I founded therein a palace of boxwood, *meskannu*-wood, cedar, cypress, terebinth, tamarisk, *mebrû*-wood, eight palace (area)s as my royal residence (and) for my lordly leisure (and) decorated (them) in a splendid fashion. I fastened with bronze bands doors of cedar, cypress, *dapranu*-juniper, boxwood, (and) *meskannu*-wood (and) hung (them) in their doorways. I surrounded them with knobbed nails of bronze. I depicted in greenish glaze on their walls my heroic praises, in that I had gone right across highlands, lands, (and) seas, (and) the conquest of all lands . . .

(36b–40) I dug out a canal from the Upper Zab, cutting through a mountain at its peak, (and) called it Patti-hegalli. I irrigated the meadows of the Tigris (and) planted orchards with all kinds of fruit trees in its environs. I pressed wine (and) offered first-fruit offerings to Aššur, my lord, and the temples of my land. I dedicated this city to Aššur, my lord . . .

(53–55) In the city Calah, the centre of my dominion, temples which had previously not existed . . . I founded . . . (60–68) I established in them the seats of the gods, my lords. I decorated them in a splendid fashion. I installed over them cedar beams (and) made high cedar doors. I fastened (them) with bronze bands (and) hung (them) in their doorways. I stationed holy bronze images in their doorways. I made (the images of) their great divinity resplendent with red gold and sparkling stones. I gave to them gold jewellery, many possessions which I had captured . . .

(140–154) when I consecrated the palace of Calah, 47,074 men (and) women who were invited from every part of my land, 5,000 dignitaries (and) envoys of the people of the lands Suhu, Hindānu, Patinu, Hatti, (145) Tyre, Sidon, Gurgumu, Malidu, Hubušku, Gilzānu, Kummu, (and) Musasiru, 16,000 people of Calah, (and) 1,500 *zariqû* of my palace, all of them—altogether 69,574 (including) those summoned from all lands and the people of Calah—for ten days I gave them food, I gave them drink, I had them bathed, I had them anointed. (Thus) did I honour them (and) send them back to their lands in peace and joy. (Grayson 1991a, 289–93)

In his turn, Sargon II (721–705 BCE) began work on a completely new capital city called Dur-Sharrukin, “fortress of Sargon,” at the modern site of Khorsabad. Sargon II’s successor, Sennacherib (704–681 BCE), subsequently rebuilt the city of Nineveh (near modern Mosul), including his elaborately decorated “Palace without rival,” whose carved and inscribed orthostats reveal Assyrian royal ideology in its grandest fashion (Russell 1992). In addition to building cities, the kings of Assyria demonstrated other interests. They collected exotic animals, planted gardens with exotic plants, built libraries (Black and Tait 1995, 2206), worked to assure an adequate food supply (Altaweel 2008), and more generally presented themselves as making the land fruitful (Radner 2000). Each Assyrian monarch thus sought to display his power over the world, his devotion to the gods, and his beneficence to the people he ruled.⁴

MAJOR COMPETITOR STATES

In their bid for influence and control of the ancient Near East, several powerful adversaries played recurring roles in the expansion and eventual demise of the Neo-Assyrian Empire. North of the Assyrian heartland, in what is now southeastern Turkey and northwestern Iran, the Urartian state, entrenched in mountain fortresses, was a powerful enemy. While its history is obscure, we find Shalmaneser III clashing with Urartu in the mid-ninth century. Undeterred, by about 800 BCE the Urartians had expanded toward Lake Urmia in the southeast and expanded westward toward the Mediterranean Sea, giving them access to important trade routes (Kuhrt 1995, 554–57; Zimansky 1995, 1138–39). It was only with the concerted military efforts of Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon II that Assyria was able to subdue, but not eradicate, Urartu, which continued to have diplomatic relations with Assyria (Kuhrt 1995, 557–58; Zimansky 1995, 1139–40; Melville 2016, 116–40).

The relationship with Babylonia to the south would remain Assyria’s most troublesome sphere of influence. With its long heritage and entrenched political interests, Babylonia did not take easily to external control. In the mid-ninth century, relations between Assyria and Babylonia were stabilized by treaty. The relationship continued in this way until the reign of Shamshi-Adad V (823–811 BCE), who campaigned in Babylonia to deal with unspecified political problems (Kuhrt 1995, 557).

As with much of the rest of Neo-Assyrian history, it was Tiglath-pileser III who, with his major military campaigns, settled matters with Babylonia for a time. He defeated the Chaldean ruler of the area and took up dual kingship of Assyria and Babylonia. This state of affairs eventually crumbled, and

the next hundred years or so would see a periodic changeover in the ruler of Babylon, alternating between local rulers and the Assyrian monarch (Oates 1986, 113–23).

Often allied with the Babylonians in the struggle against Assyria were the Elamites, who lived in the region to the east and southeast of Babylon, an area later occupied by the Persians. This state, centered on the city of Susa, figured most prominently in the late eighth and seventh centuries, in some cases helping the Babylonians repel Assyrian attacks on Babylonia and in other cases repelling Assyrian incursions into Elamite territory. The last of these incursions was in 646 BCE when Ashurbanipal defeated Susa, bringing an end to the Elamite state (Brentjes 1995, 1013–15).

Egypt was of perennial interest to the Assyrians as a source of wealth, especially gold. Egypt's distance from Assyria, however, made subjugating it a difficult proposition. Nonetheless, as Tiglath-pileser III and his successors pressed into the southern Levant in the late eighth century, an invasion of Egypt became more possible. An actual invasion of Egypt, however, did not take place until the reign of Esarhaddon, who mounted a failed attempt in 674 BCE and a successful attempt in 671 BCE. He conquered the Nile Delta and the area upstream to Memphis, appointed a series of petty kings from among the local population to fragment political power, and installed various other officials to keep an eye on them (Leichty 2011, 186). This was an unstable state of affairs that Ashurbanipal had to deal with in 667 and 664, when rebellion broke out in Egypt led by Kushite kings from the south. The Assyrians defeated the rebels in both cases but maintained a local dynast to rule Egypt from the Nile Delta city of Sais, a situation that inaugurated the twenty-sixth Saite dynasty (Kuhrt 1995, 634–38). The precise path the Assyrian-Egyptian relationship took from there is not clear, especially as Assyrian power waned in the Levant after about 640 BCE. Nonetheless, Egyptian forces appear alongside the Assyrians as they fought desperately to hold off the Babylonians in the late seventh century (Kuhrt 1995, 544–45, 590), suggesting that an alliance between these two powers was still in effect.

NEO-ASSYRIAN IMPERIAL SUBJECTS AND PRACTICE

Alongside the large states surveyed above were many smaller groups with whom the Neo-Assyrian Empire interacted. Not surprisingly, these smaller groups often resisted Assyrian attempts to control them, sometimes gathering in military coalitions to beat back the Assyrian army, in other cases capitulating. In the case of nomadic groups such as the Arabs, their movement and

lack of significant settled populations meant that evasion was often the most effective form of resistance.

The Assyrians used a full complement of hegemonic tactics to coerce and control these subjects (see Düring, this volume). These included military force, deportations (Oded 1979), conscription of personnel from provinces and vassals (Postgate 1974b, 59–60), and the use of garrisons in peripheral lands (Saggs 2001, 156–57; Grayson and Novotny 2012, 180, no. 22 iv 54–60). In the realm of administration, the Assyrians divided the lands they controlled into provinces, which were directly controlled by Assyrian personnel, and vassals,⁵ which remained under local leadership that was then bound to the Assyrian king by a variety of means. Provinces were described as part of “the land of Aššur,” the land owned by the Assyrian state god Aššur. Vassals, in contrast, bore “the yoke of Aššur,” which is to say they were subject to the control of Aššur (Postgate 1992, 251–55). Vassal rulers were required to swear oaths that stipulated loyalty to the Assyrian king and his dynasty, including coordination of foreign policy, approval for local changes in rulers, provision of laborers and supplies for building projects, and aid to the Assyrian army in the form of intelligence, supplies, and troops (Machinist 1992, 70; Parker 2001, 250–51; for texts, see Parpola and Watanabe 1988). Vassals delivered various kinds of tribute and gifts—perhaps on an annual basis—to the imperial palace from whence they were distributed to the royal court. These trips to the imperial capital probably included a renewal of vassal oaths, thus serving as a central act of ongoing loyalty and incorporating vassals into an empire-wide elite class (Postgate 1974b, 121–27). In return for their submission and faithful remittance of tribute, vassals retained a level of autonomy with which to govern their lands.

The Assyrians employed several kinds of officials to monitor military, economic, and political activity throughout the empire. We hear of the *pīḫatu*, *šaknu*, and *šāpiru* officials, all of whom could rule and administer lands under Assyrian control (CAD P/12, 360–69; CAD Š/17.I, 180–92, 453–58).⁶ There was also the *rab kāri*, “port inspector,” who oversaw trading stations and could collect taxes and tribute. The *qīpu* officials seem to have monitored Assyrian vassal rulers, in some cases embedded in or near vassal courts. For example, Tiglath-pileser III installed a *qīpu* over Samsi, “the queen of the Arabs,” after having defeated her in 733 (Tadmor and Yamada 2011, 106–7, no. 42:19’–26’).

The Assyrians also built an ideological system that legitimated Assyrian rule and integrated vassal rulers and their gods into what Bedford (2009, 60) calls a “symbolic universe.” The Assyrian king was seen as the agent of the divine world engaged in a process of ordering the earthly world to reflect the divine preeminence of the god Aššur (Bedford 2009, 48–55). This ideology

was expressed in the vassal oaths that invoked Assyrian and local gods such that when a vassal rebelled, the Assyrian king was obliged to impose order by punishing the rebel (Bedford 2009, 54–55). The removal of cult statues from rebellious territories reinforced this by portraying local deities as abandoning their people because of the latter’s evil actions (Cogan 1974, 9–21). This ideology shaped an elite identity in which vassals could participate (Bedford 2009, 60–61). Put another way, the vassal elite—along with the provincial elite and royal court—were “the actors that spread the king’s power to the rest of the empire” (Parker 2011, 371).

THE PERIPHERY IN NEO-ASSYRIAN STUDIES

REDISCOVERY OF ANCIENT ASSYRIA IN AN AGE OF EMPIRE

Before the rediscovery of ancient Mesopotamian civilizations in the nineteenth century by European adventurers such as Layard and Botta and the decipherment of cuneiform (described in Larsen 1996), nearly all that was known of the Assyrian Empire derived from the Hebrew Bible, in which Assyria plays the arch-villain and rod of divine anger. The “fascinated horror” (Machinist 1993, 78 n. 2) with which this foundational text of Western civilization regarded the Assyrians was borne out by the newly discovered palace reliefs, which showcased love of war and seemingly endless cruelty toward opponents.

While the Roman Empire was considered by many a model to be emulated by European imperialists, this was generally not the case when it came to the empires of the Near East. Liverani (2005, 224–25; cf. Frahm 2006) points out that despite the European–American perception of a *translatio imperii* from the Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian Empires to the Greeks and thence to the Romans and modern Western empires,⁷ the empires of Asia were at the same time viewed as incarnations of Oriental despotism, the true prototypes of the contemporary Ottoman Empire.⁸ The biblical fear and loathing of Assyria thus harmonized with this image of a totalitarian and immoral state that embodied “the negative values of despotism, generalized slavery, centralized economy, magic, stagnation, lust and sadistic cruelty” (Liverani 2005, 225–26; see also Holloway 2006; Frahm 2006). To its conquered periphery, the irresistible force of Assyria brought devastation in place of governance⁹ and monomaniacal proselytism of Aššur (a stand-in for Islam; [see Holloway 2002, 33–34]) in place of civilization.

By the turn of the twentieth century, study of Assyrian royal inscriptions and archival texts had progressed to the point where Assyriologists could

begin to define not only Assyria's political history but also the organization and administration of its empire (e.g., Johns 1901; Olmstead 1918; Forrer 1920). This began to erode the impression that the Assyrians had been merely militaristic predators, not bothering to administer or improve their holdings once they had taken the booty they desired. Admiration for Assyrian art and literary and religious texts vied with their (often anti-Semitic) dismissal (Frahm 2006, 79–85). At the same time, the atrocities of colonial empires and the horrors of the world wars began to evoke ambivalence toward imperialism in general, whether Western or Eastern, overturning the formerly positive valuation of “bellicosity, imperial ambitions, and autocratic political system” (Frahm 2006, 86–87).

NEO-ASSYRIAN STUDIES IN THE POSTCOLONIAL PERIOD

Neo-Assyrian studies flourished in the period after World War II, kicked off by the resumption of archaeological work and the discovery of new texts in the Assyrian heartland, particularly at the renewed British excavations at Nimrud (see Reade 1982; Cifarelli, this volume). But advances in Assyriology and authoritative new editions of royal inscriptions, letters, and administrative and legal documents¹⁰ were accompanied by a new interest, influenced by the postcolonial academic climate, in deconstructing imperial ideology and social and economic history (cf. Liverani 2005, 230).

Tadmor, Liverani, and others analyzed the royal inscriptions to explore the Assyrian semiotic system, issues of access and audience, and the propagandistic shaping and masking of relationships with rivals, vassals, and victims (e.g., Liverani 1979; Fales 1981; Tadmor 1997). The iconography of the palace reliefs, rock monuments, and royal steles, known for a century, was investigated anew for the creation in these monuments of an ideological program complementing that in the texts (e.g., Reade 1979; Winter 1983; Porter 2000). The study of Assyrian religion and its relationship with imperialism also developed considerably (e.g., Cogan 1974; Pongratz-Leisten 1994; Holloway 2002; Vera Chamaza 2002). Meanwhile, the publication of archival texts provided fodder for a host of studies illuminating the operation of the Neo-Assyrian Empire and its economic and social structure (e.g., the synthetic studies of Diakonoff [1969] and Postgate [1979]). Assyriologists have wrestled with and debated thorny questions regarding the palatial and provincial administration and bureaucracy (see Radner 2006), taxation and royal service (e.g., Fales 1973; Postgate 1974b), foreign tribute (e.g., Elat 1982; Bär 1996), the deportation system (e.g., Oded 1979), land tenure (e.g., van Driel 1970; Postgate 1974a; Fales

1984a; Liverani 1984), labor (e.g., Zabłocka 1972; Postgate 1987; Fales 1997), long-distance trade (e.g., Oppenheim 1967; Fales 1984b; Elat 1991; Radner 1999), money and prices (e.g., Müller 1997; Radner 1999), the social and legal status of the population (e.g., Jacobson 1969; Garelli 1972; Galil 2007), and its ethnic and linguistic composition (e.g., Tadmor 1978; Zadok 1995; Zehnder 2007).

During this revival of Neo-Assyrian studies in the late twentieth century, Lenin's (1939) thesis of imperialism as the "highest stage of capitalism" and its successors, dependency theory (Frank 1966) and world-systems theory (Wallerstein 1974), were deeply influential on contemporary understanding of the newly decolonized world. This perspective inspired ancient historians and archaeologists to seek evidence in the peripheries of ancient colonial systems and empires—including Assyria—for structural transformation and economic, social, and cultural destruction comparable to contemporary Third World poverty and turmoil. The "criminalization" of Assyria as an "evil empire" thus took a new turn (Liverani 2005, 226; cf. Frahm 2006, 86–87). The democratic critique overlay, but did not entirely replace, a palimpsest of orientalist and biblical images of Assyrian rapacity and omnipotence. Mann (1986, 237) found it safe to say that "uniquely among the major ancient empires, Assyria has been looked back upon fondly by no one."¹¹

In concert with this new attraction to interregional explanatory models, the postcolonial shift of attention toward areas outside the imperial metropolises also found expression in Neo-Assyrian studies. While Assyria had always loomed large for historians of the biblical lands, this new systemic approach, combined with new textual and archaeological evidence, led to a resurgence of work on this period in the southern Levant, making the provinces and vassal kingdoms of this region the first intensively studied part of the Assyrian periphery (see references in Faust, this volume; Brown, this volume.). In the 1980s and 1990s, the new interest in imperial peripheries dovetailed with changing archaeological opportunities. Salvage initiatives necessitated by the construction of dams in Iraq, Syria, and Turkey encouraged regional survey and excavation of Neo-Assyrian provincial sites of all sizes, even as work in the capital cities of the Assyrian heartland in Iraq became politically more difficult (see Wilkinson et al. 2005; MacGinnis, Wicke, and Greenfield 2016; Düring, this volume; Guarducci, this volume).

THE INFLUENCE OF WORLD-SYSTEMS THEORY

World-systems theory answered a need in Neo-Assyrian studies for a large-scale interregional explanatory framework to comprehend this mass of

new textual and archaeological data, and it became the dominant paradigm (together with related core-periphery perspectives) in theoretical and synthetic scholarship on the Neo-Assyrian Period for several decades. Wallerstein sought to explain the rise of the modern “world-system,” that is, a multi-polity system (a “world”) linked together largely by economic rather than political relations. He distinguished this “world-economy” from earlier “world-empires” in which one polity dominated others through military means. While world-empires appropriate surpluses through tribute and taxation, dominant core states in the modern world-economy profit by securing monopolistic rights for their businesses in the periphery (Wallerstein 1974, 15–16). The key element of this world-economy is the division of labor between core states, where high-skill occupations and capital are concentrated, and the periphery, which provides labor for the production of raw or semi-finished materials that are moved in bulk to the core (Wallerstein 1974, 349–51).¹²

Despite Wallerstein’s (1974, 15–16, 1991) conviction that the modern world-economy was a unique historical phenomenon, ancient historians and archaeologists have found his analysis and terminology—as well as Frank’s (1966) dependency theory and *longue durée* adaptation of world-systems theory (Frank 1993)—attractive, regardless of whether they explicitly embrace world-systems theory. One appeal is that the broadened scale of analysis requires the evaluation of localized changes within a larger network of interactions or world-system (Rowlands 1987, 3; Stein 1999, 176), allowing evidence from disparate sources and a wide geographical spread to be understood within a single cohesive framework. The focus on long-term material flows and interregional power asymmetries is also well suited to archaeological data (D’Altroy 1992, 13–14).

Notwithstanding the obvious technological, social, economic, and cultural differences of the Neo-Assyrian Empire, an analogy could be made with the modern European imperialist and colonialist world-system on the assumption that the driving force of expansion and consolidation was the economic exploitation of the periphery for the benefit of the core. A dichotomy of political status justified the creation of an interregional but intra-imperial division of labor between core and periphery. The Assyrians subjugated their neighbors to access raw materials and luxury goods unavailable in Assyria itself. When indirect control through local vassals eventually proved troublesome, they annexed these territories as provinces to enable their more efficient exploitation (e.g., Diakonoff 1969, 29; Grayson 1995, 964; Bedford 2009, 42, 44).

Congruent with Wallerstein’s (1974, 15) distinction between past *tributary* “world-empires” and the *capitalist* “world-economy,” most considered the mode

of “suction” in the Assyrian Empire to have been the traditional, parasitic system of annual tribute of luxury goods from vassal states and taxation in the form of staples and labor from provinces (see Postgate 1979). The depredations of Assyrian conquest and deportation, followed by “the exorbitant extortions of the imperial tax system” (Grayson 1995, 967) and only halfhearted measures to rebuild and repopulate in an effort to maintain control (Larsen 1979, 96; Grayson 1991b, 216–17), were thought to have resulted in the economic devastation of subjugated territories, a state of “underdevelopment” (Diakonoff 1969, 29; Elat 1982, 245; Lamprichs 1995, 382; Allen 1997, 140). Furthermore, several studies of Neo-Assyrian documents argued for the transition to a “slave mode of production” during this period, as the king’s family and high officials acquired enormous, discontinuous agricultural estates from newly conquered lands, cultivated mainly by “un-free” deportee peasants (e.g., Diakonoff 1969, 30; Fales 1973; Fales 1984a). By eroding to nothing the sector of communally owned village lands worked by free peasants,¹³ a vast “internal periphery” was created and controlled by a small class of Assyrian nobles and officials.

Accumulating archaeological evidence from new excavations and surveys in peripheral regions of the empire soon challenged the image of a uniformly depopulated, depressed, and ruralized Assyrian hinterland. While the expected depopulation was found in some parts of the southern Levant (see Na’aman 1993; Faust, this volume), elsewhere the evidence showed a demographic and economic boom. Surveys in the rain-fed agricultural lands and steppe between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers showed a massive increase in small, dispersed settlements during the ninth through seventh centuries BCE, including in agriculturally marginal areas that had never before been settled (see Wilkinson et al. 2005). A similar new agricultural settlement was found in the Assyrian vassal kingdoms of the southern Levant (see Na’aman 1993; Gitin 1997; Faust, this volume). Urbanism expanded as well in the Neo-Assyrian Period. Provincial capitals of the Jazirah such as Tell Sheikh Hamad, Tell Ahmar, and Ziyaret Tepe were large, densely inhabited, and prosperous (see Kühne 1995; Barbanes 2003). Vassal capitals of the southern Levant such as Ekron and Jerusalem expanded enormously in size and population and showed evidence of extensive production and trade (see Gitin 1997; Faust and Weiss 2005; Faust, this volume).

This new evidence of economic and demographic transformation encouraged some toward more explicit use of world-systems theory and comparison with modern colonial empires. Alongside the traditional tributary methods of wealth extraction, the Neo-Assyrian Empire was suggested to have innovated new *proto-capitalistic* methods for the creation of wealth. At the same time,

the uneven development of different parts of the Assyrian periphery required an explanation that was not inherent in the world-systems model.

One solution was offered by Parker (2001), who applied the Territorial-Hegemonic Model¹⁴ to his study area in the Upper Tigris River Valley. According to this model, empires employed a continuum of strategies ranging from intensive control at high cost (*territorial* control, i.e., annexation and colonization) to loose control at low cost (*hegemonic* control, i.e., vassal treaties and punitive campaigns), depending on a calculation of the “cost of that control and the amount of income the core can extract from its subject territories” (Parker 2001, 14; similarly, Berlejung 2012; Bagg 2013). In areas of little economic or strategic value, the empire made the minimum investment necessary for pacification, while in areas of high value an intensive effort was applied to control and restructure local economies and settlement systems. Contrary to the model of the purely parasitic empire, Parker (2001, 252, 2003, 540–41) argued for much more *active* interventions in provincial economies to create and extract more wealth for the Assyrian core, including state-controlled agricultural colonization and the centralization and monopolization of ceramic, metal, and wool production. The provinces of Upper Mesopotamia were developed as an immense breadbasket, feeding the capital cities of the Assyrian heartland (Parker 2001, 252, 2003, 541).

Gitin (1997) and Allen (1997) applied a world-systems or “center-periphery” model to the southern Levant under Assyrian rule. Like Parker, they proposed a flexible Assyrian policy of “selective economic development” (Allen 1997, 156) adapted to local potential, although with opposite results. Here it was the southern Assyrian vassals whose economies were “targeted for growth” in production and trade (Gitin 1997, 84), while any area such as the northern kingdom of Israel that was “not a desirable zone for furthering Assyrian interests in accumulating and centralizing resources” (Allen 1997, 155) was conquered and looted, depopulated through deportations, and reconstituted as a province with a bare-bones administration; it was thus pacified but not developed.

Distance from the imperial core and economic specialization could account for the different strategy applied to the Levant. From the fact that some Levantine vassal kingdoms that were heavily involved in long-distance trade were left semi-autonomous despite repeated rebellions, it has often been argued that the Assyrians were reluctant to take direct control of them. As the Assyrians were unprepared to mount their own maritime expeditions or desert caravans, it was more lucrative to skim off part of the profits of local trade and run the risk of another rebellion (Elat 1978, 20–21, 34, 1991, 24–25;

Allen 1997, 1–2; Radner 2004, 157; Berlejung 2012). Some have argued that the imposition of heavy Assyrian tribute demands for precious metals and exotic goods forced Phoenician port cities to expand their trading activities into the western Mediterranean in search of new sources of silver (Frankenstein 1979; Sherratt and Sherratt 1993, 370) and required southern Levantine vassal kingdoms to intensify and commercialize their agricultural production, especially of “cash crops,” and monetize their economies to participate in the Arabian caravan trade (Allen 1997, 155, 306; Gitin 1997, 84; Byrne 2003; Routledge 2004, 207). Allen (1997, 135–36, 144, 201–7, 225, 293, 324) suggested that the Assyrian administration had an even more direct role in planning and directing the economies of the Philistine city-states toward intensified production and trade. Allen (1997, 42) used the world-systems concept of the semi-periphery—“both exploiter and exploited”—to classify the Levantine vassal kingdoms that profited from this relationship.

Analogies with the cultural and religious imperialism of later empires have been less frequent, though questions of both “Assyrianization” (Parpola 2004, 9–10) (on the model of “Romanization” or “Westernization”) and “deculturation” (Liverani 1979, 300; Zehnder 2005, 548; Mazzoni 2014, 697–99) have sometimes been raised. It was once a common view that the worship of the Assyrian national god Aššur was imposed on conquered territories (e.g., Olmstead 1908, 171; Spieckermann 1982). By contrast, Holloway’s (2002) more recent take on Assyrian religious imperialism considers both the positive and negative treatment of local cults to be part of the empire’s hegemonic project.

RECENT RESPONSES AND ALTERNATIVES TO WORLD-SYSTEMS THEORY

The widespread influence of world-systems and other core-periphery theories on the study of the Neo-Assyrian Empire and other ancient empires and interaction spheres has had several salutary effects. It has broadened the scale of analysis, encouraged consideration of the long-term structural influence of interregional interaction on local societies, and expanded the focus of archaeological research from the cultural products of the ruling elite to wider regional and socioeconomic perspectives. However, the generality and simplicity of these models that gives them their analytical and comparative power also requires homogenizing significant social and cultural differences, making them vulnerable to criticism as reductionist, anachronistic, centrist, and static.

PRE-MODERN ECONOMIC SYSTEMS

A particular problem has been the application of world-systems theory to the economic systems and technological conditions of pre-modern societies. Such applications of world-systems theory have necessitated dropping or modifying the role Wallerstein assigned to the capitalist mode of production that is dependent on an axial division of labor and deemphasizing the role of the long-distance exchange of bulk goods (Rowlands, Larsen, and Kristiansen 1987; Chase-Dunn and Hall 1991, 10–12; Algaze 2005). The role of the exchange of bulk goods is especially problematic in pre-modern periods with prohibitively high overland transportation costs (Adams 1974) and where the frictional effects of distance and easily transferable technologies (Kohl 1987) limit the ability of cores to achieve long-term dominance over peripheries (Stein 1999). Schneider's (1977) now classic critique of world-systems theory argues that the exchange of luxury or prestige goods (especially metals, cloth, and exotic items) is more important for interdependencies among (pre-capitalist and even capitalist) societies than Wallerstein was ready to admit. However, in many contexts, prestige goods did not function as fungible means of exchange but instead as sources of "symbolic capital" in a web of personalized social relations (Schloen 2001, 87, 200).

Furthermore, the difference between the military and political means of domination characteristic of world-empires and the economic dependencies created by market-based asymmetric exchange in the world-economy cannot be dismissed as epiphenomenal (see Schloen 2001, 88–89). When core dominance is achieved through military superiority (world-empire) rather than significant advantages in technology, organizational structure, or economic power (world-economy), the potential for deep structural transformation, long-term dependency in the periphery, and the overwhelming dominance and benefit of the core is limited. This is demonstrated by the rapid shifting of imperial cores in the first millennium BCE Near East from Assyria to Babylonia and then to Persia, Greece, Rome, and Parthia. In the end, when the adaptation of world-systems theory to pre-modern settings requires the evisceration of its most characteristic features, namely, "core dominance, asymmetric exchange, and long-distance exchange as the prime mover of social change," Stein (1999, 25, 42–43) argues that the model becomes so general that it is no longer of real analytical use.

Nevertheless, some continue to argue for the effectiveness of world-systems analysis even in pre-modern societies under a revised, cross-cultural definition of world-systems. For example, Chase-Dunn and Hall (1991, 7) define a world-system as "intersocietal networks in which the interaction (trade,

warfare, intermarriage, etc.) is an important condition of the reproduction of the internal structures of the composite units and importantly affects changes which occur in these local structures” (see also Frank 1993, 387). They retain the focus on the “world” unit of analysis and an interest in the ways the interactions between societies within the system drive observed changes in its constituent parts, considering, for example, the forces of the core on the periphery to be endogenous (to the system) rather than exogenous (to the study area).

Allen’s (2005) more recent contribution on the Neo-Assyrian Empire is representative of this nuanced application of world-systems terminology and theory. He describes how the Neo-Assyrian world-empire (in Wallersteinian terms) over time moved in the direction of a world-economy as it incorporated more and more territory into its area of influence (Allen 2005, 76). Once its expansion exceeded the practical limits of territorial incorporation and management of imperial lands, the Assyrians developed new strategies to profit from their dominance over distant Levantine vassals: cultivating local elites as Assyrian proxies, levying taxes at key ports of trade, placing officials to keep an eye on vassal rulers, and depending on Arab, Phoenician, and Philistine traders to acquire the resources of a wide periphery—Cyprus, Spain, Arabia, Nubia, and Afghanistan—over which the empire had no direct control or influence (Allen 2005, 80–85). The great size of the empire particularly increased the demand for and importance of silver as a fungible resource that attained near currency status (Allen 2005, 85–86; see Jursa 2010 for the subsequent Neo-Babylonian Period). While the drivers of the system remain exclusively economic, Allen’s model not only accounts for the limits of ancient technologies invoked by critics of world-systems theory but also incorporates temporal development and plays down core dominance, two further common threads in recent imperial studies.

TIME AND PROCESS

Recent models of empire have called for greater attention to temporal processes in imperial histories. Significant differences are cited between the motives and methods of the expansion and consolidation phases of past empires. “Young” empires that never attempt or never succeed at consolidating their territories are best described as parasitic conquest states (Goldstone and Haldon 2009, 17; cf. Münkler 2005), while “mature” or “world” empires pass a temporal and organizational “Augustan threshold” (Doyle 1986, 93–97) beyond which generations of “state embedding” (Goldstone and Haldon 2009, 17)

create a unified state with a homogeneous administrative system and a common identity. In keeping with these perspectives, one expects the goals, means, and constraints of Assyrian expansion and consolidation to have evolved considerably across space and time. With Allen (2005), it seems important to distinguish among the period of reclamation of the territories formerly held by the Middle Assyrian kingdom (the “expanded core” of Upper Mesopotamia between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers) in the tenth and early ninth centuries, the subordination of the perimeter of this zone through annual campaigns and tributary relationships beginning in the mid-ninth century, and the annexation and consolidation of this perimeter (coupled with increasing clashes with powerful and distant enemies) from the mid-eighth through seventh centuries. By the seventh century BCE the Neo-Assyrian Empire passed the Augustan threshold in a large swathe of its territory (Bagg 2013, contra Münkler 2005).

Another strain in the study of ancient empires argues that theories that hypostatize empires as coherent entities or systems and propose grand narratives and strategies are inherently misleading. “Empire” is a mental template imposed by past participants and present-day analysts on a set of phenomena empirically composed of the myriad actions of motivated social actors over a long period (Barrett 1997; Schloen 2001, 49–50; Sinopoli 2001a, 451; Morrison 2001, 258). The characterization of the decisions of imperial authorities as general “policies” or part of a grand strategic plan misconstrues what was experienced as ad hoc or “reactionist” responses to inherently unpredictable local conditions, contingent external and internal events, and the goals and abilities of individual rulers and administrators (Mann 1986, 169; Sinopoli 2001a, 448–50; cf. Morrison 2001; Goldstone and Haldon 2009, 25). While in hindsight we might perceive trends and strategic or economic advantages in the way Assyrian territorial expansion proceeded, in practice each campaign and annexation was an unpredictable, situational response to a complex mosaic of local, historical, and personal factors (Herrmann 2011a, 153–55). Similarly, while we abstract a coherent dual strategy of indirect rule through tributary vassals and direct rule through provincial governors, with a routine and inexorable progression from one to the other in most areas, Cogan (1993, 412) writes that “no single paradigm can explain the mosaic of political and social relationships that developed between Assyria and its dependents.” He complains of the “tyranny of a construct” (Cogan 1993, 410), which is unable to explain the mixed, shifting, and sometimes ambiguous political impositions placed on polities and tribes at the edges of the empire that blurred the distinction between vassal/client state and province.

Allied with the idea that imperial functioning was often ad hoc is a critique of the top-down and centrist bias of global interaction models, which tend to treat “all power and control [as] emanating from the imperial core” (Sinopoli 2002a, 465) and unrealistically depict imperial authorities as highly knowledgeable, rational, and effective in all situations (see also Alcock 1997; Morrison 2001; Schreiber 2006; Goldstone and Haldon 2009, 21). This idea of a “passive periphery,” the periphery as a powerless recipient of the imperial will and imperial culture, has been seriously questioned (Stein 2002).

In Neo-Assyrian studies, one fruitful area of research along these lines has been the replacement of the idea of unidirectional “Assyrianization” with a recognition of the *mutual interpenetration* of the cultural practices of imperial core and periphery. Through the intensive interaction between Assyria and particularly its western and southern neighbors, an “Assyro-Aramaic *koine*” gradually emerged; permeated the empire’s language, religion, architecture, art, dress, and administrative and commercial practices (Tadmor 1975, 1978; Winter 1982; Lumsden 2001); and existed alongside persistent local practices in every area. Instead of coercive or automatic acculturation to the norms of the dominant power, postcolonial theories of selective consumption and hybridization (Dietler 2010) seem to better describe the limited and variable Assyrian influence seen in the material culture of provinces and vassal states (Berlejung 2012; Bagg 2013), where identification with a distant power could be used to enhance local status (Lumsden 2001, 40–41; Tyson 2014a, 492–94; Tyson, this volume). Meanwhile, the adoption of foreign practices and material culture at the imperial center was made acceptable and even desirable by the universalistic politico-religious ideology of Assyrian sovereignty, in which the royal capital and palace “take on the form of a microcosm, which sums up the elements of the whole world” (Liverani 1979, 314).

Rather than closed concepts, “Assyria” and “Assyrian” were open ones capable of profound change over time. As the empire expanded, the original ethnic and geographical meaning of these terms came to exist in tension with their new political definition as “the region and people that manifest the required obedience” (Machinist 1993, 89) to the king as the representative of the god Aššur (Oded 1979, 86; Lumsden 2001, 39; Fales 2009–10; Richardson 2016).¹⁵ The lack of a persistent “rule of difference” (Chatterjee 1993, cited in Steinmetz 2014, 80) that presented barriers to the attainment of high political position and the cultural trappings of “Assyrianness” by the conquered population is a significant and often overlooked¹⁶ distinction between the Neo-Assyrian Empire and modern European colonialism and imperialism.¹⁷ In the Neo-Assyrian

Empire there were non-Assyrians, presumably former deportees, in positions at every level of the Assyrian army and administration and also as merchants and influential scholars (Tadmor 1978; Oded 1979, 104–9).

Other areas of discussion that accord greater power and agency to subject populations are the *limits of coercion* and the *integrative processes* that promote imperial stability. These discussions recognize that to maintain control beyond an initial period of conquest, imperial rulers had to cultivate the support of different groups in both the core and the periphery through the provision of real benefits that supported their ideological legitimacy (e.g., Sinopoli 2001a, 451–56; Goldstone and Haldon 2009, 9; Tyson 2014a, 499; Tyson, this volume). In this view, ancient empires are negotiated entities. Factionalism and the diversity of agendas play an important role, as supporters and opponents of the imperial project were to be found in both the core and peripheral territories (cf. Brumfiel and Fox 1994).¹⁸ As a result, the co-option of local elites seems to have been a particularly important strategy to administer subject territories and maintain the continuity of local forms of legitimation (Mann 1986, 170; Mattingly 1997; Alcock 1997; Sinopoli 2001a, 454–55; Elson and Covey 2006; Dusinger 2013; Lavan, Payne, and Weisweiler 2016). In the Neo-Assyrian Empire, loyal vassals were rewarded with material and ideological benefits, including grants of additional territory, removal of rivals and support for their claim on the throne, granting of higher dignities, and (in the case of Sargon II) even the gift of the king's daughter in marriage (Lanfranchi 1997, 82–85, 2009; Dion 2006). Recognizing the enabling “synergies” of imperial expansion and imperial interests, Tyson (2014a, 482, 2014b) argues that the real agents of striking socioeconomic change in Iron Age IIC Ammon were the local elite, describing how they profited as “imperial collaborators, actively pursuing their own gain while fulfilling imperial expectations.”

Beyond the support of vassal rulers and their courts, imperial annexation frequently also provided avenues of social mobility for military, craft, and ritual specialists who could come to identify their interests with those of the empire (Sinopoli 2001a, 455). Soldiers in the armies of conquered territories and skilled craftsmen were frequently co-opted by conscription into the Assyrian army, and some were promoted into the king's cohort (Lanfranchi 1997, 84; Lumsden 2001, 41). Furthermore, Lanfranchi (1997, 84, 86) argues that the support of merchants in both client kingdoms and new provinces was sought by the removal of commercial blockades. The royal patronage of temples within Assyria proper and in other parts of the empire (see Pongratz-Leisten 1994; Holloway 2002) must also have been aimed in part at winning the support of temple personnel. Even the populations of entire territories or cities could be

courted, for example, by granting tax and service exemption (*kidinnūtu*) and debt remission (*andurāru*) in the Babylonian cities (Holloway 2002), by restoring those exiled by Assyria's enemies to their homes (Lanfranchi 1997, 84), and by "speaking kindly" to or negotiating with foreign and client kings as well as representatives of various cities and provinces (Fales 2009).

Challenges to the "passive periphery" paradigm also attempt to distinguish between "*bottom-up processes*" (defined as "local and individual responses to incorporation into larger political, economic, and prestige networks") and the "top-down" manipulations of imperial administrators (Sinopoli 1994, 171, 2001a, 445) in influencing provincial development and generating long-term transformations. Thus, greater analytical weight is granted to the agency of provincial subjects, who can be responsible for "internal adaptations" to the demands and opportunities created by imperial annexation (Alcock 1993, 1997; cf. Schreiber 2006). Bottom-up adaptation to major shifts in political, economic, and social boundaries could have unpredictable and unintended consequences and affect the long-term continuity of the political system. The addition of household archaeology and other high-resolution studies in provincial settings to the discussion of agency promises to help identify the agents of change in imperial contexts with even greater precision, whether top-down or bottom-up (Herrmann 2011a, 2011b).

Bottom-up perspectives allow the transformations of Assyria's subject territories to be viewed in a new light. The spate of new settlement in previously depopulated parts of Upper Mesopotamia conceived in world-systems terms as proto-capitalistic investment aimed at surplus extraction can be re-envisioned as an amalgam of imperially directed attempts to stabilize and pacify the region, with bottom-up sedentarization in a context of renewed political and economic integration. According to Harmanşah (2012, 61), "Assyrian elites appropriated this [existing] settlement trend and developed an elaborate rhetoric of regional development as a policy of territorial organization, labor investment, colonization, and political control." Likewise, Faust (this volume) and others (Schloen 2001, 141-47; Na'aman 2003) argue that the new intensification and integration shown in Assyria's southern Levantine vassals was hardly Assyrian policy but rather an unintended by-product of the Pax Assyriaca¹⁹ from which both sides benefited. Alongside concerted imperial strategies—conquest, destruction, deportation, resettlement, reconstruction, urbanization, diplomacy, trade, tribute, and taxation; unforeseen responses to the waxing and waning of conflict; the creation of vast new social, economic, and political networks; and the construction of new identities and the breaking of old ones had equal potential to produce structural

transformation in Assyria's shadow (see Lumsden 2001, 39–43; Herrmann 2011a, 506–9, 2011b, 317–18).

THE PERSPECTIVES OF THIS BOOK

Contributors to the ASOR sessions on which this volume is based were asked to reflect on the role the Neo-Assyrian Empire played in societal change and transformation in its subject territories and beyond, taking into account not only top-down imperial impositions but also local responses to imperial encounters. Taken together, the resulting papers demonstrated the variability and complexity of outcomes—intended and unintended, destructive and constructive—accompanying Assyria's interaction with other lands, as well as the influence of investigators' assumptions and paradigms. The papers published here are consistent with the fragmented, multi-scalar set of approaches, eschewing monolithic frameworks, that characterizes much recent work on ancient empires.

Five of the chapters (Düring, Guarducci, Faust, Tyson, and Cannavò) take a regional perspective, summarizing the evidence for changes in settlement and economy and the extent and nature of Assyrian interventions in different parts of the empire and its “periphery.” Although they describe locally consistent patterns and often significant restructuring of subject territories, all of these authors give recognition to the limitations of Assyrian power and the impact of different localities and histories on the Assyrian approach. Three others (Darby, Brown, and Cifarelli) focus on a particular site or category of material culture. Their contextual approaches, informed by theories of consumption and communication in intercultural settings, emphasize the mutual interaction of local choices with the enabling connectivity of empire over the hegemonic imposition of imperial culture.

Two chapters, by Bleda S. Düring and Guido Guarducci, take a long-term perspective on Assyrian rule of the provinces found between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. In chapter 2 Düring shows that nearly all of the territorial control and integration strategies used in the Neo-Assyrian Empire (up to the turning point of the new phase of expansion begun by Tiglath-pileser III) already originated in the Middle Assyrian Period. Viewed from a local perspective, however, this top-down “repertoire of rule” appears as a patchwork of different strategies and intensities applied unpredictably according to local conditions and historical circumstances. Düring finds that a self-consciously superior Assyrian cultural identity was also important for the consolidation of rule in both periods but was ultimately an open and selectively used category.

Like Düring, Guarducci compares the imperial strategies of the Middle and Neo-Assyrian periods, using the Upper Tigris region as a well-documented case study (chapter 3). His analysis reveals the limits of coercion, showing that the Middle Assyrian approach of constant conflict and minimal interaction with local communities resulted in precarious and less fruitful control, while later Neo-Assyrian efforts at compromise with local communities in multiple social fields were much more successful. Indigenous sociopolitical changes in this region during the intervening period of Assyrian retrenchment seem to have been an important factor in the change in Assyrian strategy.

The next chapters, by Faust, Darby, Brown, and Tyson, turn to the southern Levant, the outer edge of the Neo-Assyrian Empire where a number of vassal kingdoms persisted down to the empire's fall. Avraham Faust's review of settlement, demography, and economic activity in different areas (chapter 4) upholds and further supports the stark dichotomy in the development of the northern provinces versus the southern vassal kingdoms previously described by Gitin and Allen. However, he challenges their attribution of these dramatic changes to a concerted Assyrian policy of economic maximization. Rather, the Assyrian devastation and lack of reconstruction in the northern kingdom of Israel appears economically short-sighted and irrational, especially given the evidence Faust cites for the earlier prosperity of this region, including in olive oil production that was subsequently so strongly developed in the kingdom of Ekron.

In a contextual study of Judean pillar figurines (chapter 5), Erin Darby also resists a prevalent impulse to connect all changes evident in the periphery directly to the effects of imperial domination. Against a move to understand the rise of this figurine style (and other regional Levantine figurine types) during the Neo-Assyrian imperial period as a mode of resistance through local identity consolidation, she puts forward a more complex explanation in which greater connectivity throughout the empire enabled the spread and local adaptation of magico-medical rituals that used figurines.

Stephanie H. Brown (chapter 6) reviews interpretations of either direct Assyrian influence or indirect influence through co-opted local elites on the settlement and subsistence shift in the Transjordanian kingdom of Edom that began in the eighth century BCE. Her discussion of new evidence for Edomite serving vessels shows that in both elite and non-elite contexts, cultural capital was expressed by Levantine forms and decorations, with only generalized Assyrian influence in a small minority of vessels, suggesting that both theories may have overstated the case for Assyrianization.

Chapter 7 republishes, in slightly modified form, a paper originally presented at ASOR and subsequently published in the *Journal of Anthropological*

Research (Tyson 2014a). In it, Tyson considers one of the patterns societies on the periphery of empires experience as a result of their interaction with or incorporation into empires: sociopolitical and economic intensification that becomes visible at roughly the same time as the onset of imperial rule. Through a diachronic study of multiple categories of cultural artifacts from the Ammonites—who lived in and around modern Amman, Jordan—Tyson argues that the elite of this small, tribally organized society were actively involved in the processes of intensification. In this sense they were imperial collaborators, taking advantage of their mediating position between these empires and the local context to improve their own status, wealth, and power.

The following chapters, by Megan Cifarelli and Anna Cannavò, provide perspectives from two areas at, respectively, the eastern and western ends of the Neo-Assyrian Empire that are typically considered part of the imperial periphery. By giving careful attention to the contexts in which Assyrian objects were and were *not* found at the site of Hasanlu in northwestern Iran, Cifarelli shows in chapter 8 that the numerical and social significance of these objects has long been exaggerated. She argues that an Assyrocentric bias in the scholarship on Hasanlu that reproduces propagandistic claims of broad imperial supremacy has wrongly constructed a core-periphery relationship between Assyria and this region in the ninth century BCE, despite evidence to the contrary.

Cannavò's chapter (chapter 9) also questions whether all polities of lesser size and power that were in contact with Assyria can properly be construed as "peripheries" in a world-systems sense. Despite Assyrian claims of Cypriot submission, there is no evidence that economic exchange between the empire and the island was asymmetrical, and it is only through the intermediary of the Phoenician vassal cities that the Neo-Assyrian Empire had a (diffuse and indirect) effect on the economic and political organization of Cyprus.

Finally, in chapter 10, Bradley J. Parker moves from the particulars of these cases studies to a broader discussion of the theoretical and methodological questions raised by the study of imperial peripheries. Parker argues that a productive way forward in the study of peripheries and empires is a pericentric approach that focuses on the peripheries as an important source of the forces propelling imperialism. He suggests that such an approach should take into account pathways of power (political, social, and economic) and the relationships by which those pathways operate. This combination of a pericentric approach with the consideration of pathways of power and relationships is what Parker terms "Neo-pericentrics."

The contributions to this book add new perspectives and evidence to the growing body of research on the lands subjected to and in contact with the

Neo-Assyrian Empire. They align with the recent movement in imperial studies to replace global, top-down materialist models with theories of contingency, local agency, and bottom-up processes. The impact of the unprecedented expansion and astounding success of the Neo-Assyrian Empire on nearly every aspect of ancient Near Eastern society can hardly be overstated. New evidence and local and contextual studies are increasingly demonstrating how the periphery shaped the empire in turn.

NOTES

1. This chapter does not attempt to provide a comprehensive bibliography of Neo-Assyrian studies but rather selected examples to illustrate trends in research on this period. For recent overviews of the history and archaeology of the Neo-Assyrian Empire in English, see Pedde 2012; Parker 2012; Radner 2015. For extensive bibliographies of Neo-Assyrian studies since World War II, see Hämeen-Anttila 1987; Deller 1988; Mattila and Radner 1997; Brinkman 1997; Luukko and Gaspa 2008; Gaspa 2011.

2. Examples include Mann 1986; Alcock et al. 2001; Sinopoli 2001a, 2001b; Elson and Covey 2006; Burbank and Cooper 2010; Areshian 2013; Steinmetz 2014; Lavan, Payne, and Weisweiler 2016.

3. For example, Alcock 1993; Mattingly 1997; D'Altroy and Hastorf 2001; Morrison 2001; Sinopoli 2001a; Stein 2002; Schreiber 2006; Mattingly 2011; Khatchadourian 2013; Dusinger 2013.

4. On the parallels between Middle Assyrian and Neo-Assyrian building and efforts at modifying the landscape, see Düring, this volume.

5. It is standard practice in ancient Near Eastern scholarship to use the terms *suzerain* and *vassal* to speak of the more powerful and weaker parties, respectively, in international diplomacy, which normally established tributary relations. This language is used here and more broadly in the scholarship of the ancient Near East without any reference to or adaptation of concepts from the use of these terms in other areas of study (e.g., the Ottoman Empire or European feudalism).

6. These titles, *pīḫātu*, *šaknu*, and *šāpiru*, respectively “governor,” “commander,” and “manager,” were used differently over time. From the way they are used, it appears that there is much overlap in their roles.

7. This idea is depicted in the tympanum over the entrance to the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, dedicated in 1931, in which knowledge is passed from East (including a king of Assyria) to West (described in Abt 2012, 349–53).

8. As Larsen (1994, 29) writes, the Near Eastern empires were considered simultaneously as “origin and contrast” for the modern West.

9. “As far as [the Assyrian] extended his empire, he ruled but he did not govern; his appetites were without limit. In him is incarnate, to the highest degree, the defects and vices of Asiatic political systems” (de Morgan 1909, 340; trans. in Olmstead 1923, 645).

10. See especially the series Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period, and State Archives of Assyria.

11. See, however, Frahm’s (2006, 89–94) identification and critique of a “neo-diffusionist” trend in recent Assyrian cultural and religious studies that neglects the darker side of Assyrian history.

12. The “semi-periphery” is conceived as an area standing midway between core and periphery in its political integration and occupational skills that “partially deflects the political pressures which groups primarily located in peripheral areas might otherwise direct against core-states” (Wallerstein 1974, 350).

13. This was presumed to have existed in balance with the “slave sector” (state dependents) in the Marxian “Asiatic mode of production” (see Zaccagnini 1989; Schloen 2001, 189–94).

14. This model was first developed by Luttwak (1976), Hassig (1985), and D’Altroy (1992) for (respectively) the Roman, Aztec, and Inka Empires.

15. Assyrian royal inscriptions from Tiglath-pileser I down to Sargon II say of deportees who settled both in the imperial heartland and in the outlying provinces, “I counted them with the people of the land of Assyria” (*itti niše KUR Aššur amnūšunūti*), and Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon II claim that “tribute and tax I imposed upon them as Assyrians” (*biltu maddattu ki ša Aššuri ēmissunūti*) (Liverani 1979, 312; Oded 1979, 81–86; Machinist 1993, 86). This political definition of Assyria and Assyrian was open to continual reinterpretation and reevaluation and need not have been universally held. Alternative, more exclusive Assyrian and peripheral identities could be defined against the background of this creeping cosmopolitanism. This is demonstrated by the prophecies against Assyria in the Hebrew Bible (Weinfeld 1986) and perhaps also by the “hardening” of imperial rhetoric concerning newly conquered territories found in royal inscriptions of the seventh century, which use the phrase “to account (them) as captives/booty” (*šallatiš/ana šallati manū*) (Oded 1979, 83, 89; Machinist 1993, 93–95). Richardson (2016) argues that the maintenance of local elite identities was essential to uphold the credibility of Assyrian rule through vassals and provincial officials and that a self-conscious imperial elite identity was nascent only in the Neo-Assyrian Empire.

16. Such assumptions of a dichotomy of political status based on nationalism and ethnocentrism are often only implicit in analyses of the Neo-Assyrian Empire but are sometimes given explicit voice (e.g., Mann 1986, 235; Liverani 2005, 233; Bedford 2009, 61; cf. Goldstone and Haldon 2009, 24).

17. In the absence of this “rule of difference,” some analysts would not consider such an expanding state to be a true “empire” at all (Steinmetz 2014, 81).

18. On pro- and anti-Assyrian factions in Neo-Assyrian vassal kingdoms, see Lanfranchi 1997, 84; Lumsden 2001, 40–41.
19. The reduction in regional conflict and opening of previously closed borders, especially in the late eighth and seventh centuries (see Fales 2008).

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