

New Perspectives on Household Archaeology, edited by Bradley J. Parker & Catherine P. Foster, 2012. Winona Lake (IN): Eisenbrauns; ISBN 978-1-57506-252-5 hardback US\$69.50 & £69.00; xii + 572 pp., 168 figs., 13 tables

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The household as a narrow focus of inquiry has been aptly named 'household archaeology' and investigates the household's social, material and behavioural aspects. Disciplines such as sociology, anthropology and many geographical subareas of archaeology have long observed the importance of the household and have incorporated this focus into their research repertoires. However, the archaeology of the ancient Near East (ANE) has, for the most part, failed to follow suit. Historically, archaeologists of the ANE have been more concerned with the macro or 'monumental' artefacts, such as fortifications, temples and palaces — hardly arenas of the average ancient man, woman or child. Thankfully, this oversight has been acknowledged and various ancient Near Eastern scholars are shifting their attention to the stage of daily life — the home.

One such occasion occurred in the winter of 2009, when a three-day conference was held at the University of Utah (UT) on 'Household Archaeology in the Middle East and Beyond: Theory, Method and Practice'. The papers presented at this conference were revised and published by Eisenbrauns as the volume under review, *New Perspectives on Household Archaeology* edited by Bradley J. Parker and Catherine P. Foster. Although the contributions to this volume cover a wide spectrum of geographical and chronological areas within the wider ANE, they are organized into five sections according to their foci: theoretical, methodological, food production and subsistence, urban households and syncretical.

The first section addresses some of the methodological and theoretical issues within even the narrow focus of household archaeology. Contributions include: 'Between the Individual and the Collective Household as a Social Process in Neolithic Greece' by Stella Souvatzi; 'Homemaking in the Early Bronze Age' by Meredith S. Chesson; and 'Households through a Digital Lens' by Ruth Tringham.

Section Two comprises papers on methodological advancements in household studies. Papers include new techniques that implement numerous scientific approaches including micro-debris analysis, microstratigraphy, soil-chemistry characterization, and micro-floral studies. Chapter titles include: 'Particles of the Past: Microarchaeological Spatial Analysis of Ancient House Floors' by Isaac I.T. Ullah; 'Household Matters: Techniques for Understanding Assyrian Houses' by Lynn Rainville; 'Shifting Household Economics of Plant Use from the Early to Late Natufian Periods of the Southern Levant' by Arlene M. Rosen; and 'Defining Households: Micro-contextual Analysis of Early Neolithic Households in the Zagros, Iran' by Wendy Matthews.

Food and subsistence at the household level has recently become a significant topic in the realm of house-

hold archaeology and is the topic of the third section with research on 'Feeding Households: a Multiproxy Method for Analysis of Food Preparation in the Halaf Period at Fisticli Hoyuk, Turkey' by Marie Hopwood and Siddhartha Mitra; 'Integrating Household Archaeology and Archaeobotany: a Case Study from Ubaid Kenan Tepe' by Philip Graham and Alexa Smith; 'Beyond the House and into the Fields: Cultivation Practices in the Late PPNB' by Chantel E. White and Nicholas P. Wolff; and 'Domestic Production and Subsistence in an Ubaid Household in Upper Mesopotamia' by Bradley Parker.

Section Four concentrates on urban households and how they reflect social change within the 'city': 'The Challenge of Identifying Households at Tell Kurdu (Turkey)' by Rana Ozbal; 'The Life of the Majority: a Reconstruction of Household Activities and Residential Neighborhoods at the Late-Third-Millennium Urban Settlement at Titris Hoyuk in Northern Mesopotamia' by Yoko Nishimura; 'Households and Neighborhoods on the Indus Tradition: an Overview' by Jonathan Mark Kenoyer; and 'Changing Households at the Rise of Urbanism: the EB I–II Transition at Tel Bet Yerah' by Sarit Paz.

Syncretical Household Studies makes up the fifth and final section and attempts to connect the history of the household and larger, economic-political issues: 'The Uruk Phenomenon: a View from the Household' by Catherine P. Foster; 'Household Continuity and Transformation in a Prehistoric Cypriot Village' by David Frankel and Jennifer M. Webb; 'How Households Can Illuminate the Historical Record: the Judahite Houses at Gath of the Philistines' by Jeffrey R. Chadwick and Aren M. Maeir; 'Household Archaeology in the Southern Levant: an Example from Iron Age Tell Halif' by James W. Hardin; followed by an afterword on 'The Archaeological House: Themes and Directions' by Roger Matthews.

As one can see, the range of this volume is extensive and indeed is its strength. Going into depth regarding each contribution is beyond the scope of this review. With that said, a majority of the papers utilize, in one way or another, micro-analyses (i.e. the study of micro-cultural remains or debris that may provide information about household activities). For instance, Lynn Rainville writes that she focused on micro-artefacts because 'they provide a window into the debris left by repeated actions' (p. 145) and developed a sampling procedure to collect micro-samples covering a wide range of locus types within urban Ziyaret Tepe in modern-day Turkey. The detailed methodologies presented in this volume will be of great value as more research into households begins, especially the chapters that utilize the more recent developments within micro-analyses. Since household archaeology is somewhat new to the study of the ANE, it is rather appropriate that this volume include an extensive array of methodologies within a wide spectrum of geographical and chronological dimensions. However, it is this strength of the micro-analyses that also lends to this volume's area for improvement. It would be helpful to have additional papers that utilize more of the social elements, such as ethnographic and social theories. However, this area for improvement is addressed in the volume's concluding chapter (more on this below). Considering the recent devel-

opment of household archaeology in the ANE, a second area for improvement would be a glossary of terms, which may be tricky since this is a volume of contributing papers and consequently may have varying definitions.

The final chapter 'About the Archaeological House: Themes and Directions' by Roger Matthews conducts a closer examination of the new frontier of household archaeology in the ANE and offers suggestions for future research — I find this element of the volume refreshing. Not only do the authors and editors clearly inform the reader that household archaeology has not been a focus in ANE archaeology and, therefore, the conference/volume itself sees the value in interdisciplinary research, does not have it all figured out, and is indeed still learning; but Matthews offers a friendly critique on, what he sees as, defects in current household research within archaeological contexts and how those defects can be addressed.

In conclusion, *New Perspectives on Household Archaeology* is a much needed addition to the study of the household. Colleges and universities with programs in anthropology, archaeology, sociology, and ancient history would do well to include this volume in their libraries. Scholars and students wanting to engage in the past on a more micro, or daily, level would do well to include this into their research as well.

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