



ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

Imperial Control in Rural Assyria: Evidence from Recent Excavations at Qach Rresh

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Abstract

The Neo-Assyrian Empire is predominantly known to both scholars and the broader public as an aggressively expansionist state, fuelled by conquests and the consequent plunder, tribute demands, and deportations. This perception has been shaped, in part, by the emphasis on archaeological investigations of major urban sites and monumental architecture at the expense of smaller, rural settlements, particularly in the Assyrian heartland (modern-day northern Iraq).

This paper presents the preliminary findings from the investigations at the rural site of Qach Rresh on the Erbil Plain of Iraqi Kurdistan conducted by the Rural Landscapes of Iron Age Imperial Mesopotamia project (RLIIM) in 2022-2024. Qach Rresh is estimated to have been established during the late Neo-Assyrian period and remained occupied in the post-Assyrian period (7th-4th centuries BCE). The estimated founding of the site aligns with the dramatic increase in the number of rural settlements in the Assyrian heartland during Iron Age, which has been interpreted to be potential evidence of the imperial efforts to reorganise its countryside. By examining the Qach Rresh results, this paper aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of Assyria's economy, structures of imperial control, and the impact of Assyria's collapse on the Empire's rural areas.

Keywords

SW Asia, Archaeology, Rurality, Assyria, Collapse

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