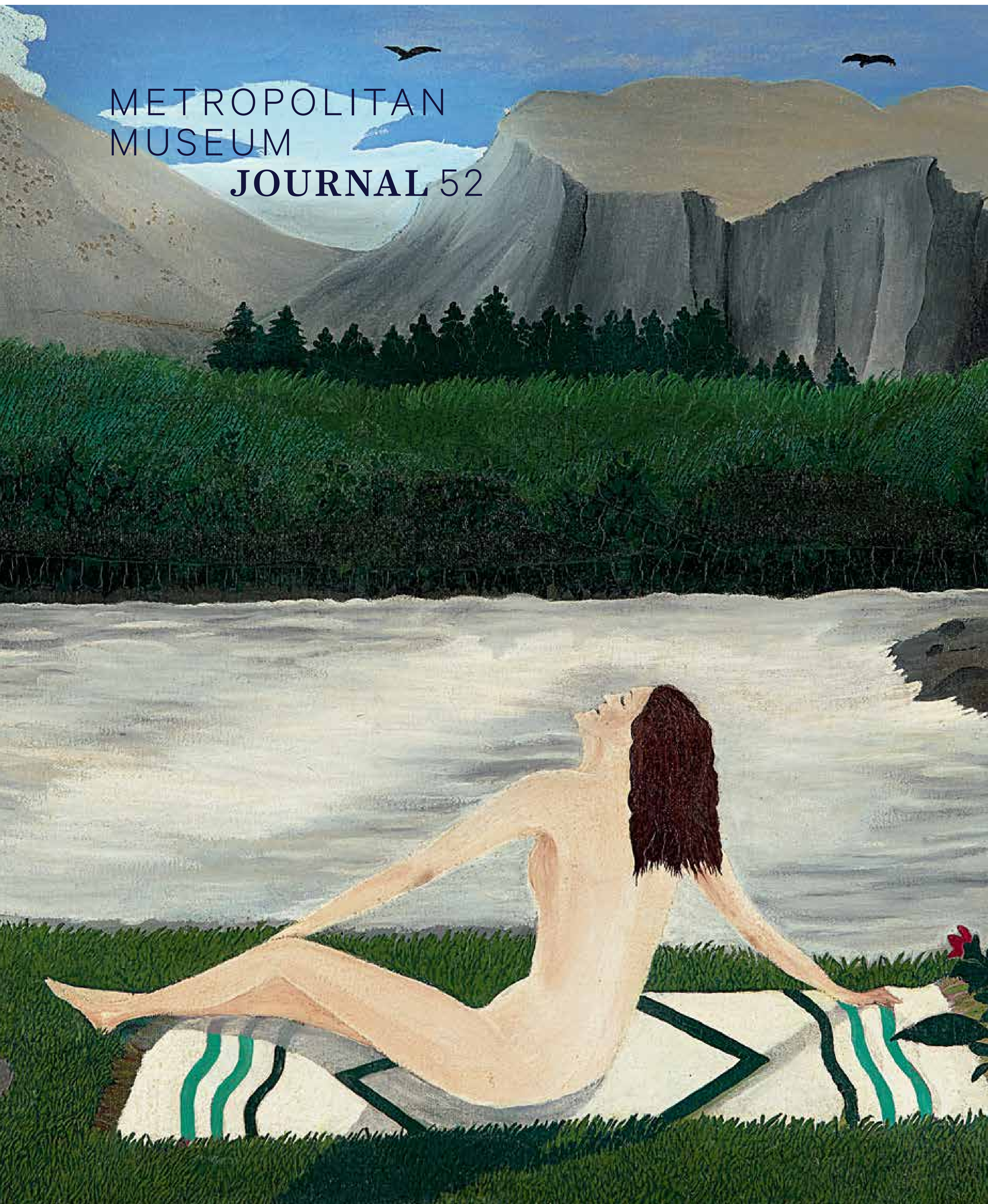
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Lady of the Lake*, ca. 1936–39. See fig. 2, p. 97.

Illustration on p. 2: Paolo Veronese (Italian,
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ABBREVIATIONS

MMA The Metropolitan Museum of Art
MMAB The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin
MMJ Metropolitan Museum Journal

Height precedes width and then depth in dimensions cited.

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM JOURNAL 52

LUCA BOMBARDIERI

A Possible Cypriot Origin for an Assyrian Stone Mixing Bowl in the Cesnola Collection

The comprehensive publication of the Cesnola Collection of Cypriot stone sculpture in The Metropolitan Museum of Art from 2014 sheds new light on iconographic and ideological aspects of major stone statuary, as well as a variety of other stone objects.[1] Of particular interest is a shallow basalt bowl that had previously remained unpublished (fig. 1). Part of a small group of ten hard-stone vessels purchased by the Museum in 1874–76 from the Cesnola Collection, the basalt bowl appears to be a typical Assyrian mixing bowl.[2]

The production of different types of stone mixing bowls began in northern Mesopotamia in the Early Iron Age and increased considerably, developing distinctive features, throughout the Neo-Assyrian period and the Post-Assyrian/Neo-Babylonian period (eighth to sixth century B.C.). The most widespread types were primarily shallow bowls made of basalt with a simple base, or a

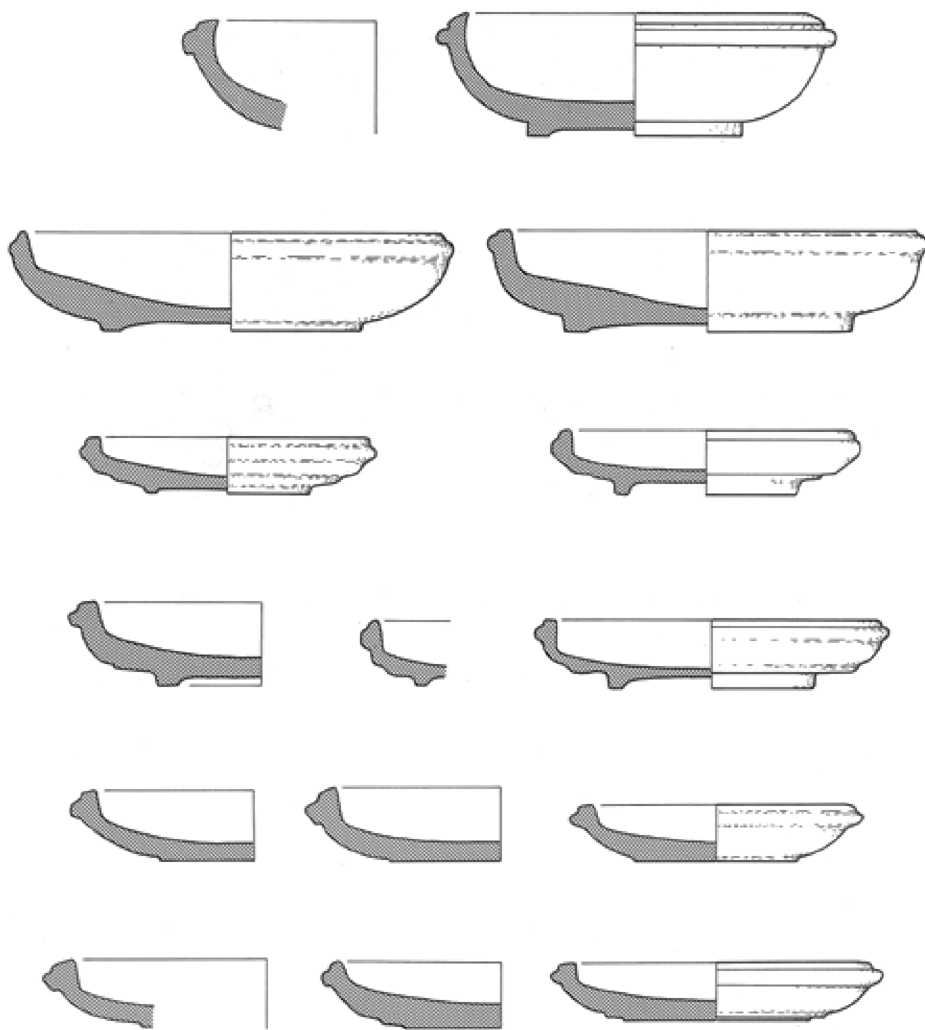
fig. 1 Mixing bowl. Cyprus. Iron Age, ca. 8th–6th century B.C. Basalt, H. 2 in. (5 cm); Diam. 8 in. (20.3 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cesnola Collection, Purchased by subscription, 1874–76 (74.51.5054)

fig. 2 Map of the Ancient Near East and the Eastern Mediterranean in the first millennium B.C., with find sites of Assyrian stone mixing bowls (8th–6th century B.C.) mentioned in this article, and select second millennium B.C. sites

ring base, or a disk base, which usually have a distinctive form of double rim, or discontinuous rim with bar handle. Pedestal bowls and tripods can also have the same form of rim.[3] Analogous shapes and comparable decoration patterns are documented in contemporary ceramic production.[4]

The lower rim of the Metropolitan Museum's bowl serves as both a handle and a suitable place for securing a lid. The bowl could be held by placing the finger below the rim to take the weight, while the thumb could be hooked upward through the discontinuous rib and toward the interior of the bowl. Many bowls of this type, deriving from Assyrian palaces, bear inscriptions with royal titles and names of the Neo-Assyrian kings, and occasionally with hieroglyphs that assign them to royal property. Production of the bowls originated from central Assyria and is attested across a vast area comprising southern Mesopotamia, inner Syria, and the Palestinian Levant, extending as far as the central Anatolian plateau and—hypothetically—Cyprus (fig. 2).

At the main city of Ashur, a significant number of mixing bowls come from the sacred area of the Temple of Ishtar, from the levels that can be dated to the reign of Shalmaneser III and Sin-šar-iškun (fig. 3).[5] On the whole, this production was well attested at Ashur at least from the beginning of the eighth century B.C. and throughout the entire Neo-Assyrian and the Post-Assyrian/Neo-Babylonian periods, within a



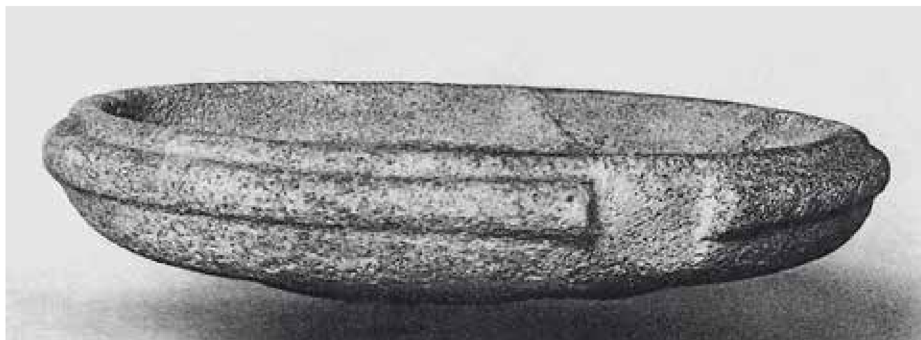


fig. 3 Drawing of stone mixing bowls from Ashur, 8th–7th century B.C.

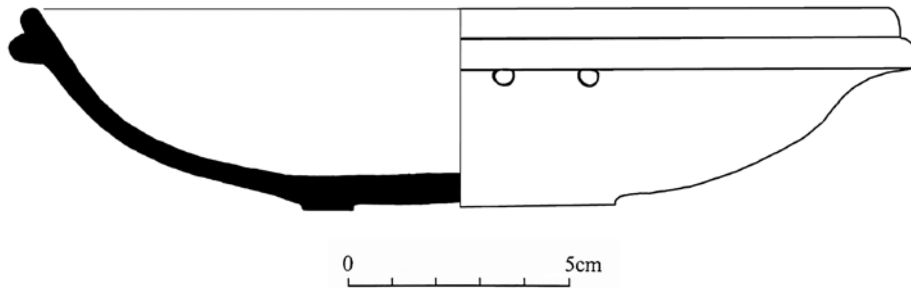
fig. 4 Stone mixing bowl. Tell Halaf

chronological range similar to that documented in Nimrud and Nineveh.[6] In these central capital cities, several stone mixing bowls bear inscriptions of the kings Sennacherib, Esarhaddon, and Ashurbanipal. At least two stone mixing bowls were also found at Persepolis in the fourth century B.C., and we may assume that both came from Assyria during the seventh century B.C. and were used there for a long time.[7]

In the immediate periphery of the Assyrian empire, the production is well documented at Carchemish and Tell Halaf as well as in the provincial northern Mesopotamian towns of Tell Ahmar, Tell Barri, and Tell Sheikh Hamad, where Assyrian (and then Neo-Babylonian) governors' palaces were located (fig. 4).[8] Outside of northern Mesopotamia, the production of mixing bowls has been sporadically traced from southern Mesopotamia (Ur and Nippur) to central Anatolia (Phrygian Boğazköy), in the period between 650 B.C. and the conquest of Croesus in 547 B.C.[9] The production of mixing bowls has been much more widely documented in western Syria (from the royal quarters at Hama), the Levant (from Lachish in a seventh-century B.C. level; and from Megiddo and Hazor, dated before the destruction of 732 B.C.), and in Cyprus.[10]

Based on a definition by L. A. Moritz suggesting that similar containers, named *mortaria*, were used for various purposes related to the preparation of food, especially for small quantities of ingredients, the containers in question may be considered functional mixing bowls.[11] *Mortaria*—which did not function as mortars, despite the name—and the Assyrian mixing bowls were probably employed for rubbing and mixing, rather than pounding, small quantities of easily crushed substances.[12] The mixing bowls were made for royalty and high officials and are strictly connected with royal banquet ceremonies in Neo-Assyrian palaces. Analogous forms of the bowls would have served the same purpose at meals taken by peripheral and Assyrianized elites.

The Assyrian menu for royal banquets was celebrated far outside Assyria and contributed to the wide appeal of Assyrian culture, its impact lasting long after the fall of the empire, attested by the topos of Assyrian decadence in Greek literature.[13] The role of food as a means to disseminate royal culture is well exemplified by the Banquet Stele of Ashurnasirpal II. The famous text emphatically lists the food served at the inauguration of the royal palace at Nimrud in 869 B.C., probably the most exquisite and enormous Assyrian feast, to which sixty-nine thousand guests from diverse provinces and surrounding regions were invited.[14] The text reveals the wide variety of ingredients and dishes served by the cooks of the Assyrian royal kitchens, especially the assorted meat-based courses seasoned with aromatic condiments. The stele lists the following common spices of royal cuisine: cardamom, watercress, spicy salts, onion, garlic, cumin, thyme, and fennel, along with herbs and unidentified ingredients such as *karkartu*, *ḫabbaqūqu*, and *saḫunu*.[15]



Meat and spices figured prominently in elite food, but were absent in the daily diets of commoners, which were based on cereals (bread and beer), vegetables, and dairy products.[16] Sheep, goats, calves and steers, fishes, ducks, doves, and other winged animals were cooked in ovens, roasted over the fire (*šube/šume*), or on spit roasts (*gabbubu*). Special joints of meat were salted (*midlu*) long before being cooked or boiled in large bronze cauldrons.[17] The boiling of meat appears to be represented in a relief scene from the Southwest Palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh, in which a large bronze open vessel is transported on a wood raft together with a beheaded steer ready to be cooked.[18]

Mixing bowls were customarily placed on the table during meals, and it seems possible that bowls such as the one in the Metropolitan Museum may have been utilized to grind aromatic ingredients like salt and herbs. The two items, used in small quantities, sometimes required light crushing at the table, and would be kept covered to preserve the fragrance during the banquet.[19]

The stone mixing bowls bear a clear Assyrian character, and convey new information about how that culture prepared and consumed food. The widespread diffusion of exclusive objects demonstrates how Assyrian elements were adopted and assimilated by peripheral and foreign elites, in particular, the Cypriot ruling classes. The complexity of cultural relations between Cyprus and Assyria and the role of the island in the Neo-Assyrian and Post-Assyrian economic and ideological system are still being debated.[20] The traditional view of an Assyrian domination in Cyprus in the eighth to seventh century B.C., as initially argued by Einar Gjerstad in the 1940s, has been reconsidered by most scholars, who reject the former emphasis on the disruptions brought about by military incursions from outside the island.[21] It seems beneficial to approach this controversial issue not by exclusively focusing on possible evidence of direct cultural interactions between Cyprus and Assyria, but by evaluating more complex phenomena of assimilation and adoption of cultural elements from a wider Eastern Mediterranean perspective. It is important to consider that the contacts between Cyprus and Assyria were mostly mediated through the influence of the Phoenicians, particularly through Kition.[22] A ceramic Phoenician import from the sacred area at Kition Kathari (Area II, Temple 1) provides a relevant point of discussion (fig. 5).[23] The

fig. 5 Drawing of ceramic bowl. Sacred area at Kition Kathari (Area II, Temple 1; 2221). Gray and black polished ware

fig. 6 Stele of Sargon II. Kition, Larnaca. Neo-Assyrian, after 707 B.C. Gabbro/basalt, H. 82¼ in. (209 cm), W. 27 in. (68.5 cm). Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Vorderasiatisches Museum, Purchase 1845 (VA 968)

fig. 7 Octagonal pyramidal seal. Cyprus. Neo-Babylonian, 6th century B.C. Blue chalcedony, seal face ¾ × ½ in. (1.9 × 1.3 cm), H. 1⅛ in. (2.8 cm), string hole 1⁄16 in. (.2 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cesnola Collection, Purchased by subscription, 1874–76 (74.51.4422)

shallow bowl in gray and black polished ware has an everted rim with a horizontal depression at its midpoint, forming two rolls—features that are also characteristic of the Metropolitan Museum's Assyrian stone mixing bowl. The co-presence of this type of bowl in both ceramic and basalt in Phoenicia and Assyria has been proven previously.[24] Furthermore, it has been argued that in Cyprus the repertoire of gray and black polished ware imitates stone prototypes, especially basalt vessels, and the depositing of these vessels in funerary and sacred areas can be attributed to their use for food and liquid offerings.[25] Contacts between Assyria and Cyprus, mediated by Phoenicians, could have provided the common underlying network for the introduction of such objects to the island.

Whereas Assyrianizing works of art were presumably imported to the island or imitated by local artists during the Archaic period (as is most evident with seals, ivory inlays, and stone sculpture), the only truly Assyrian object found in Cyprus is a royal Neo-Assyrian stele (fig. 6).[26] This well-known victory stele, which is attributed to Sargon II (721–705 B.C.), was found in 1845 at Kition, and is now in the Vorderasiatisches Museum in Berlin.[27] The iconography of the king on the stele connotes Assyrian manufacture and a strictly royal ritual context; the position of the arms and cudgel clearly points to a kingship ceremony witnessed by the gods, represented in front of the king. The cuneiform inscription along the sides of the stele records that seven kings of Cyprus took fright upon hearing of the deeds of Sargon, and sent a series of appeasing gifts.[28]

Examples of imported Assyrianizing objects in Cyprus are the stamp seals in the Pierides Museum in Larnaca and in the Cesnola Collection of the Metropolitan Museum, cut in both elaborate and common styles that can be associated with Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian glyptic (fig. 7).[29] Perhaps the clearest evidence of demand for Assyrianizing prestige objects by Cypriot elites is represented by the decorated ivory inlays imported to the island during the Archaic period. For example, the majority of ivory panels from the Royal Cemetery at Salamis belongs to the "ornate" style, of which the main centers of production were likely located in Phoenicia, and shows an Assyrianizing character, with iconographic elements widely shared in contemporary Mesopotamia and the Levant.[30] The mixed provenance of the ivory panels resulted in the hybrid style that is most characteristic of a wide Eastern Mediterranean shared cultural milieu.

In addition to imported objects, the imitation of Assyrian motifs in Cypriot figurative art is evident, especially in the stone sculpture of male votaries. The significance and prestige ascribed to these representations of dignitaries and officials during the Archaic period are conveyed by their colossal size, as attested by the limestone head of a bearded man in the Cesnola Collection in the Metropolitan Museum (fig. 8).[31] While the identity of the figure, his rank in religious ceremonies, and probable military role remain uncertain, the elaborate dress with conical helmet indicates high social status. The dress code adopted by such members of the Cypriot elite again strongly suggests an Assyrian-style model evenly diffused since the end of the eighth century B.C. from the Levantine coast to Cilicia and Cyprus.[32]

Although the Assyrianizing elements in Cypriot art appear evident, the presence of Assyrian objects imported to the island remains sporadic and questionable. Unfortunately, the provenances of the stamp seals from both the Pierides Museum and the Metropolitan Museum are unclear. Both Pierides and Cesnola were actively involved in the antiquities market, and we must allow for the possibility that the objects could have been brought to the island in modern times.[33] One of six Neo-Babylonian–style stamp seals from Cyprus that are datable to the seventh to sixth century B.C. has a firm attribution, however. The seal bears a Cypro-Syllabic inscription and epigraphic analysis confirmed that it was certainly imported to the island and re-engraved during the Cypro-Archaic I period.[34]

fig. 8 Limestone head of a bearded man. Cyprus, sacred area of Golgoi *Ayios Photios*. Archaic, early 6th century B.C. Limestone, 35 × 14 × 23 in. (88.9 × 35.6 × 58.4 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cesnola Collection, Purchased by subscription, 1874–76 (74.51.2857)

Caution must be taken when attempting to draw a conclusive hypothesis about the unprovenanced and unique Assyrian stone mixing bowl in the Metropolitan Museum. If we accept that the provenance from Cyprus is genuine, the bowl may provide further significant evidence of an elite, Assyrian-style object at the island during the period from the eighth century to the first half of the sixth century B.C. Without question, however, the function, dating, and geographic associations of the Metropolitan Museum's stone mixing bowl support the notion that Cyprus took part in a wide Eastern Mediterranean cultural network. This active participation may have resulted in the progressive assimilation of ideological and cultural elements from Assyria, the most influential political and cultural entity in the Eastern Mediterranean at the time. The Cypriot elite appear to have fashioned their image of power through the adoption of Assyrian-style status objects and behaviors, such as codified dining practices.

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NOTES

1 Hermary and Mertens 2014.
2 Ibid., p. 411, no. 618; MMA 74.51.5054; H. 2 in. (5 cm); Diam. 8 in. (20.3 cm).
3 Searight, Reade, and Finkel 2008, p. 51.
4 Fiorina, Bombardieri, and Chiocchetti 2005; Kreppner 2006.
5 Miglus 1996, pls. 58–60.
6 Searight, Reade, and Finkel 2008, pp. 51–53; Bombardieri 2010, pp. 122–28, 212–18.
7 Schmidt 1957, pls. 60.4, 61.3; Searight, Reade, and Finkel 2008, pp. 52–53.
8 For Carchemish, see Searight, Reade, and Finkel 2008, nos. 397, 415. For Tell Halaf, see Hrouda 1962, pp. 66–67, and Searight, Reade, and Finkel 2008, no. 414. For the other northern Mesopotamian towns, see Bunnens 1990, pp. 18–22; Trokay 2000; Kreppner 2006; and Bombardieri 2010, pp. 122–28, 212–18.
9 For southern Mesopotamia (Ur and Nippur), see Woolley 1965, pl. 35, and Zettler 1993, p. 137. For central Anatolia (Phrygian Boğazköy), see Bossert 2000, pl. 93.103, 104.
10 For western Syria, see Riis and Buhl 1990. For Megiddo and Hazor, see Lamon and Shipton 1939, pl. 113.2,4,14; Loud 1948, pl. 263.21; Tufnell 1953, pl. 65.8; and Yadin et al. 1958, p. 51.
11 Moritz 1958, pp. 22–23.
12 Bombardieri 2010, p. 119.
13 As exemplified in Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica* 2.23.2.
14 Grayson 1991, p. 292, text A.0.101.30, line 114.
15 Bottéro 2004, pp. 69, 101–3; Gaspa 2012, pp. 182–83.
16 Gaspa 2012, p. 183.
17 Ibid., p. 180.
18 Barnett, Bleibtreu, and Turner 1998, pl. 147a.
19 Searight, Reade, and Finkel 2008, p. 62.
20 Reyes 1994; Iacovou 2001; Cannavò 2007.
21 Gjerstad 1948, pp. 449–52. See also Tatton-Brown 1989, p. 73.
22 Cannavò 2007; Hadjisavvas 2007; Cannavò 2015.
23 Bikai 1981, p. 27, no. 70, pls. XXII.11, XXVI.9. The main assemblages of gray and black polished ware come from Kition and its territory during the Cypro-Geometric III to Cypro-Archaic I periods; see Bikai 2003 (Kition Kathari); Fourrier 2015 (Kition Bamboula); Papageorghiou 1990 (Aradippou, tomb 1); Flourentzos 2008, p. 102, fig. 101 (from a rescue-excavated tomb in the area of the Larnaca International Airport).
24 Kreppner 2006; Bombardieri 2010, p. 128.
25 Georgiou and Karageorghis 2013; Orsingher n.d., forthcoming.
26 Karageorghis 1974; Reyes 2001; Nenna 2006; Caubet 2014.
27 Börker-Klähn 1982, pp. 202–3; Morandi 1988, pp. 113–17, 147, table B1; Reyes 1994, pp. 50–51; Karageorghis 2002, pp. 153–54; Radner 2010, pp. 433–35; Merrillees 2016.
28 Radner 2010, pp. 440–41.
29 Reyes 1994, p. 61.
30 Herrmann 1986, pp. 35–36. One of the characteristic elements of the "ornate style" is the sacred tree. The motif is depicted on one of the openwork panels forming the scrollwork back of a chair from Tomb 79 (Karageorghis 1974, pls. A, B, LXI–LXIII) and finds immediate parallels with the well-known ivories from Room SW 37, Fort Shalmaneser at Nimrud (Herrmann 1986, pls. 288, 289, 325, 326; Pappalardo 2006). The lion motif is also common to the style, seen in the S-shaped ivory table leg with a lion motif (Karageorghis 1974, pl. F). Comparisons from SW 37 are the larger lion paws on ivory furniture legs (Herrmann 1986, p. 379; Pappalardo 2006, pl. L) and the panels depicting opposing human-headed sphinxes and kneeling figures, in Egyptian dress, framed by notched palm branches and separated by a stylized tree, coming from the rows of the ivory panels originating from a bed (Karageorghis 1974, pls. LXVII, LXVIII). The same motif occurs on openwork furniture plaques from Nimrud and Samaria (Herrmann 1986, pls. 288, 160; Mallowan 1966, fig. 479; Crowfoot and Crowfoot 1938, pl. II.2). See also Cecchini, Mazzoni, and Scigliuzzo 2009.
31 Hermary and Mertens 2014, p. 28.
32 Hermary 1989, pp. 22–23.
33 Reyes 1991; Reyes 2001.
34 Masson 1983, p. 344, n.353; Morpurgo Davies 1988, p. 106; Tuplin 1996, p. 48; Egetmeyer 2010, p. 31.

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