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Ann C. Gunter
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INTRODUCTION

Lately, scholars have located in the ancient Mediterranean world new and fertile ground for exploring Orientalist discourse. The "origins of Orientalism" have been unearthed in the conflict between Greeks and Persians in the early fifth century B.C.E., when Hellenic identity defined itself in opposition to a barbarian East.[1] Signs of a nascent Orientalism have also been detected in an earlier period of Greek history, in Homer's depiction of Trojans, Phoenicians, and other non-Greek peoples in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Those who discern an early Orientalism in Classical or pre-Classical Greece have argued, importantly, that Greek awareness of its profound debt toward the East expressed itself through the discourse of alterity. At once attracted by and fearful of an East both known and unknown, Greeks constructed an "Other" in literature and myth that is first preserved in Homeric poetry.[2] And yet, simultaneously, as labels for ancient artifacts, literary forms, and religious practices, "Greek" and "Oriental" are becoming more difficult to disengage.

One of the field's most debated issues now centers precisely on the relationship between "Greece" and "the Orient." Was the eastern Mediterranean world in pre-Classical times a locus of opposition or of symbiosis? Did its neighboring cultures form a continuum or were they neatly separable? Where was the boundary between Asia and Europe, "East" and "West"? Did the concept of the Orient as a cultural formulation of identity and otherness emerge in antiquity, and if so, when? The construction of Asia and Europe as self-contained entities, demarcated both culturally and geographically, persists as a fundamental premise in the study of ancient Greece and its Near Eastern neighbors. Yet few scholars – including those who have questioned their validity – have offered a detailed critical reappraisal of the categories themselves. This book explores these categories as problematic, seeking to develop new models for understanding the polities that flourished within this geographical region and how they interacted. In the eastern Mediterranean world of the early first millennium B.C.E., what cultural boundaries governed artistic production

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and notions of self or style? Are the categories of "Greek" and "Near Eastern," or "Oriental" and "Orientalizing," which scholars have employed for over a century, adequate or meaningful in explaining the production of art or the interrelationship of cultures?

In the late nineteenth century, archaeologists recognized a pre-Classical era in which Greece had come under the stimulus of Egypt and the Near East, acquiring through the intermediary of Phoenician traders key features of civilization: an alphabetic script, metalworking techniques, monumental stone architecture, and sculpture. The subsequent discovery of Mycenaean settlements in the eastern and central Mediterranean confirmed long-distance contacts at a significantly earlier date. Recent archaeological discoveries have pushed back the inception of Iron Age interaction between mainland Greece, Crete, and the Levant to the ninth and tenth centuries, virtually eliminating any insular "Dark Age" following the collapse of the Mycenaean kingdoms around 1200 B.C.E. In particular, finds at Lefkandi on Euboia of metal and faience artifacts made in workshops in the Levant and perhaps also in Egypt have encouraged thoughts of an unbroken continuity of trading links similarly manifested in imports of "Oriental luxuries."[3]

Over the past few decades, scholars have thoughtfully reconsidered the development of Greek art and culture in this wider geographical setting, with significant results. They have effectively contested an isolated Greece by demonstrating manifold ways in which Greek culture was deeply enmeshed with, and indebted to, its Eastern neighbors. As a result of wide-ranging research and persuasive arguments, many would now embrace a considerably expanded role for the Near East in the early development of Greek culture. In areas of human concern as diverse as literature, religion, science, art, and law, during what are often regarded as the formative centuries of Greek civilization, "Greek" and "Oriental" seem increasingly to overlap, or merge. Some would claim an Orientalizing *process* – as distinct from an Orientalizing *period* or *phase* – that both preceded and succeeded the seventh century. Others would take this argument much further, drawing attention to a wealth of parallels with "Phoenician," "Levantine," and "Semitic" cultural sources. Declining to isolate "Orientalizing" in chronological terms, a few assert that Greece and the Levant were closely linked commercially and culturally from the late second millennium until they were sundered by the fifth-century wars between Greeks and Persians.[4] In many respects, this new perspective signals a dramatic departure from the traditional concept of an "Orientalizing phase" characterized by short-lived and superficial foreign influence limited primarily to the "borrowing," or decorative use, of images and ornamental patterns that arrived as trade goods or souvenirs of overseas ventures. Foregrounding shared notions over a wide area of the eastern Mediterranean undermines a neat dichotomy between "Greek" and "Oriental" and identifies within the supposedly eternal "East-West" conflict an extended period in

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which Greek culture was permeated by Near Eastern traditions sufficient to constitute an "Oriental dimension."[5] One could argue that a shift in emphasis favoring the Near Eastern contribution is, after all, now in order, providing a corrective balance to a picture of cultural development long dominated by Hellenocentric bias.[6] This perspective, then, situates the relationship between Greece and the Near East in antiquity within a long tradition, much explored for the modern period, in which "Oriental" and "exotic" figure prominently among Europe's categories of difference.[7] Greek fascination with and hostility toward the peoples of Asia, together with the inclination to exercise an exceptional proficiency at transforming imported novelties into native traditions, emerge as durable, even predictable, traits.

Yet, as archaeological evidence continues to grow in quantity and complexity, it seems increasingly difficult to subsume under a single model the relationship between the Aegean and the Near East attested over a period of many centuries. Orientalism conceives of this relationship as essentially dichotomous or antithetical, one that can only be accommodated by conflict or appropriation, through Greek "assimilation" of things "Oriental." The Greece of the era of Homeric epic, traditionally the eighth century B.C.E., encountered an "Orient" dramatically different from that of the early fifth century, and also unlike that of the late second millennium. Relationships and perceptions between and among these regions were, in fact, complex and diverse and changed over the course of the early first millennium. Recent studies have demonstrated that the quantity and distribution of Greek ceramic finds on the eastern Mediterranean coast in the late eighth and seventh centuries contrasts with the pattern both earlier, in the Late Bronze Age, and later, from the late seventh century onward.[8] Even that seeming fixture in the history of "East-West" relationships, the Greek-Persian conflict – an almost mythical paradigm of cultural conflict and polarity – has not withstood new scrutiny. Archaeological and literary evidence demonstrating that Athenians eagerly consumed Persian textiles, parasols, peacocks, and garment styles belies pious claims to detest "Oriental luxuries" as symbols of Persian effeminacy and despotism. The complex, highly ambivalent cultural relationship Margaret C. Miller has carefully reconstructed cannot be neatly pigeonholed either as a radical break in attitudes toward the East or as characteristic Greek envy and fear of the Other accompanied by transformation of imported novelties.[9] And, if Greek culture shared so broadly and deeply with its Oriental neighbors, can we continue to classify as "exotica" or "novelties" those foreign imports that Greek artists, in turn, transformed into a native idiom? Viewing these resources, goods, and persons as "Oriental" is only one of several possible perspectives, and it effectively precludes investigating their movement and impact over a wider region as possibly related phenomena on which the rich textual and archaeological sources from Egypt and the Near East could shed new light.

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We are all familiar with the prevailing method of articulating visually defined categories of "Greek" and "Near Eastern," which typically juxtaposes two images (one from each category) and analyzes their similarities and differences. Often the aim is to elaborate the ways in which the Near Eastern image has been "adapted" or "transformed," thus providing insights into the nature of Greek art and the originality of the Greek artisan. Studies of this kind frequently also seek to determine the origin or source of the Near Eastern image and to use this information as a clue to the means of its transmission to "the Greek world" as well as to its meaning in a Greek cultural context.[10] These issues of similarity and difference, and of original and copy (or adaptation), I believe, lie at the heart of many current approaches to "Orientalizing" Greek art. Craig Clunas has elaborated some of the problems of this approach with respect to the Western study of Asian art, pointing out that it maximizes differences between "Western" and "Oriental" and minimizes differences between historical periods and geographical regions so as to bolster a notion of "Oriental."[11] In many respects, these issues also reflect the common, late nineteenth-century framework within which the fields of ancient Greek and Near Eastern art jointly developed: an intellectual climate obsessed with origins and essences, together with a notion of art as the expression of national spirit and of originality as the supreme artistic virtue. Indeed, categories of ancient Near Eastern art were initially defined as the predecessors of Greek art. Turning to their Near Eastern colleagues for assistance in distinguishing "North Syrian" from "Phoenician," specialists in Greek art find them likewise wrestling with inherited (and now largely unworkable) categories of "Assyrian," "Phoenician," and "Egyptian," which are burdened with much of the same baggage of authorship, originality, and cultural hierarchy. To be sure, twentieth-century scholars have significantly modified these older labels, developing at least for select media a complex set of categories defined both regionally and chronologically, sometimes also by workshop, and occasionally even by individual master. These refinements in classification represent remarkable achievements, but it is not yet clear that these methodologies will provide a certain path toward resolving central questions about artistic production. Will the continued refinement of styles by region, period, and hand ultimately yield sought-after information regarding the ethnic identity of the artisan or the precise location of workshops of origin? At the other end of the spectrum lie new perspectives that emphasize instead the similarities between "Greek" and "Near Eastern," attributing them either to a common culture (a "natural" overlap resulting from shared roots) or to conscious borrowing ("influence") that varied in intensity and purpose with the level or frequency of contact brought about primarily by commercial ties. Rather than describing these similarities as "Near Eastern influence" or as an "Oriental dimension" in Greek culture, however, I wish to open another avenue of investigation by shifting the focus of inquiry from the relationship between "Greece"

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and "the Near East" to interaction within a broader geographical and historical setting.

Instead of a perspective focused on the circulation and reception of foreign objects, persons, and ideas within the Greek world, I have sought to view these relationships as part of a much broader set of interactions centered in the Neo-Assyrian Empire and its frontiers both east and west. Decorated bronze vessels and horse trappings, carved ivory furniture and containers, and faience amulets and figurines – fashioned in or incorporating North Syrian, Phoenician, and Egyptian images and styles – traveled east as well as west, to the Assyrian capitals in northern Mesopotamia and beyond the imperial frontiers to western Iran. Phoenician merchants and artisans journeyed throughout the Mediterranean world but also headed east, to Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf. North Syrian, Phoenician, and Egyptian styles, iconographies, and techniques of manufacture and decoration were developed and brought to new locations by artisans working within their native traditions as well as by local artisans who copied, adapted, and reworked foreign models. Like the products of foreign workmanship and style that reached the Aegean and points farther west, some of those that traveled eastward spawned imitations and adaptations. Imperial building projects in the Assyrian capitals and provinces employed craftsmen and materials brought from widely dispersed geographical areas, relocated personnel and craft traditions, and introduced royal iconographies and court styles throughout southwest Asia, to Egypt and Cyprus, and ultimately to the Aegean region and the Italian peninsula. Moreover, Neo-Assyrian texts and representations establish that many finely crafted ivories, metal artifacts, and textiles not only were prized as luxury objects but also played significant roles in imperial strategies of appropriation and control. They were seized as booty, demanded as tribute, kept in palace and temple storehouses, and given as gifts to conquered rulers and other foreigners. Their regions of origin were in some cases home to divinely nurtured sources of materials and artisans that were exclusively available to Assyrian kings, who in turn identified themselves with these craftsman-deities. In association, these sources elaborate ideologically charged works of art – and concepts of crafting – that were transferred along specific pathways by means of rituals that established or confirmed relationships of domination and deference. Once given to foreigners these objects traveled further, functioning within local networks of gift exchange and other forms of ceremonial transfer. If these objects participated fundamentally in imperial strategies of appropriation and control, then it seems legitimate to inquire whether those associations played a role in the availability, acquisition, and reception of these objects and styles by polities that lay along the empire's western as well as its eastern frontier.

My broader view of cultural interaction builds on an impressive record of excavation and analysis that has thoroughly altered understanding of Phoenician

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activity in the early first millennium B.C.E. Treatments long focused narrowly on the Aegean and the Levant have given way to a welcome new perspective that also embraces contacts among Phoenicians, Greeks, and native cultures throughout the Mediterranean.[12] Interest in early Greek contacts with the Levant, along with a virtual renaissance of interest in the site of Al Mina, has contributed substantial new information on the location, identification, and chronology of Greek ceramic finds along the eastern Mediterranean littoral.[13] Yet contemporary scholarship only dimly acknowledges the political affiliations and cultural horizons that stretched beyond the Phoenicians' Levantine homeland, linking the entire eastern Mediterranean with the farther reaches of the Neo-Assyrian Empire as far as western Iran and the Arabian peninsula. While the Phoenicians and their material culture have never been more in evidence in the Mediterranean (and beyond, to Spain's Atlantic Coast), the "Orient" of Orientalizing studies remains a stubbornly nineteenth-century concept rooted in Homeric and modern colonial frameworks. Traditionally, the eastern boundary of "Orientalizing" concerns has been established by archaeological or literary testimony of Greek "penetration." Interactions among Neo-Assyrian centers, frontiers, and neighbors therefore furnish a largely untapped opportunity to examine within an approximately contemporaneous setting similarities and differences in the transfer and recontextualizing of a closely related set of artifacts, styles, and iconographies. Obscuring the conventional divisions between scholarly jurisdictions and relinquishing the customary homogeneity of "Orientalia" and "Aigyptiaka" as primary units of description and analysis will, I believe, also serve to stimulate fresh approaches to analyzing the movement and reception of objects whose cultural identities and meaning have become too comfortably familiar.

Scholars have increasingly begun to understand the nature and sequence of Phoenician activity throughout the Mediterranean world within the framework of Neo-Assyrian imperial expansion. Among other consequences, some have argued, the Assyrian conquest of coastal regions in the late eighth century helped set in motion a Phoenician expansion, which scholars have avidly investigated.[14] These studies emphasize the commercial ramifications of Assyrian control of the Levantine coast and the westward extension of Phoenician activity in broader networks of trade in metals, particularly silver. Seymour Gitin proposed to consider the westward Phoenician expansion as an "extended periphery" of the Neo-Assyrian Empire, thus emphasizing the empire's importance in the broader scheme of developments throughout the Mediterranean world in the early first millennium.[15] For the most part, however, the empire exists as a shadowy presence on the eastern fringes of the Orientalizing world, a vast political entity that nonetheless seems to have remained outside recorded Greek consciousness.[16] Occasionally it has yielded hints of direct knowledge of Greeks, through textual references of the late eighth and early seventh centuries to the Yamnaya/Yawnaya, "Ionians."[17] These tantalizing fragments

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have indicated to many scholars a hostile relationship between the Assyrian kings and newly established trading settlements. Thus far, however, and to the disappointment of many scholars, cuneiform sources have furnished scant testimony that these worlds intersected directly, at least to any significant degree. Archaeological evidence has likewise failed to elaborate unambiguous links between the imperial centers and the Greek world. A half-century ago, T. J. Dunbabin observed that certain features of early Greek Orientalizing art, such as scenes of warfare and depictions of lions, had specifically Assyrian antecedents. But he concluded that Greek knowledge of Assyrian subjects, iconography, ornament, and style must have been acquired through "intermediaries," either material (such as patterned textiles) or geographical (such as North Syrian architecture or funerary monuments).[18] Most scholars have followed suit, attributing the presence of Assyrian features to the action of intermediaries. Those concerned with Orientalizing issues have consequently tended to view Assyria as effectively outside their purview. Perhaps convinced that Greeks knew little about the empire (and vice versa), few have seen the need to consider the circulation and meaning of core "Orientalizing" categories, such as Phoenician- and North Syrian-style ivories and bronzes, within their imperial setting. Moreover, the widely held conviction that Greeks possessed a unique inclination and aptitude for transforming foreign things and ideas into native versions has tended to discourage comparisons with neighboring polities in the reception of Near Eastern or Egyptian imports and styles. The expanded role for Phoenicians resulting from recent studies has also, less satisfactorily, further entrenched them as intermediaries between the Greek world and Assyria.

Recent reappraisal of cultural interaction in the eastern Mediterranean has already begun to affirm the direct significance for the Greek world of the fundamental changes that occurred in southwest Asia as a result of Assyrian imperial expansion. Beginning in the late eighth century, when Assyrian administrative control extended to the coastal cities and states of the Levant, Greek encounters with southwest Asia took place within radically altered historical and economic circumstances. The changes that occurred within the region's economy at once affected the Greek economy, writes Giovanni Lanfranchi, because the commercial activity of the states and cities of the Levant profoundly affected Greek trade: "Thus, the apparently distant Neo-Assyrian empire became immediately an element *internal* to the political, social, economic and cultural transformations in the Greek world."[19] Challenging the view that textual sources indicate hostility between the Assyrians and Greek settlements (and trade), Lanfranchi argues that both in North Syria and Cilicia Greek settlement dramatically began, and Greek trade greatly increased, "after the Assyrian conquest, and particularly *after* the consolidation of Assyrian territorial control."[20] Current investigations of Near Eastern sources for or influence in Greek intellectual developments, including literature and astronomy, have likewise

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implicitly or explicitly acknowledged the Neo-Assyrian Empire as the historical framework in which they took place.[21] Yet the "explanations" for recognized parallels or borrowings tend to rely on a general concept of diffusion and leave largely unspecified the circumstances under which these kinds of cultural interaction would have taken place.

Embracing the Neo-Assyrian Empire as the geographical and historical framework for reappraising cross-cultural interaction in the early first millennium thus entails a significant shift in perspective. First, the eastern Mediterranean orbit in which interaction with the Greek world took place reemerges as a geographical, historical, and cultural reality, enabling us to situate evidence for contacts and exchange within a richer, more nuanced historical setting and more precise chronological parameters. Second, new sources become available and even crucial to the investigation. Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions and palace reliefs furnish accounts of Assyria's territorial conquests and often list or depict items of booty or tribute presented to the king. New editions of royal inscriptions from monuments now dispersed in museum collections incorporate current scholarship in the field of Assyriology.[22] Similarly, new editions of the large corpus of royal correspondence, legal and administrative texts, and other official records recovered from the Assyrian capitals of Nimrud and Nineveh have recently been published through the ongoing State Archives of Assyria project, making available textual sources for precisely some of the issues under consideration. Many letters, which date primarily from the late eighth and early seventh centuries, document the relocation and deployment of labor forces and individual artisans engaged in imperial building projects. They also substantiate close royal attention to the empire's provinces and client states both east and west. The king corresponded regularly with high-ranking officials, governors, and agents, who reported from the provinces, including those on the frontier. Legal and administrative texts, including treaties and palace inventories, shed light on political and diplomatic relationships between the Assyrian centers and the provinces and with client states that were required to furnish tribute. In addition, fresh analytical approaches to the Assyrian royal inscriptions and palace reliefs have elaborated and emphasized the ideological framework underlying notions of "Assyrian" and "non-Assyrian." New archaeological sources are also at hand. Surveys and excavations, not least in hitherto little-explored regions along the empire's northern and northeastern frontier, together with reassessments of long-known evidence, have unearthed fresh information on the nature of Assyrian occupation and the material culture of these regions in the ninth to seventh centuries and helped to define and clarify these transitional zones.

The extraordinary degree to which this world was interconnected derived in large measure from the political boundaries that embraced much of it. Beginning in the ninth century, a series of military conquests under Ashurnasirpal II

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(883–859 B.C.E.) and Shalmaneser III (858–824 B.C.E.) ultimately brought Syria, Phoenicia, and Cilicia under the control of the Assyrian Empire centered in northern Mesopotamia, a westward expansion mirrored by campaigns to western and southwestern Iran and the Persian Gulf (Map 1). In the last third of the eighth century, under Tiglath-pileser III (744–727 B.C.E.), the Assyrians achieved their long-standing aim of reaching and controlling areas of the eastern Mediterranean coast. This king's reign also introduced policies of mass deportation, which relocated entire communities often to distant regions of the empire. By the seventh century, under Esarhaddon (680–669 B.C.E.) and Ashurbanipal (668–ca. 630 B.C.E.), Assyrian control had extended to Cyprus and Egypt as well as to the southern Arabian peninsula. Many locations along the southern coast of Turkey and the eastern Mediterranean littoral will have furnished significant centers for the coexistence of different cultural and ethnic groups possibly from considerable distances, loci of contacts between mobile inhabitants of the Aegean and those of the Assyrian Empire. Imperial mechanisms constituted powerful forces operating throughout the region, not least affecting the availability of raw materials, the training and mobility of artisans, and the distribution and consumption especially of luxury goods. The Assyrian war machine likewise guaranteed effective communication routes throughout the empire for transporting troops and supplies, among other resources. Messengers (*mār šipri*) traveled along an apparently well-maintained road system, conveying correspondence and other administrative documents to and from the imperial centers.[23]

Yet the eastern Mediterranean in this period also encompassed areas far beyond its immediate geographical boundaries, comprising a world perhaps analogous to the "Greater Mediterranean" that the French historian Fernand Braudel envisaged for the sixteenth century.[24] Amber from the Lebanon, or possibly from the Baltic, made its way in the form of finished objects to Greek sanctuaries and tombs and to settlements farther west that traded with Greeks and Phoenicians. Amber seals of the "Lyre-Player" group, carved in Cilicia or North Syria, have been found as far west as Etruria.[25] Frankincense and myrrh from the South Arabian peninsula reached ports in the Levant, royal palaces in the Assyrian heartland, and sanctuaries on mainland Greece.[26] Shells of the large *Tridacna* mollusk were transported from their natural habitat in the Red Sea or Persian Gulf to North Syria and Phoenicia, where many were elaborately engraved and then re-exported, apparently together with other products of the Levant. They ultimately arrived at destinations far from their places of origin and decoration, extending from Vulci in western Italy to Susa in southwestern Iran. Their presence links contexts as diverse as private graves, sanctuary votive deposits, and hoards of imperial booty.[27] Ostrich eggshells were exported from the Zagros Mountains of western Iran through the Levant to the western Mediterranean.[28] Human as well as natural resources likewise expanded both physical and cultural boundaries. Phoenician merchants traveled east as well

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as west and sometimes resided for a while in distant locations, including Assyria and Babylonia.[29] The "Greater eastern Mediterranean" (or "Greater southwest Asia"), as it might be designated, thus introduces a substantially broader scope. From the early first millennium B.C.E., the region was profoundly interconnected through the interdependence of resources and resulting human mobility.[30] Not all of these contacts were equally frequent, sustained, or significant, but they remind us that conventional maps do not reflect the real boundaries that governed life in this period.

Eschewing the categories of "East" and "West" allows consideration of alternative categories of difference, other "we/they," "here/there" constructions. Over the past few decades, Assyrian royal inscriptions and palace reliefs have been intensively and productively investigated as sources for an imperial ideology that aimed to "make Assyrian" ethnically and linguistically diverse peoples over a vast geographical range. Foreigners, subject peoples, "non-Assyrians" broadly defined, comprise those places, persons, and things that were to varying degrees "not us," "not here."[31] These sources also assist in reconstructing those mechanisms of appropriation and transfer that took place in an imperial setting and the ways in which objects and resources brought from elsewhere were invested with ideological meanings. In recent years, specialists in Greek archaeology have challenged from a variety of theoretical perspectives the unitary conception of "Greek" and prevailing assumptions concerning ethnicity, culture, and identity. Among other sources, a wide-ranging interest in colonial encounters has generated a conceptually and empirically rich literature probing the diversity and complexity of "non-Greek" as well as "Greek" – the "cultures within Greek culture."[32] Scholars have reconfigured "Greece" into regional units that experienced different histories of interaction with their eastern (and western) neighbors and into chronological phases that more sensitively register variations in the intensity, source, and reception of objects and technologies acquired from elsewhere. My work also builds on current research into the political, cultural, and religious institutions that emerged in the Aegean region during the eighth and seventh centuries. New resources include catalogues and other detailed studies that list, identify, and analyze works of Egyptian and Near Eastern origin and style recovered from Greek sites, chiefly sanctuaries and tombs.[33] Many of these studies also offer keen insights into the ways in which polities, communities, and individuals obtained objects from afar, kept or exchanged them, and constructed new meanings for them. In addition, recent studies of the circulation of goods in the eastern Mediterranean have emphasized the role of consumption in cross-cultural encounters and brought into new prominence the importance of prestige or status goods – often works of Egyptian or Near Eastern origin or style – in the construction of elite identities and long-distance interaction.[34] They comprise a carefully laid foundation on which I have attempted to build in a different direction. By exploring

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