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The undersigned, appointed by the

Division GSAS

Department History of Art and Architecture

Committee

have examined a thesis entitled

Assyrian Music as Represented

and

Representations of Assyrian Music
presented by

Jack Cheng
candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy and hereby
certify that it is worthy of acceptance.

Signature Irene Winter.....

Typed name Irene Winter.....

Signature Anne DRAFFKORN KILMER.....

Typed name Anne Draffkorn Kilmer.....

Signature David Roxburgh.....

Typed name David Roxburgh.....

Date 13 March 2001.....

Assyrian Music as Represented
and
Representations of Assyrian Music

A thesis presented

by

Jack Cheng

to

The Department of the History of Art and Architecture

in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in the subject of
History of Art and Architecture

Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts

March 2001

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Irene J. Winter
Advisor

Jack Cheng

Assyrian Representations of Music and Representations of Assyrian Music

This thesis describes the social practice of music as it is represented in images from the late Neo-Assyrian period (883-648 BC), and then considers how images of music may contribute new understanding to the study of ancient art. Musical instruments of the period include chordophones (horizontal forearm harp, vertical harp, various lyres, lute, and possibly a zither), aerophones (pipes, flutes, whistles, trumpets), membranophones (kettle drums, frame drums, and others), idiophones (cymbals, sistra) and vocal music. A variety of musicians are distinctively portrayed: male and female; Assyrian, Elamite, Judean, Syrian, Arab and others; human and animal. The events in which these musicians play these instruments are classified as Military, Religious, Banquets, Work, and Mythical. Once these categories of instruments, musicians, and events are defined, patterns emerge. For example, the horizontal forearm harp is played only by male Assyrians in Religious and Military scenes. Another pattern: female musicians tend to play for female audiences.

Using the definitions and classification systems developed in the first half of the thesis, the second half focuses on the semantic value of a half dozen themes that recur in these representations of music. An argument is made for the horizontal forearm harp being a national instrument, closely associated with the king and his duties, regal, martial and cultic. Images of foreign musicians are re-examined with an eye to how visual details show them becoming assimilated, or assyrianized—a visual analogue to the royal boast about prisoners of war: “I made of them Assyrians.” The inherent temporal aspect of

music is shown to have embellished the narrative structure of the palace reliefs. A typology of lyres is established and may help in identifying the musicians who wear feathered headdresses. The placement of images of female musicians is considered as a clue to the function of palace rooms. The ancient vocabulary used to describe music is considered as a means of accessing the aesthetic appreciation of music. Some of the meanings expressed in these images of music are explicit, others implicit. All of them add to a richer understanding of Assyrian life and art.

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Illustrations

Some of the illustrations have been resized and attempts to clarify messy areas that resulted from scanning using Adobe Photoshop, but no details have been altered. Detailed descriptions of figures 1-43 can be found in the catalog.

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This dissertation is a study of Neo-Assyrian music as represented in images. The result is a catalog of images of music and a discussion of the iconography of music, musicians and musical events. This is also a study of Neo-Assyrian representations of music. That is to say, this is also a consideration of why music was represented in images, and how scenes of music contributed to the greater artistic and cultural orbits of Neo-Assyrian life. Thus the dual title of this work. Half of the dissertation is devoted to Assyrian music, with the caveat that the information comes from their representations; the second half, dependent on the terminology and relationships developed in the first, concentrates on the cultural meaning of such representations in the decorative program of Assyrian palaces.

Representations of music had many functions, including the display of cultural and intellectual “wealth,” the identification of various types of events, the suggestion of time and pacing in a scene, and a general appeal to the viewer’s imagination, both visual and auditory.

In studying ancient music, the limitations of various sources become quickly apparent. In the Neo-Assyrian case, there are no significant archaeological remains of instruments to interpret. Texts can be specific about context or historic events, but still vague in the details of musical culture like instrumentation. Visual images, on the other hand, present more detailed pictures—each one in itself and even more so in combination with the others. In pictures, the construction and playing technique of instruments are described, and the relationships between instruments and musicians and types of musical events can be mapped out.

It would seem that music was not a primary topic for Assyrian texts or images. Music in texts and images tend to be secondary acts that add color to an event. For example, the king Ashurbanipal (668-631 BC) writes in his annals: “with singers and music I entered Nineveh amidst rejoicing.”¹ But what kind of music? One of the bronze gates of Balawat depicts a procession of king Ashurnasirpal II (883-859 BC) accompanied not by singers but by two frame drum players, a pair of harpists, and a sistrum player (Cat no. R26). In both cases, the musicians are subordinate to the main action—the movement of the king—but the image provides details that the short text cannot describe adequately. The flow of line in visual representations is more efficient in conveying the fluid concepts that may be referred to as “cultural practice.” In the absence of a corpus of texts on musical practices, I argue that in fact, images are the best source for understanding Assyrian musical life.

At the same time, it should not be assumed that this scene of procession was not abbreviated or edited. The images are constructs, as much as the texts are. That is the reason the dissertation is presented in two parts. The first part (Chapters 1 through 3) tries to draw all the information about music it can from all the available sources, primarily visual. The second part (Chapters 4 and 5) considers the construction of these representations and tries to evaluate the intended (and unintended) meanings embedded in them. As such, this is very much an art historical work. It is a catalog of iconography followed by a discussion of semiotic strategies in the representation of music and musical events.

¹ Ashurbanipal Cylinder B, Daniel David Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*, (London: Histories & Mysteries of Man, 1989), 865, p. 334.

A catalog of musical practices may seem to have aspirations as a musical ethnography of Neo-Assyria; however, this dissertation makes no claim to be a satisfactory work of ethnomusicology. At the same time, it may come as close to such an endeavor as is possible, given the time and distance between then and now, and the nature of our evidence. That is the case if one assumes, as I do, that while Neo-Assyrian art is not strictly documentary, it tends to be edited down, rather than elaborated upon. To put it another way, the catalog of images may *exclude* details and events but is assumed not to *include* invented details or events. For example, the might of the Assyrian army in military scenes is presented as a lack of injured or dying Assyrians. Just so, an image of a solo lute performer may lack the accompanists that were at an actual performance. Still, I have some confidence that the lute was played in such a circumstance and I have full confidence that the lute was an instrument played in Assyria; I do not believe Assyrian artists invented instruments that did not exist at the time. The assumption that the artists drew from experience rather than invention extends also to the foreign musicians and various contexts of music that are depicted.² The truth value of each type of source is debatable, but suffice it to say that these images are probably a subset of actual Assyrian musical experience. For that reason, though I would not consider this a comprehensive ethnography, by carefully using the visual evidence, I believe this may be as complete a picture of musical life at the time as is possible.

² Exceptions can be found in the images I describe as Mythical: two seal impressions showing anthropomorphic animals playing instruments, and an inscribed shell showing music played among sphinxes. The participants in these scenes may constitute fantastic combinations of known elements (man and animal), but I believe that the instruments depicted were not themselves inventions.

The rest of this introductory chapter reviews previous research on Mesopotamian music, defines some of the parameters of this study, describes the sources used, and outlines the dissertation chapter by chapter.

Previous work

The earliest works on musical life in Mesopotamia were ambitious collections of musical information that reviewed centuries or millennia of information.³ Curt Sachs, a musicologist, wrote about Mesopotamian music in the early 20th century, inspired in part by the palace reliefs that had recently arrived in the museums of Europe.⁴ Francis Galpin, the musicologist who assembled the collection of musical instruments at Boston's Museum of Fine Arts, wrote an enthusiastic work on Sumerian music, based on the discoveries of Sir Leonard Woolley at Ur in the 1920s and 1930s, but without a working knowledge of the Sumerian language.⁵ Joan Rimmer and Subhi Anwar Rashid each wrote well-illustrated books on the subject, both of which draw primarily on the collections with which each was associated: Rimmer at the British Museum and Rashid at the Iraq Museum; Rashid's scope, however, was not limited to the collection in

³ A chronological history of musical scholarship of Mesopotamia is given in Subhi Anwar Rashid, *Mesopotamien*, vol. 2, *Musikgeschichte in Bildern II: Musik des Altertums* (Leipzig: Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1984), pp. 8-10.

⁴ Curt Sachs, *Reallexikon der Musikinstrumente* (Berlin: 1913), *Musik des Altertums* (Breslau: 1924), "Die Entzifferung einer babylonischen Notenschrift," *Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 18 (1924): 120ff.

⁵ Francis W. Galpin, *The Music of the Sumerians and their immediate successors the Babylonians and Assyrians*, 2nd ed. (1st edition Cambridge University Press, 1937) (Strasbourg: Strasbourg University Press, 1955).

Baghdad.⁶ All of these works are surveys that cover at least two millennia of material and some range quite far geographically.

More specific work has concentrated on three aspects of Mesopotamian music: musical instruments, theories of music, and Sumerian and Akkadian terms for musical instruments and theory. The primary scholars who helped identify ancient instruments in the archaeological and visual record and contributed to our understanding of the history, manufacture and function of instruments, are Marcelle Duchesne-Guillemin, Bo Lawergren, and Agnès Spycket.⁷ Among the many scholars who have worked out the numerical systems of tuning tablets to conjecture scales and elements of ancient musical theory are Richard Crocker, Marcelle Duchesne-Guillemin, Oliver Gurney, Anne Draffkorn Kilmer, Hans Martin Kümmel and David Wulstan. Those Assyriologists who contributed to the understanding of ancient musical terminology, that is, names of instruments, musical intervals and other musically relevant terms, include Gurney, Kilmer, and Kümmel. It is worth noting that this group of scholars of Mesopotamian music includes philologists and musicologists.⁸ Ancient musical instruments and their representations have not been a topic of research for many art historians or archaeologists, however. In addition to Rashid and Spycket, Dominique Collon of the British Museum has also written on aspects of Mesopotamian music.⁹ The specialized knowledge of these researchers has laid the foundation for a more general, culturally integrated study of Mesopotamian music.

⁶ Joan Rimmer, *Ancient Musical Instruments of Western Asia in the Department of Western Asiatic Antiquities, British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1969); Rashid, *Mesopotamien*.

⁷ See the bibliography for the many contributions of the scholars mentioned in this paragraph.

⁸ And a nuclear physicist—Bo Lawergren.

This dissertation aims to add to the state of Mesopotamian musical scholarship in two ways. First, I shall argue that more information about Mesopotamian music can be extracted from the known corpus of images by critically analyzing representations of music. Second, by treating music as a performative social event, the place of music in society can be elucidated, including both the influence of this society on the production of music and the influence of the music on the production of the social fabric.

The first aim can be thought of as elevating the visual and archaeological evidence to a point level with, and occasionally superior to, the information gathered from textual sources. Images can be studied at different levels of communication and they will be examined as both representative evidence left *by* the Assyrians, and as representations specifically created to leave a particular impression *about* Assyrians. In other words, both the message, and its motivation, are of interest here.

The second goal is drawn directly from the discipline of ethnomusicology, which is equally the child of anthropology and musicology. For a century now, scientific fieldwork has been conducted to record and analyze musical performances around the world. Music is the part of society studied by ethnomusicology, but it is studied as social practice, not merely as sound. Ethnomusicologists examine the preparation of musicians, as well as their status in society, and also the expectations and aesthetic judgments of their audiences. It is this inclusive, ethnographic consideration of music that I want to apply to the Mesopotamian sphere, the musical details of which have hitherto been primarily named and identified. The goal here is rather to study musical situations or

⁹ I am not including the many single articles by curators or art historians who point out the musicological detail of one or two objects under their review.

contexts, which requires that one first identify the objects (instruments) and people (musicians) in those contexts.

Given my stated goals, it would be problematic to attempt to cover four millennia of history in detail. Instead, I have chosen to concentrate on a span of under three centuries, the last flourish of the state of Assyria. This Neo-Assyrian period is one for which archaeologists have recovered rich visual as well as textual sources from which to draw on. One limitation in studying Neo-Assyrian music is that there are only two tablets that discuss musical theory per se.¹⁰ For this reason, the topic of Neo-Assyrian musical theory and performance styles will not be treated here, though a continuity from earlier periods may be assumed because the basic technical music terms remained constant from Old Babylonian through Neo-Babylonian times.

Assyria in the Neo-Assyrian Period

The Neo-Assyrian period is conventionally defined chronologically as the period between the reigns of the kings Aššur-dān II and Ashurbanipal. Aššur-dān II (934-912 BC) began the re-expansion of Assyria through the acquisition of territory lost during the Middle Assyrian period. Ashurnasirpal II (883-859 BC) was the ruler who finally recovered the Middle Assyrian state, and his reign was prosperous enough that he built a new capital city, Nimrud/Kalah. By dint of ancient effort and archaeological chance, visual evidence from Ashurnasirpal II's reign is available to complement and corroborate the textual

¹⁰ See Anne DRAFFKORN KILMER, "A Music Tablet from Sippar (?): BM 65217+66616," *Iraq* 46 (1984): 69-80; and IRVING L. FINKEL, ed., *The Series SIG₇.ALAN=Nabnītu*, vol. 16, *Materials for the Sumerian Lexicon* (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1982), 249-254.

evidence, making it an ideal point at which to begin an examination of Neo-Assyrian music.

The 7th century BC king Ashurbanipal (668-631 BC) was relatively powerful, but his immediate successors could not maintain a similar hold on the territory and were defeated by Babylonians allied with Elamites from the east. From that point, Mesopotamia was no longer under the control of local rulers and became the satellite state of others. Visual material specific to the unsteady final kings of the Assyrian Empire has not been identified, and for this reason, Ashurbanipal's reign is effectively considered the end point of this research.¹¹

Assyria is defined geographically as the area in which these kings ruled (expanding and contracting somewhat during each reign). The base of operation was in Northern Mesopotamia, but the kings campaigned south past Babylon towards the Persian

¹¹ The kings and their regnal years:

Aššur-dān II	934-912
Adad-nārārī II	911-891
Tukultī-Ninurta II	890-884
Ashurnasirpal II	883-859
Shalmaneser III	858-824
Šamši-Adad V	823-811
Adad-nārārī III	810-783
Shalmaneser IV	782-773
Aššur-dān III	772-755
Aššur-nārārī V	754-745
Tiglath-pileser III	744-727
Shalmaneser V	726-722
Sargon II	721-705
Sennacherib	704-681
Esarhaddon	680-669
Ashurbanipal	668-631
Ashur-etel-ilani	630-627
Sinsharrishkun	626-612
Ashur-uballit II	611-609

The chronology of kings in use here is taken from Julian Reade, J.E. Curtis and J.E. Reade, ed., *Art and Empire: Treasures From Assyria in the British Museum* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1995), p. 38. The orthography of these Akkadian names is from the series *Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia*.

Gulf, west through Judea to the Mediterranean, north through Urartu to Lake Van and east towards Elam and the Iranian plateau (see Figure 44).

Neo-Assyrian Music

Neo-Assyrian music would naturally seem to be defined as the musical products and activities of men and women in late period Assyria, but it is not quite that straightforward. I have defined music in a way that excludes a number of objects, and made choices on the geographic limits of sources that affect both the number and types of objects to be considered evidence of Assyrian musical life.

Excluded are a number of objects, like horse bells, that are dismissed as merely noisemakers rather than musical instruments. Musical instruments are defined here as sound producing objects which can vary in tone or pitch to create rhythms and/or melodies. A secondary criterion is that the production of sound is the primary intention of the participant and not merely a by-product of another action. Thus, a bell choir or even a single chime could qualify as a musical instrument but the horse bells, which serve to accentuate the activity of a horse, do not.¹²

Included are the products and representations of some neighboring populations, and there are two cases in which foreign musicians may appear among the evidence presented here. In the first case, Assyrians depicted foreign musicians in their art. An example of this would be the palace reliefs that show Elamite musicians being led from a defeated city (Cat. no. R15). Here the assumption is that the Elamites are described in

¹² This is not to say that the horse bells did not have a real—possibly emotional—effect on anyone who heard them. In battle scenes, hunts and review ceremonies, the clanging of the horse bells would have

contrast to the Assyrian examples, or as individuals who will eventually be subsumed into Assyrian culture. Either way, as long as the musicians are consistently labeled as foreign, the Assyrian representations highlight both differences and similarities that help to define Assyrian music. These representations include about four or five examples.¹³

The second case in which depictions of foreign musicians are included here is when they appear on works of foreign manufacture found at Assyrian sites. The prime examples of this are the ivories made in a North Syrian style found in the Assyrian city of Nimrud. The assumption here is that the inclusion of a representation among a person's possessions can suggest an affinity for, or at least acceptance of, that which is represented. In other words, someone who owns a picture of a Syrian musical event probably has some acquaintance with Syrian music itself. Such an inference is entirely speculative, but is supported in the present case by the economic texts indicating that foreign musicians were housed and kept by the Assyrian court. Although the musicians are identified as foreign, playing for Assyrian audiences established them as part of Assyrian musical life.¹⁴ This second case, of foreign musicians from foreign representations, introduces half a dozen ivory objects to the evidence considered.

Babylonia, Assyria's southern neighbor and a powerful player in the development of Mesopotamian culture over many centuries, would seem to be a rich source of information for this period, but I shall deal with Babylonia as just another foreign state for a number of reasons. First, the political and military treatment of Babylon by kings

conveyed the rhythm of the horse's gait and certainly affected the enemy, lion or Assyrian soldier who heard them.

¹³ The uncertain number is based on how foreigners are identified, see Chapter 2.

¹⁴ To make a modern analogy, West African dance music can be considered part of Parisian musical culture while still retaining a distinct identity as a "foreign" music outside of the local French tradition.

Sennacherib and Ashurbanipal was similar to the way in which they treated other rival states.¹⁵ Second, the scholarly letters to Sargon II reporting on Babylonian religious and cultural practices suggest that there was a recognized cultural divide.¹⁶ Furthermore, the domestic architecture in Assyria and Babylonia had markedly different patterns of distribution, again emphasizing the contrasts rather than the similarities, between these neighbors.¹⁷ Therefore, material excavated in southern Mesopotamia has not been privileged here. Instead, like other neighboring states, in cases where the Assyrian chose to illustrate or report on Babylonian musical activities, or in cases of Babylonian manufactured objects finding their way to Assyrian cities, those sources will be labeled and dealt with as such.

In sum, Neo-Assyrian music is defined here as intentional sound production by Assyrians, or by foreigners for Assyrian audiences, in areas under Assyrian control between 934 and 648 BC, with the period under scrutiny here being further limited to between 883 and 648 BC based on the evidence available.

¹⁵ See the dissertation of Jülide Aker, "Rhetoric of Transgression: Ashurbanipal's Babylonian Policy and Transformations in the Visual Domain," forthcoming.

¹⁶ Simo Parpola, ed., *Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars*, vol. 10, *State Archives of Assyria* (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1993), p. 275, for example, where the correspondent describes a kettledrum performance before the Babylonian god Nabû and Marduk.

¹⁷ Corinne Castel, *Habitat urbain néo-assyrien et néo-babylonien de l'espace bâti ... à l'espace vécu*, vol. 143, *Bibliothèque archéologique et historique* (Paris: Paul Geuthner, S.A., 1992). In her review of Castel, Elizabeth C. Stone presents the argument that the difference in house plans—many small houses and few large ones in Assur versus a more even distribution of house sizes in Babylonia—reflect the political structure of each nation, Assyria, the powerful monarchy and Babylonia, a state with a more democratic Assembly, 'Review of C. Castel, *Habitat urbain néo-assyrien et néo-babylonien*,' *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 56, no. 3/4 (1999): 427-429.

Sources

The sources used in writing any history need to be scrutinized and weighed on a scale of reliability and informational value. The sources used in writing an ancient cultural history can be ranked fairly easily, at least in the abstract. The primary, incontestable evidence is archaeological. Provided the excavator did a good job, one can say with certainty that an excavated object was present in a given area at a given point in history. Less sure, but often richer in detailed information, are textual and visual sources. The major caveat here is that representations in words or images can say whatever the writers or artists, or their patrons, wanted. The best way to weed out half-truths and exaggerations is by considering the consistency of presented facts. The more corroboration is provided by other texts or images, the more one considers a representation “reliable.” Of course, this reliability may represent merely a consistency in Neo-Assyrian ideology, where ideology is defined as the “ideas, beliefs and values in social life” promoted in the “complex of signifying practices and symbolic processes” by a “dominant social power” in order to legitimate the dominance of that social power.¹⁸ To put it more simply, even in the face of consistency, these images may reflect an idealized image of Assyrian society that serves the interests of their creators, rather than “real” cultural practice.

¹⁸ This definition is adapted from Terry Eagleton, *Ideology, An Introduction* (New York: Verso, 1991), pp. 28-29. What is not included in this slightly neutral definition of ideology is the presumption that the images are false representations. There may, in fact, be false representations; however, my assumption is that the manipulative effect of these images is derived more from a careful selection of topics for representation and the particular stylization of those basically truthful scenes. Thus, the idealized vision of musical practice presented in these images is not completely invented, but rather carefully selected from actual Assyrian musical life.

Abstractly, then, archaeological evidence is to be favored over textual and visual evidence. Practically speaking, however, the evidence available is not evenly distributed across these categories. Furthermore, their reliability and utility differ by genre within media. For the rest of this introduction, the various media from which evidence is drawn are described and reviewed.

Unfortunately, archaeological evidence of music is sorely lacking from Neo-Assyrian sites. Bronze cymbals and shell clappers are the only Neo-Assyrian instruments found at ancient sites. A.H. Layard, who presumably excavated and then brought these objects to the British Museum, did not record their findspots.¹⁹ Our best category of evidence, then, assures us that such cymbals and clappers were available in Neo-Assyrian cities, but gives us little other information.

Textual evidence is more plentiful, especially from ancient libraries and archives where cuneiform tablets were stored. Relevant textual genres include lexical, economic and legal texts, historical annals and religious texts.

Visual evidence for Neo-Assyrian music consists of a corpus of less than four dozen images that have been catalogued here.²⁰ A general description of the various media in which these images appear is given here in order of most to least numerous examples: palace reliefs, carved ivories, painted jars, and sealings.

¹⁹ Dominique Collon, personal communication.

²⁰ These images have been previously catalogued by Rashid and Rimmer. Rashid, *Mesopotamien*, and “Untersuchungen zum Musikinstrumentarium Assyriens,” in *Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte Vorderasiens: Festschrift für Rainer Michael Boehmer*, ed. U. Finkbeiner, R. Dittmann, and H. Hauptmann (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1995): 573-595; Rimmer, *Ancient Musical Instruments of Western Asia*. All were useful in compiling my documentation but none of them was comprehensive (Rashid’s publications were not meant to be, and Rimmer did not list all of the relevant field drawings held in the Western Asiatic department of the British Museum).

The palace reliefs are stone slabs with iconic and narrative images, about 2 meters high, with which the walls of Assyrian palaces were lined. The reliefs were intended for a semi-public audience (that is, those allowed into the palace), and the historical narratives depicted may have been exaggerated or abbreviated to convey a particular impression of an event. The scale of these images, with some figures over life-size, others half that, allows for details which provide a lot of information. Because they were made for the palaces of individual kings, the reliefs can be dated to particular reigns. In fact, they are the only visual source that can be dated so precisely.

Carved ivories (up to 6 cm high in the cases of the pieces with musical scenes in this catalog) from this period were mostly used as decorative elements on furniture or as containers. The audience for these objects was both more and less limited than the audience for the reliefs. On the one hand, some of these objects would have been personal possessions kept in private rooms; on the other hand, the portability of these objects made it possible that they would be carried far from their creators. In fact, many of the ivories from Nimrud (the city with the best excavated collection) can be stylistically attributed to Syrian or Phoenician creators. The ivories can only be dated within centuries, as many were found in secondary archaeological contexts.

A small number of jars found at Ashur were painted (height: 20-36 cm). These fragmented and faded images offer glimpses of scenes that included icons of deities and altars, suggesting religious content. They help to associate particular instruments with religious activity, but do not offer much more detailed information.

The clay impressions of personal or administrative seals found at Nimrud also occasionally contain musical iconography. Their small scale (height: 1-3 cm) makes it

difficult to gain much information from this medium. Furthermore, the small number of seals and jars do not allow for an assessment of consistency.

All of this evidence, both textual and visual, was created for an elite stratum of society.²¹ The cost of materials and labor required to create these artworks would be beyond the resources of all but the most powerful institutions. The intended audience for these documents and images was probably not much larger than the palace and temple institutions for which they were created. All of the texts would have had a small audience in an era where public literacy was quite low. The visual material would have been intelligible to a broader audience, but restricted access to the palace where it resided would have constrained the size of that audience. The limits of the evidence are the limits of this study; this is a report on elite Neo-Assyrian music, or perhaps more accurately, this dissertation presents Neo-Assyrian music as represented by and for elite patrons and artists.

Organization of the present study

The order of the next three chapters builds from simple identifications to more complex interactions and relationships. This order follows from the most basic to more complex iconography: 1) identifying musical instruments, 2) assuming the people holding them are musicians, and then 3) assuming the musicians are playing music in an appropriate context. Each of these three chapters investigates its topic without casting too far ahead but builds on previous chapters, so that the chapter on musicians includes references to the instruments played by each group and the chapter on contexts incorporates musicians

into the discussion. These chapters can be considered a study of Assyrian music as represented. The information in them is summarized in three tables in Appendix A.

The subsequent two chapters, four and five, consider the representation of Assyrian music. In those chapters, Assyrian music is not the primary subject; the focus is instead on Assyrian images and descriptions of music. Building upon the processes described by Erwin Panofsky in his seminal essay “Iconography and Iconology,”²² these two chapters attempt to decode some of the explicit and implicit messages carried in these images of music. However, in discarding Panofsky’s exclusively Western European focus, I have also discarded his terminology. The fourth chapter describes some of the “denotative meanings” in the representations. That is to say, by assessing the patterns of frequency and usage of musical imagery in the Assyrian reliefs, particular emphases and narratives become evident. The fifth chapter explores the motivations behind these representations and the “connotative,” rather than denotative, meanings embedded in them. In other words, the issues discussed in that chapter are aspects of Neo-Assyrian culture that were embedded in the art simply because the artists themselves were Neo-Assyrian. Both of these last two chapters will try to explain how the musical motifs could have affected the reading of the larger artistic program. A final chapter summarizes the conclusions reached in this dissertation.

An overall arc of the dissertation can be drawn using a continuum from description to analysis. The first three chapters all deal with description at various levels, with the description of instruments being the most basic, and the musicians the next. The

²¹ Other media, such as the bronze bowls from Nimrud, were investigated, but provided no example of musical imagery to include.

third chapter, still descriptive, introduces descriptive categories that are not necessarily Assyrian, but useful for analytic purposes. The fourth chapter then builds on that by analyzing and interpreting three topics of musical iconography. The fifth chapter goes even further in its interpretations, raising speculative issues to be considered in future work.

The first step to that end is to identify and classify the musical instruments found on Neo-Assyrian representations.

²² "Iconography and Iconology: An Introduction to the Study of Renaissance Art," in *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (1939), pp. 26-54.

Chapter 1

Musical Instruments

Many of the instruments used in the Neo-Assyrian period, like the lute or kettledrum, are familiar to modern audiences and have modern names by which they are referred to here. The familiarity is a result of the Near Eastern origins of many modern instruments (carried through the Mediterranean to Greece and Rome) and also reflects the limited physical variations in producing sound. Sound is a physiological sensation that can be generated by the vibrating molecules in a taut string, a stream of air, a stretched skin, or a piece of metal or wood, and with the vibrations transmitted through a fluid medium like air. This presentation of Assyrian instruments is organized under a system of classification established by Curt Sachs and Erich von Hornbostel that takes those physical elements as the primary principle to categorize musical instruments.

The Sachs-Hornbostel classification was developed almost a century ago to describe both traditional musical instruments and also those unknown to Western European audiences.¹ The system incorporated all manner of music makers (including European types) into the new field of organology, the study of musical instruments. In order to accommodate the broad range of variation, the Sachs-Hornbostel system is based on the element of an instrument that vibrates to create sound. Thus there are

¹ Curt Sachs and Erich von Hornbostel, "Systematik der Musikinstrumente: ein Versuch," *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* 46 (1914): 553-90. Their system has now "gained universal acceptance" among musicologists, writes Howard Mayer Brown in his entry on Sachs in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 1980), vol. 16, pp. 374-5.

Much of the information on modern instruments and musicological definitions in this chapter is taken from *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 1980) and *The New International Dictionary of Music* by Philip D. Morehead (New York: Meridian, 1991).

chordophones (string instruments), aerophones (wind instruments), membranophones (skin instruments) and idiophones (“self” vibrating instruments). Subcategories deal with how the instruments are played and how the instrument is shaped to produce greater or lesser resonance. Chordophones may be bowed, plucked or strummed. Aerophones may employ fipples (a directed channel like the mouthpiece of a recorder), reeds or the human mouth to manipulate an air stream. Membranophones and idiophones are struck with the bare hand, a specialized stick, or against each other. In the Neo-Assyrian organology, chordophones and aerophones each merit their own category. Because of the more limited evidence, membranophones and idiophones are lumped together as percussion instruments (as they are in modern orchestras). I have also included a category for vocal music.

Indigenous Mesopotamian categories of musical instruments may have been somewhat different. In a lexical text first attested in the third millennium BC, the names of a number of wooden instruments are listed in Sumerian in a column on the left side, with their Akkadian equivalents in a column on the right.² Their material composition was very likely the main criteria for this list as the Sumerian terms are all preceded by the determinative ^{GIS}, signifying “wood.” This list was compiled as a lexical tool, the instruments “ordered” by their determinative and then by their use. The list is not a comprehensive inventory of the known Sumerian wooden instruments and is grouped with other lists of wooden tools.³ In other words, the only native grouping of Mesopotamian instruments—a text first composed two thousand years earlier than the

² HAR-ra=hubullu tablet VII B, Vol. 6, *Materialen zum Sumerischen Lexikon*. (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1958), p. 119.

Neo-Assyrian period—seems to be more concerned with the writing of the names of the instruments and their material than any other descriptive criteria, such as sounds produced. Considering current ignorance regarding the identification of some of the instruments not listed in these word lists (and the identification of some of the words on the lists), this indigenous system would be unworkable for the purposes of the present study. While the material composition of many of these instruments is not ascertainable from the available texts and images, the sounding elements of instruments are often distinguished in both visual and verbal descriptions. Thus, the Sachs-Hornbostel system is more accessible to a modern understanding of musical instruments than the Mesopotamian lexical lists would be. It offers clear and definable categories based on sound production as distinct from materials of construction and therefore has been adopted here.

In the catalog of instruments that follows, each Sachs-Hornbostel category—string, air, skin, metal and wood—is described and the range of possible instruments for a given medium is listed. Then, examples of these instruments from Neo-Assyrian times are examined. Each instrument is described by shape as well as playing technique. Associations with particular types of instrumental accompaniment are provided, but detailed discussions of musicians and musical events are reserved for later chapters. Finally, a brief, non-comprehensive review of its relevant history in Mesopotamia is given for each instrument.⁴

³ Another tablet, K9922 in the British Museum is a similar list and “apparently does not belong in any series” (*MSL 6*, p. 119).

CHORDOPHONES

Chordophones, or string instruments, create sound through the vibrations of strings made of gut or hair (or, in modern times, nylon or wire). The vibrations are created by bowing, hammering or plucking the string with a bow, a finger or a plectrum. The five Sachs-Horbostel sub-types of chordophones are the bow, harp, lyre, lute and zither, all of which are attested in Mesopotamia, although only the last four in Assyrian art. Evidence for the musical bow, a bent stick strung from end to end, sometimes with a resonator attached, is from the third millennium BC, some two thousand years before the Neo-Assyrian period.⁵ The harp is a generally triangular instrument with strings between one arm and the sound box, making an arched or angled frame. This shape requires strings of varying lengths that produce different notes when plucked or struck. The lyre is basically trapezoidal with a crossbar supported by two arms over a sounding board. Because the strings between the crossbar and the sounding board are generally equally long, the strings must vary in tension to create different notes. Harps and lyres can be distinguished on the basis of their shape, how the strings are strung, and the variation in string lengths. The lute consists of a resonator attached to a neck, with strings lying parallel across the neck and resonator. Variations in notes are made by “shortening” the length of strings on the lute by anchoring them to the neck with one hand while manipulating the string with the other. The zither has a sounding board over which multiple strings are strung, like the

⁴ Broader, more general histories of these instruments in Mesopotamia can be found in the *Reallexikon der Assyriologie* under the name of each instrument.

⁵ This instrument is depicted on a seal from grave PG 800 (Puabi) of the Early Dynastic Royal Cemetery of Ur, now at the University of Pennsylvania Museum, CBS 16728, U.10872 (Woolley, C. Leonard, *Ur Excavations II: The Royal Cemetery*, (Philadelphia and London: University Museum and British Museum, 1934), pl. 193, no. 18.

modern dulcimer. The strings can be tuned by moving the bridge of each string, effectively changing the length of the segment that vibrates.

Harps

Harps in Assyria (Akkadian *sibātu* or *sammū*⁶) are known to be of at least three types: the small harp, the vertical harp and the horizontal forearm harp (the latter terms are modern)⁷. The small harp is known from a text and the vertical harp and forearm harp are known from images.⁸ A fourth type of harp (a horizontal type) is played by an Elamite prisoner depicted on a palace relief.

The small harp (*šu-ut* ^{GIŠ}_{ZÀ.MÍ} *še-bi-ti*) is invoked in a hymn of Sargon II.⁹ This harp is among the instruments played by musicians in praise of Nanaya, an aspect of the goddess Inanna (called Ishtar in the Neo-Assyrian period).¹⁰ The instrument is not described further and its orientation not specified, but presumably it was smaller than other harps.

⁶ For a discussion of the Akkadian word *sammū*, previously translated as “lyre” by the *CAD*, see Bo Lawergren and O.R. Gurney, “Sound Holes and Geometrical Figures. Clues to the Terminology of Ancient Mesopotamian Harps,” *Iraq* 49 (1987): 37-52. They argue that the previous translations were based on incomplete and ambiguous readings, and then argue for “harp” because of phrases that describe sound holes (seen on harps, and not lyres), the metaphoric “hand shape” of the *sammū* (citing Hh VIIIB, 88: *giš.šu.[gá].zá.mí* = *ma-an-du-ú*, which they translate as “harp having a hand” or “part of the harp having a hand” [pp. 48-9]) and the number of strings (9 for the *sammū* according to an Old Babylonian text). These last two points, though not attested to in the Neo-Assyrian period, lead the authors to suggest the possibility that the hand reference may be related to the “forearm harp” (p. 49).

⁷ “Vertical harp” is a musicological term used in previous literature on Mesopotamian music, for example Joan Rimmer, *Ancient Musical Instruments of Western Asia in the Department of Western Asiatic Antiquities, British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1969), p. 32; “forearm harp” is my designation, and was suggested by Professor Anne D. Kilmer.

⁸ All of the illustrated instruments are listed in Appendix A, Table 1, with indices to examples from the catalog.

⁹ Alasdair Livingstone, ed., *Court Poetry and Literary Miscellanea*, vol. 3, *State Archives of Assyria* (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1989), 4, pp. 13-16, line 8.

¹⁰ J. Black and A. Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia* (London: British Museum Press, 1992), p. 134.

The vertical harp is shaped like a tall isosceles triangle with the frame consisting of the long side nearest the musician and the short base, and the strings defining the third side. There are at least 14 strings visible on any image of the vertical harp and often many more are depicted or implied. Extrapolating from the depicted strings, Lawergren and Gurney suggest that a total of 17 strings was standard.¹¹ Tassels or extra lengths of string may hang down from the horizontal base.¹² Assyrian harps are marked with hourglass shapes on the upper arm; these shapes may represent sound holes that would amplify the notes of the harp.¹³ When played, the frame of the instrument is supported under the left arm of the musician and the strings are strummed or plucked by both hands in front of the body.¹⁴

The vertical harp is not shown played as a solo instrument in any of the surviving Neo-Assyrian images.¹⁵ On a slab preserving a banquet scene that originally adorned Ashurbanipal's palace Room S', a vertical harp player is at the left, followed by a drum (Cat. no. R17). This image is incomplete, however, because when the slab was removed, other parts of the scene were left behind and have not been recovered. Field drawings (Or. Dr. V 46) reveal that this drummer was in turn followed by a pair of vertical harps, a

¹¹ Lawergren and Gurney, *Iraq* 49 (1987): 51. The 17 string harps are those played by Assyrians on palace reliefs, the vertical harps played by Elamites are suggested to have 20-30 strings. By way of comparison, the modern concert harp has 46 or 47 strings, plus pedals to vary the tension and create even more notes.

¹² Variations in how these tassels are decorated are discussed next chapter in the paragraphs describing male and female musicians, and in Chapter 4 on foreign musicians.

¹³ Lawergren and Gurney, *Iraq* 49 (1987): 37-52.

¹⁴ An exception to this position occurs on Cat. no. R15, which shows an Elamite harp player with the instrument on the right side of his body. However, Rimmer suggests that this may be a mistake in modern restoration (*Ancient Musical Instruments of Western Asia*, p. 32). Although I agree with Rimmer that this is an exception, the original field drawing of this relief, signed by Layard, shows the unique playing style of this instrument was represented as currently restored, see Or. Dr. II. 5, in Richard David Barnett, Erika Bleibtreu, and Geoffrey Turner, *Sculptures from the Southwest Palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh*, 2 vols. (London: British Museum Press, 1998), pl. 304. See below for more on lefties.

lute and a double pipe. In other examples, the vertical harp is accompanied by at least one of these instruments—drum, lute or pipe—or a lyre.¹⁶

The small harp and vertical harp are less distinctive and prevalent than the horizontal forearm harp in royal representations of the Neo-Assyrian period.¹⁷ The L-shaped frame of this instrument extends horizontally from the player's waist and turns up at the far end. This vertical post is topped with a finial shaped like a forearm, complete with a hand, palm open. Strings extend from the horizontal arm near the player to the vertical arm at an acute angle. Where details on representations can be read, this instrument is strung with between 7 and 9 strings, 9 strings in the majority of representations.¹⁸ Extra lengths of string may dangle from the vertical end of the instrument, sometimes with tassels at the end. The instrument is played—either struck or plucked—with a long, curved stick or plectrum held in the right hand. The left hand is held near the strings, perhaps for dampening, plucking, or bending the strings. To support this instrument, musicians wear a strap over their left shoulder.

¹⁵ On a Middle Assyrian comb, however, there is a single vertical harp without accompaniment (VA Ass 1097, Prudence O. Harper et al., ed., *Assyrian Origins: Discoveries at Ashur on the Tigris* [New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1995], cat 46, pp. 85-6, fig 21).

¹⁶ On Cat. no. R21, the vertical harp is played with a lyre and double pipe; Cat. no. R16 with a lyre; Cat. no. R15 shows an Elamite musical ensemble consisting of seven vertical harps, a double pipe, a drum and a horizontal harp.

¹⁷ Early scholars suggested that this instrument is actually a dulcimer, a type of zither, based on an early misreading of a bad restoration and from translations of biblical instruments. This has been refuted by a number of scholars and by a new restoration which clearly shows a harp, as discussed in T.C. Mitchell, "An Assyrian Stringed Instrument," in *Music and Civilisation*, ed. T.C. Mitchell, British Museum Yearbook (London: British Museum, 1980), pp. 33-42.

¹⁸ Differences occur even among pairs of harps on the same representation, as on Cat. no. R13. This inconsistency suggests two opposing interpretations: either a visual aesthetic that is not based on absolute accuracy or one of extremely detailed description. Given that the inconsistencies themselves are not consistent, that is, an 8-stringed harp is only once paired with a 9-stringed harp, I find the former interpretation, that the visual artist was not exact, more likely. In any case, the range of variation—between seven and nine strings—is narrow enough to be considered accurate within reason.

I include in the group of forearm harps representations of horizontal harps that are identical except for the eponymous finial. The different types are combined based on the shared general shape and playing technique of the instruments and the similar musical events and musicians associated with these instruments. Images of these horizontal harps without the forearm finial come from the bronze reliefs of the Balawat Gates. Although contemporaneous with reliefs from Ashurnasirpal II's reign, the door reliefs are considerably smaller in scale than other representations of the horizontal forearm harp and thus may have been abbreviated for the convenience of the visual artist (Cat. nos. Br1-3).

Forearm harps are almost invariably played in pairs.¹⁹ The pairing is emphasized on a series of reliefs depicting a procession in Sennacherib's palace in a passage leading to the Ishtar temple.²⁰ The figures in this procession are in single file with the exception of two pairs of harp players who overlap so closely as to appear walking shoulder to shoulder.²¹ This is not simply a convention applied to all musicians—the percussionists that precede the harpists walk in single file. Of the 19 representations of forearm harps (including the type from the Balawat Gates), 18 are shown in nine pairs, seven of those pairs being tight overlaps, often among single file processions. In the one instance where a forearm harp appears alone, on a relief from Ashurbanipal's reign, two identical men, tightly overlapping and in the same posture and costume, have only one instrument between them, held by the player closest to the viewer.²² When considered together with

¹⁹ For other groupings of instruments into ensembles, see the descriptions in the Catalog. However, none of the other ensembles is even repeated in type, unlike the example of the forearm harp.

²⁰ BM 124948 and adjacent slabs best illustrated on Or Dr VI xlvi and xxxviii (Cat. no. R13).

²¹ Similarly with processions of the (forearm) harps on the Balawat Gates, Cat. no. Br1 and Cat. no. Br2.

²² Cat. no. R24.

mistakes in hand positions on the relief,²³ I interpret the single harp player as an anomaly that may have been an oversight rather than a deliberate representation. It seems reasonable, therefore, to conclude that the forearm harps were meant to be played in pairs. Whether the two instruments doubled up notes, played harmonies or counter melodies in the same or different tunings are questions to raise, but they cannot be answered with the data currently available. Percussion instruments occasionally accompany the pairs of forearm harps, specifically frame drums and sistra.²⁴

Another kind of horizontal harp is played by an Elamite prisoner on a relief from the Southwest Palace at Nineveh, attributed to the reign of Ashurbanipal (Cat. no. R15). The instrument is about the same size as the forearm harp but shaped differently—the bottom of the harp is rounded like a boat bottom—and decorated differently—the horizontal length is decorated with dot centered circles.²⁵ The instrument is strung with 10 strings.

²³ The left hand of the harp player is not behind the strings where we would expect it; the right hand of the individual behind him is raised, as if to play his missing instrument.

Something similar occurs where two forearm harp players overlap on reliefs from Ashurnasirpal II's reign. On Cat. no. R4 and Cat. no. R3, Ashurnasirpal II offers a libation over a dead ox and a dead lion and two musicians play forearm harps to the right of each scene, facing the viewer's left. The different planes of depth are shown in an unexpected order. First is the closer player's left arm, as we would expect, and then another left arm (presumably that of the player behind), the strings of the first instrument, the right hand of the first player, and then the strings of the second instrument and the right hand of the second player follow. The order of limbs may indicate that it was possible to see through the strings. This may be a visual convention that differs from our own, or there may be another explanation that reminds us that the work that remains is incomplete. If we consider that the final work of art was painted, it is conceivable that the strings may have been painted over the hands that were carved in relief. This would be an effective way to portray the two dimensional string over the rounded forms of the figure.

On BM 124920 (Cat. no. R17), Ashurbanipal's "Banquet" scene, the artist(s) successfully renders a hand behind a veil of strings using only relief carving.

²⁴ In some instances, the percussion precedes the forearm harp, as on the series Cat. no. R13, and on the bronze doors, Cat. nos. Br1-2. These scenes depict processions, which Cat. no. R1, with a frame drum behind the forearm harps, does not. One might expect a regular ordering of instruments in processions and on representations, but this small group, with three of four examples showing some similarity, is the only indication of some consistency of order.

²⁵ Lawergren and Gurney, *Iraq* 49 (1987): 37-52 suggest these circles may represent sound holes.

This relief was originally reconstructed incorrectly but the erroneous plaster has since been removed and the carving restored by the British Museum. This change is the subject of T.C. Mitchell's article, "An Assyrian Stringed Instrument."²⁶ Mitchell's hypothetical reconstructed instrument (pl. 25) restores the vertical element that was lost due to a chance break in the relief. A vertical post undoubtedly existed for the instrument to have made any logical sense, but the decorative forearm finial on Mitchell's reconstruction of that post is not certain. In fact, based on the slightly different shape and decoration of the instrument, the non-Assyrian player and the composition of the musical group—a single horizontal harp among many other string and wind instruments—I would argue that the forearm finial should not have been reconstructed.

In fact, this is not truly "An Assyrian Stringed Instrument," but rather an Assyrian representation of an Elamite stringed instrument. As further evidence against Neo-Elamite reliefs at Kul-e Farah have representations of horizontal harps without the forearm on the vertical post.²⁷ The relevant reliefs are Kul-e Farah I and IV (de Waele's numbering) and are dated to the end of the 7th century BC and the 9th century BC respectively; in other words, they are native depictions of Elamite musical culture contemporary to the Neo-Assyrian reliefs. Given the strict profile with which these instruments are depicted, it is not known whether some of the morphological differences between the Elamite and Assyrian horizontal harps were merely cosmetic or whether there was an acoustic difference between the two. One thing is for certain: the Elamite harp—in both Assyrian and Elamite depictions—was shown to have been played singly,

²⁶ *Music and Civilisation* (see n. 17 above) and detailed by him on p. 35, and pl. 16-25.

unlike the paired Assyrian horizontal forearm harps; thus, unless the Assyrian harps were played in strict unison, the styles of music produced by these techniques would have been different.

Harps have a long history in Mesopotamia. A horizontal harp was among the instruments found in the Early Dynastic Royal Cemetery of Ur and its wood frame reconstructed based on impressions in the soil and the surviving decorative elements of metal and stone.²⁸ Based on the shape of the instrument and the angle of the strings, however, this Early Dynastic instrument does not seem to be a direct precursor of the portable Assyrian horizontal harps. In fact, the horizontal forearm harps are first documented in the first millennium, with no evidence of similarly decorated instruments from before the Neo-Assyrian period.²⁹ Vertical harps have a more easily traceable visual ancestry, from Old Babylonian clay plaques, on which a harpist plays seated, through the incised decoration of a Middle Assyrian comb, on which the musician plays standing.³⁰ In this case, although tuning and playing conventions may have changed in Neo-Assyrian

²⁷ These reliefs are discussed and reproduced in drawings and photographs in Eric de Waele, “Musicians and Musical Instruments on the Rock Reliefs in the Elamite Sanctuary of Kul-e Farah (Izeh),” *Iran* 27 (1989): 29-38. These images are presented here on plates 38-40.

²⁸ BM 121198 was incorrectly reconstructed as one instrument from the remains of two instruments, a bull headed lyre and a round silver harp (Richard D. Barnett, “New Facts About Musical Instruments from Ur,” *Iraq* XXXI, no. 2 [1969]: 96-103, pp. 98-100, pl. 12c and d reproduce the amalgamated reconstruction and Wooley’s notebook sketch, 17b is a drawing of the proposed harp on its own).

²⁹ The closest precedent would be a horizontal harp depicted on an Old Babylonian plaque from Tell Asmar, now in the Louvre (AO 12455), illustrated in André Parrot, “Musique mésopotamienne,” in *Assur* (Paris: 1961), fig. 378. Differences between this instrument and the Neo-Assyrian horizontal harp include the number (seven) and length (shorter) of strings and a sounding box. As played, the Old Babylonian harp was pinned between the left arm and body, rather than held with a strap, which would have restricted some of the movement of the hands.

³⁰ Old Babylonian plaques with harps include IM 55863, V 456 from the Iraq Museum (published in Subhi Anwar Rashid, *Mesopotamien*, vol. 2, *Musikgeschichte in Bildern II: Musik des Altertums* [Leipzig: Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1984], pp. 106-7, figs. 114-5, the Middle Assyrian comb comes from Tomb 45 in Ashur (VA Ass 1097). As Lawergren points out, this Middle Assyrian image shows the harp being carried on the right side of the musician, rather than the left as on Neo-Assyrian images (Harper et al., ed., *Assyrian Origins*, cat 46, pp. 85-6, fig. 21, note 6).

times, the instrument was developed from local Mesopotamian traditions. The contextual use of these instruments is the focus of a later chapter, but it is worth noting that the vertical harp, with the longer traceable history, seems to have been played at more informal events while the horizontal forearm harp, with a life span that matches the Neo-Assyrian period, appears in more ceremonial contexts.

Lyres

Lyres in Assyria (Akkadian *kinnâru*) are both less and more standardized than harp forms. Each lyre pictured in Assyrian art varies in the size and curvature of the arms and crossbars, while at the same time all the lyres are basically the same size and of the same roughly trapezoidal shape.³¹ The instruments usually have at least five, and no more than seven strings. Lyres are all played in the same manner, held on the left side of the body with the strings at about a 45-degree angle up and away from the body. Some lyres are shown played with a plectrum, whereas others are played with the fingers. With or without plectrum, the lyre may be strummed or individual notes plucked.

Lyres are depicted alone on a Phoenician-style ivory found in Fort Shalmaneser Room SW37 and on a seal impression from Nimrud, both small-scale works of art.³² In most other instances, lyres are played with other lyres, vertical harps, and percussion instruments. Trios of lyre players are found both on a relief from Sargon II's palace at

³¹ Rimmer identifies the instrument on Cat. no. R21 as a Phoenician or Syrian type lyre based on Cypriote comparisons, but admits that “the chronology and classification of the many lyre-forms which co-existed in the Near East in the first millennium is neither complete nor certain” (Joan Rimmer, *Ancient Musical Instruments of Western Asia*, p. 34). It may be that lyre types readily identified the nationality and/or sex of the player, but the small sample here can only suggest the possibility without reaching any conclusions. An examination of first millennium BC representations of lyres throughout the ancient world might lead to a typology and the beginning of such a project is presented in Chapter 5.

³² The ivory: Cat. no. I9; the seal impression: Cat. no. S1.

Khorsabad and on a relief from Sennacherib's palace at Nineveh.³³ A number of lyre ensembles include a pipe that could play single note melodies (as on Cat. nos. R21, I2, I5, I7). The inclusion of a melody player raises the issue of whether the lyre may have been a harmonic accompaniment, playing chords over which the pipe would solo. Unfortunately, without an explicit text describing such a partnership (and without modern knowledge of Akkadian words for melody and harmony), this is a question that can only be raised and not answered.

Lyres, like harps, have a long history and are known from the Royal Cemetery. In fact, the most celebrated (and most frequently published) Mesopotamian instruments are the lyres from Ur.³⁴ Judging from their elaborate decoration using rare materials and their frequent depiction on contemporary plaques, Early Dynastic lyres were much more significant for their time than Neo-Assyrian lyres were for theirs. There is one known example of a Mesopotamian lyre from the 2nd millennium, but without proper provenience; Collon suggests the smaller first millennium lyre type is a Western Semitic import that came from Syria, and was also exported from Syria to Egypt.³⁵ Support for

³³ The Sargon II relief is lost and is known from a field drawing, Cat. no. R6 (Botta); the Sennacherib relief shows three enemy lyre players herded by an Assyrian soldier and therefore does not depict a proper performance but may reflect the composition of a musical ensemble, Cat. no. R11.

³⁴ Featured in most popular surveys of Mesopotamian art and culture, such as Henri Frankfort, *The Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient*, 4th revised ed., *The Pelican History of Art* (London and New York: Penguin and Viking Penguin, 1970), pp. 61-3 (mislabelled as harps) and James B. Pritchard, ed., *The Ancient Near East, vol. I, An Anthology of Texts and Pictures* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), fig. 44, on the cover of Rimmer *Ancient Musical Instruments from Western Asia*, and on the cover of a recent issue of *Expedition* 40, 2, 1998. One example is illustrated here on plate 36.

³⁵ The 2nd millennium BC lyre is illustrated in Anne Draffkorn Kilmer, Richard L. Crocker, and Robert R. Brown, *Sounds from Silence: Recent Discoveries of Mesopotamian Music* (Bit Enki Publications: Bit Enki Publications), Record and book, p. 18; Dominique Collon, "Leier. B. Archäologisch," in *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und vorderasiatischen Archäologie*, ed. D.O. Edzard (Berlin, New York: 1983), pp. 576-582.

this hypothesis may be found in the late 8th century BC seals known as the Lyre Player Group, which may have had their origins in the Levant or the Eastern Aegean.³⁶

Lutes

Only two lutes (Sumerian GÚ.DI, Akkadian *inu*³⁷) have been found in Assyrian representations, and lutes are not mentioned in any texts from the period except lexical texts. The pictured lutes have small egg shaped resonators, not significantly larger than the player's hand. The neck is long and thin, which would limit the total number of strings. On a relief from the Northwest Palace of Ashurnasirpal II in Nimrud, a bearded male lute player holds his instrument at a 45-degree angle, strumming or picking with his right hand and holding the neck of the lute with his left.³⁸ Two tassels or extra lengths of string dangle from the neck. His playing complements the clapping and performance of two figures masked in lion skins. The second known lute player is a woman, in an ensemble that includes vertical harps, a drum and a double pipe on a relief from near the

³⁶ Edith Porada first named this group, "A Lyre Player from Tarsus and his Relations," in *The Aegean and the Near East, Studies Presented to Hetty Goldman on the Occasion of her Seventy-fifth Birthday*, ed. Saul S. Weinberg (Locust Valley, NY: J. J. Augustin, 1956), pp. 185-211, suggesting they were made in Rhodes by a Near Eastern engraver. Boardman and Buchner published more seals in the same style, including excavated examples from Ischia that aid in the dating of the seals, John Boardman and Giorgio Buchner, "Seals from Ischia and the Lyre-Player Group," *Jahrbuch des deutschen archäologischen Instituts* 81 (1966): 1-62; they argued that the seals are more likely of North Syrian or Cilician origin, based on the distribution of excavated exemplars and the stylistic similarity of the seals with the Neo-Hittite reliefs at Karatepe. More recently, Boardman changed his assessment and suggests that the style may be Aramean, "The Lyre-Player Group of Seals: An Encore," *Archäologischer Anzeiger* (1990): 1-17. Irene Winter argues for a Phoenician origin based on iconographic parallels with the Carmona ivory group and the pattern of distribution of Phoenician groups through the Mediterranean; the lack of examples from Phoenician sites is attributed to a lack of excavation in those areas, "Homer's Phoenicians: History, Ethnography, or Literary Trope? [A Perspective on Early Orientalism]," in *The Ages of Homer: a tribute to Emily Townsend Vermeule*, ed. Jane B. Carter and Sarah P. Morris (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), pp. 247-272, see note 39.

³⁷ Dominique Collon and Anne Draffkorn Kilmer, "The Lute in Ancient Mesopotamia," in *Music and Civilisation*, ed. T.C. Mitchell, British Museum Yearbook (London: British Museum, 1980), 13-28, 4 pl.

³⁸ Cat. no. R2.

end of this period, in Ashurbanipal's palace.³⁹ In both reliefs, from Ashurnasirpal II and from Ashurbanipal, the lute is played as a solo instrument or as part of an orchestra in scenes I read as entertainments after battle. If the lute was a popular rather than elite instrument, it may have been under-represented in the Assyrian art that survives. The musical culture gleaned from the extant visual and textual sources does not reflect the popular experience of an imaginary "average" Assyrian, but rather the experience of the elite patrons who commissioned these works.⁴⁰

Earlier lutes in Mesopotamia were represented on seals and clay plaques and mentioned in texts from the third millennium BC on.⁴¹ Contemporary or possibly earlier parallels to the Assyrian examples can be found on Neo-Hittite reliefs at Karatepe from the 9th century BC.⁴² In these earlier examples all the musicians play right handed, and hold the lute at an angle of at least 45 degrees away from their body. Like the Neo-Assyrian lute, the comparable cases portray the lute as a popular instrument, without particular ceremonial significance.⁴³

³⁹ Cat. no. R17, from Room S'.

⁴⁰ In contrast, the lute is, along with the vertical harp, quite popular on mold made clay plaques depicting musicians from the Old Babylonian period (early 2nd millennium BC), see Rashid *Mesopotamien*, pp. 92-3 with nine examples. The mass produced clay plaques are generally considered an art form that was more accessible to the general populace, see Elise Auerbach, "Terra cotta Plaques from the Diyala and their Archaeological and Cultural Contexts," Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1994. The casual connotations of the lute and vertical harp may have carried over into Neo-Assyrian times as they are both consistently shown in banquet scenes, as will be discussed in Chapter 3.

⁴¹ Collon and Kilmer, "The Lute in Ancient Mesopotamia," in *Music and Civilisation*, 13-28.

⁴² Helmuth Theodor Bossert, *Karatepe kaziları* (Ankara: Turk Tarih kurumu basimevi, 1950), pl. 76.

⁴³ On a seal from the British Museum (BM 28806), a lute player is seated among deities, but the musician is half the size of the deities and appears to be a servant. As the seal is inscribed as belonging to a musicians named Ur-ur, the lute may simply identify this individual in the scene and not depict a recurring event or ritual.

Zither

There may be a representation of two zithers on an ivory pyxis of North Syrian style found at Nimrud.⁴⁴ As this is the only depiction of a zither, and from a foreign source, the zither should perhaps not be considered as an Assyrian instrument, but rather as an instrument in the broader Assyrian musical environment. A procession of women musicians curve around the sides of this cylindrical box. A pair of double pipe players is followed by a frame drum player, all facing right. Two women towards the end of the group turn their faces out, although their bodies remain in profile. In their left hand, the women hold rectangular objects decorated with parallel lines that they manipulate with their right. These objects may be zithers, sound boxes with strings across them. It is equally possible that they are percussive scrapers or not musical instruments at all. The small scale and unique iconography of this image make identification uncertain. Reinforcing this uncertainty is the lack of images of Mesopotamian zithers from earlier periods.⁴⁵

AEROPHONES

Aerophones, or wind instruments, create sound through the vibration of air. Included in this group are flutes, whistles, reed instruments, and horns. Flutes and whistles are both types of musical pipes, essentially tubes that may have finger holes that are blocked or opened to change pitch. Technically a “flute” produces sound when air is blown

⁴⁴ Cat. no. I3.

transversely across an opening (as a modern orchestral flute); a “whistle” has a fipple inside which directs the air stream against a hard lip, causing vibration (as in a modern recorder); and a “reed instrument” has a thin vibrator (the reed) that oscillates when blown (as on a modern clarinet). Akkadian names for some of these variations are known and the texts help to distinguish different pipes from each other. In contrast, images give no clue as to the internal mechanism of an instrument and the playing technique of these instruments is fairly similar.⁴⁵ Using visual evidence, the instruments described can only be referred to in the general category “pipes.” One variation that is distinguished visually (and whose ancient name is not yet known) involves two tubes held in each hand and connected or meeting in the mouth of the player; this instrument is referred to here as a “double pipe.” The final sort of aerophone, the horn, uses the player’s lips to stimulate vibrations in the air stream. Most modern horns, like the trumpet or Alpine horn, are conical or have flared ends, and there are ancient Near Eastern instruments with those characteristics that may be identified as horns.

Pipes: flutes, whistles, reeds

In the Nanaya Hymn of Sargon II (mentioned above in connection with the harp), the scene is set with this description: “Skilled musicians are seated before her, players of the

⁴⁵ Gina Salapata has suggested in a lecture in 2000 that this object may be a forebear to the “Apulian sistrum,” a percussion instrument. Her paper is forthcoming in *Studien zur Musikarchäologie*. I thank Anne Kilmer for this information.

⁴⁶ The application of the end of a pipe to the mouth to be played does not uniquely indicate a whistle or reed. The Turkish *ney* for example, is a transverse flute blown across the open end of the tube. Still, given the embouchure, or mouth position, required to play such an instrument the “pipes” discussed here are most likely whistles or reeds.

lyre, the small harp, the clapper, the *malīlum*, the *sinnatum*, and the *arikti*.⁴⁷ *Malīlum* is the reed flute⁴⁸ and *sinnatum* refers to a woodwind instrument of some type.⁴⁹ *Arikum*, from a root meaning length, is usually translated as long pipes, which in turn implies a variation in pipe lengths.⁵⁰ Clearly there were variations among aerophones, despite the difficulties in distinguishing each type visually.

Pipes are depicted on Assyrian and North Syrian style ivories excavated from Nimrud and on the palace reliefs of Ashurbanipal.⁵¹ Whether a single pipe, or the more common double pipe, the instrument is held near horizontally with both hands.⁵² They may have been played as solo instruments, but all the examples of an unaccompanied pipe player are incomplete fragments of larger scenes and therefore not conclusive. Pipes were certainly played with harps, lyres, lutes, and drums.

Pipes are seen in Mesopotamian art from Early Dynastic times, such as the double pipe depicted on a shell inlay excavated from the Inanna Temple in Nippur and now at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.⁵³ This Early Dynastic representation shows the pipe held

⁴⁷ For a slightly different translation, see Livingstone, ed., *Court Poetry and Literary Miscellanea*, 4, lines 7-9, p. 13.

⁴⁸ The flute is also *embūbu*, in Akkadian and *GI.GÍD* in Sumerian, literally “long reed” (*CAD ‘M’*: 164-5, *malīlu*; thanks to Andrew Cohen for clarification of Sumerian terms here and throughout).

⁴⁹ By parallelism, the *CAD* suggests *sinnatum* was a woodwind instrument, although it does not exclude the possibility that *sinnatum* could have been a percussion instrument (*CAD ‘S’*: 201, *sinnatu A*). Livingstone, ed., *Court Poetry and Literary Miscellanea*, 4, lines 7-9, p. 13 translates *sinnatum* as “oboe,” a very specific term that refers to a double reed instrument; there is no basis for such a particular translation.

⁵⁰ *CAD ‘A’*: 267-8, *ariktu B* and *C*.

⁵¹ Cat. nos. I2-3, I5, I7-8, R17-18, R21-22.

⁵² It seems that the pipe and double pipe (and the trumpet) are the only objects ever shown in anyone’s mouth in Neo-Assyrian art, perhaps because their simple forms would be meaningless without showing the act of playing.

⁵³ MMA 62.70.46 published in Leonard Gorelick and Elizabeth Williams-Forte ed. *Ancient Seals and the Bible* (Malibu, CA: Undena Publications, 1983) pl. XII-1, p. 10 and in Julia Asher-Grève *Frauen in altsumerischer Zeit*, *Biblioteca Mesopotamica* vol. 18 (Malibu, CA: Undena Publications, 1985) Cat. no. 580, p. 206, p. 97, 100, pl. XXIX.

almost vertically, in contrast to the horizontally held first millennium types. The vertical playing style does not clearly identify one type of pipe, but makes the flute less likely.

Trumpets

Horns, or trumpets, are not explicitly mentioned in texts, and appear in only one room of Assyrian reliefs. In Sennacherib's Southwest Palace at Nineveh, a series of images in Court VI depicts the quarrying and transport of large stone bull colossi for the palace.⁵⁴ Among the many figures in these crowded scenes are three pairs of male trumpeters, bearded Assyrian soldiers, astride the unfinished, blocked out form of the bull sculpture.⁵⁵ In each case, the player in front has his instrument to his lips, while his partner behind holds his instrument to his side. This may indicate a sharing of duties, with one musician taking over while the other rests. The trumpeters wear quivers on their backs, possibly as cases for their instruments.

Trumpets are not particularly popular instruments in Mesopotamian art, although they are known in the ancient Near East from the third millennium.⁵⁶ It is possible that trumpets were used primarily as signals—as in a work context in which effort must be coordinated—and not thought to be “musical.” However, even a non-valved trumpet, like a bugle, is capable of a number of tones (unlike a bell, which I have categorized as a “noise-maker”) and thus the melodic possibility of a trumpet should not be discounted.

⁵⁴ John Malcolm Russell, “Bulls for the Palace and Order in the Empire: The Sculptural Program of Sennacherib’s Court VI at Nineveh,” *Art Bulletin* 69 (1987): 520-539.

⁵⁵ Cat. no. R8 a.k.a. slab 53 (first figure damaged), WAA, Or. Dr., I, 55 depicting slabs 54 and 56, and Cat. no. R10 a.k.a. slabs 63-4,

⁵⁶ As on a limestone fragment Oriental Institute A 9273 from Khafaje, Early Dynastic (Rimmer, *Ancient Musical Instruments of Western Asia*, pp. 29-30, 37, fig. 7); a bronze figure BM 130909 from Caria, Anatolia, first millennium (Rimmer 1969, p. 29, pl. viii b); and an actual trumpet found in King Tutankhamen’s tomb.

Layard suggested that the object may be a “speaking trumpet,” by which I assume he meant a megaphone.⁵⁷ While I would agree that the object in question is being used to encourage and coordinate the work in the scene, I would argue that a musical trumpet is a more efficient sounding device than a speaking voice and, given the narrowness of the cone, would be heard over a wider area than a thin megaphone. A horn could synchronize work in two ways: by setting rhythm for the workers to follow—like a Sousa march—or to announce the beginning or end of a work period—like military “Taps.”⁵⁸

MEMBRANOPHONES AND IDIOPHONES

I have grouped together the membranophones and idiophones, instruments that are struck and whose skins or body resonate to produce sound, inasmuch as they constitute the modern orchestra’s percussion section.⁵⁹ I refer to the membranophones as drums, including the kettle drum, the hand held frame drum and other less common drums. Assyrian idiophones include cymbals, a pair of metal disks or cups which are struck against each other, clappers, shell disks used like cymbals, and sistra, rattles with a Y-shaped frame with pierced beads or discs strung on rods connecting the arms of the Y.

⁵⁷ Austen Henry Layard, *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon* (London: John Murray, 1853), p. 107.

⁵⁸ More on conveying concepts of time through music is discussed in Chapter 4.

⁵⁹ Two drums which are not examined closely here are the *manzū* and the *halhallatu*. They are not mentioned explicitly in Neo-Assyrian texts but do appear in older texts which were copied by Neo-Assyrian scribes (F. Thureau-Dangin, *Rituels Accadiens* [Paris: 1921]). Because it is not possible to date the original texts, I have left these instruments out, although known by Neo-Assyrians but possibly not in use. From the texts’ linkage of these instruments to the *lilissu*, it is thought that they are drums, possibly of the same goblet shape as the *lilissu*. Tangentially, the modern Turkish word *halhal* refers to a Turkish and Arabic metal bangle worn around the ankles (J. Aker, personal communication).

Kettledrum

The kettledrum or tympanum (Sumerian **LILIS**, Akkadian *lilissu*), as a modern term, is defined as a drum with a tunable skin over a hemispherical vessel. A Seleucid tablet that describes theology on the obverse is inscribed with labeled symbols on the reverse, including the profile of a hemispherical vessel with a foot.⁶⁰ This drum is labeled as ⁴*lilissu* in Akkadian, the “divine” *lilissu*, and can be recognized as a kettledrum.⁶¹ This instrument is not illustrated on Assyrian reliefs or ivories, but texts describe it as an instrument of bronze.⁶² The ritualized manufacture of the *lilissu* has been reconstructed and may have been used in Assyrian times (although the Neo-Assyrian letters from Babylon describing the use of the instrument suggest it was not used so much locally). The skin of the drum was prepared from the hide of a black steer.⁶³ The animal is ritually cleansed and oaths are whispered into its ears, in Sumerian and Akkadian. The steer is then butchered, skinned and buried. The skin is prepared and fastened to the instrument

⁶⁰ F. Thureau-Dangin, *Tablettes d'Uruk*, vol. VI, *Textes Cunéiformes* (Paris: Louvres, 1922), pl. 91, Louvre O.175. In the introduction, Thureau-Dangin explains that the tablet was said to be from Warka when bought, but was written by a *kalù* of Enlil, and therefore probably from Nippur, not Uruk. This tablet is partially illustrated here on plate 37.

⁶¹ The divine determinative has been read to suggest that the drum was a cult object itself, venerated as a symbol of divinity, Henrike Hartmann, “Ritualtexte als Quellen für die Kultmusik der neuassyrischen Zeit,” in *Frankfurter musikhistorische Studien: Helmuth Osthoff zu seinem siebzigsten Geburtstag*, ed. Ursula Aarburg and Peter Cahn, *Frankfurter musikhistorische Studien* (Tutzing: H. Schneider, 1969), pp. 9-24, p. 19. In support of this argument, Hartmann mentions rituals that involved the display of the drum without any explicit mention of it being played. It is unclear whether there was any use of the *lilissu* outside of the cult setting and if so, whether similar standards of manufacture were adhered to.

⁶² Simo Parpola, ed., *Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars*, vol. 10, *State Archives of Assyria* (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1993), 347, line 9, p. 282, for example. It is unclear whether this description should be understood to mean that all *lilissu* were bronze, or that particular examples of bronze drums were notable. Kilmer suggests that the head of the drum may have been a bronze element, and the animal hide used as a cover, “Musik. A. Philologisch,” in *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und vorderasiatischen Archäologie*, ed. D.O. Edzard (Berlin, New York: 1994), p. 466.

⁶³ The summary of these rituals is derived from Hartmann, “Ritualtexte als Quellen,” pp. 19-22. Hartmann used Seleucid period texts published for the most part by F. Thureau-Dangin, such as AO. 6479, VAT 8022, VAT 8247, 4806 in *Rituels Accadiens* (Paris: 1921) and O.175 in *Tablettes d'Uruk*, vol. VI.

with the animal's left shoulder tendons. Offerings are made to various gods and the *lilissu* itself. The drum is given a ritual "mouth cleansing" (*mīš pī*) before it is used. The details of the construction, like using a black steer, or the left shoulder tendons, are provocatively specific and probably significant, but they are difficult to interpret. The mouth cleansing however, is known to be a ritual given to other sacred objects, particularly statues of gods and patrons, in a process of imbuing them with vitality.⁶⁴

Large drums like the *lilissu* are known from the reverse of the Stele of Ur-Nammu and on one of the Gudea Stelae, both examples from the end of the 3rd millennium BC.⁶⁵ In each of these cases, the skin of the drum faces the viewer as a large circle and thus the construction of the drum is hidden. For that reason, it would be premature to identify these as *lilissu* but they definitely belong in a history of large drums used for religious purposes. The *lilissu* is more properly attested as early as the Old Babylonian period, in both images and texts. An Old Babylonian clay plaque depicts a kettledrum that stands as high as its player's waist, that is, about the same size as a modern tympanum.⁶⁶ If the Assyrian era *lilissu* was of similar dimensions, one can imagine a deep resonant tone that would be an appropriate metaphor to describe the heartbeat of a god, as occurs in an

⁶⁴ Irene J. Winter, "'Idols of the King': Royal Images as Recipients of Ritual Action in Ancient Mesopotamia," *Journal of Ritual Studies* 6, no. 1 (1992): 13-42; Angelika Berlejung, "Washing the Mouth: The Consecration of Divine Images in Mesopotamia," in *The image and the book: iconic cults, aniconism, and the rise of book religion in Israel and the ancient Near East.*, ed. Karel van der Toorn, (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 1997), pp. 45-72; Christopher Walker and Michael B. Dick, "The Induction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia: The Mesopotamian *mīš pī* Ritual," in *Born in heaven, made on earth: the making of the cult image in the ancient Near East*, ed. Michael Brennan Dick (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbraun, 1999), pp. 55-121.

⁶⁵ Ur-Nammu's stele is depicted in Anton Moortgat, *The Art of Ancient Mesopotamia* (New York: Phaidon, 1969), pl. 199 and Gudea's stele is depicted in Jutta Börker-Klähn, *Altvorderasiatische Bildstelen und vergleichbare Felsreliefs*, vol. 4, *Baghdader Forschungen* (Manz am Rhein: Zabern, 1982), tafel E.

⁶⁶ BM 91906, published in Rimmer *Ancient Musical Instruments of Western Asia*, p. 25, pl. Vb.

Assyrian text.⁶⁷ Two Old Babylonian texts, from Mari and Ur, refer to the dedication of *lilissu* to gods, as an offering.⁶⁸ The association of the kettledrum with cultic activities then, was an established tradition at least a thousand years before the Sargonid dynasty.

Frame drums

The frame drum is, as its name implies, a skin stretched over a wooden frame that is often circular but may be any shape. Frame drums are quite light and are easily held in one hand in front of the drummer with the covered surface facing right for right-handed players.⁶⁹ The right hand can create different tones by striking the drum at different points on the skin. The left hand can mute or stretch the skin, altering the tone, or drum with the fingers. The tambourine is a type of frame drum with bangles that jangle when the drum is struck. As in the identification of musical pipes, the identification of tambourines can be problematic; what may look like a bangle may simply be immobile decoration, or, equally, bangles may be suspended from the back of a drum and be unseen. For this reason, the more generic “frame drum” is used here, but the terms tambourine and tambour are found in previous literature.

The frame drum accompanies a variety of instruments: harps, lyres and pipes. Frame drums are also played in groups without other types of instruments. In these latter

⁶⁷ Livingstone, ed., *Court Poetry and Literary Miscellanea*, 39, line 11, p. 99.

⁶⁸ Louvre A 4509, A. Kirk Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers of the Third and Second Millennium B.C. (to 1115 B.C.)*, vol. 1, *Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia. Assyrian Periods* (Toronto/Buffalo/London: University Press, 1987), pp. 57-8, A.0.39.6; Iraq U da, Douglas Frayne, *Old Babylonian period (2003-1595 BC)*, vol. 4, *The Royal inscriptions of Mesopotamia. Early periods* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), RIME 4, pp. 259-61.

⁶⁹ All of these musicians are “right handed,” as is discussed below, p. 46. This convention makes a drummer in profile facing the viewer’s right relatively easy to draw (as on Louvre Cat. no. R25) but when the musician faces the viewer’s left, as on Or Dr. VI xlvi, the right hand is properly behind the drum and the left hand below it and supporting it with the thumb, but the hand is twisted a bit awkwardly.

scenes, the drums are played as encouragement for steady work—the destruction of an orchard in one instance, and the arrival or departure of an armored soldier in another.⁷⁰

Frame drums are not uncommon on the clay plaques of the second millennium BC where they are held and played differently. On these representations, the musician faces the viewer and holds the drum with both hands so that the skin is facing out on a plane parallel to the musician's chest.⁷¹ In other words, the images look like a man or woman holding a circle against his or her sternum. This may be either a different musical practice, or just a different representational strategy for a sculpture in the round.

Other skin drums

Two other membranophones are illustrated. While Ashurbanipal and a female companion enjoy a meal in a garden, one of the musicians who approach from the left is playing a narrow, conical drum that hangs from the waist of the drummer down to the knees.⁷² The drum is suspended by a shoulder strap and the drummer uses both hands to strike the instrument. A second unnamed drum is a squat cylinder, like the modern tom or snare drum, and is played by an Elamite woman among the prisoners on another relief

⁷⁰ Cat. no. R12 and Cat. no. II, the latter a cylindrical ivory pyxis which makes it difficult to determine if the soldier is coming or going. The frame drum is also unaccompanied behind a seated group of Assyrians on the White Obelisk (dated possibly to the early part of Assurnaisrpal II's reign, or more likely, from as early as the 11th century BC). The White Obelisk is illustrated in Anton Moortgat, *The Art of Ancient Mesopotamia* (New York: Phaidon, 1969), fig. 91; for a recent discussion on this monument, see Holly Pittman, "The White Obelisk and the Problem of Historical Narrative in the Art of Assyria," *Art Bulletin* 78 (1996): 334-355.

⁷¹ Rimmer, *Ancient Musical Instruments of Western Asia*, pl. VI.

⁷² Cat. no. R17.

from the reign of Ashurbanipal.⁷³ In this instance, too, the drum is suspended from the musician and is struck with both hands.⁷⁴

Assyrian period texts do not offer much information on drums aside from the *lilissu*. A fragment of a letter to Ashurbanipal mentions an *alû* drum, but nothing more than the name of the instrument can be gained from this text.⁷⁵

Idiophones: cymbals, clappers, sistra, rattles

Bronze cymbals and shell clappers are the only Neo-Assyrian instruments found in excavation. Unfortunately, Layard, who brought these objects to the British Museum, did not record their findspots.⁷⁶ Cymbals are thin round plates that are struck against one another to produce rhythms, usually of indefinite pitch. The Assyrian cymbals in the British Museum are of varying shapes. Some are shallow cones with straight sides, others have profiles with flaring sides.⁷⁷ Still other examples are concave plates with flattened rims.⁷⁸ These cymbals have handles of various sizes, some knobbed.

There are four representations of cymbals, all from the palace reliefs of either Sennacherib or Ashurbanipal, and in each case, the cymbals are held differently.⁷⁹ The variations are so different from one another that I would suggest they represent real

⁷³ Cat. no. R15.

⁷⁴ There may be a third drum on a painted vessel from Assur. Andrae describes a figure on Cat. no. V2 as “beating a hand drum” but the drawing of this vessel shows only the figure with hand raised as if to strike a drum, above an unfortunate break in the ceramic (Walter Andrae, *Coloured Ceramics from Ashur and Earlier Ancient Assyrian Wall-Paintings* [London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1925], p. 55 and pl. 29). Thus the drum cannot be described. Given the cultic trappings of this scene one is tempted to conjecture a *lilissu* here, but the proximity of the figure directly in front of the alleged drummer invalidates this hypothesis as there would be no room for the drum.

⁷⁵ Livingstone, ed., *Court Poetry and Literary Miscellanea*, 28 line 15, p. 61.

⁷⁶ Collon, personal communication 1998.

⁷⁷ See BM N 116 and N 558, respectively. Illustrated in Rimmer *Ancient Musical Instruments of Western Asia*, pl. XXI.

differences in playing technique. The variations consist of: a) holding the cymbals by their edges with both thumbs on one cymbal and eight fingers on the other, playing them like castanets; b) holding one cymbal in each hand by the handle and striking them in an up and down motion; and c) holding a cymbal in each hand and striking them in a lateral motion in front of the chest. The fourth cymbal player is merely a fragment and the playing technique is unclear, though he may be striking the cymbals up and down. All of the cymbal players accompany harps, lyres, or frame drums.

Cymbals are depicted in earlier Mesopotamian art from at least the late third millennium, on the Stele of Ur-Nammu.⁸⁰ On this stele, as well as on other representations from the second millennium, cymbals accompany other instruments.⁸¹

The shell clappers are of comparable size to the cymbals and are pierced in the center, possibly for the attachment of a handle of wood or rope, now lost. One example now in the British Museum is patterned in relief on the outside.⁸² No representations of, or Akkadian terms for, shell clappers are known.⁸³

Sistra, rattles with pieces that jangle against a frame, also accompanied other instruments. A single sistrum player follows two frame drummers and two harpists on each of the mirrored military processions from two bands of the Balawat Gates.⁸⁴ As is the case for cymbals, the Akkadian name for this instrument is unknown so no textual

⁷⁸ BM 91388, illustrated in Rimmer *Ancient Musical Instruments of Western Asia*, pl. XXI.

⁷⁹ Cat. nos. R13, R14, R19, and R25.

⁸⁰ University of Pennsylvania Museum, CBS 16676. Moortgat, *The Art of Ancient Mesopotamia*, pls. 194-199.

⁸¹ See Koitabashi, "Significance of Ugaritic *msltm* "Cymbals" in the Anat Text," in *Cult and Ritual in the Ancient Near East*, 1-5.

⁸² BM 133008, Rimmer, *Ancient Musical Instruments of Western Asia*, pl. 22.

⁸³ Livingstone translates *kis-ki-la-te* as clappers, but does not explain why (Alasdair Livingstone, ed., *Court Poetry and Literary Miscellanea*, 37, l. 7, p. 93).

⁸⁴ Cat. nos. Br1-2.

references can be cited. Sistra are known in Mesopotamia from an image on a lyre from the Early Dynastic Royal Cemetery of Ur, and bronze sistra have been collected from Early Bronze Age Anatolia.⁸⁵

VOCALS

Identifying singers in images is problematic, in both familiar and unfamiliar cultures. In contemporary pictures, such identifications are often based on posture and context, in a group in a church, or on stage with a microphone, for instance. Even then, a figure at a microphone on stage could be an orator, so more specific details are sought, for example, closed eyes, or a facial expression that is interpreted as emotive. The visual (and theatrical) conventions that Assyrians may have used to indicate singers are unknown.⁸⁶

Using modern conventions to identify singers in ancient images would therefore be a circular exercise. The one Neo-Assyrian image most often cited as representing a singer is the procession of captured Elamite musicians.⁸⁷ In the group of women and children that follow the men with instruments is one woman holding a hand to her throat, the only example of this pose I have found. Based on this indication of the throat and the musicians leading the group, scholars have labeled this woman a singer, although the evidence remains circumstantial.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ CBS 17694, published in Woolley, *The Royal Cemetery*, pp. 69-70, 257, 280-282, pl. 105-7; MMA 55.137.1 and 55.137.2, published in Oscar White Muscarella, *Bronze and Iron: Ancient Near Eastern Artifacts in the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1988), pp. 400-1, no. 527 and 528.

⁸⁶ One obvious cultural difference in representations is the utter lack of examples of any human being in Assyrian art shown with mouth open, even in scenes of eating or drinking. For this reason, the issue of string or percussion players singing while playing is only raised as a possibility, without evidence.

⁸⁷ Cat. no. R15.

⁸⁸ Rimmer, *Ancient Musical Instruments of Western Asia*, pp. 36-7:

This ambiguity of identification occurs in texts as well. *Zammāru* denotes a singer.⁸⁹ The general word for musician is the logogram LÚ.NAR, Akkadian *nâru*, which when used with the verb *zamāru*, to sing, is translated as “singer.”⁹⁰ Still, many texts that refer to “singers” are in lists of professions or legal documents, without any verbs of action. Thus where the series State Archives of Assyria generally translates LÚ.NAR as “singers,” the word could in fact refer to either singers or musicians more generally.

There is no way to know what Assyrian singing would have sounded like.⁹¹

Historically, there were different types of singers in Mesopotamia, and certainly different types of songs. The terms *nâru*, *eštalû*, and *zammeru* all referred to singers.⁹² In a letter from Old Babylonian Mari, the writer advises the recipient to send an *eštalû*

The Elamite musicians ...[are] followed by clapping figures, presumably dancers, and one particularly interesting figure, fourth from the right in the back row. It has been suggested that this singer is engaged in the performance of wordless *vocalise* heightened by gentle beating on the throat with the right hand in order to give a slow tremolo. This was still done in recent times by certain singers in Turkestan and it is said to produce a most pathetic effect. One can well imagine its suitability on the occasion of submission to the Assyrian king who had conquered and devastated Elam.

Rimmer’s ethnographic comparison is worth noting. In reading the passage, one also notices that she presumes the clapping figures are dancers (with child dancers, or their own children?) and assumes the woman with her hand at her throat is a singer without any justification other than the odd posture which has a modern parallel. The woman’s lips are barely parted and she could just as easily be wounded or making a gesture which is no longer understood. For example, she may be ululating—an activity associated with wailing or mourning in the modern Near East and perfectly appropriate for this scene.

⁸⁹ CAD ‘Z’: 39-40, *zammāru*.

⁹⁰ *Nâru* is translated as such even without the verb in the series SAA precisely because it is so often linked with the verb *zamāru* (Parpola, Personal communication 1998). Kinnier Wilson cites *nâru* as the “presumed literary word for a singer or musician of the period” with “*zammāru*, attested for the vernacular” (*Nimrud Wine Lists: A study of men and administration at the Assyrian capital in the Eighth Century, BC*, vol. I, *Cuneiform Texts from Nimrud* (London: British School of Archaeology in Iraq, 1972), p. 76). See CAD ‘N’: 376-9, *nâru*.

⁹¹ There are tablets that describe tuning systems and they have been published and analyzed by a number of scholars, the most prominent among them being Anne Draffkorn Kilmer and Marcelle Duchesne-Guillemin who both recorded versions of an ancient song (Anne Draffkorn Kilmer, Richard L. Crocker, and Robert R. Brown, *Sounds from Silence: Recent Discoveries of Mesopotamian Music* [Bit Enki Publications: Bit Enki Publications], Record and book and Marcelle Duchesne-Guillemin, *A Hurrian Musical Score from Ugarit* [Undena: Undena], cassette). These are speculative recordings and are based on a Hurrian tablet from around 1400 BC and not based on Neo-Assyrian tablets.

⁹² CAD ‘E’: 377-8, *eštalû* from OB Mari; CAD ‘Z’: 40, *zammeru*.

singer rather than the more valuable *nâru* that was requested.⁹³ *Zammeru* was also in use in Mari in that period but “in contrast with the artists called *nâru*, who performed in palace and temple, singing to the accompaniment of various musical instruments, the *zammeru* was either an untrained singer or a singer of popular songs.”⁹⁴ A thousand years later, these distinctions were not made in the formal administrative documents that survive; indeed, the different terms for vocal and instrumental musicians were also often elided.

Standardization of Types

One characteristic that can be noted in surveying the instruments and playing techniques of Assyria is that there are standard ways of playing instruments and these do not vary. The best indication of this observation is in handedness.

All but one of the musicians that are represented hold and play their instruments in a manner consistent with how a modern right handed musician would play them.⁹⁵ This emphasis on rectitude is compatible with a system that considers the right hand “good” and the left “bad,” as discussed by Guinan in reference to divinatory practices.⁹⁶ Right is also associated with the self while left is associated with the other. Given this

⁹³ CAD E: 377-8, *eštalû*, ARM I 83:7, 9 and 10.

⁹⁴ CAD ‘Z’: 40, *zammeru*.

⁹⁵ It may be that all Assyrians—not just musicians—shown on Neo-Assyrian art are right-handed. This hypothesis has not been thoroughly examined except in this subset of musicians, a group who handle asymmetric objects very consistently. It does conform with the postural, rather than iconic, symmetry of figures in Assyrian Sacred Tree scenes. In these scenes, the stylized trees is flanked by two figures whose right hands hold cones and whose left hands carry buckets. In this case, the proper representation of a right handed act is valued more highly than visual symmetry.

A note on musical handedness: although left handed players might hold the neck of a lute in the right hand, as the left-handed Jimi Hendrix held his guitar, there are left-handed players who hold the neck with the left hand. Playing an instrument right-handed should be understood to refer to a right-handed technique, which is not inaccessible to left dominant people.

belief, it is not surprising that the only known “left-handed” player from Neo-Assyrian art is the first player in the group of Elamite prisoners on Cat. no. R15, an Ashurbanipal era relief in Sennacherib’s palace at Nineveh.⁹⁷ On it, the musician plays a vertical harp held under his right elbow, not the left as do all other vertical harp players, including the Elamites just behind this figure. One reason for this depiction—whether intended by the Assyrian artist or the British restorer—is visual: it allows the artist to depict the face of the musician rather than obscuring it behind the frame of the harp. Those musicians behind the lefty hold their instruments under their left elbows, closest to us, and then are shown with their faces to the left of their instruments, a rather awkward if not impossible posture.⁹⁸ The left handed player and the awkward head tilt of the right handed players are two solutions to the problem of representing harp players moving in profile towards the viewer’s left, a distinct minority of harp players.⁹⁹ Handedness, then, is always to the right for this group of figures.

Other characteristics can be cited, such as the angles at which various lutes and pipes are held, or the consistent manner in which forearm harps are portrayed. The relevant issue is that dozens of images created over two and a half centuries depict a constant form of musical instrument playing. These are not representations of an

⁹⁶ Ann K. Guinan, “Left/Right Symbolism in Mesopotamian Divination,” *State Archives of Assyria Bulletin* 10, no. 1 (1996): 5-10.

⁹⁷ It has been suggested by Rimmer that this relief was not an exception at all, but rather reconstructed incorrectly by the excavators, *Ancient Musical Instruments of Western Asia*, p. 32, but see n. 14 above.

⁹⁸ Here two principles of these representations, proper handedness and facial clarity, are in conflict and handedness proves to be more important; otherwise, it would have been simple just to reverse the handedness of all the players and reveal their faces without any awkward postures.

⁹⁹ This problem was also encountered on a Middle Assyrian ivory comb where a harp player also plays “left handed” while proceeding from right to left: VA Ass 1097, Ass 14630 ax from a tomb in Assur, Prudence O. Harper et al., ed., *Assyrian Origins: Discoveries at Ashur on the Tigris* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1995), cat. 46, pp. 85-8.

experimental or innovative music, but rather of a traditional, steady, and, one might surmise them asserting, “properly Assyrian” musical culture.

Summary

This chapter sought to present descriptions of the range of Neo-Assyrian musical instruments based on the representations and documents available. Each description included the basic form of the instrument, how it was held and played, and what other instruments it was grouped with. A brief overview of Mesopotamian precedents for each instrument was also given. The information was organized through the Sachs-Hornbostel classification system which is based on the medium of sound production on an instrument: chordophones (strings), aerophones (winds), membranophones and idiophones (skins and “self” vibrating instruments—together, the modern percussion section), and vocals.

The representations of instrumental playing technique are very consistent and lead one to the conclusion that these depictions of music aim to present a standard, “proper” form.

The chordophones include horizontally and vertically oriented harps, lyres, lutes and possibly a zither. The horizontal forearm harp is distinguished for being prevalent (and always represented in pairs) in Neo-Assyrian images but without a historical precedent for its type and decoration; in other words, it is a uniquely Neo-Assyrian instrument. Lyres were notable for the lack of a standardized type.

The aerophones include pipes, flutes, whistles and trumpets. Unfortunately, images do not distinguish either the internal mechanisms that constitute subcategories of

the Sachs-Hornbostel system or the distinctions inherent in the Akkadian terms for various wind instruments. One distinct type was the double pipe, held in both hands.

The membranophones include a number of skin drums: free standing, suspended by straps or held in the hand. The drum most frequently cited in Neo-Assyrian texts (though not illustrated in that period) is the *lilissu*, a kettledrum. The idiophones included cymbals and sistra, both of which were only illustrated in ensembles, never alone.

Vocal music in illustrations is difficult to identify without clearly understood conventions. As it happens, the texts are no clearer, since the Akkadian word *nâru* may refer to either instrumental musicians or singers.

Musical instruments themselves, and not associated costumes or events, are the only definite clues that a given scene depicts music. Having established the types of instruments represented in Neo-Assyrian visual culture, the next interpretive step is to assume that the people holding those instruments have played, are playing or intend to play them; that is, the individuals with musical instruments are assumed to be musicians. Accordingly, the next chapter focuses on the musician in Assyria. Whereas this chapter classified and catalogued the instruments observed in Assyrian art using modern terms, the identification of various types of musicians requires a bit more interpretation and comparative analysis.

Chapter 2

Musicians

It was noted in the previous chapter that although the Akkadian word *nâru* is used mainly to describe a singer or to introduce a song, the meaning of *nâru* is not limited to “singer,” and in fact denoted “musician” in earlier periods. The inclusiveness of this term suggests that the Neo-Assyrians did not differentiate instrumental from vocal artists; singers, after all, are musicians whose instruments are their bodies. Because the word did not ever refer only to singers, I have chosen to read references to *nâru* as applying to musicians generally, and the reader should keep in mind that the term “musician” used here includes singers. Furthermore, I would propose that since *nâru* can signify both vocal and instrumental musicians, the two may not have been distinguished in Assyrian society. That proposition is either valid, with the language as support for that position, or invalid, but necessarily blurred because of the ambiguity of the linguistic evidence. The purpose of this chapter is to explore first the textual and then the visual evidence in order to further describe the roles and place of musicians in Neo-Assyrian society. The textual material is more useful for establishing the social position of musicians, whereas the visual material is more useful for identifying and classifying a range of types of musicians.

When encountering documents relating to *nâru*, it becomes clear that the social status of the musician in Assyria is easier to describe using a range of possibilities, rather than specifics. This is because the status of the occupation itself seems to have been secondary to other factors, primarily the sex and nationality of the musician. One male

musician might have had rights of property, including the ownership of slaves, but another could have been enslaved, claimed as property himself. Musicians were in the orbit of important men but never at the center, for example on a scene of libation (Cat. no. R4), in which the musicians are second in height only to the king (who is taller by virtue of his headgear).¹ Their music was present in many different contexts but not always required in some of these same contexts. Some of these contradictions are explored here, placing the musician in the context of economics, law and social standing.

To place the musician within the larger context of Assyrian society, administrative documents prove useful. Among the best preserved archives of administrative documents from the Neo-Assyrian period are the Nimrud Wine Lists from the first quarter of the eighth century BC. Kinnier-Wilson determined that the lists document the payment of 6000 members of the court.² Among these courtiers were dozens of musicians. The musicians' ration was 2 homers and 5 *qû*, "the highest total by far for any profession recorded in this class of text" and we can concur with Kinnier-Wilson that, "It is in any case quite certain that the history of the court musicians of Assyria is not to be written *pianissimo*."³ He calculated the number of musicians to be about 200 out of the total court of 6000, or one in thirty. This may sound high, especially as there is no direct

¹ That height might indicate the relative importance of an individual, see Meyer Schapiro on some general principles of visual composition, "On Some Problems in the Semiotics of Visual Art," in *Theory and Philosophy of Art: Style, Artist and Society* (New York: George Braziller, 1994), 1–33. One principle is that more important personages are represented with larger figures. This is certainly true in Assyrian art where the king is always the tallest figure.

It is possible that proximity to the king is also a sign of importance. Unfortunately, one cannot, as with size, assign the king prominence and scale backwards from there; with proximity, the king is always closest to the king by definition and semantic meaning cannot be extrapolated from such an arbitrary closed system. And, however logical it might be to associate represented proximity to authority with some measure of importance, Assyrian images do not supply clues as to individual identities or jobs; the figure closest to the king could be a trusted advisor or he could be a lowly manservant.

² Kinnier Wilson, *Nimrud Wine Lists*, p. 1.

evidence for the musical performances of ensembles of more than a dozen members. His formula for population was calculated by determining a standard portion for one person and then dividing the total allotment for a given group by that standard portion. The standard portion was one tenth of a *qû*, a liquid measure of 10 cups.⁴ There were privileged portions, however, from six men per *qû* up to two men per *qû*. If musicians were so privileged, it would reduce their total numbers by half, to about 100, or at the highest rate, 40 very well paid musicians.⁵ Such high rates seem rather improbable, however, though it is possible that they were paid somewhere within this range, with individual musicians receiving more based on their skill or seniority. In any case, we may conclude from the significant percentage of resources that went towards musicians that they were fed regularly, and probably given no less than a standard portion—which would imply even more than 200 musicians. If we accept Kinnier-Wilson's calculation, then the high number of musicians opens up the possibility that dozens of ensembles could have been playing almost near constantly in various rooms. One hypothetical scenario: groups of 5 musicians each in three shifts would allow for 13 ensembles playing at a time (and a total of 40 different quintets). Another: 8 shifts with 5 groups of 5 musicians each.⁶

Some musicians were not only fed but accumulated enough wealth—through barter, trade or inheritance—to buy and sell property. A tablet from Nimrud records the

³ ND 2489, ii, 4, Kinnier Wilson, *Nimrud Wine Lists*, p. 78.

⁴ Kinnier Wilson, *Nimrud Wine Lists*, p. 117ff describes the calculations and different rationing systems discussed here.

⁵ Kinnier Wilson suggests that persons with such a high rate of payment would likely be supporting their own servants, *Nimrud Wine Lists*, p. 118.

⁶ Ensembles of about five players would be in line with the images of musicians from this period, although the images may be abbreviated representations of larger musical groups.

sale of a plot of land by a number of musicians.⁷ These musicians did not have identifying cylinder or stamp seals, and instead “sealed” the tablet with their fingernails. The right to own property indicates that musicians could belong to the *awīlum* or free man’s class; although this case shows that owning property did not also come with the degree of responsibility over written records, rooms or storage containers that would require a seal. Another argument for their inclusion as *awīlum* is the attestation of musicians as legal witnesses for contracts. If not *awīlum*, these musicians were certainly of a class higher than slave. One individual who seemed to have done well for himself was the chief musician of Til Barsip, Bel-aplu-iddina, who sold five servants during the reign of Ashurbanipal.⁸

At the same time, musicians could also be considered property by kings. These were the foreign musicians who were taken by or given to the Assyrian kings as booty or tribute.⁹ It is unclear if these captives ever had an opportunity to enter into Assyrian society as anything other than slaves.

Thus, musicians were a significant element of the Assyrian court with a social status that could vary widely from slaveholder to slave. This status seems to have more to do with issues other than occupation. Although gender and nationality are signaled in texts, more detailed information may be gotten from identifying and comparing representations of the different types of musicians.¹⁰

⁷ ND 264, J.N. Postgate, *The Governor’s Palace Archive*, vol. II, *Cuneiform Texts from Nimrud* (London: British School of Archaeology in Iraq, 1973), no. 35, pl. 24, pp. 73-5.

⁸ Theodore Kwasman and Simo Parpola, ed., *Legal Transactions of the Royal Court of Nineveh, Part I, State Archives of Assyria* (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1991), 312, 313, pp. 251-253.

⁹ For example, see Sennacherib’s Bull inscription below, page 56.

¹⁰ There are a number of issues of Assyrian musicians’ lives that currently remain a mystery but may eventually be answered by texts. These include how musicians were trained, whether music making was a

Pictorially, a musician is identified as a person who holds a musical instrument.¹¹

This assumes that the figure holding the instrument is the person who has been, is, or will be playing that instrument. Given this assumption, the identification of musicians from their instruments is fairly straightforward. Conversely, it is not easy to identify musicians without instruments, that is, singers.¹² It is also possible that objects may yet be identified as musical instruments, increasing the number of musicians when the iconography is understood. However, no new radical identifications have been made here so the musicians identified in this dissertation are not so different from those identified by others scholars of Mesopotamian music.¹³

This chapter studies musicians in Neo-Assyrian times and explores how they were treated representationally—by style, iconography and medium. Variations within the population of represented musicians are examined, specifically the divisions of gender and nationality. In a minority of representations, the musicians are anthropomorphized animals, and these are also discussed.

hereditary position, whether they made their own instruments, and whether there was any overlap between musicians playing inside and outside the court.

¹¹ Musicians can not be identified with a specific costume, contrary to the suggestion of T. A. Madhloom, *The Chronology of Neo-Assyrian Art* (London: Athlone Press, 1970), p. 71.

¹² Another category of musicians without instruments would be fragmentary images. One example would be ND 5429 from Nimrud in the Iraq Museum, which Mallowan identified as a *kalu* priest with a “*kalu* drum” based on the figure’s hat, similar to those worn by other (but not all) musicians (Max E.L. Mallowan, *Nimrud and its Remains*, 2 vols. [London: Collins, 1966], p. 269, fig 251). Similarly, because the disembodied head of BM 127370 from Room E of Ashurbanipal’s North Palace resembles that of a musician from the same room, Slab 5 (Cat. no. R16), Barnett cites this as the head of a musician (Richard David Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace of Ashurbanipal at Nineveh [668-627 BC]* [London: British Museum, 1976], p. 39, pl. 14). In these cases and others like them, I have opted for a more conservative identification and only cite figures as musicians if they have recognisable instruments or have physical similarities to figures on the same image who are clearly musicians. For example, on Cat. no. V2, the figure identified as a drummer without a drum is lent credence by the double pipe player who precedes him.

¹³ See especially Subhi Anwar Rashid, “Untersuchungen zum Musikinstrumentarium Assyriens,” in *Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte Vorderasiens: Festschrift für Rainer Michael Boehmer*, ed. U. Finkbeiner, R. Dittmann, and H. Hauptmann (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1995), pp. 573-595.

It should be noted that for each level of interpretation, from instruments to musicians to musical events, the corpus of relevant evidence diminishes. This is because the fragmentary artifacts may be broken so that an instrument can be recognized but the player is lost. The conclusions drawn in this chapter, then, may be based on fewer examples than those of the last.

Types of Musicians

In this section, distinctions are made between types of musicians. I have tried to reveal indigenous distinctions, rather than imposing modern interpretations, by studying differences of Assyrian representation at the level of individual figures. The types do not include categories of musicians such as “temple musicians” or “secular musicians”; such types are derived from the context in which they are found (a temple, for example). The characteristics that define each type of musician here are found on the musicians themselves, not in descriptions of their surroundings or the event in which they participated.

Images are more heavily relied on than texts in this section. The advantage of texts is specificity, but the texts do not go beyond describing musicians by their nationality or their gender. Visual representations carry more detail but demand more interpretation. Determining the nationality or even the gender of musicians from images first requires an explicit definition of each category. These definitions may be based on physical attributes of the represented musicians such as stature, costume and grouping. The first distinctions will be made between male and female musicians, followed by Assyrians contrasted with foreign musicians and then human versus animal musicians. In

each case, only one characteristic is examined at a time, that is to say, males of any nationality are compared with females of any nationality and then Assyrians of either gender are compared with non-Assyrians of either gender.

Male - Female

Textual sources identify male and female musicians clearly, whereas images encode gender characteristics rather subtly. The texts will be examined first.

In texts, a female musician is indicated by prefixing the noun **NAR** with the sign **SAL**, a determinative for “female.” The plural **NAR.MEŠ** can be used to describe mixed gender groups, although the presence of both male and female musicians is sometimes explicitly specified, as on the Bull inscription of Sennacherib with reference to the Judean king Hezekiah:

With 30 talents of gold, 800 talents of silver and all kinds of treasure from his palace, he [Hezekiah] sent his daughters, his palace women, his male and female singers, to Nineveh, and he dispatched his messengers to pay the tribute....¹⁴

The clear identification of female musicians when a more ambiguous plural could have sufficed is a conscious choice that reflects the significance and symbolic importance of female musicians.

To determine the gender of a figure in an Assyrian image, one can use clues such as the depiction of secondary sexual characteristics, details of dress and the grouping or arrangement of the figures themselves.¹⁵ Relevant secondary sexual characteristics would

¹⁴ Daniel David Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*, (London: Histories & Mysteries of Man, 1989), 312, p. 143.

¹⁵ Discussions of sexual typing of Assyrian representations are few; in an exception, Pauline Albenda points out some of the same characteristics that I have here, specifically the “high breast line” and the “ample

include a beard or breasts. Beards are sure indications of masculinity in Assyrian art, but the absence of a beard does not distinguish beardless men from women.¹⁶ The presence of breasts is more consistent although more subtly indicated than the beard, and often best seen in direct comparisons, which are few.¹⁷ The female chest as represented in Neo-Assyrian reliefs differs from the male in the curve of the profile from neck to belly. On women, this curve comes out horizontally from the neck before turning downward sharply. The breasts are thus depicted as a high, shelf-like bosom. On men, this curve is much shallower. A corollary effect of this depiction of the female chest is that the neck of female figures appears shorter than that of males.

Neo-Assyrian modes of dress both confuse and clarify issues of gender. There are no fixed articles of clothing or ornamentation that immediately identify the gender of a figure. Women do not wear wide belts, whereas men sometimes do, but the belts are not worn by all men, and some men in robes may be concealing belts under their outer garments. Women do not wear hems above their ankles, but men may wear either knee- or ankle-length garments. Jewelry of all sorts is worn by both sexes and there are no distinctively gendered hairstyles or footwear. There is no firm rule of dress that can be applied to determine the gender of figures. Fashion is useful, however, in determining groupings on specific scenes, which may help to sort out males and females.

Male and female musicians on Neo-Assyrian images are never intermingled except in one case, which will be discussed below. This is why it is difficult to compare

bodies," although it should be noted that eunuchs' bodies tend to be ample as well ("A Royal Eunuch [sic] in the Garden," *NABU*, no. 3 [1998]: 88-89).

¹⁶ See note 18 below for more on beardless men.

body types. By contrast, bearded and unbearded male figures play music together, and are even paired together in the playing of forearm harps, suggesting that the distinction between bearded and unbearded men was not as great as that between men and women.¹⁸ This principle of gender separation as a general rule is not particularly surprising, given the class and gender stratification in Neo-Assyrian society.

A series of figures on a relief from Nineveh offers a chance to examine some of the gender specific details mentioned above and may clarify some of these differences (Cat. no. R15).¹⁹ The scene, Slabs 5-6 of Room XXXIII of the Southwest Palace at Nineveh, was carved during Ashurbanipal's reign and depicts the aftermath of a battle with Elamites.²⁰ On a lower register, a line of Elamite prisoners walks from right to left, led by eleven musicians. The first three of these musicians are bearded, as is the fifth. By spatial association, and by his robe, which is striped down the back of his hip like the bearded fellows, I would group the beardless fourth figure with the figures before and

¹⁷ This is why I am skeptical of Andrae's sexual identifications of figures on painted vases (Walter Andrae, *Coloured Ceramics from Ashur*). The number of figures is small and without obvious determinants like a beard, the sex of a slim, beardless figure is difficult to discern with any certainty.

¹⁸ Although this might seem obvious enough, it is worth considering when confronted with modern descriptions of beardless male musicians in Assyrian art as eunuchs (see Julian E. Reade, "The Neo-Assyrian Court and Army: Evidence from the Sculptures," *Iraq* 34, no. 2 [1972]: 91-2). Reade accepts what he calls the "traditional" identification of beardless figures as eunuchs from Layard and Olmstead, but is clearly not committed to this reading (he invites others to substitute whatever term they prefer). Would non-castrated men play music with eunuchs? Perhaps, if they were expected to sing in different vocal ranges. But in those cases, any innocent access a eunuch might have to women's spaces in a palace would be negated by his fellow band member.

If they did not mix, might we be seeing three categories of men: bearded, beardless but not castrated, and castrated? In this case, we would need to further differentiate between beardless types, perhaps identifying one group, the older looking men with jowls and paunches, as eunuchs, and another group, younger, slimmer beardless men, as youths. The position of the eunuch as distinct from court officials is discussed by Hayim Tadmor, "Was the Biblical *sārîs* a Eunuch?," in *Solving riddles and untying knots: biblical, epigraphic, and Semitic studies in honor of Jonas C. Greenfield*, ed. Zony Zevit, Seymour Gitin, and Michael Sokoloff (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1995), pp. 317-325.

¹⁹ The field drawing of this relief is WAA Or. Dr., II, 6, reproduced in John M. Russell, *Sennacherib's Palace Without Rival at Nineveh* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), fig 65.

²⁰ The identification of these figures as Elamites is based on their hair and clothing, as discussed below, p. 75.

behind him and interpret these first five musicians as male. Passing over the remaining six musicians for now, the group is followed by six adult sized figures and nine figures that do not come up to the height of the adults' shoulders, presumably children. Based on their proximity to the children and their slightly shorter stature, I identify these figures who follow the musicians as women.

The six beardless figures between the bearded men and the women with children are of the greatest interest. I would identify these six as female musicians.²¹ This may appear odd, as I have earlier asserted that male and female musicians are never shown playing together, whereas I now argue that this constitutes an exception. My identification of these musicians as female is based on the visual separation of one group from the other, and qualities of physiology and dress that help both to distinguish this second group from the men in front and to relate them to the women behind. The argument for a mix of sexes in this scene is buttressed by possible ideological motivations regarding the representation of foreigners.

The eleven musicians can be divided into two groups through a visual element that clearly separates the first five from the next six. In this scene, all of the figures overlap. The children are on a plane in front of the women and block their bodies. Each musician's instrument obscures the body of the figure ahead of him or her. Even the last musician's hem covers a small corner of the robe of the woman behind. This overlapping

²¹ The abraded condition of the stone on some of the figures' faces may look like beards, but not when directly compared to the carefully delineated beards of the figures at the head of the procession.

Although this is a significant and well published relief, previous scholars have used gender neutral terms in descriptions of these figures. For example, Rimmer, *Ancient Musical Instruments of Western Asia*, pp. 36-37, Mitchell, "An Assyrian Stringed Instrument," pp. 33-42, and Rashid, *Mesopotamien*, pp. 136-138. In a recent Ph.D. thesis, the author suggests the unbearded figures may or may not be women but does not reach a conclusion, Theodore William Burgh, "Do You Hear What I Hear?: A Study of Musical

gives the scene a sense of confusion, of arbitrariness and spontaneity appropriate for defeated prisoners. The one pair of adjacent figures that does not overlap is the fifth and sixth figures. The contour lines of these figures appear to touch—the front tassel of the sixth's instrument just meets the line of the fifth's hip—but they do not overlap, as the tassel of this last male figure does with the player in front of him. A conscious decision has thus been made to physically separate the two groups of musicians, even though the resulting composition looks like a jumble of figures.

The physical attributes that contribute to establishing the gender of the second group of musicians as female include beards, breasts, height and musculature. These figures are beardless. As for the breasts, a difference can be seen especially in comparing the bearded pipe and horizontal harp players at the front of the Elamite group with the pipe player and drummer at the rear. This observation is limited because most of the musicians are playing vertical harps that obscure their neck and chests. A third significant physical attribute is height. The average height of the second group of musicians is less than that of the bearded and beardless male musicians who lead the group.²² Finally, the male musicians all have striations on their forearms indicating musculature. Individuals in the second group of musicians have smooth arms, as do the women with children just behind. All of these physical details distinguish the following half-dozen from the first five musicians.

A number of details of clothing and adornment associate the second group of musicians with the women behind the group, while further differentiating them from the

Instruments and Musical Activity in Iron Age Israel/Palestine and Surrounding Cultures of the Ancient Near East," Ph.D. diss., University of Arizona, 2000.

men. The hems of the men's robes are horizontal (although three of the five men lift one leg so the hem cannot be determined) whereas the hems on all the other figures are higher in front and lower in back. Like the second group of musicians, the women's garments are decorated with a stripe that runs parallel down the sleeve; the men's sleeves are plain. The last six musicians and the women who follow all wear a band around their neck, possibly representing either necklaces or collars on their shirts (and emphasizing a short, squared neck), which the men do not. Finally, although seven vertical harps are played in this scene, the instruments are decorated differently. The men play harps with tassels that hang straight and then are decorated at the end with four rows of beads or knots, the next three harps are decorated all the way through with ten rows of beads or knots and the last is of yet another type, without any knots.²³

Thus, evidence of gender in this group is apparent in composition as well as detail. The procession is separated into three groups: the first five musicians, the next six musicians, and six adult non-musicians with nine children. Physiological and fashion details identify the first five musicians as male and the non-musicians behind as female. The six musicians in-between are, in both dress and physiognomy, clearly more like the women behind them than the men before them.

The combination of male and female musicians in this scene is clearly unusual. Given its unique status, the ideological intentions for this grouping are worth some

²² At the same time, the females with children behind the musical ensemble are on average even shorter than the musicians.

²³ The vertical harps played by Elamites on their own reliefs have one knot, tying the tassels together at the center, to make an hourglass shape, as seen in Eric de Waele, "Musicians and Musical Instruments on the Rock Reliefs in the Elamite Sanctuary of Kul-e Farah (Izeh)," *Iran* 27 (1989): pls. Ib, IIIb. It is possible that the fact that these harps are shown to be untied was an intentional slight to the proper Elamite standard. Assyrian harps are not knotted at all, as shown on Cat. no. R21 and Cat. no. R1; there may be one bottom row of knots on Cat. no. R20. This will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

speculation. The basic argument is simple—the scene makes the Elamites look bad—but it does so in a number of specific ways. First, if there was a taboo against mixed sex musical ensembles in Assyria, even if there was not the same prohibition in Elam, the Elamites are shown to have transgressed the cultural norm of the relief's primary audience.²⁴ Second, the very fact that women musicians were exposed to the public is fairly unusual, especially if these were court musicians.²⁵ Third, there is an implied feminization of the men in this scene, by association with the women and by the exaggerated lifting of one leg as a visual pun, giving the men the slanted hem of a woman's dress. The raised skirt is discussed as a sign of humiliation for female prisoners on Assyrian reliefs by Megan Cifarelli.²⁶ Cifarelli cites Assyrian laws and texts that suggest any sort of undress or display was both culturally transgressive and demeaning. As such, the parallelism in the men's hem is given even more negative connotations.

The scene of Elamite musicians helps to define the visual differences between representations of men and women on the Assyrian reliefs. Some of these differences are clear, like beards for men, while other identifications are made from an accumulation of details, like a slight rise in the bosom, a lack of defined forearm musculature and a slightly raised hem for women versus beardless males.

Now that the visual definitions for determining the gender of figures on the reliefs have been articulated, some general distinctions between the treatment of male and

²⁴ Even though the scene is set in Elam, it can be read as a criticism of Elamite civilization, perhaps comparable to later Hellenistic portrayals of their Eastern neighbors as uncivilized barbarians. Megan Cifarelli makes this argument regarding the Urartians, also from the east, in “Gesture and Alterity in the Art of Ashurnasirpal II of Assyria,” *Art Bulletin* 80 (1998): 224-225.

²⁵ If they were recognizably court musicians, the depiction of the men may have been just as insulting. More on women musicians existing primarily in court situations will be discussed in the next chapter on musical contexts.

²⁶ Cifarelli, “Gesture and Alterity” pp. 221-223.

female musicians can be addressed.²⁷ Because musicians are represented as male in most cases, the focus will be on the female musician as contrasted with the male majority. First, the scenes that contain women will be identified; second, the represented audience of female musicians will be examined; and third, the instruments played by each sex will be considered.

Female musicians appear on three known scenes on the palace reliefs: the scene of Elamite prisoners (Cat. no. R15), a scene of a banquet in a garden found in Ashurbanipal's North Palace at Nineveh, Room S' (probably having collapsed into the room from an upper story) (Cat. no. R17), and a fragment of another banquet scene found in the same room (Cat. no. R22). All of these are from the reign of Ashurbanipal, the last major Assyrian king. Female musicians do not appear at all on reliefs before Ashurbanipal. On ivories found in Assyrian capitals, female musicians appear in six ivories of North Syrian and South Syrian styles (Cat. nos. I3-5, I7-9). Two Assyrian style ivories show male musicians.²⁸ A ninth ivory is broken and only an instrument can be identified, without a musician (Cat. no. I6). On the ivories on which musicians can be identified, six of eight examples feature women.

²⁷ It must be noted that the distinction between male and female figures on the ivories of Assyrian, Phoenician and Syrian styles, is not adequately defined in the literature, and will not be here. For the sexual identification of particular figures, the reader is asked to consult the descriptions in the catalog. For the most part, scholars have agreed on the genders of individuals on ivories, but such unanimity may reflect either mere parroting, the shared cultural biases of the interpreters, or real visual elements that are registered without being articulated or justified. As an example, the figures on Cat. no. I1 have been described as female, reflecting the original interpretation by the excavator, the modern European and American culture of the scholars, and possibly all based on the figures' long hair—although none of this is made explicit.

It should be duly noted also, that while I too agree with most of the previous gender identifications (with the exception of the Assyrian ivory, Cat. no. I1), those identifications must remain provisional. There is not the kind of certainty in gender identification of figures on ivories as on the palace reliefs.

²⁸ Previous scholars have identified the drummers on the city walls of a pyxis from Nimrud as female, and I would not rule out that possibility, but they look more like long haired men to my eye (Cat. no. I1).

The audience, where one can be identified in scenes that feature female musicians, is itself female, with two exceptions: the Elamite prisoners (Cat. no. R15) and the banquet scene of Ashurbanipal (Cat. no. R17). In the first of these exceptions, the scene presents women playing music as male soldiers work. This seems to be an unusual situation, and I would venture to guess that this is not the primary audience for which these musicians were trained; in other words, although musicians may have been expected to play in such contexts, this is not the reason they became musicians, or were maintained by a palace or temple. These are representations of disjunction, in which women play music in unfortunate and unusual circumstances. In the majority of representations, the audience they play to is a seated figure, in one case the king, accompanied by a woman (Cat. no. R17), the second exception to the female audience rule. In reconstructions of the mostly fractured ivories, the seated figure is usually restored as a woman, that is, as a figure similar looking to the musicians. While the visible costumes of the fêted personages do appear to be feminine, and the reconstructions would appear to be generally correct, the conclusions drawn from these scenes should be accompanied by caution and wariness. If we conditionally accept the reconstructions and identifications of previous scholars, then the implication of these representations is that the main purpose of female musicians was to make music for female audiences. A corollary to this hypothesis is that the female musicians that dominate the representations on ivories may have been culturally appropriate for a sheltered female audience *of the ivory itself* and the image on an ivory pyxis might reflect the musical experiences of a female owner for whom the piece was made or collected. That is, even if originally made for a different audience in North Syria, I am suggesting that the experience of Neo-Assyrian female audiences may have

made the distribution of these pieces to women in the Assyrian capital particularly appropriate. In contrast, male musicians are never shown playing specifically for a female audience, although women are occasionally present in battle scenes, as enemy prisoners.

Although female musicians are not cited in legal texts, as male musicians were, female musicians may have fared better economically and socially than women at large. All of the documented transactions involving musicians as property owners or legal witnesses involve only men although both sexes are mentioned equally in administrative documents like the wine lists. In general, representations of women on Neo-Assyrian art are few in number and of those, most show women as prisoners. Female musicians may be the only women who perform non-menial tasks on the palace reliefs. Perhaps music was one avenue through which Assyrian women—and foreign women residing in Assyria—could better their positions in society.²⁹

All of the instruments that women musicians play are also played by men, but the reverse is not true. Only men play the trumpet and the horizontal forearm harp. My hypothesis for why women were excluded from these instruments is based on the contexts in which these instruments were played, to be discussed in more detail next chapter. In brief, the trumpet is shown played only in the laborious conditions of quarrying and transporting large stone sculpture, an activity in which women apparently did not participate. The forearm harp is shown either in situations that involve religious ceremony or military campaigns, again, contexts in which we would not expect to find Assyrian women.

²⁹ The opportunity to pursue music was probably fairly limited.

To summarize, the Assyrians did make clear distinctions between male and female musicians. The sexes are distinguished in the language even when a mixed term was available, and by elements of iconography and style. The differences between male and female musicians are further emphasized by the absolute sexual segregation of Assyrian musicians. The sexes are represented in different proportions on different forms of art with women musicians predominant on ivories (which originated outside the heartland) but only appearing late in the history of palace reliefs. Female musicians are shown primarily with female audiences. There are also instruments particular to the male domain, whereas there are not any instruments that seem to be played only by female musicians. Male and female musicians are not equally represented in the art of this period, but each sex was depicted in a distinct role in Assyrian musical life.

Assyrian - Foreign

Distinguishing foreign from Assyrian people on Neo-Assyrian art is easier than distinguishing the men from the women. This may give some insight into the intentions and motivations of this era's artists and patrons, and the ideological boundaries of their culture. They were perhaps more interested in making statements—mostly negative—about the men of neighboring nations than making statements about women—who probably posed less of a threat to the Assyrian palace or temple institutions that were commissioning these images. A number of scholars have written on the ideological character of Neo-Assyrian art, and the present work is built in part upon iconographical

studies that identified the nationalities of various representations.³⁰ As with gender differences, the distinguishing details are both physical—in hairstyle and posture—and sartorial—headgear, clothing, and footwear. In comparing Assyrians with foreigners, the first step is to identify Assyrian characteristics, and then to describe and identify other distinct groups.

ASSYRIANS

Representations of Assyrian figures may best be characterized by examining the epicenter of this group: the king and his retinue. The king may be identified on reliefs with cuneiform labels, and he may wear wristbands decorated with rosettes. Other Assyrians can be identified through specific visual parallels with these known Assyrians.

Representations of Assyrians are generally muscular and have upright postures.³¹ Both men and women have a consistent hairstyle: tight waves along the top of the head and down the neck, ending in a bloom of curls at the shoulder. Men are generally bearded, with squared off facial hair, although beardless Assyrian men also appear. Assyrian fashion varies somewhat but usually involves a tunic and a skirt (sometimes belted), either knee or ankle-length.³² In reliefs, where scale permits differentiation,

³⁰ Markus Wäfler, *Nicht-Assyrier neuassyrischer Darstellungen*, 2 vols., vol. 26, *Alter Orient und Altes Testament* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1975); Julian Reade, “Ideology and Propaganda in Assyrian Art,” in *Power and Propaganda*, ed. Mogens Trolle Larsen, *Mesopotamia* (Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1979); Irene J. Winter, “Royal Rhetoric and the Development of Historical Narrative in Neo-Assyrian Reliefs,” *Studies in Visual Communication* 7, (1981): 2-38; Megan Cifarelli, “Enmity, Alienation and Assimilation: The Role of Cultural Difference in the Visual and Verbal expression of Assyrian Ideology in the Reign of Ashurnasirpal II (883-859 BC),” Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1995) to cite just a few.

³¹ Cifarelli, “Gesture and Alterity” pp. 210-228.

³² See, for example, Cat. no. R1 for Assyrian soldiers and R3 for the king and his retinue.

Assyrians benefit from social perspective, that is, they may be scaled slightly larger than non-Assyrians.³³

Assyrian musicians are predominantly male, and play a large variety of instruments. The instruments include the vertical harp, lyre, lute, double pipe, frame drum, sistra, and cymbals. The trumpet and the horizontal forearm harp are two instruments that are only shown played by Assyrian men.

FOREIGNERS

The foreign musicians who enter the Assyrian sphere are varied. In one text, a wine list from Fort Shalmaneser at Nimrud dated to 784 BC, a number of different nationalities of musicians are named: Assyrian, Kassite, from Tabal, from Kummuh, Chaldean; in another text from the same site: Hittite, from Iabashute, Aramean, Kassite and Assyrian.³⁴ Unfortunately, the music of each group is not described, and neither is the dress of each group, making them difficult to identify in visual representations. What can be inferred from these texts is that musicians retained their national identity even (or especially?) in the service of the Assyrian king, but it is unclear whether this distinction was made for accounting purposes, because they were valued as exotic, or, most relevant to this study, because of the types of instruments they played and the kind of music they produced.³⁵ Images of foreign musicians are likewise limited in information, but the details are a little different and contribute to a larger understanding of their roles.

³³ Cat no. R11 is a good example of this.

³⁴ Stephanie Dalley and J.N. Postgate, *Tablets from Fort Shalmaneser*, vol. 3, *Cuneiform Tablets from Nimrud* (London: British School of Archaeology in Iraq, 1984), 145.iii, 19-23; NWL 15, 1.7-11.

³⁵ These issues are dealt with in Chapter 4.

Some representations of foreign musicians are on objects of foreign manufacture found at Assyrian sites. In other words, the artists and the music are presumably from the same, but non-Assyrian, culture. Because the presence of foreign musicians in the Assyrian capitals is well attested, I assume that the presence of these images reflects an affinity for the music of these groups, although it could be argued that the physical object on which the scene is depicted constitutes the primary value.³⁶ Other representations of foreigners are Assyrian, either depicting foreigners as emissaries of another culture, or as prisoners or slaves sent as tribute. Beginning with the foreign objects, then moving to Assyrian images of accepted foreigners, and finally considering Assyrian images of foreign prisoners, each nationality will be discussed in turn, and then the overall differences between Assyrians and foreigners will be noted.

North Syrians

The first group of foreign musicians to be discussed is the North Syrians. These musicians appear on a subset of our corpus: ivories carved in the North Syrian style.³⁷ In other words, these are works of art created in the greater periphery of Assyrian influence and then sent to the capital cities. The stylistic qualities are exemplified by large, wide, almond shaped eyes of the figures. The hair is presented as a patterned helmet that does

³⁶ To make a modern analogy, an American with a poster of a Chinese opera production may simply enjoy the graphic design of the image, but it is not unreasonable to assume that she also enjoys the music being portrayed.

³⁷ Cat. nos. I3-8. The North Syrian style has been identified by shared stylistic characteristics and by a pattern of distribution, Max E.L. Mallowan and Georgina Herrmann, *Furniture from SW.7 Fort Shalmaneser*, vol. 3, *Ivories from Nimrud (1949-1963)* (London: British School of Archaeology in Iraq, 1974), and Irene J. Winter, "Phoenician and North Syrian Ivory Carving in Historical Context: Questions of Style and Distribution," *Iraq* 38 (1976): 1-22.

not reach the shoulders. These musicians play double pipes, frame drums, lyres, and an unidentified instrument that may be a zither or a percussive scraper.

All of the musicians depicted on known Syrian style ivories are female.³⁸ This may be because music making was an exclusively female profession in Syria, although this seems unlikely. Even if this was true, or even if images of female musicians were favored by Syrian artists, there is no evidence to suggest that the Assyrians who imported them appreciated them for anything more than their artifactual value. However, it is possible that the Assyrian audience for ivory products only liked their ivories decorated with female Syrian musicians because they were less threatening, and represented a subset of a foreign population which was conceived as weaker, or more valuable, or both. It is equally possible that the audience simply preferred looking at images of women, rather than men. Another explanation is that the ivories tend to be pyxides, cylindrical containers that may have been used for cosmetics, and therefore used by a female constituency. This follows from the suggestion made previously that female audiences were restricted to performances by female musicians by fiat or custom.

Phoenician/South Syrian

A female lyre player appears on an ivory of foreign origin found in Room SW37 of Fort Shalmaneser, dated to between 860-612 BC.³⁹ She has a slim, narrow figure, fine cheekbones, and almond shaped eyes; the carving of the ivory can be characterized stylistically as egyptianizing. The style and iconography of this figure has been described

³⁸ On one ivory from the SE Palace at Nimrud (Cat. no. I3), two figures at the end of the procession hold rectangular objects that have been identified as possibly zithers or a percussive scraping instrument. As reconstructed in drawings, this last pair wears short skirts and legs bare above the knee.

as “unique”⁴⁰ and as such, it is difficult to draw many conclusions from it, other than to point out the ubiquity of the lyre in different nations in this part of the world in this period.

Phoenician style figures are inscribed on a tridacna shell found at Assur.⁴¹ Although this form of art flourished around the Mediterranean in the 7th century BC, the depiction of musicians on this shell is a singular example among known tridacna shells.⁴² On this shell, men with crosshatched hair to their shoulders and wearing ankle length robes play a lyre, a pipe and a frame drum in a garden before other men and sphinxes.

Possible Persians with feathered headdresses

Another distinct group can be identified by their feathered headdresses as depicted on Assyrian reliefs. Various scholars have argued that they are Philistines, Persians or Elamites.⁴³ John Russell has wondered if their late introduction, in the reign of Ashurbanipal, might suggest that they are Egyptians.⁴⁴ He finds support in the single feathers worn by Egyptian captives in Room M, although those figures wear a different costume and hairstyle.⁴⁵ The best argument, though not definitive, is Barnett’s identification of the men as Persian, based on both precedents in Luristan and antecedents

⁴⁰ Cat. no. I9, ND 7597.

⁴¹ Georgina Herrmann, *Ivories from room SW37, Fort Shalmaneser*, vol. 4, *Ivories from Nimrud (1949-1963)* (London: British School of Archaeology in Iraq, 1986), cat 385, p. 123, pl. 86.

⁴² Cat. no. Sh1.

⁴³ Rolf A. Stucky, *The Engraved Tridacna Shells*, vol. 19, *Dédalo* (Sao Paulo, Brasil: Museu de Arqueologia e Etnologia Universidade de Sao Paulo, 1974).

⁴⁴ See P. Calmeyer, “Federkränze und Musik,” in *Actes de la XVIIe Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale*, ed. André Finet (Ham-sur-Heure: Comité Belge de Recherches en Mésopotamie, 1970), p. 184 for his review of the literature.

⁴⁵ Personal communication.

at Persepolis, however Calmeyer rejects that attribution because the feathered headdress is never mentioned in the copious Greek descriptions of Persians.⁴⁶ Calmeyer suggests instead that the costume was not ethnic at all but rather a badge of rank, possibly in a cultic context. Such a hypothesis would not necessarily conflict with Barnett's reading of the headdress as Persian. It is certainly true that the headdress has a number of variations, and itself is the most consistent part of a varied group of individuals. However, on a relief from Nineveh's Southwest Palace Room XXII, the men with feathered headdresses appear to be the prisoners of Assyrian soldiers, indicating that they are non-Assyrian.⁴⁷ Giving precedence to an omission in Greek histories over the existence of exemplars from Persepolis demonstrates more faith in the ancient Greek sources than I can sustain; I prefer to accept the compromise between Barnett and Calmeyer's positions and consider the feathered headdressed men as "possible Persians," perhaps a special unit of Persians or Elamites.⁴⁸ In two scenes that feature these men, music is played: at a military procession of many men and in a garden with a lion.

The feathered military procession moves from left to right.⁴⁹ Because these reliefs are broken, they are thought to have fallen from an upper story, it is difficult to reconstruct the entire scene. One fragment shows a double pipe player with a slightly different headdress—an extra feather projects forward—facing left. Although the fragment cannot be placed with certainty, it certainly seems that the musician is facing the

⁴⁵ See BM 124928, illustrated in Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace of Ashurbanipal*, pl. XXXVI. The difference in personal adornment may be simply a contextual difference between figures who are clearly shown as humiliated in Room M, and others who are shown in a procession in Room S'.

⁴⁶ Calmeyer 1970, pp. 192-195.

⁴⁷ Austin Henry Layard, *Monuments of Nineveh* (London: 1849), vol. 2, pl. 44, and Archibald Paterson, *Assyrian Sculptures: Palace of Sinacherib* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1915), p. 49.

⁴⁸ See Chapter 5 for more on the identification of these figures.

⁴⁹ Cat. no. R23. The shields and spears argue against a cultic context here.

soldiers, and not playing towards the king and assembled Assyrians who are the presumed focus of the procession. In other words, whereas the audience of the procession is on the right—and probably the Assyrian king—the audience of the pipe player is on the left—and probably the procession itself. The only insight here is that the pipe is perhaps being used like a military fife to coordinate the march—a use that is not specifically attested for Assyrian soldiers and musicians.

In the second instance of feathered musicians, two men are shown bearing a vertical harp and a lyre and walking through a garden with a tame lion.⁵⁰ These men are beardless, chubbier, and wear extra beads and decoration, in contrast to the feathered headdressed men in the procession. Their relationship with the lion and their ultimate destination are unclear. The adjacent panel is lost but farther to the right, panels show a lion and lioness lounging in a garden.

Arabs

Four men face each other in two pairs on a relief of Ashurbanipal's palace (Cat. no. R25). The musicians on the left play a frame drum and a lyre, partially obscured by the drum and the body of the lyre player. The lyre has a straight cross bar and arms and the musician holds a plectrum in his right hand. On the right, the musicians play cymbals and a lyre of different shape. The second lyre has an angled cross bar and curved arms. This lyre player has no plectrum but his fingers are spread exaggeratedly over the strings, possibly to indicate plucking.

⁵⁰ Cat. no. R16. Barnett identifies these figures as a woman and a youth, but the curvature of the upper torso can be read as a male chest on both musicians (*Sculptures from the North Palace of Ashurbanipal*, p. 39).

The musicians' hair is depicted as rolls of tight curls that are flipped to the back of the head, almost like dreadlocks. The men are all bearded, with long full, squared off beards. They wear long tunics that end in fringes at the ankles. The tunics are belted, with the pair on the left in sashes and the pair on the right with what looks like geometrically decorated incised belts of metal. The men are all barefoot.

The very distinct hairstyle can be compared to Arab warriors riding camels from Slabs 11-12 of Room L of Ashurbanipal's North Palace at Nineveh.⁵¹ The soldiers from Room L are bare chested and wear knee length skirts. In contrast, the belted tunics the Arab musicians wear are nearly identical to the Assyrian musicians from Room S' (Cat. no. R21), although there the Assyrians are beardless and wear slippers. Based on their costume and the fact that they are not harassed by soldiers, it would seem that these men are part of the Assyrian contingent, culturally if not ethnically.⁵²

Judeans

The Judeans are the first foreign group to be discussed here who are definitely portrayed as enemies in their appearance. Three captives with lyres are followed by an Assyrian escort on a relief from Room XXXII of Sennacherib's palace (Cat. no. R11). The lyre players wear long tunics with hems at mid-shin; two parallel wavy lines decorate the

⁵¹ Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace of Ashurbanipal*, pl. XXXIII, now BM 124925-6.

⁵² Cifarelli uses the example of a scribe depicted using a brush and scroll as evidence that foreigners—in this case someone writing in alphabetic Aramaic rather than impressing Assyrian cuneiform—were sometimes depicted as indistinguishable from ethnic Assyrians (“Gesture and Alterity,” p. 213). What I am suggesting is that these are representations of a mid-process state in which the individuals are accepted in Assyrian society but still depicted with ethnic features.

It may be that costume (clothing, headdress) represents a cultural association on these images whereas hair (amount of curl, length, stylization) represents ethnicity. In that case, these men would be ethnically foreigners who have been “made Assyrian” culturally. See Chapter 4 for more on the assyrianization of foreigners.

tunics near the bottom. Two of the men wear caps and the third has tightly curled hair. They all wear beards of tight curls and walk in a hunched posture.⁵³

The tight curls of hair and beard are found on figures wearing long tunics in Room XXXVI of Sennacherib's palace, depicting the Judean city of Lachish, identified with an Akkadian label.⁵⁴ Although there is not an exact match for the wave design at the calf of the tunic, or the tight fitting cap, the cap is similar to the scarves tied tightly around the head of the figures led from Lachish. Perhaps the wave and the type and tying of the headscarf were regional variations within Judea, much like the different patterns and knots of a *kaffiya* can denote regionality in the Middle East today.

The lyres that these men play are again different from those played elsewhere by other foreigners. The two arms of the instrument are straight but different lengths, giving the lyres the shape of an irregular trapezoid. Both ends of the crossbars fold back on themselves like a hook, or the eye of a needle.⁵⁵

Elamites

The only Assyrian depictions of Elamite musicians are those of Elamite captives being led from their conquered city on Slabs 4-6 in Room XXXIII of the Southwest Palace at Nineveh (Cat. no. R15). These reliefs were discussed in some detail above as the group that combined, yet separated, men and women in one musical ensemble. However, Elamite representations of their own musicians also exist, and can be compared with the

⁵³ The middle figure is less stooped than the two that bracket him, giving the impression of a younger man flanked by elders. Whether this effect was intentional, and what that might mean about Judean musicians is unclear.

⁵⁴ Those reliefs are published in David Ussishkin, *The Conquest of Lachish by Sennacherib*, vol. 6, *Publications of the Institute of Archaeology* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1982).

Assyrian representations. I will first focus on how the musicians on this relief were identified as Elamite, followed by a discussion of their instruments.

The figures on this relief share the same basic hairstyle: tight curls at the top of the head that come down behind but do not quite reach the neck. The hair is tied with a band knotted at the back of the head. All of the musicians wear this style and the women and children behind them have variations on this type. The same hairstyle is worn by defenders and escapees of a city under siege, depicted in Room F of the North Palace of Ashurbanipal.⁵⁶ The figures in Room F are protecting and fleeing a city identified by a cuneiform label as Hamanu, “a royal city of the land of Elam.”⁵⁷ These Elamite soldiers wear the long belted tunics with a stripe down the hip and leg that the male musicians also wear. From the consistent hair and costume, there can be little doubt that the musicians in Room XXXIII are Elamites.

These Elamite musicians play vertical harps, a horizontal harp (without a known forearm finial)⁵⁸, double pipes and a cylindrical drum. Ignoring variations in decoration, all of these Elamite instruments were instruments known and played by Assyrians as well, suggesting a shared musical culture—sharing instruments if not songs and scales. It is worth noting again that, as discussed above, this group of Elamites is the only instance in which male and female musicians play together.

⁵⁵ Comparisons with lyre images of non-Assyrian origin are made in Chapter 5.

⁵⁶ Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace of Ashurbanipal*, pl. XVII. These are slabs 3-4 of Room F, now BM 124931 and BM 124932.

⁵⁷ M. Streck, *Assurbanipal und die letzten assyrischen Könige*, 3 vols., vol. II (Leipzig: 1916), p. 318.

⁵⁸ See Chapter 1, n. 24, regarding the current restoration.

The Elamite reliefs from Kul-e Farah are contemporaneous with the Neo-Assyrian state and present an unusually relevant comparison with the Assyrian palace relief.⁵⁹ Elamite musicians are depicted fairly consistently by both Assyrian and Elamite artists. The major difference in how the musicians were portrayed is both obvious and understandable in context: the Assyrian relief depicts Elamite women playing music.⁶⁰ The Assyrians show a group of musicians rounded up and taken away in a disorganized mass, not a proper performance. The Elamite reliefs show musical performances at ritual settings, at which women would not necessarily have participated.

The similarities, however, outweigh the differences. On both Assyrian and Elamite depictions, the hair bobs toward the shoulder in the back, and is held with a headband that ties in a knot at the back of the head. The men appear to have a neat beard (they can be hard to read on some of the eroded outdoor reliefs). The tunics have short sleeves, ending before the elbow. Waists are indicated on all the musicians, and the figures in Kul-e Farah I wear a belt, like those on the Assyrian relief. Kul-e Farah I also shows the costume coming down to the ankles, as on the Assyrian relief. The other reliefs depict shorter, knee-length garments that match other Assyrian portrayals of Elamites.⁶¹ The instruments pictured are similar as well: plenty of vertical harps, a couple of horizontal harps and one frame drum. The Neo-Elamite reliefs provide a corrective for distortions or exaggerations perpetuated by Assyrian artists on their eastern

⁵⁹ A brief bibliographic note on these reliefs were given in Chapter 1, n. 27, and they are illustrated on plates 38-40.

⁶⁰ Another difference is that the Elamite reliefs show all their musicians as right handed (as the Assyrians showed all of their own musicians). However, the one left handed Elamite player on the Assyrian relief may have been reconstructed improperly (suggested by Rimmer, *Ancient Musical Instruments of Western Asia*, p. 32).

⁶¹ For example, Slabs 8-9(?) from Room H of the North Palace at Nineveh, now BM 124939, Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace of Ashurbanipal*, pl. XXIII.

neighbors. As it turns out, the Assyrian reportage appears to have been reasonably accurate in this case, particularly in regard to the shape of the instruments and the hair and costume of the musicians.

Assyrians and foreigners are always differentiated, either by specifically naming them in texts or keeping them separated in images. This nationalistic grouping of musicians—especially in the administrative texts when they are presumably playing for similar audiences under similar conditions—may be interpreted as indicating that each national group had a distinct musical style. Regional musical styles would explain why the palace would want to retain so many of the same type of instrumentalists—Judean lyre music was different from Assyrian lyre music or Arab lyre music. It might be assumed that foreign musicians had fewer rights or resources than Assyrian musicians, but after they have been captured, there is no direct evidence to that effect. In fact, it is possible that foreign musicians or their children were readily assimilated into Assyrian society or acquired a relatively high status by virtue of their skills. There are some foreign musicians, like the Judeans, who look humiliated, while others, like the Arabs, seem at ease with their surroundings and unmolested by Assyrian soldiers. Some of this effect may be due more to the context of the scenes than the musicians' nationalities. For example, it is possible that the Arabs (Cat. no. R25) were once forced out of their home, like the Judeans and Elamites. They may simply have been represented at a different stage of their assyrianization.⁶²

⁶² Russell points out that Judeans are shown both as enemies, in the Room XXXVI Lachish series and then as slave labor at the capital, in Court VI, both in Sennacherib's palace. Thus we have an example of

Very few instruments are associated with just one culture. Exceptions are the horizontal forearm harp played only by Assyrians, and the Elamite horizontal harp. If the representations constitute evidence and not merely accidents of preservation, these instruments may be limited to those groups. Lyres are both shared as types and at the same time unique to each culture as each group plays an instrument that varies in shape and decoration from all the others. The vertical harp, double pipes and frame drums are shared by many neighboring groups, suggesting an “international” culture of musical instruments—but not necessarily shared songs or musical styles.

Human - Animal

The most straightforwardly definable subset of musicians are the animal musicians attested on two sealings, both excavated from Nimrud. These musicians do not mix with any humans, either as fellow musicians or as an audience.

The first, a sealing of Išdi-Nabu on a tablet from Nimrud dated after 648 BC depicts two monkeys crouching, facing each other and playing pipes.⁶³ The second impression is taken from a jar sealing.⁶⁴ On this sealing a horse, seated like a man, drinks from a jar and is attended by another anthropomorphic equid while a third plays a bow shaped instrument that resembles a lyre.⁶⁵

former captives performing for their new state, albeit in a more obviously coercive setting than the musicians that I am referring to here (*Sennacherib's Palace Without Rival*, p. 167).

⁶³ Cat. no. S2.

⁶⁴ Cat. no. S1.

⁶⁵ The identification of this instrument as a lyre seems to have partly been due to a tradition of equid-lyre iconography; see Helen Adolph, “The Ass and the Harp,” *Speculum* 25 (1950): 49-57; and W. Stauder, “Asinus ad Lyram,” in *Frankfurter musikhistorische Studien: Helmuth Osthoff zu seinem siebzigsten Geburtstag*, ed. Ursula Aarburg and Peter Cahn, *Frankfurter musikhistorische Studien* (Tutzing: H. Schneider, 1969), 25-32.

Although monkeys could have been trained to blow on whistles, the scene with horses presents the animals in impossibly human postures. In other words, this scene is imagined, and not meant to imitate reality. It might represent a myth, a fable, a whim, a cartoon, or a caricature. For this reason, it is difficult to interpret the meaning of the pipes and lyre in these scenes, since it may be the symbol of a cult, a literary or legendary character, an attribute of a real person being parodied or completely imaginary.

Historically, representations of musical animals are not unknown. A parallel between third and first millennium lyres may be found in representations of animals playing these instruments. The inlaid front panel of one Early Dynastic instrument from Ur shows an anthropomorphic equid playing a bull lyre—not unlike the seal impression from Nimrud—accompanied by a smaller mammal playing a sistrum.⁶⁶ One interpretation is that this is a scene of life in the Netherworld.⁶⁷ A number of monkeys play flutes or drums on images from the mid-third millennium BC to Sasanian times.⁶⁸ The images suggest a mythic or playful association with music but it is difficult to interpret these scenes further.

Summary

This chapter has reviewed information on musicians in Assyrian society, as can be determined from both texts and visual imagery.

⁶⁶ CBS 17694, Woolley, *The Royal Cemetery*, pp. 69-70, 257, 280-282, pl. 105-7. Illustrated here on figure 45b, on plate 36. The smaller animal has been identified as a “jackal-headed creature” by Francis W. Galpin, *The Music of the Sumerians and their immediate successors the Babylonians and Assyrians*, 2nd ed. (1st edition Cambridge U. Press, 1937) (Strasbourg: Strasbourg University Press, 1955), p. 8.

⁶⁷ Stauder, “Asinus ad Lyram.”

⁶⁸ Agnes Spycket, ““Le carnaval des animaux”: on some musician monkeys from the ancient Near East,” *Iraq* 60 (1998): 1-10.

The social standing of musicians apparently varied greatly, probably based more on gender and nationality than on profession. From administrative documents we learn that 3% of the household wine allotments went to musicians, not an insignificant amount. Other documents record the purchase and sale of slaves and other property by musicians. In contrast, some musicians were given to the king by vassal states and conquered cities, implying that musicians could also be traded as property. The range of social standing most likely reflected the variations in the types of people who performed as musicians. In illuminating the life of the musician, the wine lists are perhaps the most helpful because they offer a consistent point of view of one institution that dealt with musicians. The images of musicians are valuable for similar reasons.

These images were divided based on three criteria, each dealt with separately: gender, nationality and species (the latter distinguishing depictions of animal musicians found on sealings).

Male and female musicians are differentiated in images and texts of the period, with female musicians occasionally being specifically named where the plural (which could indicate all males or mixed sexes) could have sufficed. Distinguishing females in art, particularly on the palace reliefs is a bit more difficult. Using a relief of Ashurbanipal's as a test case (Cat. no. R15), variations in fashion (clothing and hairstyle), and physiognomy (height, musculature) were found to signify gender. Female and male musicians were usually segregated and it seems that they were also segregated by audience, that is, female musicians played primarily for female audiences, and male musicians for male audiences. Both genders play the same range of instruments with the

exception of the trumpet and horizontal forearm harp, both of which are played only by men.

Differences in nationality are much more clearly defined in Assyrian art. Assyrians are identified by their upright postures, square beards and general rectitude. Musicians in the ivories in North Syrian style have large eyes and are all women, possibly reflecting the ivory medium more than the culture represented. An unusual egyptianizing ivory also shows a female musician, playing a lyre. Two relief scenes show provisionally identified possible “Persians” in feathered headdresses. In one case, a pipe player plays for a procession of soldiers, in the other, a harpist and a lyrist walk through a garden with a tame lion. In an unusually harmonious grouping of Assyrians and foreigners, four men with distinctively Arab hair play lyres and percussion instruments amidst Assyrian soldiers. While all of the above musicians are depicted with a minimum of dignity and respect, the last two groups, Judeans and Elamites, are shown as defeated enemies. Three Judean lyre players are followed by an Assyrian soldier in one instance, and many Elamite musicians leave their city in the second. The Elamite musicians are comparable in dress and instruments with those depicted on contemporaneous Neo-Elamite reliefs, increasing our confidence in the reportage by the Assyrians of this group and possibly others.

In terms of the range of instruments by nationality, all of the foreign musicians in and around Assyria play similar instruments, with discernible differences in the style of their lyres, but almost all of them playing a form of lyre. The only instruments reserved for the Assyrian male musicians are the trumpet and the horizontal forearm harp. The Elamites have a particular form of horizontal harp themselves.

A final subset of musicians consists of a pair of monkeys and a horse who play music on seal impressions found at Nimrud. In both cases, the images are small and not easily read, but one might guess that these pictures illustrate fables or myths, or a merely the whim of the visual artist.

The presence of musical instruments permit one to identify the musicians. The musicians and instruments will now, in turn, help to identify various situations during which music was appropriate. In the next chapter, the performance contexts of music will be described and analyzed. Whereas the musicians in this chapter could be identified, more or less confidently, as the Assyrians described them, the musical events of the next chapter are not so clearly defined by the Assyrians themselves. In the absence of a clear Assyrian typology or classification of such scenes, the musical events, will be categorized with modern terms useful for scholarly analysis. Their Assyrian significance, however, will be discussed in the concluding chapters, 4 and 5.

Chapter 3

Musical Events

In this chapter, the musical event—the context of a musical performance as represented—is defined and described. The phrase “musical event” is used here to describe the overall situation in which musicians play instruments. It should be noted at the outset that the musical event in Assyrian art does not focus on the performance of music itself; rather, music tends to be a secondary action witnessing or an accompaniment to a primary action. Thus the musical event is never something like a concert where audience members may dine, but instead a banquet context at which music happens to be played. The primary actions will therefore be used to develop the typology of associated musical events.

Because the event is more contextual and expansive, that is, it maps more directly on the whole image or artwork, it may seem like a task that should have been covered first, rather than last, in the three chapters that characterize Assyrian music as represented in art. However, it was necessary first to identify the instruments, as they are the markers for “musical” scenes. Second, the musicians themselves needed to be distinguished and classified, as they constitute the next level of understanding for the musical event. To make a grammatical analogy, the most basic sentence that can be generated from these images is “There is a harp.” The next level would include an active verb, requiring an active subject: “A bearded man plays a harp.” A third level includes more details: “A bearded man plays a harp before a king who offers a libation, in a garden, after an animal hunt.” This chapter, on musical events, pertains to those indirect objects and modifiers of

space and time in the sentence. The complex “sentence” then, has awaited a discussion of basic sentences. Although terms like “audience” and “context” will be used frequently in this chapter, all of the observations and arguments in this chapter, as with the previous two, are based on information within the representations, and therefore refer to the represented audience and the depicted musical context.

The musical event is defined here to include the actors, the action and the setting. Using the depicted audience of the musical performance as the primary means of distinction, I have identified five major contextual categories or “musical event types”: Military, Religious, Banquet, Work, and Mythical. Each example of a musical event differs from every other, but by grouping like events, some overall patterns may be discerned. To be sure, the names and categories I employ here are not necessarily Assyrian by name or type. However, the names are useful for a modern understanding and analysis of this group of images, and the instruments and musicians in various types of scenes can help to correct or support my classification. In fact, these images were meant to be understood within a largely non-literate local society or by foreign visitors who would not necessarily have read Akkadian, so it is not inconceivable that by using some of the clues supplied in the images, non-native viewers would be able to determine some intentional patterns in Neo-Assyrian art. Thus, although the categories I use are modern, they are still based on close observation of Assyrian art.

I have isolated five main elements in a musical event for analysis: the instruments, the musicians, the audience, the setting and the action. The first two have been discussed at some length already. The latter three constitute the stage upon which the musician plays an instrument. I will consider each of these in turn.

The audience is defined here as the figures toward whom the musicians are facing, even if those audience members have their backs to the musicians. In other words, the audience is identified by the position of the musicians and not by any criteria based on the figures of the audience themselves. The other actors in a scene would be non-musicians toward whom no music is specifically directed. They would include, for example, non-musicians in a procession with the musicians, or servants attending to the primary audience. This audience is described and identified in the same language as that applied to the musicians in Chapter 2, using costume and hairstyle to determine gender and nationality. In addition, the audience may include deities, who are addressed in texts or represented in images by their symbols.

The setting, or background, of the image includes any flora or fauna, indications of geographical elements, like hills or rivers, and architecture, such as a city wall or a tent. All of these elements serve to locate the scene geographically and this location could be either specific and named, or an iconic generalization. At the most basic level, the background can suggest whether the scene is taking place in Assyria or in a foreign land.

The action describes the primary predicate of the image including necessary props; these main actions are quite varied. Among them are the pouring of liquid over a dead animal (a libation), eating and drinking while seated or reclining (a banquet), the taking of prisoners and booty from a conquered city or the collection of decapitated heads (military), or the transport of quarried stone and the erection of a building (work). Although identifying action from a static representation may in some instances be open to discussion, narrative texts usually supply unambiguous verbs.

Ultimately, it is the audience portrayed in a musical scene that allows it to be properly placed in the classification system. However, the background, action, musicians and instruments may have correlations with the audience—and therefore musical event type—and any correlations will both lend support to the classification system and aid in describing each type of musical event in more detail.

Classification

As noted, five types of musical events have been identified, some of which can be further subdivided and categorized: Military, Religious, Work, Banquet, and Mythical. The audiences that define these event types are soldiers, deities,¹ workers, diners, and anthropomorphized animals, monsters or heroes. Other classification systems are perfectly valid and might yield different conclusions; I have chosen these five categories because they overlap as little as possible but can be used for any scene in which the context is distinguishable. At the risk of redundancy, I would point out again that these are also fairly obvious categories that a naïve viewer of these images could easily derive, suggesting that a non-native contemporary viewer could also be expected to differentiate between them.

Each of the musical event types will be examined in turn, with definitions, examples and correlations of action, setting, musicians and instruments, as well as a word on consistency, that is, whether all known examples of a given event include musical

¹ Deities may be represented anthropomorphically, or as symbols of two types: either as a real world object like an altar (Cat. no. R24); or as a representational device on the surface of the representation, such as a star disk (Cat. no. V1).

performances.² An effort has been made to clarify which are the established sources for a particular event type and which are images that have been classified into an event type based on secondary characteristics.

The order in which they are presented, Military, Religious, Banquet, Work, and Mythical, as well as the subcategories therein, reflect my comfort in assigning each particular label to a set of scenes. That is, I am most confident in assigning a Military label to a scene, whereas the Mythical scenes are categorized more tentatively.

Military

As Tables A.2 and A.3 show, there are twelve scenes with musical elements that are categorized as Military, because of the soldiers in the audience. Adjacent reliefs from Ashurnasirpal II's palace at Nimrud show musicians playing while soldiers who have successfully completed a battle collect enemy heads and return to camp (Cat. nos. R1-2). Two reliefs from Sennacherib's reign are only known from field drawings and depict musicians playing while soldiers chop down orchards (Cat. nos. R7, R12). Arab musicians play among soldiers on a relief from Ashurbanipal's reign (Cat. no. R25) and an Assyrian style ivory shows women (?) playing drums from a city wall before an armed soldier (Cat. no. I1). A third relief from Sennacherib shows Assyrian soldiers with spears and shields in a procession (Cat. no. R14), reminiscent of the processions on the Balawat Gates (Cat. no. Br1-2). Enemy musicians are led from battle sites in reliefs from

² The omission of music in alternate depictions of a given act can be read in a few different ways. The two primary interpretations are that the inconsistency represents either real-life discrepancies or variations in representational practice. Once music has been associated with a particular type of event, it then becomes possible to suggest that music could be "understood" to be there by the surrounding representational context, even when not represented.

Sennacherib (Cat. no. R11) and Ashurbanipal (Cat. no. R15). A third foreign procession, of feathered, possibly Persian or Elamite men from Ashurbanipal's palace, may not be antagonistic (Cat. no. R23). These variations—post-battle activities, Assyrian and enemy processions—are all described in texts, as well as depicted on images, and texts also describe the voluntary or involuntary transfer of goods as tribute or booty from the defeated king to the Assyrian capitals.³ There are no scenes that show music being performed while the battle was being fought, only performances in the aftermath.

The audience in military scenes varies widely, but always includes the male Assyrian soldiers who define the context. Bedraggled enemy (men and women) are often part of the audience as well. One imagines that the music, whether produced triumphantly from Assyrian musicians or pathetically from foreign musicians, would have been inspiring to the Assyrians and disheartening for the enemy. On the Assyrian-style ivory from Nimrud cited above, the scene appears to be male foreign musicians banging on frame drums at the approach (or departure?) of a heavily armed Assyrian soldier (Cat. no. II).

The setting for these scenes is always a foreign land. This is clearly stated in texts, and in images often indicated by a label, or by features of distinctive landscape such as rivers and hills or exotic trees.⁴ In scenes of battles and their aftermath, architecture may be depicted. The walls of a foreign city are shown on reliefs of Sennacherib's reign

³ Albert Kirk Grayson, *Assyrian rulers of the early first millennium BC, The Royal inscriptions of Mesopotamia. Assyrian periods*; v. 2 (Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1991), A.0.101.1, p. 189ff. (218 for music), Daniel David Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*, 312, p. 143; 234, 240, p. 116, 121, 113, 203; BM 118800 + BM 90925 + BM 132013, 284, p. 137.

⁴ See the articles in Mario Liverani, ed., *Neo-Assyrian geography*, vol. 5, *Quaderni di geografia storica* (Università di Roma "La Sapienza," Dipartimento di scienze storiche archeologiche e antropologiche dell'antichità, 1995), especially Michelle I. Marcus, "Geography as Visual Ideology: Landscape, Knowledge, and Power in Neo-Assyrian Art," pp. 181-191.

(Cat. nos. R7 and R12) and the stables of an Assyrian encampment are in the background of a relief of Ashurnasirpal II's (Cat. no. R2).

Because both Assyrian and foreign musicians play in military scenes, subcategories of the Military genre may be defined by the type of musician. Where the musicians are Assyrian and march with other Assyrians, they form an Assyrian Procession. Where the musicians are foreigners removed from their homes by Assyrian soldiers, they form an Enemy Procession. All Assyrian musicians in these scenes are male; the foreign musicians may include females (although the majority of foreign musicians are male).

A wide range of instruments appear in military scenes, although one must distinguish between Assyrian instruments, brought on a military campaign, and foreign instruments, forced out of their proper contexts at spear point. In the majority of military scenes, the combinations of instruments played by Assyrians varies widely, and may include horizontal forearm harps, lyres, lutes, frame drums, and cymbals. The instrumentation is more standard in processions, where Assyrian musicians play (in order from the front of the procession to the rear) two frame drums, two horizontal forearm harps and one sistrum (Cat. nos. Br1-2). In texts, singing is also described in Assyrian processions:

That the might of Assur, my lord, might be made manifest, I hung their heads upon the shoulders of their nobles and with singing and music I paraded through the public square of Nineveh⁵

and

⁵ Esarhaddon Broken Prism B, Luckenbill *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*, 514, p. 206; also V. Scheil, *Le Prisme S d'Assaraddon, Roi d'Assyrie 681-668*, vol. 208, *Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études* (Paris: Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion, 1914), p. 16, face 3, l. 40-42 shows "singing and music" to have been translated from "zammerê u (giš) ZAG-SAL."

The head of Teumann, king of Elam, I hung on the neck of Dunanu. With the Elamite captives, the booty of Gambulu, which at the command of Assur my hands had captured, with singers and music I entered Nineveh amidst rejoicing.⁶

As noted in the first chapter, without fully understanding the visual conventions that communicated singing, we can only guess whether or not the images of Assyrian processions were meant to suggest vocalizations.

Enemy processions are inconsistent in their ensembles, but the instruments played include lyres, vertical harps, a horizontal harp, double pipes and a drum, and possibly singing (c.f. the Elamite woman with her hand at her throat, Cat. no. R15). The instruments played by foreigners in these scenes should probably not be considered “martial instruments,” but rather domestic, concert instruments depicted in contrast to the Assyrian army and to emphasize their value as booty for the Assyrian court.

There are many military scenes depicted in Assyrian art and only a fraction of them include musicians. In texts, too, different versions of the same annals may not always list musicians.⁷ Either musical performances are not always required for military events, or they may have been present but not consistently represented.

Religious

If Religious musical events are defined by the divinities among their audience, six images can be confidently regarded as Religious scenes and three more inferred. Before the

⁶ Ashurbanipal Cylinder B, Luckenbill *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*, 865, p. 334. The relevant passage is transliterated in Maximilian Streck, *Assurbanipal und die letzten assyrischen Könige*, vol. 2, p. 124, Cyl. B, Col. VI, 46: *itti anēlu nārē fmeš epeš nin-gu-ti*. An alternate translation would be “with musicians making merriment,” rather than a disingenuous distinction between “singers” and “music.”

presence of the divine, three distinct acts take place: libations, a procession and a dedication. These different actions may serve as subcategories of religious scenes, but in fact they all generally include the same kinds of musicians and instruments, unlike the subcategories of Military scenes (Assyrian versus enemy processions). Libations are here defined as the pouring of liquid on consecrated ground or objects (Cat. nos. R3-4, R24). Religious processions are orderly parades of men either identifiable as temple workers or directed towards a sacred space; in any case, there is an absence of armed soldiers (Cat. nos. R13).⁸ “Dedications” is short hand for the various acts done to and around sacred cult objects, like altars, statues or buildings, including making offerings and pledging the cult object to a deity (Cat. no. Br3).⁹ All of the painted vessels (Cat. nos. V1-3) depict music being performed before altars or divine symbols, but without further details of context. A relief from Sennacherib’s palace that was categorized as Military because of the presence of soldiers, is included as Religious as well, because of the presence of a theriomorphic (animal shaped) vessel (Cat. no. R7). In fact, the musicians play towards the vessel and with their backs to the soldiers, so the classification of the relief as Religious has better support (the subject of the relief adjacent to this one is unknown).

⁷ After his sixth campaign, Sennacherib’s annals no longer refer to the musicians received as tribute in his first campaign into Babylon, although he continues to mention the musicians sent by Hezekiah of Judea after the third campaign. Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*, vol. 2, pp. 140-141.

⁸ There is textual evidence that musicians participated in the procession for the New Year’s festival, but they are not described as marching, rather, they play during offerings and at various stations along the route, see Beate Pongratz-Leisten, *Ina Šulmi Irub: die kulttopographische und ideologische Programmatik der akitu-Prozession in Babylonien und Assyrien im 1. Jahrtausend v. Chr.*, vol. 16, *Baghdader Forschungen* (Mainz am Rhein: P. von Zabern, 1994), pp. 47, 54.

⁹ The separation of the cult of Ashur from the state of Assyria is either non-existent or extremely difficult to discern. This is clear in Ann Shafer’s description of a bronze band of the Balawat Gate (here Cat. no. Br3) in “The Carving of an Empire: Neo-Assyrian Monuments on the Periphery,” Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1998, pp. 94-96, quoted and discussed in the next chapter.

The three visual representations included among Religious scenes without a divine symbol need to be justified. Ashurnasirpal II's pouring of libations over dead animals after hunts (Cat. nos. R3-4) are included by comparison with Ashurbanipal performing an identical act before an altar (Cat. no. R24). It is possible that the presence of the divine in the earlier scenes is in the body of the king in his role as priest of the national god Ashur, or the divine element may be in the act of libation itself. A third scene is classified as religious because of its original findspot, but without an explicit deity represented; it is a procession scene that originally stood in a passage leading to the Ishtar Temple in Nineveh (Cat. no. R13). Iconographically, this scene includes men wearing cloaks and hoods that resemble fish heads and tails, a form associated with religious activity and possibly the *kalu* priests, who were involved in singing and performing at temples.¹⁰

Texts support the idea that musicians played for deities. For example, from Ashurbanipal's Acrostic Hymn to Marduk and Zarpanitu: "Offerings, incense, censers, stringed *inu* instruments, harps and [...] are set out; they glorify the builder of Esaggil, Babylon rejoices, [...] is exuberant!"¹¹ Other texts refer to the musical accompaniment of various festivals, including the New Year's festival, and music for the reconstruction of a

¹⁰ For the iconography of the fish tail headdress, see Madhloom, *The Chronology of Neo-Assyrian Art*, p. 81. Examples of this type are seen on the Balawat Gates of Shalmaneser III, L. W. King, *Bronze Reliefs from the Gates of Shalmaneser King of Assyria B.C. 860-825* (London: British Museum, 1915), pls. I, II, and from the palace of Sennacherib, where two fishtail hatted men stand before a censer, Paterson, *Assyrian Sculptures: Palace of Sennacherib*, pls. 38, 74-6.

¹¹ K7592 + K8717 + DT363 + BM99173, Livingstone, ed., *Court Poetry and Literary Miscellanea*, 2, pp. 6-10. "Stringed *inu* instruments" have been identified as lutes, Collon and Kilmer, "The Lute in Ancient Mesopotamia," pp. 16-17.

temple. In addition to signaling the start of various parts of a ceremony, the musicians took part in the New Year's procession.¹²

The settings for Religious scenes are varied, but may include temple gates, presumably as further indication of the nature of the event. The musicians in these sacred scenes are male Assyrians only. Neither foreigners nor women play in these circumstances. Among these Assyrians are both bearded and unbearded men, sometimes playing together—further showing that there may not have been a cultural difference between these groups.

Instruments played at Religious events include the lyre, double pipe, frame drum and cymbals. The main instrument in these sacred scenes is the horizontal forearm harp, played in pairs as we have now come to expect. This is true of post-hunt libations of Ashurnasirpal II, the dedication of a statue by Shalmaneser III, and in the procession to the Ishtar temple portrayed in the palace of Sennacherib. The horizontal forearm harp is present in all sacred scenes, and may be accompanied by percussion instruments. The presence of the frame drum and cymbals in the Religious procession suggests that these two instruments signified “procession” in both the Military and Religious genres.

As mentioned in the first chapter, the kettledrum was itself the object of significant cultic rituals, and the manufacture of the instrument had ritual musical accompaniment.¹³ Letters from Babylon report the use of the kettledrum in various cults. The drum is brought out at night and played before various gods, possibly in their astronomical forms, including Enki, Marduk, Nergal, and Venus/Ishtar, as well as a lunar

¹² Hartmann, “Ritualtexte als Quellen für die Kultmusik der neuassyrischen Zeit,” p. 12.

¹³ *ibid*, pp. 19-22.

eclipse.¹⁴ The same instrument is used metaphorically to describe the heart of a god.¹⁵

As previously noted, there are no Neo-Assyrian representations of the kettledrum.¹⁶

Not all religious scenes have musical performances. The dedication of a statue represented on the Balawat Gates has a near twin on band X of the same gate but this second example does not include musicians.¹⁷ However, libations after the hunt, a subcategory of sacred scenes, do include music in each of three examples.¹⁸

Banquet

Banquets appear on the reliefs of Sargon II and Ashurbanipal, and are a popular subject of ivories as well. The audience in Banquet scenes includes at least one diner. This is a person, usually seated, who is presented with food and drink. Diners may lift food or drinks towards their mouths with bent elbows and angled forearms, but they are never seen with their mouths open. The setting for Banquets may be outside, in a garden signified by trees and other flora, or unmarked, presumably indoors.

Music at celebrations is mentioned in texts, for example: “In the month of Tishri (VII), I took the *sigusu*-plant in my hand [and] cele[brated] a festival on the 8th day of

¹⁴ Enki: K10373 + K12947, Simo Parpola, ed., *Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars*, 345, pp. 277-8; Marduk: K1222, 342, p. 276; Nergal K1148, 340, p. 275; Venus: 83-1-18, 270, 342, p. 276; eclipse: DT98, p. 282.

¹⁵ VAT8917, Livingstone, ed., *Court Poetry and Literary Miscellanea*, 39, pp. 99-102.

¹⁶ It is perhaps the nocturnal use of the drum that prevents it from being pictured. Conventions for portraying nighttime scenes have not been identified and may be in a mode lost to us, i.e. paint.

¹⁷ Ann Shafer suggests that these images on the gates portray different moments in the dedicatory process, “The Carving of an Empire: Neo-Assyrian Monuments on the Periphery,” p. 96.

¹⁸ There is also a libation or similar act depicted in the North Palace of Ashurbanipal, Room I, Slab 9 (illustrated in Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace of Ashurbanipal*). In that scene the king stands before a similar altar and before two Assyrian soldiers. At his feet is the head of his enemy. The slab is very poorly preserved and none of the figures can be seen in detail.

Tishri amidst sweet music.”¹⁹ A few visual images can be securely identified as Banquets, such as the field drawing of reliefs from the upper register of Room 2 at Khorsabad (now lost)²⁰ (Cat. no. R6), the banquet of Ashurbanipal fallen into Room S' of the North Palace at Nineveh (Cat. no. R17), and on a Syrian ivory from Nimrud (Cat. no. I3). I have categorized a number of relief fragments with floral backgrounds as Banquets (Cat. nos. R18-22) and incomplete ivories are classified similarly (Cat. nos. I4, I7-8). One odd scene depicts two men in feathered headdresses walking in a garden with a tame lion (Cat. no. R16). The immediately adjacent slab is unknown but farther in the garden are two more lions, reclining. Because the scene seems to be set in a park or garden, I have included it among the Banquet scenes, although specific elements, namely the lion, are more than a little unusual.

The musicians at Banquets are both male and female. The relief from Khorsabad (Cat. no. R6) shows bearded men playing for male diners;²¹ on the ivories in Syrian style, all of the musicians are female and play for female audiences; and on a sealing from Nimrud, a horse plays music for a diner who happens to be another horse (Cat. no. S1). There is a definite correspondence between musician and audience in Banquet scenes.²²

The instruments played in banquet scenes are the vertical harp, lyre, lute, double pipe, single pipe, frame drum, suspended drum, cymbals and possibly a washboard-like

¹⁹ SU 51/117, Laura Kataja and Robert Whiting, ed., *Grants, Decrees and Gifts of the Neo-Assyrian Period*, vol. 12, *State Archives of Assyria* (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1995), 48, pp. 49-50.

²⁰ Another banquet scene from Room 7 of Sargon II's palace at Khorsabad is extremely fragmentary and no musicians can be identified in the image, Gordon Loud, *Khorsabad*, (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1936), vol I, figs. 87-89.

²¹ The diners themselves are around a corner from the musicians on another wall. The subject matter (servants filling cups stand behind the musicians around yet another corner) confirms the continuity of the scene.

²² The presence of Ashurbanipal at his Banquet with female musicians (Cat. no. R17) is a notable exception, but perhaps the king should be considered exempt from these social rules.

percussion instrument or zither. The most popular of these instruments were the vertical harp, double pipe and lyre. This group of instruments is very similar to those played by Enemy Processions in Military scenes—three Judeans play lyres (Cat. no. R11), and vertical harps dominate the Elamite ensemble (Cat. no. R15)—leading me to suppose that those foreign musicians were meant to play at banquets for their own rulers, before being displaced by the Assyrians.²³

Because there are really only two semi-complete Assyrian depictions of banquets, one from Sargon II's reign and the other from Ashurbanipal, any observations made regarding the consistency of music at these events would be premature.

Work

Work scenes are among the most difficult to define, although not to identify (Cat. nos. R8-10, and R12). In each of these scenes, a group of men work in concert to accomplish a goal, dragging a quarried block of stone in the first three, destroying an orchard in the fourth.²⁴ The audience in the quarrying scenes is foreign and Assyrian, but Assyrian in the orchard scene. How then, can the audience define this genre? I propose that the key is the audience working *in concert*. In the quarrying scenes, a number of men hold identical poses in anticipation of action. In the orchard scene, a number of men are posed

²³ As an example of a foreign banquet, see PAM No. 38.780, an ivory from Megiddo showing a seated ruler drinking from a cup while a lyre player stands before him (illustrated in Gordon Loud, *The Megiddo Ivories*, vol. LII, *Oriental Institute Publications* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939], pl. 4, cat. no. 2). More banquets are depicted on four examples of Phoenician metal bowls with a fairly consistent instrumentation consisting of double pipes, a lyre (or two) and frame drum (in three examples, and three lyres and a frame drum in the fourth), see Glenn Markoe, *Phoenician Bronze and Silver Bowls from Cyprus and the Mediterranean* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), cat. nos. Cy6, G3, G8, U6.

²⁴ For more on the destruction of orchards, see Steven W. Cole, "The Destruction of Orchards in Assyrian Warfare," in *Assyria 1995: proceedings of the 10th Anniversary Symposium of the Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, Helsinki, September 7-11, 1995*, ed. S. Parpola and R.M. Whiting (Helsinki: The Project, 1997), 29-40.

at various points in a range of motion, like the figures in a series of Edward Muybridge photographs. The signal to begin (or continue) their simultaneous effort is in the hands of the musician.²⁵

Texts refer to music at Work events. In Rassam Cylinder A, Ashurbanipal reports that he had foreign kings help build his new palace: "Molding its bricks, performing labor upon it, they passed their days to the accompaniment of music...."²⁶ An association between work and music is also made in a curse that ends the treaty of Assur-nerari V with Mati'-ilu, King of Arpad:

If Mati'ilu, his sons, or his magnates who sin against this treaty of Assur-nerari, king of Assyria, may his farmers not sing the harvest song in the fields, may no vegetation spring forth in the open country and see the sunlight, may women fetching water not draw water from the springs...²⁷

The implication is that the harvest song is an integral part of the life cycle, and to silence it would mean disaster for the transgressor of the treaty.

The images depicting work have been briefly described as quarrying scenes and the destruction of an orchard. In the former, bearded male Assyrians astride the block itself play trumpets, presumably to synchronize the work of the foreign laborers. In the latter, the musicians are not clearly identifiable as foreign or Assyrian but they beat frame drums as Assyrian soldiers chop down trees. If the drummers are Assyrian, they may be

²⁵ One might suppose that seafaring scenes might depict rowers being coordinated by drums, but I have found no such representations.

²⁶ Luckenbill *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*, 836 p. 322.

²⁷ K 15272 + Rm 120 + Rm 274 + BM 134596 + 79-7-8, 195, Simo Parpola and Kazuko Watanabe, ed., *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths*, vol. 2, *State Archives of Assyria* (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1988), 2, pp. 8-11.

creating a systematic rhythm to encourage the work. If they are foreign, they might be acting under threat to establish a tempo for the destruction of their own property.²⁸

All of the musicians are male, and the quarrying scenes are the only examples of the trumpet shown in use on Assyrian art. All of these scenes are set outside the city center.

It is not clear if there is always a trumpeter in the scenes that show blocks being dragged (many are broken or damaged where the trumpeters would be expected) but there are definitely scenes of quarrying and orchard destruction that are not accompanied by music.²⁹

Myth

Mythical scenes are defined by a particular aspect of their audience. I am defining “mythical” to include scenes where monsters or anthropomorphized animals participate. Another way to consider myths is as a different sense of reality, represented differently than scenes of historical narrative. This is not to say that there is no internal logic to the images, but that that logic is not necessarily shared with the more historical representations of the world. The scenes I am classifying as mythical are the two seal impressions depicting animal musicians and an incised shell of Phoenician style that shows musicians playing in a floral background among a large figure and sphinxes (Cat. nos. S1-2, Sh1). Aside from the fantastic participants, there is a conspicuous lack of

²⁸ It is possible that they are foreigners trying to drive away the soldiers, or encouraging their troops to repel the Assyrians, but that interpretation seems the least likely by far because it would show more foreign resistance than other reliefs.

other correlations in these images, in setting, action, musicians and instruments. They may parallel other genres, however; one horse plays music while another dines—a scene that could be classified as a banquet. Another Assyrian seal, of dogs entertaining a horse at a banquet, also has music—one dog plays a string instrument of some sort, possibly a lyre.³⁰ Unfortunately, that seal was given to the Louvre without any archaeological provenance.³¹ The existence of two seals is not enough to suggest that music was a constant in these mythical banquet scenes, but it is perhaps safe to say that music was a motif in such scenes.

Summary

This chapter introduced yet a higher level of interpretive classification, the musical event. Not only does the data set continue to shrink as clues of background are sought, the categories though consistent, are not necessarily Neo-Assyrian categories. However, by presenting terminology to describe the various contexts, further arguments can be made in the next two chapters.

The context of a scene is composed of various elements: the actors, the setting, and the action. In a musical scene at least one of the figures is a musician and often another is the audience. By focusing on the audiences in these scenes, four types of musical event can be defined, Military, Religious, Banquet and Work, and a fifth, Mythical, can be added to encompass a few unusual scenes.

²⁹ Quarrying: Southwest Palace at Nineveh, Court VI, slabs 66-68, Russell, *Sennacherib's Palace Without Rival*, fig. 50; Orchards: Southwest Palace at Nineveh, Room XLV, slab 6, among others, illustrated in Cole, "The Destruction of Orchards in Assyrian Warfare," pp. 37-40.

³⁰ The seal is AO 27916, illustrated in Dominique Collon, *First Impressions: Cylinder Seals in the Ancient Near East* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press and British Museum Press, 1987), fig. 937.

Military events have Assyrian soldiers in the audience. They take place in foreign lands and may depict Assyrian processions or Enemy processions. The most prevalent Assyrian instrument in Military scenes is the horizontal forearm harp; foreign musicians play a range of instruments similar to those in Assyrian Banquet scenes.

Religious scenes have some representation of a deity implicit or explicit in the musical audience. A number of events may occur: libations, processions and dedications. As with the Military scenes, the horizontal forearm harp is represented most often.

Banquet scenes show musicians playing for diners. They tend to be segregated by gender (males play for males and females play for females). As noted in Chapter 2, the number of musicians mentioned in the Nimrud Wine Lists suggests several ensembles would be resident at the palace, possibly playing for different constituencies. The most popular instruments in Banquet scenes are vertical harps, lyres and double pipes.

Work scenes depict the coordinated labor of dozens of men. Music is probably used as a signal to synchronize the efforts of the workers. The instruments used are the trumpet and frame drum.

Mythical scenes include those with anthropomorphized animals or fantastic creatures in the scene, and could in time be expanded to include heroic figures. There is a small number of these events, and the range of instruments is neither consistent or narrow enough to draw any conclusions from them.

With these categories of musical events, the present study completes the establishment of a classification system and vocabulary with which representations of music can be described. The first two chapters used categories that we can be reasonably

³¹ Patricia Kalensky, personal communication.

sure that the Assyrians were aware of, given their careful rendering of details of instruments and costume. This chapter was also based on detailed consideration of the art, but the categories were not necessarily Assyrian. Nevertheless, I argue that they are useful for scholarly analysis, particularly as they seem to represent discrete categories, with identifiably distinct associations of musicians and instruments for each. One might consider this chapter the pivot through which we have turned from discussing *Assyrian music* as represented to us, and turned toward discussing the *Assyrian representations of music* themselves. Using the vocabulary and observations developed up to this point, the next two chapters discuss various cultural messages communicated more or less consciously through these representations.

Chapter 4

Denotative Meanings

The last three chapters introduced a vocabulary and classification system to describe the musical instruments, musicians and musical events in Neo-Assyrian representations. This chapter will use those categories to decipher some of what I will argue are the intentionally communicated messages of those images, aspects that I am calling denotative meanings. “Denotative” refers to an expressly communicated sign and has been chosen to contrast with “connotative” meaning, to be explored in the next chapter. In this last part of the dissertation, the focus is no longer on what sort of musical material was represented, but rather why musical material was represented at all. How does the addition of musical themes contribute meaning to these images? This chapter will deal specifically with three topics, each at different levels of classification, trying to extract meaning from a particular instrument, group of musicians, and musical events. To begin however, it is necessary to clarify what I mean by “denotative” and “connotative” meanings.

Denotative meanings are those that could be consciously intended by the artist, whereas connotative meanings are those that are expressed subconsciously or unconsciously by the artist and appear by dint of the artist’s development and the art’s presence in a particular culture.¹ In plainer language, the Assyrian artist imbues the work with denotative meaning when he attempts to convey an idea to us. The same artist

¹ The concept of “intention” here is applied strictly to the act of communication. On interpreting intention in art, see Richard Wollheim, *Painting as an art, The A.W. Mellon lectures in the fine arts; 1984. Bollingen*

embeds connotative meaning in his work when we recognize that his manner, and hence his product, is inescapably Assyrian.

These concepts are borrowed from Erwin Panofsky's definitions of iconography and iconology.² Iconography is often defined as a system of simple, factual signs, like the identification of saints, or musical instruments. However, in Panofsky's tri-partite scheme, simple signs are pre-iconographic, and iconography is defined as a system that describes "conventional subject matter... constituting the world of images, stories and allegories."³ Iconology, by contrast, is defined as "intrinsic meaning or content constituting the world of 'symbolical' values;" the emphasis in iconology is on the cultural value of these symbols.⁴

The dissertation to this point has established music as subject matter, and now certain conventions embedded in representations of music will be examined. There is a major limitation in applying Panofsky's terms for Assyrian art, or to the art of most other ancient societies, however. The problem is that the historical types, literary tropes or everyday expressions against which one would want to compare these images are not available to us, given the incomplete textual and visual tradition that survives in the archaeological record.⁵ However, his work is useful to stress the difference between an explicit, intentional communicative act that must be decoded and an implicit,

series; xxxv, 33 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987), and Michael Baxandall, *Patterns of intention: on the historical explanation of pictures* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

² Erwin Panofsky, "Iconography and Iconology: An Introduction to the Study of Renaissance Art," in *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1955), 26-54. Although Panofsky's article is one of the fundamental works on the subject of both iconography and iconology, his definition of iconography is not the one that tends to be used in the vernacular.

³ *Ibid*, p. 40.

⁴ *Ibid*.

subconscious communicative act that must be subtly inferred from an image. The former is the subject of this chapter, the latter, the next.

A second, procedural and perhaps more concrete distinction can be made: this chapter deals with meaning that can be isolated from within the source material itself, whereas the next chapter will require evidence from outside the visual evidence. This distinction is derived from the assumption that, on the one hand, the visual artist has given the viewer all the clues to understand the denotative meanings, but on the other hand, the same artist was less able to prevent himself, consciously or unconsciously, from embedding connotative meanings into his work. Thus, there is a methodological difference in studying these two types of information. Denotative meanings require a review of like images in order to find patterns. This would both establish the range of uses for a given motif, and highlight exceptions that do not conform to the known pattern. Connotative meanings require a review of one topic, using a wider variety of sources, such as the representation of women in all Assyrian media. This would allow one to see how cultural biases might have implicitly affected the production or style of a given representation.

Because our ancient sources are so distant, the assignation of one semiotic aspect of representation as denotative and another as connotative may seem somewhat arbitrary. After all, how can a modern viewer read the intent of an ancient artist? In the absolute, we cannot. What we can do, however, is to qualify our interpretation of these representations as meanings that the artist may have been aware of versus those he

⁵ See Piotr Steinkeller, "Early Semitic Literature and Third Millennium Seals with Mythological Motifs," *Quaderni di Semitistica* 18 (1992): 243-275, where the author discusses motifs that seem to refer to myths that are presently unknown to us.

probably was not aware of. The point is not to define whether a particular symbolic meaning was intentional or not, but whether it was *plausibly* intentional or not. The main purpose of these distinctions is to provide a useful framework to differentiate an inventory of narrative signals with appropriately shallow or manipulative consequences from a more speculative understanding of representation with deeper societal or philosophical implications.

A comprehensive catalogue of all the possible meanings of all these images would be impossible. I have chosen to present three examples in this chapter (and three different ones in the next), dealing in turn with meaning expressed in the representation of musical instruments, musicians and events, in keeping with the topics of the previous three chapters. In the present chapter, I will consider the nationalist symbolism of the horizontal forearm harp and its relationship to the king; the visual treatment of foreign musicians and the representation of a process of assyrianization; and the expression of music as time in Assyrian art and how that affects the narrative and visual interpretation of the images.

The Horizontal forearm harp: One Hand, One Harp

Now it begins, now we start; One Hand, One Heart. Even death won't part us now.

Leonard Bernstein and Stephen Sondheim (1957)

As a recognizable icon of music, the horizontal forearm harp was the first and only instrument that Layard recognized on the reliefs as they were first excavated at Nineveh (although he acknowledged that it was probable that other types existed).⁶ I have already

⁶ Layard, *Nineveh and its Remains* (London: 1849), vol II, p. 313.

mentioned in the chapter on musical instruments that this instrument was depicted more than any other, was almost always played in pairs,⁷ and was occasionally accompanied by frame drums or sistra. The pairing of the horizontal forearm harps is the most consistent visual representation of any combination of Neo-Assyrian instruments. Furthermore, as a visual device, the pairing emphasizes the musicians by creating a “shadow,” doubling the lines of a single figure’s silhouette. From a distance it may appear as a thickening of the contour of an important person, drawing the eye more effectively than would two musicians in a single file row. In the chapter on musicians, it was noted that only male Assyrians were shown playing the forearm harp. An Elamite musician is shown playing another sort of horizontal harp, but it is noticeably different in decoration.⁸ In the chapter on musical events, the forearm harp was found in representations of military and religious settings. The common denominator between these two types of events is the implied presence of the king: as leader of the Assyrian military, or as officiant in the religious cult of Ashur.

The iconographic significance of this instrument needs to be examined. This section aims to do just that, beginning with the physical decoration of the instrument and continuing with the events that are represented with forearm harps in attendance. All of the horizontal forearm harp’s observed associations point to a close relationship with the king. This in turn requires a consideration of the various roles the king played and how these royal functions might affect how the harp was read as an iconographic element in the larger scene.

⁷ See Cat. nos. R1, R3, R4, R7, R13, Br1, Br2, Br3. The one exception (Cat. no. R24) has been considered a mistake, Chapter 1, p. 25-6. For a detailed description of this instrument, see p. 24.

⁸ Cat. no. R15, see Chapter 1, p. 26-7 for a description of this instrument and its restoration on the reliefs.

The finial of the vertical post of the horizontal forearm harp depicts a human forearm and hand, with a rosette decoration around the wrist. Two observations require some interpretation: the presence of the rosette wristband and the orientation of the hand. The only other arms that wear a rosette wristband belong to the Assyrian kings, their immediate retinue and the protective genii that surround them in images.⁹ That fact suggests that the horizontal forearm harp is royal in some fashion, either as an instrument that was played specifically for the king—and he appears in the audience in many of these representations, but not all—or as an instrument that represents the king in some way.

The orientation of the hand is not constant in relation to the instrument. On all of the images of the instrument where the musician faces left in profile, the finial hand is facing the musician. In other words, the pinky (the “fifth digit,” in medical terms), the leading edge of a raised hand, is closer to the musician than the thumb in these depictions, as it would be if a real person raising their hand were facing the musician. In the one instance where the musician faces right in profile (Cat. no. R24), the hand faces away from the musician. In all cases the hand is facing to the right for the viewer. The post is not an element you would expect to rotate on an actual instrument; as pictured, it must

⁹ Kings: Ashurnasirpal II, BM 124557 illustrated in Curtis and Reade, ed., *Art and Empire*, p. 45; Ashurbanipal, Cat. no. 24; royal retinue: Nimrud Room D, slabs 3 and 4, illustrated in Samuel M. Paley and Richard P. Sobolewski, *The Reconstruction of the Relief Representations and their Positions in the Northwest-Palace at Kalhu (Nimrud) II*, vol. 2, *Baghdader Forschungen* (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1987); genii: BM 124561 illustrated by Curtis and Reade, ed., *Art and Empire*, on p. 57 and on the cover of that catalog. The rosette is also shown on the royal scepter, as seen in the palace at Nimrud, Room G, slabs 25 and 30, illustrated in Janusz Meuszynski, *Die Rekonstruktion der Reliefdarstellungen und ihrer Anordnung im Nordwestpalast von Kalhu (Nimrud)*, vol. 2, *Baghdader Forschungen* (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1981), pl. 9.

For more on the bracelet, see K. R. Maxwell-Hyslop, *Western Asiatic Jewellery, c. 3000-612 B.C.* (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1971), p. 246-249. An actual gold and inlaid bracelet of this design was among the jewellery recently found in the recently discovered queen’s tombs at Nimrud, see Spencer P. M. Harrington, “Royal Treasures of Nimrud,” *Archaeology* 43, no. July/August (1990): 48-53.

provide steady tension for the strings of the harp. I believe the reason for the inconsistency in orientation is, in fact, for a different sort of consistency in representation.

Assuming that every depiction of the hand always presents the viewer with the same side (back or palm) of the hand, then they represent either the back of the right hand or the palm of the left. On the finial hand itself, there are no details to suggest either the palm side of the hand nor the knuckled back of the hand.¹⁰ Without any physical details suggesting one over the other, I would suggest reading the hand as the back of a right hand. It has already been noted that the right hand side is favored in Assyrian culture and it would make sense if one were to depict only one hand, that the dexterous, rather than sinister hand be shown.¹¹ Furthermore, this gesture will be compared below to a pose struck always with the right hand.

Why is the finial shaped like a hand? and Whose right hand is it? are the next immediate questions. The answers are related. It is suggested that the hand is there to make a gesture of some sort, and the hand's owner must have a reason for making that gesture. An open right hand held in front of the face is a cultic gesture familiar in Mesopotamia from the votive tablet of Gudea (ca. 2200 BC), through the Code of Hammurabi (1792-1758 BC) and the altar of the Middle Assyrian king Tukulti-Ninurta I (1243-1207 BC).¹² The posture is taken by a lower ranking individual (sometimes a ruler) when approaching a higher ranking individual (such as a god). The harp is decorated so as to represent this gesture. But for whom?

¹⁰ The reader is again reminded that details may have been painted on these sculptures and subsequently lost over time.

¹¹ Chapter 1, p. 46, citing the work of Guinan, "Left/Right Symbolism in Mesopotamian Divination."

¹² These are illustrated in Anton Moortgat, *The Art of Ancient Mesopotamia* (New York: Phaidon, 1969), pls. 185, 209 and 246, respectively.

Presumably the limb is a substitute for the arm of one of the participants at a musical performance: the musician or an audience member. If the arm is that of the musician, it may be read as performing this gesture for the musician whose hands are otherwise occupied. If the horizontal forearm harp player was engaged in approaching kings and/or divine symbols that demand respect, then the hand attached to his instrument could be one way to satisfy protocol. However, if the hand faces toward the musician, it is in a position that would be impossible to imitate with the musician's actual hand. An argument could be made that in the absence of other iconographic markers, a contour drawing of a hand might have been assumed to show the back of a hand. Therefore, it was more agreeable to show a right hand facing the wrong direction on the instrument than it was to show a left hand facing the proper direction. Arguing against the identification of the hand with the musician is the absence of the rosette wristband on the musician's own arms.

Another possible “musician” is the instrument itself. I have noted that the kettledrum, *lilissu*, can be written with the divine determinative and as early as Neo-Sumerian times, a type of harp, the *balag*, was accorded the same honor.¹³ If the finial hand is a physical element of a divine instrument, then the rosette wristband would be as appropriate there as on the apotropaic figures who flank the king. This identification is intriguing but there is little evidence to either support or contradict it.

¹³ The divine determinative is used in the Ur III period, *CAD 'B'*: 39, *balaggu*, 1b: TCL 5 5672 i 15, also iii 11. I do not believe the horizontal forearm harp is a *balag* because of the late introduction of this instrument, however. If the Mesopotamians had categories of instrument like ours, “harp” with various types therein, then it would be possible that the Neo-Assyrian instrument was a “sort” of *balag*. My thanks to Andrew Cohen for pointing this out and suggesting this interpretation.

The hand might belong to an audience member, present or with the hand as proxy. If the rosette is really a royal emblem, perhaps this forearm is the gesture of a royal audience in acknowledgment of the music. It would be wholly inappropriate for the king to bestow such respect on the musician himself; however, it is within the realm of possibility that the royal gesture was directed towards the very music emanating from the instrument. Statues and icons of deities were not merely symbols of the gods in Mesopotamia, but manifestations of the divine.¹⁴ Could religious music—a sound—be similarly regarded as an embodiment of a god? Such a concept is not unheard of. In Islam, the word of the prophet, as recorded in the Koran, is considered sacred, the fundamental revelation of God on earth. Furthermore, these words were meant to be recited aloud. William A. Graham points out that the name of the book itself, “al-Qur’ān,” means “The Recitation” referring to the original divine word received by Muhammad but also to its use as a text that is meant to be spoken and heard.¹⁵ Given the example of Islam, it must be considered at least a possibility that the sound emanating from the Neo-Assyrian instrument may have been conceived as worthy of respect or worship.

A further possibility is that the hand belongs to a divine audience member. In that case, there are several potential readings. The gesture could be an acknowledgment, or equally a blessing, maybe conferring skill to the player. Or, it could be a divine limb imparting a blessing on the music or on the audience of the performance. Or, the music

¹⁴ See Irene J. Winter, “‘Idols of the King’: Royal Images as Recipients of Ritual Action in Ancient Mesopotamia,” *Journal of Ritual Studies* 6, no. 1 (1992): 13–42.

¹⁵ William A. Graham, “Qur’ān as Spoken Word: An Islamic Contribution to the Understanding of Scripture,” in *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies*, ed. Richard C. Martin (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1985), p. 30.

may have been thought to flow from the hand of a god. Too little is understood about Neo-Assyrian cult practice to do more than list the possibilities here.

Textual clues are frustratingly difficult to interpret. The Akkadian word for arm is *idu* and for the right hand, *imittu*.¹⁶ No references or expressions involving these words can be applied with any grace to further explain the decoration and use of this instrument, although it is the favored right hand that bestows blessings in texts as well as images.¹⁷ There is a term, *tarāṣ u*, “to stretch out/toward,” said of the finger (*ubānu*), hand (*qātu*) and arm, whose contexts imply a gesture of blessing, curse or apotropaic significance.¹⁸ There are two lexical texts that associate the arm or hand with instruments. The first is a sequence of lines that seems to associate the *sammū* instrument with the hand.¹⁹ Another lexical text, *nabnī tu* 32, mentions the “arm” of the *algar* instrument.²⁰ Unfortunately, the meaning of both *sammū* and *algar* is uncertain, and both texts may have origins earlier than the Neo-Assyrian period.²¹

In the archaeological record, there are no obvious precursors to the Assyrian horizontal forearm harp. The late introduction of the instrument in Mesopotamia, coinciding with the rise of the Neo-Assyrian state, leads one to wonder whether the forearm harp was developed not from local Middle Assyrian culture, but might instead be

¹⁶ CAD “I-J”: *idu*, 10-20, CAD “I-J”: *imittu*, 120-123. Another word *kabittu*, can be used as a euphemism to refer to the left hand, CAD “K”: *kabittu*, 21. I thank Glenn Magid for referring me to the proper Akkadian terms.

¹⁷ On blessings in images, see among others the bronze “Great Amulet” of *Lamaš tu*, where the sick patient, as well as two men in fish costumes gesture upwards with their hands, see Marie Matoušová-Rajmová, “Die Darstellung einer Krankenbeschwörung auf dem ‘Grossen Amulett’,” *Archiv Orientální* 57 (1989): 141-147. On blessings in texts, see CAD “I-J”: *imittu*, 122, “he has human hands, with his right hand he makes the gesture of blessing” MIO 1 78v44. A Standard Babylonian description of a representation of a demon.

¹⁸ See *AHw*, *tarāṣ u*, 1326-7.

¹⁹ Lawergren and Gurney, *Iraq* 49 (1987), pp. 48-49.

²⁰ MSL 16, 32, l. 11, p. 252.

²¹ Lawergren and Gurney, *Iraq* 49 (1987), pp. 48-49

an import or adaptation, possibly from the West Semitic groups who influenced other aspects of Assyrian culture.²² Such a suggestion does not seem to correlate, however, with the position of the instrument at the center of Assyrian cultural practices. Perhaps then, this was a native instrument given new prominence as a reaction to the cultural influence of outsiders. In either case, whether of local or foreign origin, the horizontal forearm harp was associated with the Neo-Assyrian state in ways comparable to the way in which the bull-headed lyre from Ur immediately references the late Early Dynastic period burial practices for modern audiences, and possibly for ancient ones as well.

Whatever the deeper iconological implications of the hand on the instrument, one fact can be established. Based on both the decorative rosette and the royal audience of the forearm harp, usually at official ceremonies like libations or processions, we might consider the harp a high-level, even “royal” instrument.²³ At this point in history, it is difficult to separate the cult of Ashur from the State of Assyria, or either from the person of the king himself. Ann Shafer, in a discussion of a scene of Shalmaneser III dedicating a statue depicted on Balawat bronze Band I (Cat. no. Br3) writes:

There in his role as chief priest of Ashur, the Assyrian king sanctifies Assyria’s new border, which, as is emphasized by the careful rendering of the mountainous landscape below, is very literally carved from the land itself. In the process of

²² Hayim Tadmor, “Assyria and the West: The Ninth Century and its Aftermath,” in *Unity and Diversity*, ed. H. Goedicke and J.J.M. Roberts (Baltimore: 1975), 36–48; Irene J. Winter, “Art as Evidence of Interaction: Relations between the Assyrian Empire and North Syria,” in *Mesopotamien und seine Nachbarn*, ed. Hans-Jörg Nissen and Johannes Renger, *Berliner Beiträge zum Vorderen Orient* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1982), pp. 355–382, pl. xlxi–lx; Roland Lamprichs, *Die Westexpansion des neuassyrischen Reiches. Eine Structuranalyse*, vol. 239, *Alter Orient und Altes Testament* (Kevelaer/Neukirchener: Butzon & Bercker/Neukirchener, 1995).

²³ Ann Kilmer writes: “It is of interest to note that one NA text (BM 65217+) relating to technical music terms concerns *ikribu*-prayers *ana šarrim* ‘for the king.’” See Kilmer, “A Music Tablet from Sippar (?): BM 65217+66616,” *Iraq* 46 (1984): 69–80; and Erica Reiner, “Quelques voeux,” in *Marchands, Diplomates et Empereurs: Études sur la Civilisation Mésopotamienne Offertes à Paul Garelli*, ed. D. Charpin and F. Joannès (Paris: Editions Recherche sur les Civilizations, 1991), 421–422.

virtually acknowledging his own image-as-border, the king foregrounds the crucial role of his own divinely-sanctioned deeds and accomplishments.²⁴

At that moment, Shalmaneser stands in person as a priest, king and military leader and his image represents all of those roles as well as the very border of Assyria itself.²⁵ Viewed through this prism of regal duties, the horizontal forearm harp is perhaps best seen then as royal not in the more limited sense of having a royal audience, but in the grander scheme of state and cult—and even geography. This would explain the instrument's use in both military and religious scenes, either in scenes located toward the edge of recognizably Assyrian territory or at the physical center of Assyrian administration.

In effect, I am suggesting that the horizontal forearm harp may well have been the national instrument of the Neo-Assyrian state. By this I mean that the instrument itself was associated with Assyria and Assyrian culture at the highest levels, and I would not exclude the possibility that the forearm harp was used to play recognizably Neo-Assyrian music, although that must remain mere speculation.

To review, the instrument under discussion is decorated with a forearm that wears a rosette wristband, associated with the king and his retinue. It is played only by Assyrian men, possibly lending an official, national status to its performances. The harp is played at religious and military events at which the king is either present, or might have been expected to have directed the events. The horizontal forearm harp would therefore have acted as a symbol for the Assyrian state much in the same way as the image of the king

²⁴ Ann Taylor Shafer, "The Carving of an Empire: Neo-Assyrian Monuments on the Periphery," Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1998, p. 96.

²⁵ The notion of multiple kings, and the multitude of meanings that spring from them, is developed in Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), and further elaborated by Louis Marin, *Portrait of the King* (originally published as *Le portrait du roi* 1981), trans. Martha M. Houle (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988).

himself. For all of these reasons, I would suggest that the decorative forearm on the instrument should be interpreted as a proxy arm of the king, sharing some of the multiple duties assigned to him.

The question now is, if the horizontal forearm harp had associations of royalty, divinity, and nationhood, how would these associations affect how we read the reliefs? It would be equally possible to argue for either religion or politics to be the overriding theme—that is, all military scenes represent the conquest of the god Ashur, or all religious scenes represent the advancement of the Assyrian state through the national cult—and thus neither is satisfactory. However, we should probably consider the religious scenes more political than previously thought and vice versa.

With the horizontal forearm harps in attendance, for example, the scenes of Ashurnasirpal II and Ashurbanipal pouring libations over the dead animals they have just hunted should perhaps be seen not only in cultic terms, but also as a nation building, political event. Elnathan Weissert makes a similar argument beginning with texts, pointing out that in texts as well as images, the hunt and libation parallel military victories and libation.²⁶ In contrast, a military scene like the one amid the remains of a battle where soldiers bring the heads of enemy dead to harpists should perhaps not be considered wholly secular (Cat. no. R1). Although the cult of Ashur was apparently not evangelical,²⁷ perhaps the horizontal forearm harps were brought on campaign for pre-

²⁶ Elnathan Weissert, "Royal Hunt and Royal Triumph in a Prism Fragment of Ashurbanipal (82-5-22, 2)," in *Assyria 1995 : proceedings of the 10th Anniversary Symposium of the Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, Helsinki, September 7-11, 1995*, ed. S. Parpola and R.M. Whiting (Helsinki: The Project, 1997), 339-358.

²⁷ Grant Frame, "The God Aššur in Babylonia," in *Assyria 1995 : proceedings of the 10th Anniversary Symposium of the Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, Helsinki, September 7-11, 1995*, ed. S. Parpola and R.M. Whiting (Helsinki: The Project, 1997), 55-64.

battle invocations or, after the battle, to consecrate new markers of the Assyrian border (as depicted on Cat. no. Br3).

Two fragmentary reliefs are rather enigmatic. In one scene from Sennacherib's palace showing orchard destruction and the deportation of enemies, two harpists play in the lower right corner of the image, playing off to the right to an unseen audience, now lost (Cat. no. R7). The type of musical event has been determined in this dissertation by the audience, and is therefore unknown in this case. The only clue to what they are doing is a vessel in the shape of an animal that sits on the ground before them. Similar theriomorphic (animal-shaped) vessels were depicted in Mesopotamian cult practices since the fourth millennium BC.²⁸ Could the two harpists in this scene be consecrating an Assyrian icon in an urban setting? Establishing a shrine to Ashur in a foreign city? Such suggestions remain extremely speculative.

In another instance, a procession of musicians, including two pairs of horizontal forearm harp players, is carved on the wall of a passage toward the Ishtar Temple at Nineveh (Cat. no. R13). Again, the ultimate destination and represented audience of the musical event is lost. If the harps are royal instruments, they raise the possibility that the king may have been part of the procession or audience (represented on another part of the relief, or physically present at the temple), or that these men were performing some duties associated with the king, as priest, military leader, or administrator.

Perhaps the most wide-ranging symbolic use of the horizontal forearm harp is in the Assyrian processions depicted on the Balawat Gates of Ashurnasirpal II (Cat. no. Br1-

²⁸ For example, on the Uruk vase, pictured and discussed in Frankfort *The Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient*, pp. 25-7.

2). We might imagine that similar ensembles played for kings like Esarhaddon who described his return to the capital this way:

That the might of Assur, my lord, might be made manifest, I hung their heads upon the shoulders of their nobles and with singing and music I paraded through the public square of Nineveh.²⁹

In this case, the harp, like the king, represented multiple functions. Where the king could be seen as the priest, military leader, and personification of Ashur and Assyria, the horizontal forearm harp could conceivably be seen as representing or signalling the heart of the state—the strong arm of the king, the spirit of the nation, the centre of an empire. “One hand, one harp”; even in death, even nearly three millennia since then, we can recognize that bond.

Foreign musicians in Assyria: Consider Yourselves...

Consider yourself at home. Consider yourself one of the family.

Lionel Bart (1963)

Given the self-aggrandizing annals of the late Assyrian kings, we might expect foreigners to have been treated fairly poorly in Assyrian society and in Assyrian representations.³⁰ However, foreign *musicians* may have been valued in the Neo-Assyrian period, precisely for being foreign, providing exotic but valued skills. In fact, an analysis of representations of foreign musicians may reveal how they were visually “assyrianized” in these representations. Now that there is some familiarity with various instruments and musicians, the assimilative message of some of the representations can be understood.

²⁹ Esarhaddon Broken Prism B, D.D. Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*, 514, p. 206.

³⁰ See Cifarelli, “Enmity, Alienation and Assimilation.”

The issue of music as a creative medium particularly well suited for absorption into another culture must therefore be raised in this context.

In the history of the ancient Near East, musicians have frequently been referred to as a desirable commodity. In a letter previously cited from Old Babylonian period Mari, the recipient gets advice on what sort of singer to send to a third party, an *eš talu* singer rather than the *nâru* singer that was requested.³¹ Apparently, such requests for the exchange of musicians between cities was not uncommon in Mesopotamia.

In Neo-Assyrian texts, there are references to the practice of receiving musicians among the tribute sent by vassal kings. Ashurnasirpal II reports: “[The tribute of …] linen garments with multicoloured trim, female musicians, servant men, [... I] received.”³² Sennacherib from his account of his first campaign, against Babylon, states: “I opened his treasure-house: [treasures], his harem, courtiers and officials, singers, male and female, all of his artisans, as many as there were, the servants of his palace, I brought out, I counted as spoil,” and then after his third campaign to Judah in the west, the king Hezekiah sent treasures “as well as his daughters, his harem, his male and female musicians.”³³ The musicians are listed with princesses and concubines, suggesting a group that would be both dear to the king who has to give them up and precious to the king who receives them.³⁴ There is also a premium on female musicians here, as those

³¹ CAD 'E': 377-8, *eštalû*, ARM 1 83:7, 9 and 10.

³² From the Rassam Obelisk: BM 118800 + BM 90925 + BM 132013; Albert Kirk Grayson, *Assyrian Royal Inscriptions*, vol 2.: *From Tiglath-pileser I to Assur-nasir-apli II* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1972), p. 277, 343, A.0.101.24, 73; Julian E. Reade, “The Rassam Obelisk,” *Iraq* 42 (1980): 1-22. Unfortunately, the name of the tributary has broken off.

³³ Sennacherib Annals: final edition, Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*, 234, 240, pp. 116, 121.

³⁴ In another Ashurnasirpal II text the musicians are grouped with “his brother’s daughter with her rich dowry, a large female monkey, (and) ducks,” Ashurnasirpal II’s annals, Le Gac A, Grayson 1991, *Assyrian Royal Inscriptions* 2, p. 218, A.0.101.1

named by Ashurnasirpal II and specified by Sennacherib where a single masculine plural could have sufficed (as noted in Chapter 2).

While musicians are specifically mentioned as a subset of foreign populations, a large number of their non-musical compatriots were also being sent to Assyria. Hayim Tadmor demonstrates that a large number of foreigners were brought to Assyria and most likely settled in the new capital cities built by the Assyrian kings.³⁵ Among the favored deportees were slave labourers to help build the cities, and foreign troops that would bolster the Assyrian military. Tadmor argues that:

Soldiers, artists, craftsmen from the west were assimilated or were “regarded as Assyrians” according to the claims of the royal inscriptions, and gradually became a decisive factor in shaping the hybrid culture of the empire. The third and fourth generations of deportees did not differ much—as one may assume—from the native Assyrians. Still, we can recognize them by their foreign, Semitic personal names.³⁶

Although the deportees may have remained slaves for the rest of their lives, their children may have become assyrianized as described by Tadmor. A similar argument is made by John Russell from an analysis of visual evidence. Figures similar to those shown defeated at the Judean city of Lachish are among the laborers depicted working to drag the bull colossi from quarries in Court VI of Sennacherib’s palace.³⁷ Clearly, musicians and harem women were not the only people brought back to Assyria by the victorious kings.

However, the musicians, especially female musicians, are named specifically in these accounts in a metaphor of synecdoche; they are parts that stand for the whole. The value that their presence conveys is twofold: first as representatives of the entire

³⁵ Tadmor, “Assyria and the West,” 36-48.

³⁶ Ibid, p. 41.

deportation, and second as particularly valuable elements of the larger group. The reason that these individuals are named, along with the defeated king's daughters, is that they are precious, probably because of their musical skills. For these two reasons, as symbols of the defeated king and for their own musical talent, foreign musicians, especially female musicians, seem to have had a very positive value in Neo-Assyrian times, and were welcomed as booty or tribute into the royal palace. Once there, they retained their national identities, as evident in the manner of their grouping in the Nimrud Wine Lists.³⁸

The visual assyrianization of foreign musicians is the focus of this section of the dissertation. The two scenes relevant to the discussion both date from Ashurbanipal's reign: the procession of defeated Elamite musicians leaving their city with women and children trailing (Cat. no. R15), and the quartet of Arab musicians who play facing each other as Assyrian soldiers attend to the aftermath of a battle (Cat. no. R25).

The Elamite musicians from Room XXXIII of the Southwest Palace at Nineveh have already been discussed a number of times, but the focus here is on the decoration of their instruments. There are seven vertical harps in this scene and they are decorated differently, as has been noted above.³⁹ The decorative detail is in the tassels that hang down from the horizontal arm of the harp, possibly extra lengths of the strings. From the front of the line, the first three harps, all played by men, have tassels that hang down and then end in four rows of knots or beads. The next three harps, played by women, have knots or beads all the way through, for about ten rows. The final vertical harp, also played by a woman, has no knots whatsoever, just the tassels hanging vertically from the

³⁷ Russell, *Sennacherib's Palace Without Rival*, p. 167.

³⁸ Kinnier Wilson, *Nimrud Wine Lists*, p. 76-77, and see Chapter 2, n. 34.

³⁹ Chapter 2, n. 23.

instrument. In contrast, on Elamite depictions of the vertical harp found at Kul-e Farah in Iran, the tassels are knotted together in the center, so that they hang in the shape of an hourglass.⁴⁰ I suggested in Chapter 2 that the representations of harps without the distinctive hourglass tassels may have been a slight on the Elamites who have become “untied.” The unbound tassels may also imply a lack of cultural knowledge; these musicians no longer know how to play music like Elamites. More to the point here, the completely unknotted or unbeaded vertical harp played by the last woman may be considered Assyrian in form.

The vertical harps played by Assyrians are not knotted at all (see Cat. no. R17 and R21; there may be one bottom row of knots on Cat. no. R20). If these knots or beads were a convention that was generally understood, the last vertical harp in that procession is an Assyrian instrument. Furthermore, if we read the instruments from left to right (corresponding to reading the procession from front to back), each of the three designs becomes plainer, and more like the Assyrian style. Although this can be read as the first harpist being more Elamite than the last, it can also be read as the procession of time leading to a process of assyrianization: the series represents the stripping away of one detail of Elamite identity and replacing that detail with an Assyrian one.

The second group of foreign musicians that is visually assimilated or assyrianized is the quartet of Arab musicians from the North Palace at Nineveh, on a slab fallen into Room V (Cat. no. R25). In this case, the musicians are not in an enemy procession, but rather among Assyrian soldiers who go about their business without molesting them. These figures are wearing Assyrian clothing—long fringed tunics and incised metal

⁴⁰ Eric de Waele, “Musicians and Musical Instruments on the Rock Reliefs in the Elamite Sanctuary of Kul-

belts—but their hairstyles are recognizably foreign—long curls of hair drawn back over their heads almost like dreadlocks. In Chapter 2, I suggested that the clothing of these figures might represent the cultural membership of these figures whereas the hair represents their ethnic identity.⁴¹

Again, the instruments are of interest here. These four men play a frame drum, cymbals, and two lyres. A typology of lyres will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, but suffice it to say here that one of the lyres is a foreign type and the other is Assyrian. The Arab lyre player on the right plays a lyre with a rectangular sound box, curved arms of different lengths, and a crossbar that is at an angle to the sound box. The angle of the arms and crossbar require that the strings be of uneven length and not parallel to any part of the instrument. The lyre player on the left plays an instrument which is partially hidden by his body, but what is shown suggests that all the corners are nearly square. The strings are parallel to the arms, implying that the crossbar is itself parallel to a rectangular sound box, which is unseen. While there is no close analogue to the foreign lyre on the right, the very rectangular lyre can be seen to be played by an Assyrian at a banquet depicted at Khorsabad (Cat. no. R6), as well as on an Assyrian style ivory (Cat. no. I2) and painted vessels from Assur (Cat. nos. V1, V3). In other words, the rectangular instrument is, in all other cases but this one, played by Assyrians. Like the Elamite vertical harp tassels, the visual artist has depicted a foreigner playing an Assyrian instrument. Here, two Arab musicians are dressed (mostly) like Assyrians, still identifiably foreign in hairstyle, and playing a foreign and an Assyrian lyre.

e Farah (Izeh)," *Iran* 27 (1989): pls. Ib, IIIb. See plates 38–40.

⁴¹ Chapter 2, n. 52.

There is also a difference in how the two lyres in this scene are being played. The player on the right, with the foreign instrument, plays with his fingers, and his fingers are particularly elongated and exaggerated, presumably to emphasize this technique. The player on the left, with the Assyrian lyre, is shown presenting his right hand away from his instrument, but out from behind the drummer before him, and carefully holding a plectrum. It may be that Assyrians played lyres with plectra; unfortunately, the other depictions of Assyrian lyres are difficult to read in this regard. The image from Khorsabad (Cat. no. R6) survives only in a field drawing in pencil and the right hands of the players are hard to discern. The other examples are on small scale media (the ivory Cat. no. I2) and/or on a medium that does not express detail well (the painted pots Cat. nos. V1, V3).

There appear to be conflicting messages here. On the one hand, someone has taken pains to portray these musicians as playing Assyrian instruments. On the other hand, the artist was careful to make the musicians recognizably foreign. In fact, the messages can be read, not in conflict, but in combination. The combined message may be: These are “Assyrian musicians” who were originally foreign. Another way to read it is that these musicians may be playing foreign styles of music in the Assyrian milieu.

Perhaps the best visual equivalent to this situation would be the different styles of ivory carving that were present in the Assyrian capitals.⁴² As with music, it is impossible to determine if the different styles of ivories were meant for specific audiences or

⁴² See Irene J. Winter, “North Syria in the Early First Millennium B.C. with special reference to Ivory Carving,” Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1973; Winter, “Phoenician and North Syrian Ivory Carving in Historical Context: Questions of Style and Distribution,” *Iraq* 38 (1976): 1-22; Max E.L. Mallowan and Georgina Herrmann, *Furniture from SW.7 Fort Shalmaneser*, vol. 3, *Ivories from Nimrud (1949-1963)* (London: British School of Archaeology in Iraq, 1974).

purposes, intended for export or made to be used locally. However, regardless of intention and specific usage, multiple styles of the same types of objects (even decorated with the same subjects) were brought to Assyria and used among the elites in the palace. After all, one of the benefits of imperial expansion is the variety of goods that one can enjoy at home. Why settle for one style of furniture when a set in another style can be commissioned or taken from the provinces?

In fact, more than just a bit of variety, it is possible to consider that foreign musicians were *particularly* valuable as an exotic resource. To understand the valuation of music in Neo-Assyrian times, one must consider the implications of a total absence of recorded music. The performance of music would probably have had higher value than live performance today because it was the only chance to hear music at all. Most modern music audiences own a wide variety of recorded music.⁴³ Before recorded music, one suspects audiences would also have valued variety, which would entail hiring either a few musicians with a broad repertoire or hiring many different musicians to perform in different styles. That might require hiring a number of lyre players, but with each playing a different type of lyre music. As another point of comparison with modern music collecting, listeners are often impressed if introduced to a song, or musical style, or entire musical culture with which they were previously unfamiliar. As much as an imported ivory, music may have been held in high regard as creative property, both for personal entertainment and to impress visitors—possibly visitors whose best musicians were now playing in Nimrud or Nineveh (the modern phrase to describe this resource would be

⁴³ This variety does not pertain just to genres such as folk vs. jazz, but within genres such as Western Classical music. The most conservative canon of the latter would include works written over a period of three centuries and in a variety of geographic locales, from Handel in London to Tchaikovsky in Moscow.

“intellectual property,” rather than “creative property”). The ascription of the value (both creative and financial) of such property to a party other than the creator is still an issue, for example, with the recording contracts offered to old bluesmen, or the publishing contracts given to authors who work on science fiction franchise series, such as the best-selling Star Wars novels whose royalties go to Lucasfilm. Even today, the legal “owner” of a piece of music is not always the musician or composer but rather the individual who puts up the capital for the creative act, and in Assyrian times, that would have been the king. Music, then, should be considered a resource that could be bought or sold, taken or given, distributed or collected, no different from other commodities of value.

In a way, the abstract nature of music makes it even more naturally “collectible” than material goods like ivory furniture elements. There is no iconography of music that needs to be appropriated or recontextualized to fit the expectations of a new national audience. The anthem “God Save the Queen” (1744) can be reconfigured as “America” (1832), the subject Britain becomes America, and the theme of monarchy is replaced by democracy. The semiotic character of the song is plain in the lyrics, but without words, the melody may be adapted to different purposes.⁴⁴ Style in music is fluid, and any borrowings can be easily downplayed as inspiration, rather than imitation. In other words, in contrast to visual art, the appropriation of different kinds of musicians to play different styles of music is less susceptible to accusations of pandering or dumbing down

⁴⁴ It is possible that that particular melody sounds “patriotic,” and I think that characterization has something to do with the tempo of the song, the major keys, and the narrow range of notes, but mostly the inescapable connection with the words. The Star-Spangled Banner, adapted from a drinking song (and with a terribly wide range of pitches for an anthem), probably had trouble evoking patriotism the first few times it was sung.

the high culture, of elevating the culture of one of its vassal states to the level of Assyrian culture itself.⁴⁵

The representations of foreign musicians work to make this point: Assyrians enjoyed a wide range of music, cultivated (or seized) from the entire region under their political influence. These foreign musicians may have been metonyms for the large scale forced recruitment of labour for the Assyrian capitals, or they may have been especially precious baubles of cultural currency to be collected and displayed by the king, or both. The representations work both to distinguish the foreign origins of these musicians and their subsequent (or anticipated) assyrianization. Because their esteem lay in both their participation in the Assyrian sphere and in their exoticism, both of which are eminently displayed in these representations, it would be difficult to know whether they considered themselves foreign, Assyrian, or part of a “family” of musicians.

Music as temporal signifier: Time Goes By

It's still the same old story, a fight for love and glory, a case of do or die.

Herman Hupfeld (1931)

Time and movement are extremely difficult concepts to express in a static art like sculpture. However, there are visual conventions that imply the passage of time, as discussed by H. A. Groenewegen-Frankfort in *Arrest and Movement: Space and Time in the Art of the Ancient Near East*. One of the motifs Groenewegen-Frankfort discusses as

⁴⁵ Jülide Aker argues in her dissertation that the Assyrians were particularly harsh to the Arabs in the written annals (Aker, forthcoming). Whereas one might read the appearance of Arabs in Assyrian clothing, playing music for the troops as a rehabilitation of Arab culture in the eyes of the Assyrians, this rehabilitation is tempered by the subsuming of this foreign influence within Assyrian culture through the ambiguously semiotic medium of music.

relevant to the depiction of time is the organic form.⁴⁶ Her idea is that inherent in the physical body is the potential for motion, and thus an implied change in space over time. I argue here that scenes of music have a similar function, as they imply a change in sound over time. The musical scenes then, may have had specific meanings for the reliefs and four semantic associations of time are each considered in turn. These four cases may help us understand why music would have been an important element in these scenes of Assyrian art.

Two basic ways to convey a notion of time or narrative in a static art form include frames and unique characters. The first method would be to portray the same recognizable viewpoint multiple times, with incremental changes. Examples of this convention can be seen in Charles Schulz' comic strips, or in Claude Monet's temporal and seasonal paintings of the Cathedral of Arles, if considered as a series. A major visual cue for this method is the use of frames, boxing in the same view for three panels in "Peanuts" or actual frames around different oil paintings of the same church. Neo-Assyrian wall reliefs were often continuous, without frames. However, they were on walls, and walls have corners. If one considers each wall in Room XXXVI of Sennacherib's palace as a separately framed panel, the panel to the left shows Assyrian "horsemen and charioteers" (as described by Layard), the Assyrians approach the besieged city of Lachish on the center panel, and the right panel shows the Assyrian king

⁴⁶ "The Time Aspect of Organic Form" in H. A. Groenewegen-Frankfort, *Arrest and Movement: Space and Time in the Art of the Ancient Near East* (Faber and Faber, 1951), pp. 5-7. The issue of representing time in modern two dimensional designs is addressed in Edward R. Tufte, *Visual Explanations: Images and Quantities, Evidence and Narrative* (Cheshire, CT: Graphics Press, 1997), especially "Parallelism: Repetition and Change, Comparison and Surprise" (pp. 79-104) and "Multiples in Space and Time" (pp. 105-120). Another effective discussion of narrative can be found in Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (Kitchen Sink Press, 1993), especially "Time Frames" (pp. 94-117).

receiving prisoners and booty.⁴⁷ In this case, time can be depicted by perceiving each wall panel as a separate frame.

A second convention that conveys time would be to use the same character placed multiple times on the same background. This is used in European paintings depicting the paths (literal and temporal) of biblical characters, like the warning, temptation and expulsion of Adam and Eve from Hieronymous Bosch's painting of paradise (ca. AD 1510).⁴⁸ A more culturally relevant example for this dissertation is the altar of Tukulti-Ninurta I, a Middle Assyrian king.⁴⁹ His altar from Assur shows a man in profile approaching from the left. It then shows an identical man kneeling before an altar. This monument is conventionally read as the king coming to and paying respect to the god Nabu, embodied in an icon that sits on the altar. By showing a distinct character twice, the viewer is expected to attribute movement to that character from one position to the next, filling in the intermediate moments and space with the imagination.⁵⁰ While this effect may be inferred with two generic figures on the same background, Assyrian soldiers, for example, in that case it would not be clear if the two figures were meant to convey the same character twice or if the likeness was an indication of a multitude of

⁴⁷ See John Russell's reconstruction and discussion in "Sennacherib's Lachish Narratives," in *Narrative and Event in Ancient Art*, ed. Peter J. Holliday (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 55-73. Details of these reliefs are illustrated in Ussishkin, *The Conquest of Lachish by Sennacherib*.

⁴⁸ Illustrated in Ernst H. Gombrich, *The Story of Art*, 15th ed. (Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1989), pl. 226. Kurt Weitzmann refers to the technique of repeating a figure in the same background as the "cyclical method" of illustrating text, subsuming Wickhoff's term "continuous method" *Illustrations in Roll and Codex, A Study of the origin and method of text illustration*, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), pp. 17ff.

⁴⁹ Frankfort, *The Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient*, fig. 149.

⁵⁰ And by repeating the altar—as monument and illustration—the image on this artwork compels the viewer to relate to the king and teaches him the proper way to approach and respect this sacred object.

figures performing similar tasks. For this reason, the key to this visual convention is the uniquely identifiable character.⁵¹

I argue here that a third visual convention to express the passage of time is the depiction of music. No matter how else one chooses to define it, the basic, most fundamental character of music is *sound over time*. This is true for European classical music, cyclical Indonesian gamelan music, and avant-garde art music such as John Cage's silent piece, 4'33," which, though it doesn't indicate any sounds to be made by musicians, takes as its title a set length of time. In the musical equation, Cage's piece privileges time over sound. The point is, time is inherent in the musical act. A picture of a musical event, then, is a depiction of time passing. I would argue that this is an essential aspect of the inclusion of music in various events on the Neo-Assyrian reliefs. Indeed, the use of music as a temporal signifier is reinforced in the visual composition of these representations.

The chronological implications of musical scenes were heightened by the Assyrian visual artist. There is a large amount of detail that goes into these representations. In a given composition, the musical aspect may be denser of line and form and therefore harder to read, requiring the viewer to slow down and consider those detailed elements. An example of this would be in the lion hunts depicted in the North

⁵¹ The "girl in red" performs this function in the movie "Schindler's List" (1993). While observing the purging of the Jewish ghettos, Steven Spielberg's camera, acting as both the viewer's eye and the eye of Oskar Schindler, spots a little girl in a red jacket, the only color element in a black and white movie. The use of this device is a reminder that even in motion pictures, the viewer needs a unique character to follow, otherwise a riot may not resolve itself and may remain a churning mass of interchangeable bodies. Eventually, the girl runs into a building and the camera follows, no longer pretending to present Schindler's viewpoint but rather continuing the tracking of the movie audience's eye. Her reappearance on a pile of corpses in a later scene can be considered a use of "framing" time where cuts between different scenes represent gaps between different (time) frames.

Palace of Ashurbanipal.⁵² The scenes in Room C in which the king is on his chariot and actually wielding weapons against his prey are spacious and allow the eye to travel freely from one figure to another. The libation at the end of a hunt, found fallen in Room S, is structured with a rough symmetry of figures, including musicians playing horizontal forearm harps. The heavily detailed, overlapping pair of harpists add to the density of the scene that, along with the composition, gives the eye a place to rest and contemplate the action taking place.⁵³

Given the proposition that depictions of music could have served as temporal signifiers for the Assyrians, it is crucial to understand what characteristics time may have had for them in order to assess why this was important. There are four aspects of time that I believe were purposefully alluded to in Assyrian representations of music: marking time, rhythm, duration and ritual time.⁵⁴ They are listed in order of increasing speculation. There are texts that support the idea of marking time with music. Rhythm and duration are inherent to any musical event. Ritual time is non-specific but is an aspect of music in ceremonies, religious and otherwise. Each of these will be considered in turn, including some thoughts on why these aspects of time would be important to portray on specific reliefs.

⁵² The hunts from Room C and Room S are illustrated in Richard David Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace of Ashurbanipal*, pls. 5-13 and pls. 46-54, respectively.

⁵³ Again, the horizontal forearm harp players shown shoulder to shoulder are a more effectively solid visual cue than they would be if they were shown behind one another, as many of the other participants are shown. This argument assumes that the figure behind the first horizontal forearm harp player was meant to be a harpist as well, but missing an instrument by artistic omission or because his instrument was originally depicted in paint.

⁵⁴ For more on Mesopotamian concepts of time, see Irene J. Winter, "Fixed, Transcended and Recurrent Time in the Art of Ancient Mesopotamia," in *Concept of Time: Ancient and Modern*, ed. Kapila Vatsyayan (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, 1996), 325-338.

Marking time refers to the use of music to establish the beginning or end of an event. A modern example would be the playing of music during baseball games. The national anthem is sung before the game begins, short organ motifs mark suspenseful situations, and “Take Me Out to the Ball Game” indicates the “seventh inning stretch.” The marking of time could be one of the reasons music is present at the pouring of libations after the royal hunt (Cat. nos. R3-4, R24). Understanding the marking of time with music requires a certain depth of cultural knowledge. While we do not yet have a clear understanding of musical protocols in Neo-Assyrian customs, references exist for earlier periods. Music cued the Middle Assyrian king to stand and sit (“they make him sit down upon the royal throne and the musicians perform”),⁵⁵ and songs directed kings to make food offerings (“the king makes food portions for the. . .spirits while the singer sings [the songs indicated] when he [the singer] has reached the refrain, he [the king] throws [the pieces of meat] into the opening [through which blood, honey, oil, beer and wine were previously poured].”)⁵⁶ Music was also played at meals: “the main course of the morning is served, the musicians perform, the main (course) is cleared away.”⁵⁷ These last settings may be the contexts referred to by the terms “royal songs” and “morning songs.”⁵⁸ Marking time with music, then, may have been an important step in other rituals or ceremonies and the musical act completed the series of events. Ann Shafer interprets the contrast between the presence of music in one scene of a statue

⁵⁵ CAD 'Z': 38, *zamāru* 1d, citing KAR 135 r. i (!) 2.

⁵⁶ CAD 'Z': 154, *zumāru*, “the refrain of a song”; from a Standard Babylonian text, KAR 146 r.(!) i 22.

⁵⁷ CAD 'Z': 38, *zamāru* 1d, citing Racc. 67:13.

⁵⁸ These are Akkadian classifications (KAR 158 v i 19, 159 r i 24). There are also time specific ragas in Indian music that are so time specific that an evening concert of “morning” music was disturbing to the educated audience (Peter Manuel, lecture). In the Indian case, morning and evening music was played on the same instrument so a photograph would not have been able to distinguish the two, but we could imagine

dedication on the Balawat Gates (Cat. no. Br3) and a similar scene without music as possibly depicting different parts of the dedicatory process.⁵⁹ The representation of music-making, then, in religious events such as libations or the consecration of a statue, may have been a crucial part of the image.

Rhythm is the temporal aspect of music. The evocation of rhythm may be an allusion to a pattern of tones or beats, the pace of that pattern (tempo), or both. A reference to rhythm is perhaps evident in scenes of work. The use of music to coordinate the effort of many men acting together is attested in many cultures, for example among the slaves of the antebellum South.⁶⁰ The other scenes in which the rhythm of music is particularly relevant are scenes of processions, Assyrian or foreign. Again, the music would have been used to coordinate many men at once. One consequence of this idea is that the tempo is constricted in our imagination: too fast and the men could not keep up or would tire quickly; too slow and the work would not get done. The situation evokes the Italian term *andante*, which sets a musical tempo to a walking pace, and the scenes of procession force us to consider the Assyrian music of those scenes at such a tempo. The rhythmic aspect of music is particularly effective in evoking movement among bodies depicted in the same posture. To invoke rhythm in processions and work scenes, the depiction of music is perhaps not necessary, but contributes to an overall impression of coordination and movement.

that if Assyrian “morning songs” had specific instrumentation that we could identify, it would affect how we read the scenes.

⁵⁹ Shafer, “The Carving of an Empire,” p. 96.

⁶⁰ In the liner notes to Branford Marsalis’ “I heard you twice the first time” (1992), he writes of the traditional holler “Berta, Berta”:

For many manual laborers, music served as a temporary escape from the grueling torment of the midday sun. In Africa, griots would often encourage farmers and other workers by developing

Duration refers to the amount of time required to complete a task, like playing a song, for example. The use of music to evoke the durative aspect of time is evident in the scene of Arabs playing among Assyrian soldiers (Cat. no. R25). The narrative unfolds over a stretch of uninterrupted wall and the soldiers are all rather generic, rendering the previously discussed methods of rendering time, using frames or a repeated unique character, ineffective. By placing musicians in this scene, however, the viewer is forced to recognize that if this scene is a journalistic account of a real incident, the incident lasted for a minimum amount of time, the length of time it would take to play an Assyrian (or Arab) song. Of course, this is not a journalistic account. However, as a representation by Assyrian artists—who never depict a wounded or dead Assyrian, nor a left-handed musician—many of the iconographic elements and allusions are standard. If that standardization extended to the depiction of a musical performance as well, that performance would have been expected to take a minimum amount of time.

Another use of the durative aspect of time is in the libation scenes of the kings Ashurnasirpal II and Ashurbanipal (Cat. nos. R3-4, R24). Again the framing and unique character methods of depicting time are not usable here, in this case because the king, though unique, does not move. He merely stands and holds a vessel (liquid is shown flowing from Ashurbanipal's vessel).⁶¹ Again, the presence of musicians in these scenes stretches time out a bit. This is not a quick splash before hopping back on the chariot. If it does not take the length of a musical composition to pour a bowl of liquid onto the ground, presumably there are other steps in this ritual that would have taken up time,

rhythms for their tasks. Son Thomas notes, “The blues come up from the hard work we use to do with low pay. And that’s the only way you could feel good about working is to sing the blues.”

⁶¹ Contrast this with Tukulti-Ninurta I approaching and then kneeling before the altar of Nabu.

either saying a prayer, or even silent contemplation of the music itself. The durative nature of time enables the artist to suggest that the events pictured have begun earlier and will continue after the instant represented.

The durative meaning of music may have been a significant element in scenes of military and work events as an indication of the effort required to achieve an end. For scenes of religious events, duration was probably as important a temporal aspect as marking time, since the participants would have been expected to spend a minimum amount of time in their devotional acts. The same quality would have also been useful in banquet scenes to emphasize the amount of leisure time enjoyed by the diners.

Ritual time is an attempt to convey the concept of repeated cyclical time. The concept of cyclical or dream time is often invoked in anthropological descriptions of groups such as the Navajo or Australian aborigines. However, it is a concept shared by others who may live much of their lives in “linear time” but are instantly transported to their childhood by the sounds of Christmas carols over the supermarket speakers, or who return to a state of contemplation with the invocation of a church hymn. It is the effect of Proust’s *madeleine*, and it is often triggered by music. Images can have the same effect, possibly as part of a chain reaction. Even without having heard the music of Neo-Assyrian cults, or understanding how music was used in their ceremonies, the sight of a horizontal forearm harp may begin to signify religious associations for modern viewers; the effect of its presence could not have been any less for someone within the culture. Thus, the religious procession toward the Ishtar temple (Cat. no. R13) may have strong rhythmic effects but could also have put the viewer “in the mood” as it were, for a visit to the temple. As such, the inclusion of music in this case added atmosphere but was

perhaps not vital to the proper representation of this event (unless of course, this is a specific religious procession that required music).

It has been established that the Neo-Assyrian artists explored the semantics of styles and conventions to imbue their narrative art with more meaning and motion.⁶² I am arguing here that representations of music constitute one method of expressing concepts of time in art, especially useful in images without frames or readily identifiable repeating characters. In Assyrian art, wall reliefs may have delineated horizontal registers, but the narratives are, for the most part, read along one register. In addition, the king is the only readily identifiable single character. This means that music is a particularly useful signifier of time in scenes without the king and/or where the king is indicated as occupying one place or pose.

There are a number of reasons the artists would have wanted to convey a sense of time and they can be related to the four aspects of time discussed above: marking time, rhythm, duration and ritual time. Each of these aspects can be seen to affect the semiological character of various musical scenes in different—sometimes complementary—ways. In varying degrees, the representation of music in images of these events would have been necessary to complete the image, or merely added flavor to the scene. The basic message is that time was spent: marking time established a particular moment in an expected sequence of events, rhythm conveys the steady march of time, duration indicated the passage of time, and ritual time would remove the participant into a reflective space in which time was virtually still. More than an accumulation of detail—and accurate or not—depictions of music in Assyrian art added

qualities of time and experience to these images. The passing of time is inevitable for all human beings; the experience of time is a fundamental truth, as time goes by.

Summary

Having established classifications for the instruments and musicians, and analytic categories for the musical events portrayed in Assyrian art, this chapter introduced more interpretive material. The issues discussed were less about “what” musical material was represented and more about “why” musical material was represented. The purpose of the chapter was to establish some of the intentional meanings that can be read in these images.

The three topics considered were the horizontal forearm harp, foreign musicians, and musical events as signifiers of time. The harp was characterized as a royal instrument with the ensuing multitude of functions—military, administrative, religious—that that characterization implies. Foreign musicians were found in two cases to be depicted with Assyrian details, which I interpreted as a visual assimilation. The value placed on foreign musicians was discussed as well. In the third section, musical events were evaluated as signifiers of time, and four different values of time were reviewed and applied to various images.

Each of these topics was understood as a reading of a direct communicative act, as denotative meanings. By this term, I mean to imply that the information inferred was intentionally implied and that the patterns that led to these arguments were all contained within the images themselves—the forearm harp reinforced the presence of the king, the

⁶² Irene J. Winter, “Royal Rhetoric and the Development of Historical Narrative in Neo-Assyrian Reliefs,”

assyrianization of foreign musicians bridged images of enemies with their place at sanctioned Assyrian functions, and the use of music as a temporal signifier enhanced notions of narrative recognized by previous scholars of Assyrian art. The next chapter presents three issues to consider as connotative meanings. I shall argue that connotative meanings were perhaps not consciously intended by the Assyrian artist, but were inevitably embedded by virtue of that artist's cultural milieu, and thus it is necessary to use sources outside the artworks to recover these concepts.

Chapter 5

Connotative Meanings

The terms “denotative” and “connotative meaning” were introduced in the last chapter as adaptations of Erwin Panofsky’s definitions of iconography and iconology. Panofsky’s definitions helped to contrast the aims of the last chapter with the aims of this one, on connotative meanings. “Connotative meaning” maps largely onto what Panofsky referred to as iconology, a hermeneutic process like iconography, though cited less often. As Panofsky defined it, iconology is the study of “Intrinsic meaning or content... [manifestations of which] are often unknown to the artist himself and may even emphatically differ from what he consciously intended to express.”¹ Access to “iconology” or “connotative meanings” is gained through synthesizing elements within a work with information from outside of the work to understand an artist’s personal psychology or—more relevant to the anonymous image makers of Assyrian art—a group ethos or ideology. To put it in the terms of this study, if a Neo-Assyrian artist creates an image of a musical event, the connotative meanings are all of the “Neo-Assyrian” elements that are inevitably embedded in the work. The artist could choose to depict a vertical harp in a banquet scene, but once that is decided, he only knows how to depict the playing of vertical harps in an Assyrian fashion. Panofsky suggests that the equipment required for iconological interpretation is “synthetic intuition.” However:

The art historian will have to check what he thinks is the intrinsic [iconological] meaning of the work... against what he thinks is the intrinsic meaning of as many other documents of civilization historically

¹ Panofsky, “Iconography and Iconology,” pp. 30-31.

related to that work.... It is in the search for intrinsic meanings or content that the various humanistic disciplines meet on a common plane instead of serving as handmaidens to each other.²

Taking his methods to heart, this project requires a widening of the lens to incorporate sources outside the images in the catalog and outside this period in the attempt to reconstruct cultural meanings. These will all aid in further answering the basic question of why the Assyrians chose to create images of music making.

Panofsky has lately fallen out of favor among some art historians, particularly because of his focus on the Renaissance.³ The essential problem derives from his notion that iconological meaning was “intrinsic” to the object; not only does that preclude an audience-centered conception of meaning, the intrinsic meanings that he understood were all Judeo-Christian, and Western European, and would not be at all obvious to an observer from outside that tradition.⁴ That position is untenable in multi-cultural, post-modern thought. However, as one participant in a recent symposium on Panofsky writes, “Even those who contradict him today remain dependent on the hermeneutic procedures he had introduced and systematically elaborated.”⁵ While the debt to Panofsky is evident and happily acknowledged, the use of the term “connotative meaning” is intended to

² ibid, p. 39.

³ A recent symposium discussed the impact of Panofsky’s ideas on other humanistic disciplines, *Meaning in the Visual Arts: Views from the Outside, A Centennial Commemoration of Erwin Panofsky (1892-1968)*, ed. Irving Lavin (Princeton: Institute for Advanced Study, 1995). An overview article by Willibald Sauerländer, “Struggling with a Deconstructed Panofsky,” pp. 385-396, summarises some criticism. Examples of readings of Panofsky include Christine Hasenmuller, “Panofsky, Iconography, and Semiotics,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 36 (1978): 289-301; Keith Moxey, “Panofsky’s Concept of “Iconology” and the Problem of Interpretation in the History of Art,” *New Literary History* 17 (1986): 265-274; and Mieke Bal, *Reading “Rembrandt”: Beyond the Word-Image Opposition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

⁴ On the problems of accepting an “intrinsic” character to art, see Moxey, “Panofsky’s Concept of “Iconology””; on assuming that Western European conventions are available to all, see discussion in Hasenmuller, “Panofsky, Iconography, and Semiotics,” pp. 90ff.

⁵ Sauerländer, “Struggling with a Deconstructed Panofsky” p. 387.

convey the position taken here as rejecting a western European focused interpretive framework, while keeping the process of interpretation.

As with the last, this chapter presents three cases, dealing with instruments, musicians and musical events. A typology of the representation of lyres in the Neo-Assyrian period is created, the representation of women by medium and architectural placement is considered, and the aesthetic value of music—and how that might affect the audience at a musical event or before a musical depiction—is examined. These topics are by design more speculative and less conclusive than those dealt with in the last chapter, and point to new directions for research, rather than claiming to be the final word on any of these subjects.

A Typology: All Men are Lyres

All men are liars/And that's the truth.

Nick Lowe (1990)

In the first chapter, and then again in the fourth, I suggested that lyres were a common and fairly standard instrument in the Near East of the early first millennium BC. The instrument consists of a sound box, two arms, a cross bar and strings. Basically quadrilateral in form, the two arms extend up from the sound box to support the crossbar. Strings are strung from the crossbar and over the sound box, which amplifies the sound of the instrument as it is plucked, picked or strummed. There were many types of lyres depicted in the Neo-Assyrian period, but a few features were consistent: the number of strings varied only within a narrow range (5-7); the lyres were all hand held and of a similar size; and they were all held between the left elbow and the body, leaving both

hands free to manipulate the strings.⁶ There are, however, a number of morphological and decorative differences worth examining.⁷

What follows is not a “typology of lyres” *per se*, because of course, there are no lyres to be typed; rather, what follows is a “typology of *representations* of lyres.” This phrase refers to two levels of interpretation, which may require some clarification. Typologies are descriptions and groupings made by cultural outsiders, based on characteristics that may or may not match the criteria used by insiders; in anthropological theory, typologies are etic, rather than emic.⁸ Because there are no remains of actual instruments from the Neo-Assyrian period, the subject of this thesis has been representations, and thus any organization of lyres will compile different representations of lyres as modulated by the tastes and biases of the ancient artists and their patrons. This is not meant to imply that such classifications are unrelated to “real” objects or “real variations,” but it does allow for the possibility that the ancient artists deviated—consciously or not—from actual models when depicting particular variations of instruments.

⁶ These are all characteristics of what Bo Lawergren has termed the Near Eastern “thin lyre” (as opposed to the “thick lyre,” examples of which may be found in Egyptian and Hittite representations), “Lyres in the West (Italy, Greece) and East (Egypt, The Near East), ca. 2000 to 400 B.C.,” *Opuscula Romana XIX*, no. 6 (1993): 55-76; and idem, “Distinctions among Canaanite, Philistine, and Israelite Lyres, and their Global Lyrical Contexts,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 209 (1998): 41-68.

⁷ See plates 41-43 for details of all the representations of lyres found at Neo-Assyrian sites. The scale of the images was intended to be more or less equal: the images were sized so that figures in the pictures were each 6 inches tall. Full figures were not available for Cat. nos. V3, I5 or I7, and the scale of those images are approximated.

⁸ An insider’s system may be described as a “folk classification,” see Roy F. Ellen, “Introductory Essay,” in *Classifications in their Social Contexts*, ed. R. F. Ellen and D. Reason (London: Academic, 1979), 1-32. On the distinction between etic and emic, see James Lett, *The Human Enterprise: a critical introduction to anthropological theory* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987), pp. 61-67. To summarise, these terms are used to modify systems of understanding, and not individual representations or descriptions. An emic perspective is one to which an insider would subscribe. An etic perspective has more qualifications: it must be scientific (precise, reliable, accurate), it must be validatable, it must be falsifiable but not contradicted by the evidence, and it must be cross-culturally applicable.

At a practical level, by studying this taxonomy, I can begin to address the problem stated by Rimmer, that “the chronology and classification of the many lyre-forms which co-existed in the Near East in the first millennium is neither complete nor certain.”⁹ It will be a first step in identifying representations of lyres with musicians of uncertain origin. For example, it could give us clues to the identity of the musicians wearing feathered headdresses from Room S' of the North Palace at Nineveh of Ashurbanipal (Cat. no. R21).

Lyres are depicted being played by Judeans, Arabs, North Syrians, Phoenicians, and Assyrians. Some of the representations are by one culture of another—Assyrian depictions of Judeans, Arabs and possibly Persians—and others are representations of a culture by itself—as on North Syrian, Phoenician, and Assyrian works found in Assyrian contexts. Each of these types of lyres will be considered in turn, with a detailed description of the instrument, including size (relative to the player’s bodies), number of strings and length of strings. Then, other lyre representations from other parts of the ancient Near East will be examined and compared against this classification. It is tempting to assume an objective meaning to this, that is, that if Assyrians and other cultures portray an instrument in the same way, then perhaps the instrument did look that way, confirming the validity of Assyrian representations of other cultures, in details if not necessarily in narrative content. Ultimately, because we are dealing with representations, such a conclusion can never be fully substantiated; however, and perhaps more importantly, the taxonomy can be used to note which other cultures chose to show

⁹ Rimmer, *Ancient Musical Instruments of Western Asia*, p. 34.

themselves participating in the same musical system—or the same system of representing music.

Assyrian musicians are consistently shown playing a particular type of lyre: on a relief from Khorsabad (Cat. no. R6), an Assyrian style ivory (Cat. no. I2) and on painted vessels from Assur (Cat. nos. V1, V3). In addition, it was noted in the last chapter that, in one instance, an Arab musician in Assyrian garb plays a lyre of this type, but by virtue of the consistency noted above, the lyre is deemed to be “Assyrian”¹⁰ (Cat. no. R25). The crossbar of the Assyrian lyre is slightly wider than the sound box, and the arms extend just barely outward, so the instrument retains a very rectangular shape. The crossbar has knobs on either end (especially apparent on the Assyrian ivory [Cat. no. I2]). On a drawing of a relief from Khorsabad (Cat. no. R6), three strings—and one edge of a fourth—can be discerned with room for maybe one more string. The relief is damaged but one might estimate that there were originally four or five strings. The instrument played by the Arab in Assyrian garb matches the description of the shape of the Assyrian instrument and depicts five strings. Smaller representations on the ivory and painted vessels have fewer strings depicted on this type of lyre, owing perhaps more to the lack of detail in the scale of their medium than to artistic choice or journalistic exactitude. On the relief of Arabs in Assyrian garb, the Arab with an unfamiliar type of lyre plays with his bare fingers and the one with the Assyrian instrument holds a plectrum in his right hand. From the studied contrast between the two Arab musicians it seems that the Assyrian lyre was meant to be played with a plectrum, but none of the other images can confirm this technique.

North Syrian lyres are portrayed on two ivories in the North Syrian style found at Nimrud (Cat. nos. I5, I7). The ivories are both broken at the instrument in question, but assuming the instruments are the same type, a composite description can be made. The sound box is basically square and the upper arm curves away from the strings and then curls back again at the crossbar. There are seven or eight strings strung in parallel.

The Phoenician or South Syrian lyre is played by a woman on an ivory carved in the style of that region (Cat. no. I9). The instrument is simple and box-like with knobs at the ends of the crossbar—like the Assyrian lyre. However, the instrument is not symmetrical and the strings are anchored from one area on the sound box, but fanning out across the crossbar. The crossbar itself is at a slight angle to the squared sound box; this angle classifies the instrument as an oblique lyre.

The Judean lyre, also oblique, is shown being played by three men on a relief from Sennacherib's palace (Cat. no. R11). The sound box of the lyre is hidden by the players' bodies, but from the angle of the arms, it appears to be slightly off square. The crossbar is decorated to give the impression of folding back on itself at either end. The number of strings on this instrument is again difficult to discern. There are three strings that connect to the crossbar, with space for a fourth and maybe fifth. There may be more strings, but they are confused with the fingers of the left hand held behind the string. The number of strings, then, probably ranges between three and five. The musicians hold plectra in their right hands and hold their left behind the strings.

An Arab lyre is shown on a relief from Ashurbanipal's palace (Cat. no. R25). There are four musicians in this scene, two of whom play lyres and, as noted just above, I

¹⁰ Chapter 4, pp. 121-3.

have argued that one of those lyres is Assyrian. The second lyre, presumably Arab, has a rectangular sound box from which extend two, unequally long arms, curved more or less in parallel. Because of the unequal arms, the crossbar is at an oblique angle relative to the sound box. The crossbar, as on the Assyrian lyre, is decorated with a knob on at least the far end (the other end being hidden). Eight strings are clearly depicted on this instrument, and they are all of different lengths. The lyre player is shown with his fingers extended and bent in an exaggerated manner, perhaps to convey the peculiarity of a finger picking or strumming technique.

Men with feathered headdresses, provisionally identified as Persian or Elamite, are shown walking through a garden with a tame lion, one holding a vertical harp and the other with a lyre (Cat. no. R16). The sound box, hidden behind the player, is probably trapezoidal given the flaring out of the arms. The upper arm is an S-curve and it is unclear how it is attached to the crossbar or whether the crossbar is of one piece with the arm. The lower arm is obscured by damage to the relief. The crossbar itself is a shallow S-curve and the strings are thus different lengths. Because of wear on the relief, it is difficult to read the number of strings on the instrument.

Given this typology, one can then proceed to make comparisons with other cultures to determine if the same system (or, if one were to take a positivist view of writing history, the same lyres) was used there. Rather than testing lyres to verify the veracity of the Assyrian representation, I am testing representations of lyres to examine the extent of cross influence among these groups.

A vase from Megiddo, ca. 1025 BC, and now in the Oriental Institute, Chicago,¹¹ shows a lyre player in a procession with animals. The lyre he plays has a rectangular sound box, and unevenly long, curved arms supporting an oblique crossbar. Of all the examples found in Assyrian representations, the lyre on the Megiddo vase looks most like the Phoenician type (Cat. nos. Sh1, I5), as that instrument also has the oblique crossbar and unevenly long arms. There are differences, however; for example, the instrument depicted on the incised tridacna shell found in Assur (Cat. no. Sh1) has strings that fan out from the sound box and a short arm that is not curved. The curved arm and parallel strings from Cat. no. I5 is a better match for the Megiddo vase, but the ivory is broken and details of the sound box and short arm are difficult if not impossible to read. An actual lyre found in a grave in Egypt is similar to the Megiddo example.¹² Again, there is an oblique crossbar supported by curved arms of uneven length and a rectangular sound box. The similarity between Phoenician, Egyptian and Palestinian lyres reinforces a sense of the Mediterranean as a porous trading community and further differentiates those nations from the river and gulf based Assyria with its square cornered, rectangular lyres. The fact that Assyrian representations match others from this area further suggests that this was a musical culture that intermingled, and that the variation in types was recognised.

Using this typology, we can try to identify unknown characters on the Assyrian reliefs. The identity of the beardless Assyrian lyre player from Room S' of

¹¹ Plate 44, figure 50, from Ovid R. Sellers, "Musical Instruments of Israel," *Biblical Archaeologist* 4, 3 (1941), fig. 1. An ivory plaque from Megiddo depicts a lyre of the same shape, PAM No. 38.780, cited above in Chapter 3, n. 23.

Ashurbanipal's palace remains a mystery (Cat. no. R21). He is dressed like an Assyrian, but holds an oblique lyre with curved arms, like the Mediterranean type. The crossbar of the instrument is curved, like that suggested on the broken North Syrian ivory Cat. no. I7. One could suggest that he is a performer from Assyrian controlled Syrian territory, now playing for the Assyrian court.

The second mystery man is the man with feathered headdress accompanied by a tame lion (Cat. no. R16). His instrument is full of curves and circles and is shaped like no other. If it were a matter of cosmetic influences, the curves of his lyre again suggest a Mediterranean type. The costume has been provisionally identified in this thesis as possibly Persian; unfortunately, there are no images of musicians from the Achaemenid period reliefs at Pasargadae and Persepolis so there is no distinct comparison that would help to pin down the ethnic origin of these men. Although the instrument does not prove to be a solidly identifying characteristic, the lyre with Mediterranean curves does present itself as a factor that needs to be reconciled or disputed in any firm classification of the feathered headdressed men. In this case, the instrument makes Russell's unpublished suggestion that these men are Egyptian, more plausible.¹³

One observation can be made regarding the rectangular Assyrian lyres and the oblique Mediterranean instruments. The Assyrian type requires varying degrees of tension in order to produce different notes in the strings whereas the Mediterranean type uses differing lengths of string to produce the variation in tones. This suggests a different

¹² Illustrated in Hans Hickmann, *Ägypten*, ed. Heinrich Besseler and Max Schneider, vol. 1, *Musikgeschichte in Bildern II: Musik des Altertums* (Leipzig: Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1961), p. 139, fig. 114.

kind of engineering, although probably neither should be valued more highly than the other. Although a major difference between the Assyrian and Mediterranean lyres is distinct, some of the other variations—for example, the in-curving versus out-curving of the arms—may be merely cosmetic whereas others—the use of plectra versus bare fingers to play—have more effects on the style of music produced. This typology of representations raised a few questions, including whether types of lyres can be attributed to particular regions or larger trading groups, whether or not the types represented differing musical styles, and how the iconography of these instruments may help in identifying some of the groups of men shown on the Assyrian reliefs. The answers are not yet definitive, but it is hoped that in raising the questions, answers will more likely be sought.

Female musicians in the palace: *Les tringles des sistres tintaeient*

The rods of the sistrums jingled with a metallic twang, and at the sound of this strange music the gypsy girls stood up. Tambourines tinkled, tinkled, and the frenzied guitars ground out, under persistent fingers, the same song, the same refrain. Tralalala.

Georges Bizet, Henri Meilhac & Ludovic Halévy (1875)
(trans. Francis Steegmuller)

The presence of female musicians at all in the history of Neo-Assyrian art comes rather late. It is not until the reign of Ashurbanipal that any women are shown as musicians.¹⁴ This is not to imply that Ashurnasirpal II and other, earlier kings did not have female or foreign musicians—in fact, they must have, since the Rassam obelisk (BM 118800 + BM 90925 + BM 132013), for example, mentions female musicians Ashurnasirpal II received

¹³ See Chapter 2, p. 71. Russell's suggestion hinged on the late appearance of these figures (during Ashurbanipal's reign) and by comparison to Egyptian prisoners wearing a simpler headband with one feather depicted in Room M of the North Palace at Nineveh.

as tribute from a defeated enemy. But for some reason it was not until the 7th century B.C. that these musicians were represented on the palace walls.¹⁵ The reason for the late introduction of female musicians into visual representations is unknown and may have its origins in either a new style of image making or social and cultural changes. Either way, for images of female musicians on Assyrian palace reliefs, we need only consider the reliefs of Ashurbanipal. The other main source of visual information on women musicians is the group of ivories rendered in foreign styles. Whether or not Assyrian culture held similar views on female musicians is unknown, but perhaps Assyrians collected this foreign art as more than just interesting exotica in luxury materials. They may have been collected because the scenes reflected Assyrian social ideas. In any case, the images were not so disagreeable as to be shunned. The ivories cannot be dated with the precision of the reliefs, but they depicted female musicians on carvings from at least the 9th century on.

The first observation about female musicians is that they appear in only two types of musical events: military and banquet scenes. In the former, they are led off by rival armies as prisoners; those scenes seem to depict one-time events, and not the usual situation for these musicians. In the latter, female musicians play for diners in garden

¹⁴ Indeed, foreign musicians do not appear at all on the reliefs until the reign of Sennacherib.

¹⁵ However, the ivories in Assyrian style are dated to the 9th century on stylistic grounds, and thus if the scene of an Assyrian soldier before long haired foreigners with drums (Cat. no. II) is meant to depict women, then this object could be considered one example of a 9th century Assyrian visual representation of female musicians. See Chapter 2, n. 28.

On the dating of the ivories, see Oscar White Muscarella, *The Catalogue of Ivories from Hasanlu, Iran*, ed. Robert H. Dyson, vol. 40, *Hasanlu Special Studies* (also *University Museum Monograph 40*) (Philadelphia: The University Museum, 1980), pp. 200-202.

settings.¹⁶ The presence of women playing music at banquet scenes is more likely than the military scenes to represent the intended environment for these musicians, since it would be odd indeed to educate and maintain a musician for the sole purpose of being dragged away by a military rival. Perhaps significantly, the difference in context is correlated with a difference in medium. The subject of the carved ivories excavated from Assyrian sites tends to be repeated events, as opposed to the reliefs, which sometimes portray historically specific narratives. This seems to be true especially for the cylindrical boxes (pyxides) whose forms—like cylinder seals—favor a repeating image. On the ivories, women are shown playing music at banquets. For the elite Assyrian society that commissioned (or collected) and viewed these images, then, the expected role of these musicians was probably to play at banquets.

A second observation is that the audiences at these banquets are also primarily female.¹⁷ This is true for all the banquet scenes depicted on ivories. On the most complete relief of a banquet scene, found in Room S' of Ashurbanipal's palace, women play music for the king and a woman, possibly his queen (Cat. no. R17).¹⁸ Although this is not a large sample, given the general dearth of elite women portrayed on any Assyrian art, there appears to be a discernible pattern: female musicians play for female audiences.

¹⁶ It is possible that these scenes represent some sort of cultic activity involving the seated personage. However, in the absence of any specific religious iconography or action (like the winged disc or libation pouring that appear on other scenes), I am referring to them more basically as banquets.

¹⁷ As noted with caveats in Chapter 2, p. 64.

¹⁸ Although this scene is invested in academic discourse with much more significance than most banquets, given the head of an enemy hanging from a tree and the lone royal couple being served, the term “banquet” is used here simply to describe a situation in which one or more persons are eating or drinking.

A recent article questions the traditional gender identification of the seated figure and servants on the left side of this scene (Constanze Schmidt-Colinet, “Ashurbanipal Banqueting with his Queen?,” *Mesopotamia* XXXII [1997]: 289-308). This has been rebutted by Pauline Albenda, who uses stylistic characteristics similar to those discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis, to assert that the seated figure is in fact

The presence of Ashurbanipal at a musical performance by women can be explained by his position; the king is the center of all attention and therefore had the right to any musicians that he wanted. If visiting with a female companion, as in this scene, then it would have been more appropriate to have female, rather than male, musicians. To put it another way, the women may have been kept primarily for the king's entertainment, and played for high-ranking women as secondary employment.¹⁹

Two significant hypotheses about women musicians in Assyrian art lead to conclusions regarding specific works. The first is that female musicians in banquet scenes are represented as playing primarily for female audiences, or the king. Thus, a decontextualized fragment of a relief from Ashurbanipal's palace showing a female musician (Cat. no. R22) would probably have come from a scene featuring the king and/or a high-ranking woman.²⁰

A second hypothesis that I am introducing follows from the first: women (or the king) may have been the intended audience for *representations* of women. This was already implied and argued as a level of appropriateness, when I suggested that the decorated ivories may have been owned by women because their subject matter reflected

a woman (although there may not be enough evidence to identify her as a "queen," as Albenda does) (Pauline Albenda, "A Royal Eunich in the Garden," *NABU*, no. 3 [1998]: 88-89).

¹⁹ The scene portrayed could in fact taken place in the queen's palace, as in the story told in the Old Testament Book of Esther. A modern ethnographic case may be worth mentioning: in Morocco, female musicians who performed only for female audiences had high status in their community whereas those who performed for men had a low status, S. Schaefer Davis, "Working Women in a Moroccan Village," in *Women in the Muslim World*, ed. L. Beck and N. Keddie (Cambridge: Harvard U. Press, 1978), 416-434, cited in Karin van Nieuwkerk, *A Trade Like Any Other: Female Singers and Dancers in Egypt* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), p. 3. This is not to imply the same connotations for female musicians in Mesopotamia, but merely to point out that such a case has been documented in a known society.

²⁰ Although it might be assumed that this relief, fallen into Room S, might be part of the major banquet scene found in the same room (Cat. no. R17), the original field drawings do not show where it would be included. Furthermore, Barnett points out that the coiffure of the woman, and the palm tree behind her, are styled differently from those elements in the more complete banquet (*Sculptures from the North Palace of Ashurbanipal*, p. 58).

the owner's experience (i.e. female musicians).²¹ This is reflected too, in the function of the relevant ivories themselves, as they tend to be containers, perhaps for cosmetics, rather than decorative furniture elements. I do not believe that any firm conclusions can be reached regarding the intended audience of female representations; however, the notion is worth pursuing for some of the implications that follow.

If images of female musicians were intended for a female audience, how does the decoration of rooms affect our interpretation of the use of rooms in the palace? The answer may incorporate notions of sexual segregation. If certain women in the palace were isolated, as in a harem, entertaining only the king and his queen or his concubines among them, and access to them was restricted to others, then it might be possible that access to images of women carried some of the same restrictions, because of their inherent sexuality. Though Ashurbanipal is not shy about repeating his own image in the decorative scheme of his palace, one wonders if he would want to show off an image of his queen (like Gyges' doomed predecessor in Herodotus) or if he would keep her hidden. If the latter, what would have been the use of Room S', the hypothetical second story room or complex of rooms from which the banquet scene fell?²² Presumably it would have been used for the same people who would have had access to female musicians in life: the king, his consort and other women.

This is not to say that all of the rooms of the palace had functions that corresponded with their decoration. This is absurd, particularly considering the subject of some of the reliefs. However, I am suggesting that in this case, if there was some cultural

²¹ See Chapter 2, p. 64.

²² From this point on I will use the designation "Room S' complex" to allow for the possibility of more than one room, possibly an apartment, rather than the more restrictive sounding term "Room S'."

prohibition against the mixing of sexes, the image of the unidentified queen or consort and the female entertainers in the second story Room S' complex might have been included in the prohibition. In fact, a direct correspondence between function and decoration is not possible if one considers that the scenes on the reliefs are clearly set outdoors in a garden. What I am suggesting is that the Room S' complex may have been used by the female occupants of the palace, possibly in some restrictive fashion; that is, either it was one of the limited rooms that women could occupy, or it was exclusive to women, or both. There is evidence from Sennacherib's palace that there were apartments specifically for women: the inscription on a bull colossus at Door *a* between Court LXIV and Room LXV dedicating a palace to his wife, Tashmetum-sharrat, suggests that Rooms LXV-LXVII may have been part of the queen's palace.²³ I am proposing a similar function for the Room S' complex of Ashurbanipal's palace and the decoration from that complex of rooms may help in deducing the function of this part of the building.

In addition to the fairly complete banquet scene (with music, Cat. no. R17), the other subjects believed to have fallen from the Room S' complex include the libation at the end of a lion hunt (with music, Cat. no. R24), the surrender of a Chaldean city (no music), feathered men in procession (with music, Cat. no. R23), fragments of musicians (Cat. no. R18-20, 22), musicians near a tent (Cat. no. R21), and the sack of the Elamite city of Hamanu (no music). A large number of the identifiable scenes feature music and musicians. In fact, eight of the ten scenes of music from Ashurbanipal's palace were

²³ The inscription is published in Hannes D. Galter, Louis D. Levine, and Julian Reade, "The Colossi of Sennacherib's Palace and their Inscriptions," *Annual Review of the Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia Project* 4 (1986): 32, and a full bibliography and precise location can be found in John Malcolm Russell, *The Writing On the Wall: Studies in the architectural context of late Assyrian palace inscriptions*, Mesopotamian Civilizations 9 (Winona Lake, In.: Eisenbrauns, 1999), p. 275.

found fallen into Room S.²⁴ Although there are religious and military scenes mixed with the banquets, an overall motif of this upper story complex seems to have been music, a theme suggestive of entertaining and leisure.

The function of rooms in Assyrian palaces has not undergone a comprehensive survey, a project that will remain difficult while much of each of the palaces remains unexcavated. Research on the topic has been begun by Geoffrey Turner and, more recently, by John M. Russell.²⁵ Both scholars examined floor plans of Assyrian sites, but naturally, the plans of a conjectured second story are not available for study.²⁶ Russell, however, also uses the decorative program of the palace walls as clues to the possible function of rooms and suites. His identification of functions is not a direct mapping of image to activity, but he does consider repeated motifs to be useful indices of particular activities—rooms filled with apotropaic figures, for example, are interpreted as places for religious activity. My argument for the Room S' complex is not intended to suggest direct mapping, either; however, I am suggesting that the Room S' complex may have been a room or series of rooms used by the women of the palace and, aside from music making, there is little evidence to suggest other forms of feminine activity. So I am in effect proposing that this room complex is a good candidate for locating an indoor space

²⁴ This is slightly disingenuous as it is quite probable that at least two of the fragments of musicians found belong in the same scene, so the ratio is most likely seven of nine or six of eight—still a remarkably high percentage of these scenes.

Another scene of music created in Ashurbanipal's reign was installed in the Southwest palace at Nineveh built by Sennacherib (Cat. no. R15).

²⁵ Geoffrey Turner, "The State Apartments of Late Assyrian Palaces," *Iraq* 32, 2 (1970): 177-213; John Malcolm Russell, "The Program of the Palace of Ashurnasirpal II of Nimrud: Issues in the Research and Presentation of Assyrian Art," *American Journal of Archaeology* 102, 4 (1998): 655-715.

²⁶ On a possible second story, see Irene J. Winter, "'Seat of Kingship' / 'A Wonder to Behold': The Palace as Construct in the Ancient Near East," *Ars Orientalis* 23, [special issue on pre-modern Islamic palaces ed. by G. Necipoglu] (1993): n. 44. She suggests there that the second story may be the location of a residential quarter, and possible receptions suites as well, based on descriptions of a Byblos palace..

where music would have been performed.²⁷ The proposed use of this room is also buttressed by the clustering of a majority of the known representations of musicians from this palace. Although images of musicians may seem redundant in a space where actual musicians performed, this is certainly not uncommon in the decorative schemes of modern jazz or popular music clubs, or Harvard's Paine Concert Hall, where the names of classical composers adorn the walls.

An examination of women and discussion of the propriety of the display of feminine figures led, perhaps inevitably, to the one representation of female musicians performing in a proper context which was found more or less *in situ*, one story below. The banquet of Ashurbanipal from Room S' can be read, not only as a idealized portrait of a meal accompanied by music, but also as a clue to where similar music may have been performed.

Mesopotamian Musical Aesthetics: How High the Moon?

Somewhere there's music, how faint the tune. Somewhere there's heaven, How High the Moon?... Ooh de yoodie dibbly dibbly doo de de dee... Oobie dibbly dib de dah... Oobie dibbly dib de bop...

Morgan Lewis and Nancy Hamilton/scat by Ella Fitzgerald (1940/1960)

Words often fail us in our descriptions of music. Writing about music, the quip goes, is like dancing about architecture. This is true of any language and one reason that I have chosen not to speculate on what Neo-Assyrian music sounded like is that Assyriologists have yet to identify the Sumerian or Akkadian terms for music per se. How, after all,

²⁷ The images of battle with the Elamites may seem incongruous with this hypothesis, but that is a function of our modern sensibilities and ignorance. Certainly, if there were many songs that regaled the listener with

could anyone translate terms like “melody” or “bass” without a bilingual inscription? And yet, Salman Rushdie reminds us, “To unlock a society, look at its untranslatable words.”²⁸

To understand what effect Neo-Assyrian images of music may have had on their original audience, it is necessary to understand what effect the presence of music itself would have had on that same audience. Although textual descriptions of musical aesthetics may fall under the category of “untranslatable words,” they prove more enlightening on this topic than other sources of historical evidence, namely images and artifacts. In fact, it may be the very inadequacy of language to describe music that rescues this project since music is often described metaphorically, using words that *are* translatable. This section seeks to catalog the vocabulary used to describe the experience of music, to try to begin to comprehend how those metaphors and similes may be understood, and then to consider how those associations might affect the reading of musical imagery.

To get at the language of musical description, I consulted the pre-eminent Assyriological reference, the *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary* (hereafter *CAD*) published by the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago.²⁹ The *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary* project was begun in 1921, the first volume appeared in 1956, and a few volumes are still left to complete the 23-letter Roman alphabet used to transliterate Akkadian. The

tales of military triumph, the scenes would be extremely appropriate backgrounds.

²⁸ Salman Rushdie *Shame*, (New York: Knopf, 1983), p. 111.

²⁹ Although the *CAD* retains the word “Assyrian” in its title, it became evident since 1921 that the Assyrian and Babylonian languages were dialects of the same language. The continued use of the term “Assyrian” in the title was a conscious decision to parallel the terms “Assyriology” and “Assyriologist,” although in fact, the language was called Akkadian by its users (*CAD* ‘A₁’: vii, Introduction).

complete, three volume *Akkidisches Handwörterbuch* was also consulted.)³⁰ In the *CAD*, every word is listed with complete citations, similar to the function provided by the *Oxford English Dictionary* for the English language. Since there is a limited number of known Akkadian texts, the Chicago dictionary project lists many uses of every word. In other words, the *CAD* was intended as both a dictionary and a sort of encyclopedia of the Akkadian language and it is used here as my basic research material. The primary model for this methodology was Irene Winter's work on Mesopotamian visual aesthetics.³¹ Like Winter, I read through the entire dictionary to date; but where she collected words and phrases describing visual perceptions, I recorded every word that had anything to do with music, and compiled a lexicon, attached here as Appendix B.

There are some problems with this project's method. As noted by Winter, the researcher must critically consider others' translations and make the corrective of further philological study that incorporates changes in reading over time.³² The project is also limited by my own pre-conceived, subjective opinion of what constitutes music and musical practice. The works of two ethnomusicologists, Steven Feld and Anthony Seeger, influenced that opinion.³³ Feld's work on the Kaluli of Papua New Guinea and Seeger's work on the Suyá of Brazil alerted me to cultures that relate music to other sound phenomena and thus broadened the range of vocabulary I was prepared to examine

³⁰ W. von Soden, ed. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1965.

³¹ Irene J. Winter, "Aesthetics in Ancient Mesopotamian Art," in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, ed. Jack M. Sasson (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1995), 2569-2580.

³² "Mesopotamian Aesthetics," book manuscript in preparation, pp. 8-12. For another case, see Craig Clunas, *Superfluous Things; Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991), where the author discusses the words that were used to describe Ming objects of the 16th century A.D. Clunas points out the difficulty in understanding the nuances, or even basic meanings, of words that have evolved over centuries.

³³ S. Feld, *Sound and Sentiment*, Second Revised Edition (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990) and A. Seeger *Why Suyá Sing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

to include natural animal sounds and speech. Although their influence is not necessarily discernible in the conclusions of this paper, the broader scope of research they stimulated has helped to make a more complete survey of the Akkadian language.

A further problem in applying this information to Neo-Assyrian art is that this material has been compiled from the entire history of written Akkadian, from 2200 BC-ca. A.D. 200, not merely the Neo-Assyrian period (and more specifically for this dissertation, the period from 883 BC to 648 BC). Unfortunately, texts on music are few and far between, and so a wide net has been cast in order to gain the most information. However, there does appear to be a general continuity of musical terms. Not only were some words in use for many hundreds of years, many words were carried over even as the language of the dominant culture changed. The Akkadian language borrowed cuneiform signs from the Sumerian language, often with their semantic value intact but with different pronunciations. Indeed, there were Sumerian loan words brought into Akkadian and a few Akkadian words loaned into Sumerian, suggesting two-way exchange between these cultures. For example, Akkadian kept the Sumerian names of many instruments, and also the word *nâru*, meaning musician; Sumerian borrowed the Akkadian word for another instrument, the *sabī tu*. Many musical terms used in Sumerian, Old Akkadian and Old Babylonian texts were used through Standard Babylonian and then on to Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian³⁴—a period of more than fifteen hundred years. This

³⁴ In fact, by the late 8th century BC, the period I am most interested in here, the dominant spoken language was Aramaic and Akkadian was used as an official language, perhaps comparable to the use of Latin in law courts and churches, see Hayim Tadmor, "The Aramaization of Assyria: Aspects of Western Impact," in *Mesopotamien und seine Nachbarn*, ed. Hans J. Nissen and Johannes Renger (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag 1982), 449-470.

textual continuity suggests at least the possibility of continuities in attitudes toward music and musicians.

An immediate revelation upon reading through the *CAD* was a dearth of words about music. Many relevant words were names of types of instruments and songs derived from lexical lists, ancient “dictionaries,” but often without context or description, limiting their use here. Furthermore, most of the musical words were not descriptive, again due to the “untranslatable” nature of musical description. Without knowing what the music sounded like, Assyriologists could hardly be expected to translate a passage that described music as “harmonious” or “syncopated.” Translating Akkadian musical description into recognizable English would be comparable to an Assyrian trying to read the latest issue of *Rolling Stone*. In fact, an understanding of modern American rock criticism is based on conventions of metaphor that describe music as “hard” or “soft”—terms not directly translatable into another modern language, such as Chinese. This problem is a function of the inadequacy of any language to fully describe music, which is here compounded further by cultural differences through a remove of both space and time. Despite the focus on the Neo-Assyrian period here, the linguistic enterprise includes examples from earlier periods in order to accumulate a meaningful sample of related words.

Individual appraisals of music are approachable only through an inquiry into indications of a Mesopotamian musical aesthetic. In her work on Mesopotamian visual art, Winter has suggested that the descriptions of value that operate in the visual field can be

classified into the realms of making, appearance, and affect.³⁵ Similarly, I have found a few categories into which I can classify descriptions of music, although these categories do not neatly parallel Winter's. The categories I have found are sacred purity, emotion, and physical sensation, good or bad. There are *some* parallels between visual and aural categories of experience; for instance, my categories of sacred purity and emotion are aspects of Winter's "affect." "Affect," her term, suggests the projection of influence on the viewer, whereas my categories of purity and emotion describe that influence (though "purity" is often expressed as light in these texts and thus might be more correctly matched with "appearance"). Although I found no specific phrases that described musical skill to parallel Winter's "making," some of the status accorded to musicians is attributed to technical, specialized knowledge. Musicians are listed with priests and exorcists as those versed in scholarship in the service of the gods, repositories of information.³⁶ Because music and the visual arts are commonly integral to religious, status enhancing, and recreational activities, parallel descriptions of the visual arts and music are perhaps to be expected.

Within the categories of purity, emotion and physicality, specific evaluations and descriptions of music are made. A series of musical texts that refer to religious and funerary music contain words that describe music or instruments as holy or pure.³⁷ This could have been a judgment of the timbre, or sound quality of the music. In fact, "purity"

³⁵ I.J. Winter, "Aesthetics in Ancient Mesopotamian Art," and "Mesopotamian Aesthetics," manuscript in preparation., cited above, n. 31.

³⁶ Streck Asb. 24 vi 25, cited in CAD 'N₁': 377, *nâru a2*'.

³⁷ See Winter's description of a parallel use of language for the visual arts, "Mesopotamian Aesthetics," manuscript in preparation, pp. 54ff. On the relationship between "holy" and "pure," and the role these concepts play in Mesopotamian religious thought, see E. Jan Wilson, "Holiness" and "purity" in

or “clarity” of sound can be considered a metaphor in English, common in comparing the tone of performances by Winton Marsalis or Itzhak Perlman or Alison Krauss to amateur trumpeters or violinists or singers. The terms may also refer to purity in a more metaphoric sense. *Ebbu* (“polished, shiny, clean, pure, holy”) described the *uppu* drum or the sound of the *uppu*; *ellu* (“clean, pure, holy, sacred, noble”) described the *balaggū* instrument.³⁸ *Namru*, which means bright and shining, and thus, by extension, implies ritually pure, was used to describe a certain type of singer.³⁹ The *nigkalagū* drum was used to purify temples, suggesting that the purity of the sound of the instrument or musical genre could cleanse the area around it⁴⁰ (although I would assume that the drumming did not operate alone but was associated with other ritual practices).

Purity and holiness may be closer to what we might understand as aesthetic, but more specific emotional states could be understood as aesthetic, too, if they were powerful enough. Particular types of music or singing were associated with celebrations and a positive emotional factor has crept into translation. *Nagū* and *nigūtu* are translated as “joyous singing” and “joyous music”; *nigūtu* is further modified by *damiqtu*, “auspiciousness.”⁴¹

Mesopotamian music had a physical component that is expressed in terms like *šūnuhūti*, *tābu*, and *dannu*. *Inhu* songs, usually for laments, are said to be “exhausting”

Mesopotamia, Alter Orient und Altes Testament 237 (Kevelaer: Verlag Butzon & Bercker; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1994).

³⁸ KAR 16 r. 15f., cited in *CAD ‘B’*: 38, *balaggū*.

³⁹ ARM I 83:7, 9 and 10, cited in *CAD ‘E’*: 377, *eštalū*. See I.J. Winter, “Radiance as an Aesthetic Value in the Art of Mesopotamia (and some Indian Parallels), K. Vatsyayan Felicitation Volume, ed. B.N. Saraswati, New Delhi, in press, for more on radiance.

⁴⁰ BBR No. 26 I 22, cited in *CAD ‘N₂’*: 215, *nigkalagū* a.

⁴¹ *CAD ‘N₁’*: 123-4, *nagū*; 217-8, *nigūtu*. On *damiqtu*, Lambert BWL 40:28, and see I.J. Winter, “Mesopotamian Aesthetics,” manuscript in preparation.

(š ūnuhūti).⁴² One frequently used adjective described music as “sweet” (*t ābu*). *Tābu* modifies *alāla* and *qubbū* songs (work-songs and lamentations). In one case, a human voice is described as “sweet as a flute.”⁴³ In reference to the *nigkalagū* drum, *dannu*, “strong” or “solid,” is translated as “loud,”⁴⁴ but perhaps the Italian *forte*, as it has been adapted for use in Western musical notation, would be a better musical translation.

Physical descriptions of music are at least in part metaphoric (*t ābu*, for example). There exist other references to musical rituals in which music may have metaphoric, or psychosomatically physical effects. One unusual Standard Babylonian tablet indicates the harm that could be caused by music. “[M]ay the playing of his strings be disagreeable to the public; may his lute playing be painful (*limraš*) to his audience.”⁴⁵ “May it be painful” (*limraš*) could also be translated as “may it make <them> sick.” In another Standard Babylonian text, the phrase “let the shepherd kill her (a slave)” parallels “let the lamentation priest kill her with his *manzū* drum.”⁴⁶ The physical pain and harm of music implied here may be contrasted with the healing power of music. A third Standard Babylonian text reads: “let the resounding voice of your *š innatu* (possibly a woodwind or wooden percussion instrument) tear disease from my body.”⁴⁷ A metaphoric analogy to sorcery—“sorcerers play their instrument like musicians”⁴⁸—is in recognition, I would guess, of the almost magically ameliorative properties of music.

⁴² Streck Asb. 190:23, CAD ‘I-J’: 148, *inhu* B b. We should probably consider the *context* of the lament, and not the actual songs, as exhausting.

⁴³ Streck Asb. 56 vi 102, cited in CAD ‘A₁’: 328, *alāla* b; TuM NF 3 25:17 cited in ‘Q’: 291, *qubbū*; Lambert BWL 54:31, cited in ‘M₁’: 164, *malī liš*.

⁴⁴ AfO 14 146:120, cited in CAD ‘N₂’: 215, *nigkalagū* b.

⁴⁵ KAR 361 r 8, cited in CAD ‘E’: 80, *elē lu*.

⁴⁶ ASKT p. 120 r. 17f., cited in CAD ‘M₁’: 239, *manzū*.

⁴⁷ LKA 70 ii 7f., cited in CAD ‘S’: 201, *š innatu*.

⁴⁸ Maqlū VII 163, cited in CAD ‘N₁’: 377, *nāru*.

The metaphoric description of the input of one sense (sound) in terms of another (taste or pain) suggests the evocation of a previous, multi-sensory experience.

Descriptions like “sweet” and “painful” should perhaps be considered as metonyms of memories and as such may stand for “pleasant” or “unpleasant experience.”

On the basis of textual attestations, it is clear that musicians in the Near East were admired for their knowledge and skill, and for the positions they held in temple and palace rituals. Their music was admired for its purity and the emotional and physical responses it could elicit. I would argue that these qualities of music should not be considered singly as aesthetic qualities, nor should music be considered the entire impetus for these results. Rather, the religious, official, celebratory or funeral contexts must be taken with music to produce the required results. Once experienced, music could act like a trigger or reminder of the rest of the experience, but to begin with, the music must have been contextualized in order to evoke a response.

A processual definition of aesthetic experience puts more emphasis on the context of the experience (and previous experiences), which can be shared among members of a group. As shaped through personal preference, experience and education, it may be multiple channels of observations in confluence that combine to elicit an aesthetically pleasing (or displeasing) reaction. These channels or “ways of perceiving” are precisely what we must learn if we are to understand the aesthetics of another culture, to appreciate the arts of a different culture on their terms.

Table 5.1 Akkadian terms used to describe music

Purity	Emotion	Physicality
<i>ebbu</i>	<i>damiqtu</i>	<i>dannu</i>
<i>ellu</i>	<i>nagû</i>	<i>limras</i>
<i>namru</i>	<i>nigûtu</i>	<i>š ūnuhūti</i> <i>t ābu</i>

In sum, then, researching the “ways of perceiving” music for Mesopotamians, I have found three descriptive categories: music as purity, emotion and physicality. In the same way, Winter found discrete categories of description of the visual arts. While there may be some question where a given term fits (is “light,” for example, to be considered the property of a musical event, or an effect on the viewer?), there are enough synonymous and antonymous terms in each category to suggest that those categories are legitimate areas of perception for Mesopotamians. Even if we cannot yet fathom how a “pure” sound expressed itself for a Mesopotamian audience, that audience obviously sought and found purity in their music. If asked to describe an oil painting, a modern viewer might list likeness, voluptuousness, balance in the application of color, boldness and creativity, a number of factors which combine to envelop and please the viewer. I would submit that Mesopotamian descriptions of musical performances in terms of purity, emotion and physicality reflect an appreciation for these discrete aspects that, together, might have enveloped and pleased ancient audiences. The reason these neat categories exist can be linked to an aesthetic process that acknowledges the multiple ways an event or object is simultaneously appreciated. The Mesopotamian example suggests that concepts of aesthetics from foreign or ancient cultures can be approached, not by applying a universal system of appreciation, but instead considering a human *process* through which we can begin to describe another person or group’s aesthetic experience.

Once the affective properties of music have been understood, however basically, we can return to the subject of representation. If we accept that musical audiences were affected by these sensations, I would argue that the visual audience may have approached the *images* of music with similar feelings of purity, emotion and physical sensation. They would have had other advantages as well. The intended audience would have known all of the nuances of musical representation that I have tried to extract in this dissertation, and still others. They would have known more precisely what the horizontal forearm harp signified, and if the king was indeed associated with this instrument, then the image of the harp might evoke a combination of emotions like loyalty, fear, national pride, respect and piety. They would have recognized the foreign musicians depicted, by their hairstyles, their garb, and their instruments, and understood the process of assyrianization that was being represented. They would have read a sense of time into the reliefs, known what musical cues began and ended each event, how long a composition was to last, the pace and rhythm of the music and, perhaps, the very image of a particular ensemble in a particular context was enough to transport their thoughts to a regular ritual. They would have “heard” the music as clearly as we can “hear” the national anthem when we see photographs of athletes standing before a competition. Visitors to the palace would have known which lyres belonged to which group and perhaps been impressed at the number of kinds that were depicted and heard in the building. They might not have seen any female musicians or their images, but perhaps they had heard tales of the queen’s palace and the women who entertained there. Or, if allowed into the female domain, the decorative scheme of the rooms may have reinforced the privilege and anticipated the luxury and entertainment to be had.

More than all that, they would have known what the forearm harp and the different lyres and the different national musical styles and the proper musical cues would have sounded like. Without any form of recorded music, the effect of these representations of music must have been transportive—subtly, perhaps, but enough to trigger that familiar tickle that began at the base of the spine and slowly worked itself up to the brain. “Somewhere there is music,” they might have thought, looking at these images, “how faint the tune...”

Summary

The topics of this chapter were described as “connotative” meanings, ideas not explicitly presented in the art, but inferred through careful looking and then projected through textual referent and constrained speculation. In reviewing the last two chapters, the differentiation between denotative and connotative meanings may be made more clearly. In terms of instruments, there seems to have been a conscious program to promote the horizontal forearm harp. The ultimate meaning of the harp is unclear, but it would be difficult to dispute the fact that this instrument was presented front and center at the most important political and religious events. In contrast, the lyres were depicted in particular styles, depending on the nationality of the musician. A typology revealed that the curved, oblique lyres seemed to be associated with Mediterranean cultures, whereas Assyrians played rectangular lyres. This distinction may be helpful in eventually identifying the men in feathered headdresses; in any case, the type of instrument must be taken into account when proposing such an identification.

Among musicians, again, there would appear to have been some deliberate meaning to the depiction of two ethnic Arabs in Assyrian dress playing two different types of lyres, one of which was associated with Assyrians. Or, in the scene of Elamite prisoners, there must have been some conscious decision not to simply give all the vertical harps the same decorative tassels. In contrast, although I have argued that the placement of images of female musicians were clustered in one second story room complex of Ashurbanipal's palace, it is difficult to imagine that the artists who designed the decorative program were consciously aware of the treatment of women in Assyrian high society. Or rather, they almost certainly would not have been aware of any alternatives. Based on these images and by analogy to references to a "queen's palace," it was hypothesized that the images of music in Ashurbanipal's palace decorated the walls of an apartment where female musicians performed.

In the third case, of contexts, the last chapter suggested ways to read musical scenes semantically as markers of time, with variations therein. In this chapter, the idea was put forth that musical scenes could have evoked aesthetic and cultural moods for the informed viewer. The particular sensations that have been used to describe music in the Akkadian vocabulary can be categorized as expressing purity, emotion or physical sensations. Although the descriptions are frustratingly vague, they are at the same time similar enough to the vagueness of musical description in our own culture to seem familiar.

This chapter suggested some of the connotative meanings that could be inferred from ancient images of music. These are not authoritative arguments, but rather directions toward which more research on music can lead. Having begun with the more

pedestrian task of cataloging iconographic images, this dissertation ends on a much more theoretical note—that some sense of the experience of music may be elucidated via text and image, that is, via *representation*—even if the particular “sounds” of music continue to elude us. The final chapter will summarize the progression from the Introduction through Chapter 5 and end with some concluding remarks.

Chapter 6

Conclusions

Mesopotamian music, one of the two subjects of this dissertation, lies in the scholarly and public imagination somewhere between fascination and omission. A popular interest in music and Mesopotamia is demonstrated by Jack Sasson's discography of music based on Mesopotamian sources and a Reuters news report that announced that a Finnish academic is recording Elvis Presley songs translated into Sumerian.¹ At the same time, recent popular accounts of Mesopotamia by academics make no mention of music at all.² This dissertation aimed to bring those two extremes closer together. By presenting a grounded scholarly presentation of Mesopotamian music based on representations, it is hoped that some of the curiosity about ancient music will be partially sated, and simultaneously, partially stimulated.

The other subject of this dissertation is representation. Even as these images provide invaluable information regarding the musical life of the Assyrians, a careful study of the images reveals much about how they may have been intended to have been read. Musical motifs could be seen to have contributed to communicating the elevation of an Assyrian symbol, the denigration of foreigners and the passage of time. A close study of this subject also suggested arguments on the regional musical exchange among Mediterranean cultures, the function of rooms in the palace, and the appreciation of music—and hence the related experience of representations of music.

¹ Jack Sasson, "Musical Settings for Cuneiform Literature: A Discography," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 103, 1 (1983): 233-5; Reuters January 21, 1999.

Each of the chapters is reviewed here, followed by a few suggestions on further research topics.

I began by introducing Mesopotamian music and defining Neo-Assyrian music. This dissertation was meant to contribute to and build upon the close observations and deductions of scholars such as Kilmer, Lawergren, Rashid, Rimmer and others. Focusing on Assyria of the first millennium BC allowed me to consider a period that was rich in both visual and textual materials, although virtually devoid of archaeological evidence for music. The purpose of this dissertation was to make a clear and comprehensive review of Neo-Assyrian music as represented in the art and to discuss how the images of music could lead to insight about the representations themselves. The field of ethnomusicology was a model for a broad conception of musical practice, beyond merely musical sound.³

The sources for this study were reviewed. The evidence includes Assyrian palace reliefs, decorated bronze palace doors, carved ivories of Assyrian and foreign manufacture, Assyrian painted vessels and seal impressions and a Phoenician incised shell. Neo-Assyrian texts supplemented the visual evidence. Two descriptions, one in words and the other in images, of an Assyrian king's procession with music exemplified how texts could be precise and informative, but that images were much richer in details. Whereas the text states the nature of the event, the picture implies it, but also supplies a flow and accumulation of detail that is absent in a limited number of words. The following example demonstrates how images can also supply information about the actual

² For example, Daniel C. Snell, *Life in the ancient Near East, 3100-332 B.C.E.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

³ Another avenue of research, comparing ancient practice with ethnographic examples, has not been pursued here except in footnotes affirming the existence of situations that may have seemed unusual for readers in a

music itself: although Neo-Assyrian and Elamite musicians played similar horizontal harps, the Assyrian instrument is consistently shown in pairs, whereas the Elamite harp is shown only singly. Thus, unless the Assyrians played in strict unison, the Assyrian tradition of horizontal harp music would have been fundamentally different from the Elamite tradition.

Chapters 1-3 focused on Neo-Assyrian music from an analysis of visual representations and related texts. The chapters built from musical instruments, to musicians, to musical contexts.

Instruments

In the first chapter, the musical instruments of Assyria were described by type and playing technique. The consistency between representations of various players from the beginning to the end of the period suggested these representations were intended to portray the accepted, proper technique of playing each instrument. Using the Sachs-Hornbostel classification, standard in ethnomusicological work, the instruments were ordered as chordophones, aerophones, membranophones and idiophones, and vocals.

The chordophones, or string instruments, included harps, lyres, lutes and possibly zithers. The vertical harp was carried under the left arm and the strings, oriented vertically, were plucked or strummed with both hands. The extra lengths of string or tassels that hung off the bottom arm of these harps were decorated differently for different nationalities. Assyrian vertical harps had one row of knots or beads at the bottom of their

Western music tradition. A thorough consideration of parallels with court practices in later traditions is a topic for further study.

harps. Elamite harps are shown with more of these knots or beads. On the Elamites' own representations, these tassels were tied together at the center, creating an hourglass shape.

The most prevalent Assyrian instrument was the horizontal forearm harp. This harp extended from the player's waist and was supported by a strap worn over the left shoulder. A vertical post at the far end was shaped like a forearm with palm open and wearing a rosette wristband. The strings, strung horizontally, were struck or plucked with a long plectrum held in the right hand and manipulated—possibly muted, bent, or plucked—with the left. This instrument was only played by Assyrian musicians, and only in pairs (with one exception, probably a mistake). Pairs of these instruments were shown overlapping, as if the musicians were shoulder to shoulder, even in otherwise single-file processions. Depictions of what I believe are the same instrument on the bronze reliefs from Balawat are identical except for missing the finial, probably a lack of detailing that resulted from the smaller scale of those representations.

An Elamite musician plays a horizontal harp without the forearm decoration on the vertical arm and different decorations on the lower arm, but this is clearly another horizontal type, not the forearm harp. The chance breaks on this relief have made the reconstruction of the instrument an issue; I argue that a vertical post was indeed lost in the break but that it was not a forearm finial. This position is supported by comparisons with contemporary Neo-Elamite reliefs that show differences in the shape and playing technique (singly, rather than in pairs) of their horizontal harps.

Lyres are played by musicians of various nationalities, and each of them plays a lyre of slightly different decoration or shape. In spite of these variations, the lyre is

usually played the same way, held under the left arm and plucked or strummed with both hands.

Lutes are depicted in two reliefs of the Neo-Assyrian period. In both of these images, the neck of the lute is held at a 45-degree angle by the left hand while the right strums or picks. Two strings or tassels hang off the end of one of these lutes suggesting that these lutes may have had only two strings.

The zither is the least reliably identified chordophone from Neo-Assyria. It may be depicted on an ivory pyxis from North Syria, but the image could equally depict a percussive scraping device, an Apulian sistrum, or an object that is not an instrument at all.

Aerophones, or wind instruments, include whistles, flutes, reeds and trumpets. Whistles, flutes and reeds are all basically tubular objects; for this reason, I grouped them together as pipes in reviewing images of aerophones. These pipes, often doubled, were held fairly horizontally with both hands and accompanied harps, lyres, lutes and drums. Scenes of pipes alone are fragmentary and therefore do not conclusively represent a pipe played as a solo instrument.

Pairs of trumpets were depicted in three scenes in Sennacherib's palace, all of the same subject: the quarrying and removal of stone sculptures. One trumpeter plays, presumably to urge the workers on and to coordinate their efforts, while the other rests. It has been suggested that this object could be a megaphone, but given the narrow shape of the conical instrument and the more efficient production of sound with a trumpet, it seems more likely to have been a musical instrument.

Membranophones, or skin instruments, include the kettledrum *lilissu*, frame drums and other drums. Mention of bronze being issued for the manufacture of the *lilissu* can be interpreted to suggest that some examples (or possibly all) of this drum were made of metal. The *lilissu* was used in the cult of the moon god Sin and was itself a cultic object that required various rituals of consecration, like the “mouth cleansing” applied to statues to imbue them with vitality.

Frame drums are portable drums that are often shown accompanying other instruments, such as the horizontal forearm harp. Some modern frame drums have bangles attached to the back of the drum but such attachments are not (and would not be) visible on Assyrian representations of these drums, and so the more generic term “frame drum” is used, rather than tambour or tambourine. Other drums are shown with cylindrical or conical shaped bodies accompanying instruments in a banquet setting.

Idiophones, or self-vibrating instruments, include cymbals, clappers, and sistra. Cymbals and shell clappers were the only instruments found at Neo-Assyrian sites, but without proper excavation records. Cymbals are also depicted on the reliefs. The sistrum, a type of rattle, is represented in Assyrian processions on the bronze doors from Balawat. All of these percussion instruments are shown accompanying other instruments.

Vocal music is difficult to identify on images. An oft-cited depiction of Neo-Assyrian period singing shows a group of Elamite prisoners (Cat. no. R15). One woman holds a hand to her throat, possibly to induce a tremolo to her voice; she might also be wailing or ululating in despair. Depictions of singing are hard to ascertain, and textual references are not much more helpful. The Akkadian word *nâru* refers to both singers and musicians more generally.

It was noted that all the musicians are shown holding their instruments consistently, as would a modern right-handed player (the one exception being an Elamite, enemy prisoner playing a vertical harp). In the Neo-Assyrian period, handedness favored the right over the left, as in many cultures since then. This was taken as a possible indication that these depictions are standardized portrayals of how these instruments were played. Such consistency can be attributed either to the aesthetic of Neo-Assyrian representation—and standardized forms for depicting other activities would support this view—or to the orthodoxy of Neo-Assyrian music making—and the conservative visual style would serve either as evidence for, or an analogous parallel of, this view.

Musicians

The second chapter dealt with the musician as represented in Neo-Assyrian art. Musicians in representations were defined simply as figures with musical instruments (a consistent definition that works better than any sort of costume or physical characteristic). Texts were used as clues to the social status accorded to musicians. Images were examined to identify and classify different types of musicians.

In using texts about musicians, it is necessary to clarify that the Akkadian word *nâru* may have referred to instrumental as well as vocal artists. The term “musician” in this dissertation should be understood to have the same, more inclusive definition.

The Nimrud Wine Lists proved to be a great source of information on musicians in the palace. In the ration lists of wine for various personnel, musicians were found to comprise 200 of 6000 court positions, a rather high percentage. This led to speculation that a number of groups could have played at once in different parts of the palace, nearly

constantly. Foreign musicians are listed by nationality, possibly an indication that each group had a distinct musical style. Unfortunately, texts do not describe the music of various groups (images can help in correlating instruments with particular groups).

Other texts cite musicians as property, or as property owners, or recognized musicians as legal witnesses. The evidence suggests that at least some musicians were of the *awī lum*, or free man's class, such as the musician from Til Barsip whose sale of five servants is documented. Still other musicians were treated as property, that is, slaves who were themselves bought and sold. The wide range of responsibilities should perhaps be seen as a sign that gender and nationality were more significant than occupation when gauging social standing.

Different types of musicians are documented in both texts and images. Texts are clear and specific, but lack details. Images require some interpretation, but the greater accumulations of detail on images give clearer distinctions between groups and allow them to be correlated with instruments and situations. Three categories were considered here: gender, nationality and species (human versus animal musicians). As the identification of musicians is a higher level of interpretation, requiring that more of the source material survived, the corpus of images depicting musicians was smaller than that of instruments.

In discussing male and female musicians, it makes more sense to concentrate on the minority group, and consider how they were contrasted with the majority. Female musicians are identified in texts with the sign **SAL.NAR**. The plural for musicians, **NAR.MEŠ**, can be used to describe groups of mixed genders, although there are examples

of texts that specify both male and female musicians, demonstrating that the presence of female musicians was notable.

Gender in images is indicated through secondary sexual characteristics, dress and composition. Beards are sure signs of masculinity, although there are also beardless men. Breasts are signs of femininity, although the depiction of breasts is often fairly subtle—a slightly different profile with the bosom projecting out more horizontally whereas the male chest slopes downward. There are likewise details of dress that could identify gender (like wide belts for men) but they are not consistently depicted. However, dress does aid in grouping different figures into ensembles. Generally, male and female musicians are not intermingled. The exception that proves the rule comes from Room XXXIII of the Southwest Palace at Nineveh. That relief portrays a group of Elamite musicians being led from their defeated city. Physiognomy (beards, breasts, musculature of the forearm, height), details of dress (including stripes on collars and hems), and composition (the only non-overlapping consecutive figures) all contribute to identifying the first five musicians in this procession as male and the next six as female. It was conjectured that the mix, as well as details such as the lifting of the male leg to evoke a female hemline, may have been a deliberate representational emasculation of the Elamite men.

Female musicians are only found on reliefs dating from the reign of Ashurbanipal (Cat. nos. R15, 17, 22). They are the majority in ivories, especially ivories from North Syria. From the limited evidence available, it would seem that female musicians were only depicted playing for female audiences; possibly this reflected actual musical practice. (No male musicians are shown playing specifically for female audiences,

although women may be in the background of military scenes.) These images of female musicians are also among the few images of women performing non-menial tasks in Neo-Assyrian art. The instruments that women are shown playing are the same as those played by men, with the exception of the trumpet and the horizontal forearm harp, which are only played by men, in labor intensive or religious contexts in which women are consistently excluded. Determining the nationality of figures in Neo-Assyrian art is easier than determining gender. The visual cues are primarily in the hair and dress of the individuals. Assyrians, to begin with, wear their hair in tight waves that flow down the neck and end in curls at the shoulder. They wear tunics and skirts, sometimes to the knee, sometimes to the ankle. Assyrians also tend to be represented at a slightly larger scale than foreigners, and the difference between their proper posture and the stooped posture of others reinforces this contrast. Assyrian musicians play vertical harps, lyres, lutes, double pipes, frame drums, sistra, and cymbals. They are the only nationality shown to play the horizontal forearm harp and the trumpet.

Objects sporting images of musicians found at Neo-Assyrian sites may be of local or foreign manufacture. If foreign, the object itself, and not the representation on it, may have motivated its original collection. However, I argue that an affinity for the image may reflect an affinity for the music itself, and therefore I take an inclusive stance and consider those foreign musicians to be part of the greater Neo-Assyrian musical experience. Foreign musicians on Neo-Assyrian images can be divided into those accepted by the Assyrians and those portrayed as defeated enemy.

North Syrian musicians are depicted on ivories in the North Syrian style. They play double pipes, frame drums, lyres and an instrument that may be a zither or a percussive scraper. All of these musicians are female.

An ivory of South Syrian or Phoenician style shows a woman playing a lyre. It is difficult to draw conclusions from this single piece.

Assyrian depictions of men with feathered headdresses have not been definitively identified. Accepting both Calmeyer's suggestion that the headdress was a badge of rank, and Barnett's that the figures are Persian, I provisionally considered these individuals as Persians of a certain rank or profession. There are two images of these men playing instruments; in the first, a man plays a pipe to accompany a procession, in the second, two men, one with a lyre, the other with a harp, walk through a garden with a tame lion.

A second group of foreign musicians accorded some respect in Assyrian art appears on a relief from Ashurbanipal (Cat. no. R25). On that relief, two pairs of musicians face each other playing a frame drum, a lyre, cymbals and a second type of lyre. The two lyre players also manipulate their instruments differently: one uses a plectrum and the other is shown exaggeratedly stretching his fingers over the strings. Although the costume of these figures seem to indicate they were culturally Assyrian, their hairstyle can be recognized as that of Arabs who battle Assyrians in Room L of Ashurbanipal's palace.

The Judeans are a group depicted with decidedly less equality by the Assyrians. Three Judean lyre players are shown being driven from their home by an Assyrian soldier in Room XXXII of Sennacherib's palace (Cat. no. R11).

The Elamites have already been discussed as a group mixing female and male musicians. This foreign procession plays vertical harps, a horizontal harp, double pipes, and a cylindrical drum. The Assyrian depiction of Elamites can be compared with contemporary Elamite images of musicians from Kul-e Farah that show similar vertical and horizontal harps. The correspondence of instrumental and costume details lend an air of veracity to the Assyrian visual record.

Assyrians are always differentiated from foreigners in images and texts. The specificity with which each group is named, even in administrative documents for musicians playing for the same audience, may be an indication that each group had a particular musical style. This would explain why musicians of varying nationalities may have been employed to play the same type of instrument. Few instruments are played by only one cultural group, the exceptions being the horizontal forearm harp and trumpets played only by Assyrians, and the horizontal harp played by the Elamites. Among the popular shared instruments are the vertical harp, double pipe, frame drum, and the lyre, although the latter tends to be of a distinct shape for each group. The common organology suggests an international culture of music—although not necessarily international songs or styles of music.

A last distinction can be made between human musicians and anthropomorphized animal musicians that are depicted on sealings. In one impression, two monkeys play pipes; in another, a horse plays a lyre for another horse seated at a meal. These sealings are rather odd and difficult to interpret. They could represent myths, fables, cartoons, caricatures, or scenes of the Netherworld, and until further evidence is available to choose one reading over another, it is best to leave the question open.

Musical Events

The third chapter dealt with musical events, as defined by the information surrounding the musician(s) and the instrument(s), specifically the audience, the setting and the action. Because of the fragmentation of archaeological material, this chapter drew its conclusions from even fewer images than the previous two. The musical event can be described as encompassing five elements: instruments, musicians, audience, setting and action. The first two have already been covered; the latter three are described here.

The audience was defined as the individuals toward whom the musicians were playing, even if that audience had their backs to the musician. In other words, the orientation of the musicians determined the identification of an audience. The setting or background of the image included geographical markers, such as mountains, rivers, flora and fauna, and architectural markers, such as temples, tents, and city walls. The action referred to the primary act in a given scene (as music making was in every case an accompaniment to action and not the main focus of attention).

Using the audience as the primary criterion, five categories of musical events were described: Military, Religious, Banquet, Work, and Mythical. Although they are not necessarily native categories, they were chosen for the lack of overlap and to provide a terminology to describe these scenes more easily. They are ordered from best defined; in other words, Military scenes are easy to identify (there are soldiers in the audience) whereas Mythical scenes are less so (there are monsters or anthropomorphic animals in the audience).

There are twelve scenes of music played in Military contexts. None of these show music being played during battle. Instead, musicians are shown in the aftermath, in the clearing of the battlefield, and in processions of Assyrian troops or foreign prisoners. These situations are also described in texts. The audiences in these scenes vary but always include male Assyrian soldiers. The settings are invariably foreign lands, as indicated by landscape elements like rivers, hills or exotic trees. Foreign cities are also depicted. The instruments brought by Assyrian musicians on military campaigns include horizontal forearm harps, lyres, lutes, frame drums and cymbals; the foreign musicians are possibly court musicians forced out of their homes playing lyres, vertical harps, a horizontal harp, double pipes and a drum. Singing in Assyrian processions is attested in texts, and a woman prisoner may be singing at the end of a foreign procession of prisoners. There are many military scenes that do not have music at all.

Religious musical events are defined as including divinities among the audience. The divinities are represented symbolically by physical objects, such as an altar, or by an icon, for example a winged disk floating in the visual field. The actions around which the music is played include libations (pouring of liquid), processions (organized marches) and a dedication (pledging an object to a deity). The painted vessels all have scenes that would fit in this category. Texts also describe instruments “set out [to] glorify” deities. The settings for Religious events may include temple architecture. The musicians are male Assyrians only, although they may be bearded or unbearded. The instruments played include the lyre, double pipe, frame drum and cymbal and all of these scenes on the reliefs include the horizontal forearm harp, played in pairs. The kettledrum is not depicted in any images, but was described in texts as a cultic object, itself the subject of

rituals and worship. Music is not consistently represented at all Religious events, although it is always present in one subset, the libation.

Banquets are scenes that show at least one diner, usually seated. The setting for Banquets is often outside, in a garden, and the musicians may be male or female. The instruments played at Banquets include the vertical harp, lyre, lute, double pipe, single pipe, frame drum, suspended drum, cymbals and an instrument that is possibly a washboard (scraper) or zither. This instrumentation is similar to that of foreign musicians in Military scenes, suggesting that the foreigners were court musicians interrupted in their performances and captured by the Assyrians. There are not enough scenes of Banqueting to suggest whether or not music was a consistent element. Music is mentioned in a text describing a banquet.

Work scenes are difficult to define; they include groups of men working in concert on the same project. Texts refer to music played at building projects. Images show musicians with trumpets urging and coordinating labor forces at a quarry and with frame drums in orchards (in the latter case, for Assyrian soldiers bent on destroying a foreign orchard). All of these musicians are male and the scenes are outside of the city center at the workplace. Other depictions of quarrying and orchard destruction do not include musical performances.

Mythical scenes have peculiar audiences that include anthropomorphized animals or monsters. Such works on seals and shell show lyres, pipes and drums played among (and by) horses, monkeys and sphinxes. These are small-scale images without much

detail of setting. Again, like the banquets, there are too few of these scenes to suggest that the presence of music was a requirement.⁴

Whereas the first three chapters described the elements of Assyrian music from the representational evidence, chapters 4 and 5 discussed the representations of music as carriers of meaning. Chapter 4 was concerned with the explicit, intended meanings of these images whereas chapter 5 was concerned with the implicit, subconscious revelations that could be interpreted from these images. Panofsky's terms, iconography and iconology, were the models for this enterprise, but because of the limited cultural and literary sources for ancient art, I chose instead to use the terms denotative and connotative meanings to describe the different levels of interpretation. While there may be a continuum between communications that might be considered explicit and implicit, I believe we can still recognize which end of the continuum certain meanings stand on. In each of the chapters, three case studies focused on the information that could be gleaned from musical instruments, musicians, and musical events.

The shift from the first three chapters can be described as the difference between studying *Assyrian music* using representations and studying the *representations* of Assyrian music. Or to put it another way, if the first part asked “what” questions of images of Assyrian music, the second part addresses questions of “why.”

⁴ The information gathered in the first three chapters is summarized in three tables in Appendix A. In those tables, the appearance of each type of instrument, musician and context is noted and cross-referenced against all other categories.

Denotative

Denotative meanings in representations were defined as a variation of Panofsky's original definition of iconography: expressly communicated content. For Panofsky, iconography consciously evoked cultural symbols of literature and myth. In the case of ancient art, millennia of natural and cultural destruction and the whims of archaeological chance render any knowledge of the cultural background of the image-makers particularly incomplete, and thus iconography cannot be understood in the Panofskian sense. By introducing the term "denotative meaning" I have attempted to adapt his process of visual interpretation while avoiding the postmodern criticism his method has attracted.

The semiotic meaning of the horizontal forearm harp was finally explored. There are no clear pre-cursors to this instrument, especially with its peculiar forearm finial; images of the forearm harp appear in the archaeological record only in the first millennium BC. The late introduction of this instrument might suggest it was a West Semitic import, but its prominent place in Assyrian culture argues against this suggestion. The instrument is the most often represented in the sources that survive, is always played in pairs, and always played by male Assyrians in military or religious contexts. The pairing of the instruments also lends a certain visual weight, as pairs of harpists are shown shoulder to shoulder, in essence creating a thicker silhouette for the musical aspect depicted.

The rosette wristband on the forearm of the instrument relates the arm to the king, royal retinue and protective genii who also wear the rosette. The orientation of the hand is not consistent with the instrument, but is consistent with the visual audience; the thumb to the left, we are presented always with the back of a right hand. The hand may be a

substitute for the musician's hands (otherwise busy with the strings) in making a gesture of piety familiar from Mesopotamian monuments like the Code of Hammurabi and the altar of Tukulti-Ninurta; however, the musicians themselves do not wear rosette wristbands. The hand might alternatively be a substitute for an audience member, conferring a blessing on the musician, the instrument or the actual music itself.

Clearly a royal instrument, by dint of the wristband, one must consider the arm in relation to the body of the king. The Assyrian king performed as, and was perceived as, chief priest of Ashur, military leader, and visual synecdoche of the geographic state of Assyria. Similarly, the instrument is played only by Assyrian men in cultic and military contexts, and is even shown at the consecration of royal stele at the borders of the Assyrian state (Cat. no. Br3). A relation is apparent, and I argued that the forearm harp should be considered a symbol of the king, with a similarly multivalent character as the image of the king. A return to the images featuring the instrument is warranted. Religious scenes, such as libations, would then be read as perhaps more political, an interpretation which fits well with Weissert's assessment of those acts in conjunction with the royal lion hunt. Military scenes could be read as preparatory to the consecrations of icons of Ashur, as symbolized by this instrument and the music it made. The horizontal forearm harp may have been taken on campaign for pre-battle preparations or to consecrate new markers to mark the extent of Assyrian territory. The Assyrian processions that feature these instruments would embody many, if not all, of these meanings and help to confirm the horizontal forearm harp as the Neo-Assyrian instrument *par excellence*.

Foreign musicians were known to have been valued in the ancient Near East as we know from letters of the kings of Mari. This attitude continued into the Neo-Assyrian period, as is evident in the annals of Ashurnasirpal II and Sennacherib. Musicians were singled out in descriptions of the tribute and booty given by defeated kings to the Assyrians. The assyrianization of foreigners was considered, using the Elamite musicians (Cat. no. R15) and Arab musicians (Cat. no. R25) as the prime examples.

The decorated tassels of the Elamite vertical harps on the procession of prisoners depicted in the Southwest Palace do not conform to contemporary Elamite representations of the same instrument. Such a detail may have been conscious; in any case the seven vertical harps are seen to be in three groups, each with less decoration than the last, until the last one has a plain fringe of tassels. The plain tasseled instrument is the kind of vertical harp Assyrians are shown playing. Following the sequence from lead harpist to the end, the instruments can be read as the removal of one detail of Elamite culture and the installation of its Assyrian equivalent.

Similarly, among the four Arab musicians, two play lyres. While one lyre has an unfamiliar shape, the other is a rectangular lyre like those played by Assyrians. The Arab musicians are, like the Elamites, recognizably foreign from their hairstyle, but unlike the Elamites, they are dressed as Assyrians and unmolested by the soldiers that surround them. I argued that this depicts a late stage of assyrianization of these foreigners. The idea broadcast is either that these are Assyrian musicians by citizenship who were ethnically foreign or that these are foreigners who play music for the Assyrian court and population.

Foreign craftsmen were welcomed in Assyria, and forced relocation of defeated populations brought many of them to the capital. Musicians may have come to represent this movement of people and it is possible musicians were valued even more highly than the rest. Music is a medium (unlike visual arts, say) whose referents are not immediately clear and therefore valuing music would not be taken as valuing the particular iconography, cult, or emblems of a foreign group. Combined with the notion of music “belonging” to a patron—or “producer” in the modern theatrical sense—this music would have been the property of the king, to enjoy or flaunt as he wished. The ability to command multiple styles of music would have been impressive. Moreover, it must have been especially galling for foreign visitors if the most talented practitioners of their native music were playing in the Assyrian capital.

Music is, most basically, the production of sound over time. Time is inherent in music and music in scenes of art can be used as effective signifiers of time. There are various reasons why the Neo-Assyrian artist would want to reference time in their artwork, and these can be compared to four aspects of time: marking time, rhythm, duration and ritual time. Visual composition would have aided these references, especially as the symmetry and accumulated detail of these scenes force a viewer to pause and contemplate a little longer than is necessary for, say, the sweeping open spaces of the lion hunt scenes.

Marking time is the use of a musical cue to signal the beginning or end of a larger event. This seems to have been operative in scenes of libation if they are to be understood as the culmination of the royal animal hunt. If music was an integral part of such events, the inclusion of musicians in these images may have been necessary to

convey the propriety of the moment. Rhythm is the chronological axis of music. The steady tempo of a piece of music can be used to coordinate physical labor, as on scenes of quarrying or the destruction of orchards, or simply marching processions. Duration refers to the amount of time required to perform a piece of music. By evoking this aspect of music, the artist forces the viewer to understand that the pouring of a libation takes a certain amount of time, even though the participants are not shown in “action” (i.e. with muscles tensed or out of balance). Ritual time is meant to describe the evocation of certain emotions, reactions—aesthetic feelings—that are associated with particular works of music. One imagines that a representation of the horizontal forearm harp in use might evoke feelings of pride, patriotism, fear, piety, awe, modesty and more in the native Assyrian viewer. The corridor towards the Ishtar temple at Nineveh, decorated with a procession of horizontal forearm harps and percussion instruments, surely would have set a tone or mood for anyone traveling down that hall.

There are many ways to evoke time in visual art, and the Neo-Assyrians utilized many, with characters repeating in the same space, the use of registers to convey different points in time and, a method that has not been considered previously, through the depiction of music. Musical details did not simply add vivid images to a given wall relief. By suggesting four complementary aspects of time, musical representations could provide movement, pacing and continuity to the scene.

Connotative

In his introduction of the term “iconology,” Panofsky suggests this deeper level of meaning is intrinsic to the artist and his culture. Furthermore, he recommends that the

process of interpreting iconology would require information outside of the art. Because the accumulated cultural symbols of ancient Mesopotamia are unavailable to us, I proposed to retain the hermeneutic process described by Panofsky while replacing his terminology with the more prosaic term “connotative meaning.” In the fifth chapter, as in the fourth, three cases were presented as examples of interpreting connotative meaning, dealing with instruments, musicians, and musical events; in this case lyres, women, and musical aesthetics will be examined.

The lyre in the first part of the first millennium B.C. consisted of a hand held sound box, from which rose two arms that in turn supported a crossbar. The instrument was strung with between five and seven strings. Although lyres in and around the Assyrian sphere were similar in size, there were many morphological differences (see Plates 41-43).

It was acknowledged that representations may be inaccurate, either intentionally or not. Also, some of the lyres are presented in depictions by the same culture—North Syrian representations of North Syrian lyres—whereas some of the lyres are presented in depictions of foreign cultures—Assyrian representations of Arab lyres. Therefore, while the typology could not state plainly that some types were *of a group*, it could determine that some types of lyres were *associated with* a group.

Assyrian lyres are depicted on reliefs from Khorsabad and Nineveh, on ivory plaques of the Assyrian style, and on painted vessels found in Assur. The lyre was rectangular, with the arms extending nearly perpendicularly from the sound box. The crossbar was decorated with knobbed ends, and there appear to have been five strings on

the instrument. In a relief showing assyrianized Arabs playing two types of lyres, the Assyrian type is conspicuously played with a plectrum.

Two national lyres are represented on ivories in non-Assyrian styles. The North Syrian lyre had seven strings and arms that curved away from the sound box and then curled inward again at the junction with the crossbar. A South Syrian or Phoenician style ivory shows a woman playing a lyre with strings that fan out from the sound box along a knobbed crossbar. Because the crossbar is at an angle to the sound box, the instrument can be described as an oblique lyre.

Other foreign lyres are depicted by Assyrian artists on wall reliefs. Judeans are shown playing oblique lyres, although without curved arms. The number of strings is difficult to discern. An Arab lyre is shown with parallel curved arms and eight strings. The musician shown with this instrument uses his fingers to play the instrument, in contrast to the Assyrian type. Men with feathered headdresses have provisionally been suggested to be Persian or Elamite; one musician's lyre has curved arms, and a curved crossbar.

Some representations of lyres from native cultures were comparable to the forms shown on Assyrian depictions. Those examples reinforced a sense that the cultures with Mediterranean coastlines—North Syria, Phoenicia, Egypt—all used oblique lyres with curving arms.

Two unidentified players may profit from this distinction. One, a musician to the right of Ashurbanipal's banquet scene, is dressed as an Assyrian but uses a curved arm lyre. It was suggested that he might be a musician from a North Syrian province. The other, the man with a feathered headdress, also plays a curved arm lyre. Although hardly

proof of nationality, this suggests a Mediterranean origin of this type, and John Russell's suggestion that these men are Egyptian (for reasons of their chronological appearance on the reliefs) becomes more plausible.

The physical difference between the rectangular Assyrian lyre and the Mediterranean oblique lyres demonstrates two traditions of tuning strings, through tension or through length. However, how much the difference in lyre forms affected regional musical traditions is unknown.

Although a collection of female musicians is mentioned by Ashurnasirpal II (883-859 BC), the first king of the period under scrutiny, representations of female musicians do not appear on the palace reliefs until the reign of Ashurbanipal (668-631 BC), the last king to produce a substantial corpus of texts and images in the Neo-Assyrian period. Representations of women playing instruments on ivories are mostly of foreign origin and are difficult to date precisely.

In representations, female musicians are shown only in military and banquet scenes. In military scenes, they are depicted as foreign prisoners and should perhaps be considered a form of booty. Banquets would seem to have been the more common and expected situation for musical performances by women. It was suggested that, though imprisoned, the foreign women in military scenes essentially represent the same function as those at banquets.

The audiences at banquet scenes are primarily female, with the exception of king Ashurbanipal himself, who sits with a female companion in a garden in one scene (Cat. no. R17). Following this observation, it was hypothesized that female performers may

have been restricted to limited audiences, as in a harem. A second hypothesis posited here is that the representations of women, possibly imbued with the same sexual taboos as actual performers, may have also had a restricted audience.

The banquet of Ashurbanipal was found fallen in Room S, from an area designated Room S', possibly a room or suite of rooms on the second story of the palace. From the conspicuous decoration of the room, I suggested that this suite may have been used for leisure or entertainment. In fact, eight of the ten scenes of music from the North Palace were found to have fallen into Room S from an upper story. Although the function of rooms of Assyrian palaces has only begun to be explored, I presented this theory: that the rooms above Room S' in Ashurbanipal's palace were used for musical entertainment performed by women for high ranking women and the king.

Descriptions of music are woefully inadequate in any language. To begin to understand how contemporary audiences may have seen these images of Neo-Assyrian music, though, a survey of Akkadian vocabulary conveyed some ways music may have been perceived.

The problems with such a project are clear: the limitations of language in general, the lack of documents (which required going beyond the Neo-Assyrian period), and the dependence on current limits of translation. The *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary* was used as a resource for the linguistic evidence. The descriptions of music that were found could be grouped under three headings: purity, emotion, and physical sensation.

Adjectives of purity, *ebbu* ("polished, shiny, clean, pure, holy") and *ellu* ("clean, pure, holy, sacred, noble"), were both used to describe instruments. These terms of purity

have overtones of radiance, and another term, *namru* (“bright, shining”) could be thought of as having pure and religious implications. A certain drum was also considered to have cleansing properties. Emotion was evident in the words *nagû* and *nigûtu*, “joyous singing” and “joyous music.” The latter was also modified by the term *damiqtu* (“auspicious”). Physical sensations were referenced by terms such as *t̄ abu* (“sweet”), *dannu* (“strong, loud”), and *šūnuhūti* (“exhausting”). References were also cited which described music as painful, or conversely, as having the power to heal.

Although these metaphoric descriptions are evocative, they are not very specific in regard to the sound of music. I proposed that these terms are in reference to the context in which music was heard. Furthermore, in hearing music, I suggested that ancient audiences may have been receptive to, or actively seeking, these three categories of perception, however they were to be understood. It is just the multiple channels of sensory experience that can be delineated for our understanding of ancient musical appreciation. In effect, all of the patterns and possible meanings of musical practice discussed in this dissertation—national and gender identities, time cues and duration—would have been part of the greater context of the aesthetic experience.

In sum, the first part of this dissertation cataloged and described the music that was represented in Assyrian art. Whereas previous scholars have made chronologically longer surveys of Mesopotamian music, often using visual art as illustrations, by concentrating on one distinct period that left a concentration of visual material, the visual arts thus serve as a vital component in writing a cultural history of the Neo-Assyrian period. From an art historical background, I surveyed all of the known images from this era and described

specific details of instruments, musicians, and musical events while discerning patterns in the evidence. Texts were useful in this program, but the visual material provided much of the detail that identified the importance of the paired horizontal forearm harps, for example, and the significance of various types of musicians and performance contexts. By evaluating the iconographical elements from instrument, to player, to event, I tried to avoid imposing preconceived notions and too specific a terminology on this material.

The second part of the dissertation (and discussions in the first) was more indicative of art history as a history of art, that is, a history of visual material. By using the basic materials gained and organized in the first three chapters, the last two chapters were able to explore how the iconography of music could influence the reading of the art. An ideological program championing an Assyrian instrument and subsuming foreign musicians could be inferred. Music could also be seen as contributing to the narrative power of the reliefs, and the decorative program of the palace as a clue to the function of various rooms. In essence, the understanding of music gained in the first part contributed in the second part to a more nuanced reading of the use of musical motifs in the visual art.

The potential for future research favors two general, and opposite, directions. The first is music as a topic. As a well-documented human endeavor, archaeology and art history can help to expand the range of a serious history of music. Even as this dissertation catalogued and documented a wide range of musical practice in Neo-Assyria, aspects of the music of neighboring, and earlier, cultures were inevitably included. As similar studies of those neighboring cultures—as well as precedents and antecedents—are conducted, the result will be a richer picture of Neo-Assyrian music as well. For example, the origins of the horizontal forearm harp, so important to scenes of high

Assyrian culture, may be found elsewhere. As another project, it may be worth noting the presence of music in the wall reliefs from the Neo-Hittite period. What the relationship is between music and this visual medium, and how faithfully each tradition was adapted by the Neo-Assyrians, may be worth pursuing. Furthermore, the lack of musical scenes from the reliefs of the next conquering nation, the Achaemenids, is particularly curious and may be tied to a different, less self-promotional ideology and governing system, rather than indicating an absence of music.

The second, opposite, direction would be to examine anything but music. That is to say, there are many aspects of the ancient world that are completely unknown to modern scholars; rather than applying modern theoretical models, or investigating ancient political or economic systems, there is a cultural, sensory history to explore. Perhaps this thesis can be regarded as one contribution to a future “archaeology of the senses” where sound, smells, tastes, and tactile sensations will be considered in historical research. In the visual realm, this might include color in Mesopotamia, an aspect of art that rarely survives, but that may carry much symbolic weight. This sort of research is not in opposition to ideological or standard histories, but rather could be engaged with those projects, supporting or contradicting ideas developed by, say, feminist scholars, and being supported and contradicted by their work as well. In this dissertation, for example, music was considered as intellectual and creative property, and this led to examining how that sort of property fits into an international system of trade and display. The wide range of musical practice, especially the representation of foreign musicians, may have ramifications and parallels with ideological and political theories and histories of this period.

I ain't no student of ancient culture
Before I talk
I should read a book.
But there's one thing I do know,
There's a lot of ruins in Mesopotamia.

Pierson, Schneider, Strickland, Wilson, Wilson (1982)

Who can live without it, I ask in all honesty,
What would life be? Without a song or a dance what are we?
So I say Thank You For the Music

Benny Andersson & Björn Ulvaeus (1977)

Je veux qu'on rie,
Je veux qu'on danse,
Je veux qu'on s'amuse comme des fous
Je veux qu'on rie,
Je veux qu'on danse,
Quand c'est qu'on me mettra dans le trou

Jacques Brel (1961)

We had joy,
We had fun,
We had Seasons in the Sun
But the wine
and the song,
Like the seasons, are now gone

adapted by Rod McKuen (1964)

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Appendix A: Tables of Correlation

Table A.1 Musical Instruments and the Musicians who played them

	All images	Male Assyrian		Male Foreign		Female		Animal
		Bearded	Unbearded	Bearded	Unbearded	Assyrian	Foreign	
Horizontal forearm harp	R1, R3-4, R7, R13, R24, Br1-3	R1, R3-4, R13, Br1-3	R7, R13, R24, Br3					
Horizontal harp	R15			R15 (Elam)				
Vertical harp	R15-17, R20-21		R20, R21	R15 (Elam)	R15 (Elam), R16 (Feathered)	R15		
Lyre	R6, R11, R16, R21, R25, I2, I5, I7, I9, V1, V3, S1, Sh1	R6	R16, R21, I2, V1	R11 (Judean), R25 (Arab)				S1 (horse)
Lute	R2, R17	R2				R17		
Zither	I3						I3 (Syrian)	
Double pipe	R15, R17-18, R21, R23, I2-3, I5, I7-8, V2		R18, R21, I2, V2	R23 (Feathered)		R17	R15 (Elam), I3, S, 7-8 (Syr)	
Single pipe	R22, S2, Sh1				Sh1 (Phoen)	R22		S2 (monkey)
Trumpets	R8-10	R8-10						
Kettle drum	None							
Circular frame drum	R1, R13, R25, Br1-2, I1, I3-7, Sh1		R1, R13, Br1-2	R25 (Arab)	I1, Sh1 (Phoen)		I3-4 (Syr), I5 (Syr [probably]), I7 (Syr)	
Rectangular frame drum	R12, R14	R14		R12				
Conical drum	R17					R17		
Cylindrical drum	R15							
Cymbals	R13-14, R19, R25		R13-14, R19,	R25 (Arab)				
Sistra	Br1-2		Br1-2					
Clapping	R2, R5, R12, R5	R2 (Lion), R5	R5		R12			
Vocals	R15						R15 (Elam)	

Known dates	R1-R4, Br1-Br2	Assurnasirpal II
	Br3	Shalmaneser III
	R5	Tiglath-Pileser III
	R6	Sargon II
	R7-R14	Sennacherib
	R15-R25	Ashurbanipal

Table A.2 Musicians and the Musical Events they played at

All Images		Religious			Military			Banquet		Work	Myth
		?	Liberation	Procession	Dedication	Post-Battle	Ass Proc	Enemy Proc			
Male	Bearded Assyrian	R1-6, R8-10, R13-14, Br1-3		R3-4	R13	Br3	R1-2	R14, Br1-2		R6	R8-10
	Unbearded Assyrian	R1, R5, R7, R13-14, R16, R18-21, R24, Br1-3, 12, V1-2	V1-2	R24	R13	Br3	R1, R7	R14, Br1-2		R16, R18-21	
Male	Bearded Foreigner	R11 (Jud), R12 (Jud?), R15 (Elam), R23 (Feath), R25 (Arab)							R11, R15, R23		R12
	Unbearded Foreigner	R12 (small/able), R15 (Elam), R16 (Feath), Shi (Phoen)				R12, II					
Female	Assyrian	R17, R22					R15	R16		R12	Sh1
	Foreigner	R15 (elam), 13-5, 8 (Syr)						R15	I3, 14, 17-8		
Animal		S1-2							S1		S1, 2

Italicized Cat. nos. indicate that the Events are assumed based on comparisons to other Images with more than one type of musician rate multiple entries in this table.

Table A.3 Musical Events and the Musical Instruments played at them

Italicized Cat. nos. are assumed to be in the correct type of event based on secondary characteristics (not the audience).

Appendix B: Glossary of Akkadian Words related to Music.

This list is compiled from all periods and includes possibly relevant secondary meanings.

Sources:

Chicago Assyrian Dictionary, Chicago: Oriental Institute.

Von Soden, Wolfram Akkadisches Handwörterbuch, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1981.

Key: Akkadian in *italics*
Sumerian in **bold**

<i>adapu</i> <i>A</i> 1. a musical instrument, 2. song accompanied by that instrument	<i>bubātu</i> (type of song)
<i>alāla</i> interj. an exclamation of joy, refrain of a work song	<i>būru</i> <i>D</i> type of song
<i>alū</i> <i>B</i> bull of heaven	<i>damiqtu</i> 1. favor, 2. goodness, 3. auspicious describes <i>nigutaš u</i>
<i>alū</i> <i>C</i> a wooden drum	<i>dannu</i> solid, strong, loud (said of <i>nigkalagū</i>)
<i>anāhu</i> <i>B</i> 1. to sing (the <i>inhu</i> song) 2. same 3. to produce a moaning (?) sound	<i>dilī tu</i> a harp
<i>araḥḥu</i> <i>B</i> (a song) Perhaps a harvest song cf. <i>araḥḥu</i> <i>A</i> - storehouse, granary	<i>diš pu</i> honey in <i>diš pim tābu</i> sweet as honey, describes <i>zamāru</i>
<i>ariktu</i> <i>C</i> long flute cf. <i>arāku</i> - to be long	<i>ebbu</i> 1. polished, shining, clean, pure, holy, 2. trustworthy, proper describes <i>uppu</i> -drum
<i>āṣ ̄u</i> 1. going out, 2. leading out (of streets) 3. disappearing (disease), protruding (object), solo (singer)	<i>elē lu</i> 1. to become pure, 2. to purify, 3. to cleanse
<i>aš talū</i> (a type of singer), see <i>eš talu</i>	<i>elē lu</i> jubilation
<i>assinnu</i> (a member of the cultic personnel of <i>īš tar</i>)	<i>elilu</i> (a type of song)
<i>bakkā’u</i> wailer, professional mourner	<i>ellē a, ellē ama</i> interj. (exclamation of joy)
<i>bakū</i> to wail, mourn	<i>ellu</i> 1. clean, pure, 2. holy, sacred, 3. free, noble pure: used to describe <i>balaggu</i>
<i>balaggu</i> 1. a musical instrument, 2. a kind of song	<i>elū</i> (musical instrument) see <i>alū C</i>
<i>baṣ illatu</i> musical instrument, lex [<i>habaṣ illatu</i>]	<i>embūbu</i> 1. flute, 2. <i>embūb ḥaš ē</i> windpipe
<i>bikī tu</i> 1. weeping, tears, 2. sorrow, grief, 3. wailing, mourning	<i>embūbu</i> in <i>š a</i> <i>embūbu</i> flute player
	<i>epēš u nārūtu</i> to perform as a musician
	<i>epēš u tanī du</i> to sing praise
	<i>ēpiš ballegi</i> musician playing a drum

<i>ēpiš nigūti</i> musician playing to express joy	field on which <i>ilkum</i> work is to be done, 6 literary work, collection of songs
<i>eš talū</i> (a type of singer)	<i>iš tarūtu</i> (a type of song)
<i>galaussū kalū</i> musician of second rank	<i>jarūru</i> shouting (to express complaint, joy, etc.)
<i>galmāḥu</i> chief singer of dirges (in a temple)	<i>jarūrūtu</i> shouting
<i>gangīt t u</i> (a kind of song)	<i>kalamāḥu</i> chief of the lamentation priests, chief singer of dirges (in a temple)
<i>gâš u</i> B to whirl, to dance (?)	<i>kalū</i> A lamentation priest
<i>gihlū</i> (an expression or gesture of) mourning	<i>kalū</i> 5. to come to an end (said of lamentation songs)
<i>girrānu</i> (ritual) wailing	<i>kanzabu</i> (a musical instrument)
<i>gūš tu</i> whirl-dance	<i>karsū</i> (a kind of song)
<i>habābu</i> A 1. to murmur (said of water), 2. to hum, low, chirp, (said of animals)	<i>kerru</i> (type of song)
<i>habābu</i> B 1. to caress (said of humans, sexual connotations)	<i>kinnāru</i> lyre
<i>habas illatu</i> 1. fresh shoot of reed, 2. (musical instrument)	<i>kiskilātu</i> (metal) clappers (as a musical instrument)
<i>habibu</i> flute cf. <i>habābu</i> A	<i>kiski'u</i> (a musical instrument)
<i>halālu</i> B to pipe, wheeze	<i>kiš ubū</i> final part of a hymn
<i>halhallatu</i> (a kind of drum)	<i>kitmu</i> 1. cover (over a bed), 2. (tuning interval of a musical instrument)
<i>hālilu</i> B piping	<i>kulu'u</i> actor, member of the temple personnel (of Iš tar)
<i>harharru</i> (a string instrument)	<i>kurgarrū</i> actor, performer of cultic games, plays, dances and music
<i>huppu</i> E drum skin of <i>lilissu</i>	<i>*kuš ugalū</i> (a drum)
<i>inħu</i> B (a tune or song)	<i>lapitu</i> 1. damaged, 2. anomalous, 3. plucked (string)
<i>inu</i> A (a stringed musical instrument)	<i>lapātu</i> 1. to touch 2. to moisten with oil, 3. to touch, affect hurt, 4. to touch, to smear, to play a stringed instrument
<i>inu</i> B knowledge, technical lore of a craft	<i>lilissu</i> kettledrum
<i>irgididakku</i> lament to the accompaniment of the flute	<i>lusānu</i> (a musical instrument)
<i>iš artu</i> mode of tuning said of <i>sammū</i>	
<i>iš karu</i> A 1. work assigned, 2. materials for workmen, 3. finished products, 4. tax, 5.	

<i>maḥaṣ u</i> 1. to hit, 2. to be flattened 3. to play a musical instrument	<i>nī š u</i> B 1. gift, 2. lifting of hands, 3. look, 4. desire, 5. honor, 6. <i>nī š gabarī</i> ("rise of the duplicate") name of interval and musical mode or octave type
<i>malāḥu</i> 1. to remove (?) 2. to perform a dance or song(?) 3. to tear apart	
<i>malī liš</i> like a flute	<i>nūru</i> B (a song)
<i>malī lu</i> reed flute	<i>parašī tu</i> "of the <i>Marhaši</i> type" describing <i>sammū</i>
<i>malī lu in š a malī li</i> flutist	<i>pitnu</i> Kastens, Truhe; Saiteninstrument; box, chest; string instrument (lute?)
<i>manzū</i> (type of drum)	<i>qubbū</i> lamentation
<i>maraṣ u</i> to be sick	<i>qūlu</i> silence
<i>mekū</i> D (type of song)	<i>qurdū</i> A 1. heroism, 2. heroic deeds, 3. (a song)
<i>merru</i> A (type of song)	<i>rab kalē</i> chief of lamentation priests
<i>mindiu</i> (a musical instrument)	<i>ragāmu</i> 1. to call, to call out (said of musical instruments)
<i>mirī tu</i> B (a musical instrument)	<i>rāmimu</i> roaring, rumbling (<i>alū</i> drum)
<i>mukī l alē</i> drummer	<i>raqādu</i> to dance
<i>mummillu</i> dancer, player, actor	<i>rāqidu</i> dancing
<i>nadū</i> 1. throw down, 6. idiomatic usage 6) <i>nadū inḥu</i> to sing an <i>inḥu</i> lamentation	<i>raqqidu</i> dancer
<i>nagū</i> to sing joyously	<i>raquddu</i> dancer
<i>namru</i> 1. bright, shining, ritually pure, 2. radiant, 3. fine shape, healthy used to describe <i>eṣ talu</i> singers	<i>raṣ anu</i> to roar (<i>alū</i> drum)
<i>nargallu</i> chief musician	<i>rē'ūa</i> voice
<i>nārtu</i> female musician	<i>riqmu</i> 1. voice, sound (of an instrument), 2. noise
<i>nāru</i> musician	<i>rimmatu</i> A roar, howl
<i>nārūtu</i> musician's craft	<i>rimmu</i> roar
<i>nasāsu</i> to sing, wail, complain	<i>riqdu</i> dance (noun)
<i>nigkalagū</i> (a drum)	<i>riqittu</i> dance (noun)
<i>nigūtu</i> joyful music, merry-making	<i>riš tu</i> A exultation, rejoicing, jubilation
<i>nissatu</i> A 1. grief, worry, 2. song, wailing song	<i>rī š u</i> exultation
	<i>sabī tu</i> (a musical instrument)

sagarrû (a musical instrument or a type of song)

sammû 1. lyre, 2. (geometric figure)

samsammu 1. (drum), 2. (bird)

sâru 1. whirl, circle, dance, 2. make a circle

sassânu 1. (reed flute), 2. (reed basket), 3. (net),
4. (whip)

ṣ arâḥu 1. to sing, sing a lamentation, 2. have a
lamentation performed

ṣ ibâtu (harp)

ṣ innatu (woodwind or wooden percussion
instrument)

ṣ irḥu (dirge)

š aḥurratu awesome stillness

š amūšu second string of a nine string harp

š apû A 1. to flicker (?), burn (?), swell up and
down (voice), 2. to make resound
describes sound of *ṣ innatu* instrument

**š apû* C to be silent

š ūnuḥūti sehr angestrengt, müde (very tired,
exhausting)
describes *inḥu* songs

tigû Trommel; drum cf. Sum. SEM, ALA

timbuttu (string instrument ?) see *ḥarḥarru*

ṭ ābu sweet used to describe *alala* song, *qubbû*

uppu drum

urî tu "of the Ur type"
said of *sammû*

zamâru songs, literary composition to be sung
with or without instrumental
accompaniment

zamâru A 1. to sing (w/ or w/out accomp), 3. to
have singers perform, 4. to be sung

zammâru singer

rab zammârî chief singer

zammeru singer (of a special type)

zimru song

zumâru refrain or burden of a song

Appendix C: Catalog

The order of the catalog follows a few rules:

1. Each object is given a unique number that consists of a letter prefix identifying the medium and a number ordering those objects.
2. Visual material is presented by medium, in the following order: Palace Reliefs (R1-25), Bronze door reliefs (Br1-3), Ivories (I1-9), Painted Vessels (V1-3), Seal Impressions (S1-2), and Shell (Sh1). The order is by most to least examples, with the bronze door reliefs following the stone palace reliefs as an extension of a similar medium and context.
3. Within each medium, objects are ordered by style and then date. Within the ivory group, the Assyrian style objects are presented first (and ordered by date within this subset), followed by Syrian style and then one Phoenician style ivory.
4. For the palace reliefs of the same date (essentially, the same king's reign), objects are ordered by room number, and within room context (slab number, primarily). The reliefs fallen into Room S of Ashurbanipal's North Palace were given letters in Barnett 1976 to identify fragments of various subjects. These letters are not unique, however, and thus fragments are identified as "Banquet Fragment c" here, in order to distinguish from "Hunt Fragment c".

Notes on descriptions:

All descriptions proceed from left to right, unless otherwise noted.

The term "pair" refers to two figures whose bodies overlap very closely in such a way as to indicate that they are in step with each other, shoulder to shoulder.

The catalog uses the most specific terms possible without having to make assumptions about parts of images that cannot be seen or interpreted with confidence. This means that objects described in previous scholarship more specifically are given more generic names here. For example, instruments previously described as tambourines or flutes are referred to here as frame drums and pipes.

The catalog numbers used here can be cross referenced with museum numbers as follows:

Museum	Acc #	Cat #
Aleppo Museum	TAH 94 C.48/F.1789/O.1708	I8
Ashmolean Museum	AM 1959.210	I9
Bibliotheque de l'Institut de France	BIF MS 2995.4 (Botta)	R6
British Museum	BM 118179	I3
British Museum	BM 118916	R16
British Museum	BM 124533	R4

British Museum	BM 124535	R3
British Museum	BM 124548	R2
British Museum	BM 124550	R1
British Museum	BM 124662	Br3
British Museum	BM 124690	Br1
British Museum	BM 124696	Br2
British Museum	BM 124802	R15
British Museum	BM 124820	R10
British Museum	BM 124823	R8
British Museum	BM 124886 + BM 124887	R24
British Museum	BM 124922	R21
British Museum	BM 124947	R11
British Museum	BM 124948 + BM WAA Or Dr VI 45	R13
British Museum	BM 126515	I4
British Museum	BM 127094	I2
British Museum	BM 127096 + BM 127097	I5
British Museum	BM 127120	I6
British Museum	BM 135115	R20
British Museum	BM 135116	R18
British Museum	BM 135117 + Or Dr V 46 + BM 124920	R17
British Museum	BM 135120	R19
British Museum	BM 136773	R5
British Museum	BM WAA Or Dr I 55	R9
British Museum	BM WAA Or Dr IV 41	R7
British Museum	BM WAA Or Dr IV 56	R12
Iraq Museum	ND 1642	I7
Istanbul Museum	Ist 6339	R23
Louvre	AO 19908	R25
Metropolitan Museum of Art	MMA 54.117.11 abc	I1
Vorderasiatische Museum	VA 159	R22
Vorderasiatische Museum	VA 5043	V2
Vorderasiatische Museum	VA 5526	Sh1
Vorderasiatische Museum	VA 8761	V3
Vorderasiatische Museum	VA 953	R14
Unknown	Ass 10497	V1
Unknown	ND 2078	S2
Unknown	ND 7107	S1

Catalog # R1
British Museum BM 124550

Figure 1

Relief: King and chariot, soldiers bring heads of enemies to musicians
Height: 0.88 m.

Ashurnasirpal II
Date: 883-858 BC

Archaeological Findspot:
Nimrud, Northwest Palace, Throne Room B, Slab 6

In upper left background, two soldiers bring the severed heads of enemies to three musicians. A pair of bearded musicians play horizontal forearm harps and use plectra; the third, beardless musician plays a frame drum behind them.

Musical Instruments: Forearm harp, Forearm harp, Frame drum

Select Bibliography:

Meuszynski, 1981, Tafel 2, p. 20-1, drawing
 Rashid 1984, p. 116-7, fig. 137
 Rimmer 1969, p. 30-2, pl. 9

Catalog # R2

British Museum BM 124548

Figure 2

Relief: Lute player in group of performers

Ashurnasirpal II

Date: 883-858 BC

Archaeological Findspot:

Nimrud, Northwest Palace, Throne Room B, Slab 7

Just outside an Assyrian encampment, a bearded man plays a long-necked lute. He holds the instrument at a 45 degree angle and strums with his right hand. Tassels hang from the end of the neck of the lute. Two figures in lion skins perform, one clapping.

Musical Instruments: Clapping, Lute

Select Bibliography:

Barnett 1959, pl. 14, 21
 Layard Mon of Nin, pl. 30
 Mallowan 1966, p. 98, fig. 44
 Rashid 1984, fig. 136
 Rashid 1995 p. 580, fig. 11
 Rimmer 1969, p. 45

Catalog # R3

British Museum BM 124535

Figure 3

Relief: King offers libation over dead lion while 7 attendants and 2 harp players watch
 Height: 0.86 m.

Ashurnasirpal II

Date: 883-858 BC

Archaeological Findspot:

Nimrud, Northwest Palace, Throne Room B, Slab 19, lower register

The king offers a libation over a dead lion, with seven attendants and two musicians present. From left: two pairs of beardless attendants hold bows and arrows, the king, who faces a beardless man with a fly whisk, a pair of attendants with hands folded, and then a pair of bearded musicians playing horizontal forearm harps with sticks held in their right hands. The hands overlap the strings improperly.

Musical Instruments: Forearm harp, Forearm harp

Select Bibliography:

Meuszynski 1981, pl. 1, p. 23, drawing
Rashid 1984, p. 114-5, fig. 134
Rimmer 1969 p. 31

Catalog # R4

British Museum BM 124533

Figure 4

Relief: King offers libation over dead bull while 6 attendants and 2 harp players watch
Height: 0.9 m.

Ashurnasirpal II

Date: 883-858 BC

Archaeological Findspot:

Nimrud, Northwest Palace, Throne Room B, Slab 20, lower register

The king offers a libation over a dead bull, with six attendants and two musicians in attendance. From left: a pair of beardless attendants hold bows and arrows, a third holds an umbrella for the king, who faces a pair of attendants—a beardless man with a fly whisk and a bearded man with hands folded—who are followed by a beardless man with hands folded and then a pair of bearded musicians playing horizontal forearm harps with sticks held in their right hands. The hands overlap the strings improperly.

Musical Instruments: Forearm harp, Forearm harp

Select Bibliography:

Curtis/Reade 1995, p. 54-5, cat. 7
Layard 1849, 1, 129, pl. 12
Meuszynski, 1981, pl. 1, p. 23, drawing
Rashid 1984, p. 114-5, fig. 135
Rimmer 1969, p. 31

Catalog # R5

British Museum BM 136773

Figure 5

Relief: Victory Celebration or Performance
Height: 0.82 m.

Tiglath-pileser III

Date: 730-727 BC

Archaeological Findspot:

Nimrud, Central Palace

Three men in a procession moving right: a man in a lion skin with a stick with strap of some sort, a beardless man and a bearded man; the latter two are clapping with fingers slightly splayed.

Musical Instruments: Clapping, Clapping

Select Bibliography:

Barnett/Falkner 1962, p. 1.ff, Taf 2., p. 9
Curtis/Reade 1995, p. 62, cat. 12
Frankfort 1954, p. 92, Taf 94a
Rashid 1984, p. 120-121

Catalog # R6

Bibliotheque de l'Institut de France BIF MS 2995.4 (Botta)

Figure 6

Relief: Drawing of relief: Three musicians move toward a banquet

Sargon II

Date: 721-705 BC

Archaeological Findspot:

Khorsabad, Dur-Sharrukin, Royal Palace, Room 2, Slab 21

Two, probably three, bearded musicians with lyres move left toward a banquet scene. Damage obscures the instrument of the second musician and has obliterated all but the legs of the first. Behind them, carved around a corner of the room, are servants filling cups with drink from a cauldron on a stand. Before them, around an inside corner, are men drinking while standing, and then others drinking while seated. A lower register depicts a battle scene.

Musical Instruments: (Lyre), Lyre, Lyre

Select Bibliography:

Albenda 1986, pl. 122

Botta and Flandin, Monument de Ninive 1: pl. 52, 67

Flandin Bas Reliefs Assyriens II p. 35

Catalog # R7

Figure 7

British Museum BM WAA Or Dr IV 41

Relief: Sack of Dilbat with two harp players in corner

Sennacherib

Date: 704-681 BC

Archaeological Findspot:

Nineveh, Southwest Palace, Room III, Slab 8

In multiple registers: top two registers of equal size and of the same subject: Assyrian soldiers chopping down palm trees with axes, separated by a river from the lowest registers (at a smaller scale). Center of the relief is damaged, obscuring most of the upper register of lower half, but remains can be seen of a city wall, the top of an umbrella, possibly of the king's chariot, and in the lowest register, twelve soldiers advancing left with booty. In the bottom right corner, on the same ground line (defined by a river), but facing the opposite direction, two beardless musicians with forearm harps advance right, a small figure (statue?) of a bull precedes them and they face a small, stool-sized altar. The next slab, on which this small scene presumably continued, does not survive.

Musical Instruments: Forearm harp, Forearm harp

Select Bibliography:

Layard, Mon of Nin I, p. 73

Paterson pl. 13

Russell 1991, fig. 78

Catalog # R8

British Museum BM 124823

Figure 8a, 8b

Relief: Transport of a lamassu with trumpeter

Sennacherib

Date: 704-681 BC

Archaeological Findspot:

Nineveh, Southwest Palace, Court VI, Slab 53

Dozens of men pull a roughly quarried lamassu figure; on top of the sculpture stand three Assyrians, one gesturing with hands, the second is obscure and the third is worn, but a trumpet can be seen held in his left hand. The legible trumpet holder wears a quiver on his back. Above all this is a line of trees and then highest, a river with large, almost semi-circular boats loaded with building materials, and men floating with the aid of inflated goatskins.

Musical Instruments: Trumpet

Select Bibliography:

Curtis/Reade 1995, p. 41 (drawing)

Galpin 1955, pl. IV, 7

Paterson 1912, p. 25, fig. 32, 33

Rashid 1984, p. 124-5, fig. 143, 144

Rimmer 1969, p. 37-8, fig. 10, pl. 16

Russell 1991, fig. 60

Catalog # R9

British Museum BM WAA Or Dr I 55

Figure 9a, 9b

Relief: Transport of lamassu with trumpeters

Sennacherib

Date: 704-681 BC

Archaeological Findspot:

Nineveh, Southwest Palace, Court VI, Slabs 54, 56

Dozens of men pull a roughly quarried lamassu figure; on top of the sculpture are one kneeling and three standing Assyrians, the first standing figure gesturing with hands, the second blowing a trumpet and a third gesturing. The latter two figures have quivers on their backs.

Musical Instruments: Trumpet

Select Bibliography:

Russell 1991, fig. 59

Catalog # R10

British Museum BM 124820

Figure 10a, 10b

Relief: Transport of lamassu with trumpeters

Sennacherib

Date: 704-681 BC

Archaeological Findspot:

Nineveh, Southwest Palace, Court VI, Slabs 63-64

Dozens of men pull a roughly quarried lamassu figure; on top of the sculpture stand three Assyrians, one gesturing with hands, the second blowing a trumpet and a third gesturing, holding a trumpet in his left hand. Both figures with trumpets have quivers on their backs (for their instruments?).

Musical Instruments: Trumpet

Select Bibliography:

- Curtis/Reade 1995, p. 41 (drawing)
- Galpin 1955, pl. IV, 7
- Paterson 1912 fig. 32, 33
- Rashid 1984, p. 124-5, fig. 143, 144
- Rimmer 1969, p. 37-8, fig. 10, pl. 16
- Russell 1991, fig. 54

Catalog # R11
British Museum BM 124947

Figure 11

Relief: 3 Judean lyre players followed by an Assyrian soldier
Height: 0.985 m.

Sennacherib
Date: 704-681 BC

Archaeological Findspot:
Nineveh, Southwest Palace, Room XXXII

Against a hilly background with trees and a stream in the foreground, an Assyrian soldier advances right behind three Judean lyre players with somewhat stooped postures, bare feet, and wearing shifts; the two rightmost wear caps and the third has hair of tight curls, similar to the beards of all three. The middle player seems to stand a bit straighter. Whether the stooping posture is the result of their capture, or signifies agedness, is unclear.

Musical Instruments: Lyre, Lyre, Lyre

Select Bibliography:

- Avigad 1978
- Gadd 1936, pl. 20
- Rimmer 1969, p. 34, pl. 11
- Rashid 1984, p. 122-3, fig. 142
- Rashid 1995, p. 579, fig. 5

Catalog # R12
British Museum BM WAA Or Dr IV 56

Figure 12a, 12b

Relief: Two men play rectangular frame drums as soldiers chop down palm trees

Sennacherib
Date: 704-681 BC

Archaeological Findspot:
Nineveh, Southwest Palace, Room LXIX, Slabs 1-2

Soldiers chop down an orchard of palm trees. On the right side of the scene, against the background of a walled city and at a smaller scale (1/3), four figures (2 bearded, 2 beardless) face the soldiers; the second

figure plays a rectangular frame drum and two figures are possibly clapping behind them. The first figure is shown either playing a drum like the second figure or empty handed, depending on the field drawing.

Musical Instruments: Rectangular frame drum, clapping, clapping

Select Bibliography:
Russell 1991, fig. 42

Catalog # R13

British Museum BM 124948 + BM WAA Or Dr VI 45

Figure 13a, 13b

Relief: Procession to Ishtar Temple: three percussionists and two pairs of forearm harps

Sennacherib
Date: 704-681 BC

Archaeological Findspot:
Nineveh, Southwest Palace, Passage to Ishtar Temple

(WAA Or Dr VI xliv:) Beardless percussionists: frame drum, cymbal, frame drum lead a procession toward the left, down a slope followed by (BM 124948:) two pairs of musicians, all playing horizontal forearm harps. In each pair the further is bearded with a round cap, the closer is beardless with a tall hat ending in a fishtail shape. They play with plectra, the harps are supported by straps over their left shoulders.

Musical Instruments: Frame drum, Cymbals, Frame drum, Forearm harp, Forearm harp, Forearm harp, Forearm harp

Select Bibliography:
Barnett 1959, p. 31, pl. 50
Gadd 1936, p. 176, pl. 22
Madhloom 1970, pl. LVI, 4a, b
Mitchell 1980, p. 33, pl. 15
Moortgat 1967, p. 156, fig. 109
Paterson 1912, pl. 34, 35
Rashid 1984, p. 122-3, fig. 141
Rashid 1995 p.

Catalog # R14

Vorderasiatische Museum VA 953

Figure 14

Relief: Military procession with three rectangular frame drums and cymbals

Sennacherib
Date: 704-681 BC

Archaeological Findspot:
Nineveh, North Palace, Room S; Passage to Ishtar Temple

A procession of 12 men walking left. After 7 soldiers with shields and spears, three bearded men carry rectangular frame drums with straps that hang down, followed by a beardless man with cymbals and then a beardless man carrying a sack on his shoulder.

Musical Instruments: Rectangular frame drum, Rectangular frame drum, Rectangular frame drum, Cymbals

Select Bibliography:
 Gadd 1936, p. 176, 215-6
 Koitabashi 1992
 Rashid 1984, p. 120-1, Fig 140

Catalog # R15
 British Museum BM 124802

Figure 15a, 15b

Relief: Many musicians in an Elamite procession of prisoners/defeated enemy

Ashurbanipal
 Date: 668-627 BC

Archaeological Findspot:
 Nineveh, Southwest Palace, Room XXXIII, Slabs 5-6

A procession of Elamites move left above a river filled with dead soldiers and chariots. From left, five male musicians: a bearded harp player, a bearded double flute player paired with a bearded man playing a horizontal harp without a plectrum. The harp player is exaggeratedly in step with a beardless vertical harp player, followed by a bearded harpist.

Then, six female musicians: a vertical harp player, a beardless double flute player, two vertical harp players, a drummer with a small drum suspended in front of her waist and drumming with two hands, and a final vertical harp player. All are barefoot, wearing plain, belted robes and headbands.

Behind the musicians are six women and nine children who may be clapping. One woman with hand at throat may be a singer.

Musical Instruments: Vertical harp, Double pipe, Horizontal harp, Vertical harp, Vertical harp, Vertical harp, Double pipe, Vertical harp, Vertical harp, Cylindrical drum, Vertical harp, Singing

Select Bibliography:
 Galpin 1955, p. 20, 29
 Layard 1853b, 47-9
 Mitchell 1980, p. 33ff., pl. 16-25
 Paterson 1915, pl. 65-66
 Rashid 1984, p. 136-9, fig. 151-3
 Rimmer 1969, p. 30, 32, 35, 36-7, pl. 13, 14.
 Russell 1991, fig. 65

Catalog # R16
 British Museum BM 118916

Figure 16

Relief: Lyre player and harpist with tame lion
 Height: 1.677 m.

Ashurbanipal
 Date: 668-626 BC

Archaeological Findspot:
 Nineveh, North Palace, Room E, Slab 5

Two figures walk right with a tame lion who looks back over his shoulder. The man on the left (behind the lion's head) is beardless, wearing a feathered headdress with tassel and playing a lyre, partially eroded; the second figure wears a headband and train of discs or balls and plays a large vertical harp, plucking the strings with his fingers. Behind these figures are trees with odd branches and grapevines crawling up them.

Musical Instruments: Vertical harp, Lyre

Select Bibliography:

Barnett 1959, pl. 54
 Barnett 1976 p. 12, 39, pl. 14
 Rashid 1984, p. 132-3, fig. 148
 Rashid 1995, p. 579-80, fig. 7
 Rimmer 1969, p. 33, fig. 8, pl. 15

Catalog # R17

Figure 17a, 17b

British Museum BM 135117 + Or Dr V 46 + BM 124920

Relief: Banquet in a garden

Height: 0.565 m.

Ashurbanipal

Date: 668-648 BC

Archaeological Findspot:

Nineveh, North Palace, Room S' (fell into S), Banquet Slab C

In a garden, six female musicians approach the reclining king, a seated woman and attendants. Or Dr V 46: A woman plays a double pipe (BM 135117), preceded by a lute player, two vertical harp players, a drummer with tapered drum suspended in front of her waist, and another vertical harp player. BM 124920 (includes part of drummer and final harp player): Three attendants bear food protected by fly whisks, a pair of attendants fan a seated woman. The king reclines on a chaise and two attendants (possibly beardless males) fan him from behind. Between the musicians and the attendants, a severed head hangs from a tree.

Musical Instruments: Vertical harp, Conical drum, Vertical harp, Vertical harp, Lute, Double pipe

Select Bibliography:

Barnett 1959, p. 9ff., pl. 105, 107, fig. 54
 Barnett 1976, pl. LXIV, p. 57, pl. 64, 65
 Rashid 1984, p. 130-1, fig. 147
 Rimmer 1969, p. 32-3, pl. 10

Catalog # R18

Figure 18

British Museum BM 135116

Relief: Banquet fragment, double pipe

Height: 0.15 m.

Ashurbanipal

Date: 668-648 BC

Archaeological Findspot:

Nineveh, North Palace, Room S', Banquet Fragment e, possibly from between Slabs D and E

Upper part of a beardless figure playing a double-pipe.

Musical Instruments: Double pipe

Select Bibliography:

Barnett 1976, pl. LXIV, p. 58

Catalog # R19
British Museum BM 135120

Relief: Fragment from S', cymbal player
Height: 0.13 m.

Ashurbanipal
Date: 668-648 BC

Archaeological Findspot:
Nineveh, North Palace, Room S', Banquet Fragment c, between Slabs D and E

Torso and head of beardless man moving right, apparently holding cymbals.

Musical Instruments: Cymbals

Select Bibliography:
Barnett 1976, p. 58, pl. 64

Catalog # R20
British Museum BM 135115

Figure 20

Relief: Banquet frag, harp
Height: 0.23 m.

Ashurbanipal
Date: 668-648 BC

Archaeological Findspot:
Nineveh, North Palace, Room S', Banquet Fragment d, Between Slabs D and E

Fragment showing the major part of beardless male figure moving to right playing large vertical harp.

Musical Instruments: Vertical harp

Select Bibliography:
Barnett 1976, p. 58, pl. 64

Catalog # R21
British Museum BM 124922

Figure 21

Relief: Banquet, right side of scene
Height: 1.7 m.

Ashurbanipal
Date: 668-648 BC

Archaeological Findspot:
Nineveh, North Palace, Room S', Banquet Slab E

The topmost register shows three musicians facing two attendants. The first from the left is primarily on the previous slab (now lost) and only hands playing a double pipe remain. The second musician is a beardless

vertical harp player and the third, also beardless, plays a lyre. The attendants stand before a screen of some sort.

Musical Instruments: Lyre, Vertical harp, Double pipe

Select Bibliography:

- Barnett 1959, p. 33, fig. 107
- Barnett 1976, p. 58, pl. 64
- Mitchell 1980, p. 33, pl. 14
- Rashid 1984, p. 126-7 fig. 145
- Rimmer 1969, p. 32, 33-4, 35, pl. 12

Catalog # R22

Vorderasiatische Museum VA 159

Figure 22

Relief: Banquet fragment

Height: 0.39 m.

Ashurbanipal

Date: 668-648 BC

Archaeological Findspot:

Nineveh, North Palace, Room S', Banquet Fragment i

Fragment: In front of a palm tree, two women move right. The figure on the left plays a pipe and in front of her a second figure is cut off. The costume of the women is similar to the group that plays for the reclining king but Barnett points out that their hair and the palm tree behind them are in a different style.

Musical Instruments: Pipe, Pipe

Select Bibliography:

- Barnett 1976 pl. LXIV, p. 58
- Rashid 1995, p. 583
- Rashid 1984, p. 126, text illustration

Catalog # R23

Istanbul Museum Ist 6339

Figure 23

Relief: Persian procession with flute player in a attendance

Height: 0.147 m.

Ashurbanipal

Date: 668-648 BC

Archaeological Findspot:

Nineveh, North Palace, Room S' (fallen into S), Miscellaneous Fragment j

Fragment of relief showing parts of two registers. Above, bare feet facing left; below, the head of a bearded double pipe player wearing a feathered headdress.

Musical Instruments: Double pipe

Select Bibliography:

- Barnett 1976, p. 55-6, pl. 62
- Gadd 1936, p. 227-8

Catalog # R24

British Museum BM 124886 + BM 124887

Relief: King offers libation over dead lions
 Height: 1.6 m.

Ashurbanipal
 Date: 668-648 BC

Archaeological Findspot:
 Nineveh, North Palace, Room S' (fallen into S), Hunt Slab D and E lowest register

On the lowest register of three, three beardless Assyrians bring a dead lion into the scene. A pair of men faces right, the closer plays a horizontal forearm harp. The musicians face an altar, the bodies of four dead lions and the king, who hold a bow and pours a libation onto the heads of the lions. A pair of attendants hold fly whisks over the king and a third attendant holds a bow and arrow. Two more attendants stand with horses.

Musical Instruments: (Forearm harp), Forearm harp

Select Bibliography:

Barnett 1959, p. 24, pl. 90-9
 Barnett 1976, p. 53-4, pl. 57, 59 (detail)
 Curtis/Reade 1995 p. 86, cat 28-9
 Gadd 1936, 187-8
 Rashid 1984, p. 128-9, fig. 146
 Rimmer 1969, p. 31

Catalog # R25

Louvre AO 19908

Figure 25a, 25b

Relief: Two pairs of musicians facing each other
 Height: 1.62 m.

Ashurbanipal
 Date: 668-648 BC

Archaeological Findspot:
 Nineveh, North Palace, Room V', fallen into Room V, Slab E

Two pairs of musicians face each other. The nearest on the left plays a frame drum and the farther plays a lyre with a plectrum. The nearer on the right plays a lyre of different shape without a plectrum and the farther plays cymbals. All four musicians are bearded and have hair of tight curls which are brushed straight back. A register above the musicians shows soldiers in procession and registers below the musicians show soldiers on horseback.

Musical Instruments: Lyre, Frame drum, Cymbals, Frame drum

Select Bibliography:

Avigad 1978, fig. 8 (lyre player only)
 Barnett 1976, pl. LXVIII, p. 59-60
 Galpin 1955, p. 11, 31, 34, pl. VI
 Koitabashi 1992

Paterson 1912, pl. 14
 Place III, pl. 59, 1-3
 Rashid 1984, p. 134-5, fig. 149, 150
 Rashid 1995, p. 580, fig. 8-9

Catalog # Br1
 British Museum BM 124690

Figure 26a, 26b

Relief, door: Captives followed by 2 frame drummers, two harpists and a sistrum

Ashurnasirpal II
 Date: 883-858 BC

Archaeological Findspot:
 Balawat, Palace, Gates

"Triumphal return to center with captives. Town at far left, approached from right by captives, five female figures, two officials, four captives, an official and then the king's entourage led by five musicians, two beardless musicians with frame drums, [a pair of] bearded harpists and a beardless musician with sistrum. Then a footsoldier, royal chariot with king, driver and attendant, second chariot, led by footsoldier and with driver follows."--Cifarelli

Musical Instruments: Frame drum, Frame drum, (Forearm) harp, (Forearm) harp, Sistrum

Select Bibliography:
 Cifarelli 1995, p. 398-9
 Cifarelli 1998, p. 222, fig. 20
 Grayson RIMA II, AO 101.85
 Rimmer 1969, p. 32

Catalog # Br2
 British Museum BM 124696

Figure 27a, 27b

Relief, door: Captives followed by 2 frame drummers, two harpists and a sistrum

Ashurnasirpal II
 Date: 883-858 BC

Archaeological Findspot:
 Balawat, Palace, Gates

"Triumphal return to center with captives. Town at far right, approached from left by captives, four female figures, two officials, four captives, an official and then the king's entourage led by five musicians, two beardless musicians with frame drums, [a pair of] bearded harpists and a beardless musician with sistrum. Then a footsoldier, royal chariot with king, driver and attendant, second chariot, led by footsoldier and with driver follows."--Cifarelli

Musical Instruments: Frame drum, Frame drum, (Forearm) harp, (Forearm) harp, Sistrum

Select Bibliography:
 Cifarelli 1995, p. 406-7
 Cifarelli 1998, p. 222, fig. 21
 Grayson RIMA II, AO 101.91
 Rimmer 1969, p. 32

Catalog # Br3
British Museum BM 124662

Figure 28a, 28b

Relief, door: Dedication of an image with offerings, two harpists present
Height: 0.27 m.

Shalmaneser III
Date: 860-825 BC

Archaeological Findspot:
Balawat, Temple of Imgur-Enlil, Door, Band I

Two soldiers toss the entrails of an animal offering into water; an image of the king sits on "hilly" ground; two tall standards, an altar, and two more offering stands, the king is paired with an official in a tall hat as he pours a libation, a second official stands behind, followed by two bearded harpists playing with plectra (not paired), followed by an attendant with a stick and then a third attendant with a tall hat who leads oxen into the scene. He is followed by soldiers with sheep, and then more soldiers with chariots.

Musical Instruments: (Forearm) harp, (Forearm) harp

Select Bibliography:

Barnett 1959, p. 13, pl. 170
Curtis/Reade 1995, p.98-9, cat. 42
King 1915, 21-2, pl. I-vi
Luckenbill 1926, I, p. 614
Rashid 1984, p. 118-9
Rimmer 1969, p. 31
Shafer 1998, p. 94-96, 162-166

Borker-Klahn 1982, fig. 146

Catalog # I1
Metropolitan Museum of Art MMA 54.117.11 abc

Figure 29

Ivory: Pyxis fragment with women with frame drums
Height: 0.048 m.

Date: 900-700 BC

Archaeological Findspot:
Nimrud, Town Wall 53, Private House VI, Room 43, Level 2
Excavation # ND 3599

In Assyrian style. Fragment of an incised pyxis: A heavily armed and well decorated bearded soldier either leaves or advances on a city; on battlements of the city, four long haired, beardless foreigners with caps that tilt to the back, greet him or send him off with frame drums. Departing from previous scholarship, I identify the foreigners as male.

Musical Instruments: Frame drum, Frame drum, Frame drum, Frame drum

Select Bibliography:

Lines, Joan, "Ivories from Nimrud" in MMA Bulletin, 1955 (April), p. 233-244, esp p. 234.
Mallowan 1966, fig. 132, p. 182, 194.

Catalog # I2
British Museum BM 127094

Figure 30

Ivory: Fragment of plaque: a beardless lyrist follows a double pipe player moving right
Height: 0.05 m.

Date: 900-700 BC

Archaeological Findspot:
Excavation # V8

In Assyrian style. Fragment of plaque: a lyre player follows a double pipe player moving right.

Musical Instruments: Double pipe, Lyre

Select Bibliography:
Barnett 1957, p. 228, pl. 119
Rimmer 1969, p. 46

Catalog # I3
British Museum BM 118179

Figure 31a, 31b

Ivory: Pyxis with procession of musicians
Height: 0.067 m.

Date: 900-700 BC

Archaeological Findspot:
Nimrud, Burnt (SE) Palace
Excavation # S3

In Syrian style. A cylindrical pyxis depicts a seated figure in a garden facing right toward two servants who bring food; behind the seated figure is a procession led by musicians: from right to left, two double pipe players and a frame drum player, followed by two taller figures whose bodies are in profile, but whose faces are frontal. The taller figures each hold a striped rectangular object with their left hands and manipulate it with their right. This object has been identified as a psalter by Rashid, and a zither by Rimmer. Wegner identifies it as a xylophone. It could also be a washboard percussion instrument. The feet and skirt of a final figure can be seen behind the tall figures.

All the figures on this ivory seem to be women, and have been reconstructed as such on Figure 31b, although the short skirts and unisex wigs make the sexing less than certain.

Musical Instruments: Double pipe, Double pipe, Frame drum, Zither(?), Zither(?)

Select Bibliography:
Barnett 1957, p. 78-9, 168, 191, s. 3, fig. 20, pl. 16-7
Curtis/Reade 1995, p. 150, cat. 121
Galpin 1957, pl. 8, 5
Rashid 1984, p. 108-9, fig. 122
Rimmer 1969, p. 40, pl. VIIa (misidentified in text as VIIb)

Catalog # I4
British Museum BM 126515

Figure 32

Ivory: Fragment: pyxis with woman playing frame drum
Height: 0.06 m.

Date: 900-700 BC

Archaeological Findspot:
Nimrud, Burnt (SE) Palace
Excavation # S9 a-d

In Syrian style. Fragment of a pyxis: A stag faces right and is separated by a geometric border from a woman, also facing right, who holds a frame drum in her left hand and strikes it with her right.

Musical Instruments: Frame drum

Select Bibliography:
Barnett 1957, p. 191, pl. 16
Rimmer 1969, p. 47

Catalog # I5

Figure 33

British Museum BM 127096 + BM 127097

Ivory: Fragments of a pyxis: musical procession with double flute and harp

Date: 900-700 BC

Archaeological Findspot:
Nimrud, Burnt (SE) Palace
Excavation # S33a-b

In Syrian style. Fragments of a pyxis: a procession moving left.
BM 127096:

The first figure's head is present, but nothing else, a lyre, presumably held by the next figure follows.
BM 127097:

A double pipe held up to a mouth.

Musical Instruments: Lyre, Double pipe

Select Bibliography:
Barnett 1957, p. 193, pl. 28 a-b

Catalog # I6

Figure 34

British Museum BM 127120

Ivory: Fragments of a pyxis: musical procession with frame drum

Date: 900-700 BC

Archaeological Findspot:
Nimrud, Burnt (SE) Palace

In Syrian style. Fragment of a pyxis: a musical procession going left with hands beating a frame drum.

Musical Instruments: Frame drum

Select Bibliography:
Barnett 1957, p. 193, pl. 28 c

Catalog # I7
Iraq Museum ND 1642

Figure 35

Ivory: Pyxis with three musicians playing lyre, drum and double pipe
Height: ~0.06 m.

Date: 722-612 BC

Archaeological Findspot:
Nimrud, Burnt (SE) Palace, Room 7, Doorway to throne room
Excavation # ND 1642

In Syrian style. On a round pyxis, three figures shown in profile advance left: a lyre player with lozenge-patterned garment and curly Syrian style hair, a woman holding a frame drum with her right and striking with her left hand, a woman playing a double flute/pipe held more or less horizontally. Volutes separate figures and guilloche patterns decorate the top and bottom.

Musical Instruments: Lyre, Frame drum, Double pipe

Select Bibliography:
Avigad 1978, fig. 9 (lyre only)
Mallowan 1966, p. 218, fig. 168

Catalog # I8
Aleppo Museum TAH 94 C.48/F.1789/O.1708

Figure 36

Ivory: Musician in procession

Date: -600 BC

Archaeological Findspot:
Til Barsip, Area C Bldg C, Room XV, Pit under floor
Excavation # TAH 94 C.48/F.1789/O.1708

In Syrian style. Procession moving right, with each figure framed by plant motifs and top and bottom decorated with guilloche; parts of 6 figures can be seen, from left, a man in a short skirt with strings of fish, man with birds, man with fruit—pomegranates?, another man with oval objects, then a musician, probably female, dressed differently in a long skirt and a robe draped over her shoulders plays a double pipe, the crown of the head of a sixth figure can be seen tilted back, like the head of the musician and unlike the others, but nothing else remains of this figure.

Musical Instruments: Double pipe

Select Bibliography:
Bunnens 1997

Catalog # I9
Ashmolean Museum AM 1959.210

Figure 37

Ivory: Egyptian style woman with lyre
Height: 0.06 m.

Date: 860-612 BC

Archaeological Findspot:

Nimrud, Fort Shalmaneser, Room SW37
Excavation # ND 7597

In Phoenician style. Woman in egyptianizing style wearing a diaphonous gown faces left and playes a lyre with fanned strings. She holds the lyre to her chest, rather than in front of her body.

Musical Instruments: Lyre

Select Bibliography:

Herrmann 1986, cat 385, p. 123, pl. 86
Mallowan 1966, p. 574-6, fig. 531

Catalog # V1
Ass 10497

Figure 38

Vessel: Bucket vessel with two lyre players
Height: 0.26 m.

Date: 850-750 BC

Archaeological Findspot:

Assur, Big late Assyrian house above gate of Shalmaneser III, Room SE of great court, c A 6 V in town plan
Excavation # Ass 10497

Bucket shaped vessel: crenellated pattern around rim, hand and lyre of a figure who is cut off is preceded by a beardless figure playing a lyre and approaching a star disk of Ishtar. To the right a pair of goats facing each other are jumping towards a palmette and winged disk.

Musical Instruments: Lyre, Lyre

Select Bibliography:

Andrae 1925, p. 55-6, fig. 30 (musicians) cf. pl. 21-3 (goat)

Catalog # V2
Vorderasiatische Museum VA 5043

Figure 39

Vessel: Bucket vessel with altar scene incl a double pipe player and drummer
Height: 0.36 m.

Date: 800-612 BC

Archaeological Findspot:

Assur, trial trench, i E 9 I. in town plan
Excavation # Ashur 14638

Bucket shaped vessel with fragmented altar scene. Under crenellated geometric upper border is a beardless figure facing right with hand raised as if to strike a drum (missing), then the hands of a figure playing a double pipe, a winged Assur above palmette, altar burning censer, arm of figure holding object to flame and holding a bucket with the left hand.

Musical Instruments: Drum(?), Double pipe

Select Bibliography:

Andrae 1925, p. 54-5, pl. 29
Rashid 1984, p. 108-9, fig. 123

Catalog # V3
Vorderasiatische Museum VA 8761

Figure 40a, 40b

Vessel: Bucket vessel with three ? musicians
Height: 0.2 m.

Date: 800-600 BC

Archaeological Findspot:
Assur, Late Assyrian house on outer wall, b C 8 II. on town plan
Excavation # Ashur 11488

Bucket shaped vessel with top broken. Three figures stand facing right toward two pedestal symbols of deities, which stand before a representation of a temple. Standing behind the temple facing left are three figures, the middle figure is holding a lyre.

Musical Instruments: Lyre

Select Bibliography:
Andrae 1925, p. 52-3, fig. 29, pl. 28a

Catalog # S1
ND 7107

Figure 41

Seal Impression: Jar sealing: Horses in a banquet
Height: 0.03 m.

Date: 800-600 BC

Archaeological Findspot:
Nimrud, S. 5?
Excavation # ND 7107

A horse, seated like a human and facing right, drinks from a jar; a second horse, on hind legs, faces and attends to the first, a third horse plays a U-shaped instrument, probably a lyre.

Musical Instruments: Lyre

Select Bibliography:
Oates, Iraq 21, Pt 2, p. 117
Parker 1962, p. 39-40, pl. 22, 5, fig. 12

Catalog # S2
ND 2078

Figure 42

Seal Impression: Stamp seal: Two seated monkeys playing pipes
Height: 0.012 m.

Date: 660-641 BC

Archaeological Findspot:
Nimrud, ZT, Room 14

Excavation # ND 2078

Two monkeys (without tails) seated facing each other and playing pipes which cross at the tips.

Musical Instruments: Pipe, Pipe

Select Bibliography:

Mallowan 1966, fig. 134, 14

Parker 1955, p. 116, pl. 24, 5, text fig. 7

Parker 1961, p. 40

Catalog # Sh1

Figure 43

Vorderasiatische Museum VA 5526

Shell: Tridacna shell with lyre player and frame drum player in garden scene

Date: 680-600 BC

Archaeological Findspot:

Assur, Gurgurri Gate

Excavation # Ass 10898

Tridacna shell with lyre player and frame drum player in garden scene. Shell carved with face; on lower, rippled edge, a garden scene: sphinx; long haired lyre player, kneeling figure, lyre player in one grouping; frame drum player, kneeling figure and standing figure (with pipe?) in another grouping; sphinx.

Musical Instruments: Lyre, Frame drum, Pipe

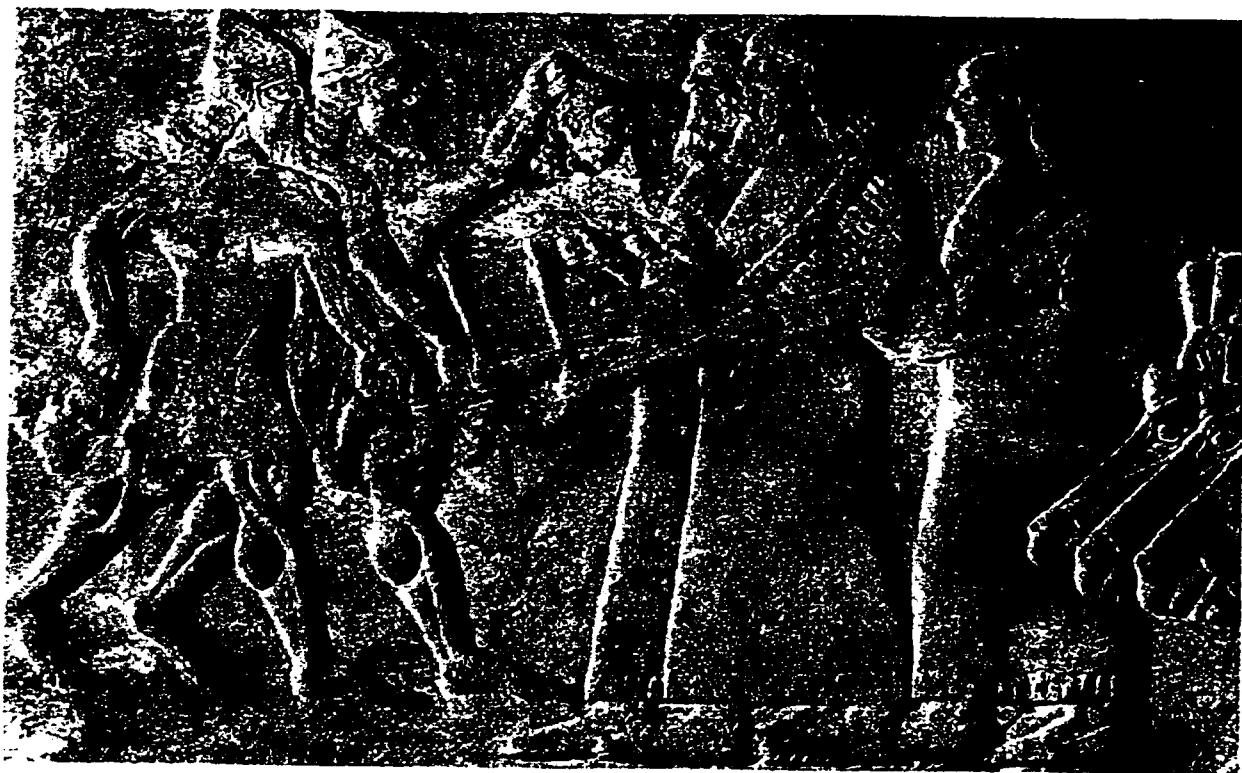
Select Bibliography:

Andrae 1939, ZA 45, p. 88-98

Rashid 1995, p. 580, fig. 10.

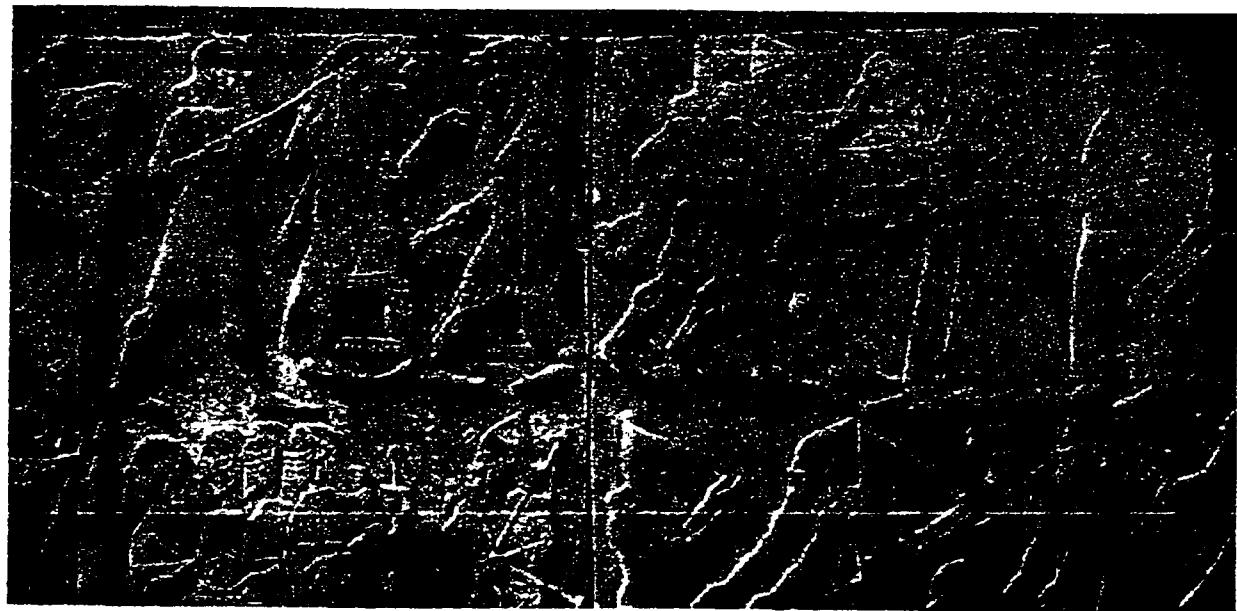
Stucky 1974

Figure 1



R1: BM 124550

Figure 2



R2: BM 124548

Figure 3



R3: BM 124535

Figure 4



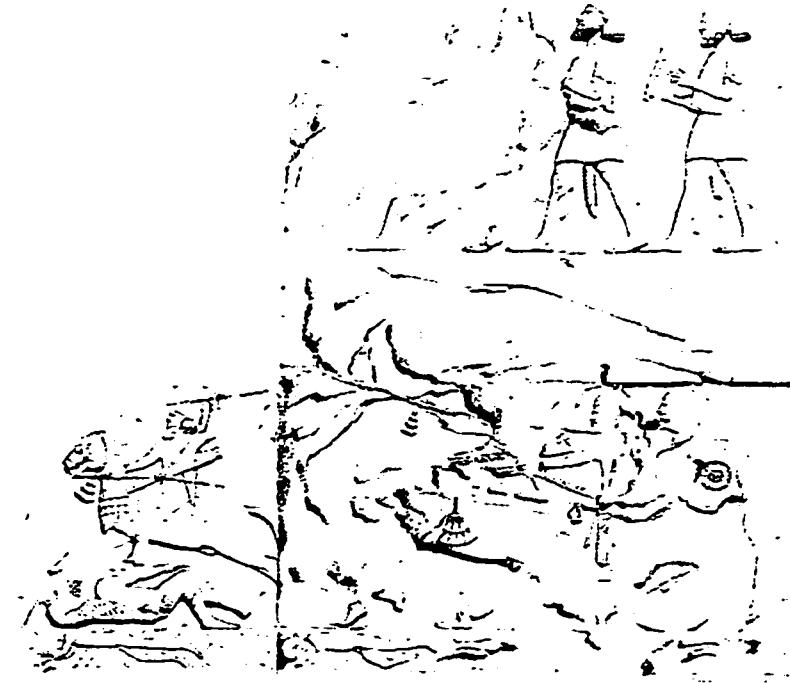
R4: BM 124533

Figure 5



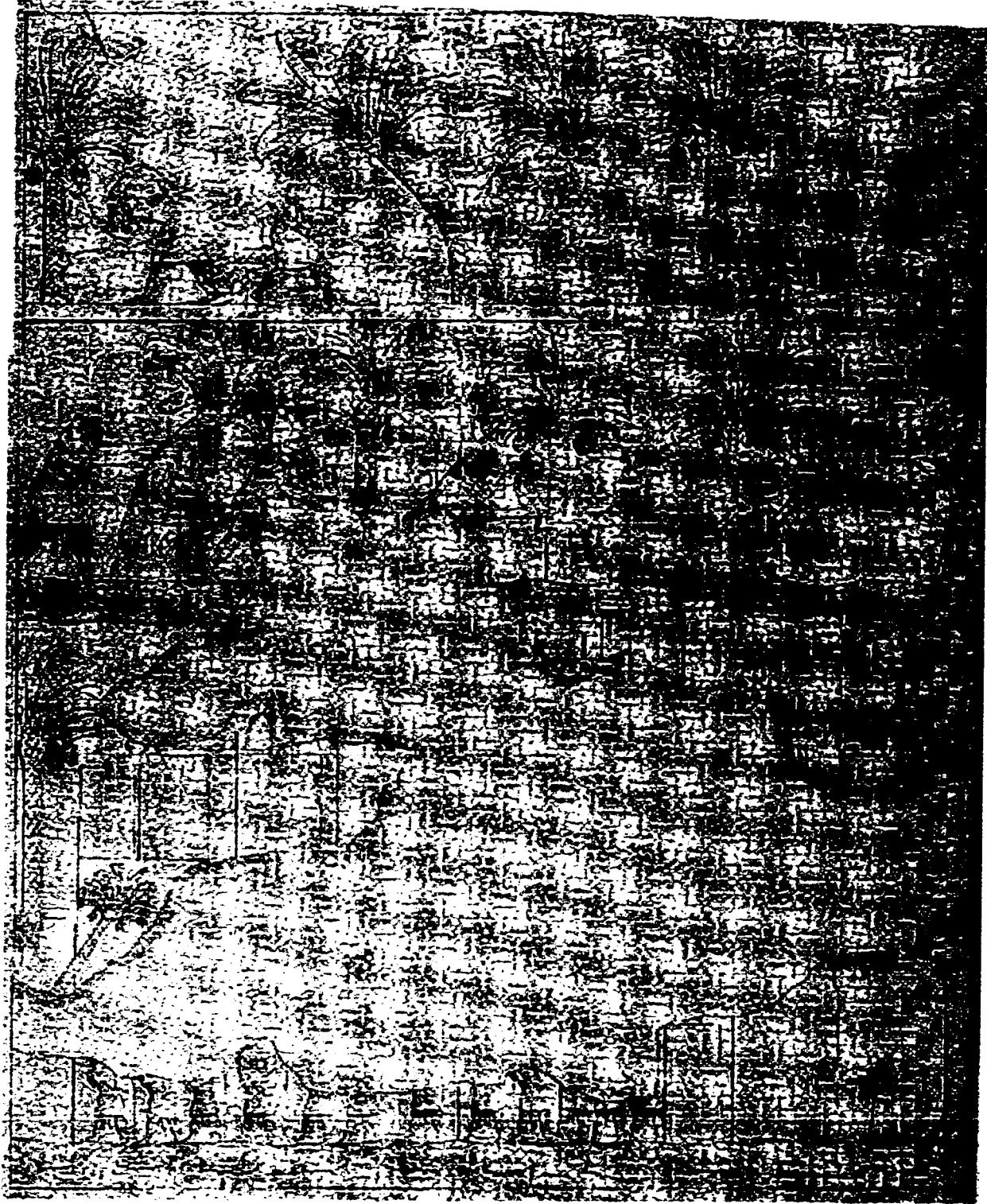
R5: BM 136773

Figure 6



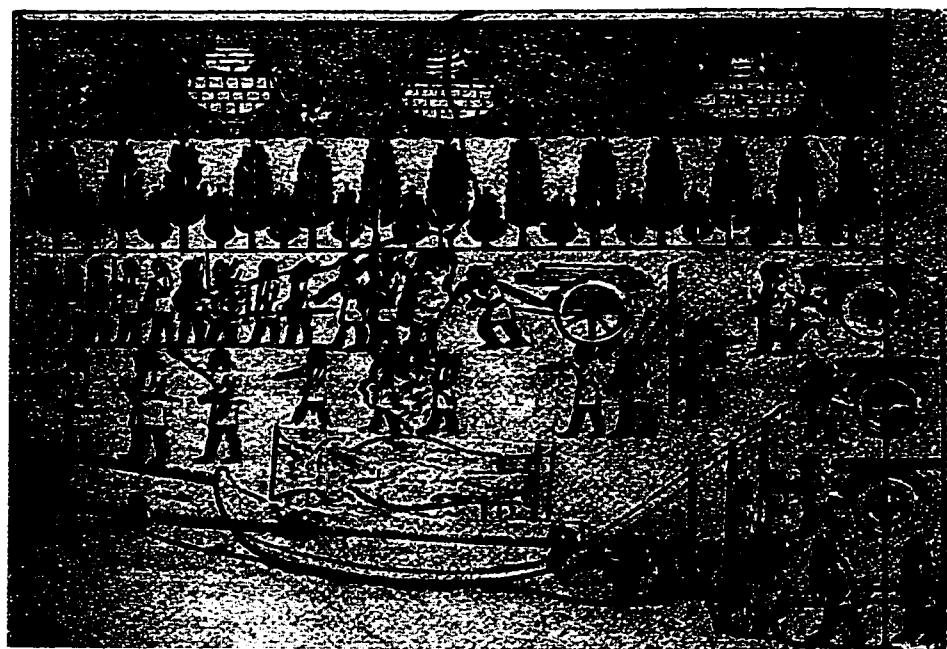
R6: BIF MS 2995.4 (Botta)

Figure 7



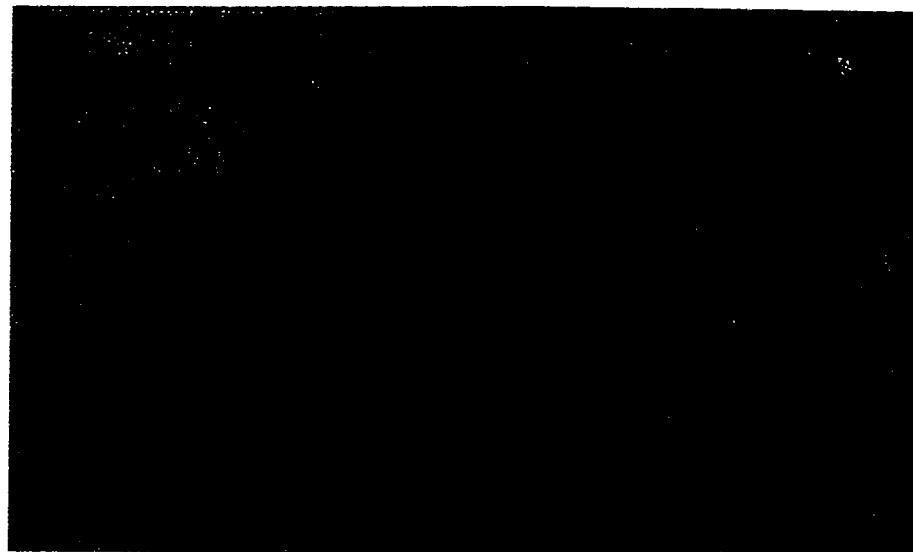
R7: BM WAA Or Dr IV xli

Figure 8



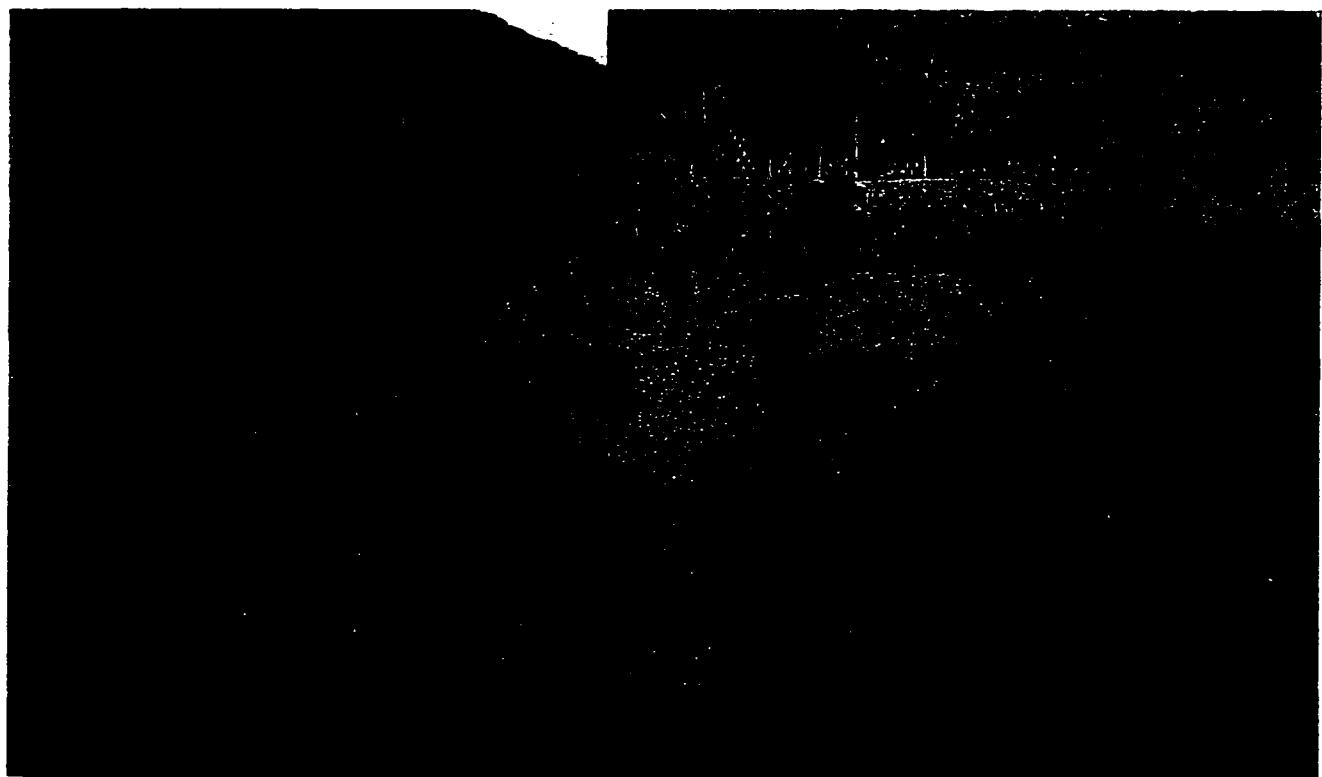
R8: BM WAA Or Dr IV 49

Figure 9



R9: BM WAA, Or. Dr., I, 55

Figure 10



R10: BM 124820

Figure 11



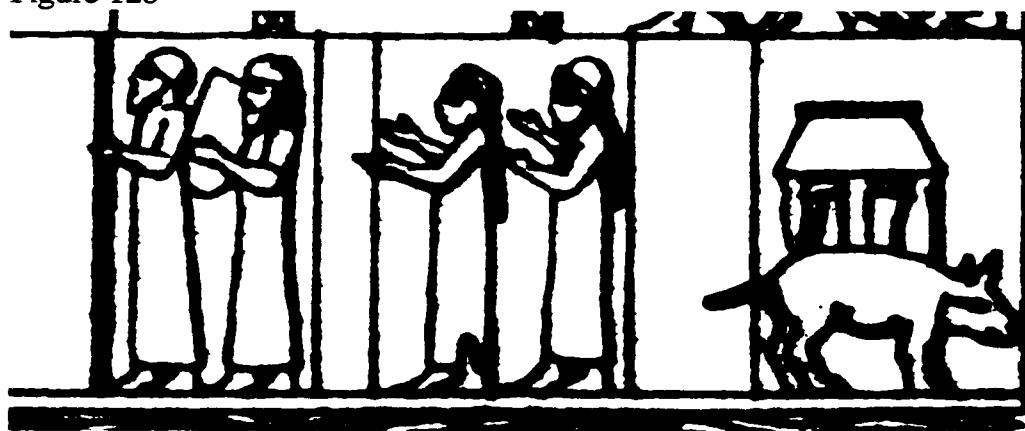
R11: BM 124947

Figure 12a



R12: BM WAA Or Dr IV, 56

Figure 12b



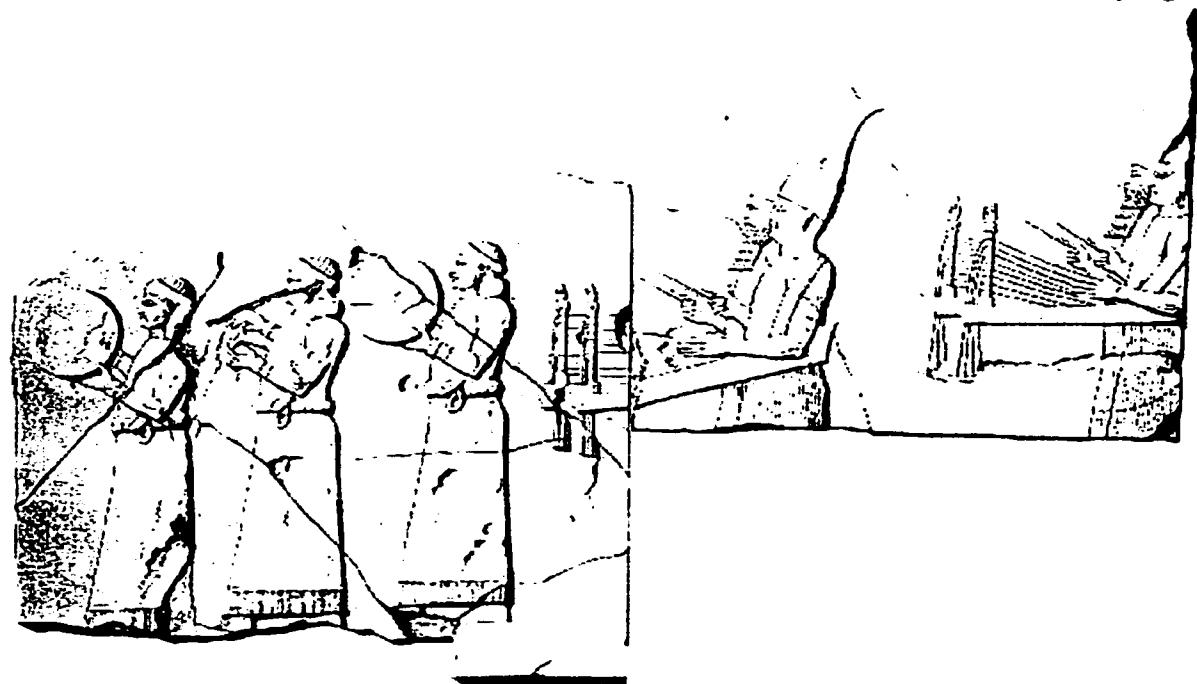
R12: BM WAA Or Dr IV, 56

Figure 13a



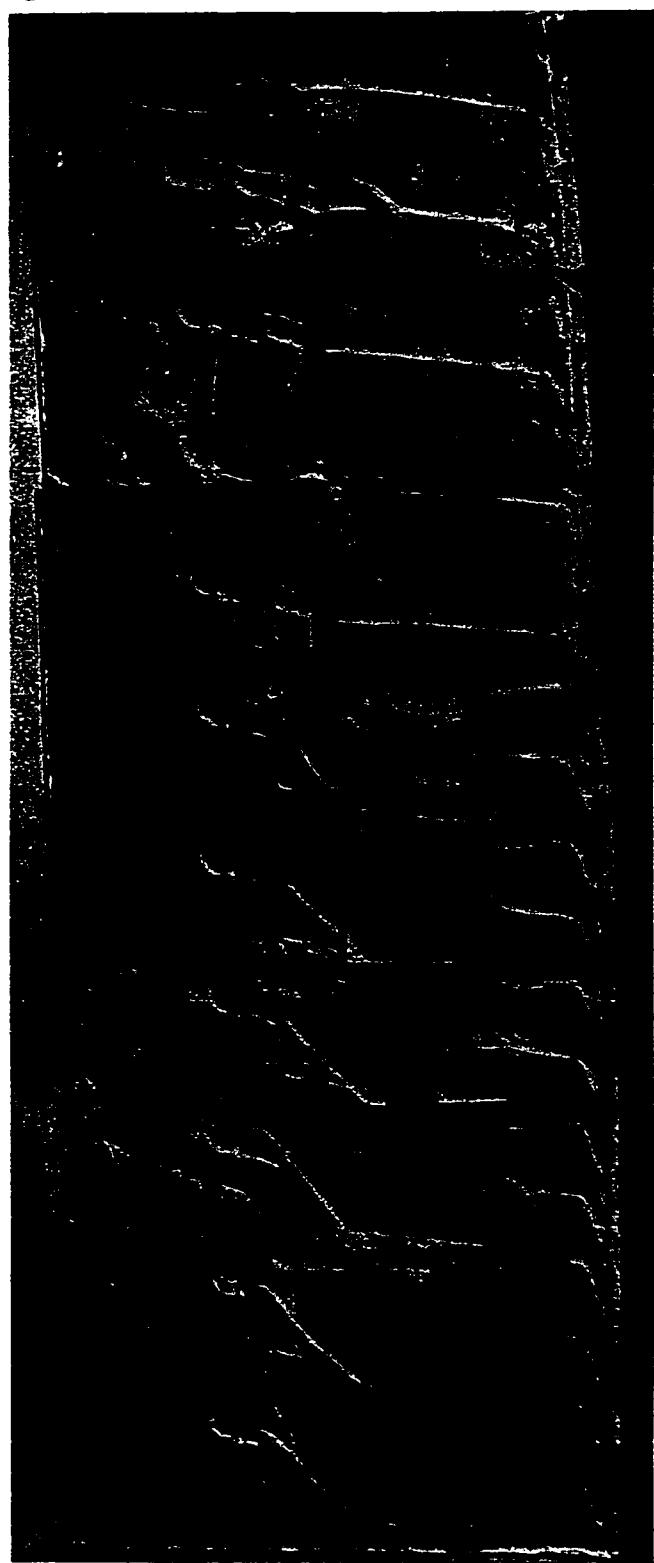
R13: BM 124948

Figure 13b



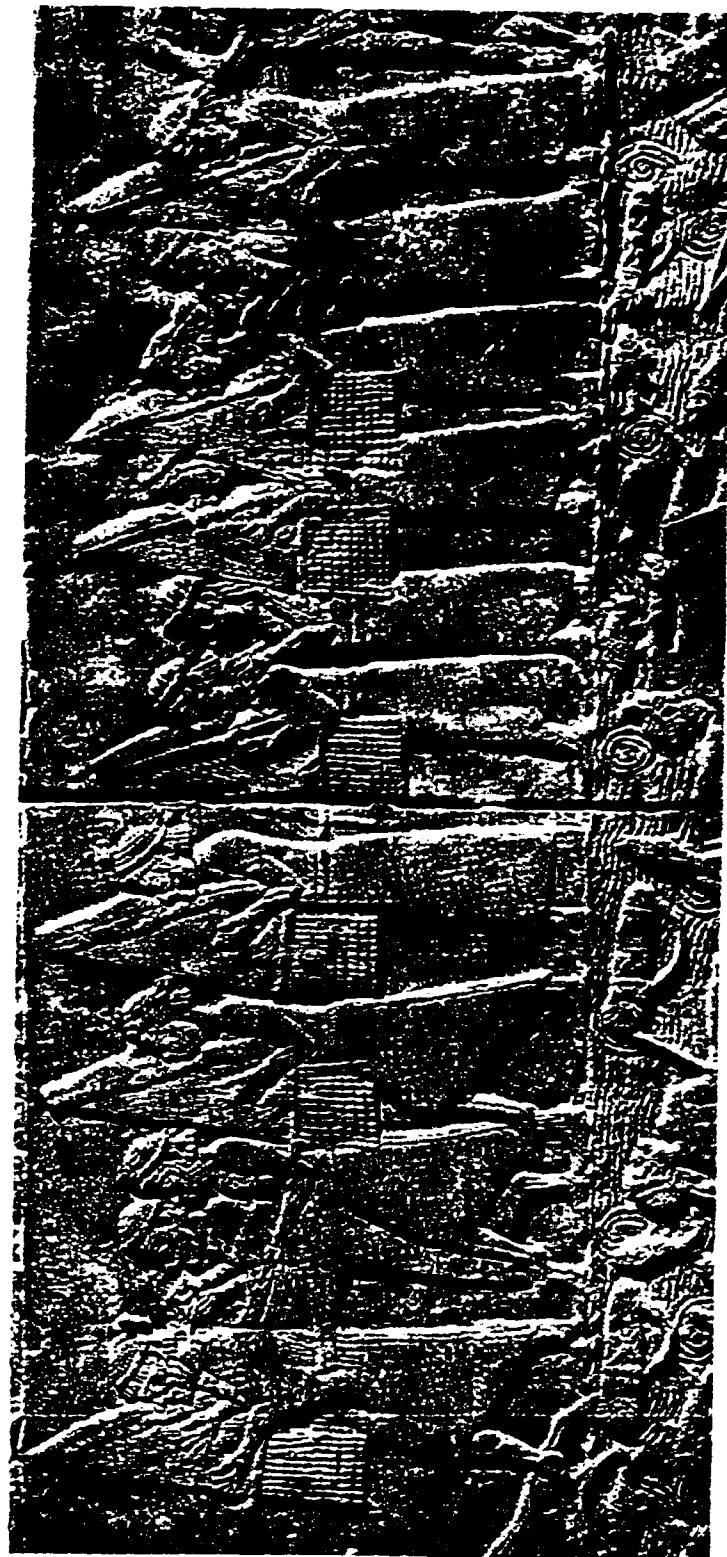
R13: BM 124948 + BM WAA Or Dr VI xliv

Figure 14



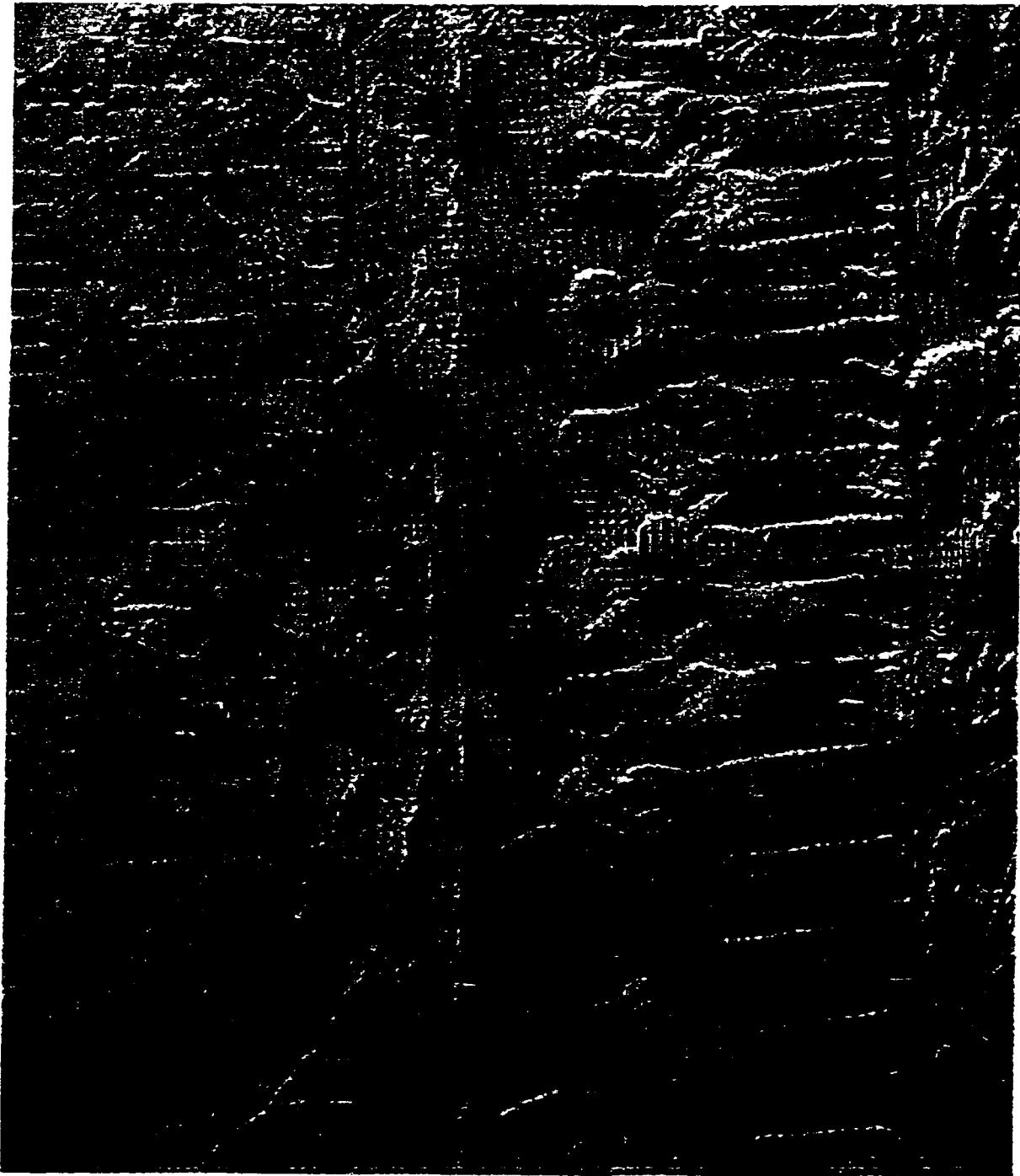
R14: VA 953

Figure 15a



R15: BM 124802

Figure 15b



R15: BM 124802

Figure 16



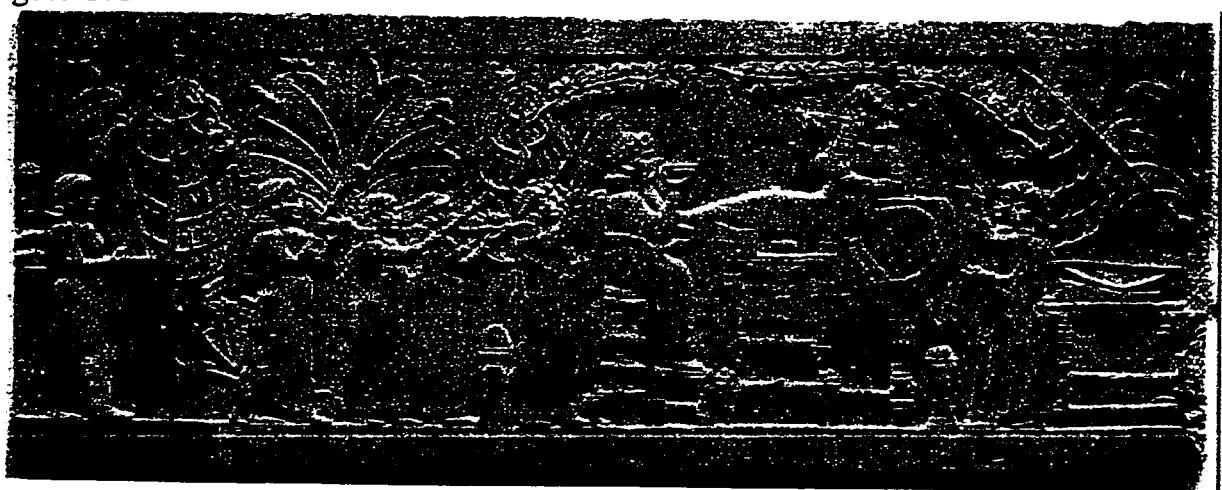
R16: BM 118916

Figure 17a



R17: Or Dr V 46 + Or Dr V 42 (partial)

Figure 17b



R17: BM 124920

Figure 18



R18: BM 135116

Figure 19



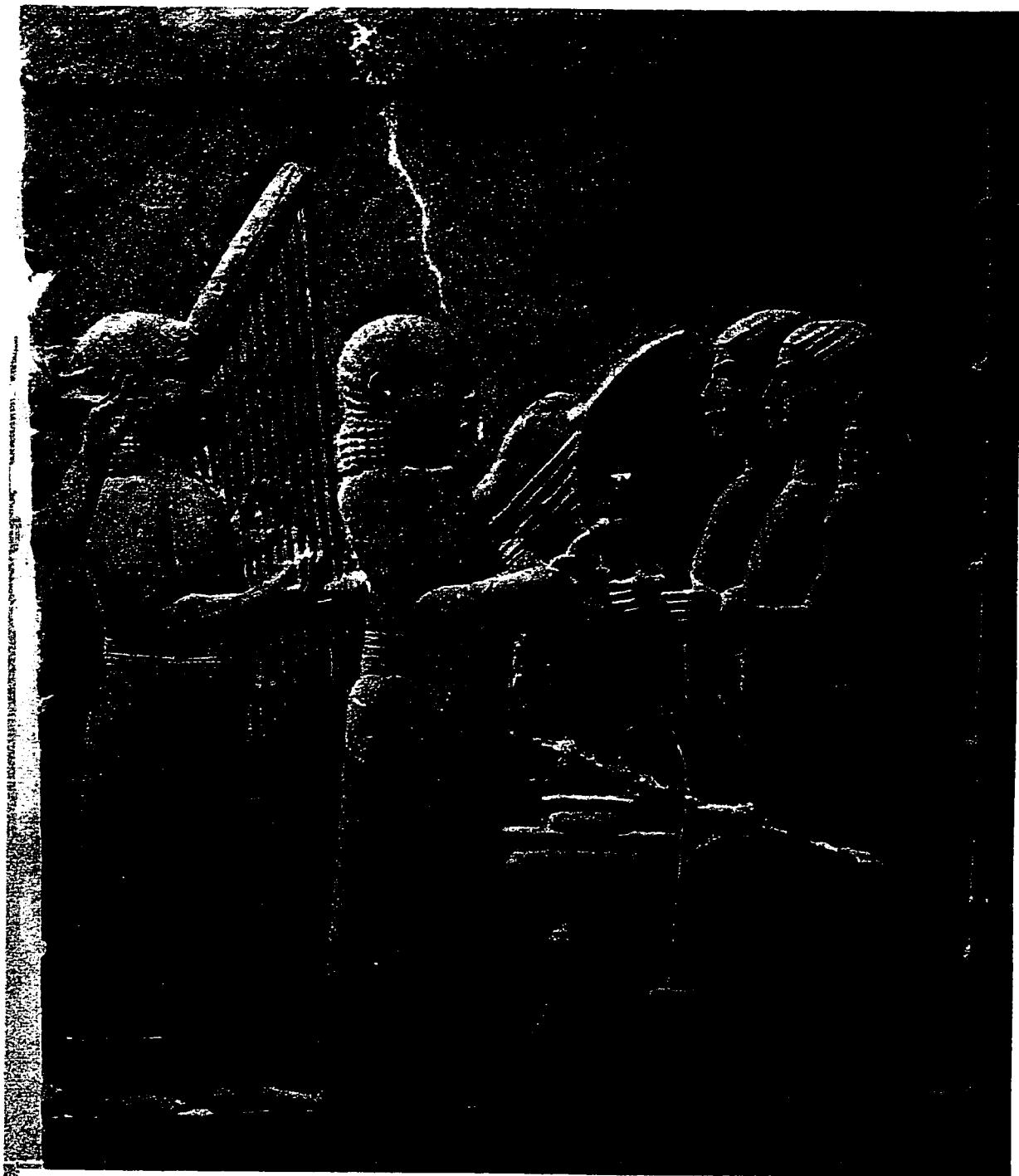
R19: BM 135120

Figure 20



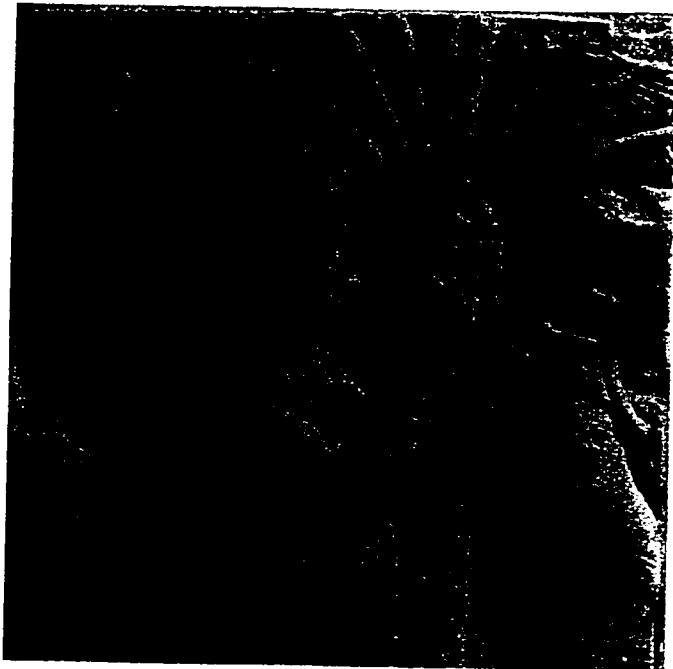
R20: BM 135115

Figure 21



R21: BM 124922

Figure 22



R22: VA 159

Figure 23



R23: Ist 6339

Figure 24



R24: BM 124886 + BM 124887

Figure 25a



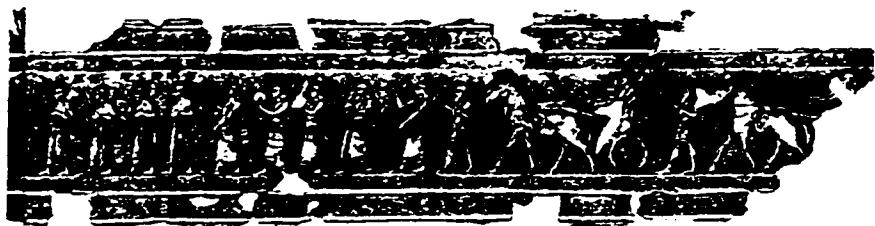
R25: AO 19908

Figure 25b



R25: AO 19908

Figure 26a



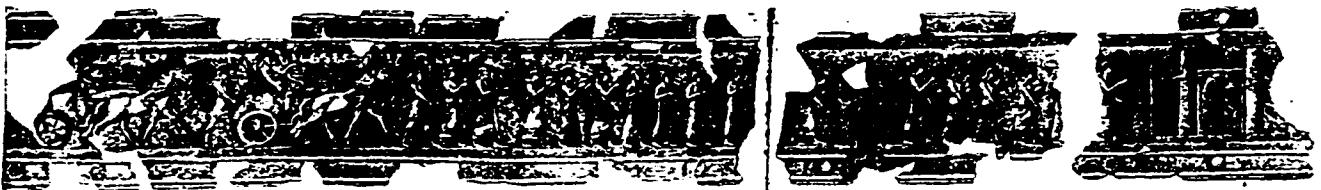
Br1: BM 124690

Figure 26b



Br1: BM 124690

Figure 27a



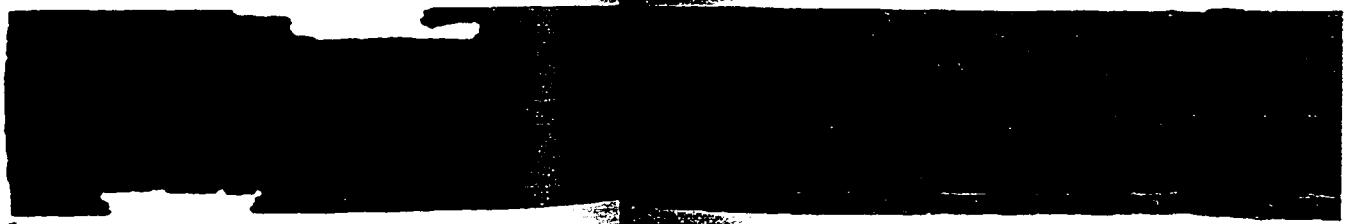
Br2: BM 124696

Figure 27b



Br2: BM 124696

Figure 28a



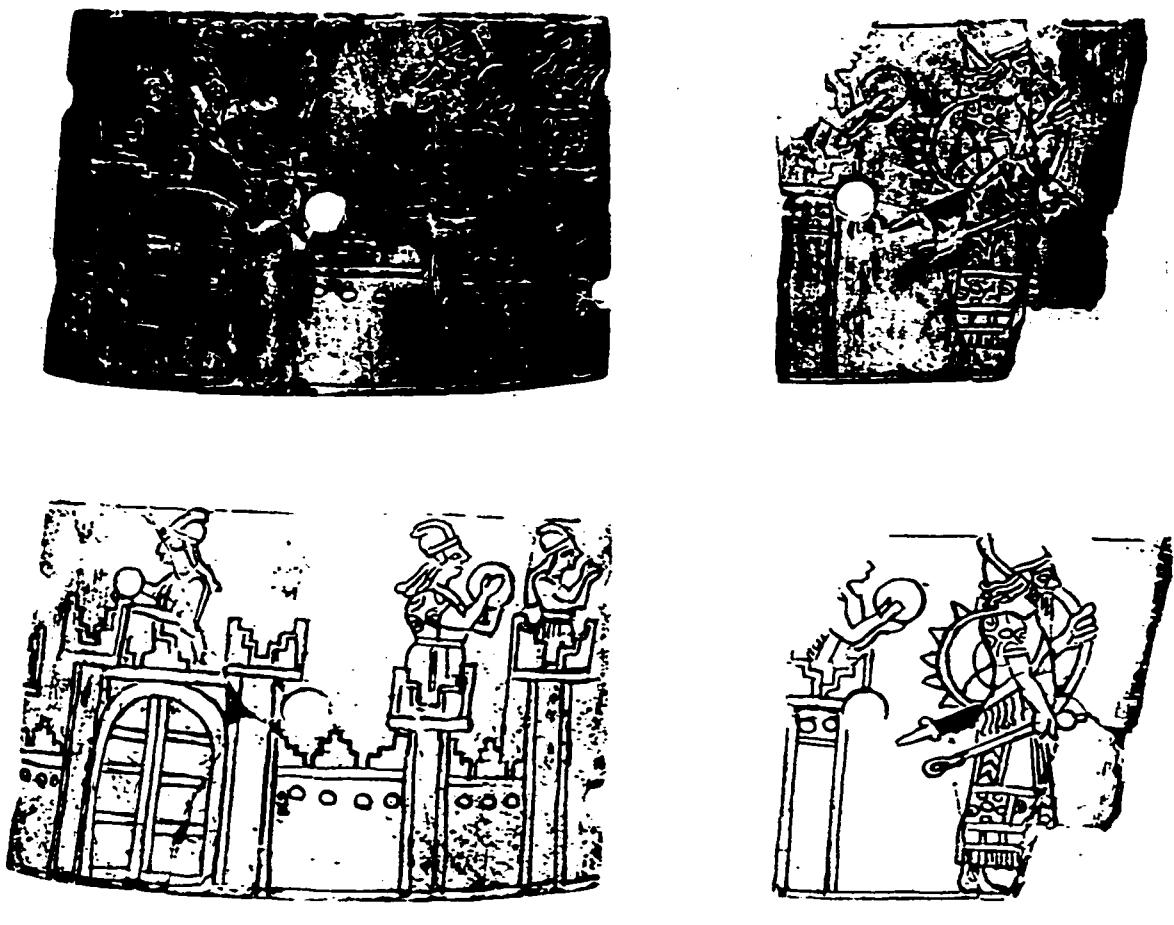
Br3: BM 124662

Figure 28b



Br3: BM 124662

Figure 29



I1: MMA 54.117.11 abc

Figure 30



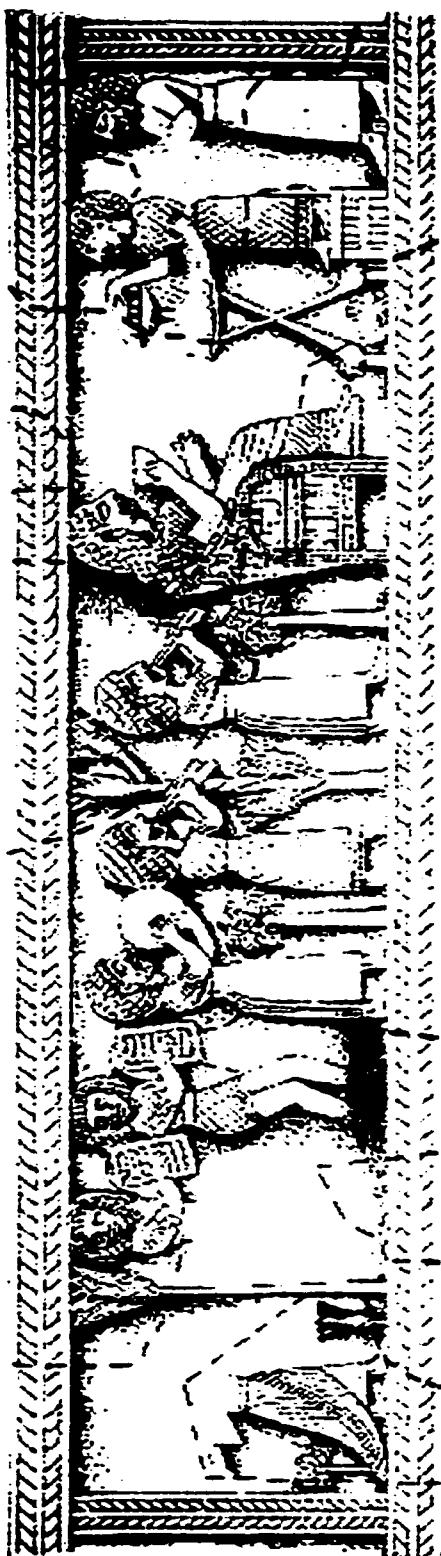
I2: BM 127094

Figure 31a



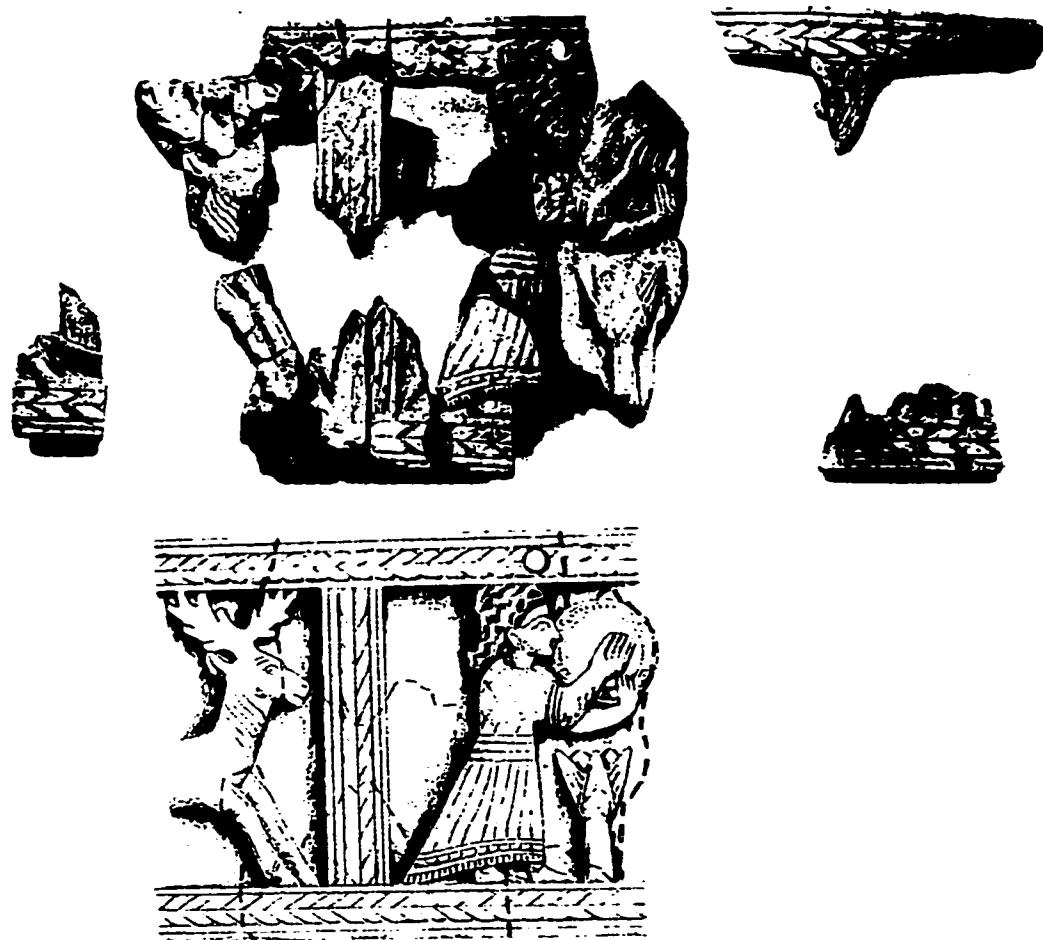
I3: BM 118179

Figure 31b



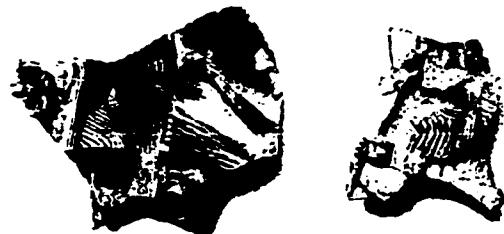
I3: BM 118179

Figure 32



I4: BM 126515

Figure 33



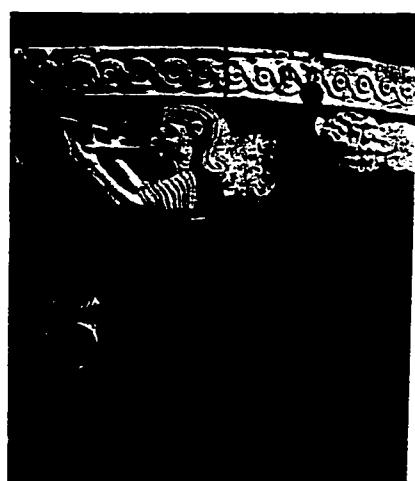
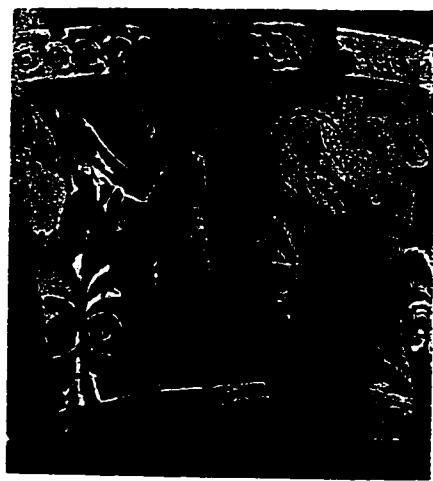
I5: BM 127096 + BM 127097

Figure 34



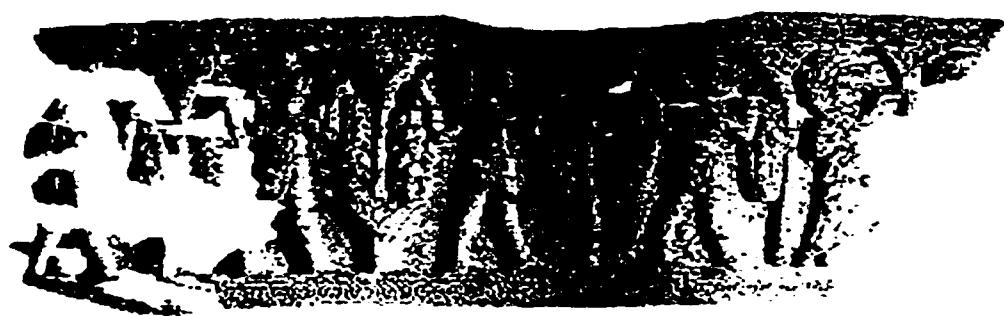
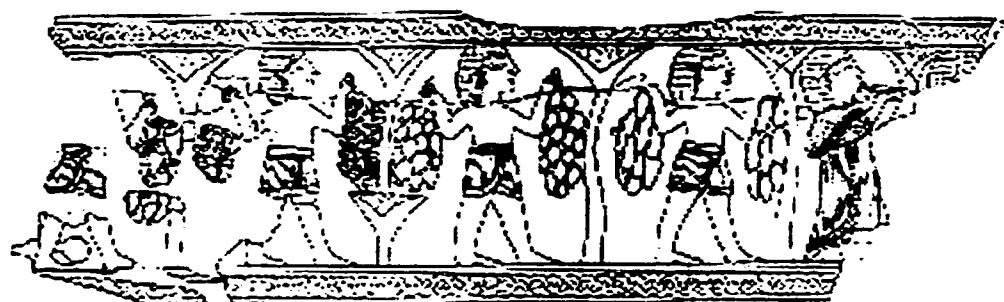
I6: BM 127120

Figure 35



I7: ND 1642

Figure 36



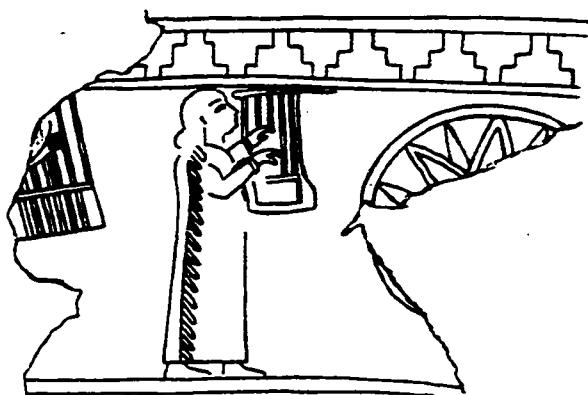
I8: TAH 94 C.48/F.1789/O.1708

Figure 37



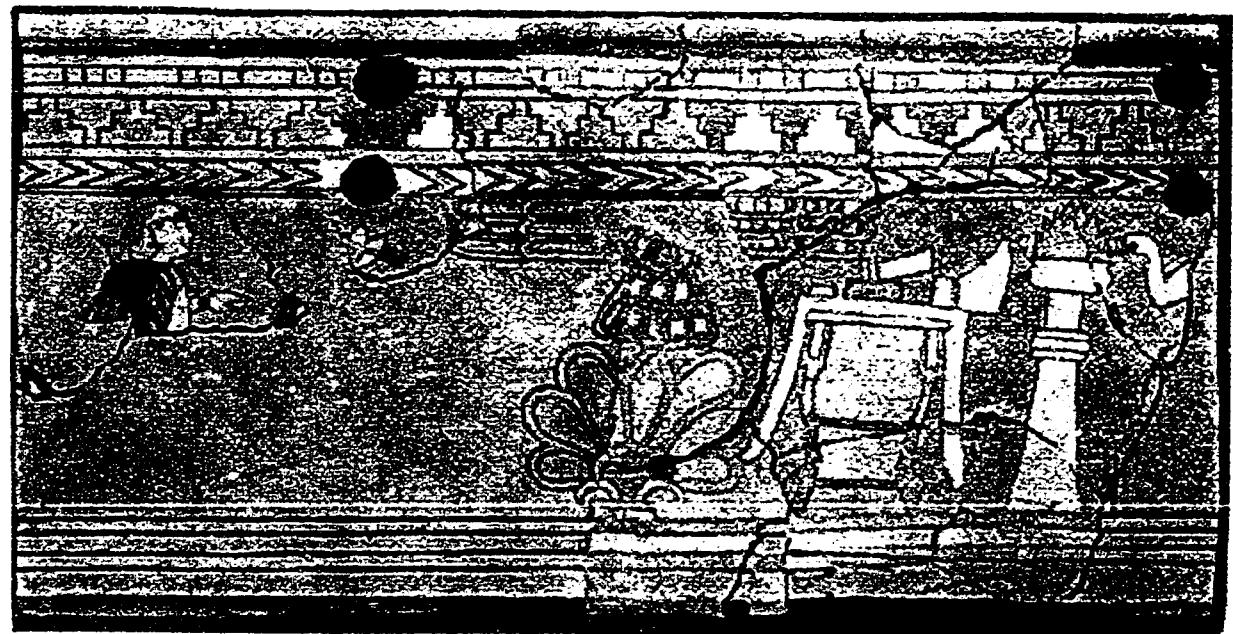
I9: AM 1959.210

Figure 38



V1: Ass 10497

Figure 39



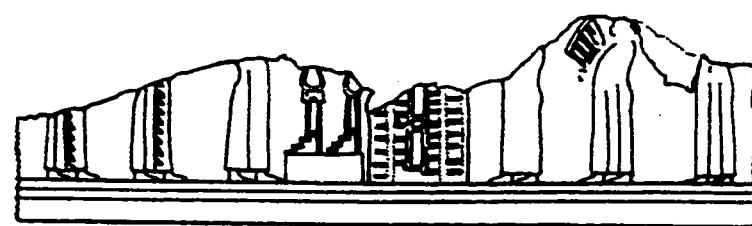
V2: VA 5043

Figure 40a



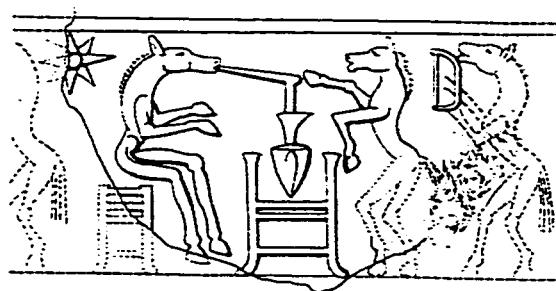
V3: VA 8761

Figure 40b



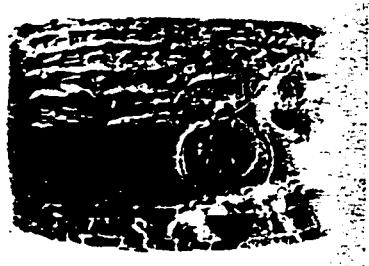
I3: VA 8761

Figure 41



S1: ND 7107

Figure 42



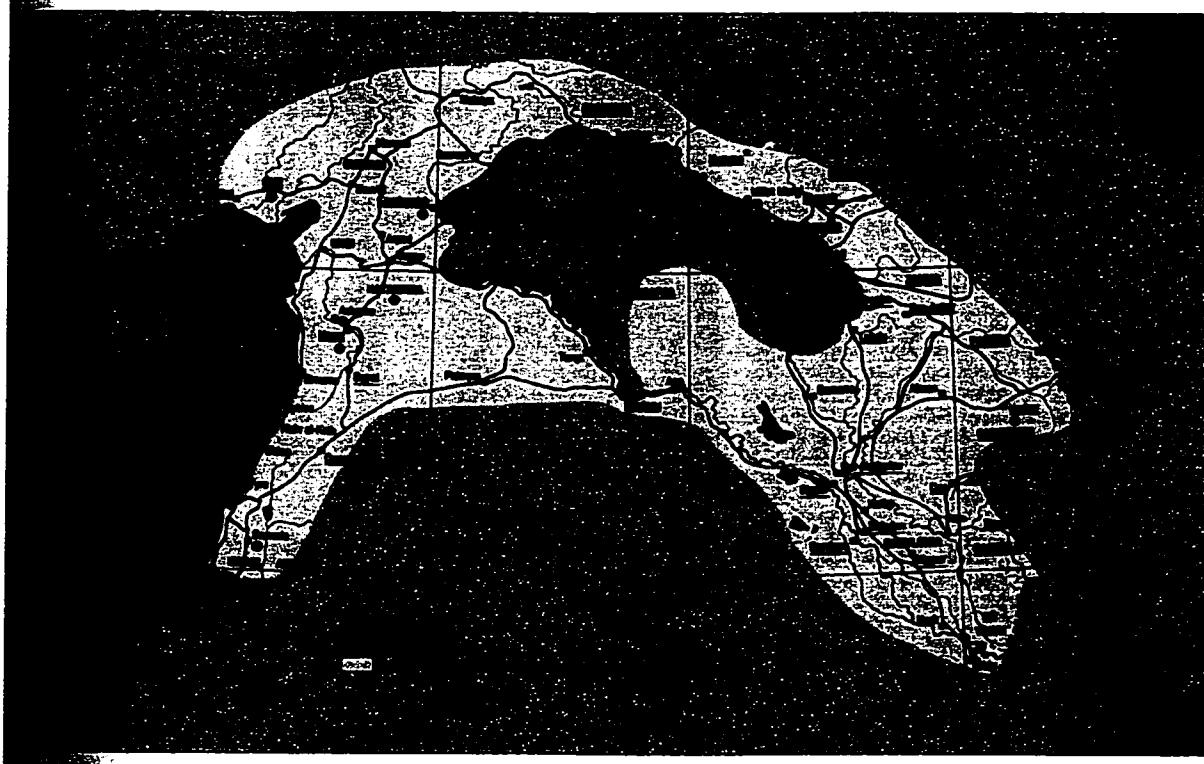
S2: ND 2078

Figure 43



Sh1: VA 5526

Figure 44



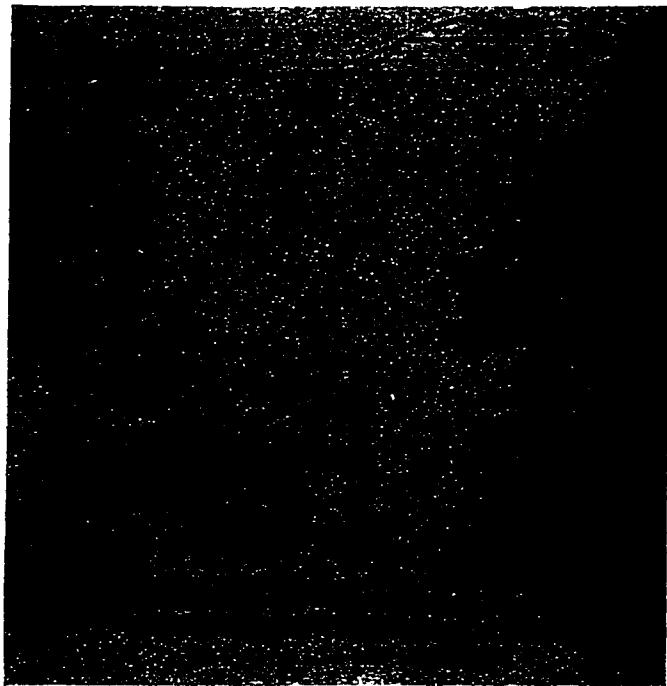
Map of Assyria

Figure 45



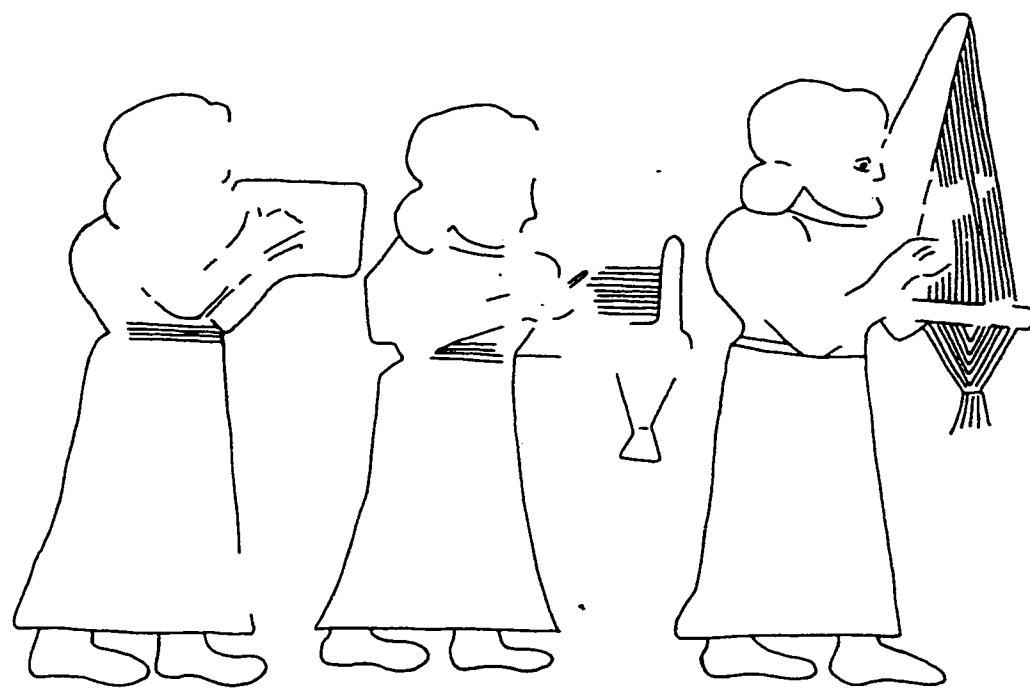
Early Dynastic lyre from Ur

Figure 46



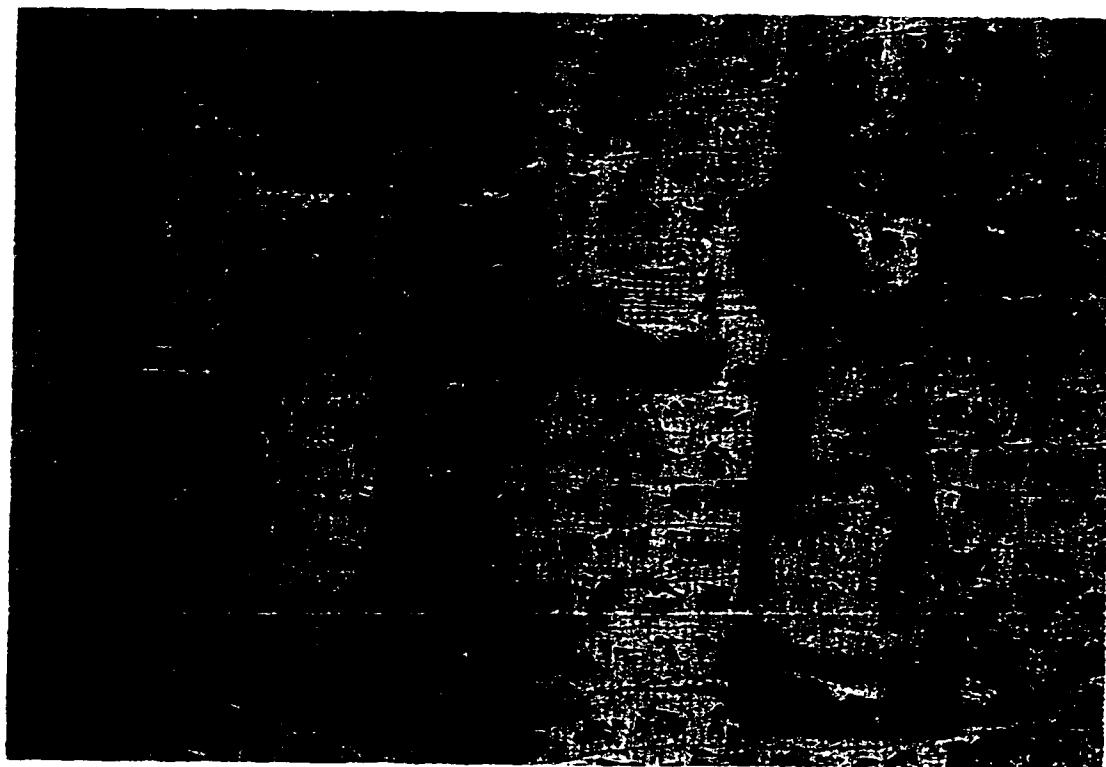
Seleucid tablet with *lilissu*

Figure 47a



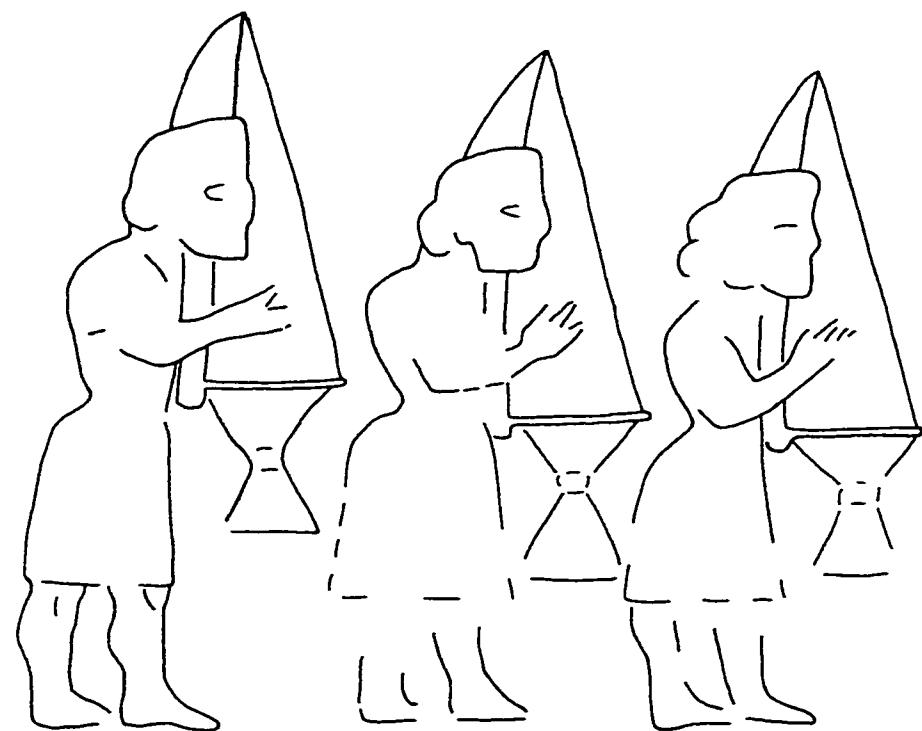
Kul-e Farah I

Figure 47b



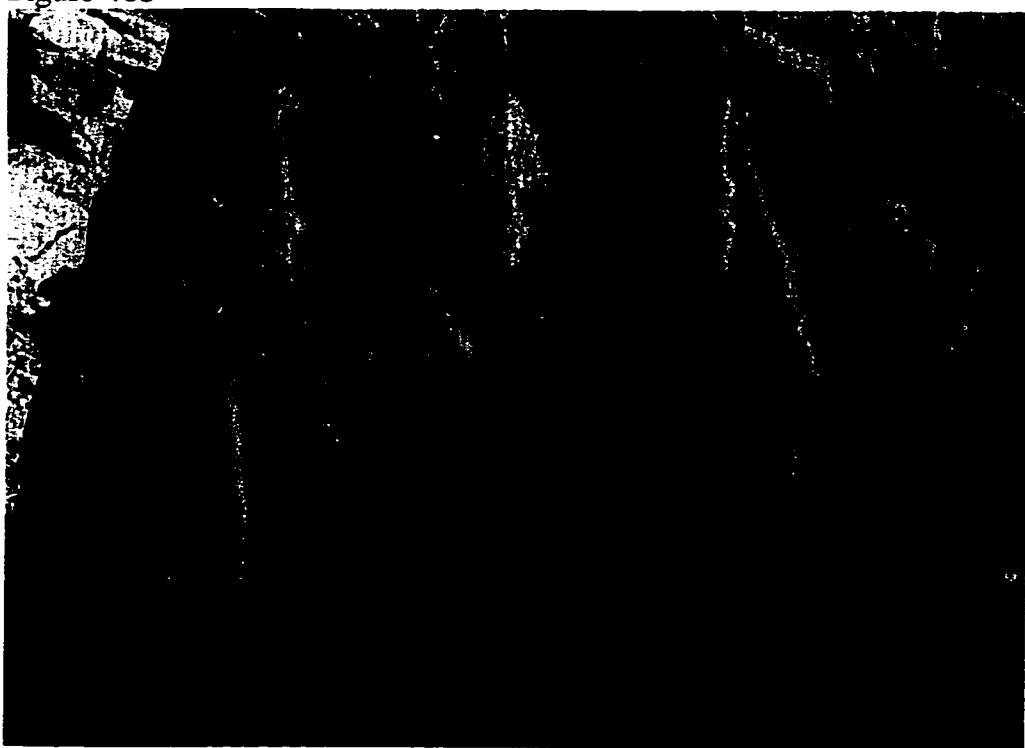
Kul-e Farah I

Figure 48a



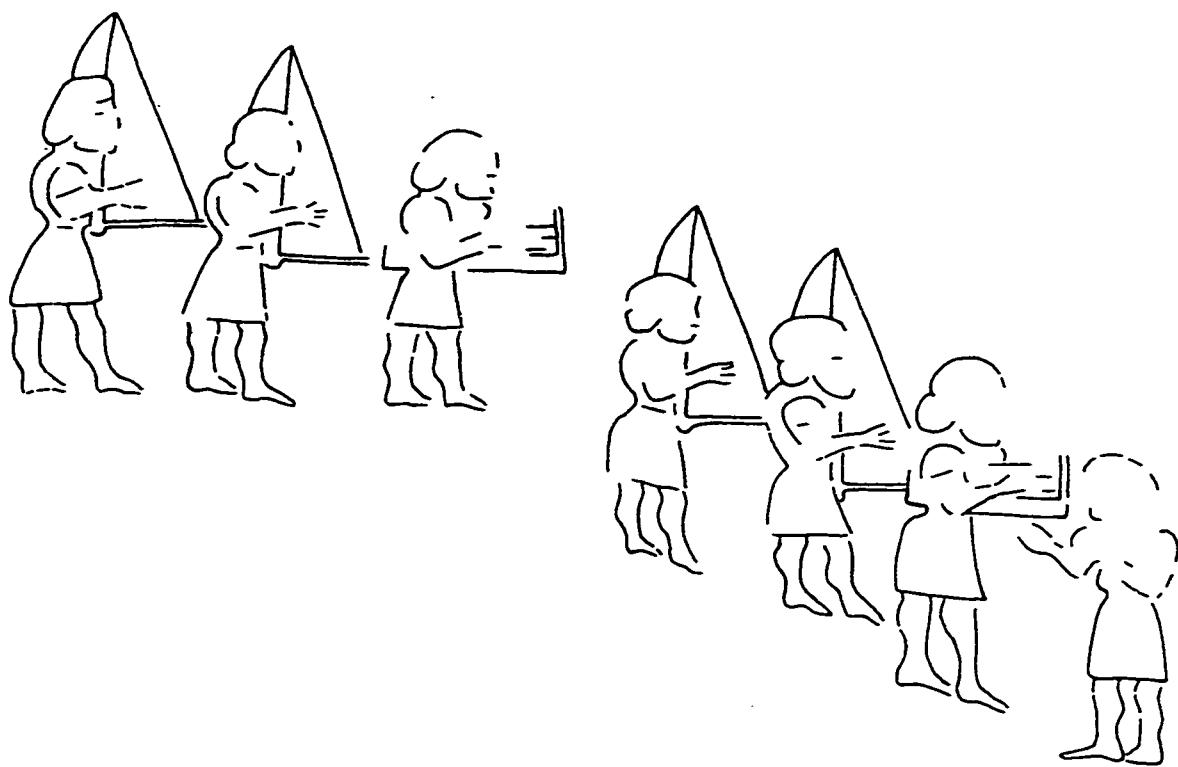
Kul-e Farah III

Figure 48b



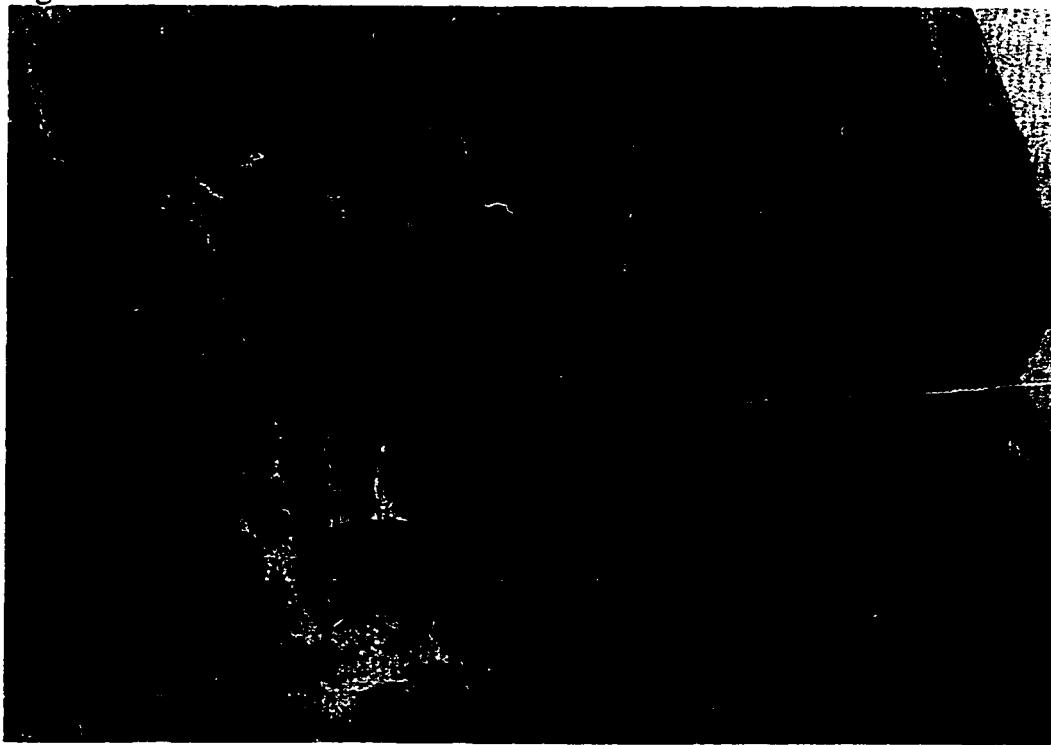
Kul-e Farah III

Figure 49a



Kul-e Farah IV

Figure 49b



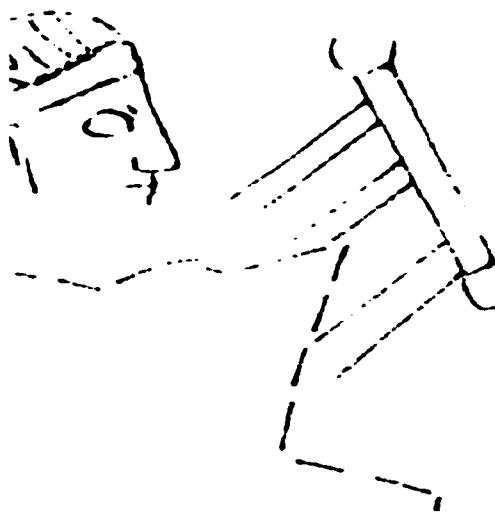
Kul-e Farah IV



Assyrian from Cat. no. R6



Assyrian from Cat. no. R25



Assyrian from Cat. no. I2



Assyrian from Cat. no. V1



Assyrian from Cat. no. V3



Unbearded Assyrian from Cat. no. R21



Feathered man from Cat. no. R16



Arab from Cat. no. R25



Judean from Cat. no. R11



Phoenician from Cat. no. Sh1



Phoenician from Cat. no. I5



Egyptianizing from Cat. no. I9



North Syrian from Cat. no. I7



Horse from Cat. no. S2

Figure 50



Oriental Institute Megiddo Vase