

# Dressing the Neo-Assyrian Queen in Identity and Ideology: Elements and Ensembles from the Royal Tombs at Nimrud

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*Includes Supplementary Content on AJA Online*

Through an analysis of the ninth- to eighth-century B.C.E. mortuary assemblages from the Queens' Tombs of Nimrud's Northwest Palace in Iraq, this article interprets dress elements and ensembles in terms of identity and ideology. The Queens' Tombs offer the only in situ evidence for royal Neo-Assyrian female dress. The finds, which have never before been studied as comprehensive ensembles, correspond to the few surviving images of Neo-Assyrian queens and greatly expand our evidence for the manner in which a queen's ideal appearance was constructed and embodied. Considering dress in death, as well as in life and the afterlife, this article proposes a standard, but flexible, queenly ensemble. To facilitate analyses, I present a figural model based on an aggregation of archaeological, art historical, and literary evidence for ideal royal women. I then analyze the dress elements and ensembles as expressions of courtly, queenly, and individual identity. Finally, I interpret queenly dress as an ideological mechanism that manifested imperial power through its materials, style, and iconography. Overall, this article aims to provide a new foundation for more thoroughly integrating the visual and material presence of queens into interpretations of the Neo-Assyrian court and its eternally conceived universe.<sup>1</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

In 1951, beneath the floor of Room DD in the so-called harem quarters of the Northwest Palace at Nimrud (situated near Mosul, Iraq), archaeologist Max Mallowan discovered an Iron Age burial dating to no later than the eighth century B.C.E. (fig. 1).<sup>2</sup> The coffin contained an unnamed woman,

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<sup>2</sup> Room DD is located against the eastern wall of the palace's southern area. Mallowan's (1966, 113–15) label "harem quarters" is now viewed as anachronistic (Kertai 2014, 196–99; 2015, 7–8, 45–6). This area included residential, service, and storage areas (Kertai 2015, 228–29).

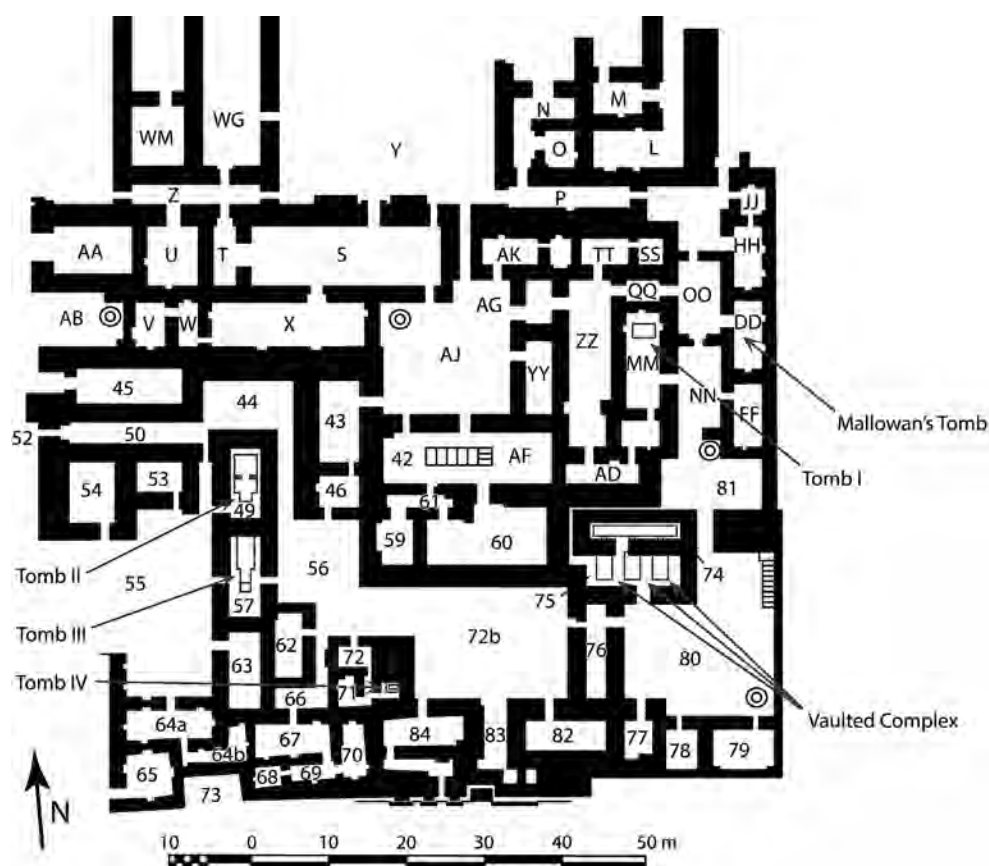


FIG. 1. Plan of the southern portion of Nimrud's Northwest Palace, showing the locations of tombs. The letters and numbers on the plan represent the names of the rooms (modified from Spurrier 2017, fig. 2).

whose elite status was announced by a chalcedony stamp seal attached to a bronze fibula by a gold chain.<sup>3</sup> About 40 years later, between 1988 and 1992, beneath the same general area of the palace, investigations by the Iraqi State Board of Antiquities and Heritage revealed a constellation of burial sites, including four elite tombs, designated as Tombs I–IV, as well as what appears to have been a less elite communal crypt known as the Vaulted Complex.<sup>4</sup> These ninth- to eighth-century B.C.E. structures preserved the remains of adults and children, but they are known as the “Queens’ Tombs” because inscriptions identified

some of the osteologically confirmed women as Neo-Assyrian queens.

The Queens’ Tombs are renowned for their profusion of golden treasures. The burials contained precious metal vessels and lavish ensembles of head-dresses (fig. 2; online figs. 1, 2),<sup>5</sup> earrings, necklaces, bracelets, rings, and anklets. Some of the dress items survived in the positions in which they would have been worn. Scholars have discussed the materials, craftsmanship, and design (entailing form and style) of individual objects and types, but, except for Spurrier’s article on Tomb III, no comprehensive analysis of the mortuary assemblages has been pursued.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Mallowan 1966, 114–15, fig. 58.

<sup>4</sup> This article cites Hussein (2016) as the principal source on the tombs and uses Al-Rawi’s (2008) translations of the texts. Schultz and Kunter (1998) provide a comprehensive osteological report. Primarily cited here, Müller-Karpe et al. (2008) summarize the report.

<sup>5</sup> See AJA Online for all online-only figures accompanying this article.

<sup>6</sup> Spurrier 2017; see also Collon 2008; Youkhanna 2008; Gansell 2016.



FIG. 2. Finds (not to scale) from the Northwest Palace, Nimrud: *top left*, gold rosette circlet, ht. 6 cm, diam. 18 cm, Tomb II, Northwest Palace, Nimrud (ND 1989.1; Baghdad, Iraq Museum, inv. no. 105692); *top right*, gold, agate, and lapis lazuli diadem with a dorsal streamer and forehead ornament, lgth. of dorsal band 40 cm, thickness of ribbon 4 cm, Tomb II (ND 1989.5; Baghdad, Iraq Museum, inv. no. 105696); *bottom*, crown of gold, lapis lazuli, turquoise, bitumen, and other stones or paste, featuring flowers, fruits, bountiful grapevines, and fantastical female figures, ht. 16 cm, diam. 24 cm, Coffin 2 of Tomb III (ND 1989.309; Baghdad, Iraq Museum, inv. no. 115619).

My project organizes, illustrates, and interprets the large quantity of data that Tombs I–IV provide regarding royal female dress.<sup>7</sup> Dress is selected as a focus because of the breadth of cultural information it can reveal, as well as the quantity, excellent preservation,

<sup>7</sup>Other archaeological studies of ancient Near Eastern female dress have examined material from the third-millennium B.C.E. Royal Tombs at Ur (Gansell 2007a; Benzel 2013), Ashur's second-millennium B.C.E. Middle Assyrian Tomb 45 (Wartke 1999; Feldman 2006), and the first-millennium B.C.E. Iranian site of Hasanlu (Marcus 1993, 1994; Cifarelli 2014).

and known findspots of so many of the tombs' sartorial items. Drawing on art, texts, and archaeological evidence, I consider the visual and material significance of single dress elements and overall ensembles. In particular, I propose a standard, but flexible, ensemble of queenly dress and elucidate aspects of identity and ideology that the ensemble and its individual elements may have manifested and conveyed in death and possibly in life and the afterlife.

#### NEO-ASSYRIAN ROYAL DRESS

Until the tombs' discovery, only scant textual and archaeological resources, along with a few artworks,

provided clues to the attire of royal Neo-Assyrian women.<sup>8</sup> Although artistic images are not a proxy for ancient reality, official depictions of a queen's attire can provide evidence for how the aesthetic and ideological construct of Neo-Assyrian royal dress established her rank and ideal characteristics.<sup>9</sup> The well-known "Banquet Scene" relief from Ashurbanipal's (r. 668–627 B.C.E.) North Palace at Nineveh preserves the most detailed image of a Neo-Assyrian queen, who is shown banqueting with the ruler in the presence of several female attendants (figs. 3, 4).<sup>10</sup> On the sculpture, the queen wears a mural crown fashioned in the form of fortified city walls, crescent earrings fringed with pendants, rosette bracelets, and a choker or high collar embellished with disks. Her draped garment is covered with disks that probably represent metal appliqués.<sup>11</sup> Loops and tassels enhance its ornamented borders. The more simply dressed attendants wear circlets around their heads, earrings resembling the queen's but with fewer pendants, palmette bracelets, unadorned chokers or collars, and plain dresses with fringed hemlines.<sup>12</sup>

Other artworks depicting Neo-Assyrian queens include a stele from Ashur that names and portrays Ashurbanipal's queen, Libbali-Sharrat.<sup>13</sup> The stele's damaged imagery corroborates the tradition of queenly dress shown on the palace relief, but it does not provide additional information. Other images are found on a bronze plaque in the Musée du Louvre that depicts the seventh-century B.C.E. queen Naqia and on a pendant, seals, and seal impressions bearing miniature imagery dating to the eighth and seventh century B.C.E.<sup>14</sup> With little comparative evidence to work with, previous art historical scholarship on royal Neo-Assyrian female dress has focused on the mural

crown, which is not represented among the artifacts from the Queens' Tombs.<sup>15</sup>

As can be seen on the Banquet Scene relief, depictions of male and female royal attire demonstrate many common characteristics (see fig. 3). The distinctiveness of queenly regalia, however, has been understudied, and typologies of Neo-Assyrian royal dress have mainly been generated from the far more numerous images of the king, crown prince, courtiers, and army (fig. 5).<sup>16</sup> In particular, artworks portray men and eunuchs wearing headgear indicative of office, earrings, necklaces, armlets, bracelets, and decorated, draped robes embellished with fringes and tassels. In addition to linking formal developments in jewelry design to regnal chronology, studies have also tied variations in male and eunuch dress to royal and military rank.<sup>17</sup> Now, since the archaeological material from the Queens' Tombs supports the identification of a distinctively queenly tradition of dress, it is possible to integrate queens and their dress into sartorial typologies and broader investigations of imperial culture.

Dress is here defined as an "assemblage of body modifications and/or supplements."<sup>18</sup> While some definitions incorporate aspects of appearance such as hairstyle and cosmetics, this project concentrates on archaeologically durable elements exemplified by headdresses and jewelry. I also consider seals and mirrors as components of dress, since they were consistently associated with the body by being worn or carried.<sup>19</sup> Forming ensembles, dress elements can function individually and collectively to transform the canvas of the body "into a picture," as Belting has described it, that visually and conceptually fuses flesh and dress into a new entity.<sup>20</sup> In this case, I consider dress as it transforms a woman into the social and political entity of a queen. I propose that the materials, style, and iconography of dress imparted and expressed identity as well as empowered queens' imperial agency.<sup>21</sup> Dress,

<sup>8</sup> Dowry lists and royal inventories provide few details about jewelry (Parker 1954, 30, 37–8, text 2307, lines 9–21, 23–9; Fales and Postgate 1992, 99–100, 115–17, texts 85, 108). Prior to the Nimrud discoveries, archaeological evidence was limited to finds from nonroyal burials, where poor skeletal preservation prevented the sexing of most bodies (Haller 1954, 76, 87).

<sup>9</sup> Cifarelli and Gawlinski 2017, xi; McFerrin 2017, 144, 147, 150.

<sup>10</sup> Albenda 1998, 89.

<sup>11</sup> On Neo-Assyrian garment decoration, see Guralnick 2004; 2008, 88–101; Gaspa 2014.

<sup>12</sup> Fringes were probably less deluxe (i.e., less laborious and costly to produce) than tessellated hemlines (Thomason 2011).

<sup>13</sup> Andrae 1913, 6–8, pl. 10.

<sup>14</sup> Reade 1987, 143–45; Ornan 2002, 461–63; Al-Gailani Werr 2008, 156–57, 159, 161.

<sup>15</sup> Börker-Klähn 1997; Ornan 2002, 474–76; Maier 2012, 1073–75.

<sup>16</sup> Madhloom 1970, 66–93; Maxwell-Hyslop 1971; Musche 1992; Postgate 1994.

<sup>17</sup> Reade 1972, 2009; Postgate 2001; Guralnick 2004.

<sup>18</sup> Eicher and Roach-Higgins 1992, 15.

<sup>19</sup> Eicher and Roach-Higgins 1992, 16; Lee 2015, 164–65.

<sup>20</sup> Belting 1994, 22. Crossland (2010), Devlin and Graham (2015), Lee (2015, 31), and Cifarelli and Gawlinski (2017, x) address materiality and embodiment.

<sup>21</sup> Melville (2005), Macgregor (2012, 67–94), and Svärd (2012, 2015) demonstrate the agency of Neo-Assyrian royal



FIG. 3. Gypsum alabaster relief showing Ashurbanipal (r. 668–627 B.C.E.) and his queen banqueting in the royal garden, ht. 58.5 cm x width. 140 cm, North Palace, Nineveh. London, British Museum, inv. no. WA 124920 (© The Trustees of The British Museum; all rights reserved).



FIG. 4. Detail of gypsum alabaster relief showing Ashurbanipal and his queen banqueting in the royal garden. London, British Museum, inv. no. WA 124920 (© The Trustees of The British Museum; all rights reserved).



FIG. 5. Gypsum alabaster relief showing Sargon II (r. 721–705 B.C.E.) and his crown prince, ht. 330 cm, Palace of Sargon II, Khorsabad. Paris, Musée du Louvre, inv. no. AO 19873-4 (Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY).

itself an aesthetic and sociopolitical construct, thereby assured the privileged identity of Neo-Assyrian queens in ideological conceptions of the empire.

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women. Winter (2007), Benzel (2015), and Cifarelli and Gawlinski (2017, x–xi) consider agential aspects of ancient Near Eastern dress and its precious materials.

#### RESEARCH CHALLENGES AND RESOURCES

Any research on the Queens' Tombs at Nimrud must proceed in the face of significant challenges—namely, deficiencies in the excavation methods and records, the inaccessibility of the artifacts and site itself, errors in the original publication, ancient disturbances to the tombs, a lack of comparative archaeological evidence for royal

Neo-Assyrian burials, and scholarly debate over the very identities of the deceased as queens. Amid this discussion of disadvantages, though, I also highlight some applications of the valuable resources that are available.

First, interpretations of the tombs and artifacts are hampered by their documentation and inaccessibility. Excavators dug and recorded Tombs I and IV with relative precision, but they cleared Tombs II and III in haste because of security issues.<sup>22</sup> Basic information such as the findspots and dimensions of many objects was not recorded. Furthermore, numerous artifacts were not photographed, and most lack close-up images and views or descriptions of their sides, backs, interiors, and bottoms. Because the objects are now inaccessible at an undisclosed repository in Iraq, no one can acquire further information about them.<sup>23</sup> Meanwhile, Nimrud was catastrophically bombed in 2015. The survival of the excavated tombs is not confirmed.

In 2000, Hussein and Suleiman published a catalogue of the tomb finds, but several errors in the volume confounded study. Then, in 2016, Hussein published a revised catalogue; however, this reference is still limited by the original records.<sup>24</sup> For example, his plans for Tombs II and III include rather meager selections of artifacts because the exact findspots for most objects are unknown. Nonetheless, the updated plans confirm the distribution of significant artifacts in the tombs. To enable the study of dress, I have customized Hussein's plans to represent only sartorial items from the sarcophagi and coffins, and I have placed images of the objects, scaled according to published dimensions, in their findspots (figs. 6–11; for a list of the individual items depicted in figs. 7–11, see the online appx. on AJA Online).<sup>25</sup>

Putting a body, as well as objects, in the burial context, Hussein's plan of Tomb I's sarcophagus includes a skeleton (see fig. 6).<sup>26</sup> Records disagree, however, regarding the skeleton's preservation.<sup>27</sup> It is therefore

impossible to reconstruct the relationships of the objects to the bones. Nonetheless, my Tomb I plan retains a hypothetical skeleton for the sake of providing some bodily orientation and corporeal reference (see fig. 7). I also offer an interpretive model of a dressed queen based on osteological and archaeological data from Tombs I and II as well as evidence from Neo-Assyrian art and texts (fig. 12; for a list of the individual items depicted in fig. 12, see the online appx.).<sup>28</sup> Since the ancient record is always incomplete, models, including my tomb illustrations and queen figure, are, by definition, modern interpretations reflecting our own hypotheses and decisions.<sup>29</sup> They can propose only possibilities and approximations. Yet the benefits of employing models as tools for research and visual analysis can outweigh the hazards, especially when a model contributes to research on disembodied, inadequately documented, and inaccessible material culture, such as the dress artifacts from the Queens' Tombs.

The obstacles presented by the tombs' spotty records are compounded by the fact that many of the burials were disturbed in antiquity. As a result, the exact circumstances of the bodies' dress at the moment of burial are lost. For instance, in Tomb II's sarcophagus, one queen was placed atop another 20–50 years later.<sup>30</sup> The second body displaced the original corpse and its dress elements. Tomb III presents a complicated case.<sup>31</sup> The queen's sarcophagus in the main burial chamber was empty, save for a bone fragment and a single bead, but, for unknown reasons, three bronze coffins filled the antechamber. Among these, Coffins 1 and 3 held multiple, partial skeletons. They were probably secondary interments.<sup>32</sup> Coffin 2, which contained a named queen, appears to have been a primary burial; the dress ensemble was found intact on a relatively complete skeleton.<sup>33</sup> However, considering the evidence for secondary interment in Coffins 1 and 3 and the unusual placement of

<sup>22</sup> Hussein 2016, xviii–xix.

<sup>23</sup> Hussein 2016, xix. Tomb IV's objects may still be in the Mosul Museum (Hussein 2016, 44).

<sup>24</sup> Hussein and Suleiman (2000) associated objects with the wrong tombs, listed incorrect object numbers, and misplaced items on the plans (Hussein 2016, 39 n. 73, 47 n. 79, 61, 88, 90, 121).

<sup>25</sup> When no photograph is available, the type of object is written in its findspot.

<sup>26</sup> Hussein 2016, 6–7, pl. 11. None of the other tomb plans includes skeletons.

<sup>27</sup> E.g., Hussein (2016, 7) refers to a fibula found “on the right

ribs,” but no ribs are documented in the osteological report (Müller-Karpe et al. 2008, 142, fig. 17b).

<sup>28</sup> Because of the high cost of three-dimensional modeling, the model is not rendered in full detail at this time.

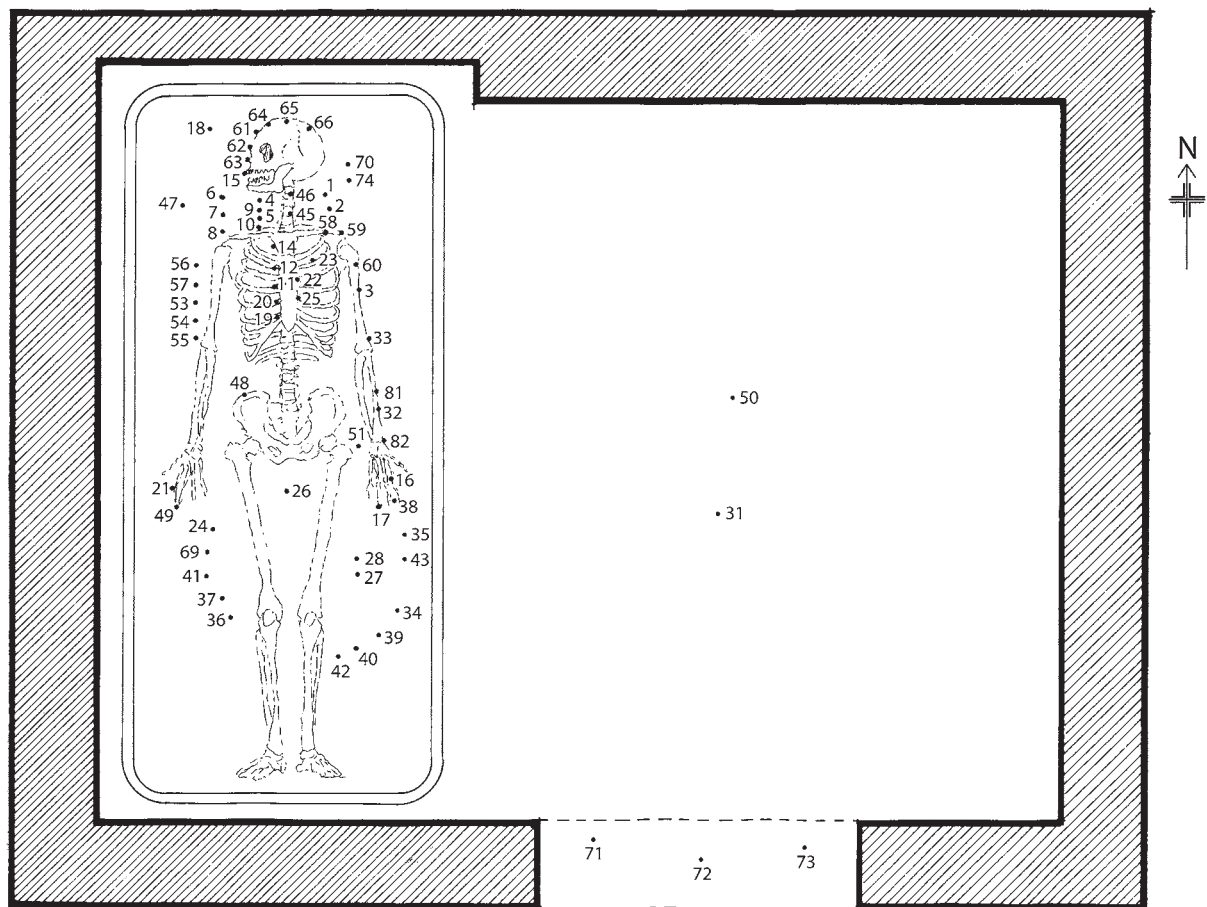
<sup>29</sup> Clark 2010, 63.

<sup>30</sup> Müller-Karpe et al. 2008, 143.

<sup>31</sup> Spurrier 2017.

<sup>32</sup> Müller-Karpe et al. 2008, 144, 146. Coffin 3 is excluded from this study because it is unknown which items belonged to which of the five men and women it contained (Hussein 2016, 38–41).

<sup>33</sup> Müller-Karpe et al. 2008, 146–47; Hussein 2016, 29, 32; Spurrier 2017.



- |                                |                                    |                               |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Beads                       | 26. Beads                          | 53. Alabaster vessel          |
| 2. Beads                       | 27. Anklet                         | 54. Alabaster vessel          |
| 3. Beads                       | 28. Beads                          | 55. Alabaster vessel          |
| 4. Beads                       | 31. Gold items                     | 56. Alabaster vessel          |
| 5. Beads                       | 32. Blue stone pendant             | 57. Alabaster vessel          |
| 6. Beads                       | 33. Stamp seal                     | 58. Alabaster vessel          |
| 7. Beads                       | 34. Rock crystal monkeys           | 59. Stone vessel              |
| 8. Beads                       | 35. Carnelian monkey amulet        | 60. Rock crystal bottle       |
| 9. Gold chain                  | 36. Rock crystal calf amulets (3)  | 61. Pottery vial              |
| 10. Beads                      | 37. Blue vase amulet               | 62. Faience bowl              |
| 11. Gold spheres               | 38. Carnelian lion amulet          | 63. Faience bowl with lid     |
| 12. Gold spheres               | 39. Stone amulet                   | 64. Faience bowl              |
| 14. Gold beads                 | 40. Rock crystal calf              | 65. Alabaster jar             |
| 15. Earring                    | 41. Rock crystal stamp seal        | 66. Alabaster jar             |
| 16. Gold ring                  | 42. Rock crystal barrel seal       | 69. Bronze mirror             |
| 17. Carnelian rings (4)        | 43. Stamp seal                     | 70. Silver bowl (under skull) |
| 18. Gold earrings (5)          | 45. Stone beads                    | 71. Pottery jar               |
| 19. Gold fibula                | 46. Faience and stone beads, seals | 72. Stone amphora             |
| 20. Earrings                   | 47. Erotic faience figurine        | 73. Stone amphora             |
| 21. Stamp seal                 | 48. Erotic faience figurine        | 74. Silver bottle             |
| 22. Stamp seal                 | 49. Erotic faience figurine        | 81. Tridacna shell            |
| 23. Stamp seal                 | 50. Large gold pomegranate bead    | 82. Alabaster jar             |
| 24. Lapis lazuli monkey amulet | 51. Pair of gold bracelets         |                               |
| 25. Stamp seal                 | 52. Number skipped                 |                               |

FIG. 6. Plan of Tomb I's burial chamber (after Hussein 2016, pl. 11; courtesy the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago).

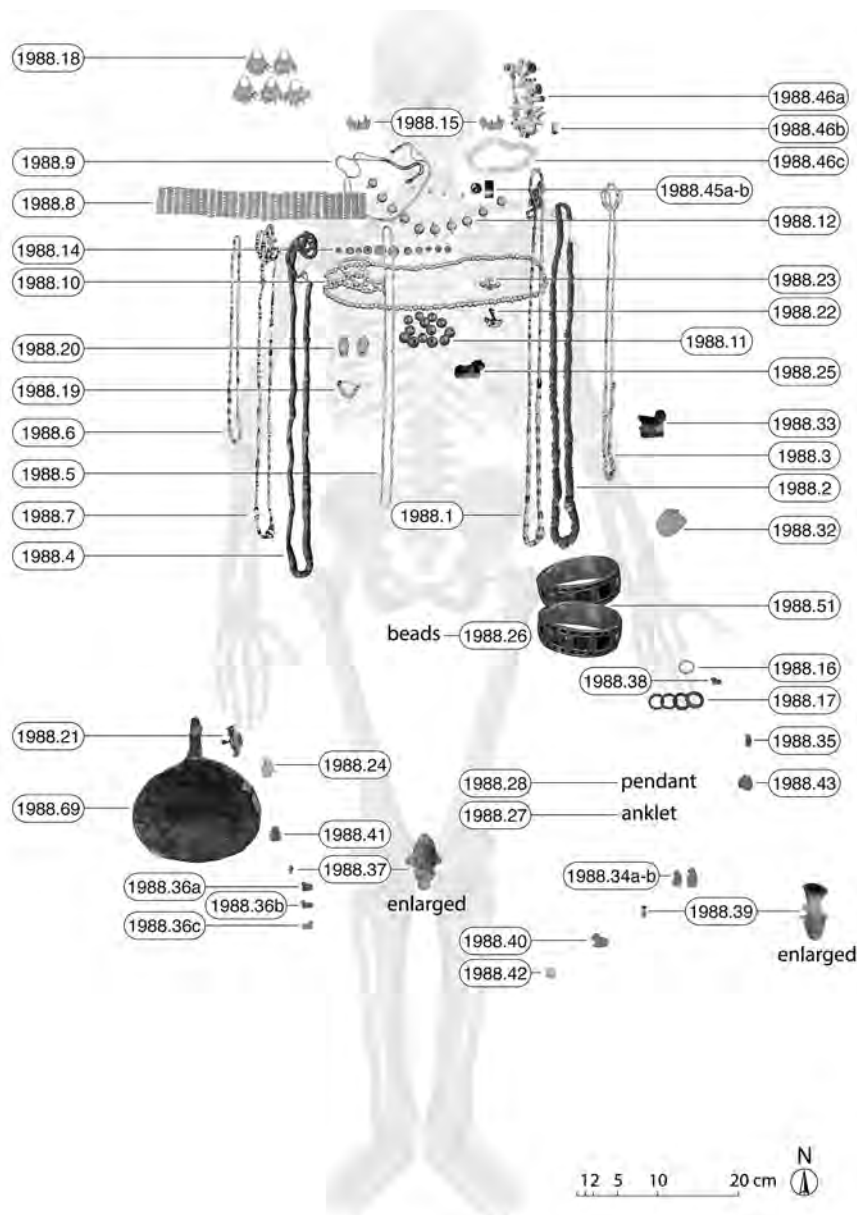


FIG. 7. Dress elements from Tomb I's sarcophagus, Northwest Palace, Nimrud (drawing by J. Pope; adapted from Hussein 2016, pl. 11). For a list of the elements, see the online appendix.

the coffins in the anteroom, the dressed body in Coffin 1 could have been transferred to the bronze coffin before it decomposed. With this in mind, we cannot assume that any of the objects in the Tomb III coffins represent complete, original burial assemblages. Finally, Tomb IV was heavily looted in antiquity. Some dress elements remained, but the skeleton was missing.<sup>34</sup> Given all of these disturbances, one might question

whether Tomb I, which oddly lacked a headdress, had been robbed as well.

Another challenge for interpreting the Queens' Tombs is the fact that no other Neo-Assyrian royal burials containing assemblages of mortuary dress or grave goods have been found. Tantalizingly, early 20th-century excavations unearthed a network of seven royal tombs beneath the Old Palace at Ashur.<sup>35</sup> Three

<sup>34</sup>Hussein 2016, 44.

<sup>35</sup>Haller 1954, 170–81; Postgate 2008, 177–78; Lundström

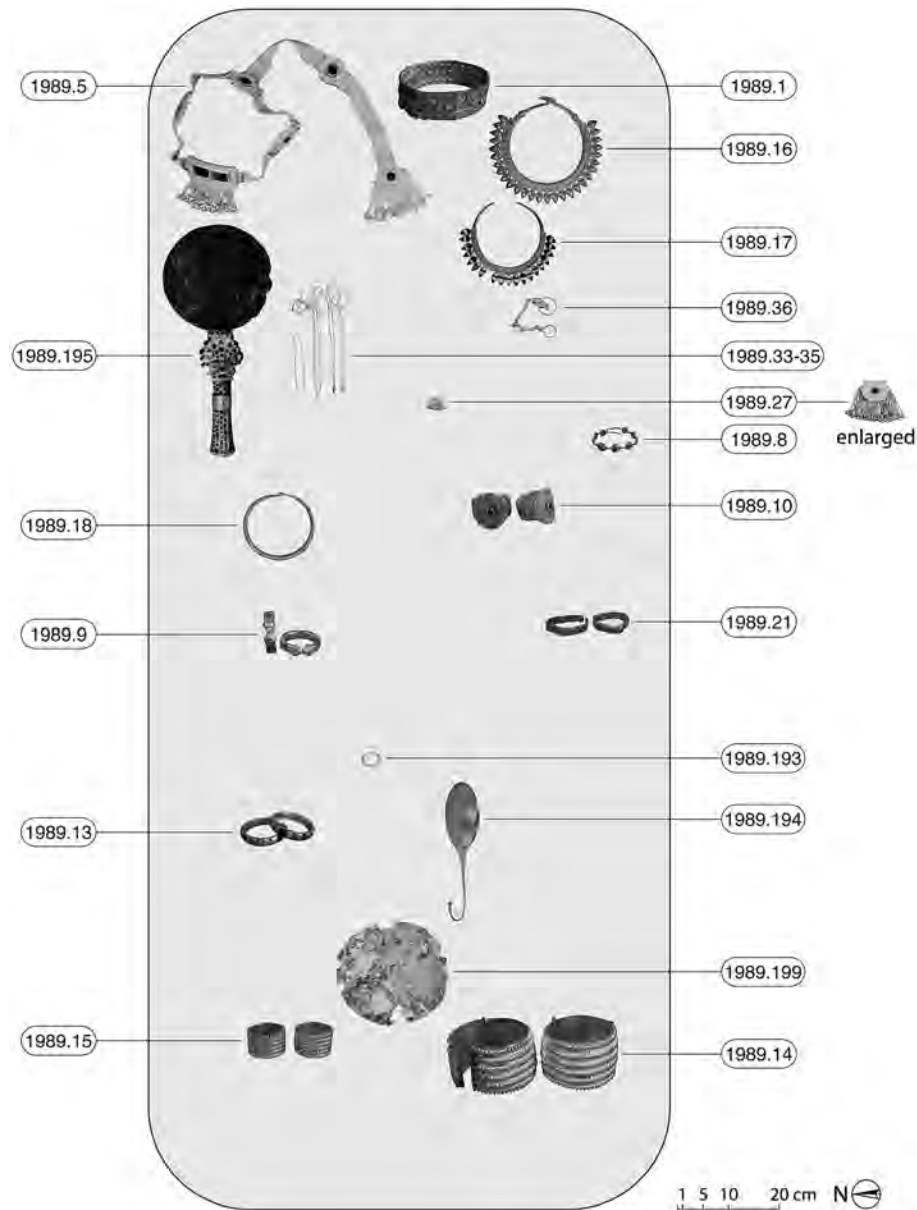


FIG. 8. Dress elements from Tomb II's sarcophagus, Northwest Palace, Nimrud (drawing by J. Pope; adapted from Hussein 2016, pl. 32). For a list of the elements, see the online appendix.

of the sarcophagi bore inscriptions declaring them to be the final resting places of Assyrian kings, including Ashurnasirpal (II, r. 883–859 B.C.E.) and Shamshi-Adad (V, r. 823–811 B.C.E), but the sarcophagi and

their chambers preserved no bodies and were almost completely empty.<sup>36</sup> Nonetheless, the tombs' vaulted architecture and location beneath the palace provide structural parallels for Nimrud's contemporary Queens' Tombs.

2009; Kertai 2015, 53–4. After Ashurnasirpal II (r. 883–859 B.C.E.) moved the court from Ashur to Nimrud, Ashur continued to be used for kings' burials at least through most of the ninth century B.C.E. The architecture above the Ashur tombs is not preserved, so it is not known how the crypts related to the palace.

<sup>36</sup> Grayson 1991, 109–10, 366–68; 1996, 197–98; Lundström 2009, 61–93, 104–32, 160–77, 185–204. The most notable find was a fragment of a stone falcon head (Haller 1954, 173, pl. 41a–c).

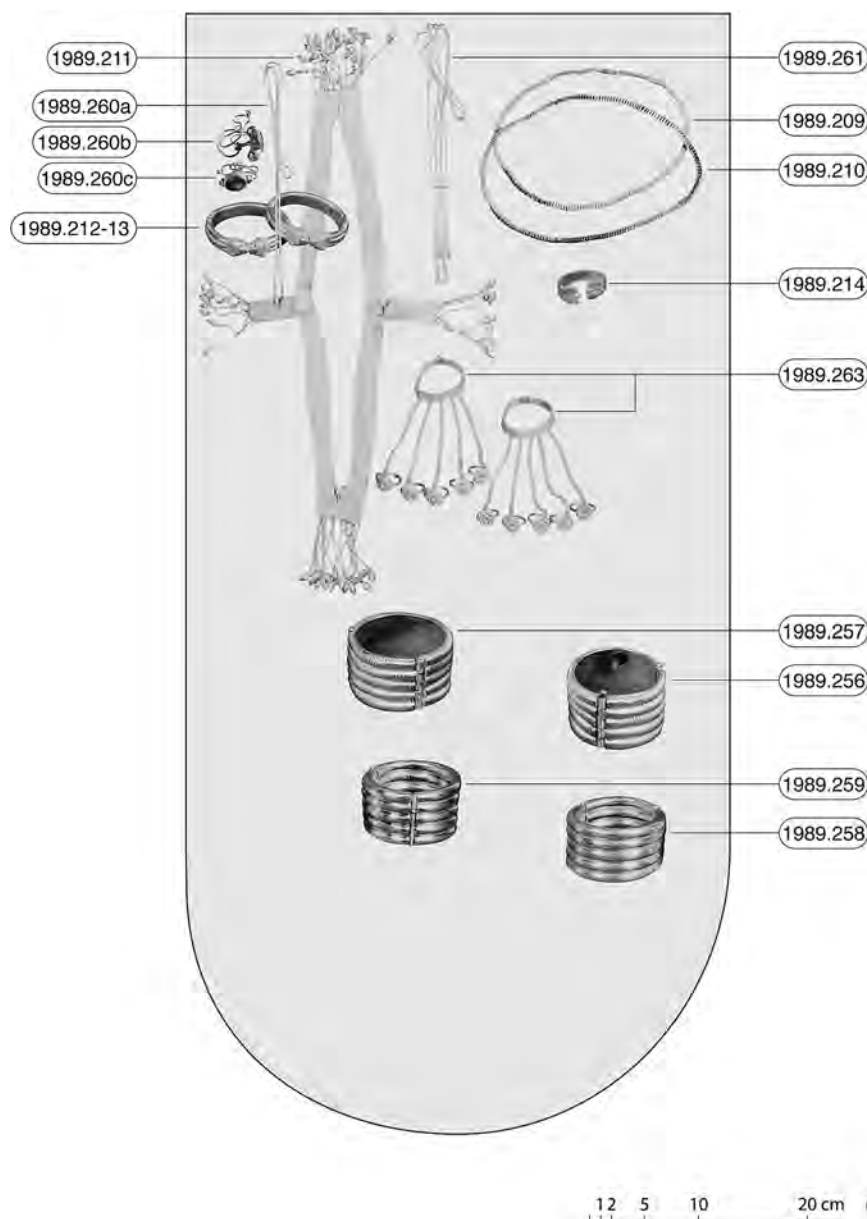


FIG. 9. Dress elements from Coffin 1, Tomb III, Northwest Palace, Nimrud (drawing by J. Pope; adapted from Hussein 2016, pl. 102). For a list of the elements, see the online appendix.

Less elite burials, probably belonging to lower-ranking royals and/or nonroyal persons, demonstrate the social and geographic dissemination of mortuary traditions seen in the Queens' Tombs. For example, communal crypts housing men, women, and sometimes children at the capitals of Ashur and Nimrud (i.e., the Vaulted Complex), the suburban site of Humaidat, and the provincial royal city of Til Barsip in Syria also employed vaulted architecture, and the burials of adults and children in pits, pots, and coffins sunk beneath residential floors at Ashur and Nimrud confirm that it

was customary to inter beneath the home.<sup>37</sup> In terms of grave goods, the burials contained copper and bronze vessels, bronze and silver earrings, rings, and fibulas, as well as stone and frit beads, seals, and scarabs.<sup>38</sup> These

<sup>37</sup> Haller 1954, 12–15, 20–1, 23–5, 28–9, 41, 55–7, 64–8, 74–9, 86–93, 95–100, 149, 152–53, 159–66; Mallowan 1966, 190–91; Ibrahim and Agha 1983; Bunnens 1997, 23–4; Hussein 2016, 47–50.

<sup>38</sup> For examples of sartorial artifacts, see Haller 1954, 68, 92, 161, pls. 17e, 19g, 38c, d.

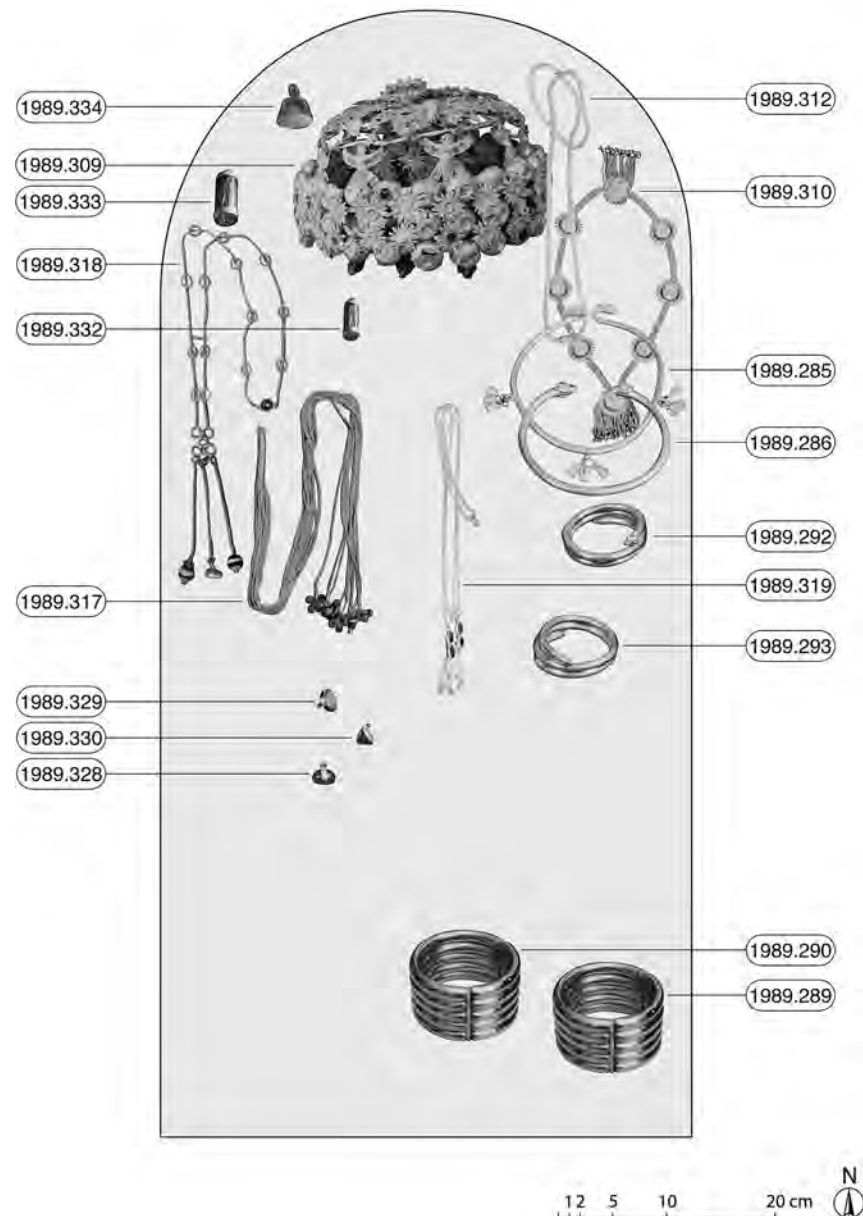


FIG. 10. Dress elements from Coffin 2, Tomb III, Northwest Palace, Nimrud (drawing by J. Pope; adapted from Hussein 2016, pl. 128). For a list of the elements, see the online appendix.

mortuary assemblages indicate a practice of providing corpses with items that both imparted and reflected wealth, rank, and/or privilege. The Queens' Tombs epitomize this custom through a similar assortment of objects, plus others, occurring in greater quantities and more precious materials. Although across the Neo-Assyrian sites considered here men and women were typically buried together, the separate entombment of kings and queens presents what was probably an ideologically motivated exception to this practice. Kings may have been buried beneath Ashur's Old

Palace because it was viewed as their dynastic home, where they could lie forever among their ancestors, affirming the unbroken royal line.<sup>39</sup> Meanwhile, it may have been considered important, even in death, that queens remained physically on-site, at their residence, as representatives of the imperial household.

<sup>39</sup> Grayson 1991, 368; 1996, 197–98; Postgate 2008, 178; Spurrier 2017, 174.

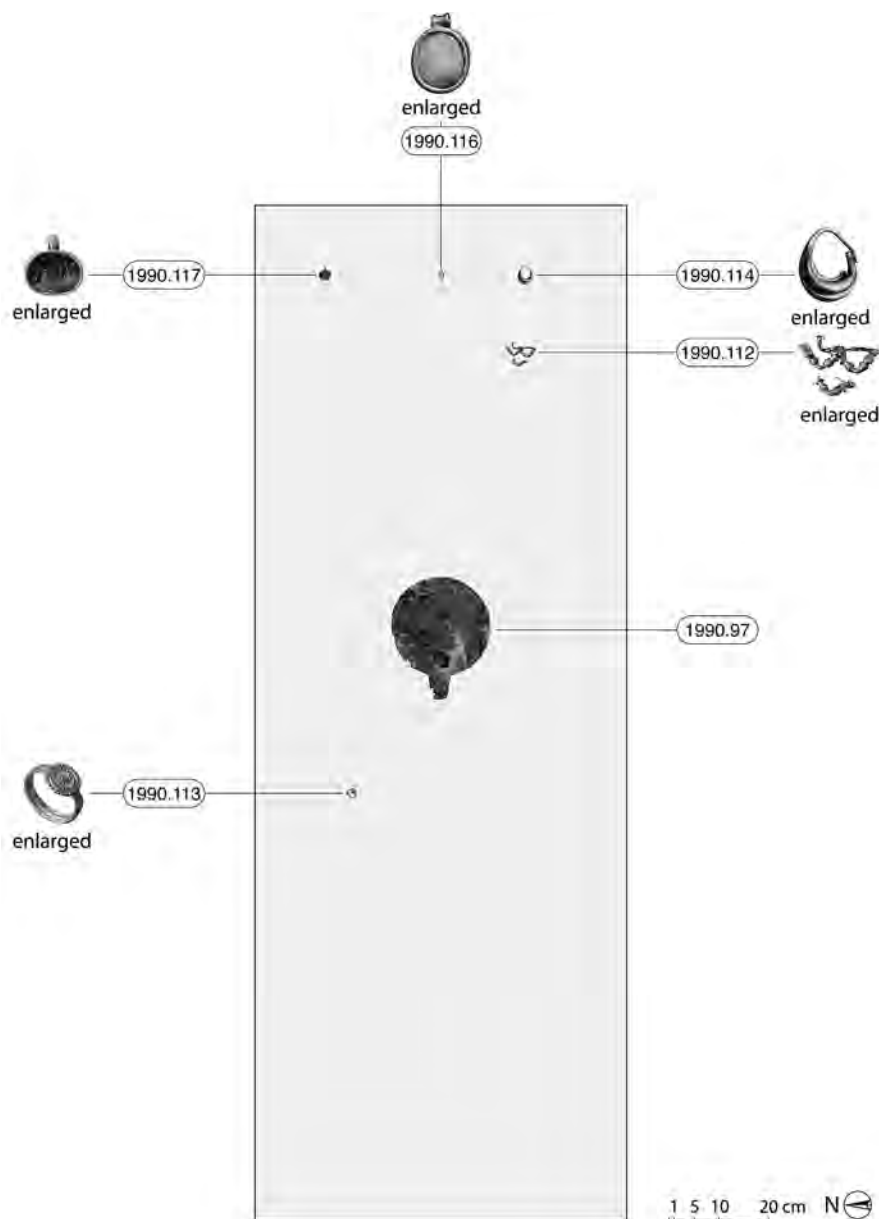


FIG. 11. Dress elements from Tomb IV's sarcophagus, Northwest Palace, Nimrud (drawing by J. Pope; adapted from Hussein 2016, pl. 176). For a list of the elements, see the online appendix.

Finally, we turn to the issue of the identity of the ornately adorned and sumptuously provisioned women buried in the so-called Queens' Tombs. Neo-Assyrian texts refer to goddesses and foreign female rulers with the Akkadian word *šarratu*, which literally means "female king."<sup>40</sup> However, this title was never used for Neo-Assyrian royal women, who did not act as primary

sovereigns. Top-ranked Assyrian women were instead identified in Akkadian as the *sēgallu* of particular kings. Literally meaning "woman of the palace," *sēgallu* is conventionally translated as "queen."<sup>41</sup> Based on this translation, I define Neo-Assyrian queenship as a position with official responsibilities held by the *sēgallu*,

<sup>40</sup> Svärd 2015, 39.

<sup>41</sup> Parpola 1988; Melville 2004, 43–52; Kertai 2013, 109; Svärd 2015, 39.

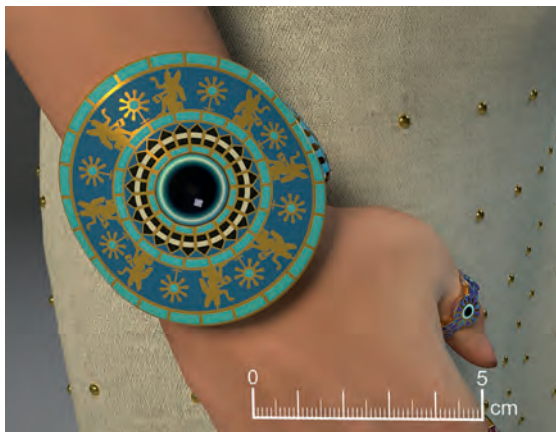


FIG. 12. Three-dimensional model of Neo-Assyrian queenly dress from Tombs I and II, Northwest Palace, Nimrud, illustrated to scale on a 155 cm tall figure (© Learning Sites, Inc., 2017). Figure and dress elements are schematized and adapted from data and photographs in Hussein 2016. The detail at bottom left shows gold hemispherical garment ornaments and a schematized bracelet and finger ring, both of gold, agate, and turquoise, and/or blue paste. Diam. of garment ornaments up to 0.5 cm; diam. of inlaid bracelet roundel ca. 6 cm; diam. of inlaid ring roundel ca. 1 cm. ND 1989.10, 1989.44, 1989.118; Baghdad, Iraq Museum, inv. nos. 105702/3, 105853, 105985. For a list of the elements represented here, see the online appendix.

who was typically, but not always, the king's spouse and the mother of at least some of his children. When a ruler predeceased a *sēgallu*, she could remain in her position during the subsequent reign, or she could retain her title, while another woman, also titled *sēgallu*, took over her official duties.<sup>42</sup> In this situation, multiple women could hold the title of *sēgallu*, but only one queen at a time fulfilled the obligations of the office as the ceremonial partner of the king.

<sup>42</sup> Dalley 2008, 174–75; Kertai 2013; Svärd 2015, 40–9.

The two women in Tomb II's sarcophagus and the woman from Tomb III's Coffin 2 were most certainly *sēgallu*. Inscriptions found in their tombs provide the personal name of a *sēgallu* and state that the tomb itself or an object associated with the body belonged to her.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, taking into account their osteologically assessed ages (ca. 20–40 years old), the dates of their kings' reigns (which likely extended beyond the women's lifespans), and historical circumstances (such as

<sup>43</sup> Al-Rawi 2008, 119–25, 136–38; Spurrier 2017.

Sargon II's relocation of the capital to Khorsabad), all three women were probably actively serving in the role of *sēgallu*—holding the office of ceremonial partner to the king—when they died.<sup>44</sup> There are not enough data to determine whether the women buried in Tomb I, Tomb III's Coffin 1, and Tomb IV were queens, too, but, given their burials beneath the palace in the manner of the named queens, I leave the possibility of their queenship open. Their dress assemblages were also similar to those of the named queens. For this reason, I refer to the dress of both the named queens and the unidentified women as “queenly,” meaning “belonging to or resembling a queen.”

#### THE TOMBS AND THEIR DRESS ASSEMBLAGES

Shafts in the floors of separate rooms provided access to the queens' vaulted mudbrick tombs (see fig. 1). Each shaft gave way to stairs that led to an ante-room, which was blocked off from the chamber that held the sarcophagus. The primary function of the tombs was to shelter the dead, but the tombs also served as social and ritual sites, beginning with the event of the funeral. Evincing ritual activity, niches in the walls variously held lamps, vessels, and cuneiform tablets naming the dead and threatening intruders.<sup>45</sup>

A Neo-Assyrian letter documents that the daughter and daughter-in-law of a deceased queen helped wash, anoint, and dress her corpse in preparation for the funeral.<sup>46</sup> The funeral lasted multiple days, during which mourners bewailed the dead, and torches, offerings, and/or incense were burned.<sup>47</sup> It is not known when the body was moved to the tomb, but a display ceremony, possibly including an exhibition of the corpse, may have been held in the burial chamber.<sup>48</sup> The remains of what appears to have been a banquet in Tomb II suggest that a funerary meal may have been shared inside the burial chamber, which was the last site of ritual interaction between the living and the physical

body of the dead.<sup>49</sup> After the funeral, the sealed chamber provided an eternal dwelling in which the deceased could sleep. Physical impediments, including massive sarcophagi and heavy stone doors, as well as supernatural barriers, such as curse inscriptions and apotropaic devices, were intended to protect the dead and their belongings.<sup>50</sup>

Tombs were also portals to the netherworld. While a body lay in the tomb, its ghost (*etemmu* in Akkadian) set out on the dangerous journey to eternity.<sup>51</sup> Upon arrival, the ghost had to cross seven thresholds with the consent of a gatekeeper and be screened by a panel of judges. In the myth of Ishtar's descent, the goddess must forfeit her dress elements as she proceeds through the gates.<sup>52</sup> Perhaps the women buried in the Queens' Tombs were supplied with extra adornment to pay their tolls and appease the judges and netherworld deities.<sup>53</sup> The intact burials included far more jewelry than could have been worn at once; earrings, in particular, occurred in extremely high quantities: more than 300 were documented in Tomb II's sarcophagus and Tomb III's Coffin 1 (see, e.g., online fig. 3). Because these mass deposits included groups (sometimes totaling an odd number) of the same types of earrings, it is questionable whether they included specific pairs and whether they were the deceased's personal property. Nonetheless, these high-quantity jewelry deposits could have equipped a ghost for countless gift-giving transactions.

Texts suggest that objects reflecting a person's social status in life were understood to earn the dead an equivalent place in the afterlife.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, the physical elements of a deceased's dress ensemble may have had their own ghosts, as it were, that were believed to adorn a person's specter and eternally assert his or her status. Textually attested anxieties about tomb robbing suggest that a ghost's netherworld rank may only have been sustained as long as the physical objects in the tomb remained undisturbed—were an item stolen from the tomb, its netherworld version may

<sup>44</sup> Müller-Karpe et al. 2008, 143–44; Svärd 2015, 48, table 2.

<sup>45</sup> Scurlock 1995, 1884; Winter 1999b; Hussein 2016, xviii, 5, 12–14, 23–4, 27–8, 43, 45, pls. 9, 26b, 27–30, 33, 34a, 83, 95a, 98, 180.

<sup>46</sup> Scurlock 1995, 1884; Parpola 2007a, xxvi, 191; Svärd 2015, 45.

<sup>47</sup> Scurlock 1995, 1884–86; Parpola 2007a, xxvi, 190–91; Postgate 2008, 179.

<sup>48</sup> McGinnis 1987, 4, 9–10; Scurlock 1991; Parpola 2007a, xxvi, 6–7, 191, 271; 2007b, 5, 229–30, texts 4, 280; Postgate 2008, 179.

<sup>49</sup> Hussein 2016, 13, pl. 33.

<sup>50</sup> Al-Rawi 2008, 119–25.

<sup>51</sup> Abusch 1995; Scurlock 1995, 2016.

<sup>52</sup> Foster 2005, 498–505.

<sup>53</sup> Scurlock 1995, 1884; Barrett 2007; Postgate 2008, 179; Scurlock 2016, 78.

<sup>54</sup> Scurlock 1995, 1887–88, 1892; Barrett 2007, 54; Scurlock 2013, 151–52; 2016, 78, 80.

have vanished as well.<sup>55</sup> In the manner of the goddess Ishtar, who was dispossessed of her queenly identity and power when she was forced to forfeit her regalia in the netherworld, the robbery of a crown from a queen's tomb may have resulted in her ghost losing her crown and, in turn, her royal privileges.<sup>56</sup>

The dead (and their ghosts) required not only permanent peace and protection but also nourishment from the living. The tomb antechambers, and possibly the rooms above the crypts, were therefore sites at which the living provided hungry and thirsty ghosts with food and drink.<sup>57</sup> Brick boxes, probably used for offerings, were found near the tomb discovered by Mallowan, and a vertical pipe running through the floor to the top of Tomb II's vault probably conveyed libations.<sup>58</sup> In addition, the living may have entered the antechambers through the floor shafts to make offerings and perform rituals in close proximity to the dead. Her specter might even have been understood to sit in the antechamber or the room above the tomb during regularly held commemorative banquets (called *kispum* in Akkadian).<sup>59</sup> Whether as a corpse at the funeral, a denizen of the netherworld, or possibly a ghost among the living, the women buried in the Queens' Tombs were eternally dressed for engagement with the living (including us), the dead, and the divine.

### Tomb I

Tomb I dates to the ninth or eighth century B.C.E.<sup>60</sup> Its rectangular terracotta sarcophagus contained an unnamed 50- to 55-year-old woman (for the finds discussed in this section, see figs. 6, 7).<sup>61</sup> Near the head lay frit beads in the form of flies and crescent earrings

related to the types depicted on royal men and women in art (1988.15, 1988.18, 1988.46c).<sup>62</sup> Gold pomegranate-shaped pendants and gold, carnelian, agate, quartz, and faience beads covered the neck, sternum, and shoulders (1988.1–1988.7, 1988.12, 1988.14).<sup>63</sup> Found near the right shoulder, a collection of gold strips may be the remnants of a choker (1988.8).<sup>64</sup> Excavators also discovered a pair of gold bangles inlaid with colorful stones near the left wrist and rings of gold and carnelian on the fingers (1988.16, 1988.17, 1988.51).<sup>65</sup> A gold-mounted carnelian seal rested atop the woman's right hand (1988.21).<sup>66</sup> Similar to the chalcedony stamp uncovered by Mallowan, Tomb I's seal may originally have been connected by a chain to a fibula (1988.9, 1988.19).<sup>67</sup> More seals lay on and around the body, but it is unclear whether they would have been worn (1988.22, 1988.23, 1988.25, 1988.33, 1988.42, 1988.43, 1988.46a, b).<sup>68</sup>

The deposition of objects in the sarcophagus suggests that the deceased wore earrings, beads, bracelets, and finger rings. Her garment could have been pinned with a fibula from which the seal may have dangled (1988.9, 1988.19, 1988.21; see fig. 12, top left). A corroded bronze mirror also lay within reach (1988.69).<sup>69</sup> Although this burial is unquestionably elite, it does not contain as many precious artifacts as Tomb II and Coffins 1 and 2 of Tomb III. Furthermore, unlike in the other burials, there is no headgear, and there may not be anklets.<sup>70</sup> The dress assemblage could indicate the woman's lower rank in the court or that she had outlived the king and was no longer carrying out the responsibilities of the queen when she died. Another possibility is that her ensemble represented an earlier (possibly ninth-century B.C.E.) tradition of queenly burial dress than was practiced during the eighth-century B.C.E.

<sup>55</sup> Al-Rawi 2008, 119–25.

<sup>56</sup> Foster 2005, 498–505; Benzel 2015, 93.

<sup>57</sup> Scurlock 2016, 78. The functions of the rooms atop the tombs are unknown (Kertai 2015, 46).

<sup>58</sup> Mallowan 1966, 114; Postgate 2008, 180; Hussein 2016, 12, pl. 25.

<sup>59</sup> Tsukimoto 1985, 2010; Postgate 2008, 180.

<sup>60</sup> Hussein 2016, 5, 12, 27–8, pls. 29, 97.

<sup>61</sup> Hussein and Suleiman (2000, 97) published an erroneous interpretation of the Tomb I's skeleton as male (Hussein 2016, 6). Schultz and Kunter (1998, 88, 90; see also Müller-Karpe et al. 2008, 141), however, determined the body to be female on the basis of its gracile bones and characteristics of the skull. Some previous publications have noted a female burial in the antechamber, but her coffin was actually found outside the tomb (Oates and Oates 2001, 80–1; Müller-Karpe et al. 2008, 143; Hussein 2016, xviii n. 3, 5, pl. 7; Spurrier 2017, 151).

<sup>62</sup> Hussein 2016, 7–8, pls. 14c, 16.

<sup>63</sup> Hussein 2016, xix, 8, 60, pls. 17a, 18.

<sup>64</sup> Hussein 2016, 8, pl. 19a.

<sup>65</sup> Hussein 2016, 7, pl. 15c–e. Hussein (2016, 7) corrects previous statements that a bracelet was found by each arm (Damerji 1999, 6; Hussein and Suleiman 2000, 97).

<sup>66</sup> Hussein 2016, 6, pl. 13a. Al-Gailani Werr (2008, 160, fig. 19s) erroneously associates this seal with Tomb III.

<sup>67</sup> Hussein and Suleiman 2000, 213, fig. 12; Hussein 2016, 7, pl. 15a, b.

<sup>68</sup> Hussein 2016, 7.

<sup>69</sup> Hussein 2016, 9, pl. 22b.

<sup>70</sup> An unillustrated “anklet” (1988.27) was found by the left thigh (Hussein 2016, 9, 62, pl. 11).

era of the named queens. The tomb could have been partially robbed as well.

I would also like to consider two groupings of small, carved stones and seals. Flanking the legs were several miniature sculptures, many of which portray monkeys and cows (1988.24, 1988.34–1988.40).<sup>71</sup> Some of the miniatures have holes for suspension and sealing surfaces, but, given their distribution along the sides of the lower body, it is unclear whether they would have been worn. Similarly, a collection of faience seals and pendants lay near the neck (1988.46a).<sup>72</sup> Some of the pendants portray Pazuzu heads and winged female figures that probably represent the demon Lamashtu. Pazuzu is a mythological being who fought Lamashtu's threats to pregnancy and newborns.<sup>73</sup> Whether or not these sculpted animals and supernatural entities were worn in the context of burial, they might have been invested with amuletic or apotropaic qualities and/or had a ritual role that was advantageous to the deceased. Additionally, the seals among these two groups of objects may have communicated identity and authority, while, occurring in association with potentially supernatural devices, they may also have personalized and/or otherwise enhanced any ritual activity enacted on the dead.<sup>74</sup>

### *Tomb II*

Tomb II's rectangular, stone sarcophagus held two women who died about a generation apart (for the finds discussed in this section, see fig. 8).<sup>75</sup> One was laid atop the other. The top body was associated with a gold bowl, a rock-crystal jar, and an electrum mirror (1989.194).<sup>76</sup> All three objects were inscribed "Belonging to Ataliyā, queen of Sargon" (II, r. 721–705 B.C.E.).<sup>77</sup> A marble tablet placed in a wall niche and two more gold bowls (one of which was found in the sarcophagus) seemingly named the other occupant "Yabā, queen of Tiglath-Pileser" (III, r. 744–727 B.C.E.).<sup>78</sup>

However, the identification of the second body is complicated by another gold bowl and an electrum cosmetics container, which were also found in the sarcophagus. They were inscribed "Banītu, queen of Shalmaneser" (V, r. 726–722 B.C.E.).<sup>79</sup> Although the inscriptions were written in Akkadian, both "Ataliyā" and "Yabā" may be West Semitic names.<sup>80</sup> "Banītu," meaning well-formed or beautiful, is an Akkadian translation of "Yabā."<sup>81</sup> Yabā and Banītu could, then, have been the same person.<sup>82</sup> Perhaps Yabā continued to serve as queen using the name Banītu during the reign of Tiglath-Pileser III's son and successor, Shalmaneser V.<sup>83</sup>

West Semitic names were popularly given to Assyrian girls, but they could certainly also signify foreign birth.<sup>84</sup> International marriages had a long history by the Neo-Assyrian period, when several texts document that the wives, daughters, and female courtiers of foreign kings were sent to the Assyrian court to be married or remarried to Assyrians.<sup>85</sup> If the women in Tomb II were foreign, some of the wealth filling their sarcophagus, such as the Levantine gold dish bearing Nilotic imagery and Yabā's name, could have been dowry items or imports from their home courts.<sup>86</sup> All Assyrian queens, however, could have received foreign items as audience gifts and portions of state tribute.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>79</sup> Al-Rawi 2008, 137–38; Hussein 2016, 15, pl. 40b, c.

<sup>80</sup> Dalley 1998, 94–5; 2004, 395–96; 2008, 171; Postgate 2008, 178; Frahm 2014, 184–89.

<sup>81</sup> Winter 1995, 2573.

<sup>82</sup> Svärd (2015, 40–1) summarizes the scholarly debate over the identities of the bodies.

<sup>83</sup> Dalley 1998, 84–9; 2004; Frahm 2014, 190 n. 119; Svärd 2015, 48, table 2. A later parallel is found in the name of a woman who served as both queen and queen mother during the seventh-century B.C.E. She was called Naqia, a West Semitic name meaning "pure," but she was also known by "Zakutu," the Akkadian translation of Naqia (Melville 1999, 13–16, 43; 2004, 56; Macgregor 2012, 97–8, 106).

<sup>84</sup> Melville 2004, 47; Dalley 2008, 171; Postgate 2008, 178; Frahm 2014, 182–88.

<sup>85</sup> Moran 1992, 1–10, letter nos. 1–4; Meier 2000. Texts mention the dowries of foreign women entering the Neo-Assyrian court and thereby confirm that the women became Assyrian wives, though not necessarily the king's (Dalley 1998, 83–4; Novotny 2001; Svärd 2015, 88, 127–30). It is unknown how many wives Neo-Assyrian rulers had, how the women were ranked, and where they lived (Melville 2004, 39–42, 48, 52; Kertai 2014, 193, 196–99; Svärd 2015, 99, 122, 128).

<sup>86</sup> Dalley 2008, 172; Wicke 2010; Hussein and Benzel 2014, 126; Hussein 2016, 15, pl. 39.

<sup>87</sup> Parpola 1987, 35–6, text 34, lines 14–16; reverse, lines 8–9.

<sup>71</sup> Hussein 2016, 8, pl. 19b–o.

<sup>72</sup> Hussein 2016, 7, pl. 14a, b.

<sup>73</sup> Curtis 1994; Wiggerman 2000, 228, 243–45. Fertility may have been honored and protected even after a woman's child-bearing years (Gansell 2013a, 409–10).

<sup>74</sup> Simkó 2015.

<sup>75</sup> Müller-Karpe et al. 2008, 143; Hussein 2016, 12. DNA analysis failed to verify whether these women were kin (Müller-Karpe et al. 2008, 148; Frahm 2014, 188–89 n. 113).

<sup>76</sup> Hussein 2016, 14, 16, pls. 40d, 42a, 43c.

<sup>77</sup> Al-Rawi 2008, 137–38; Feldman 2014, 116–19.

<sup>78</sup> Al-Rawi 2008, 119–24, 136–38; Hussein 2016, 12, 15, pls. 28, 35e, 39, 40a.

Whatever their heritage, the queens buried in Tomb II were richly provisioned. Hundreds of earrings, over a dozen gold collars and torques, numerous necklaces, at least 14 bracelets, 30 finger rings, and thousands of beads filled the sarcophagus (see online figs. 3–6).<sup>88</sup> In addition to the inscribed mirror, the sarcophagus also held a bronze mirror with an intricately inlaid ivory handle and a fragmentary bronze mirror that is missing its handle (1989.195, 1989.199; online fig. 7).<sup>89</sup> Two gold headdresses lay at one end of the sarcophagus, and two pairs of gold anklets were found at the opposite end (1989.1, 1989.5, 1989.14, 1989.15; see fig. 2, top left, top right; online figs. 1, 8).<sup>90</sup> One headdress was a three-tiered circlet of gold rosettes. The other was a diadem woven from gold wire. It consisted of a headband with a streamer that would have hung over the back of the head and spine. On the headband, a rectangular frame inlaid with lapis lazuli plaques would have been centered above the forehead. A pomegranate-tipped fringe on the bottom of the forehead ornament would have fallen across the brow. Agate inlays were placed around the rest of the headband and down the dorsal streamer, which ends in a terminal fringed with pendant pomegranates. The sarcophagus also held what appear to be stray forehead plaques and dorsal terminals that may derive from additional, now-disintegrated cloth or leather bands (e.g., 1989.27; online fig. 9).<sup>91</sup>

Some remnants of fabric with vestiges of embroidery and a few tassels survived in the tombs.<sup>92</sup> The textiles were not well enough preserved to determine what they would originally have constituted, but they may be the remains of dresses, shawls, sheets, and/or shrouds (see, e.g., the array of textiles depicted in the Banquet Scene relief, fig. 3).<sup>93</sup> Atop the bodies in Tomb II lay a mass of folded cloth enveloping loose carnelian beads

and gold appliqués that probably once decorated the fabric.<sup>94</sup> In total, Tomb II's sarcophagus held more than 2,000 gold appliqués measuring up to 0.5 cm wide and featuring perforations or loops on their backs for attachment (online fig. 10). The ornaments include large groups of practically identical studs, rosettes, knobby triangles, and encircled stars or "spoked wheels," as well as more than 40 gold strips that were about 0.5 cm wide and up to 15 cm long.<sup>95</sup> Drawing on a quantitative study of rosettes depicted on the surface of the king's garment in Neo-Assyrian art, Gaspa has projected that it would have taken more than 800 appliqués to cover a garment.<sup>96</sup> According to this calculation, Tomb II's sarcophagus contained enough ornaments, which may have been interspersed with beads and embroidery, to decorate the surface of two garments.<sup>97</sup> Wearing clothing embellished with tiny, polished stones and three-dimensional gold appliqués and studs that would have reflected light at myriad angles, the wearer would have sparkled like a cult statue or even a goddess.<sup>98</sup>

### *Tomb III*

The inscribed lid of the rectangular, stone sarcophagus in Tomb III's burial chamber reveals that it belonged to Mullissu-mukanishat-Ninua, queen of Ashurnasirpal (II, r. 883–859 B.C.E.) and of Shalmaneser (III, r. 858–824 B.C.E.).<sup>99</sup> Her ninth-century B.C.E. interment was robbed, but three bronze coffins in the antechamber preserved eighth-century B.C.E. burials.<sup>100</sup> Together, Coffins 1, 2, and 3 provided resting places for 12 or more individuals. The wealth of dress elements accompanying the women in Coffins 1 and

<sup>94</sup> Hussein 2016, 13–14, pl. 36. On Neo-Assyrian patterned textiles, see Guralnick 2004.

<sup>95</sup> Gaspa 2014; Hussein 2016, 21–2, pls. 77–80.

<sup>96</sup> Gaspa 2014, 239.

<sup>97</sup> We do not know how many pieces and meters of fabric could have constituted the queens' robes. Especially if garments were wrapped and draped, they may have consumed larger amounts of fabric than the area for which Gaspa accounted.

<sup>98</sup> Neumann 2017.

<sup>99</sup> Mullissu-mukanishat-Ninua may or may not have been Shalmaneser III's mother (Al-Rawi 2008, 122, 124; Svärd 2015, 40, 48).

<sup>100</sup> Curtis (2008) dates the coffins, which are square at one end and rounded at the other, to the eighth century B.C.E. Individual adult bodies could have been deposited in flexed positions in these 1.25–1.50 m long bronze coffins, but the coffins are too small to have fit multiple intact adult corpses (Müller-Karpe et al. 2008, 146). Thus, we can conclude that these burials represent secondary interments.

<sup>88</sup> Hussein 2016, 13–24. Hussein (2016, 17 n. 39, 75) describes "torques" as rigid hoops and "collars" as flexible, fairly wide ornaments worn close to the neck. I refer to some of Hussein's "collars" (e.g., 1989.16, 1989.17) as torques, when the pendants are attached to a rigid hoop rather than strung (Hussein 2016, 75). A lack of rigidity also differentiates "torques" from "necklaces," which are longer than "collars." Pendants distinguish a "necklace" from a "string of beads."

<sup>89</sup> Hussein 2016, 16, pl. 43.

<sup>90</sup> Collon 2008, 105–8; Hussein 2016, 14, 21, pls. 37a, b, 76.

<sup>91</sup> Collon 2008, 107–8; Hussein 2016, 15, 19–20, 80, pls. 38, 70.

<sup>92</sup> Toray Industries 1996, pl. 3; Crowfoot et al. 2008, 149–51.

<sup>93</sup> A "shroud" (Akkadian *tapšu*) might be mentioned on Tomb III's funerary tablet (Al-Rawi 2008, 124), but Reiner et al. (CAD, T, 193–94) question this reading.

2 attests to their status. Coffin 1's primary occupant is unidentified but of undoubtedly royal rank. An inscribed seal (1989.334; see figs. 10, 13, 14) designates the woman in Coffin 2 as "Ḥamâ, queen of Shalmaneser" (IV, r. 782–773 B.C.E.).<sup>101</sup>

*Tomb III, Coffin 1.* Along with an unidentified woman in her 20s, Coffin 1 held the remains of three children, an infant, and a fetus. It also contained a tremendous amount of mostly gold jewelry, including 365 earrings, more than 40 bracelets, pendants, necklaces, chains, thousands of beads, two pairs of anklets, 18 rings, and two mounted seals (for the finds discussed in this section, see fig. 9).<sup>102</sup> Most of this jewelry was adult-sized, suggesting that the woman was the coffin's principal occupant and that adults were more extravagantly dressed. However, several bracelets and a pair of wristbands with attached finger rings had juvenile diameters (e.g., 1989.214, 1989.263).<sup>103</sup> A unique element woven of gold wire with "small holes at the inner and outer edges of the bands" was probably sewn onto the woman's garment and worn with the short tessellated bands over the shoulders (1989.211).<sup>104</sup> Two simple gold circlets that could have encircled her head rested near the skull (1989.209–10).<sup>105</sup> Although their locations in the coffin are undocumented, three fringed components that resemble the terminal on Tomb II's diadem with a dorsal streamer may be the remnants of similar headgear (see fig. 2, top right).<sup>106</sup> Overall, the traditional royal Assyrian materials, design, and iconography of the jewelry, the sheer quantity of riches, and the content and configuration of the adult dress ensemble imply royal status. Furthermore, the woman's agency in the court, and perhaps as a queen, is attested by two mounted stamp seals attached to gold chains that could have been worn as devices of courtly responsibility (1989.260b, c).<sup>107</sup>

*Tomb III, Coffin 2.* A gold stamp seal identified the occupant of Tomb III's Coffin 2 as "Ḥamâ, queen of Shalmaneser" (IV, r. 782–773 B.C.E.) (1989.334; for the finds discussed in this section, see fig. 10; for



FIG. 13. Gold stamp seal with Akkadian inscription reading "Belonging to Ḥamâ, queen of Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, daughter-in-law of Adad-nirari" (Al-Rawi 2008, 136), ht. 4 cm, diam. 3.2 cm, Coffin 2, Tomb III, Northwest Palace, Nimrud. ND 1989.334; Baghdad, Iraq Museum, inv. no. 115644 (N.L. Feeney, 318th Public Affairs Operation Center [PAOC], U.S. Army, Baghdad 2003).



FIG. 14. Intaglio of gold stamp seal belonging to Queen Ḥamâ. The queen is portrayed with raised hands facing an enthroned goddess, behind whom is the motif of a scorpion. A guilloché band encircles the scene. Diam. of sealing surface 3.2 cm, Coffin 2, Tomb III, Northwest Palace, Nimrud. ND 1989.334; Baghdad, Iraq Museum, inv. no. 115644. (N.L. Feeney, 318th Public Affairs Operation Center [PAOC], U.S. Army, Baghdad 2003).

the seals, see also figs. 13, 14).<sup>108</sup> The inscription encircles the exterior edge of the stamp and therefore would not have been replicated in the impression, which shows the queen before an enthroned goddess, behind whom is depicted the queenly emblem of a

<sup>101</sup> Hussein 2016, 33, pl. 133a.

<sup>102</sup> Hussein 2016, 29–32, pls. 102–3, 105–25, 127.

<sup>103</sup> Collon 2008, 113; Hussein 2016, 31–2, 107–8, 115, pls. 122b, 126.

<sup>104</sup> Hussein 2016, 107, pl. 103b.

<sup>105</sup> Hussein 2016, 29, pl. 103a.

<sup>106</sup> Hussein 2016, 30, pl. 106a.

<sup>107</sup> Al-Gailani Werr 2008, 159–60; Al-Rawi 2008; Hussein 2016, 29–30, pl. 105b, c.

<sup>108</sup> Al-Gailani Werr 2008, 156; Al-Rawi 2008, 136; Hussein 2016, 32–3, pl. 133a; Spurrier 2017. Another seal (1989.333) from the sarcophagus named a eunuch but has been interpreted as an amulet and gift to the queen (Hussein 2016, 34).

scorpion.<sup>109</sup> The coffin included three more stamp seals and two cylinder seals (1989.328–1989.330, 1989.332, 1989.333).<sup>110</sup> One of the cylinders (1989.332) portrays the king, queen, and probably a eunuch *turtānu* (second-in-command) engaged in ritual (fig. 15).<sup>111</sup> A gold pendant depicting the queen worshipping Ishtar in her warrior aspect may also derive from this coffin.<sup>112</sup> With her collection of objects bearing self-reflexive text and imagery, Queen Ḥamā's identity and power were emphatically pronounced and reinforced.

The intaglio of the inscribed stamp seal shows the queen wearing a diadem with a dorsal streamer (see fig. 14). Although no forehead ornament is visible in the profile portrait, Ḥamā's coffin included five inlaid plaques presumably derived from the headband of a diadem, such as the intact example from Tomb II (see fig. 2, top right).<sup>113</sup> Ḥamā, therefore, may have been intended to be recognized on her seal as wearing this specific sort of headgear. A dorsal streamer is also apparent flowing down the queen's back on the cylinder seal depicting her in ritual (see fig. 15). Here, however, her head is covered by a boxy headdress with vertical elements.<sup>114</sup>

The gold crown actually found on Ḥamā's skull has no parallels in the archaeological or artistic records (1989.309; see figs. 2, bottom, 10; online fig. 2).<sup>115</sup> Leafy grapevines with bunches of lapis lazuli grapes constitute the top of this cap-like crown. Winged



FIG. 15. Modern impression of gold-capped carnelian cylinder seal. The queen is depicted to the left of the "sacred tree." To the right of the tree, the ruler is followed by a beardless male or eunuch, who is probably the *turtānu*. Ht. of seal 4.1 cm, diam. 1.5 cm, Coffin 2, Tomb III, Northwest Palace, Nimrud. ND 1989.332; Baghdad, Iraq Museum, inv. no. 115642 (courtesy the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago).

female figures encircle the middle, and more grapes dangle from the base, which is composed of a band of blooming flowers and ripe pomegranates.<sup>116</sup> With its broad, 24 cm diameter, this crown may have been worn atop an elaborate hairstyle or other underpinnings.<sup>117</sup> It is therefore conceivable that the boxy headdress depicted on the cylinder seal represented the queen wearing this spectacularly bulky crown atop a diadem with a dorsal streamer.<sup>118</sup>

In addition to headgear, Coffin 2's dress elements included 81 earrings, two gold torques, a gold fibula, two sets of gold bracelets, five sets of possible armlets, five finger rings, a pair of anklets, and hundreds of beads (see fig. 10).<sup>119</sup> The coffin also included gold chains embellished with inlaid medallions, fringes, and pendants that may have been worn over the shoulders and back (1989.310, 1989.317–1989.319).<sup>120</sup> This burial assemblage of lavish dress elements was certainly fit for a Neo-Assyrian queen.<sup>121</sup>

<sup>109</sup> Hussein 2016, 33, pl. 133a. The goddess on the seal may represent Gula, Ishtar, or Mullissu (Spurrier 2017, 165–66). The scorpion motif occurs on Neo-Assyrian seals, seal impressions, and inscriptions associated with the queen and her household (Al-Rawi 2008, 137–38; Mitchell and Searight 2008, 35, 60–1, 102–3, 105; Niederreiter 2008, 59–69, 82–4; Radner 2008, 494–502).

<sup>110</sup> Al-Gailani Werr 2008, 159–61, fig. 19p, v–w; Hussein 2016, 33–4, pl. 133b–f.

<sup>111</sup> Reade 2009, 254.

<sup>112</sup> Hussein (2016, 29, pls. 102, 103c) published the pendant's (1989.373) findspot in Coffin 1. However, Spurrier (2017, 160) has suggested that it derived from Ḥamā's burial in Coffin 2. To avoid confusion, I do not illustrate this pendant in either coffin.

<sup>113</sup> Hussein 2016, 34–5, pl. 140a–d.

<sup>114</sup> It is unclear whether the crown's vertical elements are ancient features or artifacts of damage to the seal's surface (Al-Gailani Werr 2008, 161, fig. 19w; Hussein 2016, pl. 133e).

<sup>115</sup> Hussein 2016, 33, 123, pls. 129–32. Corrected by Spurrier (2017, 158–62), previous discussions erroneously stated that this crown was found with a child (Schultz and Kunter 1998, 109; Damerji 1999, 9; Oates and Oates 2001, 87; Müller-Karpe et al. 2008, 144; Gansell 2012, 20; Macgregor 2012, 81).

<sup>116</sup> Collon (2008, 106) and Hussein (2016, 33) have suggested that the "pomegranates" are actually poppy capsules.

<sup>117</sup> Spurrier 2017, 163.

<sup>118</sup> Reade (2009, 254) identified the headdress on the seal as a mural crown.

<sup>119</sup> Hussein (2016, 35–7, 128) stated that Coffin 2 held more than 300 earrings, but only 81 earrings are listed among the coffin's contents.

<sup>120</sup> Hussein 2016, 35, pls. 140e, 141b–d.

<sup>121</sup> Hussein 2016, 34, pls. 134–37.

*Tomb IV*

In Tomb IV's rectangular, stone sarcophagus only a sparse variety of objects and a few teeth remained of the unnamed deceased.<sup>122</sup> Among the surviving dress elements were one gold crescent earring, 10 carnelian beads, one finger ring of gold and another of bronze, four silver fibulas, two mounted stamp seals linked to chains, and a bronze mirror (see fig. 11).<sup>123</sup> Similarities between this assemblage and those from Tombs I–III suggest that Tomb IV contained a woman. Ishtar imagery on the Tomb IV seals reinforces this possibility.<sup>124</sup> In light of its architecture and placement beneath the palace, Tomb IV may indeed have belonged to a lost queen, whose dressed presence we might hypothesize through the model presented in this article.

## MODELING THE DRESS ENSEMBLE OF A NEO-ASSYRIAN QUEEN

Review of the dress assemblages preserved across the Queens' Tombs establishes that the burials included similar assortments of analogous elements. The assemblages accompanying the named queens in Tomb II and Coffin 2 of Tomb III are closely related to those associated with the unidentified deceased in Tomb I, Coffin 1 of Tomb III, and possibly Tomb IV. Therefore, I view the material from all tombs as evidence for queenly dress, and, considering consistencies as well as variations, I offer a flexible interpretation of the regalia of a Neo-Assyrian queen. Although this sample of five more or less intact sarcophagi and coffins, probably containing six women, seems small, if each body belonged to a queen, it would represent all but one of the queens who likely lived at the Northwest Palace (with the remaining queen being Mullissu-mukanishat-Ninua, whose empty sarcophagus occupies Tomb III's burial chamber).<sup>125</sup>

The assemblages of durable dress elements from the Queens' Tombs entailed 360° of adornment from head to ankle and demonstrated right-left symmetry. The metal and polished stone elements were radiant and polychromatic. They incorporated moveable parts that would have flashed and jingled when the corpse was handled and, if worn in life, when the wearer moved.<sup>126</sup>

It appears that a queenly burial ensemble typically included a headdress; a pair of earrings; at least one collar, torque, or necklace; beads; one or more pairs of bracelets; sets of up to 10 matching finger rings; a pair of anklets; one or more fibulas; seals with attachment chains; and an ornamented garment (table 1). Most of the dress elements were closely related in terms of their materials, design, and iconography.

Some nearly identical items occurred across the tombs. For example, Tombs I and II contained virtually indistinguishable assemblages of fringed crescent earrings, and Tomb II and Coffin 1 of Tomb III included pairs of similarly sized gold bracelets with animal-head terminals (1988.18, 1989.9, 1989.22, 1989.212, 1989.213; see figs. 7–9; online fig. 5).<sup>127</sup> However, formally analogous pairs of gold ribbed anklets associated with the two bodies in Tomb II have significantly different sizes (1989.14, 1989.15; see fig. 8; online fig. 8).<sup>128</sup> The pair worn by the more robust body on top had a 15 cm diameter, while the pair associated with the finer-boned body beneath had only a 7.3 cm diameter.<sup>129</sup> Tombs I and II also preserved similar pairs of inlaid bracelets or armbands that may, too, have been scaled in correspondence to differences in the women's sizes (1988.51, 1989.13).<sup>130</sup> The variations in sizes among these examples of otherwise similar objects suggest that some items were crafted to fit specific individuals. This implies that queenly regalia was not expected to be interchangeable among women, whose individuality may have been acknowledged and valued through personalized parures.

The assemblages from the Queens' Tombs verify only what constituted queenly dress in the context of burial at Nimrud during the eighth century B.C.E. when the three named queens were buried. However, similarities among the eighth- and probably ninth-century B.C.E. mortuary assemblages and eighth- and seventh-century B.C.E. depictions of queens suggest that a relatively consistent tradition of queenly dress spanned the

174–75; Benzel 2015; Thomason 2016a, 137–39; Neumann 2017, 3–11.

<sup>127</sup> Hussein 2016, 7–8, 17, 20–1, 31, 60, 72, 76, 107, pls. 16a, b, 44d, 73b, 122a.

<sup>128</sup> Hussein 2016, 14, 21, pl. 76.

<sup>129</sup> Schultz and Kunter 1998, 96; Hussein 2016, 74–5. Tomb III's Coffins 1 and 2 also included anklets with potentially personalized diameters (Hussein 2016, 113, 119, pls. 125a, b, 149b).

<sup>130</sup> Schultz and Kunter 1998, 90, 96, 100; Hussein 2016, 7, 20, 65, 74, 113, 119, pls. 15e, 73a.

<sup>122</sup> Hussein 2016, 43–6, pl. 176.

<sup>123</sup> Hussein 2016, 44, pls. 178, 179.

<sup>124</sup> Al-Gailani Werr 2008, 155–57, 159, fig. 19d, m; Hussein 2016, 44, pl. 178a, b.

<sup>125</sup> Svärd 2015, 48, table 2.

<sup>126</sup> Winter 1994, 1999a, 2012; Zanon 2012; McMahon 2013,

TABLE 1. Examples of dress elements constituting a Neo-Assyrian queenly ensemble (see figs. 7–12; online figs. 1–3, 6, 10).

|                        | Tomb I              | Tomb II               | Tomb III/1              | Tomb III/2            | Tomb IV               |
|------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Diadem <sup>a</sup>    | none                | 1989.5*               | 1989.324–<br>1989.326   | 1989.320–<br>1989.323 | none                  |
| Headdress <sup>b</sup> | none                | 1989.1                | 1989.209,<br>1989.210   | 1989.309              | none                  |
| Earrings               | 1988.18*            | 1989.38               | 1989.341–<br>1989.344   | 1989.338,<br>1989.339 | 1990.114              |
| Neckwear <sup>c</sup>  | 1988.8              | 1989.17*              | 1989.377,<br>1989.378   | 1989.285,<br>1989.286 | none                  |
| Beads                  | 1988.1–<br>1988.7   | 1989.124–<br>1989.137 | 1989.419–<br>1989.425   | 1989.408–<br>1989.411 | 1990.119              |
| Bracelets              | 1988.51             | 1989.10*              | 1989.212,<br>1989.213   | 1989.292,<br>1989.293 | none                  |
| Finger rings           | 1988.16,<br>1988.17 | 1989.44*              | 1989.273–<br>1989.280   | 1989.281–<br>1989.284 | 1990.113              |
| Anklets                | 1988.27?            | 1989.14,<br>1989.15   | 1989.256–<br>1989.259   | 1989.289,<br>1989.290 | none                  |
| Fibula                 | 1988.19*            | 1989.52               | probably <sup>d</sup>   | 1989.331              | 1990.112              |
| Mounted seal           | 1988.21*            | none                  | 1989.260b, <sup>e</sup> | 1989.328–<br>1989.330 | 1990.116,<br>1990.117 |
| Ornaments <sup>e</sup> | none                | 1989.116*             | 1989.211                | 1989.367,<br>1989.368 | none                  |
| Mirror                 | 1988.69             | 1989.194,<br>1989.195 | none                    | none                  | 1990.97               |

*Note:* An asterisk indicates items represented on the model (see fig. 12).

<sup>a</sup>Diadem with a dorsal band and forehead ornament (or remnants thereof).

<sup>b</sup>Headgear other than the diadem with a dorsal band and forehead ornament.

<sup>c</sup>Collars, torques, and necklaces.

<sup>d</sup>Numerous bronze fibulas were found in Tomb III, but their exact quantity, the coffins from which they derived, and their inventory numbers are unknown (Hussein 2016, 159, pl. 171a).

<sup>e</sup>Garment ornaments with holes or loops for attachment.

late Neo-Assyrian era. Since many of the artifacts match items depicted in art, we can infer that the dead queens' ensembles were similar to what they wore in life, at least in ritual or ceremonial contexts in which the living queen would have been presented as an embodiment of ideological ideals.<sup>131</sup> On this premise, I have modeled a potential iteration of Neo-Assyrian queenly dress (see fig. 12). The figure is shown standing and lifelike

as a hypothetical personification of Neo-Assyrian ideal feminine beauty, which queens would have emulated and conceptually embodied for eternity.<sup>132</sup>

The model represents an aggregation of archaeological, art historical, and literary evidence for ideal royal women. Its purpose is to help us envision and more fully comprehend a queen's visual and material presence in the tomb, possibly in life, and even in the after-life, where kings and queens were believed to live on

<sup>131</sup> Three bracelets (1989.251–53) from Tomb III's Coffin 1 show evidence of wear, indicating that at least some objects in the tombs were worn in life (Hussein 2016, 31, 112, pl. 124h–j).

<sup>132</sup> Gansell 2013a.

attending to the netherworld deities in their palace.<sup>133</sup> Indeed, royal dress may have transformed living, dead, and depicted women into ideal queens by activating, maintaining, and expressing attributes of feminine beauty, including sexuality, fertility, and purity, that undergirded and were reinforced by their divinely sanctioned power.<sup>134</sup> Thus, through the phenomenon of dress explored in the model, a Neo-Assyrian queen may be viewed as a social and aesthetic construct as well as an identifiable person and an imperial agent.

The figural model represents a 155 cm tall woman, whose height reflects skeletal data and whose body type falls within the tombs' osteologically documented range.<sup>135</sup> Images of queens inspire the idealized hairstyle and facial and bodily characteristics.<sup>136</sup> The body, however, serves fundamentally as scaffolding to support the model's primary purpose of displaying queenly dress elements. The earrings and reconstructed seal-chain-fibula apparatus are from Tomb I, and the remaining jewelry, diadem, and garment ornaments derive from Tomb II (see figs. 7, 8, 12; online figs. 6, 10). The availability of images as well as information about scale and findspots motivated my selection of the elements.<sup>137</sup> Also, I mostly chose jewelry designs that occurred across multiple burials. Although the model's bracelets are of a variety found only in Tomb II, their roundels and the iconography they carry are familiar from art, and their figural friezes provide an opportunity to consider the social and ideological roles of miniature imagery in dress.<sup>138</sup> While illustrating the archaeologically attested position of specific dress elements on the body, the model also intends to visualize the presence of a Neo-Assyrian queen as an archetypal embodiment of the office of queenship based on both large- and small-scale signals, ranging from her overall ensemble to its miniature details.

Even though the burials sometimes included multiple examples of one type of adornment, the model wears single sets and individual elements, as is portrayed in Neo-Assyrian art (see figs. 3–5). In addition, a queen probably wore anklets, but these are not visible beneath the model's skirt (1989.14, 1989.15; see figs. 8, 12; online fig. 8). Beads are also not illustrated on the model because the manner in which they would have been worn is not archaeologically verified.<sup>139</sup> Finally, the model-figure does not hold a mirror, since mirrors may have been specifically ritual paraphernalia.<sup>140</sup> Thus, the model displays only dress elements that would have been visible, were preserved in their original form, and may have been used in a range of contexts.

The model is speculatively clothed. No evidence for garment designs survives among the textile fragments from the tombs, but the presence of fibulas suggests that robes were pinned in place (e.g., 1988.19; see fig. 7).<sup>141</sup> As shown on the model, fibulas may also have secured seals to clothing. To explore the three-dimensional appearance and functionality of draping depicted on two-dimensional artworks, I initially constructed a sample garment in muslin.<sup>142</sup> Because the results of this foray into experimental archaeology were inconclusive, the model's garment involves little drapery and is primarily inspired by artworks depicting a belted chemise with ornamented borders (see, e.g., the dresses worn by the female figures depicted on the seals in figs. 14, 15).<sup>143</sup>

The model's garment is rendered in white with gold appliques. Excavators reported that some of the textiles looked purple, black, and reddish; however, this was the result of discoloration.<sup>144</sup> Scientific analyses found no traces of dye in the flax fibers of the linen.<sup>145</sup> Although Neo-Assyrian luxury textiles, including those of linen, were often dyed, white linen is also attested in

<sup>133</sup> Barrett 2007, 9; Scurlock 2013, 152. On the use of evidence from art and burials to interpret dress in living contexts, see Marcus 1994, 4; McFerrin 2017.

<sup>134</sup> Gansell 2013a, 408.

<sup>135</sup> Schultz and Kunter 1998, 90, 96, 100, 107, n. 163.

<sup>136</sup> Strommenger 1970, fig. 15; Orthmann 1975, pl. 170; Gansell 2013b, 392, 400–6.

<sup>137</sup> The findspots within the sarcophagus for the model's finger rings are not known (Hussein 2016, 17, 21, 76, 82, pls. 44d, 74c). The rings are distributed one per finger because a small loop atop each one suggests that they may once have been attached by chains to wristbands in the manner of 1989.263 (Hussein 2016, 32, pl. 126).

<sup>138</sup> Maxwell-Hyslop 1971, 246–49; Musche 1992, pl. 81; Postgate 1994, 240–42; Collon 2010, 152–61; Castor 2017.

<sup>139</sup> If the beads originally formed necklaces, they may have been threaded by flax strings and/or bronze wires (Quillien 2014, 284; Hussein 2016, 152).

<sup>140</sup> Albenda 1985; Ornan 2002, 471–72.

<sup>141</sup> Some fibulas from the Nimrud burials could have closed death shrouds rather than garments. See Marcus (1994, 4) for an example of the use of fibulas in both living dress and mortuary contexts during a roughly contemporary period in Iran.

<sup>142</sup> Gansell 2013b, 1 July.

<sup>143</sup> See Harlow and Nosch (2015, 13) for recent experimental archaeological research on dress.

<sup>144</sup> Hussein 2016, 13.

<sup>145</sup> Toray Industries 1996; Crowfoot et al. 2008; Quillien 2014, 275–76. One textile specimen was identified as undyed cotton (Toray Industries 1996, 200).

texts.<sup>146</sup> The notion that royals wore white for special occasions is supported by seventh-century B.C.E. royal correspondence instructing the king to put on white clothes to celebrate his transition from mourning to normal activity.<sup>147</sup> Apparently white garments were suited for royal wear in life as well as in death, and it is possible that white was particularly (although not necessarily exclusively) associated with transitional phases in the lifecycle.<sup>148</sup>

The patterns that may have decorated the deceased's garments would have further demonstrated their luxury. However, the original arrangement of Tomb II's gold appliqués was not intact, and excavators did not record their distribution in the sarcophagus.<sup>149</sup> The hypothetical decoration of the model's dress therefore employs some artistic license using ornaments from Tomb II and reference to depictions of royal robes. Large quantities of garment ornaments were not found in the other royal burials, but the fabric may have been beaded, embroidered, and/or appreciated for its frosty white sheen.<sup>150</sup>

Evidence for female footwear is even more obscure. Shoes were probably made of perishable materials, and no examples from the Queens' Tombs survived. Nonetheless, the model wears simple leather slippers as a reminder that a queen would typically have been shod. Probably equipping the dead for the grueling walk to the netherworld, a Neo-Assyrian funerary text lists four pairs of sandals among the contents of a king's burial.<sup>151</sup> Shoes are also depicted in courtly contexts, such as the banquet portrayed on the seventh-century B.C.E. Banquet Scene relief (see figs. 3, 4). In this scene, the queen wears shoes embellished with a crenellated border that coordinates with other details of her apparel, but this footwear is too specific to be suitable for the model.

Overall, it is hoped that the model effectively estimates ideal Neo-Assyrian queenly dress in death, and possibly in life and the afterlife. By showing the scale and position of objects in relation to each other and the body, the model delivers practical information. At the same time, it offers a methodological tool for experimenting with configurations of queenly dress.

Furthermore, when the model is considered in the visual and material environments of the tomb, court, and afterlife, it helps us to see how royal dress may have intersected with diverse social and cultural phenomena, such as identity and ideology.

#### DRESS AND IDENTITY IN DEATH, LIFE, AND THE AFTERLIFE

Dress records the act of putting things on the body, and the performance of wearing as it constructs, activates, and maintains identity.<sup>152</sup> In the ancient Near East, dress may have been valued as a fundamental part of the person and construed as identity, not just a display of it.<sup>153</sup> Dress, like identity, also had the potential to be eternal as the vehicle for a dead queen's identity in the ranked and stratified domain of the netherworld.<sup>154</sup> A close look at the dress elements and ensembles from the Queens' Tombs reveals how dress established essential aspects of the women's identities. The consistently configured assemblages of related elements marked the women's group identity as members of the Neo-Assyrian court. Differences in the composition of the courtly ensembles and distinctions among their individual elements would have specified gender and rank, which defined queenly identity, while unique variables in dress may have signaled personal identity. Thereby, dress could thoroughly identify someone as an Assyrian courtier, a queen, and an individual. In some cases, an object, such as a seal, may also have simultaneously conveyed courtly, queenly, and personal identity.

#### *Courtly Identity*

Typologies of Neo-Assyrian dress demonstrate wide-ranging consistencies in the material, design, and iconography of the elements and ensembles worn by the men, eunuchs, and women of the royal court.<sup>155</sup> The assemblages from the Queens' Tombs correlate to these typologies and thereby establish the women's

<sup>146</sup> Fales and Postgate 1992, 108–12, texts 93–100; Villard 2010; Quillien 2014, 284–85.

<sup>147</sup> Parpola 2007a, 194–95; 2007b, 149, texts 197, 198.

<sup>148</sup> I thank Megan Cifarelli for this suggestion.

<sup>149</sup> Hussein 2016, 21.

<sup>150</sup> Crowfoot et al. 2008, 150; Thomason 2016a, 138.

<sup>151</sup> McGinnis 1987, 4, 10; Scurlock 1995, 1884.

<sup>152</sup> On relationships between dress and identity, see Marcus 1993; Gansell 2007a; Harlow 2012; Cifarelli 2014; Cifarelli and Gawlinski 2017, xiii–xv; McFerrin 2017.

<sup>153</sup> The devastating separation of Ishtar's regalia from her body in the descent myth illuminates ancient Assyrian conceptions of the vital fusion of dress and personhood (Foster 2005, 498–505).

<sup>154</sup> Scurlock 1995, 1887–88, 1892; 2016, 78, 80.

<sup>155</sup> Madhloom 1970, 66–93; Maxwell-Hyslop 1971, 232–69; Musche 1992, 207–23.

membership in the court.<sup>156</sup> Furthermore, parallels among the dress of the dead, similarly outfitted figures depicted in art, and possibly the regalia of the living population of the palace would have reinforced group identity and the implications of eternal privilege that came with courtly status (see figs. 2, top right, 3–5, 7, 8, 15; online figs. 3, 5, 6, 10). For example, living courtiers may have observed commonalities between their dress and that of the royal and divine figures illustrated on artworks displayed throughout the palace. Also, members of the court would probably have known that the dead, such as the queens interred beneath the palace, wore courtly attire in their tombs. Dress, then, would have identified and bonded the courtly community in the present as well as to future and past generations.

The dress elements from the Queens' Tombs were primarily made of gold, carnelian, lapis lazuli, and agate, all of which had been used in elite Assyrian jewelry since the second millennium B.C.E.<sup>157</sup> These precious materials were imported and received as booty and tribute. Gold declared divine and royal status.<sup>158</sup> Not surprisingly, it was the principal material of the Nimrud jewelry and Ḥamā's seal (see figs. 2, 7–14; online figs. 1–6, 8–10). Carnelian, a reddish-orange stone from the Indus Valley, and lapis lazuli, a variegated blue stone from Afghanistan, were used for seals, beads, and inlays. Agate occurs in banded and circular formations of brown and white. It was frequently used for striped beads or cut into "eyestone" disks constituting pendants and inlays that may have been understood to repel malevolence.<sup>159</sup> Together, these precious materials and their chromatic combination of yellow, orange, blue, brown, and white would have coordinated with the polychrome paintings and sculptures in the palace, visually affirming membership in the court.<sup>160</sup>

In addition to material, the design and iconography of some dress elements from the Queens' Tombs link them to broader traditions of Neo-Assyrian courtly dress. For example, the variations of crescent earrings found across the tombs match a range of artistically and archaeologically known types associated with elite Neo-Assyrian culture (see figs. 3, 4, 7 [1988.18], 12, top left;

online fig. 3).<sup>161</sup> Bracelet types, too, such as those with animal-head terminals, relate to royal jewelry known from art and texts (1989.9; see fig. 8; online fig. 5).<sup>162</sup> Although many jewelry types were common across the ancient Near East, distinctively royal Neo-Assyrian items are identified by their style, which can be observed through what Feldman has defined as "the minutiae of visual forms," such as the delicate pomegranate pendants and granulation pattern on a pair of earrings from Tomb II (1989.38a, b; see online fig. 3).<sup>163</sup>

Iconography also connected jewelry (and its wearer) to the Neo-Assyrian court. In particular, many dress elements from the Queens' Tombs incorporate pomegranate, rosette, and vegetal motifs (see figs. 2, 14; online figs. 1–4, 6, 7, 9, 10). These natural themes contributed to an imperial "rhetoric of abundance," as Winter has called it, that permeated royal Neo-Assyrian culture.<sup>164</sup> The iconography on the jewelry would have coordinated with the palace interior, where relief sculptures, wall painting, flooring, and furniture bore luxuriant motifs and imagery.<sup>165</sup> This visual environment may have evoked sumptuous royal feasts, gardens, and ritual landscapes (see fig. 3).<sup>166</sup> Adorned in fruits, flowers, vines, and leaves, members of the court would thus have been recognizable as representatives of divinely endowed imperial abundance.

Figural imagery is rare on the jewelry from the Queens' Tombs, but the inlaid roundels on three sets of bracelets from Tomb II bear typical Neo-Assyrian imagery of winged genies holding cones and buckets as they flank stylized trees (1989.10; see figs. 8, 12, bottom; online fig. 6).<sup>167</sup> On two of the sets, the frieze of genies encircles a large rosette, the center of which features an agate eyestone. The centers on the third pair

<sup>161</sup> Madhloom 1970, 90–2; Maxwell-Hyslop 1971, 235–46; Musche 1992, 207–12; Collon 2008, 108–9; Gansell 2016, 57; Hussein 2016, pls. 16, 44, 45, 116–21, 142, 178c.

<sup>162</sup> Madhloom 1970, 66–93; Maxwell-Hyslop 1971, 232–69; Reade 1972, 92–107; Postgate 1994, 238–40; Hussein 2016, pls. 73b, 122a, 123, 124, 150a, b.

<sup>163</sup> Damerji 1999, pl. 11; Feldman 2014, 41, 43–4; Lee 2015, 24–30; Gansell 2016, 56–7; Hussein 2016, pls. 16a, b, 44d.

<sup>164</sup> Winter 2003; Gansell 2016, 58.

<sup>165</sup> Maxwell-Hyslop 1971, 199, 237, 243, figs. 118a, 127 (Type 28), 135–36; Albenda 1978; 2005, 47, 51–2, 84–92, 107, 113–14, 133; Guralnick 2004, 222, 225–29, 231–32; Thomason 2010; Hussein and Benzel 2014, 127.

<sup>166</sup> Shafer 2013; Thomason 2016a, 141–42; 2016b, 250–53.

<sup>167</sup> Damerji 1999, fig. 30; Collon 2008, 111–12; Hussein 2016, 20–1, pl. 72.

<sup>156</sup> Gansell 2016, 56–7.

<sup>157</sup> Wartke 1999; Feldman 2006, 32.

<sup>158</sup> Winter 2012; Benzel 2015.

<sup>159</sup> Schuster-Brandis 2008, 199–203; Clayden 2009, 38–9, 47, 62–4; Edelman 2013, 203–8.

<sup>160</sup> Verri et al. 2009.

depict the king and crown prince in the presence of a god and a winged disk.<sup>168</sup> Although the arrangement of the figures in this vignette is unconventional, it would have been generally familiar from large-scale reliefs and other portable media.<sup>169</sup> The jewelry with figural embellishment could therefore have engaged with established imperial iconography without replicating it exactly. Through ritual iconography in particular, seals and jewelry, such as these sets of bracelets, would have associated the royal individual with privileged access to the mythological world (see figs. 12, bottom, 14, 15).<sup>170</sup> Indeed, imagery worn on the body may have been equally if not more powerful than when it was displayed in large scale—for example, on the palace walls.<sup>171</sup>

The model demonstrates that some materials, and their colors, could have been glimpsed from a distance, but iconographic details, such as the frieze of winged genies on the bracelets, would have been legible only at close range. If the bracelets were worn in life, the main audience for their miniature imagery may have been the wearer herself. Upon death, the iconography could have been observed by the living individuals who dressed the body for burial. It might also have been understood to be seen by the divine and other denizens of the netherworld. In any context, the materials, motifs, and scenes incorporated into the jewelry from the Queens' Tombs unequivocally expressed Neo-Assyrian courtly identity. On a social level, despite the limited visibility of some details, different audiences could have observed queenly dress at different distances.<sup>172</sup> In the case of the bracelets, the observer would have consciously or subconsciously processed information about the subject's identity as an Assyrian courtier. Among these many layers of information were also clues to her status as a queen.

### Queenly Identity

Queenly identity is a subcategory of courtly identity. But because royal women were rarely depicted,

it is difficult to discern what was particularly queenly, as opposed to female or courtly, about the dress of a queen.<sup>173</sup> It seems, though, that only men and eunuchs wore weapons, and, within the category of women's courtly apparel, the Banquet Scene relief potentially clarifies queenly dress in relation to the simpler attire of lower-ranking women (see figs. 3–5). However, there is no information about how dress might have differed among the multiple women who may have concurrently held the title of *sēgallu* or how a queen's dress differed from that of other elite women, such as the queen mother, the king's many wives, and female officials. Presumably, actively reigning queens wore the most elaborate dress, and their headgear probably identified their office.<sup>174</sup>

In Neo-Assyrian art (and probably in the living context of the court) the headdress presented a conspicuous sign of rank. Throughout the late Neo-Assyrian period, the ruler is typically depicted in a tall fez-like hat topped with an inverted cone.<sup>175</sup> The exterior of the base of his hat is encircled by a diadem with a dorsal streamer. When the king is depicted banqueting and hunting, he may wear just the diadem with a streamer. The crown prince, too, is portrayed in the diadem with a streamer, which may also be worn by a person holding the office of *turtānu*.<sup>176</sup> Seventh-century B.C.E. sculptures depicting Libbali-Sharrat portray her wearing a mural crown, but on Ḥamā's eighth-century B.C.E. stamp seal the queen is shown in a diadem with a dorsal streamer that appears to be similar to that worn by male officials (see figs. 3–5, 14, 15).<sup>177</sup> In sum, although a mural crown distinguished queens in seventh-century B.C.E. art, in the eighth century B.C.E. and possibly earlier, versions of a diadem with a dorsal streamer may have correlated to top rank among the men, eunuchs, and women of the court serving in the roles of king, crown prince, *turtānu*, and queen.<sup>178</sup>

Tomb II's diadem with a dorsal streamer is distinguished from the diadems depicted on the king, crown

<sup>168</sup> Damerji 1999, pl. 30; Hussein 2016, pl. 72c.

<sup>169</sup> Collon (2010, 161) has suggested that the royal iconography on these bracelets was intentionally corrupted. However, in Neo-Assyrian art, small-scale imagery (including etchings on sculptural portrayals of royal clothing) varies from large-scale renderings. On seals, as on these bracelets, divine emblems are sometimes fit into vignettes at a lower position than mortal figures (Canby 1971; Winter 1989; Herbordt 1992, pl. 2, fig. 1; pl. 3, fig. 2; pl. 5, fig. 1).

<sup>170</sup> Ataç 2010.

<sup>171</sup> Thomason 2013a, 134.

<sup>172</sup> Wobst 1977, 320–29; Castor 2017.

<sup>173</sup> McFerrin 2017, 146.

<sup>174</sup> The scorpion motif also identified the queen, but it was rendered in miniature and only rarely occurred on dress elements (Hussein 2016, 21, 33, pls. 74a, 133a).

<sup>175</sup> Reade 2009.

<sup>176</sup> Reade 2009, 254, 262.

<sup>177</sup> Reade 1987, 144–45, figs. 5–7; Ornan 2002, 461–62, 469–77; Hussein 2016, pl. 133a.

<sup>178</sup> A fragmentary tile from Nineveh could date the earliest depiction of a queen in a mural crown to the ninth century B.C.E., but this reconstructed image is questionable (Reade 1987, 139–40).

prince, and *turtānu* by its forehead ornament, which is never shown on the diadems of men or eunuchs, even when the figures are depicted at large scale (see figs. 2, top right, 3, 5, 8 [1989.5], 12, 15). Plaques and dorsal terminals probably once ornamenting diadems similar to Tomb II's intact example were also found in Tomb II and Coffins 1 and 2 of Tomb III (see online fig. 9).<sup>179</sup> Since each queen appears to have been buried with at least one diadem with a dorsal streamer, I propose that, during the era of the Nimrud burials, this female version of the royal Assyrian diadem with a dorsal streamer served to identify queens.

The diadem with a dorsal streamer may ultimately derive from royal Egyptian prototypes, while the Neo-Assyrian queenly version specifically relates to both Assyrian and Levantine traditions of regalia.<sup>180</sup> Some ivory sculptures that would have decorated imported Levantine furnishings excavated from Nimrud portray women wearing diadems with forehead plaques that are nearly identical to the frontal ornament on the intact diadem from Tomb II and the loose plaques found in Tomb II and Tomb III's Coffin 2 (see figs. 2, top left, 8 [1989.5], 12, top left, 16).<sup>181</sup> The queenly diadem with a dorsal streamer and forehead ornament may then have presented an amalgam of Neo-Assyrian, Levantine, and Egyptian characteristics indicative of an intercultural style produced in Assyria.<sup>182</sup> This is exemplified by a set of forehead plaques from Tomb II that depict stylized and naturalistic palm trees in Neo-Assyrian style (see online fig. 9b, c).<sup>183</sup> The diadem with a dorsal streamer and forehead ornament could thus have demonstrated membership in the Neo-Assyrian court, indicated female gender, referenced imperial and maybe personal ties abroad, and distinguished the office of queenship.<sup>184</sup>

In addition to diadems with dorsal streamers, the Queens' Tombs included other headdresses that complicate our interpretations. Tomb III's Coffin 1 had two simple gold chain circlets (see fig. 9 [1989.209,



FIG. 16. Levantine ivory carving of a woman wearing a diadem with forehead ornament, ht. 4.2 cm, Burnt Palace, Nimrud, ninth to eighth century B.C.E. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund 1954, inv. no. 54.117.8 (© Metropolitan Museum of Art/Art Resource, NY).

1989.210]).<sup>185</sup> These, however, were not necessarily indicative of queenship, as they would have been significantly less visible and less valuable than the other headdresses, such as the circlet from Tomb II consisting of a 5 cm wide band onto which 96 sheet-gold rosettes were riveted (1989.1; see figs. 2, top left, 8; online fig. 1).<sup>186</sup> Even more elaborate was Ḥamā's massive cap-like crown featuring fruits, flowers, and fantastical women (1989.309; see figs. 2, bottom, 10; online fig. 2). In the manner of the queens' diadems with dorsal streamers, both of these floral headdresses incorporate Assyrian and Levantine characteristics and probably represent intercultural-style objects of Assyrian production.<sup>187</sup>

Since they derived from the burials of Ataliyā, Yabā/Banītu, and Ḥamā, the rosette crown and the head-dress of fruits, flowers, and winged women evidently belonged to queens. But their discovery alongside evidence for diadems with dorsal streamers is puzzling. Were these crowns worn atop a diadem with a dorsal

<sup>179</sup> Hussein 2016, 14–15, 18–20, 30, 34–5, 80, pls. 37b, 38, 53b, 70c, 106a, 140a–d.

<sup>180</sup> For an Egyptian example from the Amarna period, see Robins 2008, 156, fig. 182.

<sup>181</sup> Herrmann 1992, 64–6, pls. 19–21; Gansell 2007b, 449, 459–61, 471–75, figs. 1–5.

<sup>182</sup> Gansell 2016, 58–9.

<sup>183</sup> Mitchell and Searight 2008, 48–9, no. 50.

<sup>184</sup> Dalley 1998, 2004, 2008; Frahm 2014, 189; Spurrier 2017, 166.

<sup>185</sup> Hussein 2016, 29, pl. 103a.

<sup>186</sup> Damerji 1999, pl. 26; Hussein 2016, 69.

<sup>187</sup> Gansell 2016, 58–60, 64 n. 42; Spurrier 2017, 164. Boehmer (2006) has suggested an Anatolian origin for Ḥamā's crown.

streamer? Were different headdresses interchangeable, or was certain headgear required for particular occasions? More specifically, could the unique floral headdresses have been owned by the women before they became queens? Might they have been bridal gifts or apparel, regalia associated with special responsibilities (such as cultic roles), or just the personal fashions of the individual women? Moreover, would these crowns, in the proposed manner of the diadem with a dorsal streamer and forehead ornament, have distinguished the wearer as a Neo-Assyrian queen? Many questions remain unresolved, but since the rosette crown and headdress of fruits, flowers, and female figures belonged to different women, they could have expressed personal, as well as courtly and queenly, identity.

### *Personal Identity*

Personal identity entails how individuals differentiate themselves from others through their opportunities and decisions. In the context of the Queens' Tombs, personal identity distinguished the individual women who held the title of queen. The concept and significance of queens as individuals is evident in texts recording the specific economic, religious, and political contributions of individual queens.<sup>188</sup> The use of personal names in mortuary inscriptions illuminates the eternal value of their personal identities as well. In addition, a curse from Tomb II, which threatens potential thieves including another "queen who sits on the throne or a palace lady," implies a sense of self and suggests that the Queens' Tombs included nontransferable property that belonged to (and physically fit) a particular person.<sup>189</sup> A queen's regalia may not only have maintained her courtly rank in the netherworld; her dress would also have been the essential means through which she would have been personally recognizable in her burial and probably in the afterlife. Hence, by seizing and wearing a dead queen's jewelry, a thief would essentially be stealing the deceased's courtly, queenly, and personal identity.

The variations among the dress elements and ensembles buried with the named queens at Nimrud demonstrate a flexibility that may have accommodated casual, personal choices within the socially conceived bound-

aries of official queenly dress. Some distinctions could have represented changes in fashions, unique commissions, the incidental acquisition of gifts and heirlooms, and/or the personal preferences of the dead or those who buried them. Some seals, however, would have provided a fixed and more official means of personal identity. All the burials, with the inexplicable exception of Tomb II, included multiple seals. The functions among the seals may have varied, but those that named and/or depicted a queen as well as those mounted to be worn may have served primarily as devices of identity (1988.21–1988.23, 1989.260b, c, 1989.328–1989.330, 1989.332–1989.334, 1990.116, 1990.117).

Seals could have simultaneously conveyed courtly, queenly, and personal identity. For example, the gold stamp seal inscribed "Belonging to Hamâ, queen" clearly documented personal identity, but, since the text graced the seal's exterior, not the sealing surface, its impressions may have communicated the impersonal authority of the office of Assyrian queenship (1989.334; see figs. 10, 13, 14). Another intriguing case is presented by the mounted seal from Tomb I (1988.21; see figs. 7, 12, top left). Its sealing surface bears Egyptian or pseudo-Egyptian hieroglyphic writing, suggesting that it originated in Egypt or the Levant.<sup>190</sup> Whether or not the script represents actual language, its legibility would probably have been irrelevant to its Assyrian audience for whom the seal and its impressions would have evoked imperial dominance while being appreciated as exotic and cosmopolitan.<sup>191</sup> The seal may also have reflected the woman's foreign heritage or diplomatic ties. However, even if the hieroglyphic intaglio had no personal meaning, the seal could still have been understood as the woman's personal property, and its impressions could have been recognized as exclusively her mark. The inclusion of seals in the burials suggests that, even if a seal did not express personal identity in administrative contexts, it was still the personal property of the deceased. As such, when a seal was worn, its size, shape, material, color, and design would have personalized a queen's appearance and identity.

### DRESS AND IDEOLOGY IN DEATH, LIFE, AND THE AFTERLIFE

From court to crypt, Neo-Assyrian queenly dress created a highly charged image that harmonized with

<sup>188</sup> Neo-Assyrian queens owned property, participated in rituals, made donations and dedications to temples, and received tribute and audience gifts (Parpola 1987, 35–6, text 34, lines 14–16; reverse, lines 8–9; Svärd 2015, 23–38, 48–60).

<sup>189</sup> Al-Rawi 2008, 119, 124; Scurlock 2013, 152.

<sup>190</sup> Hussein and Benzel 2014, 125, 366 n. 2; Hussein 2016, 6, pl. 13a.

<sup>191</sup> Cifaloni 2009; Thomason 2013b; Gansell 2016, 60.

the appearance of the king, other courtiers, and the royal environment (see fig. 12).<sup>192</sup> Through the materials, style, and iconography of her dress, a queen was not only identifiable but also an integral part of the visual and material world of the palace. Here, in addition to generating and articulating identity, a queen's dress would have activated and reinforced her ideological roles in the empire. In particular, the dressed queen embodied the imperial matters of territorial control, dynastic succession, and divinely sanctioned power.<sup>193</sup> As a perfect and inviolable summation of the empire, a queen's dressed presence thereby served an ideological function in the validation and preservation of elite authority. Aspects of a queen's dress also evoked divinity, which would have legitimized and amplified her eternal agency as a representative of the court in death, life, and the afterlife.

The combination of gold and colorful stones constituting queenly dress was visually coded to identify a royal Assyrian. As collections of exotic materials, queenly dress ensembles also demonstrated the concentration of world wealth and power at the center of the Neo-Assyrian empire. Metaphysically, materials such as agate eyestones may have offered apotropaic protection, and the radiance of polished metals and stones could have been conceived of in terms of sacredness, divinity, and purity.<sup>194</sup> Luminosity may also have been viewed as evidence for contact with the divine, evoking the ritual purity of the brilliantly dressed queens and their proximity to gods and goddesses.<sup>195</sup> Such a relationship to the divine would have sanctioned and legitimized a queen's imperial roles and authority and perhaps would also have established the divine investment of her power. Radiance may even have been recognized as a life force that signaled immortality and sustained the adorned ghost in the netherworld.<sup>196</sup> Through such political statements and magical qualities, the materials of queenly dress would have contributed vividly to the ideological construction of an infinite, everlasting empire.

Stylistic analysis of the dress elements from the Queens' Tombs also reveals their ideological efficacy.<sup>197</sup> Items of specifically royal Assyrian style, such as the bracelets inlaid with figural scenes of imperial worship and winged genies, would have unequivocally endorsed and empowered a queen as an eternal member of court and cult (1989.10–1989.12; see figs. 8, 12; online fig. 6).<sup>198</sup> Other items, including the variations of crescent earrings found across the tombs, may have been recognized as royal Assyrian in style through their minute details, while their forms would have been familiar across elite Near Eastern cultures (1988.15, 1988.18; see fig. 7; online fig. 3).<sup>199</sup> More generic Near Eastern-style dress elements, such as ribbed anklets, could also have distinguished Neo-Assyrian queens as participants in elite Near Eastern society, not just the local Assyrian court (see figs. 8 [1989.14, 1989.15], 9 [1989.256–1989.259]; 10 [1989.289, 1989.290]; online fig. 8). Ideologically, the incorporation of both royal Assyrian- and elite Near Eastern-style elements into queenly dress would have generated and expressed Neo-Assyrian imperial identity within the cosmopolitan world from which Assyrian power was ultimately derived and sustained.<sup>200</sup>

In addition to incorporating elements of royal Assyrian and generic elite Near Eastern style, the dress of a Neo-Assyrian queen included items that may be classified as intercultural and composite.<sup>201</sup> For example, the diadem with a forehead ornament and dorsal streamer exhibited intercultural style through what may have been an Assyrianization of foreign designs (1989.5; see figs. 2, top right, 8, 12).<sup>202</sup> Instead of incorporating foreign attributes, composite-style dress elements included physical components that were actually foreign or intended to be read as foreign. For example, the seal from Tomb I with Egyptian or pseudo-Egyptian script is probably an Egyptian or Levantine object that was fit into a royal Assyrian- or Near Eastern-style mount (1988.21; see figs. 7, 12, top left).<sup>203</sup> Another

<sup>192</sup> Swift 2009, 139–86; Thomason 2010, 199–203; Benzel 2015; Thomason 2016a, 137–39.

<sup>193</sup> Winter 2003.

<sup>194</sup> Winter 1994, 124; 1999a; 2012, 157–62; Reiner 1995, 119–32; Edelman 2013, 203–8; Benzel 2015, 91–6; Neumann 2017, 10–11.

<sup>195</sup> Winter 2012, 157–58; Benzel 2015, 103.

<sup>196</sup> Winter 2012, 160; Benzel 2015, 99–100.

<sup>197</sup> Gansell 2016.

<sup>198</sup> Hussein 2016, 20–1, pl. 72.

<sup>199</sup> Feldman 2014, 44; Hussein 2016, pls. 15b, 16a, b.

<sup>200</sup> Gansell 2016, 56–8.

<sup>201</sup> Feldman 2011; Gansell 2016, 58–60.

<sup>202</sup> For a definition of “Assyrianization,” see Feldman 2014, 80–1.

<sup>203</sup> Hussein and Benzel 2014, 125, 366 n. 2; Hussein 2016, pl. 13a.

occurrence of composite-style jewelry is seen in a pair of fibulas from which dangle clusters of scarabs or scaraboids.<sup>204</sup> In the cases of the seal and the scarabs or scaraboids, the foreign components are small, not immediately recognizable, and physically attached to or incorporated into typical Assyrian objects. In this manner, composite-style dress elements could have reinforced Neo-Assyrian imperial dominance through the physical bondage of foreign products.<sup>205</sup>

Near Eastern-, intercultural-, and composite-style dress elements could have signified particular political relationships or more generally evoked the regional range, cosmopolitan nature, and imperial power of the empire. It may be that exclusively foreign brides wore foreign dress elements, but the association between a woman's heritage and her dress was not necessarily literal. Although the Neo-Assyrian empire had ties in all cardinal directions, the international goods and dress elements from the Queens' Tombs predominantly connote Egypt and the Levant. Assyrian conceptions of Nilotic and Levantine environments associated them with fecundity, and landscape was conceptually sexualized and gendered female.<sup>206</sup> Incorporating western dress components and traditions into queenly ensembles therefore could have reiterated female fertility, which ultimately supported the endurance of the empire through the regeneration of the dynastic line.

The royal Neo-Assyrian ideological attribute of fertility was manifest through iconography as well. The motifs of abundance, including leaves, grapes, and pomegranates, displayed on the dress elements from the Queens' Tombs, would have enmeshed the wearer in the artificial, cultivated, exotic, and mythological contexts of the imperial Neo-Assyrian universe.<sup>207</sup> As part of this idealized environment, a queen's vitality and fertility could have been conceptually sustained through all phases of life and death. For example, the fantastical winged female figures evoking both Ishtar

and Levantine goddesses of abundance on Ḥamā's blooming and fruiting crown (1989.309) may have been intended to eternally allude to the essential role of women as sexual, bountiful beings at the center of the imperial garden, a phenomenon Collins has proposed is illustrated on the Banquet Scene relief.<sup>208</sup> The Queens' Tombs also contained seals bearing depictions of the goddess Ishtar in her nude, sexualized aspect (1988.25; see fig. 7).<sup>209</sup> Owning and impressing such a seal may have reflected a woman's sexuality and fertility, as it promoted her role in the regeneration of the empire.<sup>210</sup>

A Neo-Assyrian queen's contact with the divine is represented in imperial iconography as well. Imagery on seals and the gold pendant would have affirmed a queen's cultic responsibilities through scenes in which a queen stands in veneration before divine figures and emblems (1989.332, 1989.334; see figs. 10, 13–15).<sup>211</sup> This iconography is most developed on the cylinder seal from Ḥamā's coffin portraying the queen and king standing on either side of a "sacred tree" featuring pomegranate buds evoking the fecundity of the empire (1989.332).<sup>212</sup> The king is followed by a figure that probably represents the *turtānu*, and the winged-disk emblem of the god Ashur is depicted over the tree. Asserting their highest mortal privilege and consummate purity, the hands of the king and queen are shown gesturing toward the god and nearly touching the tree. Such close contact implies their own divine-like qualities as caretakers of the empire.<sup>213</sup> This scene, and the others of royal-divine engagement, would have expressed and activated the divine empowerment of queens as agents in a thriving empire. Worn as parts of comprehensive dress ensembles, the details of individual elements, such as this seal (and the sacred imagery its impressions replicated), would have saturated queenly dress ensembles with reiterations and emanations of the royal ideology and authority.

#### CONCLUSION: RE-DRESSING THE QUEEN

This article has aimed to clarify the sartorial contents of the Queens' Tombs at Nimrud and to interpret

<sup>204</sup> Hussein 2016, pl. 69a. Scarabs, scaraboids, and seals with Egyptian and Egyptianizing imagery and writing were not unusual in Neo-Assyrian contexts (Herbordt 1992, 120–22; Mitchell and Searight 2008, 36–7, 41, 51–2, 57–8, 60–1, 68–9, 71, 74, 93, 107–8).

<sup>205</sup> On the "threatening or powerful forces" carried by foreign goods, see Feldman 2014, 94.

<sup>206</sup> Marcus 1995, 200–2; Thomason 2001.

<sup>207</sup> Albenda 1974; Winter 2003; Collins 2004, 3–5; Collon 2008, 106; Thomason 2010; 2016a, b; Hussein and Benzel 2014, 131.

<sup>208</sup> Collins 2004, 3; Hussein 2016, pls. 129–32.

<sup>209</sup> Hussein 2016, pl. 13d, f.

<sup>210</sup> Gansell 2013a, 409–11.

<sup>211</sup> Hussein 2016, pls. 103c, 133a, e.

<sup>212</sup> Giovino 2007; Al-Gailani Werr 2008, 161, fig. 19w; Hussein 2016, pl. 133e.

<sup>213</sup> Winter 2008, 78, 85–6.

the preserved dress elements as part of standard, but flexible, full-body ensembles traditionally worn by Neo-Assyrian queens. I have also interpreted the importance of queenly attire as a vehicle of identity and ideology. When small finds are synthesized and contextualized into a big picture, the mortuary, courtly, and supernatural roles of queenly dress and dressed queens emerge. Essentially, my research has attempted to analyze queenly dress in relation to royal Neo-Assyrian conceptions of mortal life and eternity.<sup>214</sup>

Through the example of the model presented here, I have demonstrated a methodology of envisioning Nimrud's queens re-dressed in relics from the royal tombs. I have carefully and critically recontextualized them into visually grounded interpretative paradigms of the imperial environment to stimulate new ways of comprehending the visual, material, and sensorial presence of living queens as members of the court (see fig. 12).<sup>215</sup> Although recent text-based studies have made great strides in recuperating the agency of Neo-Assyrian royal women, queens have remained absent from our visual conceptions of the palace, which remain swayed by Victorian lithographs (fig. 17).<sup>216</sup> We do not know whether Neo-Assyrian queens circulated in the palace's ceremonial areas, such as the main throne room, but there is no reason to assume that their mobility was restricted.<sup>217</sup> Moreover, the division of public vs. private space within the palace is ambiguous and was perhaps based on circumstances and activities rather than architectural zones.<sup>218</sup> Certainly, wherever and by whomever a queen was observed, her glimmering, possibly jingling, ensemble would have made a powerful impression.

In art, kingly dress, like queenly dress, looks fully Assyrian, but there is not sufficient evidence to determine whether, in the manner of queenly dress, the king's actual regalia ever referenced or quoted foreign traditions.<sup>219</sup> However, aspects of the ruler's dress,

including weapons, hunting iconography, and short garments that revealed bulging muscles, emphasized his physical strength and militarism—characteristics that were not alluded to in queenly dress. The ruler's appearance may thereby have emphasized the state's martial power, while a queen's presence showcased the empire's cultural diversity and diplomatic relationships. As a dressed pair, then, the king and queen would have presented a more balanced and comprehensive picture of the empire than would have been conveyed by the sole presence of either one.

Texts and artworks also demonstrate extensive similarities in the materials, form, style, and iconography of Neo-Assyrian royal male and female dress. In particular, the ensembles of the king and queen incorporated rosette and pomegranate imagery, expressing their sexual fertility as a couple, as well as the fecundity and vitality of the empire.<sup>220</sup> Divinely charged materials and iconography of cult and ritual reinforced the authority, privilege, and even godlike status of the royal couple.<sup>221</sup> Together, in their regalia, the king and queen could have expressed imperial geography, fertility, security, wealth, diplomacy, and military power, while representing the future life of the state.

In death, dressed kings and queens would have continued to be connected to the court as the recipients of ritual offerings. Their identities and membership in the court would thereby have been preserved for generations, and with proper care from the living, their ghosts would have lived on in the afterlife as eternal extensions of their royal persons. With their enduring relationships to the palace and the living, and their potentially ceaseless existence in the netherworld, ceremonially dressed kings and queens may have been understood to eternally maintain their identities and the ideological agendas they embodied. That is, possibly in life, during her funeral, and in death and the afterlife, a dressed queen may have been valued and remembered alongside the king and other members of the court as a vital and visible part of the empire.

In closing, I would like to emphasize that this article is not meant as a final statement, but as a beginning. It aims to provide resources, methodological models,

<sup>214</sup> Katz 2013.

<sup>215</sup> McMahon 2013; Thomason 2016a, b.

<sup>216</sup> Layard 1849, pl. 2; Scott 2015.

<sup>217</sup> Kertai 2014, 196–99; 2015, 7–8, 45–6; Svärd 2015, 106–20. The second-millennium B.C.E. Middle Assyrian laws and Palace Decrees (or “Harem Edicts”) do not imply the later segregation of royal women in Neo-Assyrian palaces (Kertai 2014, 195; 2015, 228–29; Svärd 2015, 195).

<sup>218</sup> Kertai 2014; 2015, 6, 237.

<sup>219</sup> Feldman 2011; 2014, 86–104. The king's use of foreign dress elements is suggested by the Banquet Scene relief, on which an Egyptian necklace is shown slung over the ruler's

couch (Albenda 1977, 35).

<sup>220</sup> Gansell 2013a, 412.

<sup>221</sup> Spurrier 2017, 166. By the seventh century B.C.E., the king and queen may have been viewed as representatives of the state god Ashur and his divine consort Mullissu (Reade 1987, 142–43).



FIG. 17. A.H. Layard's *Hall in Assyrian Palace*, restored, colored lithograph, 38 x 56 cm (Layard 1849, pl. 2; courtesy General Research Division, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations).

and perspectives for future research and to open new paths of inquiry into Neo-Assyrian visual and cognitive perceptions of the royal presence in life, death, and the afterlife. Also, at a fundamental level, I hope that this attempt to visualize and interpret Neo-Assyrian queenly dress might enrich future research integrating women into imperial Neo-Assyrian history and culture and provide a model for the visual analysis of embodied female agency across cultures.

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## Supplementary Content: Image Gallery

Images to accompany the *American Journal of Archaeology* publication:

### Dressing the Neo-Assyrian Queen in Identity and Ideology: Elements and Ensembles from the Royal Tombs at Nimrud

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FIG. 1. Gold rosette circlet, ht. 6 cm, diam. 18 cm, Tomb II, Northwest Palace, Nimrud. ND 1989.1; Baghdad, Iraq Museum, inv. no. 105692.



FIG. 2. Detail of crown of gold, lapis lazuli, turquoise, bitumen, and other stones or paste, featuring flowers, fruits, bountiful grapevines, and fantastical female figures, ht. 16 cm, diam. 24 cm, Coffin 2, Tomb III, Northwest Palace, Nimrud. ND 1989.309; Baghdad, Iraq Museum, inv. no. 115619 (N.L. Feeney, 318th Public Affairs Operation Center [PAOC], U.S. Army, Baghdad 2003).



FIG. 3. Pair of earrings with pomegranate pendants, gold with beads of agate and other stone, wtd. ca. 4 cm. Tomb II, Northwest Palace, Nimrud. ND 1989.38a, b; Baghdad, Iraq Museum, inv. nos. 105821, 105822 (N.L. Feeney, 318th Public Affairs Operation Center [PAOC], U.S. Army, Baghdad 2003).



FIG. 4. Gold torque, diam. ca. 22.5 cm, Tomb II, Northwest Palace, Nimrud. ND 1989.16; Baghdad, Iraq Museum, inv. no. 105714 (N.L. Feeney, 318th Public Affairs Operation Center [PAOC], U.S. Army, Baghdad 2003).



FIG. 5. Pair of gold bracelets with lion-head terminals, diam. 7.2 cm, thickness 1.6 cm, Tomb II, Northwest Palace, Nimrud. ND 1989.9; Baghdad, Iraq Museum, inv. no. 105700-1 (N.L. Feeney, 318th Public Affairs Operation Center [PAOC], U.S. Army, Baghdad 2003).



FIG. 6. Detail of bracelet bearing a band of imagery depicting kneeling winged genies holding cones and buckets flanking sacred trees, gold inlaid with banded agate, agate eyestones, turquoise, and possibly faience, diam. of roundel ca. 6 cm, Tomb II, Northwest Palace, Nimrud. ND 1989.10; Baghdad, Iraq Museum, inv. no. 105702/3 (N.L. Feeney, 318th Public Affairs Operation Center [PAOC], U.S. Army, Baghdad 2003).



FIG. 7. Mirror with handle in the form of a palm tree. Bronze, ivory, carnelian, agate, and gold, diam. 21 cm, lgth. of handle 23.5 cm, Tomb II, Northwest Palace, Nimrud. ND 1989.195; Baghdad, Iraq Museum, inv. no. 115469 (N.L. Feeney, 318th Public Affairs Operation Center [PAOC], U.S. Army, Baghdad 2003).



FIG. 8. Gold ribbed anklet, shown unclashed, diam. 7.3 cm, Tomb II, Northwest Palace, Nimrud. ND 1989.15; Baghdad, Iraq Museum, inv. no. 105712/3 (N.L. Feeney, 318th Public Affairs Operation Center [PAOC], U.S. Army, Baghdad 2003).



FIG. 9. Segments from forehead ornaments of gold, lapis lazuli, carnelian, and turquoise, probably from diadems with dorsal streamers. Segments b and c, respectively, depict a stylized and naturalistic palm tree. Ht. of longest segment (segment b) ca. 8 cm. Tomb II, Northwest Palace, Nimrud: *a*, ND 1989.32c; Baghdad, Iraq Museum, inv. no. 104815; *b*, ND 1989.32b; Iraq Museum, inv. no. 105814; *c*, ND 1989.32a; Iraq Museum, inv. no. 105813; *d*, ND 1989.41a; Iraq Museum, inv. no. 105828; *e*, ND 1989.41b; Iraq Museum, inv. no. 105829; *f*, ND 1989.41c–e; Iraq Museum, inv. nos. 105830–32 (Hussein 2016, pl. 38; courtesy the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago). Note that the inventory number (104815) for segment *a* may be printed incorrectly in Hussein 2016, 79. Because all the other segments in this assemblage have inventory numbers beginning with “105,” the correct inventory for segment *a* may be 105815.



FIG. 10. Gold garment ornaments in the form of 10-petaled rosettes, width. 1.5 cm, Tomb II, Northwest Palace, Nimrud. ND 1989.116; Baghdad, Iraq Museum, inv. no. 105983 (Hussein 2016, pl. 77; courtesy the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago).