Such objects helped facilitate the *kispu* ritual, or the "post-funerary ritual meal that called forth the deceased from the netherworld to eat and drink with the living" (MacDougal 2014, 149). This rite, according to Nicolas Wyatt, "involved three features, a communal meal, *šuma zakāru*—'remembering the name,' and *mē naqû*—'pouring the water.' The dead were represented by statues called en-en-ku-ku—'lords who are sleeping'" (Wyatt 2012, 261).[31]

This notion of a separable locus of a person's agency or presence inhabiting material objects after death was by no means confined to Mesopotamia or to the ancient world. Indeed, as mentioned above, people today commonly treat gravestones intuitively as presencing the deceased. From ancient Southwest Asia, however, one of the most striking examples of the same phenomenon comes from an inscribed basalt mortuary stele known as the Katumuwa Stele (fig. 1.1), discovered in situ in the Syro-Hittite town of Zinçirli and dated to the eighth century BCE (Struble and Herrmann 2009; Herrmann and Schloen 2014; Steiner 2015, 128–31). The Katumuwa Stele depicts a figure seated before a table, holding a cup and a pinecone. The table has a duck, a vessel, and a stack of pita-like bread. The negative space is expertly filled with an inscription that prescribes meal offerings for Katumuwa's *nbš* ("self" or "life"),[32] which "(will be) in this stele" (*bnṣb.zn*).[33] Scholars suggest the small room in which the stele was set up constituted a "mortuary chapel" (Struble and Herrmann 2009; Steiner 2015, 148–50), which would have provided a space for the provision of food for the deceased's designated locus of agency, which, as in Egypt and Mesopotamia, was understood to be able to inhabit material objects.

The Katumuwa Stele and its mortuary chapel represent one of the most pristine examples of a setting for funerary/mortuary food offerings, a significant feature of the sociocultural matrix of ancient Southwest Asia (Maher and Lev-Tov 2001; Lewis 2014; Draycott and Stamatopoulou 2016). This practice, associated with primary burial/memorialization and repeated at intervals, provisioned the dead with needed sustenance and perpetuated their afterlife through

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[31] MacDougal (2014, 183) points out that figurines or statues may have been linked with a chair during the ritual as the "locus for the soul during the rituals. It is possible that images were employed to house the transitory spirit of the family deceased, just as a magic figurine for an unsettled *eṭemmu* was made to receive *kispum*."

[32] On the relationship of *nbš* to Hebrew *nepeš*, see Steiner 2015, 137–39.

[33] The term used here to refer to the stele, *nṣb*, is cognate with the Hebrew *maṣṣēbâ*, which derives from the root *nṣb*, "to stand, set up." Multiple Aramaic funerary stelai from the mid-first millennium BCE are known that bear inscriptions identifying themselves as the *nepeš* of their owners, although the term is usually translated "tomb" in these contexts. See, for instance, Beyer and Livingstone 1987, 288–90. The transcription and translation are from Pardee 2009, 53–54.