

M U S E U M
EXPLORER'S
G U I D E



oi
ORIENTAL INSTITUTE
MUSEUM



ARE YOU READY
TO BEGIN A JOURNEY

10,000 YEARS

IN THE MAKING?

Have you ever wondered how humans started living together? How did people build cities and empires? How did they understand the world and their place in it? How did they work, live, and play together, and why did they fight?

The Oriental Institute (OI) Museum of the University of Chicago holds over 350,000 artifacts, excavated mainly by OI archaeologists. In these artifacts from thousands of years ago, you might see a few things that remind you of your own life. Use this guide to explore our galleries, and learn more about the first civilizations and how they relate to us today.

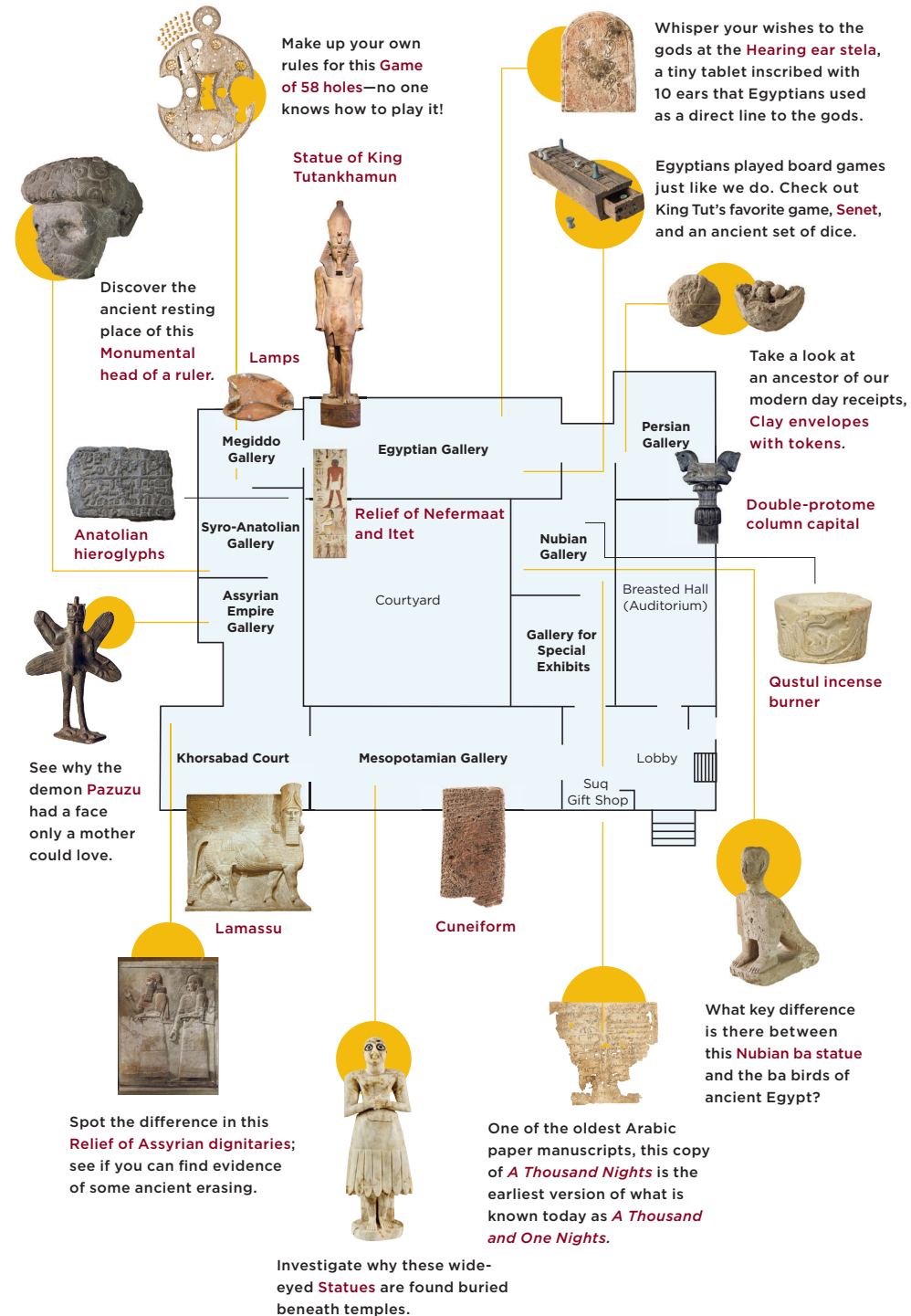
WHO ARE ARCHAEOLOGISTS?

Archaeologists are scientists who study people of the past using artifacts, written languages, and the environment. Lots of archaeologists work in this building!

WHAT'S AN ARTIFACT?

An artifact is anything made, modified, or used by a human. The Museum is full of them!

CAN YOU FIND ALL THESE ARTIFACTS?



5,200 YEARS AGO

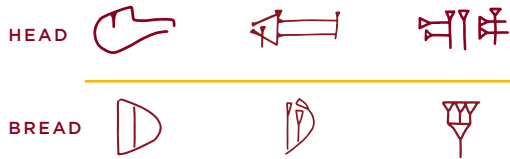
PEOPLE USED PICTURES TO COMMUNICATE. HOW CRAZY IS THAT

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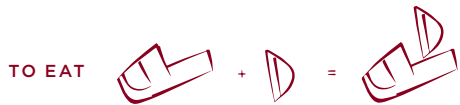
It's around 3200 BC, and there's a lot to keep track of in Mesopotamia's cities! Goods are being bought and sold, people are working and need to be paid, and workers need to be organized. People started using pictures to communicate and keep track of things. They wrote in wet clay using a stylus cut from a reed, creating triangle-shaped marks. We call this writing cuneiform, meaning "wedge-shaped."

Drawing all these pictures took a long time (and some talent!). What do you see happening to cuneiform writing over time?

Oldest (3000 BC) → Newest (600 BC)



The more people wrote, the more they wanted to say! They combined symbols to show more complex ideas, like eating or getting paid in grain:



WHY DOES THE SYMBOL FOR "BREAD" LOOK LIKE A BOWL?

The symbol for bread came from the symbol for rations. Check out the nearby bevel-rimmed bowl, which may have been used to pass out grain as payment to workers.



FIND EXAMPLES OF EARLY WRITING IN THE WRITING AREA.

- What did people first write down?
- When were letters, histories, and poetry first written? Can you guess why?
- What types of things do you like to write?



SAR: cuneiform for "garden," also used to write "to write."



TI: cuneiform for "arrow," also used to write "life."

THIS LAMASSU HASN'T LET HIS GUARD DOWN IN NEARLY 3,000 YEARS.

How did the lamassu get to the Museum?

The lamassu was found in twelve pieces and weighs about 40 tons! It took three months to bring it to the Museum using trucks, boats, and trains. The wall behind the lamassu was built after the sculpture was installed!

What was the lamassu for?

The lamassu stood at the door of the throneroom and protected the palace by keeping evil away.

What animals make up the lamassu?

This lamassu has a human head, bird wings, and the body and ears of a bull. The lamassu was thought to have the best characteristics of each animal.

What kind of crown is that?

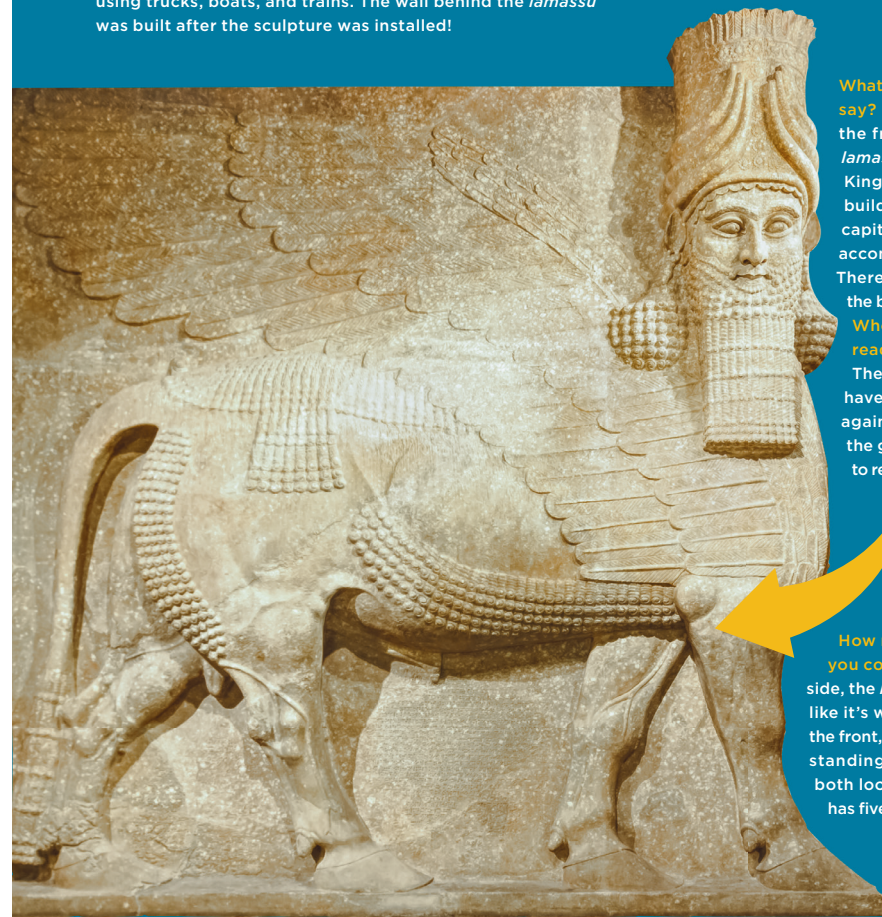
The lamassu wears a cylinder-shaped crown decorated with rosettes (flowers), feathers, and three pairs of horns. Horned crowns were only worn by divine beings in Mesopotamia. The more horns, the more powerful—making our lamassu a mighty gatekeeper.

What does this writing say? The writing on the front of the lamassu describes King Sargon II's building of a new capital city and his accomplishments. There is also text on the back of the lamassu.

Who would have read this writing?

The lamassu would have been set up against a wall, so only the gods would be able to read this hidden text.

How many legs can you count? From the side, the lamassu looks like it's walking, but from the front, it looks like it's standing still. To achieve both looks, the lamassu has five legs!



HIS DEATH REMAINS A MYSTERY. A NINE-YEAR-OLD WITH A BEARD? SOLVED.

King Tut ruled from age nine or ten until his death at age eighteen. How did he have a beard? He didn't! Look closely at this statue and you can see that this beard is shown strapped to Tut's chin. Pharaohs wore false beards to imitate Osiris, the god of the afterlife. Even female pharaohs, such as Hatshepsut, were shown with false beards.

2 What is King Tut holding? This remains a mystery. Some believe that King Tut is holding the base of a crook and flail, symbols of kingship, or two scrolls, or rolls of cloth. Others believe that the cylinders are ways to show empty space while preventing the hands from breaking, similar to the strips of stone behind Tut's beard and behind his left leg.

3 Whose small feet are these? These feet belonged to a statue of King Tut's wife, Ankhesenamun [ANK-es-en-AH-mun], which was lost in ancient times. Tut's wife is shown smaller than he is because this statue was made for Tut's temple. Since Tut was the most important person at his own temple, he was shown much larger than his wife. Her small size is no slight, though—that she is shown with Tut indicates that she was still important.

4 The cobra on King Tut's crown is called a uraeus [yoo-RAY-us]. It was a symbol of protection and royal power.

Take a look at the hieroglyphs on the back of this statue. Can you find these cartouches?
A cartouche is an oval symbol used to magically protect a pharaoh's name.



Tut's throne name,
Neb Kheperu Ra



Tut's birth name,
Tutankhamun

If you can't, it's because they aren't there! Tut died before this statue was finished. Names were added to statues last, since names were so important to ancient Egyptians and gave statues their power. The next pharaoh, Aye, had his name put on the statue when he took the throne. The pharaoh after him, Horemheb, had Aye's name removed and his own name inscribed, which is the name you see today.

HOW TO READ THE ANCIENT WRITING ON THE WALL

Hieroglyphs were only one of the writing systems used in ancient Egypt! Hieratic, Demotic, and Coptic were all used at various times for everyday writing, while hieroglyphs were used for monumental inscriptions—important and permanent carvings and paintings found in tombs, temples, and palaces.

Ancient Egyptians called hieroglyphs “the god’s words” and believed that the writing had been given to them by the god of wisdom, Thoth. Egyptians believed that things written in hieroglyphs would be magically made to happen over and over again.

Because hieroglyphs are pictures, they could be written right-to-left, left-to-right, and top-to-bottom (but never bottom-to-top!). They were arranged to be beautiful, not easy to read. Symbols would also be rearranged to put the gods’ names at the top of an inscription. Hieroglyphs symbolized both sounds and ideas, and included only consonants.

RESTORATION QUESTION

This statue was restored when it was brought to the OI almost one hundred years ago, meaning that things that were broken or missing were put back together to look like what we know or think they would have looked like in ancient Egypt. Today, museums don't usually restore objects in this way. How would your experience of this statue change if it were left unrestored? Do you think we should restore ancient objects or leave them how they were found?

CAN YOU FIND THESE COMMON HIEROGLYPHIC PHRASES IN THE GALLERY?

See if you can find the objects in the gallery that some of these signs are based on.



An offering that the king gives (Hint: Start with our cover mummy, Meresamun—ancient Egyptians believed hieroglyphs were essential to helping the dead live on in the afterlife!)



Writing



Given life



Living Horus



Bread (each symbol shows a different kind of bread!)



Water (Hint: Look at paintings!)



Folded cloth

HIEROGLYPHS: WHERE PICTURES ARE WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS

WHAT ARE ANATOLIAN HIEROGLYPHS?

Anatolian hieroglyphs are a type of writing that was created in ancient Turkey. These hieroglyphs began as pictographic symbols, where a picture represented a specific word.

In the sixteenth century BC, the hieroglyphs evolved to include phonetization [fo-NET-ta-ZAY-shun], where pictures could also represent sounds, similar to the English alphabet. These sounds were based on Luwian and Hittite languages.

These hieroglyphs were often used for monumental inscriptions, and they were read throughout Anatolia. Worshipers and travelers, not just the upper classes, could see and read many of the signs.

USE THE "WRITING IN SYRO-ANATOLIA" EXHIBIT TO FIND FAMILIAR SIGNS IN THIS FRAGMENT OF A THRONE.

- Can you find one tall triangle (city) or two tall triangles (country)?
- Look for body parts. Can you find hands and feet, or a hand holding a dagger (strong)?
- Look for other familiar symbols. What might they represent? Can you find anything in the gallery that looks like these symbols?



"Uwa," meaning ox or cow, or "u" sound from uwa



"Tarkasna," meaning donkey or mule, or "ta" sound from tarkasna



"Lala," meaning tongue, or "la" sound from lala



"Miu," meaning four, or "mi" sound from miu

FROM THE DAWN OF CIVILIZATION TO THE END OF IT. MEGIDDO IS FAMOUS FOR BOTH.

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TAKE A LOOK AT THE LAMPS ON DISPLAY

How have they changed over time? What has stayed the same?

What might a lamp look like in the future?



FUTURE?

TODAY?

IRON AGE LAMP



LATE BRONZE AGE LAMP



MIDDLE BRONZE AGE LAMP



EARLY BRONZE AGE LAMP



What does a lamp look like today?



Megiddo is an ancient site in Israel where people lived for thousands of years. It's legendary for its eight millennia of human activity and for being the site of the next-to-last battle between good and evil known as Armageddon. (*Armageddon* is the Greek name for Megiddo.) Over time, people built on the ruins left behind by previous groups, forming a man-made hill that archaeologists call a tell. When archaeologists excavate a tell, they look at the site's stratigraphy—all the different layers of stuff left behind. Each layer shows a different part of the history of this site.

By studying the stratigraphy of a site, archaeologists can look at how things changed over time.



What is a clay lamp, anyway?
Clay lamps were used for light. The basin was filled with oil, and a wick was laid in the oil with one end on the spout. The wick was lit like a candle.

STRATIGRAPHY OF MEGIDDO

THE EMPIRE WHERE ARCHITECTURE WAS (AND STILL IS) KING



The missing horns and ears may have been made of gilded wood or solid gold.

This flat space would have held a massive wooden roof beam. While the column stands just under 3 m today, the real column would have been 16.5–19.5 m tall (that's at least three of our King Tut statues stacked on top of each other!).

Many of the columns at Persepolis were topped by capitals that included bull protomes (the front halves of the bulls). This type of double-protome capital is typical of Achaemenid architecture.

The flower-like capital of palm fronds and leaves was inspired by Egyptian art.

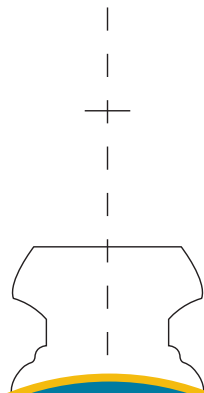
The fluted column was made in a Greek Ionian style.

Persepolis was a great city of the mighty Achaemenid Persian empire, the largest empire ever to exist at that time, over 2,500 years ago. Despite its military and political power, the architecture of the palaces and halls at Persepolis emphasized the welcoming, inclusive nature of the empire. Many of the artistic details show the empire's respect for the cultural diversity of its peoples.

Persepolis was famously sacked and burned by Alexander the Great in 330 BC, but many monuments, like this column with double-bull capital, were preserved.

WHAT STYLES AND ANIMALS WOULD YOU INCLUDE IN YOUR PALACE?

Draw your own double protome capital above.



HISTORY HAS MANY STORYTELLERS, SOME OF WHOM AREN'T EVEN HUMAN.

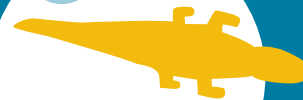
Many groups of people lived in ancient Nubia, first bringing pottery to the area and living as hunters and herdsmen, then becoming farmers and famous archers. They traded with, lived with, and sometimes ruled their neighbors to the north—the Egyptians—and created beautiful pottery and other goods, many decorated with patterns and animals.

TAKE A LOOK AROUND THE NUBIAN GALLERY

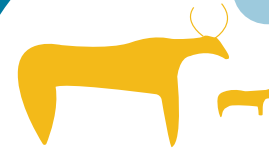
Can you find the artifacts these animals belong to? Check them off as you go!



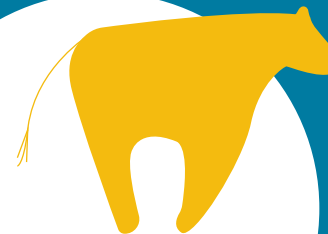
This feline creature is from an artifact famous for showing an early relationship between Nubia and Egypt.



This crocodile adorned an important warrior's possession.



This cow and calf may have symbolized the power of someone who had passed away.



Find this cow among many others on a beautifully decorated bowl.



These cartoonish creatures can be found on playfully decorated Meroitic pottery.

MUSEUM INFORMATION

MUSEUM AND SUQ GIFT SHOP HOURS

Tue, Thur–Sun: 10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.
Wed: 10:00 a.m.–8:00 p.m.
Mon: Closed

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oi.uchicago.edu/member

DISCOVER OUR COLLECTIVE IDENTITY

Understand the origin story of our lives as humans together through programs, events, tours, workshops, and education courses.
oi.uchicago.edu/programs

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How many fifth graders would it take to weigh as much as the *lamassu*?
(Around 1,066 of them!)



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