

The Oriental Institute Museum

Highlights from the Collection



Found in the Ramesseum at Thebes, this painted funerary stela was erected to commemorate the lady Djed-Khonsu-es-ankh. The deceased woman, in a diaphanous white gown, wears a cone of perfumed beeswax and a water lily on her head. She pours a libation

over a table of food offerings and raises her hand to greet the seated god Re-Harakhty, a form of the ancient Egyptian sun god. The hieroglyphic signs offer a prayer asking the gods to supply food and drink for the survival of her spirit in the netherworld.

2. Funerary Stela

Wood
Thebes, Dynasty 22
ca. 946-712 B.C.





3. Relief from the Tomb of Mentuemhat

Limestone
Thebes, Late Period
ca. 690-660 B.C.

5. Painted Jar

Baked clay
Iranian Central Plateau
Saveh (?), Early Plateau Period
early 5th millennium B.C.



4. Beaker with Geometric Designs and Birds

Baked clay
Tepe Giyan
Giyān II Period
ca. 1500 B.C.



3. The ancient Egyptians decorated the walls of their tombs with elaborate scenes showing the type of life they wished to live after death. This relief fragment comes from the tomb of Mentuemhat, a governor of Thebes. One of the most powerful men of his time, Mentuemhat was able to employ the best artists to carve and paint scenes of abundance that would satisfy his every need in the afterlife. Here oarsmen paddle boats, loaded with baskets of fruit, through waters teeming with fish.

4. Archaeologists working in Iran at Tepe Giyan during 1931 and 1932 excavated 119 burials which date to five successive periods. Among the vessels characteristic of the Giyan II Period were ones whose

decoration combined geometric patterns with representations of small suns and birds. This beaker, acquired by the archaeologist Ernst Herzfeld prior to the 1930's excavations, thus can be dated by its decoration to Giyan II.

5. This handmade vessel has a lozenge pattern on the shoulder painted in black on a plum-red burnished surface. This type of ware and decoration are characteristic of a phase in the development of Iranian civilization on the central plateau that is often called "Cheshmeh Ali" after a site of that name near Tehran.

6. This ring was probably used as a libation vessel during religious ceremonies in ancient Palestine. It consists of a hollow clay ring with hollow clay attachments in the forms of a gazelle head, two jars, two pomegranates, two doves, and a cup. Wine or water would have been poured into the cup from which the doves are drinking and circulated through the various other objects, thus symbolizing the fertility of the earth and its produce.

7. This simply formed and elaborately decorated nursing female probably represents a Cypriot mother goddess. Her facial features (including ears pierced for added earrings)

7. Mother Nursing Child

Baked clay
Cyprus, Middle Bronze Age
ca. 1850-1600 B.C.

and her limbs, breasts, and navel (?) are rudimentarily indicated. Bands of incisions suggest necklaces encircling her neck and patterns on her long, sheath-like garment. In her arms she holds an elaborate cradle containing an infant who suckles from her left breast.



6. Kernos Ring

Baked clay
Megiddo, Iron Age I
ca. 1175-1100 B.C.



The Oriental Institute Museum is a showcase of the history, art and archaeology of the ancient Near East. An integral part of the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute, which has supported research and archaeological excavation in the Near East since 1919, the Museum exhibits major collections of antiquities from Egypt, Mesopotamia, Iran, Syria, Palestine, and Anatolia.

Visitors to the Museum are given a glimpse into the fascinating world of ancient man. Three millennia of civilization in the ancient Near East saw the rise of mighty nations in Egypt, Anatolia, Mesopotamia and Iran. Smaller kingdoms, too, left traces for the archaeologists. To see the artifacts left by these people is to look back at the beginnings of some of mankind's most fundamental endeavors. Sculptures and relief carvings depict the people themselves, as well as their gods and goddesses. Monumental statues proclaim the glory of their kings. Clay tablets, papyrus scrolls and inscriptions on stone show the development of their writing systems and document many aspects of their lives. Objects used in daily life display their skill in decorative arts and reveal the refinement of their tastes.

Unlike many more widely known museum collections, whose objects were acquired by purchase, the majority of the artifacts in the Oriental Institute Museum were found as a result of the Institute's own archaeological expeditions. These excavated artifacts have an additional and special importance, not only because they are known to be authentic, but also because scholars gain scientific and historical information from the circumstances of their discovery. This knowledge adds immeasurably to the collection's scientific value and to the quality of exhibitions in the museum.

This small book highlights objects chosen to illuminate some of the more interesting and important aspects of ancient Near Eastern civilizations. The information it contains is only a brief glimpse into those complex and fascinating cultures, and is intended as an enticement to you to dig deeper into the world of ancient man.

The Oriental Institute Museum houses nearly 30,000 Egyptian artifacts that were acquired through a combination of purchases and archaeological excavations. James Henry Breasted, who founded the Oriental Institute in 1919, purchased the core of the collection in Egypt between 1894 and 1935. During the same years, a broad range of artifacts was donated by the Egypt Exploration Fund (now Society) and the British School of Archaeology in Egypt. These gifts were an acknowledgement of the Oriental Institute's financial sponsorship of the work of British archaeologists and came from their excavations. In addition, the Oriental Institute's own excavations from 1926–1932 at Medinet Habu added extensive New Kingdom and later materials to the growing collection. Today, the Oriental Institute Museum's Egyptian collection is one of the largest and most complete in the United States. It is particularly strong in artifacts that illustrate aspects of ancient Egyptian daily life, religion, and funerary practices.



8. Reconstructed Predynastic Burial

*Naga el-Deir, Naqada, Abadiyeh, Predynastic Period
ca. 3600-3200 B.C.*

Wrapped in reeds and buried in a pit in the Egyptian desert more than 5000 years ago, this body was completely enveloped by hot, dry sand which dehydrated and preserved it. The clay vessels and the slate palette with grinding stone, used to pulverize mineral pigments for cosmetics,

are examples of objects placed with the deceased for use in the next life. This mummy, created by naturally occurring environmental conditions, predates Egyptian embalming practices of the pharaonic period by hundreds of years.



9. Predynastic Jar

*Baked clay
Gerzean (Naqada III) Period
ca. 3600-3200 B.C.*

Most striking of the painted designs on this pot are the boats, carrying banks of oars, cabins or shrines, and standards. Other decorations include a large bird, probably an ostrich, and images evocative of the hills and water of Upper Egypt, where this vessel

was made. Four pierced beak-shaped lugs near the rim were probably used to tie a lid securely in place. Hand-made pots with painted decorations like these were characteristic of the Gerzean period.



10. Model of a Butcher's Shop

*Painted wood
Dynasty XI-XII
ca. 2100-1780 B.C.*

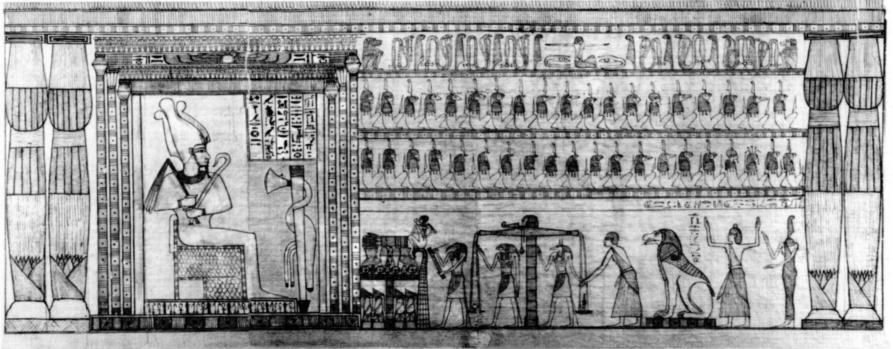
A butcher's shop, like the one represented by this model, was part of many large estates in ancient Egypt. On the ground-level

floor, a trussed bovine is being slaughtered while workmen go about their related tasks. A stairway at the right side of the shop leads to

the second floor where two figures stand, cleavers raised, perhaps to receive the meat for carving. Painted wooden models of daily

life activities were commonly placed in Middle Kingdom tombs to serve the deceased in the next life.

Copies of the Book of the Dead were placed in the tomb to ensure for the owner safe passage into the netherworld. This section of papyrus from one of these books shows the judgment of the soul. The deceased stands before Osiris, the god of the dead, who judges his worthiness to enter the next life by assessing his earthly deeds. The falcon-headed god Horus, the ibis-headed god of writing Thoth, and the jackal god Anubis attend the judgment as the deceased's heart is weighed against the feather of Maat, representing truth and justice.

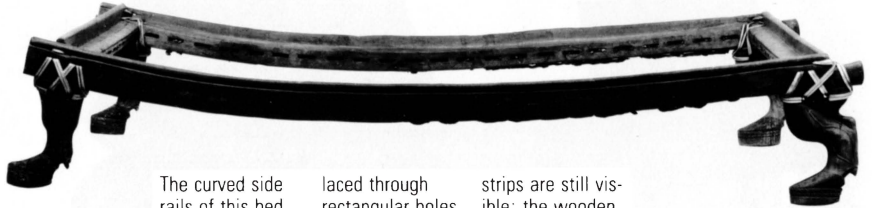


11. Book of the Dead

*Papyrus and ink
Ptolemaic Period
ca. 332-30 B.C.*

12. Bed

*Wood and leather
Archaic Period
ca. 3100-2907 B.C.*



The curved side rails of this bed are lashed with leather thongs (restored) to the end rails and the feet, which are carved in the shape of bulls' legs. Leather strips were

laced through rectangular holes in the inner sides and bottoms of the rails to provide a woven or lattice-work base to support the sleeper. (Remnants of the original leather

strips are still visible; the wooden slats are modern.) A wooden bed like this one would have belonged only to a member of the wealthy class.

13. Mud Brick Stamped with Cartouche of Ramses II

*Sun-dried mud and straw
Thebes, Dynasty 19
ca. 1279-1212 B.C.*

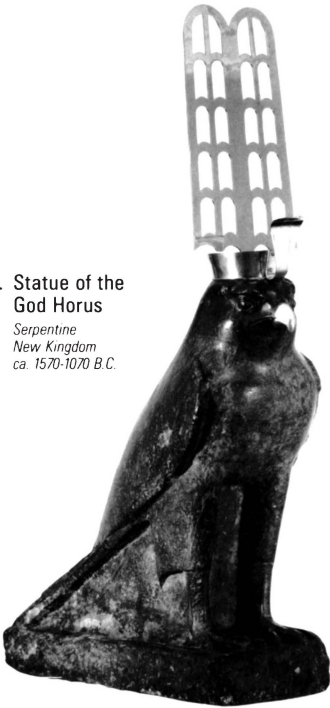


Although the ancient Egyptians are best known for their stone monuments, they also used mud bricks extensively for building. This brick, which bears the cartouche of Ramses II, was found within the walls of his great mortuary temple, the Ramesseum, along with many reused bricks

stamped with the names of his predecessors. The bricks were made from river mud and straw, shaped in wooden molds and left to dry in the sun; the cartouche was stamped on the brick while it was still damp and soft.

14. Statue of the God Horus

*Serpentine
New Kingdom
ca. 1570-1070 B.C.*



This statue represents the falcon god Horus, one of the most important ancient Egyptian gods. The beak and headdress have been restored to suggest the originals, which were almost certainly made of gold. A narrow passage from the base of the statue to the head may have been used for the

insertion of cords to manipulate the original beak and headdress. Perhaps in that way the statue functioned as an oracle—a medium through which the god made known his knowledge and purpose.

Ny-kau-Inpu, an official who was probably buried in a mastaba at Giza, included in his tomb a series of statuettes of his family and household servants. This tiny figure of a potter

It is uncertain whether this small relief is a student's practice piece or the unfinished work of a trained sculptor. Although the figure wears no royal insignia, it is probably the Pharaoh Akhenaten, depicted in the exaggerated style of the Early Period of Amarna art. The king's strange facial features—which served as a

model for all human representations during his reign—include narrow slanting eyes, long nose, hollow cheeks, thick lips, and hanging chin. Akhenaten wears a short 'Nubian' or military-style wig; the detailing of the curls has been left uncarved.



15. Trial Piece

*Limestone
El-Amarna (?), Dynasty 18
ca. 1350-1334 B.C.*

This idealized, youthful 'portrait' of an unidentified private individual is an outstanding example of Middle Kingdom sculpture. It was commissioned by a man who could afford to hire the best of sculptors to fashion in stone the likeness he would bear for all eternity. The narrow almond-

shaped eyes, full face, and large ears are typical of works of this period, as are the heavy rippled wig with pointed lappets and the wrap-around garment, the top of which is visible on the left side of the chest.

16. Bust of a Man

*Red quartzite
Middle Kingdom
ca. 1875-1782 B.C.*



17. Potter

*Painted limestone
Giza (?), Dynasty 5-6
ca. 2544-2260 B.C.*



forming a vessel upon a potter's wheel was one of those statuettes, which as a group seem to represent the staff of a typical prosperous estate owner in Old Kingdom Egypt. By includ-

ing in his tomb representations of things important to him in his lifetime, Ny-kau-Inpu sought to take them with him into the afterlife.

EGYPT



18. Colossal Statue of Tutankhamun

*Red quartzite
Thebes, Dynasty 18
ca. 1334-1325 B.C.*

Oriental Institute archaeologists working at Thebes excavated this statue of King Tutankhamun. It had been usurped by succeeding kings and now bears the name of Horem-

heb. Tutankhamun wears the double crown and the royal *nemes* headcloth of the pharaohs; a protective cobra goddess (*uraeus* serpent) rears above his forehead. The facial

features of this statue strongly resemble other representations of the king from his famous tomb, which was discovered relatively intact in the Valley of the Kings.

Mummy masks were a traditional part of the funerary provisions with which ancient Egyptians supplied their tombs for the life they believed would continue after death. This burial mask of an Egyptian lady is made of layers of linen and gesso, painted and gilded, with features that repre-

sent the dead woman. It originally covered the head and shoulders of her mummified body. Scenes of the deceased worshipping a god in the netherworld appear along the lower edge of the mask.



19. Mummy Mask

*Cartonnage
Early Roman Period
ca. 30 B.C.-25 A.D.*



20. Coffin of Ipi-Ha-Ishutef

*Painted wood
Saqqara, First Intermediate Period
ca. 2213-2035 B.C.*

A man named Ipi-ha-ishutef commissioned this coffin and had it decorated with inscriptions and pictures designed to assist him in the afterlife. The interior of the lid contains spells to protect him and to facilitate his passage to the netherworld. The 'Eyes of Horus' painted at the head end were to enable him to look out, while

the painted doorway behind them was to allow his soul to pass through to visit the outer world. The remainder of the coffin's interior bears representations of items that the deceased had used on earth and would need in the afterlife, such as food, drink, clothing, and weapons, as well as royal insignia.

From 1928–1935, the Oriental Institute conducted excavations at the site of Khorsabad in northern Iraq. Called Dur Sharrukin (“Fortress of Sargon”) in ancient times, this capital city was built by the Neo-Assyrian king Sargon II (ca. 721–705 B.C.) and abandoned shortly after his death. The bulk of the museum’s Assyrian collection comes from those excavations and is best known for the colossal human-headed winged bull and the carved stone reliefs that lined the principal rooms of the palace.

Anatolia—the Asiatic portion of modern Turkey—is represented in the museum primarily by artifacts from Oriental Institute excavations in the early 1930s at the site of Alishar Hüyük. These objects illustrate particularly well the material culture of that single region and document in detail its development.

The Syrian collection derives largely from Oriental Institute excavations in the Amuq—an area once located in Syria but now a part of Turkey. Acquired between 1932 and 1938, these artifacts span the history of northern Syria from earliest times to the Roman period. They are augmented by materials from the Oriental Institute’s work at other Syrian sites, including Tell Fakhariyah near the Khabor River.

This colossal sculpture was one of a pair that guarded the entrance to the throne room of King Sargon II. A protective spirit known as a *lamassu*, it is shown as a composite being with the head of a human, the body and ears of a bull, and the wings of a bird. When viewed from the side, the creature appears to be walking; when viewed from the front, to be standing still. Thus it is actually represented with five, rather than four, legs.



21. Human-Headed Winged Bull

Gypsum (?)
Khorsabad, Neo-Assyrian Period
ca. 721–705 B.C.



22. Assyrian Soldiers Towing a Boat

Gypsum
Khorsabad, Neo-Assyrian Period
ca. 721–705 B.C.

Archaeologists from the Oriental Institute discovered this relief fragment in the debris of the throne room of King Sargon II. The fragment shows naked Assyrian soldiers towing a boat through a shallow river during one of Sargon’s campaigns against Marduk-apla-iddina II, king of Babylon, whose name is inscribed

in the text above the scene. According to the Biblical account, that same Babylonian king (referred to as Merodach Baladan) sent envoys with presents to Hezekiah, king of Judah, upon his recovery from illness (cf. II Kings 20; Isaiah 39).

ASSYRIA

The elaborate sculptural decoration of King Sargon II's palace at Khorsabad was a visual expression of the power of the king and his empire. This larger-than-life-size relief comes from a wall just outside the throne room. Two court officials—who are beardless and,

therefore, identifiable as eunuchs—are shown marching toward the king. The second figure motions to the line of tribute bearers that stood behind him to come forward with their gifts.



23. Two Assyrian Officials

Gypsum
Khorsabad, Neo-Assyrian Period
ca. 721-705 B.C.

24. Deity Holding a Flowing Vase

Gypsum
Khorsabad, Neo-Assyrian Period
ca. 721-705 B.C.

One of a pair of sculptures that flanked a temple doorway, this god holds a vessel from which flow four streams of water—two rising over his shoulders to flow down his back and two streaming down the front of his garment. He is probably a fertility deity, an embodiment of the life-giving and life-sustaining forces within fresh water. This statue and its companion may also have served as supports, as there are saucer-like hollows cut into the square blocks resting on their crowns.



25. Bronze Band

Bronze
Khorsabad, Neo-Assyrian Period
ca. 721-705 B.C.

A pair of cedar poles—possibly supports for divine emblems—flanked the doorway to the temple of the sun god Shamash at Dur Sharrukin. They were encircled by bronze

bands such as this one, decorated with scenes in relief. In the upper register, the king is shown grasping two massive bulls by their horns. This ancient motif,

known as “the master of animals,” perhaps symbolized the dominance, vitality, and potency of the reigning monarch.

This gracefully shaped pitcher was a mortuary gift in a communal burial chamber. The highly polished exterior has a brown-red slip and shows striations of the polishing stone. Two breast-like protuberances placed on the upper body of

the vessel lend it a slight anthropomorphic air. The elegant spout curves upward from the neck and is supplied with a strainer to remove impurities from the liquid that was poured through it.



26. Pitcher with Built-in Strainer

*Baked clay
Alishar Hüyük
Assyrian Colony Period
ca. 1900-1750 B.C.*

This krater is made of a specific ware named after the Palestinian site of Khirbet Kerak, where it was first discovered. Vessels of Khirbet Kerak ware were formed by hand and completely covered with a brilliantly polished wash, originally orange-red in color but turned to black on the exterior by specialized treatment during firing. This large pot bears a typical decoration of flutings and zigzags, perhaps in imitation of metal prototypes.



29. Krater of Khirbet Kerak Ware

*Baked clay
Tell Ta'yinat, Early Bronze Age
(Amuq Phase H)
ca. 2900-2500 B.C.*

28. Bronze Statuettes

*Bronze with silver-rich alloy
Tell Judaidah
Early Bronze Age
(Amuq Phase G)
ca. 3100-2900 B.C.*



Archaeologists found these statuettes in a cache that contained three male and three female figurines. They are the earliest known metal castings of human figures in the round from Syria. The males wear broad belts and

helmets covered with a silver alloy; they probably once held weapons in their upraised hands. The naked female's hair is held in place with a headband and bound in the back in

an elaborate chignon. She crosses her arms and grasps her breasts in her hands—a common ancient pose that probably connotes fertility.

27. Pair of Bull Statuettes

*Bronze with copper-arsenic plating (?)
Central Anatolia
Early Bronze Age
ca. 2300-2000 B.C.*



These two bulls probably once adorned the top of a royal or divine standard (or the tops of a pair of such standards). The treatment of their

surfaces is unusual—one half of each bull was covered with what may be a copper-arsenic plating (probably originally silver in color), the other

half with copper. While the copper surface has become corroded, the portion covered with the arsenical metal remains essentially intact.

A naked female and a partially clothed male are represented by this unique pair of red-coated stone figurines. Hair or headdresses made of a separate material were probably once attached to the pegs atop their heads. The male, who stands with his hands at his sides, wears a loincloth tied

at the back. The female grasps her breasts with her hands—a common ancient pose that probably connotes fertility. She appears to be naked except for some type of foot-gear applied to her stump-like feet.



30. Male and Female Figures

Gypsum with bitumen and stone inlays
Tell Fakhar-yah
ca. 1300-1000 B.C.

32. Victorious Assyrian Soldiers

Limestone
Tell Ta'yinat, Iron Age
(Amuq Phase O)
ca. 750-725 B.C.



After they had conquered Tell Ta'yinat, the Assyrians carved these reliefs and used them to decorate a palace or public structure. The scene shows victorious Assyrian soldiers carrying the cut-off heads of their defeated enemies to a location where the

number of those slain would be counted. Beneath the soldiers' feet lie the decapitated bodies. At a later date, perhaps after the decline of Assyrian power, the reliefs were re-used, face-down, as paving stones.

33. Cypriot Juglet

Baked clay
Tell Ta'yinat, Iron Age
(Amuq Phase O)
ca. 1000-500 B.C.



Vessels such as this one were imported into Syria from Cyprus in ancient times, during a period of strong commercial contacts between that island and the Levant. This juglet belongs to a type of pottery known as "bichrome ware" because of its

painted decoration in black and red. It is the work of a talented potter who used geometric ornament—such as the concentric circles on the globular body—not only to harmonize with, but even to enhance, the shape of the vessel.

31. Female Sphinx

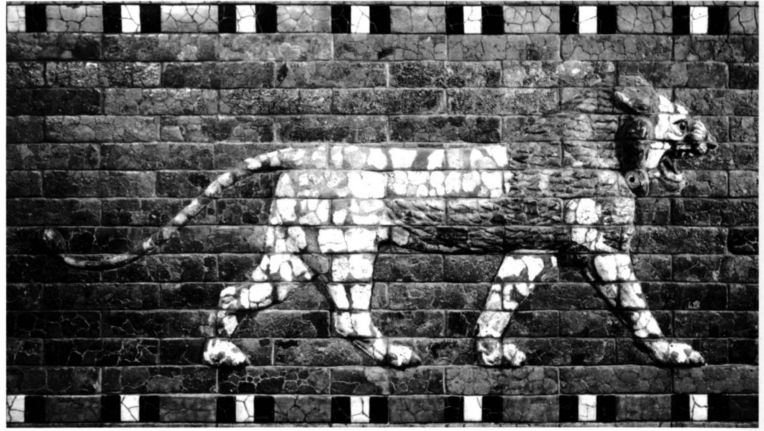
Basalt inlaid with white and green stone
Tell Ta'yinat, Iron Age
(Amuq Phase O)
ca. 800 B.C.



This recumbent sphinx of local Syrian manufacture has an unusually vivacious character due to the position of the head, which is turned sideways with the chin slightly raised, not at the stiff right angle often found in ancient Near

Eastern sculpture. Its hair is secured with a headband knotted at the back of the head and falls in two large curls onto its breast. The dowel hole in the base of the body indicates that it was part of some large object—possibly an arm of a stone throne.

Mesopotamia—the land between the rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates—is an ancient Greek term used by archaeologists to refer to the area now roughly equivalent to the modern country of Iraq. The Mesopotamian collection of the Oriental Institute Museum was acquired almost exclusively through archaeological excavations. The first of these—the University of Chicago Oriental Exploration Fund's expedition to Bismaya (ancient Adab)—worked in Iraq from 1903–1905. During the 1930's, the Babylonian Section of the Iraq Expedition excavated four sites on the lower Diyala River, and today the Nippur Expedition is continuing its work, begun in 1948, at the holy city of Nippur. The material that has been brought back as a result of divisions of finds from these expeditions forms one of the major world collections, covering in depth the civilization of ancient Mesopotamia.



34. Striding Lion

*Molded and glazed brick
Babylon, Neo-Babylonian Period
ca. 604-562 B.C.*

This colorful striding lion, its mouth opened in a threatening roar, once decorated a side of the 'Processional Way' in ancient Babylon (the Biblical city of Babel). The 'Processional Way' led out of the city through a massive gate

named for the Mesopotamian goddess of love and war, Ishtar, whose symbol was the lion. Each year, during the celebration of the great New Year Festival, the images of the city's deities

were carried out through the Ishtar Gate and along the 'Processional Way' past some 120 lions such as this one to a special festival house north of the city.

35. Four-Lugged Vessel

*Baked clay
Khalajah, Jamdat Nasr Period
ca. 3100-2900 B.C.*



Short, squat jars with painted decoration on the shoulder and four pierced lugs are characteristic of the period around 3000 B.C. in Mesopotamia. Many are decorated with only geometric designs; on this vessel

a tree was added beneath each lug. Probably strings were passed through the lugs and used to tie a lid securely in place over the jar's low neck, thus safeguarding its contents.

36. Female Figurine

*Baked clay
Tell Asmar
Ur III/Isin-Larsa Period
ca. 2100-1800 B.C.*



Figurines like this one have been found in the excavated remains of Mesopotamian houses, temples, and other public buildings of the early second millennium B.C. Their exact function is not known. This female has characteristic broad, flat hips, a large and elaborately incised pubic triangle, and prominent breasts with applied disk-shaped nipples. The multiple holes pierced at the sides of her head may have held metal earrings or served to fasten the piece to a separate material, such as cloth.

MESOPOTAMIA

37. Clay Prism of Sennacherib

*Baked clay
Nineveh (?)
Neo-Assyrian Period
ca. 689 B.C.*



On the six inscribed sides of this clay prism, King Sennacherib recorded eight military campaigns undertaken against various peoples who refused to submit to Assyrian domination. In all instances, he claims to have

been victorious. As part of the third campaign, he besieged Jerusalem and imposed heavy tribute on Hezekiah, King of Judah—a story also related in the

Bible, where Sennacherib is said to have been defeated by “the angel of the Lord,” who slew 185,000 Assyrian soldiers (II Kings 18-19).

This elaborate vessel was discovered in the Shara Temple where it was probably used to place offerings before the god. The decoration of its openwork support shows a hero, naked except for a double-strand belt, grasping the rumps of two lions in his hands. The curling tails of two additional lions are tucked under his arms, and all four felines menace a bearded bull at the opposite end of the stand. Series of figures such as these, engaged in static combats, are common in ancient Mesopotamian art. Their exact meaning is unknown.

38. Cup Supported by Hero and Animals

*Gypsum (?)
Tell Agrab, Jamdat Nasr
Early Dynastic I Period
ca. 3100-2750 B.C.*



39. Four-Faced God and Goddess

*Bronze
Ishchali, Old Babylonian Period
18-17th century B.C.*



Illicit diggers found these four-faced statuettes, which may represent a god of the four winds and a goddess of rain-storms. The god wears a low cap with a pair of horns meeting above each face. He carries a scimitar in his right hand and places his left foot upon the back of a crouching ram.

The goddess' tall crown, again with a pair of horns above each face, has the shape of a temple facade or altar. She grasps in her hands a vase from which flow streams of water; a rippled water pattern covers her garment.

MESOPOTAMIA



40. Sumerian Statuette

Gypsum (?)
inlaid with shell
and black limestone (?)
Tell Asmar, Early Dynastic Period
ca. 2900-2600 B.C.

During the Early Dynastic Period in Mesopotamia, statuettes were placed in sanctuaries as votive offerings and were later buried when the temple was remodelled or rebuilt. This representation of a Sumerian standing reverently before his god is one of a group of

sculptures found buried in a pit next to the altar of the Abu Temple at Tell Asmar. It is thought to depict a priest because it lacks the full beard and long hair of other male statues of its type.

42. Clay Tablet and Envelope

Baked clay
Nuzi, Mitannian Period
second half of the
15th century B.C.



Enclosed in its clay envelope, this tablet was stored in a private archive of more than 1,000 texts. The tablet records the outcome of a litigation between two men, both of whom claimed to own the same estate. The judges ruled in favor of the individual who provided written statements attesting to his ownership of the

land from residents of nine neighboring towns. Two court officials rolled their cylinder seals across the front of the tablet after it was inscribed, guaranteeing that the information it contained was correct.

41. Banquet Plaque

Gypsum
Khafajah, Early Dynastic II-III Period
ca. 2700-2600 B.C.



On this plaque a seated man and woman celebrate an unidentified event or ritual by participating in a banquet. Two servants attend them, others bring food and drink while musicians and dancers accompany the celebration. Plaques such as this were part

of a door-locking system for important buildings. The plaque was embedded in the doorjamb and a peg, inserted into the central perforation, was used to hold a hook or cord that secured the door and was covered with clay impressed by one or more seals.

43. Gazelle-Head Stamp Seal/Amulet

Gypsum (?)
Jamdat Nasr/Early
Dynastic I Period
ca. 3100-2750 B.C.



In central and southern Mesopotamia, both stamp and cylinder seals appeared together near the end of the third millennium B.C. Many stamp seals

were carved in the form of an animal or an animal head, and the sealing surface was decorated with simple designs—often representing animals—comprised

of drill-holes and incised lines. It is possible that many of the stamps were not actually used as seals but were worn primarily as amulets.

MESOPOTAMIA



44. Cylinder Seal

Black stone
Akkadian Period
ca. 2254-2193 B.C.

Impressions of cylinder seals conveyed information regarding ownership and authenticity and also showed that a container or door fastening had not been opened since last

sealed. This cylinder seal was dedicated to a little-known goddess, Ninishkun, who is shown interceding on the owner's behalf with the goddess Ishtar.

Ishtar places her right foot upon a roaring lion, which she restrains with a leash. The scimitar in her left hand and the weapons

sprouting from her wings indicate her warlike nature.



45. Pazuzu Demon

Bronze
ca. 800-600 B.C.

The demon Pazuzu represented by this figurine stands like a human but has a scorpion's body, feathered wings and legs, talons, and a lion-like face on both front and back. Pazuzu, the "king of the evil wind demons," was not entirely unfriendly to mankind. As an enemy of the

dreaded Lamashtu demon, bearer of sickness especially to women and children, Pazuzu is often portrayed on amulets used as protection in childbirth. The ring at the top of this figurine suggests it was such an amulet.

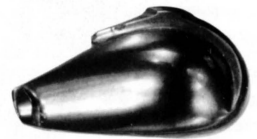
47. Plaque Showing a Harpist

Baked clay
Isin-Larsa Old
Babylonian Period
ca. 2000-1600 B.C.



Harpis are known from the earliest period of written history, but the fringed robe and close-fitting cap of this harpist are typical for the early second millennium B.C. in Mesopotamia. Clay plaques from this period depict musicians playing a variety of

stringed, percussion and wind instruments. The casting of plaques was a simple and inexpensive way to produce relief images, since numerous plaques could be made from a single mold.



46. Duck Weights

Hematite
Ishchali (?)
early second
millennium B.C.

The Mesopotamians used sets of standard weights in conducting business and set stiff penalties for those who used false weights. The weights themselves were usually made of a very hard stone like hematite.

A simple barrel shape was the most common form, but weights such as these in the form of a duck, with its neck and head resting along its back, were also prevalent.

A major portion of the Oriental Institute's important collection of Iranian objects comes from its own excavations. Prehistoric materials are particularly well represented as the result of three seasons of work begun in 1932 at the site of Tall-i-Bakun in the plain of Persepolis and twelve seasons in the 1960's and 1970's at Chogha Mish in modern Khuzestan. The museum houses a rich collection of Achaemenid art—including monumental architectural sculptures—that were obtained as divisions of finds after Oriental Institute excavations at Persepolis in the 1930's. A broad chronological and typological range of artifacts discovered by the Holmes Luristan Expedition (1934–38), Luristan and Amlash bronzes purchased on the art market, and items bought from the personal collection of Ernst Herzfeld, who began the Institute's Persepolis excavations, form important complements to the prehistoric and Achaemenid materials.



48. Colossal Bull Head

*Dark gray limestone
Persepolis, Achaemenid Period
ca. 485–424 B.C.*

Carved in the court style typical of the Achaemenid Empire, this highly polished stone head originally belonged to one of two guardian bulls flanking the portico of the hundred-columned Throne Hall at Persepolis. The heads of the bulls projected in the round and the bodies were carved in relief

on the sidewalls of the porch; the ears and horns had been added separately. The use of pairs of guardian figures such as these to protect important buildings was a common architectural feature in the ancient Near East.



49. Frieze of Striding Lions

*Limestone
Persepolis, Achaemenid Period
ca. 522–465 B.C.*

An Achaemenid artisan carved this stone to represent a cloth canopy, decorated with woven or appliquéd figures of striding lions and rosettes. A pair of diamonds joined as a figure-eight, which appear in three places, may be the sculptor's signature or "mark." The fringe along the lower edge, representing knotted cords ending in tassels, was partly chipped away in ancient times, perhaps before the stone was reused in a stairway east of Darius' residential palace.

51. Krater with Ibexes

*Baked clay
Chogha Mish
Middle Susiana 3
late 5th millennium B.C.*



The geographical term "Susiana," referring to the area ruled in the historical period by the city of Susa, is also applied to the prehistoric cultures of lowland southwestern Iran. Characteristic for an advanced stage

of the Susiana sequence are representational designs such as the stylized wild goats with long sweeping horns painted beneath the rim of this krater.

IRAN

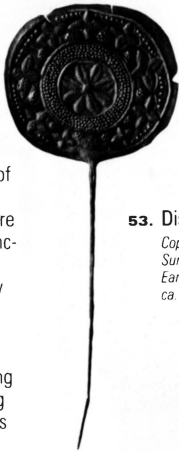
50. Foundation Slab of Xerxes

Gray limestone
Persepolis, Achaemenid Period
ca. 485-465 B.C.



This stone tablet inscribed with the Persian variant of cuneiform characters lists the nations under Persian rule shortly after the uprisings that occurred when Xerxes came to the throne. Although the tablet was intended as a foundation deposit to be

placed beneath a corner of one of Xerxes' buildings, it apparently was never used. It was found along with other tablets bearing the same text in Old Persian and Elamite employed as a facing of a mud brick bench in the garrison quarters at Persepolis.



53. Disc-Headed Pin

Copper
Surkh Dum-i-Luri
Early Iron Age III
ca. 750-700 B.C.

Large numbers of decorated disc-headed pins were found in the sanctuary at Surkh Dum-i-Luri. They may have been votive offerings to a goddess or deposits verifying contracts among nomadic peoples moving through the area. The decoration of this example, with an eight-petaled central rosette and surrounding borders of smaller rosettes and punctate patterns, is typical. The tiny incised lion's (?) head faces away from the shaft because the pins were worn with the head hanging down and the shaft pointing up.



52. Painted Bowl

Baked clay
Tall-i-Bakun
Bakun A Period
early 4th millennium B.C.

Many of the pottery vessels from Tall-i-Bakun show a highly sophisticated use of negative designs in conjunction with more usual painted patterns. On this bowl, two patterns alternate in rhythmic sequence. One is a painted design with a "head" flanked by up-raised "arms" facing both the rim and base of the bowl. The other pattern, which is given in negative by the buff surface of the vessel, consists of a cross and two lozenges.



54. Spouted Gray-Ware Pitcher

Baked clay
Iranian Plateau
Iron Age, late 2nd-early
1st millennium B.C.

Around 1200 B.C. monochrome wares were introduced in many parts of Iran and replaced the earlier painted pottery. These new, frequently burnished, wares occur in both a reddish-orange and a dark gray variety. The gray wares, of which

this long-spouted pitcher is a characteristic example, were given their color by special firing in an oxygen-reducing atmosphere. They appear to have been ceramic imitations of metal vessels.

The name Palestine, derived from the name of the ancient Philistines, refers to the geographical area that comprises most of what is now Israel and Jordan. The Oriental Institute Museum houses a spectacular collection of Palestinian materials from pre-World War II Institute excavations at the site of Megiddo. This large mound, on the west side of the fertile and relatively broad plain of Esdraelon, contains the remains of Canaanite Megiddo (the Biblical Armageddon). It yielded an almost complete sequence of levels from the fifth millennium B.C. to at least the 4th century B.C. The museum's most famous objects from the site are its share of the Megiddo ivories, dating to the 13th century B.C., but the collection also includes an extraordinarily full range of artifacts documenting the rise and development of the city and its culture. Later Oriental Institute excavations in the 1960's at Beth Yerah (Khirbet Kerak) on the southwest shore of the Sea of Galilee and at Nahal Tabor in the Jordan Valley added Early Bronze Age materials not well represented by the Megiddo collection.



55. Canaanite Statuette

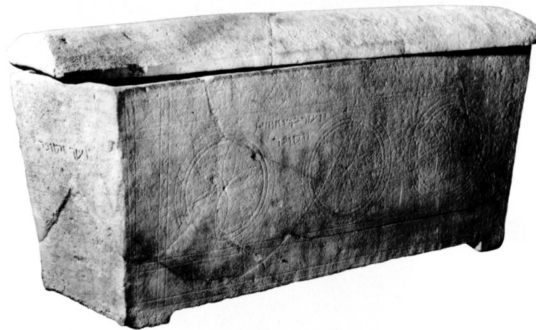
*Gilded bronze
Megiddo
Late Bronze Age II
ca. 1350-1200 B.C.*

This statuette of a god may have been the cult figure in the Canaanite temple in the ruins of which it was found. Cast in bronze and covered with gold leaf, it is an idol of the type forbidden by the much later Hebrew

prophets. The identity of this bearded and enthroned deity is uncertain but is most likely to be El—the chief god of the pantheon and father of the other gods.

57. Inscribed Ossuary

*Limestone
Jifna
ca. 70 B.C.-70 A.D.*

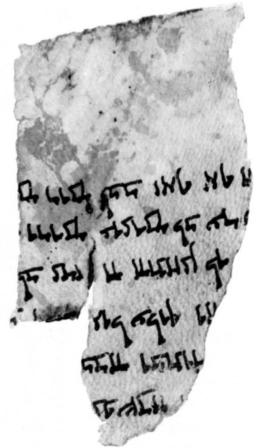


The name "Yo-ezer the scribe" is inscribed on this ossuary, a repository for bones. Around the end of the 1st century B.C., Jewish burial practices changed from primary burial in wooden coffins to secondary burial in small limestone

caskets such as this one. The body seems first to have been buried in a pit until only the bones remained. These were then gathered up and transferred to the ossuary, which was placed in a rock-hewn communal tomb.

56. Fragment of a Scroll

*Parchment and ink
1st century A.D.*



This fragment from a Hebrew manuscript was once part of a library of scrolls hidden in caves near the Dead Sea. The parchment texts, wrapped in linen and stored in pottery jars, were hidden in the first century A.D. and recovered between 1947 and 1956, at which time they became known as the Dead Sea Scrolls. The biblical writings on many of these scrolls are the earliest known Hebrew copies of Old Testament texts. The text on this fragment is non-biblical but devotional in nature.



58. Four-Horned Incense Altar

*Limestone
Megiddo, Iron Age IIA
10th century B.C.*

Horned altars are described in the Bible and have been discovered at many Iron Age Israelite sites. This example is probably too small to have been used for animal sacrifice, but may have served for the other three types of offerings known to have been made: wine, incense, and grain meal mixed with oil. The Megiddo

stratum in which this altar was found was characterized by large public structures and is generally thought to have been built by King Solomon. It included a four-entryway gate and a well-built double or "casemate" wall.

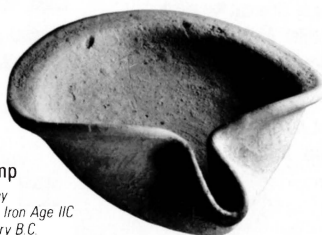


60. Griffin Plaque

*Ivory
Megiddo
Late Bronze Age II
13th century B.C.*

This plaque is one of a group of ivories discovered at Megiddo in a semi-subterranean chamber that archaeologists called the "treasury," within a large building that may have been a palace. It bears the figure of a reclining griffin—a composite creature with a lion's body and a bird's head and wings. This

motif is borrowed from the art of the Mycenaeans, but it is uncertain whether the object itself was made by a Mycenaean craftsman settled in Asia, by a local ivory carver imitating Mycenaean prototypes, or was imported directly from Greece.

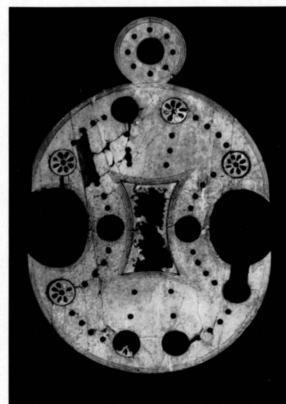


61. Oil Lamp

*Baked clay
Megiddo, Iron Age IIC
8th century B.C.*

59. Gaming Board

*Ivory inlaid with gold
and blue paste
Megiddo, Late Bronze Age II
13th century B.C.*



Two types of gaming boards were found among the Megiddo ivories—one for the "game of 58 holes" and the other for the "game of 20 squares." This is one of four similarly-shaped gaming boards for the "game of 58 holes." Every fifth

hole, as well as the central panel, was once inlaid with gold and blue paste. "Studs" of gold leaf found alongside the board may have capped the pegs used to play the game.

Lamps such as this one consist of a bowl to hold fuel, which was usually olive oil, and a spout to support a wick, which was probably made of flax. The burning wick blackened the spout and must have produced a rather smoky light. The shape of these lamps changed over time, going from

an open bowl with four pinched spouts to the one-spouted type shown here and, finally, to a closed lamp with a single spout. These differences in shape are one type of evidence used by archaeologists to date the levels they are excavating.

Measurements are given in centimeters, and height precedes width.
Unless otherwise noted, all objects were excavated
by the Oriental Institute.

1. OIM A30553; 33.7 X 13.3.
2. OIM 1351; Gift of the Egyptian Research Account, 1896; 25.0 X 22.0.
3. OIM 17973; Thebes, Tomb 34; Purchased in California, 1948; 23.0 X 51.0.
4. OIM A25965; Ex Ernst Herzfeld Collection, Purchased, 1945; 12.5 X 9.7.
5. OIM A25625; Ex Ernst Herzfeld Collection, Purchased, 1945; 35.5 X 32.2.
6. OIM A18835; Stratum VI; 10.5 X 19.7.
7. OIM 11161; Purchased in Cairo, 1920; 35.5 X 9.5.
8. OIM 11488 (body); Naga el-Deir Cemetery; Gift of the Harvard University–Museum of Fine Arts Egyptian Expedition, 1921
9. OIM 10758; Purchased in Luxor, 1920; 31.5 X 27.5.
10. OIM 11197; Purchased in Cairo, 1920; 33.1 X 41.0.
11. OIM 10486; Gift of Mrs. Elizabeth Milbank Anderson, 1919; scene pictured- 30.0 X 72.0.
12. OIM 12169; Purchased in Luxor, 1924; 26.2 X 46.0.
13. OIM 1347; Gift of Egyptian Research Account, 1896; 25.0 X 17.0.
14. OIM 10504; Purchased in Cairo, 1919; 59.6 X 55.9.
15. OIM 19477; Purchased, 1959; 12.5 X 12.8.
16. OIM 17273; Gift of Mrs. Joseph L. Valentine, 1937; 35.6 X 27.9.
17. OIM 10628; Purchased in Cairo, 1920; 13.5 X 12.0.
18. OIM 14088; 527.7.
19. OIM 18194; Ex Collection of The Art Institute of Chicago; 46.0.
20. OIM 12072; Purchased in Cairo, 1923; 63.5 X 202.0.
21. OIM A7369; Palace, Court VIII; 495.3 X 491.4.
22. OIM A11258; Palace, Throne room debris; 43.0 X 119.5.
23. OIM A7366; Palace, Court VIII; 308.0 X 249.7.
24. OIM A11808; Nabu Temple Forecourt; 151.2 X 45.3.
25. OIM A12468; Shamash Temple; 61.0.
26. OIM 10434; Stratum II; 28.0 X 16.0.
27. OIM A30797-8; Gift of Dr. Hugo Weissman, 1956; 9.5 X 10.8, 9.1 X 11.1.
28. OIM A24198-9 & A24008; 26.5 X 6.4, 26.5 X 6.4, 14.6 X 3.9.
29. OIM A27866; T 4, floor 5; 45.0 X 42.0.
30. OIM A27854-6; Gateway VII; 62.0 X 125.0.
31. OIM LI 364; male- 33.5 X 10.0, female- 29.7 X 11.0.
32. OIM A27853; Building 1, floor 2; 25.4 X 24.4.
33. OIM A27725; 12.0 X 8.1.
34. OIM A7481; 90.3 X 230.5.
35. OIM A21452; Sin Temple I (?); 17.2 X 23.5.
36. OIM A17892; Trench D; 16.5 X 6.2.
37. OIM A2793; Purchased in Baghdad, 1919; 38.0 X 14.0.
38. OIM A17948; 15.2 X 12.6.
39. OIM A7119-20; Purchased in Baghdad, 1930; 17.3, 16.2.
40. OIM A12332; Square Temple I, Shrine II; 40.0.
41. OIM A12417; Sin Temple IX; 20.0 X 20.0.
42. OIM A11878; Gift of the Iraq Museum and the American Schools of Oriental Research, 1934; tablet- 16.8 X 9.0; envelope- 18.3 X 11.5.
43. OIM A17917; 3.0 X 3.6.
44. OIM A27903; Purchased in New York, 1947; 4.2 X 2.5.
45. OIM A25413; Purchased in New York, 1943; 14.0 X 9.3.
46. OIM A9684-85; Purchased in Baghdad, 1930; 2.0 X 3.0, 1.4 X 2.4.
47. OIM A9345; Purchased in Baghdad, 1930; 12.3 X 7.7.
48. OIM A24065; 216.0 X 158.0.
49. OIM A24068; 73.0 X 171.0.
50. OIM A24120; 51.3 X 53.7.
51. OIM A35278; 35.0 X 44.0.
52. OIM A20136; A. Level III; 21.6 X 30.0.
53. OIM A25293; Sanctuary, Level 2B; 26.7 X 10.5.
54. OIM A26005; Ex Ernst Herzfeld Collection, Purchased, 1945; 22.5 X 34.4.
55. OIM A18316; Stratum VII or VI; 25.4.
56. OIM A30303; Qumran, Cave 4; Purchased in Jordan, 1956; 6.4 X 4.2.
57. OIM A29791; Gift of Dr. Harold H. Willoughby, 1953; 33.0 X 67.0.
58. OIM A13201; Stratum VA-IVB; 67.5 X 29.5.
59. OIM A22254; Stratum VIIA; 26.5 X 17.8.
60. OIM A22212; Stratum VIIA; 3.9 X 9.1.
61. OIM A28336; Stratum III; 4.5 X 13.5.
62. OIM A34979; N.W. Palace, Room G, Exchange with the British Museum; 61.2 X 58.0.
63. OIM A28582; Purchased, 1948; 11.5.
64. OIM 10626; Purchased in Cairo, 1920; 36.8 X 38.2.
65. OIM A22263-5; Stratum VIIA; 4.0 X 4.2, 4.0 X 3.9, 5.0 X 4.2.

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Photography by Jean Grant, John Hudson,
and John Mahtesian
Produced by Kim Coventry
Design by William A. Seabright
Map executed by Nicola Radcliff

The area called the Near (or Middle) East encompasses the modern states of Egypt, Jordan, Israel, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, Iraq and Iran, and the countries of the Arabian peninsula. Geographically, the area is divided into five broad zones, each with its own distinctive characteristics:

- 1) a long ridge of mountains curving in an arc from Israel northward into Turkey and then south-eastward into Iran;
- 2) extensive highland plateaus north of these mountains in Turkey and to their east in Iran;
- 3) a broad strip of arable land on the mountains' inner arc, which was aptly named the "Fertile Crescent" by James Henry Breasted;
- 4) an area of steppe and desert within the Fertile Crescent extending from northern Syria to southern Arabia; and
- 5) the great river valleys of the Nile, the Tigris, and the Euphrates, which run through the desert areas and provide water to irrigate the land.

It was in the Near East that the earliest civilizations of the ancient world arose, beginning as a heterogeneous group of cultures that began to crystallize into urban societies of literate states and empires around 3000 B.C. in both Egypt and Mesopotamia. Among the achievements of the geographically and chronologically diverse cultures that arose in this area are the domestication of wild grains (including wheat and barley) and animals (such as sheep, goats, and cattle), and the invention of writing and the alphabet.

Oriental Institute expeditions have worked in virtually every region of the Near East, excavating the remains of these ancient cultures and studying and recording their monuments. The scattering of red dots (each representing a site where the Institute has worked) on the map to the right attests to the broad range of that involvement.



62. King Assurnasirpal II

*Gypsum (?)
Nimrud, Neo-Assyrian Period
ca. 883-859 B.C.*

A large room that may have been used for purification ceremonies in King Assurnasirpal II's palace at the Iraqi site of Nimrud was adorned with exceptionally well-carved and detailed reliefs. This fragment represents the king himself, identifiable by his fez-shaped cap surmounted by a conical spike.

Originally, this piece formed part of a scene in which the king, grasping a bow, stood ready to pour a libation from a cup poised delicately on the tips of his fingers. Facing him was an attendant who carried a fly-whisk with which to banish insects from the royal presence.

63. Persian Roundel

*Gold
Achaemenid Period
ca. 404-359 B.C.*



This snarling winged lion worked in gold repoussé attests to the exceptional skill of Achaemenid goldsmiths. The back of the horned feline's body and the slender twisted cord that surrounds it bear sixteen tiny loops for attachment to a garment or textile. Greek writers often speak of the tremendous wealth of the Persians, and Herodotus writes that King Xerxes' troops "were adorned with the greatest magnificence ... they glittered all over with gold, vast quantities of which they wore about their persons" (vii.83).

(Cover)

1. King Ur-Nammu rebuilt and enlarged one of the most important temples in ancient Mesopotamia—the *E-kur* of Enlil, the chief god of the pantheon. This figurine, which was buried in a foundation box beneath one of the temple towers, represents the king at the start of the building project—carrying on his head a basket of clay from which would be made the critically important first brick. The foundation deposit also contained an inscribed stone tablet, beads of frit and gold, chips of various stones, and four ancient date pits found perched atop the basket carried by the king.

64. Butcher Slaughtering a Calf

Painted limestone
Giza (?), Dynasty 5-6
ca. 2544-2260 B.C.



64. This statuette of a butcher is one of a group of sculptures placed in the tomb of an ancient Egyptian official so that he might take with him into the after-life things that had been important to him during his lifetime. The group, which seems to represent the household and staff of a typical prosperous estate owner in Old Kingdom Egypt, included representations of the owner Ny-kau-Inpu and his family, two butchers, men and women pro-

cessing grain and making bread, four musicians, a metalworker with a blowpipe, a potter, and even two children playing leapfrog.

65. These delicate heads belong to a group of ivories discovered at the site of Megiddo, in Palestine. They had been stored in a semi-subterranean chamber that archaeologists called "the treasury," within

a large building that may have been a palace. Pairs of heads such as these were attached to cosmetic boxes. A dowel inserted behind one head functioned as the hinge for a flat lid the other served to fasten the lid

closed. The heads show traces of Egyptian influence in their heavily curling locks of hair, which are characteristic of the Egyptian goddess Hathor.

65. Three Female Heads

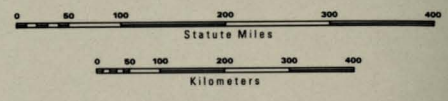
Ivory
Megiddo, Late Bronze Age II
13th century B.C.



(Cover)

1. Foundation Figurine of King Ur-Nammu

Bronze
Nippur, Third Dynasty of Ur
ca. 2112-2095 B.C.



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