

100 HIGHLIGHTS



100 HIGHLIGHTS

OF THE COLLECTIONS OF THE ORIENTAL INSTITUTE MUSEUM

EDITED BY
JEAN M. EVANS, JACK GREEN,
AND EMILY TEETER



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FOREWORD

In 1919, James Henry Breasted founded the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago with a radical idea: that who we are—how we live as humans together—began not in Greece or Rome, but rather in complex civilizations that emerged in a region he vividly named the Fertile Crescent. From the outset, Breasted’s goal in creating the OI was to conduct ancient Near Eastern research on a scale and scope that is only possible in a robust research institute dedicated to this specific purpose. And this is as true today as it was a century ago. The work of the OI has assumed an extraordinary array of forms over the last century: transformative excavations and research projects across the Middle East; linguistic research that furthers the decipherment of ancient languages; philological projects that allow for the reconstruction of histories and literatures; the creation of transformative dictionaries that serve as cultural encyclopedias for long-lost civilizations; state-of-the-art satellite and digital imaging laboratories for the discovery of ancient settlements; centers for the preservation of the region’s imperiled cultural heritage; and new visitor experiences in a world-renowned museum that aims to understand, reveal, and protect the earliest human civilizations. Poised at the centennial, we naturally reflect on a century of achievement, but just as importantly we look to the next 100 years, recommitting ourselves to Breasted’s vision in a twenty-first-century context. The OI remains resolute in advancing our knowledge of ancient Middle Eastern archaeology, cultures, and languages. OI archaeologists continue to lead excavations every year across the Middle East in projects that engage researchers from around the world and develop essential relationships with host countries for training, preservation, and collaboration. And the OI’s philologists continue to infuse their research with interdisciplinary approaches that combine new theories and methods, archaeological evidence, and cross-cultural comparisons in order to discover new information about early civilizations.

Over the course of the last century, the OI has excavated dozens of sites spanning from Tunisia to Iran. Early twentieth-century expeditions to Iraq, Iran, Egypt, Turkey, Syria, and Israel produced definitive archaeological datasets for the Middle East, from prehistory to the Islamic period. These excavations are still studied today, their findings analyzed and refined. The museum plays a key role in the continuing legacy of a century of fieldwork and stands at the very core of the OI’s mission. The vast majority of the 350,000+ artifacts in our collection were excavated scientifically by OI researchers and exported with the explicit agreement of the countries of origin and the local laws that prevailed at the time of excavation. Because these artifacts are the products of carefully-considered research questions and have well-documented archaeological contexts, the collections provide an unparalleled resource for scholarly research. Our museum also serves as the public face of the OI and plays the central role in all of our public communication and outreach efforts, particularly our docent, youth, and adult education programs. The collections bear witness to monumental landmarks in world history—from the rise of the first villages, cities, and empires to the development of essential technologies that form the basis of today’s world,

such as the origins of domestication and the invention of writing, and the establishment of great institutions of palace and temple. The collections tell a multi-dimensional story that chronicles everyday life, the international statecraft of powerful kings, and the widely varying belief systems that governed how the ancients understood the world and cosmos around them. Some of what people in the ancient Middle East created, experienced, and believed feels intimately familiar—we can see ourselves reflected in this ancient mirror. But even when their perspectives feel worlds and ages removed from our own, they have so much to teach us about what it means to be human. The artifacts selected for this book span our eight permanent galleries and were chosen to highlight—from the quotidian to the monumental—the range of human production and experience in the ancient Middle East and to underscore the central role that these civilizations played in what Breasted felicitously described as the “story of the human career.”

Christopher Woods
Director, Oriental Institute
July 2019

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Oriental Institute Museum houses some 350,000 artifacts, excavated mainly by OI archaeologists, and includes a comprehensive archive that documents our fieldwork and other research. Together, the collections comprise one of the best resources in the world for the ancient Middle East. To celebrate the OI centennial, we chose 100 highlights from the less than 2 percent of the artifacts in the collections that are on display. The highlights are arranged geographically, corresponding to their arrangement in our galleries, which chronicle the cultures of the ancient Middle East and reveal the excitement of archaeological, linguistic, and historical discovery by past and present OI scholars. We hope you will be inspired to visit the museum and explore firsthand the stories we tell in our galleries.

Many individuals contributed to this publication. The entire staff of the Oriental Institute Museum facilitated the completion of the volume. John D. M. (Jack) Green and Emily Teeter, who co-edited this volume along with me, were responsible for planning and implementing its early stages. I thank them for graciously integrating me into the project. Oriental Institute conservators Laura D'Alessandro and Alison Whyte provided the identification of the materials of the objects. Using a combination of handheld x-ray fluorescence spectroscopy and chemical tests, many of the results corrected long-maintained assumptions. Austin M. Kramer, K. Bryce Lowry, and Anna Ressman provided new photography with improved views, accurate color, and clarity. Kiersten Neumann supervised the photography for the volume and made many improvements and corrections to the text. Josh Tulisniak designed the section dividers.

Members of the Oriental Institute faculty and staff as well as graduate students from the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at the University of Chicago contributed to the volume and/or read drafts of the book. In addition to those individuals included here in the list of contributors, the editors thank McGuire Gibson, Janet Johnson, Nadine Moeller, Brian Muhs, James Osborne, Susanne Paulus, and Matthew Stolper. Special thanks also to Robert K. Ritner and Christopher Woods, who contributed their expertise at a late stage. We also wish to thank Bruce B. Williams and Pavel Onderka for assistance with the highlights in the Nubian collection. Erica C. D. Hunter and Paul Collins also improved the section on the Mesopotamian collection. Vincent van Exel carefully read the final draft and made many improvements. In the CAMEL Lab, Emily Hammer, Anthony J. Lauricella, and Emilie Sarrazin produced our detailed map. For the many ways in which all these individuals improved the volume, we are thankful. Special thanks also to Thomas Urban, Leslie Schramer, and Charissa Johnson in the Publications Office for their careful editing and design of the volume.

Finally, we owe a very special thanks to the volunteers of the Oriental Institute for their generous support of this publication in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Volunteer Program. Our indefatigable volunteers make so much Oriental Institute work possible. Without their support, this book would not have been possible.

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MAP OF THE ANCIENT MIDDLE EAST

THE ORIENTAL INSTITUTE, ITS MUSEUM AND COLLECTIONS

The roots of the Oriental Institute stretch back to 1891, when the newly founded University of Chicago hired its first president, William Rainey Harper (fig. 1). Harper, an acclaimed biblical scholar from Yale University, also served as the head of the University of Chicago's Department of Semitic Languages and Literature. This established the study of the ancient Middle East as an important focus for the new university. Within a few years, the Department's faculty consisted of, among others, his brother Robert Francis Harper, an Assyriologist; and James Henry Breasted, the first American to receive a PhD in Egyptology (fig. 2).

The faculty of the Department started to collect artifacts to supplement their teaching. Priority was given to written records, although the "evidence in the realm of form, technique, craftsmanship, costume . . ." of non-inscribed material was also valued. The first objects acquired for the collection, in 1893, were plaster casts, including replicas of the Rosetta Stone and the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser (both of which are still displayed in the museum), a collection of Kufic tombstones from Aswan, and an Egyptian *shabti*—an indication of the later breadth of the collection. The Egyptian collection saw early growth both through purchases, especially those made by Breasted on his honeymoon in Egypt



FIGURE 1. William Rainey Harper, biblical scholar and first president of the University of Chicago, 1903. (Courtesy of the University of Chicago Photographic Archive, apf1-02496. Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library)



FIGURE 2. James Henry Breasted (shown here ca. 1930) was an American Egyptologist and an advocate for the study of the ancient Middle East. He founded the Oriental Institute in 1919. (Courtesy of the University of Chicago Photographic Archive, apf1-0221. Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library)

(1894–1895), and from the University’s financial support of the work of British archaeological groups in Egypt (led mainly by Flinders Petrie), who, in return for “subscriptions,” gave a portion of their own divisions to Chicago (fig. 3).

In 1896, the rapidly growing collection, initially stored in the basement of Walker Hall, was moved to the new Haskell Oriental Museum on the west side of the University’s central quadrangle (fig. 4). William Rainey Harper served as the museum’s first director, and Breasted served as assistant director.

In 1903, the University sponsored its first field expedition, to Bismaya (ancient Adab) in southern Iraq. Over the next two years, Chicago received over 1,000 Mesopotamian artifacts from the excavation including the head of a king (p. 35). During this time, the Haskell Oriental Museum continued to receive a large number of objects from the British excavations in Egypt as well as Egyptian artifacts that were deaccessioned from the Art Institute of Chicago, a pattern that continued for several decades.

Breasted, whose scholarly emphasis was on making accurate copies of Egyptian historical inscriptions in order to provide trustworthy source materials for historians, was a strong promoter of the idea that the roots of Western civilization lay not in Greece and Rome, but in the ancient Middle East. His vision was to establish a “laboratory for the study of the rise and development of civilization” that would trace the rise of culture from the east to the west. His very popular and influential textbook *Ancient Times* (1916) brought him into contact with John D. Rockefeller Jr., whose wife had read the book to her children and had written the author an appreciative letter. In 1919, Breasted appealed to Rockefeller for funding to establish a research center at the University of Chicago. Rockefeller responded with a pledge of \$50,000 over five years, and thereby the Oriental Institute was established as a center for the study of the history, languages, art, and archaeology of the ancient Middle East. Funds



FIGURE 3. Egyptian artifacts received from the Egypt Exploration Fund in 1896. A funerary stela (pp. 100–101) can be seen at the lower right of the image. (P.B.586)



FIGURE 4. Gallery in Haskell Oriental Museum as arranged in about 1926. The exhibit was composed primarily of objects from the excavations of the Egypt Exploration Fund and the British School of Archaeology in Egypt, as well as objects purchased by Breasted in 1919-1920. The falcon statue and Papyrus Millbank (pp. 106, 108-9) are visible in the background of the image. (P. 9139)



FIGURE 5. Oriental Institute Museum, Egyptian gallery, 1937. The ceiling is stenciled with Egyptian-inspired designs and the light fixtures imitate the form of ancient pottery. The end of the hall is dominated by a colossal winged bull (pp. 44-45) from the Oriental Institute's excavations at Khorsabad, Iraq. (P. 29038)

from that gift allowed Breasted, then director of the newly formed institute, to travel throughout the Middle East, making important purchases and scouting sites for future excavation.

From the mid-1920s into the early 1930s, the University of Chicago sponsored expeditions in Egypt, Anatolia, Palestine, Iraq, and Iran. In some cases, these were multiple expeditions in a single country, all Rockefeller-funded donations. In those decades, the governments of the countries in which the institute worked gave generous divisions of finds, and thousands of objects were shipped to Chicago. The sheer number of artifacts eventually overwhelmed the Haskell Museum, which at that time housed the Department of Semitic Languages and Literature and the Divinity School. As a result of this broad mandate, the small museum galleries exhibited objects from both the Near and Far East. As Breasted reported, "there was never sufficient space for adequate exhibition space for antiquities." In 1925, the Divinity School and its artifacts moved to new quarters in Swift Hall, allowing the Oriental Institute to take possession of all the galleries. The new exhibition halls that opened on December 9 of the following year featured "fully labeled" objects from Egypt, Babylonia, Assyria, and Anatolia that were displayed in

beautifully designed cases “of types evolved from the best museum experience and especially built in the workshops of the Art Institute of Chicago.”

Despite being given more space, within a year, Breasted warned the University administration,

The rapid growth and expansion of the various institute projects and the resulting additions to the collections of Haskell Oriental Museum have rendered the building so completely inadequate as to make it imperative for the present writer to devote a large part of his time and effort to evolving and presenting a plan for the future of both the museum and the Oriental Institute. Much of the museum’s valuable collections, all the new acquisitions from the institute’s Megiddo Expedition, and a large part of the objects from the Hittite excavations in Asia Minor are at present stored in their original packing-cases owing to a lack of space in Haskell Museum.

Breasted’s warnings were heeded, and in 1928 the International Education Board, supported by the Rockefeller Foundation and family, provided funding for a new building. That building, designed by architects Mayers, Murray & Phillip, opened in 1931. It still houses the Oriental Institute and its museum, including eight permanent galleries on the ground floor (fig. 5 and plan, p. 23) and storage and workrooms in the basement. The second and third floors are devoted to faculty and staff and include project offices, a library, and two classrooms.

By the mid-twentieth century, most of the countries in the Middle East stopped granting regular divisions of excavated artifacts, and the growth of the collection slowed. Yet some artifacts from Oriental Institute expeditions continued to arrive, such as those from UNESCO-supported rescue excavations in Egyptian Nubia, which Chicago received in 1966; material from Nippur, Iraq, in 1968; and objects from Chogha Mish, Iran, received in 1970. The museum’s collections were further refined through exchanges of Egyptian and ancient Middle Eastern material with the Metropolitan Museum of Art in the 1950s and 1960s.

Through the years, the museum has undergone several renovations. In 1977, the Mesopotamian gallery was completely redesigned (fig. 6). In 1996, the galleries were closed in order to introduce climate-control systems and



FIGURE 6. Mesopotamian gallery, ca. 1993. (Photo: Jean Grant)

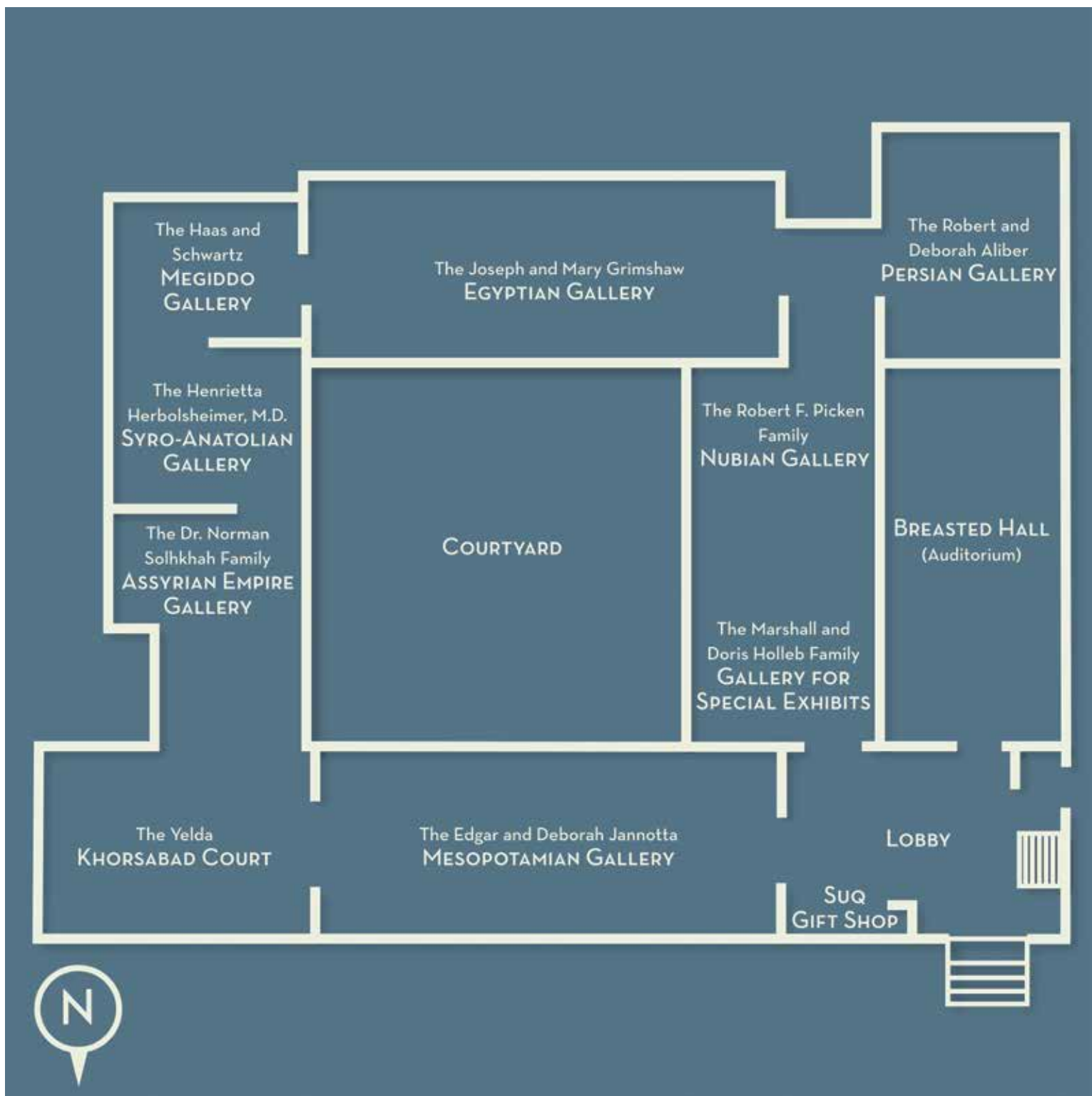


FIGURE 7. The Yelda Khorsabad Court, ca. 2013.

to add a nearly 1,500 m² wing to the south of the original building to house additional object storage, an archive for paper records and photographs that document the work of the Oriental Institute, a conservation laboratory, additional workspace for museum staff, and book stacks for the Oriental Institute's library. The completely redesigned galleries reopened between 1999 and 2006. Major changes in the new configuration included the creation of the Yelda Khorsabad Court (fig. 7), which reunited the reliefs from the palace of Sargon II (pp. 43–45) that had previously been displayed separately. The colossal statue of King Tutankhamun (p. 96) was moved to the entrance of the Joseph and Mary Grimshaw Egyptian Gallery where it could be viewed in the round. Galleries on the west side of the building were redesigned as a permanent exhibition space for the Nubian collection named for the Robert F. Picken Family.

From its inception, the mission of the Oriental Institute Museum has been to preserve, exhibit, and make available artifacts to scholars who study the ancient Middle East. Today, the museum holds over 300,000 objects. School children, tourists, students, and scholars from all over the world visit its galleries. The collection is one of the few in the world that gives a comprehensive view of all major cultures of the ancient Middle East and Nile Valley, and which is scientifically excavated and documented, making the objects of particular value for promoting the study and understanding of the past. ET

PLAN OF THE ORIENTAL INSTITUTE MUSEUM GALLERIES





THE MESOPOTAMIAN COLLECTION

Most of the Oriental Institute's Mesopotamian collection was excavated in the early and mid-twentieth century. In 1903, Edgar J. Banks began the first Mesopotamian excavations on behalf of the University of Chicago, at Bismaya (ancient Adab) in southern Iraq. Banks sent over 1,000 artifacts to Chicago, including many early cuneiform documents. These objects were housed in the Haskell Oriental Museum and would later form the basis of the Mesopotamian collection. Additional objects were added to the collection in 1919–1920, when the First Field Expedition of the Oriental Institute traveled throughout Egypt, Iraq, Syria, and Palestine, purchasing artifacts and studying potential excavation sites. Beginning in 1929, the Assyrian Expedition, under the direction of Edward Chiera, excavated the Neo-Assyrian site of Khorsabad in northern Iraq; these excavations were then continued by the Iraq Expedition and, ultimately, the Khorsabad Expedition, which completed three seasons of excavations in the 1930s under the direction of Gordon Loud. In the 1930s, under the direction of Henri Frankfort, the Iraq Expedition conducted important excavations in the Diyala region at the sites of Khafajah, Tell Asmar, Tell Agrab, and Ishchali. These and other excavations from 1929 to 1939 nearly doubled the size of the Oriental Institute collections. In 1948, the Oriental Institute began excavations at the prehistoric site of Jarmo in Iraqi Kurdistan, under the direction of Robert and Linda Braidwood, and also at the site of Nippur in southern Iraq, under the direction of Donald McCown and later Richard C. Haines and James Knudstad. A total of nineteen seasons of Oriental Institute excavations at Nippur have been realized, with the most recent seasons (up to 1990) under the direction of McGuire Gibson. The Mesopotamian collection is exhibited in the Edgar and Deborah Jannotta Mesopotamian Gallery, the Yelda Khorsabad Court, and the Dr. Norman Solhkhah Family Assyrian Empire Gallery. KG/JME



D. 29033

FEMALE FIGURINE

Clay, paint
Iraq, Jarmo
Excavated in 1948-1955
Neolithic period, 9000-7000 BC
A66650A

The thousands of Neolithic clay figurines from Jarmo depict humans, animals, and other subjects that are difficult to interpret, although many can be classified within a standard range of shapes. The Jarmo female figurines assume various forms, while the male figurines tend toward one consistent type. The most common human figurine is a female with large breasts and a rounded stomach. Clay figurines must have had varying functions, ranging from religious and magical to memorial, didactic, or even playful, and with identities, whether human or divine, similarly far-reaching. They are among the earliest clay objects made by human beings and they continued to be produced throughout Mesopotamian history. For thousands of years, until the third millennium BC, female figures dominated the clay figurine corpus. Clay figurines often appear to have been discarded, suggesting the act of making them was more important than their permanence. JME

FOUR-LUGGED JAR

Baked clay, paint (with modern restoration)
Iraq, Khafajah, Sin Temple I
Excavated in 1936-37
Jemdet Nasr period, ca. 3100-2900 BC
A21452

A small, four-lugged jar with a short neck, flat base, and double carination is a characteristic form of Jemdet Nasr monochrome painted wares, named after the site where such pottery was first discovered. The brown painted decoration of this jar, applied directly to the surface, is confined to the area between the double carination. An upper border with short vertical strokes connects the four lugs, and a plant form is depicted below each lug. The lugs were an important feature because they could have string run through them and over a lid to seal the jar, thus securing its contents. JME



D. 15750

VESSEL WITH BELTED HERO, LIONS, AND BULL

Stone
Iraq, Tell Agrab, Shara Temple, Main Level
Excavated in 1935-36
Early Dynastic period, ca. 2900 BC
A17948

This relief-carved stone vessel was found with hundreds of stone mace-heads and pendants that had been piled on the floor of a room in the Shara Temple characterized by the excavators as the treasury. The relief carving depicts an elaborate combat scene. At one end, a belted hero with curling locks assumes the full height of the composition, which is then divided into two registers of lions menacing a bearded bull at the opposite end (see p. 25). The hero grasps the hindquarters of the lions in the lower register; the tails of the lions in the upper register curl under his arms. Because much of the stone around the figures has been carved away, the composition forms an elaborate openwork support for the small receptacle at the top. KG/JME



D. 15848

STANDING MALE FIGURE

Gypsum, bitumen, unidentified inlays
Iraq, Tell Asmar, Abu Temple
Excavated in 1933-34
Early Dynastic period, ca. 2700-2600 BC
A12332

This statue was excavated from a hoard of twelve well-preserved statues buried below the floor of the Abu Temple at Tell Asmar. Such statues were dedicated to temples as substitute images of the donor. The figure has large, inlaid eyes and wears a skirt, probably of fleece; his clasped hands express an attentive quality. Archaeological reconstructions often show temple sculpture being displayed in sanctuaries, but excavations have revealed that donor statues were distributed throughout temples where, as recorded in texts, they would have been the recipients of offerings and other ritual activities. It appears that, when a statue was no longer maintained through such activities, it had served its purpose. Consequently, temple sculpture was discarded through hoarding and other methods of disposal. In addition to sculpture, vessels, mace-heads, door plaques, cylinder seals, beads, and pendants are among the sacred gifts that were dedicated to Mesopotamian temples. JME



D. 19208



D. 17502

DOOR PLAQUE

Limestone
 Iraq, Khafajah, Sin Temple IX
 Excavated in 1933-34
 Early Dynastic period, ca. 2500 BC
 A12417

This plaque, comprised of a square, relief-carved area with a central hole, was part of a locking device. A peg driven through the hole would have mounted the plaque to a wall, and a nearby door would have been locked by securing its cord or hook to the peg. Without the reinforcement of the stone plaque, the peg would have worked its way out of the wall. The relief carving depicts an elaborate banquet. In the upper register, a male and a female figure, each raising a cup and holding vegetation, are attended upon. A procession in the middle register appears to bring provisions. The lower register depicts the revelry associated with the banquet. A musician plays a harp and, on an inscribed fragment in the Iraq Museum that completes the lower register, two male figures wrestle. JME

STONE RECORDING AND TRANSACTION

Limestone

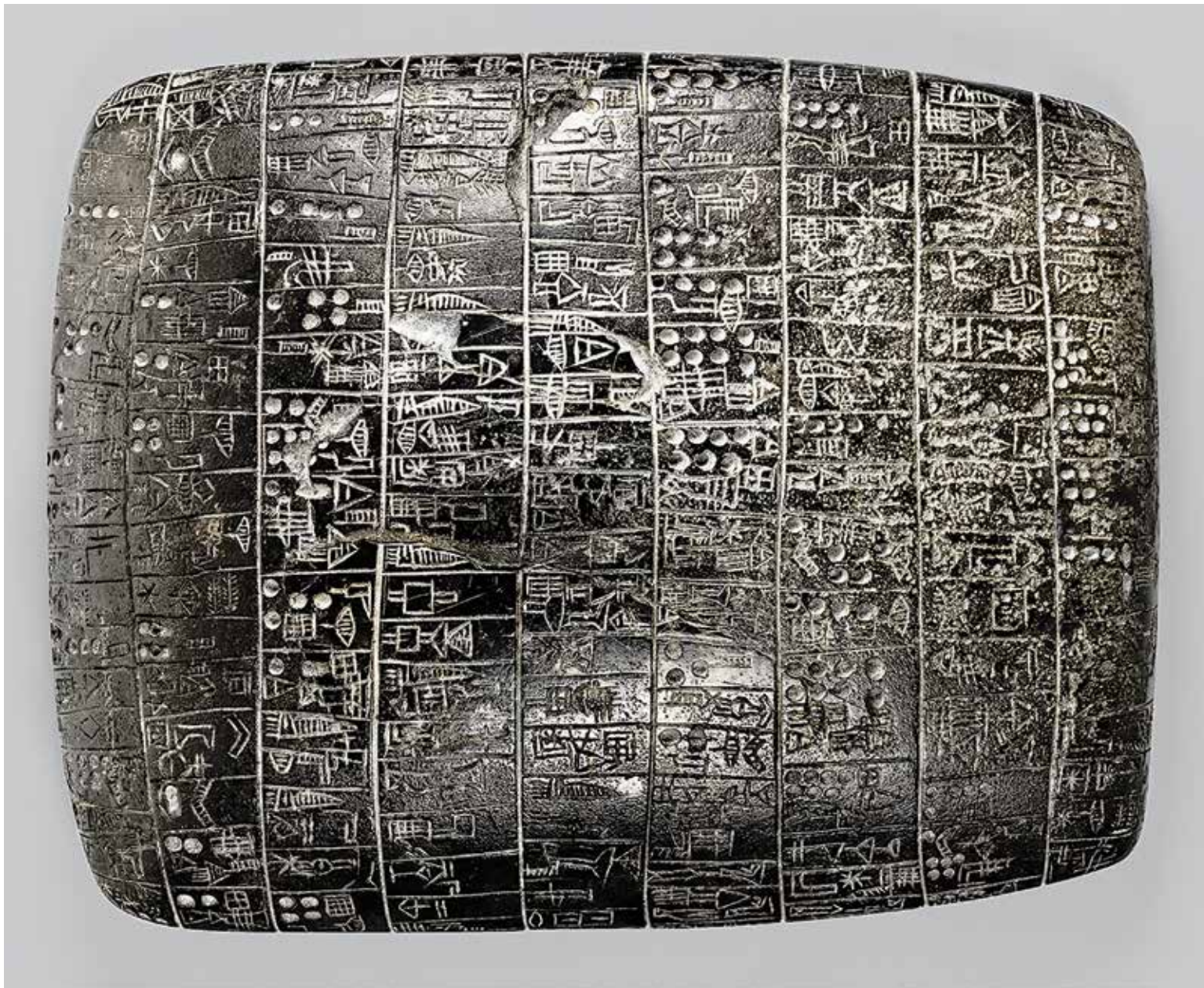
Iraq, possibly from Isin

Purchased in New York, 1943

Early Dynastic period, ca. 2500 BC

A25412

This stone tablet includes nine columns of text written on each side in pictographic Sumerian signs. This was an old-fashioned writing form at the time this text was written, as cuneiform signs had already become more abstract. The tablet appears to record the sale of agricultural fields to an unnamed elite individual. The sale is unusual because most contemporary documents recording land transfers dealt with the transfer of property to the palace or temple institutions. The transactions recorded here were made in silver, with some in oil, fat, wool, and bread also noted. The use of stone rather than clay to record this sale indicates this document was intended as a permanent, indestructible record. Such documents may have been deposited in temples, where they presumably were protected by the gods. KG/OT



D. 16918



D. 15890

UR-NAMMA FOUNDATION ASSEMBLAGE

Statue: Copper alloy; Tablet: Limestone

Beads and unworked chips of stone: Frit, agate, lapis lazuli, carnelian

Iraq, Nippur, Temple of Enlil, under the southeast tower of the inner gate

Excavated in 1955-56

Ur III period, reign of Ur-Namma, ca. 2112-2095 BC

Statue: A30553; Tablet: A30554; Beads: A30555A-T, A30556A-B, A30557

King Ur-Namma rebuilt and enlarged the temple of Enlil, the supreme deity of the Mesopotamian pantheon, at Nippur. As part of the construction rituals, he deposited bitumen-lined boxes made of baked mudbricks into the foundations of the temple. The assemblage of one box contained a statue, a tablet, four date pits, unworked chips of stone, and beads. The statue depicts Ur-Namma, identified by the inscription on the front of his long skirt, bald and shaven, possibly as an expression of his piety (see frontispiece). He stands poised at the start of the temple building project, carrying on his head a basket containing the ingredients from which the auspicious first brick would be made. The statue and the tablet bear the same Sumerian inscription, written in cuneiform: "King Ur-Namma, king of Ur, king of the lands of Sumer and Akkad, the one who built the temple of the god Enlil." KG/JME



D. 00047

HEAD OF A KING

Gypsum, bitumen, ivory, modern inlays
 Iraq, Adab (modern Bismaya), Mound V, small
 chamber west of temple terrace
 Excavated in 1903-04
 Ur III period, ca. 2050-2000 BC
 A173

This gypsum head depicts a ruler, identifiable by his rounded headdress with a wide brim. His high cheekbones, sunken temples, and arching nose show the artist's sensitivity in depicting anatomical details in a naturalistic way. The eyebrows, meeting over the bridge of the nose, were once inlaid with a different material. The original white inlay of the eyes, set in bitumen, is preserved, although the pupils made of blue paste are a modern addition. A rich and curly beard was an essential aspect of Mesopotamian royal iconography. The pointed beard and mustache are roughly carved and must have been added with a different material, such as gold, to depict this important feature. Similarly, a roughly carved strip just below the headdress suggests that hair protruding from under the brim was also added. OT

*seal**impression*

D. 27520

CYLINDER SEAL OF BILALAMA AND MODERN IMPRESSION

Seal: Lapis lazuli, gold, silver
 Iraq, probably from Eshnunna (modern Tell Asmar)
 Purchased in Baghdad, 1931
 Isin-Larsa period, ca. 2000 BC
 Seal: A7468; Impression: C4133

This seal belonged to Bilalama, son and successor of the ruler Kirikiri of Eshnunna. It is carved with a presentation scene, in which a bald and shaven male worshipper, accompanied by a goddess, approaches the seated warrior god Tishpak, who has heads of dragons emerging from his shoulders. When the seal was purchased in Baghdad, the Oriental Institute was excavating at Tell Asmar (ancient Eshnunna). Since the excavations uncovered door and bag sealings impressed with the same cylinder seal of Bilalama, the seal had undoubtedly been stolen from the site. The excavated sealings demonstrate that Bilalama was in charge of sealing both the room and its contents. Large numbers of ancient seal impressions as well as seals have been preserved from Mesopotamian sites. However, this is one of the few instances in which both a seal and its ancient impression(s) have survived. JME



D. 15907

FEMALE FIGURINE

Clay, bitumen
 Iraq, Eshnunna (modern Tell Asmar), Trench D
 Excavated in 1935-36
 Isin-Larsa period, ca. 2000-1800 BC
 A17892

Clay female figurines have been found in Mesopotamian houses, temples, and other public buildings of the early second millennium BC. Their exact function is unknown, but they are sometimes identified as votive figurines or fertility goddesses. This female figurine wears an elaborate headdress and has broad, flat hips, a large and elaborately incised pubic triangle, and breasts with applied disk-shaped nipples. The multiple holes at the sides of her head may have held metal rings. OT



D. 15950

PLAQUE WITH A HARPIST

Baked clay
 Iraq
 Purchased in Baghdad, 1930
 Isin-Larsa period, ca. 2000-1800 BC
 A9345

This clay plaque shows a man wearing a long fringed robe and playing a harp. Musicians assumed important roles in religious ceremonies and also provided entertainment at banquets and other festivities. The harp depicted here is strung between the vertical sound box and a perpendicular strut. Although the musician holds the harp upright, it could also be played horizontally, thus resembling a ship; a *magur* or “ship” harp is known from earlier Mesopotamian sources. Mold-made clay plaques such as this one have been recovered from temples, palaces, and private houses. Their exact function is unknown, although some may have been acquired as souvenirs after an important cultic event or after a visit to a shrine or temple. KG/OT



D. 20527

TABLET WITH EPIC OF GILGAMESH

Clay
Iraq, Ishchali, "Gate" (Sin) Temple
Excavated in 1935-36
Old Babylonian period, ca. 1800-1600 BC
A22007

Gilgamesh was probably a historical figure, a king of the city of Uruk, around 2800 BC. The legends that grew up around him in both Sumerian and Akkadian literature form the Epic of Gilgamesh, the most elaborate and popular of the Mesopotamian literary compositions. The epic tells the story of Gilgamesh and his quest for immortality. This tablet contains one small part of the episode in which Gilgamesh and his friend Enkidu journey to the Cedar Forest. They enter the forest, and Gilgamesh begins to cut down the sacred cedar tree with his ax. The sound brings out the monster Humbaba, the guardian of the Cedar Forest, terrifying Gilgamesh, whose cry for help unleashes winds from the sun god Shamash that trap Humbaba. Showing no mercy, Gilgamesh and Enkidu cut off the head of Humbaba and defiantly bring it back to Uruk. OT

COIL MONEY

Silver
Iraq
Purchased in Baghdad, 1930
Old Babylonian period, ca. 2000-1600 BC
A9543



D. 80

This spiral of silver looks like an item of jewelry, but the coils are too large to fit around a finger and too small to fit around an arm. Coils like these were actually part of the Mesopotamian currency system. Individually, they do not fit into the standardized system of silver weights. When silver was needed as currency, however, the desired weight could be achieved by removing a piece from the coil or by combining smaller silver pieces. The ends of these coils reveal that pieces were twisted, hammered, or cut off, and some silver coils have been found with smaller silver pieces wrapped around them. Texts from the Old Babylonian period in Mesopotamia mention money "rings" being used to purchase land, possibly a reference to these coils. KG



D. 28376, D. 28388

FOUR-FACED GOD AND GODDESS

Copper alloy
 Iraq
 Purchased in Baghdad, 1930
 Old Babylonian period, ca. 2000-1600 BC
 God: A7119; Goddess: A7120

Surviving statues of Mesopotamian deities are rare. These representations of a god and goddess as four-faced are unique, although the god Usmu, who is associated with Ea, the god of underground waters, has two faces—like the Roman god Janus—and was common in the Akkadian period, some 200 years earlier. The striding god wears a headdress with a pair of horns, a marker of divinity, above each face. He carries a weapon in one hand and places a foot on the back of a crouching ram. The seated goddess wears a tall horned headdress with a design resembling a temple façade or altar and holds a vessel of flowing waters. While the identities of these deities are unknown, the god has been associated with the four winds, and the goddess with rainstorms. KG/JME

PAZUZU AMULET

Copper alloy

Iraq

Purchased in New York, 1943

Neo-Assyrian period, 8th–7th century BC

A25413

This figurine represents the Mesopotamian demon Pazuzu, referred to in inscriptions as the “king of the evil *lilû*-demons.” Pazuzu’s appearance fits that of a demon of the evil winds that brought destruction and disease to humankind—his leonine face, scaly body, large razor-like talons, scorpion tail, and wings of a bird. Because of his appearance and demonic strength, Pazuzu was invoked in antiquity as a protective force to expel other destructive demons, making him a complicated and ambiguous figure. The Assyrians and Babylonians placed figurines and plaques of Pazuzu in their homes as protection against the harmful forces of the world, while pregnant women wore Pazuzu-head amulets, fibulae, and pendants in order to ward off the lion-headed demoness Lamashtu, who threatened to snatch and devour their newborn children. In addition to the oblong base, this figurine was also equipped with a suspension loop on top of its head. KN



D. 16980



RELIEF WITH KING ASSURNASIRPAL II

Gypsum (with modern restoration)
Iraq, Kalhu (modern Nimrud),
Northwest Palace, Room G
Excavated in 1847; by exchange
with the British Museum, 1974
Neo-Assyrian period, reign of
Assurnasirpal II, 883–859 BC
A34979

This relief depicts the Assyrian king Assurnasirpal II, builder of the Northwest Palace at Kalhu (modern Nimrud), identifiable by his royal headgear: a fez-shaped peaked cap encircled by a band tied at the back. This fragment was found in a large reception room that belonged to a suite devoted to ceremonial ablutions. It was part of a larger 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 used to banish insects from the royal presence. OT

D. 15966



D. 13271

RELIEF WITH ASSYRIAN DIGNITARIES

Gypsum, paint (with modern restoration)
 Iraq, Dur-Sharrukin (modern Khorsabad),
 Palace, Court VIII
 Excavated in 1928-29
 Neo-Assyrian period, reign of Sargon II,
 721-705 BC
 A7368

This relief showing two Assyrian courtiers was part of a long sequence of panels from the throne room façade of Sargon's palace at Dur-Sharrukin that depicted high officials, both eunuchs and bearded men, and tribute-bearers processing toward the king. The figure on the left, most likely the crown prince Sennacherib, is shown with an abundant beard, long curly hair, and a diadem decorated with rosettes and a dorsal band—all ideal qualities and attributes appropriate to his royal status. His hand is raised in a gesture of respect toward the king, who stood directly in front of him. Traces of red pigment on the figure's chest and diadem, and black pigment in the curls of his hair hint at the polychrome that once characterized these reliefs. Initially, the figure to the right was similarly carved with royal attributes, including a full beard and a headband with a dorsal band, but both of these features were erased. Hair was carved in place of the headband, yet traces of it, as well as of the beard and dorsal band, are still visible. It is unknown whether the recarving was due to an error on the part of the craftsmen, or the political reforms that took place during Sargon's reign, which may have required that the figure be remodeled as a eunuch. KN

LAMASSU

Gypsum (with modern restoration)

Iraq, Dur-Sharrukin (modern Khorsabad), Palace, Court VIII

Excavated in 1929

Neo-Assyrian period, reign of Sargon II, 721-705 BC

A7369

This monumental sculpture, hewn from a single stone block and weighing over 40 tons, was one of a pair that flanked a doorway that led to the throne room of King Sargon II. It has three front legs so that, when viewed from the side, the creature appears to be walking; when viewed from the front, it appears to be standing still. In Assyrian palaces, sculptures of mythological beasts, especially human-headed bulls and lions, often guarded entrances. With the face of a man, the body and ears of a bull, the wings of a bird, and a horned headdress indicating divinity, these creatures were known in Akkadian as *lamassus*, among other terms associated with protection. According to a successor of Sargon II, *lamassus* “turn back an evil person, guard the steps, and secure the path of the king who fashioned them.” The sculpture bears two inscriptions. The text on the front describes how Sargon II constructed the city Dur-Sharrukin and asks the gods to punish anyone who might destroy it. Since the *lamassu* was placed against the wall, the inscription on the back would not have been visible. It ends: “the gods who dwell in this city have granted me the lasting gift of building this city and growing old here.” Sargon II, however, died in battle in 705 BC and probably never lived in his palace. OT



D. 28171



DEITY HOLDING A FLOWING VASE

Gypsum (with modern restoration)

Iraq, Dur-Sharrukin (modern Khorsabad), Nabu Temple, entrance

Excavated in 1932–33

Neo-Assyrian period, reign of Sargon II, 721–705 BC

A11808

This figure, one of a pair that once flanked the entrance to the Nabu Temple, is identifiable as a god by his horned headdress. The deity holds a small 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 to his feet. Such deities with flowing vessels probably embodied the life-giving and life-sustaining forces of freshwater. This statue may have served as a support or pillar, as suggested by a depression cut into the square block resting on its headdress. OT



D. 20529

THE SENNACHERIB PRISM

Baked clay

Iraq

Purchased in Baghdad, 1919

Neo-Assyrian period, reign of Sennacherib, ca. 689 BC

A2793

This six-sided prism, bearing a lengthy Neo-Assyrian text written in cuneiform, contains the account of eight of King Sennacherib's military campaigns, ranging from Judah in the west to Elam in the east. Some of these campaigns are recorded in the Bible, and often the versions of the events differ. On this prism, Sennacherib recounts his victory over the king of Judah, Hezekiah, whom he defeated when he laid siege to Jerusalem during his third campaign in 701 BC. According to the text on the prism, Hezekiah, left alone and cut off, agreed to become an Assyrian vassal, sending lavish gifts to the royal court at Nineveh. In contrast, the Bible claims that Sennacherib retreated from the walls of the city after his soldiers were killed by an "angel of the Lord," commonly interpreted as a plague. OT



PANEL WITH STRIDING LION

Baked clay, glaze (with modern restoration)

Iraq, Babylon, Processional Way

Excavated in 1902-14; purchased in Berlin from the State Museum, 1931

Neo-Babylonian period, reign of Nebuchadnezzar II, 604-562 BC

A7481

This striding lion, its mouth opened in a roar, is made of molded, baked mudbricks covered in colorful glazes. During the New Year Festival, the cult statues of Babylon were carried out of the city through the Ishtar Gate and along the Processional Way, which continued for some 200 m outside the city, between two high walls, along the route to a special festival house. This striding lion, the symbol of the goddess Ishtar, was one of the many lions on the walls of the Processional Way. The Ishtar Gate itself was adorned with dragons and bulls, symbols of the gods Marduk and Adad, protectors of the city. Entering Babylon along the Processional Way and through the Ishtar Gate, one passed the Southern Palace and ultimately arrived at the temple complex of Marduk in the center of the city. The Ishtar Gate was known by the epithet "Ishtar overthrows its assailant," emphasizing its ability to thwart the enemy, and also as the "entrance of kingship," confirming its importance also in royal ideology. The striding lions would have already evoked the protective aspect of the goddess as the visitor proceeded along the Processional Way. KG/JME



D. 20009



D. 15787, D. 15786

COIN

Silver
 Iraq, Nippur, surface
 Recovered during excavations in 1964-65
 Parthian period, reign of Vologeses IV, AD 152-153
 A32818

Coins can be an important record of a king's reign and a means of establishing a chronological sequence for a dynasty. The Parthians based their coinage largely on Hellenistic prototypes. This coin, however, retains some elements of Mesopotamian iconography. The obverse (head) shows a profile image of King Vologeses IV wearing a helmet and a long square beard in the Mesopotamian style. The reverse shows him seated on a high-backed throne receiving a diadem from the goddess Tyche as a personification of Seleucia-on-the-Tigris, which remained an important city during the Parthian period and was the location of a major mint. KG/OT

INCANTATION BOWL

Baked clay, paint

Iraq, Nippur, surface

Recovered during excavations in 1964–65

Sasanian to Early Islamic periods, AD 500–800

A32675

Bowls inscribed with incantation texts have been found in both Sasanian and early Islamic houses. They were typically buried upside-down at strategic points to stop evil spirits or demons from attacking or harming members of the household. The incantation text was written around the interior of the bowl, which in some examples also has a demon depicted at the center. Scholars have suggested that the imagery and texts—written in Aramaic, Mandaic, or Syriac—worked together to protect the household by frightening the demons away. Some bowls, like this example, were also inscribed in pseudoscript.

While the reasons for utilizing pseudoscripts are unknown, it may be because the religious functionary who recited the spell as he wrote it was illiterate, as were the individuals for whom he prepared the bowl. Others have suggested that it was believed demons were able to read the bowls, even if human beings could not. KG



D. 15784



THE SYRO-ANATOLIAN COLLECTION

Most of the objects in the Syro-Anatolian collection were recovered during Oriental Institute excavations in Turkey in the early twentieth century. The Anatolian-Hittite Expedition (1927–1932), which excavated at Alişar Höyük in central Anatolia (Turkey) under the direction of Hans Henning von der Osten and Erich F. Schmidt, produced a chronological sequence for the Hittite heartland spanning the fourth to the first millennium BC, as well as cuneiform tablets dating to the Old Assyrian trading colonies. In the Amuq Valley of southeastern Turkey (the northern Levant), the Syrian-Hittite Expedition (1931–1938), directed by Calvin W. McEwan with the assistance of Robert J. and Linda Braidwood and Richard C. Haines, carried out an innovative series of excavations at six different sites to trace the development of society from the Neolithic period to the modern day. Extensive excavations at Iron Age Tell Tayinat revealed palaces and gates in which the large stone sculptures and hieroglyphic Luwian inscriptions in the gallery were found. The Syro-Anatolian collection is exhibited in the Henrietta Herbolzheimer, M.D. Syro-Anatolian Gallery. VRH



D. 15988

STATUES OF A FEMALE AND MALE

Limestone, bitumen, paint,
unidentified inlays

Syria, Sikkan (modern Tell
Fakhariyah), Sounding IX

Excavated in 1940

Pre-pottery Neolithic B period, ca. 9000–7000 BC

Female: L364.21; Male: L364.20

These enigmatic red-painted statues, once thought to date to the Late Bronze or Early Iron Age, have since been reassigned to the early Neolithic period, when early farming communities flourished across the Fertile Crescent. The nude female holds her breasts in a pose of fertility or protection. The male figure wears a loincloth and stands on a small pedestal. The hair or headdresses of both statues, as well as the covering of the female's feet, would have been attached by bitumen, a tar-like substance. This same material also secured the inlaid eyes of stone, which would have shimmered in the light. Based on parallels of various size and material, these could represent ancestors displayed and cared for by members of a household or community. Rituals of commemoration for these images may have been closely connected to cycles of life, death, and rebirth. JG

STATUES OF A MALE AND FEMALE

Turkey, Tell Judaidah, TT 20 XIV
 Excavated in 1935
 Early Bronze Age I (Amuq Phase G), ca.
 3100-2750 BC
 Male: A24199; Female: A24008

The sophistication of early metallurgy in Anatolia is on full display in a cache of six copper alloy statues (two of which are shown here) from the Amuq Valley, made with the lost-wax casting method and ornamented with accessories in an alloy of silver, gold, and copper. The conical helmets, broad belts, and weapons (found separately and badly preserved) worn by the males, and the elaborate hairstyles and jewelry worn by the females, in combination with their nudity, may have served to focus attention on their gender and associated status roles. Could these remarkable figures be cult statues representing a pantheon of deities? Or do they represent (perhaps deceased) kings and queens or priests and priestesses standing before a deity? VRH



D. 19599, D. 15761

RED-BLACK BURNISHED WARE JAR

Baked clay (with modern restoration)
Turkey, Tell Tayinat, Trench T4
Excavated in 1938
Early Bronze Age IVA (Amuq Phase I), ca. 2500-2300 BC
A27866

Sinuous shapes formed by hand, labor-intensive fluting and burnishing to a lustrous sheen, and complex firing that produced red and black clay—every aspect of Red-Black Burnished Ware went against the prevailing tendency toward mass-production in Levantine pottery of the third millennium BC. This distinctive pottery type had its origin among nomadic herders in the highlands of eastern Turkey and the Caucasus region. By the mid-third millennium it had spread southward as far as the southern Levant (where it is called Khirbet Kerak Ware), together with portable clay hearths (or andirons) and rounded houses. Since it existed side-by-side with local-style pottery and architecture, however, scholars still debate whether the appearance of Red-Black Burnished Ware marks the southward migration of people from the northeast or simply the spread of a different way of life. VRH



D. 15779



D. 28377

ENVELOPE AND TABLET WITH THE DEPOSITION OF BUZAZU

Clay

Turkey, possibly from Kanesh (modern Kültepe)

Purchased in Turkey, 1914 (envelope) and in Iowa, 1924 (tablet)

Old Assyrian period, ca. 1975–1835 BC

A94; A6009

Nearly four thousand years ago, Assyrian merchants from northern Iraq established a vast trading system extending from Mesopotamia to Anatolia, based on a network of commercial settlements centered at Kanesh (modern Kültepe). They carried out the earliest known market-based private trade and imported and sold tin and textiles to the local population in exchange for silver, gold, and other goods, often at great profit. The over 22,000 clay tablets discovered at Kültepe provide a detailed picture of the lives of these merchants and their families through business and private letters and



D. 28384

legal documents. This envelope was sealed by the sender to prevent the contents from being tampered with. The style and imagery of the seal impression are very typical of examples from Kültepe. The impression depicts the water god Ea seated on a throne above a goat-fish, holding a vase with flowing streams of water. Facing him is the weather god on his bull, holding the bull's reins in one hand and a lightning bolt in the other. Behind him is a hero holding an upside-down bull by its hind legs. A god holding an ax over his left shoulder and a lightning bolt and spear in his right hand stand to the left. A crescent and sun-disk, a star, a small human figure, a fish, and dots are scattered among the main figures. The cuneiform text on this tablet contains the statement in Akkadian by a certain Buzazu concerning the death of Puzur-Assur, who had been the business partner of his father. Puzur-Assur had left behind gold, silver, copper, and records on clay tablets such as this one. Buzazu and Puzur-Assur were both part of the group of Assyrian merchants who maintained the above-mentioned commercial network. These Assyrians lived among the local Anatolian population, sometimes marrying local women and starting families there. Although they must have spoken the indigenous languages (among others, Hittite and Luwian), they kept their business administration on clay tablets in their own language and cuneiform script. OT and TvDH



ATCHANA WARE GOBLET

Baked clay, paint (with modern restoration)

Turkey, Tell Tayinat, Area V

Excavated in 1938

Late Bronze Age (Amuq Phase M), ca. 1500-1300 BC

A27849

This striking white-on-dark painted vessel illustrates the position of Tell Atchana (ancient Alalakh) in the Amuq Valley at a crossroads between Syro-Mesopotamian and Mediterranean cultures. Goblets and beakers with geometric patterns and stylized birds are found across northern Syria and Mesopotamia in the middle of the second millennium BC and are known as Nuzi Ware after a site in northern Iraq. These delicate cups may have been associated with drinking rituals among elite members of the Mitannian empire which controlled this vast area until its eclipse by the Hittite and Assyrian empires. At Tell Atchana there developed an elaborate, organic style of decoration with rosettes, clusters of papyrus, and streams of water (thus dubbed Atchana Ware) that may have been inspired by the Aegean and Egyptian cultures of the Mediterranean with which the kingdom was trading. This vessel was excavated from an Iron Age level at Tell Tayinat, perhaps brought there from nearby Atchana and kept as an antique. VRH

D. 15778

BEER PITCHER

Baked clay

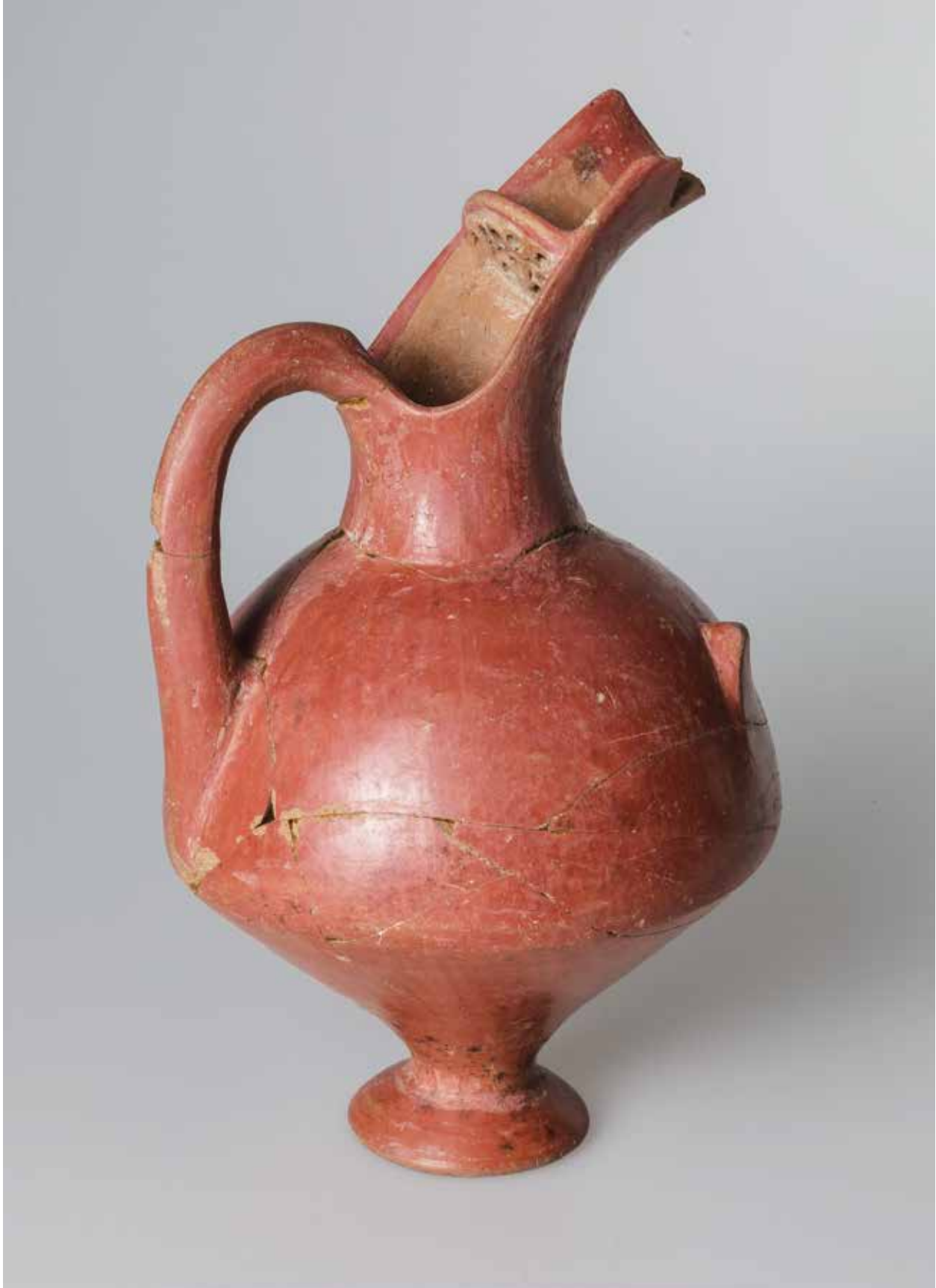
Turkey, Alishar Höyük, Building B, with skeleton b x28

Excavated in 1929

Middle Bronze Age III, ca. 1750–1650 BC

A10434

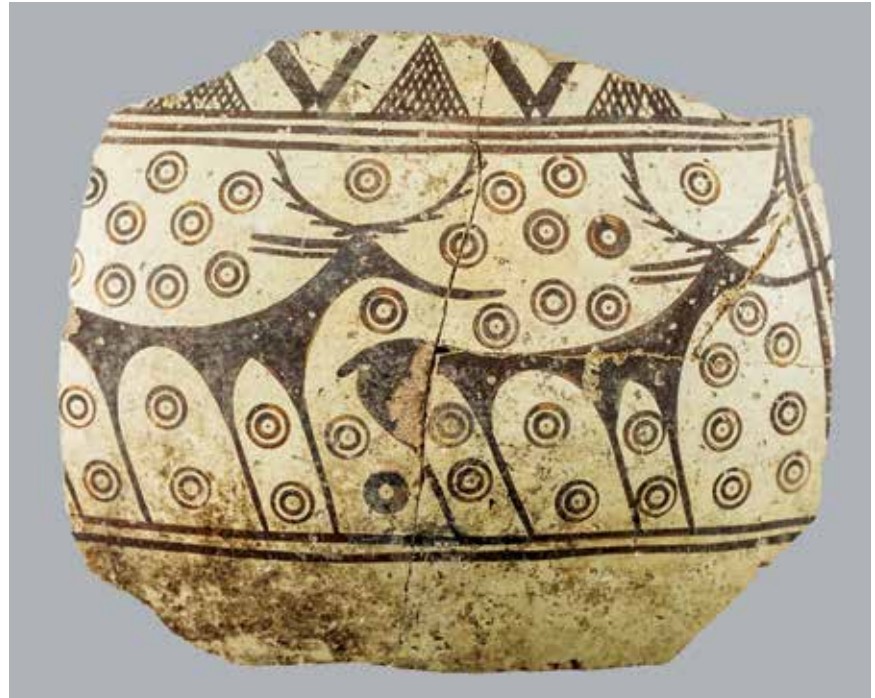
Pottery was a high art form in Middle Bronze Age central Anatolia. In addition to elaborate cult vessels made in the form of animals, human faces, or shoes, even a functional pitcher such as this one was given a graceful carinated shape, breast-like protrusions, and a burnished red surface that resembles polished copper. The strainer in the long trough-shaped spout would have held back fermented grain during the pouring of beer, an important beverage in both daily life and ritual. This vessel was found in a grave at Alishar Höyük, probably ancient Ankuwa, one of the Anatolian city-states involved in the Old Assyrian trading network. Its owner was buried alongside other graves beneath a building interpreted as a sanctuary and may have belonged to a leading family of priests. VRH



D. 28624



D. 15879



D. 19193

FEMALE SPHINX

Basalt, unidentified inlays
 Turkey, Tell Tayinat, Building I, and
 treasury room
 Excavated in 1936
 Iron Age I-II, ca. 1200–850 BC
 A27853

Unlike in Egypt, where lion-human hybrid creatures usually represented the male pharaoh, Anatolian sphinxes were often female, with long hair curled at the ends known as “Hathor locks” after the Egyptian goddess who wore it. While these supernatural figures often protected important gates and doorways in Hittite and Neo-Hittite Anatolia, this smaller resting figure may have flanked an altar or cult statue instead. Despite her delicately rounded face and decorative hairpin at the back of her head, the large inlaid eyes stare out watchfully. This fragment was found in a treasury room of the Iron Age palace of Tell Tayinat, whose kings adopted Hittite iconography and style for their monuments. VRH

SHERD WITH STAGS

Baked clay, paint
 Turkey, Alişar Höyük
 Excavated in 1928
 Iron Age II, ca. 1000–700 BC
 A10266

As a symbol of wild nature and the hunt, the stag is an enduring element of Anatolian religious imagery. Population movements and political fragmentation following the collapse of the Late Bronze Age Hittite empire in the early twelfth century BC brought new cultures to central Anatolia during the Iron Age. In the period of the Phrygian kingdom, once ruled by King Midas of the mythical golden touch, and the Neo-Hittite kings of Tabal, a painted pottery style of dark silhouette animals on buff clay appeared in this region. While this decorative style was new, stags had already featured prominently in Anatolian art for thousands of years—from wall paintings at Neolithic Çatal Höyük, to bronze standards in the Early Bronze Age, to silver drinking vessels and stone reliefs from the Hittite imperial period. VRH



D. 28411

BOWL WITH LION

Stone, unidentified inlays
 Turkey, Çatal Höyük, Square W14
 Excavated in 1933–34
 Iron Age II–III (Amuq Phase O),
 ca. 900–600 BC
 A12658

The precise purpose of decorated stone bowls such as this, found throughout the Neo-Hittite and Aramaean kingdoms, is a mystery. The spout protruding behind the lion head was likely inserted into another (leather, cloth, or ceramic) container from which a liquid was poured or squeezed into the bowl, but the identification of this substance, whether for drinking, anointment, or libation, is uncertain. Here, a carved human hand grasps the bottom of the bowl, while the forepart of a lion, symbol of power and protection, embraces the sides (see p. 53). In addition to the red pupils of his inlaid eyes, the lion's forehead is decorated with a circle of red inlaid stone. Other examples of these ritual objects are decorated with palmettes or geometric motifs. VRH



D. 15963

MONUMENTAL HEAD OF A RULER

Basalt (with modern restoration)
 Turkey, Tell Tayinat, Gateway VII
 Excavated in 1936
 Iron Age II (Amuq Phase O), 900-750 BC
 A27861A

This mutilated colossal head tells a dramatic story of the rise and fall of a kingdom. It belonged to the enthroned statue of a ruler of the Iron Age Neo-Hittite kingdom of Patina (also called Palistin, Walistin, or Unqi) in the Amuq Valley. This bearded monumental figure (originally about 2.5 × 3 m tall), which would have had inlaid eyes, may have sat in a gateway of Tell Tayinat where it could receive public offerings for the deceased king's soul. Later, in 738 BC, the army of the Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser III conquered Tell Tayinat, smashed symbols of its rulers such as this, and deported many of its people. Whereas "deposed" statues were sometimes buried out of respect or superstitious fear, the Assyrians irreverently recycled the fragments of this one as paving stones. VRH

COLUMN BASE

Basalt

Turkey, Tell Tayinat, Building I

Excavated in 1937

Iron Age II (Amuq Phase O), ca. 850–738 BC

A27859

This large stone column base was one of three found on the porch of the royal palace of Neo-Hittite Tell Tayinat. A wooden column, probably cedar of Lebanon or Aleppo pine, would have stood atop the base, raising the palace façade more than 4 m. With the carved decoration of stylized palmettes, rosettes, twisted vines, and wave-like running spirals (guilloche) on the base below, the tall columns would have evoked a forest paradise, a suitably grand introduction for the ruler enthroned in the room beyond. Huge timbers from the forested Amanus and Lebanon mountains were the most coveted resource of the northern Levant, and it is no wonder that after conquering this region, Assyrian kings of timber-poor Mesopotamia tried to recreate its columned palace façades, called *bit hilani*, in their own palaces. VRH



D. 15962

ROUNDEL

Copper alloy, gold, unidentified inlays

Turkey, Tell Tayinat, I-T, west

Excavated in 1937

Iron Age III (Amuq Phase O), ca. 738–727 BC

A56699A

An incised cuneiform inscription on this copper alloy disk, which was found outside a temple at Tell Tayinat, indicates that it was dedicated to the Syrian storm god Adad, “controller of the waters of the heavens and the earth.” It would have once gleamed with gold foil and colorful inlaid stones. The precious materials of religious objects such as this one were not merely decorative. Rather, they were considered to be charged with sacred properties of purity, protection, and permanence. The roundel was dedicated to the storm god by an Assyrian official for his own life and the life of the Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser III, who had recently conquered Tell Tayinat. A treaty of loyalty to a later Assyrian king and his heirs was recently excavated inside the adjacent temple, further demonstrating the intertwining of religion and politics in the Assyrian empire. VRH



D. 15891



D. 15960

INSCRIBED STELA FRAGMENT

Basalt
 Turkey, Demir Köprü (formerly Jisr el Hadid)
 Purchased at Jisr el Hadid, 1938-39
 Iron Age, 9th-8th century BC
 A23427

This fragment was once part of a larger stela (nearly 1 m high) with the author portrayed in the upper right-hand corner: his two feet, pointing to the right, are still preserved. In the three preserved lines of inscribed text he mentions his father, brothers, and several unknown deities. The inscription is one of hundreds coming from the area of southeast Turkey and northern Syria dating to 1000-700 BC, when independent city-states were trying to keep the Neo-Assyrian empire at bay. The author was probably one of those local kings. The inscription uses the indigenous Anatolian hieroglyphs and is written in the Luwian language. The population of the area consisted of speakers of both Luwian and Phoenician. Stelae like these were publicly displayed monuments and used either the Luwian hieroglyphs or alphabetic Phoenician. Sometimes inscriptions have both. TvDH



THE MEGIDDO AND LEVANT COLLECTION

The collection from the Levant is composed primarily of objects from the site of Megiddo (biblical Armageddon), which was the focus of a large-scale excavation by the Oriental Institute directed successively by Clarence S. Fischer, P. L. O. Guy, and Gordon Loud between 1925 and 1939. The artifacts from the excavation provide a valuable source for reconstructing the cultural sequence of the Levant from the sixth millennium BC through the end of the sixth century BC. Other important Oriental Institute excavations include those directed by Pinhas Delougaz and Helene Kantor at Khirbet el-Kerak (also known as Beth Yerah), which yielded a church and tombs dating to the Byzantine period. A few objects were purchased or entered the collection as gifts.

Prominent assemblages in the collection include the Megiddo ivories, which document interconnections between the Aegean, Egypt, Anatolia, and the Levant during the second millennium BC. Dozens of carved pieces of ivory were found mingled together with gold jewelry, stone vessel fragments, and animal bones in a small sunken room of a Late Bronze Age palace at Megiddo. The ivories were carved from elephant and hippo tusks into inlays for furniture and portable objects such as containers. The eclectic styles of the Megiddo ivories led the excavators to believe that they had been collected by an eccentric Canaanite prince. A more recent theory suggests the hoard was a ritual offering made during a time of political instability in the late twelfth century BC. The collection from the Levant is exhibited in the Haas and Schwartz Megiddo Gallery. JG/JME



PAVING STONE WITH IBEX

Limestone
 Israel, Megiddo, Stratum XIX
 Excavated in 1937-38
 Early Bronze Age I, ca. 3500-3100 BC
 A22494A-B

Found within the courtyard of a temple at Megiddo, this large paving stone features the carved image of an ibex, a horned caprid common in arid and rocky environments of the Middle East and northeastern Africa. The ibex may have been a symbol of fertility or protection or of a deity. The styles and subjects of human and animal carvings on Megiddo's paving slabs have close parallels at ritual sites of late Predynastic Egypt, including Hierakonpolis and Abydos. Highly valued Egyptian-style stone and metal objects were also found within the paved area of the temple. Together, this may indicate the presence of Egyptians or a local population with close ties to Egypt. GN/JG

D. 5492

DAGGER BLADE AND POMMEL

Copper alloy, limestone
 Israel, Megiddo, Stratum XIII
 Middle Bronze Age IIA, ca. 2000-1750 BC
 Excavated in 1938-39
 A23839A-B

The blade of this dagger is made from copper alloy. Copper was common in parts of the Middle East and on the island of Cyprus. This weapon appears to have been designed for combat, but its ornamental stone pommel and its discovery in a sacred area of Megiddo suggest it was a ceremonial or ritual object dedicated to a temple. Around half of all men in Middle Bronze Age southern Levant were buried with weapons such as daggers, indicating the presence of a strong male warrior ideology within Canaanite society. JG



D. 5494



D. 5435

JUG

Baked clay, paint (with modern restoration)
Israel, Megiddo, Tomb 1100A
Excavated in 1928-32
Late Bronze Age I, ca. 1550-1400 BC
A16554

Chocolate-on-White pottery was made in the southern Levant from the late Middle Bronze Age into the early part of the Late Bronze Age. This is one of several examples found in a tomb at Megiddo. It is characterized by a geometric, reddish brown painted decoration on a creamy white burnished slip (see p. 69). Along with other wheel-made open bowls and smaller jugs, this example is a domestic fineware for use at the table. This pottery marks a transitional era that saw many Middle Bronze Age Canaanite cities subsequently fall under the military or political domination of Egypt in the Late Bronze Age. As it bridges the two periods, the pottery is an important marker of local continuity in ceramic traditions. Scientific analysis of this pottery type suggests it was made in the northern Jordan Valley or southern Lebanon. JG

CANAANITE GOD

Copper alloy, gold (with modern wood mount)

Israel, Megiddo, Stratum VII

Excavated in 1935-36

Late Bronze Age II, ca. 1400-1200 BC

A18316

The headdress and beard of this seated figure identify him as El, the Canaanite creator deity. He holds a blossom in one hand; the other hand, now lost, was probably raised with the palm facing outward. Canaanite religion included a complex family of gods under El, the supreme patriarch. This figure came from the area of a temple at Late Bronze Age Megiddo, and the gold leaf ornamenting this cast metal figure could indicate it was worshipped as a cult image. In the Hebrew Bible, the Israelites are often drawn to Canaanite gods, including El and his son Ba'al. The Israelites' ultimate focus on the single Hebrew god is what gives them their unique religious identity. El came to be used as a general term for "god" in the Bible. JG/GN



D. 5438



D. 5481

PLAQUE WITH ROBED WOMAN

Ivory, glass inlay
 Israel, Megiddo, Stratum VII
 Late Bronze Age IIB, ca. 1400–1200 BC
 A22258A

This delicately carved openwork plaque was once part of an inlay from a chair or bed. Letters between Canaanite rulers and Egyptian pharaohs around the time this ivory was carved refer to lavish gifts and tribute that included ivory furniture. The plaque depicts a slender woman wearing a fringed robe and necklace with an Egyptian hairstyle or wig. Although this ivory features Egyptian-style elements, such as the frontal eye depicted on the profile face, the plaque was probably made for a local client in the Levant. There are strong similarities between this inlay and examples from the Syrian site of Ras Shamra (ancient Ugarit), as well as elements that anticipate Levantine ivoryworking traditions of the early first millennium BC. JG



D. 5480

GAME OF FIFTY-EIGHT HOLES

Ivory, gold, frit inlays
 Israel, Megiddo, Stratum VIIA
 Excavated in 1939
 Late Bronze Age IIB, ca. 1300–1200 BC
 A22254A–B

Board games were immensely popular in the ancient world. This board was used to play the game of fifty-eight holes. Popular in Egypt from around 2050 BC, the game spread across the Middle East during the second millennium BC. Traveling merchants and envoys probably helped spread the game's popularity. Like the game of twenty squares (see p. 97), fifty-eight holes is a race game like modern chutes and ladders. It was similar to the Egyptian game of hounds and jackals named for its animal-headed pegs. The object of the game was to be the first to move all five pegs around the board. Every fifth hole, as well as the central panel, was inlaid with gold and blue paste—these were probably safe positions. Moves were determined by the throw of a die. The gold studs may have once capped the pegs. The board's form resembles a Mycenaean shield, suggesting a connection with the Aegean world. Some have referred to the game of fifty-eight holes as the shield game, but other examples have a palm-tree configuration. JG



D. 5473

GRIFFIN PLAQUE

Ivory
 Israel, Megiddo, Stratum VIIA
 Excavated in 1936-37
 Late Bronze Age IIB, ca. 1300-1200 BC
 A22212

This ivory plaque, carved in the Mycenaean style, depicts a winged griffin, a mythological creature with a lion's body and an eagle's head and wings. Here, the griffin's head is raised, as if crying out. A close parallel for this plaque was found on the Cycladic island of Delos. Other examples are attested on wall paintings in palaces of the Levant and the Egyptian Delta. This plaque may have been made in the Aegean, may have been carved by an Aegean craftsman in the Levant, or was a local imitation of an Aegean griffin. The symbol may have been associated with royalty, reproduced by artisans who traveled over land and sea between the palaces of the eastern Mediterranean. JG

KERNOS RING

Baked clay (with modern restoration)
Israel, Megiddo, Stratum VIA
Excavated in 1930
Iron Age I, ca. 1200–975 BC
A18835

This hollow clay ring or “trick vase” with its attached vessels was probably used for pouring liquid offerings (libations) during religious ceremonies. It is also known by the ancient Greek term *kernos*. Canaanite, biblical, and ancient Greek sources refer to libations of water, wine, milk and honey, and oil. Liquids poured into the miniature krater opposite the bull-headed spout were circulated through the other vessels before being decanted through the spout. Miniature vessels on this kernos ring include two storage jars (one missing), two pomegranate-shaped vessels, and two birds (doves?) drinking from the krater. The animals may be associated with deities to whom offerings were provided. Pomegranates symbolize fertility and renewal in ancient and modern traditions. This vessel has close parallels from Late Bronze and Early Iron Age Cyprus. Some suggest that kernos rings were brought (or reintroduced) to the Levant by “Sea Peoples,” some of whom migrated to the Levant from the Aegean around 1200 BC. JG



D. 15954

FOUR-HORNED ALTAR

Limestone (with modern restoration)

Israel, Megiddo, Strata VA/IVB

Excavated in 1926

Iron Age IIA, ca. 1000–800 BC

A13201A

Sacrificial altars with horns at the four corners are known throughout the southern Levant during the Iron Age II period. They are described in the Hebrew Bible, where they are typically associated with Israelite religious worship. This altar was probably too small for animal sacrifices, but it may have been used for offering grain, wine, oil, or incense. The book of Exodus describes incense altars as one cubit wide by two cubits high (about 0.5 m × 1 m), corresponding roughly with this altar's proportions. Monumental four-horned altars known elsewhere were constructed from ashlar blocks to create wide offering platforms, probably for burnt offerings of sacrificed animals. Interpreted as architectural models of shrines or temples, their horns may represent battlements, perhaps alluding to rooftop rituals. The square niches carved into the sides of this altar may echo the cut-out windows in ceramic shrine models, a trace of its architectural inspiration. JG



D. 19256



D. 16994

COLUMN CAPITAL

Limestone
 Israel, Megiddo, Stratum IV
 Excavated in 1926
 Iron Age IIA-B, ca. 975-732 BC
 A13394

This column capital came from a monumental building at Megiddo, either an elite residence or a temple. It is carved as a highly stylized palmette with curling volutes and a central triangle. The style of this example is referred to as proto-aeolic, after the later aeolic standard in the Archaic Greek world. Such capitals are known from several other sites in the southern Levant and Cyprus. When first discovered, the capitals were associated with the building projects of King Solomon, who ruled around 950 BC, partly because Solomon's store city of Megiddo is described in the first book of Kings in the Hebrew Bible. The capitals are now more commonly assigned to the Omride dynasty of the ninth century BC and are characteristic of Israelite architecture until the Assyrian conquests of the late eighth century BC. JG

OSSUARY AND LID

Limestone

Palestine, Jifna

Gift of Dr. Harold Willoughby, 1953

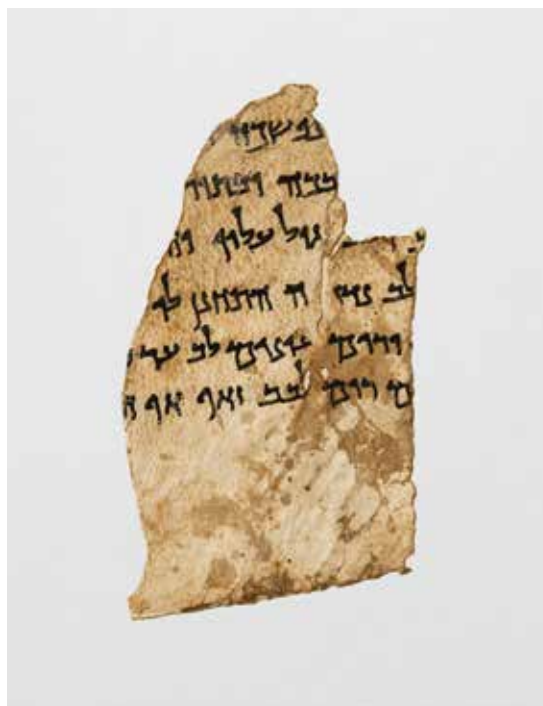
Late Second Temple Period, ca. 20 BC-AD 70

A29791A-B

Ossuaries were used to store disarticulated human skeletal remains. Typical Jewish mortuary customs in the Levant around 2,000 years ago called for the body of the deceased to be ritually washed and shrouded soon after death, then buried in the earth or in a rock-cut tomb. After some years, the defleshed skeletal remains were removed, placed in an ossuary, and reinterred within a communal family tomb. It is thought that the biblical term “gathered to his fathers” (Genesis 49:29; 2 Kings 22:20) refers to this practice of secondary burial. This ossuary is decorated with incised rosettes and a Hebrew inscription recording the name of the deceased: “Yoezer, son of Yehohanan, the scribe.” JG



D. 5508



D. 5512

DEAD SEA SCROLL FRAGMENT

Parchment, ink
 Palestine, Wadi Qumran, Cave IV
 Purchased in Jerusalem, 1956
 Roman period, ca. AD 1-70
 A30303

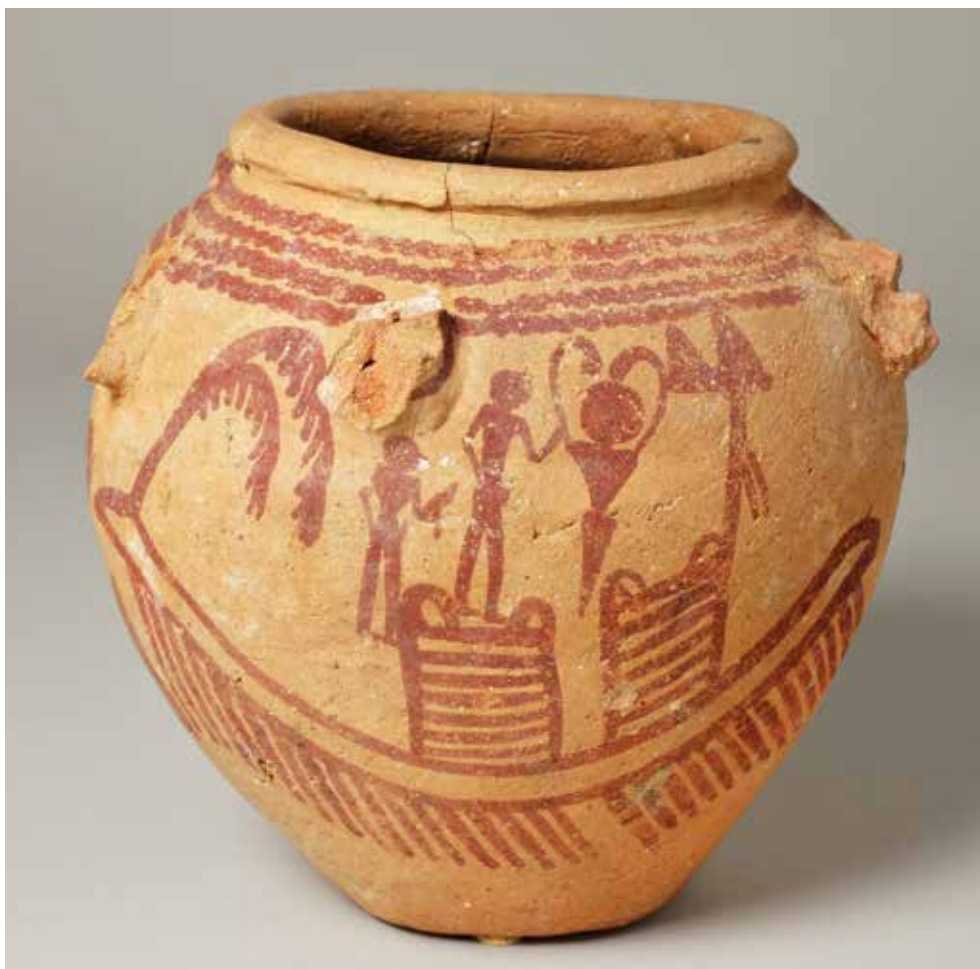
This fragment of parchment with Hebrew script is one small part of the famous Dead Sea Scrolls, first unearthed at the site of Qumran, close to the Dead Sea. The parchment texts, wrapped in linen and stored in pottery jars, were hidden in the first century AD and recovered between 1947 and 1956. The biblical writings on many of these scrolls are the earliest known Hebrew copies of Old Testament texts including Deuteronomy, Leviticus, and Isaiah. Documents in Greek and Aramaic are also attested among the Dead Sea Scrolls. Most fragments are non-biblical texts, featuring devotional poetry and prose, like this fragment of a psalm. GN/JG



THE EGYPTIAN COLLECTION

The Egyptian collection documents the entire chronology of Egypt from the Neolithic through the early Islamic period. Strengths of the collection are New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Period reliefs and *shabtis*. The collection is also very rich in organic material (especially wood and papyrus), ostraca, and Predynastic ceramic and stone vessels.

The objects come from a variety of sources. The Oriental Institute's excavations at Medinet Habu (1926–1933) added 8,000 objects, including the colossal statue of Tutankhamun. A significant percentage of the collection was acquired in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries through the University of Chicago's financial support of the Egypt Exploration Fund and the British School of Archaeology in Egypt. Key objects were also purchased by James Henry Breasted in the early twentieth century. Additional materials, especially ceramics, were obtained by exchanges with other museums. The Egyptian collection is exhibited in the Joseph and Mary Grimshaw Egyptian Gallery. ET



D. 17575

DECORATED WARE VESSEL

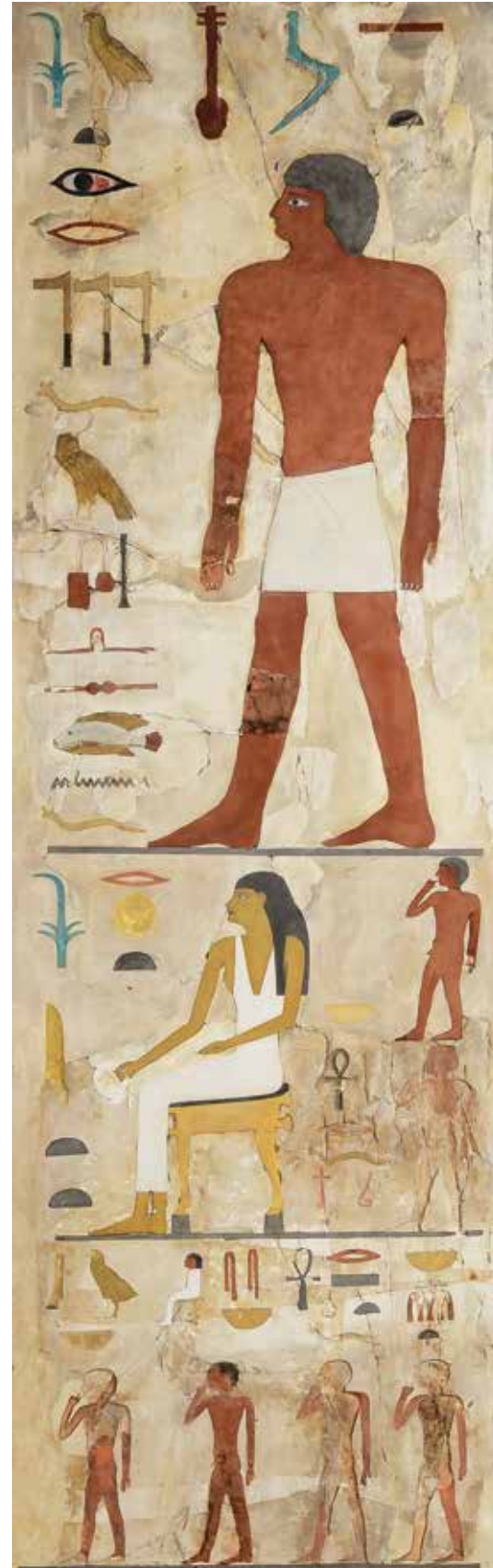
Baked clay, paint
 Egypt, Cairo
 Purchased in Cairo, 1920
 Predynastic period, Naqada IIC-D, ca. 3400 BC
 E10581

Luxury goods are found among tomb offerings throughout ancient Egyptian history, and this very early painted vessel may have been prized more for its elaborate decoration than any contents it once held. Commonly termed “Decorated Ware,” these were produced by only a few workshops and employ a specific type of marl clay as a “canvas” for fairly standardized red painted scenes. This jar is adorned with scenes of desert animals and processions of boats, the primary mode of travel in Egypt. Zigzags atop the scene represent water. The boat illustrated here is provided with oars, a prow decoration of plant fronds (perhaps the heraldic sedge of dynastic Egypt), and two cabins. From the right-hand cabin protrudes a standard with a symbol for a territory or deity atop a pole with two streamers. Such standards remained a feature of religious processions until the suppression of traditional cults in the Byzantine era. The religious nature of the boat scene is confirmed by the image of a woman with wide hips and arms raised above her head, a posture certainly representing dancing from the Old Kingdom onward. The painted figure corresponds to contemporary clay statuettes with wide hips, upraised arms, and emphasized breasts. Both the statuettes and the painted female can be identified as either ritual celebrants or goddesses. The two male painted figures are attendants and perhaps participants in the divine dance. Religious boat processions, either on the Nile or performed on land with boat parades, became a central feature of temple ritual. The boat parade continues even today in the annual festival of the Moslem sheik Abu el-Haggag at Luxor. RKR

RELIEF OF NEFERMAAT AND ITET

Limestone, unidentified inlays (with modern restoration)
 Egypt, Medum, Mastaba 16
 Gift of the British School of Archaeology in Egypt, 1909–10
 Old Kingdom, Dynasty 4, reign of Snefru, ca. 2600 BC
 E9002

The most critical—and expensive—purchase any Egyptian of status would make in his lifetime was a tomb. The structure protected the body as an eternal house, and the wall texts and scenes ensured the survival of the memory and underworld existence of the deceased, his family, and dependents. Even in the Old Kingdom, threats to the tomb's decoration were a serious concern, with names and images of the owner vandalized due to personal hostility, “killing” the image to deter ghosts during tomb robbery, or simply the desire to usurp prime funerary real estate at low cost. Older names and figures could be chiseled off the wall, and the new owner's name and features placed on the shaved surface. The artists of the vizier Nefermaat devised a unique solution to the problem by deeply carving spaces for figures and hieroglyphs and then filling the cells with colored paste. On this wall relief, Nefermaat is depicted with his wife and children accompanied by an unparalleled label: “He is one who made his gods in writing that cannot be erased.” There are no divinities depicted in the tomb, and the text shows that in Egyptian theology the word for “god” literally means “symbol” or “image.” The word's use here for imperishable “hieroglyphs” further puns on the common Egyptian term for written symbols: “god's words.” Unfortunately, the dried paste could fall out, the technique was labor intensive, and the practice was not repeated. Experimental architecture was a feature of the age. One of Nefermaat's sons, the vizier Hemiunu, undertook the even more laborious task of overseeing the building of the great pyramid of Khufu. RKR



D. 15795



D. 16971

STATUE OF A MAN AND HIS WIFE

Limestone, paint (with modern restoration)
 Egypt, Deshasheh, Tomb of Nenkhefeka
 Gift of the Egypt Exploration Fund, 1896-97
 Old Kingdom, middle to late Dynasty 5, ca. 2414-2345
 BC
 E2036A-B

The Egyptians believed that one would live forever after death if they were not forgotten by the living. Stone statues incised with the person's name were created for tombs and temples in an effort to create an imperishable likeness of the deceased. This example represents the nomarch (provincial governor) Nenkhefeka and his wife Nefershemes. Typically, they are shown in a highly idealized manner: slim, healthy, youthful, and dressed in fine linen clothes—a reflection of the way they wished to be remembered forever. In Egyptian art, men were usually shown with reddish brown skin and women with yellow, probably a reference to men being more active outside the home, in contrast to elite women, who managed the household. ET



D. 28153

STATUE OF A POTTER

Limestone, paint
 Egypt, probably from Giza
 Purchased in Egypt, 1920
 Old Kingdom, Dynasty 5, reign of Nyuserre, ca. 2445-2421 BC
 E10628

Egyptian funerary beliefs were not based on a rejection of earthly life, but on a desire to continue that life—with improvements. In the next world, individuals wished to regain their youthful health but maintain their personalities, families, and social status. That status included the necessary servants to perform the multiple tasks of the underworld estate. While the family and estate workers were commonly carved and painted on tomb walls, prominent Old Kingdom individuals could receive three-dimensional stone versions of individual figures as a gift from the royal workshop. Such statues were typically placed as a group within concealed tomb chambers known today as *serdabs*. This small figure of a potter was acquired as a member of the largest known assemblage of such statues, which probably belonged to a cemetery official named Nikauinpu. Comprising at least twenty-six individual figures, these so-called “servant statues” include bakers, brewers, butchers, cooks, a food tray, potters, and a man stoking a crucible, probably for metal work. The group also contains a dwarf, playing children, and several images of Nikauinpu himself, with and without his wife. The potter is remarkable for the depiction of his ill health, with his ribs shown protruding through the skin of his back. This symptom is otherwise depicted on famine victims, but only the potter has this feature in the group. The statue probably represents a specific individual of Nikauinpu's estate known by the artist to suffer with a wasting sickness. RKR



D. 15825

STELA OF UHA

Limestone, paint

Egypt, Girga district

Purchased in Egypt, 1935

First Intermediate Period, Dynasties 7-11, ca. 2219-1995
BC

E16956

To ensure immortality, Egyptian religion required the preservation of an individual's name and image, whether as a statue, carved or painted relief, or the embalmed and decorated mummy itself. For many Egyptians, the pivotal focus of self-presentation, and thus preservation, was the tomb stela with its standardized formula promising food offerings from the king and gods, the deceased's image, name, and status titles, and a brief autobiography summarizing the person's character and major life events. In the Old Kingdom, stone stelae were obtained from the royal workshop, but with the collapse of centralized government in the First Intermediate Period, provincial dignitaries had to rely on local artistic talent. The stela of the regional noble Uha is one of these provincial products, with an uneven stone surface, non-classical figures, and an unusual separation of the pictorial scene from the hieroglyphic texts, which are painted in lines of a single color. Uha's biography records his family's love for him and contains customary references to his self-made status, having acquired his own oxen and boat, not inherited from his father. Most significant is the two-line record of his participation in a group circumcision of 120 men, who bravely endured the surgery at puberty, "none striking out or being struck, none scratching or being scratched." While the group ceremony may be a contemporary development, individual male circumcision was a regular coming-of-age rite at all periods in Egypt and mandatory for priests. Egyptian circumcision is the source of the later Hebrew custom. RKR

**COFFIN OF THE OVERSEER
OF THE TROOPS,
IPI-HA-ISHETEF**

Cedar, paint

Egypt, Saqqara, Teti Cemetery

Purchased in Egypt, 1923

First Intermediate Period, Dynasties 9-10,

ca. 2160-2025 BC

E12072A-B

Rectangular coffins were considered to be replicas of houses and, by extension, tombs—virtual abodes of the dead that sheltered the body and provided provisions for the deceased. The interior of this coffin is decorated with the representation of an elaborate door flanked by columns (see p. 85). This replica door was believed to allow the soul of the deceased to come and go from the coffin. The mummy was laid on its side, its face toward this door. Opposite the door on the exterior of the coffin are two carved and painted eyes. It was thought that the soul of the mummy could see through them. Most of the interior is decorated with images of things that the deceased wished to have for eternity, including food, jewelry, weapons, eye paint, and sandals. The inscriptions on the underside of the lid, shown at the top of the image, above, are religious compositions known as Pyramid Texts when they appear in royal tombs during the late Old Kingdom. They were thought to protect the deceased king from harm and to facilitate his passage to the hereafter. At the time this coffin was made, the use of Pyramid Texts was unusual, for they had largely been adapted for incorporation into a related group of funerary texts called Coffin Texts. Wood from the coffin and its lid was dated through dendrochronology to the range of 2081-2064 BC, which agrees with the accepted range of dates for the First Intermediate Period. ET



D. 16238

MODEL WORKSHOP

Wood, linen, paint

Egypt, Sedment el-Gebel, Tomb 2105

Gift of the British School of Archaeology in Egypt, 1921

First Intermediate Period, Dynasties 9-10, ca. 2160-2025 BC

E11495

Food, drink, and service required by the deceased in the afterlife could be provided by real food, images of food, or models of food and its preparation. This model shows various activities taking place: men grinding grain on a stone to make bread (back right). Another man, standing in front of tall conical jars in a basket (center), presses a sieve down into a vat of beer to strain out the hunks of fermented bread from which the beer was made. Another pair of men slaughter a spotted cow. The model would have been placed near or on top of the coffin in the burial chamber. Wood models were a feature of tomb furnishings of the First Intermediate Period through the mid-Middle Kingdom. They show a wide variety of industries including weaving, plowing, feeding livestock, woodworking, boating, and people carrying various objects. They are invaluable records of tools, technology, and daily life. ET



D. 15810

CHILD'S TUNIC

Linen

Egypt, Luxor, Sheikh Abd el-Gourna, Anonymous Burial 1

Excavated in 1936 for the Metropolitan Museum of Art; by exchange with the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1950

New Kingdom, Dynasty 18, reign of Hatshepsut, ca. 1473-1458 BC
E18285

The generally hot and dry climate of Egypt has resulted in very good preservation of textiles, like this tunic sized for a child. In contrast to the idealized elaborate clothing shown on statues and in reliefs, most preserved examples of Egyptian garments were rectangles of linen that were meant to be wrapped around the body and knotted to create kilts, dresses, and shawls. Among the seamed garments, this type of tunic, which came in various lengths, was the most common. It was made by folding a length of linen in half, seaming the sides part way up leaving an opening for each arm, and cutting a keyhole-shaped opening for the neck. The bottom and neck opening were rolled and hemmed. When worn, fabric across the shoulders would hang down the arm, creating short sleeves. These tunics were worn under kilts of various lengths, giving the impression that the tunic was actually a separate shirt. This tunic was one of several discovered with mummy wrappings in an anonymous burial. ET



D. 15827

STATUE OF TUTANKHAMUN

Quartzite, paint (with modern restoration)
 Egypt, Luxor, Medinet Habu, Temple of Aye and
 Horemheb
 Excavated in 1930
 New Kingdom, Dynasty 18, reign of
 Tutankhamun, ca. 1336-1327 BC
 E14088

This statue represents a king wearing a pleated kilt, a double crown, the striped royal *nemes* headcloth, and a protective *uraeus* serpent that rears above his forehead to spit fire at his enemies. The facial features of the statue strongly resemble representations of King Tutankhamun and it is assumed that he commissioned it. However, the cartouches (name rings) belong to King Horemheb, whose names were carved over those of his predecessor, Aye. In Egyptian art, the identity of a statue was not established by the appearance, but rather by the name that was written on it, and so the facial features were not altered when one king usurped a statue from another. The narrow waist and soft belly of the king are characteristic of the art of Tutankhamun's time. The remains of small feet on the left side of the base indicate that the king's wife, Ankhsenamun, was shown standing at his side. This is one of a pair of statues. The other is in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo. ET



D. 15824

ASTRONOMICAL INSTRUMENT OF TUTANKHAMUN

Instrument: Wood, paint (with modern string and restoration)
 Purchased in London, 1923
 New Kingdom, Dynasty 18, reign of Tutankhamun, ca. 1336-1327 BC
 E12144

Plumb bob: Faience
 Purchased in Paris, 1919
 Late Period, Dynasty 26(?), 664-525 BC
 E9977

Egyptian astronomy directly influenced modern divisions of time: the 365-day year, the 30-day month (adopted but then distorted by the Romans), and the 24-hour day, with 12 hours for both day and night. While sundials or shadow clocks could track the movements of the sun and hours during the day, at night time was reckoned by the stars. A stargazer tracked the movement of specific bright stars whose positions in the sky signaled the change of hours. The astronomical observer held two instruments at right angles to determine a star's appearance: a Y-shaped vertical sighting stick through which the star was viewed and, to ensure that stick's proper orientation, a leveling device consisting of a horizontal handle supporting a plumb line. With the use of these instruments, the night sky served as a natural clock. The instrument shown here is a leveling device that was dedicated to the cult of Amun by the pharaoh Tutankhamun. The cord and plumb bob complete the appearance of the tool, but are not original to the piece. Hieroglyphic inscriptions on both long sides of the ebony handle record Tutankhamun's names and titles and stress his return to religious orthodoxy after the turbulent Amarna period. The king is said to have "acted with his two hands on behalf of his father Amun, who placed him upon his throne." The instrument is significant also for Tutankhamun's family history, since this is said to be a replacement for an earlier example donated by "the father of his father" Thutmose IV, who was more likely his great-grandfather. The skipped generation may be an early attempt to suppress the memory of his true father, Akhenaton. RKR



D. 28975



D. 15972

GAME OF TWENTY SQUARES

Wood, faience, copper alloy
 Egypt, possibly from Akhmim
 Purchased in Egypt, 1894-95
 New Kingdom, Dynasties 18-20, ca. 1550-1069 BC
 E371A-C

The game of twenty squares was popular throughout the ancient Mediterranean world. One of the oldest examples, from Mesopotamia, dates to about 2600 BC. It was played by two opponents, each of whom had five markers. The goal of the game was to move one's playing pieces down the side squares and up the middle, blocking one's opponent with a barrier of two or more markers. Moves were established by throw sticks, knucklebones, or dice. This game board is made of a solid piece of wood, its top carved with a pattern of squares, and a rectangular recess cut in its side to accommodate a drawer. The resulting hole in the side of the board was once covered with a piece of wood attached with glue along a miter joint. The drawer for storing the playing pieces is also made of a solid piece of wood into which a cavity was hollowed. A copper alloy loop on the front of the drawer served as a handle. In Egypt, scenes of people playing board games could be references to their desire to vanquish the powers of evil in order to be reborn in the afterlife. ET



SHABTI OF MEKIRETEF

Limestone, paint
 Egypt, Abydos
 Gift of the Egypt Exploration Fund, 1902-03
 New Kingdom, Dynasties 18-19, ca. 1550-1186 BC
 E8101

Shabti (later referred to as *ushabti*) figurines were placed in tombs to perform labor for the deceased in the afterlife. They originated from the idea that, in theory, all Egyptians were obligated to work on state-controlled agricultural works yet, in the afterlife, the deceased wished to be exempted from that duty to enjoy an obligation-free existence. Many examples, like this one, bear Book of the Dead Spell 6, which commands the *shabti* to work for the deceased: "O *shabti*, if I am summoned or if I am detailed to do any work that needs to be done in the realm of the dead . . . you shall detail yourself for me on every occasion of making the fields arable, of flooding the banks, or of moving sand from the east to west; 'Here I am,' you shall say." From the late New Kingdom, tombs were ideally stocked with 401 *shabtis*, one for each day of the Egyptian year, along with thirty-six figurines of overseers, one for each ten-day week, to maintain order. ET

D. 15900



D. 15813

front

SATIRICAL SCENE

Limestone, paint

Purchased in Egypt, 1930

New Kingdom, Dynasty 19, ca. 1295-1186 BC

E13951

This sketch of a boy being judged by a mouse dressed in a fine linen kilt and punished by a cat satirizes the political and social order. Here, the mouse is in command of the cat, and the cat is superior to the human. On the reverse is a hieratic (cursive hieroglyphic) inscription: "the cat and mouse bring in the boy." The composition may have been based on a folktale, which in turn may have been social commentary. ET



D. 15815

back

FUNERARY STELA

Wood, paint

Egypt, Luxor, Ramesseum

Gift of the Egypt Exploration Fund, 1896

Third Intermediate Period, Dynasty 22, ca. 946–715 BC

E1351

This stela, found in a private tomb, was commissioned to commemorate the “Lady of the House” Djed-Khonsu-*iw-es-ankh* (“Khonsu-Says-She-Will-Live”). Her name refers to the pronouncement of an oracle of the god Khonsu who promised to protect her. Dressed in a diaphanous white gown, she wears on her head a funerary cone and a lily, both symbols of rebirth. She pours a libation over a table of food offerings topped with flowers and raises her hand in adoration of the seated god Re-Horakhty, a form of the Egyptian sun god. The hieroglyphic text is a prayer asking the god to supply food and drink for the survival of her spirit in the afterlife. The scene is flanked by the tall slender emblems for west (left) and east (right), referring to the setting and rising of the sun that was equated with eternal death and rebirth. ET



MUMMY AND COFFIN OF MERESAMUN

Human remains, linen, gesso, paint
 Egypt, Luxor, probably from Medinet Habu
 Purchased in Egypt, 1919
 Third Intermediate Period, Dynasty 22, ca. 946–715 BC
 E10797

This unopened coffin still contains the mummy of the priestess Meresamun, who lived during the Third Intermediate Period, a time of political turmoil with internal ethnic competition among Egyptians, Libyans, and Nubians. The only hint of these societal issues on the coffin is found in her father's name, Akhetamun, an abbreviation of a xenophobic name cursing non-Egyptians: "The-Effective-Eye-of-Amun-Be-Against-Them." Although he has no indication of rank on the coffin, Meresamun's title as chantress of the inner chamber or "residence" of Amun places her within an elite group of female temple singers typically recruited from the royal family and its close circle. The coffin and mummy within it have been analyzed multiple times by CT scan, revealing postmortem damage but no cause of death. The state of her bones and teeth suggest that she lived to about thirty years of age. The coffin is elaborately painted in a style characteristic of the Twenty-second Dynasty, with protective gods and symbols. The most significant feature of the coffin is her prayer to the deities Ra, Horakhty, Atum, Ptah, Sokar, and Osiris as a single godhead with multiple forms and names called simply "he" and "the great god." Meresamun's theological statement unites as one god the divine forces of creation, death, and rebirth. The remarkable declaration is paralleled on two funerary papyri for men and texts from the small temple of Medinet Habu, where she was probably buried. RKR



D. 19413



HEARING EAR STELA

Limestone, paint
 Egypt, Luxor, Medinet Habu
 Excavated in 1929
 Third Intermediate Period-Late Period, Dynasties 22-25,
 ca. 945-656 BC
 E16718

Direct access to temple gods was limited to royalty and ritually purified priests. For common individuals, immediate communication with the gods was possible during divine processions outside the temple or by prayers offered at the back of temple sanctuaries and at home altars. By the New Kingdom, special temples were developed for receiving prayer, including the temple of the Hearing Ear at Karnak. In the same time period, worshipers began to erect votive stelae invoking gods and showing multiple pairs of ears. The ears are those of the god, and the stelae functioned as conduits from the speaker's lips to god's ears. The god in question varied, with Amun and Ptah prominent at Karnak and "Ptah Who Hears Prayer" worshipped in Memphis. Later records favor Thoth, known as "The Hearer" and "He of the Two Hearing Ears." In the Ptolemaic period, a pair of hearing ears was included in the carved reliefs behind the sanctuaries of Horus and Sobek at the temple of Kom Ombo. The number of receptive divine ears was not standardized. Some stelae are covered in ears, but many include three pairs, reflecting Egyptian numerical symbolism in which three indicates totality or "many." The three pairs would provide one for all occasions. The example illustrated here has five pairs, perhaps linked to the Egyptian week of ten days. The petitioner would have an ear for each day. RKR

D. 19449

STATUE OF BASA, A PRIEST OF HATHOR

Limestone, paint

Egypt, Dendera

Purchased in Egypt, 1919

Third Intermediate Period, Dynasties 22–23, ca. 945–715 BC

E10729

Wearing a cloak from which only the head and hands protrude, the priest Basa is depicted sitting on a stepped base with his knees drawn up to his chest. Such statues are found in tombs or temples and first appear in the Twelfth Dynasty of the Middle Kingdom. They are called “block” or “cube” statues in reference to their squared three-dimensional shape. The squatting pose is intended to represent a humble witness before a divine procession along a temple axis or before gods in the tomb. The cloak covering the figure provided an ideal surface for expanded texts, and here Basa records a new, Libyan-inspired concern in the Third Intermediate Period: a genealogy of his father’s lineage that extends back twenty-six generations and one for his mother listing four generations. In Basa’s time, rights to hold a priestly office depended on ancestral claims, and the statue serves as a formal declaration of the source and legitimacy of his many honors. Three scenes on the statue record Basa’s devotion to the local cult of Osiris at Dendera. On the front, Basa in priestly costume adores enthroned Osiris and standing Isis. On both lateral sides, Basa kneels in worship before the standing god. RKR



D. 15803



D. 17932

STATUE OF THE GOD HORUS

Serpentine (modern brass beak)
Egypt, Cairo
Purchased in Egypt, 1919
Late Period, Dynasties 25–26,
ca. 747–525 BC
E10504

This statue represents the falcon god Horus, the sun god with whom the living king was identified. The size of the statue suggests that it may have stood in a temple where it would have received offerings in honor of the god. A narrow channel has been laboriously drilled from the head of the statue to its base and from the beak to the top of its head. This channel may have been drilled long after the statue was carved, allowing it to be used as an oracle—a medium through which the god gave audible pronouncements. ET



D. 15978

RELIEF FROM THE TOMB OF MONTUEMHAT

Limestone, paint
 Egypt, Luxor, Tomb of Montuemhat
 Purchased in California, 1948
 Late Period, Dynasties 25-26, 690-648 BC
 E17973

The ancient Egyptians decorated the walls of their tombs with elaborate scenes showing provisions and activities that they wished to continue after death. Here, oarsmen paddle boats loaded with baskets of fruit through waters teeming with fish. The captain, with his staff of office, raises his arm and points his index finger in a gesture of magical protection against river dangers such as crocodiles. This fragment comes from the tomb of Montuemhat, a governor of Thebes. One of the most powerful men of his time, he was able to employ the best artists to carve and paint scenes of abundance that would satisfy his every need in the afterlife. Artists of the Late Period consciously emulated the artistic style and compositions of the Old Kingdom, more than 2,000 years earlier. ET

STELA OF HORUS ON THE CROCODILES

Stone
 Egypt, Luxor
 Purchased in Luxor, 1933
 Ptolemaic period, 4th century BC
 E16881



front

D. 9259



back

D. 9262

Internal disease and poison were frequently treated by a combination of approaches now considered “rational” and “magical.” Animal bites, especially from snakes or scorpions, were a common problem in Egypt, and a popular magical treatment option was the healing stela, or *cippus*, showing the triumph of the god Horus over the beasts sent by Seth to harm him. The patient is identified with Horus, and the god’s cure becomes the patient’s salvation. First attested in the Eighteenth Dynasty, the Horus cippus acquired a standard form in the late New Kingdom that would continue into Roman times. A central image of the youthful Horus tramples multiple crocodiles beneath his feet while grasping in both hands wild animals of the desert: snakes, scorpions, lions, and gazelles. Throttled in his hands, these hostile forces are rendered helpless. A protective head of Bes appears above Horus, and rows of divine figures and standardized texts cover all remaining surfaces. Patients did not read the texts, but drank water that was poured over the surface and thus “charged” by contact with the carved images and spells. A large stone healing statue with the same texts was erected by Ramesses III for travelers at a caravan stop, and as a form of civic beneficence wealthy individuals later erected statues with the images and texts in public squares above basins to catch the healing water. Smaller and more portable versions, like the one shown here, were carried by travelers for protection. In its function, the Horus *cippus* thus became a predecessor of the later St. Christopher medallion. Outside of Egypt, examples have been found in Lebanon, Iraq, Ethiopia, and Rome. RKR

BOOK OF THE DEAD (PAPYRUS MILBANK)

Papyrus, ink

Egypt, Cairo

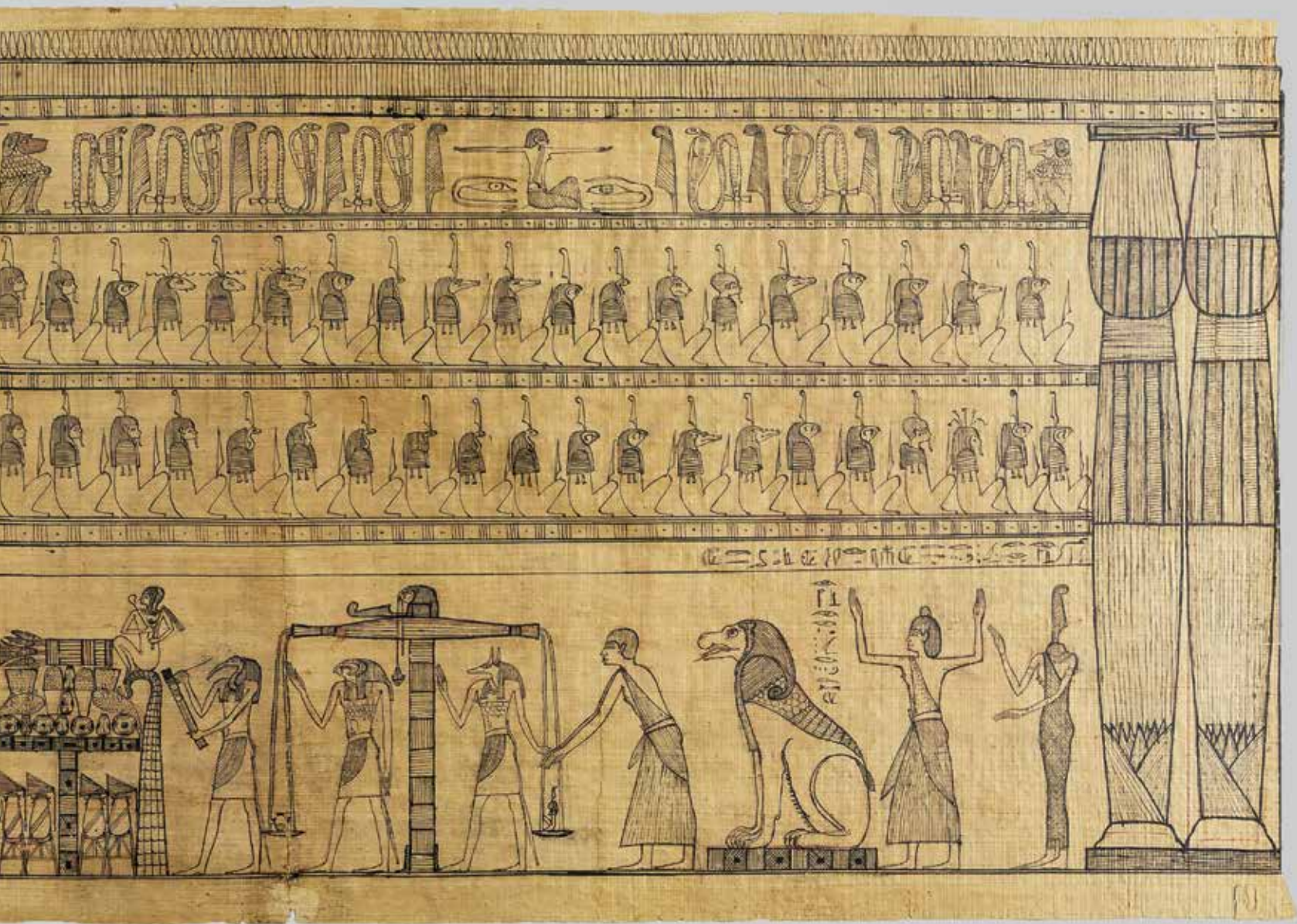
Purchased in Cairo, 1919

Ptolemaic period, 4th-1st century BC

E10486J

The Book of the Dead is composed of a series of spells that were believed to transform the deceased into a god, thereby allowing him or her to live eternally after death. Books of the Dead were placed in the tomb with the mummy. This section of a long papyrus shows the judgment of the soul. Two rows of judges who evaluate the worthiness of the deceased appear above the scene. The deceased, named Irtyuru, appears on the right with his arms upraised between the goddess of the West and Ammet, a combination of lion, hippopotamus, and crocodile who will devour the heart of the unjust. Irtyuru appears again bowing before the scale with which his heart is weighed against the goddess of truth. The falcon-headed god Horus and jackal god Anubis attend the scale as the ibis-headed god of writing Thoth records the judgment for Osiris, the ruler of the afterlife who sits in his shrine. ET





D. 13333

MUMMY MASK

Cartonnage, paint, gold

Egypt, Fayum

Gift of the Egypt Exploration Fund, 1902

Greco-Roman Period, 1st century BC–early 2nd century AD

E7177

This mask is made of gilded cartonnage, a material made from layers of linen or papyrus covered in plaster and commonly used for funerary masks from the First Intermediate Period onward. Traditional mummy masks are not portraits of a living human, but idealized representations of the individual transformed into a god. Royal masks, like that of Tutankhamun, are an exception, but even on these the portrait features are secondary to the theme of divinity. Both Tutankhamun's mask and this Greco-Roman era example for a private citizen depict the mummy's face with the golden flesh of the sun god Re. During Re's nightly voyage through the underworld, he merges with Osiris, god of the dead, and is rejuvenated for the following dawn. That unity and rebirth are depicted on the cartonnage mask with flanking images of Osiris on either side of

the deceased's golden face, while the reborn sun appears as a human-headed scarab on the crown of the head. The purpose of the mummy mask is stated explicitly in Book of the Dead Spell 151, the "Spell for a Secret Head." This is the text engraved on the back of Tutankhamun's mask. Within the spell, each portion of the mummy's head (and other body parts) is identified with a specific god, while the eyes are equated with the two boats of Re: "Your right eye is the Night Bark, your left eye is the Day Bark, your eyebrows are the Ennead, the top of your head is Anubis, the back of your head is Horus, your fingers are Thoth, your braided hair lock is Ptah-Sokar . . ." RKR



D. 15976

IBIS MUMMY

Organic remains, linen

Egypt, Abydos

Gift of the Egypt Exploration Fund, 1913-14

Roman period, 30 BC–AD 395

E9238

Animal mummies became an important part of Egyptian religion in the Late Period, and they grew in popularity through the Roman period. The animals were selected because of their association with a specific god, for example, the ibis with Thoth, and the hawk with Horus or Re. This type of mummy was offered to the god for thanks or in anticipation of the god acting on behalf of the petitioner. Most birds were mummified with a much simpler process than that used for humans. Some were eviscerated but others were not, their preservation being the result of a coating of a resinous material or a compound of wax and oil. Others were treated with natron, a naturally occurring salt. Typical for mummies from the Roman era, this example has elaborately plaited linen bandages. ET

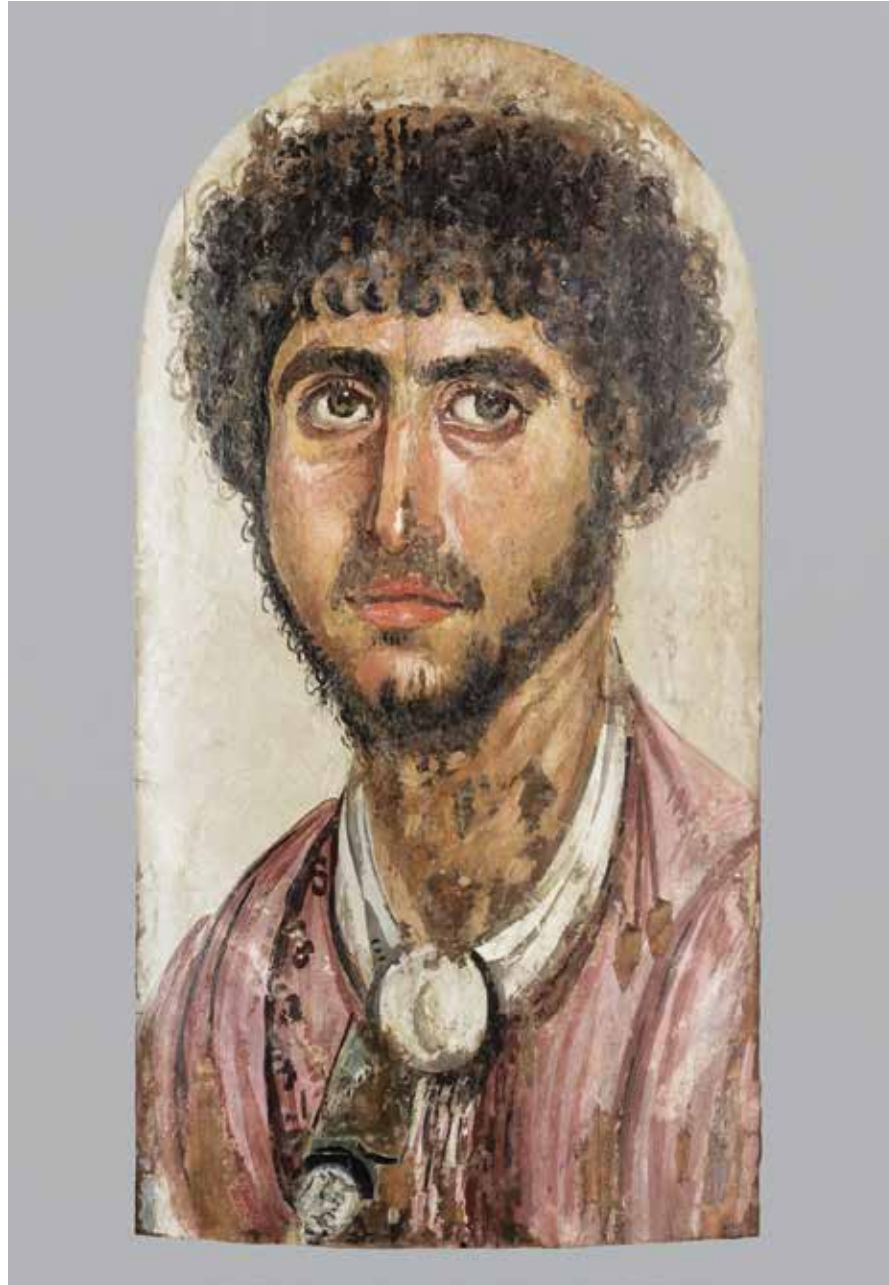


D. 15799

MUMMY PORTRAIT

Wood, wax, paint (with modern restoration)
 Egypt, Hawara
 Gift of the Egypt Exploration Fund, 1897
 Roman period, 2nd century AD
 E2053

Mummification was practiced in the Nile Valley for over three thousand years, continuing into the Roman period. As Roman rule spread across the eastern Mediterranean, Roman and local traditions commingled. In Egypt, some of the elite opted not to employ a traditional idealized and symbolic cartonnage head cover to represent the deceased (see p. 110), but rather they substituted a portrait that shows the head and chest of the individual. Such “mummy portraits” may have been inspired by the Roman practice of immortalizing the dead through naturalistic masks and stone busts. The portraits were painted on a thin wooden board that was attached to a traditionally prepared mummy bundle. ET



D. 15898



THE NUBIAN COLLECTION

Most of the Nubian collection was excavated in southern Egypt between the first and second cataracts of the Nile. This area became the focus of intense archaeological activity during the International Campaign to Save the Monuments of Nubia, an UNESCO-sponsored initiative launched in 1960 on behalf of the governments of Egypt and Sudan as a result of the decision to build the High Dam at Aswan in Egypt. The resulting reservoir, now known as Lake Nasser, inundated more than 500 km of modern and ancient Nubian settlements, cemeteries, and fortresses. The Oriental Institute was one of approximately forty institutions from around the world that participated in the campaign. Egypt and Sudan made exceptional gifts of excavated materials to the excavators. As a result, Chicago's Nubian collection is one of the largest in North America. Objects in the collection date from the fifth millennium BC into the medieval era, with especially good documentation of the earlier eras (A-Group and C-Group) and the later Meroitic period. The collection is very strong in ceramics and organic material, especially textiles and leather. The Nubian collection is exhibited in the Robert F. Picken Family Nubian Gallery. ET



D. 9268

VESSEL

Baked clay, paint (with modern restoration)

Egypt, Qustul, Tomb L 11

Excavated in 1964

A-Group, ca. 3800-3000 BC

E24291

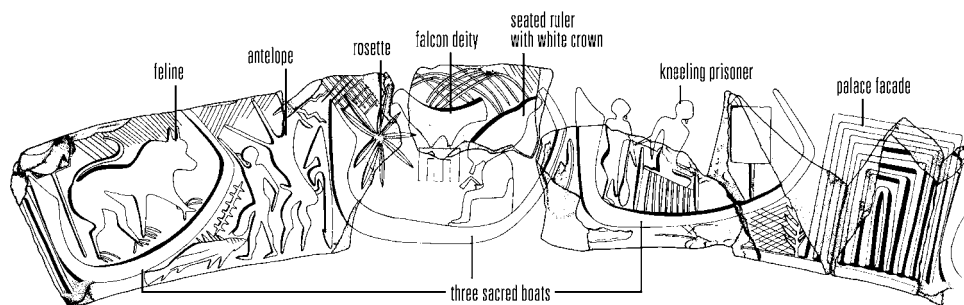
The ceramics from the earliest periods of human occupation of Nubia are among the most refined. Vessels such as this narrow-based bowl are termed as Eggshell Ware because of the thinness of their walls. The exterior is painted with a geometric pattern that may imitate the doorways of a palace. This vessel was recovered from an especially rich tomb that contained great quantities of Nubian as well as Egyptian pottery, stone vessels, and beads, some of them gold. Even at this early time, the prestige and status of the deceased was expressed by the number and quality of objects deposited in his tomb. ET



D. 17532

GUSTUL INCENSE BURNER

Limestone (with modern restoration)
 Egypt, Qustul, Tomb L 24
 Excavated in 1964
 A-Group, ca. 3200–3000 BC
 E24069



This platform for burning incense was excavated in northern Nubia from the ruins of a very large and rich tomb, presumably that of a local ruler. The carving depicts a procession of three boats. The first bears a feline. The second bears a king with a tall crown, a falcon, and a rosette—all traditional Egyptian symbols of kingship. The last boat carries a bound prisoner and guard heading toward a palace façade. These images are similar to ones on early seal impressions, rock art, and carved ceremonial palettes and knife handles that reflect the rise of kingship in northern Nubia and southern Egypt at a time when the division between the two cultures was probably not firmly established. ET

HAIR SLIDES

Shell

Egypt, Adindan, Tomb T 40

Excavated in 1965

C-Group, ca. 2000-1550 BC

E23364A-B

Ornaments like these have been recovered from tombs where they were found threaded onto the hair of the deceased. They are known in a hairpin-like shape, such as these examples, and as disks with a channel. Shell was used for luxury goods including bracelets, pendants, and beads. One of these ornaments was repaired in antiquity (the two holes allowed the pieces to be fastened together), suggesting that it was expensive and highly valued. ET



D. 15839

BOWL WITH CATTLE

Baked clay, paint
Egypt, Adindan, Tomb T 233
Excavated in 1964
C-Group, ca. 1900-1750 BC
E23452

This beautifully burnished bowl is decorated with rows of cattle, some shown with their calves. The potter has carefully differentiated each animal by the shape of its horns, the pattern of its hide, and the position of its tail. Cattle appear as a motif on C-Group pottery because they were valued as a source of milk and hides, and an individual's wealth may have been reckoned by the size of his herd. Images of cattle on funerary stelae may symbolize the power and vigor of the deceased. The background of this scene of a herd was patterned by rocking a notched stone against the surface. The pattern at the rim probably imitates leather lashing. ET



D. 15841



MIRROR

Copper alloy

Egypt, Qustul, Tomb V 48

Excavated in 1963-64

New Kingdom, Dynasty 18, reign of Amunhotep
III, ca. 1390-1352 BC

E21694

The handles of mirrors from the Nile Valley often took the form of a papyrus stalk with arched umbels. Here, the papyrus has been replaced by the figure of a graceful young woman, her arms outstretched to touch the umbels. She wears a broad triple-strand collar at her neck and a tiny girdle of cowry shells low on her hips. Her fingernails, the piercings in her earlobes, and even the dimples on her buttocks are carefully detailed. Her hair is parted in the center and gathered at the nape of her neck with a small band. The two sections of locks curl upward in back (see p. 113). Mirrors were associated with Hathor, a goddess of dance, love, music, and fertility. The identification of the figure on this mirror with that goddess is suggested by the emphasized sexuality of her form and the curled hairstyle that is characteristic of Hathor. Several such mirrors have been recovered from sites in Nubia and Egypt, reflecting the close cultural ties between the two countries. The disk would have been polished to a shiny reflective surface. ET

D. 15831

STELA OF PEKARTROR

Limestone, paint

Egypt, Abydos, Tomb D6

Gift of the Egypt Exploration Fund, 1900-01

Late Period, Dynasty 25, ca. 747-656 BC

E6408

This funerary stela shows Pekartror, a Nubian prince and general, adoring the Egyptian god Osiris, whose cult center was at Abydos, where this stela was found. During Pekartror's lifetime, Egypt was ruled by Nubian kings. The text on the lower part of the stela (now in the Pushkin Museum, Moscow) states that Pekartror came to Abydos from Nubia when he was twenty to bury his mother who was the daughter and sister of Nubian kings. Several Nubian princesses were buried at Abydos rather than in Nubia, an indication that the Nubian royal family had a presence in Egypt. The Nubian ruling elite of the time adopted many features of Egyptian culture including the language, the hieroglyphic script, and Egyptian honorific titles, yet they retained many Nubian features, such as the fringed cloak that Pekartror wears and the scarification lines on his cheeks. The way that the elite straddled both cultures is especially evident on this stela, where he is referred to by both his Nubian name, Pekartror (which incorporates the title *pekar* "crown prince"), and his Egyptian name, Iry-pa-ankh...kenken-ef. ET

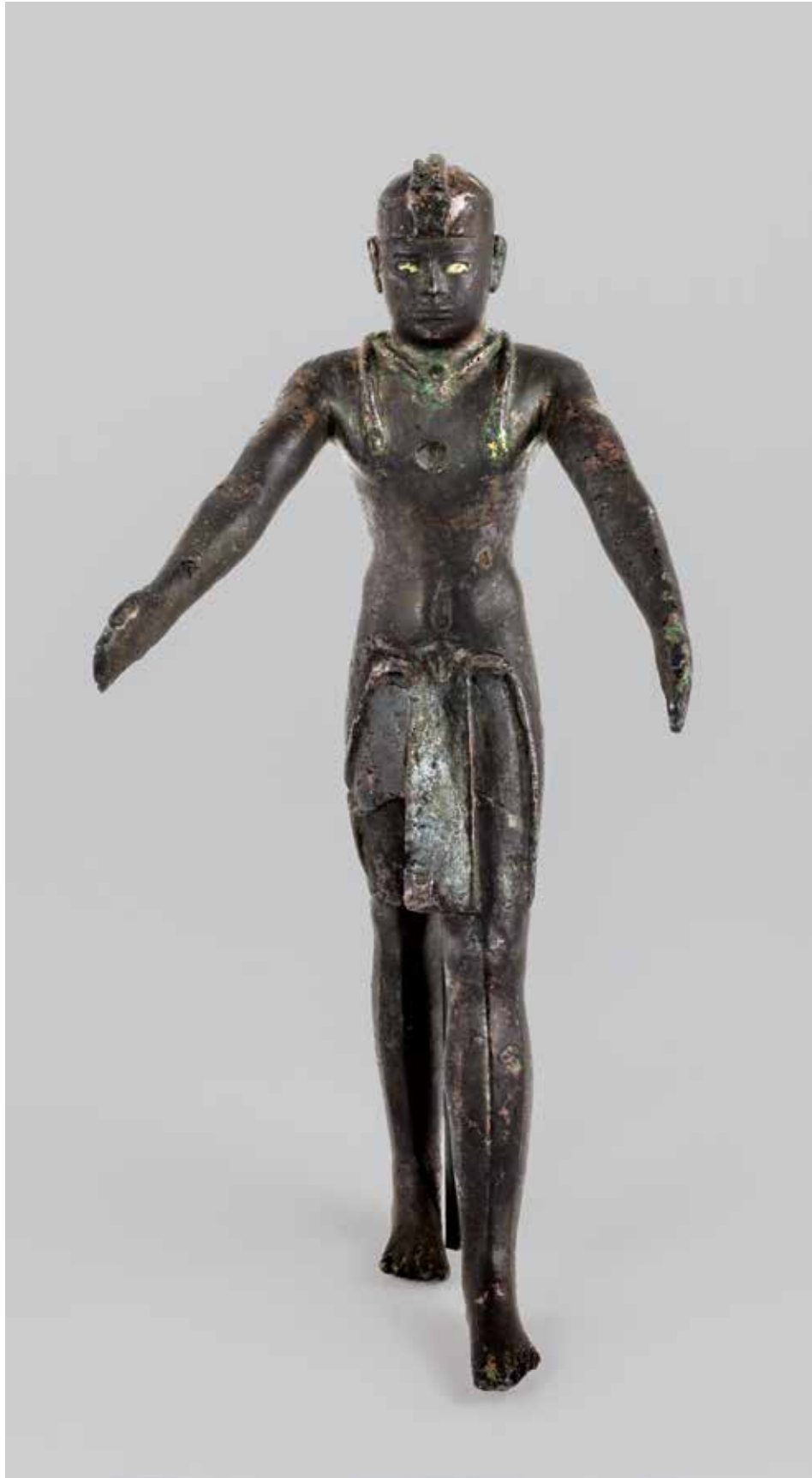


D. 15974

STATUE OF A NUBIAN KING

Copper alloy, gold, unidentified inlays
Purchased in Cairo, 1931
Late Period, Dynasty 25, ca. 747–656 BC
E13954

Nubians and Egyptians were in very close contact, and Nubians adopted many features of Egyptian art and culture. By about 747 BC, the Nubian kings conquered and ruled Egypt. This statue represents one of these Nubian rulers of Egypt, perhaps Taharka. The king wears an Egyptian-style pleated kilt, but it is paired with elements that are specifically Nubian—a tight-fitting cap crown with two uraeus snakes (perhaps symbolizing his joint rule of Egypt and Nubia), a panther head at his waist, and a cord necklace decorated with ram heads, the symbol of the Egyptian god Amun who was venerated in Nubia. The outstretched arms suggest that the king originally held a ritual object or emblem. ET



D. 15816



JAR WITH SNAKES

Baked clay, paint
 Egypt, Ballana, Tomb B130
 Excavated in 1963
 Meroitic period, AD 200–250
 E22563

D. 15986

Some of the finest and most beautifully decorated pottery from the Nile Valley was made in Nubia during the Meroitic period. The potters were especially skilled at combining local and imported styles to create vibrant new forms. The decoration on this vessel—snakes with flowers in their mouths—was borrowed from the wall decorations of Nubian temples, which in turn were inspired by earlier Egyptian motifs. The flowers that the cobras seem to be spitting are a stylized Egyptian hieroglyph, the *ankh*, which means “life.” This composition may be an ancient joke, for here the cobra, which can bring death, gives life instead. ET

OFFERING TABLE

Sandstone
 Egypt, Ballana, Tomb B183
 Excavated in 1963
 Meroitic period, AD 225–300
 E22557

The ancient Nubians adopted the Egyptian use of small offering tables that were left in or outside tomb chapels. They are usually in the form of a rectangle with a spout in imitation of the hieroglyph for “offering.” This example is decorated with round loaves of bread and vases of cool water from which liquid pours. It was believed that by depicting these items, actual bread and water would be available to the deceased forever. The text along the edges is written in Meroitic, a script that emerged in about 100 BC to write the Nubian language. Although Meroitic has not been fully deciphered, enough can be read to know that this text is an invocation to the funerary deities Osiris and Isis that names three individuals, Khorpeleye, Amiye, and his mother Kebitekli, as the recipients of offerings. The shapes of Meroitic letters were derived from Egyptian hieroglyphs and Demotic signs. ET



D. 15984



D. 15982

BA STATUE

Sandstone, paint
 Egypt, Ballana, near Tombs B245 and B242
 Excavated in 1963
 Meroitic period, AD 225–300
 E22487

This creature with a human head and feet and the body and wings of a bird represents the *ba*, or spirit, of the deceased, a concept that was imported and adapted from Egypt. It was believed that the *ba*, symbolizing the energy of the deceased, could migrate from the subterranean burial chamber of the tomb to enjoy the warmth of the sun. At dusk, the *ba* returned to the tomb to rest with the mummy. *Ba* statues have been recovered from the ruins of private tombs where they may have stood in a chapel or niche. The head and body of this statue were found in different locations in the cemetery at Ballana. ET



D. 15980

KOHL (EYELINER) CONTAINER

Wood
 Egypt, Ballana, Tomb B25
 Excavated in 1963-64
 Meroitic period, 150 BC-AD 300
 E22498

Both men and women in the Nile Valley wore eyeliner that was made of ground minerals (usually galena or malachite), generically called kohl. Containers for kohl were, as with this example, often highly ornamented. The cylinder that contained the kohl is carved in imitation of a round pavilion with small arches topped with what appear to be palm fronds, supported by columns with three-lobbed floral capitals. Floral elements on tall slender stems appear below the arches. The style is influenced by Roman architecture. The base and the lid are globes with pedestals. A great amount of effort was put into making this small luxury item, which, along with a metal cosmetic applicator, was recovered from the tomb of a man. ET

QUIVER

Leather
 Egypt, Qustul, Tomb Q62
 Excavated in 1962-63
 X-Group, AD 370-410
 E20398A

Nubian archers were famous throughout the Nile Valley, and by about 2400 BC they served as mercenaries in the Egyptian army. In some periods, Nubian men were buried with a bow, quiver of arrows, stone thumb rings, and leather wrist guards in order to equip them for the afterlife. Nubian gods, too, were shown holding archery equipment. The tooled geometric designs and the figure of a crocodile on the flaps differentiate this quiver from a purely utilitarian object, suggesting that its owner valued it as a mark of his status. This quiver was found in the grave of an archer along with a leather saddle and a colorfully woven blanket. ET



D. 15830



D. 16919

SADDLE

Leather, wood
 Egypt, Qustul, Pit Q39
 Excavated in 1963-64
 X-Group, late 4th-6th century AD
 E20374A

Horses were introduced into Nubia from western Asia—through Egypt—in about 1650 BC. Nubians were expert horsemen and the cavalry was an important part of their military. Saddles, like this example, were made of a wood frame covered with leather that created a hammock-like seat for the rider. The legs of the wood frame were inserted into the pockets at each edge of the leather cover. Sheepskin or textiles provided padding. The saddle was held on the horse by leather cinch straps from the pommel and cantle. This saddle was recovered from a pit that contained the remains of horses, donkeys, and camels along with textile and harness fragments. ET



THE PERSIAN COLLECTION

Most of the Persian collection came to Chicago as divisions following excavations by the Oriental Institute. It is the largest and most comprehensive group of material from ancient Iran in the Western Hemisphere. Chicago excavated at Persepolis and nearby Naqsh-e Rostam, Istakhr, Tall-e Bakun, and Pasargadae from 1931 through 1939. Work began under Ernst Herzfeld, and in 1935, the work, which eventually also included Rayy (ancient Rhages) and Surkh Dum-i-Luri in northwest Iran, was under the supervision of Erich F. Schmidt. Excavations were temporarily halted with the advent of World War II. In 1948 and 1949, Donald McCown, seeking the origins of urbanism, excavated Tall-e Geser in the Ram Hormuz region in the southeastern province of Khuzestan (ancient Susiana, southwestern Iran). Prior to Geser, he conducted a regional survey in the area. In the late 1950s, the Oriental Institute resumed its pioneering scientific and interdisciplinary research on the early stages of the domestication of plants and animals directed by Robert and Linda Braidwood and their team in Iranian Kurdistan. Helene Kantor and Pinhas Delougaz directed work at the Susiana sites of Chogha Mish, Boneh Fazili, and Chogha Bonut (1961–1979) that contributed greatly to our understanding of early cultural development in the region and, through a generous division of the government of Iran, added more than 15,000 objects to the Oriental Institute collection. The Persian collection is exhibited in the Robert and Deborah Aliber Persian Gallery. AA

BOWL WITH PAINTED IBEXES

Baked clay, paint (with modern restoration)
Iran, Chogha Mish, East Area, Q18:313
Excavated in 1965–66
Middle Susiana period, ca. 5200–4800 BC
A35278

Large, deep bowls became popular from the late sixth millennium BC, perhaps due to a social development in which communal feasting became important. The surfaces of these impressive bowls are often decorated with a variety of geometric designs and highly stylized depictions of animals. The most outstanding of such decorations is a panel of stylized ibexes with soaring horns. These figures are boldly painted with just a small number of sweeping brush strokes. This attractive and minimalist decoration exhibits the sophistication of the ancient potter in prehistoric Iran. AA



D. 15968



D. 15958

BOWL

Baked clay, paint (with modern restoration)
 Iran, Tall-e Bakun, Trench 1, Level 3
 Excavated in 1932
 Bakun A period, ca. 4500–4200 BC
 A20136

This painted bowl is one of the finest examples known from the prehistoric site of Tall-e Bakun. The mastery of the potter is exemplified by the excellent spacing and balance of the design elements on a curved surface. Anthropomorphic (human-shaped) motifs, as on this vessel, are rare. This scarcity could relate to the special role these vessels played in rituals and feasts that helped enhance power or social status. The human figures on this bowl appear with their arms upraised regardless of whether they are right side up or upside down. In fact, every design element is rendered in this fashion. The painted pattern is so well balanced and spaced that even unpainted areas have become part of the decoration to be appreciated by the viewer. AA



D. 15970

CLAY ENVELOPES WITH TOKENS

Clay
 Iran, Chogha Mish
 Excavated in 1963, 1965–66
 Late Susa II (Late Uruk) period, ca. 3300–3100 BC
 A32567, A64678

Clay tokens, assuming a variety of simple geometric shapes, were a primary pre-historic bookkeeping and accounting tool that served to control and monitor the flow of materials, commodities, and labor. Just prior to the invention of writing in around 3400 BC, a practice arose of sealing tokens within clay envelopes—hollow golf ball-to-baseball-sized objects—as a means of providing tamper-proof archives of individual transactions. Clay envelopes have been excavated from Iran, Syria, and Mesopotamia; most envelopes bear the impression of two or more seals that identify the parties involved and validate the transaction. In some instances, the tokens were impressed on the outer surface (or otherwise represented in mimicry using fingers or stylus impressions) before being sealed within so that the envelope would not have to be broken to inspect its contents. These impressions are very likely the evolutionary link between the representation of numbers by the prehistoric tokens and the numerical graphs of writing. A recent study of the clay envelopes excavated from Chogha Mish, Iran, and belonging to the Oriental Institute's collections, suggests that the tokens represent a variety of numerical and metrological systems used to count distinct classes of commodities. These commodity-specific systems are analogous, or perhaps identical, to those encountered in the proto-cuneiform and proto-Elamite writing systems, which constitute the earliest evidence of writing from Mesopotamia and Iran respectively. As such, the clay envelopes with associated clay tokens are critical for understanding the forerunners of writing and the administrative contexts out of which it grew. CW



DISK-HEADED PIN

Copper alloy

Iran, Surkh Dum-i-Luri, JI, Locus 178/wall,
Sanctuary

Excavated in 1938

Iron Age, ca. 800–650 BC

A25293

D. 15875

What could demonstrate the devotion of a worshiper more than an offering made of metal? This disk-headed pin was one of many metal objects deposited at the site of an Iron Age highland sanctuary in western Iran. Metal objects were highly valued in ancient times because they helped enhance social status and could be easily recycled, shaped, and decorated. Most disk-headed pins feature embossed or incised decoration, often with a central plain boss, rosette, or the face of a lion or human. This pin has an eight-petal rosette at its center and a schematic human face incised just above the thin handle (see p. 129). The face is rendered in the typical artistic technique of the dwellers of the Zagros Mountains of Iran. The region, also known as Luristan, was largely occupied by nomadic peoples who were experts in casting and shaping metal objects. AA

COLUMN WITH DOUBLE-BULL CAPITAL

Limestone (with modern restoration)

Iran, Persepolis, Apadana, Southern Portico

Excavated in 1933–34

Achaemenid period, reigns of Darius I and Xerxes, 522–465 BC

A24069, A24070

Although standing today at just under 3 m, this column shares elements of the taller columns of the main halls at Persepolis. The fluted shaft, which at full height rose 16.5–19.5 m, is topped by a flower-like capital that emerges from a wreath of leaves that hang like petals. The frontal parts of two bulls (known as a double-protome capital) rest on top. The open space between the bulls once supported a wooden beam, probably a doorway lintel. Most elements of the column were inspired by other cultures. The fluted shaft is Greek in style. The flower-like capital has Phoenician and Urartian parallels, and ultimately originates from Egypt. The double-protome capital, however, is purely Achaemenid in style. AA



D. 16977



D. 15965

ORNAMENTAL PEG WITH TRILINGUAL TEXT

Frit, paint

Iran, Persepolis, Southwest Palace, west passage of the "Harem"

Excavated before 1933

Achaemenid period, reign of Darius I, 522–486 BC

A29808A–B

Lapis lazuli, a precious stone found in the Badakhshan region of Afghanistan, was a status symbol across the ancient Middle East. Because of its rarity and remoteness, this was a very expensive stone to acquire. This inscribed peg is made of blue frit, also known as "Egyptian blue," a composite material that imitates the intense blue of more costly lapis lazuli. Egyptian blue is made of quartz, calcite, and a copper compound. When powdered and mixed with a binding agent, it could be molded into shape and fired. The peg's trilingual inscription, in Old Persian, Elamite, and Babylonian, reads: "Knobbed peg of precious stone [or lapis lazuli] made in the house of Darius the King." The use of the term for lapis lazuli may be how Egyptian blue was referred to in a royal context. AA

FOUNDATION SLAB OF XERXES

Limestone

Iran, Persepolis, Garrison Quarters,
Room 16

Excavated in 1935

Achaemenid period, reign of Xerxes,
486–465 BC

A24120

The dedication of a newly constructed building to a deity through an inscribed object, statuette, or metal plaque was long practiced in Mesopotamia and Elam (see p. 34). This stone slab, inscribed during the reign of Xerxes, may have been part of a foundation deposit from the corner of one of that king's buildings. It was removed by a successor and re-installed alongside six others within a bench inside the garrison. The seven slabs bear cuneiform inscriptions in Old Persian, Babylonian, and Elamite that record versions of two different texts. This Babylonian version gives the titles and attributes of Xerxes, lists subject lands that brought tribute, and tells how he suppressed disorder and the worship of "evil ones," or *daiva* in Old Persian, meaning "demons." For this reason, it is also known as the Daiva Inscription. It states that Xerxes restored the proper worship of Ahuramazda, a divine entity worshipped by the Achaemenids and in Zoroastrian religion. AA



COLOSSAL BULL HEAD

Limestone (with modern restoration)

Iran, Persepolis, Hundred-Column Hall, east *anta* of portico

Excavated in 1932–33

Achaemenid period, reigns of Xerxes and Artaxerxes I, 486–424 BC

A24065

Architects at Persepolis set up colossal guardian figures at the entrances of important buildings as protection from “evil spirits.” This practice was inspired by earlier empire builders, particularly the Assyrians (see pp. 44–45). This highly polished stone head weighs around 10 tons and belonged to one of two guardian bulls that flanked the portico of the Hundred-Column Hall at Persepolis. The missing ears and horns of this bull, perhaps originally gilded, were made of separate pieces of stone and attached to the head. The bull is rendered in the Achaemenid court style. The huge plain surface of its naturalistically rendered face is divided into schematic zones of massive veins, sharp-edged eyelids, and tight curls of hair. AA



D. 16991

CAPITAL WITH HUMAN-HEADED BULL

Limestone (with modern restoration)

Iran, Persepolis, Tripylon (Council Hall)

Excavated in 1931-34

Achaemenid period, reign of Xerxes or Artaxerxes

I, 486-424 BC

A24066

Most column capitals that supported roof beams at Persepolis had double-protomes in the shape of bulls (see pp. 134-35), human-headed bulls, or griffins. This represents one side, or protome, of the capital. The divine triple-horned crown, among other features of this sculpture, has Assyrian origins (see pp. 44-45). The facial details, as well as the bird feathers on its haunches, were delicately rendered despite the fact that the capital would have been at a considerable height above the ground. A pair of standing human-headed bulls also flanked the entrance of the Gate of All Lands. AA



D. 17122

ROUNDEL

Gold

Iran, possibly from Ecbatana (modern Hamadan)

Purchased in New York, 1948

Achaemenid period, possibly reign of Artaxerxes II, 404–358 BC

A28582

This spectacular roundel showing a winged lioness is thought to come from Hamadan, ancient Ecbatana, a summer residence of the Achaemenid court. A close observation of the roundel reveals the artist's mastery, as described by Oriental Institute art historian Helene Kantor:

Restrained within the circuit of a slender, twisted cord, a lithe-bodied lion, transfigured by the glory of a great upsweeping wing, turns as if in snarling defiance of pursuers. The forelegs are still stretched in the stride of a walk just ceased, while the hind-quarters seem already tensed for possible battle; the curious small horns and the ear are bent back suddenly and threateningly; the tail lashes.

Such roundels were either suspended or sewn on to garments worn by wealthy, if not royal, individuals. One can envisage the dazzling contrast made by the gold if worn on a strong-colored fabric like purple, a favorite color of the royal Achaemenids. AA



D. 27509



THE ISLAMIC COLLECTION

The Oriental Institute has a rich collection of archaeological objects from the Islamic period, especially from Iran. Thanks to Erich F. Schmidt's pioneering aerial surveys over Iran and excavations at Persepolis, Rayy, and Istakhr in the 1930s, the archaeology of Sasanian and early Islamic Iran is well represented. The following objects come from Istakhr, near Persepolis—a large and historically important city north of Shiraz that was inhabited in the Sasanian (AD 250–640) and early Islamic (AD 640–1000) periods. Istakhr was the ancestral city of the Sasanian dynasty and initially its capital. Part of the Sasanian city was discovered through excavations, but the most important results uncovered included the urban planning and material culture of the early Islamic period. The Istakhr objects are exhibited in the Robert and Deborah Aliber Persian Gallery. TV



D. 15932

ARAB-SASANIAN COIN

Silver

Iran, Istakhr, FJ90, center test

Excavated in 1935

Zubayrid Dynasty, AD 686–687 (ca. 67 AH)

A22822



D. 15933

During the first half-century of Islamic rule, this coin type was used throughout the former Sasanian realm. The obverse (or “head”) of the coin features the crowned head of King Khusraw II (AD 601–628), the last major Sasanian king. The inscription gives the name of the governor in Pahlavi and Arabic, and an Arabic profession of the faith is arranged around the border. The reverse shows the traditional fire altar with two attendants, a symbol of Zoroastrian religion, and a Pahlavi inscription provides the mint name and the date. After the Islamic conquests of the mid-seventh century, Umayyad authorities initially imitated Sasanian and Byzantine coins already familiar to local populations. By the end of the 690s, however, the Umayyads issued post-reform coins on which all images were removed and replaced with Islamic religious phrases in Arabic script. This coin was issued by the governor ‘Umar bin Ubaid Allāh at the city of Bishapur, near Istakhr. He was part of a decade-long rebellion called the second *fitna* (civil war) against the ruling Umayyads. It is interesting that a governor would be able to issue the coins in his own name, rather than the caliph’s. DW/TV



D. 15873

BOWL WITH SPIRAL PATTERN

Glass
Iran, Istakhr, DF66, west gate
Excavated in 1937
Umayyad-Abbasid periods, AD 700-1000
A24769

Glass vessels were first mass produced following the invention of mold-blowing technologies in the Levant during the first century BC and such products and techniques later spread to Persia and other regions. This small bowl was formed by blowing air into a gathering of molten glass that was inside a mold. The mold featured diagonal ribbing on its interior, resulting in this finished design. Similar examples are known from Qasr-i Abu Nasr, near Shiraz, and from Susa. Glass was a widespread product in the Sasanian empire and continued to be popular into the Islamic period. Such vessels were probably used for dining and everyday use. The number of complete or restored glass vessels known today probably represents a small fraction of what would have been used in daily life. DW/TV

BOWL

Baked clay, paint, glaze (with modern restoration)

Iran, Istakhr, F199, center test

Excavated in 1935

Abbasid period, AD 800–1000

A22760

Ceramic objects like this bowl are called lusterware because of their metallic sheen that changes color depending on the light. The lustrous effect was created by using metallic pigments such as silver or copper and firing the vessel in a kiln twice. Lusterwares seem to have been made by the same potters who made cobalt and white wares (see pp. 148–49). This large bowl has an ornate figure in the center, perhaps a stylized eagle, with an infilling of flowers and patterns in a style typical of Abbasid Iraq, and often associated specifically with the site of Samarra. Lusterware styles varied over time, continuing in Fatimid Egypt between AD 900–1200, some of the finest examples were produced thereafter in medieval Spain. The bowl's upper half is restored. DW/TV



D. 15758

BOWL WITH INSCRIPTION

Baked clay, paint, glaze
Iran, Istakhr, DF66, west gate
Excavated in 1937
Abbasid period, AD 800–900
A24768

This bowl is an example of the early Islamic glazing technology that introduced opaque white wares to the Middle East. White wares are generally thought to have originated in Iraq during either the eighth or early ninth century AD and spread throughout the Islamic world. This example is decorated with cobalt blue, which later became a common feature of Chinese porcelain. The origin of the cobalt blue and green decoration is debated by scholars, but the presence of an (illegible) Arabic inscription suggests the decoration on this example finds its inspiration in Islamic Persia. The shape and appearance of opaque white wares seem to imitate Chinese ceramics, which were highly prized and imitated in the Islamic world starting in this period. In later centuries, Chinese blue on white ceramics reached Europe and beyond, evolving into wares that remain popular to the present day. DW/TV



D. 15770

MOLDED VESSEL

Baked clay (with modern restoration)
Iran, Istakhr, GI15, shops on the mosque plaza
Excavated in 1935
Abbasid period, AD 800–1000
A24733

Molded white wares were an important product of pottery workshops at Istakhr. Excavations indicate that they were made and sold there in large quantities, as evidenced by a large number found in what was once a shop and by clay mold fragments also found at Istakhr. The vessels were made from two separate molds to create elaborate and varied surface decorations (see p. 143), perhaps inspired by the chasing on metallic vessels. A neck and handle were added before the piece was fired. Such jars and juglets are attested in Sasanian times, but Islamic period vessels had more elaborate and varied molded decorations. These jugs must have been an essential part of any household and would have been used for pouring water or wine. During the Abbasid era, these vessels became popular across Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Egypt. DW/TV



D. 15766



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