

Access to Objects

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[Sumerian Clay Cuneiform Tablet from Umma about Women Harvesting Barley](#) (1913.14.0997)

4.6 x 4 x 1.6 cm (31 g)

Small clay square cuneiform tablet with rounded edges. Front of the tablet has various characters pressed into the clay.



[Clay Cuneiform Tablet: Hymn of King Lipit-Ishtar](#) (1913.14.1464)

10.3 x 6.2 x 2.8 cm (185 g)

On Display



[Old Babylonian Clay Cuneiform Tablet of King Sin-iddinam of Larsa](#) (1913.14.0001)

7 x 4.8 x 2.5 cm (79 g)



[Summerian Clay Cuneiform Tablet from Umma about Making a Canal Bed and Digging a Field](#) (1913.14.0522)

4.5 x 4 x 1.4 cm (25 g)

Small clay square cuneiform tablet with rounded edges. Front of the tablet has various characters pressed into the clay.



Artifact Record Details



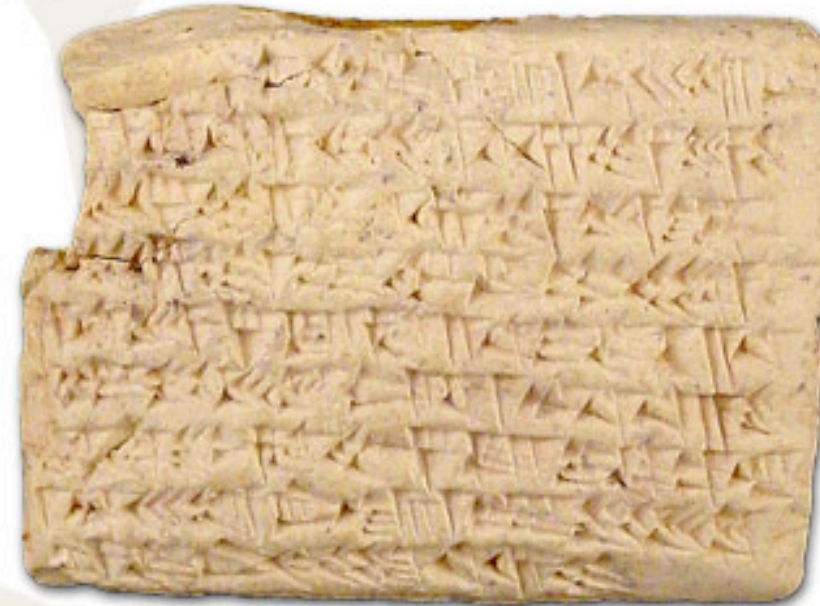
Basic Information

Artifact Identification	Sumerian Clay Cuneiform Tablet from Umma about Women Harvesting Barley (1913.14.0997)
Classification	Communications Artifacts : Documentary Artifact : Tablet, Inscribed
Visual Description	Small clay square cuneiform tablet with rounded edges. Front of the tablet has various characters pressed into the clay.
Artist/Maker	None
Geographic Location	Asia, West, Iraq
Period/Date	Ur III - Umma, ca. 2130 – 2006 BCE
Culture	Sumerian
Locality/Archaeological Site	

The Edgar J. Banks Collection of Sumerian and Babylonian Clay Tablets

This collection of approximately 1,750 inscribed tablets from ancient sites of Umma and Drehem in Mesopotamia (modern Iraq) dates from the Third Dynasty of Ur in the 21st and 20th centuries BCE to the Neo-Babylonian and early Persian periods (ca. 625-520 BCE).

These tablets came to the Spurlock Museum through a series of purchases between 1913 and 1918 from Edgar J. Banks. A graduate of Harvard and the University of Breslau in Germany, Banks went to Baghdad in 1898 as American Consul and soon began excavations at Bismya, ancient Adab, in Iraq. Banks proceeded to deal in antiquities, purchasing many pieces from locals, and was responsible for the distribution of over 11,000 tablets to universities, museums, libraries, and seminaries throughout the United States.



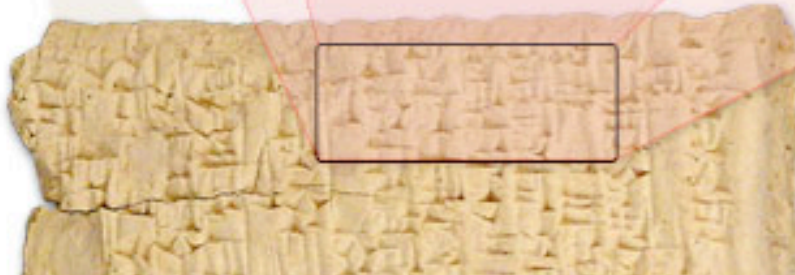
Boat Rental Receipt ▲

Uruk, Babylonia, modern Iraq

540 BCE, 15th year of King Nabu-Na'id's reign

Neo-Babylonian Period (606-539 BCE)

[1913.14.1652](#)



The collection includes texts written in both the Sumerian and the Akkadian languages. The script, called cuneiform, is the earliest writing system in the world. The symbols were made by impressing triangular-shaped wedges into wet clay tablets.

Most of the tablets are administrative texts, including government receipts and contracts, but there are also some literary and historical works, as well as medical and school texts. They provide a fascinating glimpse into everyday life in the distant past.



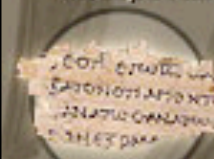
central cone



africa & the middle east



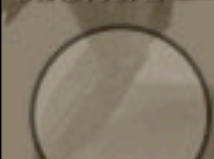
ancient mesopotamia



early writing



cuneiform



index

view: [1]



Cuneiform



Cuneiform

Learning to Read and Write

Scribes attended school to learn to read and write. Their training required long hours of practice, memorizing the signs and copying texts modeled by the teacher. The round Mesopotamian school tablet on exhibit shows a proverb written on one side by the teacher and the other by the student. It reads, "In the town of the lazy, the lame one is their courier."



School Text on a Cuneiform Disc
 Babylonia, modern Iraq, 2nd millennium BCE.
 Earthenware.
 Edgar J. Banks Collection
[1913.14.1741](#)



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Rating: 12+

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Objects vs. Information

Museums “must be prepared to distinguish between their traditional function in gathering and preserving the objects significant to our civilization and their more recently acquired responsibility to marshal and disseminate the information pertaining to these collections.”



Assassination of Julius Caesar >

Vincenzo Camuccini (Italian, Rome 1771–1844 Rome) >

Date: 1771–1844

Medium: Pen and brown ink with brush and gray wash over graphite

Dimensions: 7-9/16 x 10-9/16 in. (19.2 x 26.9 cm)

Classification: Drawings

Credit Line: Gift of Cephias G. Thompson, 1887

Accession Number: 87.12.171

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John Singer Sargent

Kunz (Konrad) Lochner

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82nd & Fifth

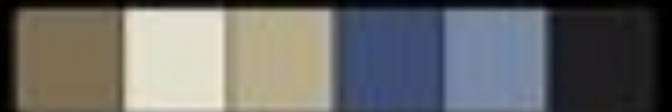


The Milkmaid, Johannes Vermeer, c. 1660

oil on oak, h 45.5cm • w 41cm. [More details](#)

A maidservant pours milk, entirely absorbed in her work. Except for the stream of milk, everything else is still. Vermeer took this simple everyday activity and made it the subject of an impressive painting – the woman stands like a statue in the brightly lit room. Vermeer also had an eye for how light by means of hundreds of colourful dots plays over the surface of objects.

♥ = 8,913



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