



Explore the wonders of the past in this stunning collection of over 160 historical artefacts.

- Updated text and new cover design including matt lam and foil treatments
- Included foreword by Sir Tony Robinson
- A beautiful collection of artefacts from ancient civilisations around the world.
- The core *Welcome to the Museum* books have sold a combined quantity of over 1 million copies in 48 languages with *Historium* selling over 100,000 copies (as of July 2022)
- *Historium* was shortlisted for the People's Book Prize.

Southern Africa

Africa has the largest number of fossils of our earliest ancestors. The earliest stone tools were found in southern Africa and early human civilisations were to have emerged in southern Africa around one million years ago. It is thought that the majority of the modern human beings descended from the southern African population.

Over the past 200,000 years, the African continent has been shaped by a complex interplay of geological and climatic forces. The African continent has been shaped by a complex interplay of geological and climatic forces. The African continent has been shaped by a complex interplay of geological and climatic forces.



AFRICA



Key to plate

1. **1. Possible bronze**
The bronze bull's head sculpture is a masterpiece of ancient African art. It is made of a dark, lustrous metal and is highly detailed. The bull's head is shown in profile, facing right. The horns are thick and curved. The face is covered in intricate patterns. The sculpture is mounted on a base.



AFRICA

Western Africa

The oldest known civilisation in western Africa is the Nok civilisation, which existed from about 900 BC to around 500 BC. The Nok civilisation was located in the area of present-day Nigeria and Benin. The Nok people are known for their terracotta figurines, which are small, stylized human figures. The Nok people also used iron tools and weapons. The Nok civilisation is one of the earliest iron-using societies in the world.



AFRICA



AMERICA

The Maya

The Maya civilisation rose to prominence in around 400 BC. Its people never formed a single empire but lived in city-state kingdoms dotted across present-day southern Mexico, Guatemala, northern Belize, western Honduras and El Salvador. What brought the Maya together as a culture was a shared belief system, a similar structure of society and similar styles of art and architecture.

The Maya settled in villages as early as 650 BC. Their cities began as ceremonial centres. Successive rulers added to the cities, building stone temples, palaces, pyramids, Ball Game courts and plazas. The lifestyles of the royal family, aristocrats, priests and craftsmen in the city were sustained by the maize, squash and beans grown in the surrounding terraced fields.

Central to Maya life was a desire to please and appease the gods through rituals and ceremonies. People believed the gods required regular offerings, in particular human blood and sacrifices, to maintain order on Earth. Priests studied the heavens for a deeper understanding of the supernatural and became excellent astronomers and mathematicians.

Hieroglyphic writing carved on stone buildings has revealed much of what we know about the Maya. Their cities are now overgrown ruins, but around six million Maya descendants still live in the same region, mostly in small village communities, and some 70 Maya languages are spoken.

Key to plate

- 1. **1. Vessel with a procession of warriors**
400-500-600
The relief figures on this vessel is a procession being led to a ritual sacrifice. At the head of the procession is a ruler identifiable by his jaguar pelt - a symbol of power and authority. He carries a blooded maceon and has an attendant for bloodletting in his headdress. Even the Maya rulers would submit themselves to bloodletting when making special requests to the gods. The painting on this vessel is one of the few surviving examples of the colourful scenes that would have adorned the walls of ancient Maya cities.
- 2. **2. Ceramic incense burner**
Fourth century AD
This ceramic incense burner shows a Maya king sitting cross-legged and wearing an elaborate headdress. The headdress formed part of the king's ceremonial regalia, identifying him as the god's representative on Earth and suggesting his own divine status. It was thought that the king could communicate with the gods and that he would join them when he died. Some from human incense was also thought to reach the gods and carry offerings to them.
- 3. **3. Pair of ear flares**
Third-sixth century AD
These ear ornaments measure 5cm (2in) across and would have been attached to a shaft that went through a side hole in the earlobe. They are carved with a motif based on gods or deities. Many figures in Maya art are shown wearing ear flares, including the incense burner king also in this gallery. Jade was a material of wealth since it was rare and very difficult to carve.
- 4. **4. Jade mask, funerary mask**
AD 600
This mask, which belonged to Palat

the Great, called *Imaxil* Palat (Palat Shuluc' Uay), was discovered in a royal tomb beneath the Temple of Palenque. The reliefs on the tomb describe a version of Maya's history of dynasty and rule. According to them, he became king at the age of 12 and ruled until his death in AD 603. At the age of 80 Sotul of his bones, however, suggest he was actually 45-50 when he died.

Palat Palat's reign, Palenque was transformed into a major Maya city and he commissioned the Temple of Inscriptions, built on a massive pyramid structure as his own burial place. Pyramids were erected to replicate the burning mountains where deities and a volcano were thought to reside. Jade of a bright green colour was highly prized by the Maya. This mask, given Palat a position of honor for the afterlife, is a gift of the gods.

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