



The exhibit on Mesopotamia includes modern impressions of cylinder seals on the theme of heroic slaughter dating back to the middle of the third millennium.

## Exhibit showcases examples of crimes in ancient history

A selection of cuneiform tablets and other objects providing the world's earliest evidence of mayhem in all its forms is currently on view in Sterling Memorial Library.

The exhibit, titled "Mayhem in Mesopotamia," is drawn from the Yale Babylonian Collection. Tablets on display include records of history's first crime family and first hired assassin, as well as other texts that tell tales of embezzlement, murder, theft, escaped prisoners and criminal trials.

Revealed in the display is how an accused person was sometimes obliged to prove his innocence by jumping into the Euphrates River; if he survived, he was deemed not guilty.

Many Mesopotamian poetic works treat the theme of wartime destruction of cities. In one tablet on display, the author

laments the devastation of the city of Ur at the hands of foreign invaders about 2000 B.C.E. In one passage, he writes that in the disorder that befell the land, the country was bewildered by terror.

The exhibit also includes maceheads, spears and daggers. One of the maceheads is inscribed with the name of Gilgamesh, making this one of the earliest objects known to bear the name of this legendary king of Uruk, hero of the famous Babylonian epic, which is considered the oldest work in literature.

Several cylinder seals on display afford examples of the themes of heroic slaughter commonly seen on seals throughout Mesopotamian history and echoed in monumental art.

"Mayhem in Mesopotamia" will be on view through April.