

## **Wooden Model of Man Ploughing with Oxen** **The British Museum**

From Egypt  
Middle Kingdom, about 2040-1750 BC

### **An ancient Egyptian farmer at work**



This model was originally placed in a tomb. Models showing various stages in the production of food were placed in wealthy burials of the Middle Kingdom (about 2040-1750 BC) to guarantee that the deceased would have food for eternity. The first stage of the process was ploughing. In Egypt this took place when the flood waters of the inundation receded, leaving a thick layer of fertile silt over the whole of the flood plain.

The loose soil required only a simple plough drawn by two cattle to create a furrow. Scenes in tombs and on papyrus show that the crop was often sown in front of the cattle, so that they would trample it into the soil. The main crops were wheat and barley for making bread and beer, and flax, for linen, rope and matting.

Cattle were the main draught animals of ancient Egypt. It is unlikely that beef was an everyday foodstuff as cattle were expensive to keep, and more useful as a draught animal. Beef was, however, represented as one of the main components of food offerings for the deceased. Models showing the slaughter of cattle for this purpose were placed in tombs, and represented on offering tables in wall paintings.

T.G.H. James, *Egyptian painting and drawing* (London, The British Museum Press, 1985)

Source URL: [http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight\\_objects/aes/w/wooden\\_model\\_of\\_a\\_man\\_ploughin.aspx](http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/aes/w/wooden_model_of_a_man_ploughin.aspx)  
Saylor URL: <http://www.saylor.org/courses/arth201>

M. Stead, *Egyptian life* (London, The British Museum Press, 1986)

Source URL: [http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight\\_objects/aes/w/wooden\\_model\\_of\\_a\\_man\\_ploughin.aspx](http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/aes/w/wooden_model_of_a_man_ploughin.aspx)  
Saylor URL: <http://www.saylor.org/courses/arth201>