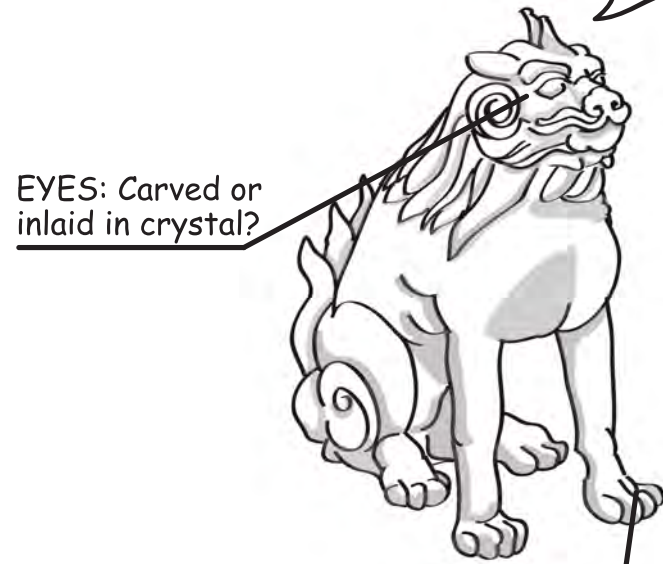


# WHAT ARE WE MADE OF? WHAT MAKES US UNIQUE?

We can be made of wood, stone, metal, ceramic, or other materials, and we look different depending on when and where we were made.

## POINTERS:

What do we have in common? What makes each of us different?



EYES: Carved or inlaid in crystal?

POSTURE: Docile or alert?  
Paws together or stepping forward?



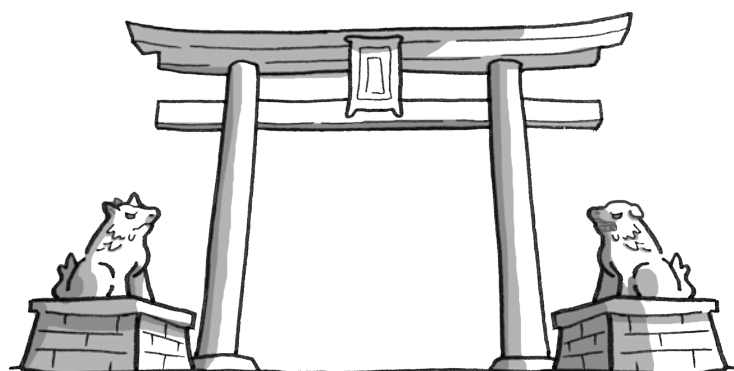
MANES and TAILS:  
Curly or straight?

WHISKERS and EYEBROWS:  
Do we have any?

FACIAL EXPRESSIONS:  
Each of us is unique!

BODY TYPE: Muscular or streamlined?

## GUARDIAN LIONS AND LION DOGS IN FRONT OF SHINTO SHRINES



Kyoto has lots of Shinto shrines. Most of these shrines have guardian lions and lion dogs outside. Next time you visit a shrine, take note of these animals—their poses, facial expressions, tails, and other aspects. You may be surprised at the variety. Some shrines have guardian foxes, boars, or even monkeys!



Become a  
**MASTER**  
of  
**GUARDIAN LIONS AND  
LION DOGS**



Have you ever seen creatures like us? We are LIONS and LION DOGS, and we often guard the entrances to Shinto shrines!

We have even inspired a famous ANIME character on Japanese TV!

## HOW CAN YOU TELL US APART?



I AM A  
**LION DOG**  
(KOMAINU)

- I am on the left
- My mouth is closed
- I have a horn



I AM A  
**LION**  
(SHISHI)

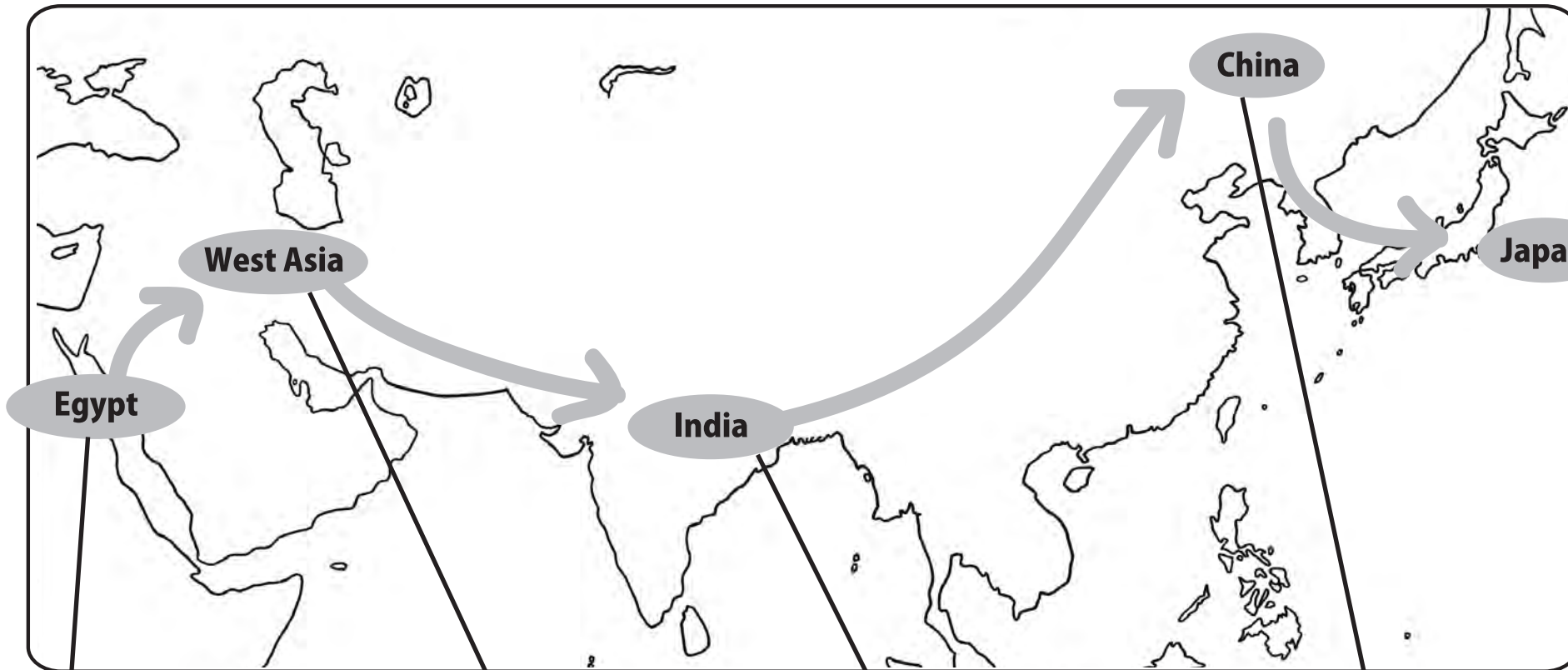
- I am on the right
- My mouth is open

What other differences can you find?

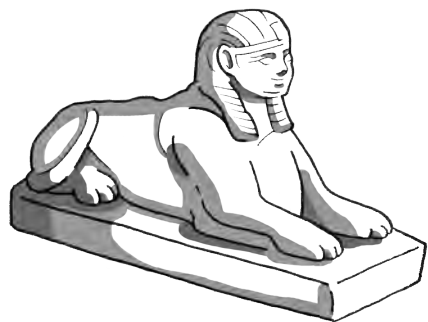


# WHERE DID JAPANESE LIONS COME FROM?

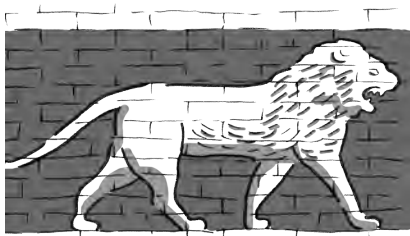
These creatures are modeled after actual lions, but there are no lions in Japan.  
Which of these places do you think might have inspired Japanese lions and lion dogs?



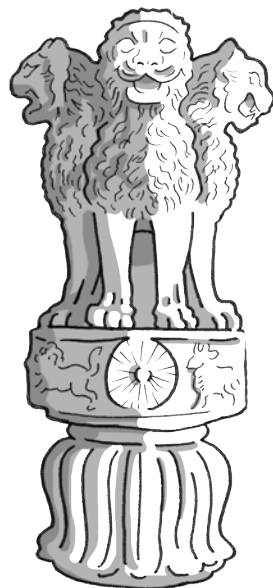
In ancient Egypt, the lion was a symbol of the authority of the Pharaohs. The Sphinx, with a human head on a lion body, is thought to be a representation of a Pharaoh.



In West Asia, lions guarded castles. Sculptures of lions typically stood outside the gates.



In India, lions were thought to represent the greatness of kings or the Buddha, so they were shown on pillars or on the pedestals of Buddhist sculptures.



There are no lions in China, so the Chinese probably thought of lions as imaginary creatures, like dragons.



## THE BIRTH OF THE LION DOG IN JAPAN!

Though lions came in pairs in India and China, in Japan the lion was coupled with an imaginary horned animal called a lion dog (komainu) and used to guard temples and shrines. In Japanese, such lion and lion dog pairs are collectively known as komainu.



Lion and Lion Dog

The first reference to lions and lion dogs is a temple record from 1200 years ago, which talks about them as masks for a dance.

The characteristics of lion and lion dog pairs changed over time.



Dance masks

Though Japanese lions and lion dogs were first made of wood, Chinese-style stone sculptures started being made about 400 years ago. You can still find stone lions and lion dogs guarding the entrance to Japanese shrines today.

When you encounter such sculptures, be sure to stop and look at them carefully. You never know what you might discover!