

Hieroglyphs, Text and Society

AHAR5004



Detail of Hammurabi's Law Code

(<http://www.history.com/news/history-lists/8-things-you-may-not-know-about-hammurabis-code>)

School of Archaeology, History & Anthropology

2017

Hieroglyphs, Text and Society

Status

20 credits (Level 5)

Lecturers

Dr Louise Steel (convenor), Dr Katharina Zinn

Lectures

Mondays 1-4 pm in Tucker 2

Assessment

Course work (50%)

- 2000-word written assignment: a document review **DUE November 14th at 11.59**
(Text for document review is posted on moodle)
- 2-hour Examination (50%)

Content

This module explores the relationship between Archaeology and History through an analysis of ancient texts from the Bronze and Early Iron Age Mediterranean and the role these have played in the interpretation of past societies. It explores, through various case studies, the impact which the written word had on past societies: as a technology of power and monumentality, a means of expressing identities, and a means of exclusion/inclusion. The module investigates how texts can be evaluated, alongside other aspects of material culture, to write a social narrative of the past and it explores the impact of literacy and its spread within ancient societies. The module compares historical narratives derived from analysis of the written word with social narratives derived from examination of text as material culture. Lectures will cover a variety of topics from the Ancient Mediterranean and may include: societies before text (assessing the importance of image and oral tradition); protohistorical societies from the Mediterranean; hieroglyphs and cuneiform; the alphabet and Homer, text and monumentality. There will be practical sessions, using the collection from the Roderic Bowen Library. The second part of the module will focus on ancient Egyptian as a specific case study. Students will be introduced to the Egyptian hieroglyphic script and will be taught to recognise, read and interpret key formulae, spells, titles and royal names which occur on Egyptian monumental inscriptions as well as on funerary material culture.

Aims

1. To examine the relationship between the archaeology and history of the ancient world, through the medium of ancient texts and to examine how textual evidence and archaeological evidence have been used contiguously and separately to write histories of past cultures;
2. Explore the various forms of the written word in the ancient worlds within their social context and to examine their impact on past societies;
3. Using Egyptian hieroglyphs as a case study, learn the basics of reading an ancient language and script in the original

Outcomes

By the end of this module students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the distinction between the analysis of the written word to write histories and analysis of the social use of written technologies within past societies;
2. Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the analysis of textual evidence as another aspect of material culture;
3. Evaluate the impact and the social role of writing technologies within past societies;
4. The ability to read and recognise important royal titles, names, formulae and spells, written in the original Egyptian hieroglyphs

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Essential

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Piquette, K.E. and Whitehouse, R.D. 2013. *Writing as Material Practice: Substance, Surface and Medium*. London: Ubiquity Press.

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Van de Mieroop, M. 1999. *Cuneiform Texts and the Writing of History*. London: Routledge. [ebook]

Highly Recommended

Andr n, A. 1998. *Between Artifacts and Texts: Historical Archaeology in Global Perspective*. New York: Plenum Press.

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Writing Your Document Report

Writing a commentary or annotation bears a marked similarity with writing a book review, for the same principles of analysis and evaluation, rather than description and narrative, apply to the writing of a commentary.

A commentary, however, could be asked on type of ancient text. Whatever you are asked to comment upon, the types of question you need to ask yourself remain essentially the same:

- When was this written?
- For whom was it written and why?
- How does it relate to its wider context and what does it tell us about that context?
- How have others commented upon it, and why?
- What were the prevailing conventions under which this was written/made?
- What message or assumptions lie within or beneath the surface of the source, and can they be supported by evidence?
- What about the materiality of the text?
- Why has this source/artefact survived, and what does it tell us about that society?
- What is absent that perhaps ought to be in the document/source, and why is it missing?
- How does this source/document align with prevailing archaeological and/or historiographical understandings?

As with all academic writing you should situate your research in the wider academic literature

LECTURE PROGRAMME

	Date	Time	Lecture	Lecturer
Week 1	2/10	1.00	Introduction	LS
	2/10	2.00	Oral Traditions	LS
	2/10	3.00	Workshop: Symbolism & Images	LS
Week 2	9/10	1.00	Development of Written Documents in Mesopotamia	LS
	9/10	2.00	Origins of Hieroglyphs	LS
	9/10	3.00	Workshop: Making Clay Tablets	LS
Week 3	16/10	1.00	Archives, Laws and Letters	LS
	16/10	2.00	Using Ancient Texts to Write History	LS
	16/10	3.00	Workshop Reading Mesopotamian Literature	LS
Week 4	23/10	1.00	Protohistoric Societies: Crete and Cyprus	LS
	23/10	2.00	Linear B: Text as an Economic Document	LS
	23/10	3.00	Workshop: Ancient Sealing Practices	LS
Week 5		1.00	Origins of the Alphabet	LS
		2.00	Homer and Archaeology	LS
		3.00	Workshop: Preparation for Coursework	LS
Week 6			READING WEEK	
Week 7		1.00	H1: Literacy in ancient Egyptian Society	KZ
		2.00	H2: Introduction: one and more consonant signs, transliteration	KZ
		3.00	H3: Reading Directions	KZ
Week 8		1.00	H4: Epigraphy – how to write ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs	KZ
		2.00	H5: The Offering Formula	KZ
		3.00	H6: Exercise: What have we learnt so far? With in-class test!	KZ
Week 9		1.00	H7: Reading Merire	KZ
		2.00	H8: Excuse: Language system of Ancient Egypt, Other formulaic objects – funerary cones	KZ
		3.00	H9 - And even more offering formulas and some grammar (word order) – with 15 minute test (unmarked): reading Offering Formulas	KZ
Week 10		1.00	H10 - More Grammar – Nouns: roots, gender, number and Suffix pronouns	KZ
		2.00	H11 And even more Grammar – Nouns: connections and possessions	KZ
		3.00	H12 – Exercise (done as test and then talked through in class) And even more Grammar – Nouns: connections and possessions	KZ
Week 11		1.00	H13 – Our first sentences: more combinations of nouns and adjectives	KZ
		2.00	H14: Pre-exam test – unmarked: Reading, writing and translating hieroglyphs	KZ
		3.00	H15: Revision Session	KZ

READINGS

Oral Traditions

- Blench, R. and Spriggs, M. (eds) 1997. *Archaeology and Language I. Theoretical and Methodological Orientations*. One World Archaeology. London: Routledge. [Part IV]
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Using Ancient Texts to Write History

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Egyptian Hieroglyphs: Text and Monumentality

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Protohistoric Societies: Crete

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Also – have a look at the *Odyssey* and/or the *Iliad* in translation.

Representing the Other: Ancient Perspectives of the Other

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