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Ca' Foscari  
Venezia

Dipartimento di Studi Umanistici

**CAncAn – Communication in Ancient Anatolia –  
ERC-2022-Consolidator Grant – 101088363  
P.I. ANNICK PAYNE**



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# Studying Ancient History

## A CodeAW Lesson

**Developed by CAncAn  
Updated January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2025**



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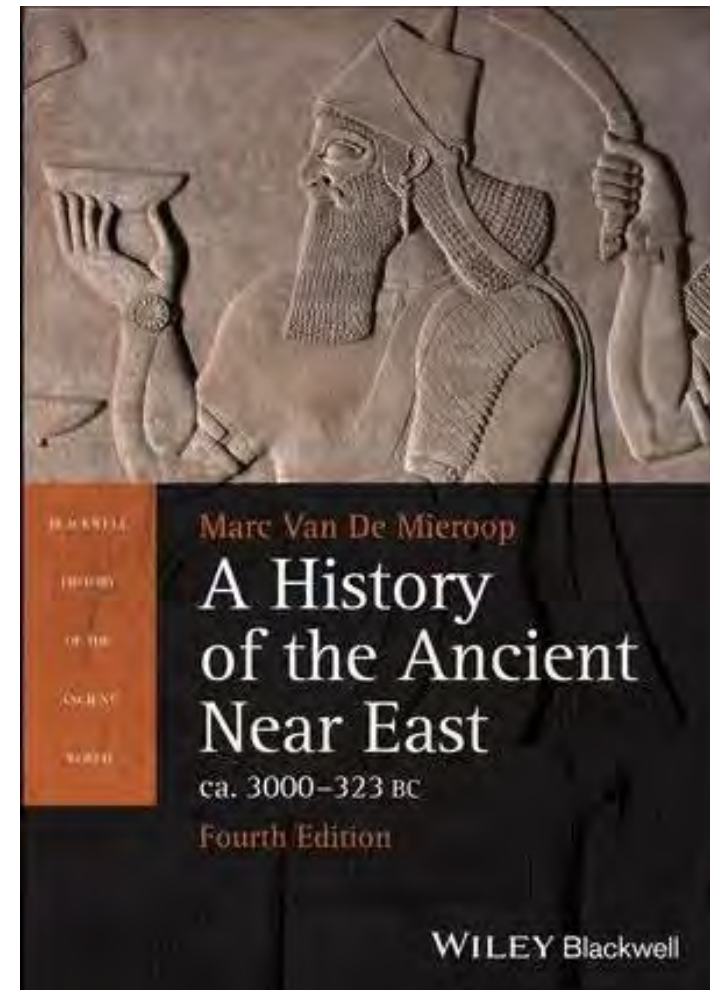
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# Ancient History

- Prehistory versus History
  - BC/BCE – AD/CE
- Sources
  - Texts, material culture, landscape, ethnographic data
- Disciplines
  - Philology, archaeology, art history, anthropology, linguistics





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## Near/Middle East

- Terminology
  - Near to what?
  - In the Middle of what?
  - East of what?
- Past & Present
  - Near East
  - Middle East
- Scope of this lesson/workshop/class/course?
  - Western Asia?
  - Eastern Mediterranean?
  - The World?
  - Neolithic to Classical Antiquity?
  - Human Origins to Modernity?







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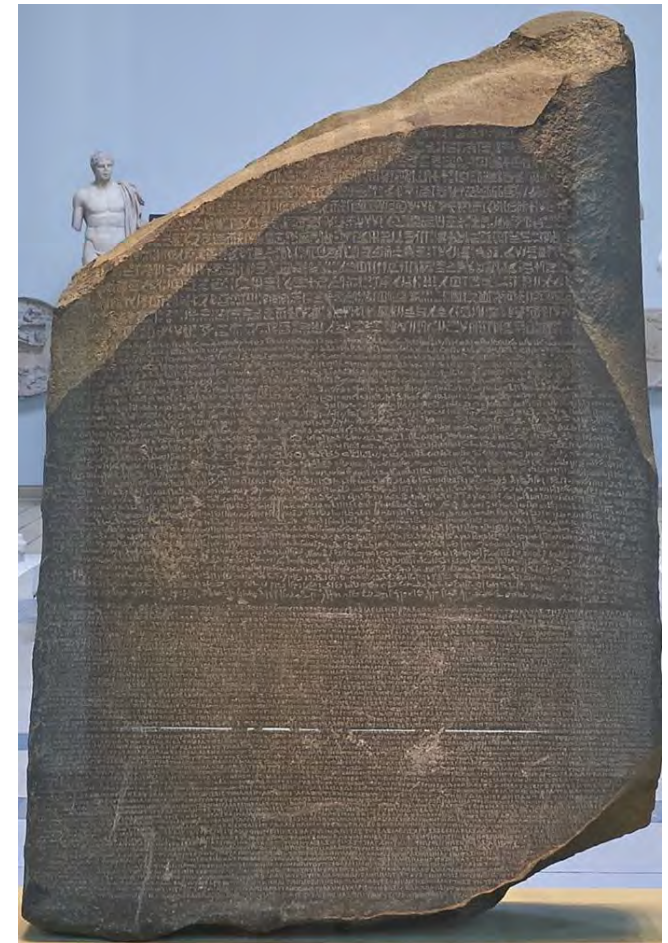
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# Early Investigations

- French Egyptomania



*The Battle of the Pyramids*



*The Rosetta Stone*



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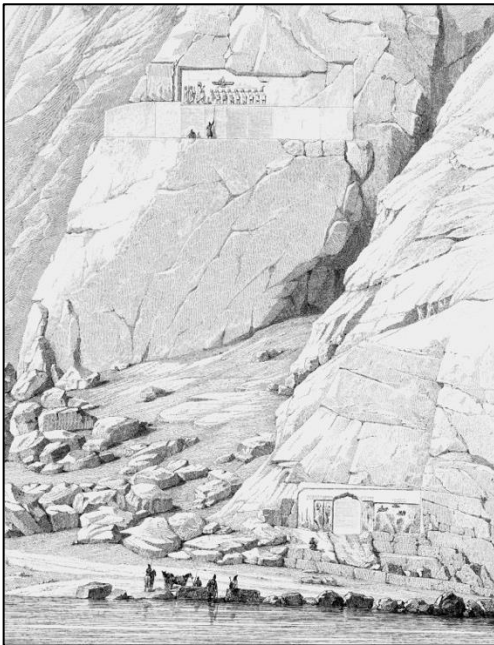
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## Early Investigations

- Western interest in Mesopotamia







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# Orientalism

- Western Civilization
- Ex Oriente Lux
- Torch of civilization
- Stream of civilization
- Gradient of civilization
- Cultural 'backwaters'



Tympanum of Breasted Hall by Ulric Henry Ellerhusen



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# How do we study Prehistory?

- Archaeology!



Türkmen Karahöyük Archaeological Project



Uluburun Shipwreck





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## How do we study Prehistory?

- What evidence do we use before the invention of writing?



<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Catalhöyük>; [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Stone\\_Tools](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Stone_Tools); [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Bone\\_Tools](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Bone_Tools);  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Charred\\_Plant\\_Remains.tif](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Charred_Plant_Remains.tif); Boz & Hager 2013;





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# Experimental Archaeology – Stone Knapping



# The Invention of Writing

- Proto-Cuneiform
  - For accounting and record-keeping
  - Circles and lines impressed in clay
  - Numbers, ideographs, logographs
  - Likely encoding Sumerian language
    - Phonetic values understood through lexical lists
    - Grammar added through sign combinations
- Clay
  - Tablets: sometimes with envelope
  - Bullae: with tokens and sealed



Proto-Cuneiform Tablet



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# The Invention of Writing

- Cuneiform (proper)
  - Signs became more abstract
  - Used to encode various languages throughout the ANE
    - Until ca. end of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE
  - Mostly logo-syllabic script
  - Rebus writing – homonymy
  - Phonetic complements – reading aids
  - Semantic complements
  - Determinatives – semantic classifiers

|            | SUMERIAN<br>(Protoform) | SUMERIAN<br>(Related) | EARLY<br>BABYLONIAN | LATE<br>BABYLONIAN | ASSYRIAN |
|------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|--------------------|----------|
| star       |                         |                       |                     |                    |          |
| sun        |                         |                       |                     |                    |          |
| mouth      |                         |                       |                     |                    |          |
| man        |                         |                       |                     |                    |          |
| king       |                         |                       |                     |                    |          |
| son        |                         |                       |                     |                    |          |
| head       |                         |                       |                     |                    |          |
| lord       |                         |                       |                     |                    |          |
| his        |                         |                       |                     |                    |          |
| reed       |                         |                       |                     |                    |          |
| power      |                         |                       |                     |                    |          |
| mouth      |                         |                       |                     |                    |          |
| ox         |                         |                       |                     |                    |          |
| bird       |                         |                       |                     |                    |          |
| destiny    |                         |                       |                     |                    |          |
| fish       |                         |                       |                     |                    |          |
| gardener   |                         |                       |                     |                    |          |
| habitation |                         |                       |                     |                    |          |
| Nineveh    |                         |                       |                     |                    |          |
| night      |                         |                       |                     |                    |          |







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# The Invention of Writing

- New Evidence = New Methods
  - Historical Linguistics
    - How did language develop over time?
  - Philology
    - What do written sources tell us about the lives and beliefs of past peoples?
  - History
    - What happened in the past and how did events and processes come to pass?



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