

valuable material for archaeological study has been destroyed during the passage of the centuries. Further, much that has been preserved is hard to understand without fuller knowledge of all the circumstances involved. Often interpretation of material remains of antiquity seems almost like attempting to fit together a jig-saw puzzle which has lost many of its parts. In general written evidence from the past is much easier to interpret than are material things apart from writing.

Even the written materials of archaeology, however, do not give us a complete knowledge of the history and culture of the past. Seldom did a man sit down with the deliberate purpose of making a complete account of these matters, in order to pass this information on to posterity. Ordinarily writing was for an immediate practical purpose: a man drew up a contract; a lawyer wrote out the important facts of a case in court; a citizen made a will; a king issued a communique regarding the progress of his warfare or put up a memorial to the greatness of his deceased father. In all these types of writings, no attempt at completeness was made, for neither then nor now would one be apt to explain in such writings what would be perfectly obvious to his contemporaries. Moreover, there is always the possibility of bias or intentional misstatement, particularly in the royal memorials and communiques--the very place where we reasonably expect to find the greatest amount of information. Sometimes our written evidence, like our material objects, seems to be only a very incomplete jig-saw puzzle, as far as a complete idea of history is concerned.

Sometimes it is difficult to determine the exact meaning of words and grammatical constructions in languages long forgotten. Here tremendous progress has been made, but many problems await further study.