



# Reading and Writing in Babylon

*Dominique Charpin*

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Over 5,000 years ago, the history of humanity radically changed direction when writing was invented in Sumer, the southern part of present-day Iraq. For the next three millennia, kings, aristocrats, and slaves all made intensive use of cuneiform script to document everything from royal archives to family records.

In engaging style, **Dominique Charpin** shows how hundreds of thousands of clay tablets testify to the history of an ancient society that communicated broadly through letters to gods, insightful commentary, and sales receipts. He includes a number of passages, offered in translation, that allow readers an illuminating glimpse into the lives of Babylonians. Charpin's insightful overview discusses the methods and institutions used to teach reading and writing, the process of apprenticeship, the role of archives and libraries, and various types of literature, including epistolary exchanges and legal and religious writing.

The only book of its kind, *Reading and Writing in Babylon* introduces Mesopotamia as the birthplace of civilization, culture, and literature while addressing the technical side of writing and arguing for a much wider spread of literacy than is generally assumed. Charpin combines an intimate knowledge of cuneiform with a certain breadth of vision that allows this book to transcend a small circle of scholars. Though it will engage a broad general audience, this book also fills a critical academic gap and is certain to become the standard reference on the topic.

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