



How Writing Came About

Denise Schmandt-Besserat

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In 1992, the University of Texas Press published *Before Writing, Volume I: From Counting to Cuneiform* and *Before Writing, Volume II: A Catalog of Near Eastern Tokens*. In these two volumes, Denise Schmandt-Besserat set forth her groundbreaking theory that the cuneiform script invented in the Near East in the late fourth millennium B.C.—the world's oldest known system of writing—derived from an archaic counting device.

How Writing Came About draws material from both volumes to present Schmandt-Besserat's theory for a wide public and classroom audience. Based on the analysis and interpretation of a selection of 8,000 tokens or counters from 116 sites in Iran, Iraq, the Levant, and Turkey, it documents the immediate precursor of the cuneiform script.

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