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All proposals will be considered.

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Knowledge, Literacy, and Elementary Education in the Old Babylonian Period

Springer

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For my dearest friends

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About This Book

A scribal education is well documented in the Old Babylonian period. Lasting from roughly 2003 to 1595 BCE, the Old Babylonian period was a time of dramatic change and instability. Politically, it began with the fragmentation and collapse of the last Sumerian Kingdom, the Kingdom of Ur, and ended with the sacking of Babylon and the fall of its eponymous dynasty. At the same time, there was significant social change. Part of this change was a dramatic increase in literacy and a massive shift in knowledge. However, both literacy and knowledge change are poorly understood. What defined this shift? What did it look like? What made up such literacy? How was it attained?

This volume explores these questions and more. It examines education in the Old Babylonian period as a means to investigate knowledge and literacy. It presents a new method to pursue this topic. While numerous studies exist on the subject, there is no global study of the early elementary education, that is, this education in its entirety. Typically, education is examined in a piecemeal fashion. It's as if education centred on lexicography alone or mathematics alone. One gets the impression that there was no purpose to education beyond training a kind of elite. This despite several studies showing a widespread literacy in this period and place. Such methodologies lead to numerous blind spots in how we perceive education. The study of knowledge has been affected by our misunderstanding of education as well. There are few examinations of local knowledge beyond the admission that some must have existed.

This work starts by introducing the topic, the place, and the problems. We see multiple kinds of literacy, from a broad functional literacy to an erudite scholarly literacy at play in Babylonia. Knowledge is defined, as well as the knowledge economy. Lexicality and mathematics are presented as the two pillars of scholarly scribal education. The Old Babylonian epistemic shift is presented and traced from the preceding period into the Old Babylonian period. This is followed by a study of the document as a means to present education, as well as the various iterations of scholarly education in Babylonia. The work shows this scholarly, elite education was by no means uniform throughout Babylonia, but each scribal centre had its own variations on how to present the Old Babylonian knowledge system. Technical literacy comes to the fore starting with chapter five, which proposes the role

of documents in fostering a kind of learning by doing. The final, concluding chapter presents the places where technical literacy was acquired and then ties this into a general discussion of education and literacy in Mesopotamia. In this final chapter, orality and the home learning environments come to the fore as a broad functional literacy is redefined.

Throughout this work, prior evidence is recontextualized to account for the entire knowledge system. New evidence is presented that challenges how we view ancient Babylonian education. The very nature of the textuality is called into question and redefined as technical literacy and then functional literacy is explored. The result is an image of the places of knowledge and education in Babylonia—a tapestry of local knowledge from which global knowledge arises—as well as a new means to explore this subject.

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Abbreviations

A	Tablets in the collections of the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago
ABAW 143	Wilcke et al. 2018
AO	Tablets in the Louvre (Antiquités orientales)
Ashm	Tablets in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford
BM	Tablets in the British Museum, London
BRM 4	Clay 1923
CAD	The Assyrian Dictionary of the University of Chicago
CBS	Tablets in the University Museum in Philadelphia (Catalogue of the Babylonian Section)
CT 9	Cuneiform texts from Babylonian tablets, &c. in the British Museum. Part IX
CUNES	Tablets in the Cornell University Near Eastern Studies collection
Erm	Tablets in the Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg
HS	Tablet in the Hilprecht Collection in Jena
IB	Tablets from the Isin excavation (Ishan Bahriyat)
Ist L	Tablets in the Archaeological Museum in Istanbul (Lagash/Girsu)
Ist Ni	See Ni
Ist O	Tablets in the Archaeological Museum in Istanbul (Kiš)
LB	Tablets in the de Liagre Bohl Collection (Leiden)
M	Tablets in the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology (Ann Arbor)
MCT	Neugebauer and Sachs 1945
MDP 22	Scheil 1930
MHET 1/1	Van Lerberghe and Voet 1991
MHET 3/1	Tanret 2002
MLC	Tablets in the Morgan Library Collection of the Yale Babylonian Collection (New Haven)
MKT 1	Neugebauer 1935
MS	Tablets in the Schøyen Collection (London and Oslo)
MSL 11	Civil and Reiner 1974
MSL 14	Civil et al. 1979

N	Tablets in the University Museum, Philadelphia (Nippur)
Ni	Tablets in the Archaeological Museum, Istanbul (Nippur)
PRAK	Genouillac 1924; 1926
RA 12	Scheil 1915
SM	Tablets in the British Museum in London (Smith)
SPVN	Sexagesimal Place Value Notation
TAD	Langdon 1911
TLB 1	Leemans 1964
VAT	Tablets in the Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin (Vorderasiatische Abteilung. Tontafeln)
YBC	Tablets in the Yale Babylonian Collection (New Haven)

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