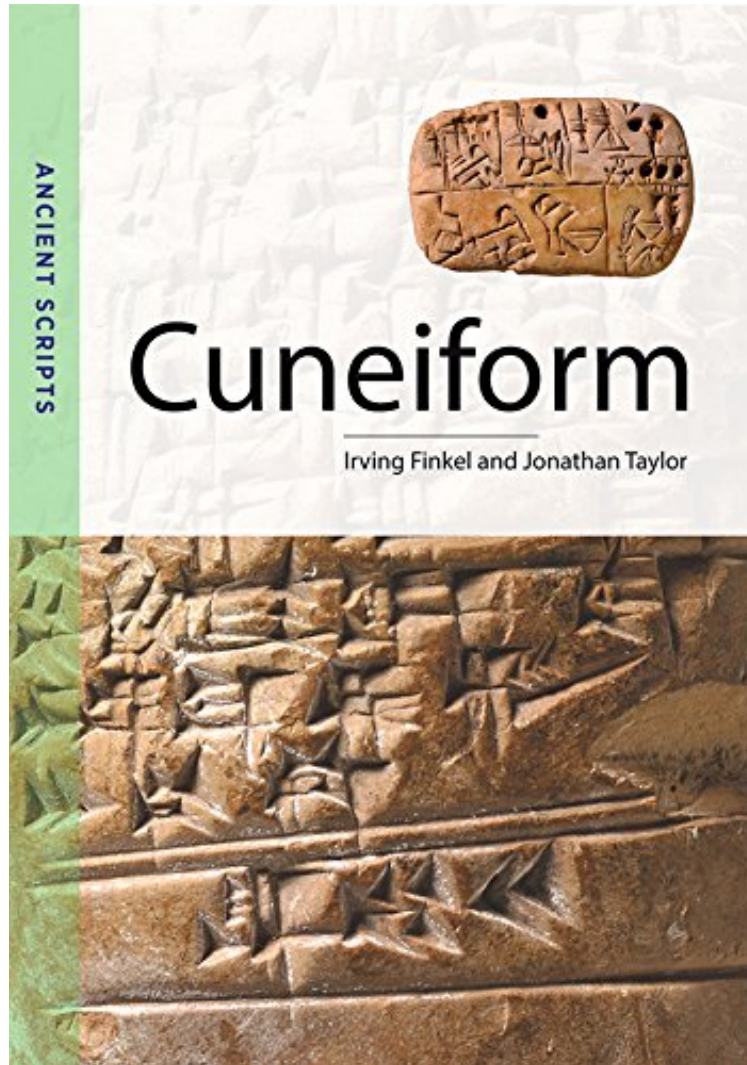


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Cuneiform: Ancient Scripts

Irving Finkel, Jonathan Taylor

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Irving Finkel, Jonathan Taylor : Cuneiform: Ancient Scripts before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Cuneiform: Ancient Scripts:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great, short book, but be aware...By Steve in DC Love this book, but be aware that it IS basically the same book as one of a similar title by the same author. 13 of 14 people found the following review helpful. A great example is the simple one sound for the Sumerian ...By Fred P. Short but effective summary of just about all aspects related to cuneiform with some effective close-up illustrations of tablets. Examples of the original accounting list pictographs from 3200 BC in 300 year development of an actual writing system. Early cuneiform writing involves a mixture of consonant-vowel syllable sounds, symbols for specific words, and short

words from the original Sumerian standing for longer words now pronounced in Akkadian. A great example is the simple one sound for the Sumerian word water which stands in for a multi-syllable Akkadian word. Everything made much more complicated today by being written in an unknown language. There are problems in that some syllables can be represented by several different signs, and some signs can represent different words or sounds. Of course, we have similar issues with modern English writing. Some suspect that the multiplicity of the same signs for different words may indicate that Sumerian was a tonal language like Chinese. Investigators are helped by the existence of scribes lists showing the equivalence of Sumerian and Akkadian terms. Nice illustration of how the cuneiform stylus instrument was made and how it created the wedge-shaped impressions. We hear that ink was used to annotate some tablets, and there are references to parchment cuneiform texts, too. Bricks were often stamped with cuneiform inscriptions with a kind of moveable typeset suggested by some signs being inserted in an inverted position. This kind of reverse image preparation must have been familiar from use of seal impressions but never used in any other way. Perhaps half of all existing known cuneiform tablets come from a single source Ashurbanipal's great archive at Nineveh. Cuneiform just barely survived into early historic times (mostly in ancient astronomical texts) so that there are useful Greek crib tablets using Greek letters to give the phonetic value of cuneiform symbols circa 100 AD to suggest what late Akkadian and Sumerian sounded like. Generally good, lengthy explanatory captions for figures, but one or two (such as the cross-section of a typical clay tablet) are hard to follow. 8 of 9 people found the following review helpful. The World's First Writing System By Dennis Zeuner In about 3200 BC, temple accountants in the Mesopotamian city state of Uruk invented a writing system that transformed record keeping and communications. It would endure for the next 3000 years, spreading throughout the Middle East, eventually reaching such areas as Armenia, Bahrain, Israel, Iran, and Egypt. Scribes, with reed stylus's, wedged cuneiform symbols on soft clay tablets that would later dry and harden in the sun. Five thousand years later archaeologists uncovered thousands of these tablets in buried ancient palace archives and libraries. Cuneiform comprises 600 1000 characters representing complete or parts of words and syllables. The numbering systems were based on the numbers 60 and 10. The calendar was based on lunar months (29 30 days), with each year having 360 days. The decipherment of cuneiform, needing a type of Rosetta stone, was made possible by a trilingual cuneiform inscription in Old Persian, Babylonian, and Elamite of Persian king Darius on a mountain pass in Eastern Iran. Also, amazingly, archaeologists found a perfect tablet listing a table of signs, pronunciations, and meanings. The book is not intimidating, with simple to understand explanations, and many color photographs. It is only 103 pages with a complete index. The nine chapter titles facilitate searching for specific subjects, such as Who used cuneiform writing? and How did it work?

Cuneiform script on clay tablets is, as far as we know, the oldest form of writing in the world. The resilience of clay has permitted these records to survive for thousands of years, providing a fascinating glimpse into the political, economic, and religious institutions of the ancient Near Eastern societies that used this writing system. A concise and accessible introduction to the topic, this book traces the history of cuneiform from its beginnings in the fourth millennium BC to its eventual demise in the face of the ever expanding use of alphabetic Aramaic in the first millennium BC. The authors explain how this pre-alphabetic system worked and how it was possible to use it to record so many different languages. Drawing on examples from the British Museum, which has the largest and most venerable cuneiform collection in the world, this lively volume includes elementary school exercises, revealing private letters, and beautiful calligraphic literature for royal libraries.

About the Author Irving Finkel is curator of ancient Mesopotamian script, languages, and cultures in the Middle East Department of the British Museum, where Jonathan Taylor is curator of the cuneiform collections.