

writing and analysis, Garroway's book—particularly her work on Mesopotamian cuneiform texts and her concluding chapter—is a welcome addition to the growing library of research on children in the ancient Near East and the Bible.

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Theory and Practice of Knowledge Transfer: Studies in School Education in the Ancient Near East and Beyond. Edited by W. S. VAN EGMOND and W. H. VAN SOLDT. Publications de l'Institut historique-archéologique néerlandais de Stamboul, vol. 121. Leiden: NEDERLANDS INSTITUUT VOOR HET NABIJE OOSTEN, 2012. Pp. 111 + 152. €36.04 (paper).

This slim volume is full of informative essays that are a pleasure to read. Its contents are eleven of the papers presented at a 2008 symposium in Leiden, plus an introduction by the editors. It must be noted at the outset that the entire endeavor operates with an extremely narrow concept of “knowledge,” to wit, knowledge of writing and knowledge that is preserved and transmitted in writing; so also education. The editors address this delimitation without however acknowledging what lies beyond its confines: knowledge of how to cook, how to make pottery, who makes the best beer in Babylon, why she married him, the way to Kanesh, how to run an assembly, how to shoot . . . In short, most of the kinds of knowledge that actually matter in people's lives, and that make up a society and its culture, are outside the restricted scope of this work. That said, the essays illuminate the ways writing is used to structure domains of knowledge in particular places, periods, and contexts, and thus offer comparative perspectives on each other's themes.

In their introduction, Wolfert van Egmond and Wilfred van Soldt call attention both to the modern habit of equating knowledge with what is written, and to the abnormality of this idea, inasmuch as writing has not existed or not been essential in most cultures, most of the time. They discuss theories claiming that writing and literacy transform cognition and thus society from primitive to civilized, and that alphabetic writing precipitates a further transformation to (Western) rationality and modernity; they then turn to critiques of such theories, describing the types of evidence and inquiry brought to bear on testing the proposition that there is a causal relation between writing and reasoning, or between alphabetic writing and modern civilization. They make no comment on the prejudices that motivate positing an inverse relationship between alphabetic literacy and savagery. But, they ask, if writing and literacy cannot be accorded the transformative role they play in such teleological grand narratives, why study these phenomena? The question practically answers itself, given the authors' starting point: writing is so fundamental to modern life that we take its value and functions for granted—to the point that most people, literate and educated as they may be, never consider what writing is and does, nor can they even distinguish it from language, though they use both all the time. This more than justifies inquiring how this tool we depend on works, in our minds and in the world. Hence the symposium, and the essays, which the editors proceed to summarize.

Eight contributions from cuneiformists are complemented by three from specialists in other fields, Marco Mostert and Wolfert van Egmond on medieval Europe and Jan Jansen on present-day Mali. Van Egmond's essay, “Informal Schooling and Textual Communities: A Medievalist's Ruminations on Schooling in the Ancient Near East,” is explicitly comparative. He describes evidence for informal

education in letters during the late medieval period, points out what differences this makes to the work writing does in society, and inquires where such informal education might be found in the ancient Near East. He notes that the Old Assyrian merchant archives and the Deir el-Medina ostraca supply evidence for writing being done by non-professionals; other examples could be found in other corpora. This approach offers a salutary challenge to cuneiformists, who have tended to fixate on the notion of schools, as institutionalized training regimens if not actual institutions. Yet even a complicated script can be taught and learned by informal or *ad hoc* means, with different results than training through formalized curricula (as Piotr Michalowski describes, pp. 42–43)—and for different reasons, too. Questions of purpose and result animate van Egmond’s inquiry: what was the intended outcome of training people to read and write—was it to produce scribes? literati? orators?—and what were the motivations for learning? The practice of education would have been shaped by its objectives; meanwhile, tools developed for one purpose could be deployed for another. Van Egmond adduces the concept of “textual community” to describe how, in societies where things were done without writing most of the time, learning to produce and reproduce texts served to shape its practitioners into communities apart, with ramifications for the kinds of texts they wrote. These very texts are our only legible evidence for their societies, which we thus study on the basis of evidence that is fundamentally atypical and non-representative of them.

Following this line of analysis, van Egmond observes further that, when the norm was to handle knowledge orally, so that even training in writing operated largely without depending on writing, texts are in a sense “by-products” of the activity of scribes whose “trade was far less about actually writing than at first sight it would seem to have been” (p. 80). Not only was writing inessential for storage and transfer of knowledge, it was—to exaggerate a little—inessential to itself, inasmuch as it was not the principal function of its practitioners.

A convergent argument is made by Mostert, who focuses on the act of reading. His essay, “Latin Learning and Learning Latin: Knowledge Transfer and Literacy in the European Middle Ages,” is an ideal one to assign students. Using a well-known alphabetically written English text to illustrate his points, Mostert defamiliarizes the practice and the media that we know like our own skin, showing how the act of reading—and therefore the nature and function of texts—is determined by the graphic conventions employed to present text to the eye. In the process he up-ends modern assumptions, naturalized since the Enlightenment, that privilege text over speech, writing over orality, and silent reading, as he demonstrates that the development of these prejudices is contingent on particular cultural practices. In the absence of devices like spacing, capitalization, and punctuation, the voice is indispensable to comprehension; the voice is moreover essential to rendering text into literature, when writing serves as a means and not the end. Mostert emphasizes that not until recently in the Western tradition has literature lived on the page or the tablet, that voiced reading has not normally been the mark of inadequate literacy but the fulfilment of writing’s purpose, and that the act of writing has historically been a menial task subordinate to the work of the author, which was elaborated in the mind to be enunciated out loud. This reviewer apprehends that last point (expounded on p. 30) with some embarrassment at her own dependence on physically writing and re-writing in order to produce a decent text.

One may question, however, to what degree Mostert’s observations are valid for non-Western cultures—in the Chinese tradition, for example, are poems not composed for the delectation of the eye as well as the ear? Hieroglyphic Egyptian inscriptions, for another example, are meant for visual apprehension first, linguistic second. In cuneiform and other logophonetic scripts, the use of determinatives serves a function analogous to capitalization. Cuneiform scribes also employed diverse graphic conventions like punctuation, spacing, rulings, and other formatting devices to aid visual comprehension of texts. Such devices are the subject of Willemijn Waal’s paper, “Reading between the Lines: Hittite Scribal Conventions,” which describes the means Hittite scribes developed to make tablets legible—in the same way as layout does for the Wallace Stevens poem that Mostert uses to demonstrate the impossibility of reading as we are accustomed to do without formatting text for the eye.

Jansen observes that formal instruction leading to literacy is a means to make *society* legible, in “When Style Matters: Literacy in an Illegible Place in Rural Mali.” He begins by recalling the association of cognitive skills with literacy and noting that the acquisition of literacy is embedded in the

sociopolitical context of instruction, which carries along an array of other skills or habits of mind. When instruction in reading and writing is conducted under the auspices of the state or a comparable authority, it has the purpose of rendering society “legible,” i.e., bringing the people, their rights and relations within the scope of that authority’s surveillance and rule. Here is how Norman Yoffee puts it in his review of James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998): “Modern states, according to Scott, attempt ‘to make a society legible’, that is, to . . . create a standard grid so that leaders and bureaucrats can record, monitor, and control them. ‘Legibility’ is effected by the state, which mandates the formation of permanent last names, standardization of weights and measures,” etc. (“The Evolution of Simplicity,” *Current Anthropology* 42 [December 2001]: 767). As Yoffee explains, this description applies to ancient states as well.

Drawing upon his fieldwork in the Sobara region of Mali, Jansen describes a form literacy may take when, in the absence of effective institutional authority and instruction, it is developed by people using the apparatus of literacy systems for their own purposes—which may not include knowing how to read and write. The Sobara region is as “illegible” to the state as texts are illegible to its people, who nonetheless make use of systems of literacy. In doing so they may constitute a personal “style,” meaning a performative manifestation of education that encompasses status as well as political, economic, or cultural competencies. Their choice of systems includes modern Western-style education and Koranic instruction, neither of which is abundant or functional in the region, alongside the traditional system called *somaya*, which combines divination with medical and botanical knowledge, as Jansen explains. All three offer paths to potential success, none is dominant, and participation in one is not exclusive of the others. To illustrate how these systems may be used by a non-literate person to develop a highly successful literate “style,” Jansen describes the example of Namagan Kanté the diviner (*soma*), who cannot read or write but who, due to the competencies and connections he has developed, participates in the market economy and engages with Muslim scholars and with the state administration: “his increasingly literate style does not involve mental skills of literacy, but eclectically borrows from practical functions developed by standard systems of literacy” (p. 67). Could not many members of nominally literate ancient Near Eastern societies, with two or more writing systems at their disposal but no means to master any of them, have done the like?

In light of Jansen’s contribution, that of Jeanette Fincke, “The School Curricula from Ḫattuša, Emar and Ugarit: A Comparison,” may be read as an exercise in rendering ancient societies legible to modern scholarship, by studying only the evidence of instruction in literacy. Fincke’s method is to classify and quantify types of school texts found in each of the three cities indicated, according to categories such as “religious” and “medical” alongside “known from the Old Babylonian school curriculum” (Figs. 2–5). The curricula she compares have in common with each other and with formal education in rural Mali (as well as many parts of the world past and present) that the languages of writing differ from the local languages of speech. Under such conditions it does not follow from the use of Akkadian as a language of writing that “the basic objective” of those curricula “was to learn Akkadian” (p. 89), rather than to learn how to write in cuneiform. The logic of the assertion that “religion played an immense part in Hittite society,” therefore it predominated in the Hittite textual corpus and occupied a substantial part of the curriculum (p. 89; repeated on p. 98), should be turned around: matters we classify as religious evidently required the production of texts, as many other matters did not—regardless of their importance—in Hittite society.

In the case of Emar, where “religious texts” form a higher percentage of school texts than in Ḫattuša, Fincke closes the tautological loop by referring to the “religious background” of the texts’ findspot in “the so-called Temple M1” (p. 90; repeated on p. 98). Often, in reading volumes of conference proceedings, one wonders whether contributors have taken account of each other’s contributions. Yoram Cohen, whose contribution also examines the curricula of Emar, points out that “the so-called temple M1 was in fact not a temple but rather a multi-functional building” that housed the scribal school of the diviner Zū-Ba’la family, their library, and their archives along with those of other families (p. 120 n. 24). This assemblage of material does not bespeak the designation “religious” in any usable sense of the word.

Cohen's essay, "The Historical and Social Background of the Scribal School at the City of Emar in the Late Bronze Age," is a good introduction to the city, its scribes, and their practices of literacy. As he explains, there were two "schools" for Emariote scribes, the older "Syrian" and the later "Syro-Hittite" one, which dovetailed in time, in their use of particular texts, and in their participants' tenure of the position of diviner (p. 117). What those schools were, beyond hypothetical constructs of ours, remains somewhat out of focus. Education was carried on within families, and with visiting scholars contributing to the curriculum, as Cohen shows with examples of specific individuals and their production of tablets. Some of his examples are intriguingly suggestive. There is Mašru-ḥamiš, who was rewarded by the king for divination that proved correct. Then there is Rībi-Dagan, who appended to one of his tablets a colophon stating that he wrote it when he was "placed in bronze chains" (p. 119). Why did he have to write in chains—was he studying at the Emar School of Bondage and Divination? Cohen opts for the more prosaic suggestion that he is speaking metaphorically of debt.

Taking another approach to instruction in cuneiform, Tobias Scheucher examines what errors in transmission can reveal about the process of transmission, in "Errors and Mistakes: The Narrow Limits of Orality-Literacy Research in the Study of Ancient Cultures—the Case of Lexical Lists from Ancient Ḫattuša." He illustrates the detection and diagnosis of errors with examples from trilingual versions of lexical lists in which the Hittite translation of an entry shows how a received Sumerian-Akkadian input was misunderstood. He presents models that discriminate stages (perception, processing, and production) and media (memory, recitation, and written texts) of transmission in order to investigate whether it can be ascertained whether different types of error arise through mistakes in oral or textual transmission (and at what stage). Ironically, his Fig. 2 (p. 141) appears to illustrate the very sort of uncertainty in error diagnosis that he describes, for it is impossible to be sure whether he really means "affect" (as a verb) or whether this is a mistake in hearing, or in spelling, for "effect" (as a noun), in cols. ii and iii.

Two crucial points are 1) that errors are visible to us only at the stage of production, represented by tablets, and tablets that serve as media of transmission, storage, or reproduction are indistinguishable on the basis of error analysis alone; 2) that phoneticization would have accompanied even a purely textual process of transmission; that is, in order to learn and reproduce graphic signs one must sound them out, so that Hittite scribes (for example) would necessarily have phoneticized Sumerograms and Akkadograms in the process of learning and teaching them. Scheucher reaches the rather discouraging but salutary conclusions that "apparently aural/oral mistakes may occur in entirely literate [i.e., textual] environments" (p. 143), so that it is "impossible to elucidate the communicative techniques by means of errors and mistakes" (p. 144), or indeed "to prove anything else than literacy by using evidence from written sources" (p. 145).

Gary Beckman endeavors to see through the written evidence to the reality behind it in "Šamaš among the Hittites," the only contribution that deals with knowledge not of writing but of something (other than language) mediated in writing. It is typically assumed that the acquisition of cuneiform script and texts entailed the acquisition of Mesopotamian culture, taken in a broad and vague sense to encompass literature, religion, sociopolitical organization, et cetera. Beckman poses a question that may be understood to test this assumption by picking out a highly particularized instance: given that Hittite scribes wrote the names of Mesopotamian and Anatolian solar deities alike with the heterogram ^dUTU, to what degree were features of the Mesopotamian sun-god Šamaš transferred into Hittite culture? His succinct inquiry, phrased in crystalline prose, yields a positive answer, to wit: Hittite texts mediate conceptions of the solar deity that integrate distinctly Mesopotamian elements, alongside non-Mesopotamian ones. Thus, "we may conclude that at least for members of the elite of Ḫatti, the importation of cuneiform writing and culture brought with it real consequences for their spiritual and intellectual life" (p. 134).

Assyria's importation of Babylonian religious and literary heritage is the subject of Niek Veldhuis's essay, "Domesticizing Babylonian Scribal Culture in Assyria: Transformation by Preservation," which primarily considers the evidence of lexical lists in the Middle Assyrian period. For Veldhuis, such texts are not only a medium of conveying information, both from Babylonia to Assyria and from ancient Mesopotamia to its modern students, in the hands of their original users they were moreover constitutive of scholarship. (But are the entries contrasting ploughs as "experienced" or "inexperienced"—

lummudu vs. *lā lummudu*, in the extract from VAT 9513 quoted on p. 11, with n. 1—not some sort of joke?) Cuneiform writing was at once an interface for transmission of cultural knowledge and “a discipline of knowledge by itself” (p. 16). Veldhuis counters the notion of a cuneiform “stream of tradition,” imagined as if it were an autonomous force, by turning the focus on the people who actively reproduced the contents of this tradition, and on their methods. In Assyria this activity involved deliberately acquiring Sumerian curricular material, deities, and liturgy, from Nippur in particular, and implanting them—domesticating them—in Assur. In the process, Veldhuis points out, Assyrian scribes fossilized the texts, turning what had been a fluid and living curriculum in the hands of Babylonian scholars into a frozen stream; for true knowledge entails not replication but creative regeneration of material.

If the Middle Assyrian adaptation of Babylonian curricular texts took place under the impetus of the state, and if this process can be observed rather closely, the same is not true for most of the Mesopotamian “periphery.” Veldhuis asserts confidently, without documentation, that “both Ugarit and Emar had received cuneiform literacy from their Mitannian overlords. . . . With the writing system the Mitannian rulers introduced the tools to teach this writing system . . .” (pp. 20–21). This is analogous to attributing a new pottery style to a new regime, e.g., attributing the spread of Nuzi Ware to Mittanian policy. Ugarit was not under Mittani’s rule in any case, and cuneiform had long been familiar to Levantine polities when the state of Mittani formed. (On the organization of the Mittani Empire, see von Dassow, “Levantine Polities under Mittanian Hegemony,” in *Constituent, Confederate, and Conquered Space: The Emergence of the Mittani State*, ed. Nicole Brisch, Eva Cancik-Kirschbaum, and Jesper Eidem [Topoi: Berlin Studies of the Ancient World, vol. 17; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014], 11–32.) But why in any case should the transmission of writing have taken a detour through the imperial court? Potters did not take direction from the state, nor need scribes have done so.

What role imperial rule did have in the use of writing is a question addressed by Wilfred van Soldt, whose answer indicates that it lies less in the form than in the fact of writing. Van Soldt begins his contribution, “Why Did They Write? On Empires and Vassals in Syria and Palestine in the Late Bronze Age,” by surveying the distribution of cuneiform texts in the Levant during the second millennium BCE, and then he focuses on Alalakh. This site, occupied continuously during most of the second millennium, has yielded archives from only two periods: Level VII, dating to the late Middle Bronze Age (roughly the seventeenth century BCE), when Alalakh was under the dominion of Yamhad; and Level IV, dating to the early Late Bronze Age (late fifteenth–early fourteenth century BCE), when Alalakh was the seat of a kingdom under the dominion of Mittani. The strata before and after these periods are almost entirely anepigraphic, save a handful of tablets deriving from the period of Hittite rule starting in the mid-fourteenth century, along with a few seals, sealings, and one stone relief inscribed in Anatolian hieroglyphics. For Alalakh VII, see now Jacob Lauinger, *Following the Man of Yamhad: Settlement and Territory at Old Babylonian Alalakh* (Leiden: Brill, 2015). On Alalakh IV and its tablets, in addition to references given by van Soldt, see von Dassow, “What Did Archives Mean in Mittani? The Case of 15th-century BCE Alalakh,” *JCSMS* 5 (2010 [2011]: 37–53). On Alalakh VII and IV, respectively, see also Lauinger’s chapter (3.13.1) and my own (4.5) in the forthcoming *Handbook of Ancient Mesopotamia*, ed. Gonzalo Rubio (Berlin: de Gruyter). The excavations ongoing at Alalakh under the direction of K. Aslihan Yener have achieved considerably more exposure of the fourteenth–thirteenth-century phases and yielded significant new evidence for the history of these periods; see the forthcoming publication of the results, *Tell Atchana, Ancient Alalakh*, vol. 2: *The Late Bronze Age II City* (Istanbul: Koç Üniversitesi Yayınları).

Further excavation could of course change the picture of text production at Alalakh, but van Soldt is correct to observe that “writing is attested here in periods during which a foreign dynasty ruled the city and when the town was a vassal of a larger empire” (p. 110). Only in such periods did a chancellery require the use of writing; only then was any bureaucracy developed. Van Soldt’s observation may be supplemented by noting the near-total absence of texts produced outside the sphere of state authority at Alalakh. Unless archives deriving from levels prior to VII or between VII and IV turn up, or outside the administrative precinct on the citadel, the argument that at Alalakh writing came into use only at the instance of state or imperial power is valid. So is van Soldt’s extension of it to the Levant generally. This reading of the evidence may further be conjoined with Jansen’s remarks about the association of

literacy with institutional authority, and van Egmond's point that even when societies have writing at their disposal most affairs continue to be transacted orally, including the transmission of knowledge.

The fact that normal transmission is oral, and committing knowledge to writing may even mark its demise, is elaborated by Piotr Michalowski in "Literacy, Schooling and the Transmission of Knowledge in Early Mesopotamian Culture." Michalowski interrogates the premises of the symposium, starting with the definition of its key term. If, he proposes, "knowledge is essentially another word for culture," then (quoting a formulation offered by scholars in another field) it may be defined as the "nonhereditary memory of the community," to which philology and archaeology can offer at best limited access (p. 39). The written record of even the most literate of ancient cultures is a highly peculiar manifestation of that culture; we err in treating it as representative, either of the culture, or of knowledge, or of its transmission. Indeed scholarship on ancient Mesopotamia may have misread its written record by viewing it through the lenses of invalid assumptions—by, for example, mistaking lexical lists for records of culture and even evidence of cognitive development: "Not only are these lists less salient culturally than many have theorized, they are also not necessarily characteristic of written tradition," since ethnographic research yields examples of oral lists (p. 46). Rather than being containers of Mesopotamian culture, texts produced within the context of instruction in writing represent "impractical decontextualized knowledge," of no use outside the curriculum itself (p. 47). As to Sumerian liturgical texts, another genre considered to convey culture through scribal education, Michalowski asserts that none of them seems to have been written before the time of Samsuiluna, that is, before the revolt of Sumerian cities against Babylonian rule was crushed and their cults were disrupted. In other words, this material was only recorded in writing when normal—oral—transmission ceased and cultic knowledge was in danger of being lost (pp. 48–50). What then can such texts tell us of Sumerian religious practice during the preceding millennium, when it was alive?

In sum, as Michalowski puts it, "the philological project often obliterates this broader context and creates an ontological fantasy in which a textual corpus is a complete, bounded semantic world" (p. 40). What lies outside this imaginary walled garden of literacy is most of the ancient world that we purport to study, starting with its languages of speech. Cuneiformists may never be able to exit the garden altogether, given the objects of our study, but it behooves us to look out over the walls as far as we can. Several essays in this volume offer views to the landscapes beyond.

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The Witchcraft Series Maqlû. By TZVI ABUSCH. Writings from the Ancient World, vol. 37. Atlanta: SBL PRESS, 2015. Pp. xiv + 201. \$29.95 (paper).

This volume presents a transcription and translation of *Maqlû*, "Burning," the longest and most important magical ritual against witchcraft from ancient Mesopotamia. The book is a welcome addition to the series *Writings from the Ancient World*.

Maqlû was created in the early first millennium BCE. All manuscripts (clay tablets and fragments) of *Maqlû* are from the first millennium BCE. Though texts come from sites in both northern and southern Mesopotamia, Ashurbanipal's library is the single most important source. The transcription (normalization) of this edition generally follows the main Nineveh text. Where this was broken, other Assyrian, then Babylonian, texts were used.

Abusch prefaces his presentation of this Akkadian composition and ceremony with a few words of introduction about Mesopotamian magic and witchcraft and about the ancient literature that centers upon such concerns. "I understand as magical those Mesopotamian rites that address the human needs, crises, and desires, especially of the individual but also of the king. In contrast to some later western societies, magic in Mesopotamia was regarded as legitimate and as part of the established religion. Therefore, in a Mesopotamian context, witchcraft (e.g., *kišpû*, *ruḫû*, *rusû*, *upšāšû lemmûtu*, etc.) refers