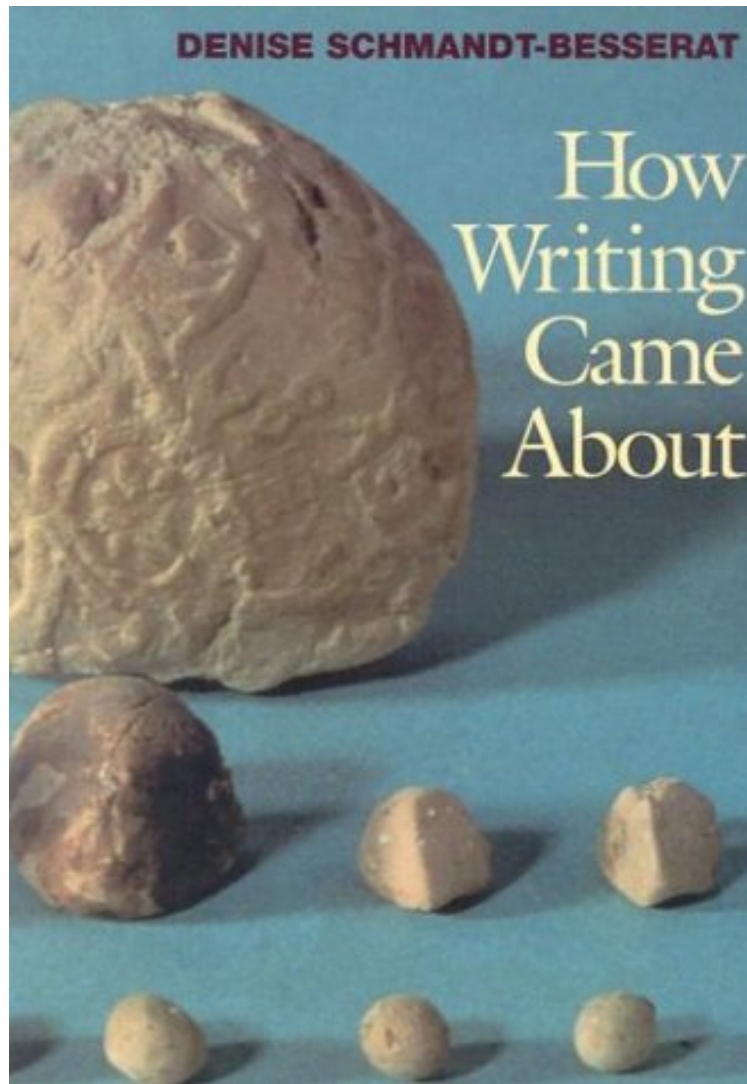


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Winner, Top 100 Books on Science, American Scientist, 2001In 1992, the University of Texas Press published *Before Writing, Volume I: From Counting to Cuneiform* and *Before Writing, Volume II: A Catalog of Near Eastern Tokens*. In these two volumes, 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.

"Discoveries in the history of writing are rare, but Denise Schmandt-Besserat made one in realizing that phonetic writing in the West descends not from pictography, a view repeated everywhere, but from abstract, nonphonetic, mostly noniconographic accounting tokens used in Neolithic farming communities of the Near East beginning from about 8000 B.C. A condensation of volume I of *Before Writing* ...this book is a perfect production, utterly lucid, thoughtfully illustrated, and thoroughly convincing." (American Journal of Archaeology)From the Back CoverIn 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.About the AuthorDenise Schmandt-Besserat is Professor of Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Texas at Austin.