



Writing and Literacy in Early China examines a topic of international importance: the emergence and spread of literacy in ancient human society. Writing arose separately in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Mesoamerica, and China, and it is widely acknowledged that modern Chinese orthography preserves logographic principles shared by its most ancient forms three thousand years ago, being unique among all the known writing systems in the modern world. In the past three decades, the discovery of previously unknown texts dating to the third century BCE and earlier as well as older versions of transmitted texts has revolutionized the study of early Chinese writing.

The long-term continuity and stability of the Chinese written language allow for this detailed study of the role literacy played in early civilization. The widely informed and highly respected contributors to this volume inquire into modes of manuscript production, the purposes for which manuscripts were produced, and the ways in which they were actually used. In all these areas, the book carefully evaluates the current evidence and offers groundbreaking new interpretations. *Writing and Literacy in Early China* illuminates the nature of literacy for both scribes and readers.

Writing & Literacy in Early China
Studies from the Columbia Early China Seminar

Edited by
Li Feng and David Prager Branner

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