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Sommario/riassunto

The Correspondence of the Kings of Ur is a collection of literary letters between the Ur III monarchs and their high officials at the end of the third millennium B.C. The letters cover topics of royal authority and proper governance, defense of frontier regions, and the ultimate disintegration of the empire and represent the largest corpus of Sumerian prose literature we possess. This long-awaited edition, based on extensive collation of almost all extant manuscripts, numbering more than a hundred, includes detailed historical and literary analyses, and copious philological commentary. It entirely supersedes the Michalowski's oft-cited unpublished Yale dissertation of 1976. The edition is accompanied by an extensive analysis of the place of the letters in early second-millennium schooling, treating the letters as literature, followed by chapters that contextualize the epistolary material within historical and historiographic contexts, utilizing many Sumerian archival, literary, and historical sources. The main objective here is to try to navigate the complex issues of authenticity, authority, and fiction that arise from the study of these literary artifacts. In addition, Michalowski offers new hypotheses about many aspects of late third-millennium history, including essays on military history and strategy, on frontiers, on the nature and putative character of nomadism at the time, as well as a long chapter on the role of a people designated as Amorites. The included DVD includes various photographs at high resolution of most of the tablets included in the study.