

Joint CSMC & SAW Workshop

**“What Can the History of Science Contribute to Manuscript Studies
or
What Can Manuscript Studies Contribute to the History of Science?”**

08-10 May 2014

Abstract

Cécile Michel

When manuscripts take the shape of the object under study: The case of clay liver models

A hundred of the clay cuneiform sources excavated in the Near East are shaped in the form of a sheep liver. They were produced by the diviners of the IInd millennium BCE specialized in extispicy, a discipline which consisted in the inspection of the entrails – especially the liver (hepatoscopy) – of sacrificed animals. After a short presentation of divination, considered a science by ancient Mesopotamians, and the various study objects of the diviners, the lecture will give a detailed analysis of the clay liver model corpus: date and place of discovery, external shapes, marks and drawings, texts, etc. Their orientation and reading, as well as a comparison with other texts of extispicy will help to understand the motivation of the diviners to produce such objects, and their use.