

SAW Conference Scholars and Scholarship in Late Babylonian Uruk

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The Urukian scholars from the end of the Achaemenid period to the beginning of the Arsacid era

Abstract – The City of Uruk offers a rare study case on the Assyro–Babylonian scholarly disciplines, thanks to the find of texts both from private houses and temples areas. Thus, we not only have access to the data but also to the main actors involved in the transmission of the knowledge: the exorcists–doctors, the lamentation priests, the astrologers and so on.

The scholars and their texts can be studied through the tablets they wrote and kept. In this presentation, I will present first the place where the tablets were produced and/or kept which offers the primary contextual approach for the study of the scholarly society of Late Babylonian Uruk. A second contextual approach concerns the political place of the scholars of the main sanctuaries and its evolution throughout the late period. The main families working for the temples were also involved in the political life of Uruk. This period saw the Alexandrine conquest, the building, life and death of the Seleucid empire, with many political and administrative changes, and the arrival of new masters during Parthian rule. The story of the main Urukian sanctuaries, the Rēš and Irigal temples, as well as the *āšipu*'s private houses offer the opportunity to follow decades of the history of Uruk from the fifth century to the very end of the second century B.C.

My paper will focus on those main contexts, trying to put scholarly tablets and the scholarly milieu within a local and sometimes more Mesopotamian story.