



ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

Babylonian Building Plans of the First Millennium BC: Text and Image

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Abstract

Out of a corpus of 34 building representations on clay tablets, eight have been attributed a date in the first millennium BC (Bagg 2011: 566, Tab. 1). Seven of these items depict the ground plan of a building, while the eighth depicts a ziggurat in side view. This paper examines the tradition of buildings plans in first millennium BC Babylonia. It takes a holistic approach that considers these tablets in the light of related genres of depiction, such as the Late Babylonian “field plans” (in some cases, actually houses), as well as drawings on the edges of contemporary legal tablets, and the temple ground plan and ziggurat depicted on the “Tower of Babel stele” housed in the Iraq Museum. It also re-evaluates the evidence for dating, and examines the relationship between text and image: the presence or absence of cuneiform captions, their placing where present, and their content. Finally, the paper discusses the written evidence for the use of tablets bearing building plans to consider their place in contemporary record keeping.

Keywords

cuneiform, building plan, clay tablet, materiality, text and image

Session

4. The materiality of inscribed and figurative objects

Workshop

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Type of paper

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