Scientific Abstract

Recently, the Kramer Institute for Assyriology and Ancient Near Eastern Studies at Bar-Ilan University received a generous and significant donation of 460 unpublished cuneiform tablets. The tablets, officially registered with the Israel Antiquity Authority, are now part of the Kramer Collection.

The new Kramer Institute collection reflects a variety of genres and languages, providing complex insights into the daily life, language, literature, and literacy of societies across southern Mesopotamia over three millennia, from the Early Dynastic period to the Achaemenid period.

Due to the collection’s large scope, and to allow for realistic scheduling, decipherment and research of the tablets will be carried out in two stages. The currently proposed project pertains to the first stage, which includes the decipherment, study, and preparation of an edition of 230 tablets. These include 20 Early Dynastic texts; 17 Old Akkadian texts; 180 Ur III texts; 6 Old Babylonian texts; 4 Neo-Babylonian texts; and 3 Late Babylonian/ Achaemenid texts.

The proposed project will focus on preparing full scientific editions of the collection. For each tablet, the project staff will prepare (1) professional images and/or scans; (2) hand copies; (3) description; (4) transliteration; (5) translation; (6) full philological commentary; and (7) an extensive scholarly introduction. The tablets will be published in several monographic volumes, as part of a series to be initiated by the Kramer Institute. The project staff will also strive to provide full digital access to the editions, by collaborating with a relevant leading international online platform, such as CDLI.

In addition, the project team will conduct extensive research on background issues that are expected to arise during the process of deciphering the tablets and preparing the editions. These may include linguistic, historical, legal, economic, literary, or other issues related to the texts. These accompanying studies will be published in scientific journals and/or in special monographic volumes that will supplement the publication of the tablets themselves.

The final product of this project will thus be a series of monographic volumes with full editions of all the relevant 230 tablets, as well as an extensive study that will address various aspects of the texts. In addition to its significant contribution to research in the fields of Assyriology and Sumerology, the project is expected to significantly advance research and education in these areas within the Israeli academic community.