

Today, in the time of expanding information technology, preparation and transmission of documents is not the most important question to many people. Computers give the best opportunity to change contents and correct errors many times and it makes the whole process simple and obvious for most of us.

In ancient Mesopotamia the similar process since the inception of the idea of a document to its keeping in institutional or private archives was much more difficult. The Babylonian scribe had to know a few basic pieces information when he received a request to write a document: the type of transaction (this influenced the selection of the appropriate formulary), the names of people involved in the transaction, the witnesses, the place and time of preparation of the document. On the basis of this information, the ancient scribe formed a clay tablet, with size and shape adapted to the request entrusted to him. Any change in the content of the document, intentional or not, every mistake, entailed the need to write down a new document, or removal by rubbing off (in other words 'erasure' as we usually call it) of unwanted or incorrect content to make room for correct information.

The aim of the project is to trace this process on the basis of a large group of duplicates from institutional and private archives from ancient Babylonia from the first millennium before Christ. Research into this unexplored area of history of ancient Mesopotamia will be carried out with several different dimensions in mind. The starting point will be considerations of the external physical characteristics of the documents (form, shape, size, missing fragments). The next and most important stage will be the study of internal features (form, grammar, vocabulary, palaeography, seals impressions, genealogy, prosopography).

The study should shed new light on the process of editing of documents and expand the knowledge of the transmission and record-keeping practices in ancient times (how often duplicates were prepared and of what category, etc.). It will also be possible to make a comparison of ancient and modern methods of record-keeping practice.