

Rebecca Hasselbach

Rebecca Hasselbach joined the Oriental Institute and Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations from Harvard University in September 2005 as Assistant Professor of Comparative Semitics. Her primary interests lie in ancient Semitic languages, particularly Akkadian, Classical Hebrew, and Aramaic, but also in Ethiopian languages and Arabic. The summer of 2006 saw the publication of Hasselbach's revised Ph.D. thesis *Sargonic Akkadian — A Historical and Comparative Study of the Syllabic Texts* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz), which investigates the syllabically written texts from the Sargonic period (ca. 2350–2100 B.C.) with focus on the syllabary, phonology, morphology, dialect variations, and ultimately its relationship to the two later Akkadian dialects, Babylonian and Assyrian. The study concludes that Sargonic Akkadian, despite the attempt of unifying the language and writing system during the Sargonic period, is not a uniform entity but consists of various dialects that can be distinguished by geographical criteria and by text genres. One of these noticeable dialects, the dialect of the Diyala region, can be identified as a predecessor of later Babylonian.

In the course of the academic year, Hasselbach worked on several articles, including an investigation of a particular orthographic feature attested in Pre-Sargonic, Sargonic Akkadian, and Eblaite, which manifests itself in the writing of third masculine singular possessive and accusative pronominal suffixes and explains how the various orthographic variants developed and reflect underlying linguistic changes in the respective languages. This article “Interpreting Early Akkadian Orthography — A Note on Pronominal Suffixes in Sargonic Akkadian” will be published in the *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*. Another project that deals with a broader Semitic framework and which is close to completion is a study of demonstrative pronouns in Semitic. This study considers evidence from a wide range of ancient and modern Semitic languages, including Akkadian, Ge‘ez, Tigre, Tigrinya, Ugaritic, Classical Arabic, modern Arabic dialects, Hebrew, and various Aramaic dialects, and examines the demonstrative pronouns of these languages and dialects with regard to syntax and morphology. The study aims at reconstructing the original demonstrative morphemes to Proto Semitic and to determine the original functional differences of affixes that can be added to the basic demonstrative pronouns.

During the academic year, Hasselbach attended the annual meeting of the American Oriental Society in March 2006, where she presented a paper based on the article “Interpreting Early Akkadian Orthography — A Note on Pronominal Suffixes in Sargonic Akkadian.” She also participated in and became a member of the International Workshop on Comparative Semitics held in Sitges in June 2006. This workshop constitutes an international group of Semitists that seeks to enhance contact and scholarly exchange among Semitists in Europe, Russia, and the U.S. At this workshop, she presented a talk with the title “The Ventive/Energetic in Semitic — A Morphological Study,” which will be published in the *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*.