

Massimo Maiocchi

Massimo Maiocchi joined the Oriental Institute and the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations on the first of October as a Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow and instructor in Assyriology. Over the last nine months, he extensively worked on the Writing in Early Mesopotamia project, the aim of which is to provide a complete description of the cuneiform writing system, with special focus on the developments that occurred in its early phase, from the end of the fourth to the beginning of second millennium BC. He set up a database for textual analysis of a group of literary texts known as “the Decad.” Besides the conceptualization of table relations, the work concerned digitalization of texts, normalization of readings, lemmatization, encoding, and development of Perl and SQL scripting to manage the large amount of data — roughly 850 texts and text fragments are presently included in the catalog. The goal of this database is to provide scholars the possibilities to search for textual variants and morphographic features, which are extremely significant for a better understanding of the corpus.

In addition, Maiocchi focused on the early history of the Tigridian region, as part of the ARCANE Project (Associated Regional Chronologies for the Ancient Near East). This is a large-scale project that aims to synchronize relative and absolute regional chronologies of the ancient Near East as a whole. The results of his studies will be published by the end of the current year in an article titled “A Sketch of Political History of the Early Tigridian Region,” in *Associated Regional Chronologies for the Ancient Near East and the Eastern Mediterranean: Tigridian Region*, edited by P. Bieliński and E. Rova (ARCANE 5. Turnhout: Brepols). The contribution provides an in-depth overview of the epigraphic evidence for the reconstruction of third-millennium history of the region roughly extending from Assur (Qal’at Sherqat) to the Illisu dam area in Turkey, and from the sites on the upper Tharthar River to the Dulkan dam on the lower Zab. The reevaluation of the available material suggests that the region flourished considerably after the fall of the Sargonic empire, in sharp contrast with the contraction of urbanization in the nearby Upper Khabur region. As part of his interest

in northern Mesopotamia before the rise of second-millennium Assyria, Maiocchi also prepared a review article of the recent volume edited by H. Weiss, *Seven Generations Since the Fall of Akkad* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2012), which will appear in the forthcoming issue of the *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*.

As part of his academic duties, in the Winter 2013 quarter, Maiocchi taught a class on Eblaite (AKKD 40399) for advanced students of Akkadian. The goal of this class was to introduce the students to the language and civilization of Early Dynastic Ebla (ca. 2400–2350 BC), focusing on primary sources unearthed there, including chancellery documents, rituals, administrative, and literary texts. In addition, in the Spring 2013 quarter he was assistant teacher for a class titled “Writing Systems and Decipherment” (NEHC 20355), which provided the students with an overview of various typologies of scripts (syllabic, logo-syllabic, alphabetic), with special reference to the so-called pristine writing systems of ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, China, and Mesoamerica. He also devoted some of his time to peer review for the *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* and the *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions*.
