

## McGuire Gibson

**McGuire Gibson** has devoted as much time as he could in the last year to finishing off a commitment he made to edit and republish Mr. Muzahim Hussein's book on the Queens' Tombs and related excavations at Nimrud. One result of his trip to Baghdad in May 2003, when he viewed not just the results of the looting of the Iraq National Museum but also the destruction and vandalizing of the offices of the State Board of Antiquity, was to agree with three or four Iraqi colleagues that he and Mark Altaweel, then an advanced graduate student (now on the faculty of University College London), would work with them to reconstruct, translate, and publish important articles that had been destroyed. This work resulted in publications in international journals, with Arabic versions in the Iraqi journal *Sumer*. Toward the end of the project, which was funded initially by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities and then a larger grant from the US State Department, they were asked to take on the republication of Muzahim's book. He had been the excavator of the Northwest Palace of Assurnasirpal (ca. 850 BC) in 1988 when the first tomb was discovered, and in 1989–90 he found three more. Later, he discovered a set of vaults that were also probably originally tombs that had been desecrated and looted, but many objects were left behind. He also discovered and emptied a well in a courtyard that had 180 skeletons, some with manacles and shackles, representing probably the personnel of the domestic wing of the palace when it fell to the Medes and Babylonians in 612 BC.

Part of the digging, and all of the analysis and preparation for publication, were done after the 1991 war, when Iraq was in dire economic conditions, with little money for archaeology. Despite the problems, Muzahim completed a text in Arabic and English, with 221 color illustrations. When it was published in Baghdad in 2000, the color printing was not very good and the magnificent finds from the Queens' Tombs did not receive the treatment they deserved.

Altaweel and Gibson took on the job, and after Altaweel retranslated and did a first editing, Gibson began to work on it. Meeting with Muzahim for a couple of weeks each summer in Istanbul for three years, they were able to clarify details and gain much better photographs, new drawings, and elicit much more information on exact findspots of the objects. Of greatest importance was a set of digital photographs that Muzahim took in 2012 of his object registers,



Gold jewelry from Nimrud. Left: Earrings (ND 1989\_19a-b, Tomb II, Sarcophagus); center: bracelets (ND 1988\_51, tomb I); right: hinge view of anklet (ND\_1989\_306, Tomb III, Coffin 2). Photos by Donny George

which gave explicit data and in some cases images of objects that otherwise had not been represented. Steven George was invaluable in translating the hand-written Arabic entries and in preparing images of objects for the book. In Chicago, two students, Lindsay Miller and Jessica Henderson, as part of a seminar project, created a database that Gibson found invaluable as he used and expanded it. This database will form the catalog of objects in the publication. Alexandra Witsell and Katharyn Hanson, who worked as Gibson's assistants for several years, were persons on the project.

The result of all this work is that the manuscript of the Queens' Tombs is about to be handed over to the editorial office of the Oriental Institute. To follow, very shortly, are the manuscripts of two shorter reports by Saleh Rmeidh and Hussein Ali Hamza, which will be combined in a book entitled *Iraqi Excavations in the Diyala Region*. Because the Rmeidh manuscript describes work done at Tell Asmar, ancient Eshnunna, where the Oriental Institute excavated in the 1930s, and because the Hamza report is on Tell Muqtadiya, another site in the same region with very similar material, they not only make sense as a combined book but also as one that the Oriental Institute should publish.

In other activities, Gibson still serves as president of The American Academic Research Institute in Iraq (TAARII), and he has been negotiating for permission to set up a center in Baghdad. TAARII maintains its overseas operations in Amman, but looks forward to shifting to Iraq. As president of TAARII, in November he organized for the Iraqi Cultural Center in Washington a symposium on Remote Sensing in Archaeology, showing its potential for research and for monitoring the condition of sites. Almost all of the presenters were either from the Oriental Institute or were former graduates, illustrating the important role that Chicago has played in the development of this field in archaeology. As an adjunct to the meeting, Chris Woods of the Oriental Institute gave a presentation on Gilgamesh, which was a great success.

Gibson also still serves on the boards of the American Institute for Yemeni Studies and the Council of American Overseas Research Centers.