McGuire Gibson

Besides his involvement with the Nippur Publication Project, McGuire Gibson continued to work on another publication project with Dr. Mark Altaweel, a graduate of our Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations. By Internet, Gibson and Altaweel keep in touch with a group of Iraqi archaeologists who are the authors of manuscripts on excavations carried out by Iraqis over the past forty years. Iraq has had a vibrant antiquities service since the 1920s, and Iraqis have administered it since 1932. While welcoming foreign expeditions, even during the period of the Sanctions of the 1990s, when other governments prevented most foreigners from working in the country, the Iraqis have carried out their own continuing program of excavations and salvage operations, which were routinely published in the official journal *Sumer*. The publication of *Sumer* was badly affected by the Sanctions, due not only to lack of funds but also to the fact that paper, ink, computer supplies, and other necessities for printing books were included on the absurd Sanctions list. The journal fell far behind and could be published only sporadically until recently. The looting of the Iraq Museum and the offices of the antiquities service, which are in the same building complex, resulted in the loss or partial destruction of manuscripts that were ready to go to press. The current project, which is now in its fourth and final year, allows the Iraqi authors to reconstruct their reports in Arabic so that Altaweel can translate them into English. Alexandra Witsell redraws the figures and enhances photographs, then formats the plates. Benjamin Studevent-Hickman reads any cuneiform inscriptions that occur. Gibson edits the manuscripts in consultation with the authors and Altaweel. Then the reports are published in international journals. With initial funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities, and another from the U.S. State Department, they have been able to set up collaborations with a total of six Iraqi colleagues. The result of the collaboration has been two articles published in the British journal *Iraq* on surface reconnaissance and soundings in the north of Iraq; one on an important prehistoric site south of ancient Assur, soon to appear as a chapter in a German book; one long report on Tell al-Wilaya, near Kut in southern Iraq, published in two issues of the Belgian journal *Akkadica*; and another important report in *Akkadica* concerning a newly excavated site near Amara, which can now be identified as the ancient city of Pashime. Gibson and Altaweel are meeting the Iraqi colleagues in Istanbul for a week in July 2010 to check the final manuscripts of a book-length report on Tell Asmar, ancient Eshnunna, a site that was previously excavated by the Oriental Institute in the 1930s; another manuscript on Tell Muqtadiya, which is also in the Diyala region north of Tell Asmar; and yet another on Tell Muhammad, a site within the southeastern part of modern Baghdad. They also have a manuscript on the site of Tell Shmid, one of the mounds in the south of Iraq that was the subject of a salvage operation in the years just before the 2003 war, but it has been difficult to bring this one to a close because the colleague involved is a Palestinian, long a resident in Baghdad, who has not been able to obtain a visa to
meet with us in either Amman or Istanbul. As with all our colleagues, we have supplied him with Internet access, and we will try to finish the piece through that means. But nothing beats face-to-face contact, especially when trying to check on numerous details. There is one more manuscript, a book-length report on Iraqi work at Nimrud, ancient Calah, the Assyrian capital. This book will have, as its core, the Queens’ Tombs, with their exquisite artifacts.

In addition to this work, Gibson has finally found the time to write up a report on a stratigraphic investigation on the Y Trench at Kish, which he carried out in 1978. This contribution will appear in a book on Kish, currently being completed by Karen Wilson. He also prepared for publication and read final proofs of an article on the Early Dynastic-Akkadian transition, a more developed presentation of material he first published in 1982. During the year, Gibson participated in three international conferences, one in London, which resulted in an unexpectedly long stay because of the Icelandic volcano. He still heads The American Academic Research Institute in Iraq (TAARII) and serves on the boards of the American Institute for Yemeni Studies and the Council of American Overseas Research Centers.

Petra M. Goedegebuure

In her study of the ancient languages of Anatolia, Petra Goedegebuure combines philology and the cultural background of texts with language typology and functional grammar. In doing so, Petra hopes to achieve two main goals. The first one is to describe Hittite and the other languages attested in ancient Anatolia at the level of pragmatics (how language is used in an interactive setting, as opposed to the study of meaning or form). Her second goal is to develop methods for applying modern linguistics to dead languages. Even though modern linguistic approaches are used in Hittitology and other extinct languages, they are usually not tested for their validity. This has led to the problem of linguists rejecting dead languages as an object of study and of philologists rejecting linguistics as a means of study.

In the presentation “The Pragmatic Function Focus in Hittite” (April 16, 2010, Workshop Linguistic Method and Theory and the Languages of the Ancient Near East, Oriental Institute), Petra suggested a framework for how to use functional linguistics for the description and better understanding of extinct languages. She concluded that general linguistic theories could be fruitfully applied to these languages if one uses an onomasiological approach (mapping forms on well-defined functions) based on contextual analysis. This approach is also exemplified in an article on Hittite question words (“Focus Structure and Q-word Questions in Hittite,” Linguistics 47/4 [2009]: 945–69). Although the current opinion is that Hittite question words typically occur in clause-initial position, it turned out that Hittite question words could occur anywhere in the clause, depending on how much contrast the speaker wants to express.

Hattic, an isolate non-Indo-European language of Central Anatolia and typologically similar to Northwest Caucasian, was the language of the cult of the Old Hittite Kingdom (ca. 1650–1450). With only twenty bilinguals, some of which are very fragmentary, decipherment of this language proceeds slowly. Petra uses typology and language-contact studies to define the parameters for further grammatical analysis of this important but opaque language, as evidenced by a lecture “The Intricate Dance of Hittite and Hattian,” November 13, 2009, Workshop Language Variation and Change, University of Chicago, and article “The Alignment of Hattian: An Active Language with an Ergative Base,” in Language in the Ancient Near East, edited by L. Kogan, oi.uchicago.edu.