

McGuire Gibson

McGuire Gibson spent almost the entire year initiating the Hamoukar Expedition (see separate report). He was able, however, to continue other lines of research and to take part in two international conferences in Copenhagen. The first, in December, focused on the role of Mesopotamian palaces. Gibson's contribution, entitled "'Paper Trails' in Palaces," dealt with ways to reconstruct the function of different parts of palaces and the patterns of information flow within them. By analyzing the architecture, one can suggest probable traffic patterns. When these patterns are combined with information gleaned from cuneiform tablets found in the building along with other objects, one can sometimes come to exciting new formulations on ancient administration and society. Clemens Reichel's work on the palace at Eshnunna (see the Diyala Objects Publication Project separate report) is a superb example of the potential benefits of this approach. At the second conference, the Second International Congress on Near Eastern Archaeology, held in May 2000, Gibson gave the first scholarly presentation on Hamoukar. During the year, he also convened and chaired a workshop at the Oriental Institute entitled "The Waters of Babylon," in which Belgian and American scholars presented their work in interpreting the ancient landscape of southern Mesopotamia by means of satellite images. This conference is connected to the ancient Mesopotamian landscapes project that he and Tony Wilkinson are doing with the cooperation of John Christensen at Argonne National Laboratory under a collaborative grant from the University of Chicago and Argonne National Laboratory. Also during the academic year, he sent two articles to press on the drastic losses of antiquities from Near Eastern sites due to illegal digging and smuggling. He is currently serving as chair of the Oriental Institute's Museum and Outreach Committee as well as the Helen Rich Memorial Fund Committee, which aids students in archaeology. He continues to serve as head of the Fund Raising Committee for the Center for Middle Eastern Studies and as a member of the Ryerson Fellowship Committee in the Humanities. Outside the university, he is a trustee of the American Institute for Yemeni Studies, the American Research Center in Syria (not yet established in Damascus), and is a member of the Executive Committee of the Council of American Overseas Research Centers. During the past year, he has given academic and popular lectures in Damascus, New York, and Chicago, including a talk at the Chicago Humanities Festival on the modern uses of Antiquity for political purposes.
