
Matthew W. Stolper wrote an introductory essay to a collection of papers presented at a workshop on "Constructing the Ancient Near East," held in 1990 at the Sackler Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution. The papers are on aspects of the early history of ancient Near Eastern studies, and they are to be published together in *Culture and History*. Stolper's introduction touches on questions about the intellectual and political history in which the fields arose, about purposes in histories of the field and the possibility of achieving them.

Stolper is preparing another introductory essay, this one for the catalogue of an exhibition of items from Susa loaned by the Louvre. The exhibition will be mounted at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1992. The essay is to deal with cuneiform texts from Susa in connection with some general questions that arise from the city's situation at a boundary between Mesopotamian and Elamite political and cultural spheres: historical interpretation and reconciliation, the discernment of Elamite culture, and Mesopotamian literature and learning at Susa.

An article in preparation treats a small group of legal texts written at Babylon in the reign of Xerxes. Two of them (one originally published with some misleading errors) mention business dealings with the overseer of "the estate of Mardonius." The proprietor is an early example of a class of Persian aristocratic holders of Babylonian property—many more of whom are found in later Achaemenid legal documents—but his identification with Xerxes' cousin, the commander of the Achaemenid expeditionary force after the defeat at Salamis, is doubtful (though not actually impossible) since the later of the texts is dated slightly after the battle of Plataea, where the general Mardonius died.

Stolper received a fellowship from the American Research Institute in Turkey to support two months' work at the Istanbul Archaeological Museums on tablets from the Murašû archive. The archive, excavated at Nippur 1893, was one of the first coherent bodies of Babylonian legal texts recovered by licit excavation (rather than being identified after the fact among tablets bought by museums), and its contents are half the known texts from the period between Xerxes and Alexander. Apart from texts in Istanbul that have already been published, the other tablets from the archive are at the University Museum in Philadelphia and the Friedrich-Schiller Universität in Jena, with a few stray pieces in Berkeley and London. With the publication of the remaining Istanbul texts, to be undertaken jointly by Stolper and Veysel Donbaz of the Istanbul Archaeological Museums, the entire archive will finally be available, about a hundred years after it was found.
