

Labor in the Ancient World

edited by Piotr Steinkeller and Michael Hudson

DESCRIPTION:

The fifth volume in this series sponsored by the International Scholars Conference on Ancient Near Eastern Economies (ISCANEE) and the Institute for the Study of Long-Term Economic Trends (ISLET) offers case studies on how labor was mobilized and remunerated in the early Near East and Mediterranean world. The initially voluntary character of labor on public building projects evolved into *corvée* as the primary way of obtaining labor. Among other characteristics are the minor significance of slave labor; the role of large building projects as a tool of social and political integration; the use of hired workers as a way of dealing with the systemic shortage of labor, and the practice of compensating the employees of "large organizations" with salaries in food and/or land allotments. By late Neolithic times the obligation to supply *corvée* labor services became the basis for assigning land tenure. The historical data demonstrate that the *corvée* labor tax became the basis for assigning property rights, not a later intrusion on these rights.

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