



Documentary Sources in Ancient Near Eastern and Greco-Roman Economic History: Methodology and Practice

Heather D. Baker, Michael Jursa

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This volume breaks new ground in approaching the Ancient Economy by bringing together documentary sources from Mesopotamia and the Greco-Roman world. Addressing textual corpora that have traditionally been studied separately, the collected papers overturn the conventional view of a fundamental divide between the economic institutions of these two regions. The premise is that, while controlling for differences, texts from either cultural setting can be brought to bear on the other and can shed light, through their use as proxy data, on such questions as economic mentalities and market development. The book also presents innovative approaches to the quantitative study of large corpora of ancient documents. The resulting view of the Ancient Economy is much more variegated and dynamic than traditional 'primitivist' views would allow.

The volume covers the following topics: Babylonian house size data as an index of urban living standards; the Old Babylonian archives as a source for economic history; Middle Bronze Age long distance trade in Anatolia; long-term economic development in Babylonia from the 7th to the 4th century BC; legal institutions and agrarian change in the Roman Empire; papyrological evidence for water-lifting technology; money circulation and monetization in Late Antique Egypt; the application of Social Network Analysis to Babylonian cuneiform archives; price trends in the ancient Near East and Mediterranean in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, as well as the effects of locust plagues on prices.

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