

PREFACE

This volume is the outcome of a conference held at New York University's Institute for the Study of the Ancient World (ISAW) on September 30 and October 1, 2016. The conference was entitled "The Mechanics of Extraction: Comparing Principles of Taxation and Tax Compliance in the Ancient World." It was made possible by the generous support of ISAW, the NYU Center for Humanities, the NYU Center for Ancient Studies, the NYU Classics Department, and an anonymous gift. The conference brought together fourteen scholars from different disciplines to present research on tax systems from across the ancient world. By bringing these different case studies into direct conversation with each other, the conference sought to stimulate new comparative research and to enrich our understanding of what makes each tax system unique. It also sought to promote a holistic approach to extractive practices that moves beyond money and material goods to incorporate labor and the social dimensions of tax compliance.

This volume includes work that was not presented at the conference and does not include some of the work that was. Whether presented at the conference or not, all the research collected here has benefited from substantial reconsideration in light of the discussions that took place at the conference and the subsequent peer review process. The volume is thus much more than a transcript of the conference: it is the product of ongoing scholarly dialogue and collaborative research. From initial conception to presentation before colleagues, and from reworking to peer review, the research in this volume has profited at every turn from the input of a much broader scholarly community. We are especially grateful for the input of more than two dozen anonymous reviewers, who shared their expertise regarding specific contributions and the volume in its entirety. These individuals took the time to share their knowledge without pay or public recognition, vetting and improving the work presented here. Such generosity is an

essential and insufficiently acknowledged service to the advancement of scholarship.

Our gratitude extends to all the participants in the conference and the volume, and in particular to Rod Campbell, who helped move the project forward. It also extends to the publication team at ISAW and NYU Press, and notably to David M. Ratzan, who was instrumental in the publishing process.

The journey from the initial planning of the Mechanics of Extraction conference in 2015 to publication in the beginning of this new and fraught decade has been long. In retrospect, there are things that we would do differently—there always are! But we especially regret that we did not make diversity and representation a central goal. Final publication has also been set back by delays and other turbulence, for which we apologize to the contributors who entrusted us with editorial care over their work. We wish this could have been otherwise, but it was not. We learn, and we are committed to doing better.

This volume is indelibly associated with ISAW. At its best, ISAW stimulates the ambitious intellectual vision of an interdisciplinary and comparative approach to the study of the ancient world. We hope this volume reflects that vision.

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Leiden and Basel
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