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labour

SLAVERY is attested from the earliest period of Roman history and certainly co-existed in varying ratios with non-slave labour. Whereas the use of hired labour in the VILLA economy was more cost-efficient than slavery, the choice between different types of workers was as much a matter of social standing, local/family tradition and availability of alternative solutions as of ECONOMIC RATIONALISM. Noteworthy are differences between PROVINCES: while the slave mode of production in AGRICULTURE is well attested in Italy and in some western provinces in the late Republic and early empire, there is almost no trace of it in Egypt. The villa economy developed into integrated enterprises, whose revenue also derived from the exploitation of natural resources, MANUFACTURE (garment, clay industries) and services (lodging, transportation of goods and persons). Both private and public sectors made constant use of temporary workers, day-labourers and skilled craftsmen, hired on a personal basis or through contractors. In larger enterprises (villas, MINES, mints) workers were organized into teams overseen by foremen subordinated to the MANAGER or owner. When access to special infrastructure (CANALS) or facilities (GRANARIES), or the use of means of production expensive to acquire (waterwheel, MILL), maintain (FISHPONDS, plough-oxen) or operate (KILN) was necessary, independent workers joined in temporary partnership.

Even though the ÉLITE affected a contemptuous attitude toward non-agricultural work, the overwhelming majority of the population was involved in some economic activity, not always connected with agriculture. EPIGRAPHIC evidence for TRADE is abundant and shows the diversity and specialization of trades for men and women. Chronic manpower shortages or, conversely, massive unemployment other than seasonal cannot be demonstrated, but evidence for labour unrest appears occasionally: strikes and RIOTS by BAKERS in 2nd-century AD EPHESOS necessitated the intervention of municipal and provincial authorities. Other similar cases amount to no more than isolated and short-lived incidents.

Although corvées (forced labour) were almost never exacted from TENANTS, FREEDMEN were compelled to perform certain tasks (*operae*) on behalf of former masters, but their obligations were strictly regulated. On the other hand, the imperial government increasingly imposed the performance of compulsory services upon provincials as part of their civic or fiscal obligations. Organized at the municipal or village level, such LITURGIES were first connected with the POSTAL service, TRANSPORT and billeting of troops and officials, but soon extended to tax collection, police duties, maintenance of ROADS and irrigation systems and exploitation of state mines, QUARRIES and factories.

Convicts condemned to hard labour were sent to imperial properties (estates, quarries, mines) and employed in public works: TRAJAN, writing to PLINY THE YOUNGER (*Letters* 10.32.2), asserted that people of that kind usually worked in BATHS, cleaned sewers and built roads. Considered respectively as a medium or mild form of punishment, on the same level as deportation and GLADIATORIAL GAMES or exile and imprisonment, condemnation *in metallum* ('to the mines', restricted to lower classes) or *in opus publicum* ('to public works') was meted out for a whole range of crimes (Paulus, *Sentences* 5.17–30b). Working conditions in these places ensured that condemnation was tantamount to capital punishment. JJA

See Aubert, J.-J. (1994) *Business Managers in Ancient Rome*; Carlsen, J. (1995) *Vilici and Roman Estate Managers until* AD *284*; Dixon, S. (2000–1) How do you count them if they're not there? New perspectives on Roman cloth production, *Opuscula Romana* 25–6: 7–17; Joshel, S. R. (1992) *Work, Identity, and Legal Status at Rome*; Lewis, N. (1982) *The Compulsory Public Services of Roman Egypt*.