

Social and Economic History of Early Mesopotamia

I. J. GELB

One important phase of the long-range project on the structure of early Mesopotamian society and economy is being brought to a conclusion with the final typing of the 493-page manuscript of the study entitled "Between Freedom and Slavery" and the preparation of appertaining charts and indices. The previous title of this study was "From Freedom to Slavery." I decided to change the title slightly when it occurred to me that the old title may inadvertently mislead readers into expecting some sort of an evolutionary treatment of the labor force from the free class to the slave class while in fact my approach in this study has been mainly descriptive and typological. The new title, "Between Freedom and Slavery," serves to emphasize that the study is devoted mainly to the treatment of one class of population, namely, the semi-free class of peasants and craftsmen, whose social status lay somewhere in between the free and the slave class and who constituted the main productive labor force in early Mesopotamia.

The project on the structure of early Mesopotamian society and economy is continuing with an in-depth study of such topics as clan, family, and household, seeding and produce, processing and manufacturing, and exchange and market.