Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire: A Study in Social Control

K. R. Bradley

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This ground-breaking book is the first to show how the institution of slavery, one of the most characteristic and enduring features of Roman imperial society, was maintained over time and how, at the practical level, the lives of slaves in the Roman world were directly controlled by their masters. The author demonstrates, first, how the tensions generated between slaves and masters can be perceived in the ancient sources, and, second, how those tensions were dealt with, as masters treated their slaves with varying forms of generosity and punishment in order to elicit obedience from them. Special attention is given to the slaves' family lives, to their acquisition of freedom through manumission, and to the climate of violence that surrounded them. Emphasizing the harsh realities of Roman slavery in a new way, this important book will stir intense debate among scholars and students.

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