

# ROMAN SLAVE LAW

*by Alan Watson*

*with a foreword by A. Leon Higginbotham, Jr.*

Legal sources provide the most coherent and revealing—yet perhaps the most underutilized—body of evidence about slavery in antiquity. In *ROMAN SLAVE LAW* Alan Watson sets out the main elements of ancient Roman law as they apply to the institution of slavery and illuminates the ideology behind them.

Watson demonstrates how the law was used to furnish a mechanism allowing masters to exploit their slaves to the fullest while restraining the slaves' desires to retaliate. Incorporating extensive translations from primary legal sources, he elucidates an elaborate body of law and places it within the larger framework of Roman society. *ROMAN SLAVE LAW* is also a work of broader and comparative implications: in other societies, slavery was based upon racism; in Rome, the oppression was colorblind.

"[Watson's] study of Roman slave law is implicitly comparative at every point, and importantly so. . . . This work places the Roman law of slavery well within the reach of all who endeavor to analyze and understand slavery as a human phenomenon."—A. Leon Higginbotham, Jr., *from the foreword*

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