



The Price of Emancipation: Slave-Ownership, Compensation and British Society at the End of Slavery (Cambridge Studies in Economic History - Second Series)

Nicholas Draper

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When colonial slavery was abolished in 1833 the British government paid £20 million to slave-owners as compensation: the enslaved received nothing. Drawing on the records of the Commissioners of Slave Compensation, which represent a complete census of slave-ownership, this book provides a comprehensive analysis of the extent and importance of absentee slave-ownership and its impact on British society. Moving away from the historiographical tradition of isolated case studies, it reveals the extent of slave-ownership among metropolitan elites, and identifies concentrations of both rentier and mercantile slave-holders, tracing their influence in local and national politics, in business and in institutions such as the Church. In analysing this permeation of British society by slave-owners and their success in securing compensation from the state, the book challenges conventional narratives of abolitionist Britain and provides a fresh perspective of British society and politics on the eve of the Victorian era.

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