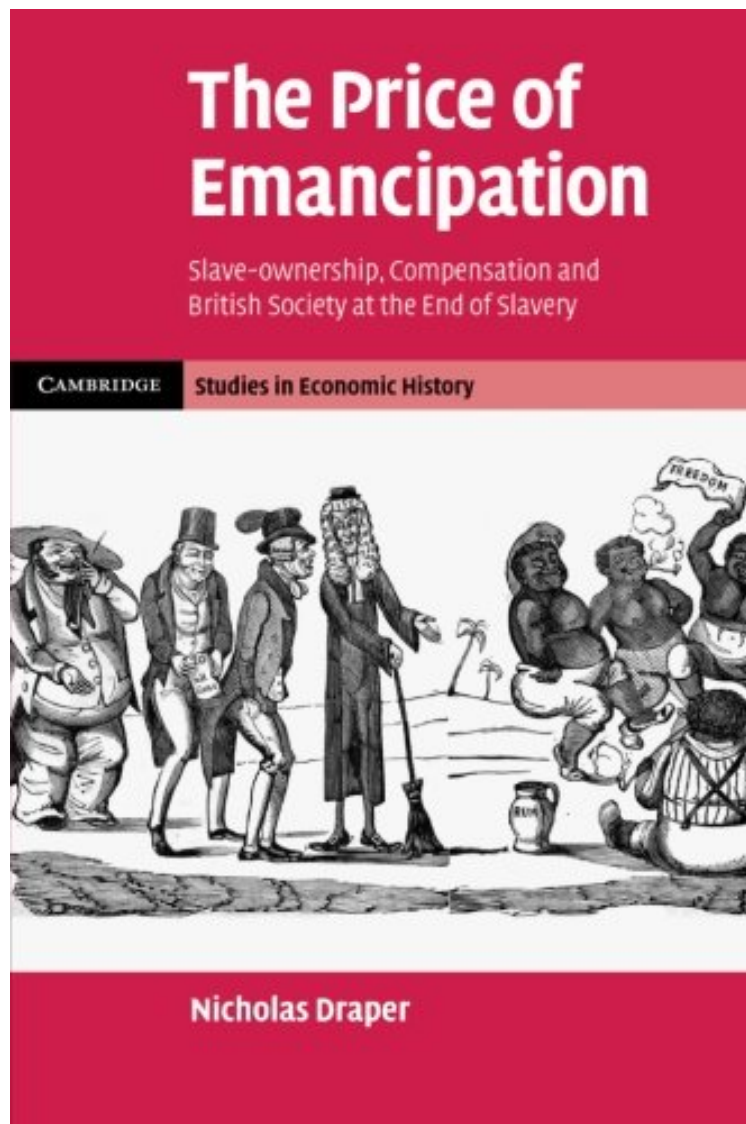


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The Price of Emancipation: Slave-Ownership, Compensation and British Society at the End of Slavery (Cambridge Studies in Economic History - Second Series)

Nicholas Draper

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Nicholas Draper : The Price of Emancipation: Slave-Ownership, Compensation and British Society at the End of Slavery (Cambridge Studies in Economic History - Second Series) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Price of Emancipation: Slave-Ownership, Compensation and

British Society at the End of Slavery (Cambridge Studies in Economic History - Second Series):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Catching up. By Peter Street This book isn't the conclusion of a scheme of research - it's the first step. The subjection isn't compensation but the compensated. When the British Parliament finally set about doing for the Caribbean and other enslaved its subjects claimed as property it had to accept that it was depriving them of valuable chattels - compensation was therefore provided. The records of the process tell us who claimed and who for, and how much they were paid. They were also, of course allowed to continue using the paid labour of their former chattels for a statutory period. The surviving documents tell us who they were and the circumstances of their claims. Until Nick Draper did the work, we didn't know. The work is still going on - much more has turned up since the book was published and a good deal of it can be found online at LBSUCL, where you can, for example, find a little more about one of the many slaveowners Nick Draper brought to light - Anna Maria Fraser, whose entire worldly wealth was, she thought, bound up in one Guyanan slave on the other side of the Atlantic - and which she feared she would not be able to claim in the proper form because she could not afford stamped paper. She lived until the 1890s. There are Invernessians alive today whose grandparents knew her. For most of their and their parent's and grandparents lives, the role their own kin had played in the slave economy was forgotten - not just never mentioned, but forgotten. Not just Invernessians - Welsh, Irish and English as well are waking up the reality of their nation's slave past because of this and other such books. What it offers is a snapshot of a single process in that involved story - of course many more famous owners aren't mentioned because by the time of emancipation they had sold out. Individuals, partnerships, banks and landowners who never set foot on a slave island rub shoulders in its pages. What is important about this book is that it rests on painstaking documentary analysis. Its conclusions may seem provisional and unimpressive, but they are solid. The arguments about the Williams thesis aren't settled but they are placed in a new context. This is an important work of English history and long, long overdue.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A massive effort. By Sceptique500 When an Act of Parliament abolished slavery in the Caribbean in 1833, a Compensation Commission was established to administer the distribution of 20 million in compensation to the owners of the over 800'000 slaves. Its records have now been put into a database, allowing the author quantitatively to address the questions of (a) how wide-spread was slave-owning in metropolitan Britain, and (b) who were the slave-owners, (c) how much did they receive. The answers are foregrounded by an analysis of the changing field of discourse around slavery (as it emerges from the official or published records of the debate) in the run-up to the Parliamentary vote, and subsidiarily its impact on the owners' standing in their social networks. Political agreement was a precondition for launching this first subsidized emancipation scheme: "property in men" was both sanctioned and abolished through the same act. The analysis concludes that slave-owning was more widespread than previously understood, though remaining a minority phenomenon: 5-10% of the relevant population owned slaves. Their geographical distribution in Great Britain is uneven. Rentier-owners and merchants shared more or less equally in the compensation. If Britain's wealth was not derived entirely from slavery, it was part of the wealth of certain sections of British society. Though a scholarly contribution to, this book is neither a reflection nor a history of emancipation in the British Empire; nor does it contain a political or economic analysis of the Caribbean plantation system, or its viability and that juncture. In Herodotian fashion it lets those who have a voice speak for themselves - in often pointillist and disjointed fashion. And of course, the slave themselves, their plight, their reactions to the scheme, and their future is wholly back-grounded. The issue of the owners' social standing is dealt with relatively cursorily, mainly from published, rather than oral history. The author is probably right, however, in pointing out that the argument by the slave-owners - that slavery was a national sin - resonated widely and eased the eventual acceptance of the consequent compensation scheme, thus contributing to healing divisions of society. On the one side, it rested on the Zeitgeist of moral improvement. On the other hand ideologically and economically slave-owning was not central to the spectrum of identities of the people involved, so it was possible for them to pocket the money - and move on. While references exist to abolition schemes in other countries - France, the Netherlands as well as independent South American states - the study does not ambition a comparative analysis of the respective experiences. The US is perceived, rightly, as a standing apart.

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.

"... well-researched and argued book, and a major contribution to the study of British history and West Indian slavery in the first half of the nineteenth century." Stanley Engerman, *Journal of Economic History*"... well-researched and insightful book ..." Christopher Clark, *American Historical* "... Draper's book is a vital reminder not only of the importance of slavery to British social history through the 1830's but also of the impact of slave emancipation as a force for political innovation and reform in British society during the age of abolition." David Richardson, *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*"Draper's book is insightful, engaging, and finely nuanced." Kevin Grant, *Journal of Modern History*"Nicholas Draper's award-winning book is well researched, heavily annotated, and handsomely illustrated." John David Smith, *Canadian Journal of History*"Draper has written an outstandingly good and important work." *H-LatAm*"... a valuable contribution to emancipation studies, and most appropriate for upper-level undergraduate or graduate-level courses." Scott Hancock, *The New West Indian Guide*About the AuthorNicholas Draper is Research Associate at the Department of History, University College London.