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Sommario/riassunto	<p>Russian rural history has long been based on a 'Peasant Myth', originating with nineteenth-century Romantics and still accepted by many historians today. In this book, Tracy Dennison shows how Russian society looked from below, and finds nothing like the collective, redistributive and market-averse behaviour often attributed to Russian peasants. On the contrary, the Russian rural population was as integrated into regional and even national markets as many of its west European counterparts. Serfdom was a loose garment that enabled different landlords to shape economic institutions, especially property rights, in widely diverse ways. Highly coercive and backward regimes on some landlords' estates existed side-by-side with surprisingly liberal approximations to a rule of law. This book paints a vivid and colourful picture of the everyday reality of rural Russia before the 1861 abolition of serfdom.</p>