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Deep South: A Social Anthropological Study of Caste and Class

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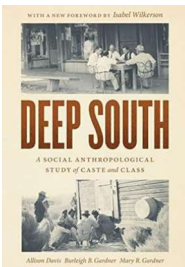
Islanders, “other,” mixed-race, and Hispanic or Latino (pp. 173-175). Connecting the differences in population makeup to changes in Mardi Gras, Machado concludes “traditions don’t just happen. They are invented...As Mobilians reinvent themselves and their Carnival, they once again have a chance to define what and who they *wanna* be” (p. 175).

Carnival in Alabama is a work of solid scholarship. Isabel Machado uses a good variety of primary sources ranging from newspapers to various archival collections, and an assortment of published reports such as city ordinances. Especially interesting are interviews with Mobilians who provide first-hand accounts covering the second half of the twentieth century. Machado also includes a substantial bibliography of secondary sources that contribute to her scholarship.

The main audience for *Carnival in Alabama* is academic. More casual or recreational readers might find the book to be, at times, a bit dense and, perhaps, too scholarly, which is unfortunate. Those willing to engage the text with attention will be rewarded by a fascinating cultural history. *Carnival in Alabama* is recommended for academic and large public libraries collecting in the areas of the history of Alabama, Southern history, Black Studies, gender and sexuality studies, and folklore.

Tim Dodge, Auburn University

Deep South: A Social Anthropological Study of Caste and Class



Allison Davis, Burleigh B. Gardner,
& Mary R. Gardner

Chicago: The University of Chicago
Press, 2022

ISBN: 9780226817989

328 p. \$20.00 (Pbk)

Deep South: A Social Anthropological Study of Caste and Class was originally published in 1941. The work was based on an undercover investigation by Black scholars Allison and Elizabeth Stubbs Davis and their White co-authors, Burleigh and Mary Gardner. They explored the everyday racism in the Deep South, concentrating on Mississippi. An abridged edition of the study was published in 1965, and in 2022, a

re-issue of the 1965 abridged version was released with a new foreword by Pulitzer Prize winner Isabel Wilkerson (author of *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*). Wilkerson’s foreword makes a case not only for the relevance of the study today but also its academic and historical importance.

The original authors of *Deep South* spent 18 months living and doing research in Natchez, Mississippi, which was, at the time, a closed and isolated Southern town. The two Ivy League couples were trained in anthropology, and along with St. Clair Drake, a Black man, they undertook the mission to study the social order of the American South. From 1933 to 1935 (and living off funding from the Rockefeller Foundation and Harvard University), the researchers immersed themselves in the culture and society of the Jim Crow South and lived among the people while hiding their true identities.

The researchers applied a caste-and-class framework to their findings, which expanded earlier studies by introducing the concept of caste, i.e., social ranks assigned at birth and usually unalterable throughout life. Their study was noteworthy in part because at the time of publication, caste and class were viewed as two separate constructs in opposition to one another. The Davises and Gardners also held that while economic class mattered, so did the class-coded attitudes, dispositions, and behaviors of Whites and Blacks. Complicating matters further was the issue of race. Racism limited the ability of African Americans to rise out of their existing caste and class. Rooted in social anthropology, this framework was controversial precisely because of the ways economic class and social status were conflated. Other critics held on to the notion that class did not exist in the United States because of the opportunities for upward mobility and thus rejected the authors’ framework.

It took the researchers years to publish their findings, and while they were editing their research, they began to face competition. Two Yale anthropologists, both White and working in the same area, spent several months in Mississippi. With shorter timelines and narrower parameters, they were able to publish their research before the authors of *Deep South*. The White researchers were more readily embraced by the mainstream and were given more authority than the Black researchers: “Decades later, the journal *American*

Anthropologist, in 2004, described the two earlier books as ‘canonical’ and ‘landmark studies,’ consigning the Davis and Gardner book to the footnotes” (p. xviii).

The *Deep South* study covered a longer period of time and was more detailed. The researchers sought to document the social structure that showed the “systematic subordination of Negroes to the whites and the exclusion of Negroes from any participation with whites that implied equality” (p. 271). Because of these unwritten rules, it was essential that the authors had both Blacks and Whites doing the research. Blacks would not be able to interview the Whites who ran the city, and the Blacks would not be comfortable being interviewed by Whites about their dissatisfaction with their subordinate status.

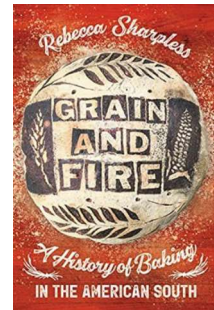
It seems as if the authors suffered from the same prejudices as those they were researching. Was it because the lead researchers were Black that their work did not receive lasting prominence? Lewis W. Jones, a reviewer of the original publication of *Deep South*, pointed out in his review that the research team consisted of two Whites and three Blacks, emphasizing division of race versus the importance of the study. *Deep South* is currently being reassessed, and many scholars today believe it is a seminal study that details the deeply embedded racism that was part of everyday life in the Jim Crow era.

One of the more remarkable facts about *Deep South* is the degree of danger in which the Black researchers put themselves. Allison and Elizabeth Davis “chose to make the personal sacrifice and to risk their lives for the greater good of documenting the structure of human division, a mission that would practically render them double agents” (p. xiv). *Deep South* still has important things to say about the role of race and racism in the United States—for those who are willing to listen. This new edition of *Deep South* is recommended for all academic libraries.

Chris Andrews, University of North Georgia

Grain and Fire: A History of Baking in the American South

Rebecca Sharpless
Chapel Hill: The University of
North Carolina Press, 2022
ISBN: 9781469668369
344 p. \$30.00 (Hbk)



In this superlative work of food history, Rebecca Sharpless recounts the American South’s rich baking heritage from the nut and root breads of the region’s early indigenous peoples to contemporary creations of the 21st century. This book does not simply chronicle the emergence and evolution of popular breads, cakes, pies, and other southern baked goods but ultimately provides a social history of the region through the lens of its distinctive baking traditions. As Sharpless notes, “By way of grain and fire, this history of southern baking kindles the broader history of the South and its people” (p. 2).

The book is organized chronologically into eight chapters and a brief afterword, each representing different eras that examine the social and culinary developments that have shaped and defined southern baking over time. Far from linear, *Grain and Fire* is a layered study that examines how the South’s baking history was influenced by major events (such as European colonization and the Civil War), demographics (namely, race, gender, social class, national origin, and urban/rural environments), and transformations in technology, transportation, and commercialization. Furthermore, readers learn the origins of iconic southern baking brands like Martha White and Little Debbie, examine the role of baked goods in local food festivals and contests, and gain a limited appreciation for how southern baking has influenced popular culture, particularly as a source of inspiration for country music lyrics and the Montgomery Biscuits baseball team name.

One of the many challenges historians face when reconstructing any regional or national history is delineating discernible, overarching patterns without overgeneralizing or neglecting unique developments within minoritized communities that do not reinforce the general narrative. Sharpless skillfully balances these considerations by noting nuances and exceptions whenever nec-