

THE PLANTATION

Edgar Tristram Thompson

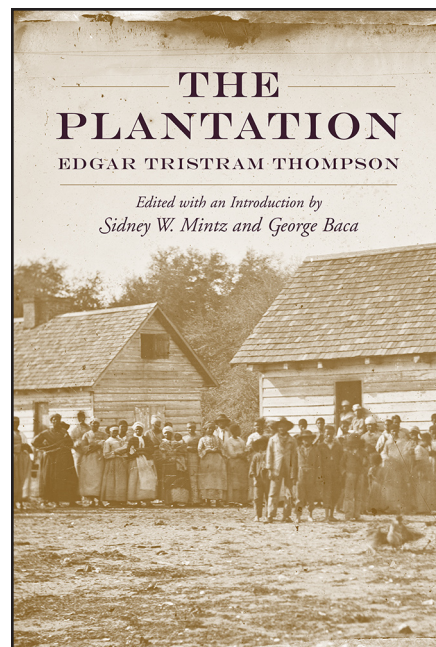
Edited with New Introduction by Sidney W. Mintz
and George Baca

A rare classic in American social science, Edgar Thompson's 1932 University of Chicago dissertation, "The Plantation," broke new analytic ground in the study of the southern plantation system. Thompson refuted long-espoused climatic theories of the origins of plantation societies and offered instead a richly nuanced understanding of the links between plantation culture, the global history of capitalism, and the political and economic contexts of hierarchical social classification. This edition of Thompson's study makes available to modern readers one of the earliest attempts to reinterpret the history of the American South as an integral part of global processes. Editors Sidney W. Mintz and George Baca provide a thorough introduction explicating Thompson's guiding principles and grounding his germinal work in its historical context.

A South Carolina native, Thompson viewed from personal experience the plantation as a political institution in which the quasi-industrial production of agricultural staples abroad through race-making labor systems solidified and advanced European state power. His interpretation marks a turning point in the scientific study of an ancient agricultural institution, in which the plantation is seen as a pioneering instrument for the expansion of the global economy. His awareness of the far-reaching history of economic globalization and of the conception of race as socially constructed predicts viewpoints that have since become standard, making *The Plantation* deeply relevant for ongoing research and debate in social, economic, and political history.

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Sidney W. Mintz is a research professor in the Department of Anthropology at Johns Hopkins University and the author of *Three Ancient Colonies: Caribbean Themes and Variations*.

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