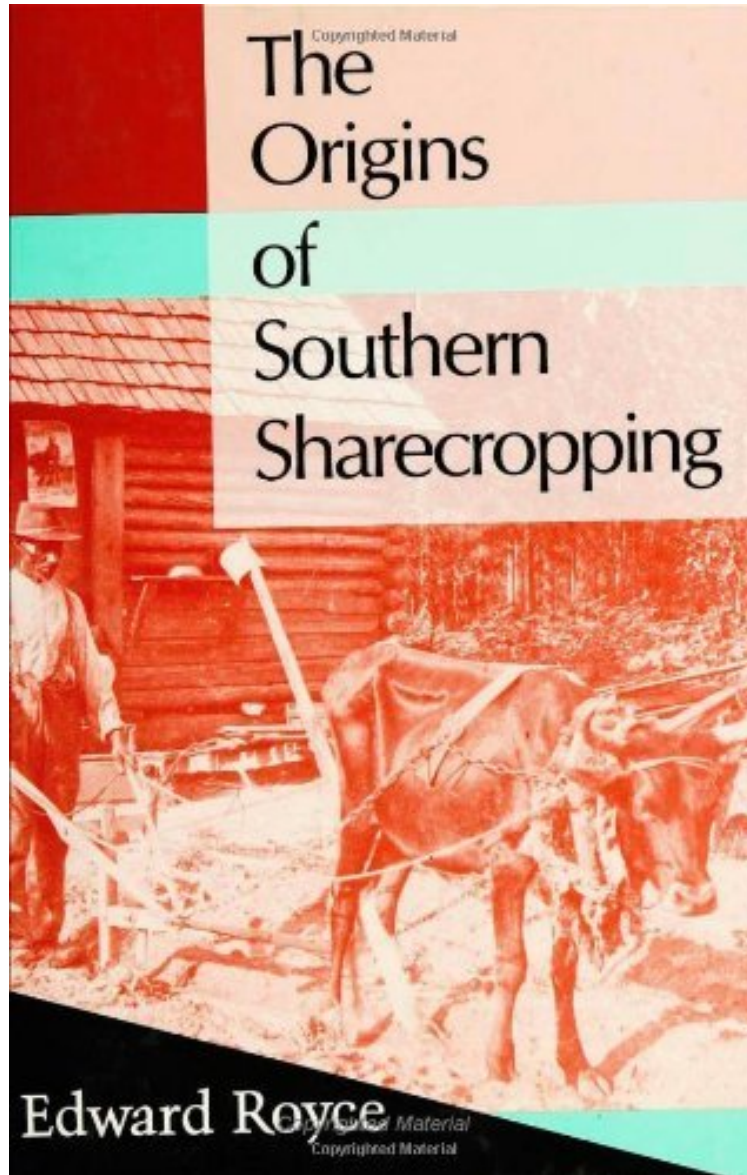


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The Origins of Southern Sharecropping (Labor And Social Change)

Edward Royce

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Vivid primary accounts of post-Civil War life by planters and freed slaves complement this study of the rise of

southern sharecropping. Edward Royce employs both historical and sociological methods to probe the question of why slavery was replaced by sharecropping rather than by some other labor arrangement. His detailed analysis illuminates conflicts between labor and capital as one group struggles to preserve the plantation system while the other pursues a quest for land and autonomy. Royce contends that southern sharecropping occurred through a "constriction of possibilities," that it was shaped by default rather than orchestrated by economic reconstruction by white landowners and black laborers. Highlighting the conflict-ridden nature of the process of social change, *The Origins of Southern Sharecropping* includes rich descriptions of the plantation system and gang labor, the freed slaves' dream of forty acres and a mule, the black colonization movement, the Freedman's Bureau, and racial relations after the war. In the series *Labor and Social Change*, edited by Paula Rayman and Carmen Sirianni.

From the Publisher
Revised perspective on sharecropping
From the Back Cover
Employing both historical and sociological methods, Edward Royce traces the rise of southern sharecropping and confronts the problem of why slavery was ultimately replaced by sharecropping rather than by some other labor arrangement. With vivid primary accounts from planters and freedpeople, he examines the transition from slavery to sharecropping from the perspective of the participants themselves. His detailed analysis of the conflicts that arose between those struggling to preserve the plantation system with gang labor, and those in search of land and autonomy, illuminates relations between labor and capital. Royce critically evaluates two major explanations for the rise of southern sharecropping: one that credits certain favorable conditions (i.e., a class of large landholders, a shortage of labor, no technological incentive to mechanize); the other that views sharecropping as a rational market response, mutually advantageous to white landowners and black laborers. The author offers an alternative perspective, arguing that the rise of southern sharecropping is best conceived as occurring through a "constriction of possibilities". Contending that sharecropping came about more by default than by carefully orchestrated economic reconstruction by either or both classes, Royce presents a case study that highlights the conflict-ridden, contradictory, and contingent nature of the process of social change. His discussion of sharecropping after the Civil War includes rich descriptions of the postwar plantation system and gang labor, the freed slaves' dreams of forty acres and a mule, the black colonization movement, the Black Codes, the Freedmen's Bureau, the Ku Klux Klan, and racial relations after the war.
About the Author
Edward Royce is Associate Professor of Sociology at Rollins College in Florida.