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Abstract
This research explores the county-level lynching record of four Deep South states—Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Mississippi—to discover the spatial and temporal distribution of lynching within the region and its relationship to social and economic conditions. The period of 1882 to 1910 is selected because lynching reached its highest levels in those decades. Demographic and economic variables from the United States censuses characterize Deep South counties as urban or rural and rich or poor. The physiography and historical attributes of counties are also considered. The research objective is to improve understanding of lynching in the postbellum Deep South through geographic analysis. The research methods determine: (1) counties where lynching was endemic and explores the causes; (2) the relationships between demographic, economic, physical and historical characteristics of counties with high rates of lynching; (3) if and when legal execution was substituted for lynching; and (4) that the random and episodic nature of lynching resulted from social disruption and imitative behavior rather than from demographic and economic causes.

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Lynching of Julia and Frazier Baker. May 1930. Philip Dray. Drawing on records held at the Tuskegee Institute, Dray argues that from 1882 until 1952, not a single year passed without a recorded lynching somewhere in the United States, most often in the Deep South and Mississippi Delta regions. This violent “justice,” meted out “at the hands of persons unknown” (with, therefore, no possibility of attaching guilt to the perpetrators, though, as Dray points out, such seemingly spontaneous events required organization and planning) held African American communities in terror and was one force behind the exodus of black southerners to the North. Dray provides an account of the history of lynching in the South and how it was used by white supremacists to maintain control over African Americans. By examining the various forms of lynching and the accompanying use of graphs and charts, Dray effectively overcomes this hurdle with the most obvious and informative mediums, newspapers and eyewitness accounts. His strategy of classifying the various modes of lynching and the accompanying use of graphs and charts further drives home his thesis. The book clearly gives the reader a dark, yet illuminating look into this extralegal practice.