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The Klan and Medieval/Renaissance Reenactors Religion and Ritual in Two Alternate Cultures {Abstract}

The Klan and historical reenactors are paracultural groups with distinct occult elements. A paraculture exists both parallel and in tandem to everyday culture or mainstream society. Paracultural groups are tightly knit social networks whose members' hobbies and organizations saturate the daily lives and identities of individual participants. Public perception often falsely confuses these two paracultures. It is our goal in this paper to clarify similarities and differences by defining and describing each in terms of several fundamental sociocultural elements. Ethnographic and ethnohistorical data is used to explore cultural structures and their modal expression among members of the Klan and historical reenacting groups. We compare and contrast the following elements: 1) occult influences; 2) religious affiliations and structures; and 3) ritual forms and traditions. While both groups take social risks by participating in paracultures or alternate cultures, they are quite distinct and operate at opposite ends of the cultural spectrum.