

The Cultic Milieu

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in 1999 a seemingly incongruous collection of protestors converged in seattle to shut down the meetings of the world trade organization union leaders environmentalists dressed as endangered turtles mainstream christian clergy violence advocating anarchists gay and lesbian activists and many other diverse groups came together to protest what they saw as the unfair power of a nondemocratic elite but how did such strange bedfellows come together and can their unity continue in 1972 another period of social upheaval sociologist colin campbell posited a cultic milieu an underground region where true seekers test hidden forgotten and forbidden knowledge ideas and allegiances within the milieu change as individuals move between loosely organized groups but the larger

milieu persists in opposition to the dominant culture jeffrey kaplan and helene loow find campbell s theory especially useful in coming to grips with the varied oppositional groups of today while the issues differ current subcultures often behave in similar ways to deviant groups of the past the cultic milieu brings together scholars looking at racial religious and environmental oppositional groups as well as looking at the watchdog groups that oppose these groups in turn while providing fascinating information on their own subjects each essay contributes to a larger understanding of our present day cultic milieu for classes in the social sciences or religious studies the cultic milieu offers a novel way to look at the interactions and ideas of those who fight against the powerful in our global age

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around 20 percent of americans fall into the category of spiritual but not religious yoga has become a ubiquitous pastime for middle class westerners mindfulness is increasingly incorporated into school curricula sports programs and even corporate culture hollywood icons and silicon valley trendsetters tout the benefits of a spiritual life these developments reflect a widespread turn away from religion toward spirituality yet the nature of this spiritual turn is still poorly understood and its consequences sorely underappreciated the shape of spirituality brings together leading sociologists to challenge common notions that spirituality is individualistic privatized and apolitical and to make the definitive case for its

social and political significance contributors examine the sweeping influence of spirituality on a variety of realms including health care and therapeutic practice popular culture civic engagement public protest conspiracy culture and progressive politics leveraging cutting edge quantitative and qualitative data this authoritative book makes clear that far from being marginal and inconsequential spirituality holds profound public importance today

recent years have seen a spectacular rise of the new age movement and an ever increasing interest in its beliefs and manifestations this fascinating work presents the first ever comprehensive analysis of new age religion and its historical backgrounds thus providing the reader with a means of orientation in the bewildering variety of the movement making extensive use of primary sources the author thematically analyses new age beliefs from the perspective of the study of religions while looking at the historical backgrounds of the movement he convincingly argues that its foundations were laid by so called western esoteric traditions during the renaissance hanegraaff finally shows how the modern new age movement emerged from the increasing secularization of those esoteric traditions during the 19th century this ground breaking publication is compulsive reading for all those involved or interested in the new age movement

this element introduces new age religion the new age movement is a loosely cohesive conglomerate of different spiritual currents with no common founder leader institution dogma or scripture because of its diversity it may appear amorphous and incoherent at first sight this element emphasizes both the unity and diversity of the new age it approaches the phenomenon from three main perspectives 1 the historical development of new age religion 2 ideas and practices associated with the new age and 3 the social organization of the new age movement it thus provides a wide angle view that sketches out some of the main patterns that emerge from a mosaic of individual currents and actors associated with the new age it also highlights some of the differences within the movement by exploring some ideas and practices in depth

networks entrepreneurship and power in contemporary spirituality offers an in depth analysis of the social organisation of new age spirituality drawing on empirical research in norway it considers what organising principles are at play how are power and authority exerted how do spiritual entrepreneurs organisations and individuals interact and how does social interaction affect their identities beliefs and practices many people who are involved in alternative spirituality regard themselves as spiritual individualists resistant to religious authority at the same time they do draw upon external resources exploring the role of media mind body spirit fairs events and their gatekeepers the book shows how a few key actors hold considerable power not only over the organised networks related to new age spirituality but also over the ideas norms tropes and

practices that circulate in the field the voices of individual freedom creativity and antidogmatism are harmonised with countermelodies of power control and commodification beneath individualistic spirituality lies a deep structure with social institutions and organising forces challenging some widespread stereotypes this book highlights regulative forces and socially sanctioned modes of thinking and acting within the new age movement it will be of particular interest to scholars of contemporary spirituality and the sociology of religion

the sage encyclopedia of the sociology of religion takes a look at the role of religion in society unpacking and evaluating the significance of religion in and on human history and tracing and outlining the social forces and influences that shape religion

jeffrey kaplan has been one of the most influential scholars of new religious movements extremism and terrorism his pioneering use of interpretive fieldwork among radical and violent subcultures opened up new fields of scholarship and vastly increased our understanding of the beliefs and activities of extremists this collection features many of his seminal contributions to the field alongside several new pieces which place his work within the context of the latest research developments combining discussion of the methodological issues alongside a broad array of case studies this will be essential reading for all students and scholars of extremism religion and politics and terrorism

religion and conspiracy theories an introduction is the first accessible volume to systematically examine the relationship between religion and conspiracy theories in the contemporary world in critical and historical perspective it lays out the historical development of these important categories considers different theoretical approaches and looks at case studies of conspiracy theories in religion about religion and as religion it maintains a critical perspective throughout on the relationship between truth and power and in the process provides a fresh perspective on belief and worldviews in our modern world designed for use in the classroom the book features helpful diagrams and resources for teachers it is an essential read for all students of religion and conspiracy theories as well as scholars of politics religious studies sociology anthropology and cultural studies

recent decades have seen an apparent increase in the number and vitality of new religious movements throughout the world they have also been marked by evident social conflict over the activities of cults these developments have been met by growing interest among social scientists in the significance of new religious movements and a proliferation of research into their activities and their social impact in this wide ranging survey tom robbins assesses the state of the art in sociological and related work on new religious movements concentrating on research on movements in the usa and western europe he analyses theories

relating the growth of new religions to sociocultural changes the dynamics of conversion to and defection from movements patterns of organization and institutionalization and social controversies over cults he also examines the impact of the study of new and deviant movements on the sociology of religion in general and the implications of recent spiritual ferment for previous models of secularization and sect church theory the book concludes with a comprehensive bibliography this text will be essential reading for students and researchers in the sociology of religion and in religious studies cults converts and charisma is a university edition of the author s trend report in current sociology volume 36 1

in the violent world of radical extremists the enemy of my enemy is my friend this study reveals how that precept plays out in the unexpected bonding between militant islam and the extreme right in america and europe it provides an insightful and sane look at the possibilities for collaboration between these groups

the 1980s saw the emergence of new age and neo paganism as major new religious movements in the first book length study of these movements michael york describes their rituals and beliefs and examines the similarities differences and relationships between them he profiles particular groups including the church universal triumphant nordic pagans and the covenant of unitarian pagans and questions the adequacy of existing sociological categories for describing these largely amorphous phenomena

challenging some assessments of religion in the west this study argues that although much organized religion particularly christianity is in numerical decline in actual fact we are witnessing an alternative spiritual re enchantment of society and culture

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