



Politics, Society, and the Klan in Alabama, 1915-1949

Glenn Feldman

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This first book-length examination of the Klan in Alabama represents

exhaustive research that challenges traditional interpretations.

The Ku Klux Klan has wielded considerable power both as

a terrorist group and as a political force. Usually viewed as appearing

in distinct incarnations, the Klans of the 20th century are now shown by

Glenn Feldman to have a greater degree of continuity than has been previously

suspected. Victims of Klan terrorism continued to be aliens, foreigners,

or outsiders in Alabama: the freed slave during Reconstruction, the 1920s

Catholic or Jew, the 1930s labor organizer or Communist, and the returning

black veteran of World War II were all considered a threat to the dominant

white culture.

Feldman offers new insights into this "qualified continuity"

among Klans of different eras, showing that the group remained active during

the 1930s and 1940s when it was presumed dormant, with elements of the

"Reconstruction syndrome" carrying over to the smaller Klan of the civil

rights era.

In addition, Feldman takes a critical look at opposition to Klan activities by southern elites. He particularly shows how opponents during the Great Depression and war years saw the Klan as an impediment to attracting outside capital and federal relief or as a magnet for federal action that would jeopardize traditional forms of racial and social control. Other critics voiced concerns about negative national publicity, and others deplored the violence and terrorism.

This in-depth examination of the Klan in a single state, which features rare photographs, provides a means of understanding the order's development throughout the South. Feldman's book represents definitive research into the history of the Klan and makes a major contribution to our understanding of both that organization and the history of Alabama.

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