



The Secular Spectacle: Performing Religion in a Southern Town

Chad E. Seales

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Tracing the religious history of Siler City, North Carolina, Chad E. Seales argues that southern whites cultivated their own regional brand of American secularism and employed it, alongside public religious performances, to claim and regulate public spaces. Over the course of the twentieth century, they wielded secularism to segregate racialized bodies, to challenge local changes resulting from civil rights legislation, and to respond to the arrival of Latino migrants.

Combining ethnographic and archival sources, Seales studies the themes of industrialization, nationalism, civility, privatization, and migration through the local history of Siler City; its neighborhood patterns, Fourth of July parades, Confederate soldiers, minstrel shows, mock weddings, banking practices, police shootings, Good Friday processions, public protests, and downtown mural displays. Offering a spatial approach to the study of performative religion, *The Secular Spectacle* presents a generative narrative of secularism from the perspective of evangelical Protestants in the American South.



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