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Introduction to the study of Religion

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Trawsnewid Addysg; Trawsnewid Bywydau
Transforming Education; Transforming Lives



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Religion and Identity

- Religious identity vs religion and identity

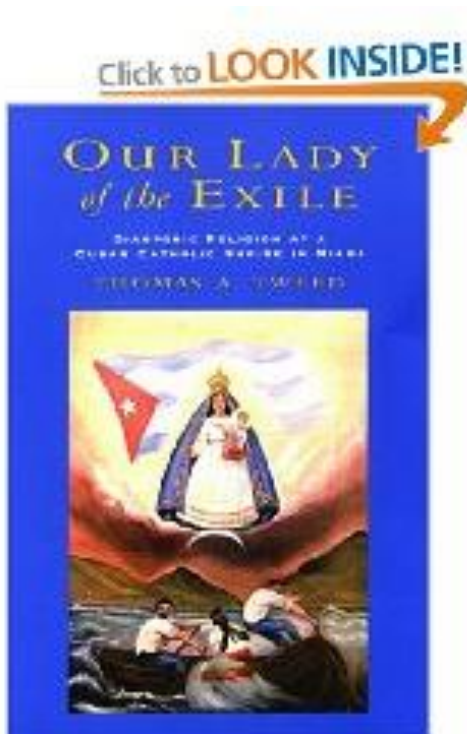
Religious Identity

- “Religion answered the question, ‘Who am I?’ for individuals, and ‘Who are we?’ for groups.” (Bryon Wilson)
- Identity is always constructed, on the individual and collective level, and express difference.

Religion and Identity

- But identity must “always be produced in and through a set of relations with real or imagined others” (Coleman/ Collins).
- Religion is a key source of identity formation and maintenance, from the personal conversion experiences to collective association with fellow believers

Example



- Thomas A. Tweed:
- *Our Lady of the Exile: Diasporic Religion at a Cuban Catholic Shrine in Miami* (Religion in America) . (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002)

Santuario de Nuestra Señora de La Caridad



- *Ermita de La Caridad de El Cobre*
3609 South Miami Ave. Miami, Florida
- -> centre of Cuban devotion
- However, no strong links to ecclesiastical institution, often unfamiliar with Church and priests but very familiar with God and Saints

- In 1961 the statue La Ermita de La Caridad arrived in Miami
- The first shrine La Ermita de La Caridad was founded in 1967
- Soon later the larger Santuario de Nuestra Señora de La Caridad was built



Nuestra Señora de la Caridad y Los Remedios

- Start of devotion:
in 1612 / 1613 three boys, Juan Moreno (-> name for colour person), and the two brothers Juan and Rodrigo de Hoyos (two indigenous boys?) were guided back to safety by the vision of the Madonna

- Soon afterwards the first brotherhood was founded in honour of Nuestra Señora de la Caridad de la Cobre
- Later the first santuario was built
- Since then centre of the devotion in Cuba
- Symbol of 'Cubanidad' (Cuban identity)
- in 1916 officially recognised by Pope Benedicto XV who made her "Patrona de Cuba"



- Text on the website about the statue:
- "Imagen original aparecida en la Bahía de Nipe. En su visita pastoral en 1997, el Papa Juan Pablo II la coronó como Regina Cuba."

Cubans in Miami

- Number of Cubans in the US (mainly Florida) increased dramatically after the Cuban revolution in 1959
- “Constructing cubanidad, a ‘Cubaness’, in exile meant retaining their language, foodways, architecture, institutions, and music.” (Tweed, p. 29)

- Religion, both in churches and at home, took on increased significance for many Cubans in Miami.
- The shrine became important site to negotiate identity
- differences between laity and clergy

Tweed's research

- Interviewing people connected to shrine
- questionnaires to people leaving the shrine in Miami
- questions about religious affiliation and reasons for coming to the shrine

Outcome

- Not a homogenous religious community
- Shrine is visited by Cubans with various religious (and non-religious) convictions, e.g., Catholics, Protestants, santeros (=devotee of a Afro-Cuban religion called Santeria) as well as atheists

- => a heterogeneous gathering of people
- However, all identify with its symbolic meaning
- By visiting the shrine they represent or even construct a common identity

- Tweed interprets the shrine therefore as “a transtemporal and translocative symbol, a social site at which the diaspora constructs collective identity” (p. 115).

- Rituals in the shrine stress the lack of demarcations within the Cuban community
- -> inter-religious communication between members of different faith who are connected by their heritage
- -> demarcation between Cubans and Non-Cubans

Activities

- If you want to find out more about identity and religion, watch the TED lecture about Mana which gives another example from a different part of the world.
- The reading for this week presents insights into identity and religion among young people in the UK.