
As a symbolic approach to the study of Indian identity in a Guatemalan town, this work largely confines itself to a description and analysis of two religious systems: the traditional community-centered, civil-religious hierarchy which developed under colonialism, and the Catholic Action movement which represents a recent reconversion and integration of town Indians into a universalistic religion where membership is achieved rather than ascribed. Associated with religious change, Warren outlines a shift from a separatist-defensive world view to one that perceives the historical division of labor as a cause of subordination and seeks equality through integration and "ladinoization." Warren's primary concern is with how changes in world view are associated with perceptions of ethnicity and subordination. She argues that a new perception of ethnicity, linked to the Catholic Action movement, challenges traditional Indian perceptions of subordination.

Judging this work on its own terms, it is a weak example of the value of the symbolic approach. Information on symbols and beliefs is scant and very thinly spread, while overall the material is poorly organized and presented. Particularly frustrating are the many general statements about Indians', or Trixanos' views, implying broad consensus and well thought-out positions among the two religious factions. It is impossible to determine to what extent these views represent the author's synthesis, the interpretations of a central group of religious ideologues, or a set of perceptions that were expressed by a broad sample of ordinary women and men. One has the impression that the interpretations of world view are largely based on discussions with a rather small group of "town theologians." Moreover, the discussion of changing ethnic identity, while contrasted with that of other scholars, is not integrated by any discernible theoretical perspective.

In sum, this study is overly vague, both ethnographically and theoretically, to be of broad value. As a study of subordination and Indian identity, it provides little new information or insights. Its major finding—that as ethnic identity is locally redefined, subordination in the larger society may continue—is not well demonstrated, however true it may be.

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