

On the positive relationship between faith and social integration

Dania Suleman, *Les Malentendus*, p.57-60 (translated)

Several contextual factors thus motivate the development of religious identity in a multicultural society¹. Various studies have shown the importance that religious affiliation can play in the migratory experience. Although gender is not systematically taken into account in these analyses, they do provide information on the different logics involved².

There is a clear, positive relationship between religious participation and social adjustment³. Contrary to popular belief, for immigrants, religion enables better integration into the host country. Studies of the Korean Church⁴ and African Pentecostal Christians⁵ in particular have explicitly demonstrated its importance in the "difficult process of integration"⁶. A religious space - be it a temple, a mosque or a church - enables better transmission of learning and services offered to immigrants within the host society. It creates a community of sharing, while meeting needs for socialization, information, orientation and integration⁷. Religious practice and membership do not necessarily indicate a desire for non-integration into society. Attending sacred places does not imply a desire to reject the values of the host country and to close oneself into its customs.

Several authors approach the question of religious identity among first- and second-generation immigrants as the result of identity recompositions played out during the migratory experience⁸, enabling immigrants to "renegotiate their place in immigrant societies"⁹. By the first generation of

¹ Andrew Village, Leslie J. Francis et Adrian Brockett, « Religious Affect Among Adolescents in a Multi-Faith Society: The Role of Personality and Religious Identity », *Journal of Beliefs & Values*, vol. 32, n° 3, 2011, p. 295-301.

² Danièle Hervieu-Léger, « La transmission religieuse en modernité : éléments pour la construction d'un objet de recherche », *Social Compass*, vol. 44, n° 1, 1997, p. 131-143.

³ Carl L. Bankston III et Min Zhou, « The Ethnic Church, Ethnic Identification, and the Social Adjustment of Vietnamese Adolescents », *Review of Religious Research*, 1996, p. 18-37.

⁴ Henry H. Kim et Ralph E. Pyle, « An Exception to the Exception: Second-Generation Korean American Church Participation », *Social Compass*, vol. 51, n° 3, 2004, p. 321-333.

⁵ Jean-René Milot et Raymonde Venditti, « Mystique pragmatique de convertis pentecôtistes d'origine africaine », dans *Le Québec après Bouchard-Taylor. Les identités religieuses de l'immigration*, Presses de l'Université du Québec, 2012.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Pyong Gap Min, « The Structure and Social Functions of Korean Immigrant Churches in the United States », *International Migration Review*, vol. 26, n° 4, 1992, p. 1370-1394.

⁸ Alex Baril, « Jeunes immigrants et religion : une revue de littérature », *Cahiers de recherche du GRIMER*, n° 12, 2006.

⁹ Albert Bastenier, *Qu'est-ce qu'une société ethnique ? Ethnicité et racisme dans les sociétés européennes d'immigration*, Presses universitaires de France, 2004.

immigrants, I mean people who have settled in a host country as adults. As for the second generation, they are either children of the first generation born in the host country, or children who arrived at a young age with their parents¹⁰. They mainly attended schools in the host country. Despite the abandonment of religious automatism or practices, or their reconfiguration¹¹, the fact remains that, for most minority religious communities, religion is one of the most fundamental elements of their lives¹², whether for the first or second generation. Certain rituals, such as the Sabbath, the rest day from Friday evening to Saturday evening, for Jewish communities¹³, and Ramadan, the month of fasting from sunrise to sunset, for Muslims¹⁴, continue to be important and do not seem to have changed or become obsolete.

According to these studies, religion not only gives meaning to the migratory experience, but also helps to forge community links within religious spaces. The temple, the mosque and the ethnic church thus act as meeting places that go beyond the mere performance of religious practices; they present themselves as spaces where religious practice and community ties coexist, fulfilling important social functions for the first generations of immigrants¹⁵. The religious space appears as a multifunctional space that responds to a community logic, to a need to come together as a group¹⁶. It is not, therefore, an austere place in which only preaching on the requirements of religious practice is conveyed; it is above all a convivial space that lends itself to human interaction. Acknowledging this dimension of the religious place and, by the same token, of religious identity, helps to put into perspective the context in which bonds are forged within religious communities. What is at first sight a space for devotion is transformed into a space for gathering, recollection and exchange, which in some cases enables the social structure of the country of origin to be recreated¹⁷. This is what Annie Létourneau was able to observe in the Montreal Cambodian

¹⁰ Alex Baril, *op. cit.*

¹¹ Rahabi Bénéïche, *Identité et rapport à la culture arabo-musulmane : enquête exploratoire auprès de jeunes adultes d'origine maghrébine résidant à Montréal*, mémoire de maîtrise, Université du Québec à Montréal, 2011.

¹² Joanne van Dijk et Ghada Botros, « The Importance of Ethnicity and Religion in the Life Cycle of Immigrant Churches: A Comparison of Coptic and Calvinist Churches », *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, vol. 41, n° 1, 2009.

¹³ Rachel Elizabeth Eisen, *Connected to Community: Jewish Ritual, Meaning, and Gender at Brandeis University*, mémoire de maîtrise, Brandeis University, 2016.

¹⁴ Josiane Le Gall, « Le rapport à l'islam des musulmanes shi'ites libanaises à Montréal », *Anthropologie et sociétés*, vol. 27, n° 1, 2003, p. 131-148.

¹⁵ Alex Baril, *op. cit.*

¹⁶ Kyoung Ok Seol et Richard M. Lee, « The Effects of Religious Socialization and Religious Identity on Psychosocial Functioning in Korean American Adolescents from Immigrant Families », *Journal of Family Psychology*, vol. 26, n° 3, 2012.

¹⁷ Mathieu Boisvert, « Le temple hindou tamoul montréalais, une institution culturelle », dans *Le Québec après Bouchard-Taylor. Les identités religieuses de l'immigration*, Presses de l'Université du Québec, 2012.

Buddhist community, during field observations¹⁸. The same is true of the Sri Lankan community in Montreal, studied by Mark Bradley as part of his master's thesis¹⁹. Rahabi Bénéaïche also observed how religious identity can be reactivated through the frequentation of places of worship among Algerian nationals, for whom religion represents a means of breaking their isolation²⁰. Immigrant Muslim women also frequent the mosque to meet their peers²¹.

¹⁸ Annie Létourneau, « Reconstruire et transmettre le bouddhisme cambodgien en contexte migratoire postgénocidaire », dans *Le Québec après Bouchard-Taylor. Les identités religieuses de l'immigration*, Presses de l'Université du Québec, 2012.

¹⁹ Mark Bradley, *op. cit.*

²⁰ Rahabi Bénéaïche, *op. cit.*

²¹ Josiane Le Gall, *op. cit.*