



*James Barnett Lecture Series on
Religious Cultures*

Presents

Stephen Glazier

University of Nebraska, Lincoln

September 22, 2016

11:00-12:20 pm

Laurel Hall, Rm 305

**Demanding Deities and Reluctant Devotees:
Belief, Unbelief, and Affect among Followers of the Orisa,
Rastafari, and Spiritual Baptists Movements in Trinidad**

Belief and unbelief are major categories of the Western intellectual tradition. But many Caribbean people do not subscribe to these Western notions. For example, most Spiritual Baptists 'recognize' and 'acknowledge' Orisa -- yet do not 'believe' that the Orisa should be worshipped. Rastafarians are materialists and do not 'recognize' or 'acknowledge' the existence of Orisa spirits. Rastafarians regard all talk of Orisa as naïve and misinformed. Orisa devotees themselves seldom question the ontological and epistemological status of the Orisa (who are part of their daily lives and play a central role in family interactions), but they do not agree as to the nature of the Orisa and how one should interact with them.

In Caribbean religious conversion, *credo* usually takes a back seat to unarticulated sensations, and affect plays a greater role in religious conversions than belief statements. Socialization is also a factor in conversion. By serving a particular Orisa in a particular way, devotees delineate their own positions within the movement as well as their positions relative to others outside the movement. Serving the Orisa -- like participation in Spiritual Baptist ritual and Rastafari reasoning -- entails much sacrifice. In the case of Orisa, parents often attempt to postpone a child's initiation for as long as possible so as to avoid obligations to the spirits.

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