

avored as dominating the entirety of Formative period Mesoamerica. While as a reviewer I may have quibbles regarding the use of archaeological theory in this volume, that should not detract from the substantial contribution to the archaeology of Oaxaca and Formative Mesoamerica made by this volume. This book will clearly become an essential resource for anyone working with these topics.



Maya Creation Myths: Words and Worlds of the Chilam Balam.

Timothy W. Knowlton.

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The Chilam Balam is second only to the Popol Vuh as an expression of Maya worldview in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Strictly speaking, the Chilam Balam is not a single book, but several, each identified by the name of the town in which it was located. This group of related texts raises complicated issues of textual history and interpretation. Timothy Knowlton, in *Maya Creation Myths: Words and Worlds of the Chilam Balam*, explores a group of accounts in the Chilam Balam of Chumayel in insightful new ways that are accessible to the nonspecialist. Knowlton combines new understandings of earlier hieroglyphic texts, recent research on Maya languages, and a knowledge of both pre-Columbian and colonial religious thinking to reinterpret these texts.

His approach follows that of Mikhail Bakhtin, whose work has influenced readers of classical literature as well as more recent work. Knowlton approaches these texts as dialogues—here between prehispanic Maya thinking and Christian ideas, but also between tradition and authorial innovation. He argues that these accounts explicitly engage with Christian teachings to reframe them in Maya terms. The process of dealing with the product of a complex textual tradition with a somewhat unclear history should be of interest to scholars dealing with similar sorts of works in the European tradition.

Knowlton explores three pieces of the creation story: an account of the destruction and recreation of the world, the fall of Lucifer, and the creation of humankind. In each piece, he situates the account within accounts from sixteenth-century Christian texts available in Yucatán as well as accounts within pre-Columbian and colonial native texts. In the process, he demonstrates considerable continuity of Maya thought across a thousand years, as he is able to demonstrate that ideas from Classical period (before 900) hieroglyphic texts are found in these sixteenth-century documents. At the same time, he ably makes the argument that European thinking is key to understanding these texts, as concepts such as Aristotelian ideas about the soul are reflected in these “native” documents. In the process, he raises interesting questions about the continued development of Maya scholarly tradition under colonial rule as it creates a syncretic intellectual tradition combining pre-Columbian and European understandings of the world.

This book is useful for scholars interested in the Spanish colonial period in Mexico, those interested in the interaction between Christianity and indigenous religious traditions—in the New World or in places such as northern Europe—and for those interested in innovative approaches to texts with complex histories.

