recognized the Spanish as gods, he presents the information from myriad documents to show that the Spanish were first addressed as gods, but that the elites quickly realized that they were mortal. Commoners among the Mexica and the peoples of other, especially outlying, ethnic groups took longer to accept this conclusion. Yet, many believed that the Spanish could temporarily assume divinity and the attributes of the gods; these were the so-called man-gods, made famous by Serge Gruzinski in his 1989 book *Man-gods in the Mexican Highlands*. Another salient controversy centers on the word "conquest," in opposition to the newer view that the central Mexican struggles between 1519 and 1521 should be regarded as a war between states. Here Rinke justifies using the word "conquest," a word that did not exist in the Nahuatl of the Mexica, reminding readers that words matter.

Finally, throughout the book he contextualizes the situations he discusses. He outlines the European events that influenced American actions. He reminds readers of the Caribbean experiences and the administrative struggles of the Spanish monarchy to construct a workable colonial government and the depopulation of the Taino peoples due to never-before exposure to Old World diseases, constant overwork, and horrendous ill treatment, despite crown directives to the contrary. Last, he does not overlook the contemporaneous resentments and antipathies of the Mexica tribute-paying, sacrificial-victim-providing subordinate city states that turned into needed Spanish allies. They represented up to 99 percent of the Spanish-directed fighting force at the siege of Tenochtitlan. Nor does Rinke ignore the dissension within both camps as to tactics and priorities.

Overall, Rinke provides an epic reinterpretation of the multiethnic struggles that began the gradual process of turning Native America into a colonial Spanish kingdom. As such, his work could be a welcome addition to upper division and graduate courses on the ethnohistory of Mexico or the Americas, in general.

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INDIGENOUS CHRISTIANITIES IN EARLY MODERN MEXICO

Aztec Antichrist: Performing the Apocalypse in Early Colonial Mexico. By Ben Leeming. Louisville: University Press of Colorado, 2022. Pp. 314. $100.00 cloth; $35.95 paper; $29.95 e-book.
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It is not an exaggeration to say that Ben Leeming's book opens a new window into a still poorly understood past. This critical and multi-angled examination of two previously unknown Nahuatl Antichrist plays, accompanied by the transcription and translation of

the original manuscripts, not only offers readers a valuable, newly discovered historical source but also contributes to the ongoing discussion about Indigenous Christianities in early modern Mexico.

Leeming treats Nahuatl as a "linguistic key" for opening historical chests full of important insights into the highly turbulent past of religious colonization, replete with physical and symbolic violence. The Antichrist plays emerged from the conflicts, overt and covert, that on one hand threatened the success of the Christianizing mission in its early phase and on the other targeted the very base of Indigenous ontology and social order. The idolatry trials and inquisitional persecutions that culminated in the 1530s were followed by a long-term campaign of discursive terror based on the diabolization of Native beliefs.

In his insightful interpretation of the plays, Leeming argues that they were inspired by the apocalyptic implications of these disruptive events, originating somewhere within Franciscan circles in the 1530s or 1540s. Although their author cannot be precisely identified, they have survived because a Nahua intellectual named Fabián de Aquino included them in a manuscript, either composing them himself or copying the work of another Indigenous writer. And although Aquino put his name on one of the pages, we do not know exactly how he was connected to the Franciscan projects.

Leeming's analysis of the plays leaves no doubt, however, that their author, who skillfully navigated both the Native and European worlds, "wrote at the peripheries of power in early colonial Mexico" (38). He should be considered one of the many Nahua intellectuals who transformed the foreign theatre genre into a powerful means of conveying unofficial, and often unauthorized, discourses and versions of Christianity. Leeming aptly notes that these Indigenous writers and scholars were in fact collaborators of the Spanish friars rather than merely their aides and assistants—and often authors in their own right as well. While their textual productions rarely challenged Christian doctrine openly, they were able to carry out this task in more subtle and subversive ways. Indeed, Leeming's study of the Antichrist plays reveals that while performance was a weapon introduced by the friars, it could "prove to be a double-edged sword" (90).

Leeming's innovative use of auto-ethnography as an analytical lens within the field of Mexican ethnohistory sheds light on the complex and intricate ways in which the Indigenous author engaged with both Christian discourses and Native traditions. Leeming argues that by appropriating the ideological framework of the colonizers, and even co-opting the friars' strategy of didactic terror in diabolizing Native beliefs, the author of the plays was able to contest and surpass their control in order to "afford his people a measure of autonomy and continuity with the past" (32).

Although I would be hesitant to explicitly characterize the plays as a "counternarrative" that presents "a thoroughly Indigenous perspective of Christianity," it is indeed striking that none of the other surviving "Nahua Christian" texts exhibits this degree of detail in

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presenting precontact religion and local knowledge, which the church so zealously struggled to eradicate. Since detailed information about ritual practices violated the injunctions of both church and crown, such works were simply illicit. But the power of the plays could be even more far-reaching: Leeming argues that by creating a public space where Indigenous actors were to become living embodiments of banned deities, they achieved a much deeper level of discursive and ideological (re)appropriation. Likewise, he shows convincingly that the contestation of dominant ideologies flowing beneath the textual surface manifests itself in establishing parallels between the fearless Nahua Christian martyrs and Christ, thus opposing the prejudiced views of Indigenous Christians as weak and eternally immature "children in faith".

Finally, Leeming contextualizes this challenging textual production in Nahuatl by anchoring the apocalyptic thought conveyed by the Native religious texts in the concept of cultural trauma caused by Christianization and colonization. This interpretative framework guides the readers through a highly complex but utterly fascinating historical source, making them aware that Native people dealt with painful events using alphabetic writing in their own language as "the perfect instrument for pushing back against empire's hegemonic claims".

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AFRO-MEXICO AND THE EARLY CARIBBEAN

Joseph M. H. Clark. *Veracruz and the Caribbean in the Seventeenth Century.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2023. Pp. xviii+, 313. $110.00 cloth; $110.00 e-book. doi:10.1017/tam.2023.68

The last decade has seen a fluorescence of studies on Afro-Mexico and a renewed interest in the early Caribbean. Joseph M. H. Clark expertly weaves both strands of scholarship into a study that centers Veracruz as a predominately Black community that linked the Mexican interior to the Caribbean and Atlantic worlds. My one critique is that the title of the book does not convey the monograph's profound engagement with the history of Africans and their descendants in Veracruz: he puts Veracruz and its Black residents at the center of a history that highlights how the maritime connection to Caribbean circuits shaped the development of the city as a vital node of empire and the culture and society of its residents.

Clark divides the work into two sections. Building the Mexican-Caribbean World examines the material links between Veracruz and the Caribbean in four chapters. The first one examines the history of settlement, from the pre-Colombian period through the Spanish city's foundation and multiple relocations, ending with the foundation of