

This is not a reference book. Neither is it a reconstruction or translation of the *Theologia Indorum*. This is an engaging read, but it is not for the novice. It is clearly intended for an audience already familiar with the general outline of early colonial history in Mesoamerica and the various documents that stand as testimony to the complex processes of colonization, acculturation, syncretism, and resistance that characterized this period. Although clearly written, sections of Sparks's work lean heavily on bodies of literature and epistemology that lie well beyond expectations for an introductory or casual audience. There are few figures, and the lack of a map assumes readers' familiarity with the region and its peoples. The effect is to create a gulf between author and reader that is only partially bridged by expansive endnotes, extensive referencing, a well-organized index, and helpful sections, such as Sparks's notes on orthography and pronunciation.

Nonetheless, Sparks offers an engrossing and thought-provoking work, constituted in equal measure by a deep understanding of theology, history, philosophy, and culture at a time of great change. In addition to outlining a plan for reconstructing the *Theologia Indorum*, the significance of this work is perhaps best articulated by Sparks himself: "What gradually emerges is a more complex portrait of mendicants prior to the arrival of the Inquisition and the Catholic Reformation, who did not simply condemn [I]ndigenous religiosity but also tried to strategically accommodate aspects of it, and [I]ndigenous elites, who did not simply resist Iberian Catholicism but also employed the new genres and orthographies for the reconfiguration of their [I]ndigenous worldviews" (297).

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MAYA YUCATAN

Return to Ixil: Maya Society in an Eighteenth-Century Yucatec Town. By Mark Z. Christensen and Matthew Restall. Louisville: University Press of Colorado, 2019. Pp. 316. \$76.00 cloth.
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Between 1990 and 2007, Restall and Christensen located in the archives of Yucatan two separate sets of corpora of 102 testaments, written in Yucatec Maya in the town of Ixil between 1738 and 1779, the overwhelming number of which belonged to members of local elites. This present book offers a glimpse into both the social and spiritual worlds of the Ixil inhabitants during. The authors' style is rich and animated, their painstaking translations and analysis of the data are subtle, and their enthusiasm concerning the materials sparkles from each and every page. The reader readily joins the feast and glamour of these corpora. I found the fifth chapter, on Ixil family life, to be the most illuminating.

Since the early 1970s, the use of wills and testaments as a substantial historical source for the study of European social, economic, and religious history has been widely embraced by social historians, primarily French. In 1984, Sarah Cline and Miguel León-Portilla published *The Testaments of Culhuacan* in Nahuatl transcription and English translation, with abundant commentary, in the UCLA Latin American Center's Nahuatl Studies series. Ever since, James Lockhart's students and their own students have offered a number of admirable studies based on last wills and testaments composed in indigenous languages from Central Mexico, the Mixteca area, and Yucatan.

Ethnohistorians of the Americas deal with indigenous peoples' *emic* approach to their culture and worldview. Thus, their emphasis is on continuity and change from pre-contact times up to the late colonial era. For such a venerable purpose, they have available to them a myriad of early-to-mid colonial indigenous sources, as well as archaeological pathways into the deep past. In 1722, Bishop Juan Gómez de Parada, referring to the work of evangelization among the Maya of Yucatan, voiced his dissatisfaction with the progress made thus far among them, stating that, "the Indians they administer are the most barbarous we have ever known and in which we have seen fewer signs of being Christians." (100). This view of the Maya of Yucatan is in utter contrast to what is stated about Ixil Catholicism (112). So, which were they?

Indigenous last wills and testaments are a problematic source for such a purpose; they are overwhelmingly formulaic in their nature, and their contents are largely dictated by stiff Spanish and Church conventions and style and impacted by the priest presiding over the testator's dictamen. We may never know if they were written out of free will and individual voice. The authors of this book are well aware of those limitations (31, 97); however, they choose to refrain from deliberating on them extensively. Their evasive treatment stands out in one particular testament: the 1748 testament of Felipe Tec (A23), in which the testator "requests his body to be buried in the '*kuna*' [deity house in Maya Yucatec], . . . in the forest, next to a *ku* (pyramid)" (97). Such a significant case calls out *viva voce* for a broader treatment of the whole issue of what to make of the Maya Yucatec system of beliefs in mid eighteenth-century Ixil. More is also needed in the treatment of the essence of *pixan*, or, the immortal soul (98-9), in contemporaneous and past Maya worldview, far beyond Catholicism's evident impact upon it. Recent compilations, such as David Tavárez's (2017), provide an adequate answer to queries about indigenous responses to the impact of Catholicism upon their autochthonous belief system and what was the true nature of their devotion and piety.

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