

REVIEWS

MAYA RELIGION, 1500S

Rewriting Maya Religion: Domingo de Vico, K'iche' Maya Intellectuals, and the Theologia Indorum. By Garry G. Sparks. Louisville: University Press of Colorado, 2020. Pp. 444. \$99.00 cloth.
 doi:10.1017/tam.2021.8

Garry G. Sparks focuses on a scant, approximately 50-year period of the mid-late sixteenth century CE in what is now highland Guatemala and the Mexican state of Chiapas. This is a period and place characterized by some of the earliest incidents of encounter, exploration, negotiation, colonization and conquest, and resistance among various Maya states/peoples of the region, representatives of the Spanish crown, and various Christianities. Within this historical, social, political, and religious context, Sparks combs through the works of K'iche' Maya intellectuals and mendicant scholars in an effort to identify the remaining pieces (and ultimately fashion a plan for the reconstruction) of Domingo de Vico's *Theologia Indorum*. Its first volume completed in 1554, and initially composed in several Mayan languages, Vico's *Theologia* is the first original, explicit Christian theology written in the Americas. Sparks explores Maya influences on, and indigenous responses to, Vico's *Theologia*. His purpose is two-fold: first, to situate Domingo de Vico and his text within the wider tradition of sixteenth-century Western European Christian thought, and second, to understand the highland Maya experience of mendicant messages as more than passively syncretic and see them as a multi-vocal theological dialogue.

Even though we may read myths and cosmology in the *Popol Wuj*, concepts of territoriality in *títulos*, political discourse in the *Rabinal Achí*, and ethnogenesis in the *Annals of the Kaqchikel*, Sparks's approach is to unify these diverse genres (even wills) under the banner of a heteroglossia theology. As an archaeologist with a research background in lowland Maya peoples of the Classic Period (ca. 250-900 CE), I found this approach's resonance with our understandings of ancient Maya worldview inspiring. Moreover, I find the nature of Sparks's reconstruction and analysis of early Christian works and Indigenous documents compelling: a taphonomic study of the historical, social, and physical processes that led to the obfuscation of Vico's *Theologia* and a demonstration of the application of intertextual analysis in its resurrection.

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).

Grande Prairie Regional College
Grande Prairie, Alberta
smorton@gprc.ab.ca

SHAWN MORTON

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.
doi:10.1017/tam.2021.9

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.