

INDIGENOUS RELIGION CONVERSIONS

The Americas' First Theologies: Early Sources of Post-Contact Indigenous Religion. Edited and translated by Garry Sparks. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. Pp. 324. \$99.00 cloth.
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In the historiography examining the evangelization of the Americas, particularly Mesoamerica, the potential for native-language religious texts to reveal new insights increasingly gains momentum. Not only do such texts reveal the doctrines, religious histories, and instructions that ecclesiastics employed in their conversion efforts, but they also show how the natives themselves—who often served as collaborators, ghostwriters, and authors—made sense of the new religion alongside culturally familiar worldviews. Here, Garry Sparks collaborates with Frauke Sachse and Sergio Romero to bring to readers for the first time an English translation of a sample from a foundational religious text produced for the Highland Maya of Guatemala in the sixteenth century: the *Theologia Indorum* by the Dominican Domingo de Vico. Despite its importance and size (estimated at nearly 900 pages), Vico's work is largely overlooked, in large part because it was never printed. Moreover, there is neither an original copy in Vico's hand nor any complete manuscript of the entire work. Instead, the *Theologia Indorum* exists today in no less than 17 fragments, produced as copies later in the colonial period and scattered throughout numerous archives. The obscure nature of Vico and his *Theologia Indorum* makes Sparks's work important.

The present work consists of three main sections, each containing contextual introductions followed by translations of native-language texts. The first concerns Sparks's translation from K'iche' of a select portion of the *Theologia Indorum*; the second and third sections contain translations of various texts including doctrinas, títulos, and hymns written in K'iche' and Kaqchikel. Throughout, Sparks uses the texts to illustrate instances of intertextuality. Indeed, one of the author's main arguments is the influence the *Theologia Indorum* had on other works from the Highland Maya, including the *Popol Vuh*.

Sparks begins by providing a context in which to understand the *Theologia Indorum*. The Dominican Domingo de Vico originally composed the multivolume work in K'iche' sometime in the 1540s and 1550s. In examining Vico's training, Sparks elucidates the differences in theoretical beliefs among the Franciscans and Dominicans in a refreshingly informative summary of prevailing European schools of thought during the early sixteenth century. These differences, he argues, affected their approach to composing native-language religious texts in New Spain, with Dominicans being more receptive to "appropriating native terms, images, and ideas for translating Catholicism, whereas Observant Franciscans . . . insisted on Latin or Castilian Spanish for key concepts or crafted new words, neologisms, in indigenous languages to refer to the new

religious ideas for the people” (4). Some, particularly those working with Nahuatl or Yucatec Maya texts from Franciscan-dominated regions, may not agree.

Copious and informative footnotes accompany Sparks’ translation of Vico’s work, and frequently reveal native and European influences on the text itself. In addition, Sparks highlights passages throughout that he sees as evidence of a correlation between the *Theologia Indorum* and the *Popol Vuh*. Most intriguing, however, are the clear connections between the *Theologia Indorum* and the texts produced after it. These are examined and translated in the second and third sections of the book to illustrate the lasting impression that Vico’s work had on the religious texts of Guatemala.

As do many contemporary scholars who examine native-language religious texts and their authors and audiences, Sparks acknowledges the influence of native amanuenses in the compilation of the *Theologia Indorum*, particularly that of Diego Reynoso. The work was written in a rhetoric and poetic style familiar among the Highland Maya that elevated and added validity to the discourse. Sparks suggests that Maya assistants such as Reynoso likely played a role in its construction, and certainly this was the case. Sparks organizes his translations in strophes and stanzas to reflect Maya poetics, which may or may not be to a given reader’s liking, depending on that reader’s linguistic orientation.

Sparks makes an important contribution by bringing to light the *Theologia Indorum*, its representation as a Maya/Christian text, and its influence on many other texts from Guatemala. This new addition to the existing corpus of the native-language religious texts of Mesoamerica allows for further comparison of the strategies employed by both friars and natives, which will no doubt reveal both commonalities and individualities.

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COLONIAL RACE, IDENTITY, AND RESETTLEMENT

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Mónica Díaz’s excellent new edited volume takes up the question of identity formation and categorization in the Spanish Americas with a critical twist. She organizes her introduction and the contributions around the framework of artifacts, artifice, and identity, placing as much emphasis on textual production and contemporary reception as on the fluidity of identities, which has come to characterize much of the recent literature on the issue. This framing creates a more sophisticated interrelation between the individual chapters, written by scholars of history and literature, and brings new depth to the topic.