

## Fill in the Middle Ground: Intertextuality and Inter-Religious Dialogue in 16<sup>th</sup>- Century Guatemala

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*Uae nima vuh rij. theo logiaindorum. ubina am nima etamabel. utzihoxic. Dios nimahau. ve alahobiçaxic v εoheic. ronohel vbanoh Dios. veutuniçaxicnaypuch. rono hel. nimabiih εo chupam. vahabal D: ueutuniçaxic naypuch chahauaxic. Chetamaxic. rumal vtçilah vinak Chritianos vεoheic. chupam εiche εhabal tzibamui.*

This large tome, the *Theologia Indorum*, titles a grand wisdom and teaching of God, the great lord, a clarification of the existence of everything done by God demonstrated thus everything of the great name that there is with the language of God, the demonstration thus of what is ruled, of what is known by good Christian people of God's existence in the K'iche' language written here (Manuscrit Américain 5, 1 recto, my translation).

### Introduction

There are, in fact, very few times in human history when two or more sizably significant groups of people encounter each other and neither one has any actual idea who, or even what, the other group is. At the turn of the sixteenth century, Spaniards had no idea where they were or what they were encountering, and the indigenous peoples of the Americas had no idea what had washed up on their shores. While an encounter with the radically cultural and religious “other” is not new within the history of Christianity, the arrival of mendicant missionaries – namely Franciscan and Dominican – to Mesoamerica is unique because it provoked and provided a paper trail authored by both voices of western Christianity from late medieval and early modern Iberia and, to a lesser degree, their indigenous American hosts, resisters, and converts. While Christian thought has always addressed, in some form, the intersection between aspects of cultures and the claims of a Christian faith, the encounter between Hispano-Catholicism and Maya religion is one the earliest – if not *the* earliest – incidents to

include contemporaneous minority reports by survivors of Christendom or colonial Christianity.

From the landing of the first sustained presence of explicitly Christian missionaries to the American mainland until the arrival of the Spanish Inquisition, the period between 1519 and 1572 in Mesoamerica marks a brief but highly unique moment in the radical shifting of religious reflection. Such periods of first contact or encounters mark foundational moments for comparative studies, including comparative theology.<sup>1</sup> The interdisciplinary field of ethnohistory has emerged as a specialty sub-area that focuses on the “texts” generated between such cultural and religious “others.” Recognizing that during historical periods of radical first encounters respective constituencies negotiated *misunderstandings* that then served as provisional precedents for further negotiated relationships, Richard White’s notion of a “middle ground” in particular provides a model that does not deny local agency as it does not relegate historically disenfranchised persons to a status of either simply passive victims or merely reactionary resisters (White 1991, ix-xvi and 50-53). By the same accord, the ethnohistorical method, especially as applied to work with historical and ethnographic Mesoamerican resources (both indigenous and mendicant), can provide Christian theology with an approach and method for comparative study that appreciates the role and value of local agency and autochthonous spiritualities.

Despite the rich paper trail from this area and period the roles and historical, ethnographic, and theological contributions by such Spanish missionaries have remained underappreciated by most scholars. Yet, the claims and approaches of these missionaries remain flat and un-nuanced over and against recent scholarly attempts to fill out and evaluate the agency and intellect of the indigenous peoples with a new appreciation. Furthermore, like White’s research into colonial interactions between the French and Algonquians, few ethnohistorians have access to historical material written by indigenous groups during or immediately after the periods of first encounters with Europeans.

However, unlike other indigenous American peoples, the Maya of Mesoamerica developed a phonetic writing system prior to contact with Europeans as part of their linguistic ideology that enabled them to appropriate the mendicant alphabet and quickly generate their own manuscripts.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, unlike most other first encounters in the Americas, the “middle ground” in Mesoamerica is filled, in part, with written sources—Mayan texts, namely *títulos*, warranting intertextual comparison. Together the writings of the highland Maya, namely the Western K’iche’, and the Spanish mendicant missionaries working in the highlands of Guatemala, specifically Dominican Friar Domingo de Vico, offer a missing and substantive insight because they constitute a brief but rare snapshot into this historical period of first contact, and a period of reconfiguration of both Hispano-Catholicism and the indigenous religion of the Maya.

Furthermore, while ethnohistorians and linguistic anthropologists have dedicated a significant amount of scholarship to the early post-contact literature by the Maya, theologians have been remiss in recognizing the value and role of these texts in either the history of Christian theological thought and method or for current constructive theological work, especially by Latin American liberationists who have taken the cultural turn seriously. Finally, despite their recognizing mendicant missionaries' work in designing and teaching a Latin-based script for Mesoamerican languages, producing the first grammars and lexicons in those languages, and often as the face of Christendom being among the primary responders to Mayan authors, ethnohistorians and linguistic anthropologists have made few efforts to take seriously and to appreciate the writings of Spanish Franciscans or Dominicans.<sup>3</sup>

The near-forgotten theologian Domingo de Vico, O.P., and his theological method predicated on his ethnographic and linguistic work among the Maya can serve as a missing key for those in the human sciences, including theologians, who work on this period. As the earliest historical period to include mutually responsive written texts by Christian theologians and religious "others," this period should be of particular importance for Christian theology in general. Followed by a biography of Vico and his context, this paper will illustrate his culturally and linguistically attuned approach through a brief analysis of the structure of Vico's theological treatise—the *Theologia Indorum*. Specifically, an analysis of genre and doctrine of God in Vico's *Theologia Indorum* will further clarify this text as a theological work akin to a *summa theologica americana* rather than other previous mendicant genres of popular theology used in the Americas, such as *doctrinae christianae* or *sermonarios*. Furthermore, attention to his doctrine of God will examine one particular, but main, theological claim in which Vico argues with and through highland Mayan concepts and rhetoric. Finally, an intertextual comparison between these two aspects of Vico's *Theologia Indorum* (its structure and claims regarding the divine) and that of a Mayan text, the *Title of Totonicapán*, this paper will demonstrate how ethnohistorical sources read in light of each other provide insightful antecedents of inter-religious dialogue – despite perceived misunderstandings – for current comparative theology.

### **Friar Domingo de Vico, O.P.: Brief Life, Long Work**

Of these early mendicant missionaries, Friar Domingo de Vico compiled the first important works on numerous Mayan languages and translation materials that served as major touchstones in the following centuries' debates in Mesoamerica. Born possibly around 1519 in Úbeda, Jaén when it was still an Arabic and Ladino (Sephardic Castilian) speaking region of southern Iberia, Domingo de Vico studied at the Dominican convent's Colegio de San Andrés in Úbeda and the Universidad de Salamanca before going to the Americas with Bishop Bartolomé de las Casas, O.P., and 45 other

Dominican missionaries on January 12, 1544.<sup>4</sup> The prestige of Las Casas – a former military chaplain, reformed estate and slave owner, “defender of the Indians,” and now new bishop of a new dioceses – was not a coincidence on this second and largest Dominican expedition to the American mainland in the sixteenth century with nearly half of them leaving Salamanca (Ciudad Suárez 1996, 29-31n66). Vico and his cohort were chosen not as a punishment or to dispose of them from Iberia but rather because the Order sought among the best and the brightest. Upon arriving in Ciudad Real, Chiapas, Mexico on March 12, 1545, Vico headed what would eventually be the Colegio de Santo Domingo in Chiapas and began working in the Dominican convents of those highlands and later in Guatemala (Remesal 1996, vol. 2, 289-292). In 1551 Vico was elected prior of the Dominican convent of Guatemala, a position he held for almost three years before resuming his missionary fieldwork (Akkeren 2010, forthcoming). As the prior he remained in the colonial regional capital city of Santiago de los Caballeros de Guatemala.<sup>5</sup> There he had close contact with Franciscan Friar Francisco de la Parra who invented the Latin-based alphabet used by all mendicants for writing Mayan languages. Also in Santiago, Vico most likely met and established a close working relationship with Diego Reynoso, a K’iche’ nobleman from Totonicapán whom Bishop Francisco Marroquín, the first bishop of Guatemala, invited and sponsored to study in that capital city. As a member of the pre-Hispanic Western K’iche’ ruling council, or *popol winaq*, a minor author of the eventual *Popol Wuj* or Mayan “Book of the Council,” and the principal author of the *Title of Totonicapán*, Reynoso was probably Vico’s primary consultant on K’iche’ language, culture, and religion.

By February 11, 1553 Vico finished the first part of a theology, his *Theologia Indorum* (Manuscrit Américain 5, 185 recto; Manuscrit Américain 10, 101 recto). The following year, on November 9, 1554, Vico finished the second part of this *Theologia Indorum* at the same time that the new and larger Dominican Province of San Vicente was designed and its regional center for the Dominicans in southern Mesoamerica moved from Santiago, Guatemala to Ciudad Real, Chiapas (Akkeren 2010, forthcoming). As a result of these changes, Vico was elected prior of the new Dominican convent of Cobán, the regional capital of the Verapaces. Early chroniclers note Vico’s prolific ethnographic, linguistic, and religious writing, his facility and competency in at least seven indigenous languages, and his death.<sup>6</sup> While his exact date of birth is unknown, early Spanish and Mayan sources – such as the 1565 *Título del barrio de Santa Ana* by Poqomchi’ Maya – mention his martyrdom by Chol Maya in the Acalán region north of Cobán on November 22, 1555 (Sapper 1906, 373-381 and Stoll 1906, 383-397).<sup>7</sup>

In addition to his previous writings on Mayan grammar, vocabulary, customs, stories, idiomatic expressions, et cetera, Vico wrote sermons and hymns as well as doctrinal material that incorporated elements of both Jean Gerson’s catechism as well as Thomas Aquinas’s theology. A few years before Vico’s death Guatemalan bishop

Francisco Marroquín – who fostered the Dominican and Franciscan friars’ work on Mayan languages and even supposedly mastered a couple of the Mayan languages himself – commissioned Vico to write a treatise on the nature of idolatry as a foundational primer or *summa consciencia* for future debates in the colony on the diversity of deviance and proscribed penances (Scholes 1952, 400). What Vico wrote instead of a supposed *Tratado de idolos* was more comprehensive. In 1554 Vico completed his theology in Mayan languages, mostly in K’iche’, Kaqchikel, and Tz’utujil (Saint-Lu 1968, 424, 426-427n227). Drawing upon his homiletical, linguistic, and ethnographic work, he wrote a theology that would serve as examples for how preaching might actually use local beliefs rather than merely condemn them.

Consisting of almost 700 manuscript pages divided into two parts, Domingo de Vico’s *Theologia Indorum* addresses a variety of theological and cultural themes. The first part, entailing 105 numbered chapters in addition to a proemium (or preamble) and a colophon, begins with the being of God and the creation of the world until the birth of Christ.<sup>8</sup> The second part contains 110 numbered chapters and a proemium and begins with the parents of the Virgin Mary, (Saints Ann and Joachim) and ends with the “final judgment.”<sup>9</sup> As mendicant publications of this period and region consisted of not only doctrinal tracts for instruction in the Christian faith and ceremonial practices but also sermons with prayers, catechisms, and other doctrinal materials, the *Theologia Indorum* exemplifies all of these genres. Furthermore, it exemplifies these missionaries’ efforts to achieve their main aim of presenting recondite subject matters in languages that – from the missionary preacher’s perspective – were problematic (Scholes 1952, 404). The *Theologia Indorum*, thus, was not a translation of a Castilian or Latin document into a Mayan language but rather a Christian product or voice from within the early encounter.

However, unlike other missionary works, Vico’s indigenous theology was never published but only continuously hand-copied. In comparison with contemporaneous mendicant texts, Vico’s *Theologia Indorum* distinguishes itself in four basic ways. First, Vico’s manuscript is not a translation of a previously written work elaborated in Europe and exported to Mesoamerica, but instead explicitly references Mayan practices and narratives based on his direct conversation *with* and ethnographic study *among* the Maya. Secondly, the *Theologia Indorum* is not written in either Latin or Castilian but originally in K’iche’. Thirdly, the *Theologia Indorum* is the first known work written in the Americas to explicitly declare itself a “theology,” thus intentionally differentiating itself from its peer texts. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, while commissioned by the Church as a preaching and teaching aid for parish priests, the primary readers directly addressed in Vico’s theology are not fellow mendicants but literate Maya, by which the *Theologia Indorum* emerges as a direct Christian reply to the Maya in the

midst of early cultural encounters. In this respect, *Theologia Indorum* may be translated as both “Theology of the Indians” and “Theology for the Indians.”

Long after his death Vico’s writings were copied and passed along between later clergy with his work influencing that of others who did not necessarily attribute credit to him (Remesal 1966, vol. 1, 298 and Sáenz de Santa María 1974, 369). By the turn of the eighteenth century the “discoverer” of the Mayan “Book of the Council” or *Popol Wuj*, Dominican Friar Francisco Ximénez, commented that the majority of Vico’s works could still be found among the Mayan leaders and parish caretakers, or *fiscales*, as:

[I]t is a lot to note those first fathers that wrote, who at least some writings can still be found, those of the venerable father [Vico] have not all been lost, whereas before only some of his are saved by the Indians, holding on to them with a veneration as if it was a rich treasure; reading publically in the church on the days which they gather, and it is a very dignified thing I recall that there are some very obscure old writings that today that seem to have been updated a great deal from the ancient languages as in every successful language, of this venerable father [Vico] they are clear for all that appear in the same language that is found today (Ximénez 1985 [ca. 1701], 43, my translation).

In fact, a systematic comparison of mendicant doctrinal tracts written over the next two centuries after Vico’s death prove how, despite the early colonial context and issues surrounding Vico and his work, the *Theologia Indorum* made a lasting impression in the region (Sachse 2007, 21). Well into the eighteenth century later clergy in the Mayan highlands acknowledged, even in formal surveys submitted to the ecclesial hierarchy in Guatemala and Spain, that:

[T]o explain in the language of the native population the holy teachings, I use the books left to us by the holy missionary fathers, especially the one that is called the “Indian Theology,” prepared by the venerable father Vico of my holy religion (Cortéz y Larraz, cuaderno 2, 35 verso – 43 recto, my translation).

Regarding his linguistic work specifically, while it is possible that he wrote grammars and lexicons on all of the seven Mayan languages that he knew, only two survive: his K’iche’ grammar and Kaqchikel dictionary. However, to the extent that they did survive, they continued to influence and be used by later clergy in their studies of Mayan languages (Bredt-Kriszat 1997, 188 and n16). Among both Maya and mendicants, the



ethnographic, linguistic, and theological work of Vico was a “best seller” (Bredt-Kriszat 1997, 185).

As a result of Vico’s interdisciplinary theological method and amalgamated genre as a *summa*, the few recent scholars who have worked on the *Theologia Indorum* mistakenly identified the work as either a mere compilation of sermons or the redaction of three or four separate, previously written works: “The Names of God” or “Theology of the Indians” proper from chapter one to around chapter 29, “The Earthy Paradise” from chapter 30 to 45, “The List of Great Names” from chapter 46 through the remainder of the part one, and a catechism as part two (Acuña 1992, 137, and Acuña 2004, 19).<sup>10</sup> While the vast majority of writings by Spanish mendicant missionaries during the sixteenth century in Mesoamerica did consist of *cartillas* or catechisms and *sermonerios* or sermon collections, Vico’s two tomes clearly distinguish themselves even on the superficial quantitative scale in both size and scope and, thus, consist of “probably the most complete theological treatise ever produced in a native American tongue” (Brinton 1883, n32).

### **A *Summa Theologica Americana*: A Question of Genre**

The most apparent evidence that his *Theologia Indorum* is not a mere collection of sermons but rather an internally coherent and cohesively structured theological work pertains to the ordering of the chapters. Because Vico listed his chapter headings with K’iche’ ordinal numbers and wrote them out in the Latin-based script, rather than use Arabic numbers or Roman numeral, the ordering of the units or chapters in the *Theologia Indorum* has misled both scholars of the nineteenth century to see the two volumes as an edited anthology and later ethnohistorians of the twentieth century to under-appreciate Vico’s influence on texts written by the Maya.<sup>11</sup> As evidenced throughout the body of the work, the numbering within Vico’s theology entails multiple orders of general or major points, topics, or themes and various divisions, subdivisions, and sub-subdivisions of minor points. Vico distinguishes between these major and minor points with a set of basic K’iche’ words. He further refers to major topics as *b’ij* or *b’i* (literally “name” which in current K’iche’ is *b’i’aj* in its unpossessed form) with usually some sort of modifier, such as *loq’olaj b’ij* (“beloved name”) or *nima b’ij* (“big name”), or even occasionally a combination, *nima loq’olaj b’ij*. In the first part of his theology the use of *b’ij* or *b’i* becomes confusing as the latter portion of part one is structured along the lines of a list of prominent character names from the Catholic Old Testament. The two uses of “name” – the first use to mean “general point” or “major theme” and the second use to refer to proper personal names – both appear in chapter 44 and obviously indicate two different types of listings (Manuscrit Américain 5, 63 verso). Without previous attention to chapter 44 and the beginning of a new count with eight names starting with Adam, that skip chapters 45 and 46 but continue in chapter 47

with Cain, Abel, and Seth as the enumerated ninth, tenth, and eleventh names, the following “chapter” 48 misread as the “twelfth major theme” might seem random (Manuscrit Américain 5, 64 recto, 65 verso, 67 verso, and 69 verso).

A second but integrated numbering system of minor points or topics further highlights the internally coherent structure of the *Theologia Indorum*. While the second use of *b’ij* or *b’i* as “names” does not continue into the second part of the *Theologia Indorum*, the first use as “general theme” does along with an enumeration of minor points or topics. Minor topics, including sub-subdivisions and smaller units, have a repeating number order as new sets of subdivisions begin within each major topic. In addition to numbering them differently, Vico distinguishes major points from minor points by referring to the latter as *paj tzij*. A *paj* in K’iche’ indicates a full measure of an item in question, such as a scoopful of grain, a cupful berries, a glassful of water, a sack full of sugar, et cetera, and most often refers to liquids when used to measure something tangible. However, particularly in the high register of ritual discourse of K’iche’, such as *pixab’* or advice or council, *paj* can mean a “full measure of an idea,” a complete thought, or a point. An elder or ritual guide, a *k’amol b’e*, often begins her or his speech by announcing that she or he only wants to make “one or two points” – *jupaj, kapaj tzij*. Throughout his *Theologia Indorum*, Vico uses this K’iche’ term to designate minor points of the subdivisions within the theology’s major points or themes.

The greatest amount of confusion seems to have occurred among previous non-K’iche’ readers of the *Theologia Indorum* in the respect that Vico did not distinguish between a major point and that major point’s first minor point. When one or more chapters on minor points follows a chapter addressing a major point or theme, the major theme is also considered the first minor theme. In other words, the initial minor point enumerated in a multi-themed major topic is actually listed as the second minor point. The result is the common repetition of “[u]ka *paj tzij*” (“second point”), because no chapter headings with immediately prior listing of “*nab’e paj tzij*” (“first point”) ever appear. For this reason, a reader must pay acute attention to both the ordering of the major points (*b’ij*) along with their subsequent minor points (*paj*). Occasionally, however, the phrase “*jupaj tzij*” – most likely “*jun paj tzij*” or “one thought” rather than “first thought” – does label a couple of seemingly random chapters. Such chapters do not disrupt the number sequence and, therefore, seem to designate “a side point” or excurses.

The use of *paj* and the designation of minor points is further complicated with two other aspects of Vico’s numbering system. First, Vico often interchanges *paj* with another common K’iche’ term for “amount,” *molaj*. The rate of occurrence without disrupting the numbering sequence would indicate that he used both terms synonymously. However, current K’iche’ speakers sense a distinction in quality or level of importance between the two terms (Manuel Tahay, pers. comm.). Whereas *paj*



designates a full mutually agreed upon or a conventional unit of measure – be it traditional Maya, colonial Spanish, or current metric – *molaj* implies a less specified or ordered amount. Etymologically, *molaj* is related to both “time” as the unpossessed form of ordinal time, such as a “first time” (*jumul*) or a “second time” (*ukamul*) and possibly with “pile,” specifically such as the piles of dirt that a mole, or *b’a*, accumulates when it digs down into the ground and makes a hole, or *jul* (Santos Par, pers. comm.). While the enumeration of subdivisions as either *paj* or *molaj* indicates that they are of equal quantitative value – and thus both are minor points or subdivisions of major points rather than demarcating a distinction between subdivisions and sub-subdivisions – qualitatively a “full measure of words” is of higher importance than a “pile of words.” This use of *molaj*, however, is only evident in the first part of the *Theologia Indorum* and only in the K’iche’ versions of the text.

The second complication with Vico’s use of *paj* and *molaj* is its tendency to indicate either “minor points” or literally “chapters.” For example, in chapter 24 of part one “[u]ka *paj tzij*” clearly indexes the second minor point of the general or major point introduced in chapter 23, whereas chapter 55 explicitly uses *paj* to mean “chapter” with “*Rolajuj paj roxk’al tzij*” (“The fifty-fifth chapter” or literally the “fifth of ten (fifteen) full measures toward its three-of-twenties (plus 40) of words”) (Manuscrit Américain 5, 30 recto, 30 verso, and 78 verso). *Paj* in these two instances does not mean the same thing, thus leaving earlier unit headings, such as chapter 22 in part one, “[u]juwinaq kab’ *molaj tzij*,” ambiguous as to whether it is the “twenty-second chapter” or the “twenty-second minor point” (Manuscrit Américain 5, 27 verso). In the second part of the *Theologia Indorum*, at least in Kaqchikel, *molaj* does not appear and *paj* clearly refers to “minor point.” Instead, *pixa* or *rupixa* is used to designate the sub-sub-points in the headings from only chapters 78 through 82 in the second part in Kaqchikel.<sup>12</sup> While *paj* and *molaj* are recognizable in current K’iche’ speech and writings, the contemporary convention for “chapter” is *tanaj*, a “well-ordered stack,” as opposed to a “pile.”

Vico’s multilayered numbering system for the units within his theology, therefore, clarifies three facets of the main issues regarding the *Theologia Indorum*. These three conclusions not only serve to redress some of the more enduring misunderstandings by scholars of Vico and his work but also move beyond them and toward initial substantive insight into the content and strategic style of this theological language and method. First, by the explicit distinction between major and minor, if not also more and less important, points or topics the *Theologia Indorum* has an internally consistent, well-structured, and coherent order like a theological treatise such as a *summa*. Second, the order of presentation of the material in his theology, consisting of both biblical structure and that of catechism manuals, does not correspond to the liturgical seasons as in a missal or of the canonical hours as in a breviary making it less likely still to have been a *sermonerio*. Third and finally, the use of spelling out the

Mayan numbers in the more traditional and complex style further works, along with his appropriation of the use of *paj*, to designate a complete idea or thought – Vico’s strategic use of a formal, high register of K’iche’ normally reserved for ritual speeches by K’iche’ elders and religious and political leaders. This thus implies an argument that, for Vico, Christian clergy could position themselves as Catholic *k’amol b’e* or spiritual guides and authorities on the conditions of highland Mayan culture and religion. More importantly, the skillful use of K’iche’ and Kaqchikel terms and ritual rhetoric demonstrates a high-degree immersion by Vico into the highland Mayan world.

### A Mayan Response

As a result of the mendicant alphabet, literate Maya quickly generated a large body of indigenous literature (Scholes 1952, 400). Included in these is the *Popol Wuj*, the oldest surviving and most complete indigenous account of Native American cosmogonic narratives composed as a transcription of narratives from dances and transliteration of logographic codices which had managed to survive the book burnings of Mesoamerican libraries. These surviving colonial documents authored by highland Maya in the missionary script represent their voices in their encounter with Hispano-Catholicism. Along with the mendicant missionaries, indigenous Mesoamericans were not passive recipients of conversion efforts but active participants and initiators of religious changes that, in turn, transformed their culture. With highland Mayan voices “fixed” in oral texts via myths or transcribed from logosymbolic glyphs and oral speeches into the colonial script and engaged with missionary materials (such as catechism manuals, scripture, sermons, passion plays, et cetera), their early colonial period documents illustrate a larger, longer conversation that evinces active Mayan involvement in the reshaping and maintaining of their cosmology and corresponding spirituality (Restall 1997, 246-254 and Megged 1995, 62). Most of the post-contact native documents from the highlands were written for legal and political purposes and functioned as land titles before the Spanish Crown (Carmack 1973, 19).<sup>13</sup> Among the K’iche’ Maya, the largest of the highland sociopolitical and linguistic groups, approximately forty such *títulos* still exist as annals, testaments, appendices, and fragments, in addition to the *Popol Wuj* and a play, *The Lord of Rab’inal*. They contain many clues to the pre-Hispanic social order, noble genealogies, calendrics, history, and creation of the cosmos from the highland Maya point of view (Carmack 1973, 18).

The *Title of Totonicapán* contains more references to Christianity than any other indigenous document from the early colonial period. The appropriation of the legal genre of *título*, land title or deed, as well as of legal wills by Maya was not an uncommon event amidst the ongoing legal claims over land between Spaniards and Mayan nobility (Carmack and Mondloch 2007, 12). The *Title of Totonicapán* is no exception. However, unlike their European counterparts, some of the Mayan deeds or *títulos* based their

argument for proper land ownership within an account of creation. Unlike contemporaneous Mayan mythic and social histories, such as the *Popol Wuj* or the *Annals of the Kaqchikel*, the *Title of Totonicapán* demonstrates references to both traditional Mayan religious narratives and Genesis by way of Vico's *Theologia Indorum*, specifically the first part which Vico completed by 1553 (Carmack and Mondloch 2007, 10-11). Written in 1554 – the same year that Vico completed the second part of his *Theologia Indorum* – the first seven folios of the *Title of Totonicapán* consist of a summary of Vico's treatment of Genesis and consistently reiterate the K'iche' phrase Vico uses for "God" – *Tz'aqol-B'itol, nima ajaw*. By the eighth folio, however, the *Title of Totonicapán* begins to incorporate elements from traditional, pre-Hispanic Mayan narratives, such as the cosmogonic histories also found in the *Popol Wuj*. In some parts of the *Title of Totonicapán* the authors literally recite Vico while in other places they either make grammatical changes to his formal K'iche' or substantially adapt his position to traditional culture (Carmack and Mondloch 2007, 10-11). While the *Title of Totonicapán* does not negate or resist Vico's appropriated K'iche' name for God or his theology in general, it does use many other divine names as if to correct Vico's synonymous or univocal use and at least to imply an analogical use with different sets of names. On one hand, this Mayan text recognizes Vico's accommodation to Mayan culture and spirituality. On the other hand, the Mayan authors, such as Diego Reynoso, accommodated Vico but in a way that did not allow his theology to overwrite theirs, thereby consisting of a direct Mayan response or correction to the *Theologia Indorum*.

In general, the *Title of Totonicapán* consists of three elements: an account of biblical creation followed by the biblical genealogies and migration stories; a genealogy of K'iche' rulers since their mythical migration from "across the waters" in the east and into the Guatemalan highlands; and the verbal mapping out of the territory of land attributed to the Yax clan. The signature page contains the names of the then still living K'iche' nobility residing in Totonicapán and the area of Q'uma'kaj – the pre-Hispanic K'iche' capital and present day Santa Cruz del Quiché and Chichicastenango (or Chi Uwi' La'). For the most part, the value of the document is its correspondence to genealogies in other *títulos* and the *Popol Wuj* whereby a pre-Hispanic K'iche' national history can be reconstructed from the perspective of the K'iche' Maya through the 1550s.

As the document is written in the K'iche' language, it is more likely to have had a primary readership or audience among K'iche' elite. However, this text is written in the new genre appropriated from imperial Spain by Mayan landed gentry which the Spanish crown recognized, absolved from paying tribute, and allowed to hold estates of indigenous labor forces. While previous scholars who have worked with these highland Mayan documents have underestimated both the influence of Vico and the agency of the K'iche' authors and redactors – arguing instead that they merely copied from the *Theologia Indorum* without understanding Vico's claims and did not understand how to

write their own number system (Carmack and Mondloch 2007, 167n25 and n33) – analysis of the first seven folios in light of the internal structure of the *Theologia Indorum* clarifies how the K'iche' authors of the *Title of Totonicapán* redacted and further contextualized Vico's work.

The opening line of the *Title of Totonicapán* begins with what has previously been translated as “This is the second chapter” (*Uae vcab tçih* or *Wa we ukab' tzi*), leading some scholars to speculate that either a first chapter from an earlier version is missing or that the K'iche' authors misquoted from Vico's *Theologia Indorum* (Carmack and Mondloch 2007, 39). The latter is more likely, as the word-final /h/ and /b/ in the colonial mendicant script appear similar, and this opening chapter of the *Title of Totonicapán* begins by describing the “Earthly Paradise,” the topic of chapter 30 in the first part of Vico's theology (Manuscrit Américain no. 5, folio 44 recto). However, as discussed above, Vico did not number his chapters but rather his major and minor themes; chapter 30 in the *Theologia Indorum* is numbered as the fourth major theme (*Vcah nimabi* or *Ukaj nima b'i*) on the “Earthly Paradise” (Manuscrit Américain no. 5, folio 44 recto). In other words, where Vico numbered his thirtieth unit in K'iche' as *vcah* (*ukaj* or “fourth”), the authors or scribes of the *Title of Totonicapán* instead wrote *vcab* (*ukab'* or “second”). Based on comparative analysis between the listing of sections, subsections, and sub-subsections as “chapter” units in the *Theologia Indorum* and those “chapters” or *paj tzi* explicitly mentioned in the first seven folios of the *Title of Totonicapán*, it becomes increasingly obvious that the K'iche' authors did not merely copy but also closely read and then edited on their own “chapters” 26 through 101 of the first part of the *Theologia Indorum* as an appropriation of and correction to Vico.

For example, after recounting the first seven days of creation from Genesis from Vico's “chapter” 30, the *Title of Totonicapán* then shifts to “chapter” 29 or the “fourth subsection of the third major theme” in the *Theologia Indorum* to tell about the “nine groups and levels of angels” (Carmack and Mondloch 2007, 41). Because this is only introduced as another “[u]kaj paj tzi,” previous Mayanists have misunderstood this as another listing of a “fourth chapter” in the *Title of Totonicapán*. While not all of Vico's sections are explicitly referenced through line 65 of the *Title of Totonicapán*, the K'iche' authors combined and redacted “chapters” 26 and 29 of the *Theologia Indorum* before then moving to “chapter” 31 or the “fifth major theme” (*Ro' paj tzi*) of Vico's theology, which addresses Adam and Eve as the first human beings (Carmack and Mondloch 2007, 43). “Chapters” 27 and 28 of the *Theologia Indorum*, which deal with the story of the fall of Lucifer, are skipped until line 70, where they are then edited down together with “chapter” 38 of the *Theologia Indorum* (Carmack and Mondloch 2007, 45). Therefore, this apparent move from a “fourth chapter” (*ukaj paj tzi*) to a “fifth chapter” (*ro' paj tzi*) – rather than recognizing that the K'iche' authors are citing from Vico's “fourth minor point [of the third major theme]” and then from his “fifth major theme” –

have mistakenly led scholars to read these section headings as “chapters” proper to the *Title of Totonicapán* rather than as Mayan citations back to the *Theologia Indorum*. In discussing the relationship between Lucifer, Adam, and Eve, by line 103 the *Title of Totonicapán* again cites a “[u]kaj paj tzij” – the fourth subsection of the fifth major point or “chapter” 43 of the *Theologia Indorum*, giving the false impression that the K’iche’ authors have lost count of their own “chapters” as they move from a “fourth” unit to a “fifth” unit and then to a “fourth” unit again (Carmack and Mondloch 2007, 47).

As demonstrated in Table 1, over the course of the first 342 lines or 14 pages of the *Title of Totonicapán*, the K’iche’ authors strategically selected sections dealing with creation and migration – such as the flood, the tower of Babel, Exodus, and exile stories from the Catholic Old Testament – to construct a Catholic corpus by which to integrate and graft on their own cosmogonic and migration narratives. On one hand, the citing of specific number headings of sections or “chapters” from the *Theologia Indorum* indicates that the K’iche’ authors had not merely heard the topics or themes addressed in mendicant sermons in their local parishes but had closely read Vico’s text. On the other hand, in addition to having large portions quoted or paraphrased, the K’iche’ authors’ autochthonous editing and rewriting of the biblical accounts demonstrates that they understood not only the themes and how they may have topically matched with their own pre-Hispanic stories but also the persuasive force such stories bore for Spanish ecclesial and colonial authorities.

**Table 1 “Chapters” from Vico’s *Theologia Indorum* in the Title of Totonicapán**

Line in <i>TT</i>	“Chapter(s)” of Vico’s <i>TI</i>	Content
1	30	seven days of creation and the Earthly Paradise
6	(26, 27, 28) 29	nine levels of angles
66	(27, 28) 31	creation of first humans
103	43	creation of Eve out of Adam and the two trees
164	47 (49)	Cain, Abel, and Seth and their descendents
185	51	flood and the children of Noah
187	52	tower of Babel
198	57, 58	Jacob and his sons
201	59, 60, 61	Joseph and the entrance into Egypt
206	62 (60, 63)	Moses in Egypt



223	64, 65	Moses and Aaron confront the pharaoh
250	(66) 81-84	crossing the river
259	67, 68	journey in the wilderness
264	69	defeat of Amalech
265	72	arrival of children of Jacob
267	77	death of Moses in Moab
269	81, 82	Jericho defeated and Joseph as ruler
270	86	Joseph's death
272	87, 88	Samuel and Saul
273	89	David
274	90	Solomon
273	91-101	listing of prophets
281	100	arrival of Babylon and Assyria
283	101	diaspora by Babylon and Assyria

Furthermore, the K'iche' author-redactors made two additional, if not also corrective, moves beyond Vico's theology, again demonstrating that his theology was neither merely imposed and regurgitated nor superficially used for legal gain, such as land rights. First, the K'iche' author-redactors often changed Vico's translated account of the biblical stories for wording or versions that would have been more properly or correctly understood by a wider K'iche' audience. For example, beginning in line 94 the *Title of Totonicapán* repeatedly specifies that the two trees placed in the "Earthly Paradise" by God – the tree of eternal life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil – were *tulul* or zapote trees (*Pouteria sapota*), a specification that does not appear in the *Theologia Indorum* (Carmack and Mondloch 2007, 45). With apples as a later European imported crop, highland Maya would have had little to no understanding of even the popular, non-biblical idea of these two trees mentioned in Genesis as apple trees. The initiative by K'iche' interpreters to designate these two trees as common but prized fruit trees native to the more temperate and lush regions in and around the highlands reduces the proximity and unfamiliarity of the biblical "Earthly Paradise" narrative to a wider Maya audience.

In addition to this example of K'iche' authors further contextualizing biblical narratives for their newly at-least-nominally Catholic commoners, two other notable examples demonstrate this move by K'iche' elite. In line 178 the *Title of Totonicapán* states that Cain was slain in his *ab'ix*, "milpa" or corn-squash-bean field, the common farming plot of traditional foodstuffs of many Mesoamerican and North American indigenous peoples (Carmack and Mondloch 2007, 53). Cain, therefore, for these early

K'iche' exegetes was not simply killed in a generic field but rather in a familiar, domesticated, or presumably safe place recognized by average K'iche' and Mesoamerican agriculturalists. However, "chapter" 47 of the *Theologia Indorum*, in which Vico recounts the story of Cain and Abel, does not specify in what type of field Cain's death took place (Manuscrit Américain no. 5, folio 69 recto).

Finally, likewise in line 209 the *Title of Totonicapán* specifies that the burning bush that confronted Moses was a *tukan*, "mora" bush that would include raspberry, boysenberry, blackberry, or other such types of shrubs but with thorns (Carmack and Mondloch 2007, 55). In addition to a common food source, the K'iche' often use *tukan* or "mora" bushes as property border markers against human or animal intruders. Such an example might, in the understanding of average highland Maya, highlight not so much a border of a particular parcel but rather a conceptual boundary between the domesticated and the divine, a border sought by mendicant missionaries but better explained and translated by K'iche' scribes. In all three of these examples, the K'iche' author-redactors of Vico's theology further contextualized the biblical narratives on their own to make them more familiar and culturally accessible for a wider K'iche'an readership, a criterion that would not be apparent in a resistant or reactionary document or a text merely interested in property rights.

The second constructive and corrective move that the K'iche' author-redactors of the *Title of Totonicapán* make pertains to the mapping of their pre-Hispanic narratives onto the biblical accounts from Vico and the use of the K'iche' names for the divine. While the first seven folios consist of an edited version of the first part of Vico's theology, folio eight of the *Title of Totonicapán* identifies the migration of the four principle founders of the K'iche' nation with the "lost" tribes of ancient Israel, the diaspora under the invasion of ancient Assyria, and the exile by ancient Babylonia (Carmack and Mondloch 2007, 69). On one hand, by leaning into the popular misunderstanding by many of the Spanish missionaries that the indigenous peoples of the Americas were descendents of the "lost ten tribes," the K'iche' elite ground the legitimacy of their culture, worldview, and spirituality in popular mendicant terms. On the other hand, based on the commonly accepted authority of this misunderstanding, the K'iche' proceeded not only to unfold their national history after the "migration from the east" – with the Mayan mythic place of origin of Tulan and biblical Babylon now one and the same – but also to reassert the validity of their own pre-Hispanic cosmogonic narratives, such as the Hero Twins' cosmic ball game with the lords of the otherworld, Xib'alb'a. While the K'iche' author-redactors of the *Title of the Totonicapán* further contextualized the biblical stories via Vico, they simultaneously reconfigured their own religious stories. Throughout the course of this dual process, as the K'iche' author-redactors referred repeatedly to God, they affirmed the common use Vico's K'iche' term for the triune God but also added onto it through their continued use of, and thus in

defense of, their other terms for divine agency as apparent in the remainder of the *Title of Totonicapán* and other contemporaneous texts like the *Popol Wuj*.

### **Intertextual Inter-religious Theological Negotiations: Talking about Talk about God**

Throughout his opening chapters of the *Theologia Indorum*, Vico constructs a Spanish-K'iche' couplet by which to refer to God as he speaks of God – *Dios, nima ajaw* or “God, the great lord.” At this level of referencing, Vico’s phrase for God is neither analogical nor equivocal but rather univocal and therefore establishing a synonymous relationship between a Christian set and a Christian’s understanding of a Mayan set of terms for the divine. In the opening of his chapter one, Vico explains that:

“God” spoken of by us [Catholic] priests,  
 “Maker-Modeler” by the [K'iche'] people, is  
     the Maker of the people,  
     the Modeler of the people,  
     the Doer of us all, and  
     the Creator of us all;  
 only [God] made us,  
 only [God] made us people,  
     sculpted us,  
     carved us;  
         we have been sculpted;  
         we have been carved.  
 Maker of the good, Creator of persons;  
 we were good by [God], we were persons by [God] (Manuscrit Américain  
 5, 1 recto).<sup>14</sup>

The K'iche' root or stem *-tz'aq-* literally refers to building something out of stone as opposed to adobe or wood and denotes female creative qualities whereas the K'iche' root or stem *-b'it-* refers to working with clay for pots, jars, or bowls and denotes male creative qualities in terms of wider highland Mayan culture and worldview (Carmack and Mondloch 2007, 165n12). However, as the second half of the above quote implies, *b'itol* also refers metaphorically to the raising of children (Tedlock 1983, 267), such as the humans as the “children of God.” Based on his knowledge of K'iche' cosmogonic narratives, Vico selects a traditional K'iche' couplet for the divine, one that is similar to “Creator” in Genesis, and establishes it as the same as, or univocal to, the Hispano-Catholic *Dios*.

Rhetorically, Vico’s univocal shift from *Dios, nima ajaw* for *Tz'aqol-B'itol, nima ajaw* augments his Spanish-K'iche' couplet for a tercet. Both forms, along with

quatrains and longer forms of parallel or chiasmic structure, are extremely common in formal or the high register of spoken and written K'iche'an languages. The formation of these juxtaposing parallel constructions was not only common in Mayan thought and speech before the arrival of Europeans but also influenced the construction of Maya-Spanish bilingual semantic couplets with mendicant missionaries working throughout the Maya region.<sup>15</sup> Vico's shift from a couplet for a tercet is actually two-fold as his replacement of *Tz'aqol-B'itol* or "Maker-Modeler" for the first part of his own couplet – the "Dios" in *Dios, nima ajaw* – is already in parallel form and thus a couplet. Therefore, his construction of the tercet *Tz'aqol-B'itol, nima ajaw* moves both his couplet (*Dios, nima ajaw*) and that of the K'iche' (*Tz'aqol-B'itol*) into a tercet form. In general, a third concept or term – in this case *nima ajaw* – is added within formal K'iche' rhetoric to add nuance the first two terms neither through analogous complementarity nor necessarily equivocation but rather through subtle difference (Restall 1997, 267).<sup>16</sup> This use of a third term, or the shift of rhetorical context of *nima ajaw* from the second term of his couplet for the third term of his tercet, allows Vico to establish and use analogies not only on scholastic grounds but also on K'iche'an grounds and their understanding of similarity-in-difference or analogy.

Furthermore, in K'iche' poetics or rhetoric, a fourth term or phrase added before or after a tercet restores evenness to form either a quatrain or a pair of couplets (Tedlock 1983, 267). As also demonstrated in the above quote from the first chapter of his theology, Vico and the high register of K'iche' language in his *Theologia Indorum* is not limited merely to couplets and tercets but cuts across the various poetic and rhetorical forms of highland Maya moral and ritual discourse. For example, after establishing the univocal relationship between his "God" and the K'iche's' "Maker-Modeler," Vico moves his list of what God does into a quatrain. He begins by not only reaffirming traditional K'iche' religious language and teaching but then reiterates the *-tz'aq-* and *-b'it-* roots as the first couplet of his quatrain followed by a second couplet of God as one who "does" (*-b'an-*) and as one who "creates" (*-winaqirisa-*). By opening his theological treatise with the construction and combination of couplets not only in but also according to K'iche' speech, Vico incorporates concepts and modes of meaning intelligible to his scholastic humanist cohort and the Mayan culture of his audience.

In this regard, Vico's use of Mayan culture and language as a theological resource is not merely symbolic or a negotiation of the form or level of his discourse. Such as in the construction of the second couplet to his divine quatrain, Vico strategically pulls together a quotidian word with the common stem "to do" (*-b'an-*) together with a highly technical and specialized word of "to create" (*-winaq-*) now used only by K'iche' rhetoricians.<sup>17</sup> The root of this verb, *-winaq-*, refers simultaneously to "people" and to "twenty," however the verb is not "to people or populate" or "to make into twenty." Rather, this verb means "to create for the first time" or "to originate" but at the level of

ideas. It is uniquely used, most commonly in colonial and current K'iche' discourse, affirmatively for an activity by a divine agent. However, when used in reference with a human agent the connotation is not positive as in "to create" or "to make" but rather negative as in "to make up" or "to fabricate or fib." The positive human counterpart is -*k'isanik*, "to invent" or "to raise or rear a child" (Santos Par, pers. comm.).

The result is a classic K'iche' quatrain where the first two terms are of a high register and complement each other like two sides of coin – "to sculpt" or "to make" (-*tz'aq-*) and "to carve" or "to model"(-*b'it-*) with each implying female and male complementarity respectively and child rearing – and the third term (-*b'an-*) for "to make" differentiates as a more ordinary or low register term; the fourth term (-*winaq-*) then raises again the register as a term uniquely applied to the divine in K'iche', like the first two terms, but complementing the non-specified type of "making" as a general term like that of the third. The implications of ending with this particular stem leaves an increased impact on a potential K'iche' reader as *winaq* also referring to "20" connotes completion of a round within the Mayan vigesimal number system. Vico's quatrain and initial presentation of an understanding of the divine negotiated between Hispano-Catholic and K'iche' worldviews is, at least implicitly, "complete." Vico's ability to convey ideas of God not by merely translating a European catechism, sermons, or *summa questio* into a Mesoamerican language but rather negotiating in, through, and with Mayan concepts, style, and rules demonstrates the highly technical contextualization enterprise he engaged in as well as the need for an interdisciplinary theological method that appreciated and understood historical Mayan sources and mendicant ethnographies.

While the use of *Tz'aqol-B'itol* is not dropped, by folio 18 other names for God, if not other gods, such as *Tojil* and *Uk'u'x Kaj*, *Uk'u'x Ulew* (Heart of Sky, Heart of Earth) are put forward specifically in reference to Nakxit's prayer (Carmack and Mondloch, 107). In this respect, K'iche' socio-political and religious leaders, through their appropriation of a genre originally designed as a legal appeal to the Spanish Crown regarding land ownership, refute Vico's equation of the Christian God of the Bible with the highland Mayan understanding of divinity by, on one hand, agreeing with Vico that God is like *Tz'aqol-B'itol* but, on the other hand, not limited to *Tz'aqol-B'itol*. Whereas Vico uses his ethnographic and linguistic research to argue for and construct analogical meanings between Hispano-Catholic and K'iche'an cultural concepts and images but an univocal or synonymous understanding of *Tz'aqol-B'itol* as God, K'iche' Maya intellectuals argue back for an analogical or commensurate contruals of the divine from a basis of a more univocal relationship between their Mayan and biblical narratives. The result is a documented exchange between two radically distinct – linguistically, culturally, and religiously – groups drawing from each other's source materials to reflect upon, translate, and negotiate talk about ideas about the divine—theology (*theo-logos*).



## Conclusion

While Vico's obvious aim pertains to the conversion of the Maya to Catholicism, his strategy builds off of a shared theological anthropology as recognized by the Church in 1537, the latent legitimacy of a natural disposition to commune with the divine, and an affirmation of pre-Hispanic Maya spirituality and culture. As Vico argued against the autonomous mixing of Maya spiritual practices with Catholic devotionism, he did not rule out altogether a mixing of Catholic theology and indigenous culture as he provided an argument and precedent for another kind of mixing. First, he works primarily not only in K'iche'an languages, in which he makes his argument and assumes a literate Maya readership, but also adapts a highly formalized K'iche' vocabulary and rhetoric reserved by the Maya for speaking about the sacred. Second, Vico appears acutely aware of the analogical dimension within K'iche' as he selects his K'iche' term for God as the Maker-Modeler. While his K'iche' sources use a variety of phrases in couplet or tercet forms to refer to divine agency, Vico selects the couplet most similar to the "Creator" in Genesis over others, such as Bearer-Begetter or Sovereign Plumed Serpent. However, Vico does not use Maker-Modeler analogously to the God of the Bible but rather univocally—as understood by a Thomistic humanist in the sixteenth century.

In less than a year after the completion of the first part of his *Theologia Indorum* (1553) and probably while he was writing the second part of the *Theologia Indorum* (1554) K'iche' elites wrote the *Title of Totonicapán* (1554) and began to compile, edit, and transcribe their "Book of the Council" or *Popol Wuj* (1554-1558) as, in part, responses to the influence of Vico's theology. His death in 1555, unfortunately, prevented him from authoring a reply to the K'iche' regarding their response to his accommodation of their culture and language and use of their cosmogonic myths. Based on his appropriation of K'iche'an formal rhetoric as well as key Mayan religious and quotidian concepts, Vico might have most likely read the additional terms for divine agency put forth in Mayan texts as still univocal to the Hispano-Catholic *Dios* – an univocal relation increasingly questioned by ecclesial authorities after the arrival of the Catholic or Counter Reformation in the 1570s. Even during his lifetime, he and other mendicants schooled in the humanist scholasticism of early modern Spain who understood that different signs and words could change referents and still mean the same, faced opposition from mostly contemporaneous Franciscans who rejected accommodation of K'iche' terms for *Dios* for, instead, the Mayanized Spanish term of *Tyox* (García-Ruiz 1992, 89-92).

In addition to this mendicant debate regarding their different understandings or misunderstandings of semiotics and competing linguistic ideologies, Vico's missionary fulfillment paradigm not only competed with a more conventional replacement paradigm but also did so on the misunderstanding of indigenous Mesoamericans as

related to Jews. While many mendicants such as Vico's own Dominican superior Friar Bartolomé de las Casas disagreed with this view of Native Americans, this misunderstanding not only allowed Vico to aim to have Catholic theology fulfill Mayan religion in a similar way that he understood the New Testament to fulfill the Old Testament, but also to establish analogical meanings between Mayan culture and Hispano-Catholicism for further dialogue. K'iche' respondents, in turn, critiqued Vico's accommodationism not by rejecting his theological claims or identification of them with biblical Israelites but rather by agreeing on the misunderstood identity to invert his method of generating theological claims. Whereas Vico's theological method aimed to negotiate analogical meaning between Mayan and Iberian culture and univocal meaning between Maya spirituality and Hispano-Catholicism, highland Maya elites deployed a correction through a more univocal relation between their cultural history and that of ancient Israel and analogical understanding, thus, between their religious discourse and ritual and that of Hispano-Catholicism. Therefore, Hispano-Catholicism for the K'iche' was not a fulfillment but rather an augmentation of Maya spirituality as it accommodated biblical narratives, local ecclesial symbols and forms, and Vico's claims (Tedlock 1983, 273-4).<sup>18</sup> Despite the contrast between these two supersessionisms – Vico's fulfillment approach and the K'iche's' accumulation approach – they both agreed on enough misunderstandings to establish a provisional foundation for mutually continued inter-religious dialogue.

What has been briefly proposed here is that a comparative theological study based on intertextual analysis of indigenous and non-native materials that emerge from periods of first encounters can provide historical resources for current ethnohistorical and theological work. Furthermore, the particular moment of first contact between the Americas and Europeans is a rare, if not unique, moment in human history both to the degrees of radical alterity and the residual paper trail left by various dominant and dissenting parties. In addition to providing a thick case example of Christianity's engagement with cultural and religious others for further comparative work, the recovery and scrutiny of the work of Domingo de Vico with the highland Maya provides a reconstructed record of an inter-religious dialogue rarely available as a historical resource to comparative theology. Just as current highland Maya continue to use such texts in their own social and religious movements to redress past grievances and enhance present life, such recovery, for theology at least, gestures to a broader understanding and substantive corrective for future, comparative dialogue.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> By comparative theology I refer to the emerging school located primarily as a strand of Christian liberal theology which maintains a theological method of a mutually informative rapprochement with other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences – such as anthropology, history, language studies, et cetera – as well as between Christianity and other religions through a dialogical praxis with and highly contextual immersive commitment into a particular community of religious “others” through which to critically reflect on, if not also reconfigure, Christian religious claims. Notable representatives of this “new comparative theology” include James Fredericks, Francis X. Clooney, Kristin Base Kiblinger, and Hugh Nicholson among others.

<sup>2</sup> Similar to many other writing systems like ancient Egyptian and modern Japanese, the ancient Maya script is technically logographic: consisting of both phonetic symbols representing simple CV or “consonant-vowel” morphemes and logograms of words (but not ideas as they may be homonyms); Michael D. Coe, *Breaking of the Maya Code* (New York, New York: Thames and Hudson, Inc., 1992), 233-234.

<sup>3</sup> However, this is a trend that is currently beginning to shift in Mesoamerican studies with William F. Hanks, *Converting Words: Maya in the Age of the Cross* (Anthropology of Christianity) (Los Angeles and Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2010) and David Tavárez, “Invisible Wars: Idolatry Extripiation Projects and Native Responses in Nahua and Zapotec Communities, 1536-1728” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 2000) and in Andean studies with Alan Durston, *Pastoral Quechua: The History of Christian Translation in Colonial Peru, 1550-1650* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), Sabine MacCormack, *Religion in the Andes: Vision and Imagination in Early Colonial Peru* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), and Andrew Orta, *Catechizing Culture: Missionaries, Aymara and the “New Evangelization”* (New York, New York: Colombia University Press, 2004).

<sup>4</sup> According to Dutch anthropologist and ethnohistorian Ruud van Akkeren, the earlier date is more widely mentioned in popular literature but without any cites or documentation; Ruud van Akkeren, “Fray Domingo de Vico maestro de autores indígenas,” (forthcoming chapter, 2010), 82. However the later date is arrived at by René Acuña to place Vico in school at a more respective age by 1544; René Acuña, “La *Theologia Indorum* de fray Domingo de Vico,” *Tlalocan: Revista de Fuentes para el conocimiento de las culturas indígenas de México*, Volume X (Mexico, D.F.: Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, Instituto de Investigaciones Filológicas, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1985), 281. For examples of some of the more recent and often cited popular references to Vico, see: the *Gran Enciclopedia de Andalucía* (1979), pages 32 and 59 cited in Ginés de la Jara Navarrete, *Historia de Úbeda en sus documentos*, Volume II (Seville, Spain: Asociación Cultural Ubetense “Alfredo Cazabán Laguna,”), page 659; Dominican Friar Andrés Mesansa’s *Los obispos de la orden Dominicana en América* (Vatican: Establecimiento Benziger & C., S.A., n.d.), the only book in the Archivo General de Centro América in Guatemala City that mentions Vico, and it claims that Vico was not martyred but rather elected bishop of Verapaz between 1560 and 1566 and died a septuagenarian; the Guatemalan Catholic Archdiocese of Los Altos’ website <http://arquidiocesisdelosalto.org/content/view/15/34/> (June, 2009); the Spanish and French language website dedicated to the biographies of mendicants who worked among the Maya, <http://moines.mayas.free.fr> (June, 2009); and the more recent Swiss-Guatemalan development project

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among Q'eqchi' Maya in Cahabón, Alta Verapaz, the Instituto Agroecológico de Educación Bilingüe “Fray Domingo de Vico,” [http://www.guatesol.ch/lwschule\\_es.html](http://www.guatesol.ch/lwschule_es.html) (June, 2009).

<sup>5</sup> Now called La Antigua, this was the third of four attempts – after Iximche' or Tecpán and then Ciudad Vieja or San Miguel Escobar – to establish a capital and the most enduring capital city of Guatemala to date.

<sup>6</sup> Most notably: Remesal, especially vol. I, 420 and vol. II, 297, and Francisco Ximénez, O.P., *Historia de la provincia de San Vicente de Chiapa y Guatemala de la orden de los Predicadores*, Biblioteca “Goathemala” Volumen II, J. Antonio Villacorta C., ed. (Guatemala: Sociedad de Geografía e Historia, January 1929 [1721]), especially 473 and 523. These languages were K'iche', Kaqchikel, Tz'utujil, Q'eqchi', Poqomam, and Ch'ol (Lakantun or Lacandon) according to Ximénez; Ximénez, *Historia*, I, 58; and Poqomchi' according to Biermann; Benno Biermann, “Missionsgeschichte der Verapaz in Guatemala,” *Jahrbuch für Geschichte Staat, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft Lateinamerikas* (Colon, Germany: Böhlau Verlag Köln Graz, 1964), I, 128; also see the letter to the Audiencia de los Confines from Dominicans of May 14, 1556; Archivo General de Indias (Seville, Spain), exp. Guatemala, Leg. 168 as cited in Cristina Bredt-Kriszat and Ursula Holl, “Descripción del Vocabulario de la lengua cakchiquel de Fray Domingo de Vico,” *La descripción de las lenguas amerindias en la época colonial. Biblioteca Ibero-Americana, Vol. 63*. Klaus Zimmermann, ed. (Frankfurt and Main, Germany: Vervuert and Madrid, Spain: Iberoamericana, 1997), 176.

<sup>7</sup> This source appears to be the same as the Q'eqchi' manuscript “Iulihii titulo quetacque natirta” of August 14, 1565 (Garrett-Gates Mesoamerican Manuscripts 242, Princeton University Library). Together with and the *Annals of the Kaqchikel*, they are Mayan sources that predate almost any of the Spanish language sources about Vico.

<sup>8</sup> Based on examination of Newberry Library (Chicago, Illinois), Butler Ayer MS 1512 Cakchiquel 33; University of Pennsylvania Library (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), Manuscript Collection 700, Item 197; and Bibliothèque Nationale de France (Paris, France), Manuscrit Américain no. 3.

<sup>9</sup> Based on examination of Bibliothèque Nationale de France (Paris, France), Manuscrit Américain nos. 4, 5, 10, and 42. I have confirmed the existence of an additional eight manuscript versions of parts of the *Theologia Indorum*: Princeton University Library (Princeton, New Jersey), Garrett-Gates Manuscripts nos. 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, and 227; and American Philosophical Society (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), American Indian Manuscript no. 178.

<sup>10</sup> I have also consulted was Acuña's original typed manuscript in La Antigua, Guatemala: Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamerica (CIRMA), 1989, 3. This listing also appears in Remesal, II, 297, with Remesal possibly using Friar Francisco de Vienna's 1577 report to the Holy Office as his source.

<sup>11</sup> While Carmack and Mondloch as well as Bredt-Kriszat note the possible role in which the *Title of Totonicapán* serves as a reflection or reaction to Vico's *Theologia Indorum*, Akkeren's forthcoming chapter, “Fray Domingo de Vico maestro de autores indígenas,” provides the most textual detail to help correct this oversight.

<sup>12</sup> Due to lack of access to K'iche' versions of the second part of the *Theologia Indorum* held at Princeton University Library, this analysis was done with the Kaqchikel version, Manuscrit Américain no. 3. This word, *pixa*, does not appear in either colonial or modern K'iche' dictionaries and does not appear to be related to *pix*, "tomato" or "flash" (*centella* in Spanish; Francisco Ximénez, *Arte de last res lenguas kaqchikel, k'iche' y tz'utujil*, Biblioteca Goatemala, Volumen XXXI, Rosa Helena Chinchilla M., ed. (Guatemala City, Guatemala: Academia de Geografía e Historia de Guatemala, 1993 [1704-1714]), 130. It is possible that it is shorthand for *paj tzij*, *pixab'* (K'iche' for counsel or advice), more likely, or another K'iche' term of measurement that has since been lost.

<sup>13</sup> For a detailed study of colonial *títulos* by indigenous Mesoamericans in general including the highland Maya, see: Enrique Florescano, "El canon memorioso forjado por los *Títulos primordiales*," *Colonial Latin American Review* 11, no. 2 (December 2002): 183-230; Enrique Florescano, *National Narratives in Mexico: A History*, Nancy Hancock, trans. (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002); Enrique Florescano, "Titres primordiaux et mémoire canonique en Méso-amérique," *Études rurales*, Carmen Bernand, trans., No. 157/158 (January – June 2001) 15-43; and Matthew Restall, "Heirs to the Hieroglyphs: Indigenous Writing in Colonial Mesoamerica," *The Americas* 54, no. 2 (October 1997): 239-267.

<sup>14</sup> My English translation and punctuation from the colonial K'iche' in addition to formation into couplet and quatrain stanzas based on the Mayan poetics identified by Luis Enrique Sam Colop; Sam Colop, *Popol Wuj: Versión poética K'iche'* (Quetzaltenango and Guatemala City, Guatemala: Proyecto de Educación Maya Bilingüe Intercultural PEMBI, GTZ and Cholsamaj, 1999), 15-19. Also see Luis E. Sam Colop, "Maya Poetics" (Ph.D. dissertation, State University of New York at Buffalo, 1994).

<sup>15</sup> See Timothy Knowlton, "Dynamics of Indigenous Language Ideologies in the Colonial Redaction of a Yucatec Maya Cosmological Text," *Anthropological Linguistics* 50, no. 1 (2009): 90-112 for evidence of this in the "Books of Chilam B'alam" and the work between colonial Yukatek Maya with Franciscan missionaries in particular, and Restall, 239-276, in the region in general.

<sup>16</sup> Also see Nora C. England, *Autonomía de los idiomas mayas: Historia e identidad / Ukuta'miil, ramaq'ihil, utzijob'aal: Ri Maya' amaaq'* (Guatemala: Cholsamaj, 1994), 105-108 regarding parallelism in Mayan poetics in general; and for a case example in non-K'iche'an speech see: M. Jill Brody, "Discourse Genres in Tojolabal," *Geoscience and Man*, 26: *Tojolabal Maya Ethnographic and Linguistic Approaches*, M. Jill Brody and John S. Thomas, eds. (1 July 1988): 55-62. This textual structure not only appears in formal highland Mayan speech but also with weaving patterns or *etz'ab'alil*. In addition to merismus, or antonymic synecdoches, ten different types of parallelism have been identified within the rhetoric of formal K'iche' rhetoric which contribute to not only couplets, tercets, and quatrains but also sextets and longer parallel series often for larger chiasmic structures, Allen J. Christenson, *Popol Vuh: The Sacred Book of the Maya* (New York, New York: O Books, 2003), 44-51. Note: my use of Christenson's language analysis and expansion of Edmonson and Tedlock's work on rhetorical structures in K'iche' speech like the *Popol Wuj* is in no way an endorsement of his more speculative work, along with that of others like the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship at Brigham Young University, who aim to demonstrate a relationship between the Maya (and other Native Americans) and the Israelite Diaspora. While outside the scope of this paper, the Mayan use of parallelism described here can readily be contrasted with modern scholarly analysis of parallelism in Jewish scripture, such as: James L. Kugel, *The*



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*Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1981), 1-95.

<sup>17</sup> The unique use of *-winaq-* as “to create” in Mayan texts is abundantly apparent, such as in lines 9, 15, 21-23, 25-26 of the *Title of Totoncapán*’s account of the seven days of creation.

<sup>18</sup> This Mayan position can serve as a response not only to sixteenth-century theological positions interested in other religions and cultures like Vico but also varied twentieth-century positions like Karl Barth, Karl Rahner, David Tracy, et cetera.

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