of religious texts, communities, and persons must proceed with an eye to the emotional actor as agent as much as to the processes that pull the individual’s behavior into line with cultural standards for feeling (Corrigan 155).¹

Introduction

Three hallmarks of transition into early modernity are the wider reorientation regarding books, especially religious books in addition to the Bible, the gradual shift away from highly emotional or affective theologies, and a simultaneously larger but also tighter global perspective with the “discovery” of the Americas. Noting the extent to which these and other defining hallmarks overlapped and mutually influenced each other—such as humanism’s critical assessment of texts and philology, the modern devotional movement’s focus on religious emotions like piety and literature in vernaculars, and the development of the printing press—has informed renewed critical studies of the period. However, ironically, recent scholarly trends have not always been mutually influencing or informing. For example, as illustrated in the opening epigraph, interest in the history of emotions only slightly includes the use, conceptualization, and theorizing (if not also theologizing) of emotions in religion.² And yet the study of religious emotions during early modernity is surprisingly Eurocentric especially of a historical period partially defined by the expansion of European religions into the Americas. Even the study of the history of early modern religious emotions harbors a void of the emotions of indigenous “new Christians,” as referred to by Spain, let alone of pre- and early post-contact indigenous American religions.

Likewise, efforts—such as with ethnohistory and New Philology in particular—to balance out Eurocentric portrayals of, for example, the arrival of Europeans to the Americas has driven historians and social scientists to learn native languages and “discover” indigenous records as well as critically if not more suspiciously reread the record of European writers. But, again, few attend to

¹ Though Corrigan is summarizing Samuels (2010).
² Corrigan’s scholarship is a distinct but notable exception.
religion despite the predominance of European nominal motives, transmitters, and authors on the Americas being religious – both culturally Christian but also specifically from religious orders. Part of the problem pertains to surviving records, with most of the earliest about native religions either written by, through the lens of, or editorial oversight with Catholic clergy even, if in indigenous languages, or, if independently by and for native intellectuals, written not contemporaneous to but decades later than European accounts. Clerical records, such as of the Inquisitions, that focus on their concern of lapses by native converts back into “idolatry” has helped to disclose some of the religious worldview by indigenous Americans around the period of first contact. But geographically, temporally, and thematically early Inquisition records are limited in scope, and the underlining engine for “idolatry”—either focused on in the paper-trail or by historians, or both—is “the devil” rather than the agency, rational, and emotions (e.g., desires and fears) of native peoples. For example, Sabine MacCormack’s foundational study of Quechua religion and its treatment as idolatry by sixteenth-century Dominican missionaries correctly traces the intellectual influence of Thomism. But her analysis on Aquinas’s theology focuses almost exclusively on his theory of cognition and, thus, the propensity for deception by the devil. Furthermore, she is not afforded documents by Quechua intellectuals—like Guaman Poma de Ayala, who is also highly influenced by Aquinas, Aristotle, Cicero, Bartolomé de las Casas, and others—until at least the early seventeenth century.

The often-overlooked literature in Highland Mayan languages provides a paper-trail written by the first mendicants into the Americas, including texts in and about Mayan languages, as well as some of the first post-contact texts written by native elites, in those same Mayan languages. Among these is both the first original Christian theology written in the Americas—the *Theologia Indorum* 

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3 See, for example, most notably MacCormack 1991; Terraciano 2001, 252-317; Nesvig 2009; Tavárez 2011; and Chuchiak 2012. One of the few studies of the Inquisition in Guatemala is Few 2002 but focuses on women and gender rather than indigeneity and affective “idolatry.”

4 See, for example, Adorno 2007, 21-123.
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(volume one by 1553 and volume two by 1554), composed entirely in K’iche’an languages rather than Latin or even Spanish—along with the first set of Christian songs composed in the Americas—cups (c.1552) composed in K’iche’ and preserved in Kisla manuscript 1015 (1567)—and the oldest and most complete set of native myths written by native authors—the Popol Wuj (c.1554-58)—along with roughly 40 additional texts—like the Title of Totonicapán (c.1554) in K’iche’ and the Xajil Chronicle in Kaqchikel—in Mayan languages, by Maya writers, for Maya readers.

Most notably and relevantly, Friar Domingo de Vico toward the end of his premium to the first volume of the Theologia Indorum states the purpose of his nearly 900-page theological treatise to the Highland Maya. Specifically, he writes:

[1] Vae 4axtahal rubh 4axtahal pu 4ox clire vəzilab vinak ihl rubh rau pu re buexlub bijh. 4o dinpam rii nima rubh [¶] Chitaic chirah chiboxc naipub chirab riamab dunac vlenh. yx na4abol yx rumal [¶] Chija chi 4ox laj chija naprub chirayrah chirab retamazic D(iis) n(imahau) se bu seze nim dunac vlen. atamabul re D(iis) n(imahau) ru4 naipub retamazic tubcoh. Abinim ahke chi vinak, chitamni chi4xelanic. chiboxc naipub, vbi. D(iis) n(imahau) rumal 4ut kitxib chalamaxic, chiboxc chirah chirab chi 4ox, realabaubicic v4habal D(iis) v4ulum D(iis) n(imahau) [¶] oc loxv 4axtah chi 4ox, retamazic yx n yx vaxalact vinac tc pu k’iche vinak quicchbacic. lo mahtab chine v4habal D(iis) n(imahau) Canantuquikho ubiex chine vacanic, Are ta chiraxtah vi yunah. Are ta puex quiznic mi, chitaanic to a4ox, rumal, are ta chi cube ni y4axc, rumal di chi rib D(iis) n(imahau) ch4xupptic chisatat ta a4ox rumal retamazic D(iis) n(imahau). (APS Ms, fol. 1r, lines 8-22).

[¶] This is the revival of the self5 and the revival of the heart for the good people, the readers of the book, the petitioners of the beloved name [of God]6 that is in the large book. [¶] Someone should ask, “is it, therefore, necessary to be loved?” This knowledge is necessary in this life for you all, my sons and my daughters. [¶] May it be placed in your heart and may it be placed, thus, in desiring. It is necessary that God, the great lord, be understood as the only sufficient one and as the only great one on earth.

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5 The K’iche’ word <waach> may also be translated as “face” or “image.” Together with the term <k’ix>—which can be glossed as “heart,” “center,” “core,” or “essence”—Vico is constructing a lexical couplet or parallelism that references both the exterior and interior dimensions of human nature. It is possible that Vico is making an implied reference to Christian theological anthropology grounded in Genesis 1:26-27, which states that the first human was made in the image (imago (Latin) or ıkion (Greek)) and likeness (similitudo (Latin) or homoiotes (Greek)) of God— for humans uniquely created as imago Dei (the “image of God”). According to emerging Christian (vs. Jewish) theology and exegesis of this verse in late antiquity, the disobedience of Adam and Eve resulted in the ontological, and thus perpetual, severing away of the former (humans as divine image) and warping of the latter (humans in divine likeness) only to be restored (reconcilio) by God returning to the original idea (logos (i.e., John 1:1)) of humanity as and through the person of Jesus as the second persona (“person,” “character,” or literally “mask”) of the triune god (i.e., as God the Son).

6 While possibly read as an oblique reference to Jesus, the name of Jesus does not appear prominently until the second volume of the Theologia Indorum, and this proemium for the first volume is introducing the Thomistic topic of the “names of God” (e.g., eternal, infinite, immortal, etc.) rather than Jesus, for a theocentric rather than christocentric approach.
Knowledge of God, the great lord, with, thus, the understanding and the deeds of someone who loves and of someone who is obedient among the people and who may ask, thus, that what may be loving the name of God, the great lord, is because truly someone should desire, should love, and should want, therefore, in the heart, in the clarity, and in the being of God, the great lord. God’s teaching.

In three loves, three pains, and names in the heart, you all are the people from here [Guatemala], you all are speakers of K’iche’, and you all have been blessed. In front of you all is the word of God, the great lord, that I sow. It is speaking to you all now so that you might awaken yourselves. When then you warm up, your heart is warmed by God, and you all feel your heart because God, the great lord, is behind it; and then someone may move it and then you may act upon your heart by the teaching of God who is the great lord. (Sparks 2017, 47-9, modified).

After this section in his theology’s introduction, Vico does not explain what his book or devotional literature in general is intended to do, let alone emotionally to do, to its readers. The only exception to reflecting on a book again comes later in chapter 20, but his focus at that point is not on any religious book (e.g., his *Theologia Indorum*, the Bible, a catechism, sermons, a hymnal, Aquinas’s *summae*, etc.) but rather the “book of life” by God. And, again unlike his opening section’s brief reflection on his book’s purpose, he does not mention any affect or emotional impact of God’s “book of life” on Maya Catholics.

On one hand, this early reflection on religious emotions to native peoples can be placed within the *longue durée* of emerging debates in Iberia regarding the legitimacy of various kinds of interior religion (affective Christian theologies or spiritualities) from the turn of the sixteenth century onward. Furthermore, while the Observant reformation built off of the previous Cistercian reformation to cut across religious orders and schools of scholasticism, perpetual development of medieval affective spirituality or mysticism most prominently occurred among Franciscans in Iberia, who came under increased scrutiny and suspicion both in wider Catholic Europe and leading up to and in the wake of the Council of Trent even within Spain.

This trend was accompanied by a revaluation of the authority but also affectivity of the book. Humanism fed into the emerging semiotic divide between realism and nominalism that in northern Europe compelled Reformers to simultaneously shore up the authority and accessibility of

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*Vhuvinak molab tixh vbixic vu Dios nimafjan 4azlem vuji...* (APS Ms, fol. 25v).
the Bible while also divesting it of enthusiastic affectivity characteristic of medieval mystics (Yelle 92-99). For example, John Calvin would describe the Bible as the “corrective lens” by which to perceive the Christian god and the world (Calvin *Institutes* cite needed). Despite common impressions, even key Spanish delegates at the first session of the Council of Trent (1545-1547) were in some agreement with Martin Luther’s *sola scriptura* stance and they defended it by their training in Aquinas (O’Malley 92-93). This did not mean, however, that religious books were seen as totally devoid of any provoking or guiding of religious emotions, especially in non-classical languages.

By the turn of that century there was a translation and publication into vernacular languages, namely Castilian, of “texts designed to both inspire and guide deeper contact with God” (McGinn 2017, 6). For example, as even Francisco de Osuna stated in his *Third Spiritual Alphabet* (1527), Book 10, Chapter 4: “But why do we reveal in public these secret colloquies, and why labor to explain in ordinary language these ineffable affections? Inexperienced people will not understand these things if they do not read them more clearly in the book of experience, as this very devotion teaches them; otherwise, the one who reads the exterior letter will gain nothing, for if he does not take the gloss and inner meaning of the heart, then the lesson of the external letter will have little appeal.” What the holy man [St. Bernard of Clairvaux] has said...” (Giles, 280). And across the Atlantic, according to Alejo Venegas—humanist, Cervantes de Salazar’s teacher, and the first professor of rhetoric at the Universidad Real in Mexico in 1550—in his 1540 *Primera parte de las diferencias de libros que hay en el universo*, a book “is an ark of deposit in which, by means of essential information or things or figures, those things which belong to the information and clarity of understanding are deposited” with ark understood to be etymologically derived from “to frighten” (*arredrar*) and appropriate for his definition because Venegas understood that books frighten ignorance (Mignolo, 220).

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9 Also see McGinn 2017, 37.
10 Unfortunately, Mignolo does not provide a citation for the Spanish version of this quote from Venegas, which is: *Libro es una arca de depósito en q’ por noticia essencial, o por cosas, o por figuras, se depositan aquellas cosas que pertenecen ala
In fact, though, writings by Dominicans like Bartolomé de las Casas and his recruits, such as Vico, evince none of the affective Pseudo-Dionysian discourse, patterns, or tropes (e.g., neo-platonic flow of cosmic emanation from and return back to God, defined stages of anagogic ascent of the soul via ascetic devotional practices, senses of ecstatic union with the divine, intellectual illumination or extra-biblical messages via visions, etc.) that marked the works by Franciscan alumbrados and the likes of Francisco de Osuna, the Carmelites of Ávila like Teresa de Ávila and Juan de la Cruz, or their legacies in New Spain such as Juana de la Cruz. But they did share a language ideology regarding the transformative power of the book, enhanced by humanism and the advent of the printing press.

Analysis of Las Casas’s reporting illustrates how Thomism came to bear on Andean religious affections which can then be extended to how he and others of his cohort, such as Vico, also understood religious effigies, images, and terms among Mesoamericans, like the K’iche’an Maya. And while analysis of Las Casas’s Thomistic perspective has mostly focused on Aquinas’s understanding of perception and cognition, Aquinas’s theory affections are also highly relevant as they correspond with his theory of signification – symbols and sign theory. The influence of Aquinas after the 1520s in Spanish theological education became one of the largest intellectual divides, especially between the semiotic realism of Dominicans and the nominalism of Franciscans and, thus, by extension how Aquinas’s understandings of affections and religious emotions also informed understandings of idolatry beyond a demonology, at least for some Dominicans like Bartolomé de las Casas.

Aside from proto-ethnographic material on the K’iche’—most likely acquired from his Dominican missionary recruits who remained in the Maya highlands but also from the K’iche’

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información y claridad del entendimiento. Esta diffinicion es tan general: que no se dara escritura que no se encierre debaxo della. Primieramente díse, que el libro es arca; porque así como el arca deriuada deste verbo, Arceo, por arredrar (según dize Marco Varri) arriendra de si los ladrones; así el libro arriéndra de si la ignorancia (Venegas 1572, fol. 1v).
Ajpop Juan Cortés’s personal trip to Spain in 1577 where he tried to have an audience with King Filipe II and may have stayed at the Dominican convent with Las Casas—Las Casas provides little analysis of the K’iche’ to the same extent that he does of the Inka in his Apologética historia sumaria, such as the material in Las Casas’s writings used by MacCormack. His fellow Dominicans’ concerns for idolatry among their Quechua if not also Aymara converts provides an understanding of how many of the mendicants schooled in the new Thomistic humanism understood the affective significance of not only native religious terms but also images—a distinction possibly blurred by Inka systems of “writing” with khipu. The pictographic “writing” systems of many Mesoamerican peoples, aside from the phonetic-oriented logographic writing of the Lowland Maya likewise obscures such distinctions with, for example, the K’iche’an root word /tz’ib’/ to refer to either writing or drawing (Tedlock 2010, 32, 299). Effigies, thus, were not treated differently for them along with spoken and written words and drawn and carved images to raise the concern of idolatry.

For this reason, on the other hand, greater parsing into Vico’s quote is aided by how mid-sixteenth-century K’iche’an Maya understood religious effigies, books (including language and writing), and emotions (including affective discourse). And given their contemporaneous literature by Maya and by mendicants on K’iche’an languages this is possible. For example, the key term k’astab’al (in the modern orthography, 4aztabal in colonial orthography) in the quote from Vico does not specifically appear in the colonial lexicons and, thus, is rather obscure. Entries that are close are: of the root <k’as> (or qaz in Coto’s orthography) in Franciscan friar Thomás de Coto’s mid-seventeenth century Thesaurus verborum related “to awaken” or “to open one’s eyes” (k’as, k’astoj: despertar), “to rejoice” (k’asal nuwach: alegrarse), “to feel relief” (k’asas nuwach: alivio sentir), “to resuscitate” (k’ase, k’astajib’al: resucitar), “[to have] soul,” “to encourage,” “to motivate” (k’aslib’al:

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11 See, for example, Elizabeth Hill Boone on expanding concepts of writing to include khipu (Hill Boone 20-22) and Tom Cummins on early Spanish reception and treatment of khipukuna (Cummins 92-99).
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alma, animar, but also “magic” or literally “living stone” (k’astaj ab’aj: mágica) (Acuña 1983, CCXL, both K’iche’ and Spanish orthography modernized); and specifically in his Spanish entry on resucitar o reanudar el qué era muerto (to resuscitate or to revive that which was dead) Coto states that gaztah (k’astaj) is synonymous with “to get up” (levantarse), “to stand up” (ponerse en pie), and even “to resemble” (parecer) but is also a term for “resurrection” such as of Jesus and Lazarus – rox q’ij xuk’astaj wi ri’ qanimajawal Jesucrito (on the third day [God] resurrected him, our great lordly Jesus Christ) (Acuña 1983, 489, K’iche’ orthography modernized).

Close intertextual analysis between the mendicant and Maya literature allows for a culling out of such key relevant concepts from the rapidly shifting Maya worldview. But this shifting, as will be argued, also occurred with the shifting worldview of Dominicans like Vico. Namely, for his theology to and for the Maya Vico not only appropriated the high-register of ceremonial poetic discourse but also the discourse on religious affectivity used by Maya in relation to effigies of their gods. While he and other mendicants destroyed and discredited the validity and affectivity of Maya religious images as “idols” they also presented, if not replaced them, with their own Catholics images. However, how Maya discussed the significance of their images was not erased but rather re-employed. Catholic effigies were not discussed by Vico as Maya images were by the Maya, but neither was Catholic theological and devotional literature discussed as Maya literature was, nor did Vico discuss his writings for them strictly as devotional texts had been back in Europe. Instead, Vico’s aim appears to have been an intellectual displacement of Maya myths like the Popol Wuj but

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12 Similar definitions and understandings are found in the eighteenth-century, anonymous Dominican Vocabulario en lengua k’iche otlatecas (Dürr and Sachse, 166-167, 238), though composed from much earlier Franciscan and Dominican K’iche’an language sources; Dominican friar Domingo de Basseta’s 1698 Vocabulario quiché, such as: resuscitar: chin caztah u uach (to resuscitate) and +Caiztabi, p<assiu>o; caiztabibal; resurrecció; caiztabibal quih: día de Resu<creció>u+. Caiztabi, ánima (passion, resurrection, day of the Resurrection, soul) (Acuña 2005, 281, 363-364); and Dominican friar Francisco Ximénez’s Arte de las tres lengwas k’iche qviche y 4vtvil (c.1704-14), such as: 4aztahibal, la resurreccion, activa o pasiva. (k’astajib’al = “the resurrection,” active or passive) and Per hominem mors et per hominem resurrectio mortuorum. rumal vinac 4amien záchib rumal 4amien [sic.] 4aztahibal ridin 4aminac. rumal vinac 4amic záchib rumal 44 [se ef] vinac 4aztahibal rech 4aminac (because of people, death and loss; for people, resurrection from being dead) (Ximénez 1993, 112, 148).

13 Regarding Vico’s strategic use of K’iche’ high-register discourse, or ethnopoetics, see Sparks 2017, 10-21.
also an affective replacement of religious effigies, thus running the risk of creating the book as a new Maya “idol.”

**Desire to Discuss “Idolatry”: Mendicant and vs. Maya**

Early post-contact Highland Maya literature presents three key terms that can refer to effigies—*che’ ab’aj, k’ab’awil,* and *poy*—with the first two in particular appropriated by early Christian missionaries to mean “idol” and “idolatry.” Both the lexical couplet *che’ ab’aj* and the term *k’ab’awil* availed themselves for possible analogies, (in)commensurability, and (mis)translation between mendicants and Maya but also points of debate between the competing religious orders with their differing scholastic theologies, semiotic ideologies, and theories of translation.

**Che’ Ab’aj: Effigies of “Wood and/or Stone” (vs. “Stone and/or Wood”)**

Of the three, *che’ ab’aj* afforded the most significant point of contact. As a traditional parallel phrase *che’ ab’aj,* in Highland Mayan languages like K’iche’ and Kaqchikel, literally means “wood” and “stone,” and its antiquity is attested in the ancient logographic writings of the Classic Era (c.250 CE – c.850 CE) Maya, such as *te’, tunn* (tree, stone), *te’, took* (wood, flint), and *che’, tunich* (sticks, stones) (Hull 2012, 91-5). Depending on context the phrase in ancient, post-contact colonial, and contemporary Maya texts can have three basic references. First, this couplet may simply be referring to the basic materials or substance from which something is made, for example houses of “wood and stone.” Secondly, the phrase may refer to carved effigies, often for religious devotional practices, by the material from which they are generally carved, for example statues or figurines fashioned out of “wood or stone.” In this sense, *che’ ab’aj* may be understood as synonymous with *k’ab’awil.* For example, in chapter 25 of the first volume of his *Theologia Indorum* (1553) Friar Domingo de Vico seemingly uses *che’ ab’aj* and *k’ab’awil* interchangeably in an effort to clarify that he
is denouncing the Maya understanding of *k'ab'awil* as conscious, sentient, and communicative wooden or stone images. Finally, though more questionably, the phrase may mean a stela—a large, upright stone monument—that bears images and even written text, a “tree of stone” or “stone tree” (Hull 2012, 92; Maxwell and Hill 2006, 257).

In contrast with the doctrinal literature developed by earlier Dominicans writing in Nahuatl—such as the 1548 Dominican *Doctrina Christiana en lengua Española y mexicana*, which used *tlateotoquiliztli*, “following something as a deity,” for “idolatry”—later Dominican arrivals educated in the Thomistic humanism of Francisco de Vitoria’s Salamanca School and sent further south in Oaxaca, Chiapas, and northeastern Guatemala used “wood, stone” for “idols” (Tavárez 2017, 175). For example, Dominican friar Pedro de Feria’s *Doctrina christiana en lengua castellana y zapoteca* (1567) condemns as idolatry the Zapotec practice of *quela huezaa, quela huecete bitoo quie, bitoo yàga*, “making and being taught by stone and wood deities” (Tavárez 2017, 174-5). However, this distinction in the use of the “wood, stone” motif for “idolatry” is not simply based on the pre-contact Zapotec and Maya rather than Nahua terms, effigies, and devotional practices available to mendicant missionaries from which to draw upon, reconfigure, establish analogies, and construct neologisms among their other translation strategies in native vernaculars. Neither is this merely a distinction between the respective evangelism approaches taken by the competing religious orders in southern Iberia and then the Americas, specifically Dominicans and Franciscans but also Augustinians and later Jesuits. Rather, it represents an intellectual divide between those mendicants who studied at the universities in Valladolid and Salamanca after the return of Vitoria in 1522 and his introduction of second wave Thomism to Iberia from the Sorbonne. For example, *Salmanticense* Franciscan friar Bernardino de Sahagún, in book one—on Mexico deities—of his *La historia universal de las cosas de Nueva España*

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14 For example, see APS Mss.497.4.Ua13, fols. 33r-36v or, for an English translation, see Sparks 2017, 103-120.
(c.1540s-70s), also describes as “idols” the carvings of “stone and wood” worshipped as gods by Nahua (Sahagún 1970, 57 and 69).

In addition to the Bible, Aquinas’s *Summa theologiae* (1265-74), the center piece of Vitoria’s lectures with which he replaced Peter Lombard’s *Libri Quattuor Sentientiarum* (c.1150) as the curricular standard for theological and philosophical scholasticism, is the key source. In fact, upon his appointment as the chair of theology at Salamanca his initial lectures focused primarily on the second part of the *Summa theologiae*. Specifically, in the *Summa theologiae* II-II, quaestio 94, articles 1-4 Aquinas argues that idolatry is a subcategory of superstition that began when ancient peoples created images of deceased relatives for remembrance, keeping some vestige of their presence among the living, and then eventually over time a deified treatment of such effigies. Aquinas balances this historical theory of deification, based on the biblical Book of Wisdom (13:1-2, 11-17 and 14:15, 21), with a theological theory of anthropomorphism—of people producing construals of creator gods from human images, albeit of “fallen” human nature—based on the New Testament Letter to the Romans (1:23-25). In other words, for Aquinas, as explained in the authority of scripture, the historical beginnings and process of the anthropomorphic development of idolatry were motivated by emotions, such as grief but as also related to love. Aquinas’s theories of perception and cognition intersect with his theories of emotions (*passio* and *affectus*) as movements within a person that may distort the intellect and thus understanding and knowledge.16 Fallen human nature with misdirected love and faulty reasoning, furthermore, was prone to the deception of the devil. To this extent,

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15 While the Book of Wisdom is part of the Septuagint and thus part of the Christian Old Testament until the sixteenth century—and part of the Catholic Old Testament as affirmed by the Council of Trent (1545-63)—among Christian humanists and reformers, namely Protestants after 1529, the Book of Wisdom was to be considered deuterocanonical, intertestamental, or apocryphal, in part, due to its removal from the Jewish Bible at legendary rabbinic Council of Yavneh (c.90 CE).

16 For more detailed explication on how affections (*affectus* as interior motions of the intellectual appetite, or will) and passions (passions which are mediated by the corporal body but involve commotions of the soul) engages if not interferes with cognition, or the faculty of reason, and intellectual apprehension according to Aquinas, see Diana Fritz Cates (2009).
Thomism provided an intellectual armature for much of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century
demonology among Salmanticense missionaries in the Americas.17

The various biblical terms for idolatry aided by Humanism’s increased emphasis on not only
biblical literacy but also familiarity with original biblical languages—Hebrew and Greek—and critical
assessment from ancient source texts, such as Cardinal Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros’s Polyglot
Bible project (1522), served as more explicit points of commensurability with mendicants’
understandings of native religions. Terms often translated as “idol” in the Bible range from
“molten” or “poured” image or god (msk, e.g., ’elohe masekeha (Exodus 34:17), “carved” or “crafted”
images (psl, e.g., pesel (Isaiah 40:18:20) and pasal (Isaiah 44:9-20 or Exodus 20:4-5, which is explicitly
cited by Aquinas in II-II, q.94, a.2), simply “images” (tsb, e.g., atsab (1 Samuel 31:9), and words from
the etymologically obscure Hebrew root ’yl (e.g., ’elilim (Leviticus 19:4) that, while resembling the ’el
root that means deity, in non-religious passages means “worthless” (e.g., Job 13:4). References to
biblical verses that use these terms often appeared in early Dominican doctrinal works, such as
Feria’s 1567 Zapotec catechism, which cited, for example, Habakkuk 2:18-19 (Távárez 2017, 175).
This Habakkuk passage, in fact, uses almost all of these terms including the most common phrase to
refer to idolatry in the Bible – “stone, wood” (’eben ’es in Hebrew (e.g., Deuteronomy 4.28), ’abna ’a’a
in Aramaic (Daniel 5.4), and is even carried into Christian Koine as lithina xylina (Revelation 9.20).18

Notably, Habakkuk 2:18-19 specifically refers to such molten and carved images as “mute
“gods (’elilim) and “mute” effigies of stone and wood (le’eben le’es). And, unlike Feria, while Vico’s
Theologia Indorum does not cite specific biblical passages, even in the sections that contain summaries
of biblical stories, in chapter 25 of volume one Vico points out to his K’iche’ readers that their

17 In addition to Távárez’s recent study of this influence of Aquinas among early mendicant missionaries among
the Nahua and Zapotec in New Spain, also see Sabine MacCormack’s classic study of early Dominicans among Quechua
in the Andes (MacCormack 1991, 6-8, 15-49).
18 However, perhaps ironically for the missionaries Jeremiah 2:18-19 provides a biblical description of the
process of making and devotion to idols but no specific term is used.
effigies really do not speak to them: “If it would be buried, if it becomes infested with bugs, it is the stick that is made human as an effigy by you all, ‘Ayy! I have just been buried, I am infested,’” it does not say to you all. . . . If it would be shot on by your children, by a dog, by a hen, or by a bird, ‘Ahh! you all just shot on me, you all just stained me, I have just been soiled by you all,’ is not said” (Sparks 2017, 119). In other words, according to Vico, these Maya effigies, both che’ ab’aj and k’ab’awil, are not merely inanimate but are non-communicative and non-emotive.

And curiously, however, unlike Aquinas and Feria, Vico does not locate the origins of devotion to wood and stone effigies according to ancestor veneration (Book of Wisdom), the ancient Hebrews revering a golden calf (Exodus 32:1-28), or the second commandment of the Decalogue (Exodus 20:4-5) but rather linked to the aftermath of the tower of Babel and the division of languages, as he explains in chapter 52 of his Theologia Indorum (APS Ms, fol. 76v-768v). Likewise, this same point is made in the slightly earlier Dominican set of songs or coplas, which may have been a precursor to Vico’s theological treatise, written in the Highland Mayan languages of K’iche’ and Q’eqchi’. Dating to no later than 1552 and attributed to one of Vico’s few predecessors into the Maya region, Dominican friar Luis de Cáncer (d. 1549), chapter 12 of the coplas tells how the Devil (Diablo) from the Maya “place of fear” (Xibalb’a)—appropriated as “hell” by Dominicans—appeared before the post-Babel people and convinced them to adore the che’ ab’aj. More insightfully, the title line of this chapter, where appears some of the rare uses of Spanish, and the next line in K’iche’ appear to explicitly identify idolatry (ydolatria) with the other term k’ab’awil

19 \[ Vue chimukuric vue dichiapiric ri che oquinak chi 4abauil yvumal. Aque mixoc numukul nuchicopil. machaon chine… …\] \[ Vue ta xibakix vuadig rumal 4abauil rumal pu tizy rumal pu 44 rumal pu itiqquin. achi. micobinachakaj ni pu xinobic. mixcincytelaci xvumal maha taṣ. (APS Ms, fol. 56r).\] \[ On the assessment of the coplas in the U.S. Library of Congress’s Kislak manuscript 1015 and the Newberry Library’s Ayer manuscript 1536 along with Vico’s Theologia Indorum, see Sparks and Sachse 2017.\] 20 \[ Cap(título) xii. d(e)l p(ri)nçipio d(e) la yd(o)latria \] \[ Paxinaca chi cut Vinac Oheroc chihach qu(i)chabal ta xeoq(i)c chi pail ta xtiq(u)ric cabauilaxic \] \[ Vq(u)al vq(u)al pu q(u) cax tocol ta xeoq(u)ric \] \[ Xucut rib Diablo xibalbha xchao qchiq(u)c vinac In na q(u)niq(u)cax xaix cu panΧab castoc \] \[ Xucut rib Diablo xibalbha xchao qchiq(u)c vinac In na q(u)niq(u)cax xaix cu panΧab castoc \] \[ Chizoco xvah chi qahal are taʃ g(u)niq(u)cax xaix ni Çac rupuruçi xivumal are ta xiyariq(u)c xuch. (Kislak 1015, fol. 24r). Comparatively, for a transcription of the Q’eqchi’ version with Spanish translation from Ayer 1536 see, Bossú Z. 1986, 71-72.\]
Books and/as Idols: Discourse of Affectivity in Early Colonial Missionary and Mesoamerican Writings” – G.Sparks

(cabanilaxic) as the label for placing offerings before wood and stone (che’ ab’aj) effigies; the treating of such effigies as gods is idolatry according to this Dominican text. In the only other use of this phrase in the Kislak manuscript, roughly dated 1567, in a section of sermons written in K’iche’ but in a different hand of an anonymous Dominican the devotion to che’ abaj is listed along with murder and pride as a sin and contrary to the good justice of God.

However, like the use of che’ ab’aj to simply refer to the materials of an item, and particularly non-religious items, so too does the listing of stone and wood in the Catholic Old Testament and, thus, by extension in the first tome of Vico’s Theologia Indorum. For example, chapter 85 of the first volume of the Theologia Indorum Vico recounts the story of Joshua and the ancient Hebrews erecting a pile of stones after crossing the Jordan river as memorial but not devotion (APS Ms, 133v-134v; Joshua 4:5-7, 20-24). Likewise, in one of the earliest and most extant religious texts by Highland Maya—the Popol Wuj or “Book of the Council” (c.1554-58)—che’ ab’aj only appears twice and not with the same meaning. In the first instance, in the tale of the third attempt by Maya gods to create human beings ends, people made of wood have their faces crushed by “trees and rocks” (xq’ut kiwach rumal che’ ab’aj) (Ximénez n.d., fol. 4v). Only later, in the second instance, in the tale of the development of the fourth group of people—true human beings made of maize—does part of the Maya creation story situate a period in which people had not yet begun to call upon “wood and stone” (maja chikisik’ijoq che’ ab’aj), in other words effigies (Ximénez n.d., 35r). This varied use of this phrase in both Maya and biblical contexts and especially in non-religious use, all of which Vico if not

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22 To date this is the oldest known Dominican text in a Mayan language.
23 ¶ capitulo. iii. de la bondad de Dios Con Justicia ¶ Rumal equizib utz cabanal Dios mani carab rilo mac mani utz. Quebe ri Cacamiçanic, quebe ri queleEquie, V ne cabosonie V ne caatanie Quebe ri nimařiay rib, quebe ri iEquiliblickic che abah Ronhel mac mani carab rilo Dios Rumal equizib cayaq cubito utzil chique utzilab vinac Rumal equizib utz.. (Kislak 1015, fol. 76v). This chapter of this early Dominican sermonario could correspond to chapter 29 of the second volume of the Theologia Indorum, which explicates the carnal or natural virtue of justice (GGMM no. 175, 155-161).
also other early Dominican missionaries carried into their instructional writings in K'iche’an languages, made “wood, stone” a precarious lexical index from “idolatry.”

Notably, this couplet consistently appears in the biblical literature as “stone, wood” and not as “wood, stone.” In contrast, the occurrence of this similar motif within pre-contact Maya texts, including Classic Era logographic literature, is “wood, stone.” Early post-contact Highland Maya literature is also almost exclusively “wood, stone” and never “stone, wood,” such as the two appearances in the Popol Wuj (c.1554-58) by the K’iche’ as noted above and the five appearances in the Xajil Chronicle (c.1550s-1600s) by the related Kaqchikel Maya (Ximénez n.d., 4v, 36r; Maxwell and Hill 2006, 18, 28, 34, 257). However, early Dominican writings in K’iche’an languages are not consistent with, for example in the Theologia Indorum, using both che’ ab’aj and ab’aj che’ throughout evincing the extent to which these early Salmanticensis missionaries strove to accommodate Maya terminology and establish commensurability between their Hispano-Catholic and indigenous American religious worlds. To the extent that the Popol Wuj is a K’iche’ text written in reaction to and rejection of the Theologia Indorum for a reaffirmation of a traditional, pre-contact K’iche’ religious worldview its authors continued the Maya use of che’ ab’aj rather than also use the mendicant biblicized ab’aj che’.

By contrast, the collection of Dominican texts in the Kislak manuscript—which is the earliest known Dominican writings in any Mayan language to date and oldest evidence of Dominicans appropriating Maya religious terms for Christian use—“stone, wood” (ab’aj che’) does not appear – only che’ ab’aj twice, as discussed above. Furthermore, in the Title of Totonicapán (1554) written by early K’iche’ converts to Catholicism who worked closely with Dominicans like Vico, the traditional Maya version che’ ab’aj appears in only three places, and never as ab’aj che’.

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24 Throughout this paper the term K’iche’an is not used as the adjectival form of K’iche’ (i.e., some pertaining to, for, by, or about specifically the K’iche’ Maya), but rather refers to the linguistic and cultural sub-family of Guatemalan Highland Maya that consist of the K’iche’ (including Achi or Rab’inal dialects), Kaqchikel, Tz’utujil, Q’eqchi’, Sakapultek, Uspantek, Poqom (i.e., Poqomchi’ and Poqomam), and Sipakapense.

25 For intertextual analysis between the Popol Wuj and the Theologia Indorum see Sparks 2014; 2017, 204-211).
in one instance (fol. 19v) the phrase does simply refer to “trees and rocks,” in the other two it refers to the ritual devotion of K’iche’ ancestors to “wood and stone” effigies in temples once they began to build cities in the Guatemalan highlands (fol. 23v) but also previously in ancient times “back east” where their ancestors first learned of such practices from Assyrians and Babylonians (fol. 6v) (Carmack and Mondloch, 60-61, 110-111, 128-129; Sparks 2017, 234). In other words, as a K’iche’ accommodationist text—hybridic of both Maya and mendicant traditions—the Title of Totonicapán, in contrast to the Popol Wuji, uses che’ab’aj among its various meanings to refer to non-Christian religious effigies but only in the Maya way, as images of “wood and stone” and never as of “stone and wood.”

The Dominican appropriation and use of che’ab’aj, therefore, points to two further difficulties as a translation for “idol.” First, in neither the biblical nor the native Maya sense of the phrase does “wood, stone” occur within affective discourse; a che’ab’aj (nor ’eben ’es) does not emotionally move, provoke, or compel its devotees even according to Maya. As will be elaborated further, affective discourse for the Highland Maya usually involves the “heart” (uk’u’x), and references to one’s “heart” and to “wood, stone” does not commonly occur together, like “heart” and k’ab’awil does. Secondly, while mendicant missionaries were condemning and destroying Maya statues and images they were presenting their own, including a carved figure of a man hanging literally on two sticks. Convincing proto-converts that reverence to “sticks and rocks” is “sinful” obviously became complicated as mendicants introduced their own effigies for devotional practices. Dominicans working with native Mesoamericans were like their brethren further south who “might well describe Andean sacred images as idols. But Andeans in turn came to be convinced that Catholic religious images were ‘idols of the Spaniards,’ while the demon-conquering cross of Jesus was simply a ‘stick’” (MacCormack, 49).
K’ab’wil: “Divine,” “Divinity,” “Deities,” and Effigies as/of

Unlike che’ab’aj, the second term, k’ab’awil (k’ab’awilib’ in the plural), appears within early K’iche’an literature more frequently but also syntactically with more variance, and thus a wider range of meaning, and is etymologically more obscure, which gave greater potential for some mendicants to appropriate it and, as a result, spur intense debate between mendicants regarding its appropriation. In general, ethnohistorically within early K’iche’an literature but also ethnographically among K’iche’an religious discourse today, k’ab’awil tends to have two basic meanings among Highland Maya: supremely powerful spirits or “gods” and effigies of them—anthropomorphic, zoomorphic, or a hybridic figure composed of features of both—carved out of wood or stone. Unlike che’ab’aj, the second term, k’ab’awil (k’ab’awilib’ in the plural), appears within early K’iche’an literature more frequently but also syntactically with more variance, and thus a wider range of meaning, and is etymologically more obscure, which gave greater potential for some mendicants to appropriate it and, as a result, spur intense debate between mendicants regarding its appropriation. In general, ethnohistorically within early K’iche’an literature but also ethnographically among K’iche’an religious discourse today, k’ab’awil tends to have two basic meanings among Highland Maya: supremely powerful spirits or “gods” and effigies of them—anthropomorphic, zoomorphic, or a hybridic figure composed of features of both—carved out of wood or stone. And while both the colonial and modern orthography as well as current pronunciation varies in folk-etymologies among the Highland Maya the term is explained as an item or being that has “dual vision” (with <k’a’b’> (or <k’e’b’> in some dialects) meaning “two” along with <-il>, the root-word for “sight”), such as perspective of “this world” of the living and the “other world” of ancestors and spirits, of the present as well as of the future and pre-historic past, of earthly things and celestial things, etc.

In other words, k’ab’awilib’ are those beings that have this expansive if not also corrective hypervision (e.g., amicable guiding spirits, “gods,” “deities,” etc.) and, or, items that may communicate or avail such insight to people, often through ritual practices of divination or prognostication.

As culled from the religious worldview presented in the Popol Wuj, not all supernatural characters in the Maya cosmogonic narratives are identified as k’ab’awil. For example, the first use of the term in that text is to explicitly clarify that the lords of the Maya otherworld, Xib’alb’a or “Place

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26 Matsumoto notes a third possible mean, which is the place of worship or veneration such as a temple presumably where an effigy of a k’ab’awil spirit or deity would be housed (Matsumoto 2017, 295n19).

27 The variance between k’ab’awil and kab’awil in K’iche’ (k’ab’awil or kab’awil in Kaqchikel) due in part to inconsistent spellings in the colonial literature between ahabwil, ahabwil, ahabwil, 4ahwil, etc., with the colonial <4> or modern <k’> being a glottalized <k’>.

28 Personal conversations with various chuchqajawib’ (Maya spiritual guides) such as daykeepers (ajq’ijab’) and K’iche’ and Kaqchikel cultural activists in Guatemala since 1995.
of Fear,” are not k’ab’awil (mana k’ab’awil) (Ximénez n.d., fol. 31v). That use of the term in the initial sections of the Popol Wuj, which contains stories of Maya cosmogenesis and theogony, only applies to one of the supreme primordial, creator gods – Heart of Sky, Heart of Earth (Uk’u’x Kaj, Uk’u’x Ulew), who is k’ab’awil or “divine” (Ximénez n.d., fols. 34r, 35r).

In the final sections that consist of the formative migration, dynastic and politically expansive histories of the K’iche’ confederacy k’ab’awil shifts to refer to the titular patron spirits or deities of each of the major governing lineages: the “god” Tojil of the Kaweqib’ lineage of the Nima K’iche’ branch and of the Tamub’ and Ilokab’ branches, the “god” Awilix of the Nija’ib’ lineage of the Nima K’iche’ branch, the “god” Jakawitz of the Ajaw K’iche’ lineage of the Nima K’iche’ branch, and Nik’aj Taq’aj of the Sik’aj lineage of the Nima K’iche’ branch of the K’iche’ nation (Ximénez, n.d., fols. 35v-36r, 37v, 43v, 45r). But other Highland Maya nations—at times allied and then later competing with the K’iche’—also had their respective divine patrons, such as Jun Toj as the k’ab’awil for the Rab’inal people to the east of the K’iche’ and Sotz’i Ja Chi Malk’a’n for the Kaqchikel people to the south (Ximénez n.d., fol. 41r). However, among the K’iche’ Tojil is gradually construed as superior to the other ones, in large part due to the increased political dominance of the Kaweqib’ lineage (though sixteenth-century Kaweqib’ would most like have attributed their political and military dominance to the superiority of their k’ab’awil/Tojil) with Tojil even declared as the K’iche’ substitute for the primordial creator god also call the Framer and Former, Tz’aqol, B’itol (Ximénez n.d., fols., 35v-36r).

These lineage deities are notably different from the theogony in the first sections of the Popol Wuj—such as the Heart of Sky, Heart of Earth, the Bearer and Begetter (Alom, K’ajoloni), the Plumbed or Feathered Serpent (Q’uq’unatz), and Xpiyokok and Xmukane (the divine grandfather and divine grandmother). For example, while there is no account of the origins of these more cosmogonic deities who create both the celestial and terrestrial worlds and all of the creatures,
including human beings, the titular deities do not enter the lives of the Highland Maya until their westward migration from the mythological primal city of Tulan in the east and their journey through caves, canyons, and mountain ranges (fol. 41r). These later k’ab’awil lib’ are, in fact, given to the K’iche’ Maya in their legendary primal city Tulan “where the sun rises,” cared for and carried by their assigned lineages (fol. 39r), “fed” human and animal blood offerings (fols. 38r, 41r, 42, 50r) and burnt offerings, such as sap or resin incense (fols. 40r, 54r), along with other devotional activities like fasting and petitionary prayers (fol. 54r).

Despite the first seven folios of the Title of Totonicapán consisting of a K’iche’ redaction of the first volume of the Theologia Indorum, much of the later sections presents versions of stories also found in the last portions of the Popol Wuj (Sparks 2016). Whereas the Popol Wuj tells of Tojil and the other titular deities requesting blood offerings—both human and animal—a similar version of this account in the Title of Totonicapán specifies that the human blood given to the gods Tojil, Awilix, and Jakawitz was that of the enemies of the K’iche’. In contrast to the ritual bloodletting practices of the Lowland Maya centuries prior during the Classic Era—which was conducted by nobility onto themselves and did not lead to death but rather consisted of their bleeding onto parchment that was then burned in an effort to produce not only an offering but also a spiritual vision—the Title of Totonicapán specifies devotional offerings made from the blood of executed war captives. This latter practice, along with other forms of human sacrifice, is more evident in Postclassic Era by Nahua from central Mexico, like the Mexica (Aztec), and Nahua-influenced Maya of the Yucatan.

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29 Xa k’ut ukik’el kab’e chwach k’ab’awil chwach Tojil, Awilix, Jakawitz, Keje’ k’ut uk’ucasik kikamiisacik e qamam, qakajaw B’alam K’itze’, B’alam Aq’ab’, Majukotaj, Iki B’alam kumul W’aq Amaq’ajlab’al (fol. 10v, lines 19-23). “Only then the blood [of the victims from the Seven Tribes] went onto the effigies, onto Tojil, Awilix, and Jakawitz. Just like that was the protection from the killing of our grandfathers and our fathers—B’alam K’itze’, B’alam Aq’ab’, Majukotaj, and Iki B’alam—by the warriors of the Seven Tribes” (my translation).

30 Regarding the ritual bloodletting and vision-inducing practices of Maya nobility during the Classic Era, see Schele and Miller 1986.
From a historical analysis, these Highland Maya myths evince a later influence from Nahua (aka Toltec) religion from central Mexico and possibly, mixed with Postclassic (after 900 CE) Lowland Maya in the Yucatan region. Though, as Frauke Sachse and other ethnohistorians have argued, the names of some of previous Maya deities also evince religious influence from a wider Mesoamerican religious complex, especially from central Mexico, such as the cult of the Plumed Serpent (e.g., Quetzalcoatl of the Nahua), Xpiyokok and Xmukane of the K’iche’ as derived from the divine grandparents Oxomoco and Cipactonal of the Nahua, and the primary ritual devotion oriented toward the sun by Nahua eventually mixing with primary ritual devotion oriented toward maize by ancient, Classic Maya.31 Furthermore, while the Popol Wuj attests to an older, historic Nahuatl-speaking population along the Pacific slopes of Guatemala and El Salvador—called Yaki by the K’iche’ and later Pipil after the arrival of Spaniards and their north-central Mexicans allies—ethnohistorians note a significant later influx and influence of Nahua culture, including religion, around the 1200 CE.32 The shift in k’ab’awil not only from older, cosmogonic, more distinctively Highland Maya deities—like the Bear and Begetter or Heart of Sky, Heart of Earth—not evident in the Nahua pantheon (but in the first sections of the Popol Wuj) for instead more localized, lineage affiliated titular spirits—like Tojil—(in the latter sections of the Popol Wuj) but also from more ethereal nature deities (in the early parts of the Popol Wuj) for also concretized effigies of “wood and stone” (in the final parts of the Popol Wuj) may also semantically mark a theological shift for the K’iche’ beginning around 1200 CE—a new era where religious effigies increasingly played a role.

Specifically, as the trek of the ancestral ruling K’iche’ lineages transitioned from patterns of migration for ones of settlement their k’ab’awil were petrified into zoomorphic images of a lion,

31 See, for example, Dürr and Sachse 2017, 45; and Van Akkeren 2012.
32 See, for example, Carmack 1981. However, Frauke Sachse convincingly argues against the Toltec hypothesis for, instead, K’iche’an stories of an ancestral journey from Tulan in the east not as a reference to any historical migrations of Nahua or Nahuaized Lowland Maya from the Yucatan but rather a more wide-spread literary motif of (re)birth, primarily with the symbol of the rising sun, found throughout Mesoamerican myths; see Sachse 2008.
jaguar, and serpents. Except for one—Saqi K’oxol—who escapes into the shadows of the forest to remain an undomesticated nature spirit, a classic trickster character commonly found in indigenous American myths (Ximénez n.d., 40v).

33 Even more specifically, in contrast to many of the other titular spirits and primordial creator gods, the lineage deities of the K’iche’ leadership class are not only concretized into effigies but also eventually housed in temples as the K’iche’ establish towns and cities in the central highlands of Guatemala (Ximénez n.d., 50v, 51v, 53v). So, k’ab’awil may lean into a synonymous understanding with che’ ab’aj as occurred toward the end of the Popol Wuj but also in the first volume of Vico’s Theologia Indorum (1553) and then also by K’iche’ converts to Catholicism in their Title of Totonicapán (1554). Therefore, for the early post-contact Highland Maya of the sixteenth century k’ab’awil referred to both local spiritual patrons of peoples and of regional nature as well as carved images of them – statues, effigies, or, for some mendicants, “idols.” The theological and theoretical debate between mendicants regarding how to interpret this term as either “idol” or “divinity” became the focal point of one of the first contentious and long-lasting debates in Guatemala.

**Poy: Manikins, Scarecrows, and Other “Heartless” Persons**

The third contending K’iche’an term for mendicants to have used by which to translate a Christian notion of “idol” to Highland Maya was poy. However, whereas poy semantically could overlap with che’ ab’aj and even, in some sense of the term, k’ab’awil as an anthropomorphic fabrication, according to the mendicants’ Maya audience poy is explicitly “heartless.” Within

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33 Saqi K’oxol is found in various, separate, and later K’iche’ stories and even dramas, for example see: Tedlock 1983 and 1986; and Edmonson 1997, 3-80.
mendicant pastoral and doctrinal literature *poy* is all but absent, but plays a significant role within the cosmogonic, theogonic, and historical narratives of the K’iche’ in the Popol Wuj.\(^{34}\)

The third attempt to create human beings results in “manikins” (*poy*) made from carved wood (*ajam che*) specifically believed by Maya from the sacred *tz’ite’* tree – *palo de pito* in Spanish, coral tree or whistle tree in English, *Erythrina berteroana Urban* among other species (Aguirre de Riojas and Pöll, 34-35).\(^{35}\) The tale in the Popol Wuj states that this pre-human race of people were literally without blood and other vital bodily fluids to symbolically underscore the extent to which they were apathetic to the creator gods, like *Tz’aqol, B’itol*, but also other creatures and items of nature. Due to their heartlessness these wood people are destroyed in part by having their faces (*kiwach*, which also metaphorically can refer to their very “selves”) smashed by “trees and rocks” (*che’, ab’aj*); but literally *che’ ab’aj* can also refer to either wooden or stone carved statues for ritual practices or possibly monumental stelae (“stone trees,” or *ab’aj che’*).\(^{36}\) In other words, the heartless people made of wood were smashed by the material that would become objects of heartfelt religious devotion by true human beings, by people of the fourth creation attempt made of maize. While having various ceremonial uses among ancient peoples throughout Mesoamerica, among the Highland Maya trees of the *erythrina* genus are still used for carving some sacred wooden figurines, such as of Maximon or San Simón, and the divining bundles (*nari*) of daykeepers (*ajq’ijab’*) contain the inedible small, bright red *tz’ite’* beans.\(^{37}\)

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\(^{34}\) While not as numerous in the Popol Wuj as *che’ ab’aj* and *k’ab’anil*, references to *poy* can be found on fols. 4r, 4v, 5r, 6r, 24r, 46v of the Ximénez manuscript (Ayer Ms 1511).

\(^{35}\) Though many Mayanists, who are not botanists, have identified the varietal used by the Highland Maya as *Erythrina corallodendron* (Recinos 1950, 88n13; Christenson 2003, 82n104; Tedlock 1996, 340, 341).

\(^{36}\) There is an debate among Mayanists regarding the meaning of *che’ ab’aj* or *ab’aj che’* (both variations appear in Maya texts with no indication of a difference) with some arguing the term simply refers to the material from which the effigies are made (e.g., wood or stone; for example, see Christenson 2004) and others translating the term to refer to a stele (i.e., “stone trees”) as erected stone monuments often with carved images or glyphs used by pre-contact Maya to commemorate and celebrate ceremonial events (see, for example, Hill and Maxwell 2006, 257 and Hull 2012, 92).

\(^{37}\) While *tz’ite’* is a native K’iche’ word, to use of *nara* to refer to the bag of red beans, crystals, and stones is a loanword from Spanish for the measurement of roughly 32-24 inches (though the length varied throughout colonial Spanish America) and the silver-tipped rod or staff of that length held by local colonial and present-day indigenous authorities as a sign of office and, occasionally during local land disputes, to officially measure plots of land. In either cases—divining...
Later in the Popol Wuj, after the cosmogonic and theogony sections and into the political historical sections of specifically the K’iche’ Maya, *poy* is used to refer to manikins the K’iche’ make and dress up as warriors so that their army looks bigger than it really was to intimidate and drive away enemy forces (fol. 46). According to the account in the Popol Wuj not only did the trick succeed, unlike the *poy* as the people of wood trying to be true humans in the third creation attempt, but the term explicitly refers to only *poy* as appearing like people and not as gods, such as Tojil. Even in extraordinary events—of, for example, war—*poy* does not refer to religious statuaries.

The Popol Wuj, however, does recount an episode where *poy* are fashioned to replace god-like characters, such as the main rulers One Death and Seven Death (Jun Kame and Wuqub’ Kame). These lords of Xib’alb’a, the Maya otherworld, challenge to a ballgame first the twin sons (Jun Junajpu and Wuqub’ Junajpu) and then the twin grandsons (Jun Ajpu and Xb’alanke) of two of the divine creators (Xpiyokok and Xmukane). Upon their arrival to the court of Xib’alb’a each set of brothers are greeted not hospitably by the lords of Xib’alb’a but rather deceptively by manikins they fashioned and enthroned in their place (fol. 24r). While Jun Junajpu and Wuqub’ Junajpu fall prey to the trickery of Xib’alb’a and are killed their sons, the hero twins, do not. According to the Popol Wuj, the defeat of Xib’alba’ by Jun Ajpu and Xb’alanke not only vindicates their fathers but also puts death in its place, raises the fourth and true sun, and brings about the creation of true human beings by Xmukane, the divine grandmother. However, even in this section of the Popol Wuj *poy* does not refer to effigies of gods because the text explicitly states that the lords of Xib’alb’a are not divine, *mana k’ab’awil*. In other words, *poy* cannot mean “false god” if what it deceptively imitates is never considered divine, even if non-human like the lords of the otherworld.

bundle or staff of a council member—a *vara* is a sign of “standard” authority, akin to “canon” in ancient Greece (*kanna*) and later Christianity.
This important distinction between *poy* in contrast to either *che’ab’aj* or *k’ab’awil*—that unlike either but especially the latter, *poy* never refers to a religious statue and is almost antithetical to *k’ab’awil* in relation to matters of the heart—does not appear lost on the early mendicant missionaries. For example, according to the anonymous sixteenth- or seventeenth-century *Vocabulario en lengua 4iche otlatecas*, *poy* refers to an ordinary scarecrow, *estantajo dominguejo* (Dürr and Sachse 267). And according to Dominican friar Francisco Ximénez’s later *K’iche’an* dictionary *poy* refers to a kind of scarecrow made of rags, *espantajo de trapos* (Ximénez 129).

Of the various colonial era *K’iche’* lexicons these two are among the more informative. Ximénez’s early eighteenth-century *K’iche’* transcription and Spanish translation of the *Popol Wuj* is the oldest extant version of these Highland Maya cosmogonic stories. However, while he does acknowledge that he drew from older mendicant linguistic works, such from the 1550s by Dominican friar Domingo de Vico, in the end his lexicon dates to 150 years after the redaction of the *Popol Wuj* by *K’iche’* elites and, thus, may express later colonial understandings of *K’iche’* terms. While also a later redaction, as argued by Sachse, the *Vocabulario en lengua 4iche otlatecas* bears a close genealogy to not only the earliest mendicant linguistic work, including that mistakenly attributed to Vico, but also entries drawn from Vico’s *Theologia Indorum* (Dürr and Sachse 35). Therefore, while the term *poy* remains obscure in the *K’iche’* authored *Popol Wuj*, according to mendicant resources on the *K’iche’* language close to the *Popol Wuj* *poy* refers to effigies or life-size figures made for non-ritual but albeit possibly deceitful purposes (e.g., keeping away crows, military foe, or divine competition). To this extent, it is curious that early mendicant missionaries did not use this term, *poy*, to mean “idols” as false objects of worship possibly attributable to the Christian devil except that they seem to have understood that their *K’iche’* audience knew *poy* not as religious objects at all and as not real but rather replicas (e.g., of people as “true” human beings but without heart, as a farmer in his field, as soldiers at the ready, etc.). In other words, both sixteenth-century
mendicants and K’iche’ Maya understood *poy* as false whereas mendicants aimed to have K’iche’ view their ritual effigies of “true” devotion (*che’ ab’aj* and even *k’ab’awil* according to Franciscans) as “false” and distinct from, at least per Christianity, “true divinity” (*k’ab’awil* according to Dominicans). If K’iche’ already understood *poy* as quotidian objects of deception it would be an inadequate concept to help mendicants establish a notion of false religion intelligible for Highland Maya let alone convincingly argue that Maya *k’ab’awil* was really just *poy*. For Highland Maya, *poy* did not mean, do, or feel the same as *k’ab’awil* or *che’ ab’aj*.

*K’ab’awil 2.0: Dominican “Divinity” vs. Franciscan “Idolatry“*

The growing distinction between intellectual schools informing clergy through their respective education—namely those schooled in Humanism and those not, those also schooled in scholasticism and those not, and within scholasticism those influenced more by Thomism and those by nominalism—came to bear on contruals of idolatry and, more specifically the treatment of the term *k’ab’awil* largely between Dominicans and Franciscans in Guatemala. By the 1520s in Iberia one of the stark contrasts between many Dominicans and Franciscans was their educational formation and, thus, their linguistic and semiotic ideologies germane to theories of translation and evangelization. While both orders were heavily influenced by the Humanism en vogue since the late fifteenth century, by the 1520s mendicants, mostly Dominicans but also some Franciscans, schooled at the University of Salamanca were trained in the realism of Thomistic scholasticism (*universalia sunt realia ante rem*), the optimism of being able to establish commensurable meaning through analogies, and an understanding that a signifier (*modus significandi*), such as a word, was distinct from what it signified (*res significata*). By contrast, orders that maintained clerical education within their respective convents, such as largely Franciscans and Augustinians, promoted the nominalist scholasticism of William of Ockham, denied the existence of universals in terms of signification (*universalia sunt
nomina post rem), and understood signs as intrinsically related to referents. Unlike their Dominican counterparts, nominalist Franciscans were highly suspicious of the ability for a word from one language to ultimately really mean the same as an approximate word in other language, especially with respect to religious language; neither Allah in Arabic nor Tz’aqol B’itol in K’iche’ Maya, for example, could mean the same as the Christian god with Dios or Deus.

As recorded in the first history of the Dominicans in the Maya highlands, the 1619-20 Historia general de la indias occidentales y particular de la gobernacion de Chiapa y Guatemala by Dominican friar Antonio de Remesal, by the Guatemalan lay historian Francisco Antonio de Fuentes y Guzmán in his 1690 Recordación Florida, and the major Franciscan historian Francisco Vázquez in his 1714-16 Crónica de la provincia del Santísimo Nombre de Jesús de Guatemala de la orden de Nuestro Seráfico Padre San Francisco en el reino de la Nueva España, the debate between Dominicans and Franciscans regarding the use of the K’iche’an term k’ab’awil boiled over into a major controversy as early as 1551. As previously noted above, while the term is ambiguous in pre-contact K’iche’ texts, referring to both spiritual or semi-divine characters and effigies made of wood or stone in the Popol Wuj, Dominicans proposed appropriating the term to mean “pure divinity” in K’iche’an pastoral literature (Remesal 1454-1456). Even Las Casas argued that “for the common and supreme god over everything that they [native Mesoamericans] would say whose name in the language of Guatemala was ‘Cavovil’ [k’ab’awil] and in that of Mexico ‘Teutl’ [teotl].” Franciscans, on the other hand, vehemently opposed and argued that the term only referred to Maya idols and, thus, could not possibly be used to instead point and refer to the Christian notion of the divine. Working with the first bishop of Guatemala, Francisco Marroquín, early Franciscans to Guatemala, like Friar Pedro de Betanzos, condemned the term k’ab’awil as referring to idols (Fuentes y Guzmán, II, 549-550;

38 “…por el dios común y superior de todos, [n11 que llamaban] que ellos decían, cuyo nombre en la lengua de Guatemala [sic] nombraban Cavovil, y en la de México, Teutl” (Las Casa 1967, II 506).
“Books and/as Idols: Discourse of Affectivity in Early Colonial Missionary and Mesoamerican Writings” – G.Sparks

Vásquez, 127). Franciscan literature, instead, phonetically K’iche’anized Dios to become Tyox as their alternative for k’ab’awil as “divinity.”

The tension between their competing semiotic ideologies and, by extension, theories and strategies of translation played out for centuries through the mendicant literature in and on Highland Mayan languages. For example, an early Franciscan Spanish-to-Kaqchikel bilingual dictionary and the later, nearly comprehensive Thesaurus Verborvm [m] (ca.1650) by Franciscan friar Thomás de Coto the entry for ydolo (idol) is k’ab’awil and che’ ab’aj (BnF Ms Amér 7, fol. 155v; Coto, 289). Later the Dominican friar Domingo de Basseta used a Franciscan Kaqchikel dictionary as a key source for his own Kaqchikel and K’iche’ dictionaries for fellow Dominicans in the late seventeenth century (Sachse forthcoming). The entry for cabauilab (k’ab’awilaj), defines the term as “to commit idolatry” and abcabanil (ajk’ab’awil) as an “idolater” in other words the Franciscan definition. However, in a later hand presumably by an eighteenth-century Dominican a marginal addition states: “K’ab’awil k’u ruk’ rib’ is ‘God being within Godself’; K’ab’awilaj means ‘to worship’; K’ab’awil was said in ancient times for ‘God’ and also means ‘shooting star’ (Basseta, fol. 168r).39 Despite the unilateral decision by Bishop Marroquín that the debate over the meaning of k’ab’awil was over it apparently continued quietly through the mendicant paper-trail over the course of the colonial period.

In the early Dominican texts alone leading up to the 1551 controversy belie this controversy over k’ab’awil as well as their understanding of affectivity in universal human nature but also culturally among the Highland Maya in particular. While part of the trend away from the affective spirituality that saturated medieval Christian mysticism and more in line with the devotio moderna of the previous century, music, especially in the vernaculars, played an increasing role for mendicant

39 cabauil quruq rib, Dios esta en si mismo.
(significa adorar.) Cabauil se decia antig.[amente]
para Dios y significa tambien la
estrella vaga.(BnF Ms Amér 59, fol. 168r, right-hand margin).
missionaries like the Dominicans. Preaching appealed to and moved via reason and intellectual apprehension; music moved via the body, sensory appetite according to Aquinas, and involved commotion of the soul with emotions (passiones) as well as to the interior motions of the will or intellectual appetite as affections (affectus).

Sahagún’s *Psalmodia Christiana* in Nahuatl, which he composed between 1558-61 and was eventually printed in 1583, was thought to be among the earliest Christian songs composed in the Americas (Sahagún 1993, xv; León-Portilla, 145-146, 226-228). However, in the 1540s Bartolomé de las Casas famously negotiated for no Spanish forces or settlers to enter his Highland Maya mission territory for at least five years, and his corps of Dominicans, according more to legend, entered the region singing in their initial effort to pacify and convert the K’iche’an peoples. Las Casas was apparently inspired by the Nahua singers and musicians taught by Franciscans like Sahagún in Mexico City in 1538 (Biermann, 438). Among the first Dominicans who entered the Maya highlands in the late 1530s and early 1540s, Friar Luis de Cánecer is said to have composed a set of songs focused on basic biblical stories and doctrinal teachings and been one of Vico’s tutors once he arrived in 1545.40 And, as thanks for the support he received from Franciscans in Mexico and their Nahua singers, Las Casas had a set of these songs dedicated to the bishop of Mexico City, Juan de Zumárraga, and sent them to Mexico to be printed on the Americas’ first printing press under the title *Cancionero spiritual, coplas muy devotas en loor de nuestro Señor Jesucristo y de la sagradísima virgin María, su madre*, but is all but lost (Biermann, 466). Two partial versions survive in an early seventeenth-century Q’eqchi’ Maya manuscript (Ayer Ms 1536) and the recently identified earlier and more

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40 There is scholarly debate regarding Luis de Cánecer’s entrance into the Maya region with, for example, Manuel Giménez Fernández siding with Remesal’s account of Cánecer leaving Nicaragua and arriving into Guatemala by July 1536, possibly joining Las Casas in Oaxaca later that same year, but returning to Guatemala and entering the northern K’iche’ frontier town of Sacapulas by May 1537 (Giménez Fernández, 91). However, Biermann and Marcel Bataillon based on analysis of other sixteenth-century records that predate Remesal argue that Cánecer did not come to Guatemala until 1542 and from Spain rather than Nicaragua (Biermann, 493, Bataillon 1965).
extensive K’iche’ Maya manuscript copy, dated 1567 but with a composition date of 1544-1552 (Kislak 1015, fol. 59r). 41

With the coplas of Kislak 1015, written in the years leading up to the “k’ab’awil controversy,” the term k’ab’awil appears four times: twice in chapter 12 related to the Tower of Babel, in chapter 22 related to the religious practices of Egyptians during the time of Jesus’ escape from King Herod’s slaughter, and in chapter 48 that tells of God’s apocalyptic fire (Kislak 1015, fols. 24r, 25r, 32v, 55v). 42 The K’iche’ version of these coplas (c.1552) while most like initially composed by Cáncer prior to the arrival of the second cohort of Dominicans, including Vico, shares distinctive discursive features also found in Vico’s Theologia Indorum, especially volume one (1553) where, as discussed above, the use of k’ab’awil varies to refer to effigies of wood or stone, che’ ab’aj, but also implicitly to that beyond such material signa for, instead, “the divine” as any religious image’s true res or referent.

However, as a late contemporary of Vico’s theological treatise, the K’iche’ Popol Wuj (c.1554-58) represents a near post-contact Maya religious worldview and explicitly uses k’ab’awil as first and foremost the divine agents that create the cosmos and desire that true people have “heart” and sing their divine names as well as the carved effigies of such deities that guide them both physically through migration and settlement but also emotionally through religious ceremonialism and divinatory practices. For early modern Maya, even the mendicants’ desire to try and talk about the divine and “idolatry” related to the heart.

41 The former is currently held at the Newberry Library in Chicago, Illinois and the subject of Bossú’s university thesis. The latter is currently held as part of the Jay I. Kislak Collection at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. For preliminary analysis on Kislak 1015 in light of Ayer Ms 1536 and Remesal’s account of these songs see Sparks and Sachse 2017.

42 ¶Cap(itulo) xii. d(e)l p(ri)nçipio d(e) la yd(o)latria ¶ Paxinaca chi cat V inac Oherc dichab q(i)chabal ta xeoq(i)c chi pai ta xtiiq(i)c abahnilxic. (fol. 24r); ¶ xa in hu(n) in iuaban Dios Nubi xa untuq(e)l q(ui)ni xq(ihila miba(m) abahnilxic. (fol. 25r); ¶ Ta xopon cabanal tam cotom tam ha xaq(u)q(i)x q(i)z abahnilbic egipxo. (fol. 32v); and ¶ diuq(i)x q ut run(obre) abah iuabanil nahe ohc ohc xat xat puac huna di(un) xac tic tic robah (fol. 55v).
Highland Maya Theological Anthropology: A Locus of Affect

Heart of the Matter

Unlike che’ab’aj and poy, as noted in the Popol Wuj, k’ab’anwil for the K’iche’an Maya relates to the human heart. As more extensively documented in the ethnographic literature, the Highland Maya have a variety of terms for their moral and religious anthropology – how they understand human nature and its constitutive elements, how they are affected and are moved (e.g., emotionally) by the wider cosmos as well as affect and move others and things in any particular ecology. The most general of these terms, in K’iche’, is -wach, which literally can mean “face” or “in front of” someone or something but more broadly refers to one’s exterior, public view, or persona, or it can mean “self” as the psychosomatic whole of a person and thus also interiority. For example, the common greeting la utz awach? (are you well? how are you?) can be responded to regarding one’s corporeal health but also one’s mental or emotional state. Terms for one’s more ephemeral or ethereal self include nawal (often translated as one’s essence, core value or character, or spirit usually in symbolic relation to a particular animal form or natural phenomena), uxlab’ (literally “breath” but also “spirit,” though the use of this term may be the result of Dominican appropriation), and the lexical couplet ninuch’, natub’ (literally “shadow, shade” but also “spirit” or “soul”). In autochthonous K’iche’ literature nawal often appears as the couplet of nawal, pus to refer to a kind of transformative or sacrificial force or power usually in military, political, or religious contexts.

43 For example, see Fischer and Hendrickson 2003, 79-88 regarding the Kaqchikel and MacKenzie 2016, 66-112 regarding the K’iche’ but also Pitarch 2010, 22-77 regard the Tzeltal of Chiapas, Mexico.

44 In colonial K’iche’an lexicons both of these terms are defined as sombra. It is unclear whether the lack of distinction these two terms—ninuch’ and natub’—is inherent to K’iche’ (i.e., that for a native K’iche’ speaker they would have been synonymous and only used in a poetic parallelism for rhetorical reasons) or because sombra in Spanish can mean either shadow or shade. Because they are rendered as two at least phonetically distinct words in K’iche’ I have rendered them in English with two different words. Regardless, similar terms of “shadow” to mean something akin to one’s “soul” is found in other non-K’iche’an Highland Mayan languages, such a naab’l in Mam and ch’ulel in Tzeltal (Watanabe 254; Pitarch 2010, 24-39; and Pitarch 2012, 105).

45 Though, unlike pus (puz in the colonial orthography), nawal is etymologically not a Mayan word but rather derived from the Nahuatl term nahual resulting from Nahuatl influence either from the Yaki (Pipil) Nahuatl-speaking population in Guatemala and El Salvador or the later “Toltec” influence on the Maya by the twelfth-century. However, rather than replace the Maya term pus, the Nahuatl term nawal was adjoined to it to form a lexical couplet. However, the
And like che' ab'aj and k'ab'awil, many of these terms were used by early mendicant missionaries in their effort to translate Catholic concepts including the idea that humans only have one soul or spirit, possibly unlike the theological anthropology of the Maya. And as with k'ab'awil, the appropriation and attempt to reconfigure the meaning of these terms was a topic of contentious debate between mendicants. For example, nawal, pus was used to mean “miracles,” such as in the teaching of the miracles performed by Jesus. For Dominicans ncslab’ meant “spirit” on par with or to replace ninuch’, natub’, as Vico argued in chapter 32 of the Theologia Indorum, but not only for humans (APS Ms, fols. 46v-47v). In opposition to Franciscans who claimed that only Spanish or Latin could be used to speak about the Holy Spirit (Espiritu Santo, Spiritus Sancti) Dominicans like Vico rendered the third character of the triune god with ncslab’ (e.g., rab ncslab Dios or ncslabixed spiritu santo; Dürr and Sachse, 309). In contrast, Franciscans strove to replace natub’ with the Latin term anima, soul (Fischer and Hendrickson 81). Instead, for most K’iche’an Maya anima’ has become thoroughly incorporated into their native anthropology to be either an additional term for “soul” or “spirit” or an additional understanding or even different kind of soul-spirit.

Finally, and more significantly, is the term -k’u’x, which can be literally translated as “heart” but more broadly also translated to mean soul, core, center, or essence. Anthropologically or physiologically uk’u’x as one’s “heart” is a seat of emotions, along with other human core loci such as one’s stomach (pamaj unpossessed), in contrast to one’s head (jolomaj unpossessed), which relates to thought and ideas (no’j) and knowledge or understanding (-eta’maj). Furthermore, along with nawal but more interior than -wach, -k’u’x can refer to someone or something’s essence like the general

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46 I’m grateful to Frauke Sachse for pointing this out; personal communication.
47 It remains unclear to the extent to which the current K’iche’an concept of anima’ does or does not align with the Greco-Roman philosophical or Hispano-Catholic theological use of anima.
dispositions or a current state of one’s “heart” but less perennial, deeply constant, or characteristic than one’s nawal.48 But, unlike the other anthropological terms, -k’u’x can relate and refer to the divine (e.g., the creator god Uk’u’x Kaj, Uk’u’x Ulew (Heart of Sky, Heart of Earth)), the celestial realm (e.g., the equilateral triangle in the lower part of the Orion—specifically Saiph, Rigel, and Sigma Orionis—is a Maya constellation called Heart of the Sky (Uk’u’x Kaj)), and wider familial, communal, and social relations (e.g., the Maya constellation Uk’u’x Kaj is also called xk’ub’ or “hearth stones,” which is a reference to the three large hearth stones traditionally used for cooking in the “heart” of every Maya home) (Milbrath 1999, 266–68). Finally, as “heart” the concept of -k’u’x extends to also include “blood” (kik’ unpossessed) as the medium by which daykeepers (ajq’ijab’ ) sense signals or signs (etal ) – inter-natural communication with the wider cosmos and spiritual realms attributed to daykeepers borrowing koyopa’, “lightening” (Tedlock 1996, 232–33; Freidel, Schele, and Parker, 200-201, 226-229). Uk’u’x, a person’s heart, according to K’iche’an Maya is the locus by which people deeply feel, move, are moved, and compel others to move.

Maya Religious Affections

The intricate relationship between k’ab’awil distinctively and matters of the heart for the sixteenth-century Maya is evident throughout their most significant religious literature. Affective or religiously emotional discourse surrounds the K’iche’ engagement with k’ab’awilib’ like no other object within the Popol Wuj, as exemplified as it states:


48 While not in modern K’iche’an languages, the term k’ojelem found in colonial literature refers to someone or something’s essence but may have been a mendicant neologism aimed at establishing and explaining to ways of being with respect to essence and existence, especially by Dominicans with respect to Aquinas’s doctrine of god, and is not an anthropologically moral or religious term. Unlike English (to be) and Spanish (ser, estar), K’iche’an languages to have a copla (i.e., a separate verb “be”) except for k’oje’ik (k’olik or k’o in modern K’iche’), which is more akin to the Spanish verb haber (hay) or “there is.”
Great was the weeping in their hearts and in their bowels for the dawning and the clearing [of the sky]. Only over there they arrived before it as penitents in great sorrow and great anguish. They trembled due to the pains through which they had previously passed. “Our recent arrival to here has not been sweet. Alas! That we could just see the birth of the sun. What have we done? Our faces were one on our plateau, but we just abandoned each other,” they said when they spoke much among themselves, amidst their sorrow, amidst their angst; and amidst weeping and calling out they spoke as their hearts were not yet appeased by the dawn. These, thus, are the “deities” who were appeased there in the canyons and in the forests, they were just among bromeliads and just among hanging moss and not yet upon the altars the people would give them. Tojil, Awilix, and Jakawitz initially spoke from there. Their light was great and also their soul and their spirit were great above all of the “deities” of the nations. Their force was abundant and also their pathways and their ways of working were abundant. They were chilling, and they were fearful, and they existed in the heart of the nations, and [the first rulers of the nations] were appeasing and heartening for them. …Their hearts would not bear ill will to their “deities” whom they carry, they carry them, and they came from over there in Tulan Suywa, from over there where the sun rises.49

Likewise, shortly later in this same final section, the Popol Wuj further clarifies:

According to Edmonson (1971, 178), (Simeón 1977, 71), and Campbell (1981) the name for the first and second kind of incense is derived from the central Mexican language of Nahua and, thus, would arguably have been introduced to the K’iche’ Maya along with the three new titular deities for the three ruling lineages of the emerging K’iche’ confederacy and other Nahua or “Toltec” influence around the twelfth century.51 In two colonial mendicant lexicons terms related to

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49 English translation from the K’iche’ and emphasis mine, but also see the English translations in Christenson 2003, 226-227; Tedlock 1996, 180-181.
50 K’iche’ transcription and English translation mine, but also see: Christenson 2003, 288; Tedlock 1996, 160.
51 Cites regarding the etymologies of kaisiwistan (or kawistan) and mistan (or mixtan) from Carmack and Mondloch 2007, 187-8n187.
these types of incense if not also deities are pejorative and relate to native demonology. Franciscan friar Alonso de Molina’s 1555 Nahuatl-Spanish dictionary, *Vocabulario en lengua castellana y mexicana*, associates the prefix *<awi>- (<awil>*)—possibly apparent in the name of the K’iche’ titular god *Awilix* and the term *k’ab’awi*—with vice (*vicio*), vainness, vanity (*vana*), carnal interests (*carnal*), and general evil (*mal*).\(^\text{52}\) And the early colonial K’iche’-Spanish dictionary erroneously attributed to Dominican friar Domingo de Vico glosses entries possibly related to the deities affiliated with these first two mentioned types of incense, *miktan ajaw* and *kakostan ajaw*, as “demons” (Carmack and Mondloch 2007, 188n187).\(^\text{53}\) However, according to the K’iche’ authors of the *Title of Totonicapán* all of this incense, including the third type called *k’ab’awil*, is “beloved incense” (*loq’olaj pom*).\(^\text{54}\) In a similar but notably different version of this same event recounted in the *Title of Totonicapán*, the K’iche’ Catholic authors of that text state:

> *Ta xek’amowan k’ut, ta xk’ik’aj k’ut kipom, kik’amowan’al. B’alam K’itzé’, kasiwastan upom. B’alam Aq’ab’, mistan pom re’ch. Majukotaj, k’ab’awi pom rech.*\(^\text{55}\) *Ta xkiporoj. “Kamul k’amo, oxmul k’amo, at Tz’aqol, at B’itol, at k’u miktaj ajal kaj uly, at kaj tz’uk, kaj ulyuk.” K’amo misqul ri usaqirik, upakatajik, misqul q’i, misqul ch’uk’ul. At k’ut, at qajuy’al Tolan Siwan, q’analaj jiyub’, raxalaj jiyub’;” xecha’ ta xkiporoj ri kipom.* (Carmack and Mondloch, fol. 18r, lines 1-11).

Then they just gave thanks, then just opened their incense, their thanksgivings. “Kasiwastan” was B’alam K’itzé’s incense. “Mistan” was the incense of B’alam Aq’ab’. “K’ab’awil” was the incense of Majukotaj. Then they burned it. “Twice thanks and thrice thanks to you the Framer, to you the Former, to you who is thus the center of the sky and earth, you are the four corners and the four edges. Thanks for the brightening and parting that we have just seen, the sun we just now see, and the star we just now see."

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\(^{52}\) This connection was made by Carmack and Mondloch (2007, 188n187), which they cite as Molina 1944, 10; however, it is not clear what exactly they are referencing. Therefore, also see: Molina 1571, fol. 9v; https://archive.org/stream/vocabularioenlen00moli#page/n277/mode/2up (image 278), accessed November 16, 2017.

\(^{53}\) Regarding the misattribution of Vico with this early K’iche’ lexicography see: Sparks 2011, Dürr and Sachse 2017, 23-35; and Sachse (forthcoming).

\(^{54}\) Due to the root *loq’* usually glossed as “love” *loq’olaj* has been translated here as “beloved.” However, modern K’iche’ speakers, especially spiritual guides (*chuchqajawib*) such as daykeepers (*aq’ij*), often also translate this term as “sacred,” “holy,” “glorious,” “noble,” and “majestic” claiming that its essence cannot readily be translated well.

\(^{55}\) Similar to the Popol Wuj: *Kik’amowan’al ch’ik k’an’tx. Mixtam pom ub’i’ pom ruk’a’am B’alam K’itzé’. Kawistan Pomon chik ub’i’ pom ruk’a’am B’alam Aq’ab’. K’ab’awil pom chuchxizik chik ruk’a’am Majukutaj.* (Their thanksgiving in their heart. “Mixtam” incense was the name of the incense carried by B’alam K’itzé’. “Kawistan” incense is still the name of the incense carried by B’alam Aq’ab’. “K’ab’awil” incense is called still the incense carried by Majukutaj.) (Ayer 1515, fol. 40r, lines 12-8, K’iche’ transcription and English translation Christenson 2004, 187 modified).

\(^{56}\) Similar to the Popol Wuj in the early cosmogenic section: *ronojel kaj, uly, ukaj tz’uk’atzik, ukaj xukutatzik, retawizik, ukaj che’atzik* (all of the sky and earth; its four corners, its four sides, its measurements, its four stakings); and later in a prayer by K’iche’ rulers: “...at puch Tojil, Awilix, Jaq’awizit, a[p]om kaj, upam uly, kaj tz’uk’, kaj ulyuk.” (“...and to you Tojil, Awilix, and Jakawitz, the belly of the sky and the belly of the earth, the four corners and the four edges.”) (Ayer 1515, fol. 1r, lines 19-22, K’iche’ transcription and English translation Christenson 2004, 15, modified).
You, thus, you are our mountain Tulan Siwan, our great yellow mountain and our great green mountain,” they said when they burned their resin incense. (English translation mine)

However, unlike the Popol Wuj, the Title of Totonicapán shifts the dedication of the offering of burnt resin incense away from k'ab’awilib’ as the deities of the ruling lineages to rather back to the supreme primordial deity Tz’aqol, B’itol, the Framer and the Former of the earth and all of the cosmos. This deity is not only the initial god to which the Popol Wuj called k’ab’awil but is also the K’iche’ name that Vico appropriated for also the Christian god throughout his Theologia Indorum – for example, Tz’aqol B’itol Dios nima ajaw (etc). For both K’iche’ who resisted Hispano-Catholicism (like those who wrote the Popol Wuj) and K’iche’ who worked with the mendicants and became their early converts (like those who wrote the Title of Totonicapán), k’ab’awil could not only point to mean the “divine” but was also that which moved the K’iche’ not physically, coercively, or even persuasively but rather ritually, emotionally, and, for the lack of a better term, spiritually.

Book Ideology: Maya Wuj

The final pertinent Maya concept is that of “book,” wuj, especially the extent to which it yokes early modern Highland Maya understandings of language, theological anthropology, and religious material culture but not affectivity. In brief, Maya linguistic ideology or ideas of language, for example as illustrated in the Popol Wuj, holds an understanding that language is not only communicative or informative (i.e., tells) but is also formative (i.e., creates) and transformative (i.e., produces change beyond persuasion). Language for the Maya conveys not just understanding but also force. In this sense, as a book is written language, a wuj is somewhat similar to k’ab’awil.

While the references in the Popol Wuj of the term k’ab’awil are far more extensive than those of wuj, those of the latter are no less important. They provide evidence that the K’iche’an Maya had a textual ideology that most likely predated the arrival of Europeans and related to their understanding of language, namely that language had force. However, on one hand, Lowland Maya
by their Late Preclassic Era became the only indigenous people in either North or South America to
develop a phonetic-based writing system that continued at least into the sixteenth century, as
evincing in the Relación (c.1566) of Franciscan friar and later bishop Diego de Landa (1524-79) who
attested to personally burning 27 Maya books along with reportedly five thousand religious effigies.57

Seen as a whole, it could be argued that the Maya have nearly a 2,000-year history of writing books –
from ancient logographic texts carved on stelae and written in folding-screen paper codices (like the
Dresden Codex, Paris Codex, Madrid Codex, and Grolier Codex), to early post-contact books (like
the Popol Wuj, Xajil Chronicle, and nine surviving Books of Chilam Balam), to colonial era legal
documents (such as títulos (land deeds) and testamentos (wills)) which contain traces of pre-contact
Maya and early Maya Catholic religion, and to the published poetry, literature, and political
manifestos of contemporary Maya.58 However, on the other hand, there is no conclusive evidence
that Highland Maya wrote phonetically or produced books in any form (e.g., tablets, scrolls, codices,
etc.) until after contact with mendicant missionaries.

The early (1553-6) survey of the living conditions of native Mesoamerican peoples by
Spanish jurist Alonso de Zorita (1511-c.85) claims that he saw a book with glyphic writing or images
held among the K’iche’, though none have survived nor are attested to by other sources (Keen 272). The K’iche’ verb stem /t’z’ib’/ can refer to both painting and writing according to colonial era and modern K’iche’ sources, though the extension of its semantic domain to include phonetic writing
among the Highland Maya may have only occurred after the introduction of an alphabetic script by
mendicants in the 1540s. And the early post-contact K’iche’an documents are composed of not only
pre-Hispanic myths and histories but also with use of native genres, often along with newly

57 See, for example, Landa on the phonetics of Maya glyphs (Landa 316-322), and Michael Coe on the
importance of Landa’s book, in part via Charles Étienne Brasseur de Bourbourg, in helping modern epigraphers
decipher the ancient Maya writing system (Coe 30, 99-101, 260).
58 See, for example, Tedlock 2010.
introduced Iberian genres. Though, their pre-contact development and use could have been limited to pictographic (e.g., lienzos, or maps) or oral texts and only incorporated into written texts by Highland Maya beginning in the 1540s.

Unlike oral texts, writing involves sight, which relates explicitly to and builds off of K’iche’ religious understanding of human nature. In the stories of the various attempts by the Maya gods to create true human beings they make only one request and have only one regret. Their request is for people to have language, to speak the names of the gods, and to thank them for creation (Ximénez n.d., fol. cite). All but the fourth and final creation attempt successfully produced people who could fulfill this single commandment – only humans have language with the force of god. However, the fourth batch of people, humans created out of maize according to the Maya, also had perfect sight (e.g., perfect hindsight, foresight, insight, etc.) like the gods (Ximénez n.d., fol. cite). In both the failure to speak by the initial three attempted creations of people and the expansive vision for the fourth batch of people are not the result of any mistake or error on the part of those respective peoples but rather by the designs of the gods. For this reason, many Highland Maya today say they are not born with “original sin” but rather “original debt” to god and their ancestors for their existence. Thus, unlike western Christian theological anthropology, human nature is not understood by the Maya as “fallen” and in need of “healing” or salvation.

As a result of their perfect vision the divine creators blur and diminish human sight, not due to sin but to have them be less godlike (Ximénez n.d., fol. cite). A compensation for this truncated vision is the technology of written language, like the Popol Wuj. For example, in its prologue where the K’iche’ writers explicitly state where and under what conditions they are compiling, redacting, and transcribing their stories to be the Popol Wuj, they state that their book is by the ruling council

59 See, for example, Robert Hill on the Annals of the Kaqchikel (Hill 1992 127-8, and 2012, 4-26) and Dennis Tedlock on the Popol Vuh (Tedlock 1996, 27-33).
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(a popol[w] wuj) but that it is based on an initial book of ancient writings (nab’e wujil ajer tzib’am) and is to be used as an instrument by which to see clearly (ilb’al saq) and continue to witness (ilol) and ponder (b’isol) enlightened life (saq k’aslem) (Ximénez n.d., fol. 1r.). This rationale for the text is repeated toward the end when it states: “There is, thus, an instrument for seeing for them, there is their book, the Council Book is its name according to them [the ruling lords],” K’o k’ut ilb’al re, k’e wuj, popol wuj ub’i’ kumal (Ximénez n.d., fol. 54r).

Early post-contact indigenous literature provides few meta-moments where a text explicitly reflects upon what it, as a text, is. For the K’iche’ the only other comparable site is, again, the contemporaneous Title of Totonicapán, which states that members of the leading Kaqoj and Eq’omaq’ lineages of the Tamub’ branch of the K’iche’ nation “are also themselves witnesses within this book,” xa uq’anawinaq rib’ chupam wa’e wuj (Carmack and Mondloch, fol. 7v, line 23, modern transcription and English translation mine). However, unlike the Popol Wuj, this line from the Title of Totonicapán does not say anything about what a wuj is nor how its role and value pertains to, and thus also discloses, Maya understandings of human nature. But it does provide additional textual evidence that for the Maya while books entailed language, and thus had force or power, books, even religious books, were not affective. If anything, in terms of Maya theological anthropology, books pertained to one’s “head” (ujoloni) rather than one’s “heart” (uk’u’x).

Conclusion

Perhaps in an ill irony, during the decades leading up to the 500th anniversary of Columbus’s first voyage the Maya of Guatemala found themselves in a repeat performance of the decades that followed the arrival of Europeans in the sixteenth century. While the percentage of Maya lives lost during the genocide of the 1970s-80s did not equal the near 90 percent population decline by the 1580s the qualitative impact on Maya life did. The latter missionary renewal efforts to “purge
paganism” from the religious life of the Maya by Protestant (namely charismatic Pentecostals and neo-Pentecostals) and Catholics (both Catholic Action and charismatic Catholic Renewal) echoed the efforts by early Spanish mendicants. Appeals “to the heart” at the heart of religious (as well as anti-communist political and neo-liberal socio-economic) conversion entailed both the promotion of literacy (largely in Spanish but also in Mayan languages, such as the work by the evangelical Summer Institute of Linguistics/Wycliffe Bible Translators) as well as local bonfires of the vanities, including the burning of books.

On one hand, this led to the reported accounts of the burning of caches of colonial era documents often written in Highland Mayan languages in an antiquated orthography that only scholars could read. Numerous human rights reports contain accounts from the 1970s and 1980s of the Guatemalan military either piling Maya villagers into the local Catholic church and eventually setting it on fire burning everyone alive along with any of the historical records and religious images within it. If baptismal records are among the few documents that someone exited, then their erasure helped to hide that a massacre ever occurred – a community of personae non gratae thus could not possibly have been razed. But even beginning in the 1950s and 1960s there are accounts of zealous Catholic priests, often from Europe or the U.S., publically piling up and burning a parish’s old statues and boxes of documents to usher in a new era of new orthodoxy – out with the compromised Catholicism of colonial Maya confraternities and in with a corps of Maya laity leaders as catechists and deacons with Catholic Action.60 In other local accounts, Maya catechists with Catholic Action—perhaps inspired by the new clergy, or the desire to break the historical influence of local cliques of the confraternities, or fear of rumors of the army targeting vestiges of Communist

60 For example, as told to me by Virgilio Vicente of a Spanish priest during his childhood in a local parish outside of San Miguel de Uspantán.
latent Catholicism, or any combination of these concerns—on their own initiative burned boxes of local documents that had become fetishes if not also suspicious evidence.61

On the other hand, in other Highland Maya communities colonial documents are arguably fetishized and cared for. They are kept locked away in old, often elaborately carved, wooden boxes—cofres—historically protected by various local Maya societies of laity that date back to medieval Europe—cofradias—entrusted with caring for a parish and its images. While no one in these Maya villages has been able to read these documents for decades if not centuries, the cofres are often reverently treated like the images of saints in the parish church—covered with an elaborate woven clothe, presented with candles and resin incense and maybe even prayers, periodically carried out and processed on ceremonial occasions by members of local Maya leaders. The Title of Totonicapán, unlike the Popol Wuj and almost all of the other important K’iche’an texts that are now held in libraries in the U.S. and Europe, is still held by the Yax family in the highland K’iche’ town of San Miguel de Totonicapán. And supposedly when local disputes emerge regarding land boundaries, ownership, or inheritance of their historic land holdings a town meeting is called where the Title of Totonicapán and other such old records are stacked on a central table. They are not read since no one can read them but they are appealed to—gestured toward, patted on by the hands of local K’iche’ leaders, who say things like “we all know what has already been written and said.”62

And yet it is all too easy to couch the Maya emotions around religiously treated (including discourse) books as the later modern influence of Christian writings—especially akin to the sola scriptura reverence for the Bible as the “word of God” by mid-twentieth-century evangelical and neo-orthodox missionaries from the U.S.—like Carlos Fuentes’s quote on the cover of Dennis Tedlock’s

61 Such an event supposedly took place in Sakapulas as told to Robin Shoaps in personal communication.
62 Santos Par, an extended member of the Yax clan, witnessed such an event in his youth; as he told me in personal communication.
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English translation of the Popol Wuj as “the Mayan Bible.” Or to assume that this is either a continuity of how ancient Maya also treated their sacred writings or an autonomous act of resistance where post-contact Maya created syncretistic treatment of the new Catholic images—of saints and scriptures—but as their ancient godly effigies — either way an act of resistance by which their religious trappings change but religious emotions and beliefs are maintained over and against the mendicant missionaries.

The early post-contact Highland May literature allows for a unique culling out of how the last generation of Kʼicheʼan Maya who knew their pre-contact religious world thought and felt about effigies, books, and construals of the divine. Intertextual alignment and analysis of these contemporaneous two sets of documents—one set by Kʼicheʼan elites and the other by mendicants—in Kʼicheʼan languages indicates that Dominicans appropriated not only the Kʼicheʼ concept of kʼab’awil, leaning into an understanding of it as “pure divinity” against the concerns of Franciscans, but also the affective or emotional discourse of the “heart” that Maya also employed regarding kʼab’awil. Religious emotions did not relate to books for the Maya; but religious emotions for them were intimately connected to kʼab’awil as religious objects related to their understanding of their gods’ desires. Beyond simply reconfiguring kʼab’awil to mean not just effigy or “idol” but also the “divine,” Vico also appropriated the Maya emotional or affective discourse for their kʼab’awilib’ but applied it to Catholic devotional literature. Like his other translational moves to have Kʼicheʼan Maya understand Catholic beliefs and practices, he also apparently strove to have them feel about religious writings like Catholics back in Iberia did. But not like the older affective mysticism of medieval Christianity still perpetuated by some millenarian mendicants nor only as the early modern

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63 For a comparable study of semiotic shift in the fetishized treatment of Christian scripture by Dutch Calvinist missionaries in Indonesia see Keane 2007.
affectivity toward texts influenced by the *devotion moderna* and humanism but rather an emotional appeal and religious conversion or “renewal of the heart” on traditional Maya terms.

The reception of many Catholic concepts and their phraseology by Vico and other mendicants can be traced through the early autochthonous literature of the Highland Maya, such as the Popol Wuj in reaction to and the *Title of Totonicapán* in accommodation of the *Theologia Indorum*. However, one can only imagine how Vico’s talk of revival, re-enlivening, or “resurrection” of one’s “heart” and whole “self” feel on K’iche’ ears and eyes who read his book as the repeated waves of small pox and other epidemics ravished Highland Maya communities. Because such language rarely appears in the K’iche’ literature. Vico’s apparent distinction between reawakening or reviving the whole person, both their exterior (*uwach*) and interior (*uk’ux*), who receptively reads his book is not explicitly rearticulated in other Maya texts. But their reverence for if not also fear of “sacred” books does down into the present in a way perhaps more attributable to Vico than to pre-contact Maya.

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64 From the Highland Maya perspective alone, the Kaqchikel Xajil Chronicle confirms numerous epidemics.
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