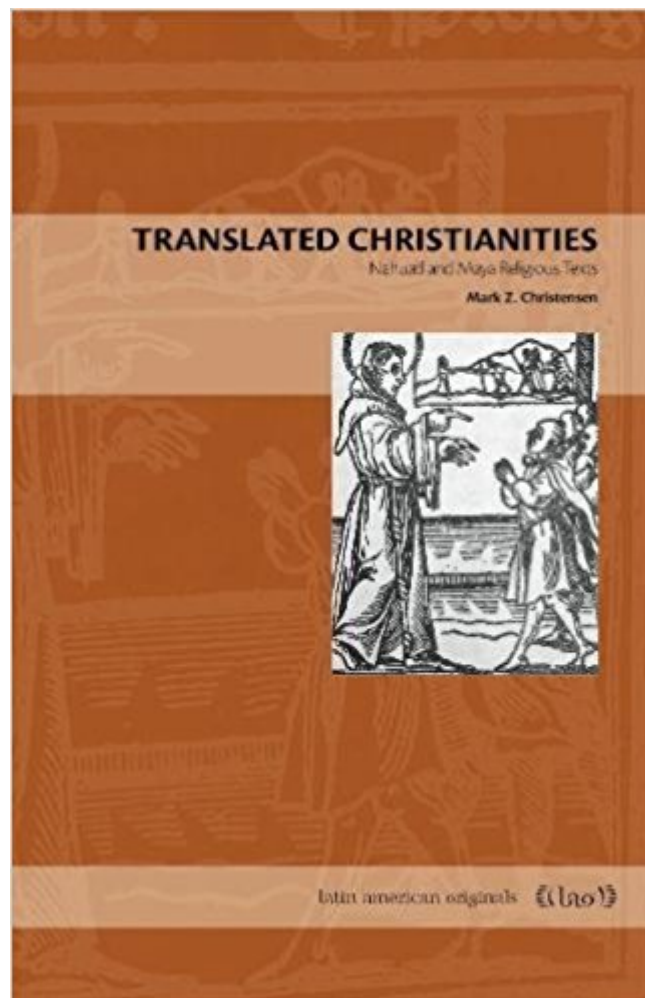




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Translated Christianities: Nahuatl And Maya Religious Texts (Latin American Originals)



Synopsis

Beginning in the sixteenth century, ecclesiastics and others created religious texts written in the native languages of the Nahua and Yucatec Maya. These texts played an important role in the evangelization of central Mexico and Yucatan. *Translated Christianities* is the first book to provide readers with English translations of a variety of Nahuatl and Maya religious texts. It pulls Nahuatl and Maya sermons, catechisms, and confessional manuals out of relative obscurity and presents them to the reader in a way that illustrates similarities, differences, and trends in religious text production throughout the colonial period. The texts included in this work are diverse. Their authors range from Spanish ecclesiastics to native assistants, from Catholics to Methodists, and from sixteenth-century Nahuas to nineteenth-century Maya. Although translated from its native language into English, each text illustrates the impact of European and native cultures on its content. Medieval tales popular in Europe are transformed to accommodate a New World native audience, biblical figures assume native identities, and texts admonishing Christian behavior are tailored to meet the demands of a colonial native population. Moreover, the book provides the first translation and analysis of a Methodist catechism written in Yucatec Maya to convert the Maya of Belize and Yucatan. Ultimately, readers are offered an uncommon opportunity to read for themselves the translated Christianities that Nahuatl and Maya texts contained.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

How to know the success of the evangelization of Mesoamerican peoples during the colonial

era? Mark Christensen's *Translated Christianities* goes a long way toward answering that question by means of a masterful translation and analysis of selected Nahuatl- and Maya-language ecclesiastical texts by indigenous authors and some clergy, both of whom fashioned local catechisms, confessionals, baptismal treatises, and Christian stories for the edification of their congregations. Thus, *ku* and *altepetl* and *balche* and *nixtamal*, among many other native concepts in these writings, served to keep the natives' world real as they contemplated the mysteries of the faith. This work is an important contribution to our field.

—Susan Schroeder, Tulane University

After the establishment of colonial rule, Mesoamerican peoples were forced to come to terms with Christianity: to accept, reinterpret, or deliberately ignore Christian teachings, or, at the very least, to show up at mandatory catechism classes. Mark Christensen expertly guides the reader through a rich selection of little-known religious writings in native languages, unfolding multiple dimensions of this intercultural confrontation. Ecclesiastics pursued various strategies to persuade, cajole, or frighten indigenous people into compliance, sometimes dressing Christian doctrine in fancy rhetorical clothing and sometimes dumbing it down for audiences they perceived as childlike or crude. Their messages often escaped their control, being reworked in unorthodox ways by indigenous Christians. Concise, yet ranging broadly in time and space, this book shows that, indeed, the processes of translation and adaptation yielded not one but many

Christianities.

—Louise M. Burkhart, University at Albany, SUNY

This is a major contribution to the history of the missionary enterprise in Mexico in both the colonial and independence periods. Mark Christensen clearly explains the challenge faced by missionaries, both Catholic and Protestant, in attempting to translate European Christian concepts into native languages and cultures that had no equivalents. He shows their inventiveness and the misunderstandings that inevitably resulted. He does this by translating original documents in Nahuatl and Maya and giving the background and analysis of each one. The result is an illuminating and brilliant piece of historical detective work. This work will prove invaluable to professional historians and graduate students alike.

—Stafford Poole, C.M.

Christensen's brief and gracious introductions to a variety of examples from the Nahua and Maya catechistic corpus provide a compelling point of entry for the study of what is revealed, upon close inspection, to be a diverse and challenging corpus that defies easy generalizations. This work should instruct and engage both undergraduate and specialist audiences.

—David Tavárez, *Hispanic American Historical Review*

Mark Z. Christensen is Assistant Professor of History at Assumption College.

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