

THEOLOGY AND ECONOMY IN THE *POPOL WUJ* AND *THEOLOGIA INDORUM*

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Abstract

Drawing on modern ethnography, scholars often characterize ancient Maya religion as “covenants” involving human beings generating merit through ritual activity in order to repay a primordial debt to the gods. However, models based on modern ethnography alone would not allow us to recognize the impact on Maya religions of those Christian discourses of debt and merit that accompanied sixteenth-century colonization. This article attempts to historicize our understanding of indigenous Mesoamerican theologies by examining how early Colonial indigenous language texts describe moral and ritual obligations to the gods in terms of their societies’ economies. The specific case study here compares two contemporaneous sixteenth-century K’iche’ Maya texts: the *Popol Wuj* by traditionalist K’iche’ elites and the *Theologia Indorum* by the Dominican friar Domingo de Vico. Comparison of these texts’ use of exchange-related lexicon illustrates that the traditionalist theological discourse of the *Popol Wuj*, which emphasizes reciprocal obligations between different beings within an ontological hierarchy, came to exist alongside Christian K’iche’ discourses with a more mercantile religious language of spiritual debt payment. It is argued that these results have potential implications for our assessment of ethnohistorical sources on indigenous theology from elsewhere throughout Mesoamerica as well.

INTRODUCTION

This article examines how exchange-related language is used in the *Popol Wuj* in comparison with its use in sixteenth-century Christian theological texts in the K’iche’ language. A goal of this analysis is to demonstrate how Colonial evangelization challenged traditionalist K’iche’ understandings of the moral order binding humans and the divine through the introduction of Christian discourses of spiritual debt repayment. Scholars have long understood that exchange systems do more than distribute goods and services, also serving as moral systems by which people establish and maintain social relationships (Mauss 2002[1950]). As people also exchange with other-than-human beings like gods and ancestors, groups may use economic discourse to describe ritual obligations and their moral or cosmological bases. Graeber (2014) notes that each of the major religions of the Old World came to describe moral obligations using the language of the marketplace. For example, the religious texts of Hindu Brahmanism (Malamoud 1983), Mahāyāna Buddhism (Tanabe 2004), and medieval Catholic Christianity (e.g., Aquinas 1920) all share a central concern of human life consisting of an indebted state, with ritual activities aimed at generating merit and/or alleviating this cosmic debt. Graeber (2014:80) asserts that:

The reason is that all of them—from Zoroastrianism to Islam—arose amidst intense arguments about the role of money and the market in human life, and particularly about what these institutions meant for fundamental questions about what human

beings owed to one another. The question of debt, the arguments about debt, ran through every aspect of the political life of the time.

The relevant insight here is that these alignments between economic and religious discourse have historical origins in the concerns of their times. For Graeber (2014:121), debt payment is based on just one of several systems of moral accounting which human beings invoke concerning obligations cross-culturally, and so differs from needs-based transfer or hierarchical appropriation. So although life in all human communities involves obligations, not all obligations are “debts,” unless we wish to collapse family meals, gift-giving, tribute payments, ransom, legal fines, and commercial loans into the same analytical category. Accordingly, Graeber (2014:75) argues that “it’s only once we can imagine human life as a series of commercial transactions that we’re capable of seeing our relation to the universe in terms of debt.” For example, Mahāyāna Buddhists in China and Japan developed ledger books to record merit as a moral commodity accumulated from ritual acts, which they could then apply on behalf of themselves or transfer to others (Tanabe 2004:533). As we will discuss, medieval Christianity also developed means of accumulating and transferring merit on behalf of oneself and others.

Scholars of Mesoamerican societies likewise have given attention to the interrelationship between ritual and economy (e.g., McAnany 2010; Wells and Davis-Salazar 2007). In fact, indigenous Mesoamerican theologies often are described as “contracts” (Thompson 1970:170) or “covenants” (Coe and Houston 2015: 242; Monaghan 2000:36–39) involving humans’ repayment through ritual activity of a primordial debt owed to the gods for making human life possible. In his comparative overview of

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Mesoamerican theology, Monaghan (2000) draws on his own and others' ethnographic research to argue for understanding the relationship between humans and the gods in indigenous cultures in terms of "debt" and "merit." Conceptualizing Mesoamerican theologies in these terms provides Monaghan with points for contrast as well as for comparison between religious traditions. Citing Earle's (1986) ethnographic work in highland Guatemala, Monaghan claims that "K'iche' [Maya] feel they are born not with original sin, but with original debt. Even the root of their word for life (*k'aslem*) means 'debt'" (Monaghan 2000:38). This interpretation of Mesoamerican ritual as a primordial debt repayment has been widely influential in subsequent scholarship on the pre-Hispanic Maya, with debt and merit being called "the basic structuring principles" of Maya religious expression since at least the Classic period (McAnany 2010:69).

Despite their evident value, models based on modern ethnography alone would not allow us to recognize what long-term change may have occurred since the Colonial period in K'iche' theology, or in Mesoamerican theologies more generally. For example, the basis for Monaghan's claim that K'iche' are born with "original debt" is based on a folk etymology elicited during ethnographic fieldwork (Earle 1986:172, n37), but without reference to comparable examples of the term's use over time. I say folk etymology because *k'aslem* is a nominalized form of the positional intransitive verb *k'as* "to be alive, be awake" (Mondloch 2017:234), rather than being derived from the homophonous noun *k'as* "debt." Other ethnographic accounts indicate that the intersections of economic and religious discourse among Mayan-language speaking communities have changed over time. For example, in Hull's (2000:13) account of ritual language among the Ch'orti' Maya of eastern Guatemala, he notes:

Many from the older generation recall participating in or hearing about numerous ceremonies that are no longer practiced today. One of these is known as the *Limosna* or "Payment to the Earth" ceremony. The word *tojma'r*, "payment" is used for all types of payments today but several consultants informed me that its usage used to be more restricted to mean specifically "payments to the gods." The ceremony today is considered one of many obligations involved in planting the milpa or building a new house.

In addition to semantic adjustments in exchange-related lexicons through the expansion or reduction of denotations, the meanings of material exchange objects themselves also have been subject to historical changes. Wisdom (1940:34–37) observed during the early twentieth century that Ch'orti' rejected Guatemalan paper currency in favor of the continued use of silver pesos. In addition to their use as a general medium of exchange, these silver pesos served as gifts between godparents and to deities (alongside cacao and copal, respectively), and as personal ornaments with "aesthetic, protective, and curative value in themselves" (Wisdom 1940:37).

Our ability to interpret Mesoamerican theologies over time is further complicated by several centuries of Christian evangelization in the region, which introduced its own theological discourses and concomitant economic language and assumptions. European Catholic theology of the sixteenth century had a developed juridical doctrine of atonement, with a Latin economic and legal vocabulary that informed those Church teachings and practices on debt and merit transmitted to indigenous communities. Through sin against God, humanity is said to be in bondage due to the debt or liability

(*reātus*) it has incurred. To free humanity from eternal punishment, Christ paid the price (*pretium*) for humanity's redemption, which is accomplished through the merit (*meritum*) his death afforded (Aquinas 1920). Furthermore, the infinite merits earned by Christ and the good works of the saints comprise the Treasury of the Church (*thesaurus ecclesiae*). Whereas Christ's sacrificial death paid the price of original sin, this treasury of merit can alleviate those temporal (as opposed to eternal) punishments that result from sin when distributed by the Church, for example, as indulgences (Kent 1910). In sixteenth-century Spain, suffrages such as almsgiving and bequests for masses constituted "a piety steeped in accounting, shaped and governed by numbers, focused squarely on debts and credits, driven by the desire to transfer specific amounts from one ledger to another" (Eire 1995:174–175).

Furthermore, questions about the relationship between theological and economic language in Mesoamerican theologies cannot be resolved by reference to early dictionary entries alone. These dictionaries, grammars, and other diverse early Colonial works in indigenous languages produced by Christian missionary linguists (León-Portilla and León-Portilla 2009) often served not simply to document these languages, but to appropriate and transform them in accordance with other imposed changes to native conduct and religion (Hanks 2010). This is not to say that the creation of Christian registers in native Mesoamerican languages was monolithic, but rather a complex process involving both coercion and creativity, taking different forms in different regions and historical moments. For example, there were significant disagreements in the sixteenth century among the mendicant evangelizers in highland Guatemala over whether to import loanwords or to adapt native terms for Christian concepts (Romero 2015b; Sachse 2016). Therefore, what is needed is an approach that examines how exchange-related lexical items are used and adapted in both traditionalist and Christianizing discourses in practice, supplemented, where appropriate, by a critical examination of entries in Colonial dictionaries.

This article is an attempt to further historicize our understanding of indigenous Mesoamerican theologies by examining how early Colonial indigenous language texts describe moral and ritual obligations in terms of their societies' institutional economies. The specific case study here compares the intersection of economic and theological discourse in two contemporaneous sixteenth-century K'iche' Maya texts. These texts are the *Popol Wuj* (in Colonial orthography, *Popol Vuh*) and the *Theologia Indorum* "Theology for/of the Indians" by the Dominican friar Domingo de Vico. The relevance of the *Popol Wuj* for this investigation is evident from its status as the single most influential indigenous language source in modern scholarship on the Maya, having been translated into other languages at least forty times (Henne 2020). The surviving manuscript was copied in the original K'iche', as well as translated into Spanish at the beginning of the eighteenth century by the Dominican friar Francisco Ximénez, and was bound with a grammar, catechism, and confessional guide to assist evangelizers (Quiroa 2011). Many characters and episodes built into the *Popol Wuj* narrative have demonstrably deep roots in pre-Hispanic Maya culture (e.g., Coe 1978), and scholars continue to reference this source regularly when reconstructing ancient Maya civilization (Chinchilla Mazariegos 2017; Moyes et al. 2021). The *Popol Wuj* is unusual in its relative lack of direct references to Christian narratives in its origin narratives when compared with other K'iche' *títulos* of the time (Sparks 2019:198). At present, most specialists on the *Popol Wuj* agree that a version of the original K'iche'

language text itself was assembled anonymously by K'iche' Maya elites during the 1550s (van Akkeren 2003), most likely between A.D. 1554 and 1558 (Christenson 2007:38; Sparks et al. 2017: 204, n2; Tedlock 1996:56).

The *Theologia Indorum* (López Ixcoy 2011a, 2011b, 2012, 2017) refers to a two-volume original K'iche' language work composed under the Dominican friar Domingo de Vico during A.D. 1553–1554. For several decades, scholars have recognized a close relationship between the *Theologia Indorum* and the *Popol Wuj* (Acuña 1983). Vico presumably composed it with an unknown number of native speaker consultants, as it exhibits some familiarity with indigenous religion and makes extensive use of K'iche' ceremonial rhetoric and poetics in its presentation of Christianity (Romero 2015b; Sparks 2019; Sparks et al. 2017; for similar use of indigenous poetics in Colonial Ch'olti' Christian works, see Law 2007). As the text is directed at literate Maya as its primary readers, this “marks the *Theologia Indorum* as a direct Christian reply to the Maya and their cosmogonic narratives found in later contemporaneous texts like the famous *Popol Wuj*” (Sparks et al. 2017:33). The authors of the *Popol Wuj*, in turn, appear to use the *Theologia Indorum* “as a foil against which to reassert a distinctively pre-Hispanic worldview” (Sparks et al. 2017:209). As such, these two works provide a promising “intertextual series” (Hanks 2000:110–111) for exploring missionaries' introduction of economic language into their Christian theological discourses in K'iche', and where this use diverges from that of indigenous elites' traditionalist accounts of the obligations between humans and the gods. By comparing the use of exchange-related language in these mid-sixteenth-century traditionalist and Christian compositions, I demonstrate how the creation of Christian registers in K'iche' not only challenged the version of Late Postclassic Maya theology expressed by the authors of the *Popol Wuj*, but challenged what these authors understood to be the moral basis of indigenous society itself. As we will see, the traditionalist theological discourse of the *Popol Wuj* emphasizes reciprocal obligations between different beings within an ontological hierarchy, whereas the *Theologia Indorum* employs a more mercantile religious language of spiritual debt repayment.

SOCIOHISTORICAL CONTEXT

Although a Colonial product of K'iche' Maya people in highland Guatemala, the *Popol Wuj* draws on older cultural traditions rooted in ancient Maya civilization. Political and religious topics are well-represented in the Maya logosyllabic texts from the lowland region during at least the first millennium A.D., yet the surviving corpus addresses economic exchanges less often. State finance in the form of tax or tribute payments in provisions and wealth is evident from the surviving Classic period lowland Maya art and text (McAnany 2010, 2013). The importance of merchants in Classic Maya society is more controversial, although there is growing evidence of everyday exchange activities (Carrasco Vargas et al. 2009; Martin 2012), marketplaces (King 2015), accounting practices, and currencies (Freidel et al. 2016). Unflattering depictions of the trading “God L” suggest to Martin (2010) that the Classic Maya had an ambivalent attitude towards merchants, at least in those works commissioned by political elites. Hieroglyphic texts and representations of the court life of these same political elites are less ambiguous in their celebration of their own roles in indigenous political economy, with art and text depicting the presentation of wealth in the form of enumerated

cacao beans and cargo bundles (*ikaatz*) likely containing precious stones like jade (Stuart 2006).

Supplementing these studies of pre-Hispanic material culture, comparative etymological studies of exchange-related terms in the Mayan language family have argued for the antiquity and evolution of various economic practices (Kaufman, with Justeson 2003; Speal 2014; Tokovinine and Beliaev 2013). This study will focus on the use in context of K'iche'an reflexes of several of these terms, including *k'as* (debt), *k'ex* (to exchange), *loq'* (to buy), *patan* (tribute), *sip* (gift), *qaj* (to loan), and *toj* (to pay), as well as the term for riches (*q'inomal*). Although the authors cited above reach conclusions about Maya economic prehistory from these data, the purpose of this article is to investigate the use of this exchange-related lexicon in K'iche'an discourse during the sixteenth century, and how Christian evangelization involved semantic adjustments that competed with K'iche' traditionalists' own theological understandings of indigenous ritual practices.

The centuries just prior the arrival of the Europeans found K'iche'an-speaking groups in highland Guatemala involved in the complex international economy of the Postclassic Mesoamerican world, characterized by an increased diversity of trade goods, long-distance exchange, and commercialization (Smith and Berdan 2003). K'iche'an societies during the Late Postclassic were stratified as consisting, in emic terms, of a ruling elite (*ajawab'*); their vassals (*alk'ajola'*, literally “children”), who provided tribute in the form of subsistence, goods, and labor; and enslaved people (*munib'*; Braswell 2001:309; Carmack 1981:149). Furthermore, the K'iche' lords of Q'umarkaj made hereditary claims on a local group called the *nima'q achi'*, who worked elite lands and provided the lords with domestic goods and services (Carmack 1981:155–156), although this did not extend to other groups by this name elsewhere (Chinchilla Mazariegos 1999). Archaeological excavations in the area of the Late Postclassic K'iche' capital of Q'umarkaj have revealed that “the range of elite goods ... in metal, shell, turquoise, jade, and exotic pottery indicates the status differentiation within the site and participation in a regional trading network” (Babcock 2012: 312). Furthermore, K'iche'an elites symbolically emulated some objects and practices of their Nahuatl-speaking contemporaries with whom they interacted (Braswell 2003). Ethnohistoric sources suggest that, in Late Postclassic Guatemala, marketplace exchange operated parallel to other mechanisms, such as tribute from subordinates and gift-giving between lords of different polities (Feldman 1985:21). For example, the Kaqchikel-language Xajil Chronicle reports how a vassal of the K'iche' lords attempted unsuccessfully to appropriate food from a Kaqchikel tortilla vendor (*ajk'aywäy*) visiting Q'umarkaj. The subsequent demand by K'iche' warriors that the woman be turned over for punishment for violently resisting the vassal's appropriation of her market goods occasioned a revolt against the K'iche' (Maxwell and Hill 2006:176–180).

During the sixteenth century, the economic and religious life of this Postclassic Mesoamerican world was appropriated and transformed through European invasion. The colonizing project jointly engaged in by the Spanish Crown and the Catholic Church in Mesoamerica during this time was called *reducción*. These policies involved the forcible resettlement of indigenous communities to facilitate their evangelization and the extraction of labor and goods, as well as the creation of Christian registers of native languages in accordance with *policía cristiana* “Christian civility” (Hanks 2010; Romero 2015b). In Guatemala, the work of congregating indigenous peoples into new communities to facilitate these processes was led initially by the Dominicans (MacLeod

2008:121). The Dominicans and other mendicant orders of the Church had their own history of relating the economic field to religious life. As Little (1983) demonstrates, during the maturation of late Medieval Europe's commercial economy, the Dominican and Franciscan friars articulated a Christian ethic that justified the activities of merchants and other urban professionals. (Saint Francis, himself a former merchant, is a patron saint of merchants.) As friars took vows of voluntary poverty, lay people's charitable donations to the mendicants came to be understood as a principal component of this emerging urban spiritual life, along with the option of joining one of the friars' lay confraternities (Little 1983:206). In sixteenth-century highland Guatemala, the mendicant clergy serving in these parishes were supported officially by *encomienda* tribute (Carmack 1981:306, 311), and less officially by ration (*sustento*), service (*servicio*), and parish fees (Van Oss 1986). Hill (1992:115–116) notes that although economic support required of local people for the resident friars was comparatively modest during the later sixteenth century, the cost of the friars' monthly maintenance and their *limosnas* ("alms," charges for services like performing a Mass) had increased greatly by the early decades of the seventeenth century. Money for memorial masses and (for the relatively wealthy) sizeable donations to the town church or the lay confraternities (*cofradías*) also became common features of the indigenous *testamentos* (wills) by that time (Hill 1998). Thus institutions of *reducción* and evangelization were accompanied by a Christian spiritual economy as well.

The principal concern of those Spaniards in the region through much of the sixteenth century was access to indigenous labor through *encomienda* (MacLeod 2008:128). Descendants of the indigenous nobility in highland Guatemala, in turn, pursued various strategies to maintain their customary position and privileges (Carmack 1981; Hill 2012). This occurred at the same time that the labor and goods that traditionally marked their elite status were being redirected to Spaniards, the Church, and, eventually, to the acquisition of nonlocal market goods (Pezzarossi 2014). In 1555, around the same time that the *Popol Wuj* and the *Theologia Indorum* were being written, de Zorita (1963:35) observed the descendants of the K'iche' nobility during his tour as *oidor* of the Audiencia of Guatemala. He later recounted:

[The lords of Q'umarkaj] were as poor and miserable as the poorest Indian of the town, and their wives fixed their tortillas for dinner because they had no servants, nor any means of supporting them; they themselves carried fuel and water for their houses. The principal lord was named Don Juan de Rojas, the second, Don Juan Cortés, and the third, Domingo. They were all extremely poor; they left sons who were penniless, miserable tribute-payers, for the Spaniards do not exempt any Indians from payment of tribute (de Zorita 1963:272).

Although several administrative reforms followed Pedro de Alvarado's death, the seat of the K'iche' nobility (Santa Cruz Utatlán) had already been substantially depopulated by the mid-sixteenth century, through the combined forces of disease, enslavement, and immigration (Carmack 1981:311). Nonetheless, the K'iche' lords did improve their situation somewhat in the succeeding decades (Carrasco 1967), often with the assistance of sympathetic Spanish officials and Dominicans. They continued to claim (often successfully) inherited rights to domestic labor and goods from local *nima'q achi'* peoples into the eighteenth century (Carmack 1973:385–389, 1981:314–316, 321–322; Carrasco 1967; Contreras

1965). However, many of these legal victories still lay in the future, during the time the K'iche' alphabetic text of the *Popol Wuj* was first written. It is against this background that we will examine the use of economic discourse in the *Popol Wuj* narratives.

THE *POPOL WUJS* MORAL ECONOMY

The *Popol Wuj* comprises a cosmic history of the K'iche' nation encompassing the creation of the world and the first people up to the indigenous nobility of the mid-sixteenth century. The fundamental beliefs on which economic interactions are based is called the moral economy (Hirth 2016:238). Aspects of the moral economy of the elite K'iche' authors of the *Popol Wuj* are embedded throughout this narrative. To begin with, those familiar with the *Popol Wuj* will recognize the fundamental role of humans in its cosmogonic narrative, as expressed in the gods' repeated attempt to create "providers" and "sustainers" for themselves:

"The dawn approaches, and our work is not successfully completed. A **provider** (*tzuqul*) and a **sustainer** (*q'o'l*) have yet to appear—a **child** of light (*saqil al*), a **son** of light (*saqil k'ajol*). Humanity has yet to appear to populate the face of the earth," they said (Christenson 2007:192, emphasis added; K'iche' text in Christenson 2003:153).

This terminology parallels that used to describe relations between different groups in K'iche' society. Vassals were called the "children" (*alk'ajola'*) of the ruling elite, and it was their obligation to provide the elites with food, goods, and labor, such as military service (Braswell 2001:309–310; Carmack 1981:149). Furthermore, the same terminology of "providing" and "sustaining" is used for relationships of political dependency and obligation in other accounts of the K'iche' lords. For example, in the Kaqchikel-language Xajil Chronicle, the *nima'q achi'* group that provided sustenance, housing, and other domestic services to the great K'iche' lord K'iqab' is referred to as *ri tzuqul* (Maxwell and Hill 2006:168, 171, 189), just as humans are for the gods in the *Popol Wuj*. As mentioned previously, the standard of living of the K'iche' lords suffered during the 1550s, although they continued to make a claim on labor and goods from the local *nima'q achi'* within the Spanish administrative framework (Carmack 1973:388; Carrasco 1967). This had important implications for historical lords beyond just their standard of living. Elsewhere there is a suggestion that the quality of a K'iche' lord's food reflected his ability to command respect and allegiance. The *Título of Totonicapán* reports that Ilokab' lineage members attempted to sow discord among the K'iche' lords by spreading rumors that the lords had disparaged the quality of each other's food (Carmack and Mondloch 1983:141).

Throughout the narrative, the authors of the *Popol Wuj* express the relationship between humans and the divine in economic terms that are also used to express these hierarchical relationships between humans and other humans. As Tedlock (1996:55) notes: "Just as the gods needed human beings to nurture them with offerings, so human lords required subjects to bring them tribute." In one of the manuscript's clearest articulations of this parallel between offerings and tribute in the practice of Late Postclassic K'iche' religion, we read:

These were great temples wherein were the stone gods. There all the lords of the Quichés [i.e. K'iche'] worshiped. All the nations worshiped there as well. The nations would enter therein to burn offerings before Tohil first. Then they would worship the Ah Pop

and Ah Pop of the Reception House. They would come to give their quetzal feathers and their **tribute** (*ki patan*) before the lords—each in turn they would give **provisions** (*ki tzuqun*) and **sustenance** (*ki q'o'n*) to the Ah Pop and Ah Pop of the Reception House, the great lords who had brought down their citadels (Christenson 2007:286–287, emphasis added; K'iche' text in Christenson 2003:249).

Following this description of the lords receiving provisions and tribute from their vassals, the narrative goes on to discuss the fasts and sacrifices of the K'iche' lords to the gods on behalf of their **vassals** (*kal*) and **servants** (*ki k'ajol*), as well as their women (*ixoq*) and children (*alk'u'al*). In appealing to creator gods for agricultural abundance and children, the lords declare these descendants will be *tzuqul awe, q'o'l awe* “**providers** to you, **sustainers** to you” (Christenson 2003:251). The authors of the *Popol Wuj* then comment on prayers, sacrifices, and fasts:

<i>Ta xkib'an ki patan</i>	Thus each of the lords carried out his
<i>Jujun chi ajawab'.</i>	obligations.
<i>Are' loq'b'al saq k'aslem;</i>	This was their way of showing veneration for
	light and life,
<i>Loq'b'al puch ajawarem.</i>	The way of showing veneration for their
	lordship also.

(Modified after Christenson 2007:291; K'iche' text in Christenson 2003:253.)

We will return to several elements of this passage throughout this article, but for now, note that the same term often translated as “tribute” (*patan*) refers to the obligations of the K'iche' lords to fast and sacrifice to the gods on behalf of their subordinates. This is because in discourse, *patan* has a broader semantic denotation, which Colonial dictionaries gloss as one's service or office (Dürr and Sacshe 2017:133; Edmonson 1965:86; see also Carmack 1973:312, n36). In this sense, it is comparable to the Nahuatl notion of *tequitl*, a “duty obligation that all individuals had to serve society and the gods” (Hirth 2016:38). As one might expect, *patan* is used in the *Popol Wuj* to label the tribute of jade, precious metals, gems, and exotic bird feathers delivered to the K'iche' lords by militarily defeated political subordinates:

<i>U patan ronojel amaq'</i>	The tribute of all the nations
<i>Xul chikiwach nawal ajawab'</i>	Thus came before the faces of the
	nawal lords ...

(modified after Christenson 2007:291; K'iche' text in Christenson 2003:255).

However, *patan* also describes intracommunity labor obligations in K'iche' sources, including agricultural and military service. For example, at the conclusion of the Rabinal Achi dance-drama, when Kaweq announces that the time has come for the Eagle and Jaguar courtiers to execute him on behalf of their lord Ajaw Job' Toj, he exhorts them:

<i>Chib'ana b'a r[i] ichak</i>	Do your duty ,
<i>Chib'ana b'a ri ipatan</i>	Do your work ,
<i>Chib'ana b'a la r[i] iwe', ri</i>	Do it now with your teeth, your claws
<i>iwixkaq</i>	

(modified after Tedlock 2003:122; K'iche' text in Breton 1999:290).

Ajpatan (“he-of-*patan*”) refers to political subordinates in retrospective pre-Hispanic histories in the *Popol Wuj* (Christenson 2003:218,

2007:252) and other Colonial K'iche' documents, such as *El Título de Yax* (Carmack and Mondloch 1989:43) and the *Título of Don Francisco Iskin Nija'i'b'* (Matsumoto 2017:198). Later during the Colonial period, this term was extended to include obligations to the Church and the Spanish Crown, such as the office of Indian governor appointed by the Audiencia of Guatemala (Maxwell and Hill 2006:533).

Widely shared within the Mayan language family, *patan* can be reconstructed back to Core Mayan **pataan* “tribute, service” (Kaufman 2003:59–60; see Macri andLooper 2003:290 for an alternate view). Maya hieroglyphic texts refer to a tribute presented to Classic Maya lords as *patan* (Stuart 2006:127). Furthermore, the captions to a scene on a well-known Classic Maya vase depict the wealthy God L complaining to the Sun God that Rabbit had robbed him of his insignia, his clothes, and his *pata(n)* (Beliaev and Davletshin 2006:25, 38, n36). Perhaps unsurprisingly, the cognate forms of *patan* are found throughout the Colonial period narratives of other Mayan language groups. The establishment of *patan* obligations form important points of reference in the accounts of the Spanish conquest in the Chontal language *título* of Acalan-Tixchel (Restall 1998:53–76; Smailus 1975), and Yucatec Mayan manuscripts such as the *título* of the Canul lineage of Calkini (Okoshi Harada 2009; Restall 1998:82–103) and the Xiu lineage papers of Yaxá (Quezada and Okoshi Harada 2001:100). Retrospective primordial histories such as that in the Yucatec Maya *Book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel* also cite *patan* obligations at Postclassic sites such as Chichen Itza when accounting for the establishment of the pre-Hispanic political order as well (Roys 1967:19, 74–75).

Despite these widely shared references to tribute and labor obligations, the meanings of *patan* were adapted in different Mayan languages to groups' different sociohistorical contexts. For example, *patan* came to include additional meanings in the languages of Chiapas along the western edge of the Maya region. Entries for *patan* in both Friar Domingo de Ara's (1986:359) Colonial dictionary of Tseltal and the Colonial Tsotsil dictionary of Santo Domingo Zinacantán (Laughlin, with Haviland 1988:282) include *negocio* “business,” in addition to the more familiar meanings of tribute and service. This particular extension may relate to the key role of Chiapas in the trade of goods between Verapaz in the Maya area and Central Mexico, with the merchants of Zinacantán, in particular, claiming this occupation as their role exclusively (Hirth 2016:210–212).

For the authors of the *Popol Wuj*, *patan* obligations ordered more than the relationships between different groups of human beings and those groups' patron gods. Indeed, *patan* describes the relationships between all the different kinds of beings in the origin myths leading up to the account of the K'iche' nation. In this way, like other cosmogonies past and present, the *Popol Wuj* narrative conveys a moral order (Lovin and Reynolds 1985). As Edmonson (1971:17, n403) notes in a footnote to his translation:

The concept of “job (*chak*)” or “office (*patan*)” is highly developed in Quiche [K'iche'], and is a recurrent theme throughout the *Popol Vuh*. Gods and men, animals and implements, lords and commoners are continually assigned their duties (which are by implication their functions and positions in the cosmos).

Edmonson's observation is borne out throughout the multiple attempts by the gods to create humans. When their first attempt at creating providers and sustainers (the Animals) fail to speak and worship their Creators, *Tz'aqol B'itol* (“Framer and Shaper”) decide the Animals will be replaced. The Creators announce:

“We shall now make one who will give honor. Your **calling** (*ipatan*) will merely be to have your flesh eaten. Thus be it so. This must be your **service** (*Are’ k’ut chipataniij*)” they were told ... Therefore their flesh was brought low. They were made to **serve** (*xkipataniij*). The animals that were on the face of the earth were eaten and killed (Christenson 2007:77, emphasis added; K’iche’ text in Christenson 2003:25).

The Creators move on to additional attempts to make beings who could serve as their “providers” and “sustainers.” Their third attempt results in wooden effigies, who ultimately lack the “understanding” (*na’wik*) necessary to properly worship and sustain the gods. This action leads to their destruction by Heart of Sky, in which the wooden effigies’ griddles, plates, pots, dogs, turkeys, and grinding stones rise up against them:

“This was our **service** (*qapatan*) for you who were the first people (*na winaq*). But this day you shall feel our strength. We shall grind you like maize. We shall grind up your flesh,” said their grinding stones to them (Christenson 2007:87–88, emphasis added; K’iche’ text in Christenson 2003:35).

Note that these are all potential foodstuffs or domestic tools for making or eating foodstuffs—in other words, they are literally the providers and sustainers of their owners. Their suffering in the course of serving the wooden effigies was justified while those effigies were potentially the providers and sustainers of the gods within the cosmic hierarchy. But once the wooden effigies’ position was compromised, there was a divine imperative that the effigies’ servants in the domestic economy subjected them to treatment similar to what those servants had received.

While *patan* obligations extend to what many non-Maya would consider “inanimate” objects like grinding stones, they order relationships among deified culture heroes and underworld beings in the *Popol Wuj*, as well. When Rat trades his life for the news that the fathers of Hunajpu and Xbalanque left behind ballgame equipment, he announces: ““Your **task** (*ipatan*) is not to be maize farmers. But there is something that is yours,” said the rat” (Christenson 2007:130, emphasis added; K’iche’ text in Christenson 2003:106). Many scholars have written on ballplaying’s central role in the public performance and monumental rhetoric of the pre-Hispanic Maya nobility (e.g. Helmke et al. 2015). Rat’s contrast between maize farming and ballplaying as an appropriate *patan* for these culture heroes appears to be a late echo of this.

Even more explicit is the organization of the lords of Xibalba in the narrative, in which One Death and Seven Death assign a different means of sickening and killing people as the “task” (*patan*) and “dominion” (*ajawarem*) of each of the lords (*ajawab*): “These, therefore, were the great judges, all of them lords. Each was given his **task** (*upatan*) and his **dominion** (*rajawarem*) by One Death and Seven Death (Christenson 2007:115, emphasis added; K’iche’ text in Christenson 2003:66). These terms, *patan* and *ajawarem*, are interchangeable in the parallelisms constituting the list of the underworld lords and their assigned functions (Christenson 2003:66–68).

We see, then, that the *Popol Wuj* narrative organizes relationships in the world according to this model of *patan* obligations. There are also hints that the basis for these obligations is ontological, in the sense that they are elements of one’s being or fate. For example, before the death of the four progenitors of the K’iche’ lineages, they announce to their wives:

“We go to our people. Our Lord Deer is now established, mirrored in the sky. We shall thus return, for our **work** (*qapatan*) is accomplished, and our **day** (*qaq’ij*) is now finished” (Christenson 2007:254, emphasis added; K’iche’ text in Christenson 2003:220).

The parallelism here between *patan* and *q’ij* (“day”) is suggestive. Days in the 260-day calendar have been a source of names among K’iche’an speakers since pre-Hispanic times, with the day of one’s birth (*ruq’ij wi*) serving as a basis for indigenous divination, as it is thought to reveal something of the attributes of the person born on that day (de Coto 1983:522; Weeks et al. 2009:12). In the 1722 K’iche’ calendar, when a day sign serves as yearbearer it is said to be *chupam rajwarem* “in its lordship” (Edmonson 1997:117; Weeks et al. 2009:81), using the same term paired with *patan* in the list of the lords of Xibalba in the *Popol Wuj*. The authors of the Xajil Chronicle use *ruq’ij* to refer to the “destiny” of the seven nations as they depart Tulan (Maxwell and Hill 2006:22), and Friar de Coto glosses it as “the authority of a person” (de Coto 1983:56).

As used by the authors of the *Popol Wuj*, *patan* denotes the reciprocal obligations that define and order the relations between beings of the cosmos within an ontological hierarchy. It is hierarchical in that one is provisioned and sustained by the work and suffering of one’s social subordinates, at times drawing on the familial analogy of vassals as “children.” It is reciprocal, as the K’iche’ lords’ own *patan* of fasting and sacrifice is “the root/foundation of their provision and sustenance” (*uxe’ puch tzuquj q’o’j*; Christenson 2003:253–254, 2007:290), which they received from their subordinates. The service of the lords is to weep and cry out in their hearts (*k’u’x*) and bowels (*pam*) to the gods (Christenson 2003:250–251, 2007:288). The obligations of lordship (*ajawarem*), then, are to provision the gods above you and to petition them on behalf of those humans who in turn sustain you, the latter being your vassals and household. The failure of one tier to fulfill their own obligations can result in that tier’s reassignment or even destruction, as it did in the case of the wooden effigies, who were overthrown from the heavens (the Creators) and the earth (their domestic objects and animals).

Human lords are provisioned and sustained not only with food and drink, but also by the various prestige objects of jade (*xit*), precious metals (*pwaq*), and the beautiful feathers of various birds (Christenson 2003:254–255). These are the sorts of items of personal adornment that Graeber (2014:130, 145) notes very often comprise the social currencies used to organize relationships in what he calls “human economies.” Yet for the authors of the *Popol Wuj*, such gilding is not enough—both Seven Macaw and the opposing nations in the narrative lack the insight (*wäch*) of the K’iche’ *nawal* lords. The authors assert that these ancestral K’iche’ lords were great in their essence (*nim kikoje’ik*; Christenson 2003:249). Given their special essence and their ritual pleading on behalf of their subordinates, the K’iche’ lords:

did not merely exercise their lordship. They did not merely receive gifts, nor were they merely provided for or sustained ... They did not achieve their lordship, their glory, or their sovereignty by deception and **theft** (*xkeleq’aj*) (Christenson 2007:291, emphasis added; K’iche’ text in Christenson 2003:254).

Where a cynical observer might see only an extractive practice, the authors of the *Popol Wuj* assert a moral economy.

To summarize, for the authors of the *Popol Wuj*, one's *patan* is one's task in society, whether a lord (*ajaw*) or a maize farmer (*ab'ixom*). In the sense that it is one's *q'ij*, it is one's role within a cosmic order. The sufferings one experiences in the course of provisioning others is understood as justified since these are the social relationships of which the moral order consists. This is certainly a hierarchical social arrangement of "mutual obligation, phrased in an alimentary idiom" (Monaghan 2000:38). However, the authors of the *Popol Wuj* do not go on to describe the relationship between humans and the gods in terms of a primordial debt (*k'as*), a loan (*qajom*), or fine for some offense (*mak*) that human beings incurred in the course of making human life possible. This difference between traditionalist and Christian sources in K'iche' will become clearer as we compare the use of exchange-related terms between the *Popol Wuj* and the *Theologia Indorum*.

COMPARING EXCHANGE-RELATED TERMS IN THE *POPOL WUJ* AND THE *THEOLOGIA INDORUM*

Although appearing less frequently in the manuscript than *patan*, several other exchange-related terms are used by the authors of the *Popol Wuj*. One such reflex in K'iche' that is widely shared across Mayan languages is *k'ex*, often translated as "to exchange" (Kaufman 2003:244, 781–781; Speal 2014:76–77). One use of the term in the *Popol Wuj* is when the Hero Twins' mother Lady Blood deceives the lords of Xib'alb'a that she has been executed by providing croton sap as an "exchange" or "substitute" (*uk'exel*) for her heart (Christenson 2003:84). As Taube (1994:669–671) has pointed out, this episode parallels ethnographically documented curing rituals among several Mayan language-speaking groups, in which an offering is "exchanged" for the sick person. Friar de Coto's (1983:344) Colonial dictionary notes that, at least by the seventeenth century, *k'ex* was the term used by indigenous people in the marketplace for barter (*trocar*) or to make small purchases of fewer than 20 cacao beans. This may suggest a commercial analogy at work, at least when describing relationships with antagonistic partners.

When we examine the use of *k'ex* elsewhere throughout the *Popol Wuj*, however, it becomes clear that the meaning of "substitution" predominates here. Most examples of *k'ex* reference intrafamilial continuity. The Hero Twins' elder brothers, One B'atz and One Chowen, are called the "substitute for their father" (Christenson 2003:92). After the Hero Twins deceive them and reduce them to monkeys, the twins themselves become the "substitutes" for their older brothers (Christenson 2003:101). Later on, *k'exoq* refers to the succession of multiple generations of K'iche' ancestors (Christenson 2003:233). The only other instance in the manuscript in which *k'ex* is used for the exchange of objects is when the Hero Twins trick Seven Macaw by using maize as a substitute (*k'exel*) when repairing his teeth, while plucking the jewels and precious metals from his face, resulting in his death (Christenson 2003:46–47). If *k'ex* does index commerce in the *Popol Wuj*, it does so in a highly unflattering light, associating it primarily with deceptive practices used against adversaries.

This is not to say that calculated exchange with non-adversaries does not appear in the *Popol Wuj*. The "price" or "payment" (*ajil*) for something, related to the words for "number" and "to count," is used several times throughout the manuscript. The lords of Xib'alb'a offer to "give payment" (*chiqaya' iwajil*) to the disguised Hero Twins for them to perform dances (Christenson 2003:142–143). And the various luxury items of precious stones,

metals, and exotic bird feathers delivered by the defeated nations as tribute (*patan*) are the "great price given" (*nim rajil xkiya'o*) to the K'iche' lords (Christenson 2003:254, 2007:291). Most references in the manuscript to *ajil* refer to bride price expenses, whose increase indexes the increasingly strained relationships between groups over the course of the narrative. At first, we are told, children were simply given in marriage as "gifts" (*chikisipaj*), "charity" (*toq'ob'anik*), and "presents" (*mayjanik*), without a return payment (*rajil*; Christenson 2003:227–228, 2007:260). Later, the wedding feast as an expression of gratitude was the only price (*rajil*) given among the Great Houses at Chi Izmachi (Christenson 2003:32, 2007:264). Finally, more substantial expenses beyond the wedding feast become a point of contention among the K'iche' lineages, as conflicts emerge at Q'umarkaj (Christenson 2003:234, 2007:267). K'iche'an ruling elites married within their social stratum, at least when arranging a principal wife, a match which incurred significant expense (Carmack 1981:150, 157; Hill 1992:142). If the K'iche' elites composing the *Popol Wuj* in the 1550s were as impoverished as those that de Zorita (1963) describes, a concern for their ability to afford suitable matches for their children may help to explain why wedding expenses account for the most references to price (*ajil*) in the narrative. As Graeber (2014:131) observes: "In most human economies, money is used first and foremost to arrange marriages."

Toj ("to pay") (Dürr and Sachse 2017:296) is another K'iche'an term with widespread cognates in other Mayan languages (Kaufman 2003:783–784; Speal 2014:86), including in Classic Maya hieroglyphic texts (Tokovinine and Beliaev 2013:175). In the seventeenth century, Friar de Coto (1983:387) defined it as *verbo común a todo género de paga, como deuda, compra, pena, culpa, etc.* ("common verb for all kinds of payment, whether debt, purchase, penalty, guilt, etc."). There is some disagreement among scholars as to whether the name of the K'iche' patron god Tojil derives from this root (Christenson 2007:211, n551). Edmonson (1965:124, 1971), Campbell (1983:83), and Carmack (1981:201) interpret Tojil's name as deriving from the word for "rainstorm." Toj is "day" in the indigenous 260-day calendar, corresponding with the day *Atl* "water" in the comparable Central Mexican calendar. The *Vocabulario en lengua Aiche otlatecas* defines *Toj* as the "name of one of the Indians' days, its meaning is downpour or rain" (Dürr and Sachse 2017:42, 296), while the Kaqchikel-language Xajil Chronicle traces the name's etymology to thunder (Maxwell and Hill 2006:51). Tedlock (1996:296, n152) agrees that the god's name derives from the calendar day name, but adds from his experience among contemporary K'iche' diviners that this is the day on which *tojonik* "one pays" what one owes, whether to one's ancestors or to creditors, for example (Tedlock 1992:115).

Nonetheless, apart from possibly being the basis of the proper name of the K'iche' patron god Tojil, *toj* rarely appears in the *Popol Wuj*. The noun *tojb'al*, literally "the means of paying," is used specifically in reference to corporeal violence by overlords to their subordinates. It refers to violence by the lords of Xib'alba' against their failed servants (Christenson 2003:128) and to the sacrifice of defeated Ilokab' lineage members as punishment for the "offense" or "sin" (*mak*) of attempting to overthrow the lord K'o Tuja (Christenson 2003:231). The authors do not use it in the text as a more generic exchange term in the sense that Friar de Coto later reports.

For manuscripts that otherwise exhibit considerable intertextuality (Romero 2015b; Sparks 2019; Sparks et al. 2017), how

economic discourse is deployed in religious discourse in Vico's *Theologia Indorum* differs noticeably from the *Popol Wuj*. First, in the *Theologia Indorum* it is God the great Lord (*Dios nim ajaw*) who "provides" for (*tzuq-*) and "sustains" (*q'o'-*) human beings with food and drink (López Ixcoy 2017:30), rather than humans providing for the divine, as in the *Popol Wuj*. Dios provides this sustenance (*tzuqb'al*) through the "great tribute, great work" (*nim upatan, nim uchak*) of Heaven and Earth (*kaj ulew*) as a *loq'ob'al* "love gift" to all humanity (López Ixcoy 2017:62). This charity from Dios is likened by the author elsewhere to similar gifts (*loq'ob'al*) that human beings might give to family members, enumerated in the text as the items traditionally delivered to the ruling elite: jade (*xit*), precious metal (*pwaq*), quetzal (*q'uq'*) and cotinga (*raxon*) feathers, pataxte (*peq*), cacao (*kako*), food (*wa*), or drink (*ja*; López Ixcoy 2017:126). While Dios provides all this for human beings, the Christian God is said to have no need for any human service (*chiquapanij*) or work (*chiquachakij*), since all things in Heaven and Earth are already his (López Ixcoy 2017:52). Even human life itself is just a "loan" (*xa qaqajom k'aslem*) to humans from this Christian God (López Ixcoy 2017:120).

In many ways, the economic language of Vico's Christian theology in K'iche' contradicts and undermines the moral order presented in the *Popol Wuj*, removing for human beings any meaningful role in an exchange relationship with the divine. Yet these Colonial K'iche' texts also exhibit those tensions inherent in the Christian theology of the age, perhaps best known from the arguments in Europe concerning the role of human action in salvation that informed the sixteenth-century Reformation and Counter-Reformation. Recall that the Catholic doctrine of atonement of that time distinguished between the eternal punishment for the debt of original sin that is paid for through the merit of Christ's sacrifice, and the temporal punishment attending to all sins, of which the latter may be expiated through acts of charity, penance, and the merit transferred through the Treasury of the Church (Kent 1910).

In terms of eternal punishment, the *Theologia Indorum* tells us that Christ is the one who determines the "payment" (*tojob'al*) of the living and the dead, and who substitutes (*k'exertisay*) for all human beings' good works (López Ixcoy 2011b:149). In terms of temporal punishment, although Dios needs nothing from humans, fulfilling the commandments is what we humans should give in **exchange** (*uk'exerisaxik*) for everything Dios has given us (López Ixcoy 2012:167). The *Theologia Indorum* remarks at length on **paying** for one's sins (*chutoj wi umak*; López Ixcoy 2017:108). Good and bad deeds each have their recompense (*k'exel*) or price (*rajil*) from Dios, and all sins have their payment (*tojob'al*), whether as sickness or misfortune on earth or as punishment after death in Xib'alb'a (López Ixcoy 2017:130–132). Although *toj* is not used in a strictly economic sense in the *Popol Wuj*, this sense is evident in the *Theologia Indorum*, as we are told that Dios may send one to Xib'alb'a "if you don't **pay** your **debt**, your **loan**, what you **borrowed**, what is **loaned** to you also" (*ma wi chitojo ik'as, ib'oq, ijalom, iqajom puch*) by other people (López Ixcoy 2012:171–172). Despite his theological differences with the Dominicans, later on the Franciscan de Coto (1983:388) would gloss *tojb'al mak* in Spanish as *el purgatorio*, "lugar donde se paga la culpa" ("Purgatory, 'the place where guilt is paid for').

The *Theologia Indorum* endorses penance and acts of charity as a means of addressing the temporal cost of sin. The "price" (*rajil*) for Dios forgetting one's sin is crying out to Him in one's heart

and one's bowels (*uk'ux upam*; López Ixcoy 2017:136), here borrowing a traditional K'iche' parallelism which the *Popol Wuj* also uses when describing the ancestral K'iche' lords' *patan* obligation of pleading before their gods on behalf of their subordinates. Elsewhere, the Christian holiday of Lent (*cuaresma*) is called "the day for paying for our sins" (*uq'ij tojorik qamak*) (López Ixcoy 2011b:317). And although God's **love** for human beings (*uloq'oxik Dios qumal*) does not require jade, gold, quetzal or cotinga feathers, pataxte, or cacao (things traditionally afforded to the K'iche' elites), the Christian person does give offerings of wealth (*q'inomal*) to the Church in the form of cloth (*k'ul*) and vessels of precious metal (*pwaq*) for the Mass (López Ixcoy 2011b:209).

Although *patan* is fundamental to how the authors of the *Popol Wuj* describe obligations between humans and the gods, other K'iche' exchange-related terms rarely appear in that manuscript. This contrasts with the *Theologia Indorum*'s apparent dismissal of reciprocal *patan* obligations as a proper model of the human-divine relationship and its greater emphasis on other exchange-related terms, such as *toj* ("to pay"). These differences encourage us to consider how the introduction of these Christian discourses, alongside Colonial changes in the local political economy, may have contributed to semantic adjustments of the K'iche'an exchange-related lexicon. To pursue this question further, let us examine in more detail the case of *loq'ob'al*, a ubiquitous term in the *Theologia Indorum* also used by the *Popol Wuj* authors to describe the K'iche' lords' obligatory fasts and sacrifices to the gods.

CHRISTIANIZATION AND THE MORAL ECONOMY

Ta xkib'an ki patan

Jujun chi ajawab'.

Are' loq'b'al saq k'aslem;

Loq'b'al puch ajawarem.

Thus each of the lords carried out his **obligations**.

This was their **way of showing veneration** for light and life,

The **way of showing veneration** for their **lordship** also.

(Modified after Christenson 2007:291; K'iche' text in Christenson 2003:253.)

Loq' is a polyvalent verbal root in K'iche' and Kaqchikel languages, with meanings such as "buy," "love," or "sacred" (Maxwell and Hill 2006:68, n161, 571, n3). The K'iche'an term *loq'[o]b'al* is comprised of the verb root *loq'* suffixed by the thematic vowel *-o-*, the instrumental *-b'-*, and the nominalizer *-al* (Maxwell and Hill 2006:368, 430). Therefore, a grammatically literal translation of *loq'ob'al* is an "instrument of loving/buying" (Weeks et al. 2009:203, n105).

Both Colonial dictionaries document a diversity of denotations for *loq'*. It is glossed in Spanish as *amor* ("love") and *caridad* ("charity") in the *Vocabulario en lengua 4iche otlatecas* (Dürr and Sachse 2017:246). Friar de Coto's (1983:28, 90, 136, 313, 345, 438) more expansive dictionary glosses *loq'ob'al* with various Spanish words and phrases: *la obra de amor, caridad, dádiva, limosna, merced o favor, presente o offrenda que se da a Dios* ("act of love, charity, gift, alms, mercy, favor, present or offering that one gives to God"), and as a synonym with other K'iche'an words for "gift" (*sip* and *mayijab'al*). These latter terms are used for things given without expectation of repayment, both in the *Popol Wuj* (Christenson 2003:227–228, 2007:260) and in overtly Christian contexts (López Ixcoy 2017:62; Maxwell and Hill 2006:399).

Loq' and its derivatives are ubiquitous features of the discourse of the *Theologia Indorum*, appearing well over one hundred times in each of the published manuscripts referenced in this study, the BnF Manuscrit Américain 10 (López Ixcoy 2017) and the Garret-Gates manuscript number 175 (López Ixcoy 2011a, 2011b, 2012). This is because the mendicants selected this lexeme for translating notions of Christian love and charity. For example, Christ's description of his redeeming death for humanity is given as *nunimaloq'ob'al nunimatoq'ob'isab'al*, "my great act of love, my great mercy" (López Ixcoy 2011a:154). The adjective *loq'olaj* came to be the common term for "sacred" in K'iche' and Kaqchikel languages even to this day (Kaufman 2003:799), a process of semantic adjustment observed in Colonial example phrases such as *nuloq'olaj qajawi San Francisco*, glossed as "my beloved father Saint Francis" (Dürr and Sachse 2017:246). The numerous entries in the Colonial dictionaries conflating Christian love with charitable donations should be unsurprising perhaps, given the symbiotic relationship between mendicants' voluntary poverty and laypeople's charitable donations that has existed since these orders' founding in Europe (Little 1983).

Interestingly, de Coto (1983:104) also glosses *loq'ob'al* as *lo con que se a de comprar algo*, "that with which one buys something." De Coto (1983:434) notes that *loq'* can also mean a "precious thing, of much value." In contrast with *k'ex*, which de Coto says refers to barter or small-scale purchases of fewer than 20 cacao beans in the marketplace, he notes in his entry for *mercar* that *loq'* refers to the purchase of large or bulk things with a value greater than 20 cacao beans, such as a bag of salt or a horse (de Coto 1983:344). Furthermore, the example sentences provided for *loq'* as "to buy" in the *Vocabulario en lengua Aiche otlatecas* refer specifically to buying slaves (Dürr and Sachse 2017:246). Although de Coto's seventeenth-century entries reflect local economy under Spanish colonialism, this linguistic distinction may echo the different spheres of exchange by which various goods circulated in highland Guatemala during the Late Postclassic (Feldman 1985:21–23). Besides charity and large purchases, *loq'* took on meanings related to currency in other Colonial contexts of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. *Loq'ob'al* is used in late sixteenth-century Kaqchikel records to refer to monetary contributions in community fundraising efforts to pay fines levied by Colonial administrators (Maxwell and Hill 2006:571–575), and *loq'oj* is used to refer to bequests in currency (*tostones*) to relatives in a 1608 Kaqchikel will (Hill 1998:177).

Returning to the example above from the *Popol Wuj*, the polyvalence of *loq'* has led translators to render *loq'[o]b'al* differently in their versions of that passage. Edmonson (1971:246) translates *loq'ob'al* as the "price" the K'iche' lords pay the gods for light (*saq*), life (*k'aslem*), and their lordship (*ajawarem*). Alternatively, Tedlock (1996:193) translates *loq'ob'al* as a "way of cherishing" these things, and Christenson (2007:291) as the "way of showing veneration" for them. Our understanding of this passage, and by extension the *Popol Wuj's* authors' theology, would be helped by examining *loq'* in the fuller context of retrospective pre-Hispanic narratives for comparison with how it is used in explicitly Christian works.

The contexts in which *loq'* is used in retrospective pre-Hispanic accounts suggest a kind of admiration or esteem for prominent personages and things. Throughout the *Popol Wuj*, the K'iche' progenitors and their early lords are described as being "loved" in this way (Christenson 2003:165, 237, 2007:206, 274). Likewise, in the Xajil Chronicle, Kaqchikel ancestors are "loved" or "honored" by

powerful people they encounter over the course of the narrative (Maxwell and Hill 2006:137, 151). *Loq'* is also used in the *Popol Wuj* to describe the reverence held for the sacred bundle which the K'iche' progenitors (*qajawab'*) left behind with their descendants (Christenson 2003:222, 2007:255), an element of pre-Hispanic religiosity which early Christian evangelizers would not have encouraged.

The implication then is that *loq'ob'al* in retrospective pre-Hispanic accounts refers to the means by which one expresses reverence for lords or gods. In the *Popol Wuj*, this describes the K'iche' lords' *patan* obligation to fast and sacrifice to the gods on whom their lordship and human life itself ultimately depend. However, the semantic range of *loq'* was affected by its ubiquitous use in the emerging Christian registers through which it adopted indexical associations, in keeping with the kinds of discourse the mendicant preachers brought with them from Europe (Little 1983:200). This is especially evident when we examine how *loq'ob'al* was applied subsequently in K'iche'an narratives in reference to Christian theologies of debt and merit.

In the years following the composition of the *Theologia Indorum* and the *Popol Wuj* in the 1550s, a new means of accessing the treasury of merit to pay the debt of sin became common in the Maya area—the system of indulgences. These included *bulas de la santa cruzada*, "Bulls of the Holy Crusade," by which the Church and the Spanish Crown raised revenue for projects like church construction (Hinojosa y Naveros 1908). Printed indulgences circulated widely throughout all the Spanish territories in the Americas, especially after Pope Gregory XIII extended the *bulas de la santa cruzada* to the Indies in 1573 (Cummins 2011). Chuchiak (2006:127–131) reports how elsewhere in the Maya area, in Yucatan, it had become a widespread practice by the early seventeenth century for clergy to sell these bulls to locals, at times through local indigenous leaders. The purchase of bulls was at times compulsory, and could be made on credit. A controversy erupted when, perhaps inspired by the "miraculous powers of forgiveness and grace" attributed to the bulls by the clergy commissioned to sell them (Chuchiak 2006:128), local Maya put these bulls to use as sacred objects in ways that the Spanish authorities found objectionable. Bulls of plenary indulgence were even integrated as patches into those kinds of Maya manuscripts confiscated by extirpators of idolatry, such as the hieroglyphic Madrid Codex (Chuchiak 2006) and the collection of healing chants known as the *Ritual of the Bacabs* (Roys 1965:vii).

In highland Guatemala, the Kaqchikel-language Xajil Chronicle notes the arrival of indulgences by 1569 (Maxwell and Hill 2006:319), including a *bula* brought by a Spaniard (*kastilan winäq*) in 1584. The reference of greatest interest to us here is the account of the arrival at Tzolola' (Sololá) in January and September 1588 of *jubileo* (indulgences) and *bula* ([papal] bulls) from Rome (Maxwell and Hill 2006:368, 373). These indulgences are called in the text *ruloq'ob'al qanimatata' Sancto Padre*, "the holy instrument of our great father, the Holy Father" (Maxwell and Hill 2006:373, emphasis added). Whereas in the *Popol Wuj*, the K'iche' lords' fasts and sacrifices were the *loq'ob'al* they presented as their *patan* obligation to the gods, by the end of the sixteenth century the term is applied also to those bulls sold in indigenous highland communities. As the alms payment received for indulgences facilitated the Church's transfer of the merit accumulated from the saints' good works as a credit against one's penitential debt (Little 1983:201), this is an example of how Christian notions of debt and merit became integrated into sixteenth-century K'iche'an discourse.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

While the traditionalist K'iche' authors of the *Popol Wuj* in the 1550s could use *loq'ob'al* in their account of a moral order predicated on *patan* obligations, the term's deployment, first by mendicants and then by secular clergy, enabled the term's semantic expansion to encompass those more mercantile assumptions within sixteenth-century Christian discourse. Doubtless the indigenous peoples of Colonial highland Guatemala also had their own local interpretations of the indulgences sold in their communities. Nonetheless, we see here the confluence of economic and religious discourse that informed the development of Christian registers in K'iche'an languages during the sixteenth century. The traditionalist discourse of the *Popol Wuj* which casts the vertical transfer of labor and goods as reciprocity within an ontological hierarchy came to exist alongside Christian discourses with their more mercantile religious language of debt and merit. This is not to say that the Christian register displaced the traditionalist one, but simply that the former's influence must be taken into account in any characterization of K'iche' theologies over time. Although the *Theologia Indorum* rejects the K'iche' traditionalists' view of human beings' obligation to the divine as expressed in the *Popol Wuj*, the devotions of both calendar diviners (Tedlock 1992:228–245) and lay confraternity members (Romero 2015a:84) were referred to in K'iche' ceremonial discourse as *chak patan* “work, service” well into the twentieth century. The proliferation of indigenous lay confraternities after the sixteenth century likely provided an alternative organizational structure for the persistence of traditionalist K'iche'an theologies, as these maintained a degree of independence from European ecclesiastical oversight (Christenson 2016:148–157; Orellana 1981:169–171).

In light of this research, we might also reconsider our assessment of sources on indigenous theologies from elsewhere through-

out Mesoamerica, particularly when employing imported theological terms like “covenant” to describe them. Despite the essential differences between mendicants, secular clergy, and other evangelizers, debt and merit were fundamental concepts of Catholic doctrine communicated to those peoples evangelized and administered throughout the Spanish Empire. Inculcating Christian notions of indebtedness through a native exchange-related lexicon with its own indexical associations involved challenges in the Tagalog language of the Philippines (Rafael 1993:121–135), just as it did in Mesoamerica. The influence of these concepts is evident even in those indigenous language manuscripts meant to be hidden from the gaze of Colonial authorities. In Yucatan, where the Franciscans dominated early evangelization efforts, the Book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel concludes an otherwise Postclassic Maya creation myth with: “The payment (*tohol*) of heaven is given. In truth [Christ] transferred it (*mansah*) when He was stretched out on the cross-tree back then” (in Knowlton 2010:80–81). That the Christian God has no desire for jades, precious metals, or quetzal feathers, a refrain familiar from the Dominican *Theologia Indorum*, is also found in the *Coloquios* purporting to represent a 1524 debate between the first Franciscan missionaries and Nahua elders and priests (León-Portilla 1986:107). When Sahagún has the Nahua elders assert *tioxtlava* and translates this as *pagamos nuestras deudas* (“we pay our debts”) to the gods through copal and sacrifice (León-Portilla 1986:151), we might wonder whether pre-Hispanic Mesoamerican ritual is being recast in the economic language of Christianity. Continued attention to the intersection of economic and religious discourse in indigenous sources promises to provide us with a more nuanced understanding of the history of native Mesoamerican theologies.

RESUMEN

Basándose en la etnografía moderna, los estudiosos a menudo caracterizan la religión maya como un “convenio” en que los seres humanos generan méritos a través de rituales para pagar una deuda primordial a los dioses. Sin embargo, los modelos basados únicamente en la etnografía moderna no nos permitirían reconocer el impacto en las religiones mayas de esos discursos cristianos sobre la deuda y el mérito espiritual que acompañaron a la colonización durante el siglo dieciséis. Este artículo intenta historizar nuestra comprensión de las teologías indígenas mesoamericanas por analizar cómo los textos en lenguas indígenas de la época colonial temprana describen las obligaciones morales y rituales a los dioses en lenguaje de la economía. El estudio de un caso específico aquí compara dos textos

contemporáneos del siglo dieciséis escritos en idioma maya k'iche': el *Popol Wuj* por las élites tradicionalistas k'iche' y la *Theologia Indorum* por el fraile dominico Domingo de Vico. La comparación del uso del léxico de intercambio en estos textos ilustra que el discurso cristiano k'iche' sobre el pago de la deuda espiritual, con su lenguaje religioso más mercantil en orientación, llegó a existir junto con el discurso teológico tradicionalista del *Popol Wuj*, que enfatiza las obligaciones recíprocas entre seres diferentes dentro de una jerarquía ontológica. Se argumenta que estos resultados también tienen implicaciones potenciales para nuestra evaluación de fuentes etnohistóricas sobre las teologías indígenas de otras partes de Mesoamérica.

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