



Contemporary Maya Spirituality

Jean Molesky-Poz

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Since the mid-1980s, when Guatemala returned to civilian rule and achieved relative peace and stability, the Maya have begun openly expressing their spiritual beliefs and practices. Jean Molesky-Poz draws on in-depth dialogues with Maya Ajq'ijab' (keepers of the ritual calendar), her own participant observation, and inter-disciplinary resources to offer a comprehensive, innovative, and well-grounded understanding of contemporary Maya spirituality and its theological underpinnings. She reveals significant continuities between contemporary and ancient Maya worldviews and spiritual practices. Molesky-Poz opens with a discussion of how the public emergence of Maya spirituality is situated within the religious political history of the Guatemalan highlands, particularly the recent pan-Maya movement. She investigates Maya cosmology and its foundational principles, as expressed by Ajq'ijab'. At the heart of this work, Ajq'ijab' interpret their obligation, lives, and spiritual work. In subsequent chapters, Molesky-Poz explores aspects of Maya spirituality—sacred geography (the reciprocal relationship between the earth and humans, sacred places, and the significance of the cross or quatrefoil map), sacred time (how the 260-day sacred calendar is "the heart of the wisdom of the Maya," the matrix of Maya culture), and ritual practice (the distinct way and method of ancestral study, with special attention to fire ceremonialism). She confirms contemporary Maya spirituality as a faith tradition with elaborate historical roots that has significance for individual, collective, and historical lives, reaffirming its own public space and legal right to be practiced.

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