

The Indian Christ, the Indian King: The Historical Substrate of Maya Myth and Ritual

Victoria Reifler Bricker

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Victoria Reifler Bricker : The Indian Christ, the Indian King: The Historical Substrate of Maya Myth and Ritual before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised *The Indian Christ, the Indian King: The Historical Substrate of Maya Myth and Ritual*:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A First-Rate History of Spanish/Maya Conflict in Central America By Neodoering This is nonfiction, so these categories don't really apply to this book. The book is about the conquest of the Maya Indians by the Spaniards. It covers 5 centuries of conflict, the 1500's right up into the 20th century. There are a bewildering number of characters in the book, as the Indians rise up again and again to try to throw off the Spanish yoke. The main thing I took away from it was that it was a bad thing to be a Mayan leader. The Spaniards will kill you if they catch you, and if they don't, your own people will grow disgruntled with you and kill you themselves. The story follows literally dozens of leaders over the centuries, and most of them are killed before they get very far. I never realized that there were half a dozen uprisings over the centuries. I thought the Caste War of the Yucatan was it. Not so. There are many uprisings over the years. The Maya are still rising up, as the Zapatista Movement showed. They're fighting to make things better for themselves and their children. Only time will tell if they will succeed. An excellent history of conflict in Central America, from both the Spanish and Indian viewpoint.

Victoria Bricker shows that "history" sometimes rests on mythological foundations and that "myth" can contain valid

historical information. Her book, which is a highly original critique of postconquest historiography about the Maya, challenges major assumptions about the relationship between myth and history implicit in structuralist interpretations. The focus of the book is ethnic conflict, a theme that pervades Maya folklore and is also well documented historically. The book begins with the Spanish conquest of the Maya. In chapters on the postconquest history of the Maya, five ethnic conflicts are treated in depth: the Cancuc revolt of 1712, the Quisteil uprising of 1761, the Totonacapan rebellion of 1820, the Caste War of Yucatan (1847-1901), and the Chamulan uprising in 1869. Analytical chapters consider the relationship between historical events and modern folklore about ethnic conflict. Bricker demonstrates that myths and rituals emphasize structure at the expense of temporal and geographical provenience, treating events separated by centuries or thousands of miles as equivalent and interchangeable. An unexpected result of Bricker's research is the finding that many seemingly aboriginal elements in Maya folklore are actually of postconquest origin, and she shows that it is possible to determine precisely when and, more important, why they become part of myth and ritual. Furthermore, she finds that the patterning of the accretion of events in folklore over time provides clues to the function, or meaning, of myth and ritual for the Maya. Bricker has made use of many unpublished documents in Spanish, English, and Maya, as well as standard synthetic historical works. The appendices contain extensive samples of the oral traditions that are explained by her analysis.

"...a major work, with the potential of becoming a classic." --Choice "Bricker's elucidations of the roles of historical foundations of myth and ritual drama and of the feedback between myth and history are significant contributions to the literature on myth, ritual drama, and ethnohistory...this is an outstanding work, a standard of excellence..." --American Anthropologist
About the Author Victoria R. Bricker is Professor Emerita of Anthropology at Tulane University.