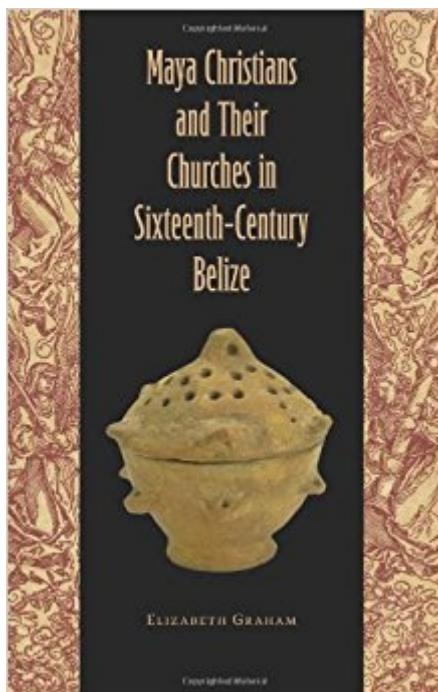


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# **Maya Christians And Their Churches In Sixteenth-Century Belize (Maya Studies)**



## **Synopsis**

Based on her analysis of archaeological evidence from the excavations of Maya churches at Tipu and Lamanai, Elizabeth Graham seeks to understand why the Maya sometimes actively embraced Catholicism during the period of European conquest and continued to worship in this way even after the end of Spanish occupation. The Maya in Belize appear to have continued to bury their dead in Christian churchyards long after the churches themselves had fallen into disuse. They also seem to have hidden pre-Hispanic objects of worship in Christian sacred spaces during times of persecution, and excavations reveal the style of the early churches to be unmistakably Franciscan. The evidence suggests that the Maya remained Christian after 1700, when Spaniards were no longer in control, which challenges the widespread assumption that because Christianity was imposed by force it was never properly assimilated by indigenous peoples. Combining historical and archaeological data with her experience of having been raised as a Roman Catholic, Graham proposes a way of assessing the concept of religious experience and processes of conversion that takes into account the material, visual, sensual, and even olfactory manifestations of the sacred.

## **Book Information**

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and fascinating study of Maya religion and Christianity in the frontier."--Joel Palka, University of Illinois-Chicago Based on her analysis of archaeological evidence from the excavations of Maya churches at Tipu and Lamanai, Elizabeth Graham seeks to understand why the Maya sometimes actively embraced Catholicism during the period of European conquest and continued to worship in this way even after the end of Spanish occupation. The Maya in Belize appear to have continued to bury their dead in Christian churchyards long after the churches themselves had fallen into disuse. They also seem to have hidden pre-Hispanic objects of worship in Christian sacred spaces during times of persecution, and excavations reveal the style of the early churches to be unmistakably Franciscan. The evidence suggests that the Maya remained Christian after 1700, when Spaniards were no longer in control, which challenges the widespread assumption that because Christianity was imposed by force it was never properly assimilated by indigenous peoples. Combining historical and archaeological data with her experience of having been raised as a Roman Catholic, Graham proposes a way of assessing the concept of religious experience and processes of conversion that takes into account the material, visual, sensual, and even olfactory manifestations of the sacred. Elizabeth Graham is senior lecturer of Mesoamerican archaeology at University College London.

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