RELIGION, WRITING, AND THE SHAPING OF THE CLASSIC MAYA WORLD

The Classic Maya civilization (250–925 CE) in Mesoamerica innovated a hieroglyphic script that was written and read by people spread across hundreds of square kilometers and dozens of autonomous kingdoms over the course of more than a millennium. Yet, unlike other regions of the ancient world where writing was independently invented, the Maya area was never politically unified. In *Religion, Writing, and the Shaping of the Classic Maya World*, Mallory E. Matsumoto draws on hieroglyphic texts, imagery, and archaeological finds to reconstruct interactions through which the Classic Maya exchanged knowledge about their hieroglyphic script and how to use it. She argues that religion and ritual practice were central contexts for maintaining a coherent, mutually intelligible writing system in the absence of political centralization. The Classic Maya case challenges long-standing assumptions about the social forces underlying the origins of early writing. It also reveals religion's potential to shape human culture and technology. This title is also available as Open Access on Cambridge Core.

Mallory E. Matsumoto is an assistant professor in the Department of Religious Studies at The University of Texas at Austin. She is the author of *Land, Politics, and Memory in Five Nija'ib' K'iche' Títulos: "The Title and Proof of Our Ancestors"* and *The Maya Myths: A Guide to the Gods, Heroes and Ancestors*.

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Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781009774383

DOI: 10.1017/9781009774406

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When citing this work, please include a reference to the DOI 10.1017/9781009774406

First published 2026

Cover image: K'inich K'an Joy Chitaam II (center) accepts a shell-plated *ko'haw* from his father, K'inich Janaab Pakal I (left), and flint blade and round shield from his mother, Ix Tz'akbu Ajaw (right), upon his accession as king. Detail from the Palenque Palace Tablet. Photo by Jorge Pérez de Lara.

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

A Cataloging-in-Publication data record for this book is available from the Library of Congress

ISBN 978-1-009-77438-3 Hardback
ISBN 978-1-009-77437-6 Paperback

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