

Olmec Religion: A Key to Middle America and Beyond. By KARL W. LUCKERT. Norman, 1976. University of Oklahoma Press. Maps. Figures. Illustrations. Bibliography. Index. Pp. xiv, 185. Cloth. \$9.95.

The Zapotecs: Princes, Priests, and Peasants. By JOSEPH W. WHITE-COTTON. Norman, 1977. University of Oklahoma Press. Maps. Tables. Illustrations. Appendix. Notes. Bibliography. Pp. xiv, 338. Cloth. \$14.95.

Someone will have to explain to me how these two books, both on Mesoamerican topics, should have been published in the same year by the same press, for one is virtually useless to both scholars and laymen, and the other invaluable.

The author of *Olmec Religion* is a professor of humanities at Northern Arizona University, and his study was undertaken with a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities. With such impressive credentials before us, it is sad to relate that this is a very bad book, with mistakes of fact occurring on almost every page, and with wild speculation unhampered by the findings of archaeological or art-historical research. The Olmecs lived a very long time ago (from about 1200 to 400 B.C.), but this is no excuse for presenting us with such figments of the imagination as a Green Reformer, The Snake Society, and Snake Men, all supposed to have been influential in the site of La Venta. Science fiction has its place, but not here.

Luckert's basic thesis is that Olmec archaeology has consistently overemphasized the importance of jaguars in the iconography, while downplaying the role of the serpent. Actually, no other student of the subject has denied the presence of serpent imagery in Olmec religion, but the author makes a religion out of his own convictions. In his almost monomaniac emphasis upon the importance of the rattlesnake *Crotalus durissus* in Mesoamerican culture history, he approaches the extremism of José Díaz Bolio, a Yucatec poet and scholar not mentioned in text or bibliography. One of the problems with this thesis is that rattlers are quite scarce in the Olmec country of southern Veracruz and Tabasco. I, however, have personally spent much time dodging extraordinarily abundant fer-de-lances at the Olmec site of San Lorenzo, and warmly recommend to Luckert that he turn his attention to that unpleasant species.

These comments do not mean that nothing can be said about the religion of such a remote and non-literate people. In recent years, important advances have been made by David Joralemon, adopting a

purely iconographic approach to the complex deity images in Olmec art; and by Peter Furst, who has been applying with great sophistication ethnographic data from the New World tropics to were-jaguar and other imagery among the Olmec. Those wishing to learn something about this absorbing topic would do better to study their works, and forget *Olmec Religion*.

The Zapotecs is a down-to-earth, factual, and readable account of an important native people of Mesoamerica from earliest times to the present. It brings together the latest archaeological, linguistic, historical, and sociocultural data into a volume which must now be the definitive work on the subject. It makes a perfect companion volume to *Ancient Oaxaca*, edited by John Paddock. The prehistory of the Zapotecs of Oaxaca is now very well-known, their colonial history extremely well-documented, and their social anthropology studied by some of the great scholars of their time (such as Elsie Clews Parsons, Bronislaw Malinowski, and Ralph Beals). All of this is presented elegantly and completely by Whitecotton, along with abundant footnotes which specialists should find useful.

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COLONIAL AND INDEPENDENCE PERIODS

Guía de las fuentes en el Archivo General de Indias para el estudio de la administración virreinal española en México y en el Perú, 1535–1700. Vol. I: *El gobierno virreinal en América durante la casa de Austria.* Vol. II: *Catálogo de la correspondencia y documentos de los virreyes de México en el Archivo General de Indias, 1535–1700.* Vol. III: *Catálogo de la correspondencia y documentos de los virreyes del Perú en el Archivo General de Indias, 1552–1700.* By LEWIS HANKE with the collaboration of CELSO RODRÍGUEZ. Cologne, 1977, Bohlau Verlag. Bibliography. Pp. 398, 340, 386. Cloth.

The viceroys of Mexico and Peru conducted a voluminous official correspondence, much of it still preserved in the Archivo General de Indias. Repeatedly they informed the crown about mining, patronage, jurisdictional disputes, the Indians, trade, pirates, and endless other topics. Covering the full range of colonial conditions and activities, this correspondence was the most detailed and comprehensive source of information the crown received from America. Professor Hanke's