

*Voodoo and Politics in Haiti*. By MICHEL S. LAGUERRE. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989. Figures. Notes. Bibliography. Index. ix, 152 pp. Cloth. \$35.00.

Anthropologist Laguerre here groups seven previous papers dealing with different aspects of voodoo from colonial times to the Duvalier era. The best chapters, which draw on field work, are those concerning pilgrimage, the Bizango secret society, and the Duvalier regime. Three chapters on the preindependence period, based essentially on printed works, are notably weaker. The earliest written, they take no account of most of the relevant historical work of the last twenty years or even of such ethnographic classics as Mintz and Price's *Anthropological Approach to the Afro-American Past* (1976) or R. F. Thompson's *Flash of the Spirit* (1983). Long-outdated ideas, such as Dahomey's supposed dominance of the colonial slave trade, consequently are perpetuated.

Laguerre uncritically expounds familiar theories about voodoo's links with rebellion and fugitive slaves and in general tends to present hypotheses as fact. He also ignores work on modern voodoo by Gerald Murray and Jean Kerboull, and he depicts the secret societies as by-products of *cimarronaje* with no consideration of African precedent. Although he breaks with earlier Haitian writers in stressing regional variation in voodoo, he does little to illustrate the point, and his argument that it was ecologically determined is not substantiated. Confident assertions about the religion's pattern of development, its common and variant features, and slave resistance are supported by little evidence. The manuscript bibliography is a listing of miscellaneous documents partly copied from Vaissière's *Saint Dominique* (1909). While the book, which is poorly copyedited, may serve as a useful introduction to the topic, it might mislead as well as inform.

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## Background

*Emperor of Culture. Alfonso X the Learned of Castile and His Thirteenth-Century Renaissance*. Edited by ROBERT I. BURNS. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990. xii, 272 pp.

The thirteen articles included in *Emperor of Culture* address from an interdisciplinary perspective Alfonso X's place in the culture of late medieval Castile and of western Europe. A successor to his father, Ferdinand III's, cultural policies, Alfonso played a central role in the remarkable artistic achievements of the period. Although his abilities as a ruler may be debatable, his accomplishments and place in medieval culture have never been questioned. This collection furthers our knowledge of the multifaceted cultural activities of Alfonso and his court and provides readers in the English-speaking world with access to a scholarly discourse hitherto restricted to specialists. As the book shows, the activities of Alfonso and

his circle of scholars ranged over a wide cultural spectrum: music, scientific and magical lore, troubadour poetry, theatre, exquisite manuscript illuminations, the formation of the Castilian language, historical narrative, and, finally, the compilation of a monumental legal corpus.

After Burns's introductory essay, O'Callaghan provides an excellent overview of Alfonso's ambitious program of reforms, showing both his triumphs and failures. Kasten's interesting piece shows how the royal scriptorium played a central role in the making of the Castilian language by creating "a very large body of words." Kosmer and Powers place the illuminations to the *Cantigas* in the wider context of thirteenth-century art, while Roth argues that the labor of some of Alfonso's Jewish collaborators included not only translation but the composition of original works. Keller's "Drama, Ritual and Incipient Opera" is an ingenious argument for a reading of the illuminations in the *Cantigas* as a "visualization of drama." Cárdenas explores the relations between the royal scriptorium and the chancery, while Holloway's erudite essay links Dante to Alfonso's court through Brunetto Latini, ambassador to the latter and teacher of the former. Snow focuses on the dual position of Alfonso as king and as troubadour in the *Cantigas*, while Dyer studies the connections between Alfonsine historiography and literary narratives. Music and the survival into modern times of lyrics from the *Cantigas* is the topic of Katz's essay. Craddock surveys Alfonso's legislative opus. The book concludes with Cárdenas's short bibliographical essay.

Although many of the articles have marked laudatory tendencies, they provide insights into areas too often neglected or ignored by historians.

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*An Introduction to the Politics and Philosophy of José Ortega y Gasset.* By ANDREW DOBSON. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989. Bibliography. Index. xiii, 186 pp. Cloth. \$39.50.

*The Imperative of Modernity: An Intellectual Biography of José Ortega y Gasset.* By ROCKWELL GRAY. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989. Notes. Bibliographical essay. Bibliography. Index. Bibliographical index. Cloth. xiii, 424 pp.

Ortega's importance in the history of twentieth-century Spain is that between 1910 and 1930 he molded a new bourgeois political consciousness. As a result, bourgeois intellectuals of the left and some of the right, as well, articulated their political ideas within a conceptual universe largely created by Ortega. That the intellectual life of Madrid revolved around Ortega (and Madrid was Ortega's much more than Vienna was Wittgenstein's) leaps off the newspaper pages of that period. Why that should be so is not explained in the books under review, although Gray's biographical format is more successful.