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**and politics during this period. Astrology in the Middle Ages was considered a branch of the magical arts, one informed by Jewish and Muslim scientific knowledge in Muslim Spain. As such it was deeply troubling to some Church authorities. Using**

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**the stars and planets to divine the future ran counter to the orthodox Christian notion that human beings have free will, and some clerical authorities argued that it almost certainly entailed the summoning of spiritual forces considered diabolical. We know**

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**that occult beliefs and practices became widespread in the later Middle Ages, but there is much about the phenomenon that we do not understand. For instance, how deeply did occult beliefs penetrate courtly culture and what exactly did those in**

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**positions of power hope to gain  
by interacting with the occult? In  
A Kingdom of Stargazers,  
Michael A. Ryan examines the  
interest in astrology in the  
Iberian kingdom of Aragon,  
where ideas about magic and the  
occult were deeply intertwined**

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**with notions of power, authority, and providence. Ryan focuses on the reigns of Pere III (1336-1387) and his sons Joan I (1387-1395) and Martí I (1395-1410). Pere and Joan spent lavish amounts of money on astrological writings, and astrologers held great sway**

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**within their courts. When Martí I took the throne, however, he was determined to purge Joan's courtiers and return to religious orthodoxy. As Ryan shows, the appeal of astrology to those in power was clear: predicting the future through divination was a**

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**valuable tool for addressing the extraordinary problems—political, religious, demographic—plaguing Europe in the fourteenth century. Meanwhile, the kings' contemporaries within the noble, ecclesiastical, and mercantile elite had their own reasons for**

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wanting to know what the future held, but their engagement with the occult was directly related to the amount of power and authority the monarch exhibited and applied. A Kingdom of Stargazers joins a growing body of scholarship that explores the



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**mixing of religious and magical  
ideas in the late Middle Ages.  
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**Breaking with the Past  
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**To many medieval Europeans north  
of the Pyrenees, the Iberian  
Kingdom of León-Castile was  
remote and unfamiliar. In many**

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**ways such perceptions linger today, and the fact that León-Castile is mentioned at all in current textbooks is the result of efforts begun by scholars some forty years ago. Joseph F. O'Callaghan was part of a small group of English-speaking**

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**medievalists who banded together at conferences in the early 1970s to share their knowledge of Spain. O'Callaghan's general A History of Medieval Spain (1975) introduced a generation of English-speaking medievalists to Iberia. Still much of the new scholarly interest over the**

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past decades has been directed toward the Kingdom of Aragon-Catalonia with its exceptionally well-preserved archives. The Emergence of León-Castile brings together the current research of O'Callaghan's colleagues, students and friends. The essays focus on

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**the politics, law and economy of León-Castile from its first great leap forward in the eleventh century to the civil strife of the fifteenth. No other volume in English allows the reader to trace the institutional development of the kingdom with this chronological**

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**breadth. At the same time the volume integrates the Leonese experience into the wider discussions of lordship and power. While León-Castile's culture was certainly its own, the kingdom shared in and influenced the institutional and economic**

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**development of its fellow Christian kingdoms both in Spain and north of the Pyrenees. The kings of León and Castile were among the first European rulers to invite townsmen to their assemblies. At the same time, they attempted to regulate their economy through sumptuary**



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**legislation and wage and price freezes. And, their centuries-long colonization southwards influenced the Germanic expansion across the Elbe, the English drive into Wales and Ireland and the Latin settlement in the Crusader states. In conclusion this collection**

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**underlines the fact that León-Castile was not an isolated backwater but a sophisticated state that had an important influence on the development of medieval and renaissance Europe.**

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**evidence of the changes in Spain's social structure between the fourteenth and seventeenth century. Every part of society is examined, culminating in a final section that is entirely new to the second edition and presents the changing social practices of the**

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**period, particularly in response to the growing crises facing Spain as it moved into the seventeenth century. Also new to this edition is a consideration of the social meaning of culture, specifically the presence of Hermetic themes and of magical elements in Golden Age**

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**duration and context; in many cases the damage wrought by poor harvests was confounded by war. The roles of human action, malfunctioning markets and poor relief are a recurring theme. The chapters also take full account of demographic, institutional,**



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change during this period into the narrative, offering a strikingly new understanding of the General Crisis. Changes in weather patterns, especially longer winters and cooler and wetter summers, disrupted growing seasons and destroyed

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harvests. This in turn brought hunger, malnutrition, and disease; and as material conditions worsened, wars, rebellions, and revolutions rocked the world.

For some historians, medieval Iberian society was one marked

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study's focus on the Christian heartland north of the Duero River, known as Old Castile, allows for a detailed investigation of the Jews' changing relations with the area's main power players - the monarchy, the church, and the towns. In a

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departure from previous assessments, Soifer Irish shows that the institutional and legal norms of toleration for the Jewish minority were forged not along the military frontier with Islam, but in the north of Castile. She argues that the Jews' relationship

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with the Castilian monarchy was by far the most significant factor that influenced their situation in the kingdom, but also demonstrates that this relationship was inherently problematic. Although during the early centuries of Christian

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expansion the Jewish communities benefited from a strong royal power, after about 1250 helping maintain it proved to be costly to the Jewish communities in economic and human terms. Soifer Irish demonstrates that while some



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Castilian clergymen were vehemently anti-Jewish, the Castilian Church as a whole never developed a coordinated strategy on the Jews, or even showed much interest in the issue. The opposite is true about the townsmen, whose relations

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with their Jewish neighbors vacillated between cooperation and conflict. In the late thirteenth century, the Crown's heavy-handed tactics in enforcing the collection of outstanding debts to Jewish moneylenders led to the breakdown in the

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negotiations between the Jewish and Christian communities, creating a fertile ground for the formation of an anti-Jewish discourse in Castilian towns. Soifer Irish also examines the Jews' attitudes toward the various powers in the Christian

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society and shows that they were active players in the kingdom's politics. Jews and Christians in Medieval Castile breaks new ground in helping us understand more fully the tensions, and commonalities, between groups of different faiths in the late

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“Warrior monks”—the misnomer for the Iberian military

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orders that emerged on the frontiers of Europe in the twelfth century—have long fascinated general readers and professional historians alike. Proposing “ecclesiastical knights” as a more accurate name and

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conceptual model—warriors  
animated by ideals and  
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Conedera presents a  
groundbreaking study of how  
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seemingly incongruous combination of monastic devotion and the practice of warfare into a single way of life. Providing a detailed study of the military-religious vocation as it was lived out in the Orders of

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medieval military orders,  
Conedera defines,  
categorizes, and explains  
these orders, from their  
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spiritual decline in the  
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arguing that that the best



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way to understand their spirituality is as a particular kind of consecrated knighthood. Because these Iberian military orders were belligerents in the Reconquest, Ecclesiastical

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Knights informs important discussions about the relations between Western Christianity and Islam in the Middle Ages. Conedera examines how the military orders fit into the religious landscape of

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medieval Europe through the prism of knighthood, and how their unique conceptual character informed the orders and spiritual self-perception. The religious observances of all three orders were remarkably

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alike, except that the Cistercian-affiliated orders were more demanding and their members could not marry. Santiago, Calatrava, and Alcantara shared the same essential mission and purpose: the defense and

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expansion of Christendom understood as an act of charity, expressed primarily through fighting and secondarily through the care of the sick and the ransoming of captives. Their prayers were simple and

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their penances were aimed at knightly vices and the preservation of military discipline. Above all, the orders valued obedience. They never drank from the deep wellsprings of monasticism, nor were they

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ever meant to. Offering an entirely fresh perspective on two difficult and closely related problems concerning the military orders—namely, definition and spirituality—author Sam Zeno Conedera illuminates the

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religious life of the  
orders, previously eclipsed  
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**meanings of these events,  
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Ruiz argues that the fluid and at  
times subversive character of**

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**medieval festivals gave way to highly formalized and hierarchical events reflecting a broader shift in how power was articulated in late medieval and early modern Spain. Yet Ruiz contends that these festivals,**

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**followed the reconquests of the mid-thirteenth century presented new military and economic challenges. At the same time the fragile balance between Muslims, Jews, and Christians in the Peninsula was also profoundly**



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**affected. Economic and financial pressures were of over-riding importance. Most significant were the large tax revenues that the Iberian Jewish community provided to royal coffers, new evidence for which is provided**

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**here. Some in the Jewish community also achieved prominence at court, achieving dizzying success that often ended in dismal failure or death. A particular feature of this study is its reliance upon both**

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