



## The Position of Magic in Selected Medieval Spanish Texts

By *Jr. Francis Tobienne*

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It is difficult to assess an explanation of a belief, or a belief system in words, Tobienne begins, and harder still to assign signification to such inexplicable conviction[s]. This book addresses the often blurred line[s] between magic, religion, and science within Spanish literature and history, and is divided into three parts. The first section offers a brief overview of Spanish history from the fifth century through the seventh century and looks at the divide between white and black magic. White magic is often attributed to a divine agency, whereas black magic is the result of dark or demonic influences. The second part of the book looks at Alfonso X (also known as el Sabio, or the Wise) and his *Las Siete Partidas* and *Lapidario*, and the role of how magic was received in the Spanish university system and translating centers and spaces within Alfonsos court. The final section examines two poems: *Auto de Los Reyes Magos* and the *Vida de Santa María Egipciaca* in terms of the white magic concepts of *mirabilia* and *miracula*. Collectively, these poems alongside Bishop Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae* contribute to the discourse of a Medieval Spain and its rich, intellectual history and moreover, provides a launching pad into this discussion regarding a small window of quasi-tolerance in Spain amidst Muslims, Jews, and Christians.

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### Review

'...fascinating, clearly organized scholarly text...organised into three easy to follow chapters...covers its subject with clarity and sufficient depth to make its point... This book will repay lengthy study, and would be of great value in any program of medieval studies that at least touches on its twin subjects, magic and medieval Spain. I read it with pleasure and believe my readers will do the same.' John McLaughlin, PhD, English Department, East Stroudsburg University, Emeritus "The author has painstakingly gathered a number of important sources and offers a basic conclusion that the boundaries between magic, religion, and science are ambiguous. The book is especially valuable in its inclusion of works from outside of Spain that aid in illuminating that era's views. It serves as a well researched compliment to the growing corpus of studies of magic in medieval Spain and will serve scholars who wish to pursue further studies in that area."  
~Jennifer M. Corry, Berry College (Mystics Quarterly volume 35, no. 3-4, September/ December 2009)

### About the Author

Francis Tobienne, Jr was born and raised in St. Croix U.S. Virgin Islands and attends Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana. He is a Purdue Doctoral Fellow pursuing his Ph.D. in Medieval Studies Literature. His interests include the intersection of critical race theory, ethics and medieval literature. He received his Masters Degree from Purdue University in December 2007. Tobiennes publications include several articles on cultural matters written for the Black Cultural Center at Purdue University and his poetry can be found in Harvard University's Dudley Review and the Matthews House Project, webzine. In addition to his scholarly pursuits, Mr. Tobienne is also an Instructor of English Composition at Purdue University.

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