PREFACE

The opportunity to participate in the Institute, "Alfonsine Contributions to Medieval Spanish Literature and Culture," organized by John Keller at the University of Kentucky in 1990 under the auspices of the National Endowment for the Humanities, prompted me to focus attention on the entire corpus of the Cantigas de Santa Maria as a significant source for the history of thirteenth-century Castile. As I was writing The Learned King: The Reign of Alfonso X of Castile, I was often able to draw on the valuable information and insights into events provided by the Cantigas. Considerations of space made it impossible to dwell on individual cantigas at any length and so I began to think about doing an extended study of the Cantigas as an historical source for the reign of Alfonso X. This book may be read as supplementary to The Learned King.

I have incorporated into the text substantial portions of many cantigas because I believe it is important for readers (especially English-speaking ones) to have the opportunity to familiarize themselves with this poetic treasure house written in Galician-Portuguese. In discussing the most important cantigas relating to the king's life, activities, and feelings I have sometimes paraphrased or summarized a stanza before giving the text in the original. In some instances I have translated the stanza, and in others I have translated an entire cantiga. As I have no pretensions to being a poet, I did not attempt to render a poetic translation; rather I have tried to give the precise meaning of each line. All translations in this book are my own, unless otherwise noted.


When I refer to Cantigas using upper-case C, I mean the entire collection; cantigas with lower-case c means one or more specific poems.

Although the usage of the term Moor has been questioned recently by some who believe that it is offensive, I have not hesitated to use it because it appears commonly throughout the Cantigas and other historical texts of the thirteenth century. Derived from mauros, an
inhabitant of ancient Mauritania or Morocco, it passed into general use both in Latin and the vernacular to refer both to the Muslims of Morocco and those of Spain.

Finally, I must express my grateful appreciation to four scholars whose work I have long admired and who have honored me by reading my manuscript. They are Professor John Esten Keller of the University of Kentucky, the dean of the ever-growing corpus of American cantigueiros; Professor Robert I. Burns, S. J., of the University of California, Los Angeles, whose studies of the mudéjar minorities in the thirteenth-century Crown of Aragón have developed a valuable area of research; Professor Richard Kinkade of the University of Arizona, a distinguished cantigueiro whose investigation of the relationships among the members of Alfonso X's family promises to elucidate a dark chapter in the king's history; and Professor Joseph Snow of Michigan State University, whose delineation of the troubadour persona of Alfonso X has been a constant stimulus to my work. To each one of these men, I offer my heartfelt thanks for the counsel freely given that has enabled me, I hope, to make this a better book.

I am also indebted to Dr. José Montoya Martínez of the Universidad de Granada and Dra. María Isabel Pérez de Tudela y Velasco of the Universidad Complutense de Madrid for their kindness in providing me with offprints of their studies relative to the Cantigas.

Lastly I wish to thank the Patrimonio Nacional de España and Edilán, S. A. for permission to include the illustrations from the facsimile edition of the Escorial manuscript of the Cantigas de Santa Maria and the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale of Florence for permission to reproduce the illustrations from MS Banco Rari 20.

This book is dedicated to my grandchildren Michael, Megan, Thomas, and Rónán, who have brought delight to my life.