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 *maurus*, 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 valu­
able area of research; Professor Richard Kinkade of the University
of Arizona, a distiguished 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.

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Lastly I wish to thank the Patrimonio Nacional de España and
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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.