

9-1-2009

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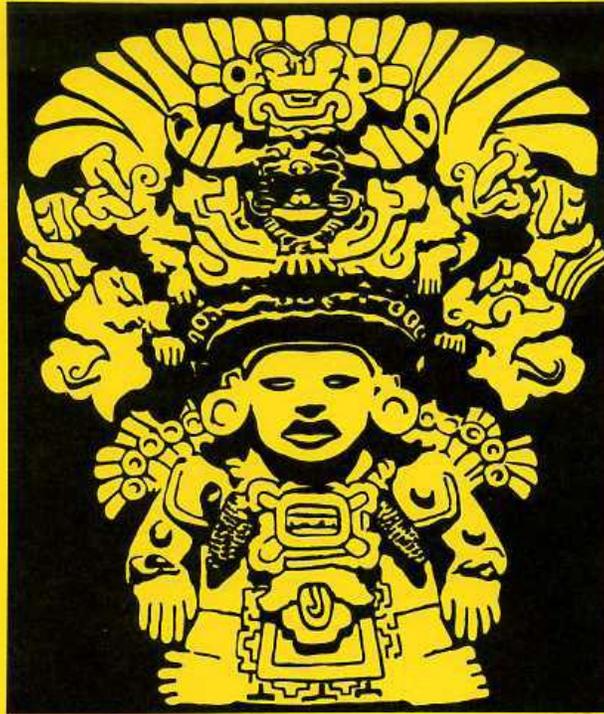
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LATIN AMERICAN INSTITUTE

Research Paper Series No. 50 September 2009

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THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO
ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO 87131

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Abstract

This study explores how pilgrimage connects to the political Weltanschauung of Alfonso X, born in 1221-1284, especially as concerns the perceived rivalry between the shrine of Mary at Villavieja and of Santiago at Compostela. By reviewing Alfonso's pragmatism behind all of the works he sponsored, by viewing the relationship between the Mother of God and St. James, by focusing on miracles in the Cantigas de Santa Maria, and especially viewing Alfonso's creation of a military order dedicated to the Virgin, it concludes that perceived rivalry between the two shrines was exclusively popular and not regal as proposed by some.

Alfonso X el Sabio: Devotee of the Virgin and St. James¹

This study wishes to explore how the idea of pilgrimage connects to the political Weltanschauung of Alfonso X, el Sabio, born in 1221 and reigned from 1252 until his death in 1284, especially as concerns the suspected rivalry between the shrine of the Virgin Mary at Villa-Sirga and that of Santiago in Compostela. It begins with the term “pilgrim” which, as Thomas D. Spaccarelli has made amply clear, relates clearly to “Christ depicted as the stranger, unrecognized by his disciples as he walked to Emmaus” (27) and with “pilgrimage” as is itself informed by “countless biblical references” (27) which in turn relate pilgrimage to an *imitatio Christi* (39-43). The term itself derives ultimately from Latin *peregrinus*, meaning “foreign” (Onions 680) and giving the Spanish *peregrino*. In Spanish it means first and foremost, a person “que anda por tierras extrañas” with the second meaning of *peregrino* adding the ingredient that one takes this journey en route to a religious shrine (*Diccionario*, “peregrino” 1173). Alfonso X himself provides a definition for *pilgrim*. In the last title, number 24, of the first *Partida*, there is an introduction and four laws treating pilgrimage.² Law 1 does define what is meant by “pilgrim”:

Romero tanto quiere decir como home que se parte de su tierra et va á Roma para visitar los santos lugares en que yacen los cuerpos de sant pedro et de sant pablo, et de los otros que prisiaron hi martirio por nuestro señor Iesu Cristo. Et pelegrino tanto quiere decir como extrañó que va a visitar el sepulcro de Ierusalen et los otros santos lugares en que nuestro señor Iesu Cristo nació, et visquió et prisó muerte en este mundo, ó que anda el pelgrinaie á Santiago ó á otros santuarios de luenga tierra et estraña. Et como quier que departimiento es quanto en palabra entre romero et pelegrino; pero segunt comunalmente las gentes lo usan, asi llaman al uno como al otro. (Las siete partidas 1:498)

¹This paper was originally written as an invited presentation for the American Pilgrims on the Camino Annual Meeting held in 13-15 March 2009 Albuquerque, New Mexico.

²The brief introduction does not treat all the proposed topics and those treated are done so in a very superficial manner.

Whereas “romero” literally means “Rome-goer,” those going to the Holy Land, according to Alfonso X, were “pelegrinos” although, as in common usage as he states, their terms are interchangeable. Pilgrims to the holy land were also called “palmeros,” i.e., “palm bearers” as “it was customary when visiting the river Jordan to collect a few palms fronds there and take them back home” (van Herwaarden 133) just as it was customary for pilgrims from Santiago to return with a conch (*Diccionario* “palmero” 1125), symbol of good works (Moralejo *et al.* 205). Alfonso includes other, foreign sanctuaries – Rocamadour in France for example and foreign today, but perhaps not so foreign the shrines in Portugal. Nearly one third of the *Cantigas* or sung poems of miracles of the Virgin “make pilgrimage the background for as many miracles” and that more than eighty alone relate to shrines of Mary in the Peninsula (Keller and Grant 40).

Victor and Edith Turner, from an anthropological perspective, compare pilgrimage to a rite of passage, that is, a rite of transition “marked by three phases: separation, limen or margin, and aggregation” (2). Much of the adventure of pilgrimage, hence much of the pilgrimage story, occurs in the margin, that place which is neither the point of departure nor the point of arrival. The margin, then, is that place in which the actual *imitatio Christi* occurs.

In the Middle Ages the three most important sites of Christian pilgrimage, the point of arrival, were held by Jerusalem, Rome, and Santiago de Compostela, as noted in Alfonso’s *Siete partidas* above. Jerusalem formed the focal point of Christ’s life on earth, the place where he was crucified. Rome claimed the aggregate of activities associated with the Vicar of Christ, his first representative St. Peter. And finally, St. Peter’s fellow apostle, St. James or in Spanish, Santiago, not only proselytized Spain but was also the first apostle martyred. This constituted another reason for visiting the site named after him, Santiago with “Compostela” or “field of the

star” added on, as it was, according to legend, the star that guided the shepherds to the field where St. James’s grave lay.³ Of course in addition to these three sites, myriad others formed a complex web of sacred sites to visit, all vying with one another for clientele/devotees⁴.

The focus of this study is Spain’s Way of St. James and the other shrines which from one perspective competed with it and yet from another enhanced it, especially sites that related to the Virgin Mary and how these Marian sites are depicted by Spain’s thirteenth-century monarch, Alfonso X, el Sabio. It will examine, in particular, what the dom of *Cantigas* studies, John E. Keller, has stated about the Villa-Sirga shrine of the Virgin which is just off the Way of St. James and his view of its rivalry with Santiago. This leads inevitably to Alfonso X’s treatment of pilgrimage sites, other than Santiago, which will support the view that his intent in promoting Villa-Sirga was not any more antagonistic toward Santiago than were his reasons for promoting any of the other Marian shrines which he extolled in his sung miracles of the Virgin collected in his *Cantigas de Santa Maria*. Furthermore, his promoting Villa-Sirga was not anymore antagonistic toward Santiago than was his founding of the Military Order of the Virgin antagonistic toward the already established Military Order of Santiago, or the Orders of

³“The geographic site, Compostela, in one of its possible etymological derivations, is made to hark back to *campus stellae*, the field of stars that appeared to the eyes of the astonished shepherds. There are, however, other alternatives for the etymology of the toponym: from *composita*, well-dressed ground; or from the syncopated form of *compositum*, derived from *componere* in its meaning of ‘to bury’” (Melczer 21). “Yet another etymology derives it from ‘San Jacome Apostol’” (Camino de Santiago). It is not too far a stretch to relate *Campus stellae* to *Stella Maris*, a titled awarded the Virgin and symbolic of the connection and favor she bestows on Santiago as she did when she visited him on the banks of the Ebro or as she does in some of the miracle stories Alfonso X includes in his collection.

⁴Alan Deyermond signaled in 1968 the cult of tombs associated with churches and monasteries (*Epic Poetry* xvii) lamenting the unhappy impossibility of knowing “in most cases whether the epic preceded the tomb-cult or vice versa” (*Epic Poetry* 176). Sites of pilgrimage, then, could be not only thaumaturgical destinations, but also those where at least some sort of “heroic virtue” carrying “implications of sanctity” abounded which in the case of Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar seems “curious” to Deyermond (*Epic Poetry* 117), and anyone who has considered the epic hero even without a jaundiced eye. In addition to genuine religious reasons, then, numerous others existed –

Calatrava and Alcántara, all three founded about a century earlier (Postigos Castellanos).

In fact, the shrine of Santiago is so intertwined with the miraculous support of the Virgin that rather than rivalry one might even say that the Virgin's relationship to it only enhances and gives Santiago special distinction. Finally, if Alfonso X ever extolled the Virgin over Santiago, it may have been the one politically motivated choice that had the least deleterious effects on his reign.

The sobriquet *el Sabio*, meaning the "Wise" and also the "Learned," came to Alfonso because of his patronage of literature, belletristic to us, but very pragmatic to him as much medieval "literature" was⁵. When Alfonso had his brother Fadrique executed "*a fines de abril o comienzos de mayo*" (Ballesteros Beretta 823) of 1277, for reasons as yet unknown allowing considerable speculation, did he consult his scientific works, especially his *Libro conplido en los iudizios de las estrellas* and his *Libro de las formas & ymagenes*? After all, they provide astrological advice as to when committing fratricide is propitious and several different ways in which to eradicate one's enemies.

In addition to scientific, Evelyn S. Procter provides three other categories – historical, poetic, and legal– (6) to which Alan Deyermond adds a minor one – recreational (*Literary History* 87-95). Alfonso's motives for such bookish benefaction can be found in his writings, paramount among them is what he indicates in the second part of his *General estoria*: "*Et dizen otrosi que cada vno quanto mas a del saber e mas se llega a el por estudio, tanto mas aprende, e creçe, e se llega por ende mas a Dios, como monte que va suso al çielo*" (31). The emphases in

political and jurisdictional, for example, and not the least of which was and is financial.

⁵Lisa H. Cooper writes: "More generally, all medieval literature is arguably to some degree 'practical', in

his two history works suggests more utilitarian motives: to bolster his position as King by using the great character populating his universal history, the *Grande e general estoria*, as prefigurations of himself (Rico 115), and by using his history of Spain as a way to reinforce his regal position and his imperial aspirations (Fraker 95).⁶ His mother, as Beatriz of Swabia, made him a legitimate contender for Holy Roman Emperorship, or his *ida al imperio* in Spanish dress, which caused overburdening his kingdom, from the commoners to nobles, all three estates, with taxes and abrogation of long-enjoyed privileges.

Even his recreational text, the *Libro de açedrex & dados & tablas*, compiled in 1283 the year before he died, reveals a certain pragmatism in its prologue:

todos estos juegos son muy buenos . . . e se fazen tan bien de noche como de día, e porque las mugieres que non cavalgan e están encerradas an a usar d'esto, e otrossí los omnes que son viejos e flacos o los que han sabor de aver sus plazer apartadamiente . . . o los que son en poder ageno, assí como en prisión o en cativerio o que van sobre mar, e comunalmente todos aquellos que han fuerte tiempo, porque no pueden cavalgar nin ir a caça ni a ora parte e han por fueça de fincar en las casas e buscar algunas maneras de juegos con que hayan plazer e se conorten e no estén baldíos. (19)

The practicality of his legal category, is as palpable as is the legal breadth of Alfonso's *Siete partidas*, affiliated as it was with his ideas of empire, an empire best governed under one law. But songs to the Virgin Mary? What could they possibly have to do with practicality other than perhaps gaining favor with the Almighty after death? Examining the Santiago legend helps answer this query.

After Christ's death, the apostles went about spreading the faith, and the legend states:

that St. James the Apostle came to Spain as a missionary, A.D. 40, and that on January 2

the sense of 'didactic'; even the most outrageous of fictions produced over the course of the Middle Ages were potentially justifiable as *utile* (useful) no matter how *dulce* (sweet) they might be" (492).

⁶See also Cárdenas, "Alfonso X's Appropriation of the Perseus Myth" (1998) and "The Myth of Hercules" (1997).

he was walking along the Ebro river with seven disciples. At the same time Mary, then still alive, was in Jerusalem, praying for his success. Jesus appeared to her, and told her that angels would convey her to Spain to encourage the apostle. James and his disciples kneeling by the river, looked up, saw a radiant light, and heard seraphic music. Mary, seated on a throne borne by angels, appeared to the group and asked that a church be erected on the spot. She then took from an angel a small pillar of jasper topped with a small statue of herself. The apparition then faded, leaving the pillar with the statue as a token of Our Lady's help to St. James. (Turner and Turner 169).

William Melczer elucidates the hierarchy of heavenly beings established within the Catholic Church, with all being on the same team, and thus willing to help the faithful in their daily travails. At the top of the pyramid is the Son of God, Himself, Jesus Christ followed by His Mother. The twelve Apostles follow next in the hierarchy, then major saints like St. Francis, St. Anthony of Padua, St. Isidore, for example, and then a whole panoply of more and more local saints (3). The Virgin outranks Santiago. Like Santiago, she too is a defender of the faith but is not limited to Spain. Jill Dubisch writes:

Theologically an intercessor, she assumes in popular devotion a great power in her own right. . . . a model for obedient and chaste womanhood, she also becomes a militant defender of her people and the church. . . . Venerated in a wide range of local manifestations and appearing throughout the centuries to a variety of humble folk, she also has the power to unify, as does no other saint, both national entities and pan-national bodies of the faithful. (246)

Instances of Mary defending Spanish Christians against Moors exist, for example in *Cantiga* 185, the siege of Chincoya castle, in which her image turns away the King of Granada when through treachery he learns that a Christian garrison of only fifteen men hold it. Jane Zatta, nevertheless, writing about Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, superbly synthesizes and explains Mary's complexity:

Mary was the most complex figure in the holy family. The growth of her cult was a twelfth-century phenomenon, a manifestation of the importance that personal piety had assumed. St. Bernard of Clairvaux, with his *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, was

influential in developing the eroticized portrayals of Mary as the love ideal to which all men should aspire. She fulfilled virtually every role a woman can fulfill: tender sister, indulgent and forgiving mother, highly sensual erotic ideal. Miracles of the Virgin portray Mary as protecting those who are dedicated to her, including criminals who have no other virtue except devotion to Mary; they show her rebuking and punishing those who harm her favorites; they praise her as a delicious and sensual lover who rewards devotion but jealously punishes those who betray her love for an earthly woman; they show her as a nurturing mother who heals the ills of her earthly offspring by tenderly suckling them with the miraculous milk from her breasts. She came to represent, in popular piety, the mutually exclusive ideals of the infinite mercy of a mother for her offspring as well as the sweet, sensual, desirable but eternally chaste lover. (Zatta)

This latter descriptor, “eternally chaste lover,” is precisely the one King Alfonso focuses on when at the beginning of his *Cantigas* he writes that he wishes to be her troubadour, forsaking all other women, and belonging to her alone, hoping to recover through her what he has lost on other, earthly women (1:102, ll. 21-26).⁷ Extolling the Virgin, however, does not mean denigrating Santiago as Procter (29) and Keller (“King Alfonso’s Virgin” 61; “More Rivalry” 69) state in relationship to the Villa-Sirga shrine. Alfonso lauding the Virgin follows a tradition that begins in the fifth century (Department) and certainly has its apogee in the thirteenth with writers such as Gonzalo de Berceo, Gil de Zamora, and Gautier de Coincy joining the choir. Thus, in “More Rivalry” regarding *Cantiga* 175, Keller’s ostensible surprise and exploitation of such words as “pilfering” and “temerity” because Alfonso made the Virgin the celestial heroine in this version, contrasted with “Aimeri Picaud’s *Codex du Compostel* as well as in the *Legenda Aurea*, and the *Speculum Historiale*, not to mention its pictorial presentation in a stained glass window at Toulouse” (72), baffle. Briefly the story is about two pilgrims, father and son, who traveling from Germany stop at Toulouse on the way to Santiago. A heretic innkeeper falsely

⁷All text for the *Cantigas* comes from Mettmann’s edition published in two volumes and will be indicated with volume number: page number, and line number.

accuses the son of stealing a silver goblet when, in fact, it was he who had planted it in his belongings. The falsely accused son is genuinely hanged only to languish on the gallows unscathed for three months because the Virgin in the *Cantigas* or Santiago in the versions Keller mentions, is sustaining him. Instead of accusing Alfonso of undaunted usurpation to belittle Santiago, why not consider that perhaps Alfonso's compilers used one of the many Mary-centered versions of this story. Kathleen Kulp Hill observes that

this miracle combines two old and widespread folk motifs: the cup hidden in the sack and a saint protecting a man unjustly hanged Earlier versions of this miracle attribute it to Saint James The theme of the cup hidden in the sack appears in *Genesis* 44, where Joseph has his silver cup placed in Benjamin's sack to test the loyalty of his brothers. (211)

José Filgueira Valverde cites further instances of the story, one of which takes place at Santo Domingo de la Calzada (287-88). Although Domingo himself plays no role in the story, the Virgin rescues a hanged youth accused of theft by a young woman who planted the item in his traveling bags for spurning her amorous advances. On their return to Xanten, when they find their son still alive, the delighted parents

Fueron inmediatamente a casa del Corregidor de la Ciudad y le contaron el prodigio. Incrédulo el Corregidor contestó que su hijo estaba tan vivo como el gallo y la gallina que él se disponía a comer. En ese preciso instante el gallo y la gallina saltando del plato se pusieron a cantar. Y desde entonces se dicen los famosos versos: "Santo Domingo de la Calzada / donde cantó la gallina después de asada" (Santo Domingo).⁸

Rather than being lessened by not performing the miracle himself, I propose that Santo Domingo is enhanced by Mary's intercession in a place named in his memory, a place which the *Liber*

⁸Father Burns writes, not necessarily referring to this miracle that "A thousand absurd legends were invented and published to enhance the awe with which these sacred places were regarded, which contributed, in no small degree, to the moral and intellectual degradation of the masses. The number who annually paid their devotions to these shrines, when the difficulties and dangers of the undertaking are considered, are almost incredible" (1:265n1).

Sancti Iacobi regards as follows: “Subsequently, one ought to visit in Spain the remains of the Blessed Domingo the confessor who built the pavement of the road that stretches between the city of Nájera and Redecilla, at the place where he rests” (Melczer 118).⁹ This is not rivalry just as all the other places the *Liber* states one should visit (Melczer 96-118) cannot be considered rivalry either. Melczer clarifies that “the earthly remains of saints receive an appropriate emphasis: the visitation of these remains all along the route, the saintly relics, becomes the overriding purpose of the pilgrimage” to Santiago (156n120).

Before examining the perceived rivalry further, it is well to view what could easily be a major grievance for pilgrims en route to Santiago or any other sacred site: dishonest innkeepers. In *Cantiga* 159 an innkeeper steals a chop of meat that pilgrims en route to Rocamadour have given her to prepare. The pilgrims are chagrined to find one piece missing. When they discover that the banging in a chest is the missing piece of meat, they call the townspeople to witness the event. The chop is hung from a silken thread in the Virgin’s chapel and everyone is edified.

Similarly, in *Cantiga* 157 a woman innkeeper steals some meal from pilgrims on the way to Rocamadour to make some fritters for herself and manages to run a knife with which she is spearing the fritters through her mouth clear out the back of her head. Doctors cannot help her. So she herself goes to Rocamadour to seek help and forgiveness from the Virgin. When she does, a priest is able to remove the lodged blade.

Many others in these miracles stories take to the road to seek a favor and not necessarily because of an explicit vow, although a tacit one may be at stake. Such is the Moorish woman in

⁹Jeffrey A. Bowman discusses the importance of constructing bridges and maintaining the road for pilgrims in a fascinating study about Bishop Ermengol “a hands-on administrator and . . . an *episcopus athleticus*” who dies

Cantiga 167, who hearing of Christians benefitting from pilgrimage to Salas, another shrine of the Virgin located in the eastern part of the Peninsula, decides to take her dead child. She does and Mary revives him after being dead for three days, and the Mooress converts to Christianity.

The trip to Salas itself, however, was not untroubled with danger. In *Cantiga* 189, a man from Valencia travels alone to Salas only to be accosted by a dragon. Whereas initially no reason is given for this journey, upon slaying the dragon and being splattered with its blood, he becomes a leper and now has a cure to request in Salas.

Noteworthy in both *cantiga* 167 and 189, the recipients of Mary's intervention are from locales significantly closer to Salas – Borja and Valencia, respectively – than to Santiago.

The moment to consider the miracles at Villa-Sirga itself and Keller's assessment is at hand. In all, seventeen miracles relate to Villa-Sirga, and of these, four place Villa-Sirga directly in an anti-Santiago stance – 218, 253, 268, and 278 – although Keller-Grant claim that “five . . . were wrought for pilgrims on the way to or from Compostela” (40).¹⁰ *Cantiga* 26 and 175 add two more anti-Santiago *cantigas* according to Keller although they are not associated directly with Villa-Sirga. Both *cantigas* belong to what can be termed a standard Marian repertoire and both are disseminated by monks of Cluny, Hugh of Cluny for 26 and Caesar of Heisterbach for 175 (Filgueira Valverde 58, 287). *Cantiga* 26, also included in Berceo's *Milagros de Nuestra Señora*, tells of a pilgrim who at the insistence of the devil disguised as Santiago commits suicide as punishment for having sexual intercourse outside of marriage the night before he begins his pilgrimage. Because by its nature suicide is the one mortal sin for which forgiveness

building a bridge over the Segre River (1).

¹⁰Keller and Grant claim that “of these the five mentioned above were wrought for pilgrims on the way to

cannot be sought, the devils come to whisk him away. Santiago, in defense of his pilgrim, tries to intervene to no avail given the theologian demon's argument. Santiago suggests that a ruling be made by the Mother of God who then decides in favor of giving the pilgrim another chance. Can this be belittling Santiago? Were it not for Santiago's appeal, the pilgrim perhaps would not have been saved. Had the Virgin stuck to the rules, perhaps then, the reader/listener might be wary of being a pilgrim of Santiago. Instead, Santiago's plea on the pilgrim's behalf was efficacious. The favor the Mother of God shows the apostle and hence his pilgrim in this instance is reminiscent of the favor initiated on the banks of the Ebro in 40 A.D.

Cantiga 175, as seen, concerns the son, who traveling with his father from Germany to Santiago, is framed in Tolouse by the heretic innkeeper. Keller's claim is that this is anti-Santiago because Alfonso audaciously substitutes the boy's rescuer from Santiago, as seen in some versions of this tale, with the Virgin. This story included among the miracles that occur at Santo Domingo de Silos as well as being sufficiently stock to find its way into Stith-Thompson's *Motif Index* (Kulp-Hill 211) necessarily reduces the charge against Alfonso who may simply have been following a different tradition since what he seeks for his Marial collection are miracles of the Virgin and not of Santiago.

The four remaining *Cantigas* adduced by Keller as indicative of an opposition to Santiago have the following titles:

218 *Esta é como Santa Maria guareceu en Vila-Sirga un ome bõo d'Alemanna que era contreiro.* (1:682, ll. 1-2)

253 *[C]omo un romeu de França que ya a Santiago foi per Santa Maria de Vila-Sirga, e*

or from Compostela" (40), but as noted, I can only detect four.

non pod' en sacar un bordon de ferro grande que tragia en pēedença. (2:15, ll. 1-3)

268 Como Santa Maria guareceu en Vila-Sirga hũa dona filladalgo de França, que avia todo-los nenbros do corpo tolleitos. (2:55, ll. 1-2)

278 Como hũa bõa dona de Fra[n]ça, que era çega, e vëo a Vila-Sirga e teve y vigia, e foi logo guarida e cobrou seu lume. e ela yndo-se pera sa terra, achou un cego que ya en romaria a Santiago, e ela consellou-lle que fosse per Vila-Sirga e guarecerie. (2:78, ll. 1-5)

Significant in three of these miracles is that the recipients are all from another, and not insignificantly, distant country: Germany and France. Three suffer from some physical malady, with a fourth given a penance that is as physically cumbersome as an infirmity might be. In Title 24 of the first *Partida*, Alfonso X indicates that there are three types of pilgrims: those who go on pilgrimage freely and without compulsion, those who are required to carry out penance, and those who have made a vow to do so. The pilgrim in Cantiga 253 with the essential but not necessary ingredient of being a devotee of the Virgin has been given a penance by his abbot in which he must carry a 24-pound, iron staff from Toulouse – where the two from Germany lodged in the house of the heretic in Cantiga 175 – to Santiago where he was to “place it before the altar of Saint James in full sight of everyone without any secrecy” (Kulp-Hill 307). He gets as far as Villa-Sirga, spies the church, asks about it, and goes to it when he learns it is the Virgin’s. As a devotee he places the staff there and prays to her for forgiveness. The iron staff breaks in two. He tries to lift it, but cannot, realizing it is now the Virgin’s. He explains publically why he is there, about his penance, and all are edified with the Clergy singing “Salve Regina’ and praising the virginity” (Kulp-Hill 308). He fulfills his pilgrimage to Santiago and

returns to France where he “gladly served the Holy Virgin Mary as long as he lived” (Kulp-Hill 308). Keller’s understanding is that “he was thereafter a greater devotee of the Holy Virgin than of St. James” (Keller, “King Alfonso’s Virgin” 65). But Cantiga 253 never characterizes him as a devotee of Santiago in the first place. So it is not as if one object of devotion is better than the other or chosen over the other. Furthermore, the penitent actually travels all the way to Santiago perform without his penitential weight. Besides, whereas there may well be devotees of Santiago, Santiago as patron saint of Spain is Santiago Matamoros. “The protection of St. James for the fighting class was reinforced by visions of the saint. He was seen as Santiago Matamoros, the supernatural defender of Spain against the infidel” (Ward 112). Observe this passage taken from the *Crónica popular del Cid*, a best-seller during the sixteenth century, in which a Greek bishop goes on pilgrimage to Santiago where he hears that Santiago would appear to Christians during their battles in the battle gear of a knight. To this the bishop responded that:

Santiago era pastor & no cavallero y essa noche le apareció Santiago armado en vn cavallo blanco & le dixo que no dudasse de su cavallería que él era cavallero de Jesu Cristo y que otro día él abriría las puertas de Coimbra con aquellas llaves que en la mano tenía. Y en la mañana el obispo lo contó a todos los clérigos & a muchos otros & les dixo a qué ora otro día avía de ser tomada Coymbra. E assí lo fallaron por verdad. (Cronica del muy esforçado cavallero el Cid xx).

In *Cantiga 26*, as seen, Santiago does not appear as Matamoros, and Benedicta Ward offers an instance in which Santiago appears in the role of “*divinus medicus*” (116). Still his dominant role is as Matamoros, thus, “St James was 'miracle-working' mainly for a clientele that consisted very largely of Frankish knights” (Ward 125). It cannot surprise terribly then that in the *Liber Sancti Jacobi*, as Melczer points out,

earthly remains of saints receive an appropriate emphasis: the visitation of these remains all along the route, the saintly relics, becomes the overriding purpose of the pilgrimage.

To go on pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela means therefore to visit – that is, to see and touch – each and all the relics on the way. As is to be expected from a Frenchman, the author of the *Guide* devotes and overwhelming portion of his attention to the French saints on the route. This nearly overshadows Santiago himself. (156n120)

With this as a potential mindset, the shrines of the Virgin who performs the roles of “tender sister [or] indulgent and forgiving mother” must have had its particular attraction. Even as a defender of the faith, Mary performs her miracles, at least as recorded in Alfonso X’s *Cantigas*, on a personal level. *Cantiga* 63, for example, relates the battle at San Esteban de Gormaz when in 989 García Fernández, at that time Count of Castille, defeated Almanzor (Kulp-Hill 80). According to the miracle an outstanding knight of García Fernández listened to masses of the Virgin while the battle raged. Reproached by his squire for not participating in the battle, the knight continued to pray to the Virgin. When he finished and joined García Fernández’s troops, the battle was over and the victorious Count thanked him for his military prowess without which the battle would have been lost. When the Count urged him to attend to his wounds, the knight became aware of his battered weapons, and realized that he had been substituted by Mary who wished to keep him from falling into disgrace. Defense of the Faith can hardly evince a more personal hue.

Returning to the “anti-Santiago” miracles, in *Cantiga* 218, a wealthy yet honest merchant suffers paralysis causing him impoverishment. He asks pilgrims to Santiago to take him there for a cure, so they carry him there to no avail because “*non quis que guarisse Deus, polos seus pecados*” (1:683, l. 33). On their return, by the time they get to Carrión de los Condes, a few kilometers from Villa-Sirga, his condition worsens as now he is also blind. Fearing his demise, his fellow pilgrims take him to and leave him at Villa-Sirga thinking it may be in his best

interests. He piteously beseeches the Mother of God, is cured, returns to Germany, recounts his miracle to all, and takes offerings to Villa-Sirga “*a Virgen que nunca falez’ aos cuitados*” (1:684, l. 63), even if they are not her devotees. The shrines at Compostela, Rome, and Jerusalem are not primordially healing shrines. Travel to them required significant stamina which may have been sufficient to make the sites visited for penitential reasons:

In some ways, it is obvious that distant shrines would not attract the sick, who would find travelling particularly hard; . . . Healing shrines are of necessity local shrines. Compostela, Rome, and Jerusalem had local inhabitants, however, no more healthy than people elsewhere. Yet no record exists of local cures at the shrines of St James, St Peter, and the Holy Sepulchre. (Ward 125)

Cantiga 218 reinforces this learned assessment and suggests other, perhaps more convincing, reasons for this cure at Villa-Sirga rather than at Santiago rather than denigrating the Moor Slayer.

Cantiga 268 tells the story of a crippled French woman who visits shrine after shrine without benefit until pilgrims returning from Santiago tell her of healing miracles performed at Villa-Sirga. She is carried to Villa-Sirga and cured. Again, to view this as discrediting Santiago seems a bit Quixotic considering both the distinction between healing shrines and those of Santiago, Rome, and Jerusalem and that the pilgrims are only returning from Santiago and do not make explicit that she should not visit that shrine. This miracle is no more a denigration of Santiago than it is of the multiple, unnamed shrines the crippled woman visits before being told of Villa-Sirga.

In a similar story, *Cantiga* 278, a blind woman goes to Santiago but is not cured, the *Cantiga* saying simply that “it happened to her thus” – “*mas avē[o]-ll’ assy*” (2:78, l. 20), by all accounts a fortuitous happening. On her return she lodges in Villa-Sirga, it rains, and she seeks

shelter in Mary's Church there. She prays to the Virgin there who cures her. As she continues her journey homeward she encounters a blind man en route to Santiago: "*mas ela ll' aconssellou / que fosse por Vila-Sirga, se quisesse lum' aver*" (2:79, ll. 40-41). Again she only relates what happened to her and does not explicitly counsel him not to go to Santiago, but to go to Villa-Sirga. And again we have a healing versus a non-healing shrine. Not that healing cannot take place at these sites, rather that there are sites noted for healing and in this particular *cantiga*, this happens at a time when Villa-Sirga was developing a reputation for miracle healings (2:78, ll. 13-16, 17).

Indeed, Aubrey F. G. Bell's assessment of these miracles seems more acceptable.

Whereas he accepts the potential for rivalry, he states:

Nor, once more, would the King have taken sides in favour of Villa Sirga in the rivalry between that shrine and Santiago de Compostela apparent in several of the poems: he is merely reproducing the words of some inhabitant of Villa-Sirga anxious to divert the traffic of pilgrims from Santiago. (343)

Given the hagiographic hierarchy in which Mary is only second to Christ, and given the emphatically personal nature of her intervention, her churches along the route no doubt had their special attraction. These miracles at Villa-Sirga are not the only ones in which Alfonso awards Holy Mary of Villa-Sirga a higher status than other saints. *Cantiga* 313 relates the story of a ship broken by a storm. Viewing the drownings around them, survivors

*. . . chamavan Sennor Deus,
e San Pedr' e Santiago, San Nicolas, San Mateus
e santos muitos e santas, outorgando que romeus
de grado seus seerian se lles quisesse valer.* (2:164, ll. 31-34)

Not the Lord God himself, not Saint Peter, not Santiago, not Saint Nicholas, patron saint of

seamen, nor Saint Matthew¹¹, nor unnamed male or female saints with the promise of becoming their pilgrims come to their aid. So who does? The Virgin of Villa-Sirga on the suggestion of a priest who was on board. Are we to view what happens in this miracle as a “downgrading” of God Himself, at the top of the hagiographic pyramid, a “downgrading” of St. Peter, of Santiago, etc.? The thrust of this miracle of Villa-Sirga is identical to that of the other included miracles in Alfonso’s *Cantigas*: Mary is a reliable haven.

Thus, rather than “downgrading Santiago,” especially in favor of Villa-Sirga, Alfonso is focusing on the Virgin, his Lady, for whom he has forsaken all earthly donnas, as would be appropriate in poems dedicated to her. Alfonso was aware, as most Catholics may be, of the established rudimentary hierarchy of holy persons: first Christ, then his mother, and then and only then the apostles such as St. James himself. Joseph F. O’Callaghan offers useful information here:

King Alfonso was familiar with the Christian saints but seemed to have a special feeling for St. Ildefonsus of Toledo whose name he bore and whom Mary favored in a particular way for his defense of her virginity (CSM 2). Other than St. Ildefonsus, the Apostle St. James is mentioned more often in the *Cantigas*. James is declared to be the patron of Spain (CSM 175.7). Indeed, King Alfonso, in his will of 8 November 1282, acknowledge him as his lord and defender, and declared himself to be Santiago’s *alférez* or standard bearer. In the hierarchy of Christian saints, Mary obviously stood higher than St. James, but it is likely that King Alfonso’s emphasis on Villa-Sirga rather than Compostela was motivated also by his conflict with Archbishop Gonzalo. (216-17; emphasis added)

¹¹The first three entreated – God/Christ, St. Peter, and Santiago – represent the three great pilgrimage sites of Christendom, Jerusalem, Rome, and Santiago, respectively. Saint Nicholas, as stated, is patron saint of sailors. The reason for including Matthew the Evangelist in the list seems a bit more arcane. Matthew records the incident of Christ walking on the tempestuous Sea of Galilee calming it (Matthew viii, 23-27) as do Mark (iv, 35-41) and Luke (viii, 22-25). Only Matthew, however, records St. Peter’s attempt to walk on water, “successful so long as he exercises his faith in Christ” (Spence and Exell 65). That Matthew, like James, ranks third in the pious pecking order may be reason enough to invoke him. Christ’s calming of the tempest in the Sea of Galilee is the only connection I can find that would make it appropriate to invoke his name in a peril-at-sea scenario.

No moratorium on appeals to Santiago exists. But just as one seeks a baker and not a plumber for bread, so one seeks the Virgin Mary for personal favors, especially those having to do with healing, and frankly, a wide variety of other requisitions.

O’Callaghan has dexterously shown that the first stanza of Prologue A of the *Cantigas* includes lands governed by Alfonso as follows: “*Don Affonso de Castela / de Toledo, de Leon, / Rey ben des Compostela / ta o reyno d’Aragon*” (1:101. ll. 1-4). By listing the eight kingdoms he governed – Castile, Toledo, León, Córdoba, Jaén, Seville, Murcia, Algarve – as is customary although in varied formulas found in charters and the other Royal scriptorium compilations he ordered, Alfonso blatantly signals his regal standing. Alfonso’s flagging that his territory runs from Compostela to Aragon may relate to his self-designation as King of Santiago de Compostela in *Cantiga* 367. This miracle presents an illness Alfonso endured in Seville and which the Virgin Mary cured, motivating him to go on pilgrimage to a church he had had built in her honor in Santa María del Puerto. Because the poem oddly lists him as King of Castile and “Santiago de Compostela” (2:295, l. 17), a title never used in official documents, O’Callaghan reasons:

Although it may have been justified by the necessities of rhyme, I am convinced that it was intended to be a forceful assertion of royal sovereignty over the archbishopric. Archbishop Gonzalo of Compostela (1273-1281) had refused to do homage to the king, who forced him into exile and assumed direct governance of the archbishopric and its extensive lordship in Galicia. (190)

When Pope Nicholas III admonishes Alfonso by sending him a legate for that purpose, O’Callaghan surmises that listing himself in *Cantiga* 367 as King of Santiago may have “intended to manifest to everyone that the archbishop and the archbishopric were still very much dependent on the crown” (191). The debatability in holding that Alfonso would use his *Cantigas*

as a means to broadcast his positions aside, no doubt can exist that Alfonso clearly and intentionally asserted the archbishopric's dependence on the crown by listing it as he did.

Beyond inclusion in the *Cantigas* themselves, the church/fort Alfonso had built in the erstwhile Alcanate but now Puerto de Santa María pertains to plans initiated by Alfonso's father, Fernando III, as regards controlling the Straits of Gibraltar and the area as a means of impeding Moorish military incursions into Spain. After warfare in 1260 pertaining to Salé, Alfonso is supposedly to have docked in the port, and attracted and gratified by the abundance and pleasantness of the place considered it ideal for waging campaigns against northern Africa. Thus *Cantiga* 328 relates how the name was changed from Alcanate to Puerto de Santa María through the influence of the Virgin. Not only did he name this port in her honor and built a church in her honor, 1268-1290,¹² but also he added to the military orders of Santiago, Alcántara, and Calatrava, that of Santa María, which although not exclusively an order focused on maritime warfare, certainly included it as a major concern. Why would the self-declared *alférez* of Santiago not bring in the military order of Santiago to continue war against the infidel? Two reasons come to mind. Joseph Snow's perceptive study of the Puerto de Santa María poems in Alfonso's Marial anthology emphasize the personal nature of the entire collection but especially those miracles at the close of the collection where these stories appear (10): "Within this large narrative, we have the Puerto poems. They feature Alfonso, his brother Manuel, many members of his court, and events or miracles of small import except for their connection with Alfonso" (13). In 1272 Alfonso X creates the Orden de Santa María de España in praise of Holy Mary

¹²O'Callaghan 180-81. The Church was built on the site of an old mosque and today is known as the Castle of San Marcos.

whose purpose was to “*luchar por la religión y por la patria contra las bárbaras naciones, para la defensa y dilatación de la Fe católica*” (Menéndez Pidal 163). Juan Torres Fontes argues that the Order was strictly to be a naval enterprise (84) with a new mission to Morocco to attack the enemy in his homeland, removing the threat he posed on the coast, the new frontier, without which action they would forever be vulnerable (Sancho Mayi 20). Once the Puerto de Santa María was established, as Hipólito Sancho Mayi indicates, the problem he faced was how to induce people capable of defending it to leave the relative security of the interior in exchange for the certain insecurity of the new area (20). The answer was to distribute landed property, both urban and rustic, and to grant tax exemptions (Sancho Mayi 29). It was no hindrance if a powerful, healing, Marial shrine existed by which Christians in the area could and would be favored by the Mother of God as well, hence the 24 *cantigas* dedicated to the Puerto de Santa María. Snow calls *Cantiga* 328 the prologue *cantiga* in that it relates how Alcanate became Puerto de Santa María and exalts its abundance. *Cantigas* 356, 358, 364 deal with building the church in Puerto de Santa María and miracles the Virgin performed to assist in its construction. The remainder deal with miracles afforded to the Infante Manuel, Alfonso X himself, scribes, miniaturists, and others in his employ. The Virgin of the Puerto de Santa María cures rabid women, ill children, a man whose forehead is crushed by a rock, a sick horse, crippled children, a woman with a twisted mouth which makes eating impossible for her, and so on. The individuals for whom the miracles are performed are often mentioned by name – Domingo, Sancha, Pedro, etc. These are easily the equivalent of the generic Fulano, Mengano, and Zutano. Not so, however, with names of the King’s family, nobles such as Reymondo de Rocaful, Bonamic a royal servant, Pedro Lourenço the painter. Miracles are afforded not only to those immediately

in Puerto de Santa María but include folks from Sevilla, Jérez, San Lúcar de Barrameda, Arcos, and Niebla. Not only is the Virgin of the Puerto de Santa María efficacious in her own city but also the entire area is recipient of her aid. When a thief is caught and swears by God and the Virgin that he is innocent, and immediately reverts to thieving, caught in Puerto de Santa María, he confesses and is hanged. Catalanian pirates, harassing seafarers to the Puerto de Santa María, are castigated with bad weather by the Virgin for despoiling those in her territory and forced to return the loot. Even Alfonso X is prompted by the Virgin of the Puerto de Santa María to award an estate he had promised to Reymondo de Rocaful (382). Interesting because it parallels the supposed rivalry between Villa-Sirga and Santiago is the tale of a woman from Córdoba who lives next to a church of Santa María la Mayor who is ill and told to go to Silos. She does but in a dream she is instructed now to travel to Puerto de Santa María. She does, but still is not cured, until following the instructions of yet another dream, she goes to the Church of the Holy Cross in Cádiz (368). Is Alfonso slighting the Virgin of the Puerto de Santa María in *Cantiga* 368? Just as he is Santiago's standard bearer, he is the Virgin's devotee. I think not. He is lauding the Virgin. With the Puerto de Santa María and the Orden de Santa María de España, he had combined both piety and politics to further his aim at securing his territories against the threat of Islam. After losing his fleet which had surrounded Algeciras, with the beseiging Christian army disbanding to seek refuge (Torres Fontes 91-92), and faring poorly against Granada (Torres Fontes 94), the Orden de Santiago was decimated in the Battle of Moclín in 1280 (Menéndez Pidal 169; Torres Fontes 95), the knights of the Order of Santa María de España were subsumed into the Order of Santiago on 24 April 1281 and itself ceased thereby to exist.¹³ Alfonso, as

¹³ Comparing military orders in Spain to the rest of Christendom, Alan Forey writes: "The military orders were less

inept a manager of men as he may have been, as inept a ruler of his estate as some may consider him, was too in tune with celestial realities to offend any on the hagiographic pyramid. As members of the God-team, all were potentially useful and necessary to him.

Alfonso's histories had a purpose in creating a bulwark for his kingship and desired emperorship. His science definitely supported his ability to make the right choice at the right time given astrological influences on mankind. His legal treatises were to unify multifarious foral law into a common law of the land, useful for Holy Roman Emperor. Even his single work belonging to the recreational category arises from the self-interest of an elderly, perhaps old, man who sought recreation, respite in board games. Why would his *Cantigas de Santa Maria* be any different? Who, other than Christ himself, to seek assistance from than Christ's mother, the mother who convinced him to convert water to wine at Cana? Upon looking at the miracles dedicated to the Puerto de Santa Maria for example, the port close to Cádiz an ideal spot for launching an attack or attacks on Africa; upon considering his identification with St. Ildefonsus (O'Callaghan 216), his namesake who defended the Virgin against heretical detractors; upon viewing his self identification as Santiago's *alférez* – Santiago whose close relationship to Mary has been noted; upon realizing that he ordered one of the largest compilations dedicated to the miracles of the Virgin, his *Cantigas de Santa Maria*; upon pondering his creation of a military order in Her honor to carry a maritime jihad against the infidel; one can only conclude that Alfonso was one of Her greatest devotees. Divisive perhaps owing to unwise decisions concerning his terrestrial policies, his pious politics were all inclusive.

significant numerically in the Iberian peninsula. When Santiago lost its master and fifty-five brethren at the battle of Moclín in 1280, the loss was serious enough to occasion the amalgamation with the order of Santa María de España;

...” (195). Juan Torres Fontes claims that the Order of Santiago lost more than 2800 in this battle, including knights and foot soldiers (95).

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