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Exploring Strange, New Worlds: Travellers and Foreigners in Medieval Iberian Literature

by

Lauren Sappington Taranu

A dissertation presented to the
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
of Washington University in
partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy

May 2014

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To my parents, who always encouraged learning,
to my beloved sisters,
and to Raul, my inestimable travelling companion

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Exploring Strange, New Worlds: Travellers and Foreigners in Medieval Iberian Literature

by

Lauren Sappington Taranu

Doctor of Philosophy in Hispanic Languages and Literatures

Washington University in St. Louis, 2014

Professor Eloísa Palafox, Chair

This dissertation examines written travel accounts produced by Castilian and Andalusí authors and voyagers from twelfth- to fifteenth-century Iberia. The guiding research questions revolve around how journeyers encountered, reacted to, and reported on foreign peoples, lands, and customs as they left behind their homes and travelled throughout Europe, Africa, and Asia. From their liminal position as persons displaced from their home societies and separated from the ideology and social relations of their native lands, travellers offer a new perspective on a web of connections that permeated a dynamic, responsive, and interconnected medieval world.

Chapter One examines the travel accounts of two Andalusí voyagers, Abu Hamid al-Gharnati, a Muslim scholar, and Ibn Jubayr, a pilgrim to Mecca. Looking particularly at religious questions, I read their travel diaries against a backdrop of supposed cultural and religious ethnocentrism and find that while both men hold on to their Muslim faith as a tie to their home worlds, each exhibits cultural awareness and curiosity and participates in a more complicated and diverse world than the one he left behind. Chapter Two is a study of the essential travel components of two popular works of Castilian fiction, the *Libro de Alexandre* (from before 1250) and the *Libro del Caballero Zifar* (c. 1300). I focus in particular on the positive representation of the foreign and how these works might reflect back upon the authors'

home societies. These two ideas—the positive representation of the unfamiliar and the veiled commentary on the authors’ native lands—are main themes in Chapter Three. This chapter treats two works of imaginary travels, the *Libro del conocimiento* (c. 1390) and the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal* (in circulation by c. 1470). I examine the manner in which the authors utilize the foreign as a way to comment upon problems within their own communities. By setting up foreigners as models of inspiration, the writers were able to advocate for Christian unity and improved moral behavior by admonishing and encouraging their Christian readers without criticizing them outright. Two early-fourteenth-century Castilian travellers are the subject of Chapter Four. Ruy González de Clavijo, an ambassador of Enrique III to the Mongol-Turkic suzerain Timur in Samarkand, and the Cordoban knight Pero Tafur befriend foreign rulers and social inferiors, exchange gifts, and willingly participate in customs alien to their own culture and religion. Praising foreign societies for their wealth, power, and sophistication, Clavijo and Tafur portray themselves as special friends of important foreigners, thus positioning themselves as men specially suited to strengthen the bonds between Castile and alien civilizations in Europe, Africa, and Asia.

From the variety of reasons for and manners in which these men journeyed abroad, I conclude that travel is a unique act that has the ability to modify the voyager’s perceptions of the unfamiliar and the foreign. By re-focusing the study of travel literature on the points of contact between the traveller and the foreigner, I attempt in this dissertation to highlight the ways in which medieval Iberian voyagers approached the unfamiliar with more open-mindedness and curiosity than might be expected given the social and historical contexts from which they departed.

INTRODUCTION

As it does today, travel played a meaningful role in the lives of medieval Europeans. Men, women, and children, old and young, noble and commoner made journeys close to and far from home.¹ Medieval Europeans travelled for a variety of reasons: local and long-distance pilgrimage, war and crusade, fairs and festivals, trade, commerce, marriage, missionary activity, diplomatic relations, desire for knowledge, delivery of news and messages, knightly feats, royal and noble obligations, diversion, and adventure. While most who left home would have travelled willingly, others were forced to wander as punishment for crimes or perhaps to complete a pilgrimage instead of facing incarceration. Some soldiers must have preferred the comforts of home to war abroad, but others embraced the opportunity to break up the monotony of routine life (lay or monastic) and to see the world beyond. As travel was such a familiar part of many peoples' lives, it is no surprise that this theme appears in works of fiction as well as biographical or autobiographical works based on true stories throughout the Middle Ages. The situation in medieval Iberia is no different. The idea of journey or travel can be found in a variety of literary genres: popular love poetry, the learned *mester de clerecía*, chivalric novels, royal chronicles, and travel literature, both fiction and non-fiction, from the twelfth to fifteenth centuries. Journeying outside one's own town or country provides myriad experiences to relate

1. There are several thoroughly enjoyable studies that inform the modern reader about medieval travel in general, the details of the physical journey, who travelled and for what reasons, and other information that perhaps is not readily apparent in our world of comparatively easy journeys. Norbert Ohler's *The Medieval Traveller* (1986) discusses logistics of voyages such as climate and geography, modes of transport, and hospitality. The book also includes discussions of several specific medieval European travellers. *Travel in the Middle Ages* by Jean Verdon (1998) likewise addresses transportation, lodging, and the various peoples who realized journeys to near or distant lands and their reasons for doing so. Margaret Wade Labarge's *Medieval Travellers* (1982) examines general and specific people who travelled in the Middle Ages, and she focuses her study especially on noble or royal travellers, of whom we have the most extant information. These three works are excellent starting points for imagining the world in which medieval voyagers lived and moved.

to one's peers and friends back home. The experiences, observations, praises, and critiques noted in travel accounts reveal much about how the traveller perceived himself and others. Looking at what a writer of travel narrative includes or chooses to silence in a text gives the reader some idea of his world-view and what was important to him. Furthermore, examining the relationship between the traveller and the foreigners he meets abroad allows for a more complete picture of the medieval world and how its various cultures and civilizations interacted with each other.

The point of departure for my dissertation is the concept of encounter, that is, the interaction that takes place when the Iberian traveller of the Middle Ages confronts unfamiliar peoples, customs, religions, languages, and systems of governance in alien realms throughout his journeys. Each of my chapters will approach this central idea from various literary and historical perspectives specific to the works studied, but underlying them all will be questions of how the traveller confronts the foreign and the foreigner, how he identifies or perceives the unfamiliar, how he reacts to those new experiences and peoples, and finally, how he explains the foreign in his text for his readers. With this perspective, I hope to fill a void in existing criticism on medieval Iberian travel literature which generally deals with the descriptive and rhetorical elements of travel accounts and the structure of the narrative. In analyzing several distinct travel-books produced by Iberian sojourners between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries, I endeavor to trace the evolution of medieval Iberian travel writing and to advocate for a comprehensive and inclusive view of the travel literature genre that embraces a wide rather than narrow range of works dealing with travel. I furthermore hope to open up these under-studied texts to a wider audience and to transmit some idea of the sheer marvel of their daring journeys.

The study of medieval Iberian travel literature has remained neglected in comparison

with other literatures and canonical works of the same epoch, and it has simultaneously been considered from principally a geographical-historical perspective with less attention given to its literary qualities. Medieval Iberian travel accounts only began to enjoy more scholarly attention in the 1980s, and the dearth is due in a large degree to the generically ambiguous nature of travel accounts that straddle history, biography, autobiography, geography, science, and literature. The act of travel provides such a broad and varied experience that journeyers write about cultural and religious customs, legends, politics, foreign gastronomy, modes of travel, contemporary persons of import, marvels, principal cities with their monuments and attractions, and an abundance of other topics, mundane and extraordinary. With this ambivalence of how to categorize travel writing, scholars have been slow to recognize the wealth of information about the medieval world that still remains to be gleaned from these unique accounts. Several studies, some of which I detail below, have focused on questions of genre, which is natural when approaching understudied and hard-to-classify works. These deal with issues of narrators, rhetorical devices, the structure of the narrative, and marvel material. Larger studies that attempt to speak globally about medieval Iberian travel literature have not been able to study each work in depth and sometimes ignore outlying texts. At the other end of the spectrum, studies dedicated to particular works are quite narrow in focus and do not draw large conclusions about these travel-books in general. My aim, then, has been to read closely each of the travel-books extant from medieval Iberia and to attempt to understand how they fit together and what conclusions one can draw about how those individuals, compared with their home societies at large, interacted with what and whom they encountered abroad.

In the field of Iberian literary studies, Miguel Ángel Pérez Priego was one of the first to

offer an indispensable contribution to the study of medieval Iberian travel literature.² In his 1984 article, “Estudio literario de los libros de viajes medievales,” Pérez Priego discusses “Spanish” (Castilian) travel accounts, of both real and feigned journeys, which were produced from approximately the late-fourteenth century through the fifteenth, to wit: *Libro del conocimiento*, a book of imaginary travels from around 1390; *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal*, an account circulating by 1471 of the imaginary travels of the historical don Pedro, second son of João I of Portugal; *Embajada a Tamorlán*, the record of Ruy González de Clavijo’s embassy to Timur of Samarkand from 1403-1406; and *Andanças e viajes de Pero Tafur*, the travel diary of a Castilian knight who journeyed through the Mediterranean, Europe, and the Near East in the 1430s. Pérez Priego also includes in his Spanish travel literature canon the late fourteenth-century Aragonese translations of the works of Marco Polo and John Mandeville. From his list, Pérez Priego excludes chronicles and biographies, such as *El Victorial* by Gutierre Díez de Games, for in that work, he argues, travel is simply a secondary component of the important knightly accomplishments that constitute the crux of the text. Furthermore, he also excludes *libros de caballerías* (chivalric novels), despite the centrality of the journey in them, due to their distinct methods of narrative construction.

Taking these works as constitutive of the Spanish travel-book genre, Pérez Priego develops a list of five characteristics which define those texts as a distinct and separate category. In order to offer the reader a kind of guide as to the general structure and content of the works examined in this dissertation, I wish to review Pérez Priego’s criteria. The first defining

2. Barbara Fick’s doctoral thesis was published earlier, in 1976, as *El libro de viajes de la España medieval*, which is a descriptive and rather superficial study of three medieval Castilian travel accounts: *Embajada a Tamorlán*, *El Victorial*, and *Andanças e viajes*. Works by other scholars discussed in the Introduction are more suitable for approaching the study of medieval Iberian travel-books.

characteristic is the presence of an *itinerary* which structures the narrative and in most cases is present throughout the entire work (Pérez Priego 220-3). The itinerary, the traveller's journey from place to place, may be more or less precise and occasionally, in the accounts of fictitious travels, may even be impossible.

The second attribute of travel literature that Pérez Priego highlights is a *chronological order* which gives account of the passage of time and further serves to organize the text (223-6). Like the itinerary, the chronological order noted in the work may be strictly or loosely followed. Ruy González de Clavijo's account of his embassy to Timur on behalf of Castilian king Enrique III details his journey almost daily. Despite note-taking while abroad, it sometimes happens that the time between the actual travel and the writing of the text allows errors in dating to appear, although these mistakes do not greatly affect the understanding of the travelogue. On the other hand, fictional travel accounts naturally reveal a much more imprecise and generalized chronology.

Pérez Priego's third principle, *spatial order*, is the one that does the most to create narrative order in the travel account (226-9). By spatial order, the scholar refers to the places visited and then described by the traveller who tends to show a desire to describe everything. Nonetheless, he must limit himself and privilege certain places over others. Cities prove to be the focus of description in travel-books, and Pérez Priego calls them the "narrative nuclei" of the work which structure the account. Indeed, cities have such primacy given them that when there are no cities in a certain stage of the journey, time is accelerated, as it were, and the writer quickly passes on to the next important site. The reverse likewise occurs: time "decelerates" in cities where the traveller dedicates many pages to describing their particular qualities (Pérez Priego 226-7). Studying the description of cities, Pérez Priego has discovered that they follow

the antique rhetorical tradition *descriptio urbis*. In this style of description, the writer adheres to several particular points: the history and founders of the city, its condition and fortifications, the fertility of its natural surroundings, the inhabitants and their customs, the city's buildings and monuments, and finally, its famous citizens. Travel writers often expand upon these aspects to relate their entrance into the city, the hospitality provided by its rulers, commerce or trade, systems of justice and governance, and digressions on relics, holy men and women, and miracles associated with religious buildings or sites therein.

Mirabilia is the fourth attribute of travel-books proposed by Pérez Priego (229-32). These marvels or wonders are a special component of the genre that capture the reader's imagination and introduce him further to an unknown and extraordinary world. Much of the fantastical material comes from legends of the East through, for example, works of classical authors like Pliny, the Alexander romances, or the legends of Prester John. These kinds of marvels are more prevalent in works of fictitious travels, but "real" travellers frequently exclaim about the wonders that they too witness abroad. Through the use of comparison, they describe for their readers animals unknown in their home country, like giraffes, elephants, and crocodiles, and marvel at the architectural wonders of the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople or the decadence of Rome. These travellers tend to report "true" marvels and sometimes even hesitate from describing wondrous sites abroad for fear that their readers will doubt their truthfulness.

The final defining aspect of medieval Spanish travel-books is a certain *form of presentation* (Pérez Priego 232-4). This form entails a continuous, linear narration of a single protagonist, be he individual or collective. The traveller-protagonist is also typically the narrator, and thus a singular or plural first-person narrative is employed. This form of presentation differentiates the travel-book from other types of narrative in which, for example,

parallel actions occur and the narrator may temporarily leave the reader in suspense to recount another part of the story.

It is these five characteristics, namely, itinerary, chronological order, spatial order, *mirabilia*, and form of presentation, which are generally present in the works Pérez Priego includes in his corpus: *Libro del conocimiento*, *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal*, *Embajada a Tamorlán*, *Andanças e viajes de Pero Tafur*, and translations of Marco Polo and Mandeville. In each case, however, Pérez Priego notes that there are exceptions to those general rules.³ In the fictitious travels of don Pedro, for example, it is the group's interpreter who serves as the narrator, rather than don Pedro himself. After a while, Marco Polo's text abandons an itinerary and describes those things most attractive to the reader. The *Embajada a Tamorlán* is almost exclusively narrated in the third person, rather than the first. This handful of examples suffices to show that the guidelines established by Pérez Priego must be flexible, rather than strict, for each medieval Iberian travel account proves to be a unique text based on the singular experiences and objectives of its author or protagonist. In the pages that follow, I will discuss the elasticity of the genre based on the works included in the canon by other scholars of medieval Iberian travel-books.⁴

3. Percy Adams, professor of English literature, has similarly spoken to the variance inevitable in travel literature of all eras: "[T]he récit de voyage cannot be a literary genre with a fixed definition any more than the novel is; it is not even *sui generis* since it includes so many types both by form and by content. For, like other forms just as amorphous, it evolves and will continue to evolve" (282).

4. While constraints of space obligate me to mention only the most important scholars who have written about Iberian travel literature, other valuable studies have been carried out. Miguel Ángel Ladero Quesada has written an introductory work to the various civilizations and travellers of the Middle Ages which helps to contextualize the travelogues herein studied. Anca Crivăț's doctoral thesis, published in Bucharest in 2003, examines Castilian travel-books of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries from a literary perspective and their relation to other contemporary works of prose. Crivăț's dissertation director Eugenia Popeanga has put forth a

Pérez Priego's foundational study was followed by an invaluable contribution by Joaquín Rubio Tovar in 1986, *Libros españoles de viajes medievales*. This book discusses those works in which “es el viaje y lo que éste conlleva (el encuentro con un medio extraño, la información histórica, política o geográfica de los territorios que se recorren, la aventura, etc.) lo que da su último sentido al escrito” (“it is the journey and that which it entails (encounter with a strange environment; historical, political, or geographical information about the territories that are traversed; adventure; etc.) which give the text its ultimate meaning”; 10).⁵ Rubio Tovar divides his study into a prologue of four chapters and an anthology of travel-book excerpts. The prologue serves as a general introduction to aspects of the medieval world that would have affected travellers in their journeys abroad, such as the Mongol Empire, the importance of *mappae mundi*, geography, and marvels. In addition, Rubio Tovar discusses the literary genre of travel-books. Following Jean Richard's essential and classic study, *Les récits de voyages et de pèlerinages*, which proposes a typology of travel narratives, Rubio Tovar recognizes that travel accounts constitute a multifarious genre and speaks of their various classifications: pilgrimage guides, hagiographies, crusade records, accounts of ambassadors and missionaries, merchants' guides, certain portions of biographies, and imaginary travels or “geographic novels” (Rubio Tovar 35). As far as defining characteristics of the genre are concerned, Rubio Tovar agrees with Pérez Priego's study and concludes that medieval Spanish travel-books constitute an

series of studies which deal with travel, space, and exile, among other topics. Of most relevance to medieval Iberian travellers, her “Lectura e investigación de los libros de viajes medievales” deals with European travel literature in general, the structuring of the texts, and how to approach travel narrative within the context of medieval literature. Finally, the reader may also wish to consult Vladimir Acosta's comprehensive three-volume work, *Viajeros y maravillas*, which covers a range of medieval travellers, both real and imaginary, and the treatment of marvelous material.

5. All English translations are mine.

autonomous genre with room for variety in each specific work.

Importantly, Rubio Tovar expands upon Pérez Priego's corpus of travel-books to include several more tomes. His list is comprised of: *Liber Sancti Jacobi*, a twelfth-century pilgrim's guide to Compostela written by French scholar Aymeric Picaud; *Fazienda de Ultramar*, a thirteenth-century pilgrim's guide to the Holy Land with biblical passages in the vernacular and other religious material; the travels of Benjamin of Tudela, who travelled in the mid-twelfth century and composed his text in Hebrew; the travelogue of Abu Hamid al-Gharnati, an Iberian Muslim who journeyed for several decades in the twelfth century; Marco Polo; John Mandeville; *Libro del conocimiento*; *Embajada a Tamorlán*; Pero Tafur's *Andanças e viajes*; *El Victorial*, a biography written by Gutierre Díez de Games about Pero Niño in the early fifteenth-century; and *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal*.

As evidenced by this list, Rubio Tovar includes works that span chronological, ethnic, and linguistic divides. This broader approach is more appropriate compared with one that restricts the study of "Spanish" travel-books to those produced in Castile.⁶ Furthermore, including a variety of works under this classification simply reflects the heterogeneous nature of travel and travel writing. Each journey, as well as the written reactions to it, was unique. Allowing for broad inclusion in studies of travel literature does not weaken or "dilute" the genre; rather, it allows the specificity of each work to become clear.

Ten years after Pérez Priego's study on the problematic travel-book genre, Sofía Carrizo

6. In 1991, Rafael Beltrán offered an excellent general review of Castilian travel literature in his article "Los libros de viajes castellanos. Introducción al panorama crítico actual: ¿cuántos libros medievales castellanos?". Beltrán restricts his study to *Embajada a Tamorlán*, *Andanças e viajes de Pero Tafur*, and *Libro del conocimiento* but inexplicably omits the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal*.

Rueda tackled the same problem.⁷ She agrees with Pérez Priego that the heterogeneity of the corpus has made defining the genre difficult. Instead of grouping together real and fictitious journeys, she divides the traditional points of view about travel books as speaking of travel accounts (*relatos de viajes*) and travel literature (*literatura de viajes*). For Carrizo Rueda, the former is an account that offers a series of information about a journey through certain lands (like Marco Polo). She maintains that this is a mixed genre and that it is impossible to separate that which is documentary from its “literariness.” Carrizo Rueda understands travel literature, on the other hand, to be those works characterized by complex fictional processes, where reference to the itinerary is subordinated to any difficulty or event in the life of the character (Homer, Virgil, Jonathan Swift). In the end, Carrizo Rueda admits that it is a problematic distinction since true and fictional elements can be present in both categories.⁸

More recently, Francisco López Estrada published a comprehensive review of Iberian

7. Carrizo Rueda has dedicated many pages to Castilian travel-books with concern for intertextuality and questions of genre, ideas she explores in her article “¿Existe el género ‘relatos de viajes’?”. Some of her other works are referenced in the Works Cited section.

8. Carrizo Rueda does, however, propose a definition of the *relatos de viajes* genre: “Se trata de un discurso narrativo-descriptivo en el que predomina la función descriptiva como consecuencia del objeto final que es la presentación del relato como un espectáculo imaginario, más importante que su desarrollo y su desenlace. Este espectáculo abarca sociedades, conocimientos de diversos tipos, objetos para la admiración y las mismas acciones de los personajes. Debido a su inescindible estructura literario-documental, la configuración del material se organiza alrededor de núcleos de clímax que en última instancia, responden a un principio de selección y jerarquización situado en el contexto histórico y que responde a expectativas y tensiones profundas de la sociedad a la que se dirigen”; (“It concerns a narrative-descriptive discourse in which the descriptive function prevails as a consequence of the final objective, which is to present the account as an imaginary spectacle, more important than its development and *dénouement*. This spectacle covers societies, knowledge of diverse types, objects of admiration, and the very actions of the characters. Due to its inseparable literary-documentary structure, the configuration of the material is organized around various nuclei of climax that ultimately respond to a principal of selection and classification situated in the historical context and that respond to profound expectations and tensions of the society to which they are addressed”; *Hacia una poética*” 123-4).

travel literature, *Libros de viajeros hispánicos medievales* (2003), which draws on many of his earlier works.⁹ The travellers analyzed by López Estrada are varied, but primacy again is given to Castilian journeyers. The *Libro del conocimiento*, John Mandeville, the *Embajada a Tamorlán*, the travelogue of Pero Tafur, and *El Victorial* each receive a chapter dedicated to their study. López Estrada mentions Hebrew and Arabic books but in a single chapter that allows very little to be said about any one of them. He mentions Benjamin of Tudela, Ibn Jubayr, Abuobaid el-Becri,¹⁰ Abu Hamid al-Gharnati, and two anonymous Morisco writers.¹¹

In my approach to travel literature, I advocate for a broad acceptance of which works constitute the genre, but it is likewise valuable to study the function of travel even in works that do not fit into the guidelines put forth by the scholars noted above. My chapters examine travelogues written by eleventh and twelfth century Andalusis; the travel components of two celebrated Castilian works of fiction, the *Libro de Alexandre* and the *Libro del Caballero Zifar*; imaginary travel accounts of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; and the travel-books of a Castilian ambassador and a knight of the early fifteenth century. In choosing texts that span

9. Some of his important contributions dating back to the 1980s are: “Viajeros españoles en Asia: la embajada de Enrique III a Tamorlán (1403-1406),” “Procedimientos narrativos en la *Embajada a Tamorlán*,” and “Pero Tafur: trotamundos medieval.”

10. I disagree with the inclusion of Abuobaid el-Becri (Abu Ubayd al-Bakri) in a study of medieval Iberian travellers. Al-Bakri was an eleventh-century geographer and historian of Al-Andalus. He composed works based on or including travel accounts of others, but he himself never travelled to the places about which he wrote. Fragments of an account by a medieval Andalusí who did travel, Ibrahim Ibn Jaqub, are found in al-Bakri’s *Kitab al-Masalik wa’l-Mamalik*.

11. The texts of two unknown Morisco writers were published in an article by Mikel de Epalza in 1982. One man, a Muslim from Tortosa, Catalonia, writes a guide-book for pilgrims making the *hajj* to Mecca toward the end of the fourteenth century. The account is quite impersonal and sparse in details, with most attention centered on rituals to be performed in the holy city. The other text is a letter to the author’s brother describing his captivity and liberation at the beginning of the fifteenth century.

chronological and cultural divisions of medieval Iberia, I will endeavor to show that it is indeed fruitful to study these heterogeneous works alongside one another.

Before proceeding to an explanation of my chapters, I would like first to discuss one issue of terminology that will be pertinent to understanding all the sojourners here considered. The concept of liminality was developed by anthropologist Victor Turner and is a useful theoretical tool for considering the unique state of travellers who occupied a space between the native lands they had left behind and the foreign lands to which they did not yet belong, or to which they belonged incompletely. Turner draws on the second of three phases of Arnold van Gennep's *rites de passage*, which were defined by the latter as "rites which accompany every change of place, state, social position and age" (Turner 94). These rites will again be discussed in the second chapter, but for now it is useful to point out the principal ideas. Van Gennep's three phases consisted of separation, margin, and reaggregation. In the separation phase, a person detaches himself from a state (social condition, group, etc.) of which he is a part. In the transition period, the subject belongs to an ambiguous state that is unlike the previous or proximate states. In the final phase of reaggregation, the subject is incorporated into a new state and "has rights and obligations vis-à-vis others of a clearly defined and 'structural' type; he is expected to behave in accordance with certain customary norms and ethical standards . . ." (Turner 95). In *Ritual Process*, Turner elaborates upon the idea of liminality, that is, van Gennep's transition or threshold phase. He describes liminal people as "necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and [ceremony]" (95). This liminal state lends itself well to understanding the position of travellers.

Notwithstanding their varied reactions to the unfamiliar, each traveller shares the experience of no longer being fully connected to his home world. It is with a focus on that particular shared state that I wish to approach the following texts.

The primary sources studied in Chapter One are the accounts of Abu Hamid al-Gharnati (1080-1169) and Ibn Jubayr (1145-1217), both Muslims of Al-Andalus. Abu Hamid left Granada in his twenties and spent the rest of his life living in various cities abroad, from the Maghreb to the Middle East to European Russia, never to return to his homeland. Ibn Jubayr's account relates his two-year pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina and the experiences he had on the journeys to and from those holy cities through the Maghreb and the northern Mediterranean. I first discuss the general state of relations between medieval Muslims and Christians as put forth by historian Bernard Lewis, who offers evidence that until the nineteenth century, Islamic society was largely self-sufficient and had no need of recurring to foreigners for political, economic, or religious reasons. In light of this ethnocentric worldview, I then analyze how the travellers' experiences abroad modify their perspectives on foreign Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Departing from a sophisticated cultural and intellectual background compared to that of contemporary Christendom, Abu Hamid and Ibn Jubayr both show continuity with their homeland through the importance they place on religious matters in their texts, but they also depart from the general medieval Islamic worldview by dint of their experiences in foreign lands.

Abu Hamid travels as a man of popular science, taking record of foreign customs, trade practices, legends and marvels, religious rituals, law and jurisprudence, and flora and fauna. In addition to his great curiosity for all that he encounters outside Al-Andalus, he positions himself abroad as an authoritative religious scholar who institutes correct, orthodox Muslim practices in lands where they are lacking, with special attention given to Friday prayers and sermons, the

Arabic language, and doctrinal issues such as polygamy, abstinence from alcohol, and pilgrimage. He celebrates the spread of Islam outside its spiritual centers in the Middle East and relates stories of conversions and gains that Muslim subjects win from their non-Muslim rulers (*e.g.* the ability to worship unhindered in mosques or to practice polygamy). Despite the attention given to religious matters and the links to the greater community that his Islamic faith provides, Abu Hamid is at once a man of an open mind and universalist perspective. His long decades of residence in non-Islamic lands, especially in such a diverse city as Saqsin on the Caspian Sea, for example, demonstrate his willingness to live peaceably alongside foreigners of other faiths. Abu Hamid breaks away from an ethnocentric perspective, which is evidenced by his life-long wanderings, his interest in foreign customs and peoples, and the praise he offers about the foreign lands he visits.

Abu Hamid's close contemporary and fellow traveller, Ibn Jubayr, was motivated by distinct and specific reasons as he voyaged abroad. His objective was to complete the pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina, which he accomplished in a two-year-long journey, first travelling through the Maghreb and the Middle East and returning through the Levant and northern Mediterranean. Ibn Jubayr is a pious man and fervently writes about the religious rituals and moving spiritual experiences in which he participates in the holy cities and other special sites. Like Abu Hamid, Ibn Jubayr's Islamic faith ties him to a wider community and provides continuity with his homeland while he travels outside Al-Andalus.

My study of Ibn Jubayr focuses on the tension evident in his travelogue that he experiences as he encounters both Muslim and non-Muslim people on his journey. Ardent in his Sunni faith and supportive of the Almohad dynasty in the Maghreb and Al-Andalus, Ibn Jubayr is troubled by those whom he considers heretical Muslims or those who claim Islamic faith and

yet treat their co-religionists unjustly. Outside Al-Andalus, Ibn Jubayr confronts new beliefs and ways of life that are alien to him. On the return journey, he spends time in Christian-controlled lands and is disturbed by the temptation that Christianity presents to Islam; he worries that his fellow Muslims will convert away from their faith. It is the very act of travel which forces Ibn Jubayr to face a world that differs so greatly from the ideal of a unified Islamic community, bound together by the same beliefs and doctrines.

The travels of Abu Hamid and Ibn Jubayr provide them with an opportunity to become acquainted with a world larger and more heterogeneous than that they left behind. Abu Hamid delights in acquiring knowledge of foreign customs and lands and spends many years in the company of diverse peoples. At the same time, he is confident in his Islamic faith and insists on spreading orthodox Islam and correcting its faulty practice in minority Islamic communities abroad. Ibn Jubayr, as is natural on a religious journey, likewise demonstrates an adherence to his religious upbringing that is bolstered by the spiritual delights he experiences on his pilgrimage. At the same time, his ideal of a unified Islamic community that exists separate from non-Muslims enters into conflict when he must pass through crusader kingdoms and Christian lands in the Mediterranean. Thus, for both Abu Hamid and Ibn Jubayr, travel is a means by which their attention is turned to the outside world, and the accounts of their journeys give the reader insight into how each one, willingly or not, reacted to distinct peoples and customs found abroad.

Two works of fiction produced in Castile around the thirteenth century likewise take up the question of leaving behind one's home and making a new life for oneself in a foreign land. In Chapter Two, I study the *Libro de Alexandre*, a poem of the life of Alexander the Great, and the *Libro del Caballero Zifar*, Castile's first chivalric novel, with regards to the essential role

that travel plays in them. These texts do not constitute part of the travel-book genre, but the journeys the protagonists undertake are more than a simple structuring or narrative element of the works. I choose to include these texts not only because travel is central to each story but also because each work speaks about foreign lands and peoples, how the unfamiliar is perceived by the protagonists, and how that reflects back upon the homeland. In this manner, these two works of fiction have much in common with the imaginary travels narrated in the *Libro del conocimiento* and the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal*. Furthermore, the importance of chivalric ideals and heroic deeds found in the *Alexandre* and the *Zifar* find an echo in the wanderings of Pero Tafur.

Two fundamental ideas I study in each work are the protagonists' attitudes toward the foreign and what that might say about the author's attitude toward his home society. Throughout his travels around the known world, Alexander holds up the foreign land as a valuable, longed-for space and enters into close friendship with various other men of his own rank. At a lower social level, even Alexander's soldiers enter into frank discussions about the benefits and disadvantages of settling down in a foreign realm. Albeit for vastly different reasons in the beginning, the knight Zifar likewise journeys abroad and eventually makes a permanent home for himself in a foreign land. Zifar, as well as his son Roboán, find in foreign kingdoms a better place than the one they left behind.

I suggest that the effusive praise of the foreign land and the portrayal of Alexander and Zifar reflect a desire on the part of each author to reflect subtly upon his own society. For his part, Alexander is styled as a conquering lord who is welcomed by the inhabitants of each land he brings under his control, just as the author could have wished to portray Christian kings of Iberia who were "reconquering" Islamic lands to the south. Similarly, the triumph of Zifar and

his family in a foreign kingdom and the justice they establish for their adoring subjects may reflect the court of Castilian king Sancho IV and his wife María de Molina who ruled at the time of the work's composition.

The technique of using the foreign to comment upon one's own society is likewise found in travel-books of imaginary journeys in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Castile. In Chapter Three, I analyze the *Libro del conocimiento* (c. 1390) and the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal* (c. 1470). The former work, probably based on a portolan chart or *mappa mundi*, highlights the travels of an anonymous Castilian throughout the world and gives basic information regarding each kingdom he visits. The latter is a fictionalized account of the travels of the historical Pedro of Portugal, second son of King João I.

In this chapter, I focus in particular on the religious matters raised by the travellers' treatment of the foreign. In general, the traveller of the *Libro del conocimiento* is open-minded to foreign peoples and beliefs, but he does reserve negative judgment for idolaters or those who have no belief in a god. Idolaters and irreligious people detract from an otherwise idyllic foreign land. However, the narrator points out that those groups do in fact keep one of God's commandments, which is not to harm one another. It is this kind of comment in which I believe a negative judgment of the author's own society may be seen: people without divinely-revealed religion keep God's commandment, while Christians war against fellow Christians and thus fail to keep God's law. Similarly, the narrator of the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal* advocates for Christian unity and improved Christian behavior among lay people as well as ecclesiastics. The traveller holds up certain foreigners as examples of morally good people, but he also portrays particular Muslims, especially those controlling the Holy Land, as enemies of Christianity, perhaps in an attempt to stir up a crusading spirit among the book's readers. These

works offer a varied representation of foreigners, but in each case, the treatment of those people reflects some desire for change in the home world of the author, be it Christian unity, an improvement of morality in all social ranks, or a reminder about the state of things in the Holy Land. The fictitious nature of the *Libro del conocimiento* and the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal* allow the writers to criticize indirectly their own societies and to comment upon religious and other problems that concerned them.

The final chapter examines two works which culminate—with the exception of the c. 1470 *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal*—the chronological trajectory in medieval Iberian travel writing. The works studied in this dissertation show a varied treatment of foreigners by the travellers who, over the centuries, become increasingly open to the outside. The *Embajada a Tamorlán* is the account of the Castilian embassy headed by Ruy González de Clavijo to the Turkic-Mongol ruler Timur in Samarkand in the first years of the fifteenth century. Its fifteenth-century travel-book companion is the *Andanças e viajes* by Pero Tafur, a knight from Córdoba who travelled the world in the 1430s during a lull in Christian-Muslim fighting in Al-Andalus. While Clavijo's account is written in a more objective and detached style, in accordance with preparing a report for his king, both books allow the reader to glean an idea of the travellers' opinions on foreign lands, peoples, and customs.

In this fourth chapter, I focus on the ways in which Clavijo and Tafur cross religious, ethnic, and linguistic barriers to establish connections and even friendships with strangers they meet abroad. Like the imaginary travellers of the *Libro del conocimiento* and the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal*, they represent the unfamiliar in a positive light. Now, however, the focus on the positive qualities of the stranger is not with a primary goal of criticizing their own societies. Rather, Clavijo and Tafur use their familiarity with foreign realms to bolster their

own reputations back home and present themselves as worldly cultural conduits who have integrated themselves into sophisticated, desirable foreign communities.

Studying together travel-books by Castilian and Andalusí writers of the twelfth to fifteenth centuries allows one to understand more fully the development of travel writing in medieval Iberia and to learn about relations between those travellers and the foreigners they encountered around the world. Although later Castilian voyagers likely would not have had direct contact with the travelogues of Andalusí journeyers, they did share, to some extent, a cultural and historical environment which informed their writings and justifies their study today. Pero Tafur of Córdoba exemplifies this cross-cultural sharing in the ease with which he befriends a Sevillian Jew converted to Islam living in Egypt; Tafur's time previously spent in Seville serves as a commonality that binds the two in friendship. Whereas many scholars treat Castilian and Andalusí travelogues separately, it is perhaps even more productive to analyze them together as products of a heterogeneous medieval Iberia that fostered many excursions of its diverse inhabitants to other parts of the world. The voyagers themselves crossed those cultural, religious, and geographic barriers which are now sometimes imposed upon the travel-books herein discussed. More fruitful than analyzing countries in isolation, the study of travellers allows one to see a web of connections that permeated medieval Europe, the Mediterranean, and Eastern and Central Asia.

In many cases, travel accounts speak not only to the foreign environment which is encountered on the journey but also to the native land and how the two compare. Travellers are the bridges between the homeland and the foreign land, and their accounts, fictional or not, provide contemporary and modern readers with a better understanding of how differences in ethnicity, custom, religion, and language were negotiated. Furthermore, travel-books

demonstrate how degrees of difference were evaluated (*e.g.* in terms of religion, both Castilian and Andalusí travellers met others of their same beliefs, others who were Muslims or Christians but of different sects, or people altogether without religion). Travel is the act which exposes preconceived ideas and stereotypes about others who differ in a variety of ways from the wayfarer. However, the moment of encounter between the traveller and the stranger is peculiar: because the voyager is a displaced person far from home, his liminal state affects the reactions and conclusions that the encounter produces in him. The perception of the world that was fashioned in his native land must be re-evaluated with new information that he acquires abroad. His relationship with the foreigner is not one of “Center” and “Other,” for he is no longer surrounded by people similar to him in customs, religion, and place of birth. Thus I attempt in this dissertation to re-focus the study of travel literature on the points of contact between the traveller and the stranger and to analyze how those contacts affected their perception of the unfamiliar as well as what it might indirectly reveal about the travellers’ attitudes toward their home societies. Studying travel literature affords the modern reader a new perspective on the foreign relations of medieval Iberia. Through their liminal position between multiple worlds, travellers were able to realize relationships with strangers that transcended conventional political, religious, and ethnic stereotypes associated with the unfamiliar. Whereas the foreign, then and now, is commonly associated with that which is different, incomprehensible, fantastical, or even inferior, the travellers examined here reveal new and sometimes surprisingly open attitudes toward the unfamiliar. From Andalusí voyagers who maintained some sense of continuity with their home world through their religion while contemplating the foreign, to fictional travellers who praised alien lands and advocated for change at home, to adventurous Castilians who participated in unfamiliar customs and integrated themselves into communities abroad, medieval

Iberian travellers have much to say about the lands they left behind and their place in a diverse world as they bravely encountered the unknown.

CHAPTER ONE

Altering an Ethnocentric Muslim Paradigm: The Accounts of Andalusí Travellers

Abu Hamid al-Gharnati (1080-1169) and Ibn Jubayr (1145-1217)

Non-Castilian (and especially non-Christian) travellers have not been treated as thoroughly by scholars of medieval Iberian travel-books who have instead placed more emphasis on those accounts written in the Castilian language.¹² That a few Islamic Iberian accounts of travel and geography remain extant is a happy circumstance and perhaps not surprising. Islamic expansion from its roots in the Arabian Peninsula necessitated knowledge of new lands under Islamic control. Especially in the first centuries of Islamic domination of the Iberian Peninsula, Muslim travellers and scholars from Al-Andalus composed works which gave account of these newly acquired and relatively unknown lands for their co-religionists. A few reports of travels

12. To reiterate, most studies of medieval Spanish travel books restrict their primary sources to Castilian works. Miguel Ángel Pérez Priego's study of medieval travel-books is limited to those written in the Castilian language (*Libro del conocimiento, Embajada a Tamorlán, Andanças e viajes de Pero Tafur*, and *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal*) although he includes the translations of Marco Polo and John Mandeville. Rafael Beltrán restricts his study to Castilian travel-books (*Embajada a Tamorlán, Andanças e viajes de Pero Tafur, Libro del conocimiento*) but inexplicably omits the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal*, even though it was written in Spanish. The medieval Hispanic travellers examined by Francisco López Estrada are varied but refer principally to works written in languages of Latin origin. The *Libro del conocimiento*, John Mandeville, the *Embajada a Tamorlán*, the travels of Pero Tafur, and *El Victorial* each receive a chapter dedicated to their study. López Estrada mentions Hebrew and Arabic books but in a single chapter that allows very little to be said. Joaquín Rubio Tovar's study of Spanish (Iberian) medieval travel books is multilingual, multiethnic, and much more ample, including the *Liber Sancti Jacobi de Aimerico Picaud* (by a French cleric), the *Fazienda de Ultramar*, the Hebrew *Libro de Viajes de Benjamín de Tudela*, the Arabic *rihla* of Abu Hamid al-Gharnati, the works of Marco Polo and John Mandeville, the *Libro del conocimiento*, the *Embajada a Tamorlán*, *El Victorial*, and finally, the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal*. As is evident from this review, Andalusí travel books have been considered little, and indeed, their bibliography even today is quite lacking.

undertaken by Iberian Muslims in the eleventh and twelfth centuries remain, and it is on two of these works that I wish to focus the present chapter. From this position, I ask whether the status of *traveller* supersedes differences in the religion, historical era, ethnicity, and geographical point of origin for medieval Iberian travellers. In other words, how are the encounters between Andalusí sojourners of the High Middle Ages and the strangers they meet in foreign lands represented? Do these encounters show similarities to the ways in which fifteenth-century travellers Clavijo and Pero Tafur depicted their adventures abroad? The Christian Castilians Clavijo and Tafur, as I will discuss in Chapter Four, do not represent foreigners as incomprehensible, exotic, barbaric, or inferior beings. Rather, they take pains to point out commonalities between themselves and new acquaintances of different countries and religions, sometimes even establishing friendships with them. Does this desire to create bonds with others also characterize Andalusí travellers? Studying non-Christian and non-Castilian wayfarers will afford a more complete picture of medieval Iberian travellers and the variety of ways in which they responded to and evaluated the world around them in their journeys abroad. Furthermore, this multi-cultural perspective will help to elucidate some questions particular to Andalusí travellers that may not be found in the accounts of Castilian voyagers.

In this chapter, I analyze the travel accounts of Abu Hamid al-Gharnati (1080-1169) and Ibn Jubayr (1145-1217), who travelled principally during the twelfth century. These works will provide a fruitful point of comparison when studied alongside the medieval Iberian travel narratives that I examine in three other chapters.¹³ Moreover, they permit me to test my

13. Another non-Christian Iberian traveller, the Jew Benjamin of Tudela, serves as a fascinating counterpart to the Islamic Iberian voyagers treated here, especially since he is their contemporary, travelling from around 1165 to 1173, and for his interest in religious matters. Although there is not space to fully study him here, his text has enjoyed much more scholarly attention, which the reader may consult. For now, I simply wish to point out that like Abu

hypothesis of the significance of the particular act of travel with regard to its effects on wayfarers and how they react to the world abroad. To anticipate some conclusions resulting from the questions asked of these works, I will argue that these Muslim Iberian travellers do not respond in precisely the same manner as the later Christian journeyers, but they do approach, to a certain degree, that attitude of curiosity toward the stranger, sometimes willingly and sometimes reluctantly. Compared to their later Castilian counterparts though, they tend to be more ethnocentric, more reserved, and less open to incorporating themselves into foreign communities. After first examining the general medieval Muslim worldview, I will study each traveller's text in order to determine how Abu Hamid and Ibn Jubayr alternately conform to or break with that mindset in their journeys abroad. I will argue that these two cases support my hypothesis that the act of travel has the ability to modify the prejudices of individuals once the traveller and the foreigner become acquainted with one another. To substantiate this claim, I will look at how the writers construct their narratives, with attention both to self-representation and representation of others in their texts, as well as the portrayal of the relationships between travellers and strangers. In particular, I shall focus on the contemporary religious divide between Muslims and Christians and explore the ways in which the travellers' displacement from home affected that divide.

To frame the present chapter, it is important to approach the works of Islamic Iberian travellers through their own historical context and not through a subsequently imposed Western Christian perspective. To this end, I wish to take as a starting point Bernard Lewis's 1982 book,

Hamid and Ibn Jubayr, it is the religious matter that Benjamin of Tudela carries with him on his voyage abroad and which provides continuity with his homeland. With some exceptions (Rome, Baghdad, Damascus, and Jerusalem), the focus of Benjamin's writing is the Jewish community in every place he visits and related matters such as their important leaders or traditions. Otherwise, the society in which those Jews live disappears; Benjamin is concerned only about the Jewish element of those cities. Alongside the travelogue, it is illuminating to read David Nirenberg's *Communities of Violence*, a work about Christian, Jewish, and Muslim relations in Aragon, the kingdom bordering Benjamin's Navarre.

The Muslim Discovery of Europe, a work which attempts to rectify the Eurocentrism that has plagued Western studies of Islam and its history. In this text, Lewis provided a much-needed counterpart to Western views of Islam by presenting, as it were, the opposite side of the coin: he studies Islamic views of Western Christendom from the first Islamic military forays into Europe up until the beginning of the nineteenth century. Supported by a large number of thoroughly researched documents of the contacts between Islam and Christian Europe over that millennium, Lewis examines important events in Western European history through Arab eyes. Other chapters deal with points of contact between the two groups, such as issues of trade, translation, intermediaries, and representations of Western Europe in Islamic scholarly writing. A final section is concerned with various topics ranging from economics and government to science, culture, and society. Taking together these considerations, Lewis concludes that no Muslim discovery of Europe did in fact occur. Whereas Europeans throughout the centuries were keen to learn about Muslim life and culture, no parallel desire was to be found within Islam. Westerners first became interested in Muslim life because their most important centers of early religion (Jerusalem, Alexandria, Antioch, and later, Constantinople) were found in Muslim-controlled lands. Later, the Renaissance stimulated intellectual curiosity toward Muslims, and interest in political and economic ties drew Western Europeans to the territories of Islam. These impulses to discover life and culture across a religious divide did not take root in Muslim hearts and minds. Rather, Lewis argues, Muslims existed self-sufficiently and had no need of repairing to non-Muslim civilizations for spiritual, economic, or intellectual reasons. In general, Muslims simply were not interested in Western Europe and perceived Christians as inferior and hostile peoples who had little to offer them (Lewis 302). The various European nations appeared as unimportant, barbarous infidels who made up non-Islamic territories, the House of War (Lewis

140). The Muslim mind was convinced of the superiority of his religion and culture above all others, and Lewis points out many instances in which this belief was justified.¹⁴

A work as far-reaching as Lewis's is bound to generate further scholarship which fills in gaps and points to nuances in areas of a more restricted breadth.¹⁵ It is my hope to add to the scholarly literature on medieval Muslim-Christian relations with this chapter. Keeping in mind, then, the supposed general Muslim attitude toward European non-Muslims as discussed by Lewis, I now turn to two medieval Muslim Iberian travellers who did venture outside the realm of Islam. The written accounts by Abu Hamid al-Gharnati and Ibn Jubayr of their journeys and pilgrimages outside Iberia present opportunities to study how the indifference or lack of curiosity by Muslims toward non-Muslims presented itself in these two individuals. As I will elucidate in the following pages, the act of travel decidedly affects the mindsets of the wayfarers as they encounter others who differ from them in religion, ethnicity, custom, and language. Indeed, Abu Hamid and Ibn Jubayr seem to break with the supposed ethnocentrism described in Lewis's study first by simply choosing to travel through non-Muslim lands. I propose that in these places abroad, as well as in Muslim lands outside Iberia, Abu Hamid and Ibn Jubayr go beyond a traditional religious division between the House of Islam (*dar al-Islam*) and the House of War

14. See, for example, p. 274, which relates the disgust a Moroccan ambassador felt when faced with the horror of bull-fighting in Christian Iberia. In the Peninsula, Christians also recognized and admired the advanced learning and culture of their neighbors to the south, especially in such splendid cities as Córdoba and Seville. In the thirteenth century, Castilian king Alfonso X paid homage to Arabic intellectual advancement through his promotion of translations of Arabic texts.

15. Nabil Matar, for example, has similarly reoriented readers in his illuminating 2009 work, *Europe through Arab Eyes, 1578-1727*, although he reaches different conclusions. Focusing on early modern relationships particularly in the Mediterranean, Matar draws out a "diversity of perspectives" by analyzing accounts of Muslim captives and ambassadorial records, among others (5). He submits that there is no monolithic model to describe the variety of exchanges that occurred in the 150-year span he studies in the Mediterranean and highlights occasions of friendship and mutual assistance that took place even in the midst of war.

(*dar al-Harb*) to evaluate individuals based on their direct personal experience with them. As travellers in a liminal state first outside their home country and sometimes outside Islamic territories, these doubly-displaced voyagers shed, to differing degrees and at times reluctantly, the ethnocentric worldview described by Lewis as they encounter a host of strangers in their travels through North Africa, the Mediterranean, the Levant, the Middle East, Eastern Europe, European Russia, and Central Asia. With regard to Abu Hamid, his travelogue at once presents him as a religious teacher of orthodox Muslim practices who institutes those customs in far-flung Muslim communities abroad as well as an open-minded person who did not find it problematic to live out a great number of years outside Muslim rule in the company and under the dominion of Christians. Ibn Jubayr, for his part, is compelled to come face-to-face with the disturbing lack of unity within Islamic lands and the uncomfortable observation of Christian-Muslim coexistence in the Mediterranean. The attitudes of these two travellers are somewhat distinct from those of their fellow journeyers of fifteenth-century Castile, Ruy González de Clavijo and Pero Tafur, whose open-mindedness and praise of the foreign will be discussed in Chapter Four. For now, let us return to the unique accounts of Abu Hamid and Ibn Jubayr who leave behind their Andalusí homes to confront a more complex and multivalent world abroad.

Abu Hamid al-Gharnati presents a fascinating peripatetic case, and his journeys, made even in modern times, would astound.¹⁶ Born in Granada, he probably resided for a time in Uclés, a town in the province of Cuenca one hundred kilometers southeast of Madrid and some four hundred kilometers north and slightly east of Granada.¹⁷ His was not a specific journey

16. As recorded in his *Al-Mu'rib 'an ba'd 'aya'ib al-Magrib*, Abu Hamid's full name is Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Rahim b. Sulayman b. Rabi' al-Qaysi. Ingrid Bejarano has discussed in depth various issues regarding his name. See pp. 17-19.

17. Uclés, a pre-Roman settlement, was under Muslim control from the ninth century until

with a fixed destination and return voyage; rather, around the age of twenty-six, he departed his native Al-Andalus and spent several decades travelling through North Africa to the Middle East, northward into Russia, westward into Europe as far as what is now Hungary, and eastward as far as the Aral Sea at what is today the border between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Abu Hamid never returned to his homeland. Encinas Moral has reconstructed a more detailed itinerary of his travels outside Al-Andalus based on two extant works that Abu Hamid penned: *Al-Mu'rib an ba'd adja'ib al-Maghrib* and *Tuhfat al-albab wa nukhbat al a'djab*.¹⁸ He states that Abu Hamid

1085, when it was occupied by Christian forces for one year. Alfonso VI of Castile acquired the town in 1091, but the Battle of Uclés in 1108 saw it returned to Muslim hands under the control of the Almoravids.

18. The *Al-Mu'rib an ba'd adja'ib al-Maghrib* was composed in 1160 in Baghdad at the behest of Abu Hamid's friend, the vizier 'Awn al-Din. Today, it exists in a single manuscript copy at the Real Academia de la Historia, number 34 of the Gayanagos Collection. This manuscript contains 149 folios, the first 114 of which make up Abu Hamid's *Al-Mu'rib*. Folios 115-149 are a partial copy of a geographic work by Abu l'Fida'. César Dubler translated the travelogue portion of Abu Hamid's work (folios 96-114) from Arabic to Spanish in 1953 and included in that edition a truly exhaustive study on matters related to Abu Hamid's world and the civilizations, cultures, and customs he encountered abroad. The rest of Abu Hamid's text (folios 1-95) was translated into Spanish in 1991 by Ingrid Bejarano, under the title *Elogio de algunas maravillas del Magrib (Praise of Some Wonders of the Maghreb)*. This translation excludes folios 33-39, which deal with calendars and which were left to be published by Juan Vernet of the Real Academia de la Historia. Bejarano provides a useful summary of the structure of the manuscript on pp. 47-48 of her edition. The portion of the *Al-Mu'rib* translated by Bejarano deals principally with legends and wonders of the world, geographical topics (cities, bodies of water, mountains), astronomy (stars, the Milky Way, the Sun and Moon), and religious matters (directions for facing Mecca during prayer, times of prayer, the Holy Mosque, and other sacred sites). Although Abu Hamid includes a few personal anecdotes in this section of his work (especially as regards his experiences in Alexandria and Cairo), it is not developed enough to be considered a travel account. The travelogue proper begins at folio 96, the part of the work corresponding to Dubler's Spanish translation. My citations in Spanish, then, will be from Dubler.

Abu Hamid's other known work, the *Tuhfat al-albab*, was begun in Mosul in 1162 and completed three years later. It is a rather miscellaneous work that Abu Hamid wrote at the urging of his host in Mosul, the sheikh 'Umar b. Muhammad b. al-Jidr al-Ardabali. As structured by its author, the *Tuhfat* is comprised of a prologue and four chapters dealing with various topics: descriptions of the world and its inhabitants (human beings and *jinn*), geography, wonders (both real and fantastical), notable monuments, zoological information, and a discussion

travelled through Al-Andalus until 1106, when he departed due to disagreements with the politico-religious policies of the Almoravid monarchs (Encinas Moral 33-4). Abu Hamid then visited many parts of the Maghreb and travelled by boat from Tunis to Alexandria in 1117 or 1118. He spent the next three years in Cairo, travelling throughout Egypt and studying under famous Muslim teachers. He then studied in Damascus, and after passing through Ashkelon (in present-day Israel), Baalbek (in present-day Lebanon), and Palmira, arrived in Baghdad in 1123 where he stayed for four years and had a son named Hamid.¹⁹ From Baghdad, Abu Hamid journeyed through Abhar and Ardabil (cities in present-day Iran), where he arrived in 1130. Travelling east, he visited the Mugan Plain (located in northwestern Iran and the southern part of the Republic of Azerbaijan) and thence passed into the Absheron Peninsula of eastern Azerbaijan which juts into the Caspian Sea. Travelling northward, Abu Hamid visited Derbent, the southernmost city of Russia located between the Caspian Sea and the Caucasus Mountains, an ancient and important crossing between the Eurasian steppes to the north and the Middle East to

of the good and bad that follows death. The work was already popular in Abu Hamid's era, and several manuscript copies, although at times incomplete or erroneous, are found in libraries around the world (Paris, Leningrad, London, Copenhagen, Gotha, and Algiers). Gabriel Ferrand had edited the text in 1925 but offered only a partial translation to French. Ana Ramos translated the work into Spanish in 1990, titling it *El Regalo de los Espíritus (The Gift of the Spirits)*. To my knowledge, there is no complete translation to English of either of Abu Hamid's works. Such a work would be a great boon to scholars of medieval Islamic Iberia.

19. Abu Hamid means "father of Hamid." This *kunya*, or honorific, references the name of the bearer's eldest child and is the case here. I have not found any evidence of noteworthy deeds by Hamid, the son, so the title may simply imply a familiar but respectful setting. However, Hamid is the only named child in Abu Hamid's account and merits a few lines of text by his father. Abu Hamid leaves Hamid behind in Hungary, although the reason why is not clear, and he speaks tenderly of him: "Era valiente y de mérito. Cuando era niño, yo le daba medio *daniq* por cada cuestión que se aprendía de memoria" ("He was brave and meritorious. When he was a child, I would give him half a *daniq* for each question that he learned by memory"; 70). English translations are mine except where otherwise noted.

the south.²⁰ Continuing north, he arrived at Saqsin (near present-day Astrakhan), at the mouth of the Volga River, in 1131 and made there a home for himself and his family for twenty years. In 1135 or 1136, Abu Hamid voyaged to Volga Bulgaria, a state established in the seventh century and conquered by the Mongols in the 1230s.²¹ In 1150, he departed from Bolghar, capital of Volga Bulgaria, and headed east, making contact with Rus' and Cuman peoples. Encinas Moral believes that the encounter with the Muslim steppe nomads known as the Cuman would have incited him to turn his journey toward Hungary (called Bashgird in Dubler's text), for these Muslims formed an important contingent of the Hungarian royal army (Encinas Moral 35).²² In Hungary, Abu Hamid was received in the royal court and served as *imam* (religious or civic leader) and *ulama* (Islamic legal scholar) for approximately three years, between 1150 and 1153. The traveller's route then led him through Kiev, whence he returned to the Volga Delta to visit Saqsin where he previously lived with his family. Abu Hamid then travelled east as far as Khwarezm (Jorezm) by the Aral Sea in western Central Asia. In 1153, he left Khwarezm to make the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca. While in the Arabian Peninsula, he also visited Medina and other holy sites and returned to Baghdad in 1160. In 1162, Abu Hamid lived in Mosul, at that time under rule by atabegs (governors) of the Zengid dynasty. During his next three years in Mosul, the traveller wrote his *Tuhfat al-albab*. Already well into his eighties, Abu Hamid finally

20. H. T. Norris has established a connection between Abu Hamid's *Tuhfat al-albab* and a later work called the *Sirat 'Antar B. Shaddad*, which borrows from the former, particularly with regards to Abu Hamid's sojourns in the Caucasus region, Volga Bulgaria, and Hungary.

21. In the early tenth century, Islam was adopted as the state religion of Volga Bulgaria. Much of the trade between Europe and Asia at that time was controlled by Volga Bulgaria, due to its strategic position on the middle course of the Volga River and at the confluence of the Kama and Volga Rivers.

22. In Hungary, Abu Hamid lived under the rule of Géza II; Pecheneg and Uzbek tribes also lived there. These groups could freely practice Islam as long as they served in Géza's battles against the Byzantine Empire led by Manuel I Komnenos.

moved to Aleppo and thence to Damascus, where he died in 1169 or 1170 around the age of ninety.

Before passing on to the heart of Abu Hamid's journeys, it is illuminating to consider what Abu Hamid left behind when he departed Al-Andalus, coupled with the fact that he never returned to his homeland. In Abu Hamid's youth, the Almoravids had taken control of Al-Andalus (1090), and were a "sociedad fundamentalista" ("fundamentalist society"; Encinas Moral 50). From 1091 to 1145, Al-Andalus was governed by the Almoravid Empire from Marrakech in north-west Africa. The Andalusí governors, characterized by their religious fanaticism, created rifts with Christians with whom they did not desire to live peacefully (Encinas Moral 51). Christians saw the Almoravids as promoting religious war and responded in kind, expelling Muslims from Zaragoza and converting their mosque into a cathedral in 1118. For Muslims under Almoravid rule, Encinas Moral explains that Andalusí ulamas and imams involved themselves in politics, censured freedom of thought, and condemned "subversive" books (51). He argues that this environment of "ideological monolithism" was the cause of Abu Hamid's departure from his homeland (52). Dubler, on the contrary, supposes that Abu Hamid's departure was due to the "definitive reconquest" of Uclés. Bejarano refutes Dubler's claims, pointing out that the Christian conquest of Uclés was short-lived rather than definitive and speculates, as does Encinas Moral, that Abu Hamid might have desired to escape the "integrismo político imperante en al-Andalus bajo los almorávides" ("reigning political fundamentalism in Al-Andalus under the Almoravids"; Encinas Moral 23). With a large part of his life lived among peoples of other faiths, especially Roman and Nestorian Christians, perhaps Abu Hamid's willingness to associate with other religious and political sectors caused him to be more at home abroad among foreigners rather than in Islamic Iberia. He must have been, as Bejarano asserts,

“persona de mentalidad abierta y universalista” (“a person of an open and universalist mentality”; 35).

In the 1140s, with discontent and disturbances in Al-Andalus under the Almoravid regime, another group, the Almohads, rose up from North Africa and took Seville, Córdoba, Granada, and other cities. Encinas Moral points out that like the Almoravids they displaced, they were also Berbers and strongly religious (52). This is the dynasty that would be ruling during the time of Ibn Jubayr and will be discussed later.

Self-Representation: Abu Hamid as Religious Authority

Abu Hamid composed the written account of his multitudinous journeys likely around the year 1160 at the behest of Vizier ‘Awn al-Din, whom he takes care to exalt in his text. In the thirty-ninth chapter of Dubler’s division of the text, Abu Hamid meets acquaintances of the vizier in Khwarezm of Central Asia. Not only is he careful to record their praises of the vizier, but he points out that those laudatory remarks come from people who are “distinguidos, buenos poetas y generosos” (“distinguished men, good poets and generous”; 75).²³ In the final chapter of his work, Abu Hamid notes the generous acts the vizier has done for him and extols his friend as the

gloria del Islam, amigo del *Imām*, honor del género humano, enamorado de la dinastía, égida del pueblo, corona de los reyes y los sultanes, señor de los visires, cabecera del Oriente y del Occidente, criatura escogida del Califato, auxiliar del Príncipe de los Creyentes—¡Dios con su favor haga durar la ruina de los enemigos de su gobierno!—, y me dio tantas vestiduras de honor, dinero y otros

23. Lacking an English-language edition of the *Al-Mu‘rib*, the English translations are mine.

beneficios que no se podrían contar ni enumerar. Obtuvo además para mí una carta de la majestad del Califato—¡Dios haga durar su sombra protectora sobre los mundos, tanto en el Oriente como en el Occidente de la tierra, y derribe a sus enemigos humillados y envilecidos! (77)

glory of Islam, friend of the Imam, honor of mankind, lover of the dynasty, protection of the people, crown of kings and sultans, lord of the viziers, head of the East and the West, chosen one of the Caliphate, assistant of the Prince of the Believers—May God with his favor cause the ruin of the enemies of his government to endure!—and he gave me many garments of honor, money and other benefits that could not be counted or enumerated. He also obtained for me a letter from the majesty of the Caliphate—May God cause to endure his protective shade over the worlds, as much in the East as in the West of the earth, and bring down his enemies, humbled and debased!

Just as Clavijo, more than two hundred later, is careful to record the praises that Timur showers upon his king, Enrique III, Abu Hamid does the same for his patron at the end of his work. Like Clavijo, and even Gómez de Santisteban, author of the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal*, in the imaginary letter of Prester John to Juan II of Castile, Abu Hamid exaggerates the virtues of his patron when it comes time to record for posterity the storied life he lived.²⁴

Aside from the attention given to his friend the vizier at the end of his text, the rest of Abu Hamid's work is concerned with other interests. Abu Hamid underscores the human element at the heart of his travels. His ethnographic concerns show through in his interest in what foreign peoples are like, how they live, and by what systems of religion and justice they are

24. Clavijo's embassy to Timur is discussed in Chapter Four, and the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal*, a work of imaginary travels, is analyzed in Chapter Three.

governed. Bejarano states that “. . .el enfoque geográfico siempre está hecho en función del hombre, que es siempre el centro de interés principal en la obra de Abu Hamid” (“the geographical focus is always made in accordance with man, who is always the principal center of interest in Abu Hamid’s work”; 35). There is rather little attention paid to architecture, monuments, or famous sites he visits abroad; rather, Abu Hamid writes about foreign customs, entertaining stories he knows or learns along the road, and commercial interests, such as prices and goods traded. One of Abu Hamid’s most pressing concerns, however, is with the state of Islam in foreign lands. Indeed, he travels as a scholar and as a guide in order to correct the practices of Muslim communities which lie far from the grander centers of Islam in the Middle East. Dubler has argued that Abu Hamid’s cultural base is his Islamic formation, tended to over many years and in many cities by his studies with renowned teachers: “Deducimos como móvil del viaje su deseo de propagar la fe musulmana por los pueblos que él visita, pero no en forma violenta, sino en misión pacífica y sin fanatismo; a veces parece que sólo trata de reafirmarlos en las creencias islámicas aceptadas por sus padres . . .” (“We deduce the motive of the trip to be his desire to propagate the Muslim faith throughout the towns that he visits, but not in a violent manner, rather in a peaceful mission and without fanaticism; sometimes it seems that he only tries to reaffirm them in the Islamic beliefs accepted by their fathers . . .”; Abu Hamid 172).

While visiting a town on the banks of the Caspian Sea, Abu Hamid writes about their hospitality practices. He finds there “. . . [un hospicio] grande destinado a los huéspedes extranjeros indoctos. En cuanto a los hombres de ciencia, se los llevan a sus casas. A mí me hospedó uno de sus emires llamado Abu ’l-Qasim. Sus esclavos degollaban cada día para mí una oveja” (“. . . a large hospice dedicated to unlearned foreign guests. Concerning the men of science, they take them to their houses. I was housed by one of their emirs, named Abu ’l-

Qasim. His slaves slaughtered a sheep for me every day”; Abu Hamid 49).²⁵ Thus the reader is first introduced to Abu Hamid as a “man of science,” in direct contrast to the “uneducated” visitors, and as one who receives special treatment from a leader or ruler in that community.²⁶ Like Clavijo, Pero Tafur, and even the fictional representation of the Infante don Pedro of Portugal, Abu Hamid portrays himself as an important outsider whose worth is recognized by those he visits abroad. While living with the emir, for instance, he directs the emir’s reading of a treatise about law and answers a juridical-religious question for the emir’s sister. Furthermore, people from various towns seek out Abu Hamid and visit him at the emir’s home. These first few paragraphs which set up Abu Hamid as a scholar and religious authority underscore the role he will play in his later travels as a teacher to rectify misguided Islamic practices and beliefs. Dubler has also noted the range of peoples with whom Abu Hamid comes into contact. The traveller

conoce los ritos (*madahib*) musulmanes y el *fiqh*, y como experto jurisconsulto, trata con emires y monarcas, pero al mismo tiempo recibe a la gente humilde. Abu Hamid no sólo atiende a ésta, sino que le gusta conversar con ella e informarse por ella misma de las cosas notables y maravillosas de su país.

25. The common transliteration of the Arabic to “emir” may also appear as “amir,” just as “emirate” may occur as “amirate.” The alternate spelling may result as an attempt to bring it closer to Arabic language, which lacks the vowels “e” and “o.” Emir may refer to a military commander, governor, prince, or other high-ranking ruler.

26. Encinas Moral does not consider Abu Hamid a “man of science” despite his “vast Islamic religious culture” (36). Rather, he says, Abu Hamid’s text focuses on anthropological, folkloric, or ethnological concerns (36). Similarly, Dubler asserts that despite his extensive studies, Abu Hamid never becomes a “man of science” and that his works lack an “erudite luster” for he does not have didactic ends in mind (135, 139). As Bejarano has pointed out, scientific knowledge in Abu Hamid’s text is important when it is useful to human beings or when it relates to matters of religion (38). One might refer then, to the *popular* rather than *scientific* knowledge found in Abu Hamid’s works, although it is clear that the voyager had a thorough background in religious studies.

Resulta, pues, hombre llano y afable que, por su erudición, goza de cierto prestigio entre sus correligionarios; no llega, por ello, a ser vanidoso, ya que confiesa con toda franqueza que no tuvo fuerzas para ayunar, por la intensidad del calor, en el mes de *ramadan* que coincidió con el rigor del verano durante su estancia en *Bulgar*. (Dubler 172)

is familiar with the Muslim rites (*madahib*) and the *fiqh*, and as an expert jurispudent, he addresses emirs and monarchs, but at the same time he receives modest people. Abu Hamid does not only attend to these humble people, but he is delighted to converse with them and to become informed through them of the notable and wondrous things of their country. He emerges, then, as a straightforward and affable man who, because of his erudition, enjoys certain prestige among his co-religionists; he does not become, for that reason, vain, since he confesses with all frankness that he did not have the strength to fast, because of the intensity of the heat, in the month of Ramadan that coincided with the severity of the summer during his stay in Bulgar.

The lengthiest passages of Abu Hamid's text are dedicated principally to commercial and religious topics. It is in these longer chapters that Abu Hamid's concern for the spread of Islam and its right practice becomes clear. In an early chapter, Abu Hamid uses a discussion of the origin of the name *Bulgar* as a pretext to exalt the expansion of Islam in the region surrounding the confluence of the Volga and Kama Rivers, in what is now European Russia. Abu Hamid relates that he has read in the *Historia del Bulgar* that a Muslim merchant, also a specialist in medicine, travelled to the country of the Bulgars for commercial purposes. It happened that both the king and queen of the land fell ill with a grave sickness, almost to the point of death, and

their own doctors were not able to cure them. The Muslim doctor offered to restore them to health on the condition that they convert to Islam. They agreed, the Muslim saved them, and the monarchs, along with all their subjects, immediately embraced the new religion. The king of the Khazars (Spanish *jázaros* or *cázaros*), having learned of their conversion, came to make war against them and demanded to know why they had converted without his command. The Muslim merchant-doctor, who also appears to serve as a religious teacher to the monarchs, instructed them not to fear but rather to say that Allah is great. While invoking the name of Allah, the Bulgar king fought against the king of the Khazars and caused his army to flee. The king of the Khazars asked for peace and likewise converted to Islam. He reported that during the battle he had seen enormous men on white horses who destroyed his army; the Muslim merchant-doctor, again in a position of instructing kings, explained that he was fighting against the very armies of God.²⁷ At this point, Abu Hamid returns to his original theme—explaining the origin of the name *Bulgar*—to explain that *bulār* meant “wise man” in that people’s language and also came to refer to the region itself. He further explains that it was changed to *Bulgar* in Arabic but doesn’t specify the link of this etymology to the conversion story. Is the wise man the Muslim merchant who first put into motion those conversions or the kings who came to know the truth of Islam and responded appropriately?

In this passage, Abu Hamid dramatizes the historical processes of conversion while

27. As an aside, it is interesting to note the similarity between this vision of heavenly warriors on white horses who destroy the opposing (non-Muslim) forces and that of Saint James the Moorslayer as depicted in the Battle of Clavijo. In this legend of the *Reconquista*, Santiago Matamoros appears on a horse and gives aid to Iberian Christians led by Ramiro I of Asturias against Muslims from the Caliphate of Córdoba. The legendary battle would have occurred in the mid-ninth century and was written down at least by the twelfth century. Just as Abu Hamid’s account gives credence to divine sanction of Islamic expansion in European Russia, the Spanish legend served to reinforce Christian Reconquest ideology and to foment enthusiasm for pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela.

succinctly boiling them down into one convenient event. Of course, with the *Historia del Bulgar* no longer extant, the reader may not know for certain to what extent, if any, Abu Hamid modified his source. In any case, the traveller finds the conversion story of Volga Bulgaria and Khazaria compelling enough to include in his own work. This inclusion, as I stated above, reinforces and aggrandizes the spread of Islam in European Russia.²⁸ Abu Hamid takes the histories of both Volga Bulgaria and Khazaria and intertwines them to depend upon that single Muslim merchant-doctor who, as God's instrument, effects the conversion of both states. Historically, the conversion of Volga Bulgaria and Khazaria to Islam was much more drawn out over time as well as incomplete. Furthermore, Volga Bulgaria did not have the power over Khazaria as portrayed in Abu Hamid's legend. A short consideration of the religious history of the two civilizations in the early Middle Ages will underscore the manner in which Abu Hamid modifies that history to suit his own purposes, namely to exalt the spread of Islam and to show that it is divinely sanctioned. Settled in the steppes around the Black and Caspian Seas, Khazars warred with Arabs in the first Islamic expansion from c. 650 to c. 750 and constituted the reason that Islam did not enjoy large-scale expansion into European Russia (Noonan 501). Khazar nobles and royalty converted to Judaism most likely in the early ninth century, although the progress to "full Rabbinical Judaism" occurred in stages and not immediately (Golden 151, 158). Noonan theorizes that the conversion took place in part to establish religious and political independence from the Arabs, who wanted them to accept Islam, and the Byzantines, who desired their conversion to Orthodox Christianity: "Judaism was apparently chosen because it

28. For geographical terminology, I follow Professor Thomas S. Noonan. In his chapter of *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, Volume 3, he states that "there are no universally accepted terms in English for what is referred to here as European Russia" and explains the various objections to the terminology (487). He concludes that "European Russia" is the most practical of the options to refer to the area occupied in the early Middle Ages by groups such as the Rus' state around Kiev, Byzantine Crimea, the Khazar khaganate, and Volga Bulgaria (487).

was a religion of the book without being the faith of a neighboring state which had designs on Khazar lands” (502). Despite the conversion to Judaism, many Christians and Muslims, both immigrants and converts, lived among the Khazars, following the profitable trade that the Khazar Empire enjoyed (Grousset 180-1). It appears that not all leaders followed the Jewish faith fully, for one khagan around 965 is reported to have converted to Islam for political security, and in 1016, a Christian Khazar is found as khan of the Taman Peninsula, between the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea (Grousset 181). Khazarian control of the region began to weaken in the ninth century, and Svyatoslav of Rus’ completed Khazaria’s downfall with its overthrow in 965. Grousset reports that by the year 1030, “the Khazars had disappeared as a political power” (182). In the years after the Rus’ overthrow of the Khazar capital, many Jews fled the city and those who remained likely converted to Islam (Golden 148).

For their part, the Volga Bulgars were subject to the Khazarian khaganate until 950, by which point they had escaped Khazaria’s control. Little is known about the Volga Bulgar emirate before the tenth century, but the account of Arab ambassador Ibn Fadlan does document the state of things in Volga Bulgaria around 922. In fact, Ibn Fadlan helps the Volga Bulgar emir, a tributary of the Khazars, to protect himself and his people from the Khazars by building a fortress. By the time of Ibn Fadlan’s visit, Volga Bulgaria had already begun to adopt Islam, and Noonan explains that the conversion “was, in part, defiance of the Khazars whose ruling elite was Jewish and, in part, a means to obtain support from co-religionists against Khazar domination” (504-5).

I have wished to review this complex history of Khazaria and Volga Bulgaria in an attempt to highlight how Abu Hamid appropriates for his own purposes the stories of large-scale conversions to Islam. The historical conversions of Khazars and Volga Bulgars principally

served political ends, and indeed, Peter Golden affirms that the choice of religion of Eurasian nomads came about due to “‘mundane (rather) than spiritual considerations,’ combined with ‘sound political sense’” (123). Nonetheless, Abu Hamid emphasizes the spiritual and supernatural aspects of the story (the cure for the monarchs’ sickness, the appearance of heavenly armies) which reinforce the religious aspect of his own journey and travel account. By exalting the spread of Islam brought about by a simple Muslim merchant, Abu Hamid draws a parallel to his own religious mission in lands far from Islam’s spiritual centers in the Arabian Peninsula and perhaps even wishes to justify his residence outside Islam for his readers. The Muslim merchant of the story not only has a hidden knowledge which enables him to heal the monarchs where all others fail, but he also has great faith in God through which he leads the Bulgars to victory over the Khazars. Finally, the merchant is also knowledgeable in spiritual matters, for he is able to interpret the vision of the Khazar king and explain that the armies he saw were truly a heavenly host. The characteristics of the merchant are ones that appear time and again in the person of Abu Hamid as he travels the world. I turn now to those instances which shape the representation of Abu Hamid within his text.

Abu Hamid devotes much space to speaking of the Saqaliba (Russians or Slavs) centered around Kiev. He offers a laudatory description of Saqaliba, noting that it is “un país extenso, abundante en miel, trigo y cebada, y de grandes manzanas, que son las más hermosas que hay. Allí la vida es barata” (“an extensive country, abounding in honey, wheat, and barley, and in great apples, which are the most beautiful that exist. There, life is easy”; Abu Hamid 62). Following this general view of the land, Abu Hamid then writes in great detail about the mercantile practices of its people who trade in old animal pelts. In addition, Abu Hamid explains the security and justice of the Saqaliba and their rigid laws which ensure that debtors or criminals

fully compensate those whom they have wronged. The traveller also speaks to cultural and religious practices there: the Saqaliba are Orthodox Christians and some towns practice trial by ordeal in order to combat witchcraft. Finally, arriving at Kiev (called Gurkuman in Dubler's text), Abu Hamid speaks at length concerning the Muslims of the land.²⁹ He reports that there are thousands of Maghreb descendants in that place who now appear as Turks, since they speak the Turkish language and use wooden arrows. Abu Hamid states that he preached among these Muslims and that he furthermore established among them the practice of Friday congregational prayer, which they did not know.³⁰ Upon departing, he leaves behind one of his disciple-students in Kiev, ostensibly to ensure the continuation of the practices Abu Hamid has imparted to the Muslim community there.

In these passages regarding the Saqaliba, Abu Hamid shows various concerns. On the one hand, he possesses an anthropological and ethnographic interest in the cultural, religious, and economic practices of the peoples he meets, and he dutifully records those customs in his text. On the other hand, he has a personal concern for correcting and instructing far-flung Muslim communities in the ways of orthodox practice. Abu Hamid willingly assumes the position of teacher and conveyor of outside knowledge in order to bring these communities in line with his own religious beliefs. He furthermore institutes these practices of his own accord and out of his

29. Encinas Moral explains that Abu Hamid refers to Kiev with the name of Gurkuman, which would have been a copyist's error based on the Arabic name of Kiev, Kuyaba (49). Hungarian historian András Róna-Tas states that Abu Hamid used the name Mon Kermen to refer to Kiev, a name that was later misread as Gur Kermen or Gurkuman (293). Mon Kermen, meaning "great city," was the name for Kiev in the Kipchak languages, which term Abu Hamid would have learned during his stay with the Volga Bulgars. Róna-Tas points out that Abu Hamid followed a similar practice with his treatment of the Hungarians: he used the Volga Bulgar term Bashgird (Bashkir) to refer to the Hungarian (Magyar) people instead of their own designations (293).

30. The *jumu'ah* is a congregational prayer that takes place on Fridays just after noon and that is obligatory for adult males who reside in the area. The prayer is accompanied by a sermon.

zeal for the study of Islam; he does not act as a missionary or representative sent by any higher authority. The relationship between Abu Hamid and the Saqaliba Muslims is one episode in which a divergence may be noted between the Andalusí travel experience and that of the Castilian travellers I will study in Chapter Four. This outside importation of correct religious practices by Abu Hamid stands in contrast to the experiences of other Iberian travellers like Clavijo and Tafur. These Christian Castilians tended to praise foreign customs and oftentimes willingly participated in them. Likewise, the imaginary travel books of Castile, the *Libro del conocimiento* and the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal*, typically do not use foreign lands as an example of incorrect practices that need to be rectified. Rather, as I will argue in Chapter Three, commenting on the foreign is a way in which the author is able safely to criticize his own society and its ills; the foreign oftentimes is held up as a model of good behavior and right belief in order to spur the text's readers on to moral improvement. In this way, Abu Hamid's representation of himself as a bearer of orthodox Muslim practices to a people who only partially practice correct Islam deviates from accounts of Christian travellers, imaginary or not, who uphold the foreign if not as a model to be imitated, at least as a benign example of alien customs.

After departing Saqaliba, Abu Hamid's next destination is the kingdom of Hungary, where similar developments occur. As in the passages concerning Saqaliba, he first describes the peoples who inhabit Hungary and speaks of its cities, fortifications, and topography. Abu Hamid speaks positively about the region, notes the ease of life there, and is impressed by how cheaply good slaves may be purchased (67). In these descriptive passages, Abu Hamid anticipates the later Castilian travel narratives by praising the bounty of the foreign land and noting, like Pero Tafur, points of interest to a mercantile mind.

Much space in the passages concerning Hungary is devoted to the issue of religion. In Hungary, Abu Hamid finds that there are thousands of Maghrebi descendants as well as people from Khwarezm (Juwarizm). Interested in these diverse Islamic Hungarian peoples, Abu Hamid explains the state of Islam among those who hail from the Maghreb or Khwarezm: the Maghrebis serve the Christian Hungarians only in war and practice Islam publicly, whereas those from the Khwarezm region serve the Hungarian royalty and pretend to be Christian although they practice Islam in secret (Abu Hamid 65). As he did in Saqaliba, Abu Hamid presents himself as a teacher of the proper Muslim way but to an even greater degree in Hungary. The Maghrebi descendants honor him and put into practice what he teaches them:

Entré en relación con los descendientes de magribíes, que me honraron mucho.

Yo les di algunas enseñanzas científicas, hice que algunos de ellos se soltaran en hablar árabe, y me esforcé para que repitieran y practicaran con asiduidad los deberes de la oración ritual y las demás prescripciones litúrgicas. Asimismo les resumí la doctrina sobre la peregrinación y la partición de herencias; ciencia, esta última, que comenzaron a aplicar. (Abu Hamid 66)

I entered into a relationship with the descendants of the Maghrebis, who honored me very much. I gave them some scientific teachings, I caused some of them to speak in Arabic, and I made an effort so that they would diligently repeat and practice the duties of ritual prayer and the other liturgical prescriptions. Likewise I summarized for them the doctrine concerning pilgrimage and the division of inheritances, the latter a law which they began to apply.

As in Saqaliba, the Maghrebi descendants in Hungary are not familiar with the practice of Friday prayer and sermon. Abu Hamid explains its importance to them as the “pilgrimage of the poor,”

according to Muhammad (67). The traveller-teacher then goes on likely to exaggerate the success he has among the Hungarian Muslims, stating that “Hoy, entre ellos, bien públicamente, bien en secreto, se predica el sermón del viernes en más de diez mil lugares, pues su territorio es muy extenso” (“Today, among them, be it publicly or be it in secret, the Friday sermon is preached in more than ten thousand places, since their territory is so extensive”; Abu Hamid 67). The institution of sermons and community prayers in Saqaliba thus is repeated in Hungary, where Abu Hamid has even more success.

Following this passage, the traveller recounts a story that harks back to the legend of the Muslim merchant-doctor who converted the Volga Bulgars and the Khazars to Islam. Now in Hungary, Abu Hamid encourages the Muslim soldiers of the Hungarian army to help the king in his battles against Byzantium, for, he says, it is holy war and will be a merit to them (68). He furthermore relates an important political development based on the faithfulness of the Muslim soldiers. Abu Hamid reveals that the lord of Constantinople wished to make peace with the king of Hungary and as part of his offering, he surrendered many captive Muslims back to Hungary. One of these Muslims recounted to Abu Hamid that the Byzantine king was puzzled as to why the king of Hungary would make war with him since he had not done so in the past. The captive Muslim had told the Byzantine king that Muslim soldiers under the Hungarian monarch were permitted free public exercise of Islam and, wishing to battle against Byzantium, convinced their lord to do so. The Byzantine king, still puzzled, replies that he too has Muslim subjects but that they will not fight for him. The captive explains that they refuse because they are forced by the monarch to be Christians. In a decisive reversal, the lord of Constantinople declares that he will no longer force his Muslim subjects to be Christian and that he will build them mosques so that they serve him in war (Abu Hamid 68-9). In this chapter, Abu Hamid relates a contemporary

story rather than referring to an older legend reported by another. Indeed, he involves himself in the question of religious freedom by reporting the event from an eyewitness who explained how simple Muslim soldiers and captives were able to convince the Byzantine emperor to reverse his policy of forced conversion to Christianity. Not only were they able to accomplish that great change through their use of reason and practicality, but they won even more than anticipated with the agreement of the emperor to build mosques for his Muslim subjects. In a vein similar to that of the conversion story of the Volga Bulgars and Khazars, it is common Muslims who are able to effect changes that lead to the protection and respect of Muslims by non-Muslim adversaries. Furthermore, the reader once again perceives the exaltation of the spread of Islam: the building of the mosques by the Byzantine ruler goes further than simply letting Muslims practice their faith unhampered; rather, the construction, at the behest of the highest authority in the empire, encourages Islam in the land and gives its adherents a publicly visible and protected place of their own.

Abu Hamid cleverly builds upon the influence of Muslim soldiers over a Christian ruler in the following chapter, in which he relates information from his three-year stay in Hungary, from 1150 to 1153. He begins by emphasizing the importance of the Hungarian king, Géza II, who ruled from 1141 to 1162, stating that he has larger armies, more territory, and a kingdom “many times more important” than that of the Byzantine emperor (Abu Hamid 69). Furthermore, all nations fear him for his infamous armies and his unparalleled courage. In describing the Hungarian king, Abu Hamid does not need to exaggerate much; Géza II was one of the most powerful monarchs of the Kingdom of Hungary. The traveller does not name the Byzantine emperor, Manuel I Komnenos, who ruled from 1143 to 1180. Manuel was an active ruler with an ambitious foreign policy, and he warred against Hungary from 1151 to 1153, as well as later

in the 1160s. The Byzantine Empire at this time was undergoing an ultimately incomplete restoration of its former glories, led by five rulers of the Komnenos Dynasty. The Komnenian period saw increased contact with the Latin West, and Byzantine culture and prosperity reached new peaks. Having placed the Hungarian king in his text in a position superior to that of the Byzantine emperor in every way, Abu Hamid inserts himself as a principal player in the religious politics of the day. He reportedly argues religious doctrine with the Christian Hungarian king, and what is more, he convinces Géza to abide by the policies he has charged Muslim Hungarians with following. While Abu Hamid reports basic facts about Géza in a more or less correct manner (including Géza's use of Muslim soldiers), the religious debate he records is not independently verifiable.³¹ Nonetheless, the passage is telling with regard to Abu Hamid's religious ideology and is worth reproducing in full for its compelling exchange of logical arguments:

Quando se enteró de que yo había prohibido a los musulmanes beber vino y les había permitido tener esclavas concubinas, a más de cuatro esposas legítimas, dijo: “Eso no es cosa razonable, porque el vino da fuerzas al cuerpo, y, en cambio, la abundancia de mujeres debilita el cuerpo y la vista. La religión del Islam no está de acuerdo con la razón.” Yo dije entonces al trujamán: “Dí al rey: La ley religiosa de los musulmanes no es como la de los cristianos. El cristiano bebe vino en las comidas en vez de agua, sin embriagarse, y eso aumenta sus fuerzas. En cambio, el musulmán que bebe vino no busca sino embriagarse hasta el máximo, pierde la razón, se vuelve loco, comete adulterio, mata, dice y hace impiedades, no tiene nada bueno, entrega sus armas y su caballo y dilapida cuanto

31. For more on Géza II, Medieval Hungary, and its religious history, see Nora Berend.

tiene, sólo para buscar su placer. Y, como los musulmanes son aquí tus soldados, si les mandases salir de campaña, no tendrían caballo, ni armas, ni dinero, porque todo lo habrían perdido con la bebida, y tú, al saberlo, o habrías de matarlos, o golpearlos, o expulsarlos, o darles nuevos caballos y armas, que estropearían igualmente. Por lo que respecta a las esclavas concubinas y a las mujeres [legítimas], a los musulmanes les conviene la poligamia a causa del ardor de su temperamento. Además, puesto que forman tu ejército, cuantos más hijos tengan, más serán tus soldados.” Dijo entonces el rey: “Escuchad a este jeque, que es hombre muy sensato, casaos cuantas veces quisierais y no le contradigáis.” De esta suerte, aquel rey, que amaba a los musulmanes, se desentendió de los sacerdotes cristianos y permitió que se tuviesen esclavas concubinas.” (Abu Hamid 69-70)

When (the king) found out that I had prohibited the Muslims from drinking wine and that I had permitted them to have concubine slaves, in addition to four legitimate wives, he said: “That is not a reasonable thing, because wine gives strength to the body, and, by contrast, the abundance of women debilitates body and sight. The Islamic religion is not in agreement with reason.” I then said to the interpreter: “Tell the king: the religious law of the Muslims is not like that of the Christians. The Christian drinks wine at meals instead of water, without becoming inebriated, and that increases his strength. By contrast, the Muslim who drinks wine seeks only to inebriate himself to the maximum; he loses reason, becomes crazy, commits adultery, kills, says and commits impieties, has no good thing, turns in his arms and his horse, and squanders all that he has, just in order

to seek pleasure. And, as the Muslims here are your soldiers, if you were to order them out on a campaign, they would not have horses, nor arms, nor money because they would have lost everything with the drink, and you, upon finding out, would either kill them, beat them, or discharge them, or give them new horses and arms, that they would likewise ruin. Concerning the concubine slaves and the legitimate wives, polygamy is advisable for Muslims because of the ardor of their temperament. Furthermore, given that they form your army, the more children they have, the more will be your soldiers.” The king then said: “Listen to this sheikh, for he is a very sensible man, marry as many times as you wish and do not contradict him.” In this way, that king, who loved the Muslims, freed himself from the Christian priests and permitted them to have concubine slaves.

Once again, Abu Hamid is a purveyor of orthodox Muslim practices, just as he was in Saqaliba. On this occasion, however, he has the opportunity to explain with well-reasoned arguments why those practices are important specifically for Muslim believers. To counter the possible interference from the Christian king with the religious laws he wishes to introduce to the local Muslim community, Abu Hamid notably uses political and economic arguments, rather than spiritual ones, in order to convince the king that proper Muslim behavior is also in his and his kingdom’s best interest. Like the Byzantine emperor, the Hungarian king moves away from Christian hegemony to let Muslims in his kingdom freely practice their religious law. Finally, in Hungary, it is Abu Hamid who is the person capable of effecting these great changes. From his first report of the Muslim merchant-doctor who brought about the conversion of the Volga Bulgars and the Khazars, Abu Hamid next moved on to instituting by himself correct Muslim practices in Saqaliba. From there, he heard first-hand reports about the softening of the

Byzantine emperor who was convinced by Muslim soldiers to allow his Muslim subjects to freely practice their religion. Finally, Abu Hamid presents himself as the culminating figure in this series of Muslims who successfully negotiate with non-Muslim leaders in order to improve life for their co-religionists in those lands and to institute practices which bring the believers in line with mainstream Islam.

Continuity with and Separation from Islam

From the aforementioned episodes which take place in Volga Bulgaria, Saqaliba, and Hungary, it becomes evident that a driving concern for Abu Hamid in his years spent abroad is the implementation of orthodox Muslim practices in communities which lie far from the spiritual centers of Mecca and Medina. As Clavijo and Pero Tafur would do some three centuries later, Abu Hamid—particularly in the cases of the Hungarian king, his friend the vizier, and his host at the Caspian Sea—underscores the importance of leading foreign figures in order to aggrandize his own person in his relationship with them. He not only has their ear, as it were, but he occupies a position of authority and power in which he is an instructor and bearer of vital Muslim customs to fringe communities. Moreover, he is sufficiently astute in his relationships with foreigners that he is able to convince them of the superiority of his plans and have them carried out.

Thus, in Abu Hamid's account of his decades of travel outside his native Al-Andalus, he finds continuity amidst foreign peoples and customs by carrying with him religious practices, like the Friday prayers and sermons and the practice of Arabic language, which allow him a connection to his religious home and also facilitate his integration into new Muslim enclaves in lands populated by Christians, Jews, and pagans. In her article on medieval Castilian and Arab

travellers, Alicia Martínez Crespo has studied together two Andalusis (Abu Hamid and Ibn Battuta) and two Castilians (Clavijo and Pero Tafur). She argues that the primary difference between the two sets of travellers in their experiences abroad is the security and support that the Arab travellers feel throughout the lands they visit due to political and linguistic unity.³² Fanjul and Arbos, editors of Ibn Battuta's *rihla*, have also spoken to the "coherent and harmonic space" that the Islamic community occupies (23). I agree with the assessment of the Islamic vision of the world provided by these scholars, but I insist that, especially with regards to Abu Hamid, it is valid only until a certain point. It is precisely because of Abu Hamid's travels that he departs from the political, linguistic, and religious hegemony of Islam. In fact, alongside his insistence on orthodox Islamic practices in foreign lands, there is evidence that Abu Hamid enjoyed living in a heterogeneous community of peoples of multiple faiths. For example, he establishes a home for himself and his family in Saqsin, a city on the Caspian Sea at the Volga River delta, for two decades.³³ Encinas Moral has commented upon the diverse environment encountered at Saksin:

La ciudad de Saksin es vista por el viajero granadino como una urbe en la que reina el respeto más absoluto entre todas las comunidades religiosas. Tantos cristianos, judíos y musulmanes hanafíes, malikíes y saafíes disponen de iglesias,

32. The bulk of Martínez Crespo's paper examines points at which Muslim and Christian travellers converge or diverge in their written travel accounts. She briefly examines how they treat landscapes, weather, flora and fauna, time and chronology, the description of cities, commercial activities, religious sites, lodging, gastronomy and its rituals, various foreign peoples, and wonders or marvels. However, the examples she offers seem rather to disprove her argument that the distinct Christian and Muslim worldviews influenced their interpretation of the lands they visited. On the contrary, the travellers seem to coincide to a large degree in their reports on the aforementioned issues, although Martínez Crespo does well to point out some examples of how the two cultures held distinct views on topics like the social status of the merchant.

33. Saqsin or Saksin was a city that flourished between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries. It was located near present-day Astrakhan, Russia.

sinagogas y mezquitas donde poder orar. Además, todas las comunidades religiosas tenían sus propios jueces, juristas y predicadores. Por otra parte, la vida en la ciudad no era cara y eran abundantes la carne, el caviar, las frutas y el pan, que se pagaban con ‘plomo blanco’. Tal vez este sano clima de convivencia social y el alto nivel de bienestar influyesen en el ánimo de Abu Hamid para establecer allí su residencia. (42-3)

The city of Saysin is seen by the traveller from Granada as a place in which reigns absolute respect among all religious communities. Christians, Jews, and Hanafi, Maliki, and Safi Muslims have churches, synagogues, and mosques where they can pray. Furthermore, all the religious communities had their own judges, jurists, and preachers. In addition, life in the city was not expensive and meat, caviar, fruits, and bread were abundant and were bought with “white lead.”

Perhaps this healthy climate of social coexistence and the high level of well-being encouraged Abu Hamid to establish his residence there.

As will be further discussed in Chapters Two and Four, I advocate for the traveller to be understood as occupying a liminal space between the comfort and relations in the home world on the one hand and, on the other, an incorporation into a community abroad. Abu Hamid’s liminal state is much less pronounced than that of his later Castilian counterparts in travel, Clavijo and Pero Tafur, for the Andalusí is fundamentally concerned about continuing Islamic practices in foreign lands.

Returning to Bernard Lewis’s argument for an ethnocentric Muslim population that in general experienced a lack of interest in the outside world, I find that Abu Hamid breaks with that mold to a certain, but not full, degree. Abu Hamid is an avid traveller, and that fact alone

distinguishes him from the general Muslim community. He journeys beyond the borders of *dar al-Islam*, the House of Islam, to countries where Muslims exist as a minority. Furthermore, he manifests an ethnographic interest in foreign peoples and customs, especially those related to trade. He reports with detail several practices not found in other lands, like whaling and skiing, and is assiduous in chronicling goods, prices, and manners of trade. He praises foreign lands, is impressed with their fecundity and easy life, and in evidence of his enjoyment abroad, he settles down in SAYSIN for many years and has a family.

In religious matters, however, Abu Hamid does conform to the idea of a medieval Muslim who is not concerned with non-Muslim peoples or ideas. While travelling in non-Muslim lands, for instance, he generally limits himself to pointing out if Christians or idolaters inhabit the region. He never denigrates other beliefs but still regards his own faith as supreme and true. Abu Hamid only speaks of other religious tenets, as in Christian Hungary, when it serves his own purpose of instituting orthodox Islamic practices in foreign Muslim communities. In no way does he see other religious beliefs as competitors or threats to the existence of Islam in those faraway lands, and he certainly does not participate in non-Muslim practices—or if he does, he does not deem it appropriate to report in this account. Abu Hamid lauds conversion to Islam but does not work toward that end himself; he is not a missionary. Rather, he consistently portrays himself as a bearer of those religious practices which are so essential to his very being. In this way, he maintains his focus principally on the Muslim community around the world rather than concerning himself with “insignificant” matters of foreign religious beliefs.

The Travels of Ibn Jubayr

From Abu Hamid’s lifelong travels, I turn now to the *rihla*, or travelogue, of Abu al-

Husayn Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Ibn Jubayr, a Muslim from Valencia in Al-Andalus who lived from 1145 to 1217.³⁴ Ibn Jubayr served as secretary to the Almohad governor of Granada and, provoked by an occurrence that happened in his court, made the pilgrimage to Mecca from 1183 to 1185. Ibn Jubayr's account of his two years abroad is a captivating work that allows for great insight into the personal spiritual life of this man and the uneasiness he experiences when faced with tensions between Muslims and Christians in the Mediterranean as well as with problems in exclusively Muslim communities. Ibn Jubayr acquired the means to peregrinate to Mecca due to a disturbing event with his lord, the governor of Granada. This man, Abu Sa'id 'Uthman b. 'Abd al-Mu'min, one day offered Ibn Jubayr a cup of wine, which Ibn Jubayr declined, adding that he had never before tasted it; as a pious Muslim, he practiced abstention from alcohol. Outraged at being rejected, the governor ordered Ibn Jubayr to drink seven full cups of wine, and Ibn Jubayr was forced to consume the forbidden drink. Seized by regret, the governor filled the same cup seven times with gold coins for Ibn Jubayr who promptly asked leave to carry out the *hajj*.³⁵

34. The manuscript copy of the *rihla* that has been used for most editions and translations is housed in Leiden. It is a copy from Mecca around 1470 and served as the text for the Arabic edition published by William Wright in 1852. Four other manuscripts survive (one in Fez and three in Rabat, Morocco). M. J. de Goeje published an updated version of Wright's edition in 1907. The *rihla* was translated in the twentieth century from the original Arabic to Italian (Schiaparelli, 1906), French (Gaudefroy-Demombynes, 1949-1965), and English (Roland Broadhurst, 1952). The English edition, entitled *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr*, has remained popular and was reprinted as recently as 2013. Despite Ibn Jubayr being Andalusí, his work was not translated to Spanish until 1988, by Felipe Maíllo Salgado, with the title *A través del Oriente*. My citations will come from Maíllo Salgado's 2007 edition of the Spanish translation and Broadhurst's 1952 English translation.

As a starting point for studies on this traveller, see Ian Richard Netton, the preeminent authority on Ibn Jubayr, who dedicated an entire volume (number 2) of his *Islamic and Middle Eastern Geographers and Travellers* to that pilgrim. The volume is a collection of many scholarly articles dealing with Ibn Jubayr.

35. This story does not appear in the *rihla* but rather is related by al-Maqqari, a seventeenth-century source. If it is true, rather than legendary, perhaps Ibn Jubayr omitted it from his account in order not to expose his lord to embarrassment or publicize that wrongful deed. Scholars have

Although Ibn Jubayr was not at fault for the sin, Ian Richard Netton speculates that his “delicacy of conscience” compelled him to carry out the pilgrimage to Mecca. Ibn Jubayr might also have been looking for a legitimate way to distance himself from a seemingly crazed governor. In any case, he receives permission and spends the next two years away from Al-Andalus. On February 3, 1183, Ibn Jubayr departs Granada, passes through Ceuta, and voyages through the Mediterranean to Alexandria and then Cairo. He next travels along the Nile toward Upper Egypt and the city of Qus. Joining a caravan headed for ‘Aydhab, an important port, now abandoned, on the west coast of the Red Sea, he then voyages to Jeddah in Hejaz, the western region of the Arabian Peninsula.³⁶ Thence he travels to Mecca, where he spends eight months. Accompanying a caravan of pilgrims from Iraq, he terminates his pilgrimage in Medina by visiting the tomb of Muhammad. Journeying north through the desert, he visits Kufa, Baghdad, and Mosul. The rest of his voyage home takes him through Crusader Syria (Aleppo, Damascus, and Acre) and the Mediterranean (such as Sicily), where his party experiences hardships at sea and is forced to winter. Passing through Cartagena, he arrives back in Granada on April 25, 1185. The trip may have awoken a penchant for travel inside Ibn Jubayr for he makes another trip abroad in 1189 and a third journey by 1217, which terminates in Alexandria with his death at age 72.

Inasmuch as he makes a journey to a fixed destination and a return trip home, Ibn Jubayr’s voyage is most akin to that of Clavijo to Samarkand. The structure of Ibn Jubayr’s

accepted the story at face-value, despite its late appearance and lack of corroborating evidence, most likely for its attractive dramatic flair.

36. Francisco Pons Boigues has pointed out that in previous years, pilgrims who arrived at Egypt would travel on to Mecca by way of the Suez Isthmus. In the crusader period, however, Christian soldiers blocked that passageway to the pilgrims (Pons Boigues 268). In Ibn Jubayr’s time, pilgrims are forced to cross the Red Sea further south at ‘Aydhab rather than north through the Suez Isthmus and Sinai.

narrative is quite similar: he follows a linear order, mentioning each place he visits or passes through, and he diligently divides his text chronologically by the Muslim calendar of months. He consistently describes the most important cities and their famous monuments and attractions, although he frequently is at a loss for words, believing that the sights are too great to be described. Ibn Jubayr also seems to possess a discerning and critical mind, for oftentimes he investigates matters for himself rather than rely on unsound testimony of others. This aspect of his character will be discussed further, but here one example suffices: a memorable occasion occurs in Alexandria when Ibn Jubayr and his party wish to measure the famed Hellenistic lighthouse, one of the wonders of the world. The reader may easily imagine the amusing spectacle they must have formed as they lined up along one side of the structure with their arms outstretched in order to take measurements for themselves (Ibn Jubayr 74-5; 32-5).³⁷

Apart from these similarities, Ibn Jubayr's account is unique for an Iberian travel narrative. As a pilgrim and not a diplomat, adventurer, or teacher, he is greatly concerned with spiritual matters that directly affect him and with the political policies governing treatment of pilgrims throughout Islamic lands. While Ibn Jubayr relates his own experiences during his two-year journey, he also fashions a pilgrimage guide out of his travel account, writing for a reader who has not yet completed the pilgrimage: he minutely describes, for example, the ritual practices that are carried out not just in Mecca and Medina but in other holy sites as well.³⁸ In

37. When citing directly or indirectly from Ibn Jubayr's text, the first page number refers to Felipe Maíllo Salgado's 2007 Spanish translation. The second number indicates the English translation of R. J. C. Broadhurst's edition from 1952.

38. One may compare Ibn Jubayr's text with a pilgrim guide written by a Muslim of unknown name from Tortosa, Catalonia at the end of the fourteenth century. This text (along with a second work in the same manuscript collection) was published by Mikel de Epalza in *Hespéris Tamuda* in 1982 under the title "Dos textos moriscos bilingües (árabe y castellano) de viajes a Oriente (1395 y 1407-1412)." The Tortosa pilgrim's text relates his journey from

relation to his personal spiritual concerns, Ibn Jubayr is furthermore preoccupied about issues that arise among confluences of different peoples: Christians, Muslims from the Maghreb, Muslims who visit Arabia from other parts of the world, and heretical Muslim sects. In the discussion that follows, I will focus on Ibn Jubayr's self-representation in the text and then on his primary concerns regarding problems within and without the Islamic communities he visits. Analyzing Ibn Jubayr's characterization will allow one to better comprehend his reactions and attitudes towards his encounters abroad with Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

Ibn Jubayr as Religious Man and Critical Thinker

In his encounters with foreigners abroad, Ibn Jubayr stands in contrast to the protagonists of other travel narratives, most notably Abu Hamid al-Gharnati and Pero Tafur. Whereas the latter two highlight their own importance through personal connections they made with foreigners on their journeys, Ibn Jubayr comes across as a much more humble man. He is deeply religious, which is evident through the interjections of prayers of thanksgiving and for help that are scattered profusely throughout the work. The fourteenth-century historian Lisan al-Din ibn al-Khatib praised Ibn Jubayr as a man

clear in doctrine, and an illustrious poet, distinguished above all others, sound in

Tortosa to Mecca, where it leaves off and does not include a return voyage. The text is quite sparse, written in a simple style, with extremely little personal information given. The writer describes the conventional sights and animals (pyramids of Egypt, crocodiles) but offers few personal reactions to what he encounters abroad. He does relate some dangers (lack of water, mistreatment of pilgrims) and speaks of some of the same historical or holy sites that Ibn Jubayr describes, like the Mount of Drums. The bulk of the text, though, is dedicated to the ceremonies performed and ritual words pronounced in Mecca and in its surrounding holy sites. It is here where the guide-book form is clear; the author even uses the imperative form to explain what one should do to successfully complete the *hajj*. While this is a valuable text, the detached spirit of its writing and the dearth of information about how its author viewed himself and the world around him cause it to compare unfavorably with Ibn Jubayr's compelling narrative.

reason, generous spirited, and of noble character and exemplary conduct. He was a man of remarkable goodness, and his piety confirms the truth of his works. . . His correspondence with contemporary scholars reveals his merits and excellence, his superiority in poetry, his originality in rhymed prose, and his ease and elegance in free prose. His reputation was immense, his good deeds many, and his fame widespread; and the incomparable story of his journey is everywhere related. God's mercy upon him.³⁹ (quoted in Netton, Introduction 3)

Ibn Jubayr also appears to be sincere in experiencing the pilgrimage as a moving, emotional religious occasion. In Mecca, for example, he delights in the ritual readings of the Koran, the sermons, and the prayers that are offered up each day. He is affected by

este acontecimiento y esta solemnidad [que] se desarrolló en perfecto orden, la belleza de la voz del invocador, a pesar de su edad juvenil, pues tenía once años o poco más o menos; la hermosura de las palabras que pronunciaba en prosa y en verso; los tonos de los almocries que se elevaban [salmodiando] el libro de Dios, poderoso y grande; todo formaba un conjunto que conmovía las almas y las emocionaba, anegaba los ojos [de lágrimas] y provocaba el llanto en recuerdo de las Gentes de la Casa, a las que Dios ha dispensado de mancilla y ha purificado completamente. (166)

the order and splendour of this scene, the beauty of the voice of that muezzin, notwithstanding his youth, for he was about eleven years old or thereabout, the eloquence of the discourse he made in prose and verse, the high voices of the

39. Lisan al-Din ibn al Khatib (1313-1374) wrote a history of Granada, the *Kitab ihatah fi akhbar ghranata* that, in addition to the praise quoted above, informs of Ibn Jubayr's family, his city of origin (Valencia), and his full name (Cantarino 27).

readers of the Book of Great and Glorious God, all these things together move and affect the spirit, draw tears from the eyes, and bring to the memory the family of the Prophet from whom God has removed all impurity and whom He has cleansed. (94)

Ibn Jubayr has strong religious experiences during his eight months in Mecca, and in his subsequent pilgrimage to Medina, while he attends to special religious practices every day. Despite the impact that the stay in Mecca has on him, he is not indiscriminate in his perception of the reality of the place. He experiences much gratification by way of the daily spiritual practices but in one case points out that a certain young preacher left something to be desired. The young man “pronuncia un sermón con el que conmueve más a los corazones por la armoniosa dicción, que no por las invocaciones del nombre de Dios o [por] predicar la humildad” (“pronounced an eloquent sermon that moved most spirits, more from its mellifluous delivery than from its piously recollective or emotional qualities”; Ibn Jubayr 241; 152). Likewise, the assembly gathered at the sermon “A este jatib se le encontró donoso y hábil, si bien sus exhortaciones no habían llegado a las almas como hubiera sido de esperar; pues la exhortación piadosa cuando surge de la lengua no sobrepasa la distancia de los oídos” (“had found the preacher intelligent and talented, although his discourse had not touched the soul as had been hoped and the pious recollections that left his tongue had not gone beyond the ears”; Ibn Jubayr 241; 152).

For Ibn Jubayr, there is no contradiction in being a religious man and at the same time possessing a scientific mind that wishes to find the truth in all matters. During their stay in Mecca, a debate arises among the many pilgrims there as to whether the water in the holy

Zamzam well inside the Sacred Mosque is rising.⁴⁰ Ibn Jubayr writes that a large crowd gathers around the well because they believe “decididamente por ignorancia, no en manera alguna racionalmente” (“rather on the affirmation of the ignorant than of the wise”; 227; 140) that the water is rising. One member of Ibn Jubayr’s group tries to verify the phenomenon, and a seemingly wise man confirms that it is. Ibn Jubayr and his group are still not satisfied with these “strange and false inventions” and verify the facts for themselves. The traveller paints a compelling picture of the antics the companions resorted to in order to discover the truth:

Uno de nosotros había ido la noche del viernes a guindar su pozal en el pozo bendito, de manera que tocase la superficie de agua, retuviese la cuerda al borde del brocal e hiciese un buen nudo en ella, a fin de comprobar nosotros la medida [de su nivel de agua]. Cuando vino la mañana y la gente gritó: “La crecida, la crecida bien visible,” uno de nosotros se abrió paso entre aquella multitud, a pesar de la dificultad, llevando consigo a alguien con el pozal que dejó prender; entonces halló que la medida [del nivel del agua] estaba conforme a su situación [acostumbrada]: no había menguado, ni aumentado. . . En la mañana del sábado, día 15 del mes, examinamos la medida [del nivel del agua], a fin de comprobar exactamente la posición, y la encontramos tal como estaba antes. Si un hablador hubiese dicho ese día que [el nivel] no había aumentado, se le habría lanzado efectivamente al pozo, o los pies lo habrían pisoteado hasta hacerlo papilla. ¡Dios nos libre de la locuacidad del vulgo, de sus impulsos y de cabalgar en los repropios de sus pasiones! (228-9)

40. The Well of Zamzam is located inside the Sacred Mosque of Mecca, just east of the Kaaba, the holiest place in Islam. It is believed to be a source of water generated miraculously by God for relief of the thirst of Abraham’s son Ishmael. Despite the water that is taken from it by pilgrims for drinking, the well is said to have never gone dry.

On Friday night one of us lowered his bucket into the blessed well until it touched the surface of the water, and made a knot in the rope at the place where it reached the brim. We were thus able to measure it truly. In the morning the people cried out that the water had plainly risen, but one of us, making his way with difficulty through the crowd, and accompanied by one who carried the bucket, lowered the vessel into the well and found that the measurement was the same, neither more nor less. . . On the morning of Saturday the 15th of the month, we carefully examined this measurement in order to clear all doubt as to the truth of the matter, and found it to be as it was before. But if anyone had remarked that day that the water had not risen, he would have been thrown into the well, or been trodden under foot until he dissolved. We take refuge in God from the violence and excesses of the crowd, and their indulgement of ungoverned passions. (141-2)

The passage is almost comical for the contrast between the levelheadedness of Ibn Jubayr and his party and the wild emotions of the other pilgrims. Of course, any inclination to laugh is dispelled as Ibn Jubayr points out the violence of the crowd who would have killed anyone who dared contradict their belief in the rising water. The last sentence in the above quotation exemplifies many instances in which the pilgrim places his trust in God rather than man. Indeed, if Ibn Jubayr is not able to find out the truth about a matter—for instance, about the legend of the Mount of the Drums—he leaves the question to God, stating that “Dios es el más sabio en lo incognoscible” (“God best knows concerning these hidden things”; 300; 194).⁴¹

The above examples have illustrated that the complex figure of Ibn Jubayr is represented

41. Like Pero Tafur, discussed in Chapter Four, Ibn Jubayr does not portray himself as all-knowing. Whereas Tafur may simply warn the reader that he did not observe some fantastical story first-hand, Ibn Jubayr refers his audience to God’s wisdom.

to the reader as at once humble, deeply religious, and a critical thinker. This combination of traits is further reflected by the persons whom Ibn Jubayr chooses to highlight in his travelogue. The accounts of the true journeys of Clavijo, Pero Tafur, and Abu Hamid, as well as of the imaginary voyage in the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal*, include a panoply of foreign personages from all walks of life. However, the protagonists tend strongly to devote more attention to those famous figures of their times, such as Timur, John VIII Palaiologos, the king of Hungary, and Prester John, to name just a few. The travellers also take pains to point out their personal relationships with those figures in order to bolster their own reputation back home. Ibn Jubayr is quite unique in this regard, for he is decidedly unconcerned with powerful rulers. By contrast, the acquaintances he makes are mentioned if they are especially religious men who do good works or lead moral lives. Those persons tend not to be important in the political realm.

After peregrinating to Medina, Ibn Jubayr passes through an ancient city called Harran (located in the south-eastern region of present-day Turkey). The pilgrim explains that a spring south of the city was once a dwelling place for the patriarch Abraham and his wife Sarah. Now the site is a shrine, and many ascetic holy men and “solitarios errantes apartados del siglo” (“unworldly anchorites”; Ibn Jubayr 379; 254) make their home there. In this area, Ibn Jubayr and his party meet several saintly sheikhs who pray for the pilgrims. Ibn Jubayr records that upon departing, they felt joy at having met devout men who waited for God (380; 255). It is this kind of meeting that is worthy enough to be noted in Ibn Jubayr’s account. His concern is to improve himself, not through friends in high places of authority, but through connections to and observations of wise and religious Muslims. Ibn Jubayr does not develop lasting friendships with these ascetics, but he does purposefully seek them out to share conversation, to learn, and to pray together.

Negotiating Ethnocentrism

With regards to the ethnocentric Islamic paradigm as described by Bernard Lewis, I have already discussed how Abu Hamid al-Gharnati partially breaks with that mold. As an explorer, he expands his interests to lands that lie beyond Islam's religious centers. However, as I have argued, he still maintains a principal concern for Islamic matters, chiefly the propagation of orthodox religious practices to communities that have more tenuous ties with Islamic centers of learning. In his own way, Ibn Jubayr also develops an interest in the outside world. As his primary goal was to complete the pilgrimage to Mecca, one of the five pillars of Islam, Ibn Jubayr may not have anticipated the variety of practices, beliefs, and kinds of people he would encounter outside Al-Andalus, but he reacts to them with both a judicious and spiritual mind. On the one hand, Ibn Jubayr's attention is focused on matters that exclusively concern Muslims, such as heretical sects, immoral behavior, and problems within the Islamic community at large. On the other hand, his preoccupation is drawn outside the realm of Islam when he passes through Christian-inhabited lands and is concerned about the temptations that Christians represent to Muslims. In the pages that follow, I discuss these two tendencies within Ibn Jubayr's work: the attention given to Islamic matters and the perception of non-Muslims. I suggest that it is the act of travel which causes Ibn Jubayr to break with the typical ethnocentrism of medieval Muslims, for he is exposed to greater divergences in beliefs and ways of life, both within the *dar al-Islam* and without. Because he physically occupies their same space, Ibn Jubayr is compelled to consider persons who differ from him in religion, custom, and language.⁴² Sectarian Muslims

42. When passing through "mixed" lands, it is impossible for Ibn Jubayr and his party to maintain themselves completely separated from Christians. This is evidenced by their passage booked on Genoese ships, for example, and it is again seen in Acre when they rent a room from a Christian woman. There must have been countless other small encounters with foreigners of that sort which Ibn Jubayr did not record but which brought him into close contact with those persons

and Christians of Mediterranean lands may no longer be ignored when Ibn Jubayr encounters them face-to-face. His first-hand experiences and contact with these various, unfamiliar peoples do not dramatically change Ibn Jubayr into an unreservedly open-minded person who embraces any new thing, but those encounters do point to what is at the heart of travel: a direct confrontation of the foreign and the strange. Doing so provides Ibn Jubayr with a unique experience that Muslims insulated within the realm of Islam might not have experienced. To these contacts with others different from himself, Ibn Jubayr reacts based on his pious character and religious upbringing and also faces the alien with the open and critical mind discussed above.

Strife within the House of Islam

Before setting out on his pilgrimage, Ibn Jubayr most likely did not suffer from an oversimplified view of his co-religionists. After all, it was the Muslim governor of Granada who compelled him to drink several goblets of wine, which Ibn Jubayr protested. Despite his acquaintance with his lord's erratic character, Ibn Jubayr is perhaps surprised and certainly dismayed when he encounters immoral or unethical behavior in Muslims abroad. One matter that draws his attention occurs toward the beginning of the text at his stop in Alexandria. At the port, customs agents record all the possessions that the Muslim travellers carry with them and unlawfully force them to pay a tax on those goods.⁴³ It is a chaotic scene in which travellers are

whom he deemed so different from himself in religious terms.

43. This "tax" is called the *zakat*. Broadhurst defines it as "alms bestowed as a sanctification of the property remaining to the owner" (399). The *zakat* is required of every free, adult Muslim who has possessed a property (excluding necessities) for a whole year. The *zakat* collected may be distributed to the needy, to travellers, for the liberation of slaves, or for the service of God (Broadhurst 368). Ibn Jubayr argues they should be receiving the *zakat*, not paying it.

searched, questioned, and put to oath by the officials. Ibn Jubayr relates that “Mientras tanto muchas de las cosas de la gente desaparecían entre la mezcla de manos y la multiplicación del gentío. Después, tras una terrible escena de humillación y de vergüenza, se les despidió. ¡A Dios pedimos que aumente por eso los galardones!” (“During all this, because of the confusion of hands and the excessive throng, many possessions disappeared. After this scene of abasement and shame, for which we pray God to recompense us amply, they [the pilgrims] were allowed to go”; 73; 32). Several weeks later, the pilgrims are horrified to experience the same mistreatment at many ports along the Nile. Their persons are unjustly searched, and the laws governing the collection of the *zakat* are not followed (Ibn Jubayr 111-2; 55). This kind of occurrence, of which Ibn Jubayr is able to provide multiple examples, provokes the pilgrim to outrage as he discusses the state of the traveller. He argues that the wanderer merits help, not hindrance, since he is away from his homeland; being away from one’s home implies that one needs extra assistance from his fellow man. Moreover, the traveller is a person devoted to God, since he would not set out on an arduous pilgrimage otherwise, and Ibn Jubayr quotes Koranic verses as arguments against the customs agents’ immoral behavior (113; 56).

The further Ibn Jubayr travels, the more apparent to him becomes the exploitation of pilgrims, and his reaction to this injustice likewise becomes stronger. After witnessing how pilgrims are packed onto ships in dangerous numbers in the port at ‘Aydhab, Ibn Jubayr goes so far as to proclaim that Muslims who commit this kind of behavior should be violently punished: “El país de Dios que merecería un almotacenazgo (*hisbah*), cuyo azote fuese la espada, es esta ciudad” (“This is the country of Islam most deserving a *hisbah*, and the scourge employed should be the sword”; 124; 66).⁴⁴ He goes on to illustrate that those unscrupulous people are not true

44. Broadhurst explains that the *hisbah*, a scourging, is usually carried out with whips (393).

Muslims; they may say the right words, but their beliefs and practices betray them. The people of ‘Aydhab are

más descarriada del camino que el ganado, y le es inferior en sentido común. No tienen religión, excepto la fórmula de la unicidad divina, que ellos pronuncian para mostrar su islamismo. Fuera de eso nada hay en sus creencias corrompidas ni en su conducta que sea aceptable ni lícito. Hombres y mujeres andan a su guisa [completamente] desnudos, salvo un trapo con el que [algunos] esconden sus vergüenzas, pues la mayoría de ellos no las esconden. En suma, es un pueblo (*umma*) que no tiene moralidad, ni pecado que sobre ellos [no atraiga] la maldición. (Ibn Jubayr 125)

more astray from the (right) path, and have less reason, than the animals. They have no religion save the formal words professing the unity of God, which they utter to display that they are Muslims. But behind that are corrupt beliefs and practices that cannot be condoned and are unlawful. Their men and women go naked abroad, wearing nothing but the rag which covers their genitals, and most not even this. In a word, they are a breed of no regard and it is no sin to pour maledictions upon them. (Ibn Jubayr 66)

In this manner, Ibn Jubayr has no qualms about criticizing members of his own religious group, although he makes the claim that they should not even be considered Muslims, since their behavior stands in such contrast to the religious principles which they profess to hold. An interesting comparison may here be drawn with the treatment given similar kinds of wild, irreligious people found in imaginary travel accounts. In these accounts, studied in Chapter

A scourging by swords, then, is quite emphatic.

Three, the fictitious travellers tend to uphold these “savage” races as models of good and as a way to point out the faults found in their own societies. In Ibn Jubayr’s case, however, his direct experience leaves no room for idealizing the people of ‘Aydhhab, and he feels thoroughly disgusted at their alien customs.

Ibn Jubayr is further dismayed when he encounters separations within Islam during his stay in Jeddah, a city on the Red Sea less than ninety kilometers from their destination of Mecca. In this region called the Hejaz, Ibn Jubayr, a Sunni Muslim, censures those who follow Shiism and its various sects. He does not denounce them simply for holding different beliefs but rather points out their irreligious behavior. These sectarian Muslims treat pilgrims passing through their lands in an abominable manner, even worse, Ibn Jubayr asserts, than the manner in which they treat tributary Jews and Christians (Ibn Jubayr 133; 71). Were it not for Salah al-Din, our traveller’s hero, the pilgrims in the Hejaz would have no hope of relief from oppression. As with the false Muslims in ‘Aydhhab, Ibn Jubayr criticizes those he considers heretical Muslims and advocates for their punishment in the strongest of terms; the passage is worth quoting at length to comprehend the ardor of Ibn Jubayr’s feeling:

En consecuencia, el país de Dios que merecería ser purificado por la espada y ser lavado de sus inmundicias y de sus suciedades, por la sangre derramada en la vía de Dios (*fi sabil illah*), es este país del Hiyaz, por lo que [sus gentes] han aflojado los lazos del islam y considerado presa legítima los bienes y la sangre de los peregrinos. . . ¡Cómo! La Casa de Dios está ahora en manos de unas gentes que se sirven de ella como medio de vida ilícito. La han convertido en un medio para arrebatar los bienes, reivindicarlos sin derecho, importunar a los peregrinos a causa de ello y afligirles con la ignominia y la miseria de este mundo. Dios

pronto lo arreglará mediante una purificación que librará a los musulmanes de estas innovaciones (*bida'*) injustas por la espada de los almohades, defensores de la fe, partido de Dios—al que le ha sido conferido el derecho y la verdad—defensores del territorio sagrado (*haram*) de Dios, poderoso y grande, celosos en [respetar] sus sacrosantas prohibiciones, esforzados en la exaltación de su palabra, en la manifestación de su invocación y en la defensa de su doctrina. (134-5)

The lands of God [i.e. Islamic lands] that most deserve to be purified by the sword, and cleansed of their sins and impurities by blood shed in holy war are these Hejaz lands, for what they are about in loosening the ties of Islam, and dispossessing the pilgrims of their property and shedding their blood. . . How can it be that the House of God should now be in the hands of people who use it as an unlawful source of livelihood, making it a means of illicitly claiming and seizing property, and detaining the pilgrims on its account, thus bringing them to humbleness and abject poverty. May God soon correct and purify this place by relieving the Muslims of these destructive schismatics with the swords of the Almohades, the defenders of the Faith, God's confederates, possessing righteousness and truth, the protectors of the Haram of Great and Glorious God, the abstainers from what is unlawful, the zealous raisers of His name, the proclaimers of His message and the upholders of His creed. (72-3)

Not only does Ibn Jubayr encourage violent punishment of the Hejaz peoples, but he also takes advantage of the opportunity to promote the Almohad dynasty of the Maghreb and Al-Andalus as true Muslims who carry out God's will. The progression of Ibn Jubayr's text from him first decrying the mistreatment of pilgrims in Alexandria to eventually calling for war against

schismatic Muslims is an adroit textual maneuver. Ibn Jubayr's travel abroad has prompted those reflections, and he abandons the commonplace concern for description of foreign lands to remark upon serious political and religious matters. Thus he censures schisms in the Islamic community at large but also promotes his own Islam as the true faith which should be taken up in all Muslim lands:

Aquel que se halla en la verdad está persuadido, completa y firmemente convencido, de que no hay [verdadero] islam sino en los países del Magreb, porque ellos están en una vía luminosa sin fronteras. En los demás [países], en estas regiones orientales, hay pasiones, innovaciones reprobables (*bida'*), sectas y partidos extraviados; salvo aquellas de sus gentes que Dios, poderoso y grande, ha preservado. Así, no hay justicia, ni derecho, ni ley (*din*) sobre la superficie de esos [países], solamente junto a los almohades—Dios los fortifique; pues ellos, en este tiempo, son los últimos *imames* de la rectitud. Todos los demás príncipes de esta época van por otro sendero: imponen el diezmo a los mercaderes musulmanes como si fuesen para ellos gente tributaria (*ahl ad-dimma*); les arrancan sus bienes mediante cualquier artimaña o motivo; cabalgan por caminos de injusticia [tal] que no se ha oído hablar de nada parecido. Exceptuando, por supuesto, a este sultán justo, Saladino, del que ya hemos relatado su conducta y sus méritos. (134-5)

Let it be absolutely certain and beyond doubt established that there is no Islam save in the Maghrib lands. There they follow the clear path that has no separation and the like, such as there are in these eastern lands of sects and heretical groups and schisms, save those of them whom Great and Glorious God has preserved

from this. There is no justice, right, or religion in His sight except with the Almohades—may God render them powerful. They are the last just imams of this time, all the other Kings of the day follow another path, taking tithes from the Muslim merchants as if they were of the community of the *dhimmah*, seizing their goods by every trick and pretext, and following a course of oppression the like of which, oh my God, has never been heard of. All of them, that is, except this just Sultan, Saladin, whom we have mentioned for his conduct and virtues. (73)

By this point, Ibn Jubayr has appropriated the form of the pilgrim guidebook as a mouthpiece by which to proclaim the superiority of the Almohad dynasty, the group at rule in Al-Andalus during Ibn Jubayr's lifetime. The Almohad Empire began as a fanatical Islamic Berber sect founded by Ibn Tumart in the twelfth century that came to rule over the Maghreb and Al-Andalus. In Al-Andalus, they replaced the Almoravid dynasty and controlled that land until 1212 at which time they were defeated by Christian forces at the Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa. The Almohads were less tolerant than their Almoravid predecessors of non-Muslim inhabitants in their lands and decried perceived moral laxity in the Almoravid reign. Almohad founder Ibn Tumart, who lived from 1080 to 1130, followed the teachings of Muslim intellectual al-Ghazali and desired to revive a spirituality no longer found in the 'Abbasid caliphs at Baghdad. After the crusader success in Jerusalem in 1099, the Baghdad caliphs became mere puppets, and Ibn Tumart reacted against this lack of spiritual power. His message was of absolute monotheism; of adherence to Muhammad's teachings, rather than jurists' interpretations; and of the importance of holy war, called *jihad*. These stricter views are perhaps what shaped Ibn Jubayr's attitude toward imbibing and toward Christian "polytheists." It is in this reformist environment that Ibn Jubayr grows up and from which he departs on his pilgrimage. Particularly the first part of Ibn

Jubayr's *rihla* upholds the Almohads as true Muslims and contrasts his own religious community with the immoral and sectarian attitudes he finds abroad.

As with other travellers, this pilgrim takes advantage of being separated from home in order to comment on political and religious concerns. In contrast to the Castilian accounts of imaginary travels that uphold the foreign as models for good behavior and inspiration to better works, Ibn Jubayr finds much to censure in the lands outside Al-Andalus, despite the fact that they are inhabited by Muslims and located geographically closer to the holy site of Mecca. The desire to exalt the Almohads may be a true concern of Ibn Jubayr, but it is not unlikely that he considered the audience back home in Iberia who would be reading his text. The praise for the Almohads could serve to win him favor with those in power.

There is one additional fundamental concern that Ibn Jubayr perceives within the realm of Islam. Several groups of foreigners who make the pilgrimage to Mecca are not portrayed positively; Ibn Jubayr points out their violent tendencies and wild bouts of destructive emotion. These foreigners are generally part of the pilgrim caravan that travels with the Emir of Iraq and thus enter Arabia through other routes, not from the Maghreb. Ibn Jubayr portrays them almost as wild beasts, for in one instance, the keepers of the holy mosque in Mecca are forced to replace the wooden dome over the sacred *maqam* of Abraham and substitute a dome made of iron “como [medida de] precaución por los no árabes mencionados, pues, si no hubiese sido de hierro, se la habrían comido totalmente, además de otras cosas; porque sus almas son sinceras en su ardiente deseo por estos santos y sagrados lugares . . .” (“in readiness for these foreigners; for were it not of iron they would eat it or do worse, such is their rude fervour for His holy shrine . . .”; 265; 170). With this and other examples, Ibn Jubayr portrays the religious fervor at holy Mecca, but he is not insensible to the foreign pilgrims' good intentions. Indeed, he prays God to reward

them for their faith. As the fault of these Muslims is their excessive spiritual outbursts and nothing more sinister, Ibn Jubayr does not recommend any punishment against them, although it is clear that their behavior is an irritant and a distraction.

What I have attempted to point out with the above examples of divisions within Islam is how, through the eyes of this pilgrim, the general ethnocentric paradigm offered up by Bernard Lewis may be modified at the individual level. Ibn Jubayr lives in a world that is no longer dually occupied by Muslims and non-Muslims (and indeed, that ideal had long disappeared). Rather, as he journeys first outside Al-Andalus, and then outside the Maghreb and the realm of the Almohad dynasty, he encounters Muslims whom he deems unfit to be called Muslims, due to their irreligious behavior, as well as non-Sunni Muslims, whom he labels heretical. It is travel that affords him this liminal ground from which to evaluate those outside his homeland. What is especially unique about Ibn Jubayr's case, compared to later works by Christian travellers, is that he holds up his Sunni co-religionists as models of proper Islamic belief and behavior rather than using the foreign as a way to criticize his own society. As I stated previously, the schisms within Islam point to the failing of a united Muslim community homogeneous in their beliefs and doctrine. Netton has observed the same phenomenon in the travelogue:

What Ibn Jubayr's text *does* signify, most clearly, throughout, is an Islamic world already divided upon itself by religious faction and suspicion. A deeply riven sectarian milieu in the whole of *dār al-Islām* is apparent from Ibn Jubayr's view of and comments upon the state of Islam in Arabia, whose entire peninsula might be said to constitute a species of 'religious geography' for the holy City of Mecca. This City, one of the profoundest symbols of the Islamic faith, and its theoretical and yearned-for unity, is thus, paradoxically, for Ibn Jubayr the focus of a voyage

which sometimes instructs that traveller in a variety of aspects of Islam at its most *disunited*. His disillusionment and rage are only exacerbated and compounded by the strife of the Crusades and the conflicting and ambivalent attitudes which those wars generate about Christianity and Christians within his heart. (“Basic Structures” 212)

I turn now to those encounters with Christians on Ibn Jubayr’s journey back to Iberia in order to argue further that the overarching lack of interest in non-Muslims is fractured by travellers who, willingly or unwilling, enter into contact with those groups.

Complications with Christians

The trip from the crusader kingdoms through the Mediterranean back to Al-Andalus provides Ibn Jubayr with a first-hand look at the co-existence of Christians and Muslims, particularly on the island of Sicily. Netton describes this period as “a strange age of real intercultural *travel and trading*, produced by centuries of co-operation, on the one hand, co-existing beside very real intercultural *military* strife produced by the Crusades, on the other, an apparent paradox upon which Ibn Jubayr himself felt moved to comment and rank among the *‘ajā’ib* [wonders] of his narrative” (“Basic Structures” 209, original emphasis). In general, Ibn Jubayr expresses much dismay at the state of Muslims in Christian lands and is astonished when the two groups live peaceably in the same space. The Christians whom Ibn Jubayr encounters in the Mediterranean are not a fringe element to be safely ignored. As a traveller, Ibn Jubayr is thrust into this contested space which differs so greatly from the exclusively Muslim lands he has visited up till that point.⁴⁵

45. I call these lands contested for Ibn Jubayr always prays that Christian lands will be

Ibn Jubayr mentions several lands in which Christians and Muslims peacefully coexist, and he is astonished at that way of life. In Crusader Syria, Christian and Muslim merchants are not hindered when travelling through the other's lands. Each pays a tax and enjoys security in which to carry out their business. War, of course, is another matter, but it does not interfere with trade: "Las gentes de guerra están ocupadas en sus guerras; el pueblo permanece en paz; los bienes de este mundo son para quien vence" ("The soldiers engage themselves in their war, while the people are at peace and the world goes to him who conquers"; Ibn Jubayr 441; 301). Near the city of Baniyas in Syria, Christians and Muslims farm and raise cattle together in peace: "La explotación del llano se realiza entre los francos y los musulmanes, siguen en eso un precepto que llaman el 'precepto de la participación' (*yadd al-muqasama*); pues ellos comparten la cosecha en [proporcional] igualdad. Sus ganados están mezclados y no resulta entre ellos menoscabo alguno" ("The cultivation of the vale is divided between the Franks and the Muslims, and in it there is a boundary known as 'The Boundary of Dividing.' They apportion the crops equally, and their animals are mingled together, yet no wrong takes place between them because of it"; Ibn Jubayr 459; 315). Not only do Christians and Muslims live together, but outside the city of Acre, they also worship in the same place. At a spring east of the city, there remain a wall of the mosque which previously stood there and the *mihrab*, which indicates the direction in which Mecca lies. Ibn Jubayr reports that the Franks have built their own *mihrab* there: "musulmanes e infieles se reúnen en ella, unos se ponen cara a este oratorio para la oración, otros

restored to Muslim rule. Indeed, the traveller frequently utters malisons against Christian-held cities (e.g. "la ciudad de 'Akka—Dios la arruine" ["the city of Acre—may God destroy it"; 460; 317]). In contrast to Pero Tafur, whose designation of Muslims as the "enemy" I believe to be perfunctory, Ibn Jubayr appears to be more serious in his denunciation of Muslim-Christian relationships and in his concern over Muslims who live in Christian-controlled lands. Of course, Ibn Jubayr may also be exaggerating his true feelings against Christians in order to gratify his Almohad readers in Al-Andalus.

cara a aquél. Está en manos de los cristianos, venerada y conservada. ¡Dios reserve en ella un lugar de oración para los musulmanes!” (“Muslim and infidel assemble there, the one turning to his place of worship, the other to his. In the hands of the Christians a venerableness is maintained, and God has preserved in it a place of prayer for the Muslims”; 464-5; 319).

In the examples he observes of Muslims and Christians leading their lives in such proximity, Ibn Jubayr does not hold them up as models to be followed. Indeed, he is shocked at the situation and prays that all Muslims would be safeguarded from the temptation to live easily under Christian rule. He maintains that those Muslims living in Christian lands have been seduced

porque ven la situación de sus hermanos [muslimes] en los dominios territoriales (*rasatiq*) musulmanes y la de los que los rigen; pues, en el bienestar y en la benignidad [de relaciones], su situación es inversa a la de ellos. Ésta es una de las calamidades sobrevenidas sobre los musulmanes; que los medios islámicos sufran la opresión de la categoría de los terratenientes [de su mismo credo], que elogien la conducta de sus adversarios y enemigos, la de los francos que los dominan, y que se familiaricen con su equidad. (461-2)

for they observe how unlike them in ease and comfort are their brethren in the Muslim regions under their [Muslim] governors. This is one of the misfortunes afflicting the Muslims. The Muslim community bewails the injustice of a landlord of its own faith, and applauds the conduct of its opponent and enemy, the Frankish landlord, and is accustomed to justice from him. (317)

Characteristically honest, even when what he writes reflects badly upon his own religious community, Ibn Jubayr admits that part of the problem is with Muslim rulers who do not act with

justice toward their Muslim subjects. Even faithful Muslims, then, are tempted to live under Christian rule with infidel leaders who will at least treat them fairly. Despite admitting that unjust Muslims have caused their brethren to move away, Ibn Jubayr refuses to excuse the behavior of the Muslims in Christian lands. He insists that no Muslim should reside in a Christian territory, for in that land, they will hear malisons directed toward Muhammad and all prohibited issues will be practiced freely in their presence (Ibn Jubayr 469; 321-2).

Ibn Jubayr's dream of maintaining separate realms for Muslims and Christians does not match up with reality. In his condition as traveller, he is confronted with a seemingly chaotic world in which infidels live as neighbors to his fellow Muslims, and he is utterly astonished that his co-religionists appear to abide there without qualms. Ibn Jubayr is concerned with the poor living conditions of some Muslims under Christian rule since they must live in an infidel environment, which he considers filthy and impure. As he relates his further travels throughout the Mediterranean though, there surfaces a different kind of concern. Ibn Jubayr agonizes over the temptation that Christians represent to Muslims. Christian lands are places of filth but also of seduction. The temptation of Christian life appears in Ibn Jubayr's text generally in one of two ways. One inducement is the friendly attitude of Christians. In Crusader Acre, for which Ibn Jubayr has prayed many times to be destroyed, he and his companions are treated justly and respectfully in the customs house where Christian clerks speak and write in Arabic. The scene, of course, stands in direct contrast to the customs houses in Alexandria and elsewhere, where Muslim agents dealt unjustly with the pilgrims. Later, in Sicily, their group travels the busy road to Palermo, and the pilgrims meet groups of Christians who greet the Muslims and treat them amiably. One might think well of this friendly behavior, but to Ibn Jubayr, it appears to be a temptation to "ignorant" Muslims (501; 345). He is extremely concerned about Muslims being

taken in by friendly Christians and tempted to convert. Indeed, conversion to Christianity would constitute a terrible sin. Ibn Jubayr reports on one Muslim who converted and then even dedicated himself to the life of a monk: “se habría apresurado hacia el infierno” (“thereby hastening for himself the flames of hell”; 471; 323).

The second kind of allurement is the exotic luxury on display by some Christians. Despite wanting to be kept safe from this kind of temptation, Ibn Jubayr records in detail a Christian wedding party in Tyre, which is fascinating to read at length:

Entre las escenas de boato de este mundo dignas de contarse, que un día en Sur (Tiro) junto al puerto presenciamos, está el cortejo nupcial de una novia. Todos los cristianos, hombres y mujeres, se habían congregado para este efecto y se habían alineado en dos hileras a la puerta de la novia, que iba a ser conducida al esposo mientras sonaban trompetas, flautas y todos los instrumentos para tocar. Hasta que, [por fin], ella salió con marcha vacilante entre dos hombres que la sostenían por la derecha y la izquierda, parecían ser ambos de sus parientes maternos. Ella, con el más hermoso aspecto y el más magnífico vestido, arrastraba rozagante la cola de seda bordada en oro, según el estilo acostumbrado en sus vestidos. Sobre su cabeza [llevaba] una diadema de oro, que estaba envuelta en una red tejida de oro y en la parte alta de su pecho [llevaba] otra parecida, dispuesta armoniosamente. Rozagante, con sus adornos y sus aderezos, marchaba lánguidamente con la lánguida marcha de la paloma o la andadura de la nube. Dios nos libre de la turbación (*fitna*) ante [tal] espectáculo. (466-7)

An alluring worldly spectacle deserving of record was a nuptial procession which we witnessed one day near the port in Tyre. All the Christians, men and women,

had assembled, and were formed in two lines at the bride's door. Trumpets, flutes, and all the musical instruments, were played until she proudly emerged between two men who held her right and left as though they were her kindred. She was most elegantly garbed in a beautiful dress from which trailed, according to their traditional style, a long train of golden silk. On her head she wore a golden diadem covered by a net of woven gold, and on her breast was a like arrangement. Proud she was in her ornaments and dress, walking with little steps of half a span, like a dove, or in the manner of a wisp of cloud. God protect us from the seduction of the sight. (320-1)

Ibn Jubayr continues to describe the spectacle, noting the splendidly dressed Christian nobles, both men and women, and the musicians who accompany them. He notes that both Muslim and Christian onlookers gape at the sight without censuring it. These worldly luxuries of clothing and feasting, as well as other inducements like the beautiful palaces and gardens they visit later in Palermo, are to be shunned as temptations to Christianity. The good Muslim must also be watchful to guard against Christians who would appear to trap him with their courteous and friendly attitudes. In the case described above, the reader wonders to what extent Ibn Jubayr himself felt that temptation of a luxurious lifestyle, for he devotes much space to its description and allure, making his prayer for protection at the end seem almost like an afterthought.

In these instances, Ibn Jubayr has generally portrayed Christians as representative of wrongdoing (limited to taking Muslim lands), temptation, and an impure way of life. He does not touch specifically on their sins or wrong beliefs (except calling them polytheists) but rather on the sin into which they could lead a Muslim.⁴⁶ Ibn Jubayr does not categorize Christians as

46. The polytheism of Christians alleged by Ibn Jubayr refers to the doctrine of the Trinity,

evil people; when he encounters a Christian who helps them, he gives the Christian his due in his text. The most striking example of this acknowledgment occurs when the Norman King of Sicily, William II, rescues the penniless Muslims of Ibn Jubayr's stranded ship. During a terrible storm, Ibn Jubayr, his Muslim companions, and over two thousand Christian pilgrims are stranded at sea half a mile from the city of Messina where the king was visiting. The king learns of the situation and comes down to the shore to watch as Christian boats go out to rescue the passengers. The captains of the rescue boats charge exorbitant rescue fees, and the Muslims will not be able to afford their deliverance. King William, observing them and learning their story, orders their rescue to be paid from his own pockets, thereby saving all the Muslims on the ship. Despite Ibn Jubayr considering all Christians as enemies, he acknowledges that the presence of the Christian king was an act of God's grace, for otherwise he and his companions would have been robbed or enslaved (491-2; 338).⁴⁷ Their stay in Messina after the shipwreck likewise presents a contradictory picture: it is a city of filth, unbelief, and luxurious commodities. Notably, however, "Día y noche estás constantemente seguro, aunque seas extraño de rostro, de maneras y de lengua" ("your days and nights in this town you will pass in full security, even though your countenance, your manners and your tongue are strange"; 492; 339). In these situations, Ibn Jubayr has observed the goodness of some Christians in their treatment of Muslim

the belief that in the unified Godhead there are three distinct persons, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This idea may have bothered Ibn Jubayr more than an Eastern Muslim, for example, due to his growing up and serving under the Almohads, a group characterized by strict monotheism.

47. A paper by P. S. van Koningsveld discusses the situation of Muslim slaves and captives who lived under Christian masters in medieval Western Europe. Especially interesting is his research into the roles of learned captive Muslims who transmitted linguistic, religious, and scientific ideas among the Christian communities in which they lived. Additionally, the article speaks of the juridical status of captive Muslims and the institution of redemption. The redeeming of captives by paying great sums of money is a topic that Ibn Jubayr frequently mentions in his journey through the Mediterranean.

strangers, but he does not waver in his belief that Muslims should remain apart from them and not be subject to their rule.

I would like to offer one final example of the complex situation of Muslims and Christians in the contested Mediterranean territories. Ibn Jubayr's passages concerning the life of Muslims within King William's court and Norman Sicily in general has attracted much attention.⁴⁸ The pilgrim reveals that King William, who reads and writes Arabic, has filled his court with Muslims: pages, eunuchs, handmaidens, concubines, ministers, chamberlains, physicians, astrologers, and even the head cook are Muslims, and Ibn Jubayr relates that King William looks after them quite assiduously (494-5; 340-1). Of course, their faith may not be practiced publicly in court, but King William knows their religion and does not inhibit them. The pilgrims hear it told that when a great earthquake occurred in Sicily, King William went wandering around his palace, where he "no oía sino a sus mujeres y a sus *fityan* invocando a Dios y a su Enviado" ("heard nothing but cries to God and His Prophet from his women and pages"; Ibn Jubayr 496; 341). The Muslims crying out to God were frightened when they saw that King William had observed them, but the monarch tranquilly told them: "Invocad, pues, cada uno de vosotros al que adore, aquel cuya religión sigáis" ("Let each invoke the God he worships, and those that have faith shall be comforted"; Ibn Jubayr 496; 341). Ibn Jubayr also relates some of the covert manners which the Muslim servants employ in order to carry out their religious duties. When a time of prayer arrives, for example, they slip out of the chamber one by one so that they may pray unmissed by their masters (Ibn Jubayr 497; 343).

That which Ibn Jubayr encounters in his travels through the Levant and the

48. See, for example, Karla Mallette's *The Kingdom of Sicily, 1100-1250: A Literary History* for a thorough explanation of the unique cultural and political history of that kingdom, especially pp. 1-16. Mallette also gives a short introduction to Ibn Jubayr's time spent in Sicily and provides an English translation of his account from that period of his journey.

Mediterranean is jarring to him as he observes a complex space of Christians and Muslims living together, in greater and lesser degrees of harmony, practicality, and sometimes friendship. His reactions to a world that is no longer black and white, but rather gray, vary from astonishment to reluctant fascination to dismay and anger. His feelings against the intermingling of the two religious groups may have been compounded by his recent pilgrimage. Having experienced such spiritual highs at Islam's holiest sites may have reinforced Ibn Jubayr's resolution against relationships with Christians. Furthermore, an eight-month stay in the spiritually focused, religiously homogeneous environment of Mecca might have caused the pilgrim to experience something of a shock once he ventured out to Crusader Syria and the Mediterranean.

A second explanation for Ibn Jubayr's reaction of recoil from Christian society and customs goes back to his religious background. Part of Ibn Jubayr's discomfort in these multicultural and multi-faith lands may have stemmed from his upbringing under the radical Almohad Empire. As discussed previously, the Almohads reacted against perceived religious and moral laxity, both in Al-Andalus and in Baghdad. In Al-Andalus they treated *dhimmi* (protected non-Muslims in Islamic lands) more harshly than their Almoravid predecessors, forcing Jews to convert, for instance, and killing them if they resisted. A similar, but less fanatical, concern about the cohabitation of distinct religious groups shows up in Ibn Jubayr's discussion of the mixing of Christians and Muslims that he finds in Syria and in the Mediterranean. Furthermore, his voyage places him at the very heart of the contested lands of the Crusades, where Christian forces had established Crusader states from the late 1090s onward. Naturally, Ibn Jubayr reacts as one wronged by foreign invaders, but he may also be dispirited at the internal disunity of his Muslim brethren and the lack of a cohesive response to Christian Crusaders. It would be just two more years before his hope in Saladin came to fruition with the sultan's 1187 victory over the

Christian leaders of the Kingdom of Jerusalem.

With regard to Ibn Jubayr's time amongst Christians in the Mediterranean, Netton concludes that

We may identify in the person of Ibn Jubayr a basic gut reaction: Ibn Jubayr did not really like Christians or Christianity. It is true that he may, on occasion, admire individual Christian people or their actions, but the Crusading milieu and his own religious upbringing and environment prove too strong to disguise Ibn Jubayr's fundamental attitude: Christianity is intrinsically the enemy from every point of view, whether it be moral, spiritual or physical. ("Basic Structures" 218)

This conclusion oversimplifies the complicated experiences that Ibn Jubayr had while travelling through Christian lands and observing their relationships with Muslim neighbors. It is true that Ibn Jubayr appears not to like Christians, but I disagree with Netton's subsequent conclusion that "Christianity is intrinsically the enemy." Ibn Jubayr does not paint a simple dichotomy of good Muslims and evil Christians. I have pointed out several instances in which he recognizes problems of his co-religionists as well as some positive attributes of Christians. Furthermore, Ibn Jubayr's insistence on deprecating Christians and Christian symbols (particularly the Cross) may be a conscious attempt on the writer's part to reinforce for his readers his own orthodoxy.⁴⁹ It is possible that Ibn Jubayr expresses himself more strongly against Christians than he really feels in order to "prove" himself to his Muslim reader. What the voyager really experiences in the Mediterranean is a confrontation with an outside group that can no longer be ignored. With the change of rulers and conquerors from Muslims to Christians and back again, the two religious groups are at each other's doorsteps, as it were, and this is a disturbing spectacle for Ibn

49. Regarding the use of Christian symbols in Ibn Jubayr's text, see Ian Richard Netton, "Basic Structures and Signs of Alienation in the *Rihla* of Ibn Jubayr."

Jubayr. As Bernard Lewis has argued, Muslims in insulated lands, away from borders shared by both religions, could have imagined Christians in Western Europe as backwater infidels who offered little culturally, economically, and religiously to interest them. The caveat to this general principle arises with the traveller who comes face-to-face with another people and realizes that the issue is more complex than first imagined. The Christians of Ibn Jubayr's account are no longer those inferior beings easily dismissed from thought. On the contrary, Ibn Jubayr spends quite a bit of time thinking about them, or more precisely, trying *not* to think about them and the temptation they pose to good Muslim believers.

Conclusion

I have endeavored to situate the travel accounts of Abu Hamid al-Gharnati and Ibn Jubayr within the context of their medieval co-religionists and the general worldview of Muslims during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Since Abu Hamid, in particular, and Ibn Jubayr, to a lesser extent, are exceptional among their Muslim peers for the travels they made abroad and the records they made of those trips, I have wished to examine how travel affected their opinions about and interest in the outside world. I conclude that travel is the catalyst by which Abu Hamid and Ibn Jubayr break with supposed Islamic disinterest in non-Muslim lands. Outside Al-Andalus and outside the realm of Islam, the travellers are forced to confront those who differ from themselves. They are exposed to greater divergences in beliefs, customs, and ways of life and acquire a more complicated, nuanced view of the world because of that exposure. Travel, and the ensuing liminal state of the displaced voyager, destabilizes the paradigm of ethnocentricity.

Both Abu Hamid and Ibn Jubayr first break with the mold by simply journeying outside

their homes and their Muslim communities at large. Abu Hamid's interest in the foreign land is evidenced by his concern for recording in detail unfamiliar customs, practices of justice and religion, and all aspects related to trade and commerce. In Abu Hamid's case, this is the extent to which he shows concern for other ways of life. With regards to religious questions, he carries with him fundamental orthodox Muslim practices that symbolically and spiritually tie him to his homeland. It is through these practices, some of which he institutes in non-Muslim territories, that he establishes continuity between the home world and the foreign land. From his liminal position as traveller, he incorporates himself into new communities in a way that stands in contrast to that of Pero Tafur or Clavijo, for instance. Abu Hamid does not adopt foreign customs for himself; rather, he brings to his new acquaintances unknown practices that he introduces within their communities. Despite his interest in the trade, ways of life, and systems of governance of foreigners, Abu Hamid reports on non-Islamic faiths (almost exclusively Christianity) only when it is directly relevant to chronicling his success in bringing fringe communities in line with orthodox Muslim practices.

Ibn Jubayr's experience abroad is much more uneasy than that of Abu Hamid as he discovers schism and immoral behavior among his co-religionists as well as the situation, disturbing to him, of Christian and Muslim coexistence in the Levant and the Mediterranean. As a journeyer outside Al-Andalus and the larger area of the Maghreb, Ibn Jubayr is obliged to recognize the disunity that then plagued the territories of Islam in the form of heretical sects and persons who professed Islam without truly practicing it. After concluding his pilgrimage in Medina, Ibn Jubayr incorporates himself into foreign communities to an even lesser extent than does Abu Hamid. Journeying through Crusader Syria and lands like Sicily which have often changed between Muslim and Christian hands, Ibn Jubayr feels himself an outsider and does not

wish to become involved in the border situation which witnesses Christians and Muslims living together rather peaceably. Indeed, he attempts to hold on to his ideal of total separation between the two religious parties (warfare being the legitimate exception). Nonetheless, as a traveller, and in contrast to the typical ethnocentric Islamic paradigm, he is forced to turn his thoughts to these uncomfortable places of alien cultures and issues. The European is no longer an inferior outsider who can safely be ignored. On the contrary, Christians present real temptations and dangers for the Muslim who is not on his guard.

Through these two Andalusí travellers, it may be concluded that the general disinterest felt by medieval Muslims toward Christendom is modified at the individual level. It is precisely because of travel that Abu Hamid and especially Ibn Jubayr gain a more complicated, nuanced view of the world outside Islamic realms. The reactions of both men to their displacement from home tend to uphold their original worldviews with regard to the centrality of their Muslim faith to their own lives and to their vision for the world. Their journeys abroad, however, compel them to turn their minds to what lies beyond a unified and homogeneous Muslim community. For Abu Hamid, his concern is with ethnographic information of various foreign peoples, whereas Ibn Jubayr confronts a situation of Muslim and Christian coexistence which is far from his ideal. In both cases, travel is the act that alters the ethnocentric mindset and raises outside issues for the journeyers who may not have otherwise considered them. Although Abu Hamid and Ibn Jubayr do not respond to the foreign in precisely the same manner in which the Castilians Clavijo and Pero Tafur will do a few centuries later, travel affects them all, despite their differences in religious profession, historical era, and point of origin, and causes them to contemplate the outside world from a new, more nuanced perspective that allows—and even compels—them to question the realities of their own Islamic communities.

CHAPTER TWO

Encountering the Foreign in the *Libro de Alexandre* and the *Libro del Caballero Zifar* (c. 1300)

The study of the outsider, the marginal figure, or the “Other” has been a popular and productive critical tool in approaching the idea of difference, especially in psychological, political, literary, historical, and cultural investigations. In their introduction to *Marvels, Monsters, and Miracles: Studies in the Medieval and Early Modern Imaginations*, Timothy Jones and David Sprunger have pointed out how the nature of difference can be studied from small, personal scales to large, societal ones:

On the psychological level, every self defines itself by engaging an Other, some one or thing that is both attractive and repulsive, similar and different. On a larger scale, whole social groups define themselves through the same dialectical process. Asia, Africa, and the Americas all serve as Others for Europe: Jews, Muslims, Viking “heathen,” and various heretics all serve as Others for Christendom. Over the past quarter century, this concept of the Other has become one of the most commonly used tools for analyzing experiences with foreign phenomena. (xv)

In the particular context of medieval Iberia, research on the Other has tended to focus on the dynamics in play among the three principal religious and social groups present in the Iberian Peninsula in the Middle Ages: Christians, Muslims, and Jews.⁵⁰ Other contemporary studies of

50. See, for example, Hamilton, on the topic of the “go-between” in Hispania and Al-Andalus, or Gregg, for an analysis of the appearance of devils, women, and Jews in sermon *exempla*.

medieval Iberian relationships have been centered on the points of contact between the Christian kingdoms of the northern Iberian Peninsula and Muslim Al-Andalus in the south. The connections among these groups were quite complex, as there was not one simple case of Oppressor and Oppressed; rather, depending on the time and location, one group may have had more or less control or influence over another, and this imbalance was easily subject to change.

What I propose to do throughout this chapter, and indeed, the dissertation as a whole, is to look outward from the peninsular kingdoms by focusing on literature produced in medieval Iberia that deals with travellers who left their lands of origin and journeyed abroad, encountering a series of foreigners along the way. Travel provides a distinct way to evaluate the relationship between the Center, or Self, and the Other. Instead of being limited to a certain place and moment in time in which one group may predominate over another, travel allows for more negotiation and swifter change in the relationships between the traveller and the foreigner. Encounters between these two entities consist of various negotiations with regard to balance and equality in their relationships. Travellers must establish identities for themselves abroad, where they are generally unknown; foreigners must decide how to welcome or repulse strangers in their lands; and both parties must find ways to communicate and relate to each other despite differences in language, religion, and customs. These profound differences, at times sources of conflict or tension, are at other times sources of admiration and new ideas for the other party, many examples of which were discussed in Chapter One with regards to the travelogues of Abu Hamid al-Gharnati and Ibn Jubayr.

In the present chapter, I study in particular two fictional works produced in medieval Castile, the *Libro de Alexandre* and the *Libro del Caballero Zifar*. Both works feature a traveller-protagonist who journeys abroad and experiences various encounters with foreigners.

In each work, I examine the interactions between the protagonist and those he encounters along the road and in lands abroad to show that these works offer a serious argument in favor of travel abroad, exposure to the wider world, and relationships with those who are different from oneself.

It is here, during these moments of encounter between the traveller and the foreigner, that the principal ideas of the present chapter will be centered. Instead of approaching the *Libro de Alexandre* and the *Libro del Caballero Zifar* from the traditional perspectives of epic poem and chivalric novel, respectively, I wish to consider them as travel literature. A detailed investigation of how the protagonists react to and are received by foreigners will allow me to uncover nuances in the relationships between the displaced voyager and the strangers he meets and to continue to design a schema to explain in broad terms how the foreign was perceived in medieval Iberian literature.

Before looking at these specific works, it is useful here to comment on some issues of terminology. I have already noted the use of the term *Other* as it is used in some circumstances and areas of study. Some may consider it apt to use this designation in referring to the strangers whom the travellers herein studied encountered, but I prefer to use a more precise terminology, when possible, and hence will employ the more specific term “foreigner,” when appropriate.⁵¹

In the Middle Ages, as well as in modern times, there was a variety of “Others,” each differing in their degrees of strangeness and in their relationships with each other and with Western Europe.

Medieval historian Paul Freedman has commented on the prevalent use of the designation

“Other” in medieval studies:

51. “Foreigner” refers to an individual belonging to a place or country outside one’s own. Where the word “country” is used, it is in the general sense of the land where a person is born or resides. While medieval “countries” should not be understood as equivalents of modern nation-states, there of course existed limited territories governed by certain individuals or bodies which distinguished themselves from other, neighboring lands.

The Middle Ages certainly created a panoply of mistrusted and persecuted enemies—Saracens, Jews, lepers, heretics, apocalyptic peoples. But the very heterogeneity and proliferation of such despised peoples calls into question how “the Other” is to be used as a theorizing tool. Is it merely a general term for the marginal or outcast? Or does it imply a more actively sinister process whereby a formerly tolerant (or at least not savagely intolerant) society became obsessed with pollution, danger, and subversion? (3-4)

Freedman submits three fundamental reasons as to why the concept of Other is not appropriate in medieval studies, and I agree with him in his rejection of it. His first argument concerns the danger of

totalizing all unfavorable descriptions as if they fit into a single model of the alien, a tendency that has been described as ‘the fetishization of alterity.’ Jews, Saracens, monstrous races, women, homosexuals, heretics, and peasants thus are placed in a single classification as outsiders, without regard for the differences among them both intrinsically and in their representation. (9)

In other words, one problem with characterizing all non-Center groups as Other is that it obscures their individual characteristics and also their unique relationships with the dominant group. Freedman understands that the conflation of all outside groups as Other leads scholars to commit the very error they attempt to avoid:

An indiscriminate identification of all forms of otherness as constituting a universal set of signs and assumptions tends to place these groups narrowly in terms of their relation to the dominant forces in society, thus ironically reproducing the viewpoint of the dominant culture. This obscures not only the

differences among marginal groups but also their interrelation apart from the governing classes. (9-10)

Thus, in a scholar's attempt to recover marginal and outside perspectives, he still approaches those groups from a dominant position when he considers them as Other. He also fails to draw out the specificity of each group, both in their relations to the Center and in each group's relation to each other.

Freedman's second concern with the theory of the Other builds off the first. He points to the problem with "the tendency to treat *alien* or *Other* as if they were stable terms denoting complete and consistent rejection when in fact there were degrees of marginality, so much so, that seemingly contradictory positions could be held simultaneously" (10). In this way, Freedman is concerned with the multiple ways in which the dominant culture regarded various outside groups. This is a theme that I will explore in the third chapter with regard to the diverse judgments proclaimed about Muslims by authors of imaginary travel-books.

Having discerned the myriad troubles with the characterization of a homogeneous Other, Freedman lastly turns to problems scholars encounter with the representation of the dominant community when employing the idea of Other to discuss outside groups:

[A] third difficulty with an oversimplified idea of the medieval Other is that elite society is presented as unanimously and unquestioningly determined to push a variety of feared or despised peoples to the margins of the human. One can point to cracks within the unity of the dominant classes. Particularly with regard to "proximate others," such as peasants or the urban poor, there was some recognition that they might be virtuous, in fact exemplary. (11)

Thus, in the same way that the use of Other as a theoretical instrument to study marginalized

groups oversimplifies those very groups, its use also distorts the understanding of dominant groups who did not foster a single, monolithic attitude toward other peoples.

Freedman's are valid concerns indeed, and I would like to offer just two further elaborations to his excellent arguments. First, in contrast to the perception of Others as outcasts or minority groups, there were Others for European peoples who were feared while being considered superior, for example, in military or cultural terms.⁵² The Muslim armies of Al-Andalus and their war-horses, for instance, were understood by Iberian Christians to be superior to their own forces. In a similar manner, Alfonso X recognized the advanced culture and learning of Iberian Muslims and had their books translated into Castilian and Latin. Referring to groups of people as Other reinforces their supposed marginality, and this may be an inaccurate description of the relations between groups and how they perceived one another. It also simplifies the way in which some groups, as Freedman pointed out in his second argument, could be simultaneously admired and despised depending on the question at hand. Thus, in the example of Muslims and Christians in medieval Iberia, Andalusis might be acclaimed—and even imitated—for their superior culture and learning but also denigrated for being non-Christian.

Secondly, the continued use of the term Other simply underscores the supposed fundamental difference that exists between a particular group and another. The use of the term reinforces perceived inequalities and ethnocentricity by confirming differences, usually invented for political or ideological reasons on the part of dominant groups, and ignores a common humanity among all parties. Stereotypes and generalizations hold up well when one has little direct knowledge of the marginalized group, but, as will be shown throughout these pages, travel is an act that, because of its inherent interpersonal nature, succeeds in breaking down

52. The issue of superior foreign civilizations is likewise discussed in Chapter Four, in relation to Clavijo's and Tafur's experiences in alien lands.

preconceived notions of other peoples. Using the term Other to describe foreigners would imply a structure of Center and Margin. However, the traveller is already displaced; he is in a state of flux and can no longer be truly considered as Center. Consequently, the study of travel will be an important and useful tool for moving beyond stereotypes and marginalization in order to see how travellers and foreigners negotiated their identities and formed new kinds of relationships not based on supposed differences but on common points of humanity. To use the concept of Other as a theorizing tool would prove too reductive for the literature here studied; indeed, travel narratives themselves defy a simplistic view of the variety of unfamiliar peoples encountered in foreign lands.

The *Libro de Alexandre*

The first work I will consider is the *Libro de Alexandre*, a narrative poem composed by an unidentified author in the first half of the thirteenth century that relates the life and death of Alexander the Great.⁵³ Like other works of the *mester de clerecía* genre, the *Alexandre* fuses an

53. The 1934 study by Raymond Willis (*The Relationship of the Spanish Libro de Alexandre to the Alexandreis of Gautier de Châtillon*) and Michael Ian's 1970 work (*The Treatment of Classical Material in the Libro de Alexandre*) remain foundational studies for the *Libro de Alexandre*, while in recent years, there has been a variety of investigations of particular aspects of the work, ranging among gender studies (Hazbun, 2011), the role of nature (Cacho Blecua, 1994), economics (Pinet, 2006), and fantasy (Michael, 2004). Aside from these varied elements, there have been many studies dedicated to the *mester de clerecía*, the related issue of didacticism, and *cuaderna vía* poetry, in no small part due to the tantalizing second stanza of the poem: "Mester traigo feroso, non es de joglaría, / mester es sin pecado, ca es de clerezía / fablar curso rimado por la quaderna vía, / a silabas contadas ca es grant maestría" ("The craft I bring is refined, it is no minstrel's work, / a craft without fault, born of the clergy's learning: / to compose rhyming verse in the four-line form, / with counted syllables – an act of great mastery"; 2). See, for example, Willis, 1957; Abad, 1994; Arizaleta, 2000; and Arrizabalaga, 2003. Finally, the *Alexander Romance* in general has been treated from a variety of languages and perspectives. Richard Stoneman's *Alexander the Great: A Life in Legend* is an invaluable work that explores the historical Alexander's life and also studies how that life was then propagated in hundreds of legends around the world.

entertaining narrative with didactic and moral purposes. This work shows the ascent of Alexander as he consolidates his power over ever-greater regions of the world, as well as the sea and sky, and culminates in his tragic death. The *Libro de Alexandre* is centered not on any single part of Alexander's life but rather on its trajectory and his journey and specifically, the encounters and conquests that Alexander realizes throughout Greece, the Mediterranean, Asia, and India.

Before exploring in detail the importance of travel in the *Libro de Alexandre*, attention must be given to the historical context in which it was produced. The *Alexandre*, as Jesús Cañas summarizes, is believed by the majority of critics to have been produced in the first half of the thirteenth century, before the *Poema de Fernán González* (c. 1250) and before Alfonso X's ascension to the throne in 1252 (24-31). In this period, the Christian kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula were making great headway in conquering Muslim lands, aided by a state of general discord within Al-Andalus, with only the kingdom of Granada remaining in Muslim hands by the mid-thirteenth century.⁵⁴ Sancho II and Alfonso III took Muslim lands for Christian Portugal, and Fernando III of Castile, who had united León and Castile in 1230, took Córdoba in 1236, while Jaime I of Aragon took the Muslim kingdom of Valencia in 1238. A few years later, in 1246 and 1248, respectively, Fernando III went even further to win Jaén and Seville.

Although Aragonese and Catalans explored commercial and other interests in the Mediterranean, leading to more ties with the Levant, other medieval Christian kingdoms had little time for or interest in pursuing objectives outside the Peninsula (O'Callaghan, *A History of Medieval Spain* 342). The victories of the Reconquest were not without their own problems. As a reward for their aid during military campaigns, and with the goal of holding the reconquered

54. For a detailed treatment of this time, see O'Callaghan, *A History of Medieval Spain* 331-358.

Muslim lands, nobles and military Orders became enriched with large land estates in the newly conquered territories. With this new power, the nobility became more of a challenge for the monarchs and thus preoccupied them with internal affairs.

Another issue that kept Christian rulers' attention at home was the insecurity present in the newly reconquered lands. Vast numbers of Muslims still remained in these territories, and few Christians could be found to colonize them. O'Callaghan points out that with respect to the Muslims, "no serious attempt was made to convert them, to assimilate them, or to expel them; but as their loyalty was never guaranteed, they eventually joined their coreligionists in Granada and Morocco in hostilities against the Christians. The problem of the *mudéjares*, as Muslims living in Christian territory were called, was one of the chief legacies of the reconquest" (*A History of Medieval Spain* 358).

It is against this backdrop of internal preoccupations in the Iberian Peninsula that a work so outward-looking as the *Alexandre* is produced. Examining the *Libro de Alexandre* with regard to the function of travel within it will allow for a focus on the interaction between the hero and the foreigners he meets along his journeys. The *Alexandre* offers a unique commentary on relationships with foreigners and the idea of the homeland versus the foreign land. In studying the *Alexandre*, I will first consider the work as a kind of travel-book and review its depiction of the foreign land; then, I will study our hero's interactions with two groups of people he encounters, those considered his counterparts or equals and those considered inferior in status; finally, I will examine how the idea of homeland versus foreign land is continually renegotiated in the work.

Since the 1980s, critics of Spanish letters have attempted to define a travel-book genre,

with no single consensus being reached.⁵⁵ Typically, works of fiction that easily fall into other genres (such as epic poems, the *mester de clerecía*, or *novelas de caballerías*) are not considered or studied as travel-books, notwithstanding the integral presence of travel in the narration.⁵⁶ I do not claim that these kinds of fictional works or narrative poetry should be included in a canon of travel literature, especially since a definition of that genre is so elusive, but it is an oversight to ignore travel in these works, as has been done in past criticism, since it is an indispensable component of the narration.

Although the *Alexandre* is not studied as a travel-book in Miguel Ángel Pérez Priego's works, his list of characteristics of travel-books coincides quite closely with what is found in that poem. For Pérez Priego, travel books are characterized in part by the use of descriptions, by a linear narrative of the journey, and by the inclusion of wonders or marvels. Approaching the *Alexandre* from the perspective of travel literature will provide a unique way to evaluate the relationship between the Center and the "Other," that is, between Alexander and the foreigners he encounters. In this way, I am able to separate the work from its customary genre

55. Miguel Ángel Pérez Priego was one of the first to offer, in 1984, a definition of travel-books or travel literature. He points out the great variety of works that could be considered under this heading: guides and books of pilgrimage, accounts by missionaries and ambassadors, tales of explorers and adventurers, imaginary and feigned trips, and novelistic travel tales. With some exceptions, these accounts are written from the second half of the fourteenth century throughout the fifteenth. Besides these works composed in the Peninsula, there were important and influential translations of foreign travel books, such as those by Marco Polo and John Mandeville, which contributed to the development of the genre in medieval Iberia.

Arguably the most important contribution of Pérez Priego's article is that he specifically identifies characteristics and formal principles that constitute the genre. These are as follows: 1) itinerary; 2) chronological order; 3) spatial order—description of the places visited, especially cities; 4) *mirabilia*; 5) continued lineal narration, typically in the first person, which creates a sense of authenticity and verisimilitude.

For a discussion of contributions to the idea of a travel-book genre by other academics such as Carrizo Rueda, Rubio Tovar, and López Estrada, please see the Introduction of my work.

56. One recent exception to this trend is the book *Archipelagoes* by Simone Pinet, in which she studies together the genres of cartography and chivalric romances.

expectations, by going beyond the primarily didactic interpretation associated with the *mester de clerecía*.⁵⁷ Furthermore, considering the role of travel and the encounters with foreigners in this work will provide a point of comparison for the attitude toward non-Christians in Iberia at the time of the writing of the *Alexandre*.

One of the most important elements of a travel book is the description of new places, and this component is certainly found in the *Alexandre*. As we will see in non-fiction travel books, it is not necessary to describe every city encountered; attention is focused upon the most important destinations, typically renowned cities or places of narrational consequence. Likewise, in the *Alexandre*, there are five principal locations that merit extensive description: Asia, Troy, Babylon, India, and finally, the world as a whole, as seen from Alexander's position in the sky.

Alexander originally sets out from Greece in order to overthrow Darius III, the Persian emperor, and thus free his country from its servitude to that ruler. Upon arriving in Asia, the narrator interrupts Alexander's story to include a description of the region. The narrator describes the excellent natural qualities of this part of the world: there are mountains, rivers, bread and wine, elephants, good harvests, precious stones, and the waters of the four rivers of Paradise. The praise of this eastern land is extremely positive:

Vío muchas çibdades, todas bien assentadas,
montañas muy fermosas e muy bien vallejadas,
muchas buenas riberas e todas bien pobladas,
de fuentes e de prados todas bien abastadas.
Semejól que de caças nunca tan buenas vío,

57. Similarly, Julian Weiss, in his study of the *Alexandre*, offers what he terms a "bridge" in order to avoid the solely moral or solely political critical interpretations of the work by focusing in part on the role of the cleric writer and the representation of empire (111).

nin tan buena de fruta, nin de tanto buen río;
dixo entre su cuer: ‘Como creo e fío,
antes de pocos días será tod’esto mío.’
He saw many cities, all well established,
very beautiful mountains, and many fine vales,
many rich river valleys, all full of people,
and all of them abounding in springs and in meadows.
He did not think that he had ever seen
either game, fruit, or rivers so fine;
he said to himself: “As I believe and trust,
within just a few days all this will be mine.” (303-4)⁵⁸

To complement its natural beauty and richness, the narrator argues that Asia should likewise be honored and revered for being the birthplace of Christianity: the patriarchs, the prophets, the Virgin, the apostles, and Christ himself were of Asia. The narrator points out, though, that despite the fact that the Holy Church had its foundation in Asia, God raised up Europe by making Rome the head of the Christian body. After describing Asia in general, the narrator turns to listing various regions of Asia and making short remarks about each one, with much of the information proceeding from biblical sources. As one may see from these examples, the description is overwhelmingly laudatory, but the narrator does not shirk from tempering it

58. When citing a verse or stanza from the *Libro de Alexandre*, I will give the stanza number, rather than the page number, as indicated in Cañas’ edition. The same stanza numbers are used in the *Book of Alexander* by Peter Such and Richard Rabone, whence I take the English translation of this work.

with his Christian viewpoint.⁵⁹

Finally, the description of Asia also reveals another hallmark of the travel literature genre, the comparison of the unfamiliar to the home world or the known. Travellers typically describe new concepts, objects, or places with reference to their native land or that of the reader in order to translate and make knowable the unknown.⁶⁰ However, Alexander employs a different kind of comparison as he approaches Asia. Alexander speaks to his troops, disdaining Europe and looking forward to this new land: “Suéltovos Eüropa con todos sus condados, / ca yo he muy mejores emperios barruntados” (“Europe I cede to you with all of its counties, / for I have espied much finer empires”; 306). Strikingly, the comparison is not used to translate or explain a new foreign concept, but rather, Alexander appears to truly be enamored of this new land, considering it better than the one he has left: “Sabet que yo he visto tanta buena ventura / que non ha la bondat nin cabo nin mesura; / qui visto non l’oviesse teniélo por locura, / el que aquí morasse nunca verié rencura” (“I tell you that I have seen such great good fortune / that its splendour has no limit and no reckoning; / anyone who had not seen it would consider this madness; / but any man who stayed here would never feel regret”; 307).

Description again takes center stage when Alexander arrives in Troy. In his expedition into Asia on the way to Troy, battles and conquests do not serve to point out Alexander’s particular skills in warfare. Rather, he sweeps through the region, and the account of the Greeks’ victories is summed up in a few words: “Todo lo conquerién, quanto delant trobavan” (“They conquered all that they found before them”; 775). In comparison, the description of Troy is

59. Cañas points out that this process of Christianization and medievalization is common throughout the work (73).

60. In the *Embajada a Tamorlán*, for example, Clavijo writes that the giraffe has hooves like an ox. Likewise, in his travel writings, Pero Tafur compares European and Eastern cities with Seville and Córdoba.

much more involved and presents a rather touristic view of the city. Alexander visits famous places mentioned in Classical literature, such as those in Homer's poems, and makes offerings and processions at the sepulcher of Achilles. The expedition to Troy also allows the narrator to place in Alexander's mouth one of the great digressions of the work, the story of the Trojan War. The focus on the appearance of the city instead of on Alexander's military prowess lends support to viewing Alexander as a traveller, distinct from his roles as conqueror and king.

Another famous digression of the work is the description of Babylon, which is not unlike descriptions in non-fiction travel books. The narrator gives high praise of the city and describes it in paradisaical terms, with reference to its natural surroundings, its inhabitants, and the construction of the city itself. The temperate climate produces an abundance of food and the excellent natural resources, such as fragrant trees, spices, rivers, fish, healthy water, and precious stones, enrich the lives of the inhabitants. They lead comfortable lives, free from suffering, and poor and rich alike go about well dressed. There are so many noble citizens and knights that the narrator must actually refrain from describing them further, lest he be accused of exaggeration. As for the city, the narrator speaks of the grandeur of its walls, towers, and gates, and shows that it is modern and thriving by speaking of its active harbor and maritime trade.

After the digression of the description of Babylon, the narrator returns to describe Alexander's entrance into the city, and that narration provides an equally positive evaluation. The welcome made by the citizens to Alexander is second in joy only to the joy of paradise (1539). Typical travel-book description follows with a detailed account of various kinds of people in the kingdom, ranging from children to senators, and a sensorial description of spices, textiles, entertainment, and music by minstrels. When Alexander returns to Babylon at end of book, he will be greeted with the same joyous welcome.

Thinking back on Castile during the time when the *Alexandre* was most likely composed, it is easy to imagine that the cleric author may have desired to draw a comparison to the way in which Christian kings of the Reconquest should or would be received in Al-Andalus. There are serious doubts as to whether the conquered Muslims would react in a manner similar to that of the Babylonians, but the Castilian authorities would have certainly wanted to promote that image, thus garnering support for their cause and presenting themselves as welcomed “friends” in a different land. It is notable that the *Alexandre* promotes this image of a conqueror precisely in one of the most important periods of the Reconquest.

Alexander’s campaigns in India, during his pursuit of Porus, allow for additional laudatory description common in travel-books. Like the descriptions of Asia and Babylon, there is high praise for Porus’ palaces in India. The site where the palaces are situated is flat and fertile, abounding with game, and of a temperate climate; nearby mountains provide a place for the cattle to graze. To complement the natural beauty of the landscape, the palaces and royal buildings are strong, well built, and made from gold, marble, and crystal. Vineyards, precious stones, and songbirds surround the area. The whole description speaks to the richness and beauty of Porus’ kingdom; indeed, it is pictured as a paradise, where the cares of the world do not exist: “mientre omne biviesse en aquella sabor, / non avrié set nin fambre, nin ira nin dolor” (“As long as a man lived amidst that pleasure / he would have not thirst nor hunger, rage nor grief”; 2140).

However, not everything encountered abroad is beneficial or pleasant; travellers faced veritable dangers on the road, just as Alexander finds after leaving the Indian palaces. He and his men undertake a journey in order to catch up with fleeing Porus, but the trip is long and full of very real threats to the Grecian army. One fundamental problem is the great heat and dust

combined with a lack of potable water, which affects all the men as well as their beasts. Furthermore, the road is home to various dangerous animals, such as serpents, rats, insects, bats, wild pigs, and other savage beasts (2147). This negative description of the untamed country stands in contrast to the overwhelmingly positive portrayal of the city and the “civilized” or tamed lands surrounding it.⁶¹

Throughout most of the poem, the poet’s narrative has followed fairly closely the historical account of Alexander the Great’s travels and military campaigns abroad. Toward the end of the work, however, the instances of the marvelous and wondrous increase dramatically, as is shown in Alexander’s expeditions to the sea and the sky. This does not detract from the consideration of Alexander as a travel-book; many writers, such as Pero Tafur and Marco Polo, also included descriptions of the marvelous in order to entertain the reader or give account of fantastical legends. Like other travel writers, the narrator of the *Alexandre* shows uncertainty with respect to the truthfulness of these expeditions but relates the account nonetheless. Rubio Tovar affirms that medieval travellers in general wanted to preserve the faithfulness of their stories and insisted on confirming only that which they had seen with their own eyes (27). For marvelous things unseen, travellers often clarified that they only “heard it said.” In this way, the Castilian poet is able to preserve the realism of the tale while still entertaining with a grand story.

After Alexander’s visit to the sea, where he spends two weeks observing the ways of life

61. Mary Campbell, in *The Witness and the Other World: Exotic European Travel Writing, 400-1600*, has tackled the issue of how the East was perceived in various genres of European writings. She has plotted a trajectory in portrayals of the East showing that first, the East was essentially “Elsewhere,” that is, a place that could harbor all positive and negative legends about any distant land. Then, as more travellers physically visited the East, it was divested of the sacred or grotesque extremes that had been attributed to it and became more “palpable.” Finally, Campbell argues that the East was “naturalized” by the realism of John of Mandeville. I believe the treatment of the East in the *Alexandre* falls into the second phase of this trajectory. While there is a relation of marvels and some exaggeration of lands akin to Paradise, the *Alexandre* generally offers a more serious look at foreign relations.

of sea creatures from within an enclosed glass apparatus, the narrator summarizes some of the other marvelous occurrences and beings that the Greeks have encountered, such as the phoenix and two marvelous trees that prophecy for Alexander his future death by treachery.⁶² Among the monsters that they fight, there are mountain people who live like beasts, covered in hair, grazing on flowers, going about unclothed, and sleeping on the hard earth. It is impossible to communicate with them, as they speak no common language. The Greeks are also said to have encountered the Acephali (or Blemyah), the mythological race of men having no heads, with their eyes and mouths located on the chest. In these scenes, the narrator departs from the historical facts of Alexander's life and indulges the reader with fantastical legends of what is to be found in the East. This fluidity between the historical and the marvelous calls to mind written accounts of real journeys and experiences abroad that simultaneously contain, to varying degrees, elements of the fantastical.

The emphasis on the wondrous, together with Alexander's rise in power, culminates in the final conquest of the sky.⁶³ Using a pair of griffins, Alexander constructs a flying apparatus in order to be able to observe the entire world from the air. In this way, he becomes the conqueror of a world considered at that time inaccessible to mankind (Cañas 549). As in travel-books, there is a description of this important part of his journey. From the sky, he observes seas, river sources, ships, and the most advantageous places from where to enter and exit Africa for his future military campaigns. The discussion of Alexander's conquest of the sky leads the

62. Just as Darius is betrayed by his men, Alexander too will die from poison administered by his aide Antipater.

63. For more information on the function of the fantastic in the *Alexandre*, see Corfis, who argues that the fantastic worlds in the work are presented in a verisimilar manner and as part of the life of the protagonist, so that the reader simply accepts the code of that world. Furthermore, the fantastic world is a place where the poet may safely critique the ills of contemporary society without having to directly fault the reader.

narrator to a description of the world based on the *mappa mundi* contained in the *Etymologiae* of Isidore of Seville (Cañas 550-1). In accordance with the function of *mappae mundi*, Asia, Africa, and Europe are not described objectively or scientifically; rather, the observations illustrate medieval knowledge and principles. In the *Alexandre*, the three continents are described in accordance with their religious significance: Asia is the place of the death of Christ, and hence, the salvation of all peoples; Africa is home to a feared people, the Muslims, who pray to their honored prophet Mohammed; finally, Europe is of the Catholic faith and where Peter and Paul made their home.

One final example will serve to illustrate another way in which the *Alexandre* approaches the travel-book genre. The narrative technique of delaying the climax of a story is seen both in travel literature and in the *Libro de Alexandre*. The *Embajada a Tamorlán*, written by the ambassador-traveller Ruy González de Clavijo in 1406, is a detailed account of his diplomatic mission to Samarkand by order of Enrique III of Castile. In this work, treated in Chapter Four, the Castilian ambassadors to Timur, the Muslim Mongol ruler, travel toward Samarkand at the same that Timur is returning there also, but as he is always a city ahead of them, their meeting is continually postponed. The expectation of encountering the suzerain and then being unable to do so pushes the climax of the book to their final, long-awaited meeting. Likewise, the encounter with Darius in the *Libro de Alexandre* is always just on the horizon, long-desired and yet unattainable, a situation that provides narrative tension. Alexander pursues Darius and almost captures him several times, but Darius elusively avoids him to the point that their face-to-face encounter is made forever impossible by Darius' death. Through these descriptions of cities, lands, and other important moments in Alexander's journeys, as well as through the inclusion of linear narration, the marvelous, and certain narrative techniques, the *Libro de Alexandre* may

indeed be considered as a kind of travel-book.

Consequently, it is by way of Alexander's role as a traveller—and not just as a conquering king sweeping over the world—that his relationships with the people he encounters along the road may be better evaluated. One group of relationships that Alexander enjoys is with those whom he considers his counterparts or equals. These include Darius, Darius' family, and Porus. Alexander's relationship with Darius is quite fascinating, in no small part due to how it evolves over time, like those relationships between travellers and the foreigners whom they meet abroad.⁶⁴ As a young and recently crowned king, Alexander has not yet fully established himself or his reputation throughout the world when he first shares exchanges with Darius by way of messenger. Darius characterizes Alexander as an impertinent child, saying, “Eres niño de días, de seso bien menguado, / andas con grant locura, serás y mal fallado” (“You are just a child in age and lacking in sense; / you are committing great folly and will suffer here for it”; 781) and attempts to lessen the confidence of Alexander's soldiers: “Varones que andades en tan fiera locura: / escuchades un moço loco e sin mesura” (“You knights who are behaving with such wild folly / and heed a foolish boy wanting in judgement”; 813). Alexander, for his part, taunts Darius as a talker, emphasizing his own penchant for action rather than diplomacy. Throughout the work, Darius is extolled by the narrator who calls him “buen emperador” (“good Emperor”; 847) and dedicates many verses to the description and praise of his riches, his troops, the beauty of his family, and his grand retinue. Both Cañas and Weiss have pointed out the parallels

64. Julian Weiss has also written about the relationship between Darius and Alexander. Although I argue that it is a relationship of equals, Weiss perceives an “oedipal conflict” and a father-son dynamic due to the various parallels drawn in the text between the two men. Weiss seems to interpret their relationship as symbolic and impersonal, whereas I find that there is a large degree of affection shown between the two kings, which demonstrates that the connection is more than just a narrational ploy. In any case, it is certainly a relationship that overcomes any cultural or ethnic differences existing between the two.

between Alexander and Darius in which the former is a successor to the latter and his tragic fate. These parallels also function to magnify Alexander since all of Darius' wealth and greatness will pass on to Alexander, his heir.

After the first battle with Darius, in which the Persian king is forced to flee and Alexander captures his wife and children, the relationship between the two great men evolves and becomes more respectful, in contrast to the haughty words that characterized their first exchange. When Darius' wife dies in captivity, Alexander cannot do more to prove his admiration toward the Persian king: "Pesól' a Alexandre e fizo muy grant planto, / por la su madre misma, non faría atanto" ("This grieved Alexander and he wept bitterly; / for his own mother he would not have felt so much"; 1236). Alexander's sadness is contagious, and all his men mourn the loss of this foreign woman. Endrona is placed in a beautiful marble tomb and greatly honored at her burial: "Fue el cuerpo guardado de mucho buen convento, / fue luego balsamado de preçioso unguento; / fizo el rey sobr'ella tamaño complimiento / que duró quinze días el su soterramiento" ("Her body was watched over by many fine clerics / and was embalmed at once with precious ointment; / the King paid her such great respect and honour / that her burial lasted a full fifteen days"; 1238). After hearing the account of the honor with which Alexander treated his wife, Darius prays to God that if he is destined to lose his kingdom, that it go to Alexander, a worthy monarch, thus emphasizing the equality of the two men and legitimizing Alexander's war against Persia.

Although Alexander respects Darius and honors his family, he still retains his belief that Darius' Persians lands truly belong to the Greek states.⁶⁵ When Darius sends messengers to sue

65. The historical death of Darius and Alexander's victory over the Persian Empire in 330 B.C. are the culmination of conflicts between Persia and the Greek city-states dating back two centuries, to around 547 B.C.

for peace from Alexander (1262), Alexander rejects his offer, saying the money and lands offered to him by Darius already rightfully belong to him. Despite this insistence on Greek claims to Persia, Darius is in no way construed as an evil king or as an “Other” who incites fear or disdain. Rather, similarities abound between Darius and Alexander, and their relationship is one of equality, even though they must battle on behalf of their respective kingdoms. During their second military encounter, the narrator gives them both high praise: “juntárons’ en el campo los dos enperadores, / nunca se ajuntaron tales dos nin mejores” (“the two emperors met on the field of battle: / never did two such fine men come together”; 1338). At other moments, he refers to both in positive terms: Alexander is “el buen rey acabado (“the fine, accomplished King”; 1599) and “de grant mesura” (“of great discretion”; 1590), and Darius is an “omne bueno” (“good man”; 1642) and is loyal, compassionate, and confident in God. Also during this second encounter, it is seen even more clearly that the relationship between Alexander and Darius is not one of Good versus Evil. Darius certainly is not a threatening monster or an evil force to be overcome; instead, he is shown as loyal and merciful to his men. Upon crossing a river, he has the opportunity to tear the bridge down, so that Alexander will not be able to follow him. However, as this would mean the sacrifice of his own men who are following behind him, he chooses not to. Darius’ eventual downfall, then, is not a punishment by God for his sins; rather, his death is simply attributed to “Fortune.”

The importance of the conflict over Greek land and its rightful owners would not have gone unnoticed in thirteenth-century Castile. In *Reconquest and Crusade in Medieval Spain*, Joseph O’Callaghan has shown that the Christian kings at war with Muslims portrayed themselves as heirs to the Visigoth reign and thus as the true rulers of Hispania in opposition to the Muslim usurpers (3-9). Likewise, Julian Weiss has pointed out that the *Libro de Alexandre*

can be understood both in universal and local terms. Part of that universal outlook is referred to in Weiss' chapter dedicated to the *Alexandre* when he points to the parallels between the Greek situation in the poem and the Iberian context at the time of the work's composition:

Alexander's first conquests are undertaken in order to unify the various Greek city states and to free them from foreign control. The pacification first of Athens, then of Thebes, is represented not so much as the annexation of autonomous territories as the recovery of a larger political whole. The idea that Greece, like the Visigothic Hispania, was once a unified kingdom is never explicitly stated, but the analogy is implicit in the manner of representation: the language of betrayal that runs throughout this part of the poem presupposes the existence of a territory whose political unity has been splintered by a combination of internal conflict, greed, treachery, and foreign oppression ('premia'). The recovery of Greece, with Corinth at its head, becomes a moral imperative as the precondition for future expansion. (124-5)

Thus, a work set in a time and place far from those in which it was produced becomes very much relevant to the contemporary reader, who would have noticed the resemblances between the two situations. Furthermore, the reader may even have been induced to see his Christian king as another Alexander, who would be welcomed into Al-Andalus, a land rightfully belonging to Hispania—and Christendom—as a whole.

The admiration and respect that exist between Alexander and Darius are lastly apparent in the final days of Darius' life. When Alexander learns of Darius' captivity at the hands of traitors, his first reaction is to go to his aid. Although Alexander is not able to prevent his death, he honors him as a brother and as an equal king: "Fizo el rey grant duelo por el emperador, / —si

fuesse su hermano, non lo farié mejor” (“For the Emperor, the King made a great lament / —had he been his brother he could have made no greater”; 1772). With many tears, Alexander orders rich vestments, a new crown, and a scepter for his funeral, offering promises to look after his children. Alexander affirms that he did not want to destroy Darius as he did some of the other governors and cities on his Asian tour. Rather, he admired him as an equal and for being bold enough to challenge him: “Dario, tod’ el tu preçio siempre será contado, / sól de lidiar comigo tú fuste tan osado, / non te cae en onta maguer fuste rancado, / ca yo só Alexandre, el del nombre pesado” (“Darius, may your fame be told of for ever, / such was your bravery just in fighting with me! / Let it not be to your shame that you were worsted, / for I am Alexander, whose name is renowned”; 1783). Instead of wanting to defeat him, Alexander says he would have honored him and made him his second throughout all his empire: “Avriás a mi señoero por señoer a catar, / podríás de mí ayuso el imperio mandar, / yo a ti te lo diera todo a ordenar, / de ti nunca querría otra renta levar” (“You would have had to look on me alone as your lord; / and under me you could have commanded your empire. / I would have allowed you to be master of it all / never wanting to make any further charges”; 1779). Finally, the narrator relates that Darius “non seríé más honrado entre sus crīazones” (“among his own vassals he would not have been more honoured”; 1790). In other words, among Alexander and his retinue, Darius is as with his own people. There is no longer any kind of ethnic or “national” separation between the two men. Although they made assumptions about one another at the beginning of their relationship, once they met each other in battle, their relationship evolved. That relationship was not based on any generalizations made by either Persians or Greeks, but on a personal knowledge of the other that cut through stereotypes and ethno-political conflicts to the true character of each man. Alexander had originally set out to battle Darius because of the historical conflict between

Greece and Persia. For each man, the other symbolized the danger of the foreign: Darius was the embodiment of foreign power in Alexander's home world, and for Darius, Alexander was a bold youth demanding his attention with arguments about Greek independence from Persia. Later, however, they both came to hold a deep respect for the other, so much so that Alexander is portrayed as the rightful and worthy heir to Darius' empire.

Alexander's relationship with Porus, king of India, is similar to that between Alexander and Darius, although it is not as fully developed in the narration. Porus is described in terms similar to those used to describe Darius. He is a "good king" (2063, 2086), a "grant omne, [que] avié grant corazón" ("huge man who had a great heart"; 2025). In addition to these qualities of his character, he is an excellent knight as well: "Poro avié grant cuerpo e muy grant valentía, / non yazié en un omne mayor cavallería" ("Porus, strong of body, was a man of great valour, / and no man was richer in the skills of knighthood"; 2196). This courage is shown on the battlefield during the first encounter with Alexander: even when his men begin to flee and are too afraid to heed his command to hold their positions, Porus continues fighting. The Indian king eventually retreats from this battle when Alexander's beloved horse, Bucephalus, dies. Alexander pursues him, and finally they engage in one-on-one combat; Porus has suggested this manner to determine the winner, rather than spilling needless blood from their troops. After Alexander defeats Porus, the latter asks for mercy, and Alexander, moved by compassion, readily speaks to him "vierbo de amistad" ("words of friendship"; 2208). After this battle, the relationship between Alexander and Porus is one of friendship and respect. Alexander admires that Porus "de seso e d' esfuerço fue omne acabado" ("was a man of consummate wisdom and valour"; 2215), and to honor this perfect man, Alexander bestows upon him a larger empire than he previously possessed.

To sum up, Alexander, while portrayed as the world's greatest conqueror, shows a different side of his character in his relationships with his equals. He is magnanimous with both Darius and Porus, respecting and honoring the former in death as a brother and increasing the empire of the latter. Alexander is steadfast in his belief that it is his duty to regain Greek lands from Persia, and he is confident in his ability as a ruler. Despite his self-confidence and his successes, he does not put on airs of superiority with Darius or Porus. Rather, those relationships are characterized by equality, respect, and even friendship.

Aside from these two relationships, the Greek king experiences few, if any, other inter-personal contacts. This, of course, would not be the norm for the average medieval traveller. Since Alexander is the most powerful man in the world, has an army of men to do his bidding, and a reputation that precedes him, he is not obligated to make the kinds of social contacts that other travellers would find necessary in order to meet basic needs like shelter and sustenance. Since the poet emphasizes Alexander's greatness and larger-than-life achievements, perhaps in order to underscore the tragedy of his pride and subsequent downfall, few persons the king meets are worthy enough to stand on par with him. Thus, most other victories that Alexander realizes are reviewed quickly and without great detail in the narration (for example, don Nicolao and King Métades).

Despite the lack of personal connections established between Alexander and anyone besides Darius, his family, and Porus, there is a surprising amount of discussion in the poem about the idea of foreigners, their customs, and the merits and drawbacks of both the homeland and the foreign land. As mentioned previously, Alexander initially shows partiality to Greece, the nation he has unified under his control; he is their representative and leader in their effort to take back their independence from Persia. When Darius desires peace and offers to restore

certain lands to Alexander, the Greek king declines. This rejection of Darius' offer stems from a belief that the territory in question already belongs to Greece, and thus Darius is not in a position to offer them. In this scene, the distinction between Greece and Persia is made, centered on the problematic issue of territorial rights.

The concept of difference is also mentioned in passing in the story of the Tower of Babylon and the creation of many new languages. The narrator mentions that during the reign of the queen who founded Babylon, when the inhabitants could not understand one another, “los unos a los otros teniense por salvajes” (“they reckoned each other to be savages”; 1519). A barrier in language is not just an obstacle to overcome for practical purposes, but rather, it identifies the other language speaker negatively, as savage. Basic differences in language, religion, appearance, and so on are common ways of marginalizing other peoples, and yet, in the *Libro de Alexandre*, it occurs in only a minute degree, as I will discuss presently. “Otherness” is diffused rather than exacerbated; differences, particularly between Greeks and Persians, are pointed out at times, but the text as a whole dismantles negative generalizations.

Indeed, the discussion of the foreign goes far beyond a black and white categorization of Greeks versus Persians, or an “us versus them” mentality. Critics have pointed out how the East could be depicted as negatively monstrous and also be categorized as excessively positive, with relation to the exotic and the marvelous.⁶⁶ The *Libro de Alexandre* gravitates toward a more realistic middle ground, not falling into extreme generalizations of the foreigner on either end of the scale. In my point of view, this position is taken because travel and interaction with the foreigner is central to the poem. Were the stories in the *Alexandre* simply related as legends or hearsay, one could expect to find more instances of exoticism and the marvelous. However, the

66. See, for example, Campbell's second chapter, “The Fabulous East.”

narration relates places and people with whom Alexander actually comes into contact and so they are related more faithfully.

Alexander tends to be the most optimistic among his men with respect to spending time away from Greece. Several times, he must show himself empathetic to his troops and convince them that he, too, misses the family and home he left behind. However, he stresses, what they are leaving behind does not compare to that which awaits them abroad. In a new land, they will gain honor, wealth, and fame. Alexander seems not to suffer the isolation of the traveller who has left his own world. In contrast to his companions who bewail abandoned Greece, he, the ideal soldier and commander, is perfectly happy in any place: “Grant cosa fue del rey e de su coraçón, / nunca tornó cabeça nin dexó su razón; / o serié tan alegre en su tierra o non, / non semejó en cosa a nul otro barón” (“There was something extraordinary about the King and his emotions: / he never once turned his head or abandoned his convictions, / wherefore he would be as joyful, whether in his land or not; / in the way he acted he was like no other man”; 262). Like another Moses, Alexander is able to look ahead to the Promised Land, whereas his men, like the biblical Israelites, would prefer to stay in the land they know rather than undertake a perilous and uncertain journey abroad. This scene not only underscores the tension between homeland and foreign land, but it aggrandizes Alexander, the fearless leader who embraces the unknown.

In looking at the composition of the armies in the *Libro de Alexandre*, it becomes clear that the nature of difference and foreignness is quite relative. When Alexander first kills one of Darius’ great men, Memnon, the Persians begin to take Alexander seriously, and in this part of the narration, the Persians are referred to as “bárbaros” (825). The Spanish word *bárbaro* comes from the Latin *barbarus*, meaning barbarian, uncivilized person, or foreigner (that is, not Greek

or Roman); the Latin word originated in the Greek word for *foreigner*.⁶⁷ Although the narrator does not speak disparagingly of the Persians or implicate stronger negative connotations of the word *bárbaro* (such as cruel or savage), the word used is not entirely benign. Non-Greeks are not simply different yet equal; rather, they are referred to with a pejorative term.

It is interesting to consider this dynamic of countryman/foreigner or civilized/uncivilized against the backdrop of the Reconquest at the time of this work's production in Castile. On the one hand, the Christians of Iberia viewed their religion as the one true way to God and considered the Muslim faith errant and in need of eradication from the Peninsula. On the other hand, it was clear that the Muslims possessed a much more highly developed culture and civilization, as evidenced in part by Alfonso X's desire to gather and translate the vast founts of knowledge and science held by those neighbors to the south. Thus, the recognition of the superior Andalusí culture complicated the issue of Reconquest. Similarly, Alexander does not encounter a weak or uncultivated adversary in the Persian forces; rather, he recognizes Darius' greatness and accordingly pays him tribute and respect.

The attitude of superiority of the Greeks toward the foreign Persians is not unilateral, however. When Parmenio advocates a certain military strategy to Alexander, he says that the Persians will fight valiantly because they would rather die on the battlefield than be dishonored by foreigners, that is, the Greeks: "más querrán en el campo seer descabeçados / que de gentes estrañas seer tan ahontados" ("they will prefer to die, their heads hewn off, on battle's field, / than be so put to shame by men from foreign lands; 1316). The dishonor lies not in a simple defeat in battle but rather in defeat specifically by foreigners. Thus both the Greeks and the

67. Interestingly, the Latin word *hostis* may refer to an enemy (a public enemy, as of the state) as well as to a foreigner or stranger. That which is foreign or different is construed as negative, hostile, and contrary to one's own interests.

Persians display a general mistrust and contempt toward the other based in part on their condition as foreign, as different from their own people.

What complicates this seemingly simple opposition of Greeks versus Persians is the fact that neither group is very homogeneous within itself. Although the narrator does not speak to the various backgrounds of Alexander's soldiers, they may have been Macedonians, as was Alexander, or from other territories and city-states brought together in the League of Corinth under Alexander's father, Philip II. Likewise, Darius' troops are made up of soldiers and mercenaries from various lands under Persian control. Parmenio, after telling Alexander that Darius' army would rather die than be dishonored by foreigners, reports that those men "Vienen de muchas tierras e de muchos rincones, / non han unas costumbres nin han unos sermones, / non podrán entender entre sí las razones, / caerán como puercos todos a bolodrones" ("They come from many lands and many distant parts; / they do not have common customs nor share a common tongue; / they will be unable to understand each other's words / and they will all be slaughtered as pigs would be, in droves"; 1318). Thus, Darius' men are foreigners even amongst themselves and have no homeland, customs, or language to unite them. The disparities found among the Persians cause them to be weak, but with Darius as their emperor, they stand united.

In a similar manner, Alexander will have to unite and bring together under his control the many lands he is conquering. The Greek king shows himself to be quite perceptive in this matter. After Darius' death, the army wants to return to Greece, having been through such suffering in the Asian campaign. Alexander is displeased with their attitude, saying that despite having brought about the downfall of the Persian Empire, they would actually return to Greece with nothing to show for it. Alexander, in keeping with his desire to conquer the entire known world, wants to press on and not return home, but, as a good leader, he behaves empathetically

with his men, stating that he too wishes to see the mother and sisters he left behind. He stresses, nevertheless, that it is not enough to have merely defeated the Persians, for, if they leave now, another ruler will easily usurp Alexander's place. In order to bring fully the Persian territories under Greek control, there must exist between the two lands something more than a relationship of conqueror and conquered. To this end, Alexander advocates passing on Greek customs, language, laws, and social practices. Despite the unidirectional nature of this imposition of culture (as opposed to cultural exchange), Alexander makes it clear that the Greeks will not violently impose their way of life on the Persians; rather, the latter will experience a gradual process of learning Greek customs and will even come to enjoy their company.⁶⁸ Alexander recognizes that without love and friendship between the two peoples, there will be only a vulnerable bond, easily broken by another (1846-9).

Thinking back to Iberia once more, one recognizes a parallel situation in the efforts of the Reconquest. Newly-conquered Muslim territories had to be populated with Iberian Christians in order to bring about a degree of unity and submission in that foreign territory. O'Callaghan has written that "daily interaction between Christians and Muslims did contribute to a degree of acculturation, especially in matters of language and social usage, but there was no real possibility of the full integration of Christians into Muslim society or Muslims into Christian society" (*Reconquest* 10). This is attributed to the religion of each group which "suffused every facet of life," thus precluding the incorporation of individuals as full and equal members into the other's community. No such religious qualms are to be found in the *Alexandre*, and there is a decidedly hopeful tone concerning possible future friendship.

Thus, like the various peoples of the Persian Empire united under Darius, the marginal

68. Weiss rightly calls this a situation of acculturation, that is, the "transfer" of culture (128).

and Other with relation to Greece will gradually move toward the Center. Although both the Greeks and the Persians at one time viewed the other as different and inferior, Alexander foresees them eventually coming together in equality, strangers no longer. The Greek king realizes that it is essentially travel, and all that it implies—exchange of language, customs, ideas, and interpersonal relationships—and not pure military strength that can effect a change regarding that which is considered different, foreign, or inferior. It is Alexander’s hope that with Greek travel and residence in Persia, the perceived differences between the two peoples will be overcome and unity and harmony will prevail.

Alexander’s reasoning is logical, even if it does appear rather idealistic. His men, however, are not easily persuaded that foreign lands hold that much promise. A fascinating and poignant debate on the advantages and disadvantages of living at home or living abroad comes from an unexpected source, the maimed Greek prisoners whom Alexander finds in Persepolis. Taking pity on them for their misfortune, he tells them that he will act as they decide: they may either return to Greece or stay in Persia. One of the men, Eütiçio, advocates remaining in Persia and making it their new home. He argues that to return to Greece maimed and begging would be an embarrassment to them and to their acquaintances back home; their friends would feel sorry for them at first, but their compassion would quickly disappear. Similarly, the wives they left behind, who perhaps felt little love for them previously, would now not even desire to look at them, since the men “non avremos braços con que las abraçar” (“have no arms with which we might embrace them”; 1620). Eütiçio asserts that unfortunate men like themselves will be marginalized and ignored at home; therefore, it is better to live in a land where they are unknown in order to take refuge from their misfortune.

After Eütiçio’s speech, Téseus replies, taking the counter position and arguing that

Eütício has painted their friends and families in an undeserved negative light; he reminds the men that their true friends will stay by their sides through the good and the bad. In one's own homeland, he contends, a person lives with more pleasure since his family is nearby. The importance of the place of residence is especially acute in death: at home, one is honored, and his bones and soul are able to rest in peace on his family's land; in a foreign place, on the contrary, his body is thrown aside, and no one will remember him (1633). Even though Alexander's men had, early in this expedition to Asia, longed to be back home in Greece, these captive men eventually decide to support Eütício and make Persia their new home. Alexander provides them with lands, servants, and gold and silver with which to commence their new lives and, the reader may imagine, Alexander's hoped-for friendship between Persians and Greeks.

Just as some Greek men decide to stay behind in Persia, the *Libro de Alexandre* also makes a mention of Persians establishing themselves within Alexander's camp. After Darius is betrayed and captured by the treacherous satrap Bessus, two rich noblemen, vassals of Darius, come to Alexander to be his servants. They desire no part in sharing the company of traitors and wish to join Alexander's band, which he happily permits. For these two defectors, serving a good lord is more important than loyalty to a nation or people unworthy of that quality. This example and the previous serve to illustrate that travel is a means by which those original associations of inferiority and difference with the foreign may be negotiated through the act of establishing interpersonal relations. The men who come to Alexander are not the Persian "bárbaros" previously mentioned; rather, they are welcome additions that reflect well on Alexander and the Greeks. Both Darius' vassals as well as Alexander's maimed men have, in a rather objective manner, considered their homeland in relation to the foreign land and found the former wanting. Neither Persia nor Greece is portrayed as a perfect land, but each offers

something valuable to the foreigner: Persia offers Alexander's men a place of refuge and solitude from the indifference and spite of their friends and family back home, and with a Greek leader, Darius' men have an opportunity to serve the kind of man they wish. Travelling and living abroad was, of course, not an easy experience, especially during war times, and characters from the *Libro de Alexandre* perceptively discuss the implications of doing so.

Once more, the contemporary reader of the *Alexandre* could have reflected on the movement of peoples in the poem and the varied living situations of both Christians and Muslims in Iberian frontier lands. That Christians in medieval Iberia should live under Muslim rule and that Muslims should live under Christian rule was not uncommon; the terms *mozárabe* and *mudéjar* described those situations. The poet, of course, could have hoped to exalt the conquering Christians in Iberia by the association drawn between Alexander and Christian kings and Greek and Iberian territories and to voice a desire that Muslims would willingly come to join Christian kings. Furthermore, the discussion of the advantages of living in a foreign land in the *Alexandre* coincides with the necessity of the Christian kings to promote the repopulation of conquered lands in Iberia.

Thus far, I have shown that by using the concept of travel as a tool to analyze the *Libro de Alexandre*, one finds that the work is about much more than the rise and fall of one great historical man. Indeed, there is an entire discourse in the work centered on ideas of self and Other, home and foreign, and how two groups of people confront their differences, sometimes finding resolutions. Despite a few pejorative generalizations made between the two nations, discussed above, I have shown that there are several instances in which both parties evaluate their own land and the foreign land, as well as their own people and the foreigners, and decide to cross the political and ideological barriers that existed between them in order to create new

homes for themselves among an unfamiliar people.

To these observations, I would like to add one final point about travel in the *Libro de Alexandre* that will likewise be discerned in the *Libro del Caballero Zifar*. With the departure of Alexander and his men from Greece, the very notion of *home* enters into a state of flux, and rather than being always identifiable as Greece, Alexander's idea of home becomes unstable and negotiable. I have pointed this out to a certain extent already, particularly in Alexander's optimism for what lies ahead in his journey and his desire to conquer the ends of the world. Unlike his men, he must feign a desire to return to the family and comforts he has left behind. Home for Alexander becomes less equated with a physical space and more connected to the possibilities of the future.

This variability on Alexander's part first appears in the victory over Persia, when he is eager to incorporate the Persian people into Greek domain, uniting them through language, customs, and companionship, just as the people of one nation are united. Later, after the whole of India is subdued and Alexander is recuperating from an arrow wound, he becomes impatient to be waging war once again. His plan is to cross the sea, the end of which no man has ever before found. In this maritime expedition, the narrator mentions a few of Alexander's goals, which center on finding new and unknown people and ideas: "buscar algunas gentes de otro semejar, / de sossacar manera nueva de guerrear" ("to seek out people of a different nature / to devise a new way of waging war"; 2269). He also wants to learn some of Nature's secrets: "Saber el sol dó naçe, el Nilo ónde mana, / el mar qué fuerça trae quand lo fiere ventana" ("to learn where the sun rises and whence the Nile springs / and what force the sea has when whipped up by the wind"; 2270). Just as Alexander's men were not eager to continue fighting after Darius' death, they likewise are hesitant about starting this new journey, although they profess

their unending loyalty to Alexander all the same. Their principal objection to this expedition is that they would be leaving the confines of human knowledge: “La gente d’ Alexandre era muy acuitada / porque prendié carrera que nunca fue usada. . . . ‘Señor, mal nos semeja buscar cosas atales, / las que nunca pudieron fallar omnes carnales’” (“Alexander’s people were deeply anxious, / for he was taking a path never trodden before. . . . ‘It seems to us wrong, lord, to search for such things, / as no men of flesh ever managed to find’”; 2271-2). At this point, Alexander’s home has changed even more profoundly, incorporating ever-larger areas of the foreign into his domain. At the beginning, home had been Macedon and Greece, and then it came to include Persia and India. Now, there are few places considered foreign to Alexander, and he must search them out and take them for his own. The lack of land left to conquer leads to his expeditions into the sea and the sky.

In the final pages of the book, home for Alexander becomes all-encompassing. His victories in Asia and his exploits in the sea and sky alarm the peoples of Africa and Europe, who send him tributes and offer themselves as his vassals. This surrendering of the world to Alexander is the culmination of his power. Alexander returns to Babylon to greet the recently arrived African and European emissaries who have gathered there to honor him. The narrator comments at this point on the heterogeneous group of people gathered there, manifested in the diversity of their clothing and languages. This return to Babylon is a return to home; Alexander is welcomed and beloved in this place. Although he was born Greek, Greece is no longer his center. Babylon, an ancient city and previous administrative capital of the Persian Empire, has become Alexander’s Macedon.⁶⁹ Many journeys conclude with a return to home, and Babylon

69. For this work’s medieval Christian audience, Babylon would have furthermore symbolized the dangers of pride, an issue central to the Alexander romance. The biblical story of the Tower of Babel recounts a humanity united by one language coming together to build a

functions in this manner for Alexander.

Bearing in mind some ideas put forth by the ethnographer and folklorist Arnold van Gennep will help to make clearer the way in which home, for Alexander, has shifted from Macedon and Greece to Babylon and, by extension, the whole world. In the early twentieth century, van Gennep developed a system to address various ritual events or “life crises” found across all kinds of societies, modern and pre-modern. In these “rites of passage,” van Gennep identified three principal phases: *preliminal rites* are “rites of separation from a previous world;” *liminal* or *threshold rites* are those which occur in a transitional phase after separation but before the final phase, that of *post-liminal rites*, which are “ceremonies of incorporation into the new world” (21). Solon Kimball has explained that for van Gennep, rites of passage were a response to changes in an individual’s status that provided a method of incorporation into a new status or group (xiii).

Rites of passage provide a useful framework from which to approach travel in both fictional and non-fiction literature. As if in a microcosm, one finds examples of all three phases of rites of passage in a traveller’s journey: the traveller separates himself from his home world, he embarks on a journey, and he finally encounters his foreign destination.⁷⁰ Typically, the

structure that would reach the heavens in order to make a name for themselves. As punishment for their hubris, God confounded their speech and scattered them across the world. In addition, the Babylon of the New Testament represents evil in general, which would also have informed the *Alexandre*’s contemporary public.

70. Often travellers return to their place of origin after making a journey, but Alexander creates a new home in Babylon rather than return to Greece. Van Gennep does not particularly address the issue of a traveller’s return; since he speaks of passages through life, the only way to go, of course, is forward. He does mention, however, that “if a man away from home is incorporated by a group with whom he is staying, he should theoretically go through rites of separation when leaving it” (35). A traveller’s return journey, then, may be explained through the same set of rites: separation from the foreign place into which one has been incorporated (rites of leave-taking), the transition to the homeland, and finally, re-incorporation into the

traveller is not an aloof, impersonal observer; rather, he meets other people, he interacts, he converses, he shares new experiences, and he is received or rejected by foreigners. Indeed, even today, travel can hardly be done self-sufficiently; this was true even more so in Antiquity and the Middle Ages. As the most powerful man in the world, Alexander is an atypical traveller and does not interact with common men as much as other travellers would. Nonetheless, he does participate in all three phases of the rites of passage. The most significant phase, however, is his triumphant entrance into Babylon. The reception that Alexander enjoys in Babylon is most certainly one of the “ceremonies of incorporation into the new world” described by van Gennepe (21). After having conquered Persia, India, and Asia, having made expeditions into the sea and sky, and finally having received tribute from Europe and Africa, Alexander’s domination of the world is complete. He turns to Babylon as the seat of his newly-founded empire. Before the king even reaches the city, all its citizens and visitors go out to meet him. They employ special practices, that is, post-liminal rites, to welcome him into their city and to show their love toward him:

Fenchiánle las carreras de ramos e de flores,
de blancas e vermejas e de otras colores;
muchos eran los cantos, muchos los cantadores,
muchos los instrumentos, muchos los tañedores.
Non eran los adobos todos d’ una manera,
gentes de muchas partes trayén mucha venera;
el rëy con la priessa non podié ir carrera,
plaziél’ al que uviava besar la estribera.

For him the roads were strewn with branches and flowers,
of white and red and a variety of colors;
many were the songs and many were the singers,
many were the instruments with many there to play them.
The adornments were not all of the same kind:
people of many regions brought many scallop shells;
the King, with the throng, could not travel on his path,
and it pleased those arriving to kiss his stirrup. (2534-5)

Alexander has arrived at his journey's destination, and here, he is no stranger; he is beloved and welcomed by those formerly considered foreign and different.

Alexander is one of the great travellers of history; in the Castilian poem of his life, the writer illustrates how travel—that is, journeying abroad; respecting, interacting, and establishing relationships with strangers; and having an open mind—collapses distances based on perceived differences in ideology, ethnicity, customs, and language. Alexander and Darius first formed opinions of each other based on foreignness and historical conflict: to Alexander, Darius was the wrongful ruler of Greek lands, while to Darius, Alexander was a headstrong but peripheral young man arrogantly attempting to upset his empire. It would seem that each man's goal—to preserve his own territory—would force them into a conflict resolvable only by decisive military action. Surprisingly, however, the men come to regard each other as equals and friends, and Alexander is presented as Darius' chosen heir, thus neatly solving the dilemma of Greek lands in the Persian Empire. Similarly, Alexander is able to establish friendly relationships with Porus of India and in the end, with the citizens and foreigners in Babylon who claim him as their own. This bridging of ethnic and cultural differences does not occur only in the spheres of the very

powerful. I have pointed out other instances where Greek and Persian men decide it is in their best interests to start a life among foreigners, in a land that offers them something their homeland does not. Thus, in the *Libro de Alexandre*, soldiers, noblemen, and kings all find that the foreigner and the foreign land are not as incomprehensible as they might have expected. The experience with the foreign in the *Alexandre* is not an encounter with a shadowy, unidentifiable, or marvelous Other. The Other is simply a foreigner little different from the travellers themselves.

While there are certainly many parallels between Alexander's experience in recovering Greek lands and the contemporary Christian Reconquest of Muslim lands in Iberia, in particular with regard to Fernando III's victories in Córdoba, Jaén, and Seville, the peninsular reality was most likely not as rose-colored as the final scene of Alexander's welcome in Babylon. As mentioned previously, the strong religious setting in Iberia, both in the northern Christian kingdoms and the southern Muslim regions, impeded large-scale integration by individuals living in the other's lands. Alexander himself addresses the issue of incorporation and unification of new territory, but the outlook is decidedly positive. He envisions the people of the Persian Empire coming to enjoy great friendship with their new Greek neighbors. Although it is not recorded in the *Libro de Alexandre*, the historical Alexander actually left plans before his death that explained how to achieve peace and friendship among all the lands he conquered. Diodorus, the Greek historian writing in the first century B.C., explains Alexander's intent: "to make synoecisms of cities and transplants of population from Asia to Europe, and in the opposite direction from Europe to Asia, so that he could bring the greatest continents to a state of concord and family affection by intermarriage and settlement" (McKechnie 54). This statement is striking for the wisdom Alexander shows in underscoring the necessity of mutual, and not

unilateral, exchanges among people. Alexander envisions a world of peace and friendship which will be achieved precisely through the act of travel and exchange with the foreigner. Living in a foreign land will foment a more profound knowledge of the other and will eventually lead to the creation of strong family ties.

While this vision is perhaps overly hopeful, the *Alexandre* nonetheless bridges some gaps in notions regarding the foreign, showing that interaction between the traveller and the foreigner may lead to a clearer picture of what the other is really like, that is, a person not steeped in marvelous legends but simply another human being living life with similar concerns and delights. In this way, the *Alexandre* allows the idea of home to be negotiated and denies any stable construction of here and there, us and them. To complement the ideas of home, alien customs, and incorporation into a foreign land, I now turn to the *Libro del Caballero Zifar*.

The *Libro del Caballero Zifar*

The knight Zifar is another great traveller of Spanish letters.⁷¹ This fictional character is the protagonist of the *Libro del Caballero Zifar*, a prose work produced in Castile approximately around the year 1300 or in the quarter-century following. Of disputed authorship, this work is generally considered part of the *novelas de caballerías*, but it is a heterogeneous work, indeed.⁷²

Joaquín González Muela considers it a diverse work with characteristics of many genres: “es una

71. González Muela mentions that Zifar means “traveller” in Arabic (29).

72. Gómez Redondo points out that most agree that authorship could lie with the archdeacon of Madrid mentioned in the prologue, Ferrán Martínez, but he emphasizes that “No habría, por tanto, que hablar de autor en el caso del *Zifar*, sino de un contexto de producción, formado por un espacio cortesano, presidido por la figura de doña María, y por un ámbito clerical, que no es otro que el de la escuela catedralicia de Toledo” (“It would not be necessary to speak of an author in the case of the *Zifar*, but rather of a context of production, formed in a courtly space, presided over by the figure of doña María, and in a clerical environment, which is none other than the cathedral school of Toledo”; 1458). Except where noted, translations are mine.

vida de un santo, es una traducción del árabe, tiene que ver con la ‘*matière de Bretagne*’, es un tratado de educación de príncipes, es una “novela” realista, es un “romance” fantástico, es una novela bizantina, es un “sermón universitario”, y mucho más” (9-10).⁷³ Notwithstanding the question of the particular author of this work, the *Zifar* was produced in the very specific context of the court of Sancho IV of Castile, his wife María de Molina (who survived him), and later, their descendants, to which situation Fernando Gómez Redondo has dedicated many pages. He maintains that “el *Zifar* es la pieza básica de la ideología molinista, es el libro que define el pensamiento cortesano de la reina doña María, tal y como lo había construido junto a Sancho IV (entre 1291 y 1295), como había procurado extenderlo en el reinado de su hijo Fernando IV (hasta 1311) y como, aún en la minoridad de su nieto, intenta mantenerlo” (“the *Zifar* is the basic piece of Molinist ideology, it is the book that defines the courtly thought of the queen doña María, just as she had constructed it next to Sancho IV (between 1291 and 1295), as she had attempted to extend it during the reign of her son Fernando IV (until 1311) and how, during the minority of her grandson, she attempts to maintain it”; 1375).

Gómez Redondo shows that not only was the *Zifar* produced in this court but that the protagonists, Zifar and his wife, Grima, are actually representative of Sancho IV and María de Molina. The Castilian couple is the key to understanding the significance of the fictional work in the real context of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. Gómez Redondo divides the work into three principal narrative lines or *estorias*: the first concerns the troubles of Zifar and Grima until the reunion of the entire family in Mentón and reflects the difficulties suffered by Sancho IV and María in obtaining the throne of Castile; the second *estoria* follows the young

73. Perhaps due to the eclectic nature of the *Zifar*, many studies have focused on issues of genre and the relationship of the book to other works of medieval Iberian literature. See, for example, Lucía Megías, Abeledo, and Joset.

adult sons, Garfín and Roboán, as they form their identities as knights rather than aristocrats; the final narrative line is dedicated to Roboán and his journey to becoming emperor of Triguada. Gómez Redondo sees the *Zifar* as essentially a didactic work with the purpose of inculcating certain values in its courtly audience and giving them examples by which to modify their conduct and thinking.⁷⁴ María de Molina, the woman who was present throughout the reign of Sancho IV and the minorities of her son and grandson, took on the task of creating an environment that supported her and her husband's ideology and her family's claim to the throne. Sancho IV had rebelled against his father, Alfonso X, in an attempt to secure the throne from his deceased elder brother's sons, the Infantes de la Cerda. This rebellion, in addition to his excommunication for marrying his cousin María, created an unstable environment that María, in particular, wanted to rectify. Thus, Gómez Redondo perceives striking parallels between her political and social agenda and the messages promoted in the *Zifar*. These include religious values, not despairing in the face of hardship, gratitude, loyalty, "seso natural" before science, and putting God before all else.

As occurs in the *Libro de Alexandre*, one unifying theme found in this heterogeneous work is the idea of travel. Zifar is from India and lives there with his wife and two small sons. He is an extraordinary knight, with the exception of bad fortune that causes his horse to die after ten days of being ridden, a grave predicament for a knight, indeed.⁷⁵ Jealous men in the king's court convince the king that this problem is too costly for the kingdom, and Zifar is no longer

74. For her part, Cristina González sees the work not as "una obra didáctica más o menos entretenida, sino que es un libro de aventuras" ("a more or less entertaining didactic work, but rather an adventure book"; 38). While it is undoubtedly a book of adventures, this for me does not preclude its didacticism, for which Gómez Redondo has convincingly argued.

75. Gómez Redondo explains that this misfortune works to inspire Zifar to leave behind his knightly identity and will push him toward his future kingship, that is, his true identity and the recovery of his lost royal lineage (1404-6).

welcomed as a knight. Unable to exercise his profession, Zifar decides to venture forth with his family in search of better fortune. Zifar's journey from his homeland may be characterized as a self-imposed exile. Due to the bad fortune which leads to his poverty and disdain in the king's service, he must turn to other lands in order to create for himself a better life. Zifar believes that a change in location will bring about a change in fortune: "Creo que sería bien de nos ir para otro reino do non nos conosçiesen, e quiçabe mudaremos ventura. Ca dize el bierbo antigo: 'quien se muda Dios le ayuda'" ("I think it would be better for us to go to another kingdom where we are unknown and perhaps our fortune will change. The old proverb says that God helps those who help themselves"; 78; 21).⁷⁶ After selling their few belongings and leaving their dwelling as a hospital and their clothing for the poor, Zifar, his wife Grima, and their two sons set out on their journey.

Some differences between the travels of Zifar and Alexander become immediately apparent. While they are both noblemen (Zifar's ancestry boasts of kings, but the kingdom had been lost and the family fallen upon hard times), Alexander leaves Greece well equipped to carry out the battles and conquests ahead. Alexander's objective is to gain as much glory and honor as possible. Zifar, on the other hand, leaves home dishonored and poor and seeks only to improve his family's situation in life. Zifar is in some ways more akin to a common traveller of the Middle Ages, as he had no established reputation to aid him on the road and travelled with few companions.

The *Libro del Caballero Zifar* functions as a useful counterpart to the *Alexandre* when looking at the nature of travel in medieval Iberian literature. With regards to the *Alexandre*, I

76. The Spanish citations are from González Muela's edition, and the English translations are from Charles Nelson's 1983 text. The first page number refers to the Spanish text and the second page number to the English. In this quotation, "quien se muda" literally means "who moves [himself]."

discussed issues dealing with perceptions of foreigners on a large scale and the negotiable state of home. With the *Zifar*, I will focus on other complementary ideas central to travel, such as problems of identity or self-representation abroad, the function of the final destination, and the encounter with foreign customs.

When confronting the problem of the traveller's identity, it is helpful to recall van Gennep's study on rites of passage. Despite the necessary reliance on travelling companions and strangers along the way, the traveller may be considered a marginal or alienated figure, since he is in a period of transition, having left his original home and society and not yet having incorporated himself into a new one. Van Gennep has addressed this peculiar situation in which an "unclaimed" individual, like the traveller, finds himself:

An individual or group that does not have an immediate right, by birth or through specially acquired attributes, to enter a particular house and to become established in one of its sections is in a state of isolation. This isolation has two aspects, which may be found separately or in combination: such a person is weak, because he is outside a given group or society, but he is also strong, since he is in the sacred realm with respect to the group's members, for whom their society constitutes the secular world.⁷⁷ In consequence, some peoples kill, strip, and mistreat a stranger without ceremony, while others fear him, take great care of him, treat him as a powerful being, or take magico-religious protective measures against him. (26)

Zifar and his wife certainly find themselves in this state of isolation once they depart

77. Van Gennep explains that an outsider may be considered part of the sacred realm since by definition, the sacred is something apart from one's own world, that is, the profane, the ordinary, and the quotidian.

from India. As they are poor and travelling alone, they have nothing but their own words and actions to recommend themselves to others. Frequently, Zifar is asked if he is a knight, to which question he replies affirmatively. People seem to take him at his word, but he always performs some acts of chivalry that prove his claim and give him importance in the foreigners' eyes. For her part, Grima presents herself as an intelligent and pious woman to those whom she meets. After she is kidnapped, separated from her family, and then rescued by God, she arrives in a city called Orbín, where the king recognizes that she is a wise and godly woman even before he speaks to her in person. Grima is welcomed by the king and queen into their home because she responds well to their inquiries and they see that she is “de buen entendimiento” (“with great wisdom”; 126; 62). In this place, Grima's actions confirm the monarchs' impression of her. She is ever charitable, building a convent, and she stays with the king and queen for nine years; when she departs, they are truly sorrowful to see her leave.

One of the clearest examples of the complications of Zifar's isolation as a traveller is illustrated when he needs to enter the kingdom of Mentón. At this point in the story, he has been separated from his kidnapped wife, and his children have been lost. Gómez Redondo points out that the loss of his family, as well as the loss of his identity as a knight (the lack of horses), has caused Zifar to suffer a symbolic death (1404-5). A *ribaldo*, a mischievous knave, now accompanies him, serving as his squire. Since Zifar has abandoned his original home and has not yet incorporated himself into a new place that he can call home, he is without a place of his own. This state of isolation is problematic when he wants to enter a new place, since he has no claim there or anywhere else; he must convince the foreigner to harbor him. Although Zifar has had success in this respect in previous towns, Mentón presents a bipartite problem. Not only is it a kingdom foreign to him, but the town Grades is besieged by an enemy, the king of Ester. The

servant devises a creative solution, although it is one detrimental to Zifar's pride: he must take off his knightly clothing, put on the clothing of the servant, and convincingly act like a fool in order to pass through the enemy lines and have a chance at being safeguarded by the gatekeepers of Grades.

The relationship between clothing and identity is a close one, perhaps more especially so for the traveller. Even today, as was true hundreds of years ago, clothing is an identifier, a sign, and a marker on a person, giving the world some idea of the person's background, status, and importance. Zifar is ashamed of having to wear clothes that do not correspond to his real status as a knight and to be forced to enter the city on foot, rather than on a horse, but he knows he must carry it out. When he goes through the enemy encampment, the clothing and his acting confirm the illusion he is trying to create. Happily, the gatekeeper at Grades allows him to enter, and Zifar, not wishing to remain in costume any longer, goes directly to speak with the city administrator. Our knight simply tells the administrator that he is "cavallero fijodalgo e de luengas tierras" ("a knight of the nobility from a distant land"; 152; 86) and claims he can exercise the office of a knight if he has the proper garb. The administrator gives him the appropriate clothing, and after seeing him rightfully dressed, he is pleased with him: "E mandóle dar muy bien de vestir e buen cavallo e buenas armas e todo complimiento de cavallero. E desde que fue vestido el cavallero, pagóse mucho el mayordomo de él, ca bien le semejó en sus fechos e en sus dichos que era ome de grant seso e de grant lugar" ("He ordered him given fine vestments, a good horse, keen weapons, and all the other equipment essential to a knight. After he was dressed, the steward was very pleased with him, for it seemed obvious that from his actions and his speech he was a man of great intelligence and of the nobility"; 152; 86). Zifar's subsequent victories over the enemy king's sons and nephew confirm what his raiment shows.

Thus we see that clothing and identity do not work separately but rather hand-in-hand. For the traveller, one's identity must be continually put forth, demonstrated, and proven, and clothing is one of the few tools available to the traveller by which to confirm or even change identities.

It is interesting to note that the savior of Grades is an unknown foreigner, not a local from the kingdom of Mentón. With the similarities noted between Zifar and Grima and Sancho IV and María de Molina, this fact is perhaps not surprising. Sancho IV, after all, was something of an "outsider" to the throne and had to secure his position against the wishes of his father, Alfonso X, who wanted the sons of his first-born, Fernando de la Cerda, to reign. By positioning Zifar as the foreign savior of Mentón, the author makes a case for Sancho IV as the ruler who will save Castile and establish justice and prosperity for his kingdom.

Mentón is the end of Zifar's journey, and, as such, is weighted with symbolic and real importance. Zifar has travelled from a distant place and time and has passed through much travail in order to reverse the bad fortune that plagued him in India. Mentón will be the culmination and reward of this long and difficult journey. After breaking the siege of Grades and freeing the kingdom from the enemy king, Zifar is rewarded with marriage to the king's daughter. Through a convenient set of happenings, the marriage is never consummated, the princess perishes, and Zifar's own wife Grima, as well as their sons, all make their way to Mentón and are reunited with Zifar. With Zifar as its king, Mentón becomes an idyllic, utopian kingdom. Zifar not only skillfully manages the kingdom left to him, but he makes his own improvements:

Por este cavallero fueron cobradas muchas villas e muchos castiellos que eran perdidos en tiempo del rey su suegro, e fizo mucha justiçia en la tierra e puso muchas justiçias e muchas costumbres buenas, en manera que todos los de la

tierra, grandes e pequeños, lo querían grant bien. El rey, su suegro, ante de los dos años, fue muerto, e él fincó rey e señor del regño, muy justiçiero e muy defendedor de su tierra, de guisa que cada uno avía su derecho e bien en pas. (169)

Through this knight's efforts, many towns and castles that were lost during the reign of his father-in-law were recovered. He ruled the land fairly and made many good laws and established many good customs, so that the rich and poor of the kingdom were devoted to him. The king, his father-in-law, died before the two years had run their course, and he became king and defender of the kingdom. He was a fair, just ruler and a powerful defender of his country, so that each person was treated impartially and lived at peace. (101)

What is repeated throughout in the descriptions of Mentón by the narrator as well as characters within the work is the emphasis on justice. Mentón, the foreign land, has become a paradisaical place where all rights and wrongs are justly rewarded or punished. Although the primary characters of the book are Catholic, places are identified by and evaluated on the presence or absence of social justice, not by a specific religion. Zifar is directly contrasted with the king of Ester, whose subjects flee the land in order to escape his cruelty and injustice. Zifar is also indirectly compared with his original lord, the king of India, whose injustice motivated Zifar's exile in the first place. A journey's destination becomes the place where hopes and desires are fulfilled.

Like Alexander, Zifar is a welcome and beloved ruler, and the two works defend their territorial gains, portraying Alexander as a worthy successor to Darius, albeit with sinful pride, and showing Zifar to be a wise and just ruler who recovers his rightful royal lineage. It is surely

not coincidental, then, that these works mirror similar occurrences of the periods in which they were composed. As previously mentioned, the *Alexandre* calls to mind the Christian-Muslim wars of the Reconquest and especially Fernando III, whose triumphant victories in Al-Andalus are echoed in Alexander's entrance into Babylon. Similarly, Zifar's consolidation of power on the throne of Mentón and his acclamation by its citizens serves as an example to the audience of the court of Sancho IV and María de Molina who desired to promote a certain image of themselves and their descendants.

After the marvelous reunion of Zifar's family in Mentón and the establishment of the kingdom as a utopian place of peace and justice, it would seem that the story has come to a fitting end.⁷⁸ However, Zifar's younger son, Roboán, suffers from the same desire as his father to leave home and seek a better fortune abroad; he sets out to "provar el mundo e ganar onra" ("challenge the world and win honor"; 324; 228). With respect to the travels of Roboán, I would like to discuss two principal issues, one having to do with the perception of the foreign by the traveller and the perception of the traveller by the foreigner, and the other being the cultural exchange that takes place in the process of incorporating oneself into a new community.

Typically, Roboán is received honorably in the places through which he passes and is even greeted as though he were the lord of the land (326; 229). This does not come as a surprise, since he, like Alexander, is travelling richly and with a group of select knights. Roboán's situation does stand in contrast to that of his father, Zifar, who travelled as a poor knight with little but his manners and knightly deeds to recommend himself. However, not all are eager to

78. In his discussion of the part of the book known as the *Castigos del Rey de Mentón*, Gómez Redondo sees justice as one of the pillars of governance expounded by the *Zifar*, but this value is of course extolled throughout the work (1452). Similarly, in describing the "military art" put forth by *molinista* ideology, he argues that the objective of war is none other than to secure peace (1455).

pay their respects to Roboán. While Roboán is visiting Pandulfa, the land of an infanta named Seringa, the king of Guimalet, her enemy, invades her territory. Roboán sends a message to the king, asking the king to desist in this enterprise out of respect for Roboán being there and his condition as a foreigner: “yo enbiaré a rogar aquel rey que, por la su mesura, mientras yo aqui fuere en el vuestro regño, que só ome estraño, que por onra de mí que vos non faga mal ninguno” (“I will send a request to that king, counting on his courtesy that while I am here a stranger in your kingdom, through respect to me he will cease his attacks against you”; 331; 234). The king of Guimalet does not heed Roboán’s entreaty and proceeds to beleaguer Seringa’s kingdom. The importance of Roboán’s being a foreigner is made clearer when he encounters the son of the king of Guimalet on the battlefield. Roboán is not “one of them” and therefore lacks any established identity in this new place, an identity that would otherwise command respect: “Ve tu vía—dixo el fijo del rey—, ca non eres tú ome para dezir al rey mi padre ninguna cosa, nin él para te responder. Ca tú eres ome estraño e non sabemos quién eres. Ca mala venida feziste a esta tierra, ca mejor fizieras de folgar en la tuya” (“Go on your way,’ replied the son of the king, ‘for you are not man enough to talk to my father the king about anything, nor does he have to answer you. You are a stranger and we don’t know who you are. You are unwelcome in this land and you would have done better to be satisfied with your own’”; 342; 242). Roboán’s lack of social contacts in Guimalet renders him a nobody; he is not worthy enough either to speak to the king or to be spoken to by him.

Despite the hostile attitude practiced by the king and prince of Guimalet toward Roboán due to his condition as a foreigner, Roboán does not view all strangers in the same manner. Even though the king of Guimalet is disrespectful to Roboán and unjust to the infanta Seringa, Roboán does not pass judgment on all the people of that kingdom. Rather, the king himself is singled out

as being “sobervio e desmesurado” (“arrogant [and] presumptuous”; 343; 243). In a similar way, the narrator reports that both armies fought strongly and also tells of a knight of Guimalet who, upon seeing his king without a horse, gave him his own and was killed soon after (343; 243). It is not races or whole groups of people who are bad; rather, pains are taken to point out the individuals who cause so much harm and evil in the world.

In Pandulfa, Roboán is able to incorporate himself into the community and is no longer considered a stranger. Thus, when he prepares to leave the land in order to fulfill his desire of testing the world and winning honor, the sadness that the people of Pandulfa show is greater even than the sadness of his own family on the occasion of his departure from Mentón: “Dize el cuento que nunca tan grant pesar ome vio como el que ovieron todos aquellos que ý estaban con la infante, ca quando él partió de su padre e de su madre e de su hermano Garfin e de todos los otros de la su tierra, comoquier que grant pesar e grant tristeza ý ovo, non pudo ser igual de ésta” (“The story tells that man has never seen such grief as struck all the people with the princess, for when Roboán left his father, his mother, his brother Garfin, and all his other countrymen, although there was great grief and sadness there, it could not be the equal of this”; 363; 259). Seringa and her subjects will miss him not just because of how he helped them against their adversaries but evidently because they hold a deep love and friendship toward him. It appears that during Roboán’s stay in Pandulfa, not only has affection grown between the people of Pandulfa and Roboán’s men but there has also been some amount of cultural exchange. The narrator points out the practices of the Pandulfan people to express their sadness at Roboán’s departure, or, in other words, their rites of separation: “Ca pero non se mesavan nin se rastravan nin davan bozes, a todos semejava que le quebraran por los coraçones dando sospiros e llorando muy fuerte e poniendo las manos sobre los ojos” (“for though they did not tear their hair or their

skin, nor scream, all felt their hearts would break, sighing and crying aloud and putting their hands over their eyes”; 363; 259). The people of Pandulfa, then, have unexpected ways of expressing their sadness, but it appears that Roboán’s men have acquired these practices as well: “E eso mesmo fazía el infante Roboán e toda la su gente, ca atan fechos eran con todos los de aquella tierra, que non se podían de ellos partir sinon con grant pesar” (“Prince Roboán and his troops were doing the same thing, for they had become so attached to all the people that they could not bear to part from them except with deep emotion”; 363-4; 259). This scene of separation shows how fully Roboán and his companions had become integrated into this foreign community, so much so that Roboán’s departure from the land is like another departure from his original home. Roboán, like Alexander, has not remained an isolated, aloof traveller but rather has taken the opportunity to embrace the unfamiliar.

The issues of foreignness, cultural practices, and incorporation into a foreign land repeat themselves in Roboán’s final adventures after leaving Pandulfa. The infante learns that there is a powerful and honored emperor who is pleased to meet foreigners, if they are from a good place, and so he and his men set off for that land, Triguada. In this section of narration, much attention is given to foreign customs, especially those that involve Roboán’s interactions with the emperor. When he arrives at the border of Triguada, kings, vassals of the emperor, explain to him that he must not pass any further until they have taken the news of his arrival to the emperor; in the meantime, they will provide him everything he needs. The narrator takes pains not just to describe customs in general but to note that they are specific to the people of Triguada: “ca así lo avían por costunbre” (“for so it was their custom”; 370; 264). Later, when Roboán meets the emperor in person, he kneels down before him in accordance with how the kings advised him. This practice seems to impress the emperor, because immediately afterward, he “mostró muy

grant plazer con él e mandóle que cavalgase” (“was pleased with him and ordered him to mount his horse”; 370; 264). As they are riding, the discussion turns toward Roboán’s knighthood, and the emperor wonders if a knight may receive another knighthood, as he would like to induct the infante into his service. A happy solution, based precisely on cultural differences, occurs to the emperor: “Convienes que yo faga cavallero a este infante e non lo erraremos, ca cuido que de una guisa lo fazen en su tierra e de otra guisa aquí” (“‘Indeed,’ said the emperor, ‘it is right for me to make this prince a knight, and we shall make no mistake, for I believe they do it one way in his country and another way here’”; 371; 265). Roboán confirms this to be true, explaining in detail the process of knighting with which he is familiar. The narrator continues with a detailed description of the rituals regarding knighthood in Triguada, repeating several times that each practice is in accordance with their customs, thus underscoring the divergences between Roboán’s traditions and the emperor’s. Rather than causing awkwardness or discomfort, Triguada’s foreign rituals of knighting serve to magnify Roboán’s importance in two areas: by the rich habiliments he is given and the persons by whom he is attended. After the knights, kings, and emperor eat, Roboán is given royal clothing and then goes out, accompanied by two kings, to greet the damsels of the land. The next day, after hearing mass in the church, he is made to undress and be anointed with water from a baptismal font. Roboán then receives new, beautiful vestments and is clothed by persons of ever-increasing importance: first a noble maiden, then two kings, the emperor himself, and finally, an archbishop. Afterwards, he is given even richer clothing. The next day brings a scene of cultural exchange between Roboán and his knights and the emperor’s men. Roboán’s vassals perform knightly games that please the emperor. In an act that truly brings the traditions of two distinct peoples together, the emperor commands Roboán to join in the knightly bouts—as it is their custom for the newly-knighted to

participate in tournaments the following day—but to do it in accordance with the events that Roboán was accustomed to practicing. Over time, Roboán and the emperor become close friends, so much so that the other advisors to the emperor are jealous and contrive a deceit that forces the emperor to banish Roboán from the land.

The detail given to the cultural practices and Triguiadan customs practiced by Roboán and his men underscores their increasing incorporation into this foreign kingdom. Although the jealous advisors succeed in ridding the kingdom of Roboán for a time, he will eventually return and be named successor to the emperor. Like his father Zifar in Mentón, Roboán maintains the empire in justice and peace, even honoring those who previously deceived him in their jealousy. The *Libro del Caballero Zifar*, as well as the *Alexandre*, seem to propose that the ideal king is a travelling foreigner. These rulers have departed from an unjust situation in their homelands and have used the foreign land as a base upon which to create a better kingdom. The foreign country is not an exotic land of mystery or paradise—there are good citizens as well as jealous traitors who may be found anywhere—but in contrast to the homeland, the foreign land is able to be transformed into a better place under the leadership of the travelling heroes. The constant emphasis on the establishment of peace and justice promotes these values as universal—major and minor characters alike deplore the lack of justice and acclaim its practice under Zifar and Roboán—which in turn legitimizes the rise in power of the new foreign rulers. In the *Alexandre* and the *Zifar*, natives and foreigners share the same ideals. The lack of “marvelization” of the foreigner, that is, the portraying of the foreigner as strange or other-worldly, gives the idea that there is little difference between the traveller and the people he encounters abroad. As I have shown, this could have aided Reconquest propaganda, promoting the idea that the ruler from afar will improve the territory he conquers and be acclaimed for it. At the same time, I argue that the

lack of profound dissimilarities between multiple groups of people points to their common humanity, a humanity that shares certain values but that is made complex by the various cultural practices of each.

Despite Roboán's goodness, the jealous advisors still cannot shake their ill will towards him and strive to breed suspicion among other powerful lords, arguing that Roboán, "como ome estraño, non se pagava de los naturales del inperio, mayormente de los poderosos" ("was not a native of their land and did not like the natives of the empire, especially the powerful ones"; 409; 293). Even after having spent years in Triguiada, Roboán is still censured for being a foreigner. Despite the love most Triguiadans have for him, his condition as "Other" is still intact, showing that foreignness is an easy target of suspicion, fear, and distrust. Ultimately, Roboán achieves rest and peace in all his empire and good relations with his subjects. As with Zifar, justice is the most important matter in his kingdom:

E el enperador andido por la tierra con todos estos condes e con todos los otros a quien heredó e los metió en posesiones, e los dexó asesegados cada uno en sus lugares e con amor de los de la tierra, faziendo todas merçedes señaladas en lo que le demandavan. Todos los del inperio eran muy ledos e muy pagados porque le avían por señor a quien los amava verdaderamente e los guardava en sus buenos husos e buenas costunbres, e era muy católico en oir sus oras con devoçión e sin burla ninguna e en fazer muchas graçias a las eglesias dotándolas de villas e de castiellos e guarnesçiéndolas de nobles ordenamientos segunt que mester era a las eglesias. E entre todos los bienes que el enperador avía, señaladamente era éste: que fazía grant justiçia comunalmente a todos. (428-9)

The emperor, having traveled throughout the land with all these counts and with

all the others to whom he had bequeathed property, settled them in their possessions, granted them all the special favors they requested, and left them at peace, each in his own realm and with the esteem of all their subjects. All the citizens of the empire were happy and content because they had a lord who truly loved them and respected their traditions and customs. He was very faithful in attending their religious services, and with no evidence of scorn, and he granted many favors to the churches, and endowed them with towns and castles, and furnished them with princely accouterments according to their need. Among all the good qualities the emperor possessed was this—he dealt out justice fairly to all. . . . (308)

After many adventures, Roboán, like his father, has made a strange and foreign land his home. They both have had to contend, to differing degrees, with the isolation and lack of identity that accompanies the traveller. Zifar proved himself through his pious character, his goodness, and his heroic acts of chivalry. Roboán also performed knightly feats, but attention was given to detailed cultural practices which helped him relate to the foreigners he encountered and thus integrate himself into their community. The compromise that Roboán practiced in his customs and in the foreign traditions he confronted aided in his ability to make the foreign a new home.

Conclusion

In the *Libro de Alexandre* and the *Libro del Caballero Zifar*, one encounters three adventurous travellers, Alexander, Zifar, and Roboán, as well as other minor characters, who willingly left their places of origin and in distant foreign lands actually created new homes for

themselves. Travel consists of movement in space, but it is much more than a purely physical exercise. In these works, travel forces the wayfarer, be he an adventurer, a nobleman, a king, a soldier, or a servant, to confront issues with profound implications: he must face what it means to leave behind his homeland and ponder the viability of being accepted into a foreign community. I have attempted to demonstrate how discussions in these works complicate a simple understanding of travel as movement from one point to another. The *Libro de Alexandre* and the *Libro del Caballero Zifar* delve into topics such as distrust of the foreign, the advantages and disadvantages of living abroad, the isolation of the traveller, cultural exchange, the encounter with foreign customs, the mobile nature of the concept of home, and the incorporation of travellers into new communities. The idyllic kingdoms of Zifar and Roboán perhaps take dreaming of the foreign to a utopian extreme, but the restraint with which the author approaches the above-mentioned issues allows the arguments to be taken seriously. These works advocate travel, knowledge of the outside world, and relationships with foreign places and people. Although the marvelous makes an occasional appearance in these works, what we find in looking closely at how travel functions in them is an honest approach to the complicated question of leaving behind one's home in the Middle Ages.

By contextualizing the *Alexandre* and the *Zifar* in the medieval Castilian arenas in which they were produced, as well as by taking into consideration matters in other kingdoms of Iberia, I have shown that these texts serve as a space of experimentation for political theories and ideological formation. Alexander may be read as a king of the Reconquest trying to recover lands that rightfully belonged to Christian rulers. The poem could have served as propaganda to its contemporary readers, advocating the wars of Reconquest and rallying the population in support of their kings, who, like Alexander, would be welcomed and adored in the newly

acquired lands. Similarly, Zifar, as a foreign king who improves the land he rules to the point of creating a utopia, shows parallels to Sancho IV, another kind of “outsider” king.

As a counterpart to reading these works as directly related to the contemporary events in medieval Iberia, I have also discussed how the issue of travel in the *Alexandre* and the *Zifar* speaks to larger, more transcendental issues. With the Iberian kingdoms so focused on matters within the Peninsula throughout the thirteenth century and the beginning of the fourteenth, these works act as a counterweight, drawing the contemporary reader’s attention abroad and opening his mind to greater possibilities in a large and exciting world. At the time of writing of the *Alexandre*, Christian kingdoms were involved in wars against the Muslims to the south and, aside from the seafaring Catalans, could spare little attention to matters outside the Peninsula. Likewise, the production of the *Zifar* is enclosed within the specific Castilian context of *molinismo* and the reigns of Sancho IV, Fernando IV, and the minority of Alfonso XI. Notwithstanding this focus on Castilian and Peninsular matters, the travellers in the *Alexandre* and the *Zifar* propose a way of life based on one’s ability to leave behind that which he knows and to take advantage of the foreign land as a place in which to create better societies; indeed, Alexander, Zifar, and Roboán all improve their own lives, as well as the lives of their subjects, by venturing into a new land. The foreign land is not a *tabula rasa* upon which to create a utopian society from nothing. Rather, the travellers, isolated and exiled from their homelands, must negotiate and interact with that land’s citizens in order to integrate themselves into a new community. From this state of flux, their Center shifts and is finally re-established in the new land.

This exile, self-imposed for Alexander, Zifar, Roboán, and other minor characters, and the consequent incorporation into a foreign land which becomes the new home seem to propose

that the foreign is superior to the native or, in the least, that the foreign provides a distinctly advantageous alternative to one's own home. Through his journeys as a conqueror, Alexander brought the whole world under his command, and by travelling, Zifar and Roboán became kings and emperors, thus regaining their royal lineage. For these three men, the foreign land offered a place where their true characters could be fully realized, something that would not be possible for them had they stayed in their kingdoms of origin. Likewise, for their new subjects, these foreign monarchs established long-desired justice and peace that was not previously present in their own lands.

The two works studied herein were certainly written with specific didactic, moralizing, and entertaining intentions, in accordance with their genres and the contexts in which they were produced, but they also speak seriously about travel and illustrate effective ways of successfully journeying abroad. Alexander, Zifar, and Roboán were all successful in the relationships they established with foreigners, in creating homes for themselves abroad, and in improving the world through bringing together diverse peoples and establishing justice and peace. By considering these works as travel-books, I have employed a distinct way of evaluating the relationship between the Center and the Other, or specifically, the traveller and the foreigner. The study of travellers in the *Libro de Alexandre* and the *Libro del Caballero Zifar* demonstrates that travel is not only for great and exceptional individuals but also for anyone who is willing to undertake such a journey with an open mind and a desire to see what true marvels lie beyond one's own world.

CHAPTER THREE

The Foreign as a Vehicle for Self-Criticism in Medieval Castilian Fictitious Travel Literature: the *Libro del conocimiento* (c. 1390) and the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal* (c. 1470)

There are in his country many wonders. . . . [Prester John] generally dwells in the city of Suse, and his chief palace is there which is so rich and so noble that its value cannot be calculated. . . . And the main gates of this palace are [made] of a precious stone that is called sardonyx, the edges and the bars of ivory, and the windows of the halls and the rooms are of crystal. The tables where they eat, some are [made] of emeralds, others of amethyst, others of gold with precious stones. . . . His lordship extends in breadth for four months' travel and in length without measure. (*The Book of John Mandeville* 162-4)

Fabulous accounts like this one, taken from *The Book of John Mandeville*, a fictitious travel account of an English knight who journeyed throughout the world in the mid-fourteenth century, are also found in two fictitious travel-books produced in medieval Iberia: *El libro del conocimiento de todos los rregnos et tierras et señorios que son por el mundo* (*The Book of Knowledge of All the Kingdoms, Lands, and Lordships in the World*, hereafter referred to as the *Libro del conocimiento*) and the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal, el cual anduvo las quatro partidas del mundo* (*Book of the Infante don Pedro of Portugal, who travelled the four parts of the world*). The former is a work written in the last years of the fourteenth century⁷⁹ and

79. In contrast to previous datings of the work as mid-fourteenth century, María Jesús Lacarra believes the text to be of the final decade of the fourteenth century, due to the mention of events which occurred subsequent to the year 1385. See p. 25 of her facsimile edition of

follows the supposed travels of an anonymous Castilian who reports on the various lands and rulers throughout the world,⁸⁰ with special attention given to the heraldic designs of each realm.⁸¹ The latter was composed in the Castilian language by Gómez de Santisteban at least by the 1470s and is a short fictional account of the travels of the historical Portuguese Infante don Pedro who lived from 1392 to 1449.⁸²

When approaching these works, it is easy to perceive the manner in which real and imaginary, fiction and non-fiction coexisted in travel literature of medieval Iberia. In Chapter Two, I discussed two works of fiction that are not traditionally considered by critics as travel literature, the *Libro de Alexandre* and the *Libro del Caballero Zifar*, which show that a journey can be a central and essential part of a work without said work being considered a travel-book in the restricted sense. In Chapters One and Four, I study accounts of historical travellers who actually journeyed abroad and later recorded their experiences. Enrique III's embassy to Timur, headed by Clavijo, is the most "documentary" of them, and the writer rarely strays from noting facts and first-hand experiences. Ibn Jubayr is similarly careful to record his own observations and find out for himself the truth of the matter. In his *Andanças e viajes*, Pero Tafur likewise wrote principally about that which he experienced directly, although, perhaps in an effort to

manuscript Z for details of historical events in the text which aid in dating it more precisely.

80. The author of the *Libro del conocimiento* creates a geographical account of the world, most likely following a *mappa mundi* or portolan chart to design his itinerary. See Marino pp. xvi-xxii and Lacarra p. 5.

81. See Martín de Riquer for a study of heraldry in the *Libro del conocimiento*. Also see Alberto Montaner's section on the *Libro del conocimiento* as a book of heraldry in the edition of the work by Lacarra *et al.*

82. Harvey L. Sharrer has shown that parts of the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal* appeared in a work from between 1471 and 1476 by Lope García de Salazar entitled *Libro de las bienandanzas e fortunas* and probably circulated earlier than that time.

make his account more entertaining, he included legends and stories of the places he visited, normally placing the burden of proof on someone else (e.g., “I heard it said that. . .”). Like him, Abu Hamid, alongside the ethnographic information he collects, records legends and fabulous stories that he knows or learns abroad. The Castilian books which I presently consider, the *Libro del conocimiento* and the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal*, with comparative references to *The Book of John Mandeville*, share similar oscillations between accounts of real and imaginary lands and peoples, but whereas the “true” travellers lean toward the real, these three works tip the scales toward the imaginary.

The desire to compile and transmit knowledge of the world is one of the clearly stated principal objectives of all three fictitious travel-books here considered. These statements do not mean, of course, that thirst for knowledge was the sole *raison d'être* of fictitious travel literature. By closely analyzing each work and the contexts in which they were produced, I believe it is possible to elucidate other, more subtle objectives that the authors may have had in mind at the moment of composition. Authors of accounts of imaginary journeys are able to create real as well as imaginary spaces. In some cases, when the author takes up and reworks the writings of a previous real traveller (such as Mandeville does with Odoric of Pordenone and others), the description of the journey may well seem authentic, and, as shall be discussed below, narrative techniques such as employing the first person add to the verisimilitude of the account. Whether the journey is passed down in legend (like the stories of Prester John) or is a reworking of a true travel account, the authors of fictitious travel literature had license to manipulate their material to suit their own ideologies and concerns. By looking at the places, peoples, and subject matter treated in these works, and furthermore, how those places and peoples are alternately censured, praised, or ignored, we may begin to understand some of the authors' own hopes, fears, or

desires for their home worlds couched in their comments on the foreign world. Fictitious travel writing allowed these authors to express their own ideas and even to criticize the contemporary state of affairs in medieval Europe by commenting on the foreign. By narrating fictitious journeys to real and legendary places and commenting on what the traveller encountered abroad, the writers were able to promote their own ideas on various topics that may have been at odds with contemporary ideologies or practices of political and religious authorities. It is my intent to illustrate how the writers of the *Libro del conocimiento* and the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal* effected this commentary and what one may therefore conclude about the values and worldviews they held.

Ever since Miguel Ángel Pérez Priego published in 1984 his study on medieval Hispanic travel-books, critics have acknowledged his criteria for distinguishing works of that genre, to wit: itinerary, chronological order, spatial order, *mirabilia*, and the form of presentation.⁸³ The narration of travel-books should follow an itinerary, which typically shows the traveller in a succession of places, going from city to city, or kingdom to kingdom; this sequence provides the structure of the narrative. The book must also follow a chronological order which gives an account of the journey. This order may be more or less exact, depending on whether the travel was real or imaginary. The writer of the *Embajada a Tamorlán*, composing an official record, is extremely precise as regards dates and even times of departures and arrivals. The traveller in the *Libro del conocimiento*, on the other hand, avoids specifics and relies on ambiguous or generic wording to tell the chronology of his tale (*e.g.*, “andudo aquella nao por alta mar tanto tienpo” [“that ship sailed on the high seas for so long”], “andude tanto” [“I traveled a distance”], “andude

83. See Pérez Priego, pp. 220-234.

muy gran camino” [“I traveled a long way”]).⁸⁴ In addition to chronological order, the travel-book needs also to show spatial order, which for Pérez Priego is the most important point (226). With spatial order, the critic refers to the places visited and the description of said places, even if the description is a simple mention of the land’s name, as occurs frequently in the *Libro del conocimiento*. Pérez Priego furthermore points out that cities become the true narrative nuclei that direct the organization of the rest of the account.⁸⁵ *Mirabilia*, or wonders, Pérez Priego’s fourth criterion, refer to any extraordinary or fabulous thing that “había propagado la leyenda de Oriente y que poblaba la imaginación del hombre medieval” (“the legend of the East had propagated and that inhabited the imagination of medieval men”; 229).⁸⁶ The *mirabilia* could be fictitious legends, such as the monstrous races of men, or they could simply be real wonders, like the Hagia Sophia or crocodiles and elephants, that amazed the travellers to whom they were previously unknown. In contrast to other kinds of medieval narrative, travel-books typically follow a certain form of presentation, one that is comprised of a straight, linear narration presented by a single protagonist (be he individual or collective) who normally records the account in a first-person narrative.

The three works I will discuss in this chapter, the *Libro del conocimiento*, the *Libro del*

84. See Marino, pp. 20, 22, 54. These are but a few examples of many vague references to the chronological order of the journey. For the *Libro del conocimiento*, I take both Spanish and English quotations from Nancy Marino’s dual-language edition which incorporates manuscripts S, R, and N. This edition, from 1993, was the first modern one since that of Marcos Jiménez de la Espada in 1877, published again in 1980 with an introduction by Francisco López Estrada. In their facsimile edition of manuscript Z, published in 1999, Lacarra *et al* remind scholars that a critical edition that attempts to resolve questions among the four manuscripts is still needed.

85. At this point in his discussion, Pérez Priego also demonstrates how the description of cities follows an outline based on ancient rhetorical traditions which include the history of the city, its founders, its location and fortifications, the fecundity of its lands and waters, the customs of its inhabitants, its buildings and monuments, and its famous citizens. See pp. 226-9.

86. Translations are mine except where noted.

Infante don Pedro de Portugal, and *The Book of John Mandeville*, do indeed meet Pérez Priego's criteria and are considered by most critics to form part of the medieval Spanish travel-book genre.⁸⁷ The travellers of all three works follow an itinerary (sometimes capricious) that shows them departing from a homeland; travelling throughout Europe, Africa, and Asia, with particular attention given to the Holy Land and the kingdom of Prester John; and then returning to their place of departure. These itineraries are related in a chronological order with less specificity in general than the *Embajada a Tamorlán*, for example. The writers also comply with the criterion of spatial order by describing the important places they visited, the rulers of those lands, notable features of geography, and perhaps a historical account or legend that references that area. *Mirabilia* abound in all three works, taking the form of descriptions of the monstrous races, religious legends such as Saint Thomas in India, the wealth and power of Prester John, new foods and animals, and foreign customs.⁸⁸ Lastly, these imaginary travel accounts present linear narration in the first-person singular or plural.⁸⁹ In accordance with Pérez Priego's characteristics of travel-books, it is clear that these works form part of the same genre as do the *Embajada a Tamorlán* and the *Andanças e viajes* of Pero Tafur.

87. Pérez Priego and Rubio Tovar accept all three. López Estrada devotes a chapter each to *The Book of John Mandeville* and the *Libro del conocimiento* but only briefly mentions the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal*. Beltrán, in restricting his list specifically to Castilian works excludes, of course, the translations of Mandeville, but does include the *Libro del conocimiento*. He does not mention the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal*.

88. For more on marvelous beings, the reader may consult John Block Friedman's classic work on monstrous races, *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought*, which describes many of the wonders that appear in these Castilian books of imaginary travels, as well as *The Book of John Mandeville*.

89. *The Book of John Mandeville* does exhibit a first-person narration; Mandeville speaks of his own experiences in certain places such as in Babylon (Cairo) with the Sultan of Egypt, in Jerusalem, and in the Perilous Valley. At the same time, however, the rest of the work is more akin to a travel or pilgrimage guide or an impersonal account of how one would travel from the West to other parts of the world (e.g., "whoever," "one passes through").

I have reviewed these criteria for establishing a travel-book genre in order to point out that these works, although fictitious, may indeed be considered alongside accounts of real journeys and that it will in fact be worthwhile to do so. Although the *Libro del conocimiento*, the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal*, and *The Book of John Mandeville* purport to record real journeys, literary scholars have shown that those travels did not in fact take place.⁹⁰ This difference, along with the fact that the fictitious works are, in general, vaguer, more formulaic, and more repetitive than the real journeys of Abu Hamid, Ibn Jubayr, Clavijo, and Tafur, does not suggest that these works should be dismissed from studies of travel literature. Rather, I believe that the points of contrast between accounts of imaginary and real travels raise the question of why fictional travel-books were written in the first place. This question, and the various answers to it, will be the focus of the present chapter.

At a most basic level, one negative response to the question of why fictitious travel-books were written in medieval Iberia is that despite narrative techniques to the contrary, they were *not* intended to narrate real journeys. As mentioned above, the *Libro del conocimiento*, the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal*, and *The Book of John Mandeville* all utilize a first-person narration. The employment of the first person affords the works an aura of veracity and authenticity and links them to accounts of real travels. Moreover, narration in the first person causes the work to be seen as more plausible. If a reader doubts the verisimilitude of the work due to its marvelous elements, the use of the first person might dispose the reader to think it could at least *potentially* be real. In this way, the narration tempers the marvelous elements included within it. Finally, first-person narration provides an opportunity for the reader to put himself in the place of the traveller and perhaps more fully enjoy the imaginative reading

90. See Marino, Rogers, and Higgins, respectively, for summaries of the works dedicated to determining whether or not the journeys took place.

experience. The authors write about where their protagonists travelled, what they observed, people they met, experiences they endured, and occasionally, the thoughts or emotions they experienced in certain situations. Under the guise of personal experience and through entertaining written accounts which resembled factual journeys, these writers wished to compile and transmit compendia of knowledge of the outside world for Latin Christians in Western Europe. They were interested in gathering knowledge of geography, foreign rulers, histories of foreign lands, new customs and ways of life, flora and fauna, variations on Christianity, and non-Christian religions. The writers agreed that news of the diversity of the world, of unknown peoples and places, would be of interest to their readers. Thus Mandeville's is more than a simple itinerary and guide to the Holy Land and beyond. Having written about Constantinople and the customs of Greek Christians, he explains that

Although these things have nothing to do with showing the way [to Jerusalem], they are nevertheless relevant to what I promised to explain: a part of the customs, manners, and diversities of some countries. And because this is the first country varying from and disagreeing with our country over here in faith and in writing, I have therefore included it so that you might know the diversity that exists between our belief and theirs, for many people enjoy and take pleasure in hearing foreign things spoken about. (*The Book of John Mandeville* 15)

In a similar vein, the traveller-narrator of the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal*, Gómez (or Garcirramírez) de Santisteban, a Castilian who also serves as the group's interpreter, opens the book by claiming that he records their journey abroad because the public has a desire to know about new things from around the world:

Porque todos los hombres naturalmente dessean saber todas las cosas del mundo y

han placer de ver cosas nuevas, e los que no las han visto resciben grandes alegrías en las leer y oír contar, yo, Gómez de Santestevan, como fue uno de los que anduvimos con el infante don Pedro, mi señor, determiné de contar algunas cosas notables en este breve tratado de lo que vimos en las cuatro partidas del mundo. . . . (Gómez de Santisteban 11)

Because all men instinctively long to be acquainted with everything in the world and take pleasure in seeing new things, and those who have not seen them find great joy in reading and hearing about them, I, Gómez de Santisteban, inasmuch as I was one of those who went with milord the Infante Dom Pedro, have resolved to relate in this short treatise some of the outstanding things we saw in the four parts of the world. . . . (Gómez de Santisteban 124)⁹¹

Gómez de Santisteban puts the same desire in the mouth of Don Pedro, the leader of their party of travellers, who communicates that he wants to continue travelling “fasta que en el mundo no oviesse más generación” (“until he had seen all the races of mankind in the world”; Gómez de Santisteban 27; 149). In the fabulous lands of Prester John, Don Pedro again states his desire to see the world and the legends that exist therein: “Fue mi voluntad de ver y passar todas las partidas del mundo por ver si era su señorío tan grande como dezían” (“It is my wish to see and travel over all the parts of the world to see if your dominions are as great as claimed”; Gómez de Santisteban 27; 150).

91. In 1961, Francis M. Rogers published an English translation of the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal* with several thorough chapters included in that edition that discuss the historical don Pedro, his travels throughout Europe, his posthumous fame outside Portugal, and Rogers’ findings of over one hundred editions of the work, printed throughout the last five centuries. Finally, in 2008, readers were graced with a Spanish edition of the *Libro* by Elena Sánchez Lasmariás, with a short introduction, published in the journal *Memorabilia*. In quoting from Gómez de Santisteban’s work, the first page number refers to Sánchez Lasmariás’ Spanish edition, and the second page number refers to Rogers’ English translation.

The traveller-author of the *Libro del conoçimiento* does not justify his writing by claiming that readers will be interested in knowledge of the world but, in an all-encompassing manner, simply states: “Este libro es del conoçimiento de todos los rregnos et tierras et señorios que son por el mundo, et de las señales et armas que han cada tierra et señorío por sy” (“This is the book of knowledge of all the kingdoms and lands and lordships that there are in the world, and of the insignia and arms that each land and lordship has”; *Libro del conoçimiento* 2, 3). This writer does not pretend humbly to appeal to readers by promising them pleasure in what they will read but does explicitly state the great breadth of the material treated, that is, knowledge of all the world. The objective of the *Libro del conoçimiento* is certainly breadth over depth. A typical passage in this work states the name of the kingdom visited, its principal cities, its prominent geographical features (rivers, mountains, seas, etc.), and the heraldic information of the kingdom. Sometimes a historical or biblical note or a legendary story is included. Other times, there is a generic pronouncement on the beauty of the people or the wealth of the region. Much less frequently there is a note about the inhabitants of the region.

To commence an inquiry into the motivations of the authors of the *Libro del conoçimiento* and the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal*, I wish to start by reviewing what events were occurring in their native lands that could have provoked the composition of these imaginary travels, for by writing about faraway peoples and realms, the authors create a picture of what behaviors and ideas their own societies should eschew or, alternatively, practice for themselves. The latter half of the fourteenth century, continuing into the fifteenth, was a period of political, religious, economic, and social chaos and upheaval. The Black Death, which peaked in Europe from around 1348 to 1350, caused not only an immediate decimation of the population but also ensuing famine, changes in economic and social structures, depopulation of

small communities, peasant rebellions, and religious fanaticism as people looked for minority groups to blame. In Castile, the following decade witnessed the Civil War (1366-1369) between Pedro of Castile and his illegitimate half-brother Enrique of Trastámara, a conflict which increasingly involved Castile in the Hundred Years' War (1337-1453) between England and France and their respective allies.⁹²

Religious upheaval was compounded in the last quarter of the fourteenth century with the return of the papacy from Avignon to Rome in 1377. When Pope Gregory XI died in 1378, the cardinals elected Pope Urban VI but soon regretted their decision and voted for a second pope, Clement VII, who in turn re-established a papacy in Avignon. This Western Schism, lasting until 1417, was particularly bitter for Latin Christendom as it was brought about by political disagreements rather than theological questions.

These turbulent times encompass the likely date of composition of the *Libro del conocimiento*, around 1390, and may be reflected, as I discuss later, in the author's desire to subtly criticize infighting among Christians. The *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal* was probably written several decades later, by around the 1470s. Although the Schism had ended by this point, Castile was still marred by rebellion and rivalries among nobles who sought more power and influence. Leading up to the time of the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal*, Castile was governed by two weak rulers, Juan II and his son Enrique IV. Juan II was largely known as a puppet king, controlled by the ambitious Álvaro de Luna who aroused the jealousy and anger of his fellow noblemen. The ceaseless intrigues and shifts in alliances eventually

92. Pedro of Castile allied himself with the Crown of England and the Prince of Aquitaine, while Charles V of France supported Enrique when he invaded Castile. Enrique's initial invasion caused Pedro to flee, but Pedro, in turn, forced Enrique to return to France after his defeat at the Battle of Nájera. Finally, the conflict ended in 1369 when Enrique slew Pedro at the Battle of Campo de Montiel and was acclaimed as Enrique II. See O'Callaghan, *A History of Medieval Spain*, especially Chapters 17-21.

brought about Álvaro de Luna's death; Juan II ordered him executed in 1453 and himself died the following year. O'Callaghan concludes that at the end of Juan II's reign, "Castile lay impoverished, her government in ruins, her people divided, and her future prospects dim indeed" (*A History of Medieval Spain* 566).

The weak state of the Castilian monarchy continued into the reign of Enrique IV. A year before his ascension, the Ottoman Turks had captured Constantinople and brought an end to the Byzantine Empire. Pope Calixtus III wished to commence a crusade against the Turkish threat but found little support among Western European rulers. Offering, perhaps hollowly, to help with the Turkish question afterwards, Enrique IV first asked for crusade indulgences to go to war against the kingdom of Granada. Apart from constituting an acceptable alternative to fighting the Turks, battling Muslims would serve to distract the Castilian nobility from their petty intrigues. However, there were no glorious battles against Granada in which the nobles could exhibit themselves, and they became dissatisfied with Enrique's strategy of raiding the countryside in hopes of undermining Granada's economy. Enrique IV died in 1474, just around the time in which the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal* was probably composed, and his death ushered in wars of succession which lasted from 1475 to 1479. While Portugal and France supported Enrique's (perhaps illegitimate) daughter Juana la Beltraneja, Castile and Aragon sided with Isabel, Enrique's half-sister, who ended up on the throne. O'Callaghan has summarized Enrique IV's time of rule as similar to that of his predecessor: "[Enrique IV's] reign was a tragedy, for the decline of royal authority and prestige which had characterized his father's rule continued unchecked, allowing the arrogance of the aristocracy to expand beyond all limits" (*A History of Medieval Spain* 575). The faults of Enrique, his cool response to the call to crusade against the Turks, and the lack of unity among Iberian and European monarchs are issues which

may have weighed on Gómez de Santisteban's mind as he composed his *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal*.

The Need for Christian Unity and Reformation

The principal response to these troubling times that I perceive in both the *Libro del conocimiento* and the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal*, but most particularly in the latter, is the religious response.⁹³ In the *Libro del conocimiento*, there are infrequent mentions of religion, with more space dedicated to the listing of place names, rulers, geographical features, and heraldic information; there are approximately one dozen references to religion.⁹⁴ Although the author makes few notes about religion in his text, the comments he does, or rather, does not, make are telling. When confronted with different Christian sects (namely, Greek Christians and “schismatic” [Eastern] Christians), the traveller simply mentions what kind of Christians are found in such-and-such a land and refrains from making any judgment, good or bad, about them. In the provinces called Curconia and Culman, for example, he writes that “como quiera que sean

93. Throughout this section on the usage of foreigners as models for the texts' readers, it is interesting to recollect other forms of contemporary Castilian exemplary literature. Thirteenth-century Castile had witnessed a flourishing of *exempla* collections and other didactic works; many of these, like *Sendeban* and *Calila e Dimna*, had their origins in Oriental texts. With the exception of Juan Manuel's literary masterpiece, *El Conde Lucanor*, the fourteenth century saw a decline in the production of didactic literature, compared with the preceding and subsequent centuries. In the fifteenth century, *exempla* were embraced again. Collections like the *Libro de los exemplos de A.B.C.* and *Ysopete ystoriado* featured stories of personal morality, practical advice (especially for the lower classes), and examples of how best to survive in the world as it was. There were also criticisms of the powerful and the wealthy, of both the secular and ecclesiastical realms, such as those found in the *Libro de los gatos*. Rather than re-writing existing sapiential works or recurring to short, memorable fables in order to admonish their readers, the authors of the two imaginary travel-books considered here develop longer narratives set, for the most part, in a historically real world.

94. I have found these comments about religion on pp. 12, 28, 32, 56, 60, 70, 80, 82, 84, 88, 96, 98, and 104 in Nancy Marino's edition.

pobladas de cristianos, pero son sismaticos” (“although they are populated with Christians, they are schismatics”; *Libro del conocimiento* 12, 13). Further along, he includes a mention of religion as a simple fact to be recorded along with other pertinent information on the region: “Et sabet que esta sierra Boxnia parte la Germania, et la Pavonia, et la Ungria, et la sierra está en medio, et son montes muy poblados de gentes, et tierra muy abundada de todas las cosas, pero no son cristianos católicos” (“Note that this Sierra of Boxnia borders on Alemaña and Pavonia and Ungria, and the sierra is in the center, and these mountains are quite populated with people, and the land abundant with all things, but they are not Catholic Christians”; *Libro del conocimiento* 28, 29). Similarly, in the kingdom of Palolimen, the writer reports that “es una tierra muy viçiosa et muy poblada et muy abundada de todas las cosas que son menester et es de cristianos griegos” (“it is a very rich and very populated land and abundant in all things that are necessary, and it belongs to Greek Christians”; *Libro del conocimiento* 98, 99). Twice, when speaking of Christians from Nubia, near the Nile River, the author makes mention of differences in physical appearance, for he notes when people have a black skin color. This statement does not appear to be a commentary on religious matters, but rather it is in keeping with the author’s desire to offer all kinds of knowledge from around the world. He speaks of the lands governed by Prester John,

que es patriarca de Nubia et de Etiopia et señorea muy grandes tierras et muchas çibdades de cristianos. Pero que son negros como la pez et quemanse con fuego en las fruentes en señal de cruz et en rreconosçimiento de bautismo. Et como quier que estas gentes son negras, pero son omes de buen entendimiento et de buen seso, et an saberes et çiençias, et an tierra muy abundada de todos los bienes. . . . (*Libro del conocimiento* 60)

who is the Patriarch of Nubia and of Etiopia and governs many great lands and

many cities of Christians. But they are as black as pitch and they burn themselves with fire on their foreheads with the sign of the cross in recognition of their baptism. And although these people are black, they are men of good understanding and good mind, and they have knowledge and science, and they have a land that is very abundant in all things. . . . (*Libro del conocimiento* 61)

While it is perhaps not incredible that the writer of the *Libro del conocimiento* does not comment on the differences, good or bad, among Christian sects, it may come across as surprising that he does not speak badly of Muslims, those “natural enemies” of Pero Tafur, given the negative propaganda concerning them in the Iberian Peninsula during the Reconquest. Rather, the traveller speaks about Mecca as the place “donde está la ley et el testamento de Mahomat” (“where the law and testament of Mohammed is found”) and also visits the city in which the prophet was born (*Libro del conocimiento* 70, 71). Muslims are not “enemies of the Faith”; instead, they are one part of God’s diverse world.

In contrast to the author’s neutral treatment of Muslims and non-Catholic Christians, he does reserve negative judgments, albeit in a subtle manner, for idolaters or peoples without religion. The traveller describes an island called Gropis as “tierra abundada de todos los bienes *salvo* que las gentes eran ydolatrias” (“a land abundant in all things, *except* that the people were idolaters”; *Libro del conocimiento* 56, 57, emphasis added). Again in a city called Amenuan, he praises the fertility of the land, but notes the idolatry of its inhabitants: “et es otrosi un rreyno muy grande, et de muchas gentes, et es tierra muy abundada de todos los bienes, *salvo* que las gentes eran ydolatrias et creyan en los idolos” (“it is also a very large kingdom, and with many people, and it is a land abundant in all things, *except* that the people were idolaters and believed in idols”; *Libro del conocimiento* 60, 61, emphasis added). Whereas the writer merely noted in

certain lands that its inhabitants were Greek Christians, for example, the language in the two quotations above imply that the idolatry of the inhabitants detracts from the goodness of the land and its people.

Similarly, the writer points to two regions whose people do not practice religion, which contrasts with his otherwise positive description of those lands. He visits various cities in the province of Sabba, “que son muy grandes ciudades et muy ricas et muy abundadas, pero que son pobladas de tartaros et de gentes sin ley que non guardan ningund mandamiento de Dios, salvo que non fazen mal a otro” (“which are very great and rich and abundant cities, but they are inhabited by Tartars and people without religion who do not keep one of God’s commandments, except that they do not do harm to one another”; *Libro del conoçimiento* 70-2, 71-3). In Tartaria, “son muchedunbre de gentes sin cuenta, et non guardan ningund mandamiento de Dios salvo non fazer mal a otro. . . . E çierto ellos non han ley ninguna, nin guardan ningund mandamiento de Dios salvo non fazer mal a otro” (“there are innumerable persons, and they do not keep any of God’s commandments except not to harm one another. . . . And it is true that they have no religion at all, nor do they keep any of God’s commandments, except not to harm others”; *Libro del conoçimiento* 80, 81). In these passages, it is striking that although the absence of religion may detract from the goodness of the land, the author is quite clear that a commandment these foreigners do keep is not to harm one another. With the insistence on that single, godly exception to an otherwise godless people, I infer that perhaps the author of the *Libro del conoçimiento* was pointing to a fault in his own Church that needed to be addressed. After all, if a people without religion could keep this commandment, Latin Christendom, which claimed divine law revealed through the prophets and Jesus Christ, should be meticulous about living as God instructed. In the context of the Castilian Civil War and the Hundred Years’ War,

it is possible that the author included these specific comments about irreligious people who do not harm one another in order to point out the grave error of Christians warring against Christians.

In the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal*, there is likewise an insistence, by means of commenting on the foreign, on the need for members of the Latin Christian Church to stand unified and at peace with one another. The book's modern editor, Francis M. Rogers, has argued that the historical don Pedro greatly desired Christian unity; as a boy, his religious education included ideas of "peace among Christian princes and the crusade against the infidel" (Rogers 5). The critic maintains that this instruction carried over into don Pedro's adulthood; while travelling through Europe, the historical don Pedro "had no desire to be enmeshed in conflicts among Christians" (Rogers 31).⁹⁵ In addition, on his peregrination through Europe and the Levant, don Pedro would have observed, and even participated in, the campaigns led against the Turks by Sigismund, King of Hungary and later, Holy Roman Emperor (Rogers 42). Furthermore, don Pedro had "viewed at first hand the evil consequences for global strategy of dissension among Christians," for he had knowledge of Sigismund's campaigns against Venetians in Italy and against the heretical Christian Hussites (Rogers 45). Don Pedro lived on after his death in the European imagination, and a certain Castilian, who identifies himself in the text as Gómez de Santisteban, later created the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal*, a short work based extremely loosely on the travels that the historical don Pedro undertook during his lifetime. In the book, Gómez de Santisteban is an interpreter given by Juan II of Castile to accompany don Pedro on his expedition abroad. Although Pedro is the son of Portuguese king João I, the story of his travels takes Castile, rather than Portugal, as the focal kingdom of the work, a point that, to

95. The reader may consult Rogers for a thorough and illuminating study of the life of the historical don Pedro. See especially pages 1-71.

my knowledge, has gone unnoticed by the work's critics. The interpreter-narrator is Castilian, or at least from Juan II's court, and the text was first written in Castilian, not Portuguese. The travellers may identify themselves as vassals of Castile's king (an issue I will discuss further on), and the journey appears to be a mission undertaken for both monarchs, Portuguese and Castilian. For example, when don Pedro wants to return home at one point, he knows he may not for "gelo retraerían los señores de Portugal y de Castilla" ("the lords of Portugal and Castile would shun him"; Gómez de Santisteban 23; 143). Furthermore, the beginning and end of the work center on Castile: Don Pedro and his party originally set out from Portugal, but their first destination is Valladolid, capital of Castile; then, the book ends with the party returning from the lands of Prester John to Castile, not to Portugal. Finally, it is Juan II who sends letters with don Pedro to be delivered to Prester John, which makes the journey seem, at this point, more similar to a Castilian diplomatic mission than an adventure or pilgrimage. Taking together these indications of Castile's primacy in the work, the text thus extends its message first to Castile and then to the rest of Christian Europe.

The *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal* is much more explicit in its religious component than Castile's other account of imaginary travels, the *Libro del conocimiento*. The importance of Christian unity that Rogers perceives in the historical don Pedro is carried over into the fictional work of his travels. The desire for peace among Christians is found throughout the text and especially in the two narrative nuclei of the work, the visits to the Holy Land and to the domain of Prester John, the legendary Christian priest-king of the Indies, a figure so long desired by Western rulers to be real. Rogers contends that the work "suggests a disunited Christian West" and advocates for changes, not in the Church, but in Latin Christian behavior (viii). A divinely-inspired leader such as Prester John would help effect Christian unity as well

as an improvement in personal and social morality.

In contrast to accounts of real journeys and also in contrast to the encyclopedic desire of the author of the *Libro del conocimiento* to report knowledge from all the world, Gómez de Santisteban does not concern himself with detailing or describing all the cities they visit and only sometimes reports legendary or historical material. A typical passage from their itinerary gives the name of the city or region, sometimes the number of inhabitants, and a short account of their interaction with the ruler of the land. Indeed, the foreigners the travelling party encounters are limited almost exclusively to the highest rulers, and their interaction typically follows a script: the lord inquires as to what race they are (“¿de qué generación sois?”), and the interpreter Gómez de Santisteban replies that they are “vassallos del rey león de España de Poniente” (“vassals of the Lion King of Hispania in the West”; Gómez de Santisteban 12; 126).⁹⁶ The writer mentions whether or not they pay for safe-conduct, the ruler may give them a gift of gold or a blessing, and the travellers ask for permission to depart.

As an aside, I would like to comment briefly on the question of to whom the “Lion King of Hispania” refers. Rogers maintains that “In the absence of a King Leo in Iberia, it could only have meant the Lion King of Hispania, in Pedro’s century clearly the King of Portugal” (281). For her part, Carmen Mejía Ruiz appears to understand that “rey León” refers to Juan II, King of Castile during the lifetime of the historical don Pedro. She explains that the historical don Pedro had good relations with both Juan II of Castile and Álvaro de Luna, the latter’s favorite, and that

96. It is notable that in this work, it is the interpreter-narrator who explicitly does the talking for the group when they converse with someone of another language. This would have been the case, of course, in factual journeys, like that of Clavijo, but in the *Embajada a Tamorlán*, little mention is made of the interpreter’s work. Rather, Clavijo writes as if they spoke to Timur and other foreigners directly, without interpretation, even though Timur’s ambassador Mohamad Alcaxi and Enrique III’s ambassador Páez de Santamaría most likely served in that capacity. Since the author of the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal* identifies himself as the interpreter, he perhaps wanted to emphasize his own contributions to the success of their journey.

said relationship tied Pedro to the Castilian court (314-5). I concur with Mejía Ruiz in that the Lion King must be the king of Castile for two principal reasons. One, I have already reflected on the focus on Castile in the work, which lends credence to the argument that the Lion King is Juan II. Second, a simple explanation of the epithet “lion” is that it might refer to the fact that the king of Castile was also king of León since the year 1230 when Fernando III united the two kingdoms.

Despite the formulaic nature of the exchanges between travellers and foreigners in the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal*, the insistence on Christian unity and proper Christian behavior becomes clear. From the outset of the work, the focus on the religious component is emphasized. Don Pedro, upon deciding to set out to travel the world, “no quiso llevar consigo sino doze compañeros a remembrança de los doze apóstoles, y con él éramos treze, como Jesuchristo con sus discípulos” (“wished to take only twelve companions in remembrance of the twelve Apostles, and including him we were thirteen, like unto Jesus Christ with His disciples”; Gómez de Santisteban 12; 125). The religious authority accorded to don Pedro is emphasized again when they are in the Holy Land visiting the tomb of Saint Mary. Gómez de Santisteban, evidently a member of the clergy, explains that the area will be the site of judgment on the Last Day: “Aquí avemos de ser el día de Juicio jugados, dexemos aquí una señal donde seamos juntamente” (“Here we are to be judged on Judgment Day; let us leave a token here so that we may all be judged together”; Gómez de Santisteban 15; 129). It appears that Gómez de Santisteban is attempting to buy God’s grace through that token, for which action don Pedro is displeased and rebukes him: “Padre, plugiesse a Dios que vos no viniéssedes en mi compañía, ni vos oviesse conocido, que vos nos devíades dar dotrina y consejo y nos devíades adereçar que no pecássemos ni metiéssemos a Dios, por tal vía nos dais lugar de mal porque pequemos y

tentemos a Dios, mas nunca quiera Dios que tales señas queden en tal lugar” (“Father, would to God that you had not come in my company, and that I had never known you; for you should provide us with doctrine and advice, and you should teach us not to sin nor to lie to God, and instead you lead us into sinning and tempting God. May God never will that such tokens remain behind in such a place”; Gómez de Santisteban 15; 129). The writer adds that for two months thereafter, don Pedro never laughed, because he was so deeply affected by this event (Gómez de Santisteban 15; 129). Thus, with this characterization, the reader finds a protagonist representative of a good and pious Christian who strives to please God and imitate Jesus Christ. He is such a devout and sincere Christian that he behaves even better than his priest companion, whom he must remind of his duties. He also appears to abhor the sale of indulgences or the attempt to buy favor from God. Through the religious representation of don Pedro, the writer creates a model that Christian readers can aspire to emulate. Likewise, through that strong criticism of the clergy, which is one of the few times in the work in which don Pedro is directly quoted by the narrator, the book underscores the need for dedicated leaders in the Church who take their responsibilities to God and their flock seriously. The stain of money in spiritual matters is soundly rejected by the work’s protagonist.

As a counterpart to the insistence on the need for Christians to lead their lives in accordance with biblical and Church teachings, the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal* also avows cooperative Christian support in the face of enemies who would harm the Church. After visiting Juan II in Castile and leaving the Peninsula, the group travels to the city of Nicosia where they meet the Queen of Cyprus, whose husband is a prisoner of the Turks. After the travellers relate to the Queen that they are “vassallos del rey león de España de Poniente” (“vassals of the Lion King of Hispania in the West”), the Queen replies: “Pluguiese a Nuestro

Señor que la provincia del rey león de España estuviesse cerca de la señoría del rey de Chipre porque nos pudiésemos socorrer los unos a los otros, porque los enemigos de la fe fuessen menoscabados” (“Would to God that the province of the Lion King of Hispania were near the domain of the King of Cyprus, so that we could help one another in order that the power of the enemies of the Faith might be diminished”; Gómez de Santisteban 12; 126). Thus, in the very first land they visit, there is no typical traveller’s description of the region whatsoever. The short passage on Cyprus does not even mention the queen’s name; her speech serves solely to stress the importance of Christian unity against the Church’s enemies, that is, Muslim Turks.

In contrast to the benign treatment of Muslims in the *Libro del conocimiento*, Gómez de Santisteban characterizes some Muslims in his book as enemies of Christianity. Although he does not call outright for a crusade against them, the idea may not have been far from the reader’s mind as he read about their ruling the Holy Land. Additionally, the author may have been dismayed by the lack of response to Pope Calixtus III’s call to crusade after the fall of Constantinople and in the face of that growing threat to Latin Christendom. Indeed, when don Pedro and his companions visit Christianity’s holiest sites, there is evident tension with the Muslims who control the entrances to those places. Gómez de Santisteban relates their visit to the Holy Sepulcher and the spite shown them by the Muslim who guards it:

Debaxo desta está el Sancto Sepulcro, a tres escalones, y al tercero escalón está el moro que dizen santo en vituperio de los cristianos, y la puerta es baxa y a la entrada hase el hombre de abaxar, y allí recibe cada uno una bofetada de los que allí entran por vituperio, y desque el hombre es dentro, cierra el moro la puerta por de fuera con la llave, e desque el moro entiende que el hombre ha fecho oración y visto el Sancto Sepulcro y la losa que alçaron los ángeles, luego abre la

puerta para que el hombre salga. (Gómez de Santisteban 15)

And below this [chapel] is the Holy Sepulcher, three steps down; and on the third step is the Moor, whom they refer to as “holy” out of contempt for the Christians.

The door is low, and at the entrance you have to stoop. There each one who enters gets a slap in the face, again out of contempt. And as soon as you are inside, the Moor locks the door from the outside. And as soon as the Moor thinks you have said your prayers and seen the Holy Sepulcher and the slab of stone which the angels raised, he then opens the door for you to go out. (Gómez de Santisteban 130)

Thus it is a Muslim who has the power to strike Christian pilgrims and who also determines how long those pilgrims may stay to observe the site. The Muslim guardians of the Holy Land may also refuse entry, as the author relates that they did at Solomon’s Temple.⁹⁷ The humiliation and abasement that Christians suffered in the Holy Land, as depicted by Gómez de Santisteban, quite likely would have incensed the reader against the Muslims who controlled the area. Gómez de Santisteban returns the contempt shown them in the Holy Land when he later writes of their visit to the Caliph:

al gran gudilfe de Baldaque, señor de la casa sancta de Jerusalem, y señor de la casa de Meca, donde está su propheta Mahomad, y señor de los alárabes, y señor de las doblas pequeñas, y señor de los pineos, y señor de mi miembro derecho, rey de Fez, y señor de los Montes Claros, donde se coge el oro celestial, y bevedor franco de las aguas, y pacedor de las yervas del señor pequeño que es el rey león

97. A similar occurrence took place on Pero Tafur’s journey, but the determined Tafur, having bought the help of a renegade Portuguese man, dressed in that man’s clothes and entered the Temple in the middle of the night. Rogers also makes a note of Tafur’s experience (173).

de Granada, y defendedor de la ley de Mahomad, derramador de la sangre de la cristiandad. (Gómez de Santisteban 22)

the Grand Gudilfe of Baldaque [Baghdad], lord of the sacred shrine of Jerusalem and lord of the shrine of Mecca where his prophet Mohammed lies, and lord of the Arabs, and lord of the little doubloons, and lord of the pygmies, and lord of my right member, the King of Fez, and lord of the Montes Claros, where you gather the celestial gold, and free drinker of the waters, and grazer of the grass of the little lord who is the Lion King of Granada, and defender of the religion of Mohammed, spiller of the blood of Christianity. (Gómez de Santisteban 141-2)⁹⁸

This biting satire used to describe the Muslim ruler reveals the animosity felt by the author and perhaps his contemporaries toward those “enemies of the Faith.” By qualifying the Caliph or the Islamic religion as “spiller of the blood of Christianity,” Gómez de Santisteban reminds the reader that the relationship between the two religions is not one of simple ideological or theological differences; rather, they are at war, fighting to preserve their own beliefs and continued existence. The painting of Muslims as antagonists and aggressors toward Christians may be seen as an attempt to stir up anti-Muslim sentiment among the Latin Christian readers of the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal*.

Despite the “us versus them” attitude that characterizes Latin Christians and Muslims in the work, don Pedro and his party do not find it either problematic or unseemly to visit both Muslim rulers and the most important of Islamic holy sites, the city of Mecca, where they visit

98. Rogers observes that the model for this satirical string of epithets came from an exchange of “ridiculous letter[s]” between Sultan John of Babylon and Pope Pius II which had been printed in chapbooks that circulated at the time (194).

the sacred mosque.⁹⁹ With the exception of the aforementioned Caliph, other Muslim rulers don Pedro meets are portrayed positively. A certain Grand Babylon, son of the Grand Sultan of Babylonia, is identified by Rogers as a Muslim descendant of Hulagu the Mongol who besieged and destroyed Baghdad in 1258 (165). This ruler is interested in news of the West and detains the party for two weeks in order to inquire about the Lion King and “ver si era tan gran cosa como dezían” (“learn whether he was as great as they claimed”; Gómez de Santisteban 14; 128). At the end of their stay, the Grand Babylon pays for their safe-conduct “por amor del rey león de España” (“out of love for the Lion King of Hispania”) and also gives them a gift of gold (Gómez de Santisteban 14; 128).

The travellers are treated in a similar manner when they visit the Sultan of Babylonia (that is, Old Cairo) in Egypt who, “desque supo que éramos de Poniente, ovo gran plazer con nosotros por él ser nacido en Castilla” (“as soon as he learned that we were from the West, he was very pleased with us because he had been born in Castile”; Gómez de Santisteban 17; 134). The Sultan recounts to them his story, explaining that he was taken captive by the King of Granada after Moors had killed his father, and in captivity, he was forced to convert to Islam. He reports that he was made Sultan “desque supieron los moros que era hijo de hombre poderoso de Poniente” (“as soon as the Moors learned that I was the son of a powerful man of the West”; Gómez de Santisteban 17; 134). During their stay, the Sultan does justice to a Muslim man who slapped a Christian pilgrim in the face and also pays for the group’s safe-conduct and gives them escorts to help them through Egypt. The Sultan may be interpreted as a kind of bridge between Christian and Muslim civilizations. Originally Castilian and now the ruler of Muslims in Egypt, he is receptive and eager to establish friendly relations with the Iberian dignitaries who visit him.

99. Gómez de Santisteban writes that while in Mecca, they also visited the tomb of the prophet Muhammad (23; 142). Muhammad’s tomb, of course, is located in Medina.

A final example of a positive representation of Muslim rulers occurs when don Pedro and his party receive special treatment from the great Mongol-Turkic suzerain, Timur of Samarkand, precisely because they are “vassallos del rey león de España, su hijo” (“vassals of the Lion King of Hispania, ‘his son’”; Gómez de Santisteban 19; 137).¹⁰⁰ Like the Grand Babylon, Timur detains the party in order to hear reports of the Lion King and the West. Timur also stands out for his exceptional cultural and religious tolerance when he seats the travellers lengthwise “según que lo teníamos por costumbre” (“in accordance with our custom”) and brings them special foods so that they may keep their abstinence from meat on Fridays (Gómez de Santisteban 20; 137).

In these three examples, powerful Muslim rulers honored and dignified don Pedro and his companions. Exaggerating their treatment, the writer goes so far as to set up Christian Iberia as a kind of superior civilization. After all, the Muslims of Egypt made a Castilian Christian their Sultan after learning that he had important lineage in the West, and Timur is portrayed as deferential to their customs. These images of friendly and admiring Muslims whom the travellers are eager to meet stand in contrast to the otherwise anti-Muslim remarks in the rest of Gómez de Santisteban’s work, which are directed principally toward the Muslims who occupy the Holy Land as “enemies of the Faith.” While it does create a sense of ambiguity about how Gómez de Santisteban wanted to represent Muslims as a whole to his readers, perhaps the varied representation of Muslims in the text reminds the reader not to judge whole groups of people without regard to their individual members. Furthermore, the treatment given the Iberian Christians by these powerful Muslim lords may also represent an attempt by Gómez de

100. This passage makes it clear that the author of the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal* was acquainted with material from the record of Clavijo’s journey to Timur at Samarkand, where Timur warmly refers to Enrique III as his son.

Santisteban to aggrandize Latin Christians. By portraying puissant rulers of ancient and important lands as interested in the West and specifically in an Iberian ruler, the author of the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal* places his homeland on equal terms with foreign realms. Don Pedro's group encounters foreigners who desire to learn about them and their homeland. With Christian Iberia as the source of knowledge that foreign rulers seek, Hispania is elevated to a higher status with respect to its place in Western European affairs with the East.

To return to the idea of quelling intra-Christian disputes and promoting Christian unity in the face of extra-Christian threats, one final example from the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal* demonstrates Gómez de Santisteban's desire in this regard. The last ruler they encounter on their journey is the legendary Prester John of the Indies, the Christian emperor whom Latin Christians greatly desired to be real in order to provide another front against Muslim advances throughout Europe and Asia and who also symbolized the Church's universality in a confessionally mixed world. The legend of Prester John, which began in the twelfth century, most likely grew out of the portrayal of India in the *Acts of Thomas* as well as of geographical and travel accounts of the Nestorian Christians who actually resided and evangelized there.¹⁰¹ The legend intensified when copies of a certain *Letter of Prester John* spread throughout Europe and gave hope to the belief that a Christian kingdom existed in Asia.¹⁰² Don Pedro and his companions indeed find Prester John and receive special treatment from this lord in his magnificent court. Gómez de Santisteban points out that Prester John feels a special kinship with the Lion King of Hispania¹⁰³ and, like the Queen of Cyprus, wishes they lived closer to one

101. For a comprehensive study of the Prester John legend, see Robert Silverberg.

102. See Michael Uebel for a translation and discussion of the *Letter of Prester John*.

103. When Gómez de Santisteban introduces the group to the doorman at the court of Prester

another “porque los enemigos de Jesuchristo fuessen menoscabados, que mucho trabajados somos todos tiempos destas gentes crueles” (“so that the power of the enemies of Jesus Christ might be diminished, for we are at all times much belabored by these cruel peoples”; Gómez de Santisteban 29; 153). Thus, at the opening and closing of the book, two rulers (the Queen of Cyprus and Prester John, respectively) exhort the Christian travellers, and by extension, their readers, to eschew violence against fellow Christians and rather to support those who suffer aggression by Muslim enemies. These acts may have been composed in support of Enrique IV’s ultimately unpopular foray into Granada or Pope Calixtus III’s call to crusade against Muslim Turks, neither of which resulted in any serious action. Gómez de Santisteban appears to take the idea of crusade quite seriously. With little popular or royal support for stemming the Muslim threat, Gómez de Santisteban would not have needed to “prove” himself on that issue to his reader. Nevertheless, he takes pains to stress the rightness of militant Christianity against certain—but not all—Muslim enemies.

Gómez de Santisteban’s positioning of the Prester John account at the end of his book additionally serves to emphasize again the call to reformation within the Church and of the behavior of its members, which was first seen in don Pedro’s pious characterization. The author devotes much space to detailing several excellent religious practices of Prester John and his subjects, practices which may be read as lacking in the Latin West, that is, in Gómez de Santisteban’s home world and the world of his readers. Clerics in Prester John’s realm, to cite one example, are completely humble and fulfill the vows they have taken:

John, he relates that they are “vassallos del rey león de España, su hermano en armas, y su camarero real” (“vassals of the Lion King of Hispania, his [Prester John’s] brother-in-arms and his royal chamberlain”; 25; 147). Later, when the travellers take leave of the Emperor, Prester John refers to the Lion King as his “amado hermano” (“beloved brother”; Gómez de Santisteban 29; 153).

Y en la señoría del Preste Juan de las Indias son muy sujetos los clérigos, que no han diezmos, ni primicias, ni derechos ningunos, salvo el pie del altar, y no pueden tener adilfe, ni camello, no otra bestia, ni animal en que cavalguen, ni han de tener cosa de hierro, ni de alambre, ni de cobre, ni de azero, que son allá metales ricos, assí como aca facen el oro y la plata, y esto no pueden ellos tener. (Gómez de Santisteban 26)

In the domains of Prester John of the Indies the clerics are very much subordinated, for they have neither tithes nor first fruits nor any rights at all save the foot of the altar, for they cannot have any jackal or camel or any other beast of burden or animal on which they might ride, nor may they have anything made of iron or brass or copper or steel, for these are very expensive metals there, just as gold and silver are here, and they therefore cannot have them. (Gómez de Santisteban 148)

Likewise, each abbot says Mass for Prester John just once a year and then returns to his monastery, thus not entangling himself in politics or trying to gain courtly power, “por razón que cada uno debe aver humildad como preste, porque Nuestro Señor fue humildoso y fue verdadero preste, e assí no ay mayor ni menor, nin ay mayor ni más alta orden que ser preste, y por esto ha de aver en cada preste humildad y castidad, y paciencia y penitencia” (“the reason being that each one must have humility as a priest because Our Lord was humble and a true priest. Thus there are no ranks among them. Nor is there a greater or higher order than being a priest. And therefore in each priest there must be humility and chastity and patience and penitence”; Gómez de Santisteban 29; 152). The priests are in contact with their parishioners and watch carefully

that they confess and receive Holy Eucharist every two weeks.¹⁰⁴ The simplicity and poverty practiced by Prester John's clerics perhaps contrasts with the clergy's practice in the Latin West. Gómez de Santisteban may desire to criticize an ostentation of Church authorities that is not in agreement with Jesus' humble model. Furthermore, when Gómez de Santisteban points out that there is no higher rank than that of the priesthood, he underscores the idea that it is priests who do the Church's work, not bishops, cardinals, or popes. The writer envisions an egalitarian Church quite at odds with the hierarchical nature of the Roman Church. By positioning that ecclesiastical structure as part of Prester John's realm, Gómez de Santisteban shields himself from criticism that could befall him were he to criticize the Western Church directly.

The humility and sobriety practiced by the common clergy extends all the way to Prester John himself. In battle, Gómez de Santisteban relates, the Emperor carries not banners and standards of his realm but rather thirteen crosses, in order to continually remember Jesus Christ and his Apostles (Gómez de Santisteban 26; 148). His duties as emperor, in other words, do not cause him to forget his religious obligations. Although priests are allowed to marry, Prester John relates that he sleeps on a bed of sapphires "por castidad, y por razón de aver fruto dormimos con nuestra muger cuatro meses en el año" ("for the sake of chastity, and so as to bear fruit we sleep with our wife four months in the year"; Gómez de Santisteban 29; 152). The high moral standard to which Prester John holds himself is likewise found in the way his land is governed. Swift justice is executed, even if the offender is a great lord: "E si fallare el sacerdote alguno que passa un día que no aya confessado, según la costumbre de la tierra, aunque sea un gran señor, lo tomará sin temor ninguno y lo echará fuera de la iglesia fasta que se confiesse y se arrepienta de

104. This schedule of fortnightly confession is certainly stricter than the Latin Christian norm, which the Fourth Council of Lateran in 1215 confirmed to be necessary at least once a year.

sus pecados” (“If the priest finds anyone who exceeds the time limit by as much as a single day without confessing in accordance with the customs of the land, even though he is a great lord he will seize the offender without fear and will cast him out of the church and keep him out until he confesses and repents of his sins”; Gómez de Santisteban 26; 148). Prester John also supports the poor out of his own coffers. Finally, the very office of Emperor is filled by God’s command: “E cuando fallece el Preste Juan no puede ninguno ser Preste por linaje, ni por señorío, salvo por la gracia de Dios y por el Santo Apóstol” (“When Prester John dies, no one can become the new Prester through inheritance or through personal power, but only through the grace of God and through the intervention of the holy Apostle [Thomas]”; Gómez de Santisteban 26; 149). With the Western Schism having come to a close just some decades before the composition of this work and the stain of politics and corruption generally marking Church assignments, the election of Prester John stands as a model of how the filling of that highest religious office should be carried out.¹⁰⁵ The emphasis on the religiosity and moral goodness of Prester John, his subordinates, and his government must have stood in contrast with that which Gómez de Santisteban and his readers perceived around them. Gómez de Santisteban offers a radical image of the way in which Church, government, and society function. Complete justice is carried out, and no preferential treatment is given to anyone because of his influence or lineage. By painting a picture of a Christian utopia, or a society that faithfully lived out God’s commandments, Gómez de Santisteban is able to criticize his own Church and society and offer up clear examples on actions to be taken to rectify the errors they had fallen into. Furthermore, when one compares

105. Warren Hollister explains that after the Schism, lay people as well as clergy members believed that general councils should be convened regularly to deal with questions within the Church. The popes resisted this opposition to their authority, and after the Council of Basel (1431-1449), the popes retained their control. After 1449, popes became more involved in local Italian politics and less interested in the governance of the international Church. See Hollister, especially pp. 325-327.

Gómez de Santisteban's treatment of Prester John with how the author of the *Libro del conocimiento* approaches that topic, it becomes evident that Gómez de Santisteban makes a concerted effort to highlight those aspects of Prester John's realm that were important to his ideal image of society. In the *Libro del conocimiento*, the author is more interested in describing the geography of Prester John's land and the rivers and mountains of Earthly Paradise. He does not comment on the governing of Prester John's realm, and with regard to religion, he contents himself with mentioning simply that there are many cities of Christians and that they burn the sign of the cross into their foreheads (*Libro del conocimiento* 60). Thus, when Gómez de Santisteban takes up the legend of Prester John in his own imaginary travel-book, his desire for a land like the one Prester John governs becomes all the more apparent through the pronounced attention given to the goodness and moral uprightness characteristic of that land's inhabitants, especially its clergy.

Thus I find that both the *Libro del conocimiento* and the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal* may be read as responses to the societal and religious upheavals experienced in their day. The *Libro del conocimiento* warns against intra-Christian fighting by pointing out that even people without religion do not harm one another. This message of Christian unity is taken up again by Gómez de Santisteban in his *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal*. In this work, the ideal of Christian unity takes on a defensive shade, as attention is called to a Muslim menace that threatens Christianity. Alongside the call to peace among Christians is a sort of *speculum principum* which holds up the devout don Pedro and the perfect Christian king, Prester John, as examples for the readers of the book to emulate. The text also highlights a perfect clergy whose members faithfully and humbly carry out their duties and who are not corrupted by politics, power, or greed. A new and better society is envisioned through the description of Prester John's

domain. There, high and low alike remember their duties to God, and justice, humility, and obedience are the hallmarks of each person's life.

Relation to *The Book of John Mandeville*

I mentioned previously that I would make reference to another medieval book of imaginary travels, *The Book of John Mandeville*. This work is likely the most famous of medieval European imaginary travels, and it stands as an interesting Western European counterpart to the two Castilian fictitious travel-books studied here. I would like briefly to comment upon some points of comparison between the works, as it is not unlikely that the authors and the readers of the *Libro del conocimiento* and the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal* were familiar with this text.¹⁰⁶

The Book of John Mandeville is a unique work of imaginary travels whose author draws principally on two earlier fourteenth-century accounts of real travels (those of Odoric of Pordenone and William of Boldensele) and who also supplements the book with material from wide-ranging sources.¹⁰⁷ The book was originally composed in French with a *terminus post quem* of 1351, and its author claims to be an English knight, although no historical evidence of a

106. Higgins notes that "From its initial publication in the late 1350s until about 1600, *TBJM* was one of the most widely circulated medieval books. Including fragments and excerpts, it survives in some three hundred manuscripts (some expensively made and lavishly illustrated) and in more than ten languages: the original French as well as Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, German, Irish, Italian, Latin, Spanish, and Welsh" (xiii). The Spanish versions include Castilian and Aragonese and a Catalan translation that is no longer extant (Higgins xiii).

107. Higgins has carefully recorded Mandeville's sources in his Appendix B, pp. 219-259. For the first fifteen chapters specifically, see Paola Tornaghi, who discusses at length each source Mandeville referenced in his journey toward the Holy Land. She concludes that "Mandeville was extremely selective in what he chose to use, not only worrying about authority and authenticity, but always careful to make his material attractive, and adding to the 'plagiarised' parts a freshness and lightness of touch . . ." (70).

Sir John Mandeville from St. Albans has been found. Although the writer does include stories of himself in his journeys abroad, on the whole the work is more akin to an impersonal travel guide. In general, it is far more descriptive and includes more material (such as particulars of the places visited) than the Castilian accounts of imaginary travels. *The Book of John Mandeville* is one that has received deserved attention from scholars, and so here I will limit my remarks to the manner in which it too responds to the upheaval of its time through its comments on foreign religious practices. I will note two principal aspects of the work which either converge or diverge from the ideas put forth in the *Libro del conocimiento* and the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal*.

The excellent editor Iain Macleod Higgins has noted briefly in his work that the author of *The Book of John Mandeville* critiques his own society by commenting on those abroad:

Unlike the imaginary realms of romance (even when they contain real forests, castles, or people), *TBJM*'s alternative worlds are depicted as real, as many of them in fact were. Indeed, one might argue that the *Mandeville* author's original deception was not a simple trick for its own sake, but rather that it allowed him the freedom to speak his mind in a society that did not encourage such expression: to critique the moral state of his fellow Christians through an unusually open-minded presentation of the sectarian Christian and non-Christian world beyond Latin Christendom, an open-mindedness extended to nearly every group except the Jews and some nomads like the Bedouins. (ix-x)

Higgins has rightfully noted this aspect of the work, which I would like to develop further. *The Book of John Mandeville* coincides with the two Castilian works in a representation of moral Christian behavior present even among those who are not Christian. A few examples will suffice

to demonstrate how non-Christians are portrayed as possessing correct Christian behavior and how their society benefits from their right actions. These non-Christians comport themselves in such a manner that they are even held up by the *Mandeville* author as models for Christian believers.¹⁰⁸ Mandeville speaks of a certain Island of Bragmey whose inhabitants appear to be morally perfect. Rather than simply stating their perfection, he thoroughly specifies all the ways in which they lead good and righteous lives:

Beyond this island there is another large and good and bountiful island where there are good and trustworthy people, and of a good way of life according to their belief and of good faith, and although they are not Christians and do not have perfect law, nevertheless through natural law they are full of all virtues and they flee all vices and all wickedness and all sins. For they are not proud, nor greedy, nor slothful, nor envious, nor angry, nor gluttonous, nor lustful, and they do unto others only what they want done unto them, and in this custom they fulfill the Ten Commandments. They are not concerned with goods or wealth, and they do not lie at all, and they do not swear oaths for any reason, but simply say yes and no. . . . On this island there is no robber, no murderer, no loose woman, no poor beggar, nor has anyone ever killed in this land, and they are so chaste and lead such a good life that no monks could do it, and they fast every day. Because

108. Martin Camargo has reached a similar conclusion through his fascinating and convincing study of geography and the structure of the Mandeville narrative. Camargo identifies three narrative and geographical nuclei that aim to offer a moral lesson to the reader of the *Travels*. At the beginning (England), middle (the Holy Land), and end (England's antipodes) of the book, Mandeville exhorts his readers to return to Christian living and belief. Camargo concludes that "At England's antipodes belief is imperfect rather than fragmented. At this pole of Christian identity, those who lack perfect knowledge of God's laws serve God naturally; at the opposite pole, those who have perfect knowledge of God's laws unnaturally refuse to serve God. . . . Which islands, we are left to ask, are inhabited by monsters?" (83-4).

they are so trustworthy and so just and full of such good qualities, there have never been storms or lightning, nor hail, nor any plague, nor war, nor famine, nor other tribulation such as we have many times had over here for our sins. (*The Book of John Mandeville* 172-3)

The inhabitants of Bragmey are extreme models of Christian behavior, despite the fact that they do not know Christ. Their land is one that resembles an earthly paradise, full of goodness and without the suffering that accompanies sin. Thus this passage serves to inspire Christians to reform their behavior and lead better lives. They might even feel ashamed and spurred to action since they claim Jesus as their help and Savior and yet do not live as He would wish.

In the aforementioned passage, it is striking that the *Mandeville* author goes beyond exemplifying right behavior to speak of the consequences which the practice or scorning of right behavior alternately entails. The author contrasts the peace that reigns in the land of Bragmey with the troubles that assail the narrator's world "over here" and concludes that those natural disasters are direct results of sins committed by Latin Christians. Higgins points out that at the time of the book's composition, in the late 1350s, readers of *The Book of John Mandeville* would have identified those calamities as particularly relevant to their own time and space. Higgins offers various examples, which I have also mentioned previously:

The Black Death had killed perhaps one third of the population in the later 1340s, greatly altering economic and social relations. The Hundred Years' War between England and France had begun in the late 1330s. A peasants' rebellion (the Jacquerie) had occurred in northern France in 1358, the first of several in Latin Christendom. Serious famines occurred early in the century and global temperatures had begun to cool, the beginning, according to some climate

scientists, of the Little Ice Age. (Higgins 173)

The *Mandeville* author is explicit in proposing that right and wrong actions have direct consequences on Earth and not just in the afterlife. This is an argument that is not found as clearly in the Castilian books of imaginary travels. In the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal*, however, one might perceive a subtle didacticism in the description of Prester John's realm. After reading the extensive and detailed report of Prester John's fabulous wealth, the reader of the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal* may have concluded that his high estate was an earthly reward for leading a good and moral life. Just as punishment was immediately meted out to those who sinned or committed crimes in his kingdoms, the reader could expect that temporal rewards would be received in Prester John's kingdom just as quickly. The *Mandeville* author makes that explicit: a community that maintains justice and goodness will not suffer earthly hardships. In a period of calamities all over Europe, that message surely did not go unnoticed by readers of *The Book of John Mandeville*.

Another instance in which the non-Christian foreigner acts in a way that should inspire Christians to live better occurs in Mandeville's nineteenth chapter. The narrator describes a country whose inhabitants are extremely devoted to the idols of their gods and undertake great devotional pilgrimages to the places where they are housed. They freely give of their wealth and even self-mutilate out of love for the idol and in the belief that those acts will bring them closer to God. The writer summarizes that "In short, they perform such great acts of penance and suffer such great bodily martyrdoms for love of their idols that no Christian would scarcely dare undertake to do a tenth as much for love of his Christ" (*The Book of John Mandeville* 108-9). As in the previous example, the non-Christian foreigner is held up as a model of right behavior and is directly contrasted with the problems prevalent in Latin Christian society. The author

indirectly rebukes his fellow Christians for not acting out their love of Christ even in a small degree.

A third and final passage that portrays non-Christians as models of Christian behavior involves Muslims, rather than pagans, as an imitable people who faithfully follow what their scripture dictates. In the chapter that deals with points of Islamic doctrine, the writer reports that Saracens say Christians are wicked “for they do not keep the commands of the Gospels that Jesus set out before them” (*The Book of John Mandeville* 86). Notably, the narrator makes no attempt to contradict this claim. Instead, he follows with a story of his own experience in the service of the Sultan of Egypt, who asks Mandeville “how the Christians behaved in our countries [Latin Christian kingdoms], and I said well, thank God; and he told me that truly they did not” (*The Book of John Mandeville* 86). The Sultan goes on to identify a long list of moral failures committed by priests and laymen alike and explains that it is because of these failures that Muslims now control previously-held Christian lands. The narrator reflects on this experience to urge Christians to live better:

Alas, what a great scandal it is to our law and to our faith when people who have neither law nor faith rebuke us and reprimand our sins, and those who through our good examples and through our acceptable life ought to be converted to the law of Jesus Christ are through our evils and through us distanced and estranged from the holy and true belief. It is no wonder that they call us wicked, for they speak the truth. But Saracens are good, faithful, for they entirely keep the command of their holy book Alkoran that God sent them by His holy messenger their prophet Machomet . . .” (*The Book of John Mandeville* 87).

In the end, it is the non-Christian foreigner—an “enemy of the Faith”—who is able to model

how a Christian should live his life. Indeed, not only are Christians culpable of failing to live out their faith, they are also at fault for the loss of possible Muslim converts to Christianity who are appalled by their behavior. In all three examples here discussed, the *Mandeville* author uses the foreign to highlight the faults of his own society and urge his readers—sometimes through shaming—to improve themselves by contrasting their behavior with that of those who do not believe in Christ. This same technique is one that has already been discussed in the Castilian imaginary travel-books and is found more prominently in the *Libro del conoçimiento*.

The second point of comparison between *The Book of John Mandeville* and its Castilian counterparts upon which I wish to reflect is the authors' attitudes toward Muslims. The reader will recall that in the *Libro del conoçimiento*, Muslims receive neither praise nor criticism from the author, who records information about their holy city without imposing value judgments upon their beliefs or ways of life; the brief comments on Mecca are simply pieces of knowledge about the world that need to be transmitted to the reader. In the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal*, the treatment of Muslims is quite distinct. On the one hand, three Muslim rulers receive positive treatment and appear in the text as just, tolerant, or eager to learn about the homelands of the travellers. On the other hand, and in a more emphatic manner, Muslims in the Holy Land and at large are portrayed as enemies of Christianity, a violent threat that must be repelled by Christian unity in the West and the East. It is fascinating, then, to read the completely distinct treatment that some Saracens receive at the hands of the *Mandeville* author, a treatment that addresses the finer points of Islamic doctrine in relation to Christianity and that also highlights their aptitude for conversion.¹⁰⁹ One chapter in particular is devoted to explaining the customs and religious law and belief of the Muslims. The traveller describes their

109. Instead of translating the term “Saracen” to “Muslim,” Higgins preserves the original “so as not to substitute modern associations for medieval” (19).

Paradise, their belief in the Virgin Mary and the Incarnation, and their conviction that Jesus is the “most excellent [prophet], and the closest to God” (*The Book of John Mandeville* 83). Indeed, the narrator takes pains to describe the Muslim faith as exceedingly similar to Christianity and to point out the various points of doctrine in which the two religions coincide:

They say indeed that of these four [Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Machomet] Jesus was the worthiest, and the most excellent, and the greatest, such that they have many good articles of our faith and of our belief, although they do not have perfect law and faith according to Christians, and all those who know and understand Scriptures and the prophecies are easily converted, for they have the Gospels and the prophecies and the Bible all written in their language, and they know much of Holy Scripture. (*The Book of John Mandeville* 85-6)

Thus the close degree of similarity between these two Abrahamic religions, as portrayed by the *Mandeville* author, renders Muslims and Christians almost as brothers. These are not the “enemies of the Faith” as Gómez de Santisteban would have it; the *Mandeville* author does not advocate violence against the Saracens. Indeed, the writer, who at this point in his text is following Jacques de Vitry’s *Historia Orientalis*, purposefully diverges from that account and rejects the negative descriptions of Saracens found therein (Higgins 84). Rather than offering a rhetoric of difference, which would not have been perceived as unusual, the *Mandeville* author goes out of his way to emphasize that Christians and Muslims truly have much in common. Nonetheless, although the writer is in general open-minded to the diversity of the world, he still writes from Latin Christendom and defends the primacy of the Christian faith; instead of practicing war against Muslims, Western Christians should offer up an explanation of the Christian faith so that their Abrahamic brothers might be converted. The divergence between the

Mandeville author and Gómez de Santisteban regarding conversion of Muslims to Christianity coincides with what O’Callaghan has discussed in *Reconquest and Crusade in Medieval Spain*. The historian plainly states that “The purpose of war against Islam was not to convert the Muslims” and that “Hispanic Christians were remarkably passive in confronting Muslim theology,” an attitude that is indeed present in the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal* (10). Rather, Iberian Christians intended to take back the territory they believed to be rightfully theirs and to expel the Muslims from those lands (O’Callaghan, *Reconquest* 10, 14). Those interested in Muslim conversion, on the other hand, were popes and northern Europeans, some of whom even travelled to Spain in order to effect that dream, even though they met with little success (O’Callaghan, *Reconquest* 10). If the *Mandeville* author was an Englishman as he claimed, his arguments in favor of conversion of non-Christians, especially Muslims, do not seem out of place. Gómez de Santisteban, for his part, also coincides with the attitude O’Callaghan has described as characteristic of medieval Iberian Christians; that is, he is not interested in converting Muslims to Christianity and does not discuss their theology as the *Mandeville* author does. It is quite possible that Gómez de Santisteban is less pro-Muslim than his English counterpart due to the peninsular tradition of attempting to reconquer lost Christian land and expelling Muslims from Iberia.

As the *Mandeville* reader is often reminded, the world is not a simple place; it is filled with unimaginable wonders that testify to God’s power on Earth. What complicates the view of Muslims in *The Book of John Mandeville* that I just addressed is the fact that *some* Saracens are judged negatively. Specifically, these are the Muslims who reside in the Holy Land and control access to Christianity’s holiest sites, a characterization that likewise occurs in the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal*. The *Mandeville* narrator, speaking of a pilgrim site in Nazareth

where Jesus was raised, distinguishes among Saracens: “The Saracens look after it scrupulously because of the profit that they have, and they are far more wicked and far crueller Saracens than in other parts, and they have destroyed all the churches” (*The Book of John Mandeville* 69). This negative depiction of Saracens specifically in the Holy Land agrees with the crusade ideology found elsewhere in the work. The Holy Land, “the most excellent and the most worthy and lady and sovereign of all other lands,” where Jesus Christ deigned to carry out the redemption of Man, is for the writer the central and most important part of the world (*The Book of John Mandeville* 3). In the prologue to his work, the author rebukes those Christian lords who fight against one another and advocates for a crusade to win back the Holy Land, a passage that deserves to be cited at length:

And in the said land He wished to die so as to leave it as a possession to His children—which is why every good Christian who has the power and the means ought to take pains and do great work to conquer our above-mentioned and right inheritance and take it from the hands of the miscreants and appropriate it to us, for we are called Christians after Christ, who is our Father; and if we are true sons of God, we ought to reclaim the inheritance our Father left to us and wrest it from the hands of the foreigners.

But today pride, greed, and envy have so enflamed the hearts of the lords that they seek more to disinherit others than they do to reclaim and conquer their own and lawful inheritance mentioned above. And those commoners who with goodwill have given their bodies and possessions to conquer our above-mentioned inheritance can do nothing without the sovereign lords. For a gathering of the commons without a chief lord is like a flock of sheep without a shepherd: it

spreads out and does not know where it should go or what it should do. But if it pleased our holy apostolic father [the Pope]—for it would please God well—that the landed princes were reconciled and with each of their commons would undertake the holy voyage overseas, I believe it to be certain that in a short time the Promised Land would be restored and placed in the hands of its rightful heirs, the sons of Jesus Christ. (*The Book of John Mandeville* 4-5)

This sentiment, as opposed to the idea of Abrahamic brotherhood, is much more akin to what one finds in the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal*, which also espouses Christian unity against Muslim enemies. It appears that in both works, crusade ideology is alive and well, despite the fact that the last major crusade had taken place close to the end of the thirteenth century, several decades before either work was written.

On the one hand, then, the *Mandeville* author and Gómez de Santisteban do coincide in their support for Christian unity and a negative portrayal of at least some Muslims, especially those who occupy the Holy Land, as enemies of Christianity whose growth and territorial expansion must be prevented. On the other hand, the *Mandeville* writer differs quite dramatically from the authors of the *Libro del conocimiento* and the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal* in his open-minded and even laudatory treatment of Muslims in general.¹¹⁰ Whereas Gómez de Santisteban represents Muslims in a mixed manner and the author of the *Libro del conocimiento* neutrally records facts about their sacred city, the *Mandeville* author devotes much space to explaining the points of commonality between the Muslim and Christian faiths. Perhaps this divergence is due to the different places from where each author was writing.

110. The tolerant attitude directed toward Muslims is absent in the author's mentions of Jews. Higgins has noted that their "practices and beliefs receive no attention, while the Jews themselves are demonized" (xxi).

The *Mandeville* author, allegedly from England, would not have had the same experience with Muslims as would a writer from the Iberian Peninsula who lived physically closer to Muslims of the south and who would have been more exposed to Andalusí culture and religion. I am simply speculating, but perhaps the writer of the *Libro del conocimiento* was so accustomed to Muslims that he found it unnecessary to comment on them, either positively or negatively. For his part, Gómez de Santisteban may have been steeped in the crusade ideology present in the Peninsula as rulers over several centuries called for the reconquest of Hispania. He may even have felt disillusioned that no real progress had been made in taking back Iberia from the Muslims since the late thirteenth century.¹¹¹ In contrast to the two Castilian works, the open-mindedness of *The Book of John Mandeville* reinforces its writer's remarks in favor of Muslim conversion to Christianity, a desire not expressed in the two former works. The *Mandeville* author certainly takes a different approach from the Castilian writers of imaginary travels, portraying Islam as a religion with much in common with Christianity and even holding Muslims up as outside examples of how Christians should be better practicers of their own religion. Utilizing the foreign as a model for Christian behavior likewise occurs in the *Libro del conocimiento* and the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal*, but in a less pronounced manner. Gómez de Santisteban restricts himself to the persons of don Pedro and Prester John for those models. Ultimately, the largely tolerant *Mandeville* author sees all people, whether Muslim, Christian, or idolater, as so many parts of God's wondrous world who know Him, if not through Holy Scripture, then through Nature:

Know that in all these countries about which I have spoken, and on all these

111. For an excellent study on how medieval wars against Muslims in Iberia were transformed into crusades and how the crusading ideology helped to justify and create support for said wars, see O'Callaghan's *Reconquest and Crusade in Medieval Spain*.

islands, and amongst all these diverse peoples that I have described to you, and the diverse laws and the diverse beliefs they have, there is no people—because they have reason and understanding—who do not have some articles of our faith and some good points of our belief, and who do not believe in God who made the world, whom they call God of Nature, according to the prophet, who said: “*Et metuent eum omnes fines terre.*” And elsewhere: “*Omnes gentes servient ei.*” (*The Book of John Mandeville* 183-4)¹¹²

Conclusion

It would be a disservice to the *Libro del conocimiento* and the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal* to consider them simply flights of imagination or repositories of marvelous material. Rather, as I have attempted to demonstrate, these works function as a window into the minds of two medieval Castilian authors who shared similar concerns about the moral state of Latin Christendom. To express those concerns, both writers turned to narratives of journeys abroad and populated them with a variety of foreign peoples, places, customs, beliefs, and religious practices. In order to simultaneously admonish and encourage their fellow Christian readers, the authors resorted to stories of the foreign which allowed them freely to express their ideas without the fear of reprisal they might have experienced had they declared their criticism in a more direct manner. The *Libro del conocimiento* and the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal* create imaginary worlds, sometimes based on real places, which portray a variety of foreign peoples. Some of these figures are idealized in their moral uprightness, like some pagans

112. See Higgins’s section on “The World According to Sir John” for a persuasive explanation of how the *Mandeville* author approaches the larger picture of this journey through the world (xx-xxiii).

in the *Libro del conocimiento* and don Pedro and Prester John in the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal*, whereas others, like Gómez de Santisteban's Muslims, are a mixture of good and bad qualities. For each new group of people encountered in these books, the contemporary reader must have asked how the others compared to the world and peoples he knew. In both texts, this comparison would have shown that many Christians and non-Christians outside of Western Europe lived morally better lives and pleased God more perfectly, even if they did not know Jesus Christ, compared to Latin Christians. Similarly, clergy members, like those of Prester John's domain in the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal*, were true to their vows and lived humble lives free of ostentation. The descriptions of the morally good foreigner that I have examined in this chapter implicitly level strong critiques at the state of the Latin Christian Church and the morality not only of its lay members but of its higher authorities as well. At the personal level, correct moral behavior is endorsed. The authors do not restrict their criticisms to that personal level, though. Reform within the Church and society is called for, especially in Gómez de Santisteban's work: peace, justice, and equality should characterize the workings of the community, not politics, personal ambition, or lust for power, problems which plagued the reigns of contemporary kings Juan II and Enrique IV. Finally, both works also defend the importance of Christian unity and advocate peaceful existence among Christians. The authors of the *Libro del conocimiento* and the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal* engage the foreigner by utilizing it as a vehicle by which to criticize and comment upon natural and religious crises of their homelands, offering both the contemporary reader, as well as the modern, insight into the concerns that prompted the composition of these works.

CHAPTER FOUR

New Models of Foreign Relations:

The *Embajada a Tamorlán* (1406) and *Andanças e viajes* (1454)

The late Middle Ages witnessed an increasing number of travellers from Western Europe who left their native lands for the East for adventure, commerce, political motives, pilgrimage, missionary work, and much more. As I discussed in Chapter Two, literature that featured traveller-protagonists was already popular with medieval European readers. The heroes of the *Libro de Alexandre* and the *Libro del Caballero Zifar* journeyed abroad and successfully created new and better homes for themselves in foreign lands. The accounts of these fictional characters deal with the complex act of self-exile and how the sojourner established successful relations with foreign peoples. In the present chapter, I will turn from fiction to accounts of medieval journeys that actually took place. By drawing on two fifteenth-century Castilian travel books, the *Embajada a Tamorlán* (*Embassy to Tamerlane*, 1406) and the *Tratado de las andanças e viajes por diversas partes del mundo* (*Treatise on the adventures and travels through diverse parts of the world*, 1454, henceforth *Andanças e viajes*), I intend to show how generalizations drawn about relationships among Europeans and non-Europeans in the Middle Ages may be nuanced by looking at travellers who actually experienced those encounters on their journeys abroad.

Almost universally, travel implies contact with another, with some person outside the normal, quotidian interactions of one's own society and home world. Upon setting out from their places of origin, travellers leave behind their social and familial relations and must rely on

strangers in order to successfully complete their journeys. Even when noble travellers, for example, had contact with others of similar status and importance, the foreign world was still unfamiliar, particularly with regard to customs of hospitality, gastronomy, and vestuary. Human interaction between the traveller and the stranger is at the heart of these journeys. These encounters are peculiar, though. The traveller is a displaced person who has left behind his home and social connections. In a state of flux and ambiguity, he may no longer consider himself as “Center.” This displacement, in turn, affects his relationships with those he meets along the road. Whereas it may have been easy in the home world to speak of foreigners in abstract, generalized terms, the traveller must now confront those who are culturally, ethnically, or religiously different from himself. On the road and in foreign places, the distance separating the traveller and the foreigner is physically and symbolically collapsed. The traveller interacts with strangers in order to procure lodging or food, for instance, and he observes or participates first-hand in new religious and cultural practices. By looking at the kinds of interaction between travellers and foreigners in two medieval Castilian travel books, the *Embajada a Tamorlán* and *Andanças e viajes*, I wish to demonstrate that travel is a special circumstance that obligates the wayfarer and the stranger to confront one another in a manner that goes beyond stereotypes and generalizations to inspire relationships as fellow human beings based on common points of humanity and friendship.

Travel-books have been studied from a variety of approaches and perspectives. Several academics have written of genre considerations and limitations (especially the use of descriptions and marvel material), which I address in the Introduction to this dissertation. In the following discussion of the *Embajada a Tamorlán* and *Andanças e viajes*, I would like to focus on the encounters on the road and the experiences of the travellers themselves—and subsequently, how

the journeyers then represent those experiences in their text—as unique components of travel writing. As Bakhtin has pointed out in his discussion of chronotopes in literature, spatial and social distances are collapsed on the road, which is a site of meeting and encounter: “any contrast may crop up, the most various fates may collide and interweave with one another” (243). This collapsing of distances and differences occurs not only on literary roads, however. In the two historical accounts considered here, the travellers encounter a variety of people of lesser and greater social states than themselves. Through the sojourners’ encounters with foreigners, I will detail how these processes occur and the travellers’ reactions to them. In this discussion, I analyze various facets of the travellers’ journeys: the diverse people they meet and how they are represented in the texts, judgments the travellers make, foreign customs they observe and practice, exchanges that take place between the journeyers and strangers, and finally, some ways in which the travel writers explain their experiences for their audience back home. These experiences will show how the travellers occupied a unique position between their home world and the foreign land that allowed them greater perspective to speak about the world at large. I believe that one may reread these texts to recover the peripatetic experience of the traveller and not only his function as a static, external observer.

In addition to gaining greater insight into the particular experiences of these travellers, the study of their works also affords the reader a new understanding of how their world-view both shaped and was shaped by their experiences abroad. By looking at the images of foreign civilizations as depicted by the travellers, I wish to question how these Western Christians thought of themselves in relation to the Eastern societies with which they entered into contact. When one deals with the topic of Western European relations with the Middle or Far East, Edward Said's book *Orientalism* (1978) commonly comes to mind. In this work, Said essentially

redefined the term Orientalism, a concept which previously referred to the artistic style as well as the academic study of the East by scholars, writers, artists, government administrators, and explorers. As Robert Irwin has explained, an “Orientalist” in eighteenth-century France and Britain referred to one who studied matters of the Levant or who employed a certain artistic style (for example, the use of dragons). In the nineteenth century, the idea of Orientalism expanded to include the study of languages and cultures of all of Asia. Said, however, thinks of Orientalism as a hostile political ideology and an instrument of imperialism: “Orientalism is fundamentally a political doctrine willed over the Orient because the Orient was weaker than the West, which elided the Orient’s difference with its weakness. . . .As a cultural apparatus Orientalism is all aggression, activity, judgment, will-to-truth, and knowledge (204). While the work generated, and continues to generate, discussion in post-colonial and subaltern fields of study in particular, many critics have found serious fault with Said’s scholarship in *Orientalism*.¹¹³ In Spanish-American studies, related themes such as colonialism, the Other, and the dynamics of knowledge and power are ever-present. I simply wish to remind the reader that in dealing with Medieval Iberia, we encounter a very distinct world indeed.¹¹⁴ The local and distant “Others” of Medieval Iberia were not subjects who fit the kind of Orientalism that Said proposes. Rather, as I discussed in Chapter Two, there existed a variety of marginal groups with varying degrees of marginality. In relation to the present chapter and the travels to the Mediterranean and the East

113. John MacKenzie, for example, asserts that Said, who criticizes Western Orientalists for their treatment of the East as a homogeneous, undifferentiated entity, in fact realizes the same error in his stereotypical portrayal of the West as a hegemonic entity (see especially pp. 1-15). Others, such as Robert Irwin, have pointed out factual errors in *Orientalism* that are so grave as to undermine the very thesis of Said’s work (see especially Irwin’s Introduction in *Dangerous Knowledge* as well as Chapter 9).

114. I feel it necessary to make this reminder as Said’s variety of Orientalism crops up in various medieval literary studies, for instance on John Mandeville and Benjamin of Tudela.

by medieval Castilians, I wish to underscore the fact that many civilizations that travellers like Clavijo and Tafur encountered abroad were superior to and culturally, economically, and intellectually more advanced than their own. The dynamic between these medieval Westerners and the Eastern foreigners they met along their journeys was nothing like the relationship in the present world between West and East and the long shadow of colonialism. On the contrary, I wish to demonstrate how the travellers of the *Embajada a Tamorlán* and *Andanças e viajes* positioned foreign worlds as advanced, desirable civilizations while they simultaneously show pride and pleasure at their incorporation into those alien communities.¹¹⁵

Castile Looks Abroad

The *Embajada a Tamorlán* is the account of a three-year embassy headed by Ruy González de Clavijo to the Mongol ruler Timur in Asia sent by Castilian king Enrique III in

115. François Hartog published an important work in 1980 (translated to English in 1988), *The Mirror of Herodotus: The Representation of the Other in the Writing of History*, which analyzes the Greek ethnographer and “Father of History” Herodotus and his *Histories*. In particular, Hartog examines how Herodotus approaches cultural difference and otherness in non-Greeks, using Herodotus’s account of the Scythians as his primary text. Through a minute analysis of that work, Hartog concludes that Herodotus employs that discourse not so much to discuss Scythia as to discuss and reflect back upon Greeks. The “mirror” of the title refers to the way in which Herodotus’s narrative uses cultural or ethnic others to both reflect and contrast with his own Greek homeland as well as to bring that otherness closer to his readers. Cultural others are held up as positive models in order to subtly criticize shortcomings in the writer’s home society. I have studied a similar occurrence in the books of imaginary travels in Chapter Three. An additional useful proposal of Hartog is his chapter on a “rhetoric of otherness,” which offers several ways in which travellers “translate” difference for their readers: they employ inversion, comparison and analogy, marvels, classification, and description. With regards to Clavijo’s embassy and Tafur’s adventures in Europe and the Near East, I find that this model—the rhetoric of otherness—does not lend itself quite aptly to the experience of these Castilians abroad. The “Others” that Clavijo and Tafur encounter are simply not that different from themselves; that is, the degrees to which they are different are not so great as to necessitate “translation” for their readers. Rather, as I hope to illustrate, Clavijo and Tafur find it easy to cross cultural and religious borders separating them from strangers, to establish productive relationships and friendships with them, and finally to integrate themselves into those new communities.

1403.¹¹⁶ Timur had just defeated Bayezid I, Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, at the Battle of Ankara in 1402, and this was witnessed by two Castilian knights, Gómez de Sotomayor and Sánchez de Palazuelos. Enrique III had sent them as diplomats to Bayezid, but it appears that they wound up fighting with Timur's troops against Bayezid in that important battle (López Estrada, "Viajeros castellanos" 64). Timur treated them well, and when they were ready to return to Castile, Timur sent with them an ambassador, Mohamad Alcaxi, a letter for Enrique III, and some Christian women he freed from the Turks. In order to nurture an incipient relationship with the fearsome lord who just caught all of Christendom's attention, Enrique III quickly responded with an embassy in 1403, the one which here concerns me, composed of Clavijo, Enrique III's steward; the Dominican Alfonso Páez de Santamaría; Gómez de Salazar, a person in the king's guard; and eleven other unnamed men.¹¹⁷ This mission, which lasted approximately three years, had the purpose of gathering knowledge of Timur's empire and of seeking a possible alliance against the Ottoman Turks.¹¹⁸ A defeat of the Ottomans was of

116. Timur, also known as Tamerlane, was a Turkic-Mongol ruler in Central, South, and West Asia from 1370 to 1405 who styled himself as a successor to the Mongol empire of Genghis Khan. For the perception of Mongols in the centuries preceding the works considered here, see Charles Burnett and Patrick Gautier Dalché. For more details on Timur's life and rise to power within a Central Eurasian context, see Christopher Beckwith. It is noteworthy that the writer of the *Embajada* almost without exception refers to Timur as *Tamurbeque* (Lord Timur) and not *Tamorlán* (Timur the Lame), which magnifies the greatness of Timur's person and in turn reinforces the fact that the Castilian embassy is establishing relations with a distinguished and consequential civilization.

117. Clavijo has traditionally been named as the writer of the travel account due to his position as the leader of the group of ambassadors. In his critical edition of the work, López Estrada points out that it is possible that Páez de Santamaría was the author, or at least involved in the authorship, of the work (*Embajada*. . . 36-38). I tend to see the hand of a religious man in the written text, most notably in the description of religious rites and attention to questions of theology. I will refer to the author as Clavijo, however, in keeping with the general practice of doing so.

118. The group travelled from May of 1403 to March of 1406. An outline of their itinerary

utmost importance to Christian Europe, as the Ottoman Empire had their sights set on conquering Constantinople, capital of the Christian Byzantine Empire. Timur's notable defeat of Bayezid I, and the latter's subsequent death in captivity, turned out to be only a delay in the Ottoman expansion, but another half-century would elapse before the fall of Constantinople in 1453.

Just about a year after the Ottoman victory at Constantinople, the Castilian Pero Tafur of Córdoba¹¹⁹ put to paper the account of his travels throughout the Mediterranean, the Levant and the Near East, and the Holy Roman Empire, which had taken place approximately fifteen years earlier, from 1436 to 1439.¹²⁰ Tafur describes himself as an "hidalgo y caballero" ("nobleman

may be found in López Estrada, *Libros de viajeros hispánicos medievales* pp. 71-2. Departing from the southern coast of the Iberian Peninsula, they travel by ship through the Mediterranean, normally not straying far from the northern coast. At Rhodes, they turn north to reach Constantinople, whence they travel the southern edge of the Black Sea towards Trabzon, and finally they begin the overland route to Samarkand. The return journey follows approximately the same route, the biggest deviation being a stop in Genoa that they did not make on the trip east. The final place mentioned in the account is Alcalá de Henares where they return to King Enrique III and where they must have been greeted with great joy and pomp following an arduous, daring, and truly admirable journey.

119. Tafur is from Córdoba, a city with great Andalusí history but that belonged to Castile from the 1230s when Fernando III captured it. Tafur's lineage and later activities in life, including the composition of his travel-book, place him in Córdoba, although he speaks of himself as being "castellano natural de Sevilla" ("Castilian native to Seville"). Tafur could have been born in Córdoba or had relations there and spent time growing up in Seville. Whatever the case, he is strongly attached to both southern cities but thinks of himself as Castilian. When referring to his *nación*, for example, he speaks of *España* and considers Castilian as his mother tongue.

120. Tafur's travels are divided into four principal stages which tend to center around Venice. From autumn of 1436 to May of 1437, he travels from Sanlúcar to Pisa to Venice, whence he visits Rome and other Italian cities. The second journey sees Tafur travelling to the East beginning in May of 1437. He visits Palestine, Egypt, various Mediterranean islands, Constantinople, and Turkey, returning to Venice a year later, in May of 1438. Tafur's third sojourn lasts approximately eight months, and, crossing the Alps, he visits cities in Germany and the Low Countries, as well as Poland, Austria, and parts of Italy. On his last voyage, from January of 1439, Tafur returns to Spain through the Adriatic and Mediterranean Seas until

and knight”) and is of the noble House of Guzmán.¹²¹ Unlike Clavijo, Tafur travels as an adventurer with no particular political or evangelical mission, although from time to time he does take on short diplomatic duties for lords he meets abroad. Guided principally by his personal whims, then, Tafur has more liberty to write about that which captures his attention and does not write with the same detached objectivity that generally characterizes the *Embajada a Tamorlán*.¹²² Tafur does, however, mention various objectives that drive his travels. First, he wishes to improve himself as a knight through brave and noble deeds, and he emphasizes a chivalry based on virtue rather than money or power (Tafur 5).¹²³ Pérez Priego notes that the

Sardinia, where the account prematurely ends. With regards to the composition of the written account, Tafur must have taken extensive notes while on his journey, for the dates and locations in general are accurate and complete. López Estrada convincingly speculates that the writing of his work may have been occasioned by the fall of Constantinople in 1453 (“Viajeros castellanos” 69). With his first-hand knowledge of that city, Tafur could offer his readers an important account of the legendary place, already in decline, as he witnessed it just years before the Ottoman Turks captured it.

121. Tafur dedicates his work to don Fernando de Guzmán, *Comendador Mayor* of the Order of Calatrava. This is the same Fernando de Guzmán whom readers of Golden Age drama might recognize as the corrupt and unjust protagonist of Lope de Vega’s *Fuenteovejuna*. The knightly nobleman of whom Tafur speaks contrasts with his later conduct which leads to his death at the hands of the united villagers of Fuenteovejuna. Tafur’s birth and death dates are not known, but it is known that he was living in 1479, when he appears in the records as a *veinticuatro* (alderman or municipal official) of Córdoba. López Estrada situates his birth between 1405 and 1409 and reports that after 1480, there is no news of him (*Libros de viajeros* 101).

122. One memorable example of Tafur’s mischievousness occurs when he visits thermal springs near Basel. The baths are renowned for their healing properties and attract pilgrims. However, a free-spirited environment reigns, and Tafur notes that the bathers do not deem it improper for both naked men and women to play together in the water. It happens several times that Tafur joins in the fun with the handmaidens of a certain lady there on pilgrimage. He recounts that he would throw silver coins to the floor of the pool which the maidens would dive down to pick up with their mouths. Tafur cheekily adds that one could imagine what was in the air while their heads were down below.

123. Tafur’s concept of a knighthood based on virtue does not mean that he is uninterested in money or trade. Indeed, he pays great attention to prices, fees, goods bought and sold, and the benefits of banking. His interest in commerce may reflect a growing trade economy and a rising

justification of worldly wanderings is found in the state of knighthood for it magnifies those virtues in addition to associating the traveller with famous fictitious knights (xxi).¹²⁴ Secondly, Tafur desires to observe and learn from foreign societies with the aim of improving his own.¹²⁵ Not only is Tafur (as well as Clavijo) concerned with describing the landscapes and foreign cities and their monuments, he is additionally interested in the people who inhabit them, their ways of life, their political customs, their commercial practices, and more. His wish to learn about other

merchant class. Margaret Wade Labarge's article, which provides an overview of Tafur's travels, discusses in particular the mercantile aspects of Tafur's journeys and the implications for his social status and import.

124. An objective related to this exercise of chivalry is to realize a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. With reference to Jerusalem, the reader may consult Aníbal Biglieri's article "Jerusalén: de la *Gran conquista de ultramar* a Pero Tafur." In this article, Biglieri compares the treatment given the holy city of Jerusalem in the *Gran conquista de ultramar*, the *Travels* of John Mandeville, and Tafur's *Andanças e viajes*. With regards to Tafur, Biglieri argues that the traveller responds to a modern, rather than medieval, mentality in his treatment of Jerusalem. While Tafur recognizes the historical, biblical Jerusalem, he also is conscious of his own subjective, personal experience in that city. I would add that compared to another pilgrim here studied, Ibn Jubayr, Tafur's spiritual journey is much less serious; he visits holy sites rather as a tourist than as a soul-searching pilgrim. This, of course, was one of the problems that made the concept of pilgrimage a thorny issue for Church leaders concerned about the secular dimension of that spiritual undertaking.

125. Tafur realizes that a traveller is unknown abroad and that it is in foreign lands that one may show one's true character as well as come into knowledge beneficial to one's home community. Tafur writes that by visiting foreign lands, "razonablemente se pueden conseguir provechos cercanos a lo que proeza requiere, así engrandeciendo los fijos algo sus corazones donde sin ser primero conocidos los intervienen trabajos y priesas, cuando solamente por propias façañas puede ser de ellos conocedora la gente extranjera. E no menos porque, si acaece fazer retorno después del trabajo de sus caminos a la provincia donde son naturales, puedan, por la diferencia de los governamientos e por las contrarias cualidades de una nación a otra, venir en conocimiento de lo más provechoso a la cosa pública e establecimiento de ella, en que principalmente se deven trabajar los que de nobleza no se querrán llamar enemigos" ("one may reasonably obtain advantages such that great feats require, thus exalting noblemen in their hearts where, first being unknown, labors and difficulties overtake them, when only by their own deeds may strangers know them. Moreover, if it happens that they return after the labor of their journeys to the province whence they originate, they may come to know, because of the difference of governments and the contrasting qualities between one nation and another, the most advantageous thing to society and its establishment, which things must be the work of those who do not want to call themselves enemies of nobility"; 6). All translations are mine.

human beings and unfamiliar customs recalls the interest Abu Hamid displayed in his various travels and the records he made of alien ways of life. Finally, a third objective of Tafur's sojourn is to examine his lineage which he believes links him distantly to the Byzantine emperor.¹²⁶

Clavijo, official emissary of the Castilian monarchy, and Tafur, an adventurous knight, are two representatives of medieval Castilian travel who left written accounts of their journeys which survive today.¹²⁷ Looking back on affairs in the Iberian Peninsula leading up to these times will help to contextualize and explain noble and royal Castilian interest in the West and East at the beginning of the fifteenth century.

As I discussed in the second chapter, Castile was focused on peninsular affairs at the time of writing of the *Libro de Alexandre* (first half of thirteenth century) and the *Libro del Caballero Zifar* (c. 1300): Fernando III was deeply involved in the Reconquest, and Sancho IV and María de Molina were preoccupied with consolidating and maintaining their royal power. The emphasis on domestic affairs continued in the reign of Alfonso XI (r. 1312-1350), grandson of

126. The kinship of Tafur and the Byzantine emperor is uncertain. What is more certain is that “El nombre de *Tafur* resulta un tanto anómalo para designar a una familia noble” (“The name of *Tafur* seems to be rather anomalous for designating a noble family”; López Estrada, *Libros de viajeros* 103). The dictionary of the *Real Academia Española* reports that the modern adjective *tahúr*, meaning playful, derives from the Arabic *takfur* which in turn resulted from an Armenian word, *tagevor* which was used negatively to designate Armenian kings and their relationships with the crusaders. It is not clear how the word entered into Tafur's ancestry, but it does give an indication of the multicultural milieu of “reconquered” lands of southern Iberia.

127. The original manuscript of the *Embajada a Tamorlán* is lost, but four others are extant: two from the fifteenth century (one of which is in Aragonese) and two from the sixteenth century. The important printed edition was by Argote de Molina in 1582 in Seville. López Estrada notes that the Argote edition was copied by hand, and in one of these manuscripts, there are annotations in Arabic. For more information on the manuscripts, printed editions, and translations, see López Estrada's introduction, pp. 53-57. Of Pero Tafur's work, there exists a single manuscript copy from the eighteenth century; the original manuscript is lost. Pérez Priego points out that there must have been at least two copies originally, one belonging to the dedicatee, Fernando de Guzmán, and the other to Tafur himself (XLIII). The work's first editor was Marcos Jiménez de la Espada who published it in his *Colección de Libros Españoles Raros o Curiosos* (1874). The first English-language version was translated by Malcolm Letts in 1926.

Sancho IV. Medieval Spanish historian Peter Linehan writes about the chronicler, perhaps Fernán Sánchez, who composed the *Crónica de Alfonso XI*:

In notable contrast to his thirteenth-century predecessors, the historian of the 1330s and 1340s was unconcerned by the continuum of the national story, indifferent to the once potent myth of Spain's Gothic destiny, and oblivious of the programmatic endeavour of the writers of the past to return Spain to the course from which it had been diverted in 711. The *Crónica de Alfonso XI* is narrowly focused on the here-and-now and confines its attention to the kingdom of Castile. The wider world is of little interest to its author, as it had been to Alfonso X and his collaborators. . . . Seasoned diplomat though he was, he evinces scant interest in foreign affairs, only with extreme reluctance devoting space to those 'things which happened outside the kingdoms of King Alfonso', doing so only in so far as they impinge on domestic matters, and having done so resuming his national narrative with unfeigned relief. (619)

With the establishment of the Trastámaran line in the last decades of the fourteenth century, however, there is a gradual shift in involvement in affairs outside Castile. Enrique, an illegitimate son of Alfonso XI by Leonor de Guzmán, murdered his half-brother, King Pedro I, to become the first king of Castile of the House of Trastámara. During his reign, Enrique's family expanded their influence in various peninsular kingdoms, principally by advantageous marriages and sometimes by force. Joseph O'Callaghan explains that "The expansion of the dynasty also meant the expansion of Castile and resulted to some extent in the Castilianization of the other kingdoms. In this sense the Trastámaras were the agents whereby Castile was able to realize, at least in part, her traditional ambition to dominate the peninsula" (*A History of Medieval Spain*

523).

The Trastámaras were also affected by events involving France, England, and the Mediterranean. Enrique II had to repudiate Portugal's ally, England, whose duke of Lancaster, John of Gaunt, claimed the Castilian throne through his marriage to Pedro I's eldest daughter. English pirates also wreaked havoc on Castilian merchant ships attempting to pass through the channel to deliver goods to Flanders. At the same time, Castile supported the French in the Hundred Years' War with England. After Enrique II's early death at forty-six years of age, his son, Juan I (r. 1379-1390), continued to deal with John of Gaunt's pretensions to the throne and furthermore attempted to obtain rights to the Portuguese throne. In 1389, a truce finally ended Castilian participation in the Hundred Years' War (O'Callaghan, *A History of Medieval Spain* 534).

To complicate matters further, the Western Schism of the Catholic Church, lasting from 1378 to 1417, divided European loyalties and Christian unity between the antipope in Avignon, Clement VII, and the Roman pontiff, Urban VI. While France sided with Clement VII and England supported Urban VI, Enrique II maintained his neutrality and advised his son to do the same. For a time, Juan I followed that advice, but after discovering Portugal's deception in dealing with Castile, he threw his support behind the Avignon pope and invaded Portugal in 1381, a move that ultimately ended in a peace settlement the following year.

Juan I died unexpectedly in 1390, leaving his twelve-year-old son Enrique III (r. 1390-1406) as king of Castile. He assumed control in 1393 and succeeded in bringing order to his kingdom and establishing peaceful relationships, in general, with neighboring realms. However, some important conflicts did take place. In 1391, during Enrique's minority, a widespread massacre of thousands of Jews in Castile and Aragon occurred. The archdeacon of Ecija,

Fernando Martínez, incited harassment of the Jews, and murderous outbreaks occurred in various Iberian cities. Jews had endured hostility in the past due to their importance in the management of royal finances, their work as money-lenders, and also because the general populace blamed them for sufferings related to the Black Death and peninsular wars. O'Callaghan explains: "The general upheaval of society resulting from the plague, the civil wars and their attendant destruction, the oppression by the nobility, and economic stagnation, encouraged a spirit of despair and misery among the people, who gladly vented their frustrations upon the scapegoat, the Jews" (*A History of Medieval Spain* 606).

In addition to this ethno-religious unrest, Enrique III had to address problems outside the realm. The Western Schism continued, Castilian merchants were preyed upon by pirates from England in the Mediterranean, and a dispute arose between Castile and Portugal regarding the Canary Islands in the Atlantic. Ezquerro Abadía adds that Enrique III's "curiosidad hacia el exterior y el deseo de ensanchar sus horizontes políticos le llevaron a entablar relaciones diplomáticas con los sultanes de Egipto y otros soberanos del norte de África" ("curiosity toward the foreign and the desire to broaden his political horizons led him to initiate diplomatic relations with the sultans of Egypt and other sovereigns from the north of Africa"; 7). This international vision, according to Ezquerro Abadía, anticipates the character of his granddaughter Isabel the Catholic. López Estrada likewise highlights the foreign interests of Enrique III who is "pendiente de los sucesos lejanos que intuía que podían repercutir en su país" ("on the lookout for distant events that he sensed could affect his country"; "Viajeros castellanos" 63). Indeed, not only is Enrique III watchful for foreigner matters that might impact Castile, but he also initiates relationships with foreign rulers in order to better know his equals:

Y fue tan deseoso de saber las cosas extrañas que enviaba caballeros de su casa no

solamente a los reyes cristianos y al Preste Juan de las Indias, más aún al Gran Soldán de Babilonia y de Egipto, y al Tamorlán, que quiere decir en nuestra lengua castellana “Señor del Hierro”, y el Gran Turco, y a los reyes de Túnez y de Fez y de Marruecos y con otros reyes y señores moros por haber información de sus tierras y estados y costumbres, en [lo] que hizo grandes espensas. Lo que sin duda procedía de grandeza de corazón, que mucho conviene a los grandes príncipes saber de los semejantes. (López Estrada, *Libros de viajeros* 64)¹²⁸

And he was so desirous of knowing foreign things that he sent knights from his household not only to Christian kings and to Prester John of the Indies, but also to the Grand Sultan of Babylonia and of Egypt, and to Tamerlane, which means in our Castilian language “Lord of Iron,” and to the Grand Turk, and to the kings of Tunisia and of Fes and of Morocco and to other Moorish kings and lords in order to have information about their lands and states and customs, in which he laid out great expenses. Which no doubt proceeded from greatness of heart, for it is very appropriate that great princes know of their fellow lords.

As this brief historical review shows, Castile, in the fourteenth century, experienced a great deal of turmoil, both at home and abroad, in an ever-increasing region outside the Iberian Peninsula. By the first years of the fifteenth century when Enrique III sent his two embassies to Timur in the East, Asia had already been made known to Europe through the works of Marco Polo (1254-1324), in particular, as well as the writings of other travellers like William of Rubruck (1220-1293). Colin Mackerras refers to this period as “The First Great Age of Sino-European Contact,” an epoch which imprinted upon the medieval European imagination fantastic

128. This report comes from a fifteenth-century chronicle of Diego Rodríguez de Almela, cited by López Estrada.

and wondrous images of faraway lands (12). After this fruitful period of contact between Asia and Europe, communication between the two regions was greatly diminished during the middle of the fourteenth century. According to Mackerras, the loss of contact between the lands was due to various causes: the collapse of the Mongol dynasty in China made the overland route to Europe much more difficult; Oriental peoples lost interest in Europe and trade was diminished; and finally, the plague, which killed a third of the European population between 1348 and 1351, damaged the economy and impeded journeys abroad (17).

Consequently, what we find in the *Embajada a Tamorlán* and in *Andanças e viajes* are some of the first manifestations at the beginning of the fifteenth century of the renewal of serious interest on the part of Western Europeans in Asian civilizations. Although no lasting political alliance resulted from the exchanges between Timur and Enrique III, due to the former's death shortly after the departure of Clavijo's group from Samarkand and the resulting unrest in his lands, the written account provided a wealth of information about Mediterranean commerce, overland transportation routes and infrastructure, particular customs of various peoples, and political and historical knowledge of Eastern civilizations to Castilian and European audiences.

The Matter of the East

To situate the *Embajada a Tamorlán* and *Andanças e viajes* within a group of literary works that likewise deal with Asia from a European perspective, I would like to consider Mary Campbell's book of literary history, *The Witness and the Other World: Exotic European Travel Writing, 400-1600*, which I briefly mentioned in the second chapter of this dissertation.

Campbell's work deals with the East as the subject of European travel accounts and how it is treated throughout various stages of this kind of literature. She advocates studying the East as

one of the principal medieval literary cycles:

To the great Matters of medieval literature—of Britain, of Rome, of Troy—it is time to add a recognition of the Matter of the East: an emphatically marvelous body of traditional lore and symbol available to anyone who undertook to set a narrative in Asian territories. The major difference in this case is that the Matter of the East—primarily geographical and ethnographic in substance, rather than a source of character and plot motifs—was just as likely to turn up in the ostensibly factual accounts of travelers and geographers as in romance. This lore was couched in the present tense and thus less distanced from the “real” world inhabited by those who chose to believe in it. (47)

Here, Campbell rightly recognizes that the marvelous matter of the Orient appeared both in fiction and non-fiction literary works. With its appearance in accounts of geography and real travels, the Matter of the East became less imaginary for those who read about it, as its literary usefulness was not limited solely to romance.

Campbell goes on to show a trajectory of the treatment of the Matter of the East. First, she looks specifically at the anonymous *Wonders of the East* (c. 1000), where the East is essentially an “Elsewhere” (48), a place in which a writer could deposit all sorts of fabulous or marvelous legends. Next, Campbell studies Marco Polo and Friar William of Rubruck, to demonstrate that the East became palpable for Europe and was no longer a *tabula rasa* for marvelous material. Rather, commercial, political, and religious concerns opened up the East to practical and realistic reports by travellers from the West. Campbell explains that:

Although Western Europe’s initial terror of the Mongols dissipated rapidly, to be replaced by a desperate hope that a European-Mongol alliance might eliminate the

Saracen menace, the Mongols' territory was no longer politically neutral, no longer a conveniently blank screen for imaginative projection. Friar William's journey to Karakorum was intended to open up at least a religious communication between the two civilizations, and the Polos hoped to open commercial relations. The two narratives belong then to a stupendous historical moment: in the second half of the thirteenth century the Eastern and Western limits of the *orbis terrarum* finally confronted each other in the flesh. The contact was not destined to last, but of course no one knew that. (89)

The writings produced by Marco Polo and Friar William illustrated for their audiences a new kind of East, one that was geographical, not completely marvelous, and whose inhabitants shared similar preoccupations with their Western readers.

Finally, Campbell approaches the Matter of the East through *The Travels of John Mandeville*. This work, written in the mid-fourteenth century, is part invention and part factual, and many sections follow historical travellers, such as Friar Odoric of Pordenone. Campbell argues that:

By the time of Mandeville . . . travel to the once sacred or fabulous places of the East had dropped off sharply: the Crusades were over, and the relatively gregarious Mongol Empire had been overthrown in China and was being absorbed by hostile Saracen Turks closer to home. But the chronicles of crusaders and travel accounts of missionaries had familiarized both the Near and Far East for Europe's reading public and themselves had grown even a little stale. (126)

This "domestication" of faraway lands "push[ed] back the threshold of the 'fabulous' East so far

that, in the end, men like Columbus could begin to think of sailing *west* to reach it” (124).¹²⁹ To sum up, for Europeans, the East was first a convenient depository for marvels that could not be believably placed in commonly known lands such as the civilizations of Western Europe. Through a series of reports and writings by merchants, missionaries, pilgrims, and crusaders, the East was made known to an increasing extent, and it became necessary to push back the boundaries of marvelous lands ever further.

The account of the embassy to Timur, as well as Pero Tafur’s writing, both composed several decades after the first circulation of *The Travels of John Mandeville*, continue with the domestication of the East that Campbell has proposed by offering, to a large extent, reliable and accurate information about the world outside the Iberian Peninsula to their Iberian audiences. Both works rely on first-hand knowledge of their subjects and enter infrequently, if at all, into the fantastical legends found in the likes of *The Travels of John Mandeville*.¹³⁰ Although neither

129. Mario Klarer has also studied the mobility of marvelous lands. He has explained how the boundary of those lands eventually shifted, in the late fifteenth century, from East to West: “With the discovery of the new continent in the fifteenth century, a number of existing literary traditions contributed to the creation of the early image of America. In particular, utopian features were projected onto the terra incognita. The equation of the New World with the earthly paradise and the Promised Land placed America in the tradition of ancient and medieval utopian texts. . . . Ancient sources [such as Plato and St. Brendan] frequently situate utopian communities in the West, i.e. the Atlantic. . . . Parallel to this myth of a utopian West, a number of medieval texts [by Marco Polo and John Mandeville] stylized the East as the location of the earthly paradise. With the first crossings of the Atlantic, the two utopian traditions coincided and were thus projected onto the newly discovered territories. . . . Columbus’s westward bound voyage that was supposed to lead to the Far East made it possible to project both Eastern and Western utopian traditions onto the newly discovered America” (1-2).

130. This is not to say that they did not observe what they refer to as *maravillas* (marvels, wonders). In these two works, marvels are part of the new world the travellers encounter that are unknown in their native lands, such as animals like the elephant, the crocodile, and the giraffe. In other instances, marvels could refer to awesome man-made constructions like the pyramids of Egypt or the Hagia Sophia. Finally, the term *maravilla* is also employed when confronted with spectacular wealth, prosperity, and luxury abroad, such as the court and gardens of Timur in Samarkand. López Estrada points out that Clavijo and his companions “sienten reiteradamente

Clavijo nor Tafur speaks to his knowledge of other travellers to the Mediterranean or Asia, it is quite possible that they had read the travel-books of Marco Polo and John of Mandeville, among others.¹³¹

With attention to the attitude with which these travellers approached the unfamiliar as a real part of their world, rather than an imaginative or fantastical literary trope, I will consider in the following pages the kinds of experiences that shaped the liminal states of these Castilian journeyers and examine the manners in which they responded to those experiences. I will first consider the variety of people they met along their journeys and what characterized those relationships. In general, foreign civilizations and their rulers are portrayed as wealthy, advanced, and powerful. This characterization, along with the intimate relations that the travellers enjoy with important foreigners, serves to magnify Castilian importance in the global arena. Second, I will study which foreign customs are reported on and which kind of judgments the travellers make about the new places and people they meet. Third, I will analyze the kinds of exchanges (*e.g.* gifts of food or clothing) that occur between the travellers and those they meet. These exchanges, practical and symbolic, point to an incorporation of the journeyers, to greater

la atracción de la *maravilla* . . . percibida, sin embargo, de una manera racional y creíble” (“repeatedly feel the attraction of the marvel perceived, however, in a rational and credible manner”; “Viajeros castellanos” 66).

131. Polo’s work was already being translated into several European languages during his lifetime; in the fourteenth century it was translated into Aragonese as well as Catalan, and the Aragonese manuscript shows Castilian characteristics. Likewise, Mandeville’s account entered the Peninsula through an Aragonese translation in the fourteenth century, with a Castilian version appearing later. See Rubio Tovar pp. 52-62 for details on Polo and Mandeville in medieval Iberia. In *Andanças e viajes*, Pero Tafur makes mention of Clavijo’s journey to Timur, although he is misinformed about the route the ambassadors followed. He writes that the group saw many strange things along the road and in Timur’s court, “según ellos dizen” (according to what they say) (144). Thus it is possible that Tafur had read Clavijo’s report or spoken to persons associated with that mission. He mentions a certain Alfonso Fernández de Mesa who may have been one of the members of Clavijo’s group.

and lesser degrees, into the new communities they visit. Finally, I will draw some conclusions about how the travellers perceived the strangers they met during their travels and how these perceptions may nuance our understanding of European views of Mediterranean and Asian civilizations during the late Middle Ages.

Encounters with the Foreigner

Both Clavijo and Tafur would have met an incredible assortment of new and different people, ideas, and customs while making their journeys abroad, and several of these encounters are detailed in their writings. Ezquerro Abadía paints an evocative image, worth quoting at length, of the great contrasts a medieval Castilian traveller would have experienced upon leaving his home and kingdom:

Imaginemos ante todo un hondo contraste: por un lado, un caballero castellano de fines del siglo XIV o comienzos del XV, de aquellos cuyo perfil trazó de mano maestra Fernán Pérez de Guzmán en sus *Generaciones y semblanzas*: hombre de gran dignidad, para quien es un dogma la lealtad a su Rey, pagado de su estirpe aristocrática, sumergido en el ambiente caballeresco y sensorial de la corte de los Trastámaras; profundamente cristiano, sin fisuras, adversario en absoluto de herejías y más aún del mundo infiel, aunque no le fuese desusada la visión de moros y judíos en las viejas ciudades castellanas; acostumbrado a vivir en estas villas españolas con sus monumentos románicos, góticos y mudéjares. A este hidalgo, con las virtudes y prejuicios de su clase y tiempo, le vemos trasladado a remotas tierras orientales, en ámbitos del todo distintos, en medio de masas cismáticas o musulmanas, y para remate una estancia en la corte del gran

emperador tártaro Tamorlán, con su barroco lujo oriental, su despotismo y su arbitrariedad, su esplendor bárbaro y sin medida, sus fantásticos banquetes, el profundo temor que inspiraba su persona, en grado superior a la autoridad de cualquier monarca occidental, sus tremendas cóleras. Este contraste es el que experimentó y nos lo refirió un caballero madrileño, Ruy González de Clavijo, famoso en la Historia por este arriesgado viaje al Gran Tamorlán. (5)

Let us imagine above all a profound contrast: on the one hand, a Castilian knight from the end of the fourteenth century or the beginning of the fifteenth, of those whose silhouette Fernán Pérez de Guzmán traced with a master hand in his *Generaciones y semblanzas*: a man of great dignity, for whom loyalty to his king is a dogma, pleased with his aristocratic lineage, submerged in the knightly and sensorial environment of the Trastámaran court; profoundly Christian, without errors of faith, an absolute adversary of heresies and even more so of the infidel world, although he would not have been unaccustomed to the vision of Moors and Jews in the old Castilian cities; accustomed to living in those Spanish towns with their Roman, Gothic, and Mudéjar monuments. We see this nobleman, with the virtues and prejudices of his class and time, moved to remote Oriental lands, in settings entirely different, among schismatic or Muslim masses, and to crown it all a stay in the court of the great Tartar emperor Tamerlane with his baroque Oriental luxury, his despotism and his capriciousness, his barbarian splendor without measure, his fantastic banquets, the profound fear that his person inspired, on a level superior to the authority of any Western monarch, his tremendous furies. This contrast is that which was experienced and related to us by a

Madrikenian knight, Ruy González de Clavijo, famous in History for this daring journey to the Great Tamerlane.

This description reminds the reader of the profound difference and newness a medieval traveller would have observed and experienced in that age before globalization and instant access to virtually all human knowledge. While this passage from Ezquerro Abadía's study of Clavijo focuses on the all-important encounter between Clavijo and Timur, to whom I will return shortly, it is important to note that there were other, less important persons the travellers met on the road.

Some of the most common figures that appear in the accounts, for example, are ships' captains and crews who play an essential role in the success of the physical journey. Sometimes these captains and their origins are named (they are typically Genoese or Venetian), but there is generally no discussion of lasting relationships formed with them. Likewise, Clavijo mentions, although not typically by name, locals who provide them with news of current events and others who generously host them or give them tours of the cities they visit. The most specific information given about people encountered during the journey are those who were considered important or notable, and it is from the description of these encounters that the reader learns a great deal about the history and contemporary events of those regions. Clavijo's group, for example, meets the Byzantine Emperor in Constantinople, Manuel II Palaiologos, and his family. They are also well-received by the Emperor of Trebizond (present-day Trabzon, Turkey) and the lord of the city of Erzincan. Along the route to Samarkand, they meet Timur's son, called Miraxan Miraza, and various tributaries of Timur who offer generous hospitality to them. Once Timur learns of the embassy coming from Castile, he orders various knights and nobles in the cities along the road to Samarkand to greet the ambassadors and take care of their every need. The excellent treatment and hospitality the Castilians receive on their journey to Samarkand

builds up to a climax for the spectacular entrance into Timur's capital and the lavish and warm reception they receive by Timur himself.

For his part, Pero Tafur meets an even wider variety of people since he travels when and where he chooses and is not confined to carrying out a single diplomatic mission. Among the diverse individuals he meets are: Genoese and Venetian merchants and sailors; pilgrims and other travellers; interpreters; knights; clergy of the Catholic church, including even cardinals and popes; and various royal personages.

The most important person Clavijo's group meets is of course Timur himself, the very reason for their long and arduous journey. There is news of Timur all along their journey through the Mediterranean and Central Asia. In the towns or cities where they spend the nights, the embassy hears stories of Timur's deeds, histories of his military exploits, and his current movements. Several hosts they meet along the road are tributaries of Timur and thus generously honor the diplomats on behalf of the Mongol ruler. While Clavijo and his group are travelling to Samarkand, Timur is simultaneously returning there as well. Once the ambassadors begin the overland part of the trip, they find a well-developed network of roads and horses by which news and people travel swiftly and efficiently throughout Timur's lands. Timur sends orders for local officials or lords to receive the ambassadors in his name and provides horses for them at intervals along the route in order for the ambassadors to catch up to him as quickly as possible. However, he does not want to stop to wait for the embassy and prefers to greet them in his capital, perhaps with the intent of impressing them with the wonders of that great city and its surrounding gardens and palaces. All of these events create heightened anticipation for the actual meeting of Timur in Samarkand.

The meeting occurs in an orchard just outside the capital city. Men with clubs guard the

grand blue and gold tiled door to the orchard where a crowd of people stand to watch the happenings. Two knights sent by Timur's lords collect the presents from Enrique III that the ambassadors carry with them and then lead them into the orchard. Upon entering, the travellers come upon six elephants, each with wooden *howdahs* or carriages on top which carry men who make the elephants play games with the bystanders. After passing by this impressive spectacle, the Castilians and their interpreter are carried to an old knight, a nephew of Timur, to whom they make reverence. Next they are led to three grandsons of Timur, to whom they also make reverence. One of these young men, a son of Timur's firstborn, requests the letter they bear from their king and delivers it to Timur. Finally, the ambassadors are permitted to approach the Mongol ruler himself.

The writer of the *Embajada* devotes much attention to details of the splendor of the setting and Timur's person, which must have greatly impressed the ambassadors. Timur, dressed in silk and wearing a tall, white hat encrusted with pearls and jewels, reclines on a platform on the ground, comfortably situated on silken blankets and pillows. Before him, a fountain filled with colored apples throws water high in the air. As soon as the ambassadors see Timur, they make the special reverence they have learned from his subjects by placing their right knees on the ground and crossing their arms over their chests. After taking a few steps forward, they make the same reverence again. After coming even closer, they again kneel down with their arms crossed and remain in that position until Timur orders them to rise and approach him. The Mongol knights who had accompanied the Castilians up until this point now retreat; the writer reports that they dared not come any closer to their ruler. Three lords, the most trusted of Timur's advisors, lead the ambassadors to Timur where they make one final reverence. The succession of increasingly important members of Timur's court (the nephew, the grandsons, and

the advisors) dramatically underscores the greatness of this imposing figure and contrasts with the repeated acts of humility and reverence taken by the ambassadors in his presence. Similarly, the descriptions of the marvels (such as the elephants) and riches of Timur's land and person create the impression of a sophisticated, powerful foreign civilization, not at all an inferior or barbarian race. The admiration that the ambassadors feel toward this magnificent Oriental world is clear in the detailed description of this first meeting and the many subsequent banquets they attend during their stay in Samarkand.

Against this sumptuous setting and the reverence paid to Timur by both his own subjects and foreign visitors, it is striking that the first words the writer of the *Embajada* records as coming from Timur's mouth to address the ambassadors directly are "Cómo está mi fijo, el Rey?" ("How is my son, the King?"; 260). With these words, which characterize Enrique III as an intimate member of the family of the great Timur, the Mongol ruler condescends to bridge the evident gap between their realms. He does not do this reluctantly; rather, he extends friendship and goodwill to the ambassadors, saying to the knights, lords, and descendents of emperors gathered around him:

¡Catad aquí estos embaxadores que me envía mi fijo, el rey d'España, que es el mayor Rey que es en los francos que son en cabo del mundo, e son muy grand gente! E de verdat e yo le daré mi bendición a mi fijo, el Rey. E avastava afarto que me enviara él a vos otros con su carta, sin presente, ca tan contento fuera yo en saver de su salud e estado, como en me enviar presente. (González de Clavijo 260)

Behold here these ambassadors that my son, the king of Spain, sends me, who is the greatest king among the Franks [Europeans] that are at the end of the Earth,

and who are a very great people! Truly I will give my blessing to my son, the King. It was more than enough that he would send you [ambassadors] to me with his letter, without gifts, for I would be just as content in knowing his health and state, as in him having sent me gifts.

It is striking that Timur refers to Enrique III as his son as well as the king of Spain, not just Castile and León. The former treatment may simply be due to the age discrepancy between the two rulers: in the autumn of 1404 when the ambassadors meet Timur, he is 68 years old and beginning to decline in health, whereas Enrique is barely 25. In any case, the designation of “son,” while it does position Enrique within an intimate family circle, it simultaneously serves to keep him in a lower status with respect to Timur; they are not equals. On the other hand, Timur’s designation of Enrique as the king of all Spain and not just of certain kingdoms within the Peninsula reinforces his high regard for him, a fact that the ambassadors would have wanted to emphasize.

The special treatment toward the Castilian delegation on behalf of their king is continued when the ambassadors are seated on a platform at Timur’s right after their initial greeting. Timur notices that they have been seated in a lower position than the Chinese ambassador, also present at that time, and he orders that the Castilian ambassadors be given a higher place. The disdain toward the Chinese ambassador is not surprising, given that Timur was at the time planning an invasion of China, but it also serves to distinguish his favor toward Enrique III and his diplomats. For the ambassadors, this first face-to-face encounter with Timur operates in a two-fold manner. First, their impression of the greatness and refinement of this foreign empire is solidified (and continues to be confirmed during their stay in Samarkand by way of the many feasts and pleasures they experience there). Then, this same grandeur is made accessible to the

ambassadors, displaced travellers in a foreign land, by Timur's warmth and hospitable attitude toward them. Along the road to Samarkand and during their stay in the capital city, Clavijo highlights the preferential treatment received and the intimacy they share at Timur's court. By positioning themselves as particular friends of Timur, the diplomats underscore for their readers their own honorable status and the special position they occupy as bridges between the two nations. Indeed, they overcome much of the hardship associated with the liminal state of the traveller and insert themselves, to a certain degree, into the new community. The special treatment shown the ambassadors, and by extension, Enrique III and the kingdom of Castile, could furthermore serve as a model to the manner in which that Iberian realm should be treated by other European nations: it should have a prominent place of respect and be admired for its greatness. For if Timur accords them that treatment, should not weaker European nations—who were seeking Timur's aid against the Turks—do likewise? By emphasize Timur's greatness and their share in it, the ambassadors aggrandize not only their own reputations, but that of their leader, Enrique III, and their kingdom of Castile on an international stage.

For his part, Pero Tafur has even more opportunities to establish relationships with foreigners on his trip, since he is not obligated to fulfill a diplomatic mission as Clavijo's group is. The friendships cultivated with people abroad allow Tafur to incorporate himself more fully into their societies and to leave behind, albeit temporarily, his liminal state as a traveller. He experiences this incorporation to such an extent that his new friends consider him family or compatriot, and throughout his text, Tafur is careful to highlight the affection that foreigners feel toward him. Indeed, he seems proud to be beloved and treated with honor by a variety of foreign figures. In Gubbio, Italy, he meets the Count of Urbino, an important man with ties to even more important people of the times: his second wife was the niece of Pope Martin V and sister of

Cardinal Prospero Colonna. After their initial greeting and introductions, the Count embraces Tafur “tan estrechamente” (“so tightly”) and tells him that he will aid him in whatever way he can (Tafur 44). After staying in the Count’s house for a few days, Tafur relates that the two men departed from one another “con tanta domestichezza como si con él me oviera criado o oviera muy estrecho debdo” (“with such familiarity as if he had reared me or had a very close bond with me”; 44). The Count insists that Tafur receive some parting gifts from him, even though Tafur does not like to accept presents from others. Finally, Tafur says goodbye to the Count “muy humanamente, como si fuéramos iguales en estado” (“with great humanity, as if we were equal in state”; Tafur 45). Thus, after only a few days of having known one another, Tafur is able to write that they shared great affection for each another and it was as though they, a count and a knight, were equal in state.

A similar experience occurs in Egypt when Tafur travels to Cairo on a diplomatic mission for the King of Cyprus. While waiting to see the Sultan, he spends two days in the home of the Sultan’s principal interpreter, a renegade Jew who converted to Islam in Cairo. When the interpreter realizes that Tafur is from Seville, he is very happy because he is a native of that city as well, although his father took him to live in Jerusalem while he was still a child.¹³² This commonality fosters an auspicious beginning for the pair, and Tafur and Saym immediately develop a close friendship. Saym asks him many questions about his life and his travels, and Tafur is happy to reply because he wants to take advantage of his advice and counsel. Tafur reports that in Saym’s house, he is as among family: “Yo fui tan bien tratado de él en su casa,

132. Pero Tafur, or at least his family, is from Córdoba, but in some cases, such as in this example with Saym in Cairo, he states that he is from Seville. López Estrada hypothesizes that Tafur may have done this simply because Seville would have been a more recognizable name to foreign hosts (*Libros de viajeros*, 103). As I mentioned previously, it seems likely that Tafur had spent a significant amount of time in Seville; in the travelogue he speaks of acquaintances from that city.

dexándome andar entre sus mugeres e hijos, como si fuera fijo propio, e dizíeme que esta era la mayor onra que él me pudíe fazer e que bien parecía que yo era de su nación, pues sus hijos tanto me querían” (“I was so well treated by him in his house, and he let me go around his wives and children, as if I were his own son, and he told me that this was the highest honor he could pay me and that it did indeed seem that I was from his own country, since his children loved me so”; 82). During his stay with the interpreter, Tafur receives special advice from Saym with regards to the Sultan, his customs, and Tafur’s diplomatic mission. After completing his ambassadorial obligations, Tafur remains in Cairo another month “mirando muchas cosas y muy estrañas, mayormente a los de nuestra nación” (“looking at many strange things, strange especially to people from our country”; 85), and he feels very lucky to have Saym as a guide who helps him in everything he wants to see and do during his visit.¹³³ After being gone for some weeks while he visits Mount Sinai, Tafur writes again of the intimate relationship between him and his host, saying that upon his return to Saym’s home, the latter received him as if he were his own son (105). Finally, after spending another month in the interpreter’s home, Tafur departs for Constantinople. In the passage that describes his leave-taking of Saym, his wife, and his children, he writes that “como fijo propio me tenían” (“they considered me as their own son”; 111). Thus once again, Tafur characterizes his relationship with Saym, his wife, and children as one of family. Tafur and Saym first meet because of their professions: Saym was to interpret for Tafur before the Sultan of Egypt. After coming to know that they are both natives of southern

133. These “strange things” are part of the repertoire of marvelous material found in medieval European literature. Tafur reports, for example, on Joseph’s granaries (the pyramids of Egypt) and a garden near Cairo where the Holy Family was believed to have rested during their flight to Egypt. The sights are not strange in a negative sense; rather, they are exotic and different from anything Tafur knew from his home world. In his 1611 dictionary, Covarrubias reported that “estraño” could refer to that which was singular or extraordinary or to a person “not of our home, or of our family, or of our land,” a person who was unknown or from another realm, or simply one who “is not ours” (869).

Castile, Tafur and Saym develop a special friendship over a period of several months that goes beyond a relationship based solely on that first commonality. Rather, Tafur becomes incorporated into Saym's home to such a point that he receives the highest honor he could be given from Saym: he is able to be among his wives and children, just as if he were their own son and brother.

One striking aspect of Tafur's travels is the fact that he encounters Castilians in many of the cities abroad that he visits, and he seems to have a special connection with them since they share the same native land. At least one of these Castilians was already an acquaintance of Tafur: in Pera (modernly known as Beyoğlu), he meets up with a friend he knew from Seville. However, Tafur does not spend his time exclusively with fellow Castilians when he meets them; Tafur and his friend in Pera, for example, are accompanied by friends of "otras naciones" ("other nations"; 125). It is evident from the text that for Tafur, being a fellow countryman of someone creates a special bond with that person. Tafur repeatedly speaks of being treated as if he were a native or compatriot of his new friends in other lands. Thus, the special treatment that should be given to people of one's own homeland is given to Tafur, a foreigner. When Tafur returns to the King of Cyprus from Egypt, he is greeted with great pomp and honor: "Fallé muchos de aquellos señores de la corte del rey que me salían a recibir e me acompañaron fasta la persona del rey e, cuando llegué, fallé al rey e al cardenal e muchos de los grandes con ellos, e [fui] mucho bien recebido e con tanta humanidad tratado como si yo fuera su natural" ("I found many of those lords from the king's court who came out to receive me and accompanied me to the king and, when I arrived, I found the king and the cardinal and many of the grandees with them, and I was so well received and treated with such humanity as if I were their countryman"; 112). Similarly, Tafur reports that Byzantine Emperor John VIII Palaiologos regards Tafur as family: "Me

acatava con mucho amor e como a persona de su sangre” (“He considered me with much love and as a kinsman”; 133). Tafur’s emphasis on feeling a special bond with his fellow Castilians makes his connection to foreigners who treat him as a native of their land or as part of their own families all the more impressive. The bond between Tafur and Saym the interpreter, for example, was strengthened due to the simple fact that they were both from Seville, even though Saym did not spend his adult life there. That peculiar connection signifies that, despite other differences, relationships among people are strengthened through the sharing of a homeland. Thus, when Tafur writes that natives of other lands consider him as their fellow countryman, the bond between Tafur and those foreigners is bolstered. If one imagines friendship as a series of concentric circles of affection and intimacy, it is as if Tafur is moving in one level closer in his relationship with his foreign friends when they consider him as from their own land.

Tafur seems to feel pride in his assimilation and acceptance into these foreign communities, which reflects his admiration toward them. The pride he feels is evident in the numerous occasions throughout his account in which he details how his foreign hosts and friends go out of their way to honor him and treat him affectionately, as one of their own. Tafur typically relates his intimate connections to important foreigners in a rather nonchalant manner, but he details the ease with which he creates friendships abroad time and again throughout his account. Both the Emperor and Empress of Constantinople, for example, send for him when they go hunting and declare that they enjoy great pleasure in Tafur’s company (Tafur 134). Later, Tafur again meets the Byzantine Emperor when the latter is in Ferrara, Italy for an ecumenical council to discuss the union of the Western and Eastern Churches. Tafur delivers letters to the Emperor from his wife and brother, and John VIII meets him in what Tafur describes as a happy and touching reunion: “me recibió muy alegremente, diciendo que como a

pariente e ombre de su tierra, e allegó me mucho a sí e fizome asentar allí baxo cerca de sí, preguntándome por las nuevas de su tierra e rogándome que, tanto que estoviese allí, cada día le visitase, aunque mayor placer le faría si me viniese a posar con él” (“He received me very happily, saying that [he received me] like a relative and a compatriot, and he drew me very close to him and made me sit right there below him, asking me for news of his land and begging me that, as long as I was there, I would visit him every day, although it would be an even greater pleasure for him if I would come to dwell with him”; 187). Tafur then adds rather glibly, “Ya él estava comigo doméstico mucho” (“He was already very familiar with me”; 187). Similarly, in Cologne, Germany, Tafur meets Archbishop Dietrich II von Moers and describes their relationship as one of close familiarity: “Éste me fizo muy gran fiesta e gran allegamiento, e tan doméstico era con él como si allí fuera nacido. Él mesmo cavalgava e me levava consigo a ver las iglesias e los monesterios e los palacios de los señores e las damas, que me pareció que aún del todo no las tenía aborridas” (“He threw me a grand party and a great gathering, and I was as familiar with him as if I had been born there. He himself rode [with me] and took me with him to see the churches and the monasteries and the palaces of the lords and ladies, and it seemed to me that he still did not completely consider them with abhorrence”; 203). Tafur thus allies himself with this important contemporary, whom Pérez Priego notes as one of the most powerful princes of the Church in his day, while simultaneously winking to the reader concerning the archbishop’s penchant for secular pleasures (Pérez Priego 203).

Despite Tafur’s repeated insistence on his intimate connections to powerful figures of his day and the magnificence of the cities he visits abroad, he does not portray himself as servile to his foreign social betters. Tafur’s close friend, Byzantine Emperor John VIII Palaiologos, hopes that Tafur will travel with him as he embarks on a journey to visit the pope. Tafur writes that he

was “mucho mandado e asaz rogado por él que feziese aquel camino con él, e yo toda vía lo feziera salvo que me escusé diziendo que me era forçado de ver primero toda la Grecia e la Turquía e aún Tartaria” (“much ordered and even begged by him [the Emperor] that I would make that journey with him, and I would have except that I excused myself saying that it was necessary first to see all of Greece and Turkey and even Tartary”; 134).¹³⁴ At this moment in his account, Tafur portrays himself closer to an equal of the emperor rather than as a foreign subject. That is, he does not feel compelled to accede to John VIII’s every wish. Rather, he is able to courteously but firmly reject the emperor’s pleas for his companionship on the road. Tafur evidently does not feel an obligation to curry more favor with the emperor and hence goes his separate way.

From these examples, one begins to understand some of the reasons behind the crafting of Tafur’s narrative with regard to how he interacts with the foreigners he meets and how he explains his relationships with them to his readers. Tafur recognizes the existence of magnificent, advanced civilizations outside his own kingdom of Castile, and by portraying himself as an intimate of a variety of people of those lands, from interpreters to emperors, he paints himself to his audience back home as a kind of special ambassador to foreign peoples. He sets himself apart as one who is already on a familiar level with important persons across Europe, the Near East, and the Mediterranean. Furthermore, his closeness to foreigners would have aggrandized his reputation back in Castile. After hearing Tafur’s account, his contemporaries must have been impressed by the success he had in forming personal alliances with great men and women of the international arena. Indeed, not only did he complete a series of ambitious and dangerous journeys—at one point even fighting against Turks and receiving an

134. For a study on a restricted portion of Tafur’s travels, see A. Vasiliev, “Pero Tafur: A Spanish Traveler of the Fifteenth Century and His Visit to Constantinople, Trebizond, and Italy.”

arrow wound—but he successfully integrated himself into desirable foreign communities. Tafur highlights this aspect of his adventures which likely served to bolster his name at home.

Tafur's perception of the new lands he visits does not conform to fantastical stereotypes of foreign civilizations. These "Others" are not exotic or legendary figures; nor are they marginal, distrusted groups like Muslims and Jews in Iberia. Tafur evaluates the new communities he encounters based on what he himself observes. His liminal state allows both parties to understand each other in ways that supersede simple categorizations. Tafur is no longer simply a Christian or Castilian or even a knight; rather, he, like those he meets, is a complex individual who, while made up of those various identifying characteristics, is capable of establishing relationships with others despite their differences. The variety of people Tafur encounters abroad and the manner in which he develops close bonds of friendship with them serve to show how Tafur, as a traveller, is able to cross ethnic and religious boundaries that normally would separate those various groups of people. It is precisely through the destabilized nature of the travellers' state that traditionally rigid differences are overcome.

Although Clavijo and Tafur travelled for distinct reasons, the accounts of their journeys show similarities in how they narrate their experiences with foreign peoples. Both travellers describe the sophistication, wealth, and power of many great cities they visited and position themselves as intimate acquaintances of the rulers and dignitaries of those lands. Clavijo and Tafur detail the ways in which their hosts and new friends go out of their way to honor and welcome them. Despite the linguistic, religious, political, and other differences separating Clavijo and Tafur from the foreigners they meet on their journeys, both travellers are successful in moving beyond those differences to establish productive relationships. From their liminal position in between communities and without a stable home, Clavijo and Tafur ably integrate

themselves, to certain extents, into the admired communities abroad. The differences between the travellers and their new friends are not completely eliminated, but all parties overcome them to a sufficient degree so that they consider each other as friends and even as family. By choosing to highlight in their narratives the extent to which they have become the intimates and desired companions of powerful men and women of the foreign lands they visit, Clavijo and Tafur carve out a special space for themselves in the eyes of their courtly readers back home. Clavijo does more than simply deliver a message from Enrique III to Timur, and Tafur converts his diverting adventures abroad into something more meaningful. Through the way Clavijo and Tafur represent their relations with foreigners in their travel accounts, both travellers advocate a certain kind of foreign relations policy. They demonstrate that peaceful, amicable relationships with all sorts of people—Jews, Muslims, Byzantine Christians—lead to a variety of benefits. The travellers are examples of the value of negotiation with others. Despite Tafur’s reference to the Moors as “our natural enemies,” his actions paint a different picture. There is no call to arms to fight against those who are different; rather, Clavijo and Tafur describe the material and intellectual benefits that are part of their exchange of goodwill with their friends in Europe, the Near East, and the Mediterranean. Diplomacy, in short, is less costly and more advantageous than war. With Castile marred by anti-Jewish sentiment and the continuance of Muslim-Christian wars in the Iberian Peninsula, the *Embajada a Tamorlán* and *Andanças e viajes* demonstrate a persuasive alternative model for relationships between various ethnic and religious groups.

The Practice of Foreign Customs

Studying how travellers respond to and participate in foreign customs illustrates the

manner in which they negotiate the foreign and how they incorporate themselves into those communities. The reverse also occurs: the travellers' hosts or others they meet along their journeys likewise open themselves up to the practice of customs particular to their foreign guests, customs which may be as simple as those of eating and drinking. The practice of foreign customs creates, in a sense, a new kind of reality, of existence, and of being. Journeyers and hosts, upon involving themselves in the others' practices, go beyond a mere theorization or imagination of a co-existence of diverse peoples to actually put into practice that reality.

In *Andanças e viajes*, there is evidence that Tafur adopted foreign customs he observed abroad. He evidently had become accustomed to wearing a long beard and foreign clothing, which he eventually discarded in favor of a shaven face and Spanish dress at the instigation of his Castilian friends in Italy.¹³⁵ When Tafur visits the Emperor of Constantinople in Ferrara, the latter is saddened to see the change in Tafur's appearance, for to him, a long beard is a symbol of great honor. Tafur responds that his custom is quite the opposite and that very rarely would one find a Castilian sporting a beard (Tafur 188). Thus it appears that, at least for a time, Tafur incorporated himself into the culture of the cities he visited by keeping his appearance in accordance with what his foreign friends and hosts deemed proper. The choice of garments is not without significance. Scholars of textiles and art history have long shown that clothing serves as a social marker. Désirée Koslin and Janet Snyder declare, for example, that "It is widely recognized that medieval society depended on clothing codes and prestigious textile furnishings for signs of identity as well as the actual economic underpinnings of society" (1). Similarly, Linda Anderson affirms that "Clothing . . . does more than simply protect and adorn the body: it serves as the most obvious sign of a person's place in the social hierarchy" (224).

135. Tafur reports that he changed clothing and dressed himself "a la manera nuestra" ("in our style"; 188).

For Tafur, his dress and beard serve to identify him as a person incorporated into the communities he visits. The choice Tafur made to conform to foreign standards of dress indicates that he desired to be seen as a part of that community, not as an outsider, and it was only when he was once again surrounded by members of his home world, that is, fellow Castilians, that he felt compelled to discard his changed appearance.¹³⁶

The practice of foreign customs, by the travellers or their foreign friends, is also reported in the *Embajada a Tamorlán*. Throughout the account of the embassy to Timur, Clavijo takes pains to point out a variety of foreign customs which tend to center, on the one hand, around religious rites (Christian as well as Muslim) and, on the other, on practices of hospitality. The time leading up to the first meeting with Timur, the meeting itself, and the weeks they spend as his guests are marked by some of the most detailed ceremonial customs specific to Timur's empire. The writer minutely describes, for example, the abundance of food at the feasts, how the dishes are prepared, the platters on which they are served, the intricate rituals associated with offering and receiving drinks, and the custom of providing guests with extra food to take home with them. Likewise, Clavijo refers to customs of how visiting ambassadors should greet Timur and his family, by kneeling in a certain manner, for example. All of these customs point to van Gennepe's third phase of incorporation. The ambassadors participate in the rituals of a new world and thus become symbolically tied to that place and its inhabitants.

An example regarding the practice of Muslim customs demonstrates how the liminal

136. A memorable incident that involves Timur's ambassador-interpreter Mohamad Alcaxi demonstrates that the adoption of foreign customs occurred on both sides of cultural divides. Although Clavijo does not explain why, Alcaxi is dressed in Castilian clothing when they enter Timur's court for the first time. His strange appearance immediately provokes the bystanders to laughter. Having been away from his home for around two years, it appears that Alcaxi has adopted Castilian dress as his own, not bothering to don vestments more appropriate to his reintegration into his native society.

situation of the ambassadors allowed for fluidity in relationships normally governed by ideological separation. In the Khorasan region, the embassy visits a famous Muslim pilgrimage city, home to a mosque that houses the grave of a Muslim holy man. The practice is for Muslims to kiss the clothing of those pilgrims who return home after having visited the sepulcher, and the fact that the ambassadors are Christian does not deter faithful Muslims from carrying out that reverence: “E después en otras tierras, cuando les oían dezir que avían estado en esta ciudad e avían visto la dicha sepultura, besávanles las ropas diziendo que avían seído cerca del santo Horançan” (“And later in other lands, when [Muslims] heard that [the ambassadors] had been in this city and had seen the said sepulcher, they kissed their clothing saying that they had been near Saint Horançan”; González de Clavijo 228-9). This kind of intimate, personal moment exemplifies how travel, and the unique liminal position of its practicants, allows for the transgression of barriers that normally separated peoples of divergent faiths.

Other descriptions of customs permit the reader to see how the Castilians crossed cultural and other divides that separated them from their hosts and new acquaintances. One example that offers an intriguing insight into the personal lives of the ambassadors has to do with the fact that Clavijo does not imbibe alcohol, a staple of the feasts in Asia in which the travellers were honored guests. The issue first arises in Erzincan, where the lord of that city, Patalibed, learns of Clavijo’s practice and puts aside his own custom in order to pay him respect:

E como los dichos embaxadores entraron, inclinóse a ellos e fizolos asentar cerca de sí e truxieron muchos pedaços de açucar; e dixieron que él e el cavallero que no bevía vino, que era Ruy Gonçales, e querían que aquel día fuesen compañeros en el beber. E truxieron una grand jarra de vidrio, llena de agua con açucar; e bevió él, e después dio a beber a Ruy Gonçales él con su mano. E a los otros todos

dieron del vino. E después d'esto truxieron mucha carne e mucho arroz e potajes de muchas maneras. E comieron segund el día de antes. E desque la carne fue comida, truxieron escudillas de miel e duraznos curtidos e ubas e alcaparras e otrosí cortidas. E comían muy feo; e en todo esto el vino no cesava. E desque un rato duró esto, truxieron una taça que cabría quanto tres cuartillos; e tomava el Señor aquella taça e dava él con su mano a beber a ciertos cavalleros suyos; e bevíanse todo el vino, que no avían de dexar nada, que sería fealdat grande para su costumbre. E desque el Señor fue enojado de dar a beber, tómanla aquellos sus cavalleros aquella taça grande, e dábanse unos a otros a beber, fasta que los más d'ellos fueron bien beúdos. E este día no bebió vino el Señor por tener compañía al dicho Ruy Gonçales. (González de Clavijo 178-9)

And as the said ambassadors entered, [Patalibed] bowed to them and seated them near to himself and had brought many pieces of sugar; and they said that he and the knight who did not drink wine, who was Ruy González, that they should be drinking companions that day. And they brought a large glass jar, filled with water and sugar; [Patalibed] drank, and afterwards he offered the drink to Ruy González with his own hand. And to all the others they gave wine. After this they brought much meat and much rice and stews of all kinds. And they ate as they did the previous day. After the meat was eaten, they brought bowls of honey and preserved peaches and grapes and capers, also preserved. They ate in a very ugly manner; and in all of this the wine did not cease. After this lasted a while, they brought a cup that would hold about three *cuartillos*; and the lord took that cup and with his hand offered a drink to certain knights of his; and they drank up

all the wine, for they must not leave anything, for it would be a great offense to their tradition. And after the lord was tired of offering the drink, his knights took that large cup, and offered the drink to one another, until most of them were very drunk. And this day the lord did not drink wine in order to accompany the aforesaid Ruy González.

López Estrada has rightly pointed out that this was not a small sacrifice on the part of Patalibed, for partaking in the abundance of drink was a sign of courtesy and respect in these Eastern lands (*Libros de viajeros* 81). Patalibed foregoes that ritual in order to pay respect to Clavijo in a way that did not violate his custom of not imbibing.

Later, in Samarkand, Clavijo's sobriety causes a small disturbance at a party that Timur's daughter-in-law holds. Clavijo devotes much space in the written account to detailing the importance of alcohol in the feasts and the various customs centered on the giving and taking of wine. Timur's first wife herself offers a cup of wine to Clavijo and with him "porfirió una grand peça por le fazer beber vino, ca no quería creer que nunca beviera vino. E tanto fue el beber, que sacavan delante d'ella los omnes beúdos sobarcados. Esto an ellos por grand nobleza, e entienden que no sería plazer do no uviese omnes beúdos" ("endeavored a long while to make him drink the wine, for she did not want to believe that he did not drink wine. And so much was the drinking that they carried out drunken men in front of her. They hold this to be a very noble deed, and they believe that there would be no pleasure where there were not drunken men"; González de Clavijo 281). López Estrada remarks on the strength of Clavijo's temperance, which stands "en contraste con el marco de una sociedad en la que la embriaguez es un honor en el trato social; y sobre todo cuando quien invita es la mujer mayor de Tamorlán" ("in contrast to the framework of a society in which inebriation is an honor in social dealings; and above all

when the one who invites is the principal wife of Tamerlane”; *Embajada* 281).

A final example of Clavijo’s custom as regards drinking wine serves to demonstrate the flexibility present in the relationship he has with Timur. Even though Clavijo is a guest in a foreign land and should be doing everything possible to create good ties with Timur on behalf of Enrique III, he appears not to worry about offending his hosts by not partaking of their drinking customs. Timur is very accommodating and does not press Clavijo to undergo that experience: “Este día fezo ir el Señor ante sí a los dichos embaxadores, e tomó una taça de vino en la mano e dio a beber al Maestro, que savía que Ruy Gonçales no bevía vino” (“This day the lord [Timur] made the aforesaid ambassadors come before him, and he took a cup of wine in his hand and offered a drink to the Maestro [Páez de Santamaría], for he knew that Ruy González did not drink wine”; 292). Not only has Timur deigned to learn of Clavijo’s practice, but he also respects it and is not offended by his lack of participation in a ritual meant to honor his guests. While the ambassadors participate in rites that incorporate them into the foreign world, this incorporation is more fluid than strict. Clavijo maintains his own custom of sobriety, and that is respected by Timur and his other hosts, even if it does strike them as peculiar. Respect of and participation in distinct customs signal a willingness to walk in the other’s shoes, as it were. The moments of religious and cultural crossings create unique bonds between the Castilians and their hosts that likely would not have occurred were it not for their liminal state as travellers. This position allows both groups to effect practices that are not their own, thus tying together the travellers and the foreigners by bonds of mutual understanding and respect. The practice of foreign customs incorporates both the travellers and their hosts into a new kind of reality in which both groups cross cultural and religious boundaries in order to establish better relations with the other. Tafur’s *Andanças e viajes* and Clavijo’s *Embajada a Tamorlán* propose a new

picture of coexistence of peoples throughout Europe and Asia, a new model for peacefully living with the other. At the same time, it is prudent to note that the insistence in the text on the immoderate Eastern drinking customs might be a veiled critique of such a practice. Clavijo never speaks negatively about the intemperance practiced at these Eastern feasts, but his repeated observances of that excess may have accentuated for his readers the contrast that existed between orthodox Islam, which advises against excess consumption of alcohol, and this particular Turkic-Mongolian custom that appeared not to impinge upon their own practice of Islam.¹³⁷

Perception and Judgment of the Foreign

Both Clavijo and Tafur write in what seems to be a generally objective manner that documents the experiences they enjoyed or, alternatively, suffered during their journeys, and neither is given to flights of fancy about the lands or people they visited. In Clavijo's case especially, he restrains from focusing the account on his own person and allows the description of the foreign to take center stage. Writing of the *Embajada a Tamorlán*, Miguel Ángel Ochoa Brun explains that the figures of Clavijo and his companions

quedan minimizadas y subsumidas en la riqueza de las descripciones; sus propios sufrimientos o penalidades no son subrayados; las víctimas dejadas entre las peripecias del camino son objeto apenas de una escueta referencia, patética en su laconismo. Ni un autoelogio hay, ni una mención a los eminentes méritos de los embajadores y sus acompañantes, ni una moraleja interesada en el enjuiciamiento

137. Similarly, the writer of the *Embajada* records that Timur has at least eight wives. The Koran declares the number of permissible wives to be four. Clavijo does not make that direct comparison nor does he offer any judgment on those practices they observe. However, like the issue of inebriation, there is attention paid to those practices of Timur and his subjects which contrast with traditional Islamic prescriptions.

de los hechos y cosas que vieron, ni un comentario final que resalte la colosal empresa acometida o la acogida que debió hacerles el rey a su regreso, que Clavijo no detalla, como para no caer en un por cierto bien justificado triunfalismo. (245)

remain minimized and subsumed in the richness of the descriptions; their own sufferings or hardships are not stressed; the victims left behind among the unforeseen events of the journey are barely the object of a curt reference, pathetic in its laconic manner. There is not one self-praise, not a mention of the eminent merits of the ambassadors and their companions, not one moral interested in the judgment of the deeds and things they saw, not one final commentary to underline the colossal enterprise undertaken or the welcome that the king must have given them upon their return, which Clavijo does not detail, as if in order to not fall into a certainly well-justified triumphalism.

For his part, López Estrada comes to the same conclusion: the ambassadors, despite being Castilian and Christian, are able to coexist with the others they meet on their journey despite the strangers being of such different customs and religion (*La Embajada . . . como libro de relación* 74-5). Furthermore, they do this without resorting to preconceived ideas of what these others should be like and making few judgments about the people and ways of life that they encounter. Indeed, the restraint and seriousness with which the text is composed is impressive and even more so when one reflects on the great changes and differences that the ambassadors experienced.

Consequently, it is all the more striking the few instances when they do go beyond pure description to offer opinions on the practices and people they observe. Sometimes the judgments

are of unimportant matters, such as Clavijo's opinion of distasteful bread (González de Clavijo 173) and the ugly manner of eating of the people of Erzincan (179). Such moments bring out the "human" factor in the writing and make it less sterile. However, weightier questions like theology also arouse commentary from the writer of the *Embajada a Tamorlán*. In Trabzon, for example, Clavijo (or perhaps Páez de Santamaría, in this case) describes the religious customs of the Armenian and Greek Christians in opposition to Roman Catholicism. He concedes that they are pious people but refers to the theological differences as "menguas" ("deficiencies") and "yerros" ("errors") (González de Clavijo 165).

Many aspects of Timur's rule receive warm praise by the ambassadors. Passing through Tabriz, for example, they are pleased with the well-regulated, clean markets and the city's mosques and baths. They are also impressed with the advanced organization of the empire's infrastructure and devote many lines to describing the roads and system of horses and riders by which news travels easily throughout the whole land, a system that handily surpasses their own. Similarly, they admire Timur for having control over difficult mountain passes and for the hardy and well-organized army over which he presides. The reader is reminded again of the efficacy of Timur's domain when the ambassadors begin their trek back to Castile. Already in failing health, Timur dies in February of 1405, and the battles for succession of his empire begin. The difficult and unsafe conditions that the ambassadors encounter on the roads contrast with the reliable security and efficiency present when Timur was in control.

In keeping with the importance of describing all they observe and experience, the ambassadors do not ignore Timur's cruelty. However, although the violence practiced by him does not go without notice, it does go without censure. Repeatedly, the *Embajada* recounts abuse and violence towards citizens who are forced to provide food and lodging for the embassy.

In a stirring passage from the book, Clavijo explains how the news of arriving ambassadors sent waves of fear throughout the town:

E cuando llegavan a la ciudad o lugar, la primera cosa que fazen los omnes d'estos cavalleros que a los dichos embaxadores levavan: preguntavan por los arraeces, que dizen ellos por los mayordomos. E el primer omne que fallavan por las calles, tomávanlo; e ellos acostumbran de traer unas alaramas en las caveças, e tiravan el alarama e atávangela al pescueço; e ellos a cavallo e los otros, a pie, trotando, dábanles de palos e açot's, e levávanlos que les demostrasen las casas de los arraeces. E la gente que los veía así ir, e los conocían que eran gentes del Señor [Timur] e savían que venían con algund mandamiento del Señor, davan a fuir que parecía qu'el diablo iva en pos ellos. E los que estavan en sus tiendas vendiendo sus cosas, cerrávanlas, e davan eso mesmo a fuir, e encerrávanse en sus casas, e ivan deziendo el uno al otro: —¡El chui! Que quiere dezir: ¡embaxadores!, e ya savían que con embaxadores tenían negro día. E así ivan fuyendo que parecía qu'el diablo iva en pos ellos. (231-2)

When they arrived at the city or place, the first thing that the men of these knights who were leading the ambassadors do is [this]: they would ask for the *arraeces*, which they say to mean the administrators. The first man they found in the streets, they would take him; they are accustomed to wearing linens on their heads, and they would grab the cloth and tie it around his neck; and those on horseback and the others, on foot, running, they hit them with sticks and whips, and they took them that they would show them the administrators' houses. The people that saw them going thus, and who recognized them as the lord's [Timur's]

men, and who knew that they were coming with some order from the lord, they began to flee such that it seemed that the devil was going after them. Those who were in their stores selling their things, they closed the stores, and they too began to flee, and they enclosed themselves in their homes, and they went saying one to another: El chui! Which means: Ambassadors! For they knew that with ambassadors they would have a black day. Thus they went fleeing that it seemed that the devil was after them.

After describing the fear that gripped the unlucky citizens, Clavijo appears astounded at the further violent treatment of the towns' administrators: "E desque a los arraezes fallavan, pensáis que les fablavan manso. No. Antes denostándolos e feriéndolos con maças, les fazían ir corriendo ante sí, e les fazían traer para los embaxadores todas las cosas que avían menester, e que estudiesen allí delante sirviendo. E no se podían d'allí partir, salvo con licencia" ("And after they found the administrators, you would think that they would speak to them gently. No. Rather, insulting them and wounding them with clubs, they made them go running before them, and they made them bring for the ambassadors all the things that they would need, and forced them to remain there serving them. They could not depart from there except with permission"; González de Clavijo 232). This instance of incredulity is the extent to which Clavijo comments on the violence of Timur and his men. Throughout the rest of the work, the cruelty and deception practiced by Timur are simply related and described without further commentary. After passing through Erzincan, for example, the writer relates that Timur had passed through a nearby village some years ago, and the inhabitants explained to the ambassadors that he had ordered the Armenians' churches to be destroyed. In order to save their churches, the Armenians paid him a sum of money, which Timur accepted and then, the payment notwithstanding,

proceeded to order the destruction of the churches. This story is related simply as the ambassadors heard it told and receives no judgment from the writer.

Similarly, Clavijo later writes a dispassionate account of two tall towers found outside the city of Damghan (present-day Iran) made of mud and human heads. The victims (“tártaros blancos” ‘white Tatars’) had been prisoners of war whom Timur had sent to populate the region. They later rebelled in order to return to their homeland, but Timur slaughtered them all and ordered the towers made from their heads. However, he went even further to decree that “cualquier que tuviese tártaro blanco cativo o doquier que lo pudiesen aver, que lo matasen” (“whoever had a captive white Tatar or wherever he could find one, that he kill him”; González de Clavijo 220). This order was carried out so well that Clavijo relates that along the roads, one could find ten dead people in one place, twenty in another, and three or four in yet another, so that in the end, the ambassadors were told that sixty thousand people died from this mandate. Despite the excessive cruelty displayed by Timur, Clavijo writes nothing that would question his actions. As an ambassador and recorder of his travels, it is possible he felt the need to remain detached from what he observed in order to present a faithful account to his readers. It may also have happened that once Clavijo met Timur in person and came to know more about how effectively he ran his kingdom that he saw this kind of violence as necessary for maintaining control over such large groups of people. A third possibility is that the description of cruelties and abuse of power tacitly compares to the governing style of Enrique III, with which the ambassadors would have been very familiar. In a vein similar to Timur, Enrique did restore and guard royal power from the ambitions of others, but he also attempted to quell the violence

directed toward Jews.¹³⁸ Whatever the reasons, the writer of the *Embajada* generally maintains an air of detachment and impartial observation, which causes some passages—like the one above describing the natives’ fear of ambassadors—to stand out among the rest.

Conversely, the topics and opinions given in Pero Tafur’s account of his travels are not as restricted as those of the *Embajada*, whose writers had to prepare an official text for the king. Tafur writes more openly about what he observes abroad, and his views illustrate for the reader some changes that accompany his liminal position as a traveller. In the prologue to his work, Tafur explains that he is going abroad during a truce between Juan II and the Moors, whom he calls “nuestros naturales enemigos” (“our natural enemies”; 6). Despite considering Iberian Muslims as enemies of Castile or perhaps all Christians, Tafur has no qualms about establishing friendships with foreigners and non-Christians abroad. I already mentioned his intimate relationship with the interpreter Saym, born a Jew and later a convert to Islam. Likewise, Tafur speaks about the Turks only after having observed them first-hand and spent time in their lands. In one instance, a group of Turks harasses them while they are travelling by ship and they are put in a dangerous position. Later, however, Tafur meets the Grand Turk, Murad II, in Hadrianopolis (now Edirne) and remarks on his very favorable impression of him (135). While staying in Turkey, Tafur’s good opinion of the Turks is increased. They are “noble gente en quien se falla mucha verdad y biven en aquella tierra como fidalgos, así en sus gastos como en sus traeres e comeres e juegos, que son muy tahures, gente muy alegre e muy humana e de buena

138. Years earlier, in 1380, Juan I succumbed to prejudices against the Jews, sentiments that had been built up strongly in Castile especially since the Black Death, and took measures against them, ordering them to live in ghettos and revoking their rights to autonomous Jewish tribunals. In 1391, violent pogroms took place through the instigation of the archdeacon of Eciija, who took advantage of the minority of Enrique III. Thousands of Jews were killed in various Castilian towns. O’Callaghan explains that when thirteen-year-old Enrique took the throne in 1393, however, “discord and confusion in the government came to an end” (*A History of Medieval Spain* 537).

conversación, tanto que en las partes de allá, cuando de virtud se fabla, no se dize de otros que de los turcos” (“noble people in whom much truth is found and they live in that land like noblemen, in their spending and in their attire and food and games, for they are very playful, a very happy people and very humane and of good conversation, so much so that in those lands, when one speaks of virtue, it is not said of anyone but the Turks”; Tafur 137). This is a notable description of the Turks, given that they were considered enemies of Christianity and their expansion in the Mediterranean and Asia was feared by much of Europe. Timur had, of course, defeated Bayezid at Ankara in 1402, and a period of civil war (known as the Ottoman Interregnum) put a temporary halt to Ottoman expansion. By the time of Tafur’s travels (1436-1439), the Empire had begun to put itself back together and expand once again into the Balkan Peninsula. It would be fewer than twenty years after Tafur’s journey that Constantinople would fall. Furthermore, it is immediately following the fall of Constantinople that Tafur composes his written travel account, a moment when anti-Turkish reaction surged through Europe (López Estrada, “Viajeros castellanos” 68). Tafur, however, is not concerned with the Muslim-Christian struggle in Europe. Instead of following political and religious ideologies that could foment anti-Muslim or anti-Turkish sentiment, Tafur evaluates those peoples for himself. As a traveller, having severed, to a certain extent, ties to his old life, he is in a position to discover for himself, and in a more objective manner, that which he encounters abroad.

Symbolic and Heartfelt Exchanges

When the travellers encounter strangers, symbolic as well as unfeigned exchanges of gifts occur that create ties among them. Many exchanges serve as what van Gennep would designate rites of incorporation, for they strengthen the bonds between the travellers and their hosts or new

friends. Theories of exchange and gift-giving have been studied by anthropologists since the early twentieth century and help to elucidate the meaning of the many exchanges of gifts that occur in both travel-books. Scholars have pointed to two main classes of gift exchange: 1) gifts may be given out of feelings of moral obligation and with the expectation of reciprocity and 2) they may be given in a “purer” sense with few or vague expectations of reciprocity.¹³⁹ Degrees of closeness in social relationships accompany these two categories. “Pure” gift-giving is associated with close degrees of social relationships (such as family and friends) while reciprocal (or obligatory) gift exchange is characteristic of those who feel little attachment for one another or are separated by a “greater emotional distance” (Komter and Vollebergh 747).

If “gift giving is the cement of social relationships” (Komter and Vollebergh 747), Pero Tafur and the ambassadors to Timur certainly forge new connections with strangers through acts of giving and receiving gifts and favors. The Castilian diplomats exchange gifts with Timur, his family, and his important subjects in a reciprocal and obligatory manner. This cycle of gift-giving had begun a few years earlier when Timur sent captive Christian women he had rescued from the Turks at Ankara to Enrique III. Naturally, Enrique sends gifts along with the embassy to be delivered to people along the way and to Timur in Samarkand. Throughout the period of overland travel, Clavijo and the ambassadors receive multiple gifts of clothing, food, drink, and horses in almost every town they visit. In Tehran, for example, Clavijo receives the traditional gift of brocade clothing as well as a hat “en señal del amorío qu’el señor Tamurbeque tenía con el dicho Rey [Enrique III]” (“as a sign of the love that the lord Timur had with the aforesaid king [Enrique III]”; 215). López Estrada has noted that this ceremonial garment was for honored guests and constituted one of the most frequently received gifts by the diplomats (*Embajada*

139. See Malinowski and Sahlins for foundational studies on gift exchange.

205). Other times, the ambassadors present gifts to their hosts when these are important members of Timur's family. To Timur's eldest son, Miraxan Miraza, the Castilians bring valuable woolen vestments, and he responds in kind with gifts of brocade clothing. Likewise, they present gifts to messengers and knights Timur has sent to aid them. Clavijo writes that this custom of gift-giving serves to honor Timur and is carried out with much splendor and grandeur. While the gift exchanges appear to be customary and even socially and politically obligatory, Timur is insistent in his affection for Enrique III, as I mentioned previously.

Pero Tafur receives gifts from a variety of people he meets abroad, gifts that include the practical as well as the amusing. He receives parrots, perfume, and a pair of Indian cats from Saym in Cairo and fabrics, provisions, and even a leopard from the King of Cyprus. In contrast to the gifts the ambassadors receive, Tafur's presents are more than symbolic; they appear to be given out of affection and gratitude from those who have come to feel a special fondness toward Tafur. Unlike the repeated gifts of brocade clothing that Clavijo receives, these gifts are unique, and Tafur does not receive them elsewhere. The friendships that Tafur establishes with individuals of varying states and cultures show that encounters outside of one's own community allowed the journeyer to move beyond preconceived ideas of what others were like and to find out for himself. As travellers, Clavijo, Páez de Santamaría, and Pero Tafur were uniquely positioned to do just that. The gifts they gave and received abroad served to strengthen the bonds between themselves and their new acquaintances and incorporated them more fully into the new societies.

Conclusion

By looking closely at the personal experiences of the travellers in the *Embajada a*

Tamorlán and *Andanças e viajes*, I have attempted to show that it is possible to read these texts as much more than travel-books focused on description, itinerary, and marvels, the characteristics most commonly cited as hallmarks of this genre. By examining the interactions between the traveller and the foreigner and how the traveller responded to new people, places, and customs, one is able to speak in a more nuanced manner about the relationships between Castile, Europe, the Mediterranean, and Asia in the first decades of the fifteenth century. It must not be forgotten that the travellers studied here are individuals with unique experiences and cannot be understood to represent the attitudes of their communities at large, that is, for Castilians, Iberians, or Latin Christians in general; their experiences with the unfamiliar differed too greatly from those of their *stationary* compatriots. However, their reactions to the foreign are not unexpected among *travellers*. While each journey was singular, Clavijo and Tafur call to mind the experiences of Abu Hamid, Ibn Jubayr, and the fictional heroic ventures of Alexander and the knight Zifar. Each in his own way, these adventurers opened themselves up to the unfamiliar, Clavijo and Tafur to an even greater degree.

The knowledge Clavijo and Tafur gained of the world outside Castile and the generally favorable opinions they formed of the foreigners they met provide another perspective on the history of foreign relations in late medieval Europe. Their travel-books, read by the Castilian nobility and royalty upon their return, could have tempered a general mistrust of non-Christians at the time and offered concrete information about Asia and the Near East that had been lacking in the previous century due to the collapse of the Mongol dynasty in China, the decline of overland routes to the East, and the devastating Black Death. The written accounts by Clavijo and Tafur propose a new model for relationships among various nations of medieval Europe and Asia that is founded upon peaceful communication, acceptance of foreign practices, and empathy

with the other.

In this chapter, I first analyzed the persons Clavijo and Tafur met on their journeys and the nature of relationships established among them. Clavijo and Tafur would have met perhaps hundreds of strangers during the years they spent abroad. While they do not enter into detail about their experiences with all of these people, they do record relationships that held special significance for them. In the *Embajada*, the tone, in keeping with the diplomatic mission of the travellers, is more muted when speaking of people outside Timur's court. Indeed, the focus is on Timur himself and how the ambassadors integrate themselves into that Asian community during the time they spend in Samarkand. Serving as proxies for Enrique III, Clavijo and Páez de Santamaría establish friendship between their king and Timur, who refers to Enrique as his own son. For his part, Pero Tafur writes more extensively about personal relationships he cultivated while abroad, and it is not necessary for him to focus his text on only the most important people of the epoch. Rather, he has the freedom to write about a variety of persons and does so especially affectionately about the Count of Urbino, the King of Cyprus, and Saym, the interpreter for the Sultan of Egypt in Cairo. The relationship with the latter is one that shows exactly how the traveller was in a unique position to overcome differences, in this case, cultural and religious, that normally served as barriers between groups of people. With Muslim-Christian wars still occurring in Iberia throughout the fifteenth century, and in the midst of strong anti-Jewish sentiment, it is significant that Tafur establishes such a special connection with a Jewish-born Muslim man and his family. Tafur had referred to the Moors as "our natural enemies," but his actions throughout his voyages speak to an exceedingly different mindset. I understand Tafur's anti-Muslim statement to function simply as a perfunctory device to placate his readers or to emphasize his knightly profession. Actions like those undertaken in Jerusalem, where he

dons Muslim clothing and with the help of a renegade Portuguese man, visits the Muslim-controlled Temple of Solomon, serve to contradict his early attitude toward non-Christians. His friendship with Saym and his praise of the Turks as a noble, humane, and truthful people—words written by Tafur just after the fall of Constantinople—attest to a mind no longer limited by popular anti-Muslim and anti-Jewish sentiment.

Next, I analyzed foreign customs that Clavijo and Tafur observe and participate in, as well as the judgments they make about their experiences abroad. By focusing on their participation in alien practices, I have wished to show that it was partly through these rituals that the travellers were able to incorporate themselves into new communities, as van Gennep's model of *rites de passage* illustrates. Rather than being aloof observers of their surroundings, Clavijo and his men actively participated in customs of other groups of people. Tafur is more open about giving opinions and judgments of the unfamiliar people and practices he encounters. In his account, his position as a traveller in between worlds allows him to observe first-hand and form beliefs based on those observations rather than falling into traditional oversimplifications.

Like participation in foreign rituals, exchanges of food, clothing, and other gifts between travellers and strangers abroad helped to incorporate, to a certain extent, the former into new communities. Following van Gennep and Turner's theories of rites of passage and liminality, I have pointed to how the traveller finds himself in a unique, threshold state which allows him flexibility to throw off his old customs and beliefs and embrace that which was heretofore unknown, strange, or perceived as different.

What I conclude when taking together these various facets of travellers' experiences during their journeys abroad is that their original perceptions of an "Other" lose their validity. That is to say that the "Other" is no longer a fearful, monstrous, or imaginatively marvelous

stranger. He is not a contemporary enemy, like the Muslims of Al-Andalus, who were the targets of Christian wars of reconquest and crusade throughout the centuries. Neither is he a reprehensible “Other” like Hispano-Jews of the late Middle Ages who were blamed as the cause of a variety of social, natural, and political ills. On the contrary, once personal encounters with the foreigner have taken place, the traveller is no longer able easily to dismiss the stranger with generalized excuses and stereotypes. Through Clavijo and Páez de Santamaría, Enrique III establishes a new relationship between Castile and Asia. The Castilian ambassadors, their interpreter, and even Timur himself participate in each other’s customs and learn about the others’ practices. Pero Tafur’s “natural enemies,” the Moors, become particular individuals with whom he connects and enters into friendship. Expanding on Mary Campbell’s trajectory of the “Matter of the East” in European travel literature, I argue that these fifteenth-century travel-books continue in the trend of the “domestication” of the East—that is, a process of making it known through first-hand observation—and away from the legendary material so popular in previous centuries. However, this domestication does not imply an attitude of Western superiority or a perception of the Asia as a land of savages. On the contrary, the civilizations that these Castilian travellers encountered are highly sophisticated, perhaps even more so than their own, and this is made patent by the effusive praise and admiration the travellers felt toward that which they encountered abroad and the efforts they go to in order to show their integration into those desired societies.

After the sharp decline of contact with Asia in the fourteenth century, the *Embajada a Tamorlán* and *Andanças e viajes* are two works which result from a renewed spirit of interest in the East. For the Castilian ambassadors to Timur, the interest stems from political concerns: Enrique III wished to gather as much information as possible on this civilization that could, and

indeed already had, aided Western Europe with regards to their fears concerning the Ottoman Turks. Pero Tafur, on the contrary, travels of his own design with hopes to improve himself and his society by venturing into new lands. In the end, both groups of travellers seek knowledge of the many strangers they encounter along their journeys. However, their travels are not simple encyclopedic missions. Rather, the travellers become engaged with all that is new and unfamiliar to them. From the unique liminal position that Clavijo, Páez de Santamaría, and Tafur occupy, they are able to create bridges between the worlds they left behind and those they encounter abroad and to re-evaluate for themselves previously held ideas about the foreigner. Although these bridges did not result in immediate, permanent change in attitudes toward foreign groups at the highest political levels, the writers of the *Embajada a Tamorlán* and *Andanças e viajes* propose and record for history new models of diplomacy and empathetic relations with foreign peoples in the reports to their noble and royal Castilian readers. They represent the foreign civilizations they visit as desirable, wealthy, and powerful realms and position themselves as privileged persons already acquainted with and integrated into those very communities.

CONCLUSION

The intention of this study has been to examine the reactions of Iberian travellers as they encountered foreign peoples, customs, and lands in their journeys abroad from the twelfth to fifteenth centuries. I wished first to analyze how the traveller's liminal position affected his perception of the unfamiliar and second, to evaluate how the voyager negotiated his relationship with the foreign and related it in his written text. It would appear difficult to draw sweeping conclusions from a literature so varied in scope, chronology, and type of author. The texts I have studied range from imaginary travellers to pilgrims to adventurers to ambassadors. The paucity of large numbers of travel records from medieval Iberia makes it infeasible to study any one type of travel literature in isolation. Nonetheless, I hope that my dissertation has allowed the specificity of each travel account herein examined to come forward and to add to a larger picture of perspectives on the world outside Iberia in the Middle Ages.

Taken together, works as diverse as travelogues of twelfth-century Andalusis, fictitious journeys, and accounts of fifteenth-century Castilians show a remarkable approach to the foreign. In general terms, our travellers are open-minded toward the unfamiliar, a characteristic that perhaps surprises the modern reader who is appalled at the prejudices that continue to plague our twenty-first-century world. Indeed, there is a conspicuous lack of venom directed toward foreign peoples and practices in the works of the Andalusis and Castilian travellers, as well as the authors of imaginary journeys. Their perceptions of the foreign tend to surprise when considered against a background of general Islamic ethnocentrism and anti-Muslim and anti-Jewish sentiment in the Christian kingdoms of Iberia during the Reconquest. Abu Hamid, while carrying with him his Islamic faith and becoming involved in Muslim communities abroad, made a home for himself in a foreign city of a diverse population and showed interest in alien practices he encountered on his

journeys. Ibn Jubayr was more hesitant about the Muslim-Christian frontier lands that he visited while returning to Granada from his pilgrimage, but those experiences allowed him to see that both Muslims and Christians alike had their good and bad points. With the central role of travel in the popular *Libro de Alexandre* and *Libro del Caballero Zifar*, I have attempted to elucidate the manner in which both journeyers welcomed foreign realms as sites where they made better lives for themselves and established kingdoms of justice and prosperity. While advocating for travel, for knowledge of the outside world, and for productive relationships with strangers, the texts may simultaneously reflect the authors' desire to comment upon issues in their homeland as well. On the one hand, the grandiose figures of Alexander and Zifar could serve as propaganda to create support for Castilian monarchs. On the other, it is the foreign land that is an attractive alternative to the homeland and that may couch a veiled criticism of problems present in the travellers' places of origin. Similarly, in the two Castilian books of imaginary travels, the *Libro del conocimiento* and the *Libro del Infante don Pedro de Portugal*, there is likewise an open-minded attitude toward the unfamiliar paired with a concern for the moral state of Latin Christendom. In many instances, peoples of different religions and customs are held up as models to be followed by Christian readers back home and to inspire (or shame) their audiences to lead more devout lives. Sometimes there occurs a maligning or mockery of certain groups, particularly Muslims in the Holy Land, but I insist that this treatment is more perfunctory than serious. The authors' primary objectives are to comment upon religious and natural conditions in their homeland, not to advocate for real hatred toward other groups. Reading the fifteenth-century accounts of Clavijo and Pero Tafur brings Iberian travel literature back virtually full circle. Open to participation in foreign customs and with keen interest in unfamiliar peoples, these travellers call to mind the curious personality of Abu Hamid and Ibn Jubayr's reluctant

fascination with certain foreign religious and cultural practices. The principal differences between the travellers have to do with the fact that Clavijo and Tafur are less insistent on their Christianity than Abu Hamid and Ibn Jubayr are with Islam.

What reasons account for the commonalities among attitudes toward the unfamiliar of both real and fictitious journeyers from medieval Iberia? It could be argued that humanistic influences affected Pero Tafur, as Pérez Priego has discussed in his article “Encuentro del viajero Pero Tafur con el humanismo florentino del primer cuatrocientos.” Given his time spent in Italy, this seems reasonable, but it does not account for the similar interest shown by Clavijo, the Andalusí travellers, and the protagonists of fictitious voyages. I submit that it is the unique act of travel that is able to effect such striking similarities among both real and fictitious travellers. The decision to go abroad placed each wayfarer in a special, liminal position in which he was separated from his home world. From this position, each traveller had to re-evaluate the unfamiliar with new information that he acquired while on the road and in foreign cities. Perhaps somewhat remarkably, that information led to an interest in alien customs, guarded curiosity, and even open embrace of peoples who differed from the travellers in language, religion, and systems of governance. In the experiences of Abu Hamid, Clavijo, Tafur, Alexander, Zifar, and the protagonists of the imaginary travels, the journeyers responded to foreign lands in a generally positive manner. Clavijo and Tafur recognized the existence of sophisticated, powerful civilizations outside Castile and positioned themselves as friends and intimates of the subjects and lords of those lands. Authors of fictional travels praised foreign realms in order to encourage, admonish, or criticize their audience and society back home. Even Ibn Jubayr, who is extremely disconcerted by Christian-Muslim coexistence in the Mediterranean, recognizes that some Muslims lead better lives and experience more justice

under Christian lords.

Is this open-mindedness and interest in the unfamiliar unique to Iberian adventurers? The answer to that question lies in many future areas of inquiry. One first necessary step would be to examine the few other travel-related texts produced in medieval Iberia not analyzed here. The *Fazienda de Ultramar*, a thirteenth-century pilgrim's guide to the Holy Land, has not been included in my study principally for its content: its focus is geographical description and extensive vernacular translation of excerpts of the Bible. Lacking the personal observation found in other travel-books, it has not been essential to the present study, although it merits investigation in its own right. Similarly deferred here is another work for pilgrims, the French *Liber Sancti Jacobi*, a twelfth-century guide to Santiago de Compostela. This text is a five-volume anthology of advice and knowledge for pilgrims travelling to Galicia and includes sermons, hagiographical stories concerning Saint James, liturgical texts, musical pieces, descriptions of the way, information on local customs, and practical advice. Since the work, in Latin, is believed to have been composed by a French scholar, one Aymeric Picaud, I have not included it in this study dedicated to Iberian travellers, but it is undoubtedly of great scholarly interest and relevance for its subject matter. The one true travel-book that I have not been able to discuss at length in this dissertation is the account of the Jew Benjamin of Tudela, mentioned in Chapter One. Since Benjamin certainly merits, and has received, attention from scholars of various disciplines, I chose to focus on lesser-known travellers in order to open them up to a wider audience. Nonetheless, Benjamin, as well as the two above-mentioned pilgrim's guides, would be excellent starting points for expanding this study. Additionally, an examination of translations of other travels into peninsular languages would point to how these works were modified for their new Iberian context. Next, a comparative study of famous and lesser-known

voyagers from other kingdoms of medieval Christendom and Islam would be in order. Examining how they treat the unfamiliar—whether they reproduce the idea of a fantastical, monstrous East or if they approach foreign lands with human interest—would shed some light on whether our Iberian travellers are unique in their reactions. Finally, the exploration of medieval Iberian travel could be complemented by an approach from the outside looking in, as it were. There are, for example, several German voyagers who visited the Christian kingdoms of Iberia in the mid- to late-fifteenth century. Jörg von Ehingen’s diary speaks almost exclusively of his knightly feats while in Portugal, Castile, and Granada. In the 1460s, Leo of Rozmital encountered deplorable conditions in Iberia: rival kings created anxiety and unrest, the travellers were mistreated by officials and common folk alike, priests unashamedly disregarded their duties and vows, and “heathen” (Islamic) practices pervaded all aspects of society. Thirty years later, Arnold von Harff is similarly appalled by the mistreatment by customs officials, filthy accommodations, physical dangers, and the mockery of Christianity that he perceived in Iberia. These largely negative reactions to peninsular Christian kingdoms contrast starkly with the views of Iberian travellers who oftentimes wrote with effusive praise about foreign lands. If the German accounts are to be believed, one may begin to understand why Iberian travellers, particularly Castilians, believed—or were interested in depicting—the foreign to be a better place, one where justice prevailed, the land was bountiful, and religion was practiced faithfully. In any case, these are questions that merit further examination and that will complement the study undertaken in this dissertation. I have hoped to add to the field of travel-book studies in medieval Iberia, which, as evidenced by the texts analyzed here, still holds rich and fruitful work to be done. In addition, I have endeavored to make available these lesser-known works to a wider audience. The examination of travel accounts enriches historical, cultural, religious,

ethnographic, and literary studies, and it furthermore uncovers a web of relations that connected medieval Iberians with the larger world.

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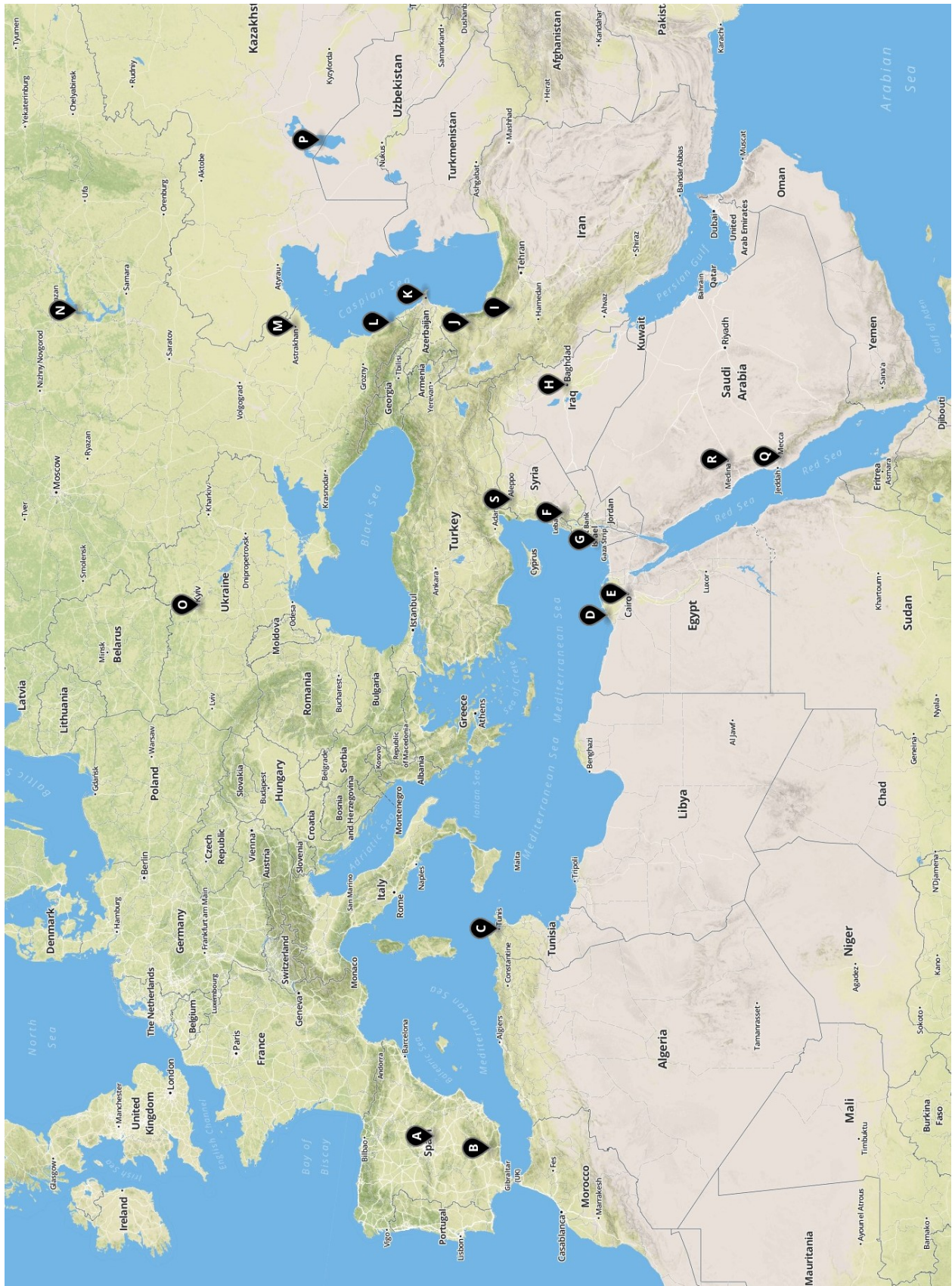
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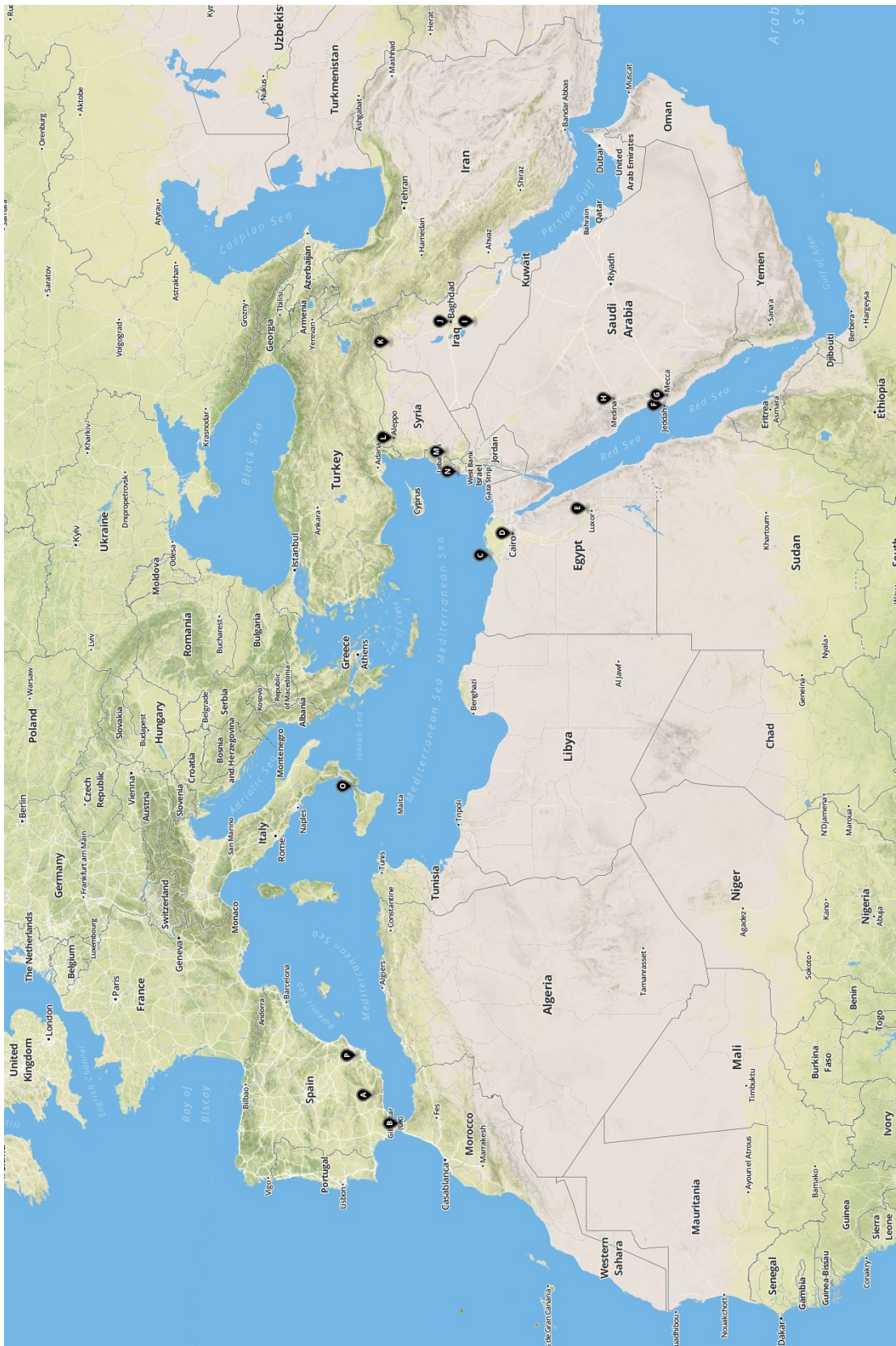
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Appendix: Maps



Principal Cities and Regions in the Life and Travels of Abu Hamid al-Gharnati

- A – Uclés
- B – Granada
- C – Tunis
- D – Alexandria
- E – Cairo
- F – Damascus
- G – Ashkelon
- H – Baghdad
- I – Abhar
- J – Ardabil
- K – Absheron Peninsula
- L – Derbent
- M – Saqsin
- N – Bolgar
- O – Kiev
- P – Aral Sea
- Q – Mecca
- R – Medina
- S - Aleppo



Major Towns Visited by Ibn Jubayr on His Pilgrimage

A – Granada

B – Ceuta

C – Alexandria

D – Cairo

E – Qus

F – Jeddah

G – Mecca

H – Medina

I – Kufa

J – Baghdad

K – Mosul

L – Aleppo

M – Damascus

N – Acre

O – Messina

Principal Towns along the Route Taken by the Castilian Ambassadors to Timur in Samarkand

A – Cádiz

B – Tangier

C – Málaga

D – Cartagena

E – Gaeta

F – Messina

G – Rhodes

H – Gallipoli

I – Constantinople

J – Sinop

K – Giresun

L – Trabzon

M – Erzincan

N – Erzurum

O – Khoy

P – Tabriz

Q – Soltanieh

R – Tehran

S – Damghan

T – Termez

U - Samarkand