

Part II

Imagining the East: Egypt, Persia, and Istanbul in My Mind

Chapter 4

“TIERRAS DE EGIPTO”: IMAGINED JOURNEYS TO THE EAST IN THE EARLY VERNACULAR LITERATURE OF MEDIEVAL IBERIA

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on portrayals of imagined eastward journeys, specifically those in Egypt, in the three poems that make up Manuscript K-III-4 of the Royal Library of San Lorenzo de El Escorial: the *Libro de Apolonio* (a romance of nautical adventures in the Eastern Mediterranean), the *Vida de madona Santa María Egipciaqua* (the hagiography of a sixth-century “holy harlot”), and the *Libre dels tres reys d’Orient* (a tale whose central focus is the Holy Family’s flight to Egypt). This article seeks to untangle the web of signification that produced these imagined Egyptian journeys in the period of the composition of the poems in the mid-thirteenth century and in the period of their compilation into a single manuscript in the late fourteenth century. The historical reality and literary landscape of Iberia changed much in the intervening period and so the reception of the poems would have changed as well. This article contrasts the original place of eastern journeys in the individual poems with their increased importance due to their later interrelation in the context of an Iberian imaginary in which the place of Egypt and the Levant had dramatically expanded.

Keywords: Escorial Manuscript K-III-4, *Libro de Apolonio*, *Vida de Santa María Egipciaca*, *Libre dels tres reys d’Orient*, St. Mary of Egypt, Aragon

TALES OF TRAVEL to unfamiliar lands have captured the imaginations of Spanish-language readers for centuries. While “eastern” journeys (those in the Eastern Mediterranean, North Africa, and the Far and Middle East) in late medieval and early modern Spanish literature have been an *in vogue* topic in criticism since the beginning of the new millennium, such journeys imagined prior to the late fourteenth century have remained in relative obscurity. In order to begin to remedy this situation, this article focuses on portrayals of eastward journeys, specifically those in Egypt, in the three poems that make up Manuscript K-III-4 of the Royal Library of San Lorenzo de El Escorial: the *Libro de Apolonio* (a romance of nautical adventures in the Eastern Mediterranean), the *Vida de madona Santa María Egipciaqua* (the hagiography of a

sixth-century “holy harlot”), and the *Libre dels tres reys d'Orient* (a tale whose central focus is the Holy Family’s flight to Egypt). Journeys in Egypt play a role in each of the three poems, but this is an imagined Egypt based on received knowledge rather than an understanding drawn from direct experience. This article seeks to untangle the web of signification that produced these imagined Egyptian journeys in the periods of the composition of the poems and the reception of the manuscript as a literary compilation.

The complicating factor of this analysis is that the periods of the composition of the three poems and their subsequent compilation into a single manuscript are separated by more than a century. Scholars believe that the three poems were composed independently in the early to mid-thirteenth century, but were compiled, copied, and bound together in a single surviving manuscript more than a hundred years later in the late fourteenth century. The role that Egypt played in the medieval Iberian imaginary was much changed between those two periods, and examining such changes underlines the importance of Egyptian journeys, especially for the later reception of the manuscript as a whole. In order to show how this is the case, this article begins with an overview of Iberian literary portrayals of eastern journeys prior to the thirteenth century, and then moves on to a close analysis of the Egyptian and Levantine journeys in the three individual poems of Manuscript K-III-4. Next, the examination turns to the changes in the historical and literary landscapes of medieval Iberia between the two periods under consideration. Finally, the materiality of the manuscript is examined in the historical context of its composition in order to propose that eastern journeys, and particularly those in Egypt, could have been one possible motivation for the combination of these three specific poems. This analysis will shed new light on the understudied place of eastern travels broadly, and specifically those in Egypt and the Levant, in the medieval Iberian imagination prior to the famous travels of the late fourteenth century.

Early modern travel, especially in the “Age of Discovery” of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, has long eclipsed medieval travel in Iberian studies. Despite this, the antiquated view of the Middle Ages as a static time has in recent decades given way to increased study of medieval travel, both within the Iberian Peninsula primarily in the form of pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela from the eleventh century on,¹ and outside of the Iberian kingdoms primarily to the Levant and beyond in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. Academic attention given to travels to the East in this later period has largely focused on the separate journeys of two diplomats. At the turn of the fifteenth century, Ruy González de Clavijo, ambassador at the court of Enrique III of Castile, undertook his famous diplomatic journey to the court of Timur in Samarqand, which he recounted in his *Embajada a Tamorlán*. Several decades later, another Spanish

I A few prominent examples of scholarship on pilgrimage in Iberia include the following: Maryjane Dunn and Linda K. Davidson’s collection *The Pilgrimage to Compostela in the Middle Ages* (New York: Routledge, 2000); Thomas D. Spaccarelli’s *A Medieval Pilgrim’s Companion: Reassessing El Libro de los huéspedes* (Escorial Ms. H.i.13) (Chapel Hill: U.N.C. Dept. of Romance Languages, 1998); and the critical cluster on the topic of pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela co-edited by John K. Moore, Jr. and Thomas D. Spaccarelli in the journal *La corónica*: “The Road to Santiago and Pilgrimage,” *La corónica: A Journal of Medieval Hispanic Languages, Literatures, and Cultures* 36 (2008): 5–14.

traveller, Pero Tafur, travelled through North Africa, the Mediterranean, the Holy Land, Trebizond, Constantinople, and back through central Europe; he later recounted these journeys in *Andanças e viajes de Pero Tafur por diversas partes del mundo avidos*. Both of these travel narratives received little attention prior to the late 1990s, but since that time, these two texts, along with the late fourteenth-century imaginary travelogue *Libro del conocimiento de todos los reinos* and the roughly contemporary Aragonese translation of *Mandeville's Travels*, have become fashionable objects of literary inquiry.²

The previously mentioned narratives, however, were far from the first instances of medieval authors from the Iberian Peninsula imagining travel outside of Europe. Reaching back into late antiquity, one finds the famous example of the Latin *Travels of Egeria* (*Itinerarium Egeriae*), which tells of the pilgrimage of a fourth-century Galician woman (possibly a nun) who visits locales described in biblical narratives, including long periods in Egypt. While expanding the focus of this study to include such Latin texts of the early Middle Ages would yield a project too broad for the aims of this article, it is of note that the elapsed period between late antiquity and the thirteenth century brought societal shifts that would render actual journeys through North Africa and the Levant more difficult for Iberian Christians. The invasions of Germanic peoples from Eastern Europe and the subsequent sacks of the city of Rome led to the fall of the Roman Empire in the west and the end of the political and economic unity of much of the territory previously held together by it, including the Iberian Peninsula. Of the various powers that sought control of the Peninsula throughout the fifth and sixth centuries, it was the Visigoths who established the most lasting power. However, that fragile political unity would last for little over a century before the invasion of the Iberian Peninsula by Muslim forces in 711. By this time, most of the Levant and North Africa was already under Muslim military control, and from this point much of Iberia would be brought into this new political, religious, and cultural sphere. The Christians of what is now Spain and Portugal who did not convert would live either in subjugation to or in conflict with Muslim powers for the next five centuries.

By the close of twelfth century, the tide was turning in favour of the military and political power of the Christian kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula, and the imaginary of the northern kingdoms again turned outward. In the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, another pilgrimage guide to the Holy Land surfaces, but now in the vernacular. The *Fazienda de ultramar* presents an itinerary for Holy Land journeys along with abundant biblical material, much of which was translated into an Iberian vernacular for the first time in this manuscript.³ Egypt naturally plays an important role in the document in

² Recent work on these fourteenth- and fifteenth-century texts include the following: Francisco López Estrada's edition of Clavijo's *Embajada a Tamorlán* (Madrid: Editorial Castalia, 1999); Aníbal A. Biglieri's article "Jerusalén: de *La gran conquista de Ultramar* a Pero Tafur," *La corónica: A Journal Of Medieval Spanish Language, Literature, And Cultural Studies* 36 (2008): 59–73; Benjamin Liu's article "Re-Orienting Medieval Spanish Travel Narratives," *Yearbook of Comparative And General Literature* 52 (2005): 19–30.

³ It is of note that these are some of the first vernacular translations of the Bible in the Iberian Peninsula.

the telling of the Old Testament narratives of Joseph's sale into slavery in Egypt and the Israelites' subsequent escape from subjugation there.

Another vernacular work of the early thirteenth century, a Castilian version of the legends surrounding Alexander the Great, the *Libro de Alexandre*, also depicts travel in the East, primarily into Asia Minor, the Fertile Crescent, and Persia, but also into North Africa.⁴ While the poem traces the life and many conquests of the Macedonian hero, a favorite subject of Western European authors of the period, the familiar theme of travel in the form of pilgrimage also surfaces in the poem. Teresa M. Rossi argues that the Castilian poet transforms the scene of Alexander's visit to the Temple of Amon into a reflection of thirteenth-century pilgrimage, even though the narrative takes place in pre-Christian Egypt.⁵ Relating the importance of the scene to this part of the poem, the author states that "esta anécdota de devoción religiosa corona la campaña militar egipcia, la punta más occidental de la conquista mediterránea" (this anecdote of religious devotion crowns the Egyptian military campaign, the westernmost point of the Mediterranean conquest).⁶ Although much of the Iberian literature of the Middle Ages that includes travel in the Levant, and in particular in Egypt, has some connection with pilgrimage, not all representations of travel in these lands are itineraries or pilgrimage guides to the Holy Land, as we have seen in the case of the *Libro de Alexandre*.

In order to gain a more complete view of the role of eastern and specifically Egyptian travel in the medieval Iberian imaginary, one must take into account a broad variety of texts. Manuscript K-III-4 of the Royal Library of San Lorenzo de El Escorial provides such variety as it includes three thirteenth-century poems representing three distinct genres and verse forms, but all containing eastern journeys including Egypt. The first of the three poems, the *Libro de Apolonio*, is the romance tale of the journeys and misadventures of a young king throughout the Eastern Mediterranean. The second poem, the *Vida de madona Santa María Egipcíaca*, is a version of the popular hagiography of the converted harlot St. Mary of Egypt. The third and final of these three is the *Libre dels treys reys d'Orient*, which tells a story composed of three biblical moments, but whose central story is a more developed narrative of an incident occurring during the Holy Family's flight from Bethlehem to Egypt. These three poems, written separately in the first half of the thirteenth century, all contain depictions of travel in Egypt, which provide us with a point of departure from which to examine eastern journeys in the medieval Iberian imaginary of this period.

The first of the poems included in the Escorial Manuscript K-III-4 is the *Libro de Apolonio*, a mid-thirteenth-century version of the "best-selling" medieval nautical

⁴ This work is recognized as the first poem of the *cuaderna vía* stanzaic style in Castilian.

⁵ The temple, also known as the Oracle of Amon, is located at the Siwa Oasis in modern-day Egypt near the western border with Libya. Siwa oasis is a remote location in the Libyan Desert (which stretches from the Nile westward into eastern Libya and also covers northern Sudan).

⁶ Teresa M. Rossi, "Alejandro Magno, el primer romero de las letras españolas: Entre vulgarización e invención," in *El Girador, I-II: Studi di lett. iberiche e ibero-americane offerti a Giuseppe Bellini* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1993), 861–66, at 862.

romance, the legend of King Apollonius of Tyre.⁷ Although several analogues of the tale exist in Latin and the various European vernaculars, the earliest known Iberian version is of interest to scholars for its numerous peculiarities. This version is widely recognized as the most Christianized account of the legend, even though the action takes place in a pre-Christian milieu; the Iberian author infuses his reworking of the tale with many aspects of a thirteenth-century ethos, creating “vivos cuadros de costumbres del siglo XIII” (lively popular vignettes of the thirteenth century).⁸ Elsewhere I have emphasized the expanded roles that the two principal female characters play in this version, and the bibliography on differences between this version and its sources and analogues is extensive.⁹ The thirteenth-century *Libro de Apolonio* follows the basic narrative outline of the other versions of the legend, but with significant differences that make it a unique poetic creation.

The basic outline of the Apollonius legend begins with the young protagonist leaving his kingdom of Tyre to find an eligible wife. His quest brings him to the neighbouring realm of Antioch where he attempts to answer a riddle in order to win the hand of the princess, but the evil king Antioco deceives the young protagonist so that he may keep his daughter for his own incestuous use.¹⁰ When Apolonio answers the riddle successfully and reveals the king's incest with his daughter, the young protagonist is forced by the evil king's murderous rage to flee into exile. After a series of misadventures, Apolonio loses all of his worldly possessions and arrives naked and alone on the shores of Pentapolis.¹¹ There he eventually wins a place at court of the good King Architrastes and the love of his daughter Luciana. Apolonio and the princess Luciana marry, and when she is in the advanced stages of pregnancy, the news arrives that the evil King Antioco is dead. Through a series of misadventures on their return journey to Apolonio's homeland of Tyre, the protagonist, his wife Luciana, and their newborn daughter Tarsiana are separated. The rest of the narrative follows the separate stories of the three characters until they are happily reunited near the end of the poem.

7 Although the title of this work within the manuscript appears as *Libre de Appollonio*, the standard spelling *Libro de Apolonio* has become so entrenched in the criticism over the past 150 years that I have decided to use this title when referring to the work.

8 Pedro L. Barcia, *El mester de clerecía* (Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1967), 38.

9 Such scholarship includes the following: my articles “Luciana's Story: Text, Travel, and Interpretation in the *Libro de Apolonio*,” *Hispanic Review* 79 (2011): 1–15, and “‘De pan y de tesoro’: Sacrament in the *Libro de Apolonio*,” *La corónica* 40 (2012): 93–120; Pablo Ancos's “Vocalidad y textualidad en el *Libro de Apolonio*,” *Troianalexandrina: Anuario sobre literatura medieval de materia clásica* 3 (2003): 41–76; and Alan Deyermond's “Emoción y ética en el *Libro de Apolonio*,” *Vox Romanica* 48 (1989): 153–64.

10 For this summary of the legend I have used the Castilian versions of the names of the characters. This is significant because the names of the characters vary widely, and Apolonio's wife, who is named Luciana in the *Libro de Apolonio*, goes unnamed in many of the other medieval versions.

11 This is most likely Pentapolis (Cyrene/Cyrenaea), located near Marj/Barca in Libya just north-east of Benghazi.

Egypt appears in the *Libro de Apolonio* a little more than half way through the 656-stanza poem. When Apolonio and his pregnant wife Luciana are on their triumphant return journey to Tyre, the newly married queen goes into a difficult childbirth. The baby is born healthy, but it appears that Luciana herself dies in the labour. Apolonio and his crew construct a watertight coffin for his supposedly deceased wife. They send Luciana's coffin out onto the sea with rich clothing, precious coins, and a handwritten letter in hopes that someone will recover the body and provide the young queen a proper burial. Physicians in Ephesus recover the coffin and find Luciana to be alive (unbeknown to Apolonio), and they promptly install her as the abbess of a convent in the city. Because Apolonio believes that his misfortunes are due to some fault on his own part, he decides to undertake an expiatory journey to Egypt.

Apolonio first goes to the land of Tarsus that he had visited earlier in the narrative in order to leave his newborn daughter in the care of the governor and his wife. Apolonio tells the couple that until he is able to marry his daughter to a suitable husband, he will refrain from cutting his hair or nails, and that, “quiero en Egipto en tan amiente estar” (I want to remain in Egypt in the meantime).¹² The narrative at this time leaves Apolonio to wander in Egypt and focuses on the story of his child Tarsiana. The young girl is raised as a daughter to the governor of Tarsus, and her true identity is kept a secret from her. It is not until Tarsiana's nursemaid Licórides is on her deathbed that the young girl learns of her true identity. At this time, the dying nursemaid confesses to the young girl that

El rey Apolonio, un noble cavallero,
señor era de Tiro, un reçio cabdalero;
ese fue vuestro padre, agora es palmero,
por tierras de Egipto anda como romero.¹³

[The King Apollonious, a noble knight, was the lord of Tyre, a principal and upright man, he was your father, he is now a palm bearer, through the lands of Egypt he walks as a pilgrim.]

Egypt is a sanctioned place for the expiation of guilt, and therefore an excuse for Apolonio's long absence from his daughter. And although this is the last explicit mention of Egypt in the poem, the importance of the locale should not be overlooked.

The references to Egypt in the *Libro de Apolonio* are brief but significant when compared to the other locales mentioned as destinations in the poem. In terms of any discussion of the geography of the narrative, it is important to make note of the imaginary character of the geographical and cultural landscape that the poem presents. While the place names used in the *Libro de Apolonio* are ones that refer to real locations in the Eastern Mediterranean, there is nothing in the poem that describes their individual locations or their cultural specificities. When Apolonio and the other characters travel

¹² *Libro de Apolonio* in Carina Zubillaga, *Poesía narrativa clerical en su contexto manuscrito: Estudio y edición del Ms. Esc. K-III-4* (Buenos Aires: Dunker, 2014), 347d. The translations of the poems into English are my own.

¹³ *Libro de Apolonio*, 360.

from one city to another in the poem, the poet does not provide any indication of distance or direction between these points of axis. The poet also avoids adding any observations that would differentiate the various locations in the poem; if the peoples of these lands speak different languages, have distinguishing traditions or ways of dressing, or engage in different religious or ritual traditions, the poet provides no such indication. The poet presents these places as homogenous locales with unspecified locations.

The theme of travel is a constant in the poem, but of the locations mentioned in the poem (Tyre, Tarsus, Pentapolis, Ephesus, Egypt, and Mytilene), Egypt is perhaps the only locale that would have been broadly recognizable to a thirteenth-century Iberian audience.¹⁴ This, of course, is due to the prominent place that Egypt plays in familiar biblical narratives.¹⁵ While the most highly educated readers/listeners of the original Iberian audiences may have had some frame of reference for the other mentioned places in the Eastern Mediterranean, the broader audience may have recognized only Egypt. This fact, along with Egypt's narrative role as a space for purification and expiation of guilt, highlights the importance of this location in the narrative despite its scant appearance in the poem.

The second thirteenth-century poem found in the manuscript K-III-4, the *Vida de madona Santa María Egipcíaca* (alternatively known as the *Vida de Santa María Egipcíaca*), also has a connection to travel in the Eastern Mediterranean, and from Egypt in particular.¹⁶ This hagiography, like the *Libro de Apolonio*, tells a story widely known throughout Europe in the Middle Ages, as many versions in Latin and various medieval European vernaculars are extant. Not only was this specific saint's life a popular one throughout the Middle Ages, but this category of saint, the converted harlot, was one of the most admired saintly types in medieval times (other examples of the type include Thaïs (the former courtesan), Mary (the niece of Abraham), Pelagia of Antioch, and of

14 France is also mentioned twice in the poem (548, 583), but not as a place that the characters visit; rather, it is used as a symbol of a kingdom that is very wealthy.

15 Several other locales of the *Libro de Apolonio* are also referenced in the Bible, but none with the frequency or intensity of Egypt. Tyre is mentioned in both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, and perhaps its most vivid appearance is in the prophecy of its destruction in the *Book of Ezekiel*. Antioch is mentioned a number of times in the *Acts of the Apostles*. References to Tarsus are exclusively in connection to the Apostle Paul who was born there. The city called Pentapolis in the *Libro de Apolonio* is believed to be the one located in the province of Cyrene, Libya (northeast of Benghazi). Cyrene is mentioned in the deuterocanonical book of *Second Maccabees*, as well as in the *Gospel of Mark* where it is referenced as the homeland of the man named Simon who carried Christ's cross. None of these cities appear as the focus of familiar biblical narratives in the way that Egypt does in both the Hebrew Bible (as the place of the enslavement of the people of Israel) and the New Testament (as the location of the Holy Family's escape from Herod's murderous rage).

16 While the title *Vida de Santa María Egipcíaca* has been the most widely used in the history of academic inquiry into the thirteenth-century poem, more recent criticism has begun to use the title that appears in the manuscript, *Vida de madona Santa María Egipcíaca*. This is due, in part, to avoid confusion with other versions of the legend, such as the fourteenth-century version that also uses the title *Vida de Santa María Egipcíaca*.

course, Mary Magdalene). Two principal stemmata of Mary of Egypt's legend exist, and the thirteenth-century Iberian version pertains to the Western one, which focuses on the story of the harlot/wandering female hermit saint instead of the life of her male confessor. The role of Egypt is apparent from the work's title, as the protagonist is of Egyptian origin, and according to tradition, she travelled both in Egypt and the Holy Land in the fourth century CE. This version of the poem tells the story of the saint's life from childhood to death, and although the organization of the poem is often described as bipartite, the segment of the poem that describes the saint's pre-conversion life of sin is certainly shorter than that of her subsequent life of holiness.

The poem begins with a prologue that highlights the importance of repentance, and then goes on to introduce the reader to the saint herself:

Esta de qui quiero fablar
 María la oí nombrar.
 El su nombre es en escripto,
 porque nasció en Egipto.¹⁷

[This woman of whom I wish to speak, I heard her being called Maria, her name is in writing, and she was born in Egypt.]

Although the exact location of her upbringing in Egypt is not specified, the reader is informed that María is so given over to sin that she abandons her parents in her youth (at age 12) to go to another realm:

En Alexandria fue María,
 aquí demanda alvergüería;
 allá va prender ostal
 con las malas en la cal.¹⁸

[She travelled to Alexandria and looks for lodging, she ends up in the streets among the bad women.]

In her time in Alexandria, she becomes the most acclaimed prostitute of the city, and the poet communicates that the men of the city are constantly killing each other over her attention and favours. Approximately 280 verses (nearly 20 percent of the entire narrative) are devoted to María's early life in her unidentified hometown in Egypt and her time in Alexandria, a period that comes to an end with her encounter with a ship full of pilgrims bound for the Holy Land. María's interest in joining the voyage to Jerusalem is more professional than devotional, and she exaggerates her "forlorn" condition when she tells the pilgrims that

En tierras de Egipto fuy nada
 e aquí fuy muy desaconsejada.

17 *Vida de madona Santa María Egipciaqua* in Carina Zubillaga, *Poesía narrativa clerical en su contexto manuscrito: Estudio y edición del Ms. Esc. K-III-4* (Buenos Aires: Dunker, 2014), 79–82.

18 *Vida de madona Santa María Egipciaqua*, 147–50.

Non he amigo nin pariente,
vo mal e feblementre.¹⁹

[In the lands of Egypt I was born and here I was badly advised, I have neither relatives nor friends, things are going badly and feebly for me.]

María declares her Egyptian origins just before leaving her native land for the remainder of her life and the poetic narrative.

The next portion of the poem tells of María's journey to the Holy Land, her conversion experience in Jerusalem, and her entrance into a life of solitary and nomadic devotion in the desert eastward across the River Jordan. She spends the next forty-seven years of her life wandering in the wilderness in penitence and suffering until she encounters another wanderer, a monk named Gozimás from a nearby monastery whose tradition is to send its brothers into the desert each year for a time of ambulatory penitence and contemplation. The pair meet again after a year, and on the occasion of the third year, Gozimás finds María deceased in the desert. At this time a lion comes down from the mountain in order to aid the elderly monk in the burial of the saintly Egyptian.

The place of Egypt in the narrative is very different in the *Vida de madona Santa María Egipciaqua* than what we have seen it to be in the *Libro de Apolonio*, even though journeys in the Levant play an important role in both narratives. Both protagonists travel for secular as well as spiritual reasons: Apolonio travels to flee his persecutors, but also journeys to Egypt to expiate his guilt; María leaves Egypt to go to the Holy Land in order to continue with her sinful trade, but ends up wandering in the desert in penitential devotion. Although Egypt is a destination for Apolonio and a point of departure for María, this location, distant from the Iberian kingdoms of the poems' composition, plays a significant role in both narratives. Both travel in the Eastern Mediterranean and Egypt are significant themes in the first two poems of the manuscript.

The third and final narrative of Manuscript K-III-4 of the Escorial Library is a poem that has been known to critics by three titles: *Libre dels tres reys d'Orient*, the *Libro de los tres reyes de Oriente*, and the *Libro de la infancia y muerte de Jesús*. This brief poem, to which I will refer using title found in the manuscript itself, the *Libre dels tres reys d'Orient*, is composed of three scenes of the life of Christ based on canonical and apocryphal material.²⁰

The first of the three narrative moments of the poem deals with the visit of the Three Kings to the newly born Christ child. The narrative tells of the Magi's interactions with Herod, their adoration of the infant Jesus, and their return to their homelands without relating the location of the newborn child to the authorities. The "Slaughter of the Innocents" ordered by Herod is also related in the poem, and it is at this point that Egypt enters the account familiar from Gospel narratives.

¹⁹ *Vida de madona Santa María Egipciaqua*, 339–42.

²⁰ Perhaps the reason why no scholarly consensus has arisen in reference to the title is because of the small amount of scholarship that has been produced about the poem. Given the lack of standardization, I have chosen the title most authentic to the manuscript: *Libre dels tres reys d'Orient*.

In order to save the Christ child from the slaughter, the poem tells of the mystical orders given to Mary's husband:

Josep jazia adormido,
el ángel fue a él venido
Dixo: "Lieva, varón, e ve tu vía
"fuye con el Niño e con María;
"vete para Egipto
"que así lo manda el escripto."²¹

[As Joseph slept the angel came and said to him: "Rise, man, be on your way, flee with the Child and Mary, go to Egypt as it is commanded in the Scriptures."]

Travel has been a motif from the beginning of the narrative with the journey of the Magi, and now the Holy Family begins its journey to Egypt, which is the focus of the second narrative moment of the poem.

The matter of Holy Family's escape to Egypt receives scant treatment in the canonical Gospel narratives, but this particular journey is a favourite subject in the apocryphal gospels as well as in related literature and art. Margaret Chaplin, in one of the few articles specifically on this short poem, focuses on the scene of the thieves and places it in the context of other medieval apocryphal narratives about the Holy Family's flight to Egypt. Patricia Grau-Dieckmann has placed the "Flight to Egypt" narratives into a larger context of medieval graphic arts. José Fradejas Lebrero has found some similarities between this narrative and one in the *Evangelio árabe de la infancia*, but to date no direct corollary has been discovered. In the case of this final narrative, therefore, we are faced with material that is both rare and understudied.

The thirteenth-century author of the *Libre dels tres reys d'Orient* begins the second narrative nuclei of poem in a way that invokes many aspects of travel. The audience is told that Mary, Joseph, and their newborn son

Madrugaron grant mañana,
solos pasan por la montaña.
Encontraron dos peyones,
grandes e fuertes ladrones,
que robavan los caminos
e degollavan los pelegrinos.²²

[They rise at dawn, alone they go through the mountain passes, they met on the road two mean and strong thieves who robbed pilgrims and then slit their throats.]

The danger of the journey is immediately communicated through the inhospitable terrain and the encounter with criminals. The reference to pilgrims also brings the scene into relation with the type of religiously motivated travel most recognizable to medieval a audience.

²¹ *Libre dels tres reys d'Orient*, in Carina Zubillaga, *Poesía narrativa clerical en su contexto manuscrito: Estudio y edición del Ms. Esc. K-III-4* (Buenos Aires: Dunken, 2014), 84–89.

²² *Libre dels tres reys d'Orient*, 96–101.

The two the more wicked thief criminals contemplate dividing the spoils from their pilgrim captives, and the suggests cutting the Christ child in half and each taking his own part in order to have an equal division of the booty. The good thief recommends putting off the distribution of the spoils until morning, and offers his house as lodging for the travelling family. During the stay, the good thief's infant son is cured of his leprosy when the Virgin Mary washes the child in the bathwater previously used to bathe the infant Jesus. In thanks for the miracle, the good thief "[e]scurriólos fasta en Egipto, / así lo dize el escripto" (and he sneaked them into Egypt, as it is written).²³ The scene of the encounter with the robbers on the road to Egypt, the longest of the three narrative moments of the poem, concludes with the poet telling his audience that the sons of both robbers follow their fathers' paths into a life of thievery.

The last and briefest narrative moment of the poem culminates with the Crucifixion. The sons of the two highway robbers are portrayed by the poet as being the thieves crucified on either side of Christ. The son of the good robber, the one who was cleansed of his leprosy on the road to Egypt, is portrayed as the thief who recognizes the divinity of Christ at the Crucifixion and joins Christ in paradise, while the other thief mocks the crucified Christ and is condemned to hell.

Egypt is portrayed as a place of safety in the *Libre dels tres reys d'Orient*, which is a different role than that found either in the *Libro de Apolonio* or the *Vida de madona Santa María Egipciaqua*. Travel is depicted in all three poems of Manuscript K-III-4 as being dangerous, but also as promising the possibility of rewards, and Egypt is variously portrayed as a place of repentance, of sin, or of succour. All three poems rely on the audience's prior knowledge of biblical narratives in order to locate Egypt within a vague imaginary of the Eastern Mediterranean, but the poem that does this most explicitly is the *Libre dels tres reys d'Orient*.

The elapsed period between the composition of the three poems discussed here and their subsequent compilation provides an opportunity for the examination of the evolving meanings of Egypt and Levantine travel for a Christian Iberian audience. The concern for the remainder of this article is the codicological context of the poems, as well as the political and societal changes that occurred between the time of their thirteenth-century composition and their fourteenth-century copying and binding.

There is a current scholarly consensus that manuscript K-III-4 dates from the second half of the fourteenth century and that the copyist was of Aragonese/Catalan extraction based on the handwriting and certain linguistic characteristics,²⁴ but consensus has not been reached on the original use of the manuscript due to its numerous irregularities. The manuscript contains one multicoloured illumination and elaborated initial capitals in red, which may lead to the conclusion that it was meant to be a presentation copy, but

²³ *Libre dels tres reys d'Orient*, 206–7.

²⁴ C. Carroll Marden notes, after detailed examination, that the simplest explanation for the linguistic rarities in the manuscript is that "the present manuscript was copied by a scribe familiar with both Catalan and Aragonese or with a dialect on the border between those two linguistic territories" (*Libro de Apolonio: An Old Spanish Poem* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1917), 29).

this seems to be contradicted by the fact that the folios are of paper (*papel ceuti*) rather than vellum and that the rubrication is haphazard in places. Despite the irregularities of the manuscript, it does appear certain that at least a century had passed between the composition of the last of the poems and their combination into the late fourteenth-century Manuscript K-III-4.

Interpretations of the combination of the *Libro de Apolonio*, the *Vida de madona Santa María Egipciaqua*, and the *Libre dels tres reys d'Orient* into a single manuscript could occasion two related categories of results. One possible type of codicological investigation could aim to locate possible rationale or intentionality for the unique combination of these three poems, but because we know virtually nothing about the compiler/scribe or the location of manuscript's production, we must rely on the content of the manuscript alone to reveal this information. A related approach could focus on the reception of the poems in relation to one another, especially in light of the historical and social context in which the three poems were united. Because modern researchers are privy to at least some of the historical and social changes between the first half of the thirteenth century and the second half of the fourteenth, as well as to the extant literary production of that intervening time, an interpretation based on the production of the manuscript and the reception of the poems is hypothetical in nature, but represents a potentially fruitful line of inquiry.

The compilation of the three poems into a single manuscript potentially affects the way they are received, as their arrangement into a single codex creates a web of connections not present when they are considered individually. While the majority of the criticism has examined the poems individually and outside of their codicological context, a few critics have studied the three poems' relationship to one another. Authors of articles about the poems, as well as editors of critical editions of the individual works, often make brief mention of the other poems in the manuscript, but scholars have not generally engaged in systematic studies of the three poems' commonalities. Alan Deyermond, in an article on the *Apolonio*, for example, mentions only in passing that

la acción de todas las obras se desarrolla en el este del Mediterráneo y sus regiones costeras e incluye una estancia bastante larga en Egipto; los protagonistas viajan para escaparse (en dos casos para escaparse de la muerte que les amenaza), enfrentándose con graves peligros (tempestad, naufragio, salteadores o piratas); el tema central es el conflicto entre la virtud y el vicio.²⁵

[The action in all these works takes place in the eastern Mediterranean and its coastal regions and it includes a very lengthy stay in Egypt; the protagonists travel to escape (in two cases to escape from death), facing great perils (storm, shipwreck, robbers and pirates); the central theme is the conflict between virtue and vice.]

Carina Zubillaga has more recently carried out two studies across the poems of the manuscript: "La impronta de la muerte en el contexto codicológico del Ms. Esc. K-III-4" and

²⁵ Deyermond, "Emoción y ética," 153.

"Vestimentas compartidas y otros cuidados: las formas de la generosidad en el Ms. K-III-4." The most extensive recent study of the codex as a unit is Andrew Beresford's "The *Vida de Santa María Egipciaca* and the Question of Manuscript Unity." Despite the title of Beresford's article, the author examines all three poems of the manuscript, as well as the short prose piece on the last folio of the manuscript often referred to as the *Vida y passion de Cristo, Nuestro Señor*. Beresford's extensive bibliography contained in the article's footnotes makes his treatment a point of departure for any modern examination of the manuscript, and I agree with Beresford in his contention that many factors "suggest that the compiler's methodology was one that was founded in a careful process of selection and design."²⁶ If the process of compilation appears deliberate, but we lack access to details about the specific context of the manuscript's assembly, then the *effect* of the interrelation of the poems in a broad Iberian context is the most productive avenue of codicological investigation.²⁷

Although none of the poems is a travel log nor primarily about Egypt, all of them deal with travels in the Eastern Mediterranean and their protagonists spend extended periods in Egypt, as Deyermond has noted above, and these themes are amplified when the poems are considered in relation to one another. Travel's meaning is not univocal in the manuscript, but in all three poems travel represents both danger and potentiality. In Apolonio's case, travel begins as something undertaken out of necessity and changes into a means of acquiring prestige and an expanded dominion. María's journeys, in the beginning of her story, are undertaken for lustful motives, but her spiritual wanderings eventually increase her spiritual status to such a degree that she becomes a worker of miracles who is recognized as a saint. Even the Holy Family's journey, which begins as a hastily undertaken escape, ends with the miraculous curing, both physically and spiritually, of a person who would have otherwise been a lost cause. When considering the manuscript in its entirety, Egypt also expands from being merely a place of pilgrimage in the *Libro de Apolonio*, a place of departure in the *Vida de madona Santa María Egipciaqua*, and a place of refuge in the *Libre del tres reys d'Orient*, to a location with expanded importance in the historical context in which the codex was compiled.

The relevance of Iberia's easterly gaze would increase over the course of the thirteenth and first half of the fourteenth centuries due to the significant political and social developments in the Peninsula, North Africa, and the Levant. The Christian kingdoms' centuries-long struggle with the Muslim political power in the south of the Peninsula

26 Andrew M. Beresford, "The *Vida de Santa María Egipciaca* and the Question of Manuscript Unity," in *Text & Manuscript in Medieval Spain: Papers from the King's College Colloquium*, ed. David Hook (London: King's College Hispanic Series, 2000), 79–102, at 83.

27 The contention that the poems were carefully selected for inclusion in the manuscript, rather than being the product of randomness, opens up a potentially fruitful line of inquiry. There are many points of comparison among three poems that remain unexplored. Physical transformation, for example, is an issue in all three poems: Apolonio transforms into a "wildman" when he undergoes his pilgrimage in Egypt; María transforms from an acclaimed beauty to a shrivelled and nearly genderless being; the son of the good robber from a state of illness to wellness when he is cured of his leprosy.

would come to a climax in 1212 with the combined Christian military's decisive defeat of Muslim armies in the famous battle of Las Navas de Tolosa. This triumph would turn the tide in favour of the northern kingdoms and have profound effects on the two largest powers of the Peninsula, the kingdom of Castile and the newly united crown of Aragon.

In Castile, the victory at Las Navas de Tolosa was part of a campaign of expansion that would intensify during the subsequent reign of Fernando III (1217–1252) and would lead at least in part to an increased confidence in external politics and a flowering of cultural production under the reign of his son Alfonso X (1252–1284). Alfonso saw himself in a position to take an active role in political affairs outside of the Peninsula, signing treaties with England against France and making imperial claims. Although Alfonso obtained the required electoral votes to win the title of Holy Roman Emperor, he was finally persuaded by Pope Gregory X to renounce the claim. The reign of Alfonso X was more successful in the realm of culture, as the immense scholarly production of his travelling court won him the byname “the Wise”. The court poets, scholars, and translators produced a wide variety of works, but it is particularly noteworthy that they translated a vast number of texts from Hebrew and Arabic into Castilian and wrote works of world history situating Castile into a broader political, intellectual, and historical framework.

In the east of the Peninsula, the consolidation of the crown of Aragon occurred through the dynastic union of the kingdom of Aragon with the county of Barcelona in the second half of the twelfth century. Both halves of the union had expansionist aims, and although the combined crown would eventually lose its holdings north of the Pyrenees in coastal France, it would expand over the generations into newly conquered Valencia, the Balearic Islands, and eventually into the Italian Peninsula and beyond. Peter II of Aragon (I of Barcelona) held the crown at the dawn of the thirteenth century and participated in the Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa. He died shortly afterward in 1213, leaving his realm to his son James I, known as “the Conquerer”.

While the Christian kingdoms of Iberia were negotiating their relationship with Muslims within the Peninsula during the High Middle Ages, many of the other Christian kingdoms of Europe had been engaged with Islamic forces in the Levant and North Africa through the crusades, principally in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. It is not the case that Iberian nobles lacked the desire that many of their co-religionists outside of the Peninsula had to take up the cross and go to the Holy Land, but rather they were implored not to do so by various popes of twelfth century; the reason for this was the need for focused attention to the struggle against Islam closer to home.

During the first half of the twelfth century western Christians came to recognise [sic] the Iberian conflicts as equivalent to the campaigns in the Holy Land, reimagining them as *bone fide* crusades, but among the Spanish, at least initially, this did not lead to a decline in the significance of Jerusalem; rather it fostered an attempt to bring the peninsular crusade into the orbit of the one in the East.²⁸

28 Patrick J. O'Banion, “What has Iberia to do with Jerusalem? Crusade and the Spanish Route to the Holy Land in the Twelfth Century,” *Journal Of Medieval History* 34 (2008): 383–95, at 385.

Throughout this period, the crusades to the Holy Land were not ignored in Spain, but rather postponed. There was even hope for uniting the more direct route to the Levant and one that would traverse Spain and North Africa: "Such a route would pass through the peninsula itself and unite two of the great crusading arenas into a single Mediterranean-wide struggle against Islam."²⁹

From the very beginning, the issues of crusade and economics were intertwined for European Christendom, and in the thirteenth century, even though the military cause was going badly, the economic connection remained. This affected not only the Levant, but also Egypt and the rest of the African Mediterranean coast:

Crusading led to the growth of merchant shipping, and when the military tide turned with the loss of the Christian principalities in the Levant, both traders and Crusaders looked for new points of contact in Egypt and North Africa. In 1248 King Louis IX of France led a disastrous crusade against Egypt, and in 1270 he returned to lay siege to Tunis, where he died of a fever.³⁰

While the Christian kingdoms of Spain had largely avoided becoming involved in the crusades in the Holy Land, they had not abstained from economic dealings with North Africa. Now, as the thirteenth century continued, the time was ripe for the Iberian political, economic, and military aims to intersect across the Mediterranean.

Both Castile and the crown of Aragon had relations with North Africa in the thirteenth century, some based on trade on others based on tendencies toward conquest and crusade. T. N. Bisson, in *The Medieval Crown of Aragon*, explains that on Aragon's behalf, James I "entered into negotiations with the hafsīd caliph of Tunis soon after the conquest of Majorca [in the early 1230s], authorized mercantile colonies and mercenary forces to operate in Tunis, and collect tribute. There were similar initiatives in Ceuta, Tlemcen, even in Egypt."³¹ The Castilian kings also saw the importance of Africa for the economic, military, and spiritual wellbeing of their own kingdom. According to Joseph O'Callaghan in the tome *The Gibraltar Crusade: Castile and the Battle for the Strait*, North African conquests were part of a larger program that included not only the lands directly across the Strait, but also African shores farther to the east. "Alfonso X also made diplomatic overtures to Egypt. Since the early thirteenth century, crusading strategists considered Egypt the key to control of the Holy Land."³² Alfonso maintained diplomatic contact with Egypt throughout the early decades of his reign. The *Royal Chronicle* tells of envoys from Egypt arriving at Seville, probably in 1260, with exotic gifts to mark the solemn anniversary of the death of Fernando III.³³ A decade later, "Alfonso X and Baybars [Sultan of Egypt, also known as Abu l-Futuh] concluded a commercial treaty" and O'Callaghan

²⁹ O'Banion, "What has Iberia to do with Jerusalem?," 384.

³⁰ Roland A. Oliver and Anthony Atmore, *Medieval Africa, 1250–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 35.

³¹ Thomas Bisson, *Medieval Crown of Aragon: A Short History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 70.

³² Joseph O'Callaghan, *The Gibraltar Crusade: Castile and the Battle for the Strait* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 19.

³³ O'Callaghan, *The Gibraltar Crusade*, 20–21.

takes this as one indication that “maritime contacts between the merchants of Seville and the Egyptians may have occurred more frequently than documentation attests.”³⁴

While making diplomatic and trade agreements, conquest could not have been far from either Iberian monarch’s mind, but agreement about the African endeavour was not always easy between Alfonso X of Castile and James I of Aragon:

Meeting at Agreda in March 1260, the two kings, aside from resolving smoldering resentments, discussed the African Crusade. Commenting that Alfonso X intended to move “against the Saracens for the exaltation of the Catholic faith,” Jaime I [James I] declared that “this should be preached in our realm” and permitted his vassals to aid him against the Saracens. The only caveat was that no harm should be inflicted on the Hafsids of Tunis, with whom Jaime I enjoyed friendly relations.³⁵

Despite the early agreement, the monarchs took separate paths to crusade. While Alfonso concentrated on the Straits of Gibraltar in order to open up the rest of African coast, James I decided to take a more direct approach to the *Tierra Santa*:

He proposed a crusade (by which he meant an expedition to the Holy Land) to Pope Clement IV, only to be told that he was morally unfit for such a cause. Even so, in 1267 James was inspired by an invitation from the Mongol Khan—and perhaps also by the urgings of his unendowed bastards Fernando Sánchez and Pedro Fernández—to mobilize a major crusade that set sail for the East two years later. James seems to have hoped thereby to allay the pope’s suspicions and to cap his own life’s work. Once under way, however, he lost his nerve in a storm and put ashore, with most of his fleet, at Aigues-Mortes; only the ships of the Infants reached Acre, but with too few men to accomplish anything.³⁶

Even though neither monarch reached his goal, both set the stage for the continued presence of the Christian realms of Iberia in the lands of North Africa.

The situation of active involvement in Africa would continue for generations, especially for Aragon. Pedro III would maintain a fleet in Tunisia as his father had done, but Mediterranean involvement would intensify under James II (1291–1327). “In North Africa James promoted military and commercial interests, notably in Tunisia, but also, during the Castilian war, in Morocco, and even as far east as Egypt. In 1293 a treaty negotiated with the sultan Khalil rendered the count-king virtually the protector of Christians in the post-crusade Levant.”³⁷ James II’s influence was also felt in North Africa because of his patronage of Ramon Llull (also known as Lull or Lully; ca. 1232–1315), whose ideas about and actions regarding the region are well documented. Llull, a Majorcan, had begun his career as a poet and courtier before experiencing a conversion and becoming

34 O’Callaghan, *The Gibraltar Crusade*, 21.

35 O’Callaghan, *The Gibraltar Crusade*, 22.

36 Bisson, *Medieval Crown of Aragon*, 70.

37 Bisson, *Medieval Crown of Aragon*, 95.

a follower of Francis of Assisi. As a Franciscan tertiary, he followed in the footsteps of the poor man of Assisi, who had himself gone on a mission to the Egyptians and had met the Sultan Malik al-Kamil at Damietta in September 1219. Llull likewise became interested in dialogue with and conversion of people of other religions, and Llull promoted language schools for just that purpose throughout the Mediterranean. He visited North Africa several times, especially Tunis, where he would eventually inspire rioting that would lead to his death. By the beginning of the fourteenth century, the Iberian kingdoms were well ensconced in North African and Levantine relations.

The interactions of the Iberian kingdoms with North Africa and Egypt, as well as their interest in the Holy Land, do not remain solely on the level of the historical record, but also extend into the realm of literary production. Between the first half of the thirteenth century when the three poems of Escorial K-III-4 were composed and the last half of the fourteenth when they were copied and compiled into a single manuscript, there was much literary production that included the themes of Levantine crusades and interactions with North Africa and Egypt. While crusader ballads were a popular genre throughout Europe, the form did not come to the Iberian Peninsula until relatively late, and only one example survives. The crusader poem, *Ay Iherusalem*, a poem about the loss of Christian kingdom of Jerusalem in 1244, was written several decades later around 1274. Straddling the divide between chronicle and chivalric romance, the *Gran conquista de Ultramar* first appeared in 1290s. This Castilian chronicle was based on William of Tyre's Latin account of the crusades and came to the Peninsula through an intermediate French text. The different manuscript traditions attribute the chronicle alternately to the patronage of Alfonso X and Sancho IV, and the text was certainly amplified in subsequent renditions. To these texts can be added some of the writings of Ramon Llull, including especially his *Liber de fine* (1305) and *Liber de acquisitione Terrae Sanctae* (1309) in which he advocates for preaching as part of the campaign against the Muslims.³⁸ The scant evidence indicates that while literature specifically dedicated to the crusades is not absent from the Peninsula, it does not arrive there until the last quarter of the thirteenth century.

The topics of crusades or Iberia's connections with North Africa and the Levant do surface in other literature from the period as a tangential theme or as a small piece of a larger whole in a variety of genres. I do not intend to offer a full catalogue of such references here but rather provide a few prominent examples from canonical texts to give an indication of the treatment of these topics.³⁹

38 Preaching was only part of the program; military force was also to be used. In the *Liber de acquisitione Terrae Sanctae*, for example, Llull "proposed that while a great crusade moved from Constantinople into Syria and Egypt, in the West the Christians would undertake the conquest of Granada and the Moroccan port of Ceuta. By means of this pincers movement he hoped that Islam could be crushed" (O'Callaghan, *The Gibraltar Crusade*, 126).

39 Other examples of texts that could be plumbed for references to or indications of interest in the themes of North Africa, Egypt, and the Levant would be contemporary hagiography, and from the early fourteenth century, the *Libro de buen amor*.

One particularly fertile compendium from the Iberian Peninsula for references to various aspects medieval society is the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, compiled at the court of Alfonso X of Castile, most likely between the middle of the thirteenth century and the monarch's death in 1284. There are four extant manuscripts of the collection, each containing different quantities of canticles or songs, but the number of them altogether (including various prologues) equals 429. This collection provides many portrayals of North Africa, Egypt, and the Eastern Mediterranean in a generation subsequent to that of the composition of the poems contained in Manuscript K-III-4.

This vast collection of Marian canticles contains five narratives that deal specifically with pilgrimage to the Holy Land (numbers 5, 155, 287, 383, and 401),⁴⁰ and of these, crusade to the Holy Land appears in two (5 and 401).⁴¹ Two additional canticles (46 and 165) have to do with crusade but do not involve pilgrimage, and in these cantigas the Muslim protagonists face the Virgin's intervention in military matters, and in one of the cases, the protagonist is converted to Christianity. Africa is mentioned generically in five canticles of the collection (95, 265, 325, 366, and 385), and in the last of these, Puerto Santa María, a newly conquered port city in the south of Spain, near Cadiz, is mentioned as an ideal place from which to launch attacks against the Muslims in Spain and Africa. Abu Yusuf Yaqub ibn Abd Al-Haqq (known as Aboyuçaf), who was the Marinid ruler or Sultan of Morocco 1258–1286, is a main character in four cantigas (169, 181, 215, and 323). He is the antagonist in the famous cantiga 181 in which the Muslim king of Marrakesh uses a banner with the Virgin's image on it to defeat the sultan in battle. Egypt is specifically mentioned in four cantigas (14, 165, 403, and 422). In three of these, Egypt appears in biblical references: 14 and 403 mention the flight of the Holy Family to Egypt, and 422 contains a reference to Egypt in the context of the Final Judgement. A more direct reference to contemporary medieval Egypt is cantiga 165.⁴² In this narrative, Baibars I, Sultan

40 Cantiga 5 is the familiar tale of chaste empress, who is accused of infidelity while her husband is away in the Holy Land; in cantiga 155 a hermit suggests that a thief from Alexandria go on pilgrimage to Jerusalem as penance for his sins; in cantiga 287, Holy Land pilgrimage is undertaken by the protagonist couple in penitence for the husband's murderous tendencies; the action of cantiga 383 occurs principally on a Holy Land pilgrimage, and therefore the theme is very developed; cantiga 401 is a petition from Alfonso for divine assistance in fighting Moors in Holy Land and in Spain.

41 There are several references to the Holy Land, most often referred to as "*Ultramar*," as well as to Jerusalem that do not have to do with pilgrimage or crusade. Cantiga 1 references the three kings as being of "*Ultramar*," and could be considered to be on a "pilgrimage" as they make their devotional journey to visit the Christ child. Cantigas 34 and 261 mention spices of *Ultramar*. In cantiga 337, a man who wants to go on a Holy Land pilgrimage, but cannot, goes there in a vision. Cantiga 187 takes place at a monastery in Jerusalem. In cantiga 314 a man asks to be taken to Jerusalem when he falls ill, but does not actually go there; in cantiga 337 pilgrimage is merely suggested or desired. Cantiga 419 references Jerusalem specifically in relation to the life of the Virgin Mary. Along these lines, without mentioning "*Ultramar*" or "*Jerusalem*" specifically, cantiga 424 is entirely about the adoration of the three kings. The text mentions that they had travelled through many lands before arriving in Bethlehem, including Tarsus, which is a city that plays a pivotal role in the *Libro de Apolonio*.

42 There are three additional references to the medieval city of Alexandria in *cantigas* 65, 145, and 155. Number 65 has to do with an excommunicate who ends up going to Rome, but is denied

of Egypt from 1260 to 1277 (also known as Bondoudar), attacks the Christian-held city of Tartus (Antartus or Tortosa) in Syria. When Bondoudar discovers that the Virgin is protecting the city, this Sultan of Egypt invokes the Qur'anic Mary, and then desists from attacking the stronghold. The *Cantigas de Santa Maria* provides many indications of Iberia's evolving interest in North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean.

We have seen the appearance of famous historical figures associated with Egypt and North Africa more generally in the *Cantigas de Santa María*, but perhaps no figure captured the Western imagination to the extent that did Salah ad-Din Yusuf ibn Ayyub, better known in the West as Saladin. This first sultan of Egypt and Syria founded the Ayyubid dynasty and captured the attention of the West through his military leadership against the crusaders in the Holy Land during the closing decades of the twelfth century. Saladin frequently appears in European literary production in the subsequent centuries, and it is perhaps surprising that many of these portrayals were neutral or even positive, despite the historical Saladin's antagonistic role in military campaigns against the Western kingdoms. Margaret Jubb has analyzed such representations and found that the "bulk of critical Western commentary on Saladin focusses [sic] on his early years, on his rise to power first in Egypt and then in Syria."⁴³ One finds such a portrayal in Don Juan Manuel's *Libro del Conde Lucanor* or the *Libro de Patronio*. As Jubb has noted, many Western tales of Saladin focus on the Sultan's travels (real or invented), and this is the case in "Exemplo L" of Juan Manuel's collection of moralizing tales. In the course of the *exemplum*, the initially flawed Saladin makes moral progress through his journey to Spain and his answering of a riddle. In "Exemplo XXV" of the same collection, the theme of travel, this time from west to east, is again present, and the depiction of Saladin that surfaces is one of wisdom and generosity.⁴⁴ These two tales from the *Libro del Conde Lucanor* serve to foment the legend of the Egyptian sultan rather than to present a retelling of the events of the crusades, as had been the case in Saladin's appearance in the late thirteenth-century Iberian *Gran conquista de Ultramar*. The depictions that we find in this literature, from crusader ballads, to chronicles, to exemplary literature, are varied in tone, theme, and purpose, but they come together to form a larger picture of the developing role of Iberian connections (at least imagined ones) to the East.

readmittance into the church, and later goes to Alexandria where he find a madman who helps him with his case. Number 145 is about John (known as the "Merciful" or "Almsgiver"), the patriarch of Alexandria. He was a seventh-century figure known for his works of charity. Number 155 is about a thieving knight in Alexandria who is ordered to fill a vessel with water in penitence. With the help of the Virgin he fills it with tears.

43 Margaret A. Jubb, *The Legend of Saladin in Western Literature and Historiography* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2000), 5.

44 For an opposing view, see Ana Adams's "Ser es fazer: El saber y la masculinidad de Saladin en *El Conde Lucanor*," *Corónica: A Journal Of Medieval Hispanic Languages, Literatures, And Cultures* 40 (2012): 145–68. In it the author analyzes Don Juan Manuel's treatment of Saladin by placing these two *exempla* in a broader context of the portrayals of Muslims in the collection and approaches the text through the lens of masculinity. Adams concludes that the portrayal of Saladin is not as positive as many critics have concluded.

Much had occurred in literature and history, as we have seen, between the time that the *Libro de Apolonio*, the *Vida de madona Santa María Egipciaqua*, and the *Libre dels tres reys d'Orient* were composed at the beginning of the thirteenth century, and the time that they were copied and combined into a single manuscript in the second half of the fourteenth. Iberia was a different place in this new period and so was the broader Mediterranean; more importantly, perhaps, the horizons of the Iberian imagination were broader. But how could these changes have affected the perception, on the part of the compiler or the audience, of the combined poems in Escorial K-III-4?

Perhaps one of the most basic differences between the perception of the texts in the two periods involves the transformation of imaginary landscapes into more concrete ones. This is more evidently the case with the *Libro de Apolonio* than the other two poems, as the narrative occupies a more expansive geography. Elizabeth Archibald, in her volume on the Latin *Historia Apollonii Regis Tyri*, which was the source text for the *Libro de Apolonio*, had already postulated this affect in the reception of the Latin narrative in an even earlier period. She contends that the plot “may also have acquired a new interest in the age of the Crusades, when biblical cities like Tyre became familiar names in European politics.”⁴⁵ The interest that Archibald was imagining with such a comment may have been a northern European one in which the Levant would have already been a more tangible place from the twelfth century onward. In an Iberian context, how much more would this be the case from the late thirteenth century onward due to the circumstance already described? How much would this be augmented when the vernacular Apollonius narrative is combined with two other poems that underline the biblical and hagiographic importance of the same region?

Jerusalem to the upper Levant would have been increasingly familiar for in the Iberian imagination by the time that the manuscript K-III-4 was compiled, but even more familiar would have been locations in North Africa. Egypt plays a new and more significant role in the case of the Iberian texts because of the new perspectives possible for the peninsular kingdoms in relation to North Africa, especially once the military situation within Iberia had been secured after the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa.⁴⁶ Archibald notes that in many other vernacular versions of the Apollonius legend, the protagonist’s long

⁴⁵ Elizabeth Archibald, *Apollonius of Tyre: Medieval and Renaissance Themes and Variations; Including the Text of the 'Historia Apollonii Regis Tyri' with an English Translation* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1991), 47. Many of the places described in the Apollonius legend had crusading significance. Antioch would have been familiar from crusade lore as it experienced two major sieges during the period of the crusades: the first in 1097–98 when the crusaders took the city, and the second in 1268 when it was lost to Baibars. The famous siege of Tyre in 1187, during which the Christian-held city was besieged by Saladin, was a rallying point for Christian crusaders in the Third Crusade as the defeat of Saladin put a halt to his series of victories.

⁴⁶ This would also be the case for the other major African locale mentioned in the *Libro de Apolonio*: Pentapolis (Cyrene/Cyrenaea) would have been located at present day Marj/Barca in Libya just northeast of Benghazi. This city is even farther west along the northern coast of Africa, about halfway between Alexandria and Tunis, and we have already seen the importance of Tunis in the Iberian imaginary, especially in terms of trade and diplomacy with Aragon.

stay in Egypt is either replaced with actions in other locales, abbreviated, or is eliminated altogether.⁴⁷ Such is the case in the late fourteenth-century English version of the Apollonius legend included in John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, in whose English historical context Egypt would have ceased to play an important role in politics or military matters. Egypt's importance in the *Libro de Apolonio* is amplified by both recent Iberian history, and by the combination of the Apollonius legend with two other texts, the *Vida de madona Santa María Egipcíaca* and the *Libre dels tres reys d'Orient*, in which there is a literal connection between Egypt and the Holy Land.

Beyond the place names and the geographical locations treated in the poems, the events of the narratives contained in the manuscript could have had certain resonance in the minds of the compiler or audience of Escorial K-III-4. The manuscript's portrayal of numerous storms at sea that sweep Apolonio off course and make dangerous María's passage to Jerusalem could recall James II of Aragon being thwarted from his planned crusade to the Holy Land when the previously mentioned storm set him ashore in southern France instead of the Holy Land in 1269. In the *Libre dels tres reys d'Orient*, the Wise Men coming from faraway lands to Bethlehem could have been identified with the crusading kings of Europe arriving in the Holy Land. In a similar way, the Magi and the Holy Family fleeing from the machinations of Herod could have been seen as representations of the crusaders being expelled from the Holy Land by the likes of Baibars and Saladin. In the case of the *Vida de madona Santa María Egipcíaca*, the fact that María arrives to the Holy Land on a ship full of pilgrims is significant as the crusaders identified themselves as armed pilgrims. The armed figures, who most critics identify as angels (although they are never explicitly identified in the poem), that prohibit María's entry into the Holy Sepulchre could likewise be seen as a reflection of the militarization of the places in the Levant that were sacred to Christians. Many other connections could be drawn between Iberia's interest in North Africa and the Levant and the content of these narratives, but these examples begin to paint a picture of new readings/receptions possible when the poems are considered in conjunction with one another in a context in which crusader and Mediterranean trade zeal had more deeply infiltrated the Iberian Peninsula.

Alan Deyermond briefly mentioned the common elements of Levantine journeys and long stays in Egypt in the three poems of Escorial K-III-4 in an article in 1989, and I have shown here that these similarities could be more than a fortunate coincidence. I would not argue that the narratives of Escorial K-III-4 are poems about crusade or conquest; rather, given the context of the Iberian kingdoms' increased interest in these topics from the second half of the thirteenth century onward, these issues are significant and worth exploring. Although the place of Egypt and Levantine journeys in the individual poems would have been less significant in the context of their separate composition in the first half of the thirteenth century, we have seen that these aspects are amplified in their later reception by the three poems' subsequent codicological combination and by the new realities of fourteenth-century Iberia and its relationship to North Africa, Egypt, and the Holy Land.

47 Archibald, *Apollonius of Tyre*, 68.

