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The specific battles Chaucer attributes to the Knight in the General Prologue of *The Canterbury Tales* illustrate the values Chaucer believed a fourteenth-century knight should possess. Chaucer deliberately chooses certain contemporary campaigns and battles in order to exemplify traditional knightly values. The long service of the Knight demonstrates his loyalty, valor, and adherence to the lifestyle of the warrior monk advocated by Pope Urban II in his declaration of the First Crusade. The Knight serves in three broad areas: southern Spain and northern Africa, the eastern Mediterranean, and northern Europe. Chaucer chooses these campaigns to construct a composite for his perfect Knight; each campaign was conducted for the expansion of both the Church and European civilization. Chaucer further elevates his Knight by distancing him from the turbulent, often distasteful Hundred Years' War in France. After long service to chivalry and the Church, the Knight is rewarded at the end of his career by being selected to head the Teutonic Knights' Table of Honor. The Knight's selection to the Table is one of the highest achievements for a fourteenth-century warrior. Because Chaucer's audience would have known the details of each campaign, an examination of the historical record illuminates the description of the Knight in the General Prologue.

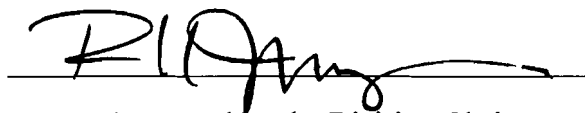
CHAUCER'S CRUSADER:
THE KNIGHT AS A REPRESENTATION OF CHIVALRY

A Thesis
Presented to
The Division of English
EMPORIA STATE UNIVERSITY

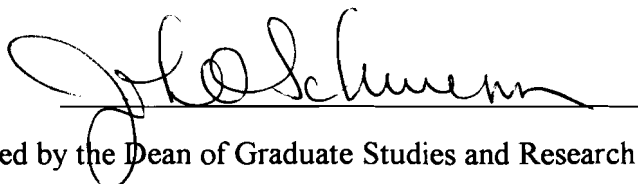
In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
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Approved by the Division Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Schumann", written over a horizontal line.

Approved by the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research

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Part I: The Knight's Career and Chivalry's Influence

Scholars have long puzzled over the Knight's character in *The Canterbury Tales*.

In the latter half of the twentieth century conflicting views of the Knight have surfaced. Terry Jones argues he was no more than a mercenary who hired out to the highest bidder while others believe he was a truly genuine warrior of God, combining the Cross and Sword as Pope Urban II had commanded a few centuries earlier. Most arguments about the Knight accept the latter reading and treat him as Chaucer described, as a worthy and honorable knight who in every battle listed fought in the finest traditions of chivalry and Christianity. The approach used by early twentieth-century scholars when exploring the history of the Knight was to examine the campaigns and battles attributed to him and then look for a historic English knight that fit the description. This scholarship was valuable because it uncovered several contemporary accounts of the battles listed in the General Prologue and established the presence of English knights in these areas. However, to inform modern readers of Chaucer's intent it seems to be more beneficial to examine closely the battles and the circumstances surrounding each, and then try to fathom what Chaucer's own audience would have thought about the Knight.

The image Chaucer constructs of his "verray, parfit, gentil knyght" in the General Prologue of *The Canterbury Tales* is purposeful and deliberate (43-78). Chaucer uses the description to shape carefully the career of what he deemed a perfect fourteenth-century knight. The Knight is represented as an accomplished warrior who has fought for many years in the name of Christianity. The Knight arrives in Southwark "late ycome from his viage" (77). The word "viage" can be translated as "voyage" or as a technical term for military expedition, meaning that the Knight comes directly from service against an enemy of Christianity and begins a holy pilgrimage. The nature of the campaigns attributed to the Knight by Chaucer makes it reasonable to assume the character was meant to represent an ideal. That ideal was one of constant service to God and adherence to the

traditional guidelines governing knightly behavior. He does not rest between his crusade against the enemies of the Church and his pilgrimage, but instead immediately begins the trip to Canterbury. As will be seen, scholars throughout the twentieth century have argued that the Knight was lately come from Prussia and the service of the Teutonic Knights. While this seems probable, there is no definite way of proving the Knight has just arrived from eastern Europe. Hence, the modern reader must be content to know the Knight has returned from a military expedition and is preparing to take part in the Canterbury pilgrimage.

Chaucer must have chosen the Knight's campaigns with careful consideration of how his audience would view a person who had been a participant. Chaucer uses the Knight to establish a standard for noble behavior in the warrior class. Scholars have long argued that during this period Chaucer was becoming disenchanted with the warrior class and used his Knight to demonstrate proper behavior for other knights. The conduct of both English and French knights in the Hundred Years' War was mercenary at best, and more likely criminal. Chaucer emphasizes the ideal he is setting forth by the position of the Knight in the General Prologue. The Knight is not only the first pilgrim introduced, he is also the sole representative of the English fourteenth-century upper class in the text. Position aside, his accomplishments would have established the Knight as a very accomplished warrior. Benson asserts in the introduction of the *Riverside Chaucer*, "The Knight is an idealized representative of chivalry, but one who has participated in real campaigns, most of them well known to Chaucer's audience . . ." (6). Manly has said the campaigns would create an almost mythical image in the minds of Chaucer's audience by "the mere recital of the names of cities and lands where the knight had fought" (91). Each of these battles and campaigns attracted soldiers from all over Europe and was discussed for decades after each occurred. A clear example of how these battles were viewed by Christian Europe is provided by the Knight's participation in the sack of Alexandria. Alexandria was the crowning achievement for Christian knighthood in the minds of most

Europeans and influenced a generation (Manly 91). Hence, a parallel can be drawn between the tumultuous events of the fourteenth century and recent events in the twentieth century. The recent military operations in Kuwait, Bosnia, and Somalia are well known to contemporary readers just as the exploits of the Knight and the battles he participated in were well known to Chaucer's own audience. A knight's service in these campaigns is an example of the ideal role for a Christian warrior, following in the same tradition as the first Crusade. The Roman Catholic Church sanctioned all of the named campaigns the Knight participated in, and each was fought on the periphery of Christian Europe (Manly 90). By placing his Knight in such exotic locations on the edge of "civilized" nations, Chaucer elevates him to an almost mythical position. Myths and stories about the lands outside of Europe abounded, and Chaucer places his Knight on these countries' very frontiers.

Scholars in the early twentieth century, namely Cook and Manly, address the image of the Knight as a real figure, or at least point to some contemporary fourteenth-century knights as possible models. They attempt to chronicle all the English knights who participated in the campaigns listed by Chaucer. The Scropes and the Earls of Hereford served in many of the same theaters of war as the Knight, and it is possible Chaucer used them as a model. However, it seems likely Chaucer did not mean for his readers to view the Knight as a particular historical figure, but instead as an ideal figure that normal men were unable to emulate completely. While the attempt to identify the Knight as a real person establishes that English knights were in fact involved in the campaigns and therefore helps to make the Knight a believable character, it does not necessarily aid in understanding the archetypal knight Chaucer is describing. Late twentieth-century scholarship has arrived at the conclusion that the Knight is a sort of conglomerate, with his service record being carefully chosen to reflect the traditional knightly values of chivalry and service to God that Chaucer felt were dying out in his contemporary world. Indeed, the latter half of the fourteenth century saw the decline and eventual end of the golden age

of knighthood. The Knights Templars had ceased to exist after becoming embroiled in international banking. The original Crusade for the capture and Christian stewardship of the Holy Land seemed to most unattainable because Europeans were unable to unite in the same numbers as previous centuries. The other military and religious orders, such as the Hospitallers and the Teutonic Knights, were still enjoying successes against the infidel, but their service would not last far into the next century. Chaucer's description of the Knight seems to be arguing for a return to the values and practices that traditional knighthood professed. While the historical record shows the Crusades and other expeditions in the name of chivalry and God were extremely violent affairs with massacres and other criminal actions occurring with some regularity, Chaucer is concerned with constructing a knight who follows the various chivalric and spiritual teachings set forth by individuals over the previous centuries.

The campaigns the Knight participated in can be grouped into three main categories (Manly 92). It is important to note, however, that Chaucer does not necessarily group the campaigns chronologically in the text. If one approaches Chaucer's description of the Knight as an attempt to construct a believable character, then it is reasonable to assume that Chaucer meant for his Knight to have served in each region for several years before moving to the next set of campaigns. However, overall Chaucer may have felt that by mixing the order of the campaigns he enhanced the poetics or aesthetics of this particular portion of the General Prologue. The battles listed in the text are not necessarily grouped together, but the historical record provides a fairly reliable and accurate way to categorize them. The earliest campaign listed involved fighting the Moors in Spain and northwest Africa. This series of battles and campaigns probably began with the battle of Algezir in 1342 (Cook 57). This siege was part of the continuing struggle between the Christians of Spain and the Muslim Moors of Africa, who were not finally expelled from the Iberian Peninsula until 1492. Also included in this group are the Knight's services in Belmarye and the ritualized combat in the lists of Tramissene. The

second broad area of service for the Knight is in Russia and Lithuania. The campaigns in this region of Europe were led mainly by the Teutonic Knights, although knights from around Europe joined them in their *reyses*, or military expeditions. The first campaign listed in the General Prologue is the conquest of Alexandria. The battles of Lyeys and Satalye, located in southern Asia Minor, can be grouped with Alexandria. However, these battles belong to the second set of campaigns involving the Knight. Looking at the battles in a chronological order is perhaps a better way to examine the Knight's record. The Knight's career starts with the campaigns in Spain and north Africa, then his battles in the eastern Mediterranean, and finally his service with the Teutonic Knights in eastern Europe. By examining each of these areas in some detail, the modern reader should be better able to gain an understanding of how Chaucer's own audience would have viewed the Knight. In addition, if modern readers examine the various works that influenced the fourteenth-century idea of knighthood, they will better understand the type of knight Chaucer constructs.

The Knight served in other campaigns as well. However, it appears Chaucer puts little emphasis on these events. Perhaps they merely help to fill the gaps between the three campaigns fought for the expansion of Christian Europe. The campaigns that are specifically named seem to be the most important events in the Knight's life (Bowden 68). Jones has pointed out the Knight was in the service of heathens during some of his career and uses this information to strengthen his argument that the Knight was a mercenary. However, Keen and others have addressed this idea and have come to the conclusion that the Knight's service to these Muslim rulers does not tarnish the image of a genuine crusader in the finest traditions of chivalry and Christianity. Chaucer might have intended for the Knight's service to the Lord of Palatyne to be linked with his service to the King of Cyprus, who forged an alliance between cities in Asia Minor during the 1360s. The most important events in the Knight's career are undoubtedly the ones Chaucer names and these

are the battles his audience would have known through personal contact with participants or reports from abroad.

The earliest set of campaigns in the Knight's list of achievements was fighting against the Moors in southern Spain and northern Africa. The siege of Algezir, which lay on the west coast of the Bay of Gibraltar, began in 1342 and ended when the city fell in March of 1344. The other campaigns in this group are impossible to date, but it is logical that the Knight should have served in this cause continuously before moving to the next set of battles. Several groups of around thirty English knights each were in the region throughout the 1340s (Manly 91-2). Chaucer names specific regions related to the Christians' struggle against the Moors, but Algezir is the only specifically named battle, and thus it is difficult to pinpoint any specific campaigns in the region. However, knights from throughout Europe participated in the campaigns against the Moors in this region under various leaders including Alfonso XI, king of Castile. The battles fought in this earliest group were an effort to rid Christian Spain and the western Mediterranean of the Moors. For several centuries the Moors of Spain and northern Africa had operated as pirates in this region against Christian Europeans (Manly 92). They had raided Christian ships and cities for many years, and these campaigns were an effort both to punish the Moors and to drive them out of Christian Europe (Bowden 52).

Chaucer establishes with this earliest set of campaigns the behavior that will characterize the Knight throughout his career. He places him on the periphery of Christian Europe, battling against pagan peoples. As we will see, by placing the Knight in such exotic locations he achieves a higher level of prestige and glory than if he had served in wholly Christian countries such as France. Indeed, the omission of any mention of service by the Knight in the Hundred Years' War has been pointed to by scholars as a deliberate act. Chaucer purposefully keeps the Knight out of the tangled domestic affairs of England and France, which also elevates the Knight's reputation. During the fourteenth century, the lands outside the boundaries of Christian Europe were looked upon by Europeans as

both mythical and mysterious. Service in these regions set men against the supposed arch-enemies of the Church. The Moors and Muslims had surpassed Europeans at this time in architecture, science, and other areas, making them a seemingly superior people. In the minds of a fourteenth-century audience the Moors were exotic and as such would have imparted a degree of excitement and mystery to Chaucer's Knight.

The second set of campaigns chronologically was in the eastern Mediterranean. These campaigns began in 1361 when King Pierre de Lusignan of Cyprus moved against the Saracens of southern Asia Minor. Lusignan was the last true Crusader in the eastern Mediterranean and he continued to fight in the tradition of the first Crusade. He wished to launch a sort of reconquest of his own in the Holy Land and reclaim it for Christianity. The crowning achievement and greatest victory for fourteenth-century Christian knighthood was the sack of Alexandria in 1365, which is one of the battles Chaucer attributes to his Knight. The amphibious attack on Alexandria was led by Lusignan. The battles of Lyeys and Satalye, located in southern Asia Minor, were two other campaigns of Lusignan. Because of Lusignan, Cyprus remained Christian and continued to serve as a warehouse and stopping point for Europeans on their way to the Holy Land.

The Knight's service with Lusignan emphasizes his continued adherence to a chivalrous and Christian code of knighthood. Lusignan continued in the spirit of earlier crusades, and the last significant crusading order in the region, the Knights Hospitallers, fought their last battles in the service of Lusignan. On an idealistic level, the Knight's reputation is enhanced by his continued unselfish support of chivalric ideas. After the soldiers defending the city had been killed or captured, the sack of Alexandria degenerated into a massacre, and indeed some Christians, including Lusignan himself, were appalled at the behavior of the European troops involved. The Christian crusaders indiscriminately killed many men, women, and children of the city. Not content merely to kill the human inhabitants of Alexandria, the victorious soldiers also killed the animals used to transport booty back to the ships. Lusignan himself did not take part in this massacre and did not,

according to all records, return to Cyprus any richer than when he left. Since Chaucer's Knight is present at later battles led by Lusignan, he probably remained with Lusignan after the sack of Alexandria just as the Hospitallers also returned to aid him. While other knights returned to their various homes in Europe, it would seem Chaucer's Knight remains in the service of the pious King Pierre and does not participate in the plunder of Alexandria. The image of the Knight is not tarnished by his participation in this battle; instead it is enhanced. The sack of Alexandria was important to the people of Europe, who had begun to feel powerless against the Saracens of the eastern Mediterranean. The only Christian countries upset by the event were the maritime powers of Italy, and within ten years they had made amends with Egypt.

The final set of campaigns the Knight participated in involved fighting in eastern Europe. Specifically, when Chaucer catalogues the Knight's service by saying "In Lettow hadde he reysed and in Ruce" (54), he is referring to the ongoing warfare between the Teutonic Knights and the Slavs of Lithuania and Russia. The Teutonic Knights also followed in the tradition of the Crusades, their order having been originally established to aid German knights in the Holy Land. With the expulsion of Christians from the region, however, they were forced to shift their efforts in order to survive. They became interested in territorial expansion for their Order and for Germany and professed that their mission was to convert the pagans of Poland and Lithuania to Christianity. Most scholars interested in the literary aspects of the General Prologue ignore the prestige of service with the Teutonic Knights during the latter half of the fourteenth century. It was the aspiration of most upper class Europeans to serve with the Order and, indeed, kings and nobles were honored to be members. However, it was not an aristocratic organization and allowed any freeman to join provided he took the vows of the Order and followed its rules. Throughout the fourteenth century the Teutonic Knights launched constant forays into Lithuania and Poland. They also devised a ceremony, called the Table of Honor, both to honor the most valiant knights and to attract other Europeans to aid them in their

cause. Without the aid of the rest of Europe, just as in Spain and in Alexandria, the conquest of Poland would have been impossible.

The last and greatest achievement of the Knight is accomplished in the service of the Teutons. Chaucer carefully constructs a chronology of service for the Knight and ends it with the highest honor of the fourteenth century being bestowed on him. He places the Knight at the head of the Teutons' Table of Honor when he writes, "Ful ofte tyme he hadde the bord bigonne / Above alle nacions in Pruce" (52-3). This is the highest distinction a common knight or any other soldier could achieve during the fourteenth century. For the third and final time the Knight distinguishes himself on the periphery of Christian Europe in the service of the Teutons. It is not surprising that Chaucer places his Knight with the Teutonic Knights, who also were an order that combined the cross and the sword in the same tradition as the first Crusade. The Knight's service with the Teutons completes the chronology of events Chaucer has created and completes the shaping of a warrior both worthy and honorable.

The Knight's service record reflected real battles and campaigns during the fourteenth century. Chaucers' audience knew about these battles and the circumstances surrounding each. They also were aware that Chaucer's Knight was designed to be an embodiment of all the attributes traditional sources dictated a good knight should possess. The courtiers and friends to whom Chaucer probably recited his poetry must have known the violent nature of warfare, whether it was for God or secular gain. However, because of their station they would have had substantially more knowledge of the events surrounding the Knight's service and the body of work that dictated the behavior of a knight. It appears that Chaucer is advocating that a knight should continue in the tradition of the first Crusade. This is in sharp contrast to the Hundred Years' War, where Christians were slaughtering Christians in France. The Crusade in its truest sense was a holy war for the greater glory of God. The individual knights were to be selfless, humble, and above any desire for personal gain. Chaucer gives his Knight these qualities when he writes,

"And of his port [he was] as meeke as is a mayde" (69). On the pilgrimage, not only does the Knight exhibit the traditional qualities Chaucer appears to be advocating, but his record reflects a continuous service to God.

From the perspective of a fourteenth-century Englishman, like Chaucer, who supported the traditional requirements of knighthood, the actions of the Knight would surely have been both worthy and honorable. Twentieth-century scholarship tends to focus on the Christians' harsh treatment of the Muslims, and the members of Chaucer's own audience were most likely aware of this as well. However, they also were aware of the body of work that detailed how a true knight should behave. The audience could differentiate between the real events attributed to the Knight and the traditional knightly characteristics he was meant to represent. Chaucer's Knight is firmly grounded in the traditional guidelines governing the behavior of a worthy and true knight. From this starting point, Chaucer fashions a person who fits all the important rules for knighthood by carefully choosing the battles of the last sixty years that demonstrate those qualities.

Geoffrey de Charny wrote various treatises on chivalry between 1345 and 1350. The guiding principle for a knight of the period was the maxim that "He who achieves more, is more worthy" (Keen, *Chivalry* 12). Manly and Cook argue for a single figure as the basis of the Knight, and this colors their reading of the General Prologue. If, however, we think of the Knight as a composite, it is easy to see he achieved more than was humanly possible. His service could conceivably stretch from the late 1330s through the 1380s. Manly asserts that the last area of service the Knight participated in was with the Teutonic Knights. He believes the Knight was probably a person of sixty or sixty-five at that time (102). This chronologically conservative assertion, however, is an attempt to show the Knight was a real person. It would be more reasonable to guess the age of such a crusader at seventy or seventy-five. The campaigns he participated in are too widely spaced chronologically for any one person to have participated in them all. While the Table of Honor may have been used to honor knights' previous accomplishments, most of

the ceremonies singled out those who distinguished themselves in the previous *reyse*, making it difficult to believe a knight of advanced age could have been thus honored.

A knight could also be ranked by his achievements in battles and tournaments. The lowest level of achievement was victory in jousts, which of course involved only one opponent. The second was victory in a tournament melee against another team of knights. But the most highly honored act was war, specifically, war in "distant and strange countries," which elevated a knight to the highest possible level of achievement. Further, knights who fought for honor and not booty were especially honorable (Keen, *Chivalry* 13). From the description of the Knight in the General Prologue it is obvious he has done all these things. Most scholarship suggests Chaucer intended for his Knight to be an Englishman, who from this base of operations journeyed to the periphery of Europe. The Knight travels to such distant and strange places as north Africa, Lithuania, and Egypt. In addition, one can assume, based upon the description of the Knight, that he is not especially wealthy. While "His hors were goode" (74) there is no other mention of noteworthy material wealth in the description. In fact, it was a requirement for a knight to possess a good horse (Bowden 50). Based upon Charny's scale of worth of a knight, Chaucer constructs a character who has achieved the highest status among the warrior class by being victorious in campaigns far from home against pagans and Muslims.

The historical record suggests that John Gower and Chaucer were personal friends so it is reasonable to assume the writings of Gower may very well have influenced Chaucer's idea of what a knight should be. In addition, Gower was also drawing upon traditional sources to describe the ideal knight just as was Chaucer. Gower's view of knighthood closely resembles the Knight Chaucer constructs. In the first section of his "Complaint against Chivalry" Gower sets down the the qualities that knights have historically possessed. While the essay mainly deals with the relationship between knights and women, it does give a firm description of the characteristics knights originally exhibited and the attributes very much reflected by Chaucer's Knight. The reader is told

that from the beginning of his career the Knight has "loved chivalrie, / Trouthe and honour, fredom and curteisie" (45-46). These lines begin the catalogue of attributes Chaucer uses to shape the history and persona of his Knight. For the most part, besides addressing the urgings of Pope Urban II, Chaucer is looking backward to the preceding centuries for his model of knighthood.

Gower writes that the knight is first to "protect the rights of the Church; second, [a knight] fosters the common good; third, it is to uphold the right of the needy orphan and defend the widow's cause." In addition, the knight is not to fight for fame but for justice. He should be accorded fame and praise if he adheres to these guidelines (Gower 194). At all points Chaucer's Knight fulfills these requirements. He fights for the Church, most of the time in battles that are directly sanctioned by it, and from that perspective, he is fostering what his contemporaries would have considered a common good. Hence, in the eyes of Chaucer's audience the Knight is fulfilling these ideal guidelines through his service on the edges of civilized Europe.

Chaucer uses the campaigns in the description of the Knight to show that his character possesses the qualities required for an ideal Christian warrior. Chaucer writes that starting "fro the tyme that he first bigan / To riden out," the Knight demonstrates both in his actions abroad and in his demeanor during the pilgrimage that he follows the traditional guidelines for knightly behavior (44-5). The earliest campaigns that the Knight is said to have participated in involved southern Spain and north Africa. This is where he first demonstrates his worth and begins his career to further Christianity in pagan lands on the periphery of Europe.

Part II: The Knight's First Campaigns: Southern Spain and Northern Africa

The first group of campaigns Chaucer's Knight participated in took place in the 1340s. During this period, a large scale war was being waged between the Muslim Moors of north Africa and the Christian rulers of Spain. If we accept that the Knight was English, or at least a European Knight, then he began his first campaign relatively close to home. No vast distances separated him from other Christians, and the campaign enjoyed support from both the Church and the rulers of Europe. The subsequent battles he takes part in are as far from Christian England as a knight was likely to go in the fourteenth century. The movement to force the Moors out of Spain establishes the Knight as a servant of the Church and as a crusader for an enlargement of Christian Europe. While sometimes these campaigns were ruthless and unmerciful to the enemy, participation in this effort would have been considered noble and honorable service to Christianity. When Chaucer writes, "[F]ro the tyme that he first bigan / To riden out, he loved chivalrie" (44-5), he is establishing that from the very beginning of his career in Spain the Knight adheres to the principles of knighthood established over the preceding centuries. The word "chivalrie" in these lines points directly to the writings of Gower and de Charny. In Spain and Africa the Knight began to follow the commandment of Pope Urban II to expand the influence of the Church with the sword (Bowden 45). Further, the Knight is placed in a region where a crusading order, the Order of the Band, was operating. In each of the three broad areas the Knight served in, an active religious and military order was operating. The presence of these orders provides a link between each of the groups and illustrates what type of causes and people the Knight should be associated with.

Chaucer does not list the campaigns in Spain and Africa first in his catalogue of the Knight's career. However, according to Manly, Cook, and others the campaigns in this region probably began in the early 1340s, although English knights and knights from around Europe had been operating in the area for several years. The siege of Algezir, now

known as Algeciras, took place between 1342 and 1344, and lasted a total of almost twenty months. The siege is the only battle from this group that has a definite date but, logically, one would assume Chaucer's Knight stayed in a particular theater of war for a period of time before moving onto his next task. The details of campaigns into Belymare and Tramysene are vague, but the campaigns themselves were part of the continuing struggle between the Christians of Aragon and Castile and the Moors. One possible explanation for the vague references to these two regions is that there were not many pitched, large-scale battles. Instead, armies would rove a region engaging the Moors when the opportunity arose. The Knight began his career by following the commands of Pope Urban to take arms against the infidel wherever he might be found in an attempt to follow in the tradition of the first Crusade.

After mentioning the siege of Algezir, Chaucer writes that the Knight had ridden in Belmarye. This refers not to a specific region exactly, but to a tribe called the Bene-Marin that possessed the kingdoms of both eastern and western Morocco (Cook 68). This tribe is the reason for the initial trouble at Algeciras and also fought in Tramysene, which is part of present day Algeria. All of these campaigns were crusades against the Moors and occurred in the 1340s (Bowden 21). Algeciras was a port city for the Moorish kingdom of Granada, which had been at war sporadically with the various Spanish kingdoms over the preceding centuries. Various popes had supported the Spanish with money and indulgences in their effort to expel the Moors from the peninsula. Spain had borne the brunt of the fight against the Moors for several centuries, and the financial and spiritual backing of the popes enabled them to continue the struggle. The threat to Castile and Spain as a whole was very great because the Moors could use the port cities of Gibraltar and Algeciras to funnel large numbers of men and supplies into the country. Alfonso XI became King of Castile in 1325 and won key victories for both that kingdom and Aragon during the *Reconquista* (Housley 56). Through these operations Alfonso furthered the interests of the Papacy by expelling a large number of Muslims from Europe. Some of the

Italian city-states and other seafaring countries also benefitted because the Moors raided their trading vessels in the Mediterranean.

The siege and eventual fall of Algeciras was the last major victory for Alfonso XI and Castile in the long and costly struggle for control of the Straits of Gibraltar and southern Spain. Castile was unable to mount an offensive great enough to expel the Moors alone, so Alfonso sent emissaries to the Pope and other European governments to elicit support. Castile had been at peace with Granada in 1331, but the truce was short-lived because of the economic competition between the two peoples. The Moors had decided to expand their foothold on the peninsula and to that end assembled troops in Morocco in 1333 with the intention of crossing into Granada. The Moors retook Gibraltar itself and reinforced Granada against the Christians of southern Spain. This loss was a major setback for Alfonso XI and Castile. The Pope continued to refer to the events in southern Spain as a crusade and told Alfonso, "[W]ith great slaughter of the faithful they have violently seized and, alas, taken possession of [the port] which functioned as a vital key to Christendom and your Kingdom, formerly denying and now permitting ease of entry and departure to the enemy" (qtd. in Housley 57). The Pope's statement makes clear how the Papacy viewed events in southern Spain. Alfonso rightly concluded that the loss of Gibraltar was a great blow to the safety of his kingdom and decided to act. It was essential for Alfonso to retake the port towns in the region and deny the Moors access from the sea to Granada. During this period, rulers of kingdoms in western Europe realized that the conflict in Spain was a chance to participate in a crusade and perhaps increase their prestige. They were given indulgences by the Pope, and Alfonso XI sent envoys throughout Europe to elicit support for his campaigns. Pierre of Cyprus used this same strategy in the 1360s to fight the Muslims of southern Asia Minor and Egypt (Housley 56-8). Eventually, many knights and nobles of Europe went to Spain to participate in the Crusade against the Moors.

During the latter half of the 1330s, the Moors of northern Africa continued to reinforce Granada and raid outside its borders as well. They were able to build up a sizable force in Granada, and when the Christians tried to deny them access from the sea in 1340, the Moors soundly defeated the naval forces of Castile and Aragon. The Muslim forces gained control of the Straits for a period, and Alfonso was forced to attack the Moorish forces on Spanish soil. He did so and won a great victory with aid from Aragon and the Portuguese (Housley 59). On November 28, 1340, Alfonso XI defeated the Sultan of Belymare, Abu Hamer, in the battle and then was able to move towards the siege of Algeciras. Cook's research indicates Alfonso's force killed or captured 200,000 Moorish troops in this battle, although these numbers may be exaggerated. However, the large number of troops involved illustrates the scale of the conflict and how willingly both sides were to sacrifice their troops for control of the region. This victory was the most important event in the region at that time because it allowed the Christian forces to concentrate on retaking a major port in southern Spain and essentially deny Moorish troops entrance by that route (Cook 58).

In Africa, the news of the Moors' defeat caused anger and they began at once preparations for exacting revenge. They assembled a large fleet to transport troops across the Straits of Gibraltar but were foiled again when Egidio di Boccanegra, a Genoese admiral, scattered the Moorish fleet with a force of seventy galleys. This action made it possible for Alfonso to begin his attack on Algeciras (Cook 58). The Genoese had trading concerns in the region and the Moors had a history of piracy. Because of the loss of their fleet, the Moors would be unable to reinforce the garrison by sea for some time. In addition, it would be difficult for the Moors to launch an attack elsewhere in southern Spain without a sizable fleet. The logistics of assembling a fleet at that time, even in the relative calm of the Mediterranean, was a daunting and time-consuming task. Alfonso did not have to worry about the Moors' opening a second front or significantly resupplying Algeciras while he was busy besieging the city. The naval forces of Genoa and other

European nations used their fleet of galleys to deny the Moors any reinforcements at Algeciras throughout the siege.

The town of Algeciras was a Moorish stronghold from the eighth century until the Christian victory there by Alfonso in the early 1340s. It lay on the west coast of the Bay of Gibraltar and was the primary destination for Moors arriving in Spain from Africa. The city was six miles from Gibraltar, located on the other side of the bay. It was, in fact the "Moorish gateway to Europe," allowing them a point at which to concentrate before moving deeper into Spain (*Commentary* Bowden 52). Because of its significance as a Moorish entry point into Spain, if the Christians could take the city they would deny a large number of Moors access to the region. The Moors in Africa and Spain did their best to retain the strategic city, but with the loss of their fleet and the blockade of the port, their efforts were not substantial enough to prevent the defeat.

The Muslim force in Algeciras was still a considerable adversary and was well supplied at the beginning of the siege. There were 30,000 men in the garrison, 12,000 of them archers. Archers had become increasingly important in warfare during the fourteenth century; they were able to repel attacks by armored knights and thus could deny an attacking force freedom of movement outside their fortifications. The English victories at Poitiers and Crecy were mainly the result of archers' participation and illustrate the deadliness of concentrated fire against armored knights. Because of the troops inside the city and the artillery mounted on the city walls, the task of laying siege to the town was obviously going to be difficult. The region around the town was fertile and productive before the siege began; there were orchards, mills, pastures, and other agricultural resources for the defenders. Following standard siege practices, the defenders brought in as many supplies as possible once it became apparent that the town was about to be besieged. In addition to the foodstuffs, the defenders of the city had a steady supply of drinking water. In order to ensure there would be no further resupply of the city, Alfonso began his assault by blockading the harbor with the ships at his disposal. At the same

time, his land army began to construct defensive positions to the southeast of the city. The city was divided into two parts: the Old City, which was not well fortified, and the New City, which was walled and designed for defense. The army began to dig trenches from the seashore to the Old Town of Algeciras. They constructed a stockade behind this trench and began to construct walls for protection against the catapults and ballistas on the city walls. However, the weather was not on Alfonso's side. In the early fall heavy rains began and lasted for more than a month. The rains collapsed trenches, washed away supplies, and caused many men to become sick. The Moors were not content to let the besiegers suffer only at the hands of the weather so throughout the siege they launched raids against the Christian army at night. This harassment and the weather itself forced Alfonso to change his strategy, at least temporarily. The fortifications nearest the city, which the army had spent considerable time constructing, had to be abandoned for higher ground. Unfortunately, the higher ground lay further from the city (Cook 58). By expanding the area between the city and the besieging troops, the possibility of the towns being resupplied increased greatly. However, Alfonso's army could do nothing until the weather changed and thus sat through most of the winter waiting for better conditions.

Eventually, the rains subsided and better weather provided the attackers with the opportunity to move back towards the city. By March of 1343 they had completely surrounded the city and were busy reinforcing their fortifications. The fortifications ensured that no troops from Algeciras could break out and no overland attempts at resupply would be successful. The army brought in ballistas and exchanged fire with the city's artillery. The King of Granada had sent several overtures for peace to Alfonso by this time, but Alfonso would not conduct talks unless the King pledged to abandon his ally, the Sultan of Belmarye. This was not acceptable to the Moorish King and the siege continued. Alfonso also continued to send out pleas for help to other Christian governments in Europe. The wet winter and length of the siege had strained both his treasury and his troops, and it would have been impossible to continue without the support

of other governments. He concentrated his efforts with France and the Pope to gain support of both men and money. Philip VI gave him 50,000 florins outright, and the Pope lent him another 20,000, which were sorely needed. The generosity of these two individuals illustrates how important the war against the Moors was considered in Europe. The lengthy siege was extremely expensive, but the rewards for Castile and Spain if they took the town were great. Knights from France and Germany began to arrive at the siege by May of 1343, increasing morale and the number of troops that could be brought to bear on the defenders of the town (Cook 58-9).

The siege could easily have lasted much longer; for that matter, Alfonso could have abandoned the effort. The Moors were assembling an invasion force at Ceuta, on the African side of the Straits of Gibraltar. However, the invasion did not materialize because of a family dispute between the would-be leader of the raid and his son. The internal dissension of the Moors gave the besieging troops the most important advantage in a siege--time. The supplies inside the city had begun to dwindle, and if Alfonso could keep any additional supplies from entering, the town was bound to fall. Alfonso blocked the harbor to prevent blockade runners from landing any provisions from ships. He ordered large piles driven into the sea-floor across the length of the harbor, and from these a chain was run. This barrier closed the harbor to any shipping and dashed any hopes of the defenders for resupply by sea. The Moors tried to relieve the garrison on three occasions but all attempts at relief were unsuccessful. This important Moorish city eventually had to surrender because of the lack of food. The loss of the city was a sore blow to the Moorish forces in Spain because it denied them an easy entrance port from which to campaign in the region.

The forces in the city had to abandon their defenses and to that end on March 21, 1344, the King of Granada tried to negotiate for a peace once again. The King promised to pay a tribute as a vassal to Alfonso and declared a truce for a number of years. In return, Alfonso would allow the citizens of the city to depart unmolested with their

belongings. The terms were accepted and by March 27 both the Old and New cities were evacuated. The siege had lasted nearly twenty months but it ended a 633-year Muslim occupation of the region (Cook 59). The fact that the defeated Moors were allowed to keep their possessions demonstrates how important the city itself was for Castile and Spain. Despite the tremendous cost in both money and men, there was no real attempt to plunder the town.

The defenders of Algeciras were starved into submission, but the attacking army had suffered many of the same hardships. The Moorish archers inflicted heavy casualties over the course of the siege with their arrows and the city's engineers with their artillery. Food and water were not plentiful in the attacking camp, but Alfonso, despite these problems and internal dissension, was able to continue the siege to its fruition. Most importantly, the Christian crusaders of Castile were successful because of the help from other European knights and soldiers.

The Christian victory at Algeciras was significant because it afforded the Christians some protection from Moorish raids. The Moors would not be completely driven out of Spain for almost another one-hundred and fifty years, but this Crusade proved the strength of the southern Spanish kingdoms. It forced the Moors to mount offensives that were much more expensive and time consuming.

Chaucer places his Knight at the siege; chronologically, this would be his first campaign. The siege and subsequent surrender of Algeciras contrasts strikingly to the next area of operations for the Knight. He is also present at the siege and sack of Alexandria, which occurred in 1361. That particular battle was very short but resulted in the massacre of many Alexandrians. However, as will be discussed in Part III, the victory was short-lived and achieved little more than the disruption of trade relations between the Muslims and Christians.

Chaucer and his audience would probably have been aware of the harsh conditions at the siege of Algeciras. In addition, groups of English knights operated in the region

throughout the period. If Chaucer is trying to construct a believable image for his audience, the presence of knights in the region contributes to the image of a realistic knight (Manly 93). The Knight endured the weather, Moorish arrows, hunger, and thirst in his service to Christianity and the crusading ideal, and his service at Algericas furthers Chaucer's assertion that the Knight loved chivalry from the very beginning of his career. The Knight persevered through the hardships and helped achieve a great victory for Christian Europe. The success of the siege can be attributed to the participants' willingness to obey their lord, their adherence to fighting for Church, and their moral strength. Knights from all over Europe, including England, participated in the siege and allowed Alfonso successfully to blockade the port, starving out the occupants of the city (Housley 61).

Alfonso XI is associated with the founding of a religious, crusading order in Spain called the Order of the Band. Alfonso founded this order based upon an earlier Spanish one called the Order of Santiago. The Order of the Band required its members to take vows of poverty and to fight in a Holy War against the infidel. Keen asserts that the Order of the Band may have influenced Edward III's foundation of the Order of the Garter in England (*Chivalry* 179-80). A knowledge of the Order of the Band is important to understanding the character being constructed. In each of the three major theaters of war where the Knight was present, there was a major religious, military crusading order. Here it happens to be the Order of the Band, which was primarily concerned with retaliating against Moorish strikes in Spain and against shipping in the Straits of Gibraltar. When the Knight went to Cyprus he would have encountered Pierre de Lusignan's own Order of the Sword, which crusaded in the eastern Mediterranean. During those battles he also would have also been in contact with the Knights Hospitallers who aided Lusignan in his conquests. In the final theater of his service, the Knight served with the Teutonic Knights of Prussia. Chaucer seems to be very carefully placing the Knight in regions where crusading orders were active. If Chaucer was trying to convince his audience that the

Knight was a person who followed the traditional knightly role, associating him with crusading orders is very important. The orders, at least outwardly, were serving Christendom in the same spirit of Pope Urban II's original Crusade. During his long service, the Knight is carrying out the duties of a twelfth-century knight and preserving the nobility and honor that is associated with that earlier time. In all of the Knight's battles that are named, he is fighting for an expansion of Christianity into the lands of pagans. He does not fight for wealth or prestige, but is eventually honored for his long service by the Teutons.

The Christian army of Alfonso XI continued to campaign in southern Spain until March, 1350. Throughout the 1340s, the Pope gave his endorsement to Alfonso to continue his Crusade to regain control of the Straits. Alfonso laid siege to Gibraltar itself in 1349, but the siege was abandoned upon his death in 1350. He was a victim of the plague, and much of his army also died of the disease (Housley 62). Based on the chronology of the Knight's campaigns, it is reasonable to assume that Chaucer's readers would imagine him in Alfonso's service, as his association with Pierre de Lusignan and the second set of campaigns does not begin until the 1360s. The warfare in northern Africa and southern Spain involved raiding of commerce on both sides. Chaucer may have been referring to this activity when he wrote that the Knight rode in Belymare. The Christian forces of Castile surely would have tried to disrupt Moorish supply lines by striking in Morocco. Belymare was the source of most of the troops and supplies being shipped to Spain in support of the Moors. Bowden believes Chaucer may not have had any specific campaigns in mind for the Knight's service in Belmarye and Tramysene but he could have been referring to the raiding and constant warfare in the region during this time period. One can also account for the Knight's performance in the lists for Christendom. It seems such challenges between the two armies were not unusual (53).

While the dates for the mortal combat between the Knight and the Moors in Tramissene are uncertain, such battles did occur with some frequency. Manly relates one

such battle where the Christian and Moorish armies were so evenly matched that neither could gain a tactical advantage. The Moors decided to send an emissary to the Christians and requested that ten of their knights meet ten Moors to decide the outcome of the battle. This was agreed to and, appropriately enough, at noon the two groups met. Chaucer asserts that the Knight had "In lystes thries, and aye slain his foo," indicating he had three times bettered the best soldiers a Moorish army could send. The story Manly relates is the type of individual combat Chaucer's audience would have envisioned when hearing about the Knight's exploits in Tramissene (Manly 94-6).

The crusade of Alfonso XI of Castile was a model for other would-be crusaders in the fourteenth century. Pierre de Lusignan did not rely on emissaries but toured Europe personally to elicit support for his crusade in the eastern Mediterranean. The use of the Genoese and the Venetians in his campaigns also allowed him to transport a greater number of men across the Mediterranean than would otherwise have been possible. Alfonso XI targeted the entry points of the Moors into Europe itself. By placing his Knight at the service of Alfonso, Chaucer is describing a man who from the very beginning of his career was a staunch fighter for Christian Europe. The Moors were invading Europe itself and southern Spain was a kind of bulwark against Muslim expansion. Thomas Hatton thinks Chaucer may have been trying to associate his Knight with earlier Crusaders who fought against the Moors. He feels that Chaucer may be alluding to Charlemagne and Oliver, who fought the Moors centuries before but were still considered models for the most worthy knights in the fourteenth century (81).

In the other two groups of campaigns attributed to the Knight, he actually goes into the land of the heathen and fights; this type of service follows de Charny's scale of valor. Fighting in Spain is a worthy enterprise, but the Knight is still in Christian lands. In order to reach the highest levels of greatness, he has to go into distant and strange countries under the banner of Christianity. He does this in Turkey and Asia Minor and eventually with the Teutonic Knights in Lithuania and Poland. While the fighting in Spain

Part III: Pierre de Lusignan and the Knight

The Knight participated in three specific battles that are linked to one man, the king of Cyprus and titular king of Jerusalem, Pierre de Lusignan. The battles were the conquest of Alexandria, Lyeys, and Satalye. The Knight's service to Lusignan helps to define the type of person Chaucer is describing. Since his fate and service were bound to the plans and aspirations of Lusignan for a time, a look at these battles and Pierre himself will provide a good foundation for understanding the type of Knight Chaucer constructs. It may be possible Chaucer had a Knight Hospitaller in mind, or perhaps a knight in Lusignan's Order of the Sword. However, there was ample opportunity for a freelancing warrior merely to attach himself to Lusignan for a time and participate in the battles. The Knight's service to Lusignan came after his participation in the battles against the Moors.

Pierre de Lusignan always had a burning desire to fight a holy war and rid Jerusalem of the Saracens. Even before he became king and was the Prince of Tripoli he was laying plans to retake the holy city and reclaim the throne there. He was considered by many an ideal leader and crusader. Sir Harry Luke says Pierre was "the most determined and enthusiastic knight-errant the world has known, one with an apostolic sense of vocation." This praise is reinforced by that of Pope Urban IV, who said he was "the athlete of Christ" (44). These words describe a man driven to do battle with Islam for the sake of Christianity. During the fourteenth century, the Christian West's desire to retake the Holy Land was waning. The great Crusades of earlier centuries were no longer possible because of the lack of support by European governments. However, Lusignan had other, more immediate reasons to fight Islam.

The kings of Cyprus were also the titular kings of Jerusalem. They had lost the city but were crowned in Famagusta, which lay closest to their lost kingdom. Recovering Jerusalem would enhance the Lusignan family's reputation as worthy defenders of Christianity. Cyprus was also the eastern-most base for operations against Islam and was

relatively protected by the Mediterranean as long as an appreciable army was on Cyprus. The Knights Templar, and the Hospitallers had been based in Cyprus at one time and had provided protection for the island after the fall of Jerusalem to Islamic forces. However, the Hospitallers migrated to Rhodes in 1308, and the Templars were abolished in March of 1312 after becoming embroiled in international banking (Runciman 435). This left the eastern-most bastion of Christianity dangerously open to attack. After the migration of the Hospitallers, Cyprus was the only Christian government still genuinely interested in the Holy Land. It was under constant threat of attack from both the Syrian coast and Egypt (Runciman 438). Pierre began to draft a strategy which would eliminate these threats and strike at the periphery of the Islamic lands. Cyprus was still a very important island for the Christian West. If the island fell to Muslim forces, it would become difficult for Christians to attack any major Islamic targets in the region. Cyprus was on the main sea route to the Holy Land from Europe and served as a warehouse for pilgrim and Crusader alike (Atiya, *The Crusade* 322). Therefore, Pierre wanted to strengthen Cyprus to keep it free from invasion and also to preserve it as a base from which to foray into the Islamic lands and retake his lost kingdom.

During the reign of Pierre's father, King Hugh IV, there were too few forces on Cyprus for any concerted attack upon Jerusalem or any other noteworthy Eastern city. King Hugh had little desire himself to attack independently the Islamic forces to his east. He also forbade Pierre from traveling abroad to recruit troops because he feared Pierre would desert Cyprus in favor of the glamorous courts on the continent. While his attempts to recruit knights for a holy war were foiled while Hugh was alive, Pierre was able to attract some knights to his cause. He founded a new order of chivalry in Cyprus, the Knights of the Sword, with the goal of combating the infidel and retaking Jerusalem. This Order's membership was supposed to be made up of the most honorable and chivalrous men. Not only did knights from Cyprus join, but also knights from France, Spain, Rome, Lombardy, Germany, Sardinia, and England came to Cyprus to enlist in the

cause (Atiya, *The Crusade* 320-21). The establishment of this order not only provided Pierre with a base to build an army to invade the east, but also contributed to the protection of Cyprus itself from hostile Islamic forces.

Pierre's establishment of the Order of the Sword and his desire to conquer Islamic cities helps to characterize Chaucer's Knight. Pierre had the single-minded goal of combating the infidels and retaking the Holy Land. Chaucer deliberately chooses to place his Knight on Cyprus at this time because the image of the Knight is enhanced by his association with Lusignan. The battles the Knight took part in were similar to those of Spain and north Africa. Each focused on the establishment of Christian control of an Islamic city and each also required the use of troops from a variety of Christian countries. Because of the international nature of Lusignan's forces, Chaucer again is establishing a realistic portrait of a worthy knight. The use of actual campaigns by Chaucer is obviously deliberate, so the reader must assume that the battles mentioned in the General Prologue are intended to contribute to the image of an ideal knight.

Europe could no longer send such massive amounts of men and equipment on a Crusade as it had in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Many religious and military orders had arisen from the earlier Crusades. However, most became compartmentalized and alienated from their original purposes, thus becoming impotent in the battle against Islam. By the dawn of the fourteenth century, the most prominent of the remaining orders were the Knight Hospitallers and the Templars. At the same time, the Teutonic Knights were beginning to become a powerful force in eastern Europe, and as we shall see the Knight eventually serves under their banner. As noted earlier, the Templars had moved away from their original purpose over time and had become involved with international banking. This led to their eventual downfall in 1312, while the Hospitallers survived and remained a potent force for some time (Atiya, *Crusade, Commerce* 122). However, the campaigns of Lusignan were to be their last major contribution to the Crusade movement and were the only places the Knight could contribute to the last assault on the Holy Land.

Chaucer could have intended for the audience to associate his Knight with one of the two remaining orders still dedicated to combating Islam, the Order of the Sword or the Hospitallers. Judging from their expressed purpose, the Knight's participation in this area of the world would be viewed as honorable and contribute to his construction as an ideal figure. Further, Chaucer's audience would know that at the same time large numbers of mercenaries and Englishmen were fighting a war in France for personal gain. Deliberately placing his Knight in the eastern Mediterranean allows Chaucer to distance the Knight from the events of the Hundred Years' War.

Because of the degeneration of most religious and military orders, Pierre's Order of the Sword, aside from the Hospitallers, was the only force capable of combating and willing to combat Islam. Internal strife and warfare, as well as a negative prevailing attitude about Crusading held by many Europeans greatly limited the resources available for Pierre. People had begun to believe that Crusades were a device used by popes and governments for "purely political purposes" (Hay 258). In contrast Pierre had the motivation, ideals, and status to organize a Crusade for its original purposes, to free the Holy Land of Islam. These qualities are imparted to Chaucer's Knight because of his association with Lusignan. The contemporary audience would have seen the Knight in much the same light as Lusignan: he is a crusader who wishes to retake the Holy Land for the betterment of Christianity. He selflessly serves in a campaign to further Christian Europe and European knighthood. These actions reflect the guidelines set down for knights in texts from preceding centuries and the fourteenth century.

During the latter half of the fourteenth century English forces were winning victories in France at Crecy and Poitiers, but Chaucer places his Knight with Pierre (Ward 159). The Knight is on a higher level than the forces in France who mostly fight for booty and personal gain. In France knights and soldiers on both sides were recruited to further the tax base of the English and the French nobles. Mostly they fought for pay, whether in the form of a stipend or in the form of captured booty. When treasuries were emptied,

they roamed the French countryside plundering fellow Christians, and in some cases fellow countrymen, for personal gain. Knights became wealthy exploiting the people of France. Chaucer's Knight represents another side of fourteenth-century knighthood. He has remained true to the teachings of the previous centuries. He does not seek personal wealth or fame with Lusignan but instead embodies the qualities of piety, humility, and selfless loyalty to a liege. Chaucer chooses to associate his Knight with a Crusader rather than the forces in France.

The forces in the Mediterranean were poised for a holy war against the enemy of Christianity, and were successful in several areas. It is important to remember at this point that some have argued Chaucer felt knighthood and knightly values were declining during the fourteenth century. By placing his Knight in the traditional role of a crusader, Chaucer could have been directing his audience to remember the values of knighthood in the preceding centuries. He may have wanted his contemporaries to view traditional knightly values as something to be lived, not merely recited. His Knight does adhere to the traditional role of a holy warrior and embodies the qualities of traditional knighthood. The later actions of Pierre further illustrate how these three battles were extensions of earlier Crusades.

Pierre de Lusignan was crowned king of Cyprus and titular King of Jerusalem in 1359 upon the death of his father, Hugh IV. Through negotiations with the king of Armenia, who was afraid of attack from the Egyptians and Turks, Pierre was able to obtain the region of Gorigos on the southern coast of Asia Minor in January, 1360, in exchange for military assistance to Armenia. Pierre sent a force under an English knight named Robert de Lusignan to take possession of the region. There is some speculation as to the real identity of this knight, but it is possible he may have been from a region in France under control of the Plantagenets. Cook does not mention whether this knight was a member of either the Hospitallers or the Order of the Sword. The Turks who lived around Gorigos felt Pierre would merely use this new possession as an advanced base for

operations against them. The Turkish cities in the region allied to attack Cyprus and push Pierre out of Asia Minor. They organized a massive fleet for this purpose, but oddly there is no evidence of an attack on Cyprus (Atiya, *The Crusade* 323-24). This event demonstrates the danger of being on Cyprus at this time. It also shows Chaucer's Knight was a defender of the last Christian government in the region. Lusignan and his forces did not choose to withdraw or negotiate a peace, but instead demonstrated an unwavering adherence to their purpose by remaining on an island, far from any outside help and surrounded on the north, south, and east by enemies.

One of the cities in this Turkish league was Satayle, also known as Adalia, located on the southern coast of Asia Minor. Satayle is one of the specific battles Chaucer attributes to his Knight. Because of the resources available to Pierre at this time he was unable to attack the Holy Land and Jerusalem directly. Instead, he spent his brief career as a crusader attacking the periphery of Islam. When he decided to move, he targeted Satayle, which lay on the northwestern arm of the Muslim world. Pierre first contacted the Knights Hospitallers on Rhodes to secure their help. He also received assistance from the Pope and various other lords and barons, bringing the total number of ships for the operation to one hundred and nineteen (Atiya, *The Crusade* 325-26). The ships sailed to Satayle from Famagusta and arrived on August 23, 1361. At dawn on the 24th, Pierre's forces disembarked, quickly destroyed all opposition in the town proper and gained possession of the castle itself. The Turkish troops had not manned the city and castle in force, and Pierre's mounted men-at-arms and infantry overwhelmed the scanty garrison. The citizens of the town surrendered the castle and city before nightfall to "avoid further bloodshed" (Atiya, *The Crusade* 326-27). The bulk of the Turkish force had remained outside the city to attack the rear of Pierre's army, but the victory was so fast and complete that there was no chance to carry out this operation. Pierre had won a relatively inexpensive victory and had struck his first blow against Islam. Chaucer's Knight was fighting Christianity's enemy while other Englishmen were involved in a bloody and futile

self-serving war against other Christians in France. Leaving a garrison to protect Satalye, Pierre's forces marched to the next important city on the coast. This leaders of this city, called Alaya, realized resistance would merely end in all of their deaths and surrendered to Pierre, giving him the keys to Alaya's fortifications (Atiya, *The Crusade* 327). After this victory, the Turks quickly sued for peace, and the conflict and immediate danger to Cyprus from the Turkish league was neutralized (Cook 71).

During this short campaign, where did Chaucer place his Knight? In order to construct a realistic figure, there would have to be a chance for an English knight to have participated in the battle. The force Lusignan organized for the campaign was multi-national, just as his own Order of the Sword was. It is a distinct possibility that if Chaucer intended his audience to believe that the Knight was a member of this Order, he would have sailed with the forty-six vessels Pierre provided. It is possible Chaucer's audience would imagine the Knight as a member of the Hospitallers. They were also a multi-national force during the fourteenth century. The Hospitallers were present in Alexandria and probably Lyeys, the two other campaigns of Lusignan that Chaucer mentions and which belong to this group. He could have sailed to Asia Minor in one of the four galleys provided by the Hospitallers Grand Master (Atiya, *The Crusade* 325-26). In his work, *The Historical Background of Chaucer's Knight*, Cook mentions an English knight, Robert of Toulouse, who commanded an English force during the battle. Cook suggests this English knight was merely a subject of the Plantagenets in France (72). There was further conflict in Satalye between June and September, 1367, when the citizens of the city rebelled. Cook reports two men, Humphrey X, Earl of Hereford and Sir William Scrope, were present at the battle (73). Whether either Hereford or Scrope were members of either the Order of the Sword or the Knights Hospitallers is not mentioned by Cook. It is possible that they were one of the "various lords and barons" who made up the balance of Pierre's invasion force (Atiya, *The Crusade* 326). It is not necessary to establish a particular Englishman as a model for Chaucer's Knight. However, it is important that his

audience would have believed an English knight could have participated in this battle.

There is ample opportunity for the Knight to have been involved in the conflict whether or not he was a member of one of the two orders present.

Following his strategy of attacking the edges of the Islamic world, Pierre next focused on the conquest of Alexandria in Egypt. At the time, it was one of the richest Islamic cities in the Mediterranean. In order to take such a city and hold it, he would need to assemble once again a sizable coalition force. To this end he set out in 1362 and traveled throughout Christian Europe looking for support. Lusignan first called upon the Hospitallers in Rhodes for assistance in the upcoming campaign and received a promise of support just as he had in his earlier campaign. His victories in Asia Minor had enhanced his reputation as a honorable and valiant champion of Christianity. He visited Venice, Milan, and Genoa and received promises of support for the campaign. However, he did not disclose the city he was planning to attack. Eventually he met with King John II of France and was promised support. Next, he sailed across the English Channel to England, where he stayed for a month and was received by the monarch (Runciman 441-42).

The reception of Edward III and Phillipa was warm and generous. King Edward held a tournament in his honor and showered him with gifts, one of which was a ship named *Katherine* that cost the Crown some 12,000 francs. Further, Edward paid all the expenses Pierre incurred during his travels to and from England (Atiya, *The Crusade* 333). It appears that Edward and the English people were impressed by Pierre and were enthusiastic about his exploits. Despite the warmth of this reception, however, Edward was "evasive about participating in the Crusade" (Luke 48). Not only was he evasive, but he made it clear to Pierre that if he were able to recover his kingdom in the Holy Land, he must surrender Cyprus to Edward. Edward based his claim on the fact that Richard the Lion Heart had given Cyprus to one of Pierre's ancestors, Guy de Lusignan, in order to compensate for the loss of Jerusalem, and it was thus forfeit in the event Pierre recovered his lost kingdom. During his stay in England, King Pierre feasted with Edward and his

court and later was the guest of honor at a feast with the Kings of Scotland, France, and Denmark (Luke 48). While Edward did not promise any official support of Pierre's Crusade, he did say he would not hinder any English knight who wished to participate.

Lusignan's visit to England is very important to the characterization of Chaucer's Knight. Obviously he was held in very high regard by Edward. People who met Pierre would still have been present at court when Chaucer was writing the General Prologue. By the time Chaucer began writing his description of the Knight Pierre had been assassinated, and this may have contributed to the larger-than-life image people of the fourteenth century had of him. Chaucer's audience may very well have seen Lusignan as a representative of an ideal knight and leader. He was a person who against all odds led successful expeditions against strongholds of Islam and who enjoyed at least the verbal support of the majority of Europe. Lusignan's exploits probably transformed him into a daring, mysterious figure for Chaucer's audience.

By placing the Knight in Pierre's service, Chaucer imparts the honor, courage, and chivalric qualities of Pierre to his Knight. Pierre was a crusader, and the audience could see Chaucer's Knight at his side fighting for Christianity and representing England boldly. The foreign knights who served with Pierre for selfless purposes, as Chaucer's Knight did, were upholding the values that de Charney and others had set down earlier. Specifically, they were championing the causes of the Church and from the standpoint of Christian Europeans, furthering the causes of good. While the expedition Pierre led to Alexandria was indeed violent, and many knights went for purely personal gain, Chaucer was trying to extract the chivalrous essence of the campaign and apply it to his Knight.

After visiting London, Pierre continued his tour of Europe by visiting the Black Prince at Bordeaux and the Duke of Austria in Vienna. He also visited the Emperor Charles, the King of Hungary, and the King of Poland, all of whom gave promises of assistance in Pierre's Crusade. He now felt he had a sufficient force to attack a major Islamic target and returned to Venice in 1364. An army began to gather there with many

lesser knights coming from as far away as Scotland. Unfortunately, all of the countries that had so warmly offered support in the previous two years now held back. None of the greater nobles of any of the kingdoms he visited showed up except the Count of Geneva and William Roger, the Earl of Hereford. The Venetians contributed a sizable contingent, but besides these forces, Pierre merely had his own men and the Hospitallers for the upcoming offensive (Runciman 442-43). Chaucer's Knight was now part of an undersized force destined to take one of the richest Islamic cities in the Mediterranean.

The bulk of Pierre's forces sailed from Venice for the assembly point at Rhodes in June, 1365. There they were joined by the Hospitallers' ships and King Pierre's forces from Cyprus in addition to a few craft from Genoa and an English force, which had sailed from Otranto. The destination was a closely guarded secret known only to Pierre and his closest advisors. They were afraid the Italian city-states, which had provided the bulk of the ships, would give information to the Muslims in exchange for trading profits (Atiya, *The Crusade* 337-44). When all the forces had been gathered from around the Mediterranean, they numbered some one hundred and sixty-five ships. This was the largest contingent of men, horses, and provisions since the Third Crusade. The fleet set sail on October 4, 1365 and when all the ships were at sea, it was announced that Alexandria, in Egypt, was their destination (Runciman 444).

The reasons Pierre decided to attack Alexandria are fairly simple. It would make an excellent base for further operations into the Holy Land and was also the main port for the vast majority of the Sultan's overseas trade. By taking and holding Alexandria, the Christians could effectively blockade all the Sultan's holdings. Christians had a sizable trading interest in Alexandria and the inhabitants felt it was unlikely to be attacked. Further, the reigning Sultan was an eleven-year-old boy, and the governor of Alexandria was on a pilgrimage to Mecca at the time. Perhaps the most tantalizing reason for Pierre to attack this city was his hope for exchanging it for possession of Jerusalem, thus fulfilling his dream of regaining his lost kingdom (Runciman 444). The opportunity to

sack Alexandria was one which Pierre could not resist since no major Islamic city had been attacked by Christian forces for decades.

Lusignan's fleet arrived within sight of Alexandria on October 9 and waited until morning to invade. As the Christian ships entered the western harbor, the inhabitants realized that this was an invasion force and began their preparations. At this point, the coalition commanders informed Pierre that they disapproved of invading Alexandria and wished to sail elsewhere but would stay if the city could be taken quickly. Pierre agreed and began to land his forces. The enemy troops on the beach were quickly overwhelmed and the citizens of the city proper fled. By mid-day on October 10, Pierre's forces had gained possession of the city (Runciman 445-46). However, the fortress of Alexandria was still in the hands of its defenders, who mounted large catapults on its walls. Many of Lusignan's commanders again suggested retreat. Lusignan was able to convince his troops to remain, and by the middle of October 11 the fortress was taken. Many of the foreign commanders again voiced their opinion that the city should be abandoned before the Sultan sent an army to retake it. Even though those loyal to Lusignan advocated staying in the city and meeting the Sultan's force when it arrived, the bulk of the force decided to leave the city, and Pierre was forced to abandon his foothold on the Holy Land. During the seven days the Christians occupied the city, the army burned, looted, and pillaged indiscriminately. They stole from Jew, Christian, and Muslim alike and slaughtered many of the inhabitants. The foreign troops even killed the animals used to transport the loot to the ships. Their ships were so loaded down that much of their booty had to be dumped at sea to prevent the vessels from foundering. Pierre was left in the city with a handful of loyal Crusaders as the foreign troops sailed back to Europe (Atiya, *The Crusade* 362-68). Lusignan, and presumably the forces loyal to him, did not participate in this indiscriminate looting (Luke 49). As the vanguard of the Sultan's force entered Alexandria on the 16th of October, Lusignan was forced to leave and sailed back to Cyprus (Atiya, *The Crusade* 362-68). This ended the greatest success of the Christian crusaders in the fourteenth

century and Chaucer deliberately places his Knight there. The Knight participated in and helped to achieve this victory, albeit hollow. The description of the Knight in the General Prologue also places the conquest of Alexandria first in his list of achievements. It appears Chaucer is pointing out for his audience that the fact the Knight was present at the greatest achievement of fourteenth-century knighthood.

If it is accepted that Chaucer is constructing a realistic composite figure, although not one based on any particular knight of the time, looking at the traditional scholarship can help establish what Chaucer's audience knew about the English participants in the sack of Alexandria. Cook says the only English Knight known by name in the battle was Sir Stephen Scrope. A Scottish knight is mentioned in eyewitness accounts, but the Saracen defenders killed him while he attacked the gates of the custom house (57). It is probable that the only knights left after the bulk of the army departed were the Hospitallers and Pierre's own forces. The Hospitallers had provided ten ships in the campaign and were concerned with regaining the Holy Land, not filling the ships with loot and returning to Rhodes (Cook 56). Would Chaucer's Knight, who is not noticeably wealthy in the General Prologue, have been involved in this massive looting of one of the richest cities of Islam? In fact, the only possessions of the Knight that are called good are his horses and that is a requirement for a knight. He could have been a Hospitaller who had once again aided Lusignan in his quest to regain Jerusalem. It is unlikely that the Hospitallers would have departed against the wishes of Pierre after the Grand Master of their Order had given his pledge to support Lusignan in this campaign. It is also unlikely that Pierre's own troops would have left or that the very forces that deserted Lusignan in Alexandria would have returned to help him later. It appears that Chaucer's Knight stayed with Pierre and was able to participate in the battle of Lyeyes two years later. The multi-national nature of the force involved at Alexandria makes it reasonable to believe English knights participated. The fact that Chaucer places his Knight at the high point of the battle against Islam in the fourteenth century contributes to the image of a truly holy and valiant man.

Europe itself received the news of Alexandria with mixed emotions. The Genoese and Venetians, who traded heavily with Islamic nations, were appalled. The Sultan refused to trade with these nations until peace was concluded with Cyprus. The Sultan also began to gather forces for invading Cyprus, but all these plans met with failure. The rest of Europe was delighted with the blow Lusignan had struck and began to pledge new forces with which to continue the assault against Islam. However, in order to stop this from happening and to protect their trading interests, the Venetians declared that a peace treaty had been signed between Cyprus and Egypt. When Pierre asked the kingdoms of Europe to fulfill their promises of troops made after the victory at Alexandria, they replied that there was no need since a peace treaty had been signed (Atiya 369-76). King Charles of France and the other countries who had pledged troops to Cyprus sent them elsewhere upon hearing the Venetian declaration of peace. In fact, peace was not concluded between the two nations until September, 1370, a year after Pierre's assassination (Runciman 447).

The final battle Pierre undertook and Chaucer attributed to the Knight is Lyeys, also known as Ayas. In early October 1367, Lusignan set off with a force to capture Lyeys, which lay on the southern coast of Asia Minor. The city had submitted to Pierre after his victory in Satalye, but it fell back into Saracen hands. He expected to meet his old ally, the king of Armenia, outside the city but this failed to happen. Pierre was able to take the town itself, but unable to capture the castle. Cook mentions that the Earl of Hereford was once again with Lusignan on this expedition (70).

The historical record provides the least amount of information about the battle at Lyeys. It is nonetheless probable that the Hospitallers provided Pierre with support in this campaign just as they had in all his previous ones. After this engagement, Pierre returned to the courts of Europe to elicit support for another Crusade. He was never able to secure the forces needed to assault the Holy Land directly because of public opinion and the belief that regaining Jerusalem or any other major Islamic city was now impossible.

Pierre's second attempt to gain support from the nations of Europe was much briefer than his first--and failed. Indeed, the last true attack against a major Islamic city by Christian forces during this era was the invasion of Alexandria. Lusignan returned to Cyprus in late 1368. Pierre's own nobles seemingly turned against him, and he ruled as a bitter tyrant for the last three months of his life. On January 17, 1369, a group of barons entered his room and beheaded him (Luke 49-50). While Chaucer's Knight, according to the General Prologue, had nothing more to do with the affairs of Cyprus, his service there is noteworthy. Pierre de Lusignan was the last active Crusader in the eastern Mediterranean. The members of his own Order of the Sword and the Hospitallers had common goals and interests in the Holy Land. These two Orders and Lusignan's own troops very likely would have remained loyal to him during his entire reign, and it seems quite unlikely that troops who deserted the monarch at Alexandria would have returned to occupy Lyeys. Both of the Orders had English knights as members as well. To Chaucer's audience, therefore, it would have been relatively easy to picture the English knights who served in these campaigns. They may have even believed Chaucer was describing a knight who was a member of the Hospitallers or the Order of the Sword. After Pierre's death, the Knight is placed by Chaucer in eastern Europe fighting with the Teutonic Knights against the Slaves of Poland and Lithuania. The Hospitallers became less and less important after the campaigns of Lusignan. It was increasingly apparent that it would be impossible for Jerusalem to be retaken by Christian forces and thus the campaigns of Lusignan were the last important contributions of the Hospitallers. They had been founded with the purpose of insuring the welfare of the city, which was now unachievable, and they soon dwindled into obscurity (Riley-Smith 476).

Further evidence of the Knight's loyalty to Lusignan comes in the Monk's Tale. In lines 2391-2398 the Monk briefly outlines the tragedy of Pierre's life and assassination. In the Prologue to the Nun's Priest's Tale, the Knight interrupts the Monk and chastises him for telling only of sorrow and not of man's ability to gain glory and fortune. Perhaps this

outburst is brought on by his resentment of the Monk's treating his former leader, and the "athlete of Christ," in such a manner. Surely the Knight would have taken offense at such treatment of the last true crusader in the eastern Mediterranean. He could have been angry because of the misrepresentation of Pierre and the trivialization of the man's accomplishments in combating Islam. To Chaucer's audience this would be reasonable. The Knight's honor would not let an insult to Pierre go unanswered.

The series of campaigns Chaucer attributes to his Knight are carefully chosen. This second broad chronological set helps to emphasize further the type of knight his audience is supposed to see. Specifically, by placing him in the service of Pierre Chaucer imparts qualities of the king to his Knight. Pierre was driven by a desire to regain the Holy Land when the rest of Europe was unwilling to help in the conquest. The holy Crusade was also viewed in a spiritual sense as the highest calling of knighthood at that time. He tried to unite the kingdoms of Europe one final time for a crusade to that effect. He also achieved the greatest victory for Christian crusaders in the fourteenth century. Indeed, the sack of Alexandria was the last major blow against Islam by Christian knights during the Middle Ages. Because the Knight is placed in the service of Pierre after the retreat from Alexandria, the reader sees that the Knight is not only brave, but also loyal. His defense of Pierre to the Monk makes this loyalty even more apparent. Loyalty was a primary requirement of any knight. He had to obey and defend his lord to the end. The fact that Chaucer's composite Knight obeyed and defended all his lords reflects the paradigm of traditional knightly virtue Chaucer is using. A contemporary of Chaucer, Honore Bonet argued that a knight must remain loyal to his liege. He writes that the first thing knights must do is "keep the oath which they have made to their lord to whom they belong [and] do all that he shall command for the defence of his land . . ." (qtd. in Miller 189).

Another key issue to Chaucer's audience would be the purposeful omission of any mention of the Knight's participation in the Hundred Years' War. The English were on the

offensive and winning key victories at this time. Chaucer does not place his knight there because the English troops fighting in France did not fit the mould of traditional, chivalrous, and worthy knights. Instead they were mercenaries who fought for personal gain and glory. While some politicians and nobles of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries argued that the Hundred Years' War was about more than personal gain, many of the Knights who fought there sought only monetary gain. John Gower, arguing that the worthy knight deserved praise, wrote, "But if a knight makes war for the sake of vain praise, his praise is unwarranted . . ." (qtd. in Miller 194). It appears that Chaucer follows this precedent and does not give praise to actions made for the sake of oneself.

After Chaucer's Knight left the service of Pierre, he continued to fight in the tradition of the original Crusade. The next, and last, chronological campaign in which the Knight served in was far to the north in the cold climate of northern Europe. He went to Prussia, Lithuania, and Russia to combat the Slavic infidel and gained the highest praise a knight of the fourteenth century could--he headed the Table of Honor. The Knight's reputation as a fearless crusader preceded him, and the Teutonic Knights granted him their highest mark of distinction.

Part IV: The Knight's Last Campaign: Northern Europe

The final campaign the Knight participated in was with the Teutonic Knights of Germany and Prussia. After listing the Knight's service at Alexandria, Chaucer continues to chronicle other theaters of service. He writes, "In Lettow hadde he reysed and in Ruce" (54). "Lettow" is present day Lithuania, where during the fourteenth century the Teutonic Knights waged a holy crusade to convert the country's native Slavic people to Christianity. The word *reysed* was a technical term for a raid or expedition into enemy controlled territory and is used frequently in contemporary accounts of the warfare in eastern Europe. The Teutonic Knights were also pushing into "Ruce," which has been interpreted by scholars as Russia. However, there is some evidence that the Teutonic Knights did not frequently enter that country and that Ruce is actually a region of modern-day Poland. During the fourteenth century, the Teutonic Order was the most respected and active crusading order in the world because not only had they developed a strong core of devoted members, but they had also used this membership to further the cause of Christianity in eastern Europe. The strong foundation of the Order allowed them both to invade and to convert Poland as well as Lithuania successfully.

By 1260 the Order completed the subjugation of Prussia and began slowly to infiltrate into Lithuania. German colonists began to move east, replacing some of the native pagan Slavs. The Slavs that remained were relegated to share-cropping, and general discrimination against them by the Germans was common. While at first the Germans did not actively try to convert the native population, as the fourteenth century progressed this became a key objective for the invaders (Koch 11). The Teutonic Knights constantly raided northeastern Europe from the mid-1200s through the early 1400s and pushed eastwards in an effort to convert the Slavs and to take possession of their lands (Bowden 63). However, the Teutonic Knights reached the peak of their power during the latter half of the fourteenth century. They controlled a large portion of eastern Europe

from east of the Oder River to Estonia, and they traded with countries as far away as England and Russia (Feuchtwanger 18). The Order fought for a greater Christian Europe in the spirit of earlier Crusades. Thus, they were effectively a continuation of the campaign against the heathen East (Stubbs 119).

The regulations governing the conduct of the Teutonic Knight were firmly grounded in the guidelines of the Templars and Hospitallers. Originally, they had operated in the Holy Land and eastern Europe assisting German knights and pilgrims during the crusades. When Acre fell back into the hands of Islamic forces they concentrated their activities in eastern Europe, attempting to colonize areas controlled by pagan Slavs. They reached the zenith of their power between 1351 and 1382, when Grand Master Winrich von Kniprode was in office. The Order itself was not especially large. In fact, it was not big enough to conduct operations on the scale it did without the help of volunteers from around Europe. These knights helped to continue the Teutons' war against the Lithuanians and caused this region to be the center of crusading after the Holy Land fell. The battles of King Pierre in the Mediterranean spanned only a decade, in comparison to the unbroken string of battles in eastern Europe over the preceding two centuries (Keen 172).

The Teutonic Order was religious and military. While in practice many knights, especially in the Order's later history, fell short of obeying all the rules of the Order, the guidelines are important to understanding the overall structure. Originally the regulations of the Order were similar to those of the Templars and Hospitallers, but over time various grand masters had added stricter regulations. Eventually, the rules of the Teutonic Order were much more demanding than those of the Templars or Hospitallers. The members of the Order were to observe religious offices throughout the day regardless of whether they were in camp or on campaign. During the winter, when the most ambitious campaigning was done, the religious services required the knights to be up well before dawn to observe mass. The knights were required to take communion seven times a year, versus the three

times a year the Templars required. The diet of the Order is further evidence of their religious zeal. No meat could be consumed on Monday, Wednesday, Friday, or Saturday. In addition, there were twenty other fast days in their regulations and most of November and December was meatless as well as all of Lent (Christiansen 83). The knights of the Order did not participate in jousts because individual prowess rather than group integrity was celebrated in the lists. Further, they were not allowed to receive shares of any booty or ransom gained by their efforts; instead these funds went into the Order's coffers. Chastity was also a requirement for the Teutonic Knight. The members of the order were not allowed to communicate with women because it might give the appearance of impropriety (Christiansen 84).

The nature of warfare in eastern Europe was much different than that of the Knight's previous campaigns. The Mediterranean provided a means of easy transportation for equipment, men, and stores from assembly points to areas of conquest. Pierre used the great fleets of Cyprus and the kingdoms of Italy to move his forces around the eastern Mediterranean. The rivers of eastern Europe provided mobility to some extent as well. However, the land was harsh, much of it covered with forests, marshes, and bogs. Contemporary sources suggest the native Slavs used the country to their advantage by sometimes drawing the heavily laden knights and soldiers into the countryside where they were easily ambushed (Treitschke 74). The terrain could be crossed by cavalry only when there was a drought or when the ground was frozen and thus forced most of the campaigning to be carried out during winter. Even foot soldiers found traversing the terrain difficult because of the lack of reliable roads in the region. The towns and fortifications of the Slavs did not contain large amounts of money, but mainly food and other consumable goods (Keen, *Chivalry* 172).

The crusade against the Slavs in eastern Europe was a hard and trying one. An account by Peter Suchenwirt, translated by Cook, of one foray into pagan territory in 1377 illustrates the logistics attackers needed to be successful. After a great feast lasting

ten days, a force was arrayed to assault what pagans they could find in Lithuania. Once boats had been loaded with supplies and horses, the host of some 30,000 men moved across the Memel River and into the pagan country. They traveled across moorlands which, Suchenwirt says, "afflicted [them] sore" (qtd. in Bowden 65). Eventually, they came across a force of pagans who gave battle. The Christians attacked and were able to force the Slavs to withdraw, but the tactics of the Slavs after this engagement are noteworthy. Suchenwirt writes that the Lithuanians attacked throughout the night and that "[T]he heathen struck through men, shot horses, and fled again to the moors" (Bowden 65-6). These hit-and-run tactics characterize a warfare unlike most in Europe at that time. From this account it appears the pagan warriors were conducting a type of guerrilla warfare. They struck from the moors, where heavy cavalry could not operate, inflicted what damage they could and then retreated to regroup. Further, they did not wait for daylight to carry out their raids. For knights trained to fight mainly from horseback against an army who takes the field of battle and stands its ground, this was surely a disconcerting tactic. The account of the battle also illustrates how combat in the Middle Ages, in fact contrasts sharply with accounts of chivalrous combat. Any equipment or livestock that could feasibly assist an army was a legitimate target for the enemy. The farmers who worked the fields and supplied warriors with food could be slaughtered to weaken the enemy. These facts of warfare in Lithuania illustrate that campaigning was serious business and not to be undertaken by men with weak wills. By the end of the fourteenth century, the Teutons had subjugated much of Poland and Lithuania. Originally they were drawn into the region for territorial gain, but as the fourteenth century progressed they became concerned with converting the native population to Christianity. While the bulk of these campaigns took place in Poland and Lithuania, Chaucer also writes that his Knight was in Russia.

William Urban has argued that Chaucer was not writing about Russia when he describes the campaigns of his Knight. Instead, Urban believes "Ruce" refers to Rosenia,

a district of Samogithia, north of the Memel River between Livonia and Prussia. The Teutonic Order operated from both these regions and launched sorties into Rosenia frequently in an effort to establish a servicable route between Livonia and Prussia. Urban suggests the reason for the error in labeling "Ruce" as Russia was a general ignorance of the geography of the region during the fourteenth century. Englishmen who served in the area would perhaps have identified Rosenia as Russia because many Russians fought on the Lithuanian side of the conflict. Further, in the minds of Europeans the idea of campaigning in Russia evoked a mythical idea because so little was known about countries outside of Europe's borders. Accounts of fictitious people and places outside Christianity's border abounded in Europe. Another reason for the possible misinterpretation of "Ruce" is the decline of knighthood and crusades. During the next century, because the Teutonic Knights had disappeared, Chaucer's Knight was as mysterious and unknown a figure as he is today (Urban 349-51).

Despite the rigid regulations of the Order, the Teutonic Knights were not completely separate from the secular and material world. The conquest of Prussia and Lithuania had political as well as spiritual benefits. The Duke of Poland in the 1220s found himself being invaded by the Prussians, he requested the Teutonic Knights' help and promised to reward them with land. The Pope also gave his blessing in the form of the Golden Bull of Rimini in 1226 (Koch 7). The Knights would have to push the heathen out, assimilate them, or convert them in order to get the lands promised. These events began the eastward push of the Order, cumulating in the war against the Lithuanians in which Chaucer's Knight was present. The land the Teutons took from the native population would be their own. The reward of land was an impelling reason for the higher echelons of the Order to compel its members into the eastern lands (Keen, *Chivalry* 172). Possession of land allowed the Order to become more powerful through the exploitation of the native population and in the eyes of the Church.

Chaucer places his Knight in Prussia and with the Teutonic Order for a specific reason. In all of Christendom, the Teutonic Knights were looked upon as the last great chivalrous order. The Templars had ceased to exist many years before, and the Hospitallers had fought their last significant battles with Lusignan in the 1360s. Only the Teutons still combined religion with feats of arms to create a type of ritualized warrior monk. They still fought the pagans of the east in the same spirit of Pope Urban II's original Crusade. For many years during the fourteenth century the highest compliment that could be paid a knight was to have been knighted, to have "earned his spurs," in Prussia. Kings and knights alike were honored to be listed as members of the Teutonic Order. Koch further emphasizes this point when he writes, "During the period between 1329 and 1382 . . . it was a particular point of pride, an ambition even, to become a knight in Prussia" (14). Von Treitschke also believes service with the Teutonic Knights is important for readers of the General Prologue. He writes, "[N]o higher praise could Chaucer find for the knight among his Canterbury pilgrims. . ." than service with the Teutons (71). While most scholars appreciate the Teutonic Order's importance during the fourteenth century, many treatments of Chaucer's Knight do not put sufficient emphasis on his service there. The Knight's service with the Teutonic Knights, especially his distinction at the Table of Honor, is the highest achievement in his career. Being singled out in this manner was one of the most sought-after honors possible for a common knight in the fourteenth century.

The Knight's participation at the Table of Honor is important to understanding the course of his career. Chaucer says of the Knight, "Ful ofte tyme he hadde the bord bigonne, / Aboven alle nacions in Pruce" (52-3). The "bord" is the Table of Honor that the Order established in Prussia and the use of the word "bigonne" by Chaucer means that the Knight had the position of honor at the Table. In order to understand how a knight came to be given the honor of leading the Table one must first examine the entire ceremony. At various times a great banquet was organized and the ten most valiant and

chivalrous Christian knights in attendance were honored. In preparation for the ceremony a large tent was erected in which the knights selected for the honor were seated at a large table, reminiscent of King Arthur's court (Treitschke 73). According to Cook, these banquets occurred at least five times during the latter half of the fourteenth century and sometimes honored more than ten knights (49). Although there are few records of the event, the ceremony could have been performed more frequently than Cook suggests. The Teutonic Knights needed other Christian knights to aid them in their campaign to subdue the Lithuanians. The Table of Honor served to motivate these foreign knights to participate in the battles against the Slavs (Keen, *Chivalry* 178). It was a recruiting device and, most importantly, it attracted experienced warriors to the Teutons' cause.

Maurice Keen tells of a witness of the Table of Honor who was a Pole and therefore, understandably hostile towards his Teutonic captors when he related his experience to the Council of Constance. The Pole's account says the banquet was held in honor of a small number of knights. Heralds announced the knights and based upon their heraldic "testimony" the most worthy guests were selected. During his testimony at the Council, the Pole made it clear he felt, of course, the heralds were bragging a bit too much about the knights they were representing. The knights who had "traversed various parts of the world in the cause of knighthood, and had been seen by the heralds in divers[e] regions" were selected, based upon the extent of their service, to be honored at the Table. The seating arrangement around the Table or "bord" was based on the extent of a knight's service. The knight who was described by the heralds as the most worthy and experienced was allowed to head the table (Keen, *Chivalry* 173). This ceremony and the testimony of the heralds helped to attract knights from around Europe to the Teutons' cause. In the male-dominated arena of warfare in the fourteenth century, the opportunity to have a herald assert one's exploits in front of a group of peers was probably irresistible. Keen further illustrates the motives of the assembled knights when he asserts, "[T]he lure of adventure and pride in hard-won glory were real and powerful human motives." Those

are precisely the elements foreign knights came seeking in Prussia (*Chivalry* 174). While the Teutons were using the Table of Honor and the prestige of service with the Order to their own ends, overall their campaigns were in the finest tradition of knightly and chivalrous behavior. The campaigns were an extended attempt, which was eventually successful, to convert pagan territories to Christianity and to bring the inhabitants under control of a Christian government.

Chaucer is continuing his careful shaping of the Knight's image by placing him at the head of a Table of Honor. Based upon the observations provided by Keen's Polish source, there is ample reason for this distinction. This was the last campaign of Chaucer's Knight, based upon the established chronology of the General Prologue. By this time, therefore, he would have served chivalry and Christianity for most of his life. Chaucer's audience would have been aware of the Table of Honor and would have understood the implications of actually leading the feast. Further, because of the careful chronology of service that Chaucer constructs in the text, it is believable that the Knight was thus distinguished. His long-time service in the finest traditions of chivalry and knighthood make him, at least in a western European's view, beyond reproach. His skill in arms at this point in his career is beyond question not only because he has survived violent conflict for so long but also because the reader is told he had "In lystes thries . . . ay slayn his foo" (63). This line firmly establishes the Knight's individual prowess and courage by describing one who has achieved honor and fame through deeds on the battlefield.

The question arises, however, of how news of these events and the details of the Table of Honor ceremony reached England. Merchants from England and all over Europe were trading with the Teutons and thus could have been a possible source. Many English knights had served and were serving in Prussia and Lithuania during the fourteenth century. They might have related the story to others in England (Bowden 63). Cook asserts that Chaucer was told about the banquets by Henry, Earl of Derby, who had served with the Teutonic Knights and had once been honored at the Table (49). Cook's research

and conclusions about each Table of Honor indicate ceremonies occurred after a campaign against the Slavs. Bowden and others write that such ceremonies could have been performed before the start of a foray into pagan-held territory. Knights who distinguished themselves in these campaigns were then honored by being given a place at the Table. Cook further suggests that the table was designed to encourage valiant behavior in raids against the Lithuanians by rewarding men who distinguished themselves in battle. By 1400, there was no need to continue the tradition because the majority of the Poles and Lithuanians had been subdued and the practice seems to have been discontinued. The Table may have originated in the Arthurian tradition or perhaps was inspired by Edward III's establishment of the Order of the Garter (Cook 51). Chaucer not only singles out his Knight for the honor of a seat at the table, but places him at its head. "[H]e hadde the bord bigonne," says Chaucer, which indicates the Knight was seated in the place of honor at the table (52). Therefore, Chaucer is asserting his Knight distinguished himself as the most valiant warrior during whatever campaign the Table was held to celebrate. If the ceremony occurred before a campaign, the Knight is the most experienced and famous person in attendance. Regardless of whether the ceremony took place before or after a *reyse* into the Slavic territories, Chaucer is demonstrating that his Knight was considered worthy of special recognition by the most respected and revered monastic and military order of the fourteenth century.

Chaucer's audience was well aware of most of the campaigns listed in the description of the Knight, as Benson indicates in the Preface of *The Riverside Chaucer* (6). Manly, Cook, and most other scholars who have researched the background of the Knight agree the campaigns listed in the General Prologue would have been common knowledge among people of Chaucer's class. Because the Knight's service with the Teutonic Order is a major part of his description in the General Prologue and because the Teutonic Knights' prestige in Europe was great, the modern reader can be assured Chaucer's audience was familiar with the Teutonic Order and their crusades in eastern

Europe. It is a safe assumption that the audience was also aware that many English knights were serving with the Order. Cook documents English service with the Teutonic Knights dating from 1328 into the 1390s (42). Manly also addresses the various dates English knights had crusaded in eastern Europe, but as has been discussed earlier, the Knight was actively fighting in other places during these times (101). If we consider the campaigns chronologically, this is the last theater of war in which the Knight participated. Prior to this he was with Lusignan in the Mediterranean fighting the Saracen. The Knight served with Pierre, who was the last true Crusader in that region, and now Chaucer sends his Knight to the last actively crusading Order in Europe. The Teutonic Knights continued in the tradition of earlier crusades by attacking the pagan Slavs of eastern Europe and expanding Christianity's influence there.

The Teutonic Knights referred to each other as "brothers" and were not allowed to display a personal coat of arms if they possessed one. Instead, a knight's tunic was white with a large, black cross emblazoned across it. While Chaucer's Knight is wearing a tunic, no mention is made of its bearing a black cross or any other device. Instead, the reader is merely told it is "al bismotered" from the armor underneath (76). Therefore, the description of the Knight in the General Prologue does not conclusively prove he had just returned from eastern Europe. However, it is apparent he has lately come from some military campaign. In line 77, Chaucer says "he was late ycome from his viage." The term "viage" can be interpreted as meaning expedition. The fact that the Knight is in London at this time suggests Chaucer perhaps is trying to convince the audience that the Knight has just returned from Prussia. Typically, ships from the Mediterranean landed in ports located on the south coast of England. Ships coming from Europe sailed into Dover or other east-coast ports. If the chronology of the battles is correct, then he may well have landed after service in Europe. However, it is impossible to prove decisively where the Knight had come from so the reader must be content to know he has just returned from an endeavor abroad and is hurrying to make his pilgrimage.

Further tantalizing clues about the possibility of the Knight's having just returned from Prussia are provided by some of the regulations of the Teutonic Order. The Teutonic Knights were not to own any gear of war. Further, they were not to wear any secular colors or have any silver or gold in their shield, saddle, or bridle (Koch 4). If Chaucer's Knight was not a member of the Order but merely served with them it is possible he adopted the same dress as his colleagues. The Knight does not appear out-of-the-ordinary and wears no fine raiment. His armor is not emphasized for its appearance, although Chaucer's audience would not need a lengthy description of how a knight dressed, just as a modern audience does not need a description of an astronaut's suit. A knight who joined the Order could leave with permission (Koch 4). It could be that Chaucer intended for his audience to believe the Knight was no longer a member of the Order or perhaps that he had merely served with them for a certain period of time and has now left to pursue other interests. The description of the Knight does prove one thing decisively--he is not especially rich and does not appear to take interest in expensive, fashionable clothing as does his son. It is possible Chaucer is using the state of the Knight's armor to comment of the condition of knighthood at that time. The fact that his son, the squire, is responsible for the care of his father's armor may indicate the younger generation has ignored the traditional values and rules that made a knight honorable and chivalrous. The Knight's modest dress reflects his devotion to the traditional knightly virtues of humility and indifference to worldly wealth.

The Teutonic Order was not an aristocracy and had always accepted freemen from all levels of society. Originally, the members had all been German, but during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries it became a multi-national force much as Pierre's had been in the Mediterranean (Koch 5). Everyone from king to commoner served in the Order, making it possible for the audience to believe Chaucer's Knight was a member. It is not important for the purposes of this study to establish what particular knight Chaucer may have had in mind, the way Manly and Cook attempted, but merely to assert that

Chaucer's audience would have believed it possible for the Knight to have been in Prussia. The idea of believability in Chaucer's description is important in understanding what his audience would have thought about the Knight. The campaigns Chaucer lists are real; hence he must have been using them to shape his Knight's image.

By detailing the Knight's service in Lithuania and Prussia, Chaucer is placing the capstone on his image of the "parfit" Knight. If we read Chaucer's description of the Knight as both realistic and purposeful, then the campaigns in Lithuania and Prussia and the Knight's place at the head of the Table of Honor serve to bring some closure to the long and distinguished career of this crusader. The difficult and trying campaigns into Lithuania and Poland demonstrate the Knight's strength, courage, and overall valor just as had the conditions at the siege of Algezir in the beginning of his career. The fact that he was honored at the Table demonstrates that he achieved one of the greatest possible honors for a fourteenth-century knight. Although traditional knighthood waned elsewhere in Europe, and although it was inevitable that the Teutonic Knights themselves would also become part of the past, the Knight finishes his career as he began it. Specifically, he continues to carry the banner of Christianity and does not seek fame or glory. Instead, he is rewarded at the Table of Honor for his unwavering dedication to the knightly ideal.

infidels in all of the named campaigns. Indeed, each of the campaigns attributed to the Knight was endorsed by the Church itself. Further, the campaigns in which the Knight participated were far from the Christian kingdoms of Europe. He served for the majority of his life in regions that Europeans regarded as mystical and savage. In comparison to the regimented life of medieval Europe, perhaps they were correct.

Another important aspect necessary to understand the type of Knight found in the General Prologue is his humility. He never appears actually to seek out personal recognition or undue attention. However, through his actions such recognition is inevitable. In north Africa he had proved himself worthy and valiant by besting not once but three times the best warriors of Islam. His previous service around the Mediterranean and his raids against the Slavs of eastern Europe earn him a place at the head of the coveted Table of Honor. The established chronology places this event at the end of his career. His preceding service leaves no doubt that he deserves such praise.

Thus, from the beginnings of his career on the rain-soaked and barren plains around Algezir to the bogs and dark forests of Poland and Lithuania the Knight unerringly adheres to the traditions that Chaucer felt were dying out in his world. The Knight is gentle, pious, and above all valiant in his service to Christian Europe. He fights in places where there is little probability of personal reward and does not pause to relax between campaigns. His armor has fallen into disrepair due to his son's neglect. The Knight represents the traditional warrior monk while his son has turned to the material world and abandoned the knight's code of conduct.

The Knight began his career in an effort to punish the Moors for their raids on Christian commerce in the Mediterranean, and when the coalition began to fall apart, he moved to another region. Pierre de Lusignan traveled Europe looking for brave knights to assist him in the reconquest of the Holy Land. It was to be a crusade in the tradition of Urban II's original Crusade. Chaucer's idealistic and worthy Knight could not resist the opportunity to participate in such a great undertaking and thus spent several years in the

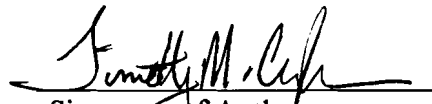
service of Pierre. He participated in the sack of Alexandria and several victories in Asia Minor. The significance of the Knight's service to a man the Pope called "the athlete of Christ" would not be lost on Chaucer's audience. Finally, when all hope of regaining control of the Holy Land was dashed, he went to the last active crusading order in Europe--the Teutonic Knights. There he fought for an expanded Christian Europe and gained the recognition he deserved. This litany of service was used by Chaucer to construct a perfect Knight for his audience. The significance of the Knight's service record would have been recognized by Chaucer's contemporaries; for a modern reader to understand as fully as possible Chaucer's intent, it is important to remember that even though the figure of the Knight is a composite, the battles attributed to him were real events.

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