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A King of Jerusalem in England: The Visit of John of Brienne in 1223

We are fortunate to have two main narratives for the history of the Crusades and the Latin East in the early thirteenth century – namely, the ‘Colbert-Fontainebleau’ continuation of William of Tyre’s *Historia*, and a related text, Ernoul-Bernard.¹ Taken together, these sources offer a reasonably full and accurate account of the course of the period. However, there are also significant differences between them, and some of the most interesting of these come in their treatment of the life of John of Brienne (d. 1237). The younger son of a prominent Champenois baronial family, John had one of the most remarkable careers of the entire Middle Ages. His biggest single upward step came in 1210, when he became king of Jerusalem by marriage. That is to say, he became the ruler of the rump Christian kingdom in the Holy Land, which, crucially, lacked the city of Jerusalem itself. It is telling, though, that ‘Colbert-Fontainebleau’ and Ernoul-Bernard do not quite agree on how this rise took place. In particular, they differ about the precise role played by the French monarchy, although they agree that the king, Philip II ‘Augustus’, emerged as one of John’s principal backers.²

Perhaps the most interesting of these disagreements, though, concerns the ‘tour of the West’ that the king of Jerusalem undertook in the aftermath of the Fifth Crusade.³ Naturally enough, the sources agree on the most important events of the tour, which took place from 1222 until 1225. King John came to Italy soon after the crusade’s disastrous end. There, in consultation with Pope Honorius III, it was agreed that John’s daughter, the heiress to the kingdom of Jerusalem, would marry the German emperor and king of Sicily, Frederick II. John then returned to his homeland, north-eastern France, where he had not set foot for more than a decade, and he called on his old benefactor, King Philip Augustus, before the latter died. Later, John went on pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostella, and he remarried during his stay in the Iberian peninsula. Finally, he returned to Italy for his daughter’s wedding, which proved to be far more dramatic than he could ever have anticipated.⁴

A noteworthy development can be easily missed in this summary. Although ‘Colbert-Fontainebleau’ says nothing whatsoever about any trip across the Channel, Ernoul-Bernard states that John visited England soon after his return to France:

Après, en ala en Angletiere au roi, et si retorna arriere en France. Et si vous di bien por voir qu’en toutes les tieres, et es cités et es castiaus et es bours où il venoit et aloit, on venoit contre lui à porcession et grant feste li faisoit on.⁵

¹ These have become the standard labels for the sources in question, and they will be employed by Peter Edbury in his monumental new edition of all of the pertinent texts.

² See esp. G. Perry, *John of Brienne: King of Jerusalem, Emperor of Constantinople, c.1175-1237* (Cambridge, 2013), 40-50.

³ *Ibid.*, 123-35.

⁴ The ‘Colbert-Fontainebleau’ continuation (the main text), in *Recueil des Historiens des Croisades: Historiens Occidentaux* (Paris, 1844-95; repr. Farnborough, 1967), ii, 356-7; *Chronique d’Ernoul et de Bernard le Trésorier*, ed. L. de Mas Latrie (Paris, 1871), 449-51.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 450.

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There can be no doubt that this journey to England actually took place. Even the Melrose chronicler, far away in the Scottish Borders, noted that the king of Jerusalem had recently come ‘to London, to speak with the king of England and the magnates about the difficult business [of the Holy Land]’.⁶ It is also worth emphasizing that the most important facts about this visit have been known for more than a hundred years, since the pioneering work of Kate Norgate in the early twentieth century.⁷ Yet there is still scope to scrutinize these events in some detail, and to reassess their significance. In short, this visit is unique, since it represents the one and only journey to England by a king of Jerusalem who was not entirely titular (that is, during the actual lifetime of the kingdom in the mainland Levant). This article, then, will take John’s visit as the centrepiece for a broader discussion of the impact that the king had on England, and vice versa, surveying the period from the late 1210s through to the early 1230s. In the words of Hans Eberhard Mayer, the aim is to re-examine a well-studied period of English history ‘with an Eastern eye’ – and, in the process, to try to regard King John from an unusual angle.⁸

If there is an obvious place to begin, then it is the complex interrelationship between the Fifth Crusade and the English civil war of 1215-17 (sometimes called the ‘First Barons’ War’). The crusade’s formal proclamation in 1213 was followed by long years of planning and preparation across Christendom, during which the English civil war broke out. Similarly, although the first of many waves of crusaders arrived in the kingdom of Jerusalem in September 1217, the expedition was soon bogged down at the siege of Damietta in Egypt, producing ‘the longest static campaign in the history of the eastern crusades’.⁹ Throughout the vast majority of this gruelling struggle, the king of Jerusalem, John of Brienne, served as the crusade’s acknowledged leader (‘cheveteine’).¹⁰ However, during a long period of absence in the kingdom of Jerusalem, John was effectively superseded by the combined representatives of the offstage ‘great powers’ – that is, the papacy and Frederick II. The latter had taken the cross, but, in the event, he did not manage to appear on time. Soon after John’s return to Egypt, the crusade finally collapsed after an abortive march southwards in the late summer of 1221.¹¹

By contrast, the civil war of 1215-17 grew out of the ambitions of another King John: the ruler of England.¹² This John’s overarching goal was to recover the heartlands of the ‘Angevin Empire’ in northern France, which had been annexed in 1203-4 by his great rival, Philip Augustus. The tensions engendered by John’s oppressive rule in England led, first, to an attempt to restrain him by law (the celebrated ‘Magna Carta’ of 1215), and then to civil war. It became a struggle for the very survival of the Angevin dynasty when the English rebels invited in Louis, the son and heir of John’s enemy, the king of France. After John’s death in the midst of the conflict, an English regency government emerged, which carried on fighting in the name of his young son and heir, Henry III. These English loyalists could count on the close co-operation and support of the papacy, and it was crucial in carrying their cause

⁶ *Chronica de Mailros*, ed. J. Stevenson (Edinburgh, 1835), 140. A new edition is currently being prepared by Dauvit Broun and Julian Harrison. For the date of this particular section of the chronicle, see Broun’s comments in *The Chronicle of Melrose Abbey: A Stratigraphic Edition*, i (Woodbridge, 2007), 9.

⁷ See Kate Norgate’s *The Minority of Henry The Third* (London, 1912), 194-5.

⁸ H. E. Mayer, ‘Henry II of England and the Holy Land’, *EHR* 97 (1982), 721.

⁹ C. Tyerman, *God’s War: A New History of the Crusades* (London, 2006), 629.

¹⁰ ‘Colbert-Fontainebleau’, 329.

¹¹ See esp. Perry, *John of Brienne*, 89-121.

¹² It has easy to confuse the two contemporary King Johns: see, for example, *Récits d’un ménestrel de Reims au treizième siècle*, ed. N. de Wailly (Paris, 1876), 73.

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to victory. The Treaty of Lambeth was agreed in September 1217, just as the Fifth Crusade was getting under way.¹³

The actual fighting in these conflicts thus barely overlapped chronologically, yet they had a great deal of impact upon each other. Before the civil war had broken out, King John of England had taken the cross – and shortly after the accession of Henry III, the English regency government obliged the boy to do the same, ‘for the greater protection of himself and his kingdom’.¹⁴ Partly as a consequence of initiatives such as these, the struggle in England soon took on many of the trappings of crusading. It became a holy war.¹⁵ It thus seems highly appropriate that the archbishop of Tyre, Simon of Maugastel, was part of a papal delegation sent to expedite the peace process.¹⁶ By far the most important point, though, is that crusading rapidly assumed a pivotal role in healing the wounds of the war, providing a ‘common enterprise’ for all Englishmen.¹⁷ Over the next few years, the roll-call of participants included not only great royalists, such as Earl Ranulf of Chester and Lincoln, Earl William of Derby and Savaric de Mauléon, but also former rebel leaders, such as Earl Saer of Winchester, Earl William of Arundel, John de Lacy, constable of Chester, and Robert Fitzwalter.¹⁸ It is also worth noting that at least one of King John’s illegitimate sons, Oliver, took part in the expedition, although it seems that he perished in Egypt.¹⁹ Indeed, as the crusade dragged on into its third and fourth years, it began to serve as an ‘honourable exit’ for those who had lost out in the vicious power struggles at the head of English politics. There are no crusader or Latin Eastern sources to corroborate Ralph of Coggeshall’s assertion that Peter des Roches, bishop of Winchester, was elected archbishop of Damietta in 1221.²⁰ Nevertheless, as Peter lost ground to his great rival, the justiciar Hubert de Burgh, the bishop did start looking towards the crusade as a possible means of escape. Only the final collapse of the expedition seems to have prevented Peter from heading out to Egypt at the end of the year.²¹

King John of Jerusalem started to arrange his tour of the West well before the end of the Fifth Crusade. It is interesting to note that we know this, and that England featured in his purposes from a very early stage, thanks to a letter preserved in Roger of Wendover’s *Flores Historiarum*. Whilst Roger thus provides us with the earliest evidence to show that the trip had been planned, he does not say anything about the king’s actual presence in England, a couple of years later.²² The letter in question was written, soon after the end of the crusade, by one of Peter des Roches’s close associates, Philip of Aubigné. Philip had served as ‘master

¹³ The civil war is covered in detail in D. Carpenter, *The Minority of Henry III* (London, 1990), 5-49.

¹⁴ *Chronicon Petroburgense*, ed. T. Stapleton (London, 1849), 7.

¹⁵ See esp. C. Tyerman, *England and the Crusades, 1095-1588* (London, 1988), 133-44.

¹⁶ See esp. J. Beverley Smith, ‘The Treaty of Lambeth, 1217’, *EHR* 94 (1979), 566.

¹⁷ N. Vincent, *Peter des Roches: An Alien in English Politics, 1205-1238* (Cambridge, 1996), 174.

¹⁸ A convenient list of crusaders is provided in J. M. Powell, *Anatomy of a Crusade, 1213-1221* (Philadelphia, 1986), 209-58. However, as Vincent notes, it is far from complete.

¹⁹ The evidence for Oliver’s participation is briefly summarized in *ibid.*, 235. It is possible that Oliver’s half-brother, Richard ‘Fitzregis’, did so too. For this, see Tyerman, *England and the Crusades*, 97; S. Lloyd, *English Society and the Crusade, 1216-1307* (Oxford, 1988), 107; and C. Given-Wilson and A. Curteis, *The Royal Bastards of Medieval England* (London, 1984), 129-30.

²⁰ Ralph of Coggeshall, *Chronicon Anglicanum*, ed. J. Stevenson (London, 1875), 190. See also Vincent, *Peter des Roches*, 200.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 206. Peter eventually took part in Frederick II’s crusade in 1227-31. It is noteworthy that this had the effect of transforming the bishop’s position in England: see *ibid.*, 229-58.

²² For the letter, see Roger of Wendover, *Liber qui dicitur Flores Historiarum*, ed. H. Hewlett, 3 vols. (London, 1886-9), ii, 262-3.

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and tutor' to the young King Henry, but he had quit the position to go on crusade in April 1221. The move may well reflect the factional infighting swirling around the English court at the time.²³ Philip arrived off Damietta in September, just in time to witness the city's evacuation and surrender. Soon afterwards, he wrote to the former crusader, Ranulf of Chester and Lincoln. Philip describes the failure of the crusade, and then goes on to add:

I have also to tell you that the lord king of Jerusalem is about to come to your part of the world; therefore, I ask you to provide him with aid in accordance with the promises made to him and to other magnates, for his debts are so great that it is a wonder to describe them. Farewell.²⁴

It is clear, then, that by the end of the crusade, John had decided to visit England, and it is self-evident that the kingdom would be just one in a series of stopping-points on his tour. Not only that, but he had met with assurances of welcome and financial assistance from the great English crusaders that he had encountered. It is well worth stressing this point, for although John was king of Jerusalem, he was also a Frenchman, and a protégé of England's great enemy, Philip Augustus.²⁵

Philip of Aubigné's letter may well have served as the catalyst for the collection of a subsidy, explicitly said to be '[for] the lord king of Jerusalem, in aid to the [Holy] Land'.²⁶ A great council was convened at Westminster in June 1222: more than six months after the collapse of the crusade, and well before John actually set out for the West. In so far as the English crown was concerned, the council's main function was to rubber-stamp its policy of 'resumption' (that is, of demesne land lost during and since the civil war).²⁷ It is rarely a good idea for an unstable regime to impose a new form of taxation, and then to give the proceeds away. But the subsidy was neither a distraction, nor an annoyance, for Hubert de Burgh and his colleagues. The justiciar was acute enough to realize that it could serve as a way for central government to flex its muscles in a self-evidently good and holy cause. On 25 June, writs were sent out for assessment and collection. Each earl was to pay three marks, each baron a mark and each knight a shilling, and every freeholder – or those with significant possessions – was to give a penny. However, the authorities did everything they could to maintain a veneer of voluntary donation: 'any of these, wishing to give more, may do so, in the name of the Lord'.²⁸ The money was to be entrusted to the Templars, Hospitallers or a local monastery. It was then to be brought to London, with assistance from the sheriffs, and deposited in the New Temple treasury by 1 November.²⁹

²³ Carpenter, *The Minority of Henry III*, 243. For a brief overview of Philip's career, see Nicholas Vincent's article in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, available online.

²⁴ Roger of Wendover, *Flores Historiarum*, ii, 262-3: 'Item vobis significo, quod dominus rex Hierusalem in partes vestras venturus est; ideo vobis precor, quod super promissa ei facta erga regem et alios maguates auxilium præbeatis, debitum enim ejus tam magnum est quod mirum est enarrare. Valete'. Gavigan's questionable translation, which refers to John's 'merits' rather than his debts, has recently been reprinted in *Crusade and Christendom: Annotated Documents in Translation from Innocent III to the Fall of Acre, 1187-1291*, ed. J. Bird, E. Peters and J. M. Powell (Philadelphia, 2013), 229.

²⁵ For more on John's relationship with Philip Augustus, see Perry, *John of Brienne*, 30-2, 46-8, 81-8, 115.

²⁶ *Rotuli Litterarum Clausarum in Turri Londinensi asservati*, ed. T. Hardy, 2 vols. (London, 1833-4), i, 516: 'exigente necessitate Terre Sancte...domino Regi Jerosolimitano in auxilium terre predictæ...' All citations from this source have been expanded.

²⁷ Carpenter, *The Minority of Henry III*, 262-300.

²⁸ *Rotuli Litterarum Clausarum*, i, 516: 'et quicquid de predictis plus dare voluerit det in nomine Domini'.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, i, 516-7. For more on the collection process, see S. Mitchell, *Studies in Taxation under John and Henry III* (Oxford, 1914), 141-2. See also H. Nicholson, 'The Military Orders and the Kings of England in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries', in *From Clermont to Jerusalem: the Crusades and Crusader Societies, 1095-1500*, ed. A. V. Murray (Turnhout, 1998), 203-18.

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If the regency government had permitted itself to become cautiously optimistic, then the outcome must have been a great disappointment. The Waverley annalist notes that ‘this grant came to next to nothing, because it was...opposed, and hence it produced little’.³⁰ Clearly, there had been some complaint about the ‘distrain’ that was used to extract payment from unwilling clergy.³¹ The crown was not prepared to yield, though, and tried again on 24 November. The surviving text, on the Close Roll, largely repeats what had been said almost half a year earlier, with obvious modifications to the timetable. Receipts were now due in February 1223. However, there are also some revealing differences. For example, villeins were now liable to pay the subsidy, whereas those holding from religious houses and ecclesiastical persons were declared exempt.³²

Whilst it is not clear when John became aware that a subsidy was being collected for him, it is unlikely to have been long after he arrived in the West in late 1222 or early 1223. It may well have been at this juncture, then, that he dispatched a knight to England, John Forestier.³³ The king’s immediate priority, though, was to meet with the emperor and the pope, and a great council duly took place at Ferentino, near Anagni, in March 1223. There it was agreed not only that Frederick would soon fulfil his crusading vow, but also that he would wed John’s daughter, the heiress to the kingdom of Jerusalem. This left John free to continue with his tour, although he was now working for the imperial crusade as well as for the Holy Land directly. In the late spring, he returned to his native soil, to the court of the old king, Philip Augustus.³⁴

This brings us to the question of when it was that John came to England. As is well known, the waters have been muddied by the influential English chronicler Matthew Paris, who claims that the king ‘landed around the octave of the Apostles Peter and Paul’ (6 July), along with the Master of the Hospital.³⁵ There are a number of problems with Paris’s proposed date, quite apart from the point that there is no independent corroboration that the Master accompanied John.³⁶ Most obviously, it would make it very difficult for John to travel to Mantes in time for the death of Philip Augustus, which took place on 14 July. For their part, Ernoul-Bernard and ‘Colbert-Fontainebleau’ seem to agree that the king of Jerusalem was present at the deathbed.³⁷ John certainly attended the funeral, which was held at Saint-Denis two weeks later, and the coronation of the former claimant to the English throne, Louis VIII, on 6 August.³⁸ It is worth noting that Philip left the king of Jerusalem a generous legacy in his will: in particular, a bequest of 3,000 marks of silver.³⁹ However, the passing of the Angevins’ old nemesis, and the accession of the assertive Louis, did much to destabilize Anglo-French relations. Whilst the English made preparations for an expedition to

³⁰ *Annales Monasterii de Waverleia*, in *Annales Monastici*, ed. H. Luard, 5 vols. (London, 1864-9), ii, 296.

³¹ See, for example, *Rotuli Litterarum Clausarum*, i, 518; and W. Lunt, ‘The Consent of the English Lower Clergy to Taxation during the Reign of Henry III’, in *Persecution and Liberty: Essays in Honor of George L. Burr* (New York, 1931), 119.

³² *Rotuli Litterarum Clausarum*, i, 567. For more on these changes, see Lunt, ‘The Consent of the English Lower Clergy to Taxation during the Reign of Henry III’, 119.

³³ For John Forestier, see below, **p. 00**.

³⁴ Perry, John of Brienne, 122-9.

³⁵ See Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, ed. H. Luard, 7 vols. (London, 1872-83), iii, 82; and his *Historia Anglorum*, ed. F. Madden, 3 vols. (London, 1866-9), ii, 259.

³⁶ The most detailed account of the Master’s movements is provided by J. Delaville Le Roulx, *Les Hospitaliers en Terre Sainte et à Chypre* (Paris, 1904), 146-8, but even he relies solely on Paris for this.

³⁷ *Chronique d’Ernoul et de Bernard le Trésorier*, 450; ‘Colbert-Fontainebleau’, 356-7.

³⁸ Perry, John of Brienne, 127-8.

³⁹ See *ibid.*, 127, 137, 142.

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Normandy, the archbishop of Canterbury, Stephen Langton, hastened across the Channel to try to coerce Louis into surrendering the duchy in accordance with a vague promise that the prince had made at the end of the civil war. Although nothing came of either of these initiatives and the archbishop soon returned home, the uneasy equilibrium of 1217-23 had been thrown into doubt.⁴⁰ With the solitary exception of Matthew Paris, our sources agree that John's trip to England occurred just after the political temperature had been raised in this way. It took place not in high summer, but in the autumn.⁴¹

John was welcomed to England by the archbishop, and, it seems, they were soon joined by the young King Henry.⁴² It is clear that Langton and Henry were together at Canterbury in early September, and this helps to pin down an approximate date for John's arrival in the country.⁴³ Naturally, the archbishop – and perhaps King Henry too – would have encouraged John to visit 'England's [premier] tourist attraction'. The magnificent new shrine of Thomas Becket, in Canterbury cathedral, had been consecrated only a few years earlier, at the climax of a grand international gathering.⁴⁴ Indeed, one account of John's visit even manages to conflate the two events.⁴⁵ It is noteworthy, though, that even a well-informed contemporary observer, William of Andres, gives no reason whatsoever for John's trip to England, other than '[to] visit and adore [the saint's] relics'.⁴⁶ Certainly, John was one of many distinguished French visitors to the sepulchre, stretching all the way back to Thomas's protector, the 'pilgrim king', Louis VII.⁴⁷ That said, it is unfortunate that the most detailed account of John's devotions at Canterbury comes from Matthew Paris, who, as we have seen, is not particularly reliable on the subject of the journey to England. Paris indicates that John's pilgrimage 'to the tomb of St Thomas' took place at the end of his stay, on the way back to France ('remeando'). However, there is good reason to believe that John went there first, at the very beginning. Not least, it could serve as a way for the king to ingratiate himself with the English and dampen their innate suspicions of him. According to Paris, John came to the shrine and prayed, and left four magnificent sapphires as a gift to the martyr: 'and we have not seen nobler ones'.⁴⁸ It is worth adding, too, that John's presence in the vicinity was memorable enough to be pressed into service as a reference point. Slightly later, on 16 November, a quitclaim involving Canterbury cathedral priory was dated in a striking and highly unusual way: 'on the Thursday next after St Martin's day, following the...arrival of John, king of Jerusalem, in England'.⁴⁹

⁴⁰ For this, see esp. Carpenter, *The Minority of Henry III*, 309-11.

⁴¹ See, for example, William of Andres, *Chronica*, ed. I. Heller, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* (Hanover and elsewhere, 1826 -), *Scriptores*, xxiv, 763; *Annales Monasterii de Waverleia*, in *Annales Monastici*, ii, 299; and also Gervase of Canterbury's continuator in *The Historical Works of Gervase of Canterbury*, ed. W. Stubbs, 2 vols. (London, 1879-80), ii, 113.

⁴² For Langton's role, see the *Annales de Dunstaplia*, in *Annales Monastici*, iii, 85.

⁴³ The archbishop's itinerary is covered in *Acta Stephani Langton Cantuariensis Archiepiscopi*, A. D. 1207-1228, ed. K. Major (Oxford, 1950), p. 166. Henry's is rather harder to pin down, but it is explored in T. Craib, 'The Itinerary of King Henry III, 1216-1272', ed. S. Brindle and S. Priestley (unpubd., English Heritage, 1999). Taken together, this confirms the need to revise the dates suggested in Perry, *John of Brienne*, 131-2.

⁴⁴ Adapted from Carpenter, *The Minority of Henry III*, 193-4, 200.

⁴⁵ See *Annales Prioratus de Wigornia*, in *Annales Monastici*, iv, 412-3, which claims that 'the king of Jerusalem was there along with four other kings, and an infinite multitude of people'.

⁴⁶ William of Andres, *Chronica*, 763.

⁴⁷ Adapted from A. Grabois, 'Louis VII pèlerin', *Revue d'histoire et de l'église de France* 74 (1988), 5-22.

⁴⁸ Paris, *Historia Anglorum*, ii, 260.

⁴⁹ The original can be found in Canterbury Cathedral Archives, MS Chartae Antiquae G98; see also Perry, *John of Brienne*, Appendix 2, no. 10.

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John's pilgrimage to the shrine of St Thomas, though, served as a mere curtain-raiser. The central event of John's stay in England was undoubtedly his presence in London and Westminster, alongside King Henry and Archbishop Langton, for the feast of the Virgin's Nativity, which took place on 8 September.⁵⁰ It seems that, on this occasion at least, Philip of Aubigné was entrusted with the task of looking after the distinguished guest. On 9 September, Henry ordered that Philip should be paid £30 to cover John's expenses at the feast, the previous day.⁵¹ English sources wax lyrical about the fact that when John went home, he did so 'loaded [down] with gold and silver, donated with the greatest largesse by the archbishops, bishops, earls and barons'.⁵² Naturally, these texts reserve a special emphasis for the gifts that King Henry himself gave, or which flowed from the royal treasury. Matthew Paris is surely on the right track, for once, when he notes that Henry donated liberally 'for the soul of his father', the Angevin King John.⁵³ Henry's father had died without redeeming his crusade vow, although this was just one of many reasons why he was 'quite probably in Hell'.⁵⁴ However, several of the English chroniclers are guilty of consciously eliding gift-giving with a quite different and far more important matter: that is, whether the king of Jerusalem had actually received the promised subsidy. As we shall see, the evidence strongly suggests that, once again, there had been severe difficulties in raising the money, and not much of it was available at the time. In other words, it looks as though John was fobbed off with a judicious blend of promises and presents – although the latter may have been offered to him as the first instalment of the cash.

As a result, John quickly decided against loitering in England any longer. As William of Andres expressively puts it: 'finding only English foxes ('vulpinos'), [King John]...hastily returned [to France] at Christmas'.⁵⁵ In fact, a little-known letter shows that he came back much earlier than that. On 25 September, John wrote to Henry III from Arras. In other words, John's stay in England had not even extended to a month. In the letter, John asked Henry to protect his envoy, John Forestier, who – we are told, somewhat cryptically – had enemies in England.⁵⁶ It is reasonable to infer that the knight had been left behind to hurry the collection process. Yet, within a week or so of the king's letter, John Forestier had also decided that the time had come to 'return...to his homeland'. King Henry gave him three marks as a parting gift.⁵⁷

Although the Jerusalemites had come and gone, the English government remained committed to the subsidy. In April 1224, for example, writs were sent out to East Anglia, exhorting the sheriffs there to work closely with their clerical partners, the bishop of Ely and the Templars.⁵⁸ By the end of the year, though, it was obvious that such localized efforts would

⁵⁰ The 'Barnwell' chronicler – actually a Peterborough source – is therefore quite right in its observation that King John came to England 'around the feast of the birth of the Blessed Mary'. See *Memoriale Fratris Walteri de Coventria: The Historical Collections of Walter of Coventry*, ed. W. Stubbs, 2 vols. (London, 1872-3), ii, 252.

⁵¹ See *Rotuli Litterarum Clausarum*, i, 562.

⁵² This quotation is taken from the Barnwell chronicler, ii, 252.

⁵³ Paris, *Historia Anglorum*, ii, 259-60.

⁵⁴ D. Carpenter, 'The Plantagenet Kings', in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, v, ed. D. Abulafia (Cambridge, 1999), 333.

⁵⁵ William of Andres, *Chronica*, 763.

⁵⁶ *Diplomatic Documents Preserved in the Public Record Office*, i, ed. P. Chaplais (London, 1964), no. 122; see also Perry, *John of Brienne*, Appendix 1, no. 9.

⁵⁷ *Rotuli Litterarum Clausarum*, i, 574.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, i, 593-4.

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not be enough. The crown was obliged to issue a general edict in December. It is worth noting that the money is described as ‘collectis’, in the past tense, although there are also references to arrears. The crucial point is that little had arrived at the New Temple. As a result, the government set a final deadline of January 1225.⁵⁹

By then, though, English attitudes towards John had changed quite markedly. Soon after the king left England, he wintered at Tours.⁶⁰ He then journeyed on to the Iberian peninsula in the spring, and he remarried during his time there. His bride was Berengaria, sister of the Castilian king, Ferdinand III. The main purpose of the marriage, from John’s viewpoint, was to provide a backdoor route into a very close relationship with the royal house of France, since Berengaria was the niece of the new French queen, Blanche of Castile.⁶¹ Whilst this would certainly have appeared hostile from an English perspective, it was exacerbated by the fact that the Castilians nursed a claim to the Angevin lordship of Gascony, in the far south of France, which they had invaded as recently as 1205.⁶² Whilst this looming threat should not be discounted, there was something far more immediate for the English to worry about in the spring of 1224: namely, the fate of Angevin Poitou. The Dunstable annalist draws our attention to English hopes that John might be able to dissuade Louis VIII from attacking the county.⁶³ It is noteworthy that, when John returned to Paris with Berengaria in tow, he does seem to have tried to do so, as the French king noted in a letter to the pope.⁶⁴ But John’s efforts were to no avail. Conflict was unavoidable once Louis had secured the defection of England’s troublesome ally, Hugh X of Lusignan, count of La Marche and Angoulême. Moreover, in English eyes at least, John may well have compromised himself in how closely he was connected with the French war effort. John was present and, indeed, the first to witness an important charter when the French host mustered at Tours in June.⁶⁵ Within two months, Louis had seized Poitou.⁶⁶ However, it is worth underlining that John’s attitude towards the interminable Anglo-French struggle was actually consistent. What he really wanted was peace – acceptance of the status quo – so that both sides could combine to assist him in the Latin East. That said, this was not a neutral policy. It carried with it an acknowledgement of the French supremacy in north-western Europe which had solidified over the course of the last twenty years. There were times when the English were prepared to concede this, *de facto* if not *de jure*. Not least, it would provide them with a breathing-space during which they could tackle their own domestic political problems. But they certainly could not accept the status quo in the mid-1220s, in the aftermath of their most recent humiliation.

This brings us, quite neatly, to a bizarre notion popularized by the doyen of Anglophone Crusade studies, Sir Steven Runciman. In his great *History of the Crusades*, Runciman noted that John himself ‘[was] suggested for the English throne’. The provenance of this idea is far

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, i, 630.

⁶⁰ *Chronico S. Martini Turonense*, ed. O. Holder-Egger, in *MGH, SS*, xxvi, 470, which cuts against the suggestions that were made in Perry, *John of Brienne*, 128 n. 23.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 129-31.

⁶² See M. Alvira Cabrer, ‘Alphonse, par la grace de Dieu, roi de Castille et de Tolède, seigneur de Gascogne: quelques remarques à propos des relations entre Castillans et Aquitains au début du XIII^e siècle’, in *Aquitaine et Espagne (VIII^e-XIII^e siècle)*, ed. M. Alvira Cabrer and P. Buresi (Poitiers, 2001), 219-32.

⁶³ *Annales de Dunstaplia*, in *Annales Monastici*, iii, 85.

⁶⁴ For this, see *Recueil des Historiens des Gaules et de la France* (Paris, 1738-1876), xix, 750-1.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, xxiii, 637.

⁶⁶ For the campaign in context, see Carpenter, *The Minority of Henry III*, 370-5.

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from clear. It comes in a characteristic throwaway remark, unsupported by the footnotes.⁶⁷ Yet it may have been connected with a contretemps that took place in late 1224. During this period, both English and French emissaries were active at the curia, lobbying Honorius III about the recent conquest of Poitou. Meanwhile, John was passing through, on his way to meet Frederick II in southern Italy. Naturally enough, the French envoys and John seem to have agreed that the only real route to peace was for the English to accept the loss of the county. The English emissaries' report contains a telling gloss, although it is not clear when it was added. Apparently, the French and John had threatened that, if anyone at the curia acted against King Louis's interests, the latter would invade England ('adicientes quod, si aliquid in curia Romana contra voluntatem regis Francie fieret, incontinenti se transferret in Angliam').⁶⁸ It is possible that Runciman's celebrated Latin skills failed him on this occasion, and that he misunderstood the 'se' as referring to John.⁶⁹

However, there is a much more interesting point to make here. Whilst it is impossible to unravel what really took place at the curia, the report may have provided the English government with sufficient excuse to withhold the subsidy. Hence, over the course of the next few months, we find that much of the money was being 'siphoned [away]' for other purposes, unconnected with King John, crusading, or the needs of the Holy Land.⁷⁰ In this way, according to my calculations, we can account for a sum total of 324 l., 500 marks and 10 shillings, described with cool precision as 'denariis regis Jerosolimitani', or 'denariis collectis in auxilium predicti regis'.⁷¹

There is a coda to John's relationship with the English, which took place five years later, under rather different circumstances. For his part, John had turned against his new son-in-law, Frederick II, when the latter had seized the crown of Jerusalem. John refused to accept this. Not only did he retain his royal title, but he also took up arms against the emperor as soon as the opportunity arose, leading an invasion of the southern Italian mainland. At the height of the 'War of the Keys', though, a remarkable shift in focus took place. John agreed, instead, to become Latin emperor of Constantinople and guardian to the rightful heir, the young Baldwin II.⁷² Meanwhile, in spring 1230, the English finally launched a campaign to recover King Henry's long-lost continental territories – an abortive and strangely understudied expedition to Brittany.⁷³ It seems that, as part of his recruitment drive for the Latin empire, John accompanied the French royal host to Clisson, near Nantes. There, John issued a charter, along with various others, which confirmed the accord between the French crown and England's former ally, Hugh of Lusignan.⁷⁴ Whilst this may have 'killed off any goodwill towards John in England', it is hard to believe that there was much left by then.⁷⁵

⁶⁷ S. Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, 1951-4), iii, 177.

⁶⁸ *Royal and Other Historical Letters Illustrative of the Reign of Henry III: from the Originals in the Public Record Office*, ed. W. Shirley, 2 vols. (London, 1862-6), i, 240-3; repr. in *Diplomatic Documents Preserved in the Public Record Office*, i, no. 153.

⁶⁹ Perry, *John of Brienne*, 132-3.

⁷⁰ Vincent, *Peter des Roches*, 238.

⁷¹ *Rotuli Litterarum Clausarum*, ii, 21; *Patent Rolls of the Reign of Henry III*, 6 vols. (London, 1901-13), i, 512, 527-8. Tyerman has noted that, as late as 1230, the English government was still investigating collectors' accounts. See his *England and the Crusades*, 191, and Vincent, *Peter des Roches*, 238.

⁷² Perry, *John of Brienne*, 135-52.

⁷³ This campaign is briefly summarized in J. Le Goff, *Saint Louis* (Paris, 1996), 105-7.

⁷⁴ See Perry, *John of Brienne*, 153, and Appendix 1, no. 14.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 153 n. 126.

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Within the shape of his life as a whole, John's visit to England can appear to be something of an anomaly. However, it fits much better within the broader context of Latin Eastern appeals for aid during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. As Jonathan Phillips has demonstrated, the period from c.1119 to 1187 had witnessed a gradual rise in the status of the dignitaries who had come out to the West seeking assistance, although most of these had been clerical.⁷⁶ Indeed, if we focus our attention on England, an obvious milestone is provided by the famous visit of Patriarch Heraclius in the mid-1180s.⁷⁷ By the time that the king of Jerusalem himself came to England, some forty years later, a number of things had changed. From the early thirteenth century onwards, for example, it was usually necessary to cross the Channel to see the king of England in person, since the latter now held so little land in France and went there comparatively infrequently. We can bring much of this together by noting some of the practical consequences of the visit of 1223. During John's own subsequent reign as Latin emperor, he sent his young son-in-law and heir to the throne, Baldwin II, to the West, whilst he himself stayed behind to guard Constantinople.⁷⁸ Baldwin finally crossed over to England in spring 1238, just after John's death: that is, when the young man had technically succeeded to the empire but had not yet been crowned.⁷⁹ During his stay in England, Baldwin received 500 l. from Henry III, as well as a large sum of money from the king's brother, the *crucesignatus* Richard of Cornwall.⁸⁰ All in all, it was sufficiently encouraging that Baldwin came again – this time, after his coronation – in 1247. On this occasion, he received the lesser sum of 500 marks from the king, with 20 l. to cover various expenses, and his passage across the Channel was paid.⁸¹ Matthew Paris's account of the first visit is particularly interesting, since he stresses that the English recalled the ingratitude of Baldwin's late father-in-law, despite all the 'beneficia' and 'honores' that John had received in England.⁸²

It is easy to minimize the impact of these developments. But there is no getting away from the basic fact that England received a visit from a leading Latin Eastern head of state – or an heir who was about to assume that status – in each decade from the 1220s through to the 1240s. Moreover, this belongs in the context of more than ten Latin Eastern embassies that were sent to Henry III, or to England at large, between 1216 and 1272.⁸³ Such journeys were

⁷⁶ J. Phillips, *Defenders of the Holy Land: Relations between the Latin East and the West, 1119-87* (Oxford, 1996), 268.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 251-66; and see also B. Kedar, 'The Patriarch Eraclius', in *Outremer: Studies in the History of the Crusading Kingdom of Jerusalem Presented to Joshua Prawer*, ed. B. Kedar, H. E. Mayer and R. C. Smail (Jerusalem, 1982), 191-4.

⁷⁸ Perry, *John of Brienne*, 164.

⁷⁹ For this, see esp. 'Régestes des empereurs latins de Constantinople', compiled by B. Hendrickx, in *Byzantina* 14 (1988), nos. 167-212.

⁸⁰ *Calendar of Liberate Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office, 1226-72*, 6 vols. (London, 1916-74), i, 326-7; Paris, *Chronica Majora*, iii, 480-1, 486. See also Lloyd, *English Society and the Crusade*, 92 and Appendix 2.

⁸¹ See *Close Rolls of the Reign of Henry III Preserved in the Public Record Office, 1227-72*, 14 vols. (London, 1902-38), iv, 510; *Calendar of Liberate Rolls*, iii, 119; Paris, *Chronica Majora*, iv, 626; and Lloyd, *English Society and the Crusade*, Appendix 2.

⁸² Paris, *Chronica Majora*, iii, 481: 'Recolebant enim memoriter, quanta beneficia et honores contulerat Anglia regi Johanni de Brenne, cum in Angliam venisset; qui cum in Franciam redierat, regno Angliæ nequiter et more ingrante machinabatur insidias...'

⁸³ See the summary in Lloyd, *English Society and the Crusade*, Appendix 2. This flurry of royal visits would not be replicated for more than a hundred years, in the quite different circumstances of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. Then, the English crown's guests would include the king of Cyprus and titular king of Jerusalem, Peter I; his kinsman, Leo of Cilician Armenia, whose realm had been lost to the Mamluks in 1375; and the Byzantine emperor, Manuel II Palaiologos. See esp. G. Hill, *A History of Cyprus*, 4 vols. (Cambridge, 1940-52), ii, 325-6, 441; C. Mutafian, *L'Arménie du Levant*, 2 vols. (Paris, 2012), i, 222-3; D. M. Nicol, 'A

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part of myriad ways in which England was stitched into the very fabric of Latin Christendom in the first half of the thirteenth century, during the 'golden age' of crusading. It is not an accident that this period witnessed the expedition of Richard of Cornwall in 1240-1, England's most significant contribution to the movement since the days of his uncle, the 'Lionheart'.⁸⁴ In short: although the events of September 1223 were not the most important part of John's tour of the West, it is still quite an oversight that 'Colbert-Fontainebleau' does not mention them at all. King John's visit to England was unique, but it should not be written off as a mere curiosity.

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⁸⁴ For this crusade, expertly sited in context, see M. Lower, *The Barons' Crusade: A Call to Arms and its Consequences* (Philadelphia, 2005).