"Scandalia … tam in oriente quam in occidente": The Briennes in East and West, 1213–1221

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John of Brienne (king of Jerusalem, 1210–25) was the last king of Jerusalem to habitually reside in any part of the Latin East until the Lusignans of Cyprus succeeded the Hohenstaufen in 1269. By then, the kingdom would be tottering towards its final elimination, and the kingship, especially, would be but a shadow of its former self. And no king of Jerusalem after John would ever again regard that kingdom as his primary base: the Hohenstaufen and Charles of Anjou were based in the West, the Lusignans on Cyprus. If these are principal reasons for taking an interest in John's reign, then we can narrow down the period in which we are most concerned still further. John spent almost two-thirds of his reign outside his kingdom proper, thereby initiating a trend which was to reach the level of absentee kingship in the next generation. He spent most of 1218–21 in Egypt, trying to lead the Fifth Crusade; he then passed almost all the remainder of his reign, 1222–25, in the Latin West, trying to drum up support for a new crusade once the Fifth Crusade had failed. Thus, the final lengthy period of rule by any king of Jerusalem essentially based and resident in that kingdom was the opening seven years of King John's reign, 1210–17. This, then, is a time well worth examining in detail.

Despite its significance, this is a very neglected age in the history of the kingdom of Jerusalem. Such detailed analyses as we have in fact struggle to find very much to say.[1] The main reason for this is the scarcity of extant source material for this particular period of Jerusalemite history. Comparatively speaking, a fair number of the Jerusalemite *acta* issued at this time have survived; but, as Peter Edbury has noted, "it is unfortunate that the narrative accounts [we have] shed almost no light at all on the politics of the kingdom of Jerusalem between [John's] accession in 1210 and the beginning of the Fifth Crusade in 1217."[2] The narrative accounts that Edbury is referring to here are what he now labels as "Ernoul-Bernard" and "Colbert-Fontainebleau": both these naratives pass swiftly from John's coronation through to the Fifth Crusade.[3] Relatively recently, however, some notable efforts have been made to fill this gap. Hans Mayer eased the task by exposing forgeries

[1] For an obvious example of this, see Ludwig Böhm's *Johann von Brienne, König von Jerusalem, Kaiser von Konstantinopel* (Heidelberg, 1938), pp. 29–41; but see below, n. 7.

[2] Peter W. Edbury, *John of Ibelin and the Kingdom of Jerusalem* (Woodbridge, 1997), pp. 32–34.

[3] Ernoul-Bernard, *Chronique d'Ernoul et de Bernard le Trésorier*, ed. Louis de Mas Latrie (Paris, 1871), pp. 409–11; Colbert-Fontainebleau (the main text in *RHC Oc* 2), pp. 311–21.

in Röhricht's register of the Jerusalemite *acta*.[4] Closely analysing the remaining corpus, Edbury then led the way with pioneering work on King John's rupture with the Ibelins (ca. 1210–13). Focusing on other matters, though, Edbury has barely re-examined John's rule beyond 1213.[5] Mayer's up-to-date, authoritative study of the Jerusalemite chancellery has added some depth to scholarly appreciation of John's difficulties in the early years of his reign (above all, concerning the break with the Ibelins).[6] Yet, even taken together, the work of Edbury and Mayer is very far from constituting a comprehensive reappraisal of the period 1210–17 in the kingdom of Jerusalem.[7]

One of the most damaging consequences of this comparative neglect is that several significant events that took place in the kingdom of Jerusalem during this period can end up unduly minimized, and hence seriously misread. This article will refer to several such events in passing – such as the early death of John's queen, Maria, which provoked a dramatic crisis amongst the kingdom's elites; and the murder of the papal legate and patriarch, the future saint Albert of Vercelli, in 1214. The present article dwells on just one such noteworthy event: an episode of considerable consequence, which I have labelled the "Erard of Brienne affair." It should be made absolutely clear at the outset, however, that this article focuses on that affair's impact within a specifically Jerusalemite and Latin Eastern context; and that means, above all, on the then-king of Jerusalem, Erard's cousin, King John.

The family tree (Fig. 1) should make the following far more readily comprehensible. The "Erard of Brienne affair" had its origins in the events of 1190, when Count Henry II of Champagne had set out to participate in the Third Crusade. Before departure, Henry had stipulated that, should he himself never return, his county was to pass to his brother, Theobald (III), and thence to Theobald's descendants. In the event, Henry did not return; he died, as ruler of the kingdom of Jerusalem, following a fall from a window in 1197. By then, though – through his marriage to Queen Isabella I of Jerusalem – Henry had sired two daughters in the East, Alice and Philippa. The kingdom of Jerusalem passed to other hands – to Isabella's eldest daughter by a previous husband – leaving Alice and Philippa, relatively speaking, landless. Yet, as direct descendants of the senior line of the house of Champagne, they had (it could be plausibly argued) a prior claim to their father's county. Champagne passed, as Henry had wished, first to his brother, Theobald III, and then, in May 1201, into the hands of Theobald's widow, Countess Blanche, who served as regent for her own and Theobald III's posthumous son, Theobald IV.

[4] Hans Eberhard Mayer, *Marseilles Levantehandel und ein akkonensisches Fälscheratelier des 13. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen, 1972).

[5] Peter W. Edbury, *The Kingdom of Cyprus and the Crusades, 1191–1374* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 41–48; also Edbury, *John of Ibelin*, pp. 32–34.

[6] Hans Eberhard Mayer, *Die Kanzlei der lateinischen Könige von Jerusalem*, 2 vols. (Hanover, 1996), esp. 1:304–23 and 2:697–704, 738–62.

[7] But see Guy Perry, "The Career and Significance of John of Brienne, King of Jerusalem, Emperor of Constantinople" (DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 2009), ch. 2, pp. 74–126. It is expected that a monograph, based substantially on this thesis, will soon be published.

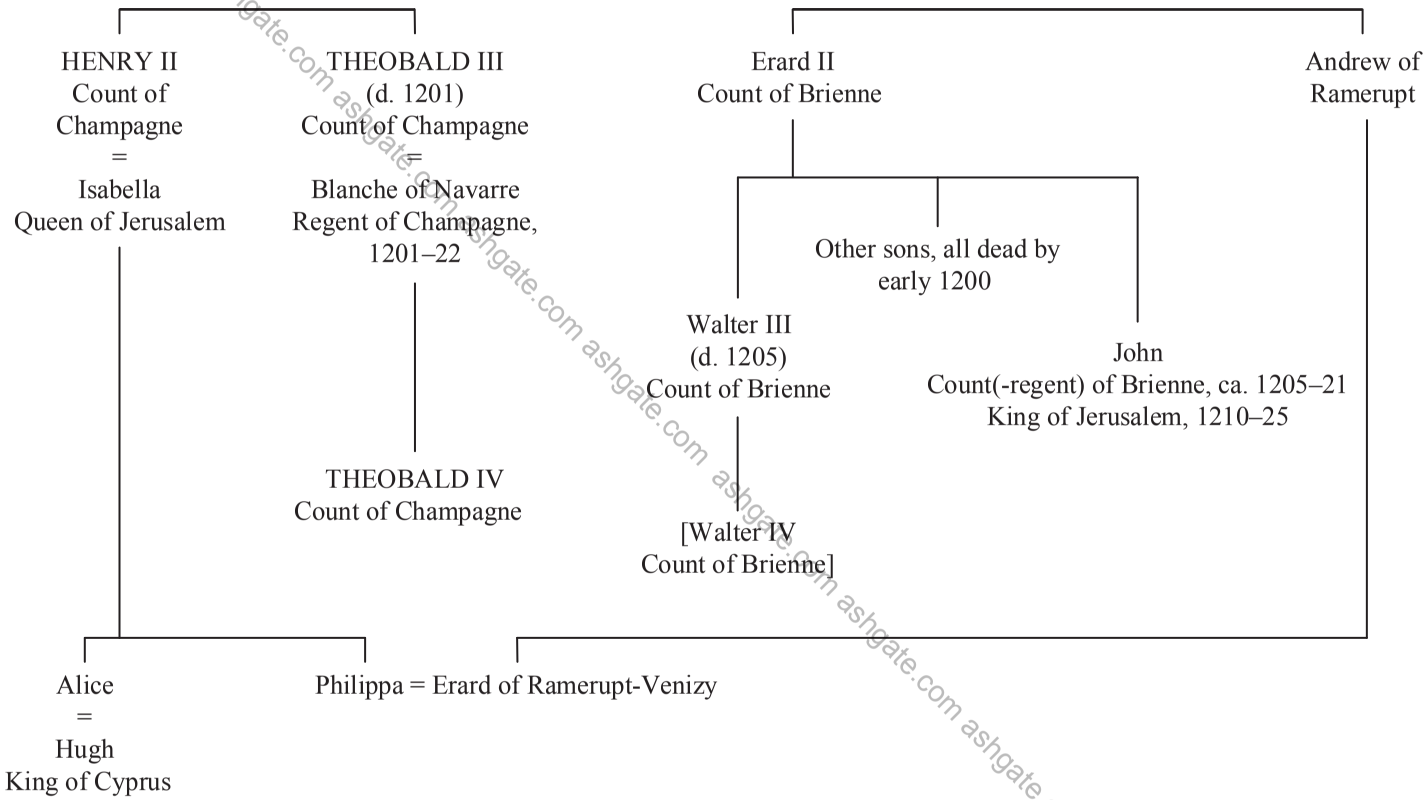

Fig. 1 The Brienne claim to Champagne, 1215–21

The posthumous nature of Theobald IV's birth complicated the matter. Evergates summarizes as follows: "[from the time of Theobald III's death, then,] the question was fairly posed: did not the daughters of Count Henry II, born whilst he was still count, have a better claim to Champagne than his brother's posthumous son?"[8]

It is now clear just how feverishly Blanche worked to ward off this prospective, truly dangerous, challenge to her infant son's inheritance. Above all, she pressed hard for the implementation of an earlier scheme, by which Alice and Philippa would be married, in the Latin East, to men of royal blood.[9] The calculation was presumably that the sisters (and their husbands) would then be less likely to come west to cause trouble for Blanche and her son. Alice, the elder sister (and therefore, presumably, the greater threat), married King Hugh of Cyprus in 1210. At around the same time, Blanche scored another notable success that clearly bears the marks of her handiwork. Her trusty *fidelis* John, count(-regent) of Brienne within Champagne, became king of Jerusalem through marriage, and, as a consequence, at least the *de facto* guardian of the as-yet unmarried Philippa, in the East.[10] A couple of years later, however, this particular achievement of Blanche's began to unravel. John's cousin in Champagne, Erard of Brienne, publicized his intention of seeking Philippa's hand in marriage. As lord of Ramerupt and Venizy, Erard was ultimately a *fidelis* of Blanche's for his "great holdings," in much the same way as King John still was for his western lands. But these ties did not prevent Erard from moving against the countess and her young son. It was plain that, having married Philippa, Erard would then try to advance her (rather debatable) claim to the county of Champagne.

Erard placed himself under ecclesiastical protection by taking the cross. He then outlined his marriage scheme to the French king, Philip Augustus. Philip had effectively established himself as chief protector of Blanche and young Theobald, yet it was obviously in his interests to keep Blanche feeling somewhat insecure. Thus, Philip's response to Erard was – in some ways – studiedly non-committal. For her own part, exploiting what pretexts she could, Blanche seized Erard's fiefs in Champagne, and even had him imprisoned for a time whilst he was en route to the East. Meanwhile, she obtained various papal rulings: among them that Count Henry II's marriage had been invalid (and his daughters were therefore illegitimate); and that, equally, the projected marriage between Erard and Philippa would not be lawful, since the couple were too closely related, within the prohibited degrees.[11] A papal bull was dispatched to the Latin East, threatening excommunication if the illicit "marriage" were performed.

[8] Theodore Evergates, *The Aristocracy in the County of Champagne, 1100–1300* (Philadelphia, 2007), p. 37.

[9] For Blanche's efforts, see esp. Perry, "The Career and Significance of John of Brienne," pp. 59–65. No. 823 in Röhricht's *RRH* is particularly noteworthy. In 1207, Blanche offered a substantial bribe to several leading Jerusalemite figures, essentially to keep Philippa in the East – so showing clearly how important this was to her.

[10] See Perry, "The Career and Significance of John of Brienne," pp. 57–65.

[11] For more on the ruling concerning Henry's marriage, see below, n. 31.

Nevertheless – shockingly – the marriage took place. By mid-1215, Erard and his bride were sailing back to France. He was arrested twice further en route, finally arriving in Champagne with Philippa, after a round trip of two and a half years. Calling largely on what may be described as the Brienne "affinity" and connections within Champagne, Erard soon rallied a surprisingly substantial number of disaffected lords and knights to his cause. The Champenois "civil war" – feared for some fifteen years – finally broke out, around the start of the year 1216.

In the short term, the war proved disastrous for Erard. He and his supporters were repeatedly castigated by several of the greatest authorities in Latin Christendom, as disloyal, ambitious vassals and sacrilegious disturbers of the peace. Erard and Philippa were excommunicated, on several grounds; and salvoes of similar ecclesiastical sanctions were also fired off against their *coadjutores* and *fautores*. Matters reached a climax in 1218 when Erard's most powerful ally, the duke of Lorraine, was forced out of the war by the combined forces of Blanche and her allies (the emperor-elect Frederick (II), the duke of Burgundy and the count of Bar). It was not until November 1221, however, that Erard and Philippa began to relinquish their claim to Champagne. And when they finally did so, not only did Erard formally receive back his fiefs, but the couple's marriage was acknowledged, and they obtained a down-payment of 4,000 *l.* and a lifetime rent of 1,200 *l.* This was (as Evergates puts it) a "handsome reward for… persistence, sufficient to place [Erard] amongst the wealthiest barons of [Champagne]." In the end, he had done rather well out of it all.[12]

Because the "Erard of Brienne affair" impacted far more on Champagne than it did anywhere else, its influence on other parts of the Latin world has tended to be ignored until now. This is quite surprising, since even a cursory examination of the subject, as attempted above, shows some of its wider ramifications. The crux of the affair – Erard's marriage – occurred, of course, in John's kingdom of Jerusalem itself. Even so, the episode has barely been looked at from any Latin Eastern angle, let alone from the perspective of the leading Latin Eastern figure most obviously concerned – namely, King John himself. The best lengthy account of the affair remains d'Arbois de Jubainville's, but he does not seriously address the actual context of the marriage in the Latin East, and has very little to suggest about John's reactions to it in the aftermath.[13] More startlingly, the German Ludwig Böhm –

[12] The above summary is derived chiefly from Henri d'Arbois de Jubainville's detailed treatment of the same subject in his *Histoire des ducs et des comtes de Champagne*, 7 vols. (Paris, 1859–69), 4:107–87; and Evergates's recent outlines in *The Aristocracy in the County of Champagne*, pp. 36–42, and in his *The Cartulary of Countess Blanche of Champagne* (Toronto, 2010), pp. 3–10. Philippa lived as Erard's wife in Champagne until he died in the mid-1240s. She did not long survive him. Queen Blanche of France then had her buried with honour in Blanche's new foundation of Maubuisson (see Henri d'Arbois de Jubainville, "Les premiers seigneurs de Ramerupt," *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes* 22 (1861), 440–58, at p. 449).

[13] D'Arbois de Jubainville, *Histoire des ducs et des comtes de Champagne*, 4:111–87.

John's twentieth-century "biographer" – simply omits all mention of the affair in his section on John as king of Jerusalem before the Fifth Crusade.[14]

The present article argues two principal points. First, King John was intimately involved in the affair. Second, it had a noteworthy, detrimental effect on John for an admittedly fairly short period in the mid-1210s, during which it tainted his relations with the key western powers on whom he was particularly dependent. Moreover, simply by pursuing the above two points as comprehensively as is feasible, it is possible to show that the whole situation did indeed loom up significantly in the Latin East as well as in the West. In short, Innocent III was basically right when he wrote that the affair had given rise to "scandalia … *tam in oriente* quam in occidente."[15]

John's involvement in this is best examined by seeking to answer three questions. First, did John support his cousin's marriage scheme? Second, what actually took place following Erard's arrival in the kingdom of Jerusalem? Third, how, and how successfully, did John salvage his own reputation and standing – and, to a lesser extent, that of the wider Brienne family – after Erard's marriage had taken place?

Erard's bid for Champagne should plainly be sited within the context of the Brienne family's sudden success in significantly advancing itself and its interests in the early thirteenth century – a momentous shift in gear spearheaded, of course, both by John's eldest brother, Count Walter III (the dominant figure in southern Italy, 1201–1205) and, shortly after that, by John himself, who became king of Jerusalem in 1210. Both these developments, like Erard's projected scheme soon afterwards, were facilitated through the medium of marriage. Unlike Erard's, though, the earlier two were widely approved of by the leading interested western powers – and this is a key difference. John's achievement in becoming king of Jerusalem was very much more than being simply, as we might guess, the greatest single inspiration to Erard. Erard could underline that he himself hailed from what was now a royal dynasty, and hence that he was of suitable stature to marry Philippa and, with her, claim Champagne.[16] Furthermore, John's royal situation probably appeared key to the realization of Erard's scheme. As king of Jerusalem and hence head of the Jerusalemite royal family, John seemed to be in a position to choose or approve Philippa's husband.[17] Erard himself drew attention to this

[14] Cf., however, a summary of the present article in Perry, "The Career and Significance of John of Brienne," pp. 115–26.

[15] My italics; cited in Theodore Evergates, *Feudal Society in the Bailliage of Troyes under the Counts of Champagne, 1152–1284* (Baltimore, 1975), p. 198. "Scandalia" is a word often used to signify sex or marriage "scandals."

[16] Given the extensive and complex interconnections between the branches of the Brienne dynasty at this time, it may well appear somewhat overstated to argue that Erard was not really a Brienne (see Evergates, *The Aristocracy in Champagne*, pp. 135, 139).

[17] Though, as we have seen, Erard proved too closely related to Philippa for the marriage to be licit.

point when he first outlined his marriage scheme to the French king, Philip Augustus.[18]

John's actual attitude to Erard and his plan is, unfortunately, not clear. Erard himself, of course, was by no means an unknown quantity to John; he was head of the main cadet branch of the Brienne dynasty until John himself founded a replacement. As count(-regent) of Brienne, John had certainly had some – perhaps many – dealings with Erard, before travelling east in 1210 to become king of Jerusalem. A comparatively little-known "Brienne" *actum* (one of the few overlooked by d'Arbois de Jubainville, but printed by Lalore) records John's assent, in 1208, to a donation made by Erard to the monastery of Saint Pierre in Troyes.[19] Since Erard was, at around that time, the most senior mature Brienne male in northern France after John himself, John may well have left Erard as his proxy ("procurator") in the county of Brienne, when he (John) departed to take up the crown of Jerusalem.[20]

At first sight, it appears common sense to suppose that John supported his cousin's scheme for familial-dynastic motives. Against this, though, may conceivably be set the notion that John was not in a position to do much to support the interests of his wider family, given the weakness of his own position as king of Jerusalem. An anecdote in *Lignages* might appear to confirm this. When a vassal in the king's presence and in his court perpetrated a killing of a relative of the king, John apparently let the murderer escape untried and unpunished to Tripoli.[21] I have argued at length elsewhere, though, that the cumulative weight of evidence strongly suggests that John was nowhere near such a *roi fainéant* as this (in fact, rather isolated) anecdote would have us believe.[22]

I would suggest that it was most advisable for John either not to support Erard at all; or – if he could not resist the temptation to do it – then to do so only covertly. As regent and then as count(-regent) of Brienne (1201–10), John had grown into a role as one of Blanche's leading supporters within Champagne, though not as a principal prop always at her side. (Rumour, indeed, later grew up around this support, mushrooming into the highly diverting notion of a love-triangle involving John, Blanche, and the French king Philip himself.[23]) John was present at the French royal court in 1209, when Philip had declared that the young Theobald IV's inheritance was not legally challengeable until the child came of age (at twenty-one, in this case).[24] John certainly acted in a capacity supportive of Blanche in 1209–10.

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[18] *Layettes du Trésor des chartes*, ed. Alexandre Teulet et al., 5 vols. (Paris, 1863–1909), vol. 1, no. 1474.

[19] *Collection des principaux cartulaires du diocèse de Troyes*, ed. Charles Lalore, 7 vols. (Troyes, 1875–90), vol. 5, no. 123.

[20] See Perry, "The Career and Significance of John of Brienne," pp. 72–73.

[21] *Lignages d'Outremer*, ed. Marie-Adélaïde Nielen (Paris, 2003), pp. 73–74.

[22] See Perry, "The Career and Significance of John of Brienne," esp. ch. 2, and above all pp. 91–102.

[23] Colbert-Fontainebleau, p. 307.

[24] See esp. *Littere baronum: The Earliest Cartulary of the Counts of Champagne*, ed. Theodore Evergates (Toronto, 2003), no. *88; and d'Arbois de Jubainville, *Histoire des ducs et des comtes de Champagne*, 4:108–9.

During that period, John and another Champenois count loyal to Blanche, William of Joigny, formally affirmed that, in their presence, Count William of Sancerre had acknowledged all the fiefs that the latter held from Countess Blanche.[25] It was, we may infer, precisely to protect herself from adventurers such as Erard that Blanche had vigorously promoted her trusty John's candidacy for the throne of Jerusalem in ca. 1208. If later, as king of Jerusalem, John let Blanche down, then it would be all too obvious that he was doing so out of crude opportunism, to advance his family's dynastic goals.

Although plainly not a "first-rank" figure, John had been accepted as king of Jerusalem largely because his candidature had swiftly acquired the backing of leading key powers in the West (including King Philip, Innocent III, and Blanche herself). It was hoped that this would translate into strong mobilization in support of the beleaguered kingdom. For a king of Jerusalem like John, then, it would be an extremely serious matter to risk this backing, whether in support of Erard or for any other reason.[26] The "Erard of Brienne affair" in fact began soon after the "crisis of 1212–13" in the kingdom of Jerusalem, a brief but dramatic period precipitated by the early death of John's queen, Maria. This event called into question John's position as king, since he had only become so through marriage to her. Calling, notably, on the Church's support, John succeeded in retaining his crown – although it could be argued that he was doing so, fundamentally, only as "crowned regent" for his and his late queen's infant daughter, the "right heir" to the kingdom.[27]

That kingdom, though, remained acutely vulnerable to Ayyubid attack. Part of John's solution may well have been, as we shall see, a proposed marriage alliance with the powerful, northern Latin Christian kingdom of Cilician Armenia.[28] The security of Acre had undoubtedly been compromised still further by the recent Ayyubid fortification of Mount Tabor, which overlooks parts of the strategically significant Jezreel Valley to its south. Shortly after helping John through the crisis of 1212–13, Innocent III responded to the new threat by formally launching a great new crusade to the East (the later Fifth).[29] Just as the "Erard of Brienne affair" was getting underway, John may well have been doing all he could to keep his own nose clean – to help garner as much support as was possible in the West for the forthcoming crusade. In this situation, it would evidently have been folly for John to give open assistance or support to Erard, if the upshot would be to risk alienation of precisely those western backers on whom he and his kingdom placed the greatest hopes.

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[25] See Henri d'Arbois de Jubainville, ed., "Catalogue d'actes des comtes de Brienne, 950–1356," *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes* 33 (1872), no. 138.

[26] See esp. Perry, "The Career and Significance of John of Brienne," pp. 57–73.

[27] Ibid., pp. 97–102, 105–6.

[28] See below, p. 72.

[29] See *Quia maior*, PL 216, cols. 817–22; and Perry, "The Career and Significance of John of Brienne," pp. 82–85.

It is worth underlining a further reason for John not to risk alienating them. John had become the first *de jure* king of Jerusalem to rule in the East whilst also formally retaining, for the present, a great western lordship (that is, his ancestral county of Brienne) in his own hands. This is his marker on the road that would lead to the "cross-Mediterranean empires" of his successor as king of Jerusalem, Frederick II, and later of Charles of Anjou.[30] To maintain that position from the distant Latin East, John depended ultimately on the goodwill of Blanche in Champagne, of King Philip in France, and of Innocent III in Latin Christendom as a whole.[31]

Against all this must be set the obvious, glittering attractions of Erard's scheme. It must have seemed to present the Briennes with an admittedly somewhat risky, but nevertheless breathtaking, opportunity to make a huge dynastic advance in their rich homeland of Champagne through exploiting their present, quite brief phase in possession of the crown of Jerusalem. (This phase was destined to end in the medium-term at best, since John had sired no male line, of Brienne kings of Jerusalem, through his late wife, Queen Maria.) It is plausible to suggest, then, that on some level at least, Erard's scheme would have appealed to the intensely ambitious, risk-taking side of an individual like King John.

It is clear that, at some point in 1213–14, John had a new "proxy" back in Brienne – namely, his kinsman, the Champenois Jacques of Durnay, whom he had appointed marshal of the kingdom of Jerusalem.[32] Mayer has suggested that Jacques was sent back to the county of Brienne in consequence of the crisis of 1212–13. He argues that since John feared, at that time, that he himself might soon be effectively deposed, Jacques's function in Brienne was to prepare for the possibility that John might return there very soon.[33] This argument is perfectly plausible, since it is not clear either when exactly Jacques was sent back, or what it was that he was instructed to do. However, it may be that Mayer has here underestimated the impact of the "Erard of Brienne affair" on John. Even though John was far away in the Latin East, it is quite possible that, for him, the most alarming development of late

[30] The phrase is derived from Christopher Tyerman, *God's War: A New History of the Crusades* (London, 2006), p. 197; see also Perry, "The Career and Significance of John of Brienne," pp. 7, 72.

[31] Bernard Hamilton has identified another reason why John, if aware of it, would not have been comfortable about the way that the "Erard of Brienne affair" unfolded. In response to Erard's challenge, as we have seen, Blanche sought to undermine Philippa's right to inherit Champagne by questioning whether she and her sister were legitimately born. Alice and Philippa would certainly be illegitimate if their mother's preceding marriage had not been properly annulled. But if Blanche was right about this – and she did get some backing from a papal commission of inquiry – then, logically, the bar of illegitimacy would descend not only on Alice and Philippa, but also on their half-sister, Queen Maria of Jerusalem. In short: this argument, if made good, could have the effect of de-legitimizing John's right to the crown which he had recently fought so hard to retain. In the event, this threat to John's kingship never properly materialized. See Bernard Hamilton, "King Consorts of Jerusalem and their Entourages from the West from 1186 to 1250," in *Die Kreuzfahrerstaaten als multikulturelle Gesellschaft*, ed. Hans Eberhard Mayer (Munich, 1997), p. 20.

[32] "Catalogue d'actes des comtes de Brienne," no. 145; and Perry, "The Career and Significance of John of Brienne," esp. pp. 31, 71, 95.

[33] Mayer, *Die Kanzlei der lateinischen Könige von Jerusalem*, 2:739.

1213 was Blanche's seizure of the fiefs that Erard held from her in Champagne.[34] John may have been particularly apprehensive about this because of the obvious difficulties of trying to manage his new cross-Mediterranean lordship: he could not help but be aware that he was not "on the pulse" with events back in Champagne. It may well have appeared to him that it was better to be safe than sorry; and hence to conclude that he must act as if all of the Briennes' ancestral holdings were in serious danger. And, if Erard had indeed been running the county of Brienne as John's proxy over the course of the last few years, then that county (as Erard's present main powerbase) could well have appeared much more in danger of confiscation than would otherwise have been the case. John may thus have sent Jacques of Durnay back to the West for the purpose of protecting his own vulnerable ancestral lands, by loudly disassociating John himself from Erard and his activities, and to garner first-hand information on the current situation in Champagne. Having imperilled the Brienne lands – and also because he was now coming out to the East – in ca. 1213–14 Erard was no longer a suitable figure to remain John's proxy for Brienne (if, indeed, he had earlier fulfilled that role). It may thus be suggested that Jacques was also sent back to replace Erard as proxy, at least until the dust there had settled.

Having arrived in the Latin East under the shadow of the papal bull against him, Erard seems to have been obliged to loiter, for some time, in the kingdom of Jerusalem. During the months following his arrival, two noteworthy events occurred – though it is extremely difficult to tease out their precise impact on Erard and his scheme. Arguably, the more significant of the two was the murder of the papal legate and patriarch of Jerusalem, Albert of Vercelli – apparently, by a disgruntled clerk. John, though, appears to have moved swiftly to derive what advantage he could from this. He may well have had a directing hand in the process by which his own close associate, the Champenois Ralph of Merencourt – bishop of Sidon and royal chancellor – succeeded Albert as patriarch-elect.[35] Erard was surely in touch with King John during this period. If John was indeed countenancing Erard's scheme, then perhaps they both could have hoped for a rather more cooperative attitude from John's ally Ralph than they would have had from the saintly Albert. (In view of the papal bull, though, even Ralph would have to move circumspectly.) Also, in 1214, John married Stephanie (sometimes called "Rita"), a plausible heiress to the reigning king, Leo, of Cilician Armenia. This marriage held out the prospect of resurrecting John's long-term dynastic ambitions for his own issue (ambitions that had earlier perished, in the kingdom of Jerusalem, along with his first wife, Queen Maria). Marriage to Stephanie reopened the possibility, now firmly closed off in the kingdom of Jerusalem, of establishing a line of Brienne kings in the Latin East.[36]

[34] For this, see esp. d'Arbois de Jubainville, *Histoire des ducs et des comtes de Champagne*, 4:113.
[35] See Perry, "The Career and Significance of John of Brienne," pp. 103–4.
[36] Ibid., pp. 113–14.

Erard's marriage finally took place at the end of this rather mysterious pause. Although the marriage's legality and consequences were much discussed afterwards, few surviving sources look closely at its immediate surrounding circumstances. For these, we have to fall back on the two main narrative accounts of John's reign, those of Ernoul-Bernard and Colbert-Fontainebleau. Both accounts have serious shortcomings. Ernoul-Bernard suggests that Queen Maria of Jerusalem gave her half-sister, Philippa, to Erard. This certainly did not happen, since Maria had died more than a year before Erard himself came out to the Latin East.[37] Whilst Ernoul-Bernard can thus be read as placing the marriage too early, Colbert-Fontainebleau appears to place it too late – apparently after the Fourth Lateran Council, which is plainly incorrect.[38] Interestingly, Colbert-Fontainebleau underlines the prospect that Philippa was proactive in bringing the marriage about – secretly leaving the castle at Acre at night before marrying Erard the next day.[39] However, the two accounts do agree on one fundamental point: namely, that the marriage took place at Acre, behind John's back, whilst the king was away at Tyre.[40] Colbert-Fontainebleau then emphasizes that although John was actually delighted with the match, he had to pretend otherwise in public.[41] The newly-weds may well have stayed on in the kingdom of Jerusalem, apparently without too much difficulty, for another couple of months after their marriage. If so, then this provides a further indication that King John was not as "corrocez" with them as he pretended, since he might otherwise have taken action against them (such as, for instance, forcibly separating the couple, or expelling or imprisoning Erard).[42]

It may be suggested that, in his capacity as Philippa's effective guardian, John could have prevented the marriage if he had really been determined to do so. Given that Erard had publicized his intention to marry Philippa, and the greatest authorities in the West had spoken out against this, John would surely have been justified, in the eyes of his kingdom's elites, in taking action to make sure that Philippa was effectively inaccessible to Erard (confined, say, in a royal fortress such as the castle at Acre, or in a secure religious establishment). The fact that, by hook or by crook, Philippa eventually married Erard may provide an indication that John did not, in fact, carry out any such action decisively. It may appear best, then, to agree with Colbert-Fontainebleau (and therefore with d'Arbois de Jubainville). In the last analysis, we may guess, John actually made the marriage possible – when his back was ostentatiously turned.

[37] Ernoul-Bernard, pp. 409–11.

[38] Colbert-Fontainebleau, p. 319; and below, p. 74.

[39] Colbert-Fontainebleau, p. 319.

[40] Ibid., p. 319; Ernoul-Bernard, p. 409.

[41] Colbert-Fontainebleau, pp. 319–20.

[42] For this, see esp. the detailed chronology proposed by d'Arbois de Jubainville, in *Histoire des ducs et des comtes de Champagne*, 4:114–17.

Reinterpreting evidence that has long been available suggests that, in the aftermath of the marriage, John did act against what appear to be well-founded suspicions that there had been a Brienne stitch-up. It would seem that he made substantial efforts to publicly disavow any hand in the marriage, as well as continuing to disassociate himself from Erard's designs on Champagne. Like many other Latin rulers, John sent a proctor to the Fourth Lateran Council – in his case, the Jerusalemite baron John Le Tor.[43] At the council, this John, and the king's clerical allies (chiefly, Ralph of Merencourt), were surely involved in at least informal discussions concerning the "Erard of Brienne affair." Whilst it is impossible to ascertain what these involved, what is plain is that at the council the canons prohibiting consanguineous marriage were altered (which in the end would have the effect of making it easier for the Church to formally recognize Erard's marriage to Philippa).[44] Quite possibly, King John's allies played a leading part pushing for this change.

By the time of the council, the French monarchy had come out far more robustly than before against Erard. Back in mid-1215, the heir to the French crown, the future Louis VIII, had written to King John of Jerusalem. Louis's letter restates the basics of the case, as the French crown then saw it. Young Theobald's right to inherit could not be challenged until he was of age. Indeed, it was highly unlikely that he ever could be ousted by either Alice or Philippa, since it was well known that their father had earlier relinquished any rights that they might otherwise have had to Champagne. And Erard and Philippa could not marry in any case, since the pair were too closely related. This "fraternal" but stern warning to King John was unmistakable.[45] Quite possibly, it was on receipt of this letter that John decided that he must send an envoy to France, to explain away the awkward fact that the marriage had recently taken place under his very nose. This, then, may well be at least a substantial part of the explanation why John Le Tor went on to France after the Fourth Lateran Council.[46]

John appears to have given no support of any kind to Erard in the Champenois civil war that followed. It is difficult to assess how much damage was done to Erard's cause there by the absence of any such backing whatsoever. But, had it been available to him, Erard would surely have wanted at least the formal endorsement of a figure who was both a king, and still the effective head of the Brienne dynasty. John's lack of support for Erard, at this critical stage, may well have been decisive in reassuring John's own, powerful, long-term western backers that the king himself was no longer out of line with them (if, indeed, he ever had been). Since Innocent III and Philip Augustus were quite shrewd enough to harbour strong suspicions concerning John's involvement in the marriage, it might appear remarkable that

[43] Colbert-Fontainebleau, p. 319.

[44] See esp. d'Arbois de Jubainville, *Histoire des ducs et des comtes de Champagne*, 4:116, n.b.

[45] A printed copy of this letter is readily available in PL 216, cols. 975–76, and now in Evergates, ed., *The Cartulary of Countess Blanche of Champagne*, no. 12 (pp. 41–42). Unfortunately, the letter has been misread in the past, as having been sent by King John to Louis, and not vice versa.

[46] See Colbert-Fontainebleau, p. 319.

both seem to have proved ready to accept John's protestations and move on. The best explanation for this is probably the simplest – and, maybe, enhances respect for John's political judgement. The course adopted by both Innocent and Philip was much the easiest one open to them and politically expedient, once it was plain that John would not flout them (further?) to assist his notorious cousin.

In the aftermath of the marriage, the papacy set the machinery in motion for ecclesiastical sanctions against both Erard and Philippa, and their *fautores* and *coadjutores*. It was at least arguable that the greatest of the latter was, in fact, John himself, but no such sanctions were ever employed against him, even though they were duly utilized against Erard and his allies in the Champenois civil war. In fact, in all the voluminous papal correspondence on the subject of Erard's marriage, there is no clear statement, or even suggestion, that the papacy held John substantially responsible for it. It seems likely that the acceptable conduct of the king's associates at the Fourth Lateran Council, followed shortly afterwards by John's abstention from the Champenois civil war, sufficed to put an end to any period of real tension between John and the papacy. And renewed papal support for John soon showed its usefulness to him, yet again, in the run-up to the Fifth Crusade.[47]

In a similar manner, John appears to have contrived to quickly mend his relationship with the French crown. And where King Philip led, the weaker Blanche may well have felt obliged to follow. Certainly, there is no clear sign of any tensions concerning the "Erard of Brienne affair" between King John and either Philip or Blanche, when John returned to the West in 1222 (that is, shortly after Erard and Philippa had begun to formally relinquish their claim to Champagne).

Although Erard's design on Champagne ultimately failed, he was not the only member of the Brienne family who, in the end, derived substantial advantage from it. Despite denying Erard any formal endorsement in the civil war, John too gained quite notably. As has already been said, many of Erard's leading supporters in that war hailed from what could be labelled as the Brienne "affinity," strongly connected to the dynasty.[48] And several of them eventually "took an honourable exit from a hopeless situation by coming out East to take part in the Fifth Crusade" (an enterprise headed, of course, by John himself). There is no sign that they held a grudge against the king for not formally endorsing Erard's cause earlier. On the contrary, several of the chief "Erardians" – such as John's close kinsmen Simon of Joinville and Erard of Chacenay – stalwartly backed John during that crusade, when his own leadership of it came under challenge.[49] A hitherto-neglected *actum* even appears to show that a good relationship was soon restored between John and Erard

[47] See esp. *Regesta pontificorum Romanorum inde ab anno post Christo nato 1198 ad annum 1304*, ed. August Potthast, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1874–75), vol. 1, nos. 5178–79, 5180, 5209; and Perry, "The Career and Significance of John of Brienne," pp. 111, 114.

[48] See esp. d'Arbois de Jubainville, *Histoire des ducs et des comtes de Champagne*, 4:128–31.

[49] See Perry, "The Career and Significance of John of Brienne," pp. 149–53; and Guy Perry, "From John, King of Jerusalem, to the Emperor-elect Frederick II: A Hitherto-neglected Letter from the Fifth Crusade" (forthcoming).

himself (if, indeed, such a relationship had ever been lost). In early 1224, King John mediated peace in a dispute between Erard and Albert, abbot of Vauluisant.[50]

The implications of the above reconstruction can, of course, be utilized to revivify discussion concerning various broader nexus questions and themes. The "Erard of Brienne affair" underscores the continuing weaknesses, as well as the strengths, of Latin Christendom's great powers at certain local and regional levels, both in the West and in the East. Despite the relatively firm concordance of those great powers against Erard and his scheme, the "marriage" still happened, and civil war followed in Champagne, before all was settled and the great powers got what was basically their way. It is in the combination of such strengths and weaknesses, at a local-regional level, that we may discern something of the situation and opportunities for what we may term "adventurer-figures" on the make – figures like John himself, as well as Erard. The differing outcomes that emerged, as various Briennes (and, of course, others) strove to advance themselves and their dynasty, indicate how the very nature of that combination could vary according to a plethora of differing circumstances.

That there is a need for this article indicates that the relationship between the Latin West and East – certainly in this period – still requires careful, and detailed, analysis. In the "Erard of Brienne affair," we witness Erard himself (with John, it seems, covertly co-operating) essentially trying to harness the Brienne family's temporary clout in the Latin East to impact back on its homeland in the Latin West. Whilst not entirely new, this may still appear as a somewhat novel development. Perhaps, then, the key point to re-emphasize here is that it was only now, from the late twelfth century onwards, that it was becoming possible – for the first time since the pioneer days of the Latin East – for one individual to be a Latin Eastern ruler whilst also formally remaining the lord of a great seigneury back in the West. This development – well underway, it should be stressed, before the epoch of Frederick II – plainly had the potential to problematize relations between the Latin Eastern rulers in question, and at least some powers back in the West.

A final suggestion to bring this article full circle. For dynastic reasons (including his continuing retention of the county of Brienne), John was intimately bound up in this "Erard of Brienne affair," both in a manner, and to a degree, that no-one else, even amongst the great in his kingdom, could really share with him. Might this be part of the beginning of a process of "alienation" (which of course accelerated dramatically under the Hohenstaufen), by which the outlook of the kings of Jerusalem, and those of their kingdom's elite, came to critically diverge? And might this help explain those elites' future readiness to accept a regent (*bailli*) in place of the absent king – fulfilling many of the functions that were needed, yet not fixating,

[50] Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS Lat. 5468, fol. 141r. Noted in Perry, "The Career and Significance of John of Brienne," Appendix 1 ("Catalogue of little-known *acta* closely concerning John of Brienne"), no. 11.

as an actual king might well have done, largely on a political *schema* that was "alien" to those elites? In short, are we approaching here the classic case of the rejection of the ruler whose interests do not coincide sufficiently with those of the ruling class in the polity in question? Such, at least, is a good starting-point for further discussion.