

Richard I and Marriage:
How Richard I Used Marriage to Benefit Himself During the Third Crusade

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Marriage in the time of the Crusades was influential with politics and finances. These influences came from the social bonds formed through marriages and the financial and legal transactions that occurred, which allowed for the newly formed family unit to provide for themselves and continue the bloodline.¹ One such transaction would be a dowry, which was a gift of cash or land from the bride's family. The dowry was also negotiated as a precaution for the bride, ensuring that she was taken care of if she was widowed.² These transactions can be seen in Richard I's (1157–1199) life through his sister, mother, and betrothed. The institution of marriage and influence of dowry was exploited by Richard I as a source of gain, as he prepared for and began his journey to participate in the Third Crusade (1189–1192).

Richard I, also known as Richard the Lionheart or King Richard, was a major player in the Third Crusade. Not only was Richard I the embodiment of chivalric culture, well educated, and well spoken, he was also ferociously protective of his troops juxtaposing his reckless attitude towards his own safety. These traits led to him enthusiastically taking up the cross to face off with the "infidel" Saladin, even going against his father's wishes to do so.³ Richard I's passion for the crusade can be seen in the following excerpt:

Richard, count of Poitou, is the first to receive the cross. Richard, the great-hearted count of Poitou, was the first to receive the sign of the cross to avenge the Cross's injury. He proceeded everyone in this action, inviting them to follow his example. His father Henry, the king of the English, was already approaching old age. . . . Although the count took the cross, he embarked on the pilgrim journey only after he was made king on his father's death.⁴

After Henry's death, Richard I was crowned and prepared to leave on the Third Crusade, which relied on accumulating a fund for the crusaders. Richard I collected his funds from the Saladin tithe, by selling off rights and properties, and a bit later into his journey, through the institution of marriage.⁵ The building of funds through marriage was especially prevalent with large bridal

¹ Natasha R. Hodgson, *Women, Crusading and the Holy Land in Historical Narrative* (Rochester, NY: The Boydell Press, 2017), 103.

² Hodgson, *Women, Crusading and the Holy Land in Historical Narrative*, 59.

³ Thomas F. Madden, *The Concise History of the Crusades*, 1st student ed. (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), 87.

⁴ Helen J. Nicholson, ed. and trans., *Chronicle of the Third Crusade: A Translation of the Itinerarium Peregrinorum et Gesta Ricardi* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgate Publishing, 2001), 47.

⁵ Madden, *Concise History of the Crusades*, 87.

doweries, which could add cash or properties to grooms' resources.⁶ Once preparations were made, Richard I and the French monarch Philip Augustus (1165–1223) finalized their plans to set off for the Third Crusade, with Sicily as the first notable stop.⁷

On Richard I's journey to Acre, when he stopped at Sicily his motive was initially disguised by saying he wanted to get Joan (1165–1199), his sister, her dowry back from King Tancred (1138–1194). It soon became obvious that Tancred was stalling the negotiations for Joan's dowry, which provoked Richard I to attack the city, Messina, and capture it. This course of action succeeded in getting Joan's dowry, since Tancred agreed to repay it to have his city returned.⁸ At first look, King Richard I stopped in Sicily to protect his sister and help her recover her dowry, since her husband, William II (1153–1189), died allowing Tancred to take the crown. The initial description of Richard I's visit was depicted in the *Itinerarium Peregrinorum et Gesta*:

At this time the queen of Apulia [Joanna] was staying at Palermo. She had recently been widowed of her husband King William. As King William had died without an heir his widowed queen and the dowry assigned to her were being held in wardship by the aforesaid King Tancred, who had succeeded King William in the kingdom. This widowed queen was the sister of King Richard. As he was concerned about her, he compelled King Tancred to give the queen full satisfaction for the dowry due to her.⁹

However, to say that Richard I's motive was solely to get Joan's dowry back for her because he was concerned, would be false. He wanted to get her dowry back and sent King Tancred messengers instructing him "to provide his sister, the queen of Sicily, with an adequate dowry and her share of her husband the king's treasury, which belonged to her by right. There was also the matter of a gold table to be equally divided with the wife of its late owner."¹⁰ Richard I's instructions were clear in his desire to get Joan her share of her late husband's riches to pay off her dowry. However, he did not do this selflessly. Richard wanted to use his sister's dowry for his pilgrimage, not restore it to her. His underhanded behavior was described by the continuator of the chronicle of William of Tyre:

From the moment he arrived, King Richard, who was very devious and greedy, never stopped begging his sister to sell her dower and go with him on his pilgrimage. He promised that as soon as he returned to England, he would repay her all that he had received from her for her dower and would marry her to an appropriately powerful and rich husband.

⁶ Hodgson, *Women, Crusading and the Holy Land in Historical Narrative*, 95.

⁷ Madden, *Concise History of the Crusades*, 87.

⁸ Madden, *Concise History of the Crusades*, 88.

⁹ Nicholson, *Chronicle of the Third Crusade: A Translation of the Itinerarium Peregrinorum et Gesta*, 154–155.

¹⁰ Nicholson, *Chronicle of the Third Crusade: A Translation of the Itinerarium Peregrinorum et Gesta*, 164–165.

When the lady heard this promise she took counsel and agrees to her brother's wish that she should sell her dower and let him have the proceeds. The king was delighted that his sister had agreed to sell her dower, for he had already come to an agreement with King Tancred over its sale. On the advice of his men, Tancred had struck a bargain with Richard that he would buy the dower for over 100,000 marks.¹¹

Richard was persistent in his pursuit to sway Joan to sell her dowry, but he was willing to come to an agreement with her. He was only open to an agreement since he had already struck a deal with Tancred for the dowry's sale. This was the first instance King Richard I utilized the institution of marriage for his own gain by going behind Joan's back to make a deal for her dowry and used it to support his pilgrimage.

This behavior was further perpetuated by Richard I's mother, Eleanor of Aquitaine (1122–1204), who already had a complicated history with marriage and was seen as someone who did not conform to the norms of the time. Eleanor may have influenced King Richard I through her actions and past; because of her history with marriage and general disposition, Eleanor was not held in high regard. Eleanor's first marriage to Louis VII (1120–1180) took place "in 1137 when her father, Duke William X of Aquitaine, had died suddenly, and without sons, while on pilgrimage to Compostella. . . . Moreover, contemporaries believed that, as a husband, Louis VII gave her love as well as protection. But as time went by the marriage turned sour."¹² As the marriage continued, it became more evident that Louis and Eleanor were unsuited for each other and had yet to produce an heir, the primary purpose of a marriage; eventually everything culminated and led to an annulment of Eleanor's first marriage.¹³ Her second marriage ended when Eleanor's husband, King Henry (1133–1189) died, making her a widow:

Widowhood was the time when aristocratic ladies gained greatest freedom of action, controlling their dowerlands, and Eleanor took advantage of her new-found freedom. She did not imitate some noble widows and quietly withdraw to her dowerlands, even though the purpose of a dower was to rid the heir's house of his mother's presence, leaving him with only his wife beside him.¹⁴

This quote shows not only how Eleanor did not fit into the expected norms for her stature, but also how her dowerlands were used. These lands came from the dower that Richard set up. "The dower

¹¹ "The Old French Continuation of William of Tyre, 1184–97," trans. in *The Conquest of Jerusalem and the Third Crusade: Sources in Translation*, trans. and ed. Peter W. Edbury (Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgate Publishing, 2004), 11–145 at 97–98.

¹² John Gillingham, *Richard I* (Yale University Press, 1999), 25–26.

¹³ Gillingham, *Richard I*, 26.

¹⁴ Ralph V. Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine* (Yale University Press, 2009), 256.

of Queen Eleanor was recognized by oath throughout all the king's lands and given to her, so that she, who had heretofore lived from the Exchequer, might henceforth live on her own income."¹⁵ The income spoken of here ties back to the previous quote, because the dower and the dower lands enabled Eleanor to take "advantage of her new-found freedom" through her own income. These dower lands, much like Joan's, were used as a "way of ensuring that the women left behind by crusaders would be provided for."¹⁶ Yet, Eleanor's dower lands did not contribute to Richard I's crusade. Nevertheless, having her go back to their kingdom to help watch over it put him at ease. However, Eleanor's history with marriage could have shifted Richard I's view of the entire establishment. As John Gillingham observed, "everything about his later life shows that Richard was much closer to his mother than his father."¹⁷ This could have contributed to the ease at which he broke his betrothal to Princess Alice of France (1160–1220), arranged by his father, for the new betrothal set up by his mother.

Princess Alice of France and Richard I were betrothed long before Queen Eleanor found Richard's new wife. Alice and Richard I were betrothed in 1169, when Richard was eleven. This led to Alice coming to stay with Richard I's family, which was customary. However, it was rumored that Richard I's father, King Henry (II), took Alice as his mistress when she got older, and she even gave birth to the king's son.¹⁸ As John T. Appleby observed,

The king, who had formally sworn to the king of France that he would marry his sister, whom his father, King Henry, had provided for him and had long kept under close custody, was suspicious concerning that custody. He therefore considered marrying the maiden whom his mother had brought. And so that his desire, for which he ardently longed, might be fulfilled without difficulty, he summoned the count of Flanders and took counsel with him. The count was a most eloquent man, with a tongue on which he set a high price. Through his mediation the king of France released the king of England from his oath to marry his sister and granted to him in undisturbed and perpetual possession the country of the Vexin and Gisors, in exchange for 10,000 pounds of silver.¹⁹

King Richard I had sworn to King Philip that he would marry his sister, Alice. However, Richard was suspicious of his father and Alice's relationship causing him to marry Berengaria of Navarre (1165–1230), who his mother had set up for him.²⁰ This decision resulted in a rift between the two

¹⁵ John T. Appleby, trans. and ed., *The Chronicle of Richard of Devizes of the Time of King Richard the First* (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1963), 14.

¹⁶ Hodgson, *Women, Crusading and the Holy Land in Historical Narrative*, 206–207.

¹⁷ Gillingham, *Richard I*, 28.

¹⁸ Appleby, *The Chronicle of Richard of Devizes of the Time of King Richard the First*, 26.

¹⁹ Appleby, *The Chronicle of Richard of Devizes of the Time of King Richard the First*, 26.

²⁰ Madden, *Concise History of the Crusades*, 88.

kings, since betrothal was a statement of marriage that was used to protect the interests of the two families involved, and Richard was breaking their previous arrangement.²¹ Thus, Richard was led to call on the Count of Flanders to help mediate the meeting between himself and Philip; through the count's talent Richard was able to keep Vexin and Gisors and get out of their previous marital arrangement for 10,000 pounds of silver. Although, it was believed that the reason why Richard would not marry Alice was because he refused to marry his father's mistress.²² That being said, Richard I also stood to gain more by marrying Berengaria.

Queen Eleanor had arranged the new match between King Richard I and Berengaria of Navarre. The queen arranging the match would have been typical for the time, since women often arranged matches between families.²³ The chronicler Richard of Devizes described how Eleanor brought Berengaria to Richard in Sicily: "He received the queen his mother with all fitting honour, embracing her warmly, and let her in a glorious procession. Then he had her return with the archbishop. He kept for himself the maiden whom he had desired and entrusted her to the care of his sister, who had returned to the camp to meet her mother."²⁴ After the happy reception of Berengaria and Eleanor, Eleanor returned home leaving Berengaria with Richard I, who entrusted his new wife's care to his sister, Queen Joan. Richard I and his forces set off toward Acre for the Crusade. Richard of Devizes recorded, "The fleet of Richard, king of the English, sailed on the open sea and preceded in this order. In the first rank went only three ships, in one of which were the queen of Sicily and the Navarrese maiden, perhaps still a virgin. In the other two was a part of the king's treasure and arms."²⁵ Their preparations for the journey were extensive:

Richard, king of England, sent letters to England, bidding farewell to all his realm and making special mention that the chancellor was to be honoured by all men. He got ready his fleet, which was more excellent than numerous, and set sail with his army, chosen and strong, with Joan his sister and the virgin he was to marry, and with everything that might be necessary for waging war or travelling afar, on 10 April.²⁶

However, the trip did not go as planned; Richard I's fleet was swept up by a storm and blown off course towards the island of Cyprus. This alteration to the ships course resulted in some ships becoming shipwrecked on Cyprus. The vessels that crashed were looted and any survivors were taken captive by Isaac Komnenos . . . , who refused to return anything to King Richard I once he

²¹ Hodgson, *Women, Crusading and the Holy Land in Historical Narrative*, 59.

²² John Gillingham, "Richard I and Berengaria of Navarre," *Historical Research*, vol. 53, no. 128 (1980): 157–173 at 165.

²³ Hodgson, *Women, Crusading and the Holy Land in Historical Narrative*, 51.

²⁴ Appleby, *The Chronicle of Richard of Devizes of the Time of King Richard the First*, 28.

²⁵ Appleby, *The Chronicle of Richard of Devizes of the Time of King Richard the First*, 35.

²⁶ Appleby, *The Chronicle of Richard of Devizes of the Time of King Richard the First*, 28.

made it to the island. So, Richard I captured the island, which became advantageous for the Crusaders because they now had a close support and supply source for the crusades.²⁷

After the capture of Cyprus, Richard followed through with his betrothal to Berengaria of Navarre, and she was crowned queen.²⁸ The union with Berengaria increased King Richard I's crusade fund through a cash dowry and had the added benefit of allying Navarre with his kingdom. Navarre's alliance would help secure the southern border of Aquitaine, his mother's homeland. One account of the wedding festivities was described in the *Itinerarium Peregrinorum et Gesta*:

. . . a Sunday, on the feast of St Pancras [May 12, 1191] King Richard and Berengaria, daughter of the king of Navarre, were married at Limassol. The young woman was very wise and of good character. She was there crowned queen. The archbishop of Bordeaux was present at the ceremony, as was [John] the bishop of Evreux, and the bishop of Bayonne, and many other magnates and nobles. The king was merry and full of delight, pleasant and agreeable to everyone.²⁹

The first account focused on the event, with descriptions of the guests and the overall pathos of the festivities. On the other hand, the account in *The Chronicle of Richard of Devizes of the Time of King Richard the First* focused more on the timeline and laws of contracted marriages: "And now that Lent was already past and the lawful time for contracting marriages had come, he married, on the island, Berengaria, the daughter of the king of the Navarrese, whom his mother had brought to him during Lent."³⁰ Once wed, Richard I and his forces set off for Acre again. Already having a victory for the Third Crusade, he arrived at the designated meeting spot.³¹

Some might argue that Richard coincidentally gained from the institution of marriage, while on his journey to participate in the Third Crusade, since he had previously collected his own forms of income through the Saladin tithe and selling his rights and property.³² Yet, there are multiple instances to prove he did manipulate the situations to be more beneficial for himself. The first instance of this would be Richard I's involvement with Joan's dowry. King Richard I might have looked to have pure motives going to help his sister with her dowry out of concern, but he had already made a deal behind Joan's back before she agreed to sell her dowry. This exposed Richard's motivations as self-serving as he had already planned to use her dowry before he even arrived in Sicily. He immediately tried to convince Joan to sell it and made a deal with Tancred

²⁷ Madden, *Concise History of the Crusades*, 89.

²⁸ Nicholson, *Chronicle of the Third Crusade: A Translation of the Itinerarium Peregrinorum et Gesta*, 189.

²⁹ Nicholson, *Chronicle of the Third Crusade: A Translation of the Itinerarium Peregrinorum et Gesta*, 189.

³⁰ Appleby, *The Chronicle of Richard of Devizes of the Time of King Richard the First*, 39.

³¹ Madden, *Concise History of the Crusades*, 90.

³² Madden, *Concise History of the Crusades*, 87.

before he managed to persuade Joan to exchange her dowry.³³ The second instance would be getting out of his betrothal with Princess Alice of France. Richard I had a valid argument to want out of the betrothal to Alice, since she was believed to be the mistress of Richard's father. However, he could have had an ulterior motive because he managed to keep lands from Alice's betrothal dowry.³⁴ Gisors, which was one of the lands in Alice's dowry, stayed in Richard I's control until someone turned on him and took it over.³⁵ The third instance of Richard I's advantageous use of marriage was with Berengaria of Navarre. King Richard I might have cared about Berengaria and married her because of an emotional attachment, or he might have seen the betrothal as more useful than his previous one. It is difficult to believe that Richard I married Berengaria because he had affection for her, since Richard I gave away his wife to Joan to take care of her so soon after their marriage. Richard I did not travel with her either, even though they had just met, and they did not really see much of each other after the crusade. "Berengaria of Navarre was brought to Richard's court, then at Messina in Sicily, in March 1191. She accompanied the crusader-king on his journey east and they were married in Cyprus, at Limassol, on May 12, 1191. After the crusade they saw little of each other and there were no children."³⁶ However, there was political and financial gain to be had from the marriage along with a higher level of security for Richard I's kingdom through the alliance thus formed. All these experiences counter the notion that King Richard I was not trying to use each situation to serve his own interests.

Richard I exploited the marriage system during the Third Crusade for his own gain while preparing and heading to crusade at Acre. His exploitation of the system can be identified through the instances with his sister's dowry, his mother's influence, and Berengaria of Navarre's dowry. Richard I utilized his sister's dowry through the deal with King Tancred. He also used Elenora's dower and the power it gave her to further ease his worry about his kingdom needing protection. Lastly, King Richard I utilized Berengaria's dowry and alliance for protection. All these occurrences show how Richard I took advantage of the establishment of marriage to further aid himself and the Third Crusade.

³³ "The Old French Continuation of William of Tyre, 1184–97," 97–98.

³⁴ Appleby, *The Chronicle of Richard of Devizes of the Time of King Richard the First*, 26.

³⁵ Nicholson, *Chronicle of the Third Crusade: A Translation of the Itinerarium Peregrinorum et Gesta*, 173.

³⁶ Gillingham, "Richard I and Berengaria of Navarre," 157.

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