

Assignment Two: Commentary on an extract from original text.

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Module: HPHI7009 History and Historians

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Source: Medieval Sourcebook - Itinerarium Peregrinorum et Gesta Regis Ricardi: Richard the Lion-Hearted Conquers Cyprus, 1191

Extract Word Count – 499 Words.

Commentary Word Count – 1081 Words.

### A commentary on the Itinerarium Peregrinorum et Gesta Regis Ricardi by Richard De Templo

*The Emperor, moreover, armed himself and with his people patrolled the shore. The Emperor's men were ever so nicely decked out! They were carefully armed and clad in expensive, multicolored costumes, with warlike steeds which frothed and chewed at their bridles and with very beautiful mules. They came out with innumerable streamers and precious golden banners waving. They were prepared for the fight, either to hold off the attackers for a long while or else to draw out the fight courageously. They sought to frighten away our men, who were hurrying to the attack, with terrible sounding shouts, like dogs baying. The shouting affected us like dogs and the enemy hastened to attempt the impossible. They had on shore some ballistas and archers; also five galleys, sufficiently well armed and full of young men experienced in naval fighting. It seemed an unequal combat to many of our men, for they were setting out, rowing themselves, in a very few fragile skiffs to occupy a port full of men. Furthermore, they were deprived of many men who were exceedingly fatigued from the continual tossing of the sea. Also, the infantry were fully weighed down with their own weapons. The natives, on the other hand, were in their own homeland and were acting entirely of their own free will.*

*When our men advanced one by one into the skiffs, the nearer ones at first stood up to fight the balistarii and archers who were attacking them in the boats. Our balistarii turned on them and during an attack in which the two sides pelted one another with rocks many of the Cypriots were killed. The rest retreated, since they could not bear up under the weight of the fighting. The arrows were flying thick and fast and three or four of the men who were retreating flung themselves to death in the waves in order to escape from the arrows. As they fled eagerly to the fort, their men were running into each other.*

*When our men had taken their galleys and had landed their own boats, balistarii and the archers, emboldened by their first success, hurled torrents of javelins at those whom they saw trying to escape from the beach. Without delay, the Cypriots, who could not bear up under the brunt of our attack, gave up the site and retreated to firmer ground. Both our balistarii and theirs were using arrows and javelins continuously. The sky seemed clouded over by them and the serenity of the day was darkened by the showers of javelins. The city boiled with a throng of men and the whole area was occupied by a multitude of balistarii who were working persistently. Victory hung in the balance and wavered as to which party it would favor. All of our men gave the foe tit for tat, but they were making no progress, while the King deliberated for a bit over sending our brave men out of the skiffs and on to the shore.*

This commentary sets out to critically analyse the *Itinerarium Peregrinorum et Gesta Regis Ricardi*, otherwise known as *The Journey of the Crusaders and the Deeds of*

*King Richard*.<sup>1</sup> The text was written by Richard de Templo around c. 1220 CE.<sup>2</sup> However, the exact dates are disputed with scholars arguing that the text was completed between c. 1217 – 22.<sup>3</sup> The following commentary seeks to address the context surrounding when the text was produced, the significance of the language used by the author, Richard de Templo, and how his historiography has been addressed by modern scholarship. The translation used for this commentary follows that of James Brundage, 1962.<sup>4</sup>

The selected extract details the conquest of Cyprus by Richard I (reigned 1189-99)<sup>5</sup>, following his wrecking on the island which took place thirty years before in 1191 CE. Although this event has been discussed as to whether it was a purposeful conquest or one of accidental providence.<sup>6</sup> The text describes the arrival of the emperor's men<sup>7</sup> to the shore, ready to face the incoming soldiers under Richard.

Richard de Templo was an Augustinian canon of the Holy Trinity London.<sup>8</sup> Michael Staunton provides an insight into the life and potential aims behind Richard de Templo's work<sup>9</sup> suggesting that the *Itinerarium* utilised several earlier sources, but mostly utilised Ambroise's *Estoire de la Guerre Sainte* ('History of the Holy War').<sup>10</sup> The text of the *Itinerarium* is suggested to have been written between c. 1216 – 1220 CE.<sup>11</sup> Providing a discussion of the events a generation after the event would suggest that the author is unlikely to disparage the actions of Richard I, who had

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<sup>1</sup> Nicholson, Helen, "Itinerarium Peregrinorum et Gesta Regis Ricardi", in: *Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*, Edited by: Graeme Dunphy, Cristian Bratu. Consulted online on 12 December 2021 <[http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2213-2139\\_emc\\_SIM\\_000369](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2213-2139_emc_SIM_000369)> First published online: 2016 [Accessed 12/12/2021 @ 15:22pm]

<sup>2</sup> Gillingham, John. "Chronicle of the Third Crusade (Book Review) (Undetermined)." *Catholic Historical Review*, vol. 86, no. 1, Jan. 2000, pp. 108–109. EBSCOhost, search-ebscohost-com.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/login.aspx?direct=true&db=asu&AN=505849578&site=ehost-live. [Accessed 12/12/2021 @ 15:26pm]

<sup>3</sup> Vander Elst, Stefan. "The holiness of that forsaken place." *Studies in Philology* 116.2 (2019): pg. 195

<sup>4</sup> *Itinerarium Peregrinorum et Gesta Regis Ricardi*, ed. William Stubbs, Rolls Series, (London: Longmans, 1864) II, 9-29 (pp. 150-83), translated by James Brundage, *The Crusades: A Documentary History*, (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1962), 166-74. <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/source/1191cyprus.asp> [Accessed 12/12/2021 @ 15:37pm]

<sup>5</sup> The Royal Household (2021), <https://www.royal.uk/richard-i> [Accessed 12/12/2021 @ 15:48pm]

<sup>6</sup> Spencer, Stephen J. "The Third Crusade in historiographical perspective." *History Compass* (2021): e12662. Pg. 3

<sup>7</sup> The 'Emperor' in question being Isaac Ducas Komnenos of Cyprus (b. Circa 1155 CE, D. Circa 1198.) <https://www.roman-emperors.org/isaacc.htm> [Accessed 12/12/2021 @ 15:34pm]

<sup>8</sup> Staunton, Michael, 'Richard of Devizes, Walter Map, and Richard de Templo', in *The Historians of Angevin England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017): pg. 14.

<sup>9</sup> Staunton, M (2017); pg. 15.

<sup>10</sup> Staunton, M (2017): Pg. 16

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, Pg. 16

died recently in 1199 CE.<sup>12</sup> Scholars have also discussed who Richard de Templo was; arguing whether he was a former member of the Knights Templar or chaplain to the Archbishop of Canterbury.<sup>13</sup> Whether the author was a member of the Knights Templar, or a chaplain is an interesting question to answer; the descriptions given of armour, weapons, and the realities of war are given from a position of understanding. Richard writes that '*nearer ones at first stood up to fight the balistarii...Our balistarii turned on them and during an attack in which the two sides pelted one another with rocks many of the Cypriots were killed.*'<sup>14</sup> The description he gives suggests that, even if he was not an active participant in the events of 1191, he was at least familiar with late 12th century combat.

The title of the *Itinerarium* provides clues as to the nature of the source. The word *Itinerarium* translates to an account of a journey from which the modern word itinerary is reached.<sup>15</sup> The aim of Richard de Templo was to provide a written account of the journey of Richard I Lionheart to reconquer Jerusalem. The genre of an *Itinerarium* is a common one in Medieval writing, providing a description of the journey a person took, usually in the form of a religious pilgrimage and the sights and events which occurred on the way. In the opening sentence of this extract, Richard describes how '*they [the troops of the emperor of Cyprus] were carefully armed and clad in expensive, multicolored costumes, with warlike steeds which frothed and chewed at their bridles and with very beautiful mules. They came out with innumerable streamers and precious golden banners waving.*'<sup>16</sup> This description attempts to suggest that the emperor's troops were expensive and highly decorated whereas Richard I's troops are described as,

*'rowing themselves, in a very few fragile skiffs to occupy a port full of men. Furthermore, they were deprived of many men who were exceedingly fatigued from the continual tossing of the sea. Also, the infantry were fully weighed down with their own weapons.'*

Richard I's troops are portrayed as the underdogs, facing an expansive and well-prepared foe, the intention of de Templo's commentary is to celebrate the defeat of foreign troops on crusade despite both sides being Christian. In De Templo's writing

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<sup>12</sup> The Royal Household (2021), <https://www.royal.uk/richard-i> [Accessed 12/12/2021 @ 17:11pm]

<sup>13</sup> Staunton, M (2017): Pg. 15.

<sup>14</sup> *Itinerarium Peregrinorum et Gesta Regis Ricardi*, ed. William Stubbs, Rolls Series, (London: Longmans, 1864) II, 9-29 (pp. 150-83), translated by James Brundage, *The Crusades: A Documentary History*, (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1962), 166-74. <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/source/1191cyprus.asp> [Accessed 12/12/2021 @ 16:44pm]

<sup>15</sup> "Itinerarium." *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/itinerarium>. [Accessed 12 Dec. 2021. @ 17:22pm]

<sup>16</sup> *Itinerarium Peregrinorum et Gesta Regis Ricardi*, ed. William Stubbs, Rolls Series, (London: Longmans, 1864) II, 9-29 (pp. 150-83), translated by James Brundage, *The Crusades: A Documentary History*, (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1962), 166-74. <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/source/1191cyprus.asp> [Accessed 12/12/2021 @ 17:31pm]

the Greeks are the opponents to Richard I's aims, an obstacle on his way to the Holy Land.<sup>17</sup> The extract is a heroic episode designed to portray the valiant crusaders as facing off against insurmountable odds - *It seemed an unequal combat to many of our men* – where they were unsure of the outcome - *victory hung in the balance and wavered as to which party it would favor*.

The *Itinerarium Peregrinorum et Gesta Regis Ricardi* is not the only text which addresses the conquest of Cyprus on Richard I's journey to the Holy Land. Contemporaries of Richard de Templo also covered this event; Roger of Howden's *Chronica*, Ralph of Diceto's *Ymagines Historiarum*, William of Newburgh's *Historia Rerum Anglicanum* and works by Ralph of Coggeshall, Richard of Devizes and Gervase of Canterbury.<sup>18</sup> It was not only the English historians who covered this event, both French and German historians wrote of the conquest of Cyprus including Andreas of Marchiennes (d. 1202), Guido de Bazoches (d. 1203), Robert of Auxerre (d. 1211), William the Breton (d. Post 1226) and two anonymous sources one of Laon and a second of Normandy.<sup>19</sup>

Modern historians have also analysed the whole of the *Itinerarium Peregrinorum et Gesta Regis Ricardi* attempting to analyse which sources have inspired Richard de Templo and what impact this had on the content. For example, the earlier portion of the *Itinerarium* known as *Itinerarium Peregrinorum* or *IP<sub>1</sub>* breaks off in 1190 having been composed by an unknown author, argued by Helen Nicholson, as being a clerk in service to Baldwin of Canterbury.<sup>20</sup> Analysis has also been undertaken examining how Cypriot sources viewed the events covered in the *Itinerarium Peregrinorum*. Nicholas Coureas examines three sources; including two minor anonymous works and the work of Neophytos the Recluse dealing with whether they corroborate the events detailed in western sources such as the *Itinerarium Peregrinorum*.<sup>21</sup>

In conclusion the *Itinerarium Peregrinorum et Gesta Regis Ricardi* provides a contemporary account of the English conquest of the Christian kingdom of Cyprus. The island of Cyprus became a source of resources for the ongoing Third crusade and the aim of Richard de Templo was to present and glorify the leadership of Richard I as well as his fellow crusaders.<sup>22</sup> The episode of the conquest of Cyprus is covered in other contemporary sources; English, French, German and Cypriot all of whom are engaged within the Third Crusade. The language used by De Templo in his description of the initial landing of troops in Cyprus indicates De Templo's crusading experience even though he was writing 30 years after the event.

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<sup>17</sup> Vander Elst, Stefan. (2019): pg. 201

<sup>18</sup> Neocleous, Savvas. "Imaging Isaak komnenos of cyprus (1184-1191) and the cypriots: Evidence from the latin historiography of the third crusade." *Byzantion* (2013): Pg. 300.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 301-303

<sup>20</sup> Spencer, Stephen J. (2021): pg. 8

<sup>21</sup> Coureas, Nicholas. "The Conquest of Cyprus During the Third Crusade According to Greek Chronicles from Cyprus." *The Medieval Chronicle VIII*. Brill Rodopi, 2013. Pg. 194

<sup>22</sup> Vander Elst, Stefan. (2019): pg. 207

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