

The Portuguese Marriage Negotiations: A Reply

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IN WRITING of the marriage negotiations with Joanna of Portugal, it was not my purpose to write a bibliography of the subject or to assess the various primary and secondary sources — a task which, in my opinion, Father Gomes dos Santos has already admirably accomplished. The latter's quotations from the famous chronicle of Rui de Pina (with which I am familiar) would make any student of the subject aware of its importance, but all works on this period refer to it frequently. Dr. Court answers her own point on the silence of de Pina on the marriage negotiations and therefore his absence from the passages to which I made reference, viz., his silence for the crucial months June-September 1485 when he was probably in Rome. But history did not come to a halt in his absence, either in England or Portugal, and use must be made of the other sources available.

There is no need to be disingenuous. Richard III turned out to be a loser, and one can imagine, when the news of Bosworth reached Aveiro, the red faces of those who had pressed so eagerly to marry Joanna off to him, including her brother the King. This alone would go a long way towards explaining why some Portuguese historians seem to have transferred the suit to Charles VIII of France or Henry VII,¹ while Rui de Pina (apparently) leaves a convenient gap. The Portuguese made at least two attempts after 1485 to make a marriage alliance with the new dynasty in England,² and the less said about the unfortunate negotiations in the last days of Richard III the better. For this reason, Antonio Vasconcello may be particularly significant, like his contemporary, Sir George Buck. He wrote after the final extinction of the House of Avis (1580) and the loss of Portuguese independence when, although remoter from events, it may have been easier to speak the truth.

I find it curious that Dr. Court should wish to attribute all the credit for initiating the marriage negotiations to the Portuguese and not to Richard III. The truth is probably irrecoverable in the absence of any written instructions from Richard to Brampton, but apart from the convention of a gentleman asking for a lady's hand rather than vice versa, widowed English monarchs seem not to have remarried until eighteen months or so after the death of the

Queen, and for the Portuguese to initiate negotiations so soon without some indication from England could have been highly indelicate. Unlike Dr. Court, I should not have found Richard III (even without the inconvenience of Henry Tudor) the most eligible male in Europe for Joanna since, as I said in my article, the Archduke Maximilian had been on the marriage market for three years — her first cousin and already provided with a family.¹ That Richard apparently preferred to ally himself to a minor power like Portugal rather than the rising star of Spain raises doubts about his diplomatic wisdom. One may wonder why he preferred Joanna to the more nubile Isabella of Aragon — apart from the former's seniority in descent from John of Gaunt.

As I have already said,⁴ Portuguese and Spanish historians seem confused over which of the Woodville brothers was in the Peninsula some time between 1485 and 1487. This is not surprising since Richard was not Scales and Edward was not a Count, and I should remain hesitant over the identification. There are no 'must have beens' in history, and where sufficient evidence is lacking the historian must leave questions open or offer only hypotheses. *Pace* Dr. Court, I did not say that 'Scales' (whoever he was) went to Portugal with Brampton but that he followed later. But the *Memorial* refers to *os embaixadores* and *emissarios ingleses* (in the plural) in Lisbon that Summer.⁵ Who was Brampton's colleague?

I should dispute a few points of fact with Dr. Court, which I hope to take up in a later article. My purpose in writing on Princess Joanna was to draw attention to an aspect of Richard III's foreign policy which has been shamefully neglected. I consciously interpreted the material in the light most favourable to Richard, and for this I make no apology — there is a serious imbalance to be redressed in his favour in this matter. If the next major study of Richard's reign takes due note of the Portuguese marriage negotiations a proper assessment of him will make a little progress because as I see it, they have two inescapable implications. Simply to acknowledge that they took place (and here Dr. Court and I are one) is to recognise that Richard was an acceptable son-in-law in Spain and brother-in-law in Portugal (even as husband for a princess of renowned virtue and piety). Secondly, so far from his support crumbling away in England, the Kings of those countries evidently regarded him as firmly seated on his throne in the Summer of 1485: in other words, Bosworth was a freak.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Domingos Mauricio Gomes dos Santos, *O Mosteiro de Jesus de Aveiro* (Lisbon 1963), pp.90-2, 94.
2. Gladys Temperley, *Henry VII* (London 1914), pp.99, 339. In 1490, the proposal was for a marriage between the King of Portugal's cousin (probably Manuel of Beja) and a sister of Elizabeth of York. If, as Dr. Court suggests, 'Scales' was in Portugal negotiating this in 1486 he does not seem to have made much progress. In 1505, the proposal was for a marriage between Prince Henry (later Henry VIII) and a daughter of King Manuel.
3. *The Ricardian*, no. 80 (March 1983), p.142.
4. *Ibid.*, p.142.
5. The relevant passages are quoted in dos Santos, p.93.