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# Royal daughters of Jerusalem and the demands of holy war

Deborah Gerish

It can be difficult to recover the situations of Frankish<sup>1</sup> royal women via twelfth-century sources from the Crusader States because holy war shaped this evidence so dramatically. Bernard Hamilton made this point succinctly in one of the first articles to consider these women: so little was known about Jerusalem's queens because they did not go to war.<sup>2</sup> Females who did not become queens recede even further into oblivion when we try to get a rounded picture. Only guarded conclusions are possible. In the case of King Baldwin II's four daughters, active in the late 1120s to 1150s, we can see how he positioned his children across the Crusader States, presumably to strengthen Frankish alliances. Evidence also shows that the eldest daughter, Melisende, became queen of Jerusalem in 1131 and contributed to holy war through various activities, generally ones associated with proper feminine behavior. Because most details about all four women originate from a single source written several decades after the fact, we can be more certain about the way royal daughters served the rhetorical demands of holy war. In his *Historia*, William of Tyre 'used' all four women to illustrate a particular story about the Crusader States: that the Franks could not keep possession of the Holy Land unless they collaborated with each other and the rest of Christendom in holy war. William wrote his extensive chronicle in the 1170s and 1180s, while serving as archbishop of Tyre, royal tutor, and chancellor of the kingdom.<sup>3</sup> His history is the only surviving narrative source for the period 1127 to 1184, so it has had considerable influence on historians.

William was not alone in promoting the theme of Frankish unity. Crusaders first established European states (known collectively as Outremer, the Crusader States or the Latin East) in the Levant between 1098 and 1106,

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<sup>1</sup> Crusades scholars have long used the term 'Franks' or *pullani* for the people of European descent who founded and inhabited these states, to distinguish them from crusaders who took short-term vows, fought in the East, and then afterwards returned to Europe.

<sup>2</sup> B. Hamilton, 'Women in the Crusader States: The Queens of Jerusalem 1100-90' in: D. Baker ed., *Medieval Women* (Oxford 1978) 143-174: 143.

<sup>3</sup> P.W. Edbury and J.G. Rowe, *William of Tyre, Historian of the Latin East* (Cambridge 1988) 13-22.

and the Franks who inhabited these small polities – the Kingdom of Jerusalem, the counties of Edessa and Tripoli, and the principality of Antioch – needed to fight continuously if they wanted to survive. Unsurprisingly, several chroniclers in Outremer portrayed the latter military efforts as perpetual holy wars, different in nature from (though related to) the short-term campaigns launched by crusaders from Europe.<sup>4</sup> Also unsurprisingly, these Frankish authors generally indicated that the kings of Jerusalem bore great responsibility for waging holy war on behalf of all the Crusader States, although technically these kings only had jurisdiction in Jerusalem. In sum, these writers perceived that the Franks in Outremer had to combine forces against a Muslim enemy. At the same time, non-narrative evidence demonstrates that the kings of Jerusalem shared these attitudes.

Until Saladin's conquest of Jerusalem in 1187, these rulers identified themselves as holy warriors fighting to retain the Holy Land. If Christendom lost control of these territories, it would forfeit the holiest of

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<sup>4</sup> Five chronicles produced in Outremer explored events after the First Crusade. Ralph of Caen's *Gesta Tancredi* focused on events in Cilicia and Antioch from 1095 to 1105; *The Gesta Tancredi of Ralph of Caen: A History of the Normans on the First Crusade*, B.S. Bachrach and D. Bachrach ed. (Farnham 2010). Walter the Chancellor similarly emphasized Antioch's position in his narrative, covering events up to 1122; T.S. Asbridge and S. Edgington ed., *Walter the Chancellor's The Antiochene Wars* (Farnham 1999). Thomas S. Asbridge has examined Walter the Chancellor's perspective on holy war in 'The "Crusader" Community at Antioch: The Impact of Interaction with Byzantium and Islam', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 9 (1999) 305-325. Fulcher of Chartres wrote in Edessa and Jerusalem for the period 1098 to 1127, and he clearly recognized the necessity for ongoing warfare to preserve the Crusader States; H. Hagenmeyer ed., *Historia Hierosolymitana* (Heidelberg 1913) (hereafter FC); H.S. Fink and F.R. Ryan ed., *A History of the Expedition to Jerusalem* (Knoxville, TN 1969). The anonymous *Historia Nicaena vel Antiochena* author reworked earlier histories, including Fulcher of Chartres, around 1143 as he chronicled Jerusalem from 1098 to 1123; D. Gerish, 'The Second Crusade and Royal Identity' in: J.T. Roche and J. Möller Jensen ed., *The Second Crusade in Perspective* (Turnhout, forthcoming). Lastly, William of Tyre, writing from about 1170 to 1184, narrated events across Outremer from 1098 to 1184, which necessitated the use of Walter the Chancellor and Fulcher of Chartres, among other sources; William of Tyre, *Chronique*, R.B.C. Huygens ed. (Turnhout 1986) (hereafter WT); E.A. Babcock and A.C. Krey ed., *A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea*, I-II (New York 1943). All citations to FC and WT come from the Latin editions, and all translations provided here are my own.

relics: the very land where Christ had lived and died.<sup>5</sup> No other Catholic ruler could rival the prestige of ruling in the Holy Land, but if Jerusalem were lost, no other ruler would incur such shame.

This unusual combination of military needs and religious justification has dominated research on gender roles in Outremer: scholars have considered how much power royal women could in fact exercise.<sup>6</sup> Because the royal family in the First Kingdom of Jerusalem produced many females (see Diagram 1), by the Third Crusade, a man who married one of these women had a clear claim to the throne. But given the importance – and the purpose – of narrative sources, we might better ask how Frankish chroniclers wove these women into their histories to meet the demands of holy war. As I have argued elsewhere, royal wives only appeared in the sources when they intersected with holy war in some fashion.<sup>7</sup> Did the same pattern hold true for women born into the royal family, whether or not they

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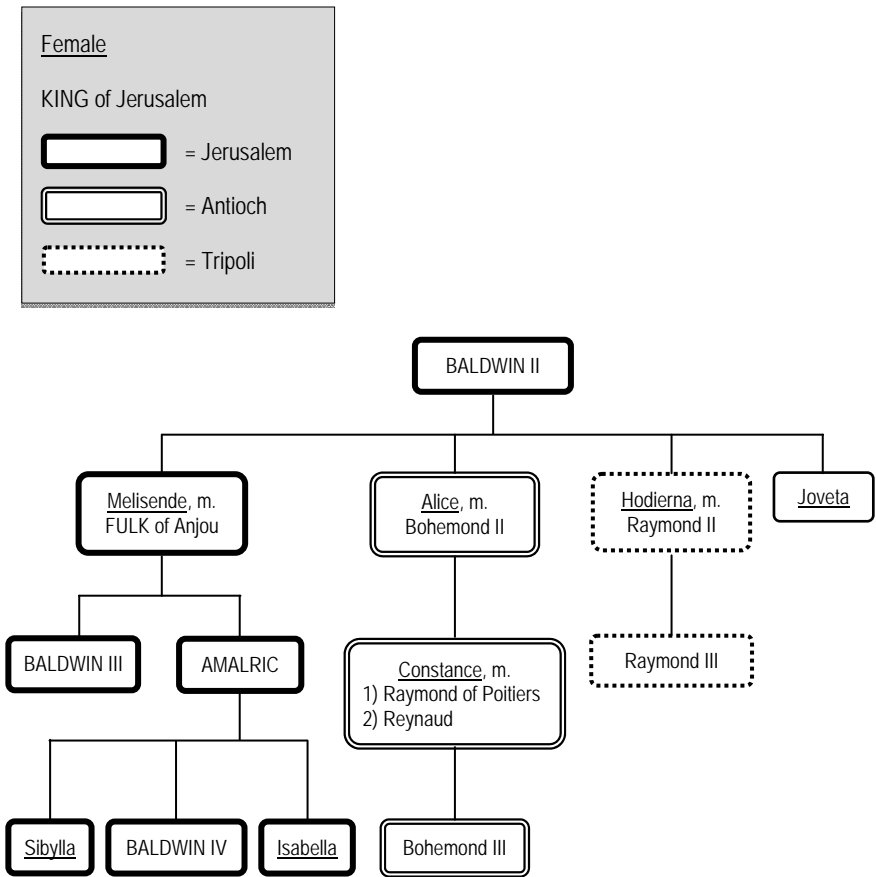
<sup>5</sup> For the state of perpetual warfare, J. Riley-Smith, 'Peace Never Established: The Case of the Kingdom of Jerusalem', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 28 (1978) 87-102; Idem, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading* (Philadelphia 1986) 21. For royal identity associated with holy war: D. Gerish, 'Shaping the Crown of Gold: Constructions of Royal Identity in the First Kingdom of Jerusalem', Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Santa Barbara (Santa Barbara 1999).

<sup>6</sup> H.E. Mayer, 'Studies in the History of Queen Melisende', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 26 (1972) 95-182; Hamilton, 'Women'; L. Huneycutt, 'Images of Queenship in the High Middle Ages', *Haskins Society Journal* (1989) 61-69; H.E. Mayer, 'The Beginnings of King Amalric of Jerusalem' in: B.Z. Kedar ed., *The Horns of Hattin* (Jerusalem 1992) 141-135; S. Lambert, 'Queen or Consort: Rulership and Politics in the Latin East, 1118-1228' in: A. Duggan ed., *Queens and Queenbridge in Medieval Europe* (Woodbridge 1997) 153-169; L. Huneycutt, 'Female Succession and the Language of Power' in: J.C. Parsons ed., *Medieval Queenship* (New York 1998) 189-201. S. Lambert, 'Crusading or Spinning' in: S. Edgington and S. Lambert ed., *Gendering the Crusades* (New York 2001) 1-15; H.J. Nicholson, "'La roine preude femme et bonne dame": Queen Sibyl of Jerusalem (1186-1190) in History and Legend, 1186-1300', *Haskins Society Journal* 15 (2004) 110-24; D. Gerish, 'Gender Theory' in: H.J. Nicholson ed., *Palgrave Advances in the Crusades* (Houndmills 2005) 130-147; H. Gaudette, 'The Piety, Power, and Patronage of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem's Queen Melisende', Ph.D. dissertation, City University of New York (New York 2005).

<sup>7</sup> D. Gerish, 'Holy War, Royal Wives, and Equivocation in Twelfth-Century Jerusalem' in: N. Christie and M. Yazigi ed., *Noble Ideals and Bloody Realities: Warfare in the Middle Ages* (Leiden 2006) 119-144.

became queens? Did they take actions that contributed to holy war, and thus to royal identity? Did chroniclers perceive them as doing so?

Diagram 1. Marriage connections between the Crusader States (simplified).



Baldwin II's four daughters provide an excellent case study for these questions, and my answers will appear in three parts. Three of them married and transmitted royal blood to their children. As Diagram 1 indicates, their spouses and descendants held powerful positions throughout Outremer, and some of them later made claims to the throne. Baldwin II seems to have placed his daughters carefully to shore up bonds between the four Crusader States.<sup>8</sup> Yet it does not appear that Baldwin II deployed them to reinforce his identity as king, except indirectly by strengthening all the Frankish states. Melisende, the oldest daughter, seems to have acted to heighten royal status as wife of King Fulk (r. 1131–1143) and mother of King Baldwin III (r. 1143–1163), and at least one sister was important for these plans. Non-narrative sources as well as William of Tyre attest to her patronage activities, suggesting that she wanted to elevate her family above noble ones in Outremer. Finally, the chronicler William of Tyre employed all these women to advance his agenda in the *Historia*. He painted a family portrait in which Melisende's sisters became foils for the queen's consensus-building leadership. In William's narrative, the two youngest daughters, Hodierna and Joveta, rarely took political actions, while Alice's attempts to seize power in this period damaged the Crusader States. Melisende's political activities, however, consistently benefited Outremer. Yet we must remember that William's stories cannot easily be verified. Most evidence for Alice's activities comes from this chronicle, and it is very difficult to uncover what Baldwin II or Melisende *actually* did or why they did it.

Little information has survived for these women, despite their high status. Research on kingship has drawn on royal charters and letters, chronicles written by men attached to the court, lawbooks, monumental artwork, coins and seals, and other written evidence. For most royal women, only a few charters survive to complement their depictions in William of Tyre's chronicle. In fact, only one of Baldwin II's daughters emerges with any clarity: Melisende. Yet even in her case, we face difficulties. Within a decade of her death in 1161, William of Tyre started to compose his chronicle, and he seems to have whitewashed some less savory incidents in which she was involved. Hans Eberhard Mayer has drawn upon charter and

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<sup>8</sup> H.E. Mayer, 'The Succession to Baldwin II of Jerusalem: English Impact on the East', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 39 (1985) 139–147; A.V. Murray, *The Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem: A Dynastic History* (Oxford 2000) 132–133, 146–210.

sigillographic evidence in an effort to uncover these buried stories.<sup>9</sup> Peter Edbury and Jonathan Rowe, following Mayer's lead, argued that William of Tyre needed to emphasize Melisende's strengths in part because her son Amalric had commissioned William's history of the kingdom.<sup>10</sup> In other words, research on all the daughters, and especially Melisende, has depended heavily on chronicle evidence, and this scholarship has not always gone far enough in accounting for William's purposes.

Before we consider William's perspective on the four sisters, written several decades after the fact, it will be helpful to review what little we know about their lives from earlier sources.

### Arranging for the daughters, late 1120s

King Baldwin II deliberately 'placed' his daughters for the benefit of the crown, but it is not clear that he did so out of a concern for royal identity. Certainly his highly practical marriage strategies cemented ties between Jerusalem and the other Crusader States while simultaneously linking the kingdom to European noble families, as Diagram 1 shows. But these strategies are not exclusively royal; in countless examples from medieval Europe, kings and nobles married off children to create vertical or horizontal bonds between their families. In fact, elite Frankish families had already produced a complex network of marriage bonds throughout the Crusader States.<sup>11</sup> Mayer has suggested that there was a system at work in the royal family of Jerusalem, both in Baldwin II's lifetime and beyond: the eldest daughter married a western magnate and younger daughters married into the ruling houses of the other Crusader States. Only in extreme situations would princesses marry lords within the kingdom. This strategy was supposed to prevent the rise of rival royal dynasties, and thus by implication it would strengthen the position of kings and queens in Jerusalem.<sup>12</sup> While it is a plausible theory, Mayer's view rests largely on

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<sup>9</sup> Mayer, 'Queen Melisende'.

<sup>10</sup> Edbury and Rowe, *William of Tyre*, 61-84.

<sup>11</sup> T.S. Asbridge, 'Alice of Antioch: A Case Study of Female Power in the Twelfth Century' in: P.W. Edbury and J. Phillips ed., *The Experience of Crusading* (Cambridge 2003) 29-47: 30-31.

<sup>12</sup> H.E. Mayer, *Bistümer, Klöster und Stifte in Königreich Jerusalem* (Stuttgart 1977) 254.

William of Tyre's assessment, and we will see below that William wanted his readers to perceive the royal family in specific ways.

Earlier evidence combined with William of Tyre's chronicle shows that Baldwin II provided for his four daughters around 1126-1127, presumably when it became clear that his wife would not produce any more children.<sup>13</sup> Baldwin II's decisions about their fates indicate pragmatism, if nothing else. Melisende married Fulk V of Anjou in 1127 on the understanding that Fulk would become the next king of Jerusalem.<sup>14</sup> The second daughter, Alice, married Bohemond II of Antioch in 1126, and Hodierna, the third daughter, married Raymond II of Tripoli sometime between 1127 and 1138, perhaps after a long betrothal.<sup>15</sup> The youngest daughter, Joveta, took the veil probably in 1127. She had served as a hostage for her father's ransom payment after Baldwin II was released from imprisonment by Balak in 1124.<sup>16</sup> Because there were rumors that Joveta had been raped, she could not be married and entered the convent of St Anne in Jerusalem.<sup>17</sup>

It is impossible to tell if Baldwin II made these arrangements to enhance royal identity, to strengthen his family's position, or merely to build a network of relationships throughout the Crusader States and Europe. Charter evidence does not resolve this issue. During Baldwin II's lifetime, the daughters occasionally appeared in witness lists, and after Melisende's betrothal by proxy, she was called *haeres regni* if she co-issued or consented.<sup>18</sup> After the king's death, no clear pattern emerges for Alice, Hodierna, and

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<sup>13</sup> Mayer, 'The Succession to Baldwin II'; R. Hiestand, 'Chronologisches zur Geschichte des Königreiches Jerusalem im 12. Jahrhundert', *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 35 (1970) 542-555.

<sup>14</sup> The particulars of this arrangement have sparked some scholarly dispute; see Hamilton, 'Women'; Mayer, 'Queen Melisende'; Idem, 'The Succession to Baldwin II'; A.V. Murray, 'Baldwin II and His Nobles: Baronial Factionalism and Dissent in the Kingdom of Jerusalem, 1118-1134', *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 38 (1994) 60-85: 79-80.

<sup>15</sup> Mayer, *Bistümer*, 243-257 offers the following birthdates for the daughters: Melisende, after 1109; Alice, around 1111; Hodierna, 1115 or 1117; Joveta, 1119 or 1120. Alice's marriage appears in FC 3.51, repeated in WT 13.21; Hodierna's marriage is noted in WT 17.18, 17.19.

<sup>16</sup> FC 3.44, repeated in WT 13.16.

<sup>17</sup> Mayer, *Bistümer*, 243-57 and 'The Succession to Baldwin II'.

<sup>18</sup> H.E. Mayer, 'Angevins versus Normans: The New Men of King Fulk of Jerusalem', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 133 (1989) 1-25.



Joveta, though of course since few charters survive, any pattern would be skewed. Alice issued four or five charters naming her father as well as her husband in the early ones, then only referencing Bohemond II in the later ones.<sup>19</sup> Thomas Asbridge has proposed that when Alice needed more authority in one of the charters, she added every connection she could claim, including her father's name and rank.<sup>20</sup> Yet Alice's strategy was not copied by the next generation of Antiochene princes: when her son-in-law's charters noted the consent of his wife Constance, he mentioned his own non-royal title and occasionally Constance's non-royal father.<sup>21</sup> If links to the king of Jerusalem mattered, they only did so for Alice. The same pattern seems to hold for Hodierna, whose link to a royal father only occasionally appeared in charters. When her husband Raymond II of Tripoli mentioned her consent, he sometimes identified her as daughter of the king of Jerusalem, but not consistently.<sup>22</sup> Finally, in the one charter Joveta issued, the scribe noted that Queen Melisende and King Baldwin III were present, but did not indicate that they were Joveta's sister and nephew.<sup>23</sup> In sum, if Baldwin II had intended for his daughters to perceive and present themselves as royal, neither they nor their marital families consistently did so – with the notable exception of Melisende.

### Melisende and royal identity, 1130s to 1150s

In marked contrast to her father, Melisende appears to show awareness of royal identity, though as always evidence for religious patronage has to be interpreted carefully. William of Tyre mentions projects for which no charters survive, such as Melisende's foundation and endowment of the abbey of Bethany, where her youngest sister Joveta became abbess in 1143.<sup>24</sup> This is just one of many public works projects that Melisende

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<sup>19</sup> Summaries of the charters appear in R. Röhrich, *Regesta regni hierosolymitani* and *Additamentum* (1893; repr. New York 1960) (hereafter RRH) 148, 150, 151a, 193a, 234a, 263.

<sup>20</sup> Asbridge, 'Alice of Antioch', 39–42.

<sup>21</sup> RRH 178b, 194, 195, 199, 228, 253, 263, 263a, 282, 292, 298, 314, 336a.

<sup>22</sup> RRH 179, 191, 193, 198, 211, 212, 233, 270.

<sup>23</sup> RRH 327.

<sup>24</sup> WT 15.26. For endowments, see J. Folda, *The Art of the Crusaders in the Holy Land, 1098–1187* (Cambridge 1995) 130–133. Mayer has argued that Melisende feared

undertook as Fulk's queen and Baldwin III's co-ruler or regent. She supported the convent of St Anne's, the *Templum Domini* (pictured on kingly seals), the church of St James, and possibly St Samuel's church. Melisende commissioned her own tomb at Notre-Dame in the Josaphat Valley, believed to be the burial site of the Virgin Mary and which also housed the remains of Melisende's mother, Queen Morphia.<sup>25</sup> Finally, Melisende and Fulk, the first rulers to be crowned in the Holy Sepulcher, started an ambitious renovation of this church, with the queen playing a major role.<sup>26</sup> Much of the construction occurred between 1140 and 1149, in time for the church's dedication on 15 July, 1149, which marked the fiftieth anniversary of the crusaders' victory in Jerusalem. Since Fulk died in 1143, Melisende must have overseen the last stages while Baldwin III was still a minor. Overall, Melisende may have been the most generous royal supporter of religious institutions and art projects connected to them.

Melisende's projects obviously underscored her piety (an attribute every medieval queen was supposed to possess) and her wealth, which was unparalleled in the Crusader States. But these highly public activities emphasized another element of royal identity: they connected the royal family to holy sites associated with Old or New Testament figures.<sup>27</sup> Royal

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competition from her youngest sister, for Joveta was the only daughter born after Baldwin II became king and thus the only *porphyrogenita*. The position as abbess supposedly compensated for Joveta's exclusion from the succession, just as the other sisters had become a princess and a countess; *Bistiimer*, 254-257 and 372-402.

<sup>25</sup> Folda, *Art of the Crusaders*, 133-137, 246-249, 251, 324-328; L.-A. Hunt, proposes that Melisende also commissioned a wall painting at Jerusalem's Damascus Gate. 'Damascus Gate, Jerusalem, and Crusader Wallpainting of the Mid-Twelfth Century' in: J. Folda ed., *Crusader Art in the Twelfth Century* (Oxford 1982) 191-214, H. Gaudette, 'The Spending Power of a Crusader Queen: Melisende of Jerusalem' in: T.M. Earenfight ed., *Women and Wealth in Late Medieval Europe* (New York 2010) 135-148.

<sup>26</sup> Folda, *Art of the Crusaders*, 119, 177-245.

<sup>27</sup> Gaudette makes this point compellingly for Bethany, 'Spending Power', 140-142; Murray does so for the Josaphat Valley monastery, *The Crusader Kingdom*, 129-130. See A.J. Wharton and Therese Martin for parallel cases in, respectively, fourth-century Jerusalem (Emperor Constantine) and twelfth-century Castile (Queen Urraca): A.J. Wharton, 'The Baptistry of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem and the Politics of Sacred Landscape', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 46 (1992) 313-325 and T. Martin, 'The Art of a Reigning Queen as Dynastic Propaganda in Twelfth-Century Spain', *Speculum* 80 (2005) 1134-1171.

ties to the Holy Sepulcher in particular served this purpose, especially after the dedication of 1149, which was commemorated in an inscription. As Jaroslav Folda has noted: "The place of the dedication was (...) linked to those rulers who safeguarded the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem".<sup>28</sup>

Lastly, a more private source complements my contention that Melisende unambiguously worked to promote her family's identity as royal: the Melisende Psalter.<sup>29</sup> Through images and words, this artifact provides some indication of how Melisende perceived her own position within the kingdom. Though admittedly the evidence is circumstantial, art historians have agreed that Melisende was closely involved in production of this Psalter around 1134 and that she was its first owner.<sup>30</sup> Art historians identify

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<sup>28</sup> Folda, *Art of the Crusaders*, 229.

<sup>29</sup> Ibidem, 137-163, plates 6.10a, 6.10b, 6.11; J. Lowden, 'The Royal/Imperial Book and the Image or Self-Image of the Medieval Ruler' in: A.J. Duggan ed., *Kings and Kingship in Medieval Europe* (London 1993) 226-228; B. Kühnel, 'The Kingly Statement of the Bookcovers of Queen Melisende's Psalter', in *Tesserae: Festschrift für Josef Engemann* (Münster 1991) 340-357; J.S. Norman, 'The Life of King David as a *Psychomachia* Allegory: A Study of the Melisende Psalter Book Cover', *University of Ottawa Quarterly* 50 (1981) 193-201; H. Buchthal, *Miniature Painting in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem* (Oxford 1957). B. Zeitler summarizes studies by Folda, Kühnel, Borg, and Buchthal in 'The Distorting Mirror: Reflections on the Queen Melisende Psalter (London, B.L., Egerton 1139)' in: R. Cormack and E. Jeffreys ed., *Through the Looking Glass: Byzantium Through British Eyes* (Aldershot 1995) 69-84. J. Backhouse usefully investigated the British Library's acquisition of the Psalter in 'The Case of Queen Melisende's Psalter: An Historical Investigation' in: S. L'Engle and G.B. Guest ed., *Tributes to Jonathan Alexander: The Making and Meaning of Illuminated Medieval & Renaissance Manuscripts, Art & Architecture* (London 2006) 457-470.

<sup>30</sup> Folda concludes that the psalter belonged to a laywoman, not a nun; *Art of the Crusaders*, 151. In 2008, Theresa Vann suggested to me in a private communication that the ivory covers indicate a liturgical rather than private use for this psalter. Also see J. Brodahl, *The Melisende Psalter and Ivories (BL Egerton 1139): An Inquiry into the Status and Collecting of Medieval Art in Early Nineteenth-century France*, Ph.D. dissertation, Brown University (Providence 1999). This little-noticed dissertation proposes that the ivory covers were added in the eighteenth or nineteenth century. Brodahl argues that the front came from England or Regensburg c. 1160 while the back was a modern addition made to coordinate with the front. If Brodahl is correct, her theory would explain why a private psalter now bears covers more appropriate for a liturgical book.

it as a product of the Holy Sepulcher scriptorium – a church that, as we have seen, had extremely close ties to the royal family.

While we have no idea if anyone besides the owners ever saw the Psalter, its art program seems unequivocal. Bianca Kühnel notes the obvious parallels between Fulk and King David: the ivory front cover depicted scenes from David's life, and the back showed an emperor engaged in the six corporal acts of mercy.<sup>31</sup> Folda has added another layer to this interpretation: the silk binding, embroidered with tiny crosses, connected the Old Testament to the Last Judgment via Christ's crucifixion.<sup>32</sup> Thus Fulk, and presumably all the Frankish kings of Jerusalem, could be likened to Christ. As crusaders or as leaders of holy war, the rulers of the First Kingdom sacrificed themselves to keep the Holy Land in Christian hands, just as Christ had sacrificed himself for Christendom.

But these activities involved only males. How could Queen Melisende contribute to holy war if she could not ride into battle? She could pray – not only to the Father and the Holy Spirit, but also to Christ and the saints who had lived in the Holy Land. The Psalter, like Melisende's other patronage activities, depicted her as a stereotypical queen, a feminine wife and mother, whose piety helped the realm. These queenly activities connected the royal family to Christian holy places, which her male kin preserved for Christendom.

The Psalter indicated that God's people were engaged in warfare, like many other contemporaneous psalters from Western Europe.<sup>33</sup> In the Melisende Psalter, however, such warfare may have been more than spiritual. Indeed, the prayers arguably strengthen the case for Melisende as initial owner of the Psalter. Since space prohibits a full discussion of the psalter, we will consider just two striking examples. A number of the prayers following psalms speak of fighting an enemy or enemies, and occasionally context suggests that these enemies were physical ones.<sup>34</sup> In fact, some

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<sup>31</sup> Kühnel, 'The Kingly Statement'.

<sup>32</sup> Folda, *Art of the Crusaders*, 157-158.

<sup>33</sup> K.M. Openshaw, 'Weapons in the Daily Battle: Images of the Conquest of Evil in the Early Medieval Psalter', *Art Bulletin* 75 (1993) 17-38. She refers to this struggle as a spiritual *psychomachia*.

<sup>34</sup> For discussions of liturgical prayers in psalters, see K.M. Openshaw, 'The Battle between Christ and Satan in the Tiberius Psalter', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 52 (1989) 14-33; J.F. Hamburger, 'A Liber Precum in Sélestat and the

prayers seem to refer to the First Crusade, later military campaigns involving Europeans who took crusading vows, or events that involved only Frankish settlers in Outremer. The prayer for Psalm 44 reads:

Lord, stand up in our aid and pluck us from the dishonors of the more vice-ridden ones, and you who in the presence of our fathers overcame the realms of enemy peoples, snatch us, who seek your face in enlightenment, from the pursuing enemies.<sup>35</sup>

Similarly, the prayer for Psalm 136 reads:

Omnipotent God, be mindful of our humility and have compassion on us, and you who once gave to our fathers the land of the adversaries in right of property [*in hereditatem*], we ask that you may restore us, free from sins, in your right of property.<sup>36</sup>

This language plainly draws attention to the kingdom's foundation. It also marks the female petitioner as a participant in holy war. Given the allusions in the latter example to right of property, I think we can safely identify this book as the property of Queen Melisende. Her public activities and this much more private example suggest that she wanted to set apart her family from others in the Crusader States by pointing out how the royal line waged constant holy war.

If Melisende did indeed want to push her family's royal credentials, we must then ask why another source from mid-century makes no reference to her whatsoever. The anonymous author of the *Historia Nicaena vel Antiochena* explained that Baldwin III commissioned a history of the kingdom. If (as I suspect) Melisende was involved in commissioning the

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Development of the Illustrated Prayer Book in Germany', *Art Bulletin* 73 (1991) 209-236; Openshaw, 'Weapons'.

<sup>35</sup> BL Egerton 1139, f. 67v, Psalm 44: 'Exurge domine in adiutorium nostrum et erue nos ab obprobriis vitiorum · et qui coram patribus nostris inimicarum gentium regna vicisti · a persequentibus inimicis vultus tui quesumus illuminatione nos eripe.'

<sup>36</sup> BL Egerton 1139, f. 166v, Psalm 136: 'Memor esto humilitatis nostrae et miserere nostri omnipotens deus · et qui quondam patribus nostris terram adversariorum in hereditatem donasti · quesumus ut nos a peccatis liberos in tuam hereditatem restituas.'

history, no one recorded this fact.<sup>37</sup> Thus if the queen mother did have a hand in the chronicle's creation, its content repeated the message of the Psalter covers: both works downplayed the queen to focus on the king.

### **William of Tyre's portrayal of the sisters, 1170s to 1180s**

Perhaps the chronicler William of Tyre, Melisende's most ardent champion, drew some inspiration from Melisende's activities when he wrote his history, for he remarked on the queen's patronage. But far more obviously, he set up contrasts between Melisende and her sisters to serve his larger purposes in writing. While scholars have noted William's attitudes towards these women, they have not fully appreciated how he essentially gave them different roles to play within the narrative. Episodes involving the sisters, as well as Alice's daughter Constance of Antioch, helped him make much larger points in the *Historia* concerning the royal family and the need for consensus.

My interpretation here runs somewhat counter to the tide of prevailing wisdom on Melisende. Ever since Mayer produced his seminal study on the charters of this queen's reign,<sup>38</sup> crusades specialists and historians of medieval queenship have followed his lead in comparing the realities of Melisende's position to the way William portrayed her. Edbury and Rowe, for instance, remarked on the inconsistency of William's depiction: the chronicler praised Melisende's rulership but organized his history around kings. By weaving her into the books on her husband and son, William undermined his own case for her power as co-ruler or regent.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Gerish, 'Second Crusade'.

<sup>38</sup> Mayer, 'Queen Melisende'.

<sup>39</sup> Edbury and Rowe, *William of Tyre*, 82-83. They, like Mayer, considered both Melisende and Alice to be dangerous political players. Edbury and Rowe, *William of Tyre*, 82: 'Melisende can be seen as an ambitious, scheming woman who clung to power, and whose behaviour endangered the stability of the kingdom. In this she can be thought of as a true sister of Alice of Antioch, whose reckless ambition William had condemned'. Mayer, 'Queen Melisende', 98: 'Of the younger sisters, Alice married the Prince of Antioch and proved to be as domineering and given to politicking as Melisende herself'. Jonathan Phillips, though also intent on the 'real' Melisende, does not condemn her efforts to rule but instead explores the difficulties medieval women faced as political actors; J. Phillips, *Holy Warriors: A Modern History of the Crusades* (New York 2010) 74-97.

Sarah Lambert believed that William was ‘deeply uncertain about the role of the queen in political society’ based on his treatment of two infamous incidents (discussed below).<sup>40</sup> These views assume that William had more-or-less accurate knowledge about events in the 1130s to 1150s and, working against his usual ‘Rankean’ zeal for the truth of events, endeavored to cast certain episodes in a light more flattering to the royal family.<sup>41</sup> Yet in my interpretation, the chronicler evinced no ambivalence whatsoever about Melisende, because this queen maintained consensus and worked tirelessly to safeguard the Latin East. She surpassed her husband and even her son Baldwin III – by far, William’s favorite king – in this regard. And she certainly outshone her sisters, whom William carefully deployed like pieces on a chessboard to advance this theme. We must remember that for William, Melisende as a historical person was less important than her symbolism as a unifier, and even royal legitimacy played second fiddle to consensus amongst the Franks.

There is no question about Melisende’s importance within the *Historia*. Edbury and Rowe have ably examined William’s insistence on the legitimacy and continuity of the royal line, in which the queen ‘transmitted something of the heroic aura of the First Crusade’.<sup>42</sup> Lambert has called Melisende the lynch-pin in William’s history of the dynasty.<sup>43</sup> I propose a different metaphor: Melisende served as the keystone in an arch connecting rulers who had participated in the First Crusade to rulers who had not. She not only formed a dynastic link; William illustrated the strengths and weaknesses of majestic kingship with anecdotes involving Melisende and her sisters. Melisende symbolized the strengths, because she consistently

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<sup>40</sup> Lambert, ‘Queen or Consort’, 155-158, quotation from 155.

<sup>41</sup> Obviously a chronicler from the twelfth century did not train under Leopold von Ranke or any of Ranke’s students. Yet modern scholars seem to appreciate William most for exemplifying the sort of mindset they were trained in, typically remarking on his impartiality, lack of bias, and objectivity in favorable terms. Edbury and Rowe make such comments throughout their study (see especially *William of Tyre*, 52-56), as does Mayer in his voluminous research drawing on this chronicle (see especially ‘Queen Melisende’, 96). R.H.C. Davis characterized William’s impartiality as ‘remarkable by medieval standards...[though] certainly not absolute’; R.H.C. Davis, ‘William of Tyre’ in: D. Baker ed., *Relations between East and West in the Middle Ages* (Edinburgh 1973) 64-76: 65.

<sup>42</sup> Edbury and Rowe, *William of Tyre*, 61-84: 83.

<sup>43</sup> Lambert, ‘Queen or Consort’, 155.

preserved consensus within the Crusader States, whereas the sisters either worked against this unity or did little to affect it either way.

William's emphasis on consensus came from the context in which he wrote. By the 1180s, when he was revising and finishing his history, the Crusader States faced myriad problems.<sup>44</sup> Saladin had unified Egypt and Syria under his rule, presenting a formidable military challenge to Frankish territories, just as Baldwin IV's incapacity from leprosy left the succession in some question. It seemed impossible that anyone within Frankish society could unite its bitterly opposed factions. Though the chronicler never openly stated his preferred solution, he obviously wanted Catholic clergy in Outremer and Europe to build up support for the Franks.<sup>45</sup> He may have hoped that a competent military leader would travel from Europe to provide aid, as had happened in the recent past.<sup>46</sup> No holy warrior, however, would be able to help the Crusader States if the Franks could not work together. Since consensus and unity had marked the history of the Latin East until about 1170, William wanted to show that (good) history could repeat itself. To save the present, he had to show the past in the best possible light.

Rulers from the past fell into two categories with different characteristics. The 'crusader' rulers demonstrated a humility suitable for men who had participated in the First Crusade.<sup>47</sup> Each man's legitimacy, strong character, and ability to maintain consensus rarely came into question, and these three aspects of royal identity complemented each other. Then William changed his approach for the later rulers, who inherited their royal power instead of earning it on crusade. These 'majestic' kings had legitimacy, and with the proper character they could keep all the Crusader States unified under Jerusalem's protective wings. But there was a catch: majestic

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<sup>44</sup> Edbury and Rowe, *William of Tyre*, 16-22, 61-65; P.W. Edbury, 'Propaganda and Faction in the Kingdom of Jerusalem: The Background to Hattin' in: M. Shatzmiller ed., *Crusaders and Muslims in Twelfth-Century Syria* (Leiden 1993) 173-189; B. Hamilton, *The Leper King and His Heirs: Baldwin IV and the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem* (Cambridge 2000)

<sup>45</sup> Edbury and Rowe, *William of Tyre*, 29.

<sup>46</sup> William himself had witnessed and participated in such negotiations; *Ibidem*, 15-17.

<sup>47</sup> Edbury and Rowe consider William's treatment of Godfrey, Baldwin I, Amalric, and Baldwin IV; *Ibidem*, 70-78. My own research on these and other First Kingdom rulers is still in progress, and space limitations prevent a full discussion of it here.



rulers had to have the proper character, otherwise factions would develop at court and drive a wedge into Frankish society.

Thus William cheerfully applauded any action taken by kings or queens that heightened the distance between ruler and ruled, unless or until that action became divisive. When Melisende founded the abbey of Bethany so her sister could be an abbess instead of a simple nun, she enhanced royal majesty in a suitably feminine manner, like any good queen. Yet Fulk's poor memory for faces could upset the normal workings of a majestic court.<sup>48</sup> Recipients of the king's favors, confident that they could act as patrons to others, would approach Fulk as intermediaries for political clients only to discover that the king no longer remembered them. In William's eyes, Fulk lacked a necessary quality to make majestic kingship function properly.

Other episodes illustrating this theme involved Melisende and her sisters. It is easiest to see how William glorified Melisende with a comparative approach, first by considering dangerous rebellions from the 1130s and then by looking at the 1152 civil war and its aftermath. The early rebellions paint vivid pictures of Alice and Melisende. Alice nearly destroyed royal power and thus consensus among the Franks, while Melisende worked to unify Jerusalem under her husband's rule.

William always cast Alice in the worst possible light. Her father Baldwin II acted out of the most magnanimous spirit when he gave her to Bohemond II, heir to Antioch. Once Bohemond arrived in Outremer in 1126 the king met him at the port, immediately handed over the principality with no fuss, and insisted that Bohemond marry his second daughter.<sup>49</sup> Alice did not repay her father's generosity, however. She fomented plot after plot against him, Fulk, and her daughter Constance, rightful heir to Antioch. Fortunately, her father, her brother-in-law, and then her son-in-law Raymond of Poitiers caught these misdeeds in time; Alice ended up in exile.<sup>50</sup> Her pathetic end, living alone on her dower lands in Laodicea, seemed a just punishment for her divisive career. According to the chronicler, these incidents were not simply cases of men restraining their unruly female kin. Baldwin II and Fulk intervened out of their sense of duty to the Crusader States as a whole. Once they reined in Alice, local powers

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<sup>48</sup> WT 14.1.

<sup>49</sup> WT 13.21, embellishing FC's account. Baldwin II had been acting as regent in Antioch.

<sup>50</sup> WT 13.27 (Alice refuses her father entrance to the city), 14.4-14.7 (rebels against King Fulk), 14.20 (plots to marry Constance's fiancé herself).

such as the Latin patriarch and the prince of Antioch could keep her under control. Alice, on the other hand, had acted to break apart the Crusader States. Worst of all, she tried to subvert the proper relationship between them, where Jerusalem's king was *de facto* head of the Latin East.

William's damnation of Alice helped emphasize Melisende's sterling qualities. The queen too got involved, at least peripherally, with a dangerous revolt when her cousin Hugh of Jaffa rebelled against Fulk around 1134.<sup>51</sup> Unlike her sister, she always acted to help the Crusader States. William explained how Hugh of Jaffa, a cousin of the queen, had a falling out with King Fulk. Though no one knew the true cause, there were rumors that Hugh aroused Fulk's wrath by refusing to obey the king, or Fulk got jealous of Hugh's relationship with Melisende. Fulk then convinced Hugh's stepson to accuse Hugh of treason. Yet Hugh's supporters remained loyal to their lord until he made an alliance with the Muslims of Ascalon. Once Fulk attacked Jaffa, Hugh's men switched sides. Finally, after mediators made peace, an assassin assaulted Hugh, believing that he would earn Fulk's approval. Overall, then, several men behaved badly over issues of prestige and preferment. The trappings of a majestic court could drive men wild.

How did Melisende behave while the men were falling out? William mentioned rumors of a romance between Melisende and Hugh, noting that there seemed to be some proof but also proposing that Melisende and Hugh met so often because they were cousins.<sup>52</sup> Then Melisende disappeared from the narrative for several chapters as Hugh's rebellion escalated. However, William interrupted his story to describe the Damascus conquest of Banyas, where the prisoners included a Frankish noblewoman, wife of Renier le Brus.<sup>53</sup> When William went back to the rebellion story with

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<sup>51</sup> WT 14.15-18. Interpretations of William's account appear in Mayer, 'Queen Melisende', 102-113; Idem, 'Angevins *versus* Normans'; A.V. Murray, 'Dynastic Continuity or Dynastic Change? The Accession of Baldwin II and the Nobility of the Kingdom of Jerusalem', *Medieval Prosopography* 13 (1992) 1-25: 23-24; Idem, 'Baldwin II and His Nobles', 75-85; Lambert, 'Queen or Consort', 155-156. Asbridge has proposed that Alice may have been involved in Hugh's revolt; Asbridge, 'Alice of Antioch'. If Hugh really did rebel to preserve Melisende's interests while Fulk cut her out of power, it seems plausible that Melisende too played a larger – or different – role in this incident than William allowed her. Might the chronicler have tried to deflect attention from Melisende's involvement by glorifying her and denigrating her sister?

<sup>52</sup> WT 14.15.

<sup>53</sup> WT 14.17.

Hugh's banishment and subsequent death in Apulia, Melisende returned to the scene.<sup>54</sup> The chronicler explained that Fulk's party now grew afraid of the queen, for the accusations against Hugh had touched her with *infamia* (ill repute) and his departure caused her sadness. She became angry with her husband and his faction to the point where they did not feel safe in her presence. At last mediators smoothed things over between the royal couple. Afterwards Fulk constantly asked for her consent, in one of the most famous passages from William's history:

From that day, the king became so uxorious that where previously he had exacerbated her wrath, now he appeased it, because not even in light matters did he try to proceed in any respect without her knowledge.<sup>55</sup>

Typically, scholars cite this passage as evidence for a role reversal in medieval power relations: Melisende now had the upper hand over a hen-pecked Fulk.<sup>56</sup> William, however, never said so or evinced any displeasure at this turn of events. He never implied that Melisende took an official role in government; nor did he say that she claimed power in her own name. William simply remarked on the queen's new influence and approved. Melisende's involvement in government, however vague, was appropriate, and her husband had finally figured this out. Fulk did not grow weak; instead he finally began to rule wisely.

Why, then, would William mention rumors about the queen's infidelity if he was so concerned about the royal line's legitimacy? A clue appears in the chapter after Fulk and Melisende's reconciliation. Here William returned to an earlier incident, the raid from Damascus. Once Fulk arranged a truce, the Banyas prisoners came back home, and Renier le Brus reunited with his wife until he learned that she had been unfaithful. Then the woman retired to a convent. While William may simply have related

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<sup>54</sup> WT 14.18.

<sup>55</sup> WT 14.18: 'Rex autem ab ea die ita factus est uxorius, ut eius, quam prius exacerbaverat, mitigaret indignationem, quod nec in causis levibus absque eius conscientia attemptaret aliquatenus procedere.'

<sup>56</sup> Mayer, 'Queen Melisende', 109-110; Edbury and Rowe, *William of Tyre*, 81; Mayer, 'Angevins *versus* Normans', 1-3; Lambert, 'Queen or Consort', 168-69; Huneycutt, 'Female Succession', 198-199.

events in chronological order,<sup>57</sup> it seems more likely that he inserted the story about Renier's wife to heighten the contrast with Melisende; otherwise there seems little reason to include these details. And if my reading is correct, readers were supposed to see that if Melisende had really cheated, Fulk would have put her away or she would have been honorable enough to step down.

Thus I propose that William included the romance angle to show that Melisende was a unifier, not a divider. Whether the king or his faction really did question Melisende's marital fidelity,<sup>58</sup> or whether William simply made up this element of the story, her subsequent anger was not unfounded. William portrayed it as righteous indignation from a queen justly concerned about her honor. Her reaction meant she was innocent of adultery and – most importantly – possessed of the proper character for a majestic ruler, because the incident allowed her to renegotiate her relationship with Fulk.<sup>59</sup> From William's perspective, there was no question that men at court had damaged consensus. Melisende's behavior ultimately helped heal these rifts and restored her relationship with Fulk, both in government and in private. She had already contributed to holy war by producing a legitimate heir.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> William's detour into another story is not unusual; he did this throughout the chronicle. Edbury and Rowe note that William generally tried to present events in chronological order, though Mayer has derided William's dating; Edbury and Rowe, *William of Tyre*, 38; Mayer, 'Queen Melisende', 96-98.

<sup>58</sup> Murray, 'Baldwin II and His Nobles', 79-80; Mayer, 'Queen Melisende', 109-110.

<sup>59</sup> Stephen D. White has proposed that medieval chroniclers imputed emotions such as anger to other people based on what the author believed appropriate to the situation; S.D. White, 'The Politics of Anger' in: B.H. Rosenwein ed., *Anger's Past: The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY 1998) 127-152: 137. Richard E. Barton's comments about righteous royal and noble anger also apply here; R.E. Barton, "'Zealous Anger" and the Renegotiation of Aristocratic Relationships in Eleventh- and Twelfth-Century France' in: Rosenwein, *Anger's Past*, 153-170: 159. Some useful examples of this process appear in M. Chibnall, 'Women in Orderic Vitalis', *Haskins Society Journal* 2 (1980) 105-121. Margaret Howell has examined chronicle and epistolary reactions to displays of anger by Isabella of Angoulême and Eleanor de Montfort; M. Howell, 'Royal Women of England and France in the Mid-Thirteenth Century: A Gendered Perspective' in: B.K.U. Weiler and I.W. Rowlands ed., *England and Europe in the Reign of Henry III (1216-1272)* (Aldershot 2002) 163-181: 173.

<sup>60</sup> James Brundage has noted that Jean d'Ibelin's thirteenth-century legal treatise drew such a comparison: male vassals performed military service while female ones

Sometime after the reconciliation, she bore a second son, Amalric, who would ultimately succeed his brother.

The chronicler returned to the theme of unity when recounting Melisende's joint reign with Baldwin III. William never explained exactly how Melisende and her son shared power: was she regent or co-ruler? He did not, however, show any ambivalence about the queen's role in government, even when he discussed the civil war between them around 1152. William of Tyre clearly favored Melisende's side, denouncing the young king's 'wicked plan' to besiege his mother in Jerusalem after they had worked out how they would divide the kingdom.<sup>61</sup> This is an important point, because just as clearly, Baldwin III was his favorite of all Jerusalem's rulers. Moreover – just as he had done with Hugh of Jaffa's rebellion – William treated this civil war as an outgrowth of majestic kingship.

The most obvious parallels between Hugh's revolt and Baldwin III's 'rebellion' lie in their origins, where majestic rulership encouraged factions to emerge at court. In the latter incident, Baldwin III's initial decision to rule alone came at the urging of young friends, who disliked the fact that Melisende showed favor to her cousin and constable Manasses of Hierges. The constable's subsequent haughtiness easily demonstrated how preferment at court could damage consensus. Yet William did not blame Melisende for this situation. The queen did exactly what he thought a ruler should do; she behaved like the best rulers of Jerusalem before her:

For his [Baldwin III's] mother was a most prudent woman, having utterly complete experience in all secular matters, plainly subduing the demands of her female sex, for she had put her hand to great things, striving both to emulate the magnificence of the best princes and to pursue their enthusiasms with no-less footsteps. And so while her son was still below the age of puberty, she ruled the realm with such industry and administered [it] with such management, that she could deservedly be said to have equaled her progenitors in that regard. As long as her son was willing to be governed by her counsel,

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married to fulfill obligations to their overlords; J. Brundage, 'Marriage Law in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem' in: B.Z. Kedar, H.E. Mayer and R.C. Smail ed., *Outremer* (Jerusalem 1982) 258-271: 271. A woman's *service de leur cors* in the marriage-bed would, presumably, include child-bearing.

<sup>61</sup> WT 17.13-14. Unfortunately, William does not explain why some of Melisende's supporters quickly abandoned her at this point; he simply denounces these people as fair-weather friends.

the populace enjoyed the greatest tranquility and matters in the kingdom proceeded in a prosperous way.<sup>62</sup>

In contrast, the chronicler condemned Baldwin III's friends and the king's immaturity. William composed speeches for the anonymous intimates that revealed his own mindset. The first appears in his thumbnail sketch of the young king's reign, where William praised Melisende for her wise government and rebuked Baldwin III for giving in to his 'more unreliable friends' who urged him to oust Melisende from government. They persuaded him by 'saying that it was unworthy for a king, who was properly set above all others, to always hang at the breasts of his mother like the son of a private person'.<sup>63</sup> William employed similar language when he described the events of 1152:

These men incited the lord king to withdraw power [over] the realm from his mother, saying that now he had reached a mature age, it was shameful both that he be managed by feminine authority and that he

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<sup>62</sup> WT 16.3: 'Erat autem mater mulier prudentissima, plenam pene in omnibus secularibus negociis habens experientiam, sexus feminei plane vincens conditionem, ita ut manum mitteret ad fortia et optimorum principum magnificentiam niteretur emulari et eorum studia passu non inferiore sectare. Regnum enim, filio adhuc infra puberes annos constituto, tanta rexit industria, tanto procuravit moderamine, ut progenitores suos in ea parte equare merito diceretur; cuius quamdiu regi voluit consilio filius, optata tranquillitate gavisus est populus et prospero cursu regni procedebant negocia.' Though medieval writers commonly used language about women who had risen above their feminine natures, as chancellor William might have had knowledge of letters that Bernard of Clairvaux had written to Melisende; see Huneycutt, 'Female Succession'. References to imitating one's ancestors also appeared in royal charters issued by Melisende and her son; D. Gerish, 'Ancestors and Predecessors: Royal Continuity and Identity in the First Kingdom of Jerusalem', *Anglo-Norman Studies* 20 (1997) 127-150.

<sup>63</sup> WT 16.3: 'Verum attendentes quibus mens erat levior quod eorum studiis, quibus dominum regem involvere nitebantur, domine regine multum obviabat prudentia, dominum regem, more aliorum eiusdem etatis 'cereum in vicia flecti, monitoribus asperum', suis inducunt persuasionibus, ut a matris tutela se subtrahens regnum ipse moderaretur avitum, indignum esse dicentes regem, quem omnibus aliis preesse convenit, quasi privati filium semper ad matris ubera dependere.'

should commit the governing work of his own realm to someone other than himself.<sup>64</sup>

These rhetorical devices are not subtle. William had his anonymous scapegoats equate royal power with masculinity and maturity, then the chronicler openly expressed his rejection of this idea. For William, the sex of Jerusalem's ruler was less important than that ruler's wisdom and ability to maintain consensus. Indeed, in his thumbnail sketch of Baldwin III, he used the civil war as an example of the king's inexperience and poor judgment. The chronicler also criticized other symptoms of immaturity: Baldwin III liked to hang out with his friends, gamble, and fornicate with other men's wives. William claimed that Baldwin III indulged in these activities 'more than was suitable to royal majesty', but once he grew up, the king's sexual continence made up for his youthful indiscretions.<sup>65</sup> Just as his father had done, Baldwin III tried to rule alone, but he did not (yet) have the character to do so. Fortunately for the Crusader States, this youth soon grew into his power.

Baldwin III's female kin served to reinforce William's point. Once the king won the civil war, he healed all rifts within Jerusalem and effectively managed Tripoli and Antioch too, for the other polities needed his aid. Melisende, her two youngest sisters, and her niece all appeared in these incidents to help the chronicler develop this theme. Again, comparisons reveal William's purpose.

Throughout the chronicle, William devoted little attention to the two youngest daughters, Hodierna and Joveta. When their nonpolitical activities underscored their piety or the royal family's majesty, the chronicler commented favorably. For example, William devoted an entire chapter to Melisende's foundation of Bethany, endorsing her careful attention to the convent's fortifications, her extensive donations of land, and her gifts of costly ecclesiastical vessels and vestments. He praised the queen for properly securing the approval of the patriarch and nuns before installing

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<sup>64</sup> WT 17.13: 'Hii dominum regem impellebant etiam ut a matrem a regni amoveret potestate, dicentes eum iam adultam pervenisse etatem, indignum esse et femineo regeretur arbitrio et regni proprii curam alii quam sibi committeret moderandam.'

<sup>65</sup> WT 16.3. William Aird has explored a parallel case from England where full manhood required access to power; W. Aird, 'Frustrated Masculinity' in: D.M. Hadley ed., *Masculinity in Medieval Europe* (London 1999) 39-55.

Joveta as abbess.<sup>66</sup> William also noted that Joveta educated Amalric's daughter Sibylla at Bethany, again reinforcing royal connections to the convent.<sup>67</sup> Finally, Joveta and Hodierna cared for Melisende when she lay dying in 1161 – a suitable activity for royal daughters, for it did not involve them in matters of state.<sup>68</sup>

However, it is much more difficult to see these two sisters as wise and effective political actors in the *Historia*. Did William downplay their actions (if he knew of any)? If so, did his authorial decisions stem from their gender or from other reasons? It seems highly likely that he wanted readers to perceive Hodierna and Joveta as foils for Melisende and Baldwin III, the capable rulers in Jerusalem who preserved consensus across all the Crusader States. William had already cast Alice in the role of political villain; Hodierna and Joveta most often involved themselves in family matters. It may be significant that when William disparaged the patriarchal election of 1157, he did not name the sister of Melisende who supported an unsuitable candidate.<sup>69</sup>

The chronicler's silence regarding Hodierna is particularly telling, for as countess and then regent of Tripoli she probably involved herself in state affairs on a regular basis. Yet in the chronicle, she took action only twice (beyond caring for the dying Melisende), just after the civil war's resolution in 1152. William explained that Hodierna and Melisende visited Antioch to help Baldwin III: Alice's daughter Constance needed to remarry, and the whole family tried to persuade her.<sup>70</sup> After these efforts failed, Baldwin III and Melisende traveled to Tripoli to reconcile Hodierna and her husband, Raymond II, who were going through some unspecified marital discord. These efforts came to naught, and the sisters set off for Jerusalem just before Raymond was killed outside the walls of Tripoli.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> WT 15.26: 'indignum enim videbatur ei, ut regis filia tanquam una ex popularibus in clauastro alicui subesset matri.'

<sup>67</sup> WT 21.2.

<sup>68</sup> WT 18.27.

<sup>69</sup> WT 18.20; Edbury and Rowe identify this sister as Hodierna. As a rule, the chronicler did not mind royal involvement in ecclesiastical elections if the electee turned out to benefit both the Church and the kingdom; Edbury and Rowe, *William of Tyre*, 85-92.

<sup>70</sup> WT 17.18.

<sup>71</sup> WT 17.19.



Hodierna did not play a pivotal role in either of these incidents. William used her unimportance to glorify a much more important person: her nephew Baldwin III. These incidents featuring Hodierna showcased the importance of marriage among great families: when women failed to marry or to sustain their marriages, unity within the Crusader States might collapse. Although Baldwin III could not solve these problems involving his female kin, at least the king intervened to hold the Latin East together. Hodierna's relative ineffectualness at Antioch and at home in Tripoli underscored Baldwin III's vigor and willingness to act. By presenting the countess as a virtual nonentity, William could shine a spotlight on the effective actions or at least the proper motives of Baldwin III (and Melisende).

William of Tyre's *Historia* understandably overshadows all other evidence for Baldwin II's daughters. The women lived in a part of the twelfth century for which even William had little evidence. These gaps in the record make it nearly impossible to reconstruct the careers of these women without reference to the chronicle. The archbishop told vivid, engaging, and seemingly authoritative stories about the princesses. But we have no way to gauge their accuracy, since only one of these daughters left behind a large number of charters.

In addition to the problem of William's sources, we cannot easily separate his interests in the 1170s and 1180s – simply put, preservation of the Crusader States – from information he provided about women who had lived decades earlier. How relevant were William's highly visible concerns when these women lived? I constantly tell my history students that when we engage in historical enquiry, we claim to be examining the past, yet our questions arise from the problems and issues that face us *now*. William worked the same way, seeing these women's past actions through the lens of holy war. And so his situation drove him to portray Baldwin II's daughters in ways that emphasized Frankish consensus and Jerusalem's primacy within the Crusader States. William's rhetorical devices have effectively buried the reality of these women's lives. Even with constant attention to the chronicler's context, audience, and purpose, we cannot recover them, because if the evidence ever existed, it has become a casualty of holy war.