Power Wielded by the Queens of Jerusalem

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HIST 482

December 10th, 2025

Introduction

In 1185, Princess Sibylla, daughter of the former King of Jerusalem, prepared to become the Queen, having agreed to set aside her husband in exchange for the crown and a promise she could pick his replacement; when the time came, she married the same man again. The courtiers of Jerusalem, who each distrusted her husband and hoped to marry her themselves, reacted with shock and horror, decrying her trickery in the histories which survive to us today. Perhaps they should have expected her to make such a move to control her own fate – after all, they were in the Kingdom of Jerusalem in the middle of the turbulent Medieval Middle East, and the women there had been developing their own complicated relationships with power as long as there had been a Latin kingdom in Jerusalem.

For a brief period in the heart of the Middle Ages, from 1099 AD to 1201 AD, Catholic monarchs reigned over an area of the holy land often called the Kingdom of Jerusalem. In modern scholarly work, the alternative region name Outremer (as it was referred to in French sources, literally meaning overseas), has begun to grow in popularity as a term to refer to the land controlled by the Latin Kingdom. Especially since during the crusader era, the Kingdom of Jerusalem was further subdivided into 4 feudal states: Edessa, Antioch, Tripoli, and confusingly, the Kingdom of Jerusalem. Each region of Outremer had its own ruling nobles who were primarily of French, Italian, and later German descent and usually came from their motherlands either in crusader armies or to participate in one of the region's political struggles, especially when there was an upcoming royal wedding or succession.

During the century from the first crusade to the fourth, 9 monarchs who reigned in Jerusalem (a further two held the title in exile but never visited Outremer) and between them, 14 royal spouses attempted to rule beside them. Most of these monarchs had short, constantly unsteady reigns full of conflict internally and with the equally turbulent Muslim powers of the day. This, combined with illnesses claiming the lives of several kings quite young, meant that a third of the inheriting monarchs of Jerusalem were daughters who had to fight for their own power as monarch separate from that of the outsider men they marry.

Control over their marriage was not the limit of power for a Queen of Jerusalem. For a woman coming to the throne through her own inheritance or a woman marrying the king, they regularly found themselves in the court without their husband, as the constant conflicts and disorder in the kingdom sent the kings and their men away from Jerusalem for years on end, during which there was a political vacuum their wives could step into. However, that often proved an arduous task, as the courts of Jerusalem were constantly at war with each other, and the monarchs of Jerusalem were not selected for their ability to rule. Spouses who married into the crown of Jerusalem, especially its queens, were selected for and defined by their dowries, but by leveraging the relationships they built within the court and the royal family, those women still were able to play the games to steer the court, and eventually, when their husbands were incapable, rule the Kingdom of Jerusalem in their names, shaping crusader history.

Historiography

When examining the crusades and the women who lived through them, there exists a paradox of having both plenty of primary sources and none. The crusades are one of the most well-documented periods of medieval history, with a mix of sources surviving through history in different languages by authors from across the church and nobility. Unfortunately, none of these

authors cared to write about the women around them beyond a single appearance as one of a handful of stereotypical caricatures: the good wife, the temptress, or perhaps the woman of God.[1] The voices of the women themselves are entirely lost to history, out of reach for modern scholars. Instead, their story unfolds between the lines of other sources, hidden behind layers of bias that differ from source to source but must always been considered. Examining the three main sources on the early crusader kingdom reveals the three different major biases that must be considered when examining crusader primary sources to understand women.

Each crusade chronicle covers similar periods in time but came to exist in wildly different contexts and thus must be considered differently when analyzed. William of Tyre's *A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea* was written in the court of Jerusalem and thus are the recalling of a man personally witnessing the events he's writing about, albeit on the payroll of the royal family, which colors his recording of some events, especially when contrasted with some contemporaries. Despite that bias, his recollection includes more mention of the actions of women in Outremer than almost any other. *Deeds Done Beyond the Sea* discusses women but so under heavy levels of bias and stereotyping[2], which often stems from how well they fit into his religious biases surrounding the role women *should* be playing – he praises women who play the good wife and has harsh critique for the actions of those outside the traditional roles.[3]

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[1] This proposed lens through which to examine women in crusade chronicles was originally proposed by Buck specifically in the context of William of Tyre, but I found it an interesting research lens to apply to other chronicles as well, if it does have to be adjusted a little to account for other sources having other biases involved in creating the stereotyped images of women. Buck, Andrew D. "William of Tyre, Femininity, and the Problem of the Antiochene Princesses." *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 70, no. 4 (June 20, 2019)

[2] Hodgson, Natasha. 2005. "Nobility, Women and Historical Narratives of the Crusades and the Latin East."

[3] Buck, Andrew D. "William of Tyre, Femininity, and the Problem of the Antiochene Princesses." *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 70, no. 4 (June 20, 2019)

Many of these gendered and religious expectations exist in other crusader chronicles, interplaying with the biases of those sources written from the events recorded. Abbot Guibert of Nogent wrote *The Deeds of God though the Franks* not long after the events he writes about but without ever visiting the holy land or meeting any of the subjects of his text. Instead, he's working to combine several sources through the lens of Guibert's own bias towards ensuring credit ends up with the "correct" noblemen.[4] That fixation results in a text that mentions the deeds of women less than any other, yet still has a single key contribution: Guibert has a self-acknowledged fascination with what drives crusaders to do hard things[5] and thus examines the relationships between the crusader kings and the women around them, providing key insight.

Albert of Aachen's *History of the Journey to Jerusalem* serves as the third source that covers the kingdoms of Outremer, comes not from the author's original recollection nor building on an existing text, instead being a record and compilation of the tales the author heard from crusaders traveling home and spending the night in his monastery. He recounts these tales with a strong bias towards the nobility – the high born a person was, the more excuses he'll make, especially for those who share his French roots.[6]

Building upon the primary sources, much early scholarship on the role women played in the kingdom of Jerusalem came from the pen of Bernard Hamilton, a respected professor of medieval history. His collection of essays from 1999, *Crusaders, Cathars and the Holy Places*, contains one of the earliest studies of the Queens of Jerusalem[7], collecting the stories of these

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[4] Levine, Robert, *Introduction* for *The Deeds of God through the Franks*. (1970) pg 3
[5] Levine, Robert, *Introduction* for *The Deeds of God through the Franks*. (1970) pg 4
[6] Susan Edgington, *Introduction* for *Albert of Aachen's history of the journey to Jerusalem. Books 7-12: The Early History of the Latin States, 1099-1119*. (2013) pg3-6.

[7] Bernard Hamilton*, Cathars and the Holy Places* (Ashgate Publishing Company, 1999), pg 143.

women form as many sources as possible, including several sources which have never been translated into English. Thus, Hamilton's works make the information contained within accessible to the generation of scholars which followed him, allowing them to widely cite Hamilton's work to form the baseline for modern scholarship. Historians have built upon Hamilton's basic studies of the lives of these women to more in-depth studies on what it means to be a woman during the crusades, authors such as William Buck and Natasha Hodgson examining the weight and determinants of gender[8] in Outremer and how they affect the sources and records of lives in the crusades.[9]

Selection and Arrival of a Queen

Every Queen who reigned in Jerusalem was first selected for it for their bloodline, their wealth, and their connections, either inside the kingdom or outside its borders. The women were not selected for their selves in life nor were most remembered in history for their deeds, instead existing as the warm body attached to their dowry. Their potential impacts on the court were viewed exclusively as a doorway through which men could enter Jerusalem to fight its wars or fill its court, from the dawn of the kingdom to its final powerful gasps.

The first king crowned in Jerusalem, Baldwin I, had two wives during his reign and his treatment of them differed but in both cases, modeled much of the worst habits of his successors. His two wives came from different backgrounds culturally and political but ultimately both were discarded to further political goals in moves that so disregarded the women who wore the crown

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[8] Hodgson, Natasha. 2005. "Nobility, Women and Historical Narratives of the Crusades and the Latin East."

[9] Buck, Andrew D. "William of Tyre, Femininity, and the Problem of the Antiochene Princesses." *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 70, no. 4 (June 20, 2019)

that even authors of the time commented on the callousness of the king, and some, including William of Tyre, openly speculated on the truth of different versions of events and motivates behind Baldwin's actions.

Baldwin arrived in Outremer a widower with no heir, and leveraged those things to further his crusading goals, marrying the first of his two queens to secure his own power in Edessa.[10] The woman he wed is a footnote in every version of the crusader story – three different sources (William of Tyre, Guibert of Nogent, and Albert of Aachen) recount different versions of his interactions with the prince of Armenia whose lands Baldwin then inherited and who historians suspect to be his new father-in-law[11] but not a single surviving contemporary source records her name. Historians refer to her as Arda of Armenia, a name recorded in the 14th century in a record written for the Knights of the Templar, which historians now believe may have been a poor attempt at anglicizing her name.[12] Without a reliable record of her name, tracking her throughout sources becomes a struggle beyond those that simply refer to her in anecdotes as "Baldwin's Queen."

Contemporary sources do not recall Arda's name but did record at length the details of the dowry payment and the transfer of power that came with her marriage. Albert Aix, author of a French chronicle, recalls the marriage in terms of what it does for Baldwin: the 60,000 bezants to pay soldiers and his new position as Lord of Edessa granting him a powerbase from which he could eventually claim the throne of Jerusalem. Arda's marriage existed only to deliver that dowry, crafted and eventually ended for that same reason.

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[10] William of Tyre, *A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea*, vol. 1 (1943), Book 10, Chapter 1
[11] Bernard Hamilton*, Cathars and the Holy Places* (1999), pg 144.
[12] Weir, Alison. *Queens of the Crusades: England's Medieval Queens. Book Two, 1154-1291*.

Each chronicle of the time recounts the ending of the marriage between Arda and Baldwin differently, but the only one who seems confident in his own tale is the French Chronicler, Albert of Aix, who wrote[13] that the cause of the divorce stemmed from the bride's father had paid only a fraction of the dowry, arguing that only 7,000 of the promise 60,000 bezants ever arrived.[14] The king sent Arda away while making excuses – Guibert of Nogent heard a story from returning crusaders that she had been sexually assaulted by pirates and thus had to be sent away. William of Tyre acknowledges the spread of that story, but remarks that others believed the king wished to make a more advantageous marriage, and noted the marriage ended improperly. For sources normally quite forgiving of the crown to be openly critical of the events it reflects a widespread critical perception of events. That didn't save Arda's marriage. Her dowry hadn't been paid, and the Crusaders secured control of the lands around Jerusalem, so they had no further use for her cultural ties and she was sent away to a nunnery.

Adelaide of Salerno, the Dowager Countess of Sicily replaced Arda, a new woman with a new fortune and company of men who could be used to fight the crusader's new conflicts with their neighbors. Upon their marriage, Adelaide's son Roger II became the heir to throne of Jerusalem, and their wealth came to Outremer. She brought with her an abundance of jewels and weaponry – 7 ships laden with them[15] and a thousand men-at-arms and Saracen archers.[16]

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[13] As translated in part from the French text by Bernard Hamilton, since no official translation of the entire manuscript into English is publicly accessible. Hamilton had access to a partial translate done by his own team while drafting his books, and many modern English-based histories of the crusades cite the source via him.

[14] Albert of Aix, *Historia Hierosolymitana*, book 3, chapter 27, quoted in Bernard Hamilton*, Cathars and the Holy Places* (1999) pg 144.

[15] Albert of Aachen. *Albert of Aachen's history of the journey to Jerusalem Books 1-6: The First Crusade, 1095-1099*. (2013) book 12 chapter 12.

[16] Albert of Aix, *Historia Hierosolymitana*, book 12, chapter 13

This marriage provided Adelaide with even less power to leave a mark on history than Arda had. Her name was recorded for history to connect her to her European male relatives,[17] but her influence disappeared after she arrived. Adelaide delivered her wealth to Jerusalem and then disappeared from its history until her marriage crumbled. She did the only thing Jerusalem wanted of her, bringing wealth to its coffers. After Baldwin claimed her men and her money, the court attacked Adelaide's marriage, especially the religious leaders who followed the leaded of the Patriarch of Jerusalem.[18] Unlike Arda, not a single source defends the king's choice to cast her aside. Her money had been spent, and she disappeared out of Jerusalem back to Sicily where she died not long after. As Queen of Jerusalem, her marriage had been only a deposit box for the kingdom that she briefly hoped her son might have inherited before they were sent away together.[19]

The pattern of viewing Queens only for what material gain their marriages brought to the kingdom long outlived Baldwin I and carried forward to women who proved they had far greater political ambitions in Outremer. No Queen proved this more than Queen Maria Comnena, second wife of King Amalric I and mother to his youngest child, Isabella. She wed him in the middle of a war with Egypt, 10 years after he had taken the throne and annulled his marriage to his first wife. Like so many women before her, Maria walked right into a court only interested into slamming doors in her face, married in a transaction to bring value to Jerusalem.

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[17] Albert of Aachen dedicates page space to explaining who she is in connection to significant figures in Europe and among the crusaders and records her name and title within while justifying the discussion of inheritances and regencies, something he only does for the European wives he discusses. Albert of Aachen. *Albert of Aachen's history of the journey to Jerusalem Books 1-6: The First Crusade, 1095-1099*. (2013) book 12 chapter 13.

[18] Albert of Aachen. *Albert of Aachen's history of the journey to Jerusalem Books 1-6: The First Crusade, 1095-1099*. (2013) book 12 chapter 24.

[19] This is likely a huge part of why she agreed to the marriage – the idea that her son would have been Baldwin's heir was agreed upon from the beginning of the marriage, and she was largely past childbearing age. The insult of him being denied that position in favor of Baldwin I's kinsman was a great enough insult that Sicily would entirely refuse to show up for the second crusade. Albert of Aachen

King Amalric married Maria not only for a monetary dowry but instead, for the military alliances her family offered. Unlike the prior examples, William of Tyre recorded no mention of her dowry, a sharp contrast to the careful notes on prior marriages. Instead, William's focus remained on the military alliance with her great-uncle, Emperor Manuel of Byzantine. The wedding took place during meetings to plan that military alliance, and King Amalric remained at his siege rather than attend those meeting,[20] meaning he didn't attend his own marriage ceremony, and required a proxy.

Following the marriage, Emperor Manuel became a regular figure throughout the conflict with Egypt, but Maria disappears into Jerusalem. Her husband fought abroad, no mention of the king's wife nor of the queen appears. Even when Amalric visits her homeland[21] or when he dies, the chronicle never mentions her. Her mother-in-law appears and exerts power the way some Queens manage to: through careful handling the marriages of Maria's stepchildren. Maria and her daughter Isabella were absent from the changing of crown and determination of futures.

During the reign of her stepson, Baldwin IV, Maria navigated her way into power in Jerusalem, built a party from allies at court and became a force to be reconned with in power. She no longer held the title of Queen, and her relatives' power in Constantinople had declined but in the loss of the only two things that defined her power during her marriage, she fought a feeble attempt by the new king's mother to banish her from court and finally stepped into the kind of power a woman in Outremer could wield.

The Queen in Court

[20] William of Tyre, *A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea*, vol. 2 (1943), book 20, chapter 1.
[21] William of Tyre, *A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea*, vol. 2 (1943), book 20, chapter 23.

While Queens of Jerusalem arrived in Outremer merely as vessels for alliances and the massage of funds, many managed to gain subtle power through careful navigation of court politics. One such woman even challenged her husband and son for power in her own name. Sources about the games played by these women are few, since the heart of medieval court manipulations was often behind closed doors where no author could listen in, but for many of the Queens who managed it, her influence on a male relative, be it a son, brother or husband, did get recorded and his actions reveal the movements and power plays of the Queen at court.

The Queens of Jerusalem acted through their male relatives and thus, those born in Jerusalem had the easiest time acting on the world around them. While some exceptional women like Maria Comnena managed to amass power in a foreign court, the women who inherited the crown from their male relatives and ruled alongside their husbands started from a far easier place to start from, and either inherited their father's allies or ruled a place where they were the known quantity.

The first woman to truly play and win in Court was Melisende, eldest daughter and heir to Baldwin II, who mastered the art of being powerful during the "reigns" of the men around her. Official church documents from the end of her father's reign and the start of her husband's bore her name and reflected an intention for her and her husband, Count Fulk of Anjou as to act joint heirs to the kingdom.[22] Despite her father's intents, her stated power waned after her death and she stops being associated in records with her husband's actions.[23]

Melisende's influence instead manifested through her second cousin, Hugh Le Puiset the Count of Jaffa, who acted as a figurehead to a party of lords who eventually rose in revolt against

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[22] Bernard Hamilton, *Cathars and the Holy Places* (1999), pg 148-9
[23] Bernard Hamilton, *Cathars and the Holy Places* (1999), pg 149

King Fulk.[24] The two men were in conflict from the moment Melisende inherited the crown, and the lords who backed Hugh revealed Melisende's hand behind him. Hugh's allies were those of Baldwin II, despite Hugh having no blood ties to most of the nobility and raised on the borders of Outremer, away from court. Instead, his allies came from being the face of action on behalf of the hugely popular Queen Melisende.

Melisende so charmed the court that William of Tyre wrote only compliments for her and after she ended her conflict with her husband, was able to govern the kingdom without any of the protests or stigma other women in similar positions faced. William of Tyre wrote about her time running the kingdom, "She was a very wise woman, fully experienced in almost all spheres of state business, who had completely triumphed over the handicap of her sex so that she could take charge of important affairs,"[25] the type of praise that he only ever wrote about the kings who held their courts together and fought their battles with outside enemies. His praise of her specific character traits implies respect for her, rather than the empty flattery that came from praising the crown that paid for his work, the way he sometimes wrote about the patriarchs of Jerusalem. Instead, he wrote as he often does and recorded the opinion of the court around him, and the court liked Melisende.

Melisende mastered the art of playing the court and winning allies, from ruling for her husband to outmaneuvering her son. After the death of her husband, Melisende came to rule alongside her son. It may have been her inheritance, but tradition dictated that the crown should have passed to him right away, but Melisende instead used his youth and her influence at court against him. She won an agreement to split the kingdom in half, encouraging those around

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[24] William of Tyre, *A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea*, vol. 2 (1943), book 14, chapter 15.
[25] William of Tyre, *A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea*, vol. 2 (1943), book 16, chapter 3.

Baldwin III to pick the northern half of the kingdom while Melisende claimed the stabler, southern half where Jerusalem sat.[26] Sources don't recount the exact details of what followed, but historians widely agree that Baldwin's half didn't last long, and before long, Melisende ruled both halves herself, and William of Tyre credited her actions during this time to her own name.[27]

Not every Queen who played the games of the court did so by winning over hearts and allies – others found themselves in conflict with the lords of Outremer, none more so than Queen Sibylla. Queen Melisende's granddaughter, Sibylla, learned from her grandmother and her mother, Agnes of Courtnay. Despite being for a time, the wife of a king and the mother of another, Agnes never wore the crown nor was she permitted near power during her husband's reign – the court demanded he annul their marriage, and he did so. William of Tyre records it as being due to consanguinity but also notes other monarchs have gotten away with the same level of consanguinity and had no issue.[28]

Sibylla learned from her mother not to rely on the court supporting her and what to do when they didn't. Left with no power after her marriage was annulled, Agnes instead played what she did have: her own remarriages and her legitimate children who were still in line to the throne, especially Sibylla's marriage. The future Baldwin IV, Sibylla's only brother, was ill with leprosy and never wed, meaning any man Sibylla wed was marrying into a crown. Agnes used that as the steppingstone to build her own power and negotiate a marriage for herself to gain power over the kingdom.[29] Sibylla learned from watching her mother become a powerbroker

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[26] William of Tyre, *A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea*, vol. 2 (1943), book 17, chapter 15.
[27] William of Tyre, *A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea*, vol. 2 (1943), book 18, chapter 19.
[28] William of Tyre, *A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea*, vol. 2 (1943), book 19, chapter 4.
[29] There are several incidents after re-entering her children's life in which she makes decisions on behalf of the kingdom which clearly suit her needs above all, the incident described at the front half of book 22, wherein she clearly has control over the entrance to Jerusalem and is able to deny her enemies entry. William of Tyre, *A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea*, vol. 2 (1943), book 22, chapter 9.

during her ill brother's reign and picked up the techniques she eventually used to secure her own power.

After the death of her first husband, Sibylla wielded her hand in marriage like a shield to navigate a court constantly ready to spiral into chaos. Her brother, Baldwin IV, was dying of leprosy, thus everyone knew Sibylla selected not only a second husband but also the man who rule alongside her as king. There were several attempts made at arranging marriages with powerful lords from France, each of which fell apart due to complicated politics in their homeland, opening the door for the lords of the court to make their claims. Her most determined suitors were Baldwin of Ibelin and Phillp of Flanders, both lords who made no secret of their ambitions to rule and who, in their pursuit of the crown and the marriage, insulted each other thus that they left Jerusalem to battle Arab armies and each other.[30]

While her potential suitors were away, Sibylla maneuvered around the court for the first time with the support of her brother. Together, they schemed to use those absences to undercut their enemies, as William of Tyre recorded that "The king knew these two nobles well and, although both were his kinsmen, he distrusted their motives,"[31] to explain the rush of their actions. They had good reason to rush; both men had been regulars at court for several years and had their own factions of allies who had gained enough power to force the king to move with secrecy in the heart of his powerbase, to work behind the backs of the powerful men at court and play their own game. The sources don't obviously they were going against the court's choices with their actions, but they do comment on the speed through which Sibylla wed Guy de Lusignan in a small ceremony while her other suitors were away, deliberately wedding a man

[30] William of Tyre, *A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea*, vol. 2 (1943), book 21, chapter 14.
[31] William of Tyre, *A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea*, vol. 2 (1943), book 22, chapter 1.

who spent very little time in Outremer or Jerusalem and thus had very few political ties to the men they were attempting to undercut.

Sibylla's marriage to Guy steadied her own political situation for a time, but after the death of her brother and son, it became a new challenge for her to navigate as they inherited to the throne. Almost immediately after the deaths of Baldwin IV and the infant Baldwin V, efforts were made by the jilted Baldwin of Ibelin to annul Sibylla's marriage. Once again, the larger court backed Baldwin, as Guy spent his time at court making more enemies than allies. They avoided the annulment by sealing themselves in a castle where the patriarch who attempted to preform the annulment couldn't reach them. The plan to get them out of their position could only have come from Sibylla this time – she agreed with the court to be coronated alone as queen, a position which, in the face of the looming military crises set her up for internal challenges and left her crown vulnerable to any of the lords with power at court who could win popular support. They surely must have known that when agreeing to the deal, as must have she. Thus, she revealed her game and showed her winning hand when in her first act as queen, she placed a crown on Guy de Lusignan's head, crowning him to rule alongside her as husband and wife in spite of all the attempts from the court to prevent both Sibylla and her mother from reaching that position.

The Queen in Absence of the King

There were occasions when Queens of Jerusalem were able to exert power not just over the court but over cities and at times the whole Kingdom in their husband's absences. All of Outremer existed in a near-constant state of conflict with the Arabic world around them and thus had power structures designed to support the kings who were constantly away, but sometimes even those failed. When those lines of communication failed, most often due to a siege or if a

king was captured after losing a battle, the Queen was one of the people who could step in and seize control and guide the kingdom.

One Queen who obtained the peak of her power during such a situation was Arda, who took place in one of the most reported incidents. Both William of Tyre and Albert of Aachen recount an incident during the siege of the city of Arsuf where Baldwin I was captured and Arda, who at the time was within the sieged city of Jaffa, stepped forward and attempted to lead.[32] Neither man explained what exactly that meant, what role she played, but both men mark her as being critical in a plan to flee Jaffa, abandoning the city in exchange for her husband's freedom. Both men had harsh critique for her plan, but this is the only occasion Arda had any impact on the chronicles of history outside her marriages, making it clear this brief taste of leadership came specifically in her husband's absence.

Arda had influence in a single city for a brief period, but other women managed to maintain positions for far longer over the Kingdom of Jerusalem itself, especially the queen of Baldwin II, Morphia of Melitene. Her husband spent an entire year in captivity in the Arab world, during which no regency was ever established, and no mention is made of someone unusual taking power from outside Jerusalem. The absence of any mention of such likely means that no nobleman took extra power during the period, outside of a small council in charge of running the city of Jerusalem. Additionally, Morphia never had an official role in the kingdom, but likely had greater power than the queens who preceded her, as it had long been an accusation that dogged Baldwin II that he surrounded himself to much with powerful women, ever since he had been raised by a powerful French mother, Melisende of Montlhéry who very much

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[32] Albert of Aachen. *Albert of Aachen's history of the journey to Jerusalem Books 1-6: The First Crusade, 1095-1099*. (2013) book 9 chapter 8

controlled her husband's estate.[33] Baldwin named his first and eldest daughter after her, and likely carried some of her ideas forward into his relationship with Morphia and his daughters.

William of Tyre never states who ruled Jerusalem while Baldwin II was in captivity, but the kingdom made serious changes to adapt to his absence and secure his release, including moving the court to a location closer to the fortress where Baldwin II was being held and helping to negotiate her husband's release, including the payment of the agreed-upon ransom.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the Queens of Jerusalem came from a wide variety of backgrounds and had different relationships to their own power. The kingdom saw them as pieces to be traded to seal alliances, trading them alongside dowries and political alliances and throwing them out so long as what their marriage brought was no longer useful. Despite that complicated position, there were still ways for the women who wore the crown to claim slivers of power.

Those who were born into the crown, like Melisende and Sibylla, used their own marriage and connections within the kingdom as tools to maintain a powerbase to act in their own interests while others claimed flashes of power by seizing the right moment.

So often, historical conversations surrounding the women in the crusader states gets caught in the gender of these women, exploring them and their actions primarily in that context. In doing so, there exists a risk that the actions and realities of these queens often get lost. Yes, their existence was shaped by their genders, but there were other factors involved in what they were able to achieve, and great value exists in exploring other aspects of their lives, from their

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[33] Guibert of Nogent. *The Deeds of God through the Franks*. (1970), pg 52.

relationships to each other, their children, power and their faith. Gender may touch each of these aspects of identity but to examine everything through that lens exclusively runs the risk of losing what those women were able to achieve and the other battles they had to fight their ways through.

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