

In 1185, Princess Sybilla, 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, although in modern days, the name Outremer, as the region 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, since it is less tied to constantly changing borders and regional conflicts. 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, there would be 9 monarchs who reigned in Jerusalem (a further two would hold the title in exile but never visit Outremer) and between them, 14 royal spouses would attempt to rule beside them. Most of these monarchs

would have 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 would 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 would regularly find themselves in the court without their husband, as the constant conflicts and disorder in the kingdom would send 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 wouldn't be a simple 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.

Loose Outline transposed from hand written note:

- Historiography
 - Primary Sources
 - Existing Scholarship
 - Lack of Scholarship on women
 - Bernard Hamilton
 - Feminist Scholarshipw
- Body
 - Bucket I: viewed only for their dowry
 - Baldwin I (two wives)
 - Sybilla
 - Bucket II: Players of court games
 - Sybilla
 - Isabella
 - Melisende
 - Bucket III: Leaders in their Husband's absence
 - Baldwin II
 - Baldwin IV
- Conclusion