Women in the Principality of Antioch: Power, Status, and Social Agency*

Andrew D. Buck

Situated at the easternmost edge of Latin Christendom, the principality of Antioch (1098–1268) was a polity of great social and political complexity. Formed following the First Crusade, the Western Europeans who first settled there, and the generations who succeeded them, navigated a dynamic political and demographic landscape which in turn had a significant bearing on the nature of settlement and society.[1] As may be expected for a state founded through war, and subject to frequent warfare and diplomatic negotiations, most historians of the principality have focused on its

* A version of this paper was given at Leeds, and I would like to thank the audience for their comments, as well as Thomas Asbridge, Peter Edbury, Natasha Hodgson, Stephen Spencer, and the denizens of Medieval Twitter for their invaluable advice on content. I also wish to express my gratitude to the journal's anonymous reviewer, as well as to Laura Gathagan and the *Haskins* editorial team, who offered thorough and helpful guidance which vastly improved this piece. Finally, this article is dedicated to the memory of Bernard Hamilton, whose own work on women and the Crusader States opened up the topic for deeper discussion and who dedicated so much to supporting early career scholars. I will never forget his unfailing kindness and erudite guidance.

[1] A.D. Buck, *The Principality of Antioch and its Frontiers in the Twelfth Century* (Woodbridge, 2017).

military and political history.[2] Examination of its underlying social structures, in particular the experiences of women, has been sparser, save for select studies on Antioch's princesses and noble families.[3] In part, this is a product of the available source material. We lack a Latin Christian narrative internal to Antioch after the 1120s, and what we do have largely treats women as tangential, if at all. On the other

[2] The main historiographical works on the principality are: C. Cahen, *La Syrie du nord a l'époque des croisades et la principauté franque d'Antioche* (Paris, 1940); H.E. Mayer, *Varia Antiochena: Studien zum Kreuzfahrerfürstentum Antiochia im 12. und frühen 13. Jarhundert* (Hannover, 1993); T.S. Asbridge, *The Creation of the Principality of Antioch 1098–1130* (Woodbridge, 2000); Buck, *Principality*.

[3] T.S. Asbridge, 'Alice of Antioch: a Case Study of Female Power in the Twelfth Century', in *The Experience of Crusading vol. 2: Defining the Crusader Kingdom*, ed. P.W. Edbury and J.P. Phillips (Cambridge, 2003), 29–47; A.D. Buck, 'The Castle and Lordship of Ḥārim and the Frankish–Muslim Frontier of Northern Syria in the Twelfth Century', *Al–Masāq: Journal of the Medieval Mediterranean* 28.2 (2016), 113–31; A.V. Murray, 'Constance, Princess of Antioch (1130–1164): Ancestry, Marriages and Family', *ANS* 38 (2016), 81–96; A.D. Buck, 'Dynasty and Diaspora in the Latin East: The Case of the Sourdevals', *JMH* 44.2 (2018), 151–69; E.L. Jordan, 'Women of Antioch: Political Culture and Powerful Women', in *Medieval Elite Women and the Exercise of Power, 1100–1400: Moving beyond the Exceptionalist Debate*, ed. H.J. Tanner (Basingstoke, 2019), 225–46. A.D. Buck, 'William of Tyre, Femininity, and the Problem of the Antiochene Princesses', *JEH* 70.4 (2019), 731–49. See also N. Hodgson, *Women, Crusading and the Holy Land in Historical Narrative* (Woodbridge, 2007).

hand, there is ample documentary and legal evidence with which to build a fuller picture of the experiences and roles played by the female inhabitants of the principality.[4]

Furthermore, modern understanding of the principality is yet to properly engage with, and take advantage of, the wealth of recent historiography which has sought to de–exceptionalize female power.[5] Such debates have considered the meaning of terms like 'power' and 'agency', such as they relate to the female experience in the middle ages, arguing that any understanding of power, its expression and its experience, should not simply be reduced to those elements traditionally

---

[4] On the sources for the principality, see Asbridge, *Creation*, 5–13; Buck, *Principality*, 7–16. On the presentation of women in medieval narratives, see K. LoPrete, 'Gendering Viragos: Medieval Perceptions of Powerful Women', in *Studies on Medieval and Early Modern Women 4: Victims or Viragos?*, ed. C. Meek and C. Lawless (Dublin, 2005), 17–38; Hodgson, *Women*, 8–25.

[5] T. Earenfight, 'Where Do We Go From Here? Some Thoughts on Power and Gender in the Middle Ages', *Medieval Feminist Forum: Journal of the Society for Medieval Feminist Scholarship* 51.2 (2015), 116–31; A. Livingstone, 'Recalculating the Equation: Powerful Women = Extraordinary', *Medieval Feminist Forum: Journal of the Society for Medieval Feminist Scholarship* 51.2 (2015), 17–29; M.A. Kelleher, 'What Do We Mean By "Women and Power"?', *Medieval Feminist Forum: Journal of the Society for Medieval Feminist Scholarship* 51.2 (2015), 104–115; H.J. Tanner, L.L. Gathagan, and L.L. Huneycutt, 'Introduction', in *Medieval Elite Women and the Exercise of Power, 1100–1400: Moving Beyond the Exceptionalist Debate*, ed. H.J. Tanner (Basingstoke, 2019), 1–18. See also the other contributions to this volume.

gendered masculine, and so consider women involved in authority as extraordinary.[6] Rather, as Theresa Earenfight has noted, 'when we imagine … wide concentric circles of power, agency, and influence, we situate women of all ranks firmly within the imagined community of the realm'.[7] In other words, power and agency could exist in many forms, with women not occasional, extraordinary actors, but fundamental to the political sphere, able to exercize authority over theirs, and others', destinies.

It is the aim of this article, therefore, to offer the first comprehensive examination of the social, legal, and political status of women in the principality of Antioch. It draws on modern historiographical frameworks, to de–exceptionalize the experiences of power and agency this could afford in a polity traditionally defined by its presence on a contested military frontier. In doing so, this piece will look not only at those involved in Antioch's ruling house, but also the major landholding nobility, as well as broader society, including minor landholders, burgesses, and those of less well–defined status.[8] It will be argued that, in line with the medieval West, there were varied and significant ways that women contributed to the diplomatic, landholding, economic, and social experiences of Latin settlement in the principality of Antioch. Importantly, this adds greater texture to modern understanding of Antioch's society,

---

[6] For this article, 'power' refers primarily to the personal, autonomous enaction of authority; while 'agency' will relate to the wider experience of, and involvement in, the principality's social, political, and religious structures.

[7] Earenfight, 'Where Do We Go From Here?', 118, 131.

[8] It should be noted that the surviving source material only allows for a detailed study of the experiences of Latin Christian women.

and also helps to contribute to broader discussions of female power and agency between center and periphery in medieval Christendom.

The Roles and Powers of the Princesses

As most sources prioritize elite experience, it is appropriate to begin with Antioch's princesses, and to explore one of the most prominent ways historians have sought to trace female power and agency: that is through involvement in familial succession.[9] Although it would be wrong to suggest that it was only by bearing children that elite women could expect to enjoy political influence, for several examples counter this notion, it is true that there are many prominent examples where a pregnant wife or mother could take an active role in the processes of dynastic succession, a reality derived from the fact that queens and other female rulers were 'guarantors of dynastic continuity'.[10] This is attested to by high–profile figures like

[9] In this piece, I have utilized the modern translation 'princess' accepting that it may carry certain modern connotations as well as the fact that, even at this time, *principissa* did not signify a codified or consistent level of status or authority, both within the principality and across medieval Christendom. This is, primarily, in order to avoid confusion and to remain in line with other scholarship on these women.

[10] E. Woodacre, 'Introduction: Royal Mothers and their Ruling Children', in *Royal Mothers and their Ruling Children: Wielding Political Authority from Antiquity to the Early Modern Era*, ed. E. Woodacre and C. Fleiner (Basingstoke, 2015), 1–8 at 1. See also J. Carmi Parsons, 'The Pregnant Queen as Counsellor and the Construction of

Eleanor of Aquitaine and Blanche of Castile, who were both powerful agents during the reigns of their children.[11] Likewise, others were able to claim rulership in their own right, if not always freely exercise it, such as Empress Matilda in England or Urraca of León–Castile.[12] In the Latin East, the case of Queen Melisende of Jerusalem demonstrates that women could also be an active political force on the fringes of Latin Christendom. As daughter and heiress to King Baldwin II, Melisende carried the kingdom's succession after her marriage to the western nobleman, Fulk V of Anjou, in 1129, and then, after her husband's death in 1143, exerted powerful influence as co–ruler with, and regent to, their son, Baldwin III.[13]

For Antioch, it is hard to trace any such influence during the early decades of Latin rule, largely due to the complexities of the principality's political situation. Firstly, though each of Antioch's first three princes, Bohemond I (r. 1098–1105),

---

Motherhood', in *Medieval Mothering*, ed. J. Carmi Parsons and B. Wheeler (New York, NY, 1998), 39–61; Earenfight, 'Where Do We Go From Here?', 118–21.

[11] R.V. Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England* (New Haven, CT, 2009); L. Grant, *Blanche of Castile, Queen of France* (New Haven, CT, 2016). See more generally the various essays in E. Woodacre and C. Fleiner (eds.), *Royal Mothers and their Ruling Children: Wielding Political Authority from Antiquity to the Early Modern Era* (Basingstoke, 2015).

[12] C. Hanley, *Matilda: Empress, Queen, Warrior* (New Haven, CT, 2019); B.F. Reilly, *The Kingdom of León–Castilla under Queen Urraca, 1109–1126* (Princeton, NJ, 1982).

[13] H.E. Mayer, 'Studies in Honour of Queen Melisende', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 26 (1972), 93–182; Hodgson, *Women*, 75–7, 181–8.

Tancred of Hauteville (r. 1105–12), and Roger of Salerno (r. 1112–19) were married, to Constance of France, Cecilia of France, and Cecilia of Bourcq respectively; it was only Bohemond and Constance who produced an heir, the future Bohemond II (r. 1126–30).[14] Because this heir grew up in southern Italy, under his mother's tutelage, this left few opportunities for Constance to gain such influence.[15] Given that, with the exception of Baldwin II's period as regent following Roger's death at the Battle of the Field of Blood (1119–26), the Antiochene succession between Bohemond I and Bohemond II appears to have followed the—oft–considered Norman—practice of appointing close male kinsmen, the likelihood is that neither Cecilia of France or Cecilia of Bourcq were part of the decision–making processes surrounding such appointments. Cecilia of France did gain lands following her husband's demise, which included the river port of Arzghan, half of the *Rugia* estate, and another estate at Jabala, which she later granted to the Church of Our Lady of Josaphat through Roger's confirmation in 1114. However, given that she then became Countess of Tripoli by marrying its lord, Pons, there is little reason to believe she remained an active member of the Antiochene ruling elite. Thus, our only indication of the use of these estates comes from William of Tyre's comment that Pons used Arzghan as a base of operations during a rebellion against King Fulk of Jerusalem in 1132 (see below), after which it returned to the princely demesne; while the half of *Rugia* eventually passed to Cecilia and Pons' daughter, Agnes, when she married Renaud II

[14] Walter the Chancellor, *Bella Antiochena*, ed. H. Hagenmeyer (Innsbruck, 1896), 105 (hereafter WC); William of Tyre, *Chronicon*, ed. R.B.C. Huygens, *CCCM* 63/63A (Turnhout, 1986), 495, 527 (hereafter WT).

[15] Asbridge, *Creation*, 141–2.

Masoir, the lord of Margat.[16] Nevertheless, that Cecilia of Bourcq was Baldwin II's sister is of interest, as, in her position as widow, she was afforded sizeable landed privileges in the principality as lady of Tarsus and Mamistra, which brought with it a sizeable household and retinue.[17] In this context, Cecilia possibly played an important role in facilitating Baldwin's accession at Antioch, convincing the nobles not to again turn to their southern Italian Norman kin—which marked an important political shift.[18] It is certainly well–known that elite women in medieval Europe could act as key cogs in cementing dynastic and cultural ties.[19] The powerful influence of Baldwin and Cecilia's kin–group, the Rethels, is certainly suggested by the former's political

---

[16] See WT, 522, 636–7; *Chartes de Terre Sainte provenant de l'Abbaye de N.–D de Josaphat*, ed. H.–F. Delaborde (Paris, 1880), 26–7; *Cartulaire général de l'ordre des hospitaliers de S. Jean de Jérusalem (1100–1300)*, ed. J. Delaville le Roulx (4 vols., Paris, 1894–1906), i, 266–8, 313–14, 423 (hereafter *CGOH*). On *Rugia*, which will be discussed further below, see also Mayer, *Varia Antiochena*, 180–2; Buck, *Principality*, 154–5; K.J. Lewis, *The Counts of Lebanon and Tripoli in the Twelfth Century: Sons of Saint Gilles* (Abingdon, 2017), 109–11, 210–11.

[17] C. Kohler, 'Chartes de l'Abbaye de Notre–Dame de la vallée de Josaphat en Terre–Sainte (1108–1291), *Revue de l'Orient Latin* 7 (1899), 108–222 at 123.

[18] Asbridge, *Creation*, 134–146. See also F. Petrizzo, *Band of Brothers: Kin Dynamics of the Hautevilles and Other Normans in Southern Italy and Syria, c. 1030–c. 1140*, PhD thesis, University of Leeds (2018).

[19] See e.g. J. Lyon, *Princely Brothers and Sisters: The Sibling Bond in German Politics, 1100–1250* (Ithaca, NY, 2012); C. Bowie, *The Daughters of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine* (Turnhot, 2014), esp. 141–208.

powers, which were tantamount to that of prince, and the subsequent marriage of his daughter, and Cecilia's niece, Alice, to Bohemond II upon his arrival in the East in 1126.[20]

The situation in the principality took a dramatic turn in 1130 when Bohemond II died. Leaving behind his young Jerusalemite widow, and an infant heiress, Constance (d. *c.* 1164), this altered the nature of the succession and exerted a powerful influence over Antiochene politics in the following decades.[21] The first consequence was that, for the first time upon a prince's death, there was an *in situ* heir, and she was female.[22] In turn, this created the need to choose a husband to rule alongside Constance and raised the specter of destabilizing existing political structures through an influx of new migrants.[23] Alice's presence also offered the chance for female regency. She possessed strong royal connections, and her own mother, Morphia of Melitene, while never overtly involved in Baldwin II's administration, had shown herself to be an able political actor during moments of

---

[20] Asbridge, *Creation*, 143–6; Buck, *Principality*, 68–9, 220–1. On the Rethels and crusading, see A.V. Murray, *The Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem: A Dynastic History, 1099–1125* (Oxford, 2000), 124–7.

[21] For modern historiographical coverage of the following events, see Asbridge, 'Alice', 29–47; Murray, 'Constance', 81–6; Jordan, 'Women of Antioch', 225–46; Buck, *Principality*, 68–77, 220–6.

[22] Asbridge, *Creation*, 133–47.

[23] Similar problems emerged during Fulk of Anjou's time as king of Jerusalem. See H.E. Mayer, 'Angevins *versus* Normans: The New Men of King Fulk of Jerusalem', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 133.1 (1989), 1–25.

crisis in Jerusalem—such as her role in securing her husband's release from Muslim captivity in 1123/4.[24]

In response to this delicate political situation, the Antiochenes appear to have considered three main strategies. The first was to approach the Byzantine emperors, who had a long and contested claim to Antioch but, despite earlier tension, had opened the way towards a political *détente* by 1118.[25] According to the Greek chronicler John Kinnamos, the Antiochene nobles dispatched an envoy to Emperor John II Komnenos to discuss a potential marriage, most likely between Constance and one of his sons, albeit this did not come to fruition.[26] Another potential avenue was a return to approaching the nearest male relative from Norman Italy, King Roger II of Sicily. If the Jerusalemite chronicler William of Tyre (d. *c.* 1184) is to be believed, Bohemond II had actually named Roger's cousin, Duke William II of Apulia, as his successor before departing for Syria. This would mean that Roger, who had since

[24] B. Hamilton, 'Women in the Crusader States: The Queens of Jerusalem (1100–1190)', in *Medieval Women*, ed. D. Baker (Oxford, 1978), 143–174, at 147–8.

[25] Asbridge, *Creation*, 92–103; R.–J. Lillie, *Byzantium and the Crusader States, 1096–1204*, trans. J.C. Morris and J.E. Ridings (Oxford, 1993), 61–87, 94–5.

[26] In the Greek text, the author makes clear it was the 'nobles' (προύχοντες). See John Kinnamos, *Epitome: Rerum ab Ioanne et Alexio Comnenis Gestarum*, ed. A. Meineke (Bonn, 1836), 16. For translation, see John Kinnamos, *The Deeds of John and Manuel Comnenus*, trans. C.M. Brand (New York, 1976), 22. See also Buck, *Principality*, 190–7.

taken over in Apulia, could potentially claim the principality by right of inheritance.[27] Yet, it appears that fears of fresh Norman migration disrupting the principality's political and landholding structures precluded this.[28] Probably with help from King Fulk, the Antiochenes instead approached Raymond of Poitiers (r. 1136–49), the son of the crusader William IX of Aquitaine and, at this point, a young knight in the service of King Henry I of England. A vigorous soldier of significant noble pedigree, and a non–inheriting son, Raymond offered little chance of heralding disruptive large–scale immigration.[29]

Of interest here, however, is the role played by Princess Alice. Indeed, there has been speculation that the princess' political machinations lay behind certain of these events, due in large part to the evidence of William of Tyre, who presented Alice as a wicked mother, prepared to disinherit her own daughter, and disavow her

---

[27] WT, 613–14, 639–41. See also H. Houben, *Roger II: A Ruler between East and West* (Cambridge, 1997), 41–59; G. Loud, 'Norman Italy and the Holy Land', in *The Horns of Hattin: Proceedings of the Second Conference of the Society for the Study of the Crusades and the Latin East*, ed. B.Z. Kedar (Jerusalem, 1992), 49–62 at 51–2; J.P. Phillips, *Defenders of the Holy Land: Relations between the Latin East and the West, 1119–1187* (Oxford, 1996), 51–2; D.M. Hayes, *Roger II of Sicily: Family, Faith and Empire in the Medieval Mediterranean World* (Turnhout, 2019), 72–4.

[28] Buck, *Principality*, 69–73. C.f. P.Z. Hailstone, *Recalcitrant Crusaders? The Relationship between Southern Italy and Sicily, Crusading and the Crusader States, c. 1060–1198* (Abingdon, 2019), 104–110.

[29] Buck, *Principality*, 69–73, 90, 129–33.

own father, in the pursuit of personal power.[30] Consequently, there have been suggestions that Alice—competing against Fulk and the nobles, who had already chosen Raymond—approached John II Komnenos, perhaps hoping to use the status this would have afforded her to rule Antioch in her daughter's stead.[31]

As Thomas Asbridge and others have noted, William's coverage was undoubtedly influenced by his distinctly Jerusalem–centric narrative strategies, and so must be treated carefully. Indeed, William almost certainly sought to divert attention away from the key roles played in this period by the nobility and patriarch of Antioch—who, at the very least, tacitly supported Alice's actions—and to hide a broader realignment of Jerusalemite authority in *Outremer*. He did so, by presenting both Baldwin II's troubled entrance into Antioch after Bohemond II's death, and a later rebellion of the northern states against Fulk in 1132, as the result of a malicious, manipulative woman; a bad mother who acted in open opposition to the desires of the principality's elites.[32] Moreover, John Kinnamos, our only source for the negotiations with Byzantium (which cannot be definitively dated but appear to have been in the early 1130s), indicated that the impetus for this came not from the lone figure of

[30] WT, 623–5, 634–6, 640–1.

[31] For discussion of the historiographical debate, see Buck, *Principality*, 69–73.

[32] Asbridge, 'Alice', 29–36; Buck, *Principality*, 69–73, 221–6; Buck, 'William of Tyre', 740–3. C.f. Jordan, 'Women of Antioch', 226–32, 240–1, who appears more trusting of William's sequence of events.

Alice, but from the wider nobility, who even William of Tyre presented as the leading force behind the decision making processes surrounding Constance's marriage.[33]

In the context of modern understanding of the political power afforded to elite mothers in medieval Europe, however, it is unsurprising that Alice would have been heavily involved in the aftermath of Bohemond II's death, particularly given her royal connections. Furthermore, while the princess was said to have been 'expelled' to her dower lands at Latakia and Jabala by Baldwin in retaliation for her actions, the lordship she subsequently developed afforded her significant power. This is indicated by the title she adopted in her charters: 'Alice, by the grace of God princess of Antioch, daughter of Baldwin, the second king of the Latins of Jerusalem, formerly wife of the lord Bohemond, son of Bohemond the Great, most excellent prince of the Antiochenes'.[34] Rather than suggesting a cowed and powerless woman, this title expresses the status and divine authority Alice claimed. During her near twenty–year tenure at Latakia and Jabala, Alice thus created a dynamic and independent seigneurie, one whose administration far exceeded anything identified outside of the princely household.[35] The charters she issued testify to elite noble support, within and

---

[33] Kinnamos, *Epitome*, 12 (Kinnamos, *Deeds*, 22); WT, 640–1. On the issue of dating the envoy and the role of the nobles, see Buck, *Principality of Antioch*, 69–72, 191–2, 221–6. C.f. Jordan, 'Women of Antioch', 231–2.

[34] 'Adelicia Balduini regis Hiersolymitani Latinorum secondi filia, uxor quondam domini Boamundi, Magni Boamundi filii, excellentissimi Antiochenorum principis, dei gratia principissa Antiochena': Mayer, *Varia Antiochena*, 113.

[35] Asbridge, 'Alice', 36–44. On Antiochene lordly households more generally, see Buck, *Principality*, 133–40.

without the principality, such as the important Sourdeval family and the exiled Jerusalemite count, Hugh of Jaffa, as well as various household officers and retainers, including a constable and a chancellor.[36] Similarly, a charter issued after Alice's death by Constance at Latakia in 1151 provides further clues as to the extent of the former's power, as it pertained to a dispute regarding her earlier seizure of lands from one Ralph Boer.[37] There are also hints that Alice pursued her own military policies, as Otto of Freising recorded that, when Bishop Hugh of Jabala visited the papal court in Rome (at which Otto was also present) in 1145 to report the loss of Edessa and request military aid, he also raised concerns regarding Alice's conduct. Specifically, Hugh complained that she had refused to share with the Church the spoils she had gained from raiding expeditions.[38] In short, Alice's move to Latakia and Jabala by no means diminished either her political power or agency—in fact, it seemingly enhanced her status as an autonomous lord able to enact all of the privileges that came with this.

If, then, we were to consider the events of 1130 and beyond not as the actions of a megalomaniacal princess, but rather in the context of a shift in the political dynamics of *Outremer*, one which saw a recalibration of Jerusalemite influence in the north, Alice's role could take on a new edge. By acting as the figurehead of the movement against Baldwin and Fulk, Alice could be seen to have deflected her

---

[36] Mayer, *Varia Antiochena*, 110–14; *CGOH*, i, 92, 106, 109, 131. See also Asbridge, 'Alice', 39–43; Buck, 'Dynasty and Diaspora', 157–60.

[37] *CGOH*, i, 153–4.

[38] Otto of Freising, *Chronica sive Historia de Duabus Civitatibus*, ed. A. Hofmeister (Hannover, 1912), 363–5.

father's wrath away from the nobles and the patriarch, offering a suitable subtext for a settlement that saved the king's blushes but also left internal elites in place to maintain control over administration. Perhaps it was not, as Erin Jordan—following William of Tyre—has argued, a case of Baldwin asserting his authority while simultaneously recognizing his daughter's claims to some power, but rather an acceptance that his influence was now diminished.[39] In this regard, it is perhaps noteworthy that the figure who emerged as the *de facto* head of the principality's ruling elites at this stage, Renaud I Masoir, lord of Margat, held lands which abutted onto Alice's own domains in the south. Two other major families, the Sourdevals and the lords of Saone, are also seen offering their support to the princess.[40] For Alice, power and agency were perhaps achieved not by acting as ruler (though it is clear that she did not yet relinquish the title of princess), or even as a regent during the interregnum, but as a subtler conduit for peace and political settlement. In some ways, this echoes the earlier actions of Cecilia of Bourcq, albeit this time not to Baldwin's benefit.

Moreover, although King Fulk had some influence within the principality in the following years as a result of his military support, the extent of his political power has been overplayed. While a charter issued in either January 1133 or 1134 ascribed to Fulk the role of 'protector and bailiff of the principality of Antioch and of the daughter of Bohemond the younger', and William of Tyre emphasised the king's authority in the north, the reality is that this marked a clear diminishment from the

[39] Jordan, 'Women of Antioch', 228, 240. See also Buck, 'William of Tyre', 740–3.

[40] Asbridge, 'Alice', 40; Buck, *Principality of Antioch*, 89, 96–7, 129–31.

status earlier enjoyed by Baldwin II.[41] By August 1135, when Fulk again issued a document in the principality, the role of Constance's protector had been removed from the *intitulatio*.[42] It is of interest that this second document was issued at around the same time Alice is said to have returned to Antioch, just before Constance's marriage to Raymond. Either, if William of Tyre is to be believed, she hoped to marry him herself and thus take control, or, as seems more likely, she wished to protect her eight–year–old daughter from an uncanonical marriage.[43] Alice certainly showed care for Constance's spiritual well–being at Latakia, issuing two documents which cited concern for her daughter's salvation.[44] In this regard, it is important to note that the surviving charter material for Alice's career following Constance's marriage, though incomplete, suggests both potential links to the princely court but also that she relinquished the title of princess of Antioch. Indeed, one of her documents was dated to the reign of Prince Raymond, while, when Constance later issued a charter in Latakia in 1151, which dealt with a dispute caused by her mother's earlier actions there, she described her as 'princess of Latakia' ('Laodicie principissa').[45] This

---

[41] 'rector ac bajulus Antiocheni principatus filieque Boamundi junioris': *Le cartulaire du chapitre du Saint–Sépulchre de Jérusalem*, ed. G. Bresc–Bautier (Paris, 1984), 172; WT, 635–9.

[42] *Cartulaire du chapitre du Saint–Sépulchre*, ed. Bresc–Bautier, 173–4. For a discussion on this shift in title, and its potential implications for understanding Jerusalemite interest in Antioch, see Buck, *Principality*, 221–6.

[43] WT, 657–9.

[44] Mayer, *Varia Antiochena*, 110–114.

[45] *CGOH*, i, 106, 131, 153–4.

perhaps further indicates that Alice had supported her daughter, not opposed her. Jordan has argued that while Alice had failed in a bid for power, she still asserted her rights as regent *in absentia*.[46] Yet, it is possible to read these documents, and the surrounding events, in a manner which suggests that neither her influence within Antioch, nor the agency offered by being mother to the principality's heir, had actually disappeared. Rather, Alice had served the needs of the Antiochenes, and her daughter, by acting as a willing participant in the diplomatic maneuvering that helped to renegotiate the terms of Jerusalemite involvement in the principality. She then returned to the city in 1135 to ensure Constance's interests continued to be protected.[47] Despite charter evidence that shows he was in Antioch, William of Tyre's suggestion that Fulk was prevented from interfering in 1135 by his wife, Alice's sister, Melisende, could even indicate her use of kinship networks to facilitate political agency.[48]

Importantly, the issue of female regency did not end here. When Raymond of Poitiers was subsequently killed at the battle of Inab in 1149, and the situation again emerged whereby Antioch was without an adult heir, it was Constance who stepped into the breach.[49] Over the following four years, she ruled Antioch with the support of the patriarch, Aimery of Limoges, and resisted several attempts by Baldwin III of

---

[46] Jordan, 'Women of Antioch', 230–1.

[47] Interestingly, this careful level of diplomatic endeavour became a frequent characteristic of Antiochene politics in the following decades. See e.g. events surrounding relations with Byzantium, discussed in Buck, *Principality*, 190–212.

[48] WT, 657–9. See also Buck, *Principality*, 70–1.

[49] Buck, *Principality*, 38–9.

Jerusalem to assert his authority.[50] Two charters survive from this period in which Constance utilized the same *intitulatio* as the prince, and, like Alice and other contemporary rulers, claimed that her power derived by God's grace ('Dei gratia').[51] It also appears that she opened diplomatic channels with Byzantium over a potential marriage alliance and rejected an attempt by Baldwin III to enforce a Jerusalemite suitor on her at a council in Tripoli in 1151. Instead, she settled upon her eventual husband, the western knight, Renaud of Châtillon (r. 1153–61), of her own accord. This, it seems, was done either with sympathy towards the needs of Antioch's nobility, or her own chances for power, as Jordan plausibly suggests, by ensuring her choice did not destabilize internal power structures or threaten Bohemond III's eventual succession.[52] It is also significant that, as will be discussed below, whereas Constance's role in governance was patchy during the opening years of Raymond's reign, she was an ever–present feature of Renaud's; co–issuing all princely charters.

When Renaud was captured by Nur al–Din, ruler of Aleppo and Damascus in November 1161, and Bohemond III remained under the age of majority, Constance again stepped in to rule. Though no charters survive from this time, a document issued later by Bohemond III could shed some light on her activities. In 1200, Bohemond granted a series of rights in the principality to the Pisans, and in doing so noted that,

---

[50] Buck, *Principality*, 77–80; Murray, 'Constance', 90–1.

[51] *CGOH*, i, 148, 153–4. On the *dei gratia* clause, see H. Fichtenau, '*Dei gratia* und Königssalbung', in *Geschichte und ihre Quellen: Festschrift für Friedrich Hausmann zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. R. Härtel (Graz, 1987), 25–35.

[52] WT, 789–90, 795–7; Kinnamos, *Deeds*, 96–8. See also Buck, *Principality*, 77–80, 226–8; Jordan, 'Women of Antioch', 236–7.

'we confirm the privileges which Constance, our mother, made to Buctaccio, legate for the commune of the Pisans and to all Pisans'.[53] While Constance's charter does not survive, there is reason to believe that it was separate to a similar grant of rights made by her and Renaud in 1154, not least because Bohemond III does not mention his step–father, but also as the legate in this earlier document is rendered as *Butate*, and so is perhaps a different individual.[54] If so, then the aforementioned privilege of Constance would likely date to the early 1160s and indicates that the princess was able to act independently in these years, with the Pisans perhaps securing her favor in case another dynastic crisis struck. We also know that she once more turned her diplomatic attentions to Byzantium, organizing a marriage alliance between Emperor Manuel I Komnenos and her daughter Maria. That the negotiations for this were carried out in secret to prevent Baldwin III from influencing proceedings—Manuel had initially offered the king the chance to mediate but was evidently unsatisfied by his choice to champion Melisende of Tripoli—demonstrates both Constance's guile and her political power.[55]

---

[53] 'confirmaremus privilegium, quod Constantia, mater nostra, fecerat Buctaccio legato pro communi Pisanorum et omnibus Pisanis': *Documenti sulle Relazione delle citta Toscane: Coll' Oriente Cristiano e coi Turchi fino all'anno MDXXI*, ed. G. Müller (Rome, 1966), 80–1.

[54] *Documenti sulle Relazione*, ed. Müller, 6.

[55] Kinnamos, *Deeds*, 151–2; WT, 854–8. See also Buck, *Principality*, 209–12, 228–9, where it is argued that Manuel's offer to Baldwin was, in all likelihood, either a ruse or a gesture of good will that lacked any political force.

Of greater significance is Constance's relationship with her son. Indeed, as Bohemond III would not reach his majority until 1163, this left something of a power vacuum in which the princess, the young heir, and the nobility all vied for influence. The nearest contemporary narrative for the events which followed, the chronicle of the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch, Michael the Syrian, detailed how a fracture emerged between Constance, who sought to retain power, and the nobility, who favored Bohemond's elevation. Apparently fearing the princess would offer Manuel Komnenos increased influence in return for support, the aristocracy turned to the Armenian ruler of Cilicia, Thoros, and together they drove out Constance and had Bohemond crowned.[56]

Yet, while most historians have readily accepted Michael's account, the anonymously authored Syriac *1234 Chronicle* passed over noble, Armenian, and Greek involvement, noting only that 'the first son of Raymond ruled at Antioch after chasing his mother out, who went to Latakia'.[57] Likewise, the silence of the

---

[56] Michael the Syrian, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, patriarche jacobite d'Antioche (1166–1199)*, ed. and trans. J.–B. Chabot (4 vols., Paris, 1916–20), iii, 324. See also D. Weltecke, *Die "Beschreibung der Zeiten" von Mor Michael Dem Grossen (1126–1199): Eine Studie zu ihrem historischen und historiographiegeschichtlichen Kontext* (Louvain, 2003).

[57] *Anonymi auctoris Chronicon ad A. C. 1234 pertinens*, ed. and trans. A. Abouna, J.–M. Fiey, and J.–B. Chabot (4 vols., Louvain, 1916–1974), ii, 119. See also A. Hilkens, *The Anonymous Syriac Chronicle of 1234 and its Sources* (Louvain, 2018). On those who trust Michael's version, see Mayer, *Varia Antiochena*, 56; Cahen, *Syrie du Nord*, 407; Hodgson, *Women*, 223–4; Jordan, 'Women of Antioch', 237–9.

thirteenth–century Armenian chronicler Sempad the Constable on an event which afforded his countrymen great political influence within Antioch is somewhat surprising when viewed in the context of later attempts made by Armenia's rulers to seize control of the principality.[58] Equally unexpected is the taciturnity of William of Tyre, although he may well have sought to prevent awkward parallels with Melisende's dispute with Baldwin III.[59] Nevertheless, that the Jerusalemite patriarch, Amalric of Nesle, noted simply that 'Bohemond acceded to the principality after Renaud' in a letter sent to the West *c*. 1165, means narrative precision remains difficult.[60]

Our understanding is further clouded by other contemporary evidence. Thus, at some point before his accession, Bohemond sent a letter reporting Renaud's capture to King Louis VII of France, describing himself not as prince, but as 'son of Raymond', while he made no attempt to request royal aid for a power bid.[61] Bohemond also issued two charters at Latakia in 1163, initially maintaining this same moniker, but later claiming to have lordship ('dominium') over Latakia and Jabala—a shift Mayer has suggested marked the first stage in a *coup*, given that these lands

[58] J. Burgtorf, 'The Antiochene War of Succession', in *The Crusader World*, ed. A. Boas (Abingdon, 2016), 196–211.

[59] This is discussed in Buck, 'William of Tyre', 743–7.

[60] 'Boamundus post Rainaldum ad principatum accesserat': *CGOH*, i, 279–80.

[61] 'Raimundi … filius': Louis VII, 'Epistolae', *Recueil des historiens des Gaules et de la France* (24 vols., Paris, 1738–1904), xvi, 27–8.

traditionally formed part of the princess' demesne.[62] Yet, these documents make no allusion to tension with Constance, while the earlier of the two was even made 'for the salvation of my parents'.[63] Furthermore, the aforementioned Pisan document of 1200 would appear to indicate that Bohemond subsequently recognized the legitimacy of his mother's authority. There is also a distinct lack of aristocratic involvement in Bohemond's Latakia charters, with the exception of Robert of Sourdeval, whose family had a long–standing interest here and at Jabala.[64] Mayer has plausibly suggested that noble abstinence reflected fears Manuel would seek reprisals against them, but there remains significant doubts over Michael the Syrian's account, especially given that Antioch's nobles had earlier played a crucial role in courting diplomatic ties with Byzantium.[65] Even though he was generally well informed, Michael is unlikely to have been an eye–witness, as he was not yet patriarch; rather, he was abbot of the Jacobite monastery of Mar Bar Sauma far to the north near to the city of Mardin.[66] Moreover, as Dorothea Weltecke has argued, Michael's text was not

---

[62] *CGOH*, i, 224–5; *Memorie storico–diplomatiche dell'antica città e ducato di Amalfi*, ed. M. Camera (2 vols., Salerno, 1876), i, 202; Mayer, *Varia Antiochena*, 59–61.

[63] 'pro salute ... parentum ... meorum': *CGOH*, i, 224–5.

[64] On the Sourdevals, see Buck, 'Dynasty and Diaspora', 160–1.

[65] Mayer, *Varia Antiochena*, 61–2. On the Antiochene nobles and their role in diplomacy, see Buck, *Principality*, 69–73, 190–208.

[66] On the early years of Michael's career, see Weltecke, *Die "Beschreibung der Zeiten" von Mor Michael Dem Grossen*, 55–86. See also H. Kaufhold, 'Notizen zur

immune from narrative agendas, as he often sought to show the difficulties of successions.[67] Since he also exhibited a palpable dislike of the Greeks, it is entirely possible that he altered his account for moralistic purposes or to show the negative consequences of closer ties with Byzantium. Tensions cannot be ruled out, but the likelihood is that different matters were at play.

Antiochene princesses were crucial players in facilitating orderly successions, such as Cecilia of Bourcq's part in Baldwin II's regency, or Alice's in aiding the shift in policy towards Jerusalem. In this context, Constance's actions could be viewed not as a bid to seize power at her son's expense, but as an attempt to provide him with a staggered entrance into rulership—a move made in recognition of the complex political climate of northern Syria, which saw Antioch subject to external interest from Jerusalem, Byzantium, and Zengid Aleppo.[68] This not only raises parallels with Melisende's actions in Jerusalem, but with precedence in western Europe: the granting of lordships to sons in preparation for rule was a recognized practice, as can be seen by Richard I of England's tenure as count of Poitou.[69] It also demonstrates the consistently vital role played by Antioch's princesses in the succession of the ruling house. Given this, and the fact that by this point Constance was an experienced

---

Späten Geschichte des Barsaumo–Klosters', *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* 3.2 (2000), 223–46.

[67] D. Weltecke, 'Originality and Function of Formal Structures in the Chronicle of Michael the Great', *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* 3.2 (2000), 173–202 at 196.

[68] On Antioch's history in the years surrounding these events, see Buck, *Principality*, 41–8.

[69] J. Gillingham, *Richard I* (New Haven, CT, 1999), 24–100.

administrator, one who had already demonstrated her ability to rule independently, there is little reason to believe, as Mayer and Jordan have, that the nobles (in their entirety, at least) opposed her—even if the young Bohemond, whose subsequent actions suggest something of a headstrong nature, proved less keen to maintain this state of affairs.[70]

For much of the following period of Latin rule at Antioch, the need for female regency was minimal. Nevertheless, there are indications that increased powers were afforded to Antioch's princesses as the principality's fortunes waxed and waned during the thirteenth century, and Antiochene authority (now united with that of the county of Tripoli) was destabilized by conflict with the other Latin polities, as well as with the Armenians, Mamluks, and Mongols.[71] For example, Lucia of Segni, the second wife of Prince Bohemond V of Antioch–Tripoli (r. 1233–52), served as regent for her son, the future Bohemond VI (r. 1252–75). Yet, she acted largely through lieutenants (described by Claude Cahen as 'creatures of the princess–mother'), whose actions were seemingly so unpopular that, after only a few months, Pope Innocent IV responded favorably to a request to allow Bohemond VI to take up the reins of power

[70] As Earenfight notes, moreover, the tutelage of children was a significant means by which women could wield power, and so further attests to Constance's authority at this point. See Earenfight, 'Where Do We Go From Here?', 121–2.

[71] Cahen, *Syrie du Nord*, 590–721; Buck, *Principality*, 240. For the details of these women, *Lignages d'Outremer*, ed. M.–A. Nielen (Paris, 2003), 67, 92, 95–6, 131, 145 (hereafter *LdO*).

early—albeit Lucia's dower rights ('dotalicium') were to be undisturbed.[72] Likewise, Bohemond VI's wife, Sybil of Armenia, stepped in as regent for their young son, Bohemond VII (r. 1275–87), albeit only in Tripoli, as Antioch had fallen to the Mamluks in 1268.[73] Sadly, the dearth of documentary and narrative evidence for these regencies—the latter of which is characteristic even for Antioch's princes during the thirteenth century, and is the result of the principality's dwindling landed extent following Saladin's invasion of the principality in 1188 (which made the issuing of charters less necessary), or archive losses experienced when Antioch fell—makes it impossible to trace the extent and nature of each princesses' authority, although Lucia's apparent reliance on proxies and the instabilities this created does suggest there were limits to power. Nevertheless, it can be noted that, throughout the principality's history, but particularly in the twelfth century, Antioch's princesses did step in to exert important levels of power and agency during moments of dynastic crisis.

Yet, it was not only during periods of interregnum that we can trace such influence. As has been established for much of medieval Christendom, elite women played a crucial role in the exercise of rulership and power. This was not just when it came to male–centric political activities which 'masculinist' historiography has focused on, but also as advisors, administrators, tutors, and influential figures at

[72] *Les Registres d'Innocent IV (1243–1254)*, ed. E. Berger (4 vols., Paris, 1881–1919), iii. 126; Cahen, *Syrie du Nord*, 652, 702, 708.

[73] J. Richard, *The Crusades, c. 1071–c. 1291* (Cambridge, 1999), 380, 461.

court.[74] The evidence for the principality before 1130, such that it survives, does not point towards a major governmental role for Antioch's princesses. Thus, none appear in the charters of the first four male rulers—a reality which tallies with the narrative evidence.[75] For example, when the Antiochene chronicler, Walter the Chancellor, described how Roger of Salerno organized the rebuilding of Antioch after an earthquake in 1114, his wife, Cecilia of Bourcq, is nowhere mentioned.[76] Moreover, while it was not uncommon in the West for women to rule in their husband or son's stead whilst they were away on military campaigns, there is no evidence that Tancred, Roger, or Bohemond II enforced this, with Walter suggesting, for example, that Roger instead left the principality in the hands of the patriarch, Bernard of Valence.[77] This is

---

[74] Earenfight, 'Where Do We Go From Here?', 117–18, 121, 124–7. See also Grant, *Blanche of Castile*, 265–318; Hodgson, *Women*, 119–24, 175–90.

[75] *Liber Privilegiorum Ecclesiae Ianuensis*, ed. D. Puncuh (Genoa, 1962), 40–2; *Carte dell'Archivio Capitolare di Pisa*, ed. M.T. Carli (4 vols., Rome, 1969–77), iv, 80–3; *CGOH*, i, 38; *Chartes de Terre Sainte*, ed. Delaborde, 26–7; R. Hiestand, 'Ein unbekanntes Privileg Fürst Bohemunds II. von Antiochia für das Hospital vom März 1127 und die Frühgeschichte der antiochenischen Fürstenkanzlei', *Archiv für Diplomatik Schriftgeschichte Siegel– und Wappenkunde* 43 (1997), 27–46; *I Libri iurium della Repubblica di Genova*, ed. D. Puncuh (8 vols., Rome, 1992–2002), i/2, 152–4.

[76] WC, 65–6.

[77] WC, 66, 79–80, 95–6, 105. For examples of female war regency, see Grant, *Blanche of Castile*, 131–46; D.F. Park, *Papal Protection and the Crusader: Flanders, Champagne, and the Kingdom of France, 1095–1222* (Woodbridge, 2018).

perhaps surprising, especially given the royal lineage of Tancred's wife, Cecilia of France, and the fact that, as already mentioned, both Cecilia of Bourcq and Alice acted as crucial cogs in securing the succession following their husbands' deaths, and then became powerful lords in their own rights.

It is possible, therefore, that the silence on the princesses' roles is a simple quirk of our male–dominated sources. Equally, it may say something deeper about the nature of female political agency in the Antiochene ruling house during the early decades of Frankish rule. It has long been noted that the principality's succession was complex: both Tancred and Roger undeniably wielded the powers of a prince, as, it seems, did Baldwin II. Yet, the complication that Bohemond of Taranto's heir would eventually come to take up his father's mantle was ever looming and seemingly unchallenged.[78] This could indicate that the apparent 'failure' to produce an heir was a more deliberate ploy to prevent dynastic complications. While it is almost certain that this did not preclude either Cecilia from enjoying the social status afforded a princess, it may, to some degree at least, have diminished their ability to enter the political sphere by removing a key source of authority, one later used to good effect by Alice and Constance: motherhood. After 1119, with the principality in dire need of military support, Cecilia of Bourcq's position as sister to the Jerusalemite King would appear to have afforded her both power and agency, but this was potentially unreflective of the period beforehand.

This changed with Constance. Although she did not appear in all of Raymond of Poitiers' charters, particularly at the start of his reign, when she was still very

[78] Asbridge, *Creation*, 133–147; Lewis, *Counts of Lebanon and Tripoli,* 82–3, 104.

young, she was present for several of the few that survive.[79] This included two documents issued in favor of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in 1140, which Raymond issued alongside his 'most illustrious' ('illustrissima') wife, seemingly as an equal.[80] Moreover, by 1149, as Constance entered her early twenties, she emerged as a more noticeable force, as Raymond's last document as ruler was made 'with the permission and assertion of my wife, Constance, sole daughter of Bohemond the Younger'.[81] The most obvious indication of her status as a source of authority and legitimacy, this likely represented a move towards a joint expression of rule, which would probably have developed further had Raymond lived longer. This challenges the argument of Jordan, who overlooks the 1149 charter and does not consider the matter of Constance's age in relation to the dating of our few surviving documents, that the princess was 'relegated, at best, to the position of his [Raymond's] consort'.[82] The reality of Constance's growing status is also indicated by her aforementioned actions in the aftermath of Inab and surrounding Bohemond III's succession, as well as her role during Renaud of Châtillon's tenure. Indeed, the princess was present for all princely charters issued during this time. Starting in 1153 with the first document issued by Renaud, a confirmation of Venetian rights in the principality, each charter

---

[79] *Le cartulaire*, ed. Bresc–Bautier, 176–83; *I Libri iurium*, ed. Puncuh, i/2, 154–5; *Die Urkunden der lateinischen Könige von Jerusalem*, ed. H.E. Mayer and J. Richard (4 vols., Hannover, 2010), i, 349, 395–6; *CGOH*, i, 143–4.

[80] *Le cartulaire*, ed. Bresc–Bautier, 176–83.

[81] 'concessione et assertione uxoris mee Constancie, Buamundi iunioris unice filie': *CGOH*, i, 143–4.

[82] Jordan, 'Women of Antioch', 233–4.

to emanate from the princely chancery in this period carried a clause noting that the gift was made 'along with Constance … princess [of Antioch] and daughter of Bohemond the Younger'.[83] This demonstrates that Constance was the accepted source of dynastic legitimacy, and thus princely power, with her presence and assent required for Renaud, who appears to have been more prince–regent than prince, to enact his governance.[84]

With Bohemond III's accession, however, the situation largely reverted to the situation before1130. Although he had multiple wives—Orgueilleuse of Harim (r. *c.* 1170–5), Theodora Komnena (r. *c.* 1178–80), Sybil (r. *c.* 1180–?93), and Isabelle (d. *c.* 1216)—they were far less involved than Constance had been. Orgueilleuse, for instance, was present for just five charters, in which she offered her consent and good will to Bohemond's activities, but there is less of a sense that she did so as an equal partner, for she was at times absent from the *intitulatio* clauses, instead appearing further down in the document.[85] Theodora, meanwhile, is known to us only due to the prince's acrimonious and illegal divorce from her in late 1180 and left no imprint on

---

[83] 'unaque Constantia … principissa, Boamundi iunioris filia': *Urkunden zur älteren Handels– und Staatsgeschichte der Republik Venedig: mit besonderer Beziehung auf Byzanz und die Levante vom neunten bis zum Ausgang des fünfzehnten Jahrhunderts*, ed. G. Tafel and G. Thomas (2 vols., Vienna, 1856), i, 133–5. See also *CGOH*, i, 170–1, 177, 209; *Documenti sulle Relazione*, ed. Müller, 6.

[84] On Renaud's status, see Buck, *Principality*, 77–80.

[85] *Documenti sulle Relazione*, ed. Müller, 15–16; *CGOH*, i, 303, 324–7; E. Rey, *Recherches geographiques et historiques sur la donations des Latins en Orient* (Paris, 1877), 22–3. See also *LdO*, 93

the documentary evidence.[86] Moreover, while Sempad the Constable noted that Bohemond took another wife after Sybil, which is also indicated in the various recensions of the dynastic text known as the *Lignages d'Outremer*, this Isabelle appeared in only one charter at the end of Bohemond's reign in 1200, again being relegated from the *intitulatio* clauses. A document issued in 1216, however, indicates that she outlived her husband and, given that she continued as a landholder within Antioch, clearly retained some agency.[87]

It is Sybil, though, who left the most noticeable imprint. Following her controversial union with Bohemond in late 1180, she appeared in some nine documents before her disappearance by 1193.[88] Interestingly, Bohemond now included Sybil in the *intitulatio* clause, and, albeit only at the start of their union, also employed an *una cum* clause similar to that used for Constance in the charters of Raymond and Renaud. Nevertheless, because of the fall–out from the events surrounding her elevation, which saw a noble rebellion force the prince to expel certain figures from court, Sybil subsequently faced significant difficulties in engaging with the political sphere. Whereas she was present throughout the period of the rebellion in 1181 and early 1182, after this point, and up to the death of the noble

---

[86] WT, 1012; Michael the Syrian, *Chronique*, iii, 388–9; *LdO*, 83, 93, 144.

[87] Sempad the Constable, *La chronique attribuée au connétable Smbat*, trans. G. Dédéyan (Paris, 1980), 65, 68; *LdO*, 20–51, 83, 93, 144; *Documenti sulle Relazione*, ed. Müller, 80–1; *CGOH*, ii, 196.

[88] *CGOH*, i, 417–18, 490–6, 514, 574–5; ii, 911–12; iv, 261; *I Libri iurium*, ed. Puncuh, i/2, 160–3. On her marriage to Bohemond, see WT, 1012; Michael the Syrian, *Chronique*, iii, 388–9; *LdO*, 83, 93–4, 144.

faction's leader, Renaud II Masoir, in 1186, her appearances in Bohemond's charters were sporadic.[89] This indicates that the settlement with the rebels had likely also included a stipulation that Sybil's influence would be reduced.

This trend becomes more obvious in the thirteenth century, as although the documentary sources for Antioch–Tripoli are even scarcer, what remains indicates an ever–diminishing role for the princess. For example, neither of Bohemond IV's wives—Plaisance of Gibelet and Melisende of Lusignan—featured in his charters as prince, despite his two relatively long reigns. This is made all the stranger in Plaisance's case by the fact she appeared in several, albeit not all, of the documents Bohemond earlier issued as count of Tripoli.[90] By comparison, when Raymond Rupen took charge of Antioch between 1216–19 with the aid of his uncle, Leon of Armenia, his wife, Heloise of Lusignan, witnessed two of the small handful of charters he issued.[91] From this point onwards, with the precipitous nature of the principality's fortunes heralding a sharp decline in the surviving documentary materials, we find no

---

[89] A.D. Buck, 'The Noble Rebellion at Antioch, 1180–82: A Case Study in Medieval Frontier Politics', *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 60 (2016), 85–108 at 102–14.

[90] *CGOH*, i, 648–9, 674–5; *Die Urkunden*, ed. Mayer and Richard, ii, 922, 990–3. According to the *Lignages d'Outremer* (*LdO*, 66–8, 82, 95, 114, 142–3, 145–6), the marriage to Plaisance brought with it familial ties not only to Gibelet, an important lordship in the county of Tripoli, but also to the lords of Nablus through Plaisance's mother, Stephany of Milly. Likewise, Melisende of Lusignan was daughter of King Amalric I of Cyprus. These marriages thus created significant diplomatic ties with the rest of the Latin East.

[91] *CGOH*, ii, 175–6.

further traces of Antioch's princesses in administration, as the output for the reigns of the last two princes to hold the city, Bohemond V and Bohemond VI, make no mention of their wives.

Apart from Constance, therefore, Antioch's princesses were only sporadically afforded a role in the surviving charters. This requires explanation. One obvious answer is that only Constance carried the bloodline of the ruling house, meaning she was always likely to have enjoyed a more privileged position than those who simply married their way in. This could even indicate that the permission clauses contained in the charters of both Raymond of Poitiers and Renaud of Châtillon were not simply a means of paying lip–service to Constance's dynastic claims, but reveal a more active and centralized role for her in the political sphere. In turn, this explains why, and how, she was able to act as independent ruler during periods of crisis, seemingly without widespread opposition from the principality's ruling elites.

However, can we take the relative paucity of references to other princesses as evidence that they did not enjoy such influence within the princely household? The slightly improved position of Sybil in Bohemond's III's charters, as well as the suggestion that the Antiochene nobles were desperate to limit her involvement following their rebellion, would appear to suggest not, for it implies she was a particularly powerful part of the prince's inner circle. Moreover, while Antioch's last two princesses do not appear in the charters, that they were afforded powers of regency could indicate that their roles in governance are clouded by lost source material. Yet, examples like Theodora Komnena and Plaisance of Gibelet, as well as the negative reaction to Lucia of Sengi's lieutenants, could suggest some distrust of outsiders, especially given Bohemond III's propensity to marry from within the ranks of the nobility, a rarity for medieval rulers. Equally, in the case of Plaisance, it may be

that Antioch—which was subject to armed conflict with the Armenians of Cilicia at the time—was not considered safe enough for her.[92] The document detailing the marriage of Bohemond VII of Antioch–Tripoli to Margaret of Beaumont in 1278, which settled on her a dowry of 10,000 Tripolitan gold bezants, as well as rents and revenues to be drawn from other possessions within the city, when coupled with the aforementioned papal stipulation that Lucia of Segni retain her dower possessions after the ending of her regency, certainly suggests that we should not assume from documentary silence that wider agency was impossible, as independent landholding was a common theme for several princesses.[93]

Another important means through which agency might be enacted is involvement in the ceremonial aspects of rulership. Indeed, elite women in much of medieval Europe would have been expected to participate in various social, religious, and political rituals—beyond the witnessing of charters—which underpinned the execution of power. This could include liturgical practices, including accessions to the throne, crown–wearings, processions, and major festivals. In other words, women were as important to the visual displays of power as they were to the mechanics of its

[92] Burgtorf, 'War of Succession', 196–211.

[93] Rey, *Recherches geographiques*, 50–3.

enaction, and through this agency could be achieved.[94] It is significant, therefore, that although our evidence is not particularly widespread in this regard, princesses clearly played a part in the ceremonial landscape of the principality. For example, when the first charter of Renaud of Châtillon's time as prince–regent, the aforementioned confirmation of Venetian rights, was issued in 1153, not only was Constance present, and, as noted above, she enjoyed a much stronger status vis–à–vis the exaction of princely authority than during her previous marriage, but so too were the major Antiochene nobles.[95] As has been argued elsewhere, aristocratic participation in princely charters was sporadic, and so the involvement of the Masoirs, Sourdevals, Fresnels, and the lords of Saone, almost certainly indicates their presence for Constance and Renaud's marriage.[96] This charter, therefore, serves as a show of unity between prince–regent, princess, and nobility. Though we are sadly without evidence for the accession rituals surrounding the Antiochene princely throne, and so we cannot know whether Constance's position here as *in situ* princess mimicked those moments found elsewhere when a monarch would be re–inaugurated upon entering a

---

[94] J. Carmi Parsons, 'Ritual and symbol in the English medieval queenship to 1500', in *Women and Sovereignty*, ed. L.O. Fradenburg (Edinburgh, 1992), 60–77; L. Gathagan, 'The Trappings of Power: The Coronation of Mathilda of Flanders', *HSJ* 13 (2004), 21–39; J. Dale, *Inauguration and Liturgical Kingship in the Long Twelfth Century: Male and Female Accession Rituals in England, France and the Empire* (Woodbridge, 2019), especially 68–129.

[95] *Urkunden zur älteren Handels– und Staatsgeschichte der Republik Venedig*, i, 133–5.

[96] Buck, *Principality*, 95–101.

new marriage, it does seem most likely that, given her leading role in arranging the union, she would have played a central part in the wider ceremonial activities surrounding her wedding to Renaud.[97] It certainly appears Constance was a particularly prominent and visible figure within Antioch. Thus, when a celebration was held at Antioch in 1157 to herald the building of a new church dedicated to the Syriac saint, Mar Bar Sauma, Constance is said to have played a key part in proceedings.[98] Though there is no overt suggestion that she had a vested interest in this foundation in the way that many elite women, including Queen Melisende of Jerusalem, expressed power through religious patronage, this is not impossible.[99] That Constance, along with other Antiochene princesses, was eventually buried in the Abbey of Our Lady of Josaphat, a foundation with extensive land rights in the principality and ties to other princesses, including Cecilia of Bourcq and Alice, certainly suggests that the female members of the ruling house were visible figures in the religious landscape.[100] Given Constance's prominent position in the mechanisms of power, as well as her seemingly good working relationship with Emperor Manuel

---

[97] Buck, *Principality*, 77–80; Dale, *Inauguration*, 87–104.

[98] Michael the Syrian, *Chronique*, iii, 300–4.

[99] H.A. Gaudette, 'The Spending Power of a Crusader Queen: Melisende of Jerusalem', in *Women and Wealth in Late Medieval Europe*, ed. T. Earenfight (Basingstoke, 2010), 135–48; E.L. Jordan, *Women, Power and Religious Patronage in the Middle Ages* (New York, NY, 2006), esp. 61–86.

[100] Mayer, *Varia Antiochena*, 118–21. For Josaphat's wider land rights, see *Chartes de Terre Sainte*, ed. Delaborde, 26–7; Mayer, *Varia Antiochena*, 113–14; Kohler, 'Chartes de l'Abbaye de Notre–Dame', 115–16, 123.

Komnenos (on which, see below), it also seems likely that, in spite of the sources' silence on this matter, she would have played a significant part in the emperor's visit to Antioch in 1158—which was characterized by a lavish procession into the city and even a tournament.[101] Though our evidence for this is slim, and it might be argued that Constance was afforded special ritualistic significance due to her status as heiress, she clearly had a ceremonial role that mirrored the experiences of elite women elsewhere. Importantly, this demonstrates the visuality of female power and agency within the principality's ruling house.

Several of Antioch's princesses are also said to have contributed to external diplomacy. As noted above, Alice reportedly opened channels of communication with Zengi, John Komnenos, and Counts Pons I of Tripoli and Joscelin II of Edessa.[102] Though the veracity of the sources can be questioned, there is less doubt that Constance twice used her position as regent to carry out diplomatic negotiations with Byzantium. In 1149, she broached the idea of marrying an imperial suitor following Raymond's death, rejecting the candidate Manuel Komnenos sent on personal grounds, while in 1161/2 she personally negotiated a union between Manuel and her daughter Maria.[103] Like most dynasties during this period, therefore, the Antiochenes participated in one of the most prominent ways women could be afforded agency, that is through marriage alliances. These not only cemented dynastic ties, but also lead to

[101] Buck, *Principality*, 202–8.

[102] WT, 623–5, 635–7. See also Asbridge, 'Alice', 31–9; Buck, 'William of Tyre', 740–3.

[103] Buck, *Principality*, 201, 209–12.

the transmission of cultural and political ideals tied to their parent families.[104] Although there remain several princesses about whom we know very little, numerous unions were created to secure and amplify the principality's status.[105] That this was a growing concern by the mid–1150s is indicated by a letter, sent by Renaud of Châtillon to Louis VII of France, in which he asked the French king to find suitable husbands for two daughters of Constance and Raymond.[106] Though this request came to naught, others were more successful. Alongside Maria's marriage to Manuel, Constance's daughter by Renaud, Agnes, married the imperial ally, Bela III of

---

[104] Hodgson, *Women*, 57–60, 87–95; Bowie, *The Daughters of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 141–208.

[105] One of these includes an apparent daughter of Bohemond III and Theodora Komnena. Thus, the *Lignages d'Outremer* (*LdO*, 20–51, 83, 93, 144) suggest that this daughter—who the *c.*1305 recension, found in the slightly later *Vaticanus Latinus 4789* manuscript, names Constance—was cast out along with her mother as part of the prince's marriage to Sybil (who the *Lignages* confuse with Orgeuilleuse of Harim) and nothing is known of her fate after this point. See also Buck, 'Noble Rebellion', 96–7. In addition to this are Bohemond IV's daughters Maria, Orgeuilleuse, Isabelle, and Helvis, who all appear to have died childless (though one late–thirteenth century recension does suggest that Maria married a certain Thoros, who would likely have been a kinsman of the Armenian rulers of Cilicia, if this did occur), and Bohemond VII's daughter Isabelle. See *LdO*, 66–7, 82, 95–6, 114, 131, 145–6.

[106] Louis VII, 'Epistolae', 14–15.

Hungary, in the early 1170s.[107] Antiochene princesses also helped to extend ties with the other Latin states. This began with Tancred's widow, Cecilia of France, who, as noted earlier, wed Pons of Tripoli and lived many years as countess of Tripoli; while Roger of Salerno's sister, Maria, married Count Joscelin I of Edessa and helped to grow the Courtney family into an influential dynasty.[108] Furthermore, in around 1177, Philippa, one of the daughters Renaud had offered to Louis VII who had perhaps earlier engaged in an illicit affair with the Byzantine libertine, Andronikos Komnenos, wed the Jerusalemite constable, Humphrey II of Toron. Unfortunately for Philippa, however, she and Humphrey died soon after through illness, and she was buried alongside her mother at Josaphat.[109]

The importance of marriage alliances in cementing Antiochene links with the wider Latin East continued into the thirteenth century. In December 1204, Bohemond III's daughter Alice was married to Guy, lord of the Tripolitan city of Gibelet, and through this union were born several children who further extended Antiochene

---

[107] Kinnamos, *Deeds*, 214; Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium, Annals of Niketas Choniates*, trans. H.J. Magoulias (Detroit, 1984), 96; Alberic of Trois Fontaines, 'Chronica', MGH *SS*, xxiii, 849–50. On Agnes, see also, T. Earenfight, *Queenship in Medieval Europe* (Basingstoke, 2013), 174.

[108] WT, 522, 869; Michael the Syrian, *Chronique*, iii, 210. On the Courtneys and the county of Edessa, see M. Amouroux–Mourad, *Le Comté d'Edesse 1098–1150* (Paris, 1988), 73–92; B. Hamilton, 'The Titular Nobility of the Latin East: The Case of Agnes of Courtenay', in *Crusade and Settlement*, ed. P.W. Edbury (Cardiff, 1985), 197–203.

[109] WT, 978–9; Mayer, *Varia Antiochena*, 118–21.

connections. This included Henry, the future lord of Gibelet; Raymond, who reportedly became the chamberlain of Antioch; and Anne (or Agnes), who married Bartholomew of Saquin (perhaps Salqin, a site in the principality close to the fortress of Harim), the lord of *Soudin* (likely St Simeon, Antioch's port).[110] That these unions helped to increase ties between Antioch and Tripoli as the two polities merged is suggested by the fact that Alice's brother, Bohemond IV, offered a rich dowry for his sister's hand, including a rent of some 1,000 bezants to be drawn from either Latakia or Saone.[111] Another example is Plaisance, daughter of Bohemond V, who married King Henry I of Cyprus in 1250.[112] This not only strengthened ties between Antioch and the kingdom, but also enabled Plaisance to pursue her own ambitions for power. On Henry's death in 1253, she acted as regent for her son, the future Hugh II, until her own death in 1261. Moreover, after an initial marriage to the Jerusalemite nobleman Balian of Ibelin was annulled under pressure from Plaisance's brother, Bohemond VII, and uncle, Henry of Antioch, she even sought to foster an alliance with England through proposed unions between herself and King Henry III's son, Edmund Crouchback, and the young Hugh with one of the English ruler's daughters. Though neither came to fruition, and Peter Edbury has argued that Plaisance's regency was

---

[110] *CGOH*, ii, 134–6; *LdO*, 68, 93, 115. It should be noted that although the *Lignages d'Outremer* (*LdO*, 83, 93–4) suggest that Alice was born to Sibyl, the likelihood is that she was instead born to Isabelle as the two recensions to describe her lineage agree that she was the daughter of the prince's fourth wife (who, as noted above, was almost certainly Isabelle). For Salqin and St Symeon, see Buck, *Principality*, 86, 92–3

[111] *CGOH*, ii, 134–6.

[112] *LdO*, 67, 95, 145.

generally overshadowed by the actions of her male relatives, this still reflects the crucial role that Antiochene princesses played as diplomatic conduits.[113]

The claim by Maria, daughter of Bohemond IV and Melisende of Lusignan, to the empty throne of Cyprus in the 1260s/1270s by right of her mother's familial ties to the island's ruling dynasty is a further example of the potential value of such unions.[114] Legally, her claim was sound, although the pressing needs of combatting the growing military power of the Mamluks meant that the High Court supported her distant kinsman, Hugh III of Lusignan (later King Hugh III), and by 1277 she had sold her claim to Charles of Anjou.[115] Two final examples are Bohemond VI of Antioch–Tripoli's daughters by Sybil of Armenia: Maria and Lucia. Maria married Nicholas II of St Omer, a powerful lord in Thebes in Frankish Greece, while Lucia married the western nobleman, Narjaud of Toucy, and later came to Tripoli to rule there just before it fell in 1289 after the death of her brother, Bohemond VII.[116] Both of these are significant, as, even if Antioch had quickly shown a desire to open ties with the Latin Empire of Constantinople following its creation in 1204, intermarriage between the Levant and Frankish Greece was rare; while the Toucy family, in

---

[113] P.W. Edbury, *The Kingdom of Cyprus and the Crusades, 1191–1374* (Woodbridge, 1991), 35, 84–8.

[114] *LdO*, 68, 82, 95, 142–3, 145–6.

[115] Edbury, *Kingdom of Cyprus*, 36, 90, 93–5; Hodgson, *Women*, 83–4.

[116] *LdO*, 92, 95–6, 131, 145. See also P. Lock, *The Franks in the Aegean, 1204–1500* (Harlow, 1995), 78–9, 94, 96; F. van Tricht, *The Latin Renovatio of Byzantium: The Empire of Constantinople (1204–1228)* (Leiden, 2011), 163; Richard, *Crusades*, 390, 491–2.

addition to holding influence in the Latin Empire, were also important players in Angevin Sicily.[117] These marriages therefore represent attempts at forging political ties outside of the Levant, the importance of which can be seen through the amount of money given to Nicholas II of St Omer as a result of this union—said to have been enough to fund a new castle at Thebes.[118] It is in this context that we must see Bohemond VII's marriage to Margaret, daughter of Louis of Beaumont (another whose family was tied to Angevin rule in southern Italy) and granddaughter of John of Brienne, the former king of Jerusalem.[119] These unions allied Antioch–Tripoli to Angevin ambitions in *Outremer,* and placed them in opposition to Hugh III of Cyprus, who, as already noted, had challenged Maria of Antioch's claim to rule.[120] In short, networks of kin, tied in large part to the female members of the ruling house, were utilized to maintain and enlarge Antioch's political reach.

It should be noted, however, that the involvement of Antioch's princess in diplomatic activities was not always a positive for the principality. Though Bohemond III went to great lengths to marry Sybil in 1180, and she had a strong presence in princely administration (excepting the years 1182–6) until her disappearance from the charters after 1191, there were rumors, found throughout the narratives, that she had a

---

[117] van Tricht, *Latin Renovatio*, 433–59; J. Dunbabin, *The French in the Kingdom of Sicily, 1266–1355* (Cambridge, 2011), 149–51.

[118] Lock, *Franks in the Aegean*, 78–9.

[119] *Lignages d'Outremer*, 96. See also Dunbabin, *French in the Kingdom of Sicily*, 146–9; G. Perry, *The Briennes: The Rise of Fall of a Champenois Dynasty in the Age of the Crusades, c.950–1356* (Cambridge, 2018), 115.

[120] Edbury, *Kingdom of Cyprus*, 90–100.

devious nature. While the suggestions of William of Tyre and Michael the Syrian that she was a witch and a prostitute can probably be discounted, Sybil is also said to have willingly allied herself with two of the prince's enemies: the Ayyubid Sultan Saladin and the Armenian ruler Leon.[121] Regarding Saladin, whose invasion of the principality in 1188 wiped away much of the Latin presence in northern Syria, the thirteenth–century Arabic chronicler Abu Shama noted that Sybil was his loyal spy, providing him with secrets and advice on how best to defeat Bohemond in return for lavish gifts. So close was their friendship, it was said, that Saladin allowed the lord and lady of the Antiochene castle of Bourzey, to whom Sybil was related, to go free when the castle was captured in 1188.[122] Worse was to come in 1193, when Sybil reportedly allied with Leon—who had fallen into dispute with Bohemond III after the latter had arrested and tortured his brother, Rupen—in order to trick the Antiochene prince into entering an ambush at the strategically vital fortress of Baghras. Convinced that the castle, lost to Saladin in 1188, could be recovered after its Muslim governor had abandoned it, Bohemond, believing Leon to be an ally, came there to meet him. Instead, Leon took him into captivity, only releasing him two years later on the condition that his eldest son and heir, Raymond, married the Armenian's niece, Alice, and their children would become heirs to Antioch's throne. It was on this basis that the aforementioned son of Raymond and Alice, Raymond Rupen, claimed the principality. The reason for Sybil's subterfuge, so the Lyon Eracles Continuator of William of Tyre suggests, was that she had grown angry that Bohemond had refused

[121] WT, 1012; Michael the Syrian, *Chronique*, iii, 388–9.

[122] Abu Shama, 'Le livre des deux jardins', *RHC Or.*, iv, 371–5.

to provide for her son, William.[123] Though not all accounts of this episode mention Sybil's involvement, her disappearance from the charters after 1191, and Bohemond's apparent marriage to a certain Isabelle by 1200, could support the notion of an estrangement. Nevertheless, she was clearly a powerful force.

In sum, the female members of Antioch's ruling house played a varied, but still important, role in the principality's political history. Though female succession occurred only once, and while the involvement of princesses in the mechanics of princely governance was by no means immutable, or at least not always traceable, this does not preclude the reality that these women had a significant impact on political, administrative, and diplomatic activities throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Whether they were more or less involved in some of the wider processes of 'soft' power which scholars have now begun to identify as crucial to understanding the mechanisms of medieval female political agency elsewhere is less clear. Yet, while ours is an imperfect window, there are enough suggestions that Antioch's princesses wielded considerable influence at court, over the tutelage and guidance of their children, in transmitting familial identities, and in supporting the ceremonial and diplomatic activities of the ruling house. This indicates that the exercise of rulership in the principality was not simply a masculine space.

---

[123] *La continuation de Guillaume de Tyr (1184–1197)*, ed. M.R. Morgan (Paris, 1982), 96, 165–72; Sempad the Constable, *Chronique*, 68, 71–2. See also *Chronique d'Ernoul et de la Bernard Le Trésorier*, ed. L. de Mas Latrie (Paris, 1871), 318–24; Izz al–Din ibn Shaddad, *Description de la Syrie du Nord*, trans. A.–M. Eddé–Terrasse (Damascus, 1984), 256–7.

The Nobility

Another fruitful area for discussion is the Antiochene nobility. As Amy Livingstone (amongst many others) has demonstrated, noblewomen in medieval Europe could exert substantial control over their families and estates, despite earlier belief that the central middle ages saw a deterioration in female aristocratic power due to the rise of primogeniture. Moreover, that, much like women who belonged to ruling houses, perhaps even more so, their political power and agency can be found in various guises.[124] Usefully, the rights and privileges of Antiochene aristocratic and landholding women were enshrined within the principality's law code, the *Assises d'Antioche*—which, though surviving in a thirteenth–century Armenian translation, can still offer an important window on Frankish legal practice when placed against other documentary materials.[125] The *Assises* thus stipulate that wives had an equal

[124] Livingstone, 'Recalculating the Equation', 17–29. See also A. Livingstone, *Out of Love for My Kin: Aristocratic Family Life in the Lands of the Loire, 1000–1200* (Ithaca, NY), 27–59, 170–203.

[125] *Assises d'Antioche*, ed. and trans. L. Alishan (Venice, 1876) (hereafter *AA*). See also Cahen, *Syrie du Nord*, 28–32; J.–M. Martin, 'Les structures féodales normanno–souabes et la Terre Sainte', in *Il Mezzogiorno normanno–svevo e le Crociate: Atti delle quattordicesime giornate normanno–sveve Bari, 17–20 Octobre 2000*, ed. G. Musca (Bari, 2002), 225–50 at 239–50; P.W. Edbury, 'The *Assises d'Antioche*: Law and Custom in the Principality of Antioch', in *Norman Expansion: Connections, Continuities and Contrasts*, ed. K. Stringer and A. Jotischky (Farnham, 2013), 241–8;

claim as their husbands to all properties, while widows could act as *bailli* for their children.[126] Other regulations safeguarded a wife's dower and dowry, as well as the right to be involved in the alienation of properties, and ensured daughters were found advantageous marriages.[127] Of particular interest is the stipulation that, should the lord of a castle or major seigneurie die with only female heirs, the eldest daughter would act in the traditional patriarchal role by inheriting as lord and providing her sisters with income and husbands.[128] There is even an indication that female heirs or widows were expected to fulfil any services owed from this lordship, presumably through a proxy in the case of military matters, though this is not directly stated.[129] It was not unheard of, however, for women to adopt military roles in medieval Christendom, though it was rare.[130] As far as the *Assises d'Antioche* are concerned, therefore, Antiochene noblewomen were able, and indeed expected, to play an active role in the structures and processes of landholding. In the case of succession rights, this raises parallels with the kingdom of Jerusalem, where female nobles, like Emma of

---

A. Ouzounian, 'Les Assises d'Antioche ou la langue en usage: remarques à propos du texte arménien des Assises d'Antioche', in. *La Méditerranée Arméniens: XII–XV siècle*, ed. C. Mutafian (Paris, 2014), 133–62.

[126] *AA*, 18.

[127] *AA*, 18–22, 36–8.

[128] *AA*, 18–20.

[129] *AA*, 20.

[130] L. Wilkinson, 'Women as Sheriffs in Early Thirteenth Century England', in *English Government in the Thirteenth Century*, ed. A. Jobson (Woodbridge, 2004), 111–24.

Caesarea, were known to have inherited lordships—a reality also included in the law codes there.[131] Likewise, though legal ideals in medieval Europe often favored men, and there was great variability regarding the extent to which noblewomen inherited all or part of their family's property, it is clear that historians can no longer maintain that such practice was extraordinary.[132]

In the case of Antioch, female aristocratic power and agency can be traced not just as a legal ideal, but as lived reality. For example, noble wives are often evidenced giving their assent to documents issued by the principality's major aristocratic

---

[131] Hodgson, *Women*, 71–87, 206–13; G. McLennan, 'The Lady of Caesarea: A Colonist in Outremer', in *Our Medieval Heritage: Essays in Honour of John Tillotson for his 60th Birthday*, ed. L. Rasmussen, V. Spear, and D. Tillotson (Cardiff, 2002), 172–84. Regarding the law codes, the extent to which female rights were discussed, including a discussion of female liege homage, can be traced through the index to the modern edition. See John of Ibelin, *Le Livres des Assizes*, ed. P.W. Edbury (Leiden, 2003), 854.

[132] K. LoPrete, *Adela of Blois: Countess and Lord (c.1067–1137)* (Dublin, 2007); Livingstone, *Out of Love for My Kin*, 87–119; C. Beattie and M.F. Stevens (eds), *Married Women and the Law in Premodern Northwest Europe* (Woodbridge, 2013); R.C. DeAragon, 'Power and Agency in Post–Conquest England: Elite Women and the Transformations of the Twelfth Century', in *Medieval Elite Women and the Exercise of Power, 1100–1400: Moving beyond the Exceptionalist Debate*, ed. H.J. Tanner (Basingstoke, 2019), 19–44. See also J.H. Drell, 'Aristocratic Economies: Women and Family', in *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe*, ed. J. Bennett and R.M. Karras (Oxford, 2013), 327–42.

families. Thus, Sybil, wife of Walter I of Sourdeval, whose family, as noted above, were influential landholders in the region around Latakia and Jabala, was co–signatory to the gift of a palace at Latakia made to the Hospitallers in 1135, even having her own concessional clause at the end of the charter.[133] Likewise, Agatha, wife of Baldwin of Marash, a county to the north of the principality whose lords seemingly had close links with the ruling houses of both Antioch and Edessa, gave her 'voluntary assent and good will' to, and co–signed her gift and confirmation of, the sale of various possessions to the Hospitallers in 1143.[134] Finally, Avice, wife of Roger of Saone, who controlled a powerful fortress from which the family drew their name, as well as, at least during the early decades of Frankish rule, the frontier sites of Zardana and Balatanos, gave her assent and good will to another sale made to that Order in 1170.[135] The most extensive evidence for the involvement of noble wives in aristocratic administration, however, comes from within the seigneurie of the Masoir lords of Margat, an impressive castle to the far south of the principality which carried with it a lordship of great administrative sophistication and which controlled much of the surrounding region.[136] Between 1151 and her death *c.* 1174, therefore, the aforementioned Agnes, wife of Renaud II Masoir (and daughter of Count Pons of Tripoli and Cecilia of France), gave her consent to four documents relating to sales and donations made in this lordship; as did Bermonde, wife of Agnes and Renaud's

---

[133] *CGOH*, i, 92. On the Sourdevals, see Buck, 'Dynasty and Diaspora', 151–69.

[134] 'assenu et voluntate spontanea', 'dantis et confirmantis': *CGOH*, i, 226–7. On the Marash lordship, see Buck, *Principality*, 132, 142–3.

[135] *CGOH*, i, 289. On the lords of Saone, see Buck, *Principality*, 130–1.

[136] On the Masoirs, see Buck, *Principality*, 129–30, 133–40.

son, Bertrand Masoir, and perhaps also daughter of Walter II of Beirut, who, between 1178 and 1188, gave her consent to the documents of her step–father and her 'advice and good will' ('monitu … et affectu') to the sale of Margat itself in 1187.[137] In the case of the Masoirs, it is of interest that, when Renaud II confirmed that he would give up his half of the *Rugia* estate to the Hospitallers in 1174—which, as noted above, had seemingly come as part of his wedding to Agnes via her mother Cecilia and her first marriage to Tancred of Hauteville—he did not include his wife in the document.[138] While the likelihood is that her absence was due to her death, and Renaud paid special attention in the charter to those of his *amicorum* who had died, when this document is placed in the context of an earlier attempt made by Bohemond III in 1168 to force the Masoirs to give up this estate, which they seem to have retained until 1182 despite the 1174 charter, this may reveal something of Agnes' residual rights.[139] As these were her dower lands, and thus her sole link to her family, it is possible that this caused the Masoirs to resist the prince's attempts to leverage

---

[137] *CGOH*, i, 155, 239, 484, 491–7; *Codice diplomatico del Sacro Militare Ordine Gerosolimitano oggi di Malta*, ed. S. Paoli (2 vols., Lucca, 1733–7), i, 206–7, 250; J. Delaville le Roulx, 'Inventaire de pièces de l'Ordre de l'Hopital', *Revue de l'Orient Latin* 3 (1885), 36–106, at 62. J. Delaville Le Roulx, *Les Archives La Bibliothèque et le Trésor de L'Ordre de Saint–Jean de Jérusalem a Malte* (Paris, 1883), 134–5. On Bermonde's lineage, see *LdO*, 74, 118–19; H.E. Mayer, 'The Wheel of Fortune: Seignorial Vicissitudes under Kings Fulk and Baldwin III of Jerusalem', *Speculum* 65.4 (1990), 860–77.

[138] *CGOH*, I, 313–14. See also note 15 above.

[139] On this, see Buck, *Principality*, 154–5; Mayer, *Varia Antiochena*, 162–83.

their surrender—a suggestion supported by the fact that the situation only changed with her death. If so, this indicates Agnes carried an important level of influence within the seigneurie.[140] There is also similar evidence for women linked to more minor noble families. In 1139/40, for example, Hodierna of Loges (whose family held lands in Latakia) supported her husband Robert in granting lands to the Hospitallers within Alice's lordship of Latakia–Jabala.[141] Interestingly, in Michael the Syrian's aforementioned account of the building of a church dedicated to Mar Bar Sauma at Antioch, the apparent patrons of this project were an Antiochene couple, the lord Henry—perhaps the Henry of Loges found in a princely charter of 1170—and his wife, Elizabeth, which could further indicate the wider roles women played in this family.[142] Moreover, in 1160, Hugh of Corbeil granted at Antioch provisions of wine, in life and death, to the Order of Saint Lazarus with the assent and good will of his wife, Heloise—with either Hugh or Heloise potentially a descendent of a countess *de Corboilo*, a vassal of the counts of Edessa who had granted lands to Our Lady of

[140] In this context, it is worth noting that Arzghan appears not to have come into Masoir possession, for Bohemond III is seen selling it to the Hospitallers in 1168 (*CGOH*, i. 266–8). However, this is likely the result of Pons' actions in using it as a military base against Fulk in 1132, after which he likely surrendered following the king's victory.

[141] *CGOH*, i, 109.

[142] Michael the Syrian, *Chronique*, iii, 300–4. For Henry of Loges, see *Documenti sulle Relazione*, ed. Müller, 15–16.

Josaphat in 1126.[143] While it is rarely possible to reconstruct the wider extent of female agency in the administration of aristocratic households in the principality, such as has been used to expand modern understanding of the political reach of noblewomen in medieval Europe, the consistency with which Antiochene women played an active part in confirming the sale of possessions, especially as co–signatories, is, perhaps, telling. It could be argued that this was mere legal convention; but, if we consider the realities of female agency elsewhere, the likelihood is that it reflects the actualized influence exerted within the household and over the alienation of possessions. This is especially so given that these examples each tap into the courting of relations to a military religious order or, in the case of Elizabeth, the direct patronage of a religious building project—which, as noted earlier, was a key method by which women could exert power and agency.

More importantly, the *Assises*' suggestion that women could inherit part or even all of a major lordship is corroborated by wider evidence. For instance, in a charter of 1163, reference is made to the possessions of a countess *de Cereph*—a corruption of *Cerep*, the Latin name for castle of al–Atharib.[144] This fortress, which lay only thirty–five kilometers west of Aleppo, was vital to Latin hopes of controlling the activities of that city's Muslim rulers, although it had fallen out Antiochene hands

[143] Comte de Marsy, 'Fragment d'un cartulaire de l'ordre de Saint–Lazare, en Terre Sainte', in *Archives de l'Orient Latin* 2 (Documents) (1884), 121–57 at 137–8; Kohler, 'Chartes de l'Abbaye de Notre–Dame', 121–2.

[144] Delaville Le Roulx, *Archives*, 97–9.

by the late 1130s and was then destroyed in an earthquake.[145] For a brief period between 1138 and 1139, though, it was in the hands of a 'count of Antioch', granted the castle by John II Komnenos after its recovery from Zengi.[146] By the 1160s, therefore, the title of count was little more than a ceremonial moniker, albeit perhaps with hopes of future recovery, but the fact that we find reference made solely to the possessions of its countess indicates that the inheritance had passed along the female line. It is also possible that the aforementioned countess *de Corbulio* represents a similar situation, although we have only a passing reference to her in a charter of 1126 so little more can be said.[147] Another particularly high–profile example is Orgeuilleuse, the first wife of Bohemond III. Alongside becoming princess, Orgeuilleuse was, at least according to the *Lignages d'Outremer*, the heiress of the Fresnel lords of Harim, another castle of great strategic importance on the Antioch–Aleppo frontier.[148] Harim had a turbulent history, passing in and out of Latin control on several occasions before its definitive loss to Nur al–Din in 1164. It also had a fluid history of succession, as at some point during the late 1150s and early 1160s,

---

[145] Abu'l Fida, 'Tire des annales d'Abou 'l–Feda', *RHC Or.*, i, 18–19. See also Cahen, *Syrie du Nord*, 154–6; P. Deschamps, *Les châteaux des croisés 3: la défense du comté de Tripoli et de la principauté d'Antioche* (Paris, 1973), 136–9; Asbridge, *Creation*, 161, 169; T.S. Asbridge, 'The Significance and Causes of the Battle of the Field of Blood', *JMH* 23 (1997), 301–16; Buck, *Principality*, 33, 36.

[146] 'χόμητί … Αντιοχέων': Niketas Choniates, *Historia*, ed. I. van Dieten (Berlin, 1975), 38. See also Buck, *Principality*, 24–7, 30–1, 185, 196.

[147] Kohler, 'Chartes de l'Abbaye de Notre–Dame', 121–2.

[148] *LdO*, 83.

despite a Tancred Fresnel appearing in a princely charter of 1160, Harim was reportedly placed under the (almost certainly temporary) protection of first the western nobleman Renaud of Saint–Valéry, who had come east with Count Thierry of Flanders and helped to recapture the castle in 1157, and then Joscelin III, titular count of Edessa.[149] Nevertheless, that Bohemond III considered Orgeuilleuse of suitable prestige to marry her only makes sense if she were the heiress to one of Antioch's most important lordships, one he may have wished to bring more closely into the princely demesne—which helps to explain the several attempts he subsequently made to recover the fortress.[150] When these examples are placed alongside that of Cecilia of Bourcq becoming lady of Tarsus, they reveal a trend of women having the power to inherit, and even rule over, key frontier lordships. As noted, it was far from unique to find female inheritance in medieval Christendom, but to see this in fragile military zones is rather less prominent, if not unheard of (as is the case for the Welsh marches)—such trends are certainly not found in the kingdom of Jerusalem.[151] It cannot be denied that the extent to which this afforded women power is less clear, as these lordships were largely outside of Frankish control at the time of female inheritance. Nevertheless, the ownership of such titles would have meant they were recognized as nobles in their own right, which probably allowed them to achieve economic and legal agency, perhaps even a role in the High Court.

---

[149] Buck, 'Castle and Lordship of Ḥārim', 113–31.

[150] Buck, 'Castle and Lordship of Ḥārim', 124–30; Buck, *Principality*, 143–7.

[151] E. Cavell, 'Aristocratic Widows and the Medieval Welsh Frontier: The Shropshire Evidence', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 17 (2007), 57–82.

Outside of the frontier lordships three further examples help to further reveal the roles played by aristocratic women as dynastic heirs. When, in 1220, Bohemond IV confirmed the sale of an important money–fief at Latakia and Jabala, long a dynastic possession of the Sourdevals, the initiator of this transaction was Sybil, daughter of Walter II of Sourdeval and, by consequence, his successor.[152] Furthermore, Bertrand Masoir's charter confirming the sale of the entire Masoir seigneurie to the Hospitallers in early 1187 contains specific provisions for his wife, the aforementioned Bermonde. Besides noting that his agreement with the Order had been made with his wife's advice, Bertrand ensured that a portion of the 2,200 bezants he and his heirs would receive annually went to her.[153] If Bertrand died and his wife survived without an heir, Bermonde—or another legitimate wife, were she to die first and he remarry—would receive 1,200 bezants each year 'as her dower and wedding gift', while 1000 would go to the Hospitallers in alms. If there were heirs, then Bermonde would still receive half as part of her dower, with the other half going to these heirs (who would receive the whole sum after their mother's death).[154] This afforded Bermonde the potential role either as heir to the Masoir holdings or as co–beneficiary with, or *bailli* to, its heirs. Unfortunately for Bermonde, she died before

[152] *CGOH,* ii, 273. It is of interest that princely confirmation was required here, as this could indicate that supervision was required for female lords. However, Bohemond's involvement likely centred on the fact that Walter II had sided with Raymond Rupen in the civil war and so the Sourdevals were being relieved of a possession closely tied to princely confirmation as punishment. See Buck, 'Dynasty and Diaspora', 166–7.

[153] *CGOH,* i, 491–6.

[154] 'pro dote et sponsaliciis suis': *CGOH,* i, 491–6.

Bertrand, but this was not the end of female involvement in the Masoir inheritance. In 1217, when Bertrand, now residing in Nicosia in Cyprus, confirmed a death–bed gift made to the Hospitallers by his son, Renaud III, the elder Masoir's daughter, Agnes, was also on hand to give her assent, along with her husband, Amalric Barlais.[155] This suggests she was part of the family inheritance, perhaps being elevated to primary heir with her brother's impending death. Although a separate gift made to the Hospitallers as part of this same document was done with only Bertrand and Amalric's assent, later charters indicate Agnes' long–term influence.[156] In 1239, Agnes, with her sons, John and Renaud Barlais, gave to the Hospitallers an annual rent of 500 bezants to be taken from the money the Order gave them each year for the Margat fief; while, in March 1240, Agnes, this time only with Renaud, promised to resume paying 500 bezants to the Hospitallers should they recover a fief held in Tripoli.[157] When read alongside the succession processes of the abovementioned frontier lordships, this helps to demonstrate that female inheritance was a prominent, and fairly regular, occurrence amongst the principality's nobles.

Another important role played by aristocratic women, much like Antioch's princesses, was forming part of marriage alliances that could cement peaceful relations with neighbors and increase prestige. Through this, agency could be gained via the creation and expansion of new family units and the maintenance of ever–

[155] *CGOH*, ii, 226–7.

[156] 'de consensu et voluntate patris et mariti mei': *CGOH*, ii, 226–7.

[157] *CGOH*, ii, 565, 576.

growing kinship networks.[158] In a crusading context, for example, Nicholas Paul has shown how noblewomen used such networks to transmit and maintain traditions of crusading participation.[159] It is of interest, then, that Bohemond III married at least twice from within the Antiochene nobility through his unions with Orgeuilleuse and Sybil. The former has already been discussed, but the example of Sybil warrants further comment. Although her exact social status is unclear, there are suggestions she was related to the family who held Bourzey, a precipitous castle overlooking the River Orontes in the south east of the principality, as well as the influential Sourdevals.[160] The evidence for both is problematic, as it is unknown whether Sybil's relatives controlled Bourzey before the marriage, and so Bohemond's actions here were, like with Harim, a means to garner greater control over the fortress; or if they received it as a result of the union. If she were a Sourdeval, meanwhile, as is suggested by certain recensions of the *Lignages d'Outremer*, this could indicate that

---

[158] Hodgson, *Women*, 71–4, 84–95; Earenfight, 'Where Do We Go From Here?', 118–19, 121–4, 128–9. See also K. Thompson, *Power and Border Lordship in Medieval France: The County of the Perche, 1000–1226* (Woodbridge, 2002), 192–4; D. Power, *The Norman Frontier in the Twelfth and Early Thirteenth Centuries* (Cambridge, 2004), 224–46; Livingstone, *Out of Love for My Kin*, 120–69.

[159] N.L. Paul, *To Follow in their Footsteps: The Crusades and Family Memory in the High Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY, 2012), esp. 21–89.

[160] Buck, *Principality*, 56, 149; J. Mesqui, 'Bourzey, une forteresse anonyme de l'Oronte', in *La fortification au temps des croisades*, ed. N. Faucherre, J. Mesqui, and N. Prouteau (Rennes, 2004), 95–133; B. Michaudel, 'Burzaih', in *Burgen und Städte der Kreuzzugszeit*, ed. M. Piana (Petersberg, 2008), 178–87.

the prince used endogamous marriages to foster a greater sense of internal political unity. The negative response to this union by Antioch's aristocracy—caused, it would seem, by Bohemond's failure to include them in decision making—suggests this was no simple process.[161] Indeed, it was rare for medieval rulers to use endogamous marriages, precisely because they could create such tension, which indicates that the dynamic between prince and nobility was particularly delicate, as has been argued elsewhere.[162] Whatever the case, such marriages afforded Antiochene noblewomen a degree of potential agency, for they offered the chance of attaining the ultimate social advancement.

Antiochene noblewomen also acted as conduits between different aristocratic families. Firstly, when Beatrice, wife of William of Saone, was widowed in 1133, she then married Count Joscelin II of Edessa. Though this does not appear to have brought with it any particular rights to the lordship of Saone, it did link one of Antioch's major seigneuries to the ruling family of a neighboring crusader state and would have contributed to Antiochene–Edessan unity.[163] Given that this period saw a strengthening of ties between these two polities, perhaps including princely overlordship of the county during Raymond of Poitiers' reign, the union may even have been deliberately engineered as part of this process.[164] The *Lignages d'Outremer* also suggest that the lord of Saone at the time of its fall to Saladin in 1188, most likely the Roger of Saone found in near–contemporary charters, was married to an Isabelle,

---

[161] Buck, 'Noble Rebellion', 87–92; Buck, 'Dynasty and Diaspora', 164–7.

[162] Buck, *Principality*, 62–163.

[163] WT, 635. See also Buck, *Principality* 130–1.

[164] Buck, *Principality*, 231–3.

who had dynastic links to the powerful Jerusalemite Ibelin family.[165] Their daughter then married a Genoese man called Bonvoisin, almost certainly the knight Baldwin Bonvoisin who later emerged as a fief–holder in the kingdom of Cyprus.[166] Yet, it is unclear what happened to Isabelle after Saone's fall, or whether, as is known elsewhere, the nominal claim to the lordship passed to her daughter. Charter evidence shows that two male scions of the family, Paschal and Roger, were present in Antioch during the 1190s, with the former becoming a priest by 1209, and, as mentioned above, Bohemond IV gifted Guy of Gibelet a sizeable revenue to be drawn from Saone when the latter married his sister, Alice.[167]

Further confusion surrounds another series of potential aristocratic marriage unions. In certain recensions of the *Lignages d'Outremer*, for example, there are suggestions the first Frankish lord of Margat—unnamed in these texts but whom we know to have been Renaud I Masoir—had a daughter who married a certain William

---

[165] Indeed, one recension in particular notes that she was the daughter of Helvis II of Ramla and Anselm of Brie, and so was the granddaughter of the constable of Jerusalem, Manasses of Hierges, through his marriage to Helvis of Ramla. It is also possible that Isabelle is synonymous with the aforementioned Avicie. See *LdO*, 62–3; H.E. Mayer, 'Manasses of Hierges in East and West', *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 66.4 (1988), 757–66 at 764.

[166] *LdO*, 63, 122–4. See also *Die Urkunden*, ed. Mayer and Richard, ii, 859–65, 869–77; Edbury, *Kingdom of Cyprus*, 79.

[167] *CGOH*, i, 600, 613; ii, 112–13, 134–6; *Documenti sulle Relazione*, ed. Müller, 80–1. See also Buck, *Principality*, 147, 162–3.

of Torhot and had by him two sons, Bertrand and Amalric.[168] Although this William may have existed and married a Masoir daughter, the account of these two sons is clearly a garbled version of the progeny of Renaud II Masoir.[169] Even if the *Lignages* are simply confused, and this Amalric is synonymous with the son of Renaud II, he nevertheless reportedly also had four daughters, three of whom opened ties to other families.[170] One, Maria, married Renaud, son of Mellior, lord of the Tripolitan city of Maraclea, which lay just to the south of the Margat lordship; a second, unnamed, married William *Le Berner*, about whom nothing else is known; and another (again unnamed) daughter had her own daughter, who married Renaud of Mimars, a family with dynastic links to the Jerusalemite constable, Manasses of Hierges.[171] Although it is far from surprising that the Masoir daughters helped to develop dynastic links with other families, particularly the influential Ibelins or the lords of nearby Maraclea, several notes of caution must be sounded regarding much of this material. Indeed, the *Lignages* are decidedly confused when it comes to the Masoir line and, as Hans

[168] *LdO*, 118; H.E. Mayer, *Die Kreuzfahrerherrschaften von Maraclea und Nephin* (Berlin, 2018), 26.

[169] *LdO*, 118. Cahen (*Syrie du Nord*, 543) considered that this unknown daughter must have been the sister of Renaud II, while he accepted that she did have a son called Amalric, albeit not Bertrand. See also Mayer, *Maraclea und Nephin*, 26–7.

[170] *CGOH*, i, 239; Delaville le Roulx, 'Inventaire', 62, 68.

[171] *LdO*, 119, 122–4. See also Mayer, *Maraclea und Nephin*, 23–9; Mayer, 'Manasses of Hierges', 764.

Eberhard Mayer has noted in the case of Maraclea, there is no corroborating evidence.[172]

The thirteenth century was a period in which the divergent and complex fortunes of the Latin East placed a greater emphasis on inter–relations amongst *Outremer*'s native noble dynasties. Antiochene women again played a significant role in securing familial links. As already noted, Betrand Masoir's daughter Agnes married Amalric Barlais, a Cypriot knight of such standing that attempts were made to make him regent of the kingdom during a succession dispute in the early 1220s.[173] Moreover, an unnamed daughter of Agnes and Amalric went on to marry Guy of Ibelin, constable of Cyprus, most likely during the lull in a civil war in 1230, when Amalric, having originally led the opposition to Ibelin attempts to seize power, now surrendered to them and probably hoped to make a settlement. Through her, therefore, were carried the hopes of peace.[174] As Guy's daughter by this marriage, Isabella, later married Hugh III of Cyprus, this also served to introduce the Masoir dynasty into the island's ruling family.[175] Two Sourdeval daughters can likewise be found within the aristocracy of the kingdom of Jerusalem in the thirteenth century. The first was the aforementioned Sybil, daughter of Walter II Sourdeval, who, by 1220, had married Adhemar of Layron, the lord of Caesarea and at one point part of the household of the

[172] Mayer, *Maraclea und Nephin*, 28–9.

[173] *CGOH*, ii, 226–7, 594–6; Edbury, *Kingdom of Cyprus*, 50–5.

[174] *LdO*, 74, 118–19; Edbury, *Kingdom of Cyprus*, 61.

[175] Edbury, *Kingdom of Cyprus*, 116.

Western nobleman and king of Jerusalem, John of Brienne.[176] Alongside her was Margaret, who was Walter II's grand–daughter by another daughter, Beatrice, herself a landholder in Toron through an unknown union. Margaret married Philip of Maugustel, a knight of Tyre who supported Emperor Frederick II's efforts to impose his will over the kingdom's succession and regency.[177] The Sourdeval women, like those of the Masoirs, were thus an important conduit for traversing the complex and dangerous political events which plagued *Outremer* in the thirteenth century.[178]

What is clear, therefore, is that the Antiochene nobility was home to powerful women who could act not only as independent lords, but also as heiresses, regents, and administrators. That this could occur on delicate military frontiers is especially important. Women also provided a vital route for diplomatic advancement and security, creating ties which transcended political, social, and geographical boundaries to the benefit of their families, even to the point of securing links to the ruling families of each of the crusader states. Though it is not always possible to ascertain the exact levels of power and agency this afforded, or to trace the other ways in which historians know that female influence was expressed, it seems likely that behind our evidence lies a much richer picture of women securing and maintaining Antioch's lordships.

---

[176] *CGOH*, ii, 273. See also G. Perry, *John of Brienne: King of Jerusalem, Emperor of Constantinople, c.1175–1237* (Cambridge, 2013), 43, 66–8.

[177] *Tabulae Ordinis Theutonici*, ed. E. Strehlke (Berlin, 1869), 66–7. See also J.S.C. Riley–Smith, *The Feudal Nobility and the Kingdom of Jerusalem 1174–1277* (London, 1973), 180–1, 201–3.

[178] Buck, 'Dynasty and Diaspora', 164–7.

Broader Society

As has been noted at various points in this article, there has been an important historiographical move to re–define what 'female power' means for the European middle ages, with a special focus on moving outside of the masculinist perspective of authority. In a recent article, Marie Kelleher has asked historians to look beyond the more overt 'public' displays of elite power and to consider the every–day experiences of social and political agency.[179] It should be noted that this is no mean feat for the principality, as those sources which survive—limited as they are—largely focus on social elites. However, though it is not always possible to consider the power and agency of women who belonged to the broader elements of Antiochene society, we can trace some of their experiences. Indeed, through the narratives and charters, as well as the *Assises d'Antioche*, evidence can be found for the activities and legal protections of women belonging to minor vassalic families, to the so–called 'burgess' class, to professed religious, and to those who constituted the 'lower' elements of society.

In discussing the rights of the burgesses, the *Assises* offer several protections for the property rights of wives, widows, and daughters.[180] This included the

[179] Kelleher, 'What Do We Mean by "Women and Power"?', 109–115.

[180] Regarding burgesses, it has been noted that these were 'non–feudatories' who could be seen acting in numerous roles in Frankish society—including 'merchants, market tradesmen, craftsmen, artisans, investors, money–changers, translators,

stipulation that all wives must have an agreed dower amounting to half of all the patrimony and properties. However, there were restrictions: while a husband was legally bound to provide a dower, a wife's access to her spouse's broader possessions was limited.[181] A childless widow could thus inherit from her husband all of the furniture, half of the other possessions, and half of his inheritance, but only for her lifetime, after which these must be returned to her husband's relatives.[182] Furthermore, a woman could not make a will regarding her dowry until she had given birth to a child, and, even then, only with her husband's permission, because the dowry became his property once a child was born. A husband generally had much stronger rights of dispersal, even regarding provisioning for heirs in the case of spousal death, albeit he could not simply disperse his wife's wedding gift and dowry in the case of a childless marriage.[183] The main exception to these rules was property added to the familial holdings during the marriage. Here, should a woman be widowed without children, she had full freedom over what to do with these

---

fishermen and farmers'. However, as it is not always possible to distinguish these from minor landholders, if there was such a clear distinction, due to the rarity of the term *burgensis* in the charter evidence, this article will consider all those outside of the major aristocratic families. See M. Nader, *Burgesses and Burgess Law in the Latin Kingdoms of Jerusalem and Cyprus* (Aldershot, 2006), 1. More generally, see K.L. Reyerson, 'Urban Economies', in *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe*, ed. J. Bennett and R.M. Karras (Oxford, 2013), 295–310.

[181] *AA*, 52.

[182] *AA*, 44–8, 54–6.

[183] *AA*, 44–6, 48–52.

possessions, of which half became her inheritance.[184] It is also worth noting that, if testimony were required as part of a property dispute, one male witness was of the same value as three female witnesses.[185] Outside of the higher nobility, therefore, it would appear female property rights were less favorable, taking on elements of 'coverture' (that is the wife's rights being eclipsed by those of her husband). Nevertheless, much like in medieval Europe, this does not mean that women were devoid of agency or status in practice.[186]

A close examination of the surviving documentary and narrative sources confirms this. For a start, the *Assises*' emphasis on male rights over the woman's dower once a child was born is supported by a charter of 1168, in which Bohemond III confirmed certain privileges and possessions held by his liege man, Guy Falsart. In this, reference is made to rents owed to the prince from a waste land Guy possessed called *Dendema*, which came to him through marriage to a certain Clementia. Noting

---

[184] *AA*, 46–8.

[185] *AA*, 44–6.

[186] C. Beattie and M.F. Stevens, 'Introduction: Uncovering Married Women', in *Married Women and the Law in Premodern Northwest Europe*, ed. C. Beattie and M.F. Stevens (Woodbridge, 2013), 1–10 at 7–8. See also the various essays in this volume. More generally, see also J.L. Nelson and A. Rio, 'Women and Laws in Early Medieval Europe', in *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe*, ed. J. Bennett and R.M. Karras (Oxford, 2013), 103–17; S.M. Stuard, 'Brideprice, Dowry, and Other Martial Assigns', in *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe*, ed. J. Bennett and R.M. Karras (Oxford, 2013), 148–62.

that princely rights to these rents had been relinquished, it was detailed that Guy and his heirs, but not Clementia, now had full control of the *gastina*.[187] Likewise, the belief that women had equal claims to possessions gained in marriage, and could act as *bailli*, is suggested by an 1163 document detailing the agreement made over lands in the territory of Antioch between one Peter Gay and Adam, prior of the Church of St Abraham in Hebron. Here, Peter surrendered his possessions 'save for the rights of the wife of William the Porter and of the sole heir of the same', which amounted to the payment of a tax formerly paid to St Abraham's which would now go to Peter. It was made clear that it was the duty of both the wife and the heir to ensure this payment was met, or their possessions would be forfeit.[188] This was a far from unique case. For example, Sarracena, wife of Barutellus, helped her husband to build a house at Antioch, who then granted it to the Hospitallers at some point before 1149; while Murielle, wife of Alexander, son of Bernard the Squire, gave her 'consent and good will' ('concensu et voluntate') to the gift of a mill made to the Hospitallers by her husband in 1154. That the latter did so for the salvation of both their souls suggests it was a jointly–made decision.[189] Similarly, in 1194, Bohemond III confirmed the sale of a *gastina* to the Hospitallers made by a certain Godfrey and his wife Albereda, daughter of the late Adam of Peviers (an otherwise unknown figure). Indeed, the wording of the charter particularly suggests a joint gift as it noted that 'they have given' ('donaverunt') the *gastina* to the Hospitallers—with the mention of Albereda's father either indicating that the lands had come to her through him, or that her status

[187] *CGOH*, i, 265–6.

[188] Delaville le Roulx, *Archives*, 97–9.

[189] *CGOH*, i, 143–4, 170–1.

was dependent on his.[190] Moreover, when the heirs of one Garnier of Burg—the beneficiary of a gift of the aforementioned lands at Latakia forcibly seized from Ralph Boer by Princess Alice—came to Princess Constance to settle a subsequent dispute in 1151, they were supported by Garnier's widow.[191] Interestingly, we also find Sybil, wife of one Peter of Avinum, holding lands within Antioch in 1174, and, given she is listed separately to her husband, it appears she held these possessions in her own right.[192] In a similar vein, the *Assises*' suggestion that most wives brought dowries to their unions, and that all children must be cared for in the inheritance, is supported in a 1174 document in which a certain Peter of Amalfi dispensed of lands and possessions with Bohemond III's assent. Here, mention was made of properties that Peter had earlier surrendered as part of the wedding agreements ('contractu matrimonii') of his two daughters.[193] That daughters were an important part of familial inheritance is likewise demonstrated by a document relating to an agreement made between the Hospitallers and the heirs of the aforementioned Peter Gay. In this, Peter's son, Salvagius, and his daughter, Melisende (who was joined by her husband, Stephen)—agreed to renounce a claim made against the Order in return for a payment of 1,000 bezants.[194] The Hospitallers, it would seem, had acquired several of Peter's properties following his death in 1166, at which point a major auction was held to pay

---

[190] *CGOH,* I, 613.

[191] *CGOH,* i, 153–4.

[192] Rey, *Recherches geographiques,* 22–3.

[193] Rey, *Recherches geographiques,* 22–3.

[194] *CGOH,* i, 356–7.

off his vast debts.[195] Nevertheless, the presence of both Salvagius and Melisende demonstrates that both had a right to claim their father's inheritance, even if the presence of the latter's husband supports the *Assises*' suggestion that male rights were more prominent.

Importantly, women could also make donations independent of male familial influence, such as the house at Antioch which a certain Richilde gave to the Hospitallers between 1135 and 1142 with support from Patriarch Ralph of Domfront; or the lands gifted to the Order at Latakia by a woman called Grarinot in 1138 with the assent of Princess Alice.[196] Moreover, in 1155, Renaud of Châtillon and Princess Constance gave confirmed a gift made to the Hospitallers by Adeline, widow of Tostan the Small, of a sizeable estate, with its appurtenances, inside Antioch. That she did so for the salvation of her soul and those of her predecessors would appear to indicate that no heirs had been born to this marriage. It is also of interest that Adeline is afforded the moniker of *domina*, and the princely confirmation notes the relinquishing of any rights the rulers had to these possessions. This indicates Adeline was not a burgess—rather it appears she was part of the minor landholding classes, as neither her or Tostan appear elsewhere in the sources. Moreover, it helps to demonstrate the broader potential of female inheritance rights in the principality and could support the *Assises*' evidence that a wife might dispense freely with certain aspects of her husband's patrimony, particularly in the case of a childless marriage.[197] Yet, although these examples primarily suggest a positive position for wives, widows,

---

[195] *CGOH*, i, 251–2.

[196] *CGOH*, i, 92, 106.

[197] *CGOH*, i, 177.

and daughters, this is not the only picture. Outside of a Frankish context, for example, women could actually form *part* of an inheritance, like the Eastern Christian families sold to the Hospitallers in 1183, or the notary George, son of Basil, son of Vardi, who was handed over to that Order, along with his wife and any future heirs, in a document issued by Bohemond III in 1194.[198] Though these were not necessarily instances of slavery, they do indicate that significant limits to social freedom could be imposed on non–Latin women.[199]

The *Lignages d'Outremer* also allow us to track the marriages of several women amongst the principality's minor vassalic families. For example, at some point towards the end of the thirteenth century, a Balian of Antioch reportedly had a daughter called Euphemia, who married Philip, a figure whose lineage carried ties to several important Jerusalemite dynasties.[200] It is also noted that William of 'Azaz (fl. 1210s)—who the *Lignages* say was constable of Antioch, even if this is not

---

[198] *CGOH*, i, 436–7, 613.

[199] Buck, *Principality*, 184.

[200] Philip's father, Lorens of Morphou, was the son of John of Morphou—whose family descended from Lawerence of Plessy, a knight who came to Cyprus with Guy of Lusignan in the 1190s, and became titular counts of Edessa in the fourteenth century—and Isabelle, who was herself the daughter of Renaud the Chamberlain—who acted as co–bailiff of the kingdom of Jerusalem on behalf of Frederick II in 1229 and through whom came ties to the lordship of Haifa—and another Isabelle, granddaughter of Guy I of Beirut. See *LdO*, 33–40, 44–6, 104–5; John of Ibelin, *Livres des Assizes*, 736; Edbury, *Kingdom of Cyprus*, 18, 108; Mayer, 'Wheel of Fortune', 860–77.

substantiated by other materials—married his daughter Clarence to James, son of Lord Bohemond of Botron, who was himself the son of Bohemond III (which made James the latter's grandson).[201] The *Lignages* also mention an Antiochene lady, Eve, who married William, son of Raymond (son of Hugh II of Gibelet), who may well be the William Raymond mentioned in John of Ibelin's *Livre des Assizes*.[202] William and Eve are said to have had a son, John, who became marshal of Jerusalem in the early 1260s.[203] One final example is the unnamed woman of Antioch who married Massé of Gaurelle, one of the knights who came with Guy of Lusignan to Cyprus in the 1190s, and by whom she had a son, Adam of Antioch, who became marshal of Cyprus.[204] Like the ruling and aristocratic elites, therefore, women could play a crucial dynastic function in securing, growing, and maintaining social structures.

Although it can be difficult to trace those whose existence sits outside of our sources for property holding and legal rights, there are some glimpses into the wider experiences of women in the principality. For example, there is some evidence for a nunnery at Antioch in which women lived an eremitical life until the community moved to Cyprus following the city's fall in 1268.[205] So far as we can glean from Walter the Chancellor, in addition to the aforementioned moments when princesses

---

[201] *LdO*, 83, 93, 120. See also Cahen, *Syrie du Nord*, 545, 595.

[202] *LdO*, 115; John of Ibelin, *Livres des Assizes*, 660, 665–7, 737.

[203] *LdO*, 115. See also John of Ibelin, *Livres des Assizes*, 737; M. Barber, *A New Knighthood: A History of the Order of the Temple* (Cambridge, 1994), 158.

[204] *LdO*, 127. See also Edbury, *Kingdom of Cyprus*, 18–19.

[205] J. Richard, 'Sainte–Croix d'Antioche: un monastère féminin de tradition érémetique au temps des Croisades?', *Chronos* 13 (2006), 29–36.

took part in the ceremonial life of the principality, it is also clear that other women played an important role in public rituals, including liturgical celebrations, the return of armies from battle, and even the visits of major foreign powers.[206] Walter even suggested that knights returning from a campaign to halt a Muslim invasion from Baghdad in 1115 were permitted to visit their wives and families before re–grouping with Prince Roger to meet a further attack, which could indicate something of a formal ceremony surrounding battle departure that recognized the agency of women as equally affected by the demands of warfare.[207] The exact nature of these ceremonial activities, as well as the extent to which they afforded power or agency to those involved, is sadly hard to reconstruct from the available evidence, but it is at least possible to posit that, much like elsewhere in Latin Christendom, they would have normalized the involvement of women in the public rituals which cemented social and religious identities.[208] It is also evident that women were expected to act as frontier settlers, as Walter recorded how women and children living in or near to isolated fortresses would be shepherded back to Antioch for protection during

---

[206] WC, 65–6, 100, 105.

[207] WC, 106. On departure scenes, see Hodgson, *Women*, 113–17.

[208] On women and their role in ceremonial life, be that social or religious, see e.g. M.L. Norton, 'Liturgical manuscripts, liturgical practice, and the women of Klosterbeuburg', *Traditio* 66 (2011), 67–170; S. Trigg, 'Women in uniform: dress and performance in medieval court culture', in *Medieval Literature: Criticism and Debates,* ed. H.A. Cocker and D.V. Smith (London, 2014), 480–90; K.A–M. Bugyis, *The Care of Nuns: The Ministries of Benedictine Women in England during the Central Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2019).

moments of military crisis, no doubt as a means to prevent them being taken as slaves, as happened to a number of women at Kafartab in 1126, as well at Zardana and al–Atharib in 1135.[209]

On a different note, several authors also depict Antioch as a place with high levels of prostitution. Walter thus suggested that an earthquake which struck the city in 1114 was the result of the sexual incontinence of the city's men with the numerous prostitutes whom he claimed lured them into their clutches with Eastern–style clothing, lewd behavior, and special drinks.[210] While it was not uncommon for ecclesiastical authors to blame natural disasters on divine retribution caused by immorality (with women often credited with responsibility for leading men astray into sin), that Fulcher of Chartres and William of Tyre also presented Antioch as a place where matters of the flesh were a prominent pastime could indicate that there was more to this than clerical censure.[211] The suggestions by both Walter and William that prostitution was linked to the numerous bath houses found within the city (which are attested in the charters), perhaps indicates that these were in some way linked, as appears to have been the case elsewhere in medieval Europe.[212] The account of the

---

[209] WC, 94–5; WT, 559, 612; Michael the Syrian, *Chronique*, iii, 238.

[210] WC, 62–3.

[211] Fulcher of Chartres, *Historia Hierosolymitana*, ed. H. Hagenmeyer (Heidelberg, 1913), 622–4; WT, 994–5. On medieval attitudes towards sexuality, see R.M. Karras, *Sexuality in Medieval Europe: Doing Unto Others*, 3rd edn (Abingdon, 2017).

[212] WC, 64–5; WT, 677, 994–5; *CGOH*, i, 134, 209, 491–6. On the link between prostitution and bathhouses, see R. Karras, *Common Women: Prostitution and Sexuality in Medieval England* (Oxford, 1996), 13–47.

Muslim aristocrat, Usamah ibn Munqidh, of the lack of shame or propriety exhibited by a Frankish man and his wife at a bathhouse in Ma'arrat an–Nu'uman could certainly support this.[213]

Therefore, while those women who inhabited the minor landholding, burgess, ecclesiastical, and lower echelons of Antiochene society are far less prominent in the sources, they are not entirely absent from the material. Although it can be much harder to understand the extent of female power and agency, there are examples of landholders, urban property owners, litigants in legal proceedings, and contributors to the religious and ceremonial life of the principality, particularly in urban centers. Women were also a vital part of rural settlement, meaning they would have been afforded agency as farmers and mothers; while, though the reasons why women became sex workers can be varied, it is possible that doing so provided them with economic or social agency.[214] In short, and entirely unsurprisingly, women were an ever–present part of all areas of Antiochene society.

This article has sought to offer the first comprehensive analysis of the rights, roles, and experiences of women in the principality of Antioch. It has argued that, throughout the principality's existence, women enjoyed legal and political rights enshrined not only in law, but which, crucially, can also be traced as lived experience.

---

[213] Usamah ibn Munqidh, *The Book of Contemplation: Islam and the Crusades*, trans. P. Cobb (London, 2008), 149.

[214] Karras, *Common Women*, 65–83, 131–42. See also the discussion on agency as linked to those aspects of medieval society which perhaps transgress modern sensibilities in Kelleher, 'What Do We Mean By "Women and Power"?', 113–114.

Most obviously, Antioch's princesses were afforded important levels of power and agency within the political and diplomatic sphere. In the case of Constance, this even meant carrying the ruling house's dynastic legitimacy. Though the narratives and charters suggest princesses were not always overtly present for processes of governance, there are nevertheless clues that behind this lay a great deal of 'soft' power, as well as the ability to influence the wider political activities of Antioch's ruling house. It is certainly true that women proved vital conduits for diplomatic endeavors, with marriage alliances forged with polities across the medieval Mediterranean and beyond. Some, like Alice and Cecilia of Bourcq, even became powerful members of the Antiochene nobility in widowhood, forging independent lordships and proving capable of sophisticated self–rule. These same trends are also discernible for the principality's aristocracy, as noblewomen held independent lordships, served as lead heirs (even on fragile frontiers), took a prominent role in the administration of the household, forged diplomatic bonds through marriage alliances (including by marrying into the ruling house), and acted as regents for their children. During the thirteenth century, the principality's political and military fragmentation actually increased the reliance on aristocratic women to preserve and transmit noble power and identity, offering chances for wider advancement across political boundaries and hierarchies. The ability to hold land and contribute to the administration of estates even extended to broader levels of Antiochene society, especially in the minor vassalic and burgess families. Women also contributed to the wider economic and social life of the principality, acting as property holders and rural settlers; taking part in civic ceremonies and celebrations; contributing to the religious landscape; and, perhaps, working as prostitutes.

Overall, therefore, despite historians' focus on the military, male–dominated aspects of the principality's history, it is evident that women played a vital and fundamental part in governing and maintaining the Frankish presence in northern Syria. Drawing inspiration from the words of Earenfight, though some women, like Alice and Constance, may have been exceptionally talented, this does not mean that we should consider it exceptional that women could claim and deploy political, social, cultural, religious, and economic power and agency at all levels of Antiochene society.[215] In a region often seen to have been dominated by war and acts of male martial prowess, what is evident is the need to look beyond this, and to better understand the settler societies that made up the polities we now call the Crusader States.

[215] Earenfight, 'Where Do We Go From Here?', 124.