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Latin Emperors and Serbian Queens:

Anna and Helena

Genealogical and Geopolitical Explorations in the Post-1204 Byzantine World

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Abstract

Latin Constantinople in the 1240s and 1250s has often been considered a ripe fruit waiting to fall into the hands of one of the competing political entities in the region (Nicaea, Epiros, Bulgaria, etc.). This paper argues, on the contrary, that under Emperor Baldwin II (1240-1273) the Latin Empire remained a dynamic power in the post-1204 Byzantine world. The basis for this re-evaluation is a revisionist study of the genealogical relations between a number of leading families in the region (among others the Villehardouin, Da Verona, and Cayeux), creating networks both within Latin Romania and beyond. One of the main hypotheses advanced is that two Serbian queens – Stefan Nemanja's third wife Anna (of Hainaut) and Stefan Uroš I's wife Helena (Angelos/Courtenay) – were in fact what one might call Latin imperial princesses. This in turn leads to a reconsideration of Latin-Serbian relations in the period 1204-1261.

Keywords

Byzantium – Latin Empire of Constantinople – Serbia – Fourth Crusade – marriage alliances – genealogy

The identity of Queen Helena of Serbia (†1314), wife of King Stefan Uroš I (1243-1276) – often called Helena of Anjou – continues to puzzle historians. Over the years diverging hypotheses have been formulated, but a scholarly consensus has not yet been reached. Recently, Nicolas Petrovitch proposed the novel idea that Helena must have been a member of the noble family of

Chaource in the county of Maine in France.¹ Crucial source data have not been taken into consideration, however. Hence I intend to re-examine the dossier by reviewing Petrovitch's suggestion and various older hypotheses. Through adding a new element to the debate, I also hope to throw some light on Helena's years before her marriage to Stefan Uroš. By filling this gap in her biography, the geopolitical significance of Helena's marriage(s) within the context of the fragmented thirteenth-century Byzantine Empire and/or space may be revealed. In the process, the marriages of Stefan Nemanjić, grand *zupan* (1196-1217) and later king (1217-1227/28) of Serbia, will also be re-examined, devoting special attention to the identity of the Serbian queen known today as 'Anna Dandolo'. These genealogical explorations will result in a partial re-evaluation of geopolitical relations in the post-1204 Byzantine world, focusing on Constantinople and Serbia, but also involving both Euboea and Thessaloniki.

1 Helena of Anjou, Chaource or Angelos/Courtenay?

The starting point for any investigation into Helena's identity is Archbishop Danilo II of Serbia's (1324-1337) *vita* dedicated to the queen's life. Danilo was a contemporary who knew Helena personally. With regard to her origin, he offers two pieces of information. First, he writes that Helena was of *carskoga plemena* – literally 'imperial blood', although by extension the term *carskoga* could also be used in the context of kings and great princes. Second, Danilo says that Helena was of 'French' origin.² Given these elements, Queen Helena has often been identified in the past as either belonging to the lineage of Charles I, count of Anjou, Maine, and Provence (1246-1285) and king of Sicily (1266-1285), or as a daughter of Baldwin II of Courtenay, emperor of Constantinople (1240-1261/73). The first identification relies on several entries for the years 1280-1281 in the Angevin registers of the kingdom of Sicily mentioning Queen Helena's sister Mary as a relative (*consanguinea* or *cognata*) of King Charles I, and on the fact that the latter's son and successor, Charles II of Anjou (1285-1309), calls Queen Helena and her son, King Stefan Milutin (1282-1321), *consanguinei* in a 1294 letter and the queen his *affinis* in a 1302 letter. The exact relationship is, however, never specified.³ The second identification is based on a Serbian

1 N. Petrovitch, "La reine de Serbie Helena d'Anjou et la famille de Chaource," *Crusades* 14 (2015), 167-181.

2 Danilo II, *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih*, ed. Đ. Daničić (Zagreb: Galca, 1866), 56; *Danilo II. und sein Schüler: Die Königsbiographien*, trans. S. Hafner (Graz: Styria, 1976), 103.

3 F. Caraballese, *Carlo d'Angiò nei rapporti politici e commerciali con Venezia e l'Oriente* (Bari: Commissione Provinciale di Archeologia e Storia Patria, 1911), 39 n. 2, 40 n. 1; L. de Thallóczy,

chronography that has been characterized as dubious and is no longer considered reliable in current historiography.⁴

Petrovich's new hypothesis is a variant of the Anjou theory. Of crucial importance is his interpretation of one specific entry in the Angevin registers. In this entry (7/8 June 1280), Charles I of Anjou instructed his officers to provide transportation for *nobilis mulier Maria de Chauris cum filio suo*, who wanted to travel *ad partes Servie visura dominam reginam Servie sororem suam*.⁵ In two entries from 4 and 5 June 1281, the same lady – now returning from Serbia together with a Serbian embassy – is called *nobilis mulier domina Chau consanguinea nostra carissima* and *nobilis mulier Maria, relicta quondam nobilis viri Anselmi de Chau*, respectively.⁶ Both Mary and Anseau, as Petrovich has rightly pointed out, also appear in two 1277 charters in the county of Ponthieu in Northern France. In these two documents, authored by Mary and her son Anseau, she styles herself *Marie de Kaieu, jadis fame mon sire/monseigneur Anseau de Kaieu*, who is identified as *grant baron et camberlenc de l'empire de Constantinoble*.⁷ This *Anselmus de Chau* or *Anseau de Kaieu* must be identified with Anseau III of Cayeux, who is also mentioned in the Angevin registers as the imperial *camerarius* of Constantinople (in a 1269 entry).⁸ Anseau was presumably the grandson of Anseau I of Cayeux, who had participated in the Fourth Crusade (1202-1204) and who had become one of the most prominent Constantinopolitan barons, *inter alia* serving as imperial regent in 1238. Anseau III's father, Anseau II of Cayeux, had married Eudokia Laskaris, daughter of Emperor Theodore I Laskaris of Nicaea (1206/08-1221), in the early 1220s. Anseau III fled Constantinople in 1261 together with Emperor Baldwin II and, like his suzerain, established himself in the kingdom of Sicily. Under Charles I of Anjou, he rose to the post of vicar or captain general of Albania in 1273, but died the following year.⁹

C. Jireček and E. de Sufflay, eds., *Acta et diplomata res Albaniae mediae aetatis illustrantia* (Vienna: Holzhausen, 1913), 1:nos 520, 544.

4 Č. Mijatović, "Ko je kraljica Jelena?," *Letopis Matice Srpske* 217 (1903), 1-30, at 9; Petrovitch, "La reine de Serbie Helena d'Anjou," 172.

5 Caraballese, *Carlo d'Angiò*, 39 n. 2; Petrovitch, "La reine de Serbie Helena d'Anjou," 171.

6 Caraballese, *Carlo d'Angiò*, 40 n. 1.

7 E. Prarond, *Le cartulaire du comté de Ponthieu* (Abbeville: Fourdrinier, 1897), 277-278; Petrovitch, "La reine de Serbie Helena d'Anjou," 174-175.

8 B. Mazzoleni, ed., *Gli atti perduti della cancelleria angioina: transuntati da Carlo de Lellis*, vol. 1 (Rome: Istituto storico italiano per il Medio Evo, 1939), 1:121 no. 740.

9 On the Cayeux, see Genealogical Table VI. See also J. Longnon, *Les compagnons de Villehardouin: recherches sur les croisés de la quatrième croisade* (Geneva: Droz, 1978), 200. It is not easy to differentiate between the successive Cayeux in Constantinople. In a 1219 charter by imperial regent Cono I of Béthune, Anseau I (*Anselmus de Chau*), who had

Petrovich is of the opinion that one should distinguish between Mary's own family name and that of her husband. Mary's own family name would have been *de Chours* (see the 1280 entry in the Angevin registers), while Anseau's family name was *de Chau/Kaieu* (with other known variants). The author then relates Mary to a number of *de Chours* (with variants) mentioned in the Angevin registers: *Patricius de Chours* or *de Chaorcis* (from 1280 to 1282), *Herveus de Chaurciis* or *de Chaours* (from 1271 to 1281) and *Henricus de Chaurcis* or *de Chaurciis/Caurs/Chaors/Caors* (from 1271 to 1279). Patrice, Hervé, and Henry, as the author argues, belonged to the Chaource family in the county of Maine, one of the prominent lineages of the region. Petrovich points out that members of the Chaource family participated in the crusades (with Templar *Adam de Chaurce* in Jerusalem in 1184), that some took part in Charles of Anjou's

participated in the Fourth Crusade, acts as first witness (with Narjot I of Toucy as second witness): G.L.F. Tafel and G.M. Thomas, eds., *Urkunden zur älteren Handels- und Staatsgeschichte der Republik Venedig*, 3 vols. (Vienna: Kaiserlich-Königliche Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1856-1857), vol. 2, no. 256. In a September 1238 charter, presumably the same Anseau I (*Anselmus de Kaeu*) acts as imperial regent (with Narjot I of Toucy mentioned as the second Constantinopolitan baron): A. Teulet, ed., *Layettes du Trésor des Chartes*, vol. 2 (Paris: Plon, 1866), no. 2744. A December 1238 charter, however, mentions Narjot I of Toucy as regent, while Anseau I (or any other Cayeux) is not mentioned; this would seem to indicate that at this time he was either absent, was somehow incapacitated, or had died: *ibidem*, no. 2753. In a 1240 imperial charter, Narjot I of Toucy is first witness, with *A. de Cheu* now only mentioned in second place: this reversed order in my view indicates that by this time Anseau I had died and had been succeeded by his son – or close relative – Anseau II (who at this time must have been regarded as Toucy's junior): R.-J. Loenertz, "Les seigneurs tierciars de Négrepont de 1205 à 1280," *Byzantion* 35 (1965), 235-276, at 268, no. 1. This Anseau II and his wife Eudokia Laskaris would seem to be last mentioned in a passage in George Akropolites' chronicle relating the 1247 conquest of the town of Tzouroulon in Thrace, wherein the couple was implicated: Georgios Akropolites, *Historia*, ed. A. Heisenberg, in *Georgii Acropolitae Opera* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1903), 1:§47. That the 'Anseau of Cayeux' mentioned in the sources after 1247 is different from Anseau II is borne out by the combined information of George Akropolites and Ephraim of Ainos with regard to Michael VIII Paleologos' 1260 siege of Galata: the 'Anseau (of Cayeux)' mentioned in the context of this campaign was a cousin (*exadelphos*) of the Nicaean emperor, a fact that is only true for 'our' Anseau III (through his mother Eudokia), but not for 'our' Anseau II (who was only married to Eudokia): Georgios Akropolites, *Historia*, §83; Ephraem Aenius, *Historia chronica*, ed. O. Lampsides (Athens: Institutum Graecoromanae antiquitatis, 1990), v. 9477, 334. For Anseau III's 1269 mention in the Angevin registers as Latin imperial *camerarius* (a charter concerning his daughter Eva's marriage, with Emperor Baldwin II and his son Philip acting as witnesses): Mazzoleni, *Gli atti perduti*, 1:121, no. 740. On Anseau III as captain general of Albania, see G.L. McDaniel, "On Hungarian-Serbian Relations in the Thirteenth Century: John Angelos and Queen Jelena," *Ungarn Jahrbuch* 12 (1982-1983), 43-50, at 48. On E. Laskaris: F. Van Tricht, "Robert of Courtenay (1221-1227): An Idiot on the Throne of Constantinople?," *Speculum* 88 (2013), 996-1034, at 1013 n. 61, 1024-1026.

campaign in Hainaut – in support of Margaret of Constantinople, countess of Flanders and Hainaut (1244-1278/80) – in 1254 (with a Patrice among them), and that a branch of the family had established itself in England in the context of the 1066 conquest.¹⁰ However, this identification of Mary as a member of the Chaource family presents several problems.

First, it is remarkable that while Mary and her sister, Queen Helena, are repeatedly identified as relatives of Charles of Anjou in the Angevin registers, the mentioned members of the Chaource family – Patrice, Hervé, and Henry – never are. Indeed, no source informs us of a kinship tie between the Chaource family and the Capetians. This is one indication that Mary did not belong to the same lineage as Patrice, Hervé, and Henry. Also, if the Chaource family had no link with the Capetian royal lineage, it is hard to see how it could meet Danilo's criterion that Helena belonged to a royal (or imperial) lineage.

Second, four papal letters from 1253-1255 not used by Petrovich contain vital information concerning Mary's – and Helena's – ancestry. Gordon McDaniel was the first to draw attention to these documents in the context of Queen Helena's descent.¹¹ In the first letter (15 July 1253), addressed to *nobilis vir Anselmus de Keu*, Innocent IV grants a marriage dispensation to Anseau and his fiancée *Maria, nata Matildis dominae de Posaga, natae comitissae Viennensis*, since Mary was Anseau's relative in the fourth degree (*quarta consanguinitatis linea*). Both the *comitissa Viennensis* – Mary's grandmother – and the *imperator Constantinopolitanus* – Baldwin II of Courtenay, who is called Mary's *avunculus* (to be translated as uncle or great uncle) – had requested the pope to confer this dispensation. A similar letter was sent to Mary herself.¹² In a third letter (13 January 1254), Pope Innocent confirms the marriage dispensation granted to *nobilis vir Anselmus, natus nobilis vir de Quo, et nobilis mulier Maria, nata quondam Calojohanni*.¹³ In the fourth letter (15 January 1255), Alexander IV reconfirms the marriage dispensation granted to *nobilis vir Anselmus, dominus de Keu, et Maria uxor eius*, notwithstanding the fact that Anseau and Mary turned out to be related in the third and fourth degrees (and not in the fourth and fifth degrees, as had first been communicated to the papal court).¹⁴

10 Petrovitch, "La reine de Serbie Helena d'Anjou," 177-179.

11 McDaniel, "On Hungarian-Serbian Relations," 43-50. Petrovitch cites McDaniel's article, but – somewhat inexplicably – does not engage the author's argumentation or discuss the papal letters in question.

12 *Les registres d'Innocent IV (1243-1254)*, ed. E. Berger (Paris: E. Thorin, 1884-1921), no. 6862.

13 *Les registres d'Innocent IV*, no. 7178.

14 *Les registres d'Alexandre IV (1254-1261)*, ed. C. Bourel de La Roncière (Paris: A Fontemoing, 1896-1959), no. 48.

It is clear that the four letters relate to the same marriage and thus to the same couple. The Latin imperial involvement is twofold: not only was Baldwin II Mary's *avunculus*, but *Anselmus de Keu/Quo* should also be identified as the prominent Constantinopolitan baron Anseau III of Cayeux. In Constantinopolitan documents, his family name appears as *Cau*, *Cheu*, or *Kaeu*.¹⁵ *Keu* and *Quo* are just two other variants. No credible alternative identification seems to be feasible. The *comitissa Viennensis* is to be identified with the then countess of Vianden, Margaret of Courtenay. She was Baldwin II's elder sister and had taken as her second husband Henry, count of Vianden (1210-1252), sometime before 1217.¹⁶ The mentioned *Matildis, domina de Posaga* is Margaret's daughter Mathilda from her first marriage with Raoul III, lord of Issoudun. Mathilda was born around 1209-1211. She is mentioned as a young child (*filiola mea*) in Raoul's testament (from July 1212), in which his wife Margaret of Courtenay appears as a witness.¹⁷

The *Calojohannes* mentioned in the 1254 letter as Mary's father – and thus as Mathilda's husband – is to be identified as John Angelos, son of Princess Margaret of Hungary and the Byzantine Emperor Isaac II Angelos (1185-1195 and 1203). In 1204 John had moved from Constantinople to Thessaloniki with his mother. Margaret had married crusade leader Marquis Boniface of Montferrat (†1207), who had been granted a principality around Thessaloniki that was feudally dependent on the emperor in Constantinople.¹⁸ After

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- 15 See references above, note 9. See also the numerous other variants in the chronicles of Geoffroy de Villehardouin and Henri de Valenciennes: Geoffroy de Villehardouin, *La conquête de Constantinople*, ed. E. Faral, 2 vols. (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1961), 1:§149, and 2:§§323, 403, 421, 430, 436, 453, 462, 478, 493; Henri de Valenciennes, *Histoire de l'empereur Henri de Constantinople*, ed. J. Longnon (Paris: Geuthner, 1948), §§515, 518, 595, 618, 625, 638-639, 645, 658, 666-668, 682.
- 16 Jean du Bouchet, *Histoire généalogique de la maison royale de Courtenay* (Paris: Jean du Puis, 1661), 261. During Baldwin II's minority in Constantinople, from 1229 – after the death of her brother Philip – Margaret ruled the county of Namur with her husband Henry of Vianden. This led to a short-lived conflict in 1238 when Baldwin returned to his home region to claim his inheritance, supported by Countess Joan of Flanders and Hainaut and by King Louis IX of France. Margaret and Henry eventually had to abandon Namur: H. Vander Linden, "Marguerite de Courtenay," in *Biographie nationale* (Brussels: Académie royale de Belgique, 1895), 13:629-631.
- 17 Du Bouchet, *Histoire généalogique*, 260-261. On the Angelos family, see Genealogical Table 1.
- 18 T.F. Madden, "The Latin Empire of Constantinople's Fractured Foundation: The Rift between Boniface of Montferrat and Baldwin of Flanders," in *The Fourth Crusade: Event, Aftermath, and Perceptions*, ed. T.F. Madden (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 45-52. See my remarks in F. Van Tricht, *The Latin Renovatio of Byzantium. The Empire of Constantinople (1204-1228)* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 47-49.

Boniface's death Margaret of Hungary was guardian for their underage son Demetrios, who – still a child – was crowned king of Thessaloniki in 1209 by Emperor Henry of Flanders/Hainaut. In the context of the successful campaign against the kingdom of Thessaloniki in 1218-1224 by Theodore Doukas, ruler of Epiros (1214/15-1230), John's mother Margaret left for her native Hungary, where she was awarded lands by her brother King Andrew II (1205-1235). John had joined his mother by 1227 and by 1235 he had succeeded her as ruler of Syrmia (Srem) and neighbouring regions, including – for some time – the county of Kovin. In the years 1235-1242, he is attested in this capacity in various Hungarians charters, being called *Calojohannes* or *Joannes Angelus* by King Bela IV. By late 1253, John had died and, sometime between 1247 and 1254, he was succeeded in the region by Rostislav Mikhailovich, one time ruler of Novgorod (1230) and Halych (1236-1237, 1241-1242). His widow Mathilda apparently received the town or county of Požega as her dower.¹⁹

If the *Anselmus de Keu/Quo* from 1253-1255 is indeed Anseau III of Cayeux, then he is of course also identical with the Latin imperial chamberlain mentioned in the Angevin registers and in the charters from Ponthieu. It then follows that the Mary from the 1253-1255 papal letters – the daughter of Mathilda of Courtenay and John Angelos – is identical with the Mary in the Angevin registers and in the Ponthieu charters, who was the sister of Queen Helena of Serbia. This leads to the conclusion that both women must have shared at least one, but – as I will now argue – most likely two parents. Archbishop Danilo's testimony that the Serbian queen was of French descent indicates that Mathilda of Courtenay presumably was Helena's mother, since John is not known to have contracted any other marriage (with or without a French

19 M. Wertner, "Margarethe von Ungarn, Kaiserin von Griechenland und Königin von Thessalonich," *Vierteljahrschrift für Siegel-, Wappen- und Familienkunde* 17 (1890), 219-255, at 224-226; Idem, "Margit császárné fiai," *Századok* 37 (1903), 593-611, at 596-600; A.L. Tautu, "Margarethe di Ungheria, imperatrice di Bisanzio," *Antemurale* 3 (1956), 51-79, at 68-69; McDaniel, "On Hungarian-Serbian Relations," 44-45. On the history of Syrmia (Srem) and the surrounding region in the thirteenth century, B. Ternovác, "A macsóí és barancsi területek története 1319-ig," *Micae Medievales* 6 (2017), 227-240, at 232-234; H. Đura, "Chy Rostyslav Mykhaylovych був баном Machvy?," in *Actes testantibus. Juvilejnyj zbirnyk na pošanu Leontija Vojtovyča*, ed. M. Lytvyn (Lviv: National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, 2011), 197-203, at 199-203; Idem, "Jedan prilog pitanju vizantijskog naleda na tlu ovostranog Srema (Sirmie Citerioris)," *Zbornik Radova Vizantološkog Instituta* 54 (2017), 117-142. John's half-brother William – Margaret's second son from her third marriage with Nicholas of Saint-Omer (see note 47) – had already died in 1242 in the context of the Mongol invasion. He also at some point appears to have played a role in Syrmia, but it is doubtful whether the mention of a *Gyletus dux Sirmii* among the witnesses in a questionable fragmentary copy of a royal charter of 1233 (?) applies to him.

connection). Danilo's second clue about Helena being of imperial (or perhaps royal) descent is not very helpful, as both the Angeloi and the Courtenay were imperial lineages. There is, however, no indication that Mathilda married more than once, either before her marriage to John Angelos or after his death. As mentioned, she was born around 1209-1211. In his testament (July 1212), her father, Raoul III of Issoudun, set aside 500 pounds – to be collected from the future income of his estates – to provide his only child with a suitable dowry (*ad eam maritandam*). Mathilda would never enter into possession of her father's lordship of Issoudun, since, after her father's death, the fief was administered by her aunt Mahaut and her husband William of Chauvigny, while by 1221 it was in the hands of more distant relatives, with King Philip II Augustus gradually gaining control during these years over the strategically located town.²⁰

Margaret of Courtenay's priority for her daughter from her first marriage must have been to marry her off as soon – and as well – as possible. In the years 1214-1218, several of Margaret's sisters were married in the context of Latin imperial diplomacy: Yolande to the Hungarian King Andrew II, Agnes to Prince of Achaia Geoffrey II of Villehardouin, and Mary to the Nicaean Emperor Theodore I Laskaris.²¹ By the early 1220s, Mathilda had attained marriageable age. She may have accompanied her grandmother, Empress Yolande of Courtenay (1217-1219), or her uncle, Emperor Robert of Courtenay (1221-1227), on their journey to Constantinople. A marriage between Mathilda and John Angelos (presumably born shortly after 1195) made perfect political sense at this time. The latter's mother, Margaret of Hungary, had always been on good terms with Emperor Henry (who had provided her and her sons with additional lands in southern Thessaly) and Thessaloniki was in dire need of assistance against Theodore Doukas' ongoing attacks (1218-1224). The marriage would have reinforced the cooperation between Thessaloniki and Constantinople against their common enemy, although it would ultimately prove to be unsuccessful.²²

Having thus argued that Mathilda probably married John in the early 1220s, we may next assume that Helena most likely was the elder sister, as she was – as far as the sources inform us – the first to be married (around 1245-1250 to Stefan Uroš I, probably as her second husband; see below), while Mary entered

20 Du Bouchet, *Histoire généalogique*, 260-261; G. Devailly, *Le Berry du X^e siècle au milieu du XIII^e siècle. Étude politique, religieuse, sociale et économique* (Paris: Mouton et Cie, 1973), 433-435.

21 On these marriages: Van Tricht, *The Latin Renovatio of Byzantium*, 179, 364-365, 380, 413-414.

22 McDaniel still placed the marriage a decade later in the mid-1230s, incorrectly assuming that Mathilda was Margaret of Courtenay's daughter from her second marriage around 1216/17 to Count Henry of Vianden: McDaniel, "On Hungarian-Serbian Relations," 44-45.

matrimonial bonds with Anseau III of Cayeux only in 1254 (and is not known to have had any other husband). Combined, these data would mean that Helena and Mary were full sisters, both having Mathilda and John as parents. An additional element possibly indicating Helena's descent from John Angelos is the fact that Danilo, in his *vita* of Helena, repeatedly likens her to angels, *inter alia* in the context of the queen taking monastic vows and at her deathbed. While, to be sure, entrance into a monastery was quite commonly described in Byzantine hagiographic literature as the adoption of an angelic life, at the same time it should be recalled that this type of comparison was also a mainstay of Byzantine imperial panegyric under the Angelos dynasty.²³

2 Helena of Thessaloniki?

The foregoing argumentation concerning Helena's descent from Mathilda of Courtenay and John Angelos may be taken as the confirmation and partial modification of work by previous authors (especially McDaniel), prompted by Petrovich's new but erroneous hypothesis concerning the Chaource family. Now, however, I would like to present a more novel hypothesis. As a daughter of John Angelos, Helena was the niece of John's half-brother, Demetrios of Montferrat, Margaret of Hungary's son by her second husband, Marquis Boniface, the first Latin ruler of Thessaloniki. An imperial charter issued by Baldwin II on 5 May 1240 mentions exactly such a niece of Demetrios of Montferrat by the name of Helena (*domina Helena, neptis quondam Dimitrii, regis Thessalonicensis illustris*). In this well-known document, Baldwin as suzerain invests Helena's husband, Guglielmo da Verona, *tercierus* of Euboea, with the rights to the kingdom of Thessaloniki, for which Guglielmo becomes the emperor's liegeman (*recipientes ipsum in hominem nostrum ligium et fidelem*). As motivation, Baldwin mentions that these rights fell to Helena because she was King Demetrios' relative (*que ad dictam dominam uxorem eiusdem ex morte prefati regis ratione propinquitatis recidere dinoscuntur*).²⁴ In a second document, dated 27 February 1241, the emperor grants in fief to Helena's husband Guglielmo and his heirs the fortified town (*castrum*) of *Pilaprum* (probably Prilep in Macedonia, north of Thessaloniki).²⁵

23 Danilo II, *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih*, 96, 100; *Danilo II. und sein Schüler*, 128-129, 133. On angelic metaphors in Byzantine imperial art (also before the Angeloi): H. Maguire, "The Heavenly Court," in *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, ed. H. Maguire (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1997), 247-258, at 251-252.

24 Loenertz, "Les seigneurs tierciers," no. 1, 268.

25 Loenertz, "Les seigneurs tierciers," no. 2, 270.

In April 1244, at the request of Helena (*nobilis mulier Helena, domina totius regni Thessalonicensis*), Pope Innocent IV confirms both imperial documents. The first papal letter concerns Thessaloniki, is addressed to Helena herself, and reproduces the text of Baldwin's charter verbatim. In the introduction, Innocent paraphrases that Thessaloniki belonged to Helena *iure successionis* and that Baldwin had invested her husband Guglielmo in her name (*tuò nomine*).²⁶ The second papal letter concerns *Pilaprum* and is addressed to her children Francesco, Corrado, Bonifacio, and Agnese, who were obviously considered to be Guglielmo's heirs with respect to the imperial grant in question.²⁷ It is important to note that these two papal documents mention Baldwin II (*clare memorie Balduinus imperator Constantinopolitanus*) and Guglielmo (*quondam Guillelmus*) as being deceased. This was, of course, not the case for Baldwin, who died several decades later, in 1273. Nevertheless, a contemporary chronicle from his home region, Philippe Mouskes' *Chronique rimée*, contains the same incorrect information: at the end of 1243, the news of Baldwin II's death spread and caused his brother-in-law and Prince of Achaia, Geoffrey II of Villehardouin, to sail with a fleet to Constantinople in order to protect the rights of his nephew, Philip of Courtenay, Baldwin's young son by Empress Mary of Brienne.²⁸

The Helena mentioned in 1240-1244, a niece of King Demetrios of Montferrat, has hitherto been identified as an otherwise unrecorded member of the Montferrat family. Jean Alexandre Buchon proposed that Helena was perhaps a daughter from a second marriage of Agnese of Montferrat. The latter, a daughter of crusade leader Boniface of Montferrat, married Emperor Henry of Flanders/Hainaut in 1206. She was already dead around 1207/08, which implies that she could never have married a second time, and no earlier marriage has been recorded.²⁹ Raymond Loenertz wrote: "Elena, inconnue par ailleurs, était nécessairement soeur ou cousine germaine de Bonifacio II de Monferrato"

26 Loenertz, "Les seigneurs tiersiers," no. 1, 267.

27 Loenertz, "Les seigneurs tiersiers," no. 2, 269.

28 Philippe Mouskes, *Chronique rimée*, ed. F.A.F.T. de Reiffenberg, 2 vols. (Brussels: Hayez, 1936-1938), 2:697. See on this episode: F. Van Tricht, *The Horoscope of Emperor Baldwin II. Political and Sociocultural Dynamics in Latin-Byzantine Constantinople* 114 (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 69-71.

29 Near the end of his chronicle (1207), Villehardouin mentions that Empress Agnese was pregnant with child: Geoffroy de Villehardouin, *La conquête de Constantinople*, §496. Valenciennes, however, in his chronicle covering the years 1208-1209, does not mention the empress or the child anymore, implying that both had died by that time: Henri de Valenciennes, *Histoire de l'empereur Henri de Constantinople*, passim. Emperor Henry in any case remarried around 1213 with a Bulgarian princess: Van Tricht, *The Latin Renovatio of Byzantium*, 391-394.

(= Margaret of Hungary's second husband), without further argumentation.³⁰ Benjamin Hendrickx suggested that Helena was a granddaughter of Demetrios, possibly by a natural child of his. While the term *neptis* may indeed have the meaning of 'granddaughter', the author's proposal – apart from the fact that Demetrios is not known to have had any heirs – seems chronologically impossible: Demetrios was born at the earliest in 1205. Assuming he became a father at the earliest possible time, say, at fourteen, his child would have been born around 1219. Assuming this child likewise had Helena at the earliest possible time, then she would have been born around 1233. As we know, however, Helena was already married to Guglielmo da Verona by May 1240, when she would have been only about seven or eight years old, and by the beginning of 1244 she already had four children.³¹

After dismissing Mihail Sturdza's proposal that Helena was Demetrios' daughter (as not compatible with the term *neptis* nor with the fact that Demetrios died without heirs), Walter Haberstumpf stated that, in any case, Helena must have belonged to the Montferrat family, referring to the names of her children with Guglielmo da Verona. Three of these, 'Bonifacio,' 'Corrado,' and 'Agnese,' indeed ran in the Montferrat family, whereas 'Helena' did not. Just like his predecessors, Haberstumpf had to 'invent' a Helena not attested in any source, by (again) suggesting that she may have been Agnese of Montferrat's daughter from a marriage she contracted before marrying Emperor Henry in 1206.³² As already stated, however, nothing is known in the sources either of such an earlier marriage or of any children it would have produced. As for the names of Helena's children, two remarks should be made. First, the names 'Bonifacio' and 'Corrado' are also found among the counts of Verona – whose genealogy is very incomplete – in the late twelfth/early thirteenth century.³³ Second, for anyone with a somehow questionable claim to Thessaloniki it may

30 Loenertz, "Les seigneurs tiersiers," no. 31, 246.

31 B. Hendrickx, "Regestes des empereurs latins de Constantinople 1204-1272," *Byzantina* 14 (1988), 7-222, at 141, no. 218. Hendrickx misdates Baldwin II's 1240 investiture charter concerning Thessaloniki to 1243; compare Loenertz, "Les seigneurs tiersiers," no. 31, 246. On the medieval use of the terms *nepos/neptis*: D.C. Jackman, "Cousins of the German Carolingians," in *Onomastique et parenté dans l'Occident médiéval*, ed. K.S.B. Keats-Rohan and C. Settapani (Oxford: Unit for Prosopographical Research, Linacre College, 2000), 116-139, at 133-134.

32 M.D. Sturdza, *Grandes familles de Grèce, d'Albanie et de Constantinople. Dictionnaire historique et généalogique* (Paris: self-published, 1983), 539; W. Haberstumpf, "Questioni prosopografiche e istituzionali circa il regno aleramico di Tessalonica nel secolo XIII," *Bollettino storico-bibliografico subalpino* 87 (1989), 201-209, at 204-205.

33 *Annales Veronenses*, ed. G.H. Pertz (Hannover: Hahn, 1866), XIX, 2, 4-6 (Pertz provides a parallel edition of the Veronese *Annales Breves*, *Annales Sanctae Trinitatis* and *Annales*

have sounded sensible – in order to boost one's own position – to name one's children after members of the lineage that had a conflicting and perhaps stronger claim to the kingdom. By adopting such a policy, after some time posterity might have started to believe that one did belong to the 'right' lineage. That Helena's hereditary claim to Thessaloniki was in fact not unproblematic would seem to be borne out by a comparison of the terminology used in the 1240 imperial document with that in the 1244 papal letter.

Baldwin II uses the term *propinquititas* (which could mean 'kinship,' 'affinity,' 'relationship,' etc.) to describe the relationship between Demetrios and his *neptis* Helena. The term in my opinion is deliberately somewhat vague: she may have been related to Demetrios by either his mother or his father. Innocent IV assumed this *propinquititas* amounted to a *ius successionis*, but this is in my view going beyond what the 1240 charter effectively states. In fact, there were indeed others who – from a Western feudal perspective – had a much better claim to succeed, in particular Marquis Bonifacio II of Montferrat (1225/26-1253), Bonifacio I's grandson. The Montferrat in fact did continue to regard the kingdom of Thessaloniki as their inheritance until in 1284, in the context of Yolande of Montferrat's marriage to Emperor Andronikos II Palaiologos (1282-1328), it was granted as dowry. In 1240, Baldwin II was thus completely negating the rights of Marquis Bonifacio II, in spite of the fact that the latter had participated personally in the 1224-1225 crusade to rescue the kingdom, together with his father Guglielmo VI, who died during the campaign and who had been invested with the rights to the kingdom, jointly with Demetrios, by Emperor Peter of Courtenay in 1217. Baldwin II's disregard for feudal rights may be interpreted as a manifestation of imperial autocracy inspired by Byzantine tradition: he unilaterally and arbitrarily granted Thessaloniki to a relative of Demetrios of his own choosing.³⁴

Given the present state of research – with no trace of any 'Helena of Montferrat' having been found in any source – it seems advisable to explore other options. Put otherwise: would it be possible that Demetrios of Montferrat's *neptis* Helena mentioned in the 1240 investiture charter is identical with Helena, queen of Serbia, daughter of John Angelos and Mathilda of Courtenay (and thus, in any case, a niece of Demetrios)? To answer this question we must evaluate whether the biographical data available for both women

Parisii de Cereta); *Annales Veronenses Antiqui*, ed. C. Cipolla, *Bolletino dell'Istituto Storico Italiano* 29 (1908), 7-81, at 32 and 39.

34 Haberstumpf, "Questioni prosopografiche," 209; M. Dąbrowska, "Is There Any Room on the Bosphorus for a Latin Lady?," *Byzantinoslavica* 66 (2008), 229-241; Van Tricht, *The Horoscope of Emperor Baldwin II*, 47.

are chronologically compatible. If this is the case, there is in my opinion no reason why we should not identify both women with one another. Regarding *neptis* Helena, on one hand, we only know that, by May 1240, she was married to Guglielmo da Verona and that, by April 1244, she had four children with him; concerning Queen Helena of Serbia, on the other, we know that her parents (John Angelos and Mathilda of Courtenay) married probably in the early 1220s; that around 1245/50 she married Stefan Uroš I; that she had three (or possibly four) children with him, including the later Serbian kings Stefan Dragutin (1276-1282) and Stefan Milutin (1282-1321); that, after her husband's forced abdication, she ruled the southern part of the Serbian kingdom (from the hinterland of Ragusa/Dubrovnik to Skadar, adopting the title of *regina Servie, Dyoclie, Albanie, Chilmie, Dalmacie et maritime regionis*); that sometime before her death she took monastic vows (without, however, entering a monastery); and that she died in 1314 (8 February).³⁵

If Queen Helena's parents married in the early 1220s, she could have been born around 1225/26. Her mother Mathilda (born around 1209-1211) would have been about 14 to 16 years old at that time. Queen Helena, then, would have been of marriageable age around 1238-1240, being about 12 to 15 years old, and – from a biological point of view – could have had four children by April 1244 (for example, one child each year or perhaps there was a set of twins).³⁶ Of course, for Queen Helena to have indeed been the '*neptis* Helena' who had

35 Petrovitch, "La reine de Serbie Helena d'Anjou," 167-169. See also the references in note 107.

36 For comparison: Emperor Baldwin I and his wife Mary of Champagne had married at the ages of 14 and 12 respectively: Gislebert de Mons, *La chronique*, ed. L. Vanderkindere (Brussels: Commission royale d'histoire, 1904), §123, 192; R.L. Wolff, "Baldwin of Flanders and Hainaut, First Latin Emperor of Constantinople: His Life, Death, and Resurrection, 1172-1225," *Speculum* 27 (1952), 281-322, at 288; repr. in *idem, Studies in the Latin Empire of Constantinople* (London: Variorum, 1976), no. IV. Mathilda's mother, Margaret of Courtenay, may have been born around 1194/95 (the wedding of her parents, Peter of Courtenay and Yolande of Flanders/Hainaut, took place in 1193) and in 1210 – then at the age of 15/16 – is attested as the wife of Raoul III of Issoudun: Gislebert de Mons, *La chronique*, §199, 286; R. Petit, *Le Ponthieu et la dynastie anglaise au XIII^e siècle* (Abbeville: Société d'émulation historique et littéraire, 1969), 431. Helena's own great-grandmother, Yolande of Flanders/Hainaut, may well have had four children in four years' time, although admittedly exact dates of birth are lacking (see Genealogical Table 11 and the online database of the Foundation for Medieval Genealogy: <http://fmg.ac/Projects/MedLands/>). Medical tractates indicate that first pregnancies were around the age of fifteen, but earlier instances are attested as well: P.M. Rieder, "Pregnancy and Childbirth: Christian Women," in *Women and Gender in Medieval Europe: An Encyclopedia*, ed. M. Schaus (London: Routledge, 2006), 666a-668a; S. Bardsley, *Women's Roles in the Middle Ages* (Westport, CN: Greenwood, 2007), 89-99.

married Guglielmo da Verona by May 1240, Guglielmo must have died before she remarried to Stefan Uroš I. The genealogy of the Da Verona family, as established by Loenertz, does not allow for this, but it is my contention that this genealogy should be revised. Between 1216 and the early 1270s, Loenertz counts only two successive Guglielmo da Veronas (I and II), while the sources in my view clearly indicate that there must have been three (I, II, and III). It will therefore be necessary to review all mentions of persons called 'Guglielmo da Verona' between these dates in the available sources. These sources include a number of charters concerning Euboea, Marino Sanudo Torsello's *Istoria del Regno di Romania* (early fourteenth century), and the *Chronicle of Morea* (with the French version dated to the early fourteenth century).

In 1216, after the death of Ravano dalle Carceri, lord of Euboea (from 1205, first of part of the island, later of the entire island), Venice granted the southern third of Euboea in fief to Guglielmo and Alberto da Verona, sons of Giberto (I) da Verona, who already had held a part of the island between 1205 and 1208.³⁷ The next mention of a Guglielmo da Verona is in the imperial charters from 1240 (Thessaloniki) and 1241 (*Pilaprum*) and, along with four children mentioned (Francesco, Corrado, Bonifacio, Agnese), in the papal confirmations of these documents from 23 April 1244. Guglielmo is mentioned as deceased (*quondam*) in the latter, which were enacted at the request of his widow, *nep-tis* Helena.³⁸ In the years 1255-1262, in the context of the conflict over Euboea between William II of Villehardouin, prince of Achaia (ca. 1246-1278), and Venice, a Guglielmo da Verona is mentioned several times. Various charters from 1256, 1257, 1258, and 1262 cite him as an ally of the *Serenissima*, but without providing any genealogical information.³⁹ Marino Sanudo Torsello repeatedly states that the Guglielmo da Verona who took part in the war over Euboea was married to Simona, a *nipote* of Prince William II, whom the latter brought over from Champagne or Burgundy (together with two other *nipotes* of his). According to Sanudo, the couple had six children: Giberto (who would succeed as *tercierus*), Guglielmo (who married the *maliscalca della Morea*), Francesco (no partner mentioned), Felisa (who married another *tercierus*, Narzotto dalle Carceri), Margarita (who married yet another *tercierus*, Grapella dalle Carceri) and Porzia (who married Marino Sanudo, lord of Paros). The chronicler adds that this Guglielmo also had a brother named Francesco, who himself had a

37 Tafel and Thomas, *Urkunden*, 2:nos. 241-242. On the da Verona family, see also Genealogical Table v.

38 See the references in notes 24-27.

39 Tafel and Thomas, *Urkunden*, 3:nos. 331-332, 334, 348. See also the remarks concerning these charters in Loenertz, "Les seigneurs tierciers," nos. 46, 49, 54, 66.

son named Bonifacio. The final mention of this Guglielmo by Sanudo concerns his death: he died sometime after the conflict over Euboea had ended with the peace treaty of 1262 – probably after 1266, as a papal letter from that year mentioning him gives no indication of him being deceased, and before 1269, by which time he had been succeeded as *tercierus* by his son Giberto II (see below).⁴⁰

Sanudo mentions next *mariscalco della Morea* Guglielmo da Verona – obviously the son of Guglielmo da Verona and *nipote* Simona who had married the *maréchalesse* of Achaia – as one of the knights that perished in the Battle of Demetrias in (probably) 1273. In the same battle, Francesco da Verona, father of Bonifacio – who then must have been the uncle of the fallen marshal Guglielmo – was taken prisoner.⁴¹ An important piece of information concerning this Guglielmo is a 1266 papal letter by Clement IV (1265-1268), which Loenertz appears to have missed, granting a dispensation to *Guillelmus junior* and his wife Catharina at their own request. The former is identified as a son of Guglielmo da Verona, *tercierus* of Euboea, and the latter as the daughter of the late marshal of Achaia. The couple's grandmothers, namely *Aelis* and *Dameta*, the latter of whom is called *marescalcissa principatus*, were related to one another in the second degree (*secundo gradu consanguinitatis conjuncte*).⁴² As spouses, *Guillelmus* and Catharina must have belonged roughly to the same generation, which implies that this must have been true also for *Aelis* and *Dameta*. Consequently, both women must have been sisters or half-sisters. A later 1278 papal document also states that Catharina was Prince William II's *nepos* and we already know that the mother of the 'younger *Guillelmus*' (Simona) likewise was William's *nipote*.⁴³ This double link with the Villehardouin family strongly suggests that *Aelis* is none other than Alix, the wife of the Champenois knight and later Moreote baron Hugh of Briel, lord of Karytaina. She was presumably a daughter of Prince of Achaia Geoffrey I – the *Chronicle of Morea* calling her son, Geoffrey of Karytaina, a nephew of Prince William II (*ses niez*) – and

40 Marino Sanudo Torsello, *Istoria del Regno di Romania*, ed. C.H.F.J. Hopf, in *Chroniques Gréco-Romanes inédites ou peu connues publiées avec notes et tables généalogiques* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1873), 101, 103-104, 108, 116, 119-120, 122. On Simona, her probable mother *Aelis*/Alix of Villehardouin, and the 1266 papal letter, see also notes 42 and 44-45.

41 Marino Sanudo Torsello, *Istoria del Regno di Romania*, 121-122. On the Battle of Demetrias: M. Angold, "Michael VIII Palaiologos and the Aegean," in *Liquid and Multiple. Individuals and Identities in the Thirteenth-Century Aegean*, eds. G. Saint-Guillain and D. Stathakopoulos (Paris: Centre de Recherche d'Histoire et Civilisation de Byzance, 2012), 27-44, at 35.

42 *Les registres de Clément IV (1265-1268)*, ed. É. Jordan (Paris: Thorin, 1893-1945), no. 369.

43 See the reference in note 47.

married Hugh some time between 1215 and 1222, either in her home region or in Achaia.⁴⁴ *Aelis/Alix* then would have been the mother of Simona.⁴⁵

Her (half-)sister Dameta – the similar name Dameron ran in the Villehardouin family – must be a daughter of Prince Geoffrey I unrecorded in any other source. The proposed identifications match the terminology used by Sanudo (*nipote*) and the papal chancery (*nepos*) with regard to both women: Geoffrey I being William II's father, Simona would have been William's niece and Catharina his grandniece. The marshal mentioned in the 1266 document must be identified with Baron John (II) of Nully, lord of Passavant/Passava and marshal of Achaia in the mid-thirteenth century. He had married a sister of Walter of Rosières, lord of Mattegrifon/Akova. *Marescalcissa Dameta* must have been John's mother. She and her Nully husband, presumably also named John (I), must originally have been granted the hereditary office of marshal of Achaia by her father, Geoffrey I, probably along with the barony of Passavant/Passava. *Dameta*, John (II), and Catharina in any case represent three successive generations of Achaian marshals, instead of only the two acknowledged until now in modern historiography.⁴⁶ It should be clear that the 'younger

44 On the Villehardouin and Briel families, see Genealogical Table IV. See also J. Longnon, *Recherches sur la vie de Geoffroy de Villehardouin suivies du catalogue des actes des Villehardouin* (Paris: Champion, 1939); Idem, "Les seigneurs de Karytaina et leurs origines champenoises," in *Mélanges Antoine Bon* (Lyon: Boccard, 1975), 33-35; Idem, *Les compagnons de Villehardouin*, 26-41, at 69-71; A. Bon, *La Morée franque. Recherches historiques, topographiques et archéologiques sur la principauté d'Achaïe (1205-1430)*, 2 vols. (Paris: Boccard, 1969), 1:105-106, 367-368, 697, 700; T. Evergates, "The Origin of the Lords of Karytaina in the Frankish Morea," *Medieval Prosopography* 15 (1994), 81-114; Idem, *The Aristocracy in the County of Champagne, 1100-1300* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2007), 186-188.

45 Thus Simona may well have been born and raised in Achaia, in spite of Sanudo's statement that she was brought over from Champagne by Prince William II (see the reference in note 40). As no detailed information on the lives of either *Aelis/Alix* or Simona is available, however, this must remain an open question (see the references in note 44).

46 See on the Nully family the different versions of the *Chronicle of Morea* (all giving the name 'Margaret', instead of Catharina, to John of Nully's only daughter and heiress): *Libre de la Conquête de la princée de l'Amorée. Chronique de Morée (1204-1305)*, ed. J. Longnon (Paris: Renouard, 1911), §§128, 219, 233, 328, 501-531; *The Chronicle of Morea*, ed. J. Schmitt (London: Methuen, 1904), vv. 7301-7752; *Libro de los fechos et conquistas del principado de la Morea*, ed. A. Morel-Fatio (Geneva: Fick, 1885), §§384-396. See also J. Longnon, "Problèmes de l'histoire de la principauté de Morée," *Journal des Savants* (1946), 77-92 and 147-161, at 86; Bon, *La Morée franque*, 1:113, 508-509, 706; T. Shawcross, *The Chronicle of Morea. Historiography in Crusader Greece* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 61. Catharina/Margaret's first husband was Gilbert of Cors, who died at the Battle of Karydi (1258). Her 1266 marriage with Guglielmo the Younger calls for a re-evaluation of the account of her conflict with Prince William II over the inheritance of the barony of

Guglielmo' from 1266 is identical with the one who met his death at the Battle of Demetrias. By 1278, his widow Catharina had remarried to John of Saint-Omer. A letter from Pope Nicholas III (1277-1280) informs us that John, identified as marshal of Achaia, had requested validation of their marriage, since he and his wife Catharina, explicitly identified as Guglielmo da Verona's widow, were too closely related (in the fourth degree of affinity, because of the consanguinity between John and Guglielmo).⁴⁷

In sum, we may conclude that both the data from our narrative sources and from the available charters imply that there were three successive Guglielmo da Veronas between 1216 and 1273. Sanudo indeed explicitly states that the Guglielmo da Verona who married William II's niece Simona was a) the son of a Guglielmo da Verona and b) had himself a son named Guglielmo, who married the *maréchalette* of Achaia (Catharina of Nully). Guglielmo I became *tercierus* of Euboea in 1216, had married Demetrios of Montferrat's niece Helena as his second wife by May 1240, acquired the rights to Thessaloniki in May 1240 and to *Pilaprum* in February 1241, had four children with Helena by early 1244, and died in late 1243 (in any case by 23 April 1244).⁴⁸ Guglielmo II was Guglielmo I's son from his first – unrecorded – marriage (and the half-brother of Francesco, Corrado, Bonifacio, and Agnese), was Venice's

Mattegrifon/Akova. In 1262, according to the *Chronicle of Morea*, apparently unmarried at the time, she became a hostage in Constantinople for her suzerain William II. While she was staying in the Byzantine capital in this capacity, her uncle Walter of Rosières died and, being the only heiress, she was not able to claim her inheritance, the barony of Mattegrifon/Akova, within the prescribed time limit. After she had been set free at an unspecified moment, she immediately tried to claim the inheritance of the barony, but unsuccessfully. During this legal battle, she is said to have married John of Saint-Omer, who, on account of his new wife, became marshal of Achaia. The information in the papal registers, however, indicates that by 1266 Catharina/Margaret was a free woman, being at that time the wife of Guglielmo the Younger, and requesting, together with her husband, a dispensation from the papacy. She would marry John only years later (before 1278), making it difficult to explain why she would have waited so long to claim the barony of Mattegrifon/Akova.

47 *Les registres de Nicolas III (1277-1280)*, ed. J. Gay and S. Vitte (Paris: Boccard, 1898-1938), no. 91; Loenertz, "Les seigneurs tiersiers," no. 99. John was a son of Bela of Saint-Omer, lord of one half of Thebes. Bela himself was a son of Margaret of Hungary and her third husband Nicholas of Saint-Omer: Van Tricht, *The Latin Renovatio of Byzantium*, 381-382 (n. 112). Margaret of Hungary was thus the common ancestor of John of Saint-Omer (grandmother) and Catharina's former husband Guglielmo (great-great grandmother).

48 That there were three Guglielmos implies that there is no reason to assume that the papal chancery in April 1244 made a mistake by mentioning Helena's husband as deceased (as does Loenertz). The chancery was obviously wrong in mentioning Emperor Baldwin II as deceased, but this does not have to mean that a similar mistake was made with regard to Helena's husband (see the references in note 28).

ally in the 1255-1258/62 conflict over Euboea, married Prince William II's niece Simona at some point, had three sons and three daughters, and died sometime between 1263/66 and 1269 (by which time his elder son Giberto [II] had succeeded him as *tercierus*).⁴⁹ Guglielmo III married Catharina of Nully – *maréchalette* of Achaia and a grandniece of Prince William II – by 1266 and met his end during the Battle of Demetrias in/around 1273.

This revised genealogy of the Da Veronas of Euboea no longer presents any impediment to identifying 'neptis Helena' with 'Queen Helena of Serbia': if *neptis* Helena's first husband Guglielmo I da Verona was deceased by late 1243 (and in any case by 23 April 1244), she could have been remarried without any problem to King of Serbia Stefan Uroš I in the years 1245-1250. A final element, then, to be taken into account is Helena's lifespan. As we have seen, 'neptis Helena' was probably born around 1225, as she was in any case of marriageable age in the late 1230s. We also know that 'Queen Helena' died in 1314. If both women are one and the same, then this Helena would have reached the age of about ninety. While this would have been rather exceptional, it is at the same time not unheard of for medieval men or women. To cite but two examples with a link to Latin Romania: Enrico Dandolo, the famed Venetian doge who participated in the Fourth Crusade, was presumably born around 1107 and died in 1205; the Serbian grand *zupan* and later monk at the Athonite monastery of Chilandar, Stefan/Symeon Nemanja (see also below), reached the age of eighty-six.⁵⁰ More generally, Engelbert of Admont (ca. 1250-1331), in his *Liber de causis longaevitatis hominum ante diluvium* stated that the average human life span was eighty-five years, while Hugo of Trinberg (ca. 1230-after 1313) in his didactic treatise *Der Renner* was of the opinion that hardly anyone would ever reach the age of eighty or more years. The testimony of these two contemporaries, although conflicting, clearly shows that at the turn of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries a number of people did live well beyond the ages of eighty and eighty-five.⁵¹

49 On the beginning of Giberto (II) da Verona's rule as *tercierus*: Marino Sanudo Torsello, *Istoria del Regno di Romania*, 119-120; Angold, "Michael VIII Palaiologos," 34-35.

50 T.F. Madden, *Enrico Dandolo and the Rise of Venice* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2003), 12-13; D. Obolensky, *Six Byzantine Portraits* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), 130. For more medieval octo- and nonagenarians see, for instance, J. Everard, "Sworn Testimony and Memory of the Past in Brittany, c. 1100-1250," in *Medieval Memories: Men, Women and the Past, 700-1300*, ed. E. van Houts (Abingdon: Routledge, 2001), 72-91, at 77-79; T. Porck, *Old Age in Early Medieval England. A Cultural History* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2019).

51 A. Classen, "Old Age in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Also an Introduction," in *Old Age in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Interdisciplinary Approaches to a Neglected Topic*, ed. A. Classen (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007), 1-84, at 41; Idem, "Old Age in the World of

The available biographical data concerning ‘*neptis* Helena’ and ‘Queen Helena’ having been shown to be compatible with one another, the hypothesis that they are one and the same is in my opinion the most plausible option. The alternative – accepting that Demetrios had two nieces called Helena, one of whom (‘*neptis* Helena’) would not be recorded in any other source and whose ancestry would remain unclear – in my view looks less convincing. This (hypothetical) identification of the two Helenas along with my other genealogical findings or proposals allow for a number of new hypotheses that can be formulated with regard to the geopolitical situation in the Balkans in the mid-thirteenth century, which I now intend to explore.

3 Four Weddings and a Funeral: Elements of Geopolitics in the Post-1204 Byzantine World

We have four marriages to consider: John Angelos and Mathilda of Courtenay (early 1220s), Guglielmo I da Verona and Helena Angelos/Courtenay (late 1230s), the latter’s second marriage with Stefan Uroš I (circa 1245/50), and lastly Anseau III of Cayeux and Mary Angelos/Courtenay (1253/54).

3.1 *John Angelos and Mathilda of Courtenay*

This first marriage, as I have already argued briefly, no doubt should be seen as the renewal/continuation of the good relations that had existed under Emperor Henry between the Constantinopolitan court and Margaret of Hungary, guardian for her underage son Demetrios of Montferrat, and her supporters in Thessaloniki. Since the death of Boniface of Montferrat (†1207), the principality (later kingdom) of Thessaloniki had been plagued by internal divisions between a Lombard party that favoured the accession of the marquis’ eldest son Guglielmo VI of Montferrat (1203-1226), on the one hand, and Margaret, whose supporters included most of the French and German barons as well as the Byzantine elite, on the other. In line with his policy of Latin-Byzantine cooperation, Emperor Henry chose to support Margaret and, not without force, managed to win over a number of Lombard barons during his 1208-1209 campaign.⁵²

The internal divisions lingered, however, and in 1217 the Lombard faction managed to persuade the newly crowned Emperor Peter of Courtenay,

The Stricker and Other Middle High German Poets: A Neglected Topic,” *ibidem*, 219-250, at 220.

52 Van Tricht, *The Latin Renovatio of Byzantium*, 212-216, 298-299.

while still in Italy, to co-invest Marquis Guglielmo VI with the kingdom of Thessaloniki. This news must have upset the delicate local Latin-Byzantine balance. In combination with Emperor Peter's simultaneous decision to support Venice (feudal partner in the empire) in her attempt to retake the coastal town of Dyrrachion from his other vassal, Theodore Doukas, ruler of Epiros, members of the Thessalonikan Byzantine elite must have started seriously questioning the future of Latin-Byzantine power-sharing. When Theodore Doukas decided to no longer recognize the Latin emperor's suzerainty by capturing Emperor Peter, who would die in captivity, and to invade the neighbouring kingdom of Thessaloniki, he must have found fertile ground among these Byzantine aristocrats.⁵³

We may hypothesize that, in this context, Constantinople (either Empress Yolande of Flanders/Hainaut or her son Emperor Robert of Courtenay) and Thessaloniki (Margaret) saw fit to strengthen their ties. The marriage between John Angelos and Mathilda of Courtenay would have sent the right message: the two main centres of political power both remained strongly committed to the Latin-Byzantine equilibrium. It would appear, however, that it was too little too late: by the end of 1224, Theodore Doukas had successfully conquered Thessaloniki and by that time claimed the emperorship for himself. As mentioned above, by 1227 John and Mathilda had relocated to Hungary, where by 1235 John succeeded his mother Margaret, sister of King Andrew II, as largely autonomous ruler of Syrmia (Srem), a region that had long been disputed between Byzantium and Hungary and which had been conquered by King Bela III (1172-1196) in the early 1180s.

3.2 *Guglielmo I da Verona and Helena Angelos/Courtenay*

The fact that, by April 1240, John and Mathilda's daughter Helena was married to *tercierus* Guglielmo I da Verona indicates that the former couple remained in contact with Latin Constantinople. The marriage makes little political sense in a purely Hungarian context, but it does within that of Latin Romania. A crusade in aid of Constantinople was being prepared in 1237-1238, while in 1239-1240 Baldwin II of Courtenay travelled with a large army to his capital through Germany, Hungary, and Bulgaria.⁵⁴ In the spring of 1240, after his coronation, the new emperor launched a campaign from Constantinople to reconquer

53 On Latin-Epirote relations during these years, see Van Tricht, *The Latin Renovatio of Byzantium*, 377-387; Idem, "Robert of Courtenay (1221-1227)," 1009, 1016-1017, 1025; F. Bredenkamp, *The Byzantine Empire of Thessalonike, 1224-1242* (Thessaloniki: Municipality of Thessaloniki, 1996), 66-78, 104-108, 130-133.

54 N.G. Chrissis, *Crusading in Frankish Greece. A Study of Byzantine-Western Relations and Attitudes 1204-1282* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 83-133.

Thrace. Barons from Southern Greece also participated. *Tercierus* Guglielmo was one of them: Baldwin's charter investing him with Thessaloniki was drawn up in the imperial army's encampment near the capital (*prope regiam civitatem in castris*).⁵⁵ It seems plausible that, in the context of the 1237-1240 preparations for the expedition in aid of Constantinople, Baldwin reconnected with his relatives Mathilda and John and that their claim to the kingdom of Thessaloniki was discussed. The imperial name (recalling Constantine the Great's famed mother) that Mathilda and John bestowed on their daughter is an indication of the ambitions they had for her as the descendant of two imperial lineages. Baldwin may well have suggested sending Helena to the Queen of Cities in order to marry her off to a suitable party who could help realize the Thessalonikan ambition in the context of the impending military expedition. The widowed *tercierus* Guglielmo, who, as his participation in the 1240 campaign clearly demonstrates, was a loyal and dependable imperial vassal, as well as an important and experienced baron, would have made an ideal candidate.

The marriage offered a chance to strengthen the ties between Constantinople and Southern Greece, after Empress Yolande in 1217 had already married her daughter, and Baldwin's sister, Agnes to the future Prince Geoffrey II of Villehardouin. With regard to the future rule of Thessaloniki, the political message was triple. First, that the empire's second city was to be ruled by a descendant of the imperial Angelos family was no doubt intended to reassure the Byzantine elite and population. Second, at the same time the former Lombard elite was welcomed again within a model of Latin-Byzantine power-sharing. Third, the Montferrats in Northern Italy should not delude themselves in thinking that their claim to the kingdom remained valid. Of course, while Emperor Baldwin II did manage to recapture a large part of Thrace in 1240, with *inter alia* the important fortified town of Tzouroulon, Thessaloniki itself and Macedonia were never reconquered. This would have possibly been the goal of a new campaign in the following year, but international events upset Baldwin's planning. The Mongol invasion of Eastern Europe (namely of Hungary, Serbia, and Bulgaria, among others) in 1241-1242 also affected Latin Romania: the Latin emperor engaged the Mongol forces twice in battle. The first time he was victorious, but the second time he was defeated, probably losing a major part of his new military resources.⁵⁶ Next, the Nicaean Emperor

55 Loenertz, "Les seigneurs tierciers," no. 1, 268.

56 On Baldwin II and the Mongol invasion: F. Van Tricht, "De Latijnse Renovatio van Byzantium. Het keizerrijk van Konstantinopel (1204-1261)," PhD Dissertation (Universiteit Gent, 2003), 762-772. See also J. Giebfried, "The Mongol Invasions and the Aegean World (1241-61)," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 28 (2013), 129-139; Van Tricht, *The Horoscope of Baldwin II*, 68 (n. 44).

John III Vatatzes, capitalizing on the disruptive and devastating Mongol invasions from which his lands had been spared, attacked Baldwin in Northern Asia Minor in 1243.⁵⁷ It would seem that during this period *tercierus* Guglielmo spent much or all of his time in the entourage of his suzerain. We only hear of him in Baldwin's company: in February 1241 in the Blachernae palace, when he is granted *Pilaprum*, and at the time of his death in 1243, when he was apparently with the emperor.⁵⁸ It is quite likely, then, that his wife Helena also mainly lived at the imperial court in Constantinople.

Widowed in 1243 or early 1244 and assuming that the emperor had also died, Helena tried to secure her right to Thessaloniki and her children's rights to *Pilaprum* by requesting papal confirmation of Baldwin II's charters. The emperor himself, who turned out to be alive and well after all, undertook a second journey to the West in 1244-1248, unsuccessfully trying to reconcile Emperor Frederick II of Hohenstaufen and Pope Innocent IV, visiting his home region, and searching to obtain aid in Rome, France, England, and Castile.⁵⁹ By 1248 he was back in Constantinople. In his absence, Empress Mary of Brienne had remained in the capital with Philip of Toucy as imperial regent. In the absence of any precise chronological data, Helena's second marriage with Stefan Uroš I has tentatively been dated between 1245 and 1250. Given the fact that Helena had long since relocated from her parents' home in Hungary to Constantinople/Euboea, it is logical to suppose that her Serbian marriage was in the first instance a Latin imperial affair. That Baldwin and his entourage would have turned to Serbia for a marriage alliance is quite understandable. Though little noticed in modern historiography, relations between Serbia and Latin Constantinople had developed in various ways after 1204.

3.3 *The Deathbed Scene of Queen of Serbia 'Anna Dandolo' at Sopoćani*

These relations appear to have started around 1214-1215, when Emperor Henry undertook two successive military/diplomatic expeditions into Serbia, the first with Tsar Boril of Bulgaria as his ally and the second with King Andrew of Hungary. Henry's goal, no doubt, was to force Grand *Zupan* Stefan Nemanjić to recognize him as his imperial suzerain. These campaigns initially bore little fruit (if we accept Stefan Nemanjić's own account of them, the sole available source), but by 1216 some kind of *modus vivendi* acceptable to both parties

57 On Vatatzes' 1243 offensive: Van Tricht, *The Horoscope of Baldwin II*, 69-71.

58 Loenertz, "Les seigneurs tierciers," nos. 1-2, 267-270.

59 R.L. Wolff, "Mortgage and Redemption of an Emperor's Son. Castile and the Latin Empire of Constantinople," *Speculum* 29 (1954) 45-84; repr. in Idem, *Studies in the Latin Empire of Constantinople*, no. v.

might have been reached. In his *vita* of his father Stefan/Symeon Nemanja, completed by 1215/16, Stefan mentions Henry several times as the 'Greek emperor', applying the customary Serbian term for the ruler of Constantinople to the Latin emperor and without any other claimant to the Byzantine throne being mentioned.⁶⁰ Taken together with the fact that around 1216/17 Stefan's brother and trusted adviser/diplomat (Saint) Sava returned to the (Serbian) Chilandar monastery on Mount Athos, situated in Latin-controlled territory in which the Latin emperor acted as protector of Byzantine monasteries, this strongly indicates that things had been smoothed out between Henry and Stefan.

It may also be meaningful that, if we are to believe the hagiographers Domentijan and Teodosije, Sava was on good terms around this time with the then archbishop (metropolitan) of Thessaloniki. The latter can be identified as Warin, who, in his capacity as imperial chancellor, was a close collaborator of Emperor Henry and his successors. After returning from his journey to Nicaea in late 1219/early 1220, where he had been consecrated as Serbia's first archbishop (see below), Sava stayed in the city for some time. Upon his return to his homeland in 1220, Archbishop Warin bade him a warm farewell.⁶¹ The repeated presence of the primate of the Serbian Church in Latin territory presupposes friendly Serbo-Latin relations. For example, the compromise between Henry and Stefan may have taken the form of some token recognition of the superior status of the emperor of Constantinople by Stefan, perhaps coupled with Henry's acquiescence to the grand *zupan's* long-standing ambition of

60 Stefan Prvovenčani, *Sabrana dela*, eds. L. Juhas-Georgievaska and T. Jovanović (Belgrade: Srpska književna zadruga, 1999), 80, 102-106; *Stefan Nemanja nach den Viten des hl. Sava und Stefans des Erstgekrönten*, trans. S. Hafner (Graz: Styria, 1962), 113, 125-128. It should be noted that the Nicaean Emperor Theodore I Laskaris is not mentioned at all. This would be different in the later *vitae* of St Sava by the Serbian Athonite monks Domentijan and Teodosije (see below). In his *vita* of his father St Symeon (written around 1208), Sava only refers to the 1204 conquest and its consequences as a period of great turmoil also affecting Mount Athos: Sveti Sava, *Spisi sv. Save*, ed. V. Čorović, in *Zbornik IJKSN 17* (1928), 171; *Stefan Nemanja nach den Viten*, 58; Obolensky, *Six Byzantine Portraits*, 135. See also Van Tricht, *The Latin Renovatio of Byzantium*, 396-402; I. Komatina, "Istorijska podloga čuda Sv. Simeona u Žitiju Simeonovom od Stefana Prvovenčanog," *Zbornik Radova Vizantološkog Instituta* 51 (2014), 111-134, at 120-128.

61 Domentijan, *Život svetoga Simeuna i svetoga Save*, ed. Đ. Daničić (Belgrade: U državnoj štampariji, 1865), 226 (Domentijan mistakenly names the archbishop Constantine Mesopotamites, the pre-1204 and post-1224 incumbent); Teodosije, *Život Svetog Save*, ed. Đ. Daničić (Belgrade: Društvo srpske slovesnosti, 1860), 135-136. On Sava returning to Mount Athos around 1216/17 and on his stay in Thessaloniki: Obolensky, *Six Byzantine Portraits*, 147-148, 154-155. On Latin Emperor Henry as protector of Mount Athos see references in note 109.

obtaining a royal crown, which he indeed would acquire from Honorius III in 1217. Nothing much is known about the circumstances (two succinct chronicle entries and one brief reference in the papal registers being our only sources), but the sudden swiftness surprises and suggests that the matter had been in preparation for some time, with Henry possibly being a consulted party. As far as the Latin emperor was concerned, there was in any case room for crowned kings within his empire's borders or sphere of influence, as the example of Thessaloniki shows.⁶²

As is well known, Serbia also established relations with both Nicaea (where the patriarchal synod was the only authority that, with imperial sanction, could grant the Serbian Church maximum autonomy through the creation of an autocephalous archbishopric, as occurred in late 1219 or early 1220) and Epiros, with several marriage alliances in the wake of Michael I and Theodore Doukas' growing strength (before 1214 and around 1219), at the same time that contacts with Constantinople were maintained.⁶³ I have argued elsewhere

62 In 1198/99-1202 Innocent III had still refused to grant Stefan a royal crown after protests from the Hungarian king – and Serbian neighbour – Emeric (1196-1204): L. Maksimović, "La Serbie et les contrées voisines avant et après la IV^e croisade," in *Urbs capta. The Fourth Crusade and Its Consequences*, ed. A. Laiou (Paris: Lethielleux, 2005), 269-282, at 274-275. Srđan Pirivatrić likewise accepts that Stefan Nemanjić recognized Henry as Byzantine emperor, "obviously slighting the imperial dignity of Theodore I Laskaris": S. Pirivatrić, "The Serbs and the Overlapping Authorities of Rome and Constantinople (7th to 16th Century): An Overview of the Political and Ideological Relationships," in *Proceedings of the 23rd International Congress of Byzantine Studies Belgrade, 22-27 August, 2016. Plenary Papers*, ed. S. Marjanović-Dušanić (Belgrade: Serbian National Committee of Byzantine Studies, 2016), 223-240, at 232; Idem, "The Dynamics of Byzantine-Serbian Political Relations," in *Processes of Byzantinisation and Serbian Archaeology*, ed. V. Bikić (Belgrade: The Serbian National Committee of Byzantine Studies, 2016), 17-37, at 27.

63 G. Prinzing, *Die Bedeutung Bulgariens und Serbiens in den Jahren 1204-1219 im Zusammenhang mit der Entstehung und Entwicklung der byzantinischen Teilstaaten nach der Einnahme Konstantinopels infolge des 4. Kreuzzuges* (Munich: Institut für Byzantinistik und Neugriechische Philologie der Universität, 1972), 155-159; B. Ferjančić, "Srbija i vizantijski svet u prvoj polovini XIII veka (1204-1261)," *Zbornik Radova Vizantološkog Instituta* 27-28 (1989), 130-148, at 103-128; Obolensky, *Six Byzantine Portraits*, 149-152; J.V. Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, 1987), 116-117; M. Angold, *Church and Society in Byzantium under the Comneni, 1081-1261* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 534; B. Osswald, "L'Épire du treizième au quinzième siècle: autonomie et hétérogénéité d'une région balkanique," PhD Dissertation (Université Toulouse 2, 2011), 47-58; Maksimović, "La Serbie et les contrées voisines," 278-281; B. Ferjančić and L. Maksimović, "Sava Nemanjić and Serbia between Epiros and Nicaea," *Balkanica* 45 (2014), 37-54. It should be noted that the autocephalous status of the Serbian Church was probably obtained at a time when the imperial and patriarchal thrones in Constantinople were vacant, and when Nicaea and Latin Constantinople were in any case at peace, with Emperor Theodore I Laskaris having married imperial princess Mary of Courtenay. These

that in 1221 Stefan Nemanjić married a niece of Emperor Robert of Courtenay, but in the light of recent literature it is necessary to develop this hypothesis in more detail. Two Western chronicles, Philippe Mouskes' *Chronique rimée* (ca. 1243) and the anonymous *Chronique dite de Baudouin d'Avesnes* (ca. 1280), inform us that, in the winter of 1220-1221, during his journey to Constantinople as emperor-elect and while staying at the Hungarian court (with his sister Yolande as queen), Robert seemingly arranged a marriage with the king of Serbia. The available data are, however, somewhat ambiguous. Mouskes states that, during the stay of his brother-in-law Robert, Andrew II of Hungary arranged a marriage between the latter's niece (*niéçain*) and King *Ausens* of Serbia. The chronicler then goes on to say that King Andrew, his son Alexander (*rois Alixandres*, who was much liked by the *Esclavon*), and *Ausens* accompanied Robert for some time while he continued his journey, and with Andrew's son Bela IV (*li rois Bilas, sire de Bile*) accompanying him all the way to Constantinople. This passage is problematic in several ways. The name of the king of Serbia is obviously incorrect and appears to refer to Tsar of Bulgaria Ivan Asen II (1218-1241). King Andrew had no son named Alexander. Perhaps *Alixandres* refers to Ivan Asen's eponymous brother, although the latter did not rule Slavonia. Indeed, it was Bela IV, Andrew's son, who ruled from 1220 as duke of Slavonia. *Bile* may perhaps be identified with Pilis County (northeast of Esztergom); to my knowledge, however, Bela had no connection with the region during his father's reign, except that his mother Gertrude of Merania was murdered there in 1213.⁶⁴

The anonymous *Chronique dite de Baudouin d'Avesnes*, possibly relying in part on Mouskes, but certainly also drawing on another source of information, relates the episode differently. On his journey to his capital, Robert had in his entourage a domestic or household officer, who according to some was his *oncle de bas* – so either an uncle or great uncle (or perhaps even some other distant relative) of relatively modest status – born in the town of Lille in Flanders.

may well be elements explaining Sava's timing. From Sava's seemingly friendly dealings immediately afterwards with the (Latin) archbishop of Thessaloniki it may be deduced that Sava's *démarche* was not considered problematic. In this context, it should be recalled that various feudal principalities under Byzantine rulers within the Latin empire *de facto* functioned as autonomous Orthodox ecclesiastical provinces (see references in note 11).

64 "Si fist li rois [Andrew II of Hungary] i mariage / D'une niéçain à cel Robiert / Et si nos fait l'estore ciert / Que rois Ausens l'ot et plévie / Ki sire iert et rois de Servie": Philippe Mouskes, *Chronique rimée*, 404, vv. 23054-23058. The term *niéçain* could mean either a niece or – by extension – a cousin. On Pilis County: P. Szabó, "A Royal Forest in the *Medium Regii*," in *Medieval Buda in Context*, eds. B. Nagy, M. Rady, K. Szende, and A. Vadas (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 115-129, at 118-123.

Perhaps he was an illegitimate descendant of Robert's great-grandfather Thierry of Alsace, count of Flanders (1128-1168), or of his grandfather Count Baldwin V/VIII of Hainaut and Flanders (1171/91-95). While staying at the Hungarian court, Robert arranged the marriage between this man's daughter, whom he presented as his cousin (*cousine*), and the (unnamed) king of Serbia. The wedding was subsequently celebrated, and thanks to this marriage – and to the aid of the Bulgarians (*Blas*) – he reached Constantinople safely.⁶⁵ While this report may sound somewhat colourful and gossipy, at the same time there are no apparent inaccuracies, as in Mouskes' text. In recent Bulgarian and Hungarian historiography, focusing on the name *Ausens* and the mention of the *Blas*, while assuming that the mention of Serbia is simply a mistake, both reports have been interpreted as referring to the marriage between Ivan Asen II and a daughter of Andrew II by his first wife Gertrude of Merania (†1213).⁶⁶ This marriage was arranged in 1218, while Andrew was on his return journey from the Holy Land, where he had participated in the Fifth Crusade. Bárány, Georgieva, and earlier authors, using Mouskes and the *Chronique* as their sources, have assumed that the wedding itself only took place three years later, in 1221. In a 1219 letter to Pope Honorius III, however, the Hungarian king mentions the marriage alliance, together with two simultaneous marriage alliances with Armenia and Nicaea, as follows: *eodem etiam animo cum Azeno*

65 “Il [Robert] avoit avec li un sergent qui estoit nés de Lisle en Flandres. Aucun disoient que il estoit oncles de bas cestui Robert qui aloit pour estre emperères. Cil vallès avoit une belle damoiselle qui estoit sa fille. Robers d'Aussoirre la fist richement apparillier et disoit que ce estoit sa cousine, puis fist parler de mariage de li et dou roi de Servie. Li rois qui cuida que ce fust voirs, s'acorda au mariaige. Si furent faites les noces à grant sollemnité. Par ce mariaige et par l'aide des Blas ala Robers d'Ausoirre seurement jusques en Constantinoble là où il fut receus à grant joie. Mais il n'osa mener le père la damoiselle avec lui pour ce que la chose ne fust seue, ains li donna deniers et le renvoia en Flandres”: *Chronique dite de Baudouin d'Avesnes*, ed. J.-B.-M.C. Kervyn de Lettenhove, in *Istorie et chroniques de Flandres, d'après les textes de divers manuscrits*, 2 vols. (Brussels: Hayez, 1880), 2:675. On illegitimate descendants of the Hainaut comital lineage, see D. Dereck, “Guillaume l'Oncle (ca. 1150-novembre 1219). Rôle politique, fortune et descendance d'un fils naturel du comte de Hainaut Baudouin IV,” *Annales du cercle archéologique de Mons* 78 (1999), 43-135.

66 A. Bárány, “King Andrew II of Hungary in Philippe Mouskés' *Chronique rimée*,” in *Byzance et l'Occident: rencontre de l'Est et de l'Ouest*, ed. E. Egedi-Kovács (Budapest: Collège Eötvös József ELTE, 2013), 27-45, at 41-43; S. Georgieva, “Bulgarian-Hungarian Marital Diplomacy during the First Half of the Thirteenth Century,” *Bulgaria Mediaevalis* 6 (2015), 339-355, at 344-350. Andrew's daughter by Gertrude of Merania was not Emperor Robert's niece, of course, but it has been argued that Mouskes could have identified her as such in view of the fact that the Hungarian king had taken Robert's sister, Yolande of Courtenay, as his second wife.

*Bulgarie imperatore mediante nostra filia matrimonium celebravimus.*⁶⁷ The use of the perfect tense indicates that the marriage had already been celebrated by this time, which would mean that the 1221 matrimony referred to by Mouskes and in the *Chronique* can hardly have been Ivan Asen's marriage to a Hungarian princess. In addition, that Mouskes would have confused Bulgaria with Serbia does not seem all that plausible: the Bulgarians had been the Latin emperors' enemies for years (recall the trauma of the defeat at Adrianople in 1205, among other instances of friction), as Mouskes well knew.⁶⁸

However, at first sight, there exists one major obstacle to the hypothesis of a marriage between Robert's 'cousin' – real or presumed (or perhaps a more distant relative) – and the Serbian King Stefan I Nemanjić. Various Serbian and other authors, both older and recent, assume that Stefan was outlived by the wife, whom he had married by 1217 and who is traditionally named 'Anna Dandolo', stating that she only died in the late 1250s/early 1260s. A famous fresco at the Serbian monastery of Sopoćani, dated to the early 1260s (hence the proposed date of Queen Anna's passing), depicts the death of the mother of King Stefan Uroš I in the presence of her son, his wife, and his children. The queen-mother depicted on her deathbed has invariably been identified as 'Anna Dandolo', although actually none of the portrayed persons are mentioned by name. In fact, very little is known about the Serbian queen known as 'Anna Dandolo'. Andreas Dandolo, doge of Venice (1343-1354), in his *Chronica per extensum descripta* (written in the 1340s), states that the Serbian Grand Zupan Stefan had married a *neptis* (niece or granddaughter, perhaps even a great-niece) of Doge Enrico Dandolo. His Venetian wife would have persuaded him to embrace the Latin rite, which led Honorius III to grant him the royal crown he had once more requested from the papacy. According to Dandolo, they were both crowned by a papal legate in the twelfth year of Doge Pietro Ziani's reign (15 August 1216-14 August 1217).⁶⁹ In his *Historia Salonitanorum*

67 R. Marsina, *Codex diplomaticus et epistolaris Slovaciae* (Bratislava: Slovenská Akadémia Vied, 1971), 1: no. 237; G. Érszegi, "Eine neue Quelle zur Geschichte der bulgarisch-ungarischen Beziehungen während der Herrschaft Boril," *Bulgarian Historical Review* 2 (1975), 91-97, at 94. Bárány, "King Andrew II of Hungary," interprets the term *mediante* incorrectly as signifying that King Andrew's 'middle daughter' was involved.

68 See his description of Emperor Baldwin I's defeat against *li Blak et li Coumain*: Philippe Mouskes, *Chronique rimée*, 308 (also 402-403).

69 "Stestanus [sic] quoque dominus Raxie et Servie, qui megadipanus apelabatur, dum neptem condam Henrici Dandulo ducis accepisset in coniugem, ex suasionem uxoris, abiecto scismate, per nuncios a papa optinuit ut regio titulo decoratus esset, et per legatum cardinalem ad hoc missum, una cum coniuge": Andreas Dandolo, *Chronica per extensum descripta*, ed. E. Pastorello (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1958), 287. For an analysis of the Sopoćani fresco, see V. Petković, "La mort de la reine Anne à Sopoćani," in *L'art byzantin chez les*

atque Spalatinorum pontificum, the chronicler Thomas of Split (†1268) confirms that in 1217 Grand *Zupan* Stefan sent messengers to Rome to request a royal crown from the pope, which was granted, with a papal legate performing the coronation.⁷⁰ In a 1220 letter preserved in the papal registers, Stefan Nemanjić (as *rex coronatus*) refers to his previous recognition of Honorius III's spiritual authority and the pope's role in the coronation.⁷¹ Doge Dandolo does not mention when the wedding between Stefan and Doge Enrico's *neptis* took place, but Ljubomir Kovačević reports a later depiction of the lady in question in Pontecasale (Veneto) containing an inscription – which seems in part based on Dandolo's chronicle – mentioning the year 1207 as the date of her marriage to Nemanjić. The inscription also adds that the lady in question was related to Enrico Dandolo through her mother.⁷²

This date, however, has been rejected as unreliable by authors – most recently Ivana Komatina – who, on the basis of a letter by Archbishop of Ohrid Demetrios Chomatenos, date the marriage around 1216/early 1217. This undated letter is part of an otherwise lost correspondence concerning various marriage projects between Stefan Nemanjić, on the one hand, and Chomatenos and his predecessor as archbishop, John Kamateros, on the other.⁷³ From the letter, we learn that at some point Stefan's sister had married a brother of the ruler of Epiros Michael I Doukas (probably Manuel). We are also informed that Stefan had asked Kamateros whether a marriage between his son Radoslav (born to his first wife Eudokia Angelos, a niece of Emperor Isaac II, whom the grand *zupan* had repudiated around 1201/02) and Theodora, daughter of Michael

slaves, dédié à la mémoire de Théodore Uspenskij. L'ancienne Russie, les slaves catholiques: deuxième recueil, 2 vols. (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1930), 2:217-221.

70 “Eodem tempore Stephanus dominus Servie sive Rasie, qui mega iupanus appellabatur, missis apochrisariis ad Romanam sedem impetravit ab Honorio summo pontifice coronam regni. Direxit namque legatum a latere suo, qui veniens coronavit eum primumque regem constituit terre sue”: Thomas archidiaconus Spalatensis, *Historia Salonitanorum atque Spalatinorum pontificum*, eds. O. Perić, D. Karbić, M. Matijević Sokol, and J. Ross Sweeney (Budapest: CEU, 2006), 162.

71 O. Raynaldus, ed., *Annales ecclesiastici*, 1220, §37 (Bar-le-Duc: L. Guerin, 1870), 20: 432b-433a; D. Obolensky, *Six Byzantine Portraits*, 142-145.

72 “Dandola. Dandolo. Duce. Venetiarum. Ex. Stipite. Matris. Nepos. Stefani. Megapani. Regis. Serviae. Uxor. MCCVII”: L. Kovačević, “Žene i deca Stefana Prvovenčanog,” *Glas SKA* 60 (1901), 30. I would like to thank Dr. Ivana Komatina for sharing this inscription with me, although I have not been able to verify its exact context or location. The exact relationship between Enrico Dandolo and this *neptis* remains unclear. She is not mentioned in the Dandolo genealogy as established by Thomas Madden: Madden, *Enrico Dandolo and the Rise of Venice*, 101-103, 202-203.

73 Demetrios Chomatenos, *Ponemata Diaphora*, ed. G. Prinzing (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2002), no. 10, 72*-73*, 55-56.

I Doukas, who had been succeeded by his brother, Theodore Doukas, in late 1214/early 1215, would be canonical. As reported by Chomatenos, Kamateros had first answered affirmatively, mistakenly assuming that Radoslav was not Eudokia's son, but Stefan's son from another (unnamed) wife. If this was the case, Kamateros had argued, the prospective spouses would not have been related to one another up to the seventh degree. After it turned out that Eudokia was Radoslav's mother, however, Chomatenos reversed the decision of his predecessor, who had died in the meantime. Furthermore, a marriage project between Stefan himself and Michael's daughter Mary had also been rejected, again because both spouses would have been too closely related. Two things seem clear: after his divorce from Eudokia, Stefan had married a second time (otherwise Kamateros would not have been under the impression that Radoslav was not Eudokia's son), but at the time of this exchange of letters he had found himself again without a wife.

Komatina has hypothesized that this second wife cannot have been Enrico Dandolo's *neptis*, arguing that Chomatenos writes that if Radoslav had not been Eudokia's son, he and Michael's daughter Theodora would have still been related, but not within the prohibited degrees. If so, Dandolo's *neptis* could not have been Stefan's second wife, as the Dandolo family, as far as we know, was not related to the Angeloi.⁷⁴ As mentioned above, however, Chomatenos merely states that in that case (Radoslav not being Eudokia's son) Michael's daughter Theodora and Radoslav would not have been related to each other up to the seventh degree. The archbishop does not say whether or not they would have been related at all.⁷⁵ This means that it is quite possible that Stefan's second wife was indeed Dandolo's *neptis* and that the 1207 date of the Pontecasale inscription may be correct. If so, Dandolo's *neptis* must have been deceased by the time of Stefan's correspondence with Archbishops Kamateros and Chomatenos. Hence, the date of Chomatenos' letter becomes a crucial element. In his exemplary edition, Günter Prinzing dated it to 1216/early 1217.⁷⁶ This, however, would mean that Dandolo's *neptis* could not be Stefan's second

74 I. Komatina, "Ana Dandolo – prva srpska kraljica?," *Zbornik Matice srpske za istoriju* 89 (2014), 7-22, at 11.

75 "Υπολαβὼν δὲ ὁ ἀρχιεπίσκοπος ἀπὸ ἄλλης γυναικὸς ἔχειν τὸν υἱὸν τὴν εὐγένειάν σου καὶ οὐχὶ ἀπὸ τῆς κυρᾶς Εὐδοκίας εὐθὺς εἶπεν ἀκώλυτον εἶναι τὸ τοιοῦτον συνάλλαγμα ὡς ἐξ ἀγχιστείας εἰς ἕβδομον βαθμὸν καθιστάμενον": Demetrios Chomatenos, *Ponemata Diaphora*, no. 10, 56; literally translated: "The archbishop, under the assumption that the son was nobly born from another wife and certainly not from the lady Eudokia, without reserve said that there was no impediment to this marriage agreement since it stood outside the seventh degree of kinship/consanguinity."

76 Demetrios Chomatenos, *Ponemata Diaphora*, no. 10, 72*-73*.

wife referred to in Chomatenos' letter: this second wife died before the letter was written, while Dandolo's *neptis* was, as far as we know, still alive in 1217, at the time of Stefan's coronation. Nevertheless, Prinzing's dating is debatable.

Prinzing uses the date of Chomatenos' accession to the archiepiscopal office as a *terminus post quem* (around 1216, according to Prinzing, after Theodore Doukas' conquest of Ohrid and after Kamateros had first been reinstated) and Stefan's coronation as a *terminus ante quem*. The latter *terminus* presupposes that Chomatenos, who addresses Stefan as *grand zupan*, would have immediately accepted his new royal status, but this is not self-evident: Chomatenos was one of the leading prelates in the realm of Theodore Doukas, who at this point, i.e., following his capture of Emperor Peter of Courtenay (spring 1217), was developing imperial ambitions of his own. From a Byzantine point of view, Serbia always had and still belonged to the empire's direct sphere of influence. Stefan's coronation by a papal legate may well have been frowned upon by aspirant Emperor Theodore Doukas and, consequently, by Chomatenos. The archbishop of Ohrid may initially have chosen to negate Stefan's coronation until amicable relations between Epiros and Serbia had been established (see below).⁷⁷ In other contexts, Chomatenos did negate the titles or claims of secular rulers or ecclesiastics that he deemed problematic. For instance, in his correspondence with the patriarchate of Nicaea, Chomatenos never recognized or named the Nicaean Emperor Theodore I Laskaris as the legitimate *basileus ton Rhomaion*.⁷⁸ Another example is his vehement protest against the Nicaean creation of an autocephalous archbishopric of Serbia – with Stefan's brother Sava at its head – to the detriment of his own ecclesiastical jurisdiction.⁷⁹ This line of reasoning implies that Chomatenos' letter may well have been written later, in 1218 or perhaps even in 1219. In this way, Dandolo's *neptis* may have married Stefan around 1207 and may have died by 1218, after having been crowned with her husband in 1217. Stefan then sought to conclude a marriage alliance with the rising power of Epiros under Theodore Doukas. After two failed attempts, his efforts were finally crowned with success on the occasion of the marriage between Theodore's daughter Anna and Stefan's son

77 In a later, undated letter Chomatenos did address an unnamed Serbian ruler as king (probably Stefan Radoslav [1227/28-1233]); see Demetrios Chomatenos, *Ponemata Diaphora*, no. 13, 74*-75*, 61-62.

78 Demetrios Chomatenos, *Ponemata Diaphora*, passim.

79 Demetrios Chomatenos, *Ponemata Diaphora*, no. 86, 179*-182*, 296-302; Ferjančić, "Srbija i vizantijski svet u prvoj polovini XIII veka," 119; Ferjančić and Maksimović, "Sava Nemanjić and Serbia," 44.

Radoslav (late 1219/early 1220). By this time, Chomatenos had apparently swallowed his objections, possibly under pressure from Theodore.⁸⁰

Ultimately, with regard to the 1221 marriage between King Stefan and Emperor Robert's (presumed) niece, it does not make much of a difference whether Dandolo's *neptis*' wedding took place around 1207 or around 1217. Even if she married Stefan in 1216 or early 1217, she could still have been deceased by 1218/19. If King Stefan did marry Emperor Robert's 'cousin' in 1221, this would imply that the Serbian queen depicted in the fresco at the Sopoćani monastery is not Dandolo's *neptis*, but Robert's 'cousin'. In any case, the queen-mother represented was the mother of the then king Stefan Uroš I. This follows from the fact that the fresco shows the death of a 'mother', not the death of a 'former queen': the painting parallels another fresco representing the *Koimesis* (or Dormition of the *Theotokos*). This, in turn, would mean that Stefan Uroš I's mother was not Dandolo's *neptis*, but Robert's 'cousin'. Some measure of confirmation for this can be found in letters from the Serbian Kings Stefan Dečanski (1322-1331) and Stefan Dušan (1331-1355), respectively the grandson and great-grandson of Stefan Uroš I and Helena Angelos/Courtenay, to the Venetian Doges Francesco Dandolo (1329-1339) and Andreas Dandolo (1343-1354). In two royal letters from 1330 and 1333, Doge Francesco is addressed as *proximo suo carissimo*.⁸¹ In a 1345 letter, Stefan Dušan addressed Doge Andreas as *affini carissimo* and referred to him as *vestra affinitas*.⁸²

Komatina, who drew attention to these letters, is of the opinion that the terms *proximus* and *affinis* indicate that the Serbian kings and the Dandolo doges were blood relatives, which would then prove that Stefan Uroš I was indeed King Stefan Nemanjić's son by Dandolo's *neptis*.⁸³ In my view, however, the use of these terms indicates exactly the opposite. For blood relatives, the terms *consanguineus* or *cognatus* were much more appropriate (see above the terms used by Charles I of Anjou for his blood relative Mary Angelos/Courtenay). *Affinis* most often refers to relatives by marriage, but admittedly could also be used for blood relatives (see above Charles II of Anjou calling Helena Angelos/Courtenay his *consanguinea* in a 1294 letter and his *affinis* in

80 Maksimović, "La Serbie et les contrées voisines," 281; V.M. Stanković, "Rethinking the Position of Serbia within the Byzantine Oikoumene in the Thirteenth Century," in *The Balkans and the Byzantine World before and after the Captures of Constantinople, 1204 and 1453*, ed. V.M. Stanković (Landham, MD: Lexington, 2016) 91-102, at 94; Ferjančić and Maksimović, "Sava Nemanjić and Serbia," 41.

81 S. Ljubić, *Listine o odnošajih između južnoga Slavenstva i Mletačke republike* (Zagreb: Jugoslavenska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, 1868), 1:376-377, 410-411.

82 Ljubić, *Listine o odnošajih između južnoga Slavenstva i Mletačke republike*, 2:278-279.

83 Komatina, "Ana Dandolo – prva srpska kraljica?," 19-20.

a 1302 letter). The term *proximus* is likewise considered to refer to relatives by marriage.⁸⁴ The conclusion must then rather be that Decanski and Dušan, on the one hand, and the Dandolo doges, on the other, were not related by blood, but only by marriage, namely the one between Enrico Dandolo's *neptis* and King Stefan Nemanjić. This in turn means that Dandolo's *neptis* was not Stefan Uroš I's mother. It follows by default that Emperor Robert's 'cousin' was Stefan Uroš I's mother (and also the queen-mother depicted in the Sopoćani fresco).⁸⁵ Stefan Uroš I and his wife Helena Angelos/Courtenay were then related themselves to each other (if Robert's 'cousin' was indeed somehow related to him), but there is no reason to think that this would have been within the prohibited degrees, for which no dispensation could be obtained.

If the hypothesis is correct that Robert's 'cousin' was King Stefan Nemanjić's third wife and also King Stefan Uroš I's mother, then it is quite probable that the Anna who is mentioned as Nemanjić's wife in the *Synodikon* of the Serbian Church from circa 1286-1292 (and in various other Serbian dynastic lists) is precisely Robert's 'cousin'. This Anna has until now been identified as Dandolo's *neptis*, but in view of my new findings this seems unlikely. In the *Synodikon*, Stefan is explicitly named as the first-crowned king, but Anna is not mentioned as the first-crowned queen, nor is she mentioned as such in any other source. Literally translated, the text reads as follows: "eternal memory to Stefan, faithful in Christ and blessedly departed, first-crowned king of the entire Serbian land, and to Anna, pious queen."⁸⁶ Consequently, Dandolo's *neptis* – who according to Andreas Dandolo in 1217 was Serbia's first-crowned queen – is not the only option. She is, in fact, the least likely option. If Robert's 'cousin' was

84 I would like to thank Prof. Dr. Monique Van Melkebeek (University of Ghent) for her valuable advice on this matter.

85 See Genealogical Table III for my partial revision of the Nemanjić Dynasty. It should be noted that Stefan Nemanjić's first wife, Eudokia Angelos, was certainly not Stefan Uroš I's mother. As mentioned, Eudokia was repudiated by Stefan circa 1201/02 and she never returned to Serbia. Having regained Constantinople, in 1204 she was remarried first to Alexios V Doukas and next to Leo Sgouros, who had established himself as a regional ruler in Southern Greece before being defeated by the Latins: B. Hendrickx and C. Matzukis, "Alexios V Doukas Mourtzouphlos: His Life, Reign and Death (?-1204)," *Hellenika* 31 (1979), 108-132; A. Ilieva, "The Phenomenon Leo Sgouros," *Etudes balkaniques* 26 (1990), 31-51. From the Sopoćani fresco we gather that King Stefan Uroš I, together with his wife Helena and their children, was present at the deathbed of his mother (in the late 1250s/early 1260s).

86 V.A. Moshin, "Serbskaia redaktsiia sinodika v nedeliu pravoslaviia," *Vizantiiskii Vremennik* 17 (1960), 278-353, at 303. I want to thank Dr. Lara Sels (Catholic University of Leuven) for her help with the translation. Komatina uses the same passage to argue that Anna was Serbia's first queen, but unfoundedly in my view: Komatina, "Ana Dandolo – prva srpska kraljica?," 17.

indeed Stefan Uroš I's mother, it is self-evident that it is she who was registered as Nemanjić's wife and queen in the dynastic enumeration of Serbian rulers and their wives in the *Synodikon*. Conventionally, we may then adopt the name 'Anna of Flanders/Hainaut' for Nemanjić's third wife and Stefan Uroš I's mother, even though the exact relationship between her and Emperor Robert remains uncertain.

Returning now to the winter of 1220/21 and Emperor-elect Robert's stay at the Hungarian court, it becomes clear that an important regional Balkan summit took place. While the reports in Mouskes' *Chronique rimée* and the *Chronique dite de Baudouin d'Avesnes* may in part be confused or incomplete, it is obvious that four key players were involved: Constantinople (with Emperor-elect Robert), Hungary (with King Andrew II, his wife and Robert's sister Yolande, and their son Bela [IV]), Bulgaria (with King Ivan Asen II's brother Alexander – whom Mouskes confusedly presents as Andrew's son) and Serbia (whose king the confused Mouskes names *Ausens*). The goal of this regional summit was to ensure continuing stability and a geopolitical status quo in the region.⁸⁷ The network of marriage alliances that already linked together the Constantinopolitan, Hungarian, and Bulgarian courts was to be expanded by including rising regional power Serbia through yet another marriage alliance. In this way, the initial confrontational strategy from the years 1214-1215 was definitively abandoned. From a Constantinopolitan perspective, one could have argued that Serbia was now positively being drawn into the empire's orbit without having to invest any further in fruitless and expensive military campaigns, which would have been especially welcome in the context of Theodore Doukas' ongoing offensive against Thessaloniki. Conversely, from a Serbian perspective, the marriage alliance guaranteed the absence of future Latin imperial military operations. Stefan Nemanjić did not mean to orient Serbia exclusively toward Latin Constantinople, but simply adopted a balanced approach aimed at establishing friendly relations with all relevant powers within the post-1204 Byzantine world (see above for the marriage alliance with Epiros and the negotiations with Nicaea in order to obtain Serbian autocephaly, both around 1219/20). The marriage shows that, in Serbian eyes, Latin Constantinople was still a power to be reckoned with in 1221. More generally, the marriage alliance should also be seen as a continuation of the pre-1204 political and cultural relations between Serbia and Constantinople/Byzantium, with the Latin

87 Attila Bányai has also stressed the importance of the 1220/21 meeting, though focusing mainly on Hungarian-Constantinopolitan relations: A. Bányai, "Courtenay Robert latin császár Magyarországon," in *Francia – magyar kapcsolatok a középkorban*, eds. A. Györkös and G. Kiss (Debrecen: Debreceni Egyetemi K., 2013), 153-179.

emperors explicitly claiming to be the direct and legitimate successors of the Byzantine *basileis* and adopting the key tenets of Byzantine imperial ideology, including the claim to universalism within a hierarchy of states concept.⁸⁸

On the ground, the 1221 conference would turn out to be more of a non-aggression pact than an active alliance focusing on mutual aid. We have, for instance, no knowledge of any kind of cooperation between Constantinople and Bulgaria in the context of addressing the Epirote offensive under Theodore Doukas from 1218 onward, which gained momentum in the early 1220s.⁸⁹ Mutual distrust and the possible gains to be had from the weakening of a partner may provide a partial explanation. Doukas' conquests of Bulgarian lands eventually led Ivan Asen II to conclude a separate peace and marry his daughter to Theodore's brother Manuel.⁹⁰ The drastic contraction of Latin imperial power in the later 1220s, with substantial territorial losses including Northern Asia Minor, Thessaloniki, Adrianople, and Philippopolis, in any case meant that Constantinople and Serbia no longer shared any border and became rather distant neighbours, geographically speaking. There is virtually no information available as to how Robert's 'cousin' would have functioned as Serbian queen after the marriage in 1221 or after her husband's death in 1227/28. Under Stefan Radoslav (1227/28-1233), Epirote influence was dominant, while after the crushing defeat of his father-in-law Theodore Doukas against Ivan Asen II at Klokotnitsa (1230) and during the reign of his brother Stefan Vladislav (1234-1243) Bulgarian influence prevailed.⁹¹

88 Van Tricht, *The Latin Renovatio of Byzantium*, 99-101.

89 Van Tricht, *The Latin Renovatio of Byzantium*, 377-387.

90 Akropolites' chronicle is the only source referring to this treaty and marriage. The author mentions them after relating Doukas' conquests up to the capture of Adrianople from John III Vatatzes around 1227/28. It would then seem that the Bulgarian-Epirote peace must also be dated to this time: Georgios Akropolites, *Historia*, §§24-26. Other authors have opted for 1221/22, but this is not in accordance with Akropolites' account; see for example Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans*, 120. See also Bredenkamp, *The Byzantine Empire of Thessalonike*, 148-149; Van Tricht, *The Latin Renovatio of Byzantium*, 394-396; A. Madgearu, *The Asanids: The Political and Military History of the Second Bulgarian Empire (1185-1280)* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 200-201 (with further references). On Adrianople in 1227/28: F. Van Tricht, "The Byzantino-Latin Principality of Adrianople and the Challenge of Feudalism (1204/6-1227/28): Empire, Venice and Local Autonomy," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 68 (2014), 325-342, at 340-341.

91 Ferjančić, "Srbija i vizantijski svet u prvoj polovini XIII veka," 132-139; Madgearu, *The Asanids*, 209-210. It should be noted that, while under Stefan Radoslav (1227/28-1234) Epirote influence was predominant, friendly relations continued to exist at the same time with Nicaea: on the occasion of his first pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1229, Archbishop Sava received a warm welcome at John III Vatatzes' court.

The following elements should nevertheless be considered. The north and north-east parts of the narthex of the Mileševa monastery (founded by Stefan Vladislav, built probably around 1218-1219, and decorated with frescoes presumably around 1222-1227/28) contain a series of portraits of the Nemanjić family: St Symeon, his sons St Sava and King Stefan Nemanjić, the latter's sons Stefan Radoslav and Stefan Vladislav (as *ktetor*). On the opposite side are depicted Emperor Constantine the Great with his mother St Helena (south-east), together with an anonymous Byzantine emperor (young of age, without a prominent beard) alongside an unidentified monk (south).⁹² The emperor has commonly been identified as the contemporary Nicaean Emperor John III Vatatzes (1221-1254), but Theodore I Laskaris (1206/08-1221), under whose reign the Serbian Church had obtained autocephalous status, and Alexios III Angelos, who is mentioned in the inscription accompanying the portrait of King Stefan Nemanjić ('son-in-law of the Greek Kyr Alexios'), have also been suggested.⁹³ Neither Alexios III Angelos (1195-1203) nor Theodore I Laskaris (1206/08-1221) were exactly young when they sat on the imperial throne and in miniatures both were, perhaps conventionally, depicted with prominent beards. In the later 1220s, Vatatzes, for his part, was not particularly young either, and besides did not have any strong personal connection with the Serbian court. The newly proposed identity of King Stefan Nemanjić's third wife implies that yet another, perhaps more likely, option should be considered. The marriage alliance between Latin Constantinople and Serbia, and the resulting presence of Robert's 'cousin' at the Serbian royal court, makes it conceivable that the depicted emperor in the Mileševa narthex is in fact Stefan Nemanjić's in-law, the Latin emperor. In the 1220s Robert was still a young man (significantly younger than the other candidates), in general prominent beards were not fashionable among the Latin aristocracy, and he quite literally occupied Constantine the Great's throne in the Great Palace of the Queen of Cities.⁹⁴

92 G. Babić, "Vladislav na ktitorskom portretu u naosu Mileševe," in *Mileševa u istoriji srpskog naroda: Međunarodni naučni skup povodom sedam i po vekova postojanja: juni 1985*, ed. V.J. Đurić (Belgrade: Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti, 1987), 9-16.

93 Ferjančić, "Srbija i vizantijski svet u prvoj polovini XIII veka," 129-130; V.J. Đurić, "Srpska dinastija i Vizantija na freskama u manastiru Mileševi," *Zograf* 22 (1992), 13-27, at 19-20; Ferjančić and Maksimović, "Sava Nemanjić and Serbia," 47-49; F. Curta, *Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages (500-1300)* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 663.

94 On the adoption of Byzantine imperial dress by the Latin emperors: Van Tricht, *The Latin Renovatio of Byzantium*, 91-92. On the (probable) depiction of Emperor Henry of Flanders in Byzantine imperial attire in a Byzantine-style fresco: F. Van Tricht, "The Anonymous *Ekphrasis* of Imperial *ξυλοκονταριαί*: Manuel I Komnenos or Henry of Flanders?," (forthcoming). On the throne of Constantine the Great: Robert de Clari, *La conquête de*

Sometime after the death of her husband, Robert's 'cousin' must have entered a monastery: several later lists of Serbian rulers mention the royal couple as King Stefan-the-First-Crowned and nun Anna.⁹⁵ Stefan Nemanjić's death, however, did not sever relations with Constantinople. Domentijan, an Athonite monk from the Chilandar monastery, in his *vita* of St Sava (mid-thirteenth century) informs us that in 1235, returning from his second pilgrimage to the Holy Land, Sava (the late Serbian king's brother) stayed for some time in Constantinople. He most probably did so in the local St Andrew *metochion* of the Theotokos Evergetis monastery, which was situated outside the city walls and with which Sava already had entertained close contacts since before 1204. Domentijan states that in the capital Sava conducted unspecified business with local Byzantine artists.⁹⁶ The stay of this prominent and well-known Serbian church leader and uncle of King Stefan Vladislav can hardly have gone unnoticed by the local secular and ecclesiastical authorities. It would indeed seem quite likely that he was received at the imperial and/or patriarchal court. In view of the then geopolitical situation, Bulgaria and Nicaea being firmly on the rise (see their combined siege of Constantinople later in 1235 and also in 1236), these contacts probably did not result in any tangible form of cooperation, but nevertheless their nature must have been rather amiable, since the Serbian dowager queen was connected to the prince and imperial heir Baldwin (II) of Courtenay (born 1217), who by now was nearing adulthood. Networking activity at this time may well have formed the basis for the later renewed marriage alliance between Constantinople and Serbia. Sava died shortly afterwards, while staying at the court of Ivan Asen II, where he had been invited (late 1235/early 1236). Members of his entourage, his later hagiographer Domentijan

Constantinople, ed. P. Lauer (Paris: Champion, 1924), §97 (who remarks in the context of Emperor Baldwin I's coronation in 1204: "si le fist on seir en le caiere Coustantin." On beards in the medieval West: G. Constable, "Introduction: Beards in History," in *Apologiae duae*, ed. R.B. Huygens, CCCM 62 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1985), 47-100, at 94-100.

95 See (with further references): Komatina, "Ana Dandolo – prva srpska kraljica?," 17 n. 37.

96 Domentijan, *Život svetoga Simeuna i svetoga Save*, 180, 328. Domentijan may have personally accompanied Sava on his second pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Earlier (presumably around 1219/20) – as reported in the later *vita* of St Sava by Teodosije (late thirteenth/early fourteenth century) – Sava had already recruited artists from Constantinople for the decoration of the church of the Žiča monastery (in Serbia), founded circa 1207/08: Teodosije, *Život svetoga Save*, 141. See also R. Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'empire byzantin. Première partie: le siège de Constantinople et le patriarcat oecuménique. Tome III: Les églises et les monastères (deuxième édition)* (Paris: Institut français d'études byzantines, 1969), 178-184; Obolensky, *Six Byzantine Portraits*, 132, 137, 167-168; R.H. Jordan and R. Morris, *The Hypotyposis of the Monastery of the Theotokos Evergetis, Constantinople (11th-12th centuries)* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 14-15; Van Tricht, *The Horoscope of Emperor Baldwin II*, 200.

possibly among them, must have informed the Serbian court of Sava's experiences in Constantinople.

3.4 *Stefan Uroš I and Helena Angelos/Courtenay*

In 1243 Stefan Uroš I acceded to the Serbian throne after his brother Stefan Vladislav had been deposed. The circumstances remain unclear, but it is beyond doubt that there was a connection with the recent death of Vladislav's father-in-law and protector Ivan Asen II († around May-June 1241) and the waning of Bulgarian influence thereafter.⁹⁷ The foregoing discussion explains why the Serbian king married Helena Angelos/Courtenay around 1245/50. The marriage should be seen as the continuation of Serbian-Constantinopolitan relations as they had developed after 1204, rather than as a Serbian-Hungarian affair as McDaniel has opined, and with Helena's descent from two imperial lineages being an obvious asset.⁹⁸ The following factors indicate that Emperor Baldwin II was instrumental in arranging the marriage: the close political relationship between Guglielmo/Helena and Baldwin II in the early 1240s, with Helena being the emperor's grandniece, and the absence of any indication that Helena ever returned to Hungary after her husband's death in 1243, with her son Francesco da Verona by Guglielmo being attested in Euboea and not in Hungary.⁹⁹ The Serbian dowager queen Anna, the proposed mother of Stefan Uroš and a 'cousin' of Emperors Robert and Baldwin, may have played a role as well. The abovementioned Sopoćani fresco of Anna at her deathbed in any case indicates that the queen mother was much appreciated, suggesting that she occupied a position of importance or influence during her son's reign. The resulting simultaneous presence of two Latin Constantinopolitan queens at the Serbian royal court appears to have had an impact both politically and

97 V.M. Stanković, "The Character and Nature of Byzantine Influence in Serbia (from the End of the Eleventh to the End of the Thirteenth Century): Reality – Policy – Ideology," in *Serbia and Byzantium: Proceedings of the International Conference Held on 15 December 2008 at the University of Cologne*, eds. M. Angar and C. Sode (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2013), 75-94, at 91-92; P. Sophoulis, "The Mongol Invasion of Croatia and Serbia in 1242," *Fragmenta Hellenoslavica* 2 (2015), 251-277, at 271-272; Curta, *Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages*, 666, 693.

98 McDaniel does not elaborate on his suggestion and merely states that "a detailed reexamination of the relations between Hungary and Serbia in the period 1240-1265, and especially around 1250, would be expected to show that the marriage of Jelena and Uroš was a natural outcome of political factors": McDaniel, "On Hungarian-Serbian Relations," 49-50.

99 Helena's son Francesco da Verona is attested in Euboea in various sources: Loenertz, "Les seigneurs tiersiers," nos. 48, 52, 66, 70, 76; see also the references in notes 40-41. Helena's other children by Guglielmo (Corrado, Bonifacio, Agnese) are not mentioned in the sources after 1244. Possibly one or more of them died before reaching adulthood.

culturally, even though Vlada Stanković has recently argued that Stefan Uroš' reputation as a pro-Western or anti-Byzantine ruler is unfounded.

Stanković indeed states that Stefan Uroš, whose reign is scantily documented, was in fact a ruler determined to strengthen the ties with the emperors in Nicaea. In my opinion, however, this is not what the adduced evidence (that is, George Akropolites' funeral oration for John III Vatatzes and Theodore II Laskaris' eulogy of his father) bears out. Stanković's own interpretation/translation of Akropolites' description of the relationship between Stefan Uroš and Vatatzes is in itself interesting: "[The Serb] who in words is counted among the emperor's faithfuls (*δοῦλος λογογραφείται*).” Apparently suspecting a certain ambivalence in the chronicler's wording, Stanković seems to doubt whether Stefan Uroš was ever considered Vatatzes' *doulos* in earnest or in deeds.¹⁰⁰ Akropolites himself encourages this view when in his chronicle he describes the Serbs as “a race which violates treaties and never shows gratitude to those who have been good to it, but for a small gain they cast aside and trample on the cup of friendship.”¹⁰¹ For his part, Laskaris portrays Stefan Uroš as an ethnarch who rebelled against the emperor, but was forced to bow to Vatatzes. These testimonies do not seem to indicate that there ever was any sincere attempt by Stefan Uroš at loyal cooperation/submission or reconnecting with Nicaea.¹⁰² Obviously, the Serbian king had attacked Nicaean Macedonia some time before 1254, but apparently Vatatzes had managed to ward off the offensive. Much more than that cannot be learnt from Akropolites' and Laskaris' eulogies. Exaggerating military successes, with modest victories turning into the complete subjection of neighbouring lands, is not an uncommon feature of Byzantine imperial panegyric. That Stefan Uroš did not subject himself to Vatatzes or seek a closer relation with him also follows from the fact that in 1257 he once again invaded Nicaean territory, this time reaching the towns of Skopje (which may only nominally have accepted Nicaean rule) and Prilep. In his chronicle, Akropolites states that this was done in collusion with Michael II Doukas, ruler of Epiros, who had decided to no longer recognize

100 Stanković, “The Byzantine Influence in Serbia,” 91-92; Idem, “Rethinking the Position of Serbia,” 94-96. The entire relevant passage in the funeral oration: “Τριβαλλὸς ἡμῖν ὀρίζει τὰ τῆς ἐσπέρας, μᾶλλον δὲ οὐκ αὐτός, εἴ γε καὶ δοῦλος λογογραφεῖται καὶ ὡς θεράπων ὑποκύπτει τῷ βασιλεῖ καὶ δύναμιν στρατιωτικὴν ὡς ὑπόφορος διδόναι καταναγκάζεται”: Georgios Akropolites, *Epitaphios*, ed. A. Heisenberg, in *Georgii Acropolitae Opera* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1903), 2:18.

101 George Akropolites, *The History*, §70, trans. R. Macrides (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 328.

102 Theodoros II Dukas Laskaris, *Opuscula rhetorica*, ed. A. Tartaglia (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2000), 30-31.

the Nicaean emperor's authority by starting a large-scale operation that would culminate in the momentous Battle of Pelagonia (1259). Presumably, Serbia controlled part of the overrun region for some time, including the town of Prilep, which in 1241 had been granted in fief by Emperor Baldwin II to Queen Helena's first husband.¹⁰³ Any weakening of Nicaean power was of course also to the Latin emperor's benefit. It is hard not to conjecture that Baldwin II and Helena, during both Vatatzes' and Laskaris' reigns, would have tried pushing Stefan Uroš into undertaking military action against Nicaea. One should recall here that the Serbian queen held a claim to the kingdom of Thessaloniki, confirmed to her by Baldwin in 1240. Michael II likewise held a claim to Thessaloniki and the surrounding region, but a self-evident solution to this problem may have been that any territorial gains were to be split among the parties involved. Furthermore, Emperor Baldwin II himself was, as I have argued elsewhere, one of the partners in the Pelagonia alliance (see also below).¹⁰⁴

Helena is in any case known to have been a strong-willed personality with a political agenda of her own. In this context, one often cites her 1267/68 letter promising the people of Ragusa (Dubrovnik) to inform them in case her husband planned to attack their city. It has also been claimed that she contributed to the failure of the marriage diplomacy Michael VIII Palaiologos and Stefan Uroš had entered into in the years 1269-1270.¹⁰⁵ Likewise indicative of her political importance is the fact that, after her husband's deposition, her son

103 Georgios Akropolites, *Historia*, §§68-71; Ferjančić, "Srbija i vizantijski svet u prvoj polovini XIII veka," 141-144; I.S.R. Mladjov, "Some Observations on the Upper Vardar and Upper Struma Valleys in the Late Middle Ages (c. 1240-c. 1380)," *Bulgaria Medievalis* 1 (2010), 137-162, at 143-145; M.S. Popović, "The 'Medieval Serbian Oecumene' – Fiction or Reality?," in *Processes of Byzantinisation and Serbian Archaeology*, ed. V. Bikić (Belgrade: The Serbian National Committee of Byzantine Studies, 2016), 37-43, at 39. On Nicaean-Epirote relations at this time: D. Nicol, *The Despotate of Epiros* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1957), 157-173; D.J. Geanakoplos, *Emperor Michael Palaeologus and the West 1258-1282* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959), 27-33, 47-74.

104 See my discussion of the Pelagonia coalition (1258-1259): Van Tricht, *The Horoscope of Emperor Baldwin II*, 82-85.

105 S. Marjanović-Dušanić, "Le pouvoir féminin dans la Serbie médiévale," in *Augusta, Regina, Basilissa: la souveraine de l'Empire romain au Moyen Âge. Entre héritages et métamorphoses*, ed. F. Chausson and S. Destephen (Paris: Bocard, 2018), 159-188, at 164-166. Attached to the 1267/68 charter is a wax seal of Queen Helena, which contains no useful information in the context of identifying her lineage. The same holds true for her two other preserved seals, appended to charters from 1289 and 1304 respectively: see Serbian Royal Documents at the State Archives in Dubrovnik (1186-1479) 12670203? – kraljica Jelena, in monasterium.net, URL </mom/SerbianRoyalDocumentsDubrovnik/12670203_%E2%80%93_kraljica_Jelena/charter> (last accessed on 3/12/2019). I would like to thank Prof. Dr. Smilja Marjanović-Dušanić for the information she provided concerning Queen Helena's seals.

gave her the entire coastal region and some other territories, which she ruled autonomously with the title of queen. Additionally, she was the first Serbian queen to be portrayed in imperial dress (at Sopoćani, clearly mirroring St Helena), a fact no doubt related to her descent from both the Angeloi and the Courtenay.¹⁰⁶ From a cultural perspective, it has long been recognized that Queen Helena contributed to a stronger Western influence entering Serbian society, while at the same time she secured for herself a reputation as a patron of Orthodox monastic communities, leading to her canonization by the Serbian Church. Although her hagiographer, Danilo, has portrayed her one-sidedly as a purely Orthodox queen, it has long been known that she remained strongly attached to the Latin Church as well. She founded, renovated, or supported a dozen Benedictine monasteries and Franciscan convents, while she also entertained excellent relations with the Franciscan Pope Nicholas IV (1288-1292). She was also presumably instrumental in appointing the learned French Dominican *Gaspar* (or possibly *Gerardus*) as archbishop of Bar (ca. 1270). That she had a special relationship with the Franciscan Order is borne out by the fact that she had a small Franciscan church dedicated to St Nicholas built inside the Orthodox monastic complex of Gradac, which she had chosen as her burial site. The monastery was founded by her husband and completed by herself, with artists having been brought in from her 'homeland' – a rather ambiguous term in Helena's case – who must have been responsible for introducing some Gothic features.¹⁰⁷

Helena was a highly educated woman, with a clear interest in religious literature, as attested by the attribution to her of a spiritual lament (cited in

106 B. Cvetković, "Franciscans and Medieval Serbia: Evidence of Art," in *IKON. Journal of Iconographic Studies* 3 (2010), 247-260, at 252-253. It is interesting to note here the similarities that have been observed between the St Francis chapel in the Kyriotissa church in Constantinople and frescoes at the Mileševa monastery, and between the frescoes at Sopoćani and those in Psahne in Euboea (1245) and in the paintings at Kranidi in the Peloponnese (1244); see also O. Kandić and D. Milošević, *Sopoćani Monastery* (Belgrade: Republički Zavod za Zaštitu Spomenika Kulture SR Srbije, 1986). One wonders if there might be any link with Queen Helena, who had connections in Constantinople, Euboea, and Serbia.

107 Cvetković, "Franciscans and Medieval Serbia," 247-259; S. Marjanović-Dušanić, "La sainteté féminine et les cultes dynastiques en Serbie médiévale: la sainte reine Hélène d'Anjou," in *Les réseaux familiaux: Antiquité tardive et Moyen Âge. In memoriam A. Laiou et É. Patlagean*, ed. B. Caseau-Chevalier (Paris: Amis du Centre d'Histoire et Civilisation de Byzance, 2012), 125-134; D. Farlato, *Illyrici Sacri* (Venice: Sebastianus Coleti, 1817), 7:44-45; C. Hawkesworth, *Voices in the Shadows. Women and Verbal Art in Bosnia and Serbia* (Budapest: CEU, 2000), 67-70. On Queen Helena of Serbia, see also in general M. Popović, *Srpska kraljica Jelena između rimokatoličanstva i pravoslavlja* (Belgrade: Pravoslavni Bogoslovski Fak. Univ., Inst. za Teološka Istraživanja, 2010).

Danilo's *vita*). She is known to have initiated a court library, to have stimulated the copying of books, and to have founded a school for poor girls. Her and/or Anna's influence at the Serbian court may also be responsible for the remarkable pro-papal stance of Domentijan's *vita* of St Sava, which continued the recent Serbian tradition of dynastic hagiography introduced at the beginning of the thirteenth century. The work was presumably written in 1253/54 (or possibly in 1242/43) and dedicated to (according to some, even commissioned by) King Stefan Uroš. Dimitri Obolensky already noted this particular trait in Sava's biography. For an Athonite monk to have Sava request a royal crown from the pope for his brother Stefan Nemanjić as well as the papal blessing for himself and the land of Serbia is indeed rather extraordinary. For example Teodosije's later *vita*, although based on Domentijan's work, no longer contains any such references to the papacy. Domentijan most respectfully calls the pope "the great thronefellow" (*suprestolnik*, after the Greek *synthronos*) of the holy apostles Peter and Paul and "pope of the great Roman realm." Obolensky expresses his surprise at Domentijan's "veneration for the see of Rome," stressing Western "intolerance and brutality" under the "parasitical Latin empire." The author argues that this is to be explained by the Latin sympathies of King Stefan Uroš, the Latin loyalties of Queen Helena (and/or Queen-mother Anna, I would add), and a lingering sense of Christian unity in Serbian society with its predominantly Latin coastland and Orthodox interior.¹⁰⁸ This is no doubt correct, although it should be noted that both Pope Innocent III and Emperor Henry had taken Mount Athos under their protection, *inter alia* to safeguard the local monastic communities against the excesses that had indeed been committed by some Latin nobles. Henry's reported portrait as *ktetor* once

108 Domentijan, *Život svetoga Simeuna i svetoga Save*, 345-348; Obolensky, *Six Byzantine Portraits*, 123, 144-146. Domentijan should not, however, be considered the mouthpiece of the Serbian court. He did not refer to the Latin emperor as 'the Greek emperor,' as Grand *Zupan* Stefan Nemanjić had done in his earlier *vita* of his father St Symeon. In spite of Stefan Nemanjić's and Stefan Uroš' Latin imperial marriages, the only emperors mentioned by Domentijan are Nicaean emperors: Theodore I Laskaris in the context of the 1219 institution of an autocephalic Serbian archbishopric; John III Vatatzes in the context of Sava's first pilgrimage in 1229 and in the closing formula, where the *vita* is presented as having been written during the reign of the "devout Greek emperor *kyr Kaloioannis* of Greece," who by 1253/54 effectively controlled Thessaloniki and the surrounding region, including Mount Athos (see also Ferjančić and Maksimović, "Sava Nemanjić and Serbia," 51). That the Athonite hagiographer chose to completely ignore the Latin emperors should perhaps be interpreted as an implicit advice or message to the Serbian king/court: a measure of reverence for and contacts with the papacy are acceptable, but the only legitimate emperors are the Nicaean rulers (whose residence at one point is called 'Carigrad,' a conventional Serbian appellation for Constantinople).

present in the *trapeza* (or refectory) of the Great Lavra monastery shows that the Athonite monks appreciated the Latin emperor's efforts.¹⁰⁹

It is not my intention here to provide a full-length discussion of the reigns of Queen Helena and her husband. What I would like to point out is that there are clear similarities between the policies of Emperor Baldwin II and those of Queen Helena. Baldwin, like his uncles Baldwin I and Henry, followed by his mother Yolande and his brother Robert, was committed to Latin-Byzantine cooperation. His court had a decidedly mixed Latin-Byzantine composition and he wished to bridge the religious divide. An example of this is the presence in his entourage of Demetrios, a priest with a clearly Byzantine background, judging from his name. Shortly before 1261 Baldwin ordered him to build a church dedicated to St George, a military and also imperial saint who was popular with both Latins and Byzantines.¹¹⁰ Emperor Henry's firm commitment to his Byzantine subjects' retention of their own beliefs and practices led him in 1213 to reopen Byzantine churches that had been closed by Papal Legate Pelagius, cardinal-bishop of Albano, and to free clerics that had suffered imprisonment at the latter's hands. This principle of relative spiritual/religious freedom was also applied in the feudally dependent principalities under Byzantine rulers (Adrianople, Paphlagonia, and the Rhodopes region, among others): these were *de facto* autocephalic ecclesiastical provinces, where the Latin patriarch held no effective authority. Baldwin II does not seem to have strayed from the course established by his predecessors, although some Latin clerics in Constantinople (patriarchs included) sometimes put pressure on Greek ecclesiastics.¹¹¹ Like Helena, Baldwin also had a special relationship with the Franciscans, who occupied a prominent place in the capital (including the arts) and at the imperial court. He is known to have entertained

109 G. Smyrnakes, *Tò Ἄγιον Ὄρος* (Athens: Anestes Konstandinides, 1903), 72, 431; M. Živojinović, "Sveta Gora u doba Latinskog carstva," *Zbornik Radova Vizantoloskog Instituta* 17 (1976), 77-90, at 82-83; Van Tricht, *The Latin Renovatio of Byzantium*, 231-233; V. Agrigoroaei, "Traduction et sotériologie. Nouvelles recherches au sujet du Barlaam français du Mont Athos," in *Francofonie medievali: lingue e letteratura gallo-romanze fuori di Francia (sec. XII-XV)*, eds. A.M. Babbi and C. Concina (Verona: Fiorini, 2016), 229-250, at 241-242.

110 *The Fall of Constantinople: Fourth Crusade. A Critical Edition with Translation, Grammatical and Historical Commentary of the Codex 408 Marcianus Graecus (ff. 1-13v) in the Library of St. Mark, Venice*, ed. and trans. C. Matzukis (Athens: Ekdoseis Hellen, 2004), 123-127. On this source, see also P. Charanis, "Les *Brachea Chronika* comme source historique," *Byzantion* 13 (1938), 335-362, at 335-337. See also Van Tricht, *The Horoscope of Emperor Baldwin II*, 191-192.

111 For the 1213 episode: Georgios Akropolites, *Historia*, §17. For a general discussion of the religious situation under Henry and Baldwin II, and Latin-Byzantine relations in particular, see: Van Tricht, *The Latin Renovatio of Byzantium*, 312-334; Idem, *The Horoscope of Emperor Baldwin II*, 164-169.

a close personal relationship with the provincial of Romania and one of St Francis' original companions, Benedict of Arezzo (Benedetto Sinigardi), who had already been Emperor John of Brienne's confessor. The ideal of poverty seemingly also appealed to him and appears to have influenced his conception of imperial ideology.¹¹² In general, Baldwin, like Helena, was a cultured man, who valued education and engaged in both literary and artistic enterprises.¹¹³

These similarities in outlook between Baldwin and Helena can be attributed in part to a similar background that we could define as 'the bicultural experience' – Baldwin in the mixed Latin-Byzantine society of post-1204 Constantinople and Helena as the product of a mixed Latin-Byzantine marriage. However, in my opinion, and bearing the Franciscan connection in mind, there is more to it than this. In the early 1240s, Baldwin and Helena knew each other personally and it may well be that the Serbian-queen-to-be was much influenced by what she experienced at the imperial court in the capital, with its focus on balanced Latin-Byzantine cooperation. This may have inspired her to adopt a similar approach in Serbia, and at the time of her second marriage Baldwin may have actively advised his grandniece in this direction. Here, we may recall the parting speech given in 1208 by Emperor Henry to his (natural) daughter after she had married his new vassal Alexios Sthlabos, ruler of the Rhodopes region (as reported by the chronicler and imperial cleric Henry of Valenciennes). Emperor Henry instructed his daughter, who would have been accompanied by a large retinue, temporarily including the emperor's (natural) brother Eustache, to win the hearts of her new husband and his people, but also never to forget her roots and not to exchange her own good ways for new bad habits.¹¹⁴ Treated to a presumably analogous imperial send-off by her great uncle Baldwin, Helena Angelos/Courtenay could thus be considered an exponent of a political system that the Latin emperors gradually tried putting into place after the 1204 crusader conquest.

3.5 *Anseau III of Cayeux and Mary Angelos/Courtenay*

The fourth and final marriage we have to consider is the one between Helena's sister, Mary Angelos/Courtenay, and Anseau III of Cayeux. Details are once again lacking, but Baldwin's personal intercession with the papacy suggests that this also was a Latin imperial affair.¹¹⁵ We have no knowledge of Mary's whereabouts at the time the marriage was negotiated and concluded. Her

112 Van Tricht, *The Horoscope of Emperor Baldwin II*, 40-41, 65, 148.

113 Van Tricht, *The Horoscope of Emperor Baldwin II*, 115-117.

114 Henri de Valenciennes, *Histoire de l'empereur Henri de Constantinople*, §§557-559.

115 See the references to the three papal letters (1253-1255) concerning this marriage in notes 12-14.

father John Angelos already being deceased, she may well have been with her mother Mathilda of Courtenay, lady of Požega in Hungary, or possibly with her sister at the royal court in Serbia, or perhaps even with her uncle Baldwin II at the imperial court in Constantinople. Whatever the case, from the fact that after 1261 Mary was still in contact with her sister (see her travels between the kingdom of Sicily and Serbia as registered in the Angevin registers), it can be argued that she had also remained in contact with Helena quite likely before 1261.¹¹⁶ The 1253/54 marriage between Mary and the imperial baron Anseau III could then be seen as the further consolidation of a Constantinopolitan – Southern Hungarian – Serbian axis. Apart from the continued contacts between Helena and Mary, this is borne out by the observations that in 1269 Anseau was still Baldwin II's imperial *camerarius* and that, at this time, his daughter Eva resided at the Hungarian royal court, where she was about to be married to Dreux of Beaumont, marshal of the Angevin kingdom of Sicily.¹¹⁷

Furthermore, in May 1270 Anseau planned to send a messenger to the Hungarian court and in a June 1272 royal charter of King Stephen V of Hungary (1270-1272) he seems to be attested as count of both Kovin and Krasso, as Dániel Bácsatyai has argued. It would indeed be difficult to identify the *dominus Anselmus comes de Kewe et Krasow* as anyone else.¹¹⁸ Given the fact that Kovin had belonged to the territories ruled by Mary's father, John Angelos, in the 1230s-1240s, it may be that Anseau acquired part of the cited lands as his wife's dowry already at the time of his wedding. That his marriage would have provided him with at least some Hungarian lands (or claims to them) seems likely. Given these circumstances, one wonders whether the Serbian and Hungarian troops mentioned in the *Chronicle of Morea's* account of the Battle of Pelagonia (1259) as fighting in the Nicaean army would not in fact have been auxiliary forces in the allied Latin-Epirote army supplied by Stefan Uroš I/Helena – as a follow-up to the aforementioned Serbian invasions of Macedonia – and Anseau III/Mary.¹¹⁹ The *Chronicle* gives a notoriously distorted account of the battle, especially with regard to the composition of both

116 See the references in notes 5-6.

117 See the references in note 9.

118 D. Bácsatyai, "A 13. századi francia – magyar kapcsolatok néhány kérdése," *Szadok* 151 (2017), 237-278, at 255-262. On Constantinopolitan-Hungarian relations, see also I. Takács, "The French Connection. On the Courtenay Family and Villard de Honnecourt apropos of a 13th Century Incised Slab from Pilis Abbey," in *Künstlerische Wechselwirkungen in Mitteleuropa*, ed. J. Fajt and M. Hörsch (Ostfildern: Thorbecke, 2006), 11-26. See my remarks in Van Tricht, *The Horoscope of Emperor Baldwin II*, 206-207 n. 58.

119 *Chronique de Morée*, §§268-270; *The Chronicle of Morea*, vv. 3542-4087.

armies. For example, German troops are described as belonging to the Nicaean army (they are enumerated together with the Serbians and Hungarians), whereas they were sent by the allied king of Sicily Manfred of Hohenstaufen (1258-1266) and thus were undoubtedly part of the Latin-Epirote army. The other (partly contemporary) accounts of the battle by George Akropolites, George Pachymeres, and Nikephoros Gregoras do not mention Serbian or Hungarian involvement at all and no German troops in the Nicaean army. Exploring this issue further, however, will have to be the subject of an altogether separate contribution.

4 Conclusion

The various insights I have presented here rely on novel genealogical and biographical hypotheses concerning a number of prominent families and lineages (Angelos, Courtenay, Montferrat, Nemanjić, Villehardouin, Da Verona, Cayeux) in the post-1204 Byzantine world (primarily Constantinople, Euboea, Thessaloniki, Serbia), replacing established and widely used genealogical/biographical data. This partially new framework allows us to identify dynamics that I feel have been underexposed until now.

The Latin imperial court under Baldwin II emerges as a very active force, both within Latin Romania and the wider Byzantine sphere. The case of Euboea shows that, through marriage alliances and the bestowal of titles to territories to be reconquered (Thessaloniki), Baldwin was successful in continuing his predecessors' policy of creating personal ties with his feudal barons in Southern Greece in order to reinforce the political unity of his empire. That he remained committed to the principle of balanced Latin-Byzantine cooperation, like most of his predecessors, follows on from the prominent role played within this imperial marriage diplomacy by his relative Helena Angelos/Courtenay, the product of a mixed Latin-Byzantine marriage and a descendant of the Angelos dynasty.

Helena's second marriage to the Serbian King Stefan Uroš I, hitherto something of a mystery, gains in clarity against the background of my re-evaluation of Latin imperial-Serbian relations. For Baldwin II, Serbia was of course a much needed ally at this point, but also much more than that. Within the larger Byzantine ambit, the marriage alliance provided a chance for strengthening his claim to being the legitimate *basileus ton Rhomaion*. For Stefan Uroš I, the marriage offered the opportunity of connecting the Serbian royal lineage to both the Byzantine and Latin imperial lineages. The Serbian king was no doubt

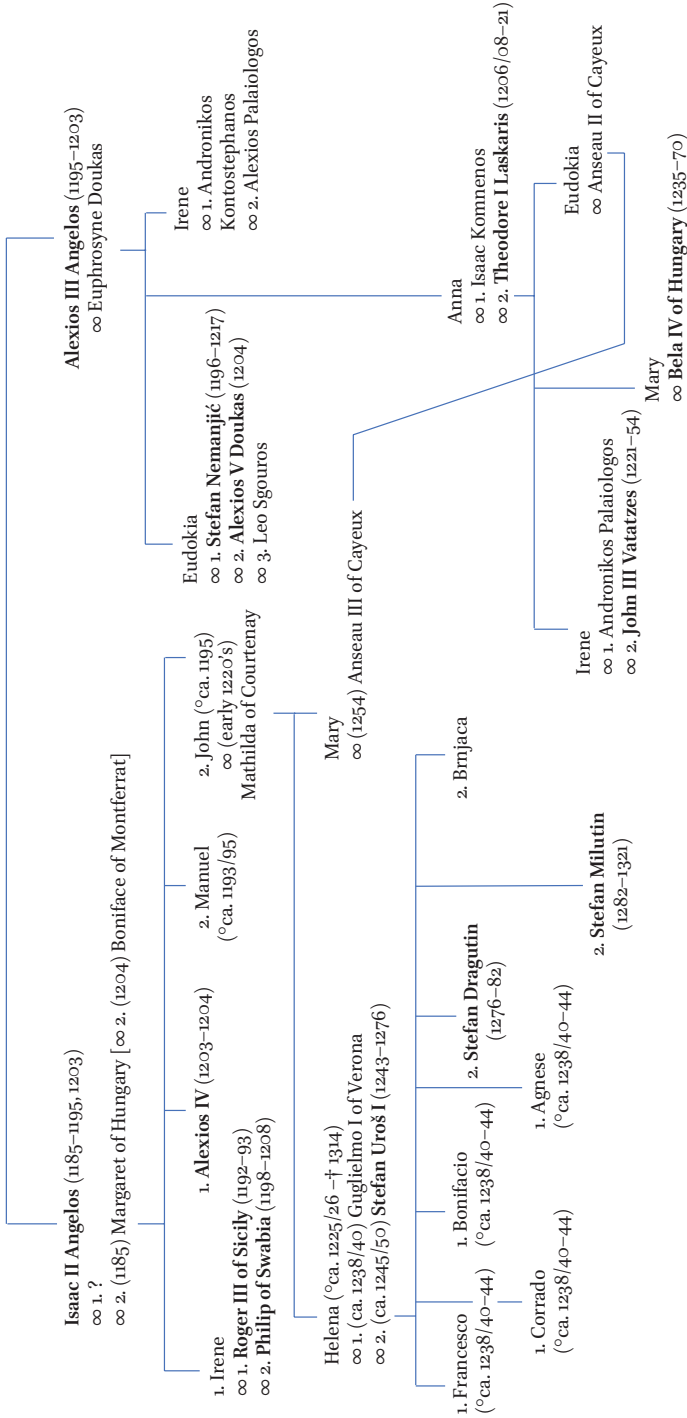
also looking for support against the growing threat of Nicaean dominance in Macedonia, and the Balkans in general, in the late 1240s; in this ominous climate, Latin Constantinople may have seemed like a potential gateway to additional papal and Venetian aid.

The Serbian attitude vis-à-vis the Latin emperors is most interesting, considering the appearance of Henry of Flanders as the 'Greek emperor' in Stefan Nemanjić's eyes around 1216, Sava's various visits to Constantinople/Thessaloniki, and the marriage of two kings to Latin imperial princesses. The Serbian rulers obviously considered it good politics to entertain diplomatic relations with all claimants to the Byzantine imperial legacy, not only with the Byzantine claimants in Nicaea and Epiros/Thessaloniki. This indicates that, from the perspective of the Serbian royal court, there was a place for the Latin emperors, whose control over the City of Constantine could not be negated, within the post-1204 Byzantine world. Perhaps it should not surprise us that a Latin ethno-cultural identity for a Constantinopolitan emperor was apparently not an insurmountable issue, given the widespread disdain among the Byzantine imperial elite for non-Greeks (even if Orthodox), including Serbs.

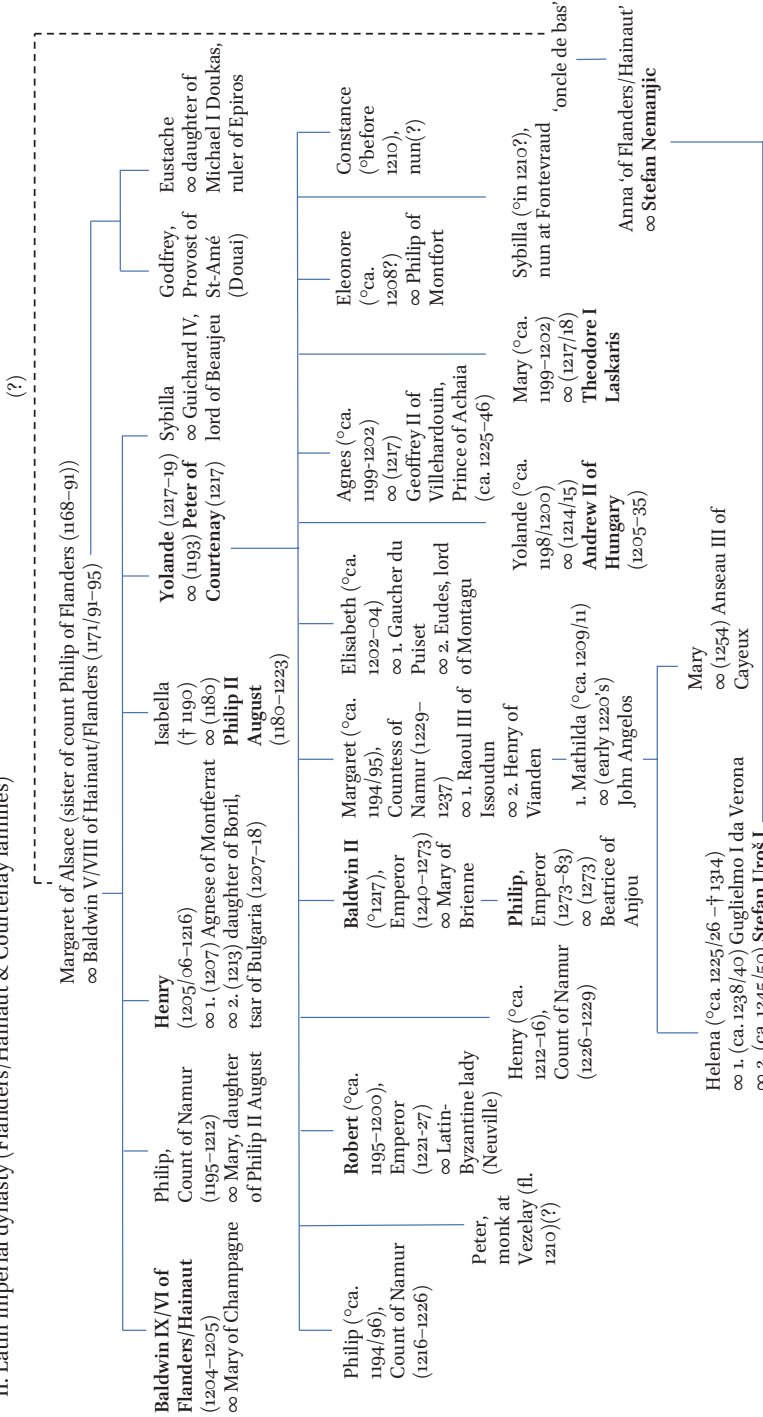
This is not to say that there was no opposition: Domentijan's *vita* of St Sava may be read as criticizing Stefan Uroš' renewed *rapprochement* with Latin Constantinople. For a Serbian Athonite monk whose own sympathies lay with Nicaea, this was clearly not the way to go. This being said, I do not think that the (partial) Serbian orientation toward Latin Constantinople, always to be considered alongside the relations entered into with Nicaea and Epiros/Thessaloniki, should be too strongly interpreted as part of any kind of new 'Western policy'. In my opinion, Latin imperial Constantinople was mostly perceived by the Serbian court as a part of the Byzantine world, though evidently with useful links to the West. After all, the Latin emperors did consider and present themselves as the legitimate and direct successors of the pre-1204 Byzantine emperors.

I would like to finish my essay by making a brief plea to rethink our traditional conception of the post-1204 Byzantine world as a conglomerate of newly formed and separate successor states. In my view, the Serbian example shows that in the minds of many and over a longer period of time there still was one empire, but now claimed by various competitors with imperial aspirations, who all controlled a piece of the pie and who all tried to rally as much support – itself a most flexible concept – as possible from the different local and regional players involved, in a multi-layered complexity of ever varying coalitions and alliances that could easily transcend conventional ethno-cultural boundaries.

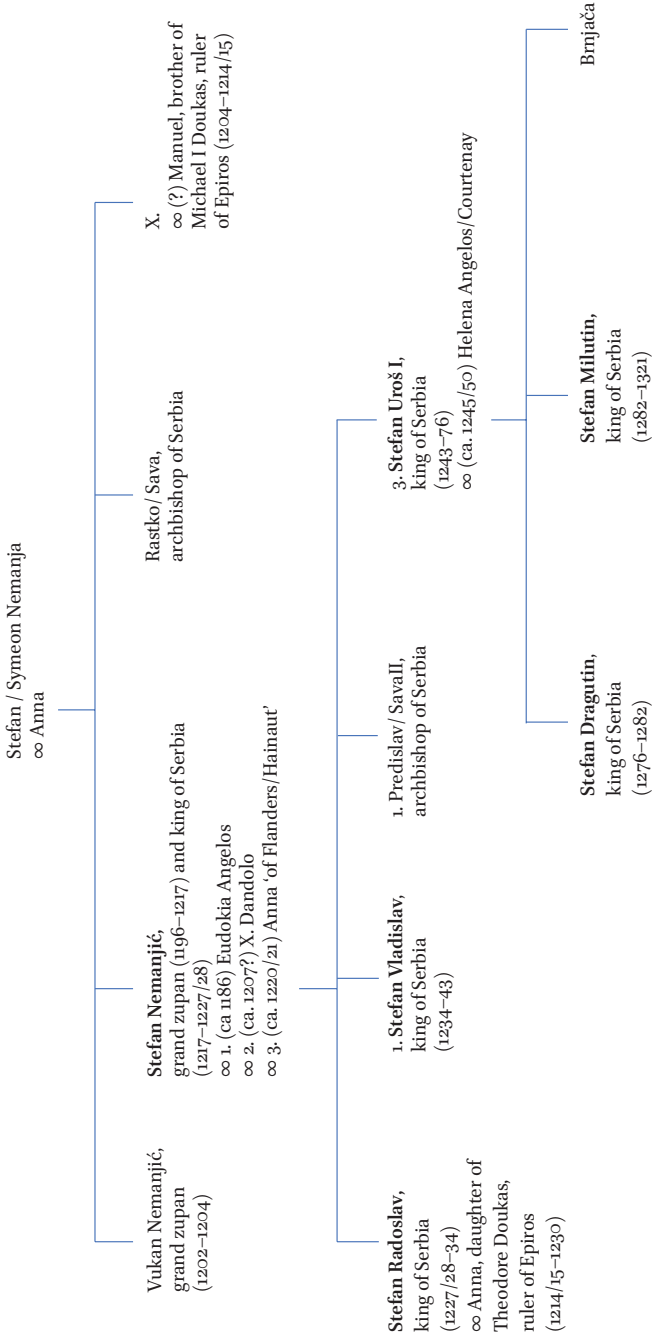
I. Angelos family



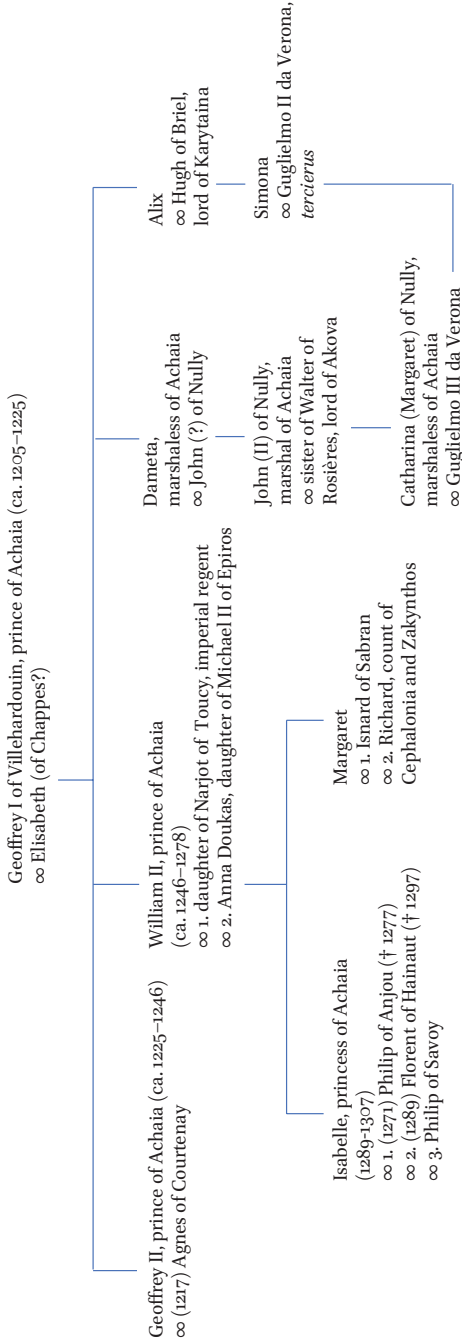
II. Latin imperial dynasty (Flanders/Hainaut & Courtenay families)



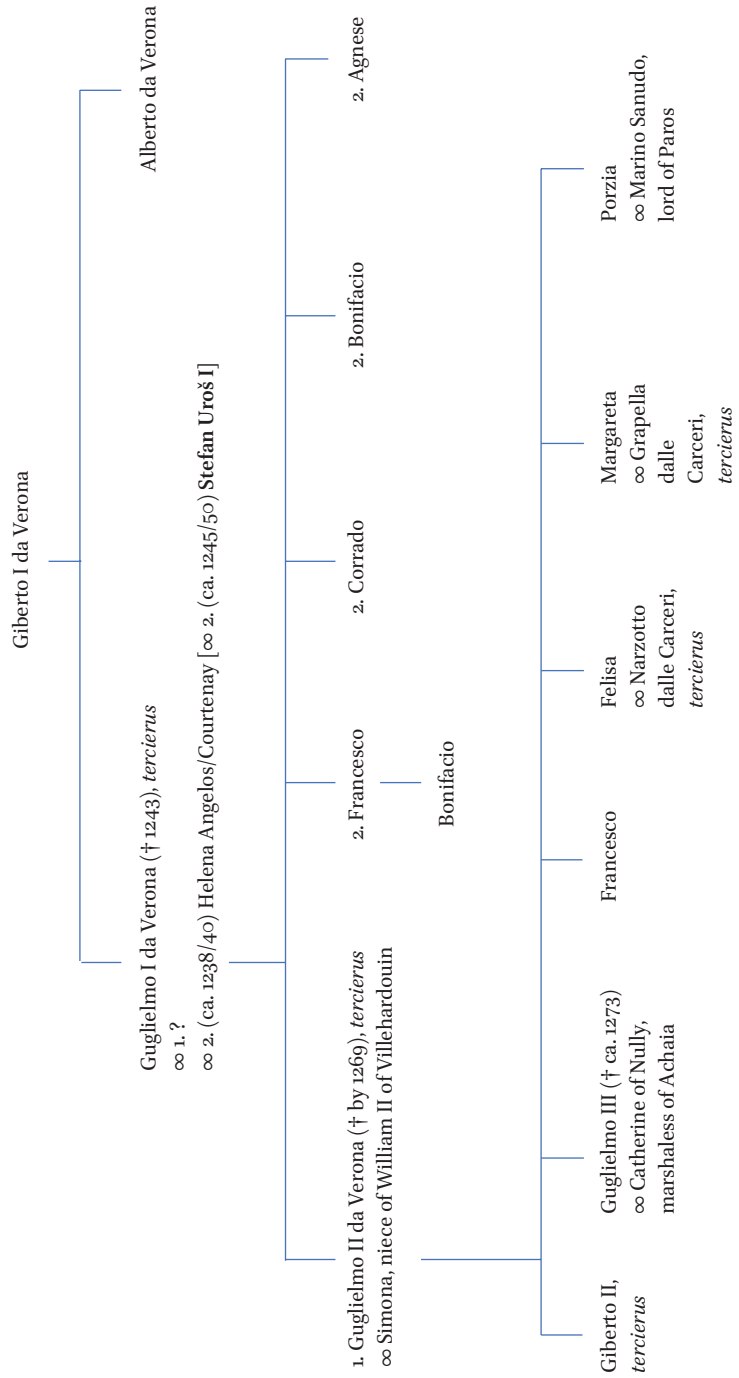
III. Nemanjić family



IV. Villehardouin family



V. Da Verona family



VI. Cayeux family

