

## ON THE GENEALOGY OF ZABEL QUEEN OF CILICIA

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The article is an attempt to bring together historical data regarding the genealogy of Zabel, queen of Armenian Cilician kingdom (1226-1252), particularly her maternal lineage. Generally the sources refer to Zabel's mother as the representative of the Royal dynasty of Cyprus. But some interesting facts in the genealogy of the latter point to the existence of both Armenian-Byzantine and Armenian-French lineages.

The statement consists of 4 parts:

### **Part A: Taronites**

It is well known that after the second separation of Armenia in the VI century AD a substantial part of the Armenian nobility gradually moves to Byzantium as a result of the absence of unified statehood in Armenia, also as a result of the targeted policy of the Byzantine empire. This movement was intensified even more in the following centuries, and although the Bagratid Armenian state managed to restrain it at least temporarily, after 1045 the Armenian nobility spread across Byzantium and neighboring countries in search of more powerful suzerains; some had managed to create their own small principalities (like Philaretos Brachamios, Gabriel of Melitene etc.). Perhaps, one of the most influential and renowned among them were Taronites descending from Ashot Bagratuni who moved to Byzantium in 966. Taronites played a major role in the political life of Byzantium; this is described in detail in the works of Nicholas Adontz and Alexander Kazhdan.<sup>1</sup>

Maria, one of the five children born to Anna Dalassene's<sup>2</sup> and Byzantine nobleman John Komnenos' (future emperor Alexios I Komnenos) marriage, had married to **Michael Taronites**.<sup>3</sup> Byzantine sources mention a young lady, who supposedly was the **daughter** of one of Michael's sons, **John** or **Gregory**. She married John Komnenos, duke of Cyprus, the cousin of Manuel I Komnenos<sup>4</sup>. The 12<sup>th</sup> century poet Theodore Prodromos refers to Komnenos' fiancée as «Euphrates Offshoot» and «Taronites Glory». Kazhdan assumes that she could belong not to the Taronites of

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<sup>1</sup> Adontz 2012a: 260-324; 2012b: 325-331; Kazhdan 1975: 17-24.

<sup>2</sup> Possibly, also having Armenian roots, see discussion and literature in Kazhdan 1975: 92-97.

<sup>3</sup> Adontz 2012a: 303.

<sup>4</sup> «Taronitissa, daughter of [IOANNES] Taronites [III] & his wife --- ([1125/30]-after 1176)... According to Rüdiger Collenberg, she was the daughter or granddaughter either of Ioannes Taronites [I] or of his brother Gregorios (both sons of Mikhael Taronites)», Foundation for Medieval Genealogy, Byzantium 1057-1204, Chapter 1. Komnenos, online <http://fmg.ac/Projects/MedLands/BYZANTIUM%2010571204.htm>  
#MariaKdied1217

Constantinople, but to their branch<sup>5</sup> which had domains in the vicinity of the Euphrates river. We are not aware of her name, it is only known that after her husband's death she joined a convent under the name of Maria.<sup>6</sup>

Isaac Komnenos and this lady belonging to the Taronites dynasty had three daughters named Maria, Eudoxia and Theodora. In 1167 Maria married Amalric I, the King of Jerusalem.

### **Part B: The Royal Family of Jerusalem**

Baldwin II, the king of Jerusalem had married Morphia,<sup>7</sup> the daughter of Gabriel, the Armenian lord of Melitene in 1101. Morphia blessed Baldwin with four daughters. It is noteworthy that Baldwin was close to divorce Morphia and take a new wife in order to have a male child. However, according to historians, Baldwin loved Morphia so much that he adamantly renounced his desire. Morphia was crowned as the Queen of Jerusalem in 1120. She never interfered into political issues, her range of interests seemed to be limited with the palace and raising the children. Nevertheless, when her husband was captured in 1123, Morphia took resolute actions. Firstly, she sent a group of mercenary soldiers to find out where her husband was kept, after which personally headed negotiations, and, eventually Baldwin and other prisoners were released thanks to 50 Armenian soldiers, who, dressed as merchants, penetrated into the fort, killed the guards and rescued the captives.<sup>8</sup>

Morphia died in October 1126 or 1127; her remains were buried in the Abbey of Saint Mary of the Valley of Jehoshaphat that was believed to be the Tomb of the Virgin Mary, not far from the Old City of Jerusalem. Interestingly, this monastery now has nine cloisters, of which three are Armenian, but Morphia and later her daughter Melisende were buried in the Orthodox cloister. Morphia's daughter's Melisende's gravestone is in the stairs of the monastery (23-rd step).

After Morphia's death Baldwin didn't marry. He decided to declare her elder daughter **Melisende** the heir to the throne.<sup>9</sup> Before her father's death Melisende acted as his co-governor. Baldwin turned to Louis VI for advice on the choice of a husband for Melisende and the King brought forward one of the most powerful French noblemen, Fulk, Count of Anjou. Melisende and Fulk had two sons: Baldwin III and Amalric I. In 1163 Amalric I (who didn't have male successors after his brother's death) was put to the throne. He will marry twice, first to Agnes of Courtenay, who will give birth to

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<sup>5</sup> Kazhdan 1975: 54.

<sup>6</sup> Foundation for Medieval Genealogy, Byzantium 1057-1204, Chapter 1. Komnenos, online <https://goo.gl/XBXjsa>

<sup>7</sup> Mutfian 2012: I, 374-375.

<sup>8</sup> Mutfian 2012: I, 375.

<sup>9</sup> See Mutfian 2012: I, 376.

Baldwin IV and Sybilla. His second wife was **Maria Comnena**, and their daughter - **Izabella**.

### Part C: Lusignans

Lusignans were one of the noble families in Western France, leiges of the Dukes of Aquitaine. Representatives of this family repeatedly took part in the Crusades and established close ties with the nobility of the eastern Outremer. Probably, that is why Amalric Lusignan who was a participant in the uprising against Henry II, had to escape, and, after a long displacement, he reached the Kingdom of Jerusalem. Here he made every effort to ensure that his brother Guy de Lusignan married Sybilla, the heiress to the throne (daughter of King Amalric I and Agnes de Courtenay). He married **Isabel**, Sybilla's stepsister and Maria Comnena's daughter. In 1198 Amalric Lusignan (3<sup>rd</sup> marriage) and Isabel (4<sup>th</sup> marriage) had a daughter, named **Sybilla**. In the same year in Tarsus Leo II was declared the «King of Cilicia and Isauria», while in Cyprus, in the House of Lusignan, Sybilla, Leo's future wife was growing up.

### Part D: Zabel<sup>10</sup>

Leo's first wife, Isabel, was the daughter of Isabel, the third wife of the brother of Bohemond III of Antioch. The marriage had a political context and was aimed to defend the Duke of Antioch from actions harmful for Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia<sup>11</sup>.

The marriage took place in 1189. Isabel gave birth to a daughter who was named **Rita-Stephanie**. However, this marriage had an unfortunate end. Regardless the reason, we only know that in 1206 Leo beat his wife badly and ordered the death of her inner circle<sup>12</sup>, after which the queen was imprisoned in the fortress of Vahka where she died a year later.

Their daughter Rita-Stephanie, was handed over to the care of her grandmother, madam Rita, and later she was deprived of all the hopes for rights to the throne succession. In 1209 Leo, upon his mother's advice, declares Raymond-Ruben, the son of his brother's daughter Alice, as his heir and in the next year married a second time. This time, he marries **Sybilla, the daughter of Amalric Lusignan**.

In this marriage Zabel, the daughter of Leo II was born, who was put on the throne in 1222.

Thus, to summarize Zabel's genealogy (see family tree), it is obvious that the maternal line branches of both Komnenos' and the Royal Family of Jerusalem are, actually, Armenian-Byzantine and Armenian-French. If we also took into account Leo's ancestors, among which was prince Leo I's mother, Thoros I's wife, and granddaughter of Vard Phokas, also of Armenian origin, and her mother's line (Hetumians) descended from Oshin of Gandzak, who moved to Artsakh from Northern Cilicia, Armenian component obviously gain a predominant position among Zabel's ancestors.

<sup>10</sup> About Genealogy of Rubenides see Rüdte-Colenberg W.H.1963, Mutaftian C. 2012, tome II.

<sup>11</sup> Sempad the Constable, The Chronicle, 637, online <http://www.digilib.am/book/333/339/7559/Swptqիրք>

<sup>12</sup> Sempad the Constable, The Chronicle, 654, online <http://www.digilib.am/book/333/339/7570/Swptqիրք>

The chart illustrates the lineage of the Komnenos and Taronites families. The Komnenos line, shown in red boxes, includes Ioannes Komnenos, Alexios I Komnenos, John II Komnenos, Manuel I Komnenos, and Alexios II Komnenos. The Taronites line, shown in green boxes, includes Anna Dalassena, Michael Taronites, Gregorios Taronites, Ioannes Taronites, and Maria Taronitissa. A blue box represents a common ancestor, likely the father of Anna Dalassena and Michael Taronites. The chart shows the marriage of Alexios I Komnenos to Anna Dalassena, and the marriage of John II Komnenos to Maria Komnene (daughter of Michael Taronites). The marriage of Manuel I Komnenos to Maria Taronitissa is also shown. The chart also includes the names of other family members, such as Maria Komnene (daughter of Alexios I Komnenos), Ioannes Taronites (son of Michael Taronites), and Gregorios Taronites (son of Ioannes Taronites).

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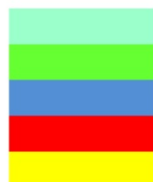
graph TD
    GM[Gabriel of Melitene] --- M1[ ]
    M1 --- Morphia
    M1 --- M2[ ]
    M1 --- M3[ ]
    M2 --- Baldwin[Baldwin of Bourcq]
    M3 --- Fulcrand[Fulcrand, Count of Anjou]
    M3 --- Amalric[Amalric of Jerusalem]
    
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Genealogical chart of the House of Ibelin:

- Gabriel of Melitene
  - Morphia (married to Baldwin of Bourcq)
  - Melisende (married to Fulcrand, Count of Anjou)
  - Amalric of Jerusalem (married to Fulcrand, Count of Anjou)

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graph TD; A["Maria Komnene  
(genealogy 1. see above)"] --- B["Isabella I of Jerusalem"]; A --- C["Amalric of Jerusalem  
(genealogy 2. see above)"]; B --- D["Sibylla of Lusignan"]; B --- E["Aimery of Lusignan"]; D --- F["Leo I of Armenia"]; D --- G["Zabel or Izabella, Queen of Cilician Armenia"];
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The chart illustrates the genealogical connection between the Komnenos and Lusignan families. At the top, Maria Komnene (genealogy 1. see above) and Amalric of Jerusalem (genealogy 2. see above) are shown as the parents of Isabella I of Jerusalem. Isabella I of Jerusalem is then shown as the mother of Sibylla of Lusignan and Aimery of Lusignan. Sibylla of Lusignan is shown as the mother of Leo I of Armenia and Zabel or Izabella, Queen of Cilician Armenia.



Probably of Armenian origin  
Known to be of Armenian origin  
Marriage  
Byzantine emperors  
French origin

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5. Kazhdan A. 1975. Armenians in the ruling class of the Byzantine Empire in the XI-XII centuries, Yerevan (in Russian).
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7. Mutaftian C. 2012.II. L'Arménie du Levant (XI<sup>e</sup>-XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle). Vol. II. Paris,
8. Rüdiger W.H. 1963. The Rupenides, Hethumides and Lusignans; the structure of the Armeno-Cilician dynasties. Lisbonne.
9. Sempad the Constable. The Chronicle. online <http://www.digilib.am/book/333/Suptqghpp>

## DESCRIPTION OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1. The Melisende Psalter is an illuminated manuscript (dated between 1131 and 1143), ordered by King Fulk for his wife Queen Melisende. Now in British Library. Source <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/melisende-psalter>
2. Mary's Tomb - Melisende of Jerusalem chapel in Abbey of Saint Mary of the Valley of Jehoshaphat. Source [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mary%27s\\_tomb,Melisende\\_IMG\\_0251c.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mary%27s_tomb,Melisende_IMG_0251c.jpg)
3. Abbey of Saint Mary of the Valley of Jehoshaphat Source <https://i.pinimg.com/originals/87/66/64/876664818c2841449c87f9334f4be17d.jpg>
4. Coronation Fulk and Melisenda, from manuscript XIII c. Source [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fulko\\_melisenda.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fulko_melisenda.jpg)
5. Queen Melisende marries Fulk of Anjou, Miniature, William of Tyre, Histoire de la Conquête de Jérusalem. Found in Tate, The Crusaders, Warriors of God, p. 71. Source [https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/M%C3%A9lisende\\_de\\_J%C3%A9rusalem#/media/File:Melisende\\_and\\_Fulk\\_of\\_Jerusalem.jpg](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/M%C3%A9lisende_de_J%C3%A9rusalem#/media/File:Melisende_and_Fulk_of_Jerusalem.jpg)
6. Marriage of Maria Komnene and Amalric I., William of Tyre, History and continuation (BNF Richelieu French manuscripts 68, folio 318v) 15th century. Source [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:BNF\\_Mss\\_fr\\_68\\_folio\\_318v.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:BNF_Mss_fr_68_folio_318v.jpg)
7. Marriage of Maria Komnene and Amalric I, Detail of the historiated initial 'V' of the Archbishop joining the hands of Amaury and Mary. Source <http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/ILLUMIN.ASP?Size=mid&IID=6032>





1.a The Melisende Psalter



1.b The Melisende Psalter





2. Mary's Tomb Melisende of Jerusalem chapel in Abbey of Saint Mary



3. Abbey of Saint Mary of the Valley of Jehoshaphat





4. Coronation Fulk and Melisenda, from manuscript XIII c.



5. Queen Melisenda marries Fulk of Anjou



6.a Marriage of Maria Komnene and Amalric I



6.b Marriage of Maria Komnene and Amalric I