Notes and Queries

No. 1 – Helena of Thessaloniki (*Lindsay L. Brook*)

Who was Helena, heiress of the Frankish kingdom of Thessaloniki? When the conquered parts of the Byzantine Empire were carved up between Venice and the leaders of the fourth crusade in 1204, Thessaloniki went to Boniface of Montferrat. He died in battle in 1207 and was succeeded by his infant son Demetrius, who was expelled by the reconquering Greeks in 1225. He died in 1230, leaving a widow Béatrice, daughter of Guiges-André, dauphin of Viennois (Giordanengo, 1988) and his rights to the kingdom to the emperor Frederick II (Loernertz, 1965).

But the Latin Roman Emperor, Baldwin II, as nominal suzerain, also had his say (Loernertz, 1965). In 1240, he awarded the kingdom to William da Verona, Triarch of Euboea (Negrepont) who as Lock (1995, p.67) claims 'had married Helena, possibly a niece of King Demetrius or more likely a daughter of Manuel Komnenos Doukas, the Greek ruler of the city at that time'. But Lock does not cite a source for either supposition. The latter seems quite implausible. If Helena were a niece of Demetrius, she would have to be a daughter of his only brother, William VI, Marquis of Montferrat, but apparently there is no record of her in western European sources.

Loenertz (1975, pp.448-449) states categorically that by 1240 William da Verona had married as his second wife 'Elena de Monferrato' ('nécessairement soeur ou cousine germaine de Bonifacio I.' - Loernertz, 1965). William da Verona's first wife, Catherine, was a mysterious niece of William de Villehardouin, Prince of Achaia.

The problem remains unresolved.

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