NOTES AND QUERIES

No. 5 – Stephanie 'of Flanders', ancestress of the Ibelins (*Lindsay L. Brook*)

Can the ancestry of Stephanie, successively wife of Guy of Milly and Baldwin I, lord of Ramla, ever be satisfactorily established? The question is an important one for genealogists, since she is the ancestress, from both her marriages, of many of the important families who ruled the Latin East and, through some of them, of the Plantagenets. Indeed, the name Stephanie abounds among the nobility of Cyprus and Outremer. But elsewhere it is not a common one. In view of the perceptive observations by Runciman (1960) about the feudal lords of Outremer, the search for Stephanie's ancestry may be futile. However let us examine the available evidence.

The *Lignages d'Outremer* (Rey, 1971) tell us that Stephanie (sometimes called Estéfénie or Estienette) was '*native de Flandres*'. Yet not a single medieval Flemish family in Warlop's (1968) comprehensive work has a Stephanie among its members. We are forced to look elsewhere. There are two signposts.

The name 'Stephania' was often given to the daughters of the Byzantine nobility; and also to those of the rulers of medieval Rome (Brook, 2003). Yet there appears to be no link in the tenth or eleventh centuries between Byzantium or Rome on the one hand, and Flanders on the other. However, 'Étiennette' was a name often given to daughters of the Provençal nobility. Vajay (1962) shows how it was diffused among the descendants of Étiennette de Rians, wife of Guillaume II, viscount of Marseille (d.1047). But again, no link between Provence and Flanders at the relevant time can be established.

There is, however, one clue that commentators have, to my knowledge, not picked up. We know that Payen le Bouteiller (*pincerna*) was the uncle of Philip de Milly, Stephanie's son; Philip succeeded Payen's nephew, Maurice, sometime after 1152 as lord of Krac des Moabites and Montréal. In all likelihood, Payen was Stephanie's brother, so we might now begin to look afresh for her origins.

Runciman (1960) wrote, '*Most of the tenants-in-chief in Outremer were of quite humble origin, successful soldiers or officials of no high birth*'. He went on to cite (among others) the early lords of Ramleh, Haifa, Toron, Bethsan, Sidon and Caesarea, whose antecedents are not known. Guy de Milly is known in the *Lignages d'Outremer*, as '*Guy the Frenchman*' and his wife as '*Stephanie the Fleming*'. Guy's patronymic '*probably only signifies that the family came from the little town of Milly, not that he owned the town*'. His wife would not have been from the Flemish nobility. However, names of Stephanie and (probably) Payen, emanating from Flanders, remain a puzzle.

The investigation is complicated somewhat by contradictory evidence and interpretations relating to the genealogies of the early members of the Milly, Ramla and Ibelin families. Mayer (1982) has challenged, successfully I believe, the late Count Rüdt de Collenberg's (1965) account.

Comments to the editor on this topic will be welcomed.

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