THE PATERNAL ORIGINS OF THE COUNTS OF GENEVA

***by Lindsay Brook*[1]**

ABSTRACT

The maternal ancestry of Gérold, Count of Geneva, from the penultimate 'Rudolfinger' King of Burgundy has long been known. The identity of his father has, however, remained elusive. In a recent book, it is suggested that Gérold is descended in the male line from the counts of Dagsburg-Egisheim in Alsace. Moreover, this author proposes that the traditional parentage given for Hildegard, great-grandmother of the Emperor Friedrich I Barbarossa, is wrong. This note does little more than draw attention to these important conclusions, in the hope that readers will either challenge or endorse them.

Foundations (2003) ***1*** *(2): 111-115* *© Copyright FMG*

The definitive work on the counts of Geneva in the middle ages is indisputably still that by Duparc (1955). He diligently traces the history of the family from the early eleventh century to around 1400, when the male line of the dynasty failed. His genealogy (folding table following p.604) begins with Gérold, '*princeps regionis genevensis civitate*'[2], who died before 1080, and was married to Tetberge, widow of Louis de Faucigny. It is almost certain that Gérold's brother was Conon, Bishop of Maurienne 1088-1107, uncle to the former's sons, Conon and Aimon[3].

Upon the death in September 1032 of Rudolf III, last King of Burgundy, Duparc tells us that there was '*une éclosion*[4] *de petits dynastes locaux*', among whom was Gérold who filled a power vacuum and had established himself firmly in the area around Geneva by the mid-eleventh century. We know virtually nothing about him. No charters of his have survived; no coins or seals have been found. He is mentioned in only five documents (Duparc, pp.63-64). But his name provides evidence that he was of germanic (or at least, lotharingian) origin. And the first of these documents[5] provides his maternal ancestry.

In Fig 1 following, I give a sketch[6] of what we might call the 'traditional' account of Gérold's ancestry, with his father missing. I have juxtaposed what we might also term the 'traditional' account of the descent of Hildegard, wife of Friedrich von Büren, mainly to highlight its chronological implausibility[7]. Fig 2 presents a more satisfactory reconstruction.

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2 There were earlier counts in the Geneva region (see Duparc, 1955, pp.52-59), but Gérold is the first that we can confidently call 'Count of Geneva'.

3 See particularly Duparc (1955, pp.96-97).

4 This translates, rather delightfully, as a 'hatching' (p.60).

5 This is in a letter from Renaud, count of Burgundy to Gui-Geoffroi, duke of Aquitaine, conserved in *Les Annales de Flodoard* (Lauer, 1905), reproduced in full in Duparc (p.63, note2).

6 Restrictions on space do not allow me to give more than a few chronological details. The reader can fill in gaps from the list of references provided.

7 The account is taken from the magisterial account of the Staufer by Decker-Hauff (1977, pp.343-344), and from Poull (1994), pp.69-72.

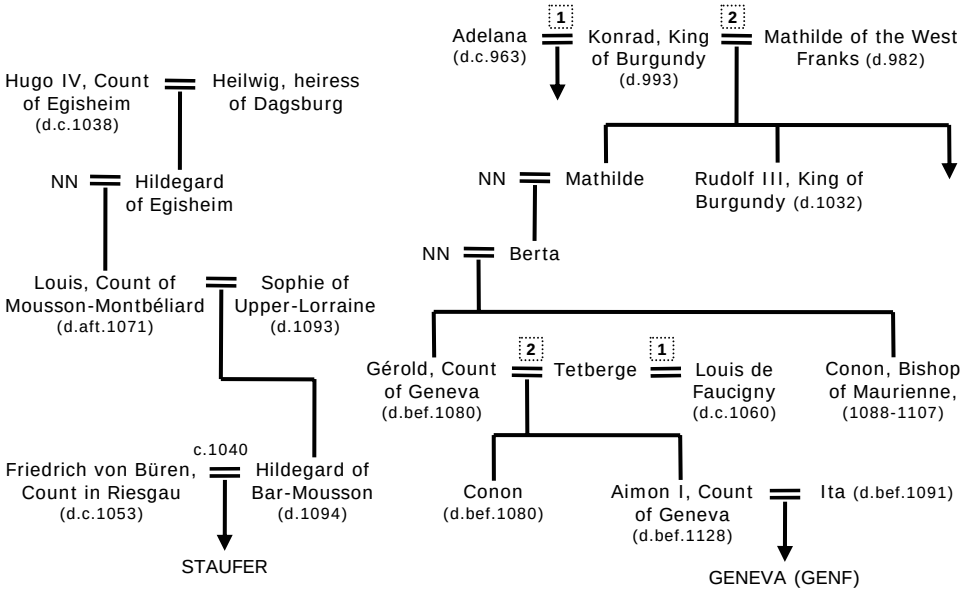


Fig 1. ***The 'traditional' account of Gérold's ancestry, and that of Hildegard, wife of Friedrich von Büren***

Sources for Figure 1

In Europäische Stammtafeln (Schwennicke, 1989) there is a comprehensive genealogy of the Welf (or Rudolfing) kings of Burgundy (Tafel 736). The editor, Detlev Schwennicke, cites his sources in the introduction. It has been suggested that '*Adelana*', first wife of King Konrad, was the daughter of Edward the Elder, King of England, but Lane-Poole (1969) has effectively demolished this identification on chronological grounds. A more likely, though probably unprovable, theory (Orna, 1965) is that she was the wife of Boleslav II, King of Bohemia (d.999).

Schwennicke gives Mathilde as '*Grossmutter v. Gerold, G(ra)f v. Genf*'. Her husband's identity is unknown. But we know that she has a daughter called Berta, mother of Gérold of Geneva (Lauer, 1905)[8]. Duparc adequately supplies the sources to substantiate Berta's children and grandchildren.

The juxtaposed table in Fig 1 illustrates that the traditional account of the ancestry of Hildegard, wife of Friedrich von Büren, is unsustainable. Data are from Decker-Hauff (1977, p.344). The great-granddaughter of a man who died around 1038 cannot have married around 1040 and given birth to children shortly afterwards. For an authoritative account of Sophie of Upper Lorraine and her husband, Count Louis of Mousson, see Poull (1994, pp.69-72)[9]. Fig 2 following provides an altogether more plausible picture.

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[8] '*… de Mathilde [= Gehmahlin König Konrads] processit Rodulfus rex et Mathildis, soror ejus, … de Mathilde filia Mathildae, Berta … de Berta Geraldus Genevensis'.* quoted in Legl (1998, p.49, note 261), from Flodoard's *Annales*.

[9] I share Poull's bafflement as to Louis's territorial holdings, which may have fluctuated with the fortunes of war. We can be confident, however, that his power base was in southern Alsace.

Legl (1998) suggests Gerold and Conon were the sons of Gerhard III of Dagsburg-Egisheim (d.1038)[10]. In Fig 2, I give a sketch of this revised version of Gérold's ancestry. (At the risk of complicating matters, I am including the two Hildegards, the elder of whom was the ancestress of the Staufer[11] emperors – see the Abstract.)

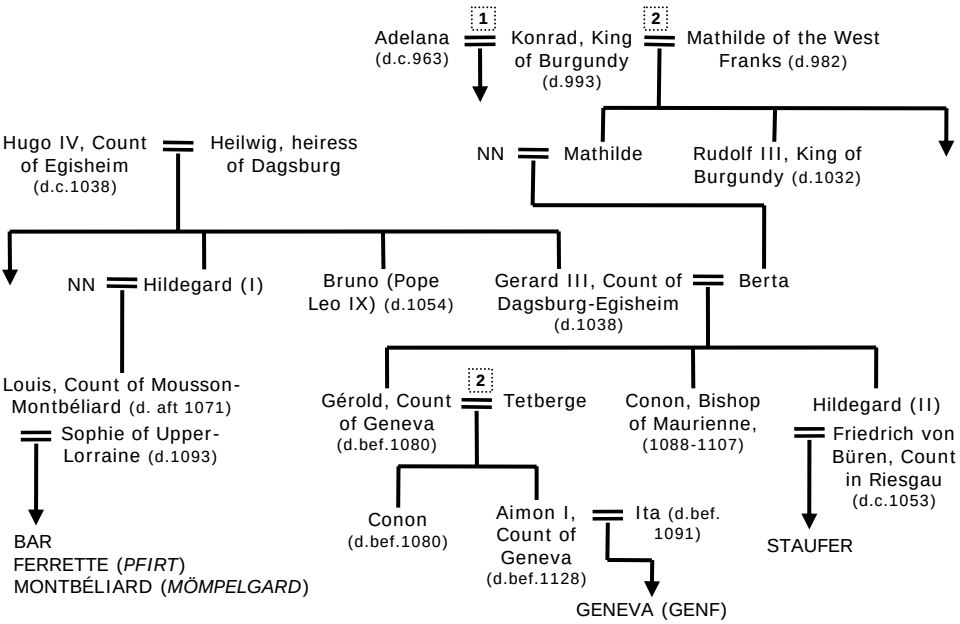


Fig 2. ***Revised account of Gérold's ancestry***

Sources for Figure 2

For the first two generations (the Burgundian kings), refer to the sources for Fig 1. The biographies of Hugo IV, Count of Egisheim, and his wife Heilwig, daughter of Ludwig Count of Dagsburg, are set out in Legl (1998, pp.43-46). We know that they had at least six children: '*vier Söhne und zwei Töchter*'[12]:

1. Gerhard III, Count of Dagsburg-Egisheim (d.1038)[13]
2. Eberhard V[14]
3. Bruno (Pope Leo IX 1049-1054, later made a saint)[15]. He died on 19 April 1054

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[10] Legl seems to have relied substantially upon the researches of Mariotte (1993; 1994).

[11] This dynasty is often referred to as the 'Hohenstaufen' but, as Reuter (1979) has pointed out, this is incorrect.

[12] See Legl, pp.46-54.

[13] See Legl, pp.48-49. Evidence that he married a niece of the last king of Burgundy is supported by Bayon (1724).

[14] Almost nothing is known about him. The key work is by Maurer (1991).

[15] '*... the third and greatest of the popes nominated by the German emperor Henry III ...*' (Kelly, 1986, p.147). As bishop of Toul and then pope, he was an energetic reformer, tackling many of the abuses

4. Hugo V, Count of Dagsburg-Egisheim[16]
5. Hildegard (I), mother of Count Louis of Mousson[17]
6. N (daughter), wife of Adalbert, progenitor of the counts of Calw[18].

Only the two children relevant to this article (and Pope Leo IX, to add context) are featured in Fig 2.

I deal first with Hildegard, whom I have designated Hildegard (I), to distinguish her from her niece. We know that she was a daughter of Hugh IV and Helwig (Vollmer, 1957), and the mother of a Count Louis '*... comitissa Hildegardis ... pro anima filii sui Lodowici comitis ...*' (Viellard, 1884, no.97). There can be little doubt that this Hildegard was the mother of Louis, Count of Mousson-Montbéliard. For chronological reasons her niece must be ruled out (see Fig 1 and commentary above). The case is put, more persuasively in the space permitted than I can, by Legl (pp.51-53), with convincing documentation elsewhere in his book.

The crucial questions still to be answered are:

- Is there evidence that Berta who married Gerard III, Count of Dagsburg-Egisheim was identical to Berta, the granddaughter of Konrad, King of Burgundy?
- Was Gérold, Count of Geneva, his son?
- Was the Hildegard (II) who married Friedrich von Büren, ancestor of the Staufer emperors, his daughter?

The answer to the first question seems to be affirmative (I quote from Watterich, 1862, book 1, chapter 10, p.140, cited by Legl): '*... nepte Rodulfi regis Iurensis*[19]*, coniuge sui germani, nomine Gerardi, strenuissimi atque elegantissimi militis*'.

Ipso facto, Gérold, Count of Geneva must be their son (see sources for Fig 1). So must Conon, Bishop of Maurienne, unless he was the brother of Tetberge, Gérold's wife, which seems improbable.

Legl (1998, pp.58-60), convinced by Hlawitschka's thesis, puts the case that Hildegard (II) was the daughter of Gerard III. Mariotte (1993) usefully documents the way in which, through Hildegard, the Staufer inherited various properties in Alsace, including Selestat[20].

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perpetrated under the regime of the so-called '*pornocrats*' (see *inter alia* Brook, 2003). I have consulted Larose (1954), but advise that this work should be used with considerable caution.

16 For Hugo V, see Legl (1998, pp.49-50). Observations about the identity of his wife Mathilde/Mechtilde is being prepared for publication by the Foundation for Medieval Genealogy, either in a later issue of *Foundations* or on our website (http://fmg.ac/).

17 For Hildegard (I), see Legl (1998, pp.51-53).

18 For the mother of count Adalbert of Calw, see Legl, p.51.

19 These are of course the Jura mountains, at the heart of the 10th and 11th century kingdom of Burgundy.

20 Unfortunately, Mariotte's 1994 article, which could perhaps have shed more light on these inheritances, was inaccessible to me at the time of writing. See Mariotte, pp. 43-49, especially p.43, note 2, citing Schwarzmaier, Klebel and Metz. His '*Arbre genealogique simplifie de la famille de Staufen*' on p.44, calls Hildegarde '*de Bar ou de Mousson ou d'Eguisheim, morte 1094-1095*'.

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