NOTES AND QUERIES

No. 6 – Bérengère, wife of Bertrand II des Baux, Lord of Berre (*Lindsay L. Brook*)

Charles of Anjou, supported by the papacy, seized the kingdom of Sicily from the Staufer in 1266. Manfred died on the battlefield of Benevento on 26th February that year. Charles had Manfred's nephew Conradin, the self-proclaimed Staufer heir to the Sicilian kingdom, beheaded in Naples on 29th October 1268.

Bertrand II des Baux, Lord of Berre and Istres, was not among the most distinguished of Charles's *provençale* conquering companions (Noblemaire, 1913/1976, is still an essential secondary source for the Baux)[1]. Bertrand won only the barony of Trogessana as the spoils of war. Others were awarded high office (see, *inter alia*, Cortez, 1921, and Minieri Riccio, 1872). But he was among the longer-lasting of the conquerors, dying as late as 1309 (not succumbing early like many of his compatriots to malaria and other diseases). This gave him time to produce a thriving brood of children. Descendants included counts and dukes who married into the higher nobility and to royalty[2]. His great-granddaughter Marguerite married in 1405 Pierre I de Luxembourg, Count of St. Pol, both ancestors of the Tudors and Stuarts.

Bertrand II married a Bérengère[3], mother of his children. Her mother's name is known to be Marguerite (Barthélemy, 1882, p.164)[4]. Her father's family is, I believe, not known,

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1 The early generations of the family have been impressively revisited in what appears to be a little known study (Smyrl, 1968).

2 The second wife of his grandson, François I, Duke of Andria, was Marguerite of Anjou-Taranto, titular Latin Empress of Constantinople.

3 The etymology of the name is fascinating. For instance, see Younge's much neglected but still invaluable book (1863), vol. ii, pp.274-277.

4 In a letter dated 15th May 1273, Charles I King of Sicily intervened in what seems to have been a dispute over the dowry of Bertrand's mother-in-law, Marguerite (document 574 in the inventory).

and to my knowledge no one has explored her ancestry[5]. I suggest here not a solution but a line of exploration, suggested by data provided in the following website: **http://genealogy.euweb.cz/baux/baux3.html**, which provides a fuller than usual account of the des Baux dynasty. The entries that interest me are:

> *C2. Gilbert de Baux dit lo Dous, sn de Marignane, test 1277;*
> *m. Sibylle N (d.shortly before 28.6.1297)*
>
> *D1. Bertrand de Baux, test 1305;*
> *m. Bérengère de Gardanne*

Unfortunately, like many genealogical websites, this one fails to provide sources for the data it releases, not least the provenance of this Bérengère from Gardanne. Nonetheless it may supply a solution to a long unresolved problem.

Both geography and nomenclature suggest strongly that Bérengère, wife of Bertrand II, may have come from Gardanne[6]. Two close relatives may have married cousins: the *provençale* marriage pool was not that that deep in late thirteenth and early fourteenth century. Gardanne is close to Berre, Marignane, Istres, Aubagne and a clutch of other *seigneuries* close the power-base of the des Baux dynasty.

Indeed there is, as Barthélemy[7] reveals, yet a third Baux-Gardanne marriage. Another Bérengère, sometimes known as 'Pellagalle', was the second wife of Hugues des Baux, Lord of Meyrargues, died in 1304, first cousin of our quarry, Bertrand II, Lord of Berre (died 1309)[8]. We do at least know the name of her father, Hugues Bérenger, Lord of Gardanne.

I have so far been able to discover little about the medieval rulers of Gardanne. Poly, pp.289-290, note 20, citing the St. Victor of Marseille Cartulary, provides the best information that I can find. So far, I lack records to construct a cohesive genealogy. In the absence of further information, I suggest that it is among the lords of Gardanne that we should search for Bertrand II's wife, Bérengère.

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[5] The name Bérengère or Berenguela was common in south-west France and northern Spain in the early middle ages. To my knowledge it was rare in Provence.

[6] Incidentally, Gardanne was home to Paul Cezanne in the mid 1880s. The nearby Mont Saint-Victoire and its surrounding countryside provided the inspiration for some of his most best-known paintings.

[7] Documents 833, 892, 893 and 900.

[8] Noblemaire was unaware of her origins. Hugues first wife was a certain Garsende. By neither did he leave any children.