BOHEMUND OF BRIENNE, PRINCE OF RASCIA, ALLEGED ANCESTOR OF BAJAMONTE TIEPOLO

by Lindsay Brook[1]

ABSTRACT

This article attempts to shed some light on the ancestry of Bajamonte Tiepolo, failed leader of a *putsch* against the Venetian Republic in 1310. His forename seems to be unique among members of the oligarchs of Venice. No firm conclusions can as yet be drawn. Some of the more fanciful suggestions can, however, be questioned or even dismissed. It is moreover proposed that 'Rascia' is a red-herring, and that the enigmatic 'Bohemund' came from elsewhere in the Balkans. This article includes a brief reassessment of the chronology of the life of Jean de Brienne, to whom Bohemund is alleged to be related.

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By the spring of 1310, doge Pietro Gradenigo was the most detested man in Venice. With these words, in his well-researched and immensely readable book on the history of the Republic, John Julius Norwich (1977) begins a chapter describing the conspiracy that year to overthrow doge Pietro. I deal here not with the conspiracy and its momentous consequences for Venice's governance. Norwich has done this admirably. Rather I take another look at the somewhat curious ancestry of the leader of the failed *coup*, Bajamonte Tiepolo[2], reviled by many in the following centuries for his *iniquo tradimento*[3] against the state.

His early life is somewhat obscure, illuminated in part by Preto (1993). We know that he was up to no good when he was in Coron (modern-day Koróni) in the Peloponnese, in 1300-1301. Hodgetts (1977, pp. 200-201) provides the colourful details:

One of the most notorious cases [of embezzlement] was that of Baiamonte Tiepolo who was convicted of having appropriated 2,222 hyperpera above his salary while he was castellan of Coron. An attempt to make his father responsible for the payment failed, and finally Tiepolo was made to pay the loss in nine instalments every four months. If he defaulted on any payment, he was made to pay a fine of five soldi per lira, or twenty-five per cent. This humiliation was given as a major cause for the disaffection of Tiepolo in 1310, in accounts of the conspiracy.

For the rest of the decade, Bajamonte seems to have kept a wary distance from la *Serenissima*.

… A strangely mysterious figure is how Norwich describes Bajamonte, *… a great-grandson of Bohemund of Brienne, Prince of the petty Crusader state of Rascia*[4] *in Bosnia* (Norwich, 1977, p.216). There are, however, two *impasses*. First, no member of the celebrated *champenoise*

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[2] A link between the 13th and 14th centuries Tiepolos with the celebrated Venetian painter Giambattista Tiepolo (1696-1770) is probable but not provable (see the brief *Addendum* to this article).

[3] 'Infamous betrayal', a phrase from the inscription on the so-called 'column of infamy', erected on the site of his house, razed to the ground after he went into exile. Praga (1926, p. 46, note 1) gives the terms of the exile order decreed by the Maggior Consiglio on 17th June 1310). Preto (1993) has written a very interesting account of how Bajamonte's reputation has in more recent times been rescued from his detractors.

[4] Rascia (more correctly Raška) is the heartland of present-day Serbia, north-west of Kosovo.

Brienne family known to history is called Bohemund. Secondly, there was no crusader state, however 'petty', established in Raška. It is tempting to dismiss this descent as at worst fictitious, at best oral tradition that has become muddled over time[5]. Rather better perhaps, following important guidance provided by Loernertz (1975) and others, is to try to find a plausible explanation in the hope that others will come up with proof.

The name Bajamonte – unique, I believe, among the Venetian oligarchs – is suggestive of a descent from a Bohemund[6], *becoming in the soft Venetian dialect, Baiamond or Bajamonte* (Ragg, 1928, p.66)[7]. Yet *Bohemond* was a name scarcely used outside the family of the *de Hauteville* conquerors of southern Italy and Sicily, and the branch of the same dynasty that became crusader princes of Antioch. The mystery deepens.

Bajamonte Tiepolo's paternal ancestry is well documented[8]. Both his great-grandfather and grandfather were doges (Giacomo (I) 1229-1249, and Lorenzo 1268-1275). They were were also active in administering Venice's rapidly expanding number of colonies[9]. His father[10], a second Giacomo, Count of Ragusa (now Dubrovnik), was the populace's choice for doge in 1289. But, as Norwich (1977) recorded, *the old traditional fear of hereditary monarchy was reawakened*[11] amongst the cautious oligarchs. Giacomo gracefully retired to Treviso on the mainland, to make way for his son's future enemy, Pietro Gradenigo.

The maternal ancestry of Bajamonte Tiepolo is more complicated. Our starting point must be Litta (1835, Vol. 3, Table 34/1), though his genealogy is rather confused. I assume that he drew upon the famous Chronicle of Andrea Dandolo, doge of Venice[12]. Fig 1 on the next page summarises this traditional account.

These are my comments on what might be called the 'traditional' genealogy:

It seems probable that the unnamed first wife of Giacomo (I) was, on chronological grounds, the mother of his son Lorenzo. A second marriage is possible, but none of Litta's three candidates looks either plausible or capable of proof. I have so far found nothing about the Storlato family, though it merits investigation. What is certain, however, is that King Tancred of Sicily (died 1194) had no daughter Valdrada known to history. Three daughters are documented: Alberia[13], Sibilla and Costanza[14] (see, for instance, Neveux, 1994). Furthermore, I suggest that the daughter of *un principe di*

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5 Praga (1926, p. 47, note 1) was dismissive of the connection with the Brienne dynasty.

6 More commonly spelt 'Bohemond'.

7 Ragg assumes that Bajamonte was the great-grand nephew of John of Brienne, King of Jerusalem and then Emperor of Constantinople. I examine the alleged relationship later in this article. As late as the eighteenth century, the names 'Bajamonte' and 'Boemondo' were interchangeable (see Preto, p. 254).

8 An early but reliable account is given in Litta's magnificent and lavishly illustrated nineteenth century collection of genealogies (1835, vol.3, table 34). Boschetti (1930) gives a useful tour of the monumental work.

9 Giacomo (I) was the first Venetian duke of Candia (Crete) – see, for instance, Borsari (1963); Lorenzo was count of Veglia (the present Croatian island of Krk).

10 Or possibly his nephew, as Norwich (1977)'s *caveat* (p.198, note 1) observes: *the genealogy is not altogether clear*.

11 *Three Tieoplo Doges in sixty years would be too much* (Norwich, 1977, p.198).

12 The relevant text and commentary is reproduced in the Appendix to the article.

13 She married Gautier III, count of Brienne, as shown in Fig 2. Among their descendants were the last Frankish dukes of Athens.

14 Costanza married Pietro Ziani, Doge of Venice (1205-1229), for whom see Nicolini (1964) and Borsari (1978).

Dalmazia, cited by some as the second wife of Giacomo (I), has become confused with the spouse of his son, Lorenzo.

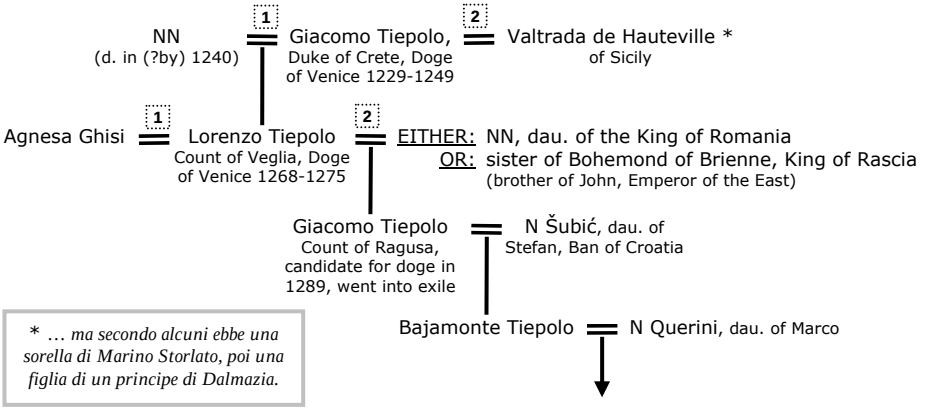


Fig 1. ***Ancestry of Bajamonte Tiepolo given by Pompeo Litta (Summary)***

With Lorenzo, we enter fascinating territory. His first wife was indeed a member of the powerful Ghisi family, prominent among the conquerors of the Aegean after the siege and sack of Constantinople by the participants in the Fourth Crusade. But her name was Marchesina, her father Geremia being the first lord of Andros in the Cyclades[15]. We know that she married before 1262 and died before 1298.

'Bohemond de Brienne' of Rascia cannot reliably be connected to the family of Jean de Brienne, King of Jerusalem and Latin Emperor of Constantinople. The latter was, I believe, too celebrated to have mysterious relations, adventurers in the thirteenth-century Balkans, otherwise unknown. The Tiepolos and their cognates, especially the Ziani[16], had, on the other hand, contemporaneously been associated with Venetian attempts to dominate the Dalmatian littoral. The immediate family of Jean de Brienne is set out in Fig 2 below.

I suggest that Bohemond was not a ruler of Raška, but an otherwise unknown castellan of Rachir in Istria. There is some dispute as to where Rachir was situated. It seems likely however that it is identical to the castle of Racize, close to Dragush in the district of Pinguente[17]. The geopolitical argument is compelling. It was from this region that Bajamonte meddled in Venetian politics, to the fury of the ruling establishment[18]. It was

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15 He is last mentioned in 1243 and may have died around 1251 (Loernertz, 1975, p.40, especially note 7).

16 For the Ziani, see in particular Borsari (1978).

17 In 1312 it belonged to count Enrico di Pisino who gave it, as dowry for his daughter Alzubeta (Elisabetta?), to Nicolò Prampergo of Friuli. See particularly Franceschi (1879) where the name Rachir and its ownership is discussed (pp.149-151). In the mid-fourteenth century, the castle was in the possession of the Prampergo family.

18 His activities might have prompted Venice to make a pre-emptive strike against Pinguente and Albano in early 1309 (Vergottini, 1974, p. 132).

also where he went into self-imposed exile after the failed rebellion of 1310, and where he continued to conspire against the Republic[19].

After an assiduous search among surviving documents in Zara (now Zadar) and other Dalmatian cities, Praga (1926) has pieced together what little is known of Bajamonte's later career. The picture in early fourteenth century Croatia is confused. The nobility, traditionally quarrelsome, took advantage of an unassertive and distant monarchy[20] to wage war among themselves. Fine (1994, pp. 204-214) throws light upon the fluctuating fortunes of the families enmeshed in the feuds. Bajamonte, always the opportunist, appears to have taken advantage of the near-anarchy to further his own interests. In 1313 and again in 1320, he was *podestà* of Nona[21], presumably an appointee of the Šubići who were counts of Nona during that period. In 1322, he was in the service of Juraj II Subic, knez of Trogir. Although Bajamonte was a minor player on the scene (Fine does not mention him), he was enough of a threat for the Venetian Council of Ten in 1325 to put a price of two thousand ducats on his head. Bajamonte's reputation seems to have remained high, though it may have lured him into somewhat dubious enterprises. In 1325, the Consiglio di Bologna elected him (from four candidates) as their *capitano di guerra*, to counter a threat to the city (Battistella, 1901, p.11ff.). So perhaps he ended his peripatetic career as some sort of *condottiero*. He disappears from history after 6th January 1328.

The name 'Bohemond' is still a puzzle. Yonge (1878)[22] speculates that it is derived from Bohumil, the Slavonian/Bohemian equivalent of the Greek name *Theophilus* ('God's love'); further that Robert Guiscard named his eldest son Bohemond, because his first wife Alberada, may have been of Illyrian extraction. The latter seems to be a theory too far. Alberada (or Auberée) was a member of the Buonalbergo family. Her father, whose name is not known, must have been among the first generation of Normans to infiltrate southern Italy[23]. The chance that he married into a Dalmatian family is remote[24]. However the suggestion that the name Bohemond was of Slav extraction cannot be dismissed lightly. To my knowledge, the first mention of Bohemond is in an annotation by Emmanuele Cicogna to Martin da Canale's chronicle[25]. Litta has copied this faithfully.

The last major task is to look carefully at the family of the counts of Brienne in the late twelfth and early thirteenth century to see if there could be any Balkan connection. Roserot (1942-48, table III) provides a workmanlike genealogy of the lords of Brienne, although he is less informed about those sons of Jean de Brienne who moved to England. His account of the earlier generations is supplemented admirably by Chaume (1947). But neither deals adequately with Jean's younger sons, for whom we must turn to Maclagan

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19 Voinovitch (1934) provides a useful commentary on the politics of the time (see especially pp.418ff.). See also Romanin (1912, p.70, note 1) for the death sentence passed *in absentia* on Bajamonte by the *Inquisitores de Decem* (Council of Ten) in 1314.

20 Croatia was ruled from distant Buda by the kings of Hungary following its annexation by Koloman between 1102 and 1107.

21 I have still to identify its location, as no town of that name appears on modern-day maps.

22 Vol. II, p.442 ('Names from the Slavonic, Section II – Slavonian Mythology').

23 For the Buonalbergo family, see Jamison (1934). Alberada's nephew, Geraldo, was the progenitor of the counts of Ariano.

24 Some sources (for example, Sanfelice di Monteforte, vol.II, table X) propose that Alberada was the daughter of Renaud, Count of Burgundy, son of Count Otto-Guillaume. I can find no evidence for this relationship.

25 *Lorenzo Tiepolo Doge ebbe due mogli; la prima Agnese Ghisi; e la seconda era figliuola del Re di Romania, o di Boemondo di Brenne, re di Rascia*. Canale (1845), p.754. ('Romania' was a commonly used name for the area conquered by the crusaders in 1204 from the Byzantine empire.)

(1989). But it is Buckley (1957) who has provided a crucial key to unlock the birth dates of the twelfth century counts of Brienne, especially that of the emperor Jean. The relevant details, taking into account the amended dates, are provided in Figure 2.

Basically, Buckley dismisses the widely-accepted chronology of Jean's life, based upon the latter's chance encounter in 1231 with the Greek historian-to-be Akropolites, then aged fourteen. The latter guessed that Jean was about eighty years old. After carefully weighing the evidence, Buckley concludes that: *... he was born not earlier than 1169 and possibly as late as 1174; that, consequently, he terminated an exceptionally active life in 1237 between the ages of 63 and 68*. Maclagan (1989, p.191) fully accepts this revision.

The *Historia diplomatica Friderici secundi* supplies a clue as to possible candidates for otherwise unknown sons of Jean, king of Jerusalem and then Latin Emperor of Constantinople. However, in view of the revised chronology, it seems highly unlikely that Bohemond was among them. Maclagan's account is altogether more convincing on the grounds that, if you have two historical candidates in the frame, it is unfruitful to seek out other probably unhistorical ones. *The imperial letter in question [dated 1237] surely refers to Jean and Louis, the younger sons of their father's third marriage [to Berengaria of León], who could naturally have travelled westward through Venice after their father's death*[26].

His father Giacomo, the *soi-disant* doge, married a noblewoman from Dalmatia, whom later tradition[27] has identified as a daughter of a Stjepan Šubić (there are several), hereditary *knez* (prince) of Trogir[28]. Should this be so, the obvious candidate is Stjepan II (usually called Stjepko), *circa* 1239, dying in 1274 (Šidak, 1942; Fine, 1987). The distinguished nineteeth century Austro-Hungarian genealogist Wertner supports this affiliation (IX tábla)[29]. Betto (1981) has examined the matrimonial alliances of a number of Venetian ruling families, including the Tiepolo. I find her conclusions on the latter to be quite unsustainable[30].

Who was Bajamonte's maternal grandmother? Ragg (1928, p.66) says that she was called Marchesina, *daughter of Bohemond of Brienne, king of Serbia*. This unusual name leads us into some intriguing territory. Loenertz (1975, pp. 43-45) has established beyond doubt that Marchesina was the daughter of Geremia Ghisi, lord of Andros (in the Cyclades), living 1207-1243. Doge Lorenzo Tiepolo was also lord of Skiathos and Skopelos (in the Sporades). A matrimonial alliance between two Aegean island dynasts, threatened by a newly resurgent Byzantium under the Palaiologi, makes sense. Lorenzo and Marchesina married sometime before 1262.

Loenertz goes on to state, on charter evidence, that Lorenzo Tiepolo's *first* wife was Agnesa, daugher of Bohemond de Brienne[31]. His sons, Pietro and Giacomo, he proposes,

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[26] Their mother had died in Constantinople earlier that year, on 23rd March.

[27] Danduli (1938-42), **12**(1): 317, 28-31.

[28] The Šubići were a fractious clan of warlords who tried with sporadic success to play other regional powers off against each other to retain power (Fine's account (1987) particularly pp.204-214, is the most accessible).

[29] The Subić dynasty can be traced back to *župan* Bogdán, c.1164. Wertner gives the next two rulers, Miroslav and Grgur, as father and son. The chronology suggests that they are more likely to be brothers.

[30] She asserts that Giacomo (II) Tiepolo, father of Bajamonte, married first a daughter of Tancred of Lecce, king of Sicily (died 1194) and then a Subić of Bribir. The alleged first marriage is both chronologically impossible and undocumented in any source available to me.

[31] Huillard-Bréholles (1852-61, **5**(1): 109).

were born by his *second* wife, Marchesina Ghisi. Bajamonte's descent from a scion of the Brienne family looks increasingly elusive, even improbable.

Addendum

On Giambattista Tiepolo, Barcham (1996) writes: *He was the most renowned painter of 18th century Italy, and the last great representative of the grand tradition in Italian art*. Urbani de Gheltof (1874) provides a useful genealogy of Giambattista's ancestry and descendants. However Litta's genealogical tables, although extending to the late eighteenth century, do not connect Giambattista with the thirteenth century Tiepolo doges.

Appendix

Andreae Danduli, Ducis Venetiarum, Chronica per Extensum Descripta aa. 46-1280 d. C., a cura di Ester Pastorello. Bologna, pp. 317-318, lines 27-31:

Nuncii Pisanorum Veneciam accedentes, a fine termini unionis alias innite usque ad quinquenium, ligam et unionem cum duce innovant. Hic dux ante creacionem suam feudum a principe tenebat Achaie, quod postea retinuit: et Iacobo filio suo [Lorenzo Tiepolo] quamdam nobilem Dalmatinam, et Petro alteri nato Vicentinam divitem matrimonio copulavit, et eos plura Venecie regimina habere permisit; que Venetorum saluti incongrua demonstrata, successori prohibita sunt.

Commentary, lines 27-31: *Hic … sunt, sulla sola fede del D. quanto ai matrimoni, dei quali non mi risulta altrimenti la fonte. La tarda precisazione delle nozze di Jacopo conte di Zara, padre di Baiamonte, con una figlia di Stefano Subich bano di Croazia, è basata sopra l'affermazione del LUCIO, 'Memorie istoriche di Tragurio', Venezio, 1674; ma non ne rimangono prove documentarie (G. PRAGA, 'Baimonte Tiepolo dopo la congiura', in Atti e Memorie della Società Dalmata di Storia Patria, 1, 1926, p. 46, n. 2). Iacopo è figlio della seconda moglie del doge, Marchesina, di Boemondo di Brienne re di Rascia; di Geremia Gisi, secondo il SANUDO, op. cit.; Pietro fu conte di Ragusa (MARTINO DA CANALE, II, 342).*

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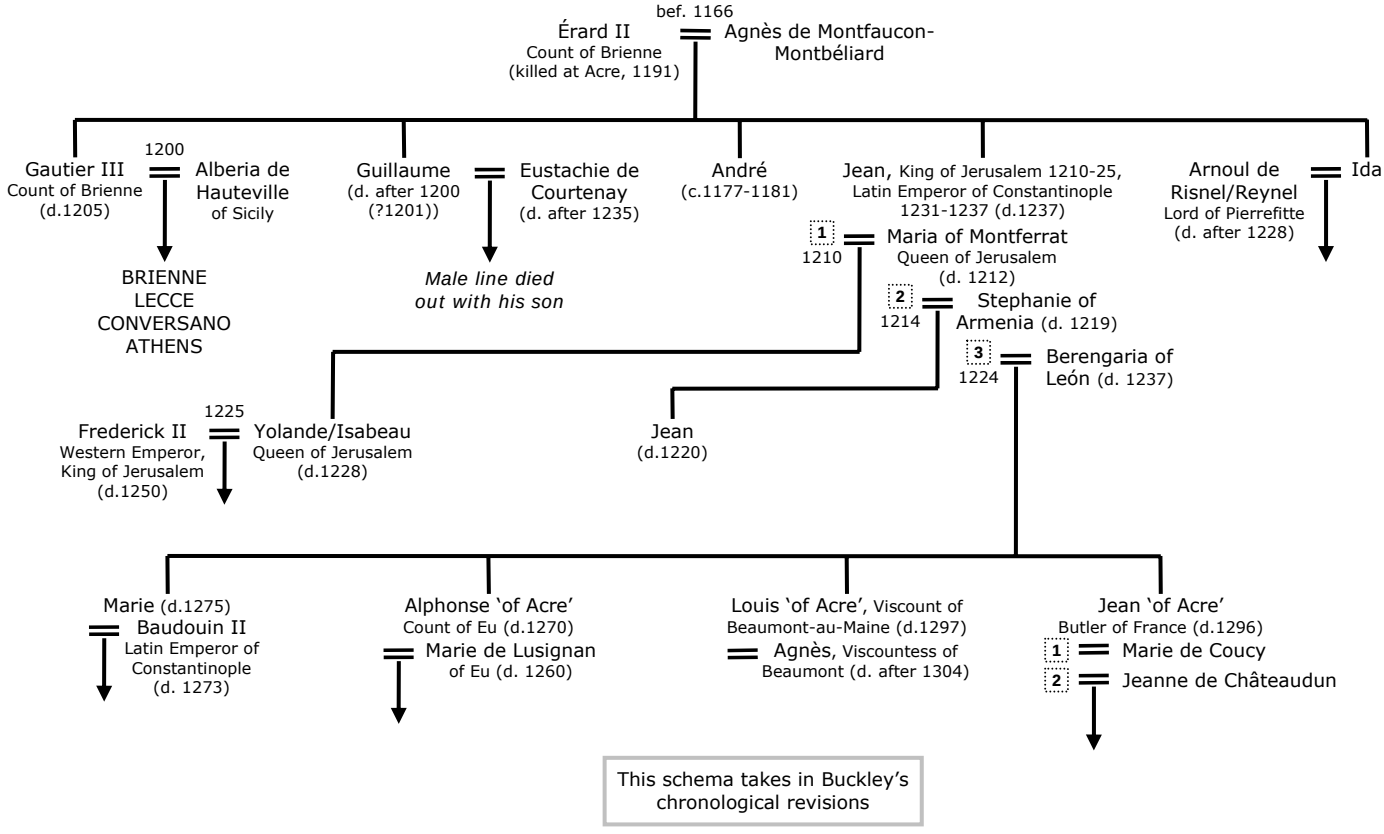


Fig 2. ***Immediate Family of Jean de Brienne***