



*Corporate Monarchy in the
Twelfth-Century Kingdom of
Jerusalem*

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Abstract: While the conflicts between Queen Melisende of Jerusalem and the men in her family have received considerable scholarly attention, explanations for the ease with which they reconciled remain elusive. As this article argues, contrary to theories advanced in the past, Melisende's role in government was not the product of a consensus among nobles to temporarily suspend the norms of political participation that invested all authority in a single, male, ruler. The position she occupied was not "exceptional," a disruption in the fabric of patriarchal dynastic succession that cloaked the Latin East. Rather, she occupied a legitimate position as co-ruler of the Kingdom, filling the role envisioned for her by her father, Baldwin II, who recognized in corporate monarchy an ideal political configuration for the challenges presented by governing in the Latin East. Past failures to provide an accurate and complete understanding of Melisende's role in the governance of Jerusalem has circumscribed our understanding of the nature of monarchy and rulership in this crusader kingdom, which remains inaccurate and incomplete as a result. In their attempt to impose a uniform, static template of feudal governance on the crusader kingdoms of Latin East, scholars have underappreciated the extent to which medieval monarchy was both fluid and contingent. As the discussion here demonstrates, modes of governing were constantly adjusted to the demands of a particular time and place, responding to the unique political culture of a particular region. This was especially true for monarchy in the nascent crusader kingdom of twelfth-century Jerusalem, which witnessed the evolution of a political system formed in the crucible of war.

Keywords: political culture; gender; Latin East; Crusades; Corporate Monarchy

In November 1143, King Fulk and Queen Melisende of Jerusalem led a party of nobles into the countryside near Acre in search of fresh air and relaxation. As they neared their destination, a hare bounded out of the brush, drawing the King's attention. Seizing his lance, Fulk joined in the chase, only to be violently thrown by his horse. As King Fulk lay prostrate on the ground, his saddle fell on his head and his "brains gushed forth from both ears and nostrils."¹ According to the chronicler, William, Archbishop of Tyre, Queen Melisende immediately flung herself to the ground, embracing her husband's lifeless body while shrieking and tearing at her clothes and hair in despair. King Fulk died three days after his fall, leaving behind his widow Melisende and his two young children, Baldwin and Amalric.

The extent of the Queen's grief is surprising given the fact that merely a decade prior

¹ Guillaume de Tyr, *Chronique*. R.B.C. Huygens (Turnhout: Brepols, 1986), vol. 2, 710–11.

to this incident, the couple was estranged due to a revolt that embroiled the kingdom. The conflict erupted after Fulk's attempts to ignore King Baldwin II's designation of Melisende as co-ruler of Jerusalem. The breach between Melisende and Fulk was not the only instance of open conflict involving the royal family of Jerusalem. In the spring of 1152, Melisende was confined to the citadel of the Tower of David, surrounded by the army of her son, King Baldwin III. In spite of repeated pleas of many powerful men to cease hostilities, Baldwin pressed on with his attack, hurling missiles and arrows at his mother and a handful of her supporters for days.² Given no other recourse, Queen Melisende agreed to resign from the position of co-ruler that she had occupied since her husband's death in 1143, retiring to her lands at Nablus.

While all families are prone to some degree of dysfunction, the intensity of the conflicts that divided the royal family of Jerusalem appears extreme. One might expect such public demonstrations of animus to have had a lasting impact, permanently alienating family members from each other. Yet, in both cases cited here, ruptures were mended and relationships repaired with relative ease. Not only did Fulk not hold a grudge against his wife for spearheading a revolt against him, but he became "so uxorious" after their reconciliation that he consulted Melisende on even the most trivial of issues, as reported by William of Tyre.³ While the narrative evidence reveals the emotional bond that developed between the King and Queen after their rift was mended, the charters attest to a shift in Melisende's political relevance post revolt, as she was restored to the position of co-ruler that her father intended her to occupy. In similar fashion, Melisende and her son Baldwin III seemed to have resolved their differences not long after the missiles stopped flying. According to William of Tyre, the conflict between the Queen and her son was quickly resolved, "and the morning star which shines forth in the midst of darkness and tranquility again returned to the kingdom and the church."⁴ In spite of the demotion in her official position, Melisende remained an active voice in political affairs until her death in 1160.

While the causes of the conflicts between Melisende and the men in her family have received considerable scholarly attention, scholars seldom address the ease with which they reconciled. H.E. Mayer goes so far as to characterize the reconciliation between Melisende and Baldwin III as "inexplicable."⁵ As this article argues, this failure is a direct result of the fact that the premise upon which these conclusions are based is flawed, stemming in part from their tendency to attribute these instances of internal division to Melisende's ambition and her willingness to violate the patriarchal norms that structured monarchy. Contrary to theories advanced in the past, Melisende's role in government was not the product of a consensus

² *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, Patriarch Jacobite d'Antioche (1166–1199)*, trans. J.B. Chabot (Paris, 1899), 1:309. A similar version of events is provided by Gregory Abu'l Faraj, also known as Bar Hebraeus: "the King of Jerusalem quarreled with his mother, and the queen fortified herself in the Tower of David." *The Chronography of Gregory Abu'l Faraj the son of Aaron, the Hebrew Physician commonly known as Bar Hebraeus*, trans. Ernest A. Wallis Budge (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), 1:279.

³ *Chronique*, 2:656.

⁴ *Chronique*, 2:780.

⁵ H.E. Mayer, "Studies in the History of Queen Melisende of Jerusalem," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 26 (1972): 172–173. While Mayer explains the participation of Melisende in governing between the civil war at the mid-1150s as the result of Baldwin's desire to spare his mother "public humiliation," he characterizes her return to political influence after 1156 as "inexplicable."

among nobles to temporarily suspend the norms of political participation that invested all authority in a single male ruler. The position she occupied was not “exceptional,” a disruption in the fabric of patriarchal dynastic succession that cloaked the Latin East. Rather, she was accepted by her contemporaries as the legitimate co-ruler of the kingdom, filling the role envisioned for her by her father, Baldwin II, who recognized in corporate monarchy an ideal political configuration for the challenges presented to governing in the Latin East.

The failure to provide an accurate and complete understanding of Melisende’s role in the governance of Jerusalem has circumscribed our understanding of the nature of monarchy and rulership in this crusader kingdom, which remains inaccurate and incomplete as a result. In their attempt to impose a uniform, static template of feudal governance on the crusader kingdoms of the Latin East, scholars have underappreciated the extent to which medieval monarchy was both fluid and contingent.⁶ As the discussion here will demonstrate, modes of governing throughout the Middle Ages were constantly adjusted to the demands of a particular time and place, responding to the unique political culture of a particular region.⁷ This was especially true for monarchy in the nascent crusader kingdom of twelfth-century Jerusalem, which witnessed the evolution of a political system formed in the crucible of war.

The discussion here calls for the need to more fully appreciate the corporate character of monarchy, which allowed different members of the family to play different roles, depending on circumstances and individual competencies.⁸ Contrary to what scholars have suggested, the corporate character of monarchy was not a casualty of the twelfth century, unilaterally rejected in favor of “new” modes of governing that confined family members, especially female ones, to symbolic roles. Melisende may have been more prominent than many of her contemporaries, but she provides an important corrective to the historiography that fails to appreciate the continued influence of family members in monarchy.⁹ This is perhaps due in part to historiographical tradition that posits a rigid divide between the early Middle Ages, typically understood as conflating public and private authority, and the central Middle Ages, in which the king is understood as becoming the dominate voice in governing as family members were increasingly supplanted by bureaucrats. As noted by Theresa Earenfight, “The notion of monarchy as sole rulership by a king has potent mythic power, even though we recognize that in practice power was not isolated in one person. Rather, it had a corporate character that ...

⁶ Joshua Prawer, “La noblesse et le régime féodal du royaume latin de Jérusalem,” *Le moyen âge* 52 (1959): 27–28; and H.E. Mayer, “The Wheel of Fortune: Seignorial Vicissitudes under Kings Fulk and Baldwin III of Jerusalem,” *Speculum* 65 (1990): 877.

⁷ Steven Runciman, *The Families of Outremer: The Feudal Nobility of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem, 1099-1291* (London: Athlone Press, 1960), 5–7.

⁸ Murray dismisses the possibility that Baldwin II intended for Fulk and Melisende to include their son Baldwin in government as well since he was not crowned alongside them in 1131. I would argue, however, that such formal association was not necessary for governing to operate in a corporative mode, and that his inclusion in official transactions is sufficient evidence of participation in governing. Murray, “Women in the Royal Succession of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem (1099–1291),” in *Mächtige Frauen? Königinnen und Fürstinnen in europäischen Mittelalter, 11–14. Jahrhundert*, ed. Claudia Zey (Ostfildren: Verlagsgruppe Patmos, 2015), 140.

⁹ Recent work on monarchy in the Mediterranean is especially useful in revising our notions of the extent to which ruling remained a family affair, with responsibilities divided among multiple members of the family, including women. See: Lucy K. Pick, *Her Father’s Daughter: Gender, Power and Religion in the Early Spanish Kingdom* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 2017); and Miriam Shadis, *Berenguela of Castile (1180–1246) and Political Women in the High Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

permitted a range of power-sharing options.”¹⁰

Co-rule was particularly suited for the Latin East given the constant military conflict and the spiritual significance inherent in the king personally leading his army into battle. Contrary to what scholars have argued in the past, gender norms that divided the various duties associated with ruling, reserving military action for men, were not detrimental to female participation in government.¹¹ The frequent and extended absences of the king from the royal court in Jerusalem which resulted from his preoccupation with military activity could have easily strained the administration of domestic affairs. As the consideration of the events and extant evidence presented here will demonstrate, the constant presence of the queen at court curbed any such disruption in routine governing, providing the administrative stability that otherwise would have been absent and facilitating the ability of the king to fulfil his duties. Gender clearly informed attitudes about governing in the crusader kingdoms, influencing the assignment of distinct roles to men and women. This did not, however, exclude women from exercising public authority, as evidenced by the example of Queen Melisende.

The corporate character of monarchical rule in Jerusalem was first introduced by King Baldwin II, who ascended the throne in 1118. At this key juncture, monarchy in the Crusader States was still in its nascent stages, resulting in a contested succession.¹² As discussed extensively by H.E. Mayer, the rules governing control of the kingdom of Jerusalem had been debated since the death of Godfrey of Bouillon in 1100. Godfrey had refused the title of king, choosing instead the more ambiguous “protector of the Holy Sepulchre” to describe his position in the kingdom. Although Godfrey’s will had stipulated that Daimbert, Patriarch of Jerusalem, assume control of all of his lands, his desires were subverted by the nobility of the kingdom, who instead installed Godfrey’s brother Baldwin, the current count of Edessa, as Jerusalem’s first king.¹³ The kingdom was, once again, thrown into turmoil following Baldwin’s death in 1118. The nobility was divided between summoning Baldwin’s brother, Eustace of Boulogne, from his domains in France and elevating his more distant relative, Baldwin of Bourcq, currently in residence at the court.¹⁴ The faction supporting Baldwin prevailed, and he

¹⁰ Theresa Earenfight, “Absent Kings: Queens as Political Partners in the Medieval Crown of Aragon,” in *Queenship and Political Power in Medieval and Early Modern Spain*, ed. Theresa Earenfight (Farnham: Ashgate, 2005), 33.

¹¹ Deborah Gerish, “Holy War, Royal Wives, and Equivocation in Twelfth-Century Jerusalem,” in *Noble Ideals and Bloody Realities*, ed. Niall Christie and Maya Yazigig (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 137.

¹² See: Alan V. Murray, “Dynastic Continuity or Dynastic Change? The Accession of Baldwin II and the Nobility of the Kingdom of Jerusalem,” *Medieval Prosopography* 13 (1992): 1–28; H.E. Mayer, “The Succession to Baldwin II of Jerusalem: English Impact on the East,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 39 (1985): 139–147; and H.E. Mayer, “Jérusalem et Antioche au temps de Baudouin II,” *Comptes rendues des séances de l’Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 4 (1980): 717–734. While the controversy surrounding Baldwin II’s ascension to the throne has received the most attention from scholars, I would note that contested, or at least challenged, successions were not rare in the kingdom of Jerusalem. With the exception of Baldwin IV, every other ruler from Amalric to Isabella faced challengers or was forced to make concessions before their consecration could occur.

¹³ See: H.E. Mayer, “Études sur l’histoire de Baudouin Ier roi de Jérusalem,” in *Mélanges sur l’histoire du royaume latin de Jérusalem*, ed. H.E. Mayer (Paris: Institut de France, 1983), 73–91; and Mayer, “The Succession to Baldwin II,” 142–143.

¹⁴ The exact nature of the relationship between Baldwin of Bourcq and his predecessors has yet to be definitively established by scholars. See: Alan V. Murray, “Kingship, Identity and Name-giving in the Family of Baldwin of Bourcq,” in *Knighthoods of Christ. Essays on the History of the Crusades and the Knights Templar, presented to Malcolm Barber*, ed. Norman Housely (New York: Routledge, 2017), 28. Mayer argues that Baldwin of Bourcq was chosen by

was anointed on Easter 1118 accordingly. Eustace was in Apulia when news of Baldwin's elevation to the throne reached him. In spite of pleas among his followers to press on and fight for the throne, he chose to defer to the nobles of Jerusalem, returning instead to his lands in Boulogne.¹⁵

While Baldwin quelled the early opposition to his rule by demonstrating his ability to effectively govern and defend the kingdom, his failure to produce a son presented a new predicament. In a departure from previous practice, which stipulated the election of kings to the throne of Jerusalem, Baldwin attempted to establish hereditary principles of succession to ensure that the kingdom pass to his descendants.¹⁶ He designated Melisende, the eldest of his four daughters, as his heir to the kingdom. Lingering questions about the legitimacy of Baldwin's position may have influenced his decision to engage in the type of anticipatory association of an heir widely practiced among the French nobility, described by Lewis as a common practice by which French lords, ranging from kings to counts, publicly "designated" one of their children as heir during their own lifetime. As Lewis cautions, anticipatory association should not be interpreted as an indication of weak hereditary rule, or a response to the insecurity of a sitting ruler. Rather, it was motivated by a range of reasons, most often concern with the preservation of the familial patrimony and a king or count's desire to be succeeded by offspring of their choice.¹⁷

Shortly after he officially designated Melisende as his heir, she began to appear in royal charters described as "daughter of the king and the heir to Jerusalem."¹⁸ King Baldwin looked to the west for an appropriate consort for Melisende, setting his sights on Count Fulk V of Anjou. One of the leading nobles of France and a proven military commander, Fulk was no stranger to the nobles of the Latin East, having undertaken an expedition to Jerusalem in 1120. After a prolonged period of negotiations, the recently widowed count agreed to accept the

Baldwin I as a backup in the event that Eustace refused the crown, but Baldwin was able to manipulate the situation to his advantage. See Mayer, "The Succession to Baldwin II of Jerusalem," 140.

¹⁵ Mayer, "The Succession to Baldwin II of Jerusalem," 139.

¹⁶ Mayer, "Studies in the History of Queen Melisende," 100; Jill N. Claster, *Sacred Violence: The European Crusades to the Middle East, 1095–1396* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 77.

¹⁷ Andrew W. Lewis, "Anticipatory Association of the Heir in Early Capetian France," *American Historical Review* 83, no. 4 (1978), 910–915. The practice of designating heirs in the Anglo-Norman realm is discussed by C. Warren Hollister, "Normandy, France and the Anglo-Norman Regnum," *Speculum* 51, no. 2 (1976): 202–242. Neither of these articles addresses the practice as it pertained to female heirs, which is rather surprising given the fact that Henry extended the practice to include oaths of homage to secure the succession of his daughter Matilda, who was formally recognized as his heir 1 January 1127. Mayer, "The Succession to Baldwin II of Jerusalem," 145.

¹⁸ In 1129, Baldwin donated land called Bestella, near Tyre: "Hoc vero donum, quod sanctae ecclesiae Vallis Josaphat ceci pro anima praedecessoris mei, bonae memoriae regis Balduini et reginae uxoris meae, quae inibi sepulta est." The charter included confirmation by Melisende, who was described as "filia regis et regni Jerosolimitani haeres." *Die Urkunden der Lateinischen Könige von Jerusalem*, ed. H.E. Mayer and Jean Richard (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 2010), nos. 109, 268–269. The language used in the charters is significant and provides an important measure of the nature of Melisende's role in governing. It is particularly useful in countering the gendered language often found in narrative sources, which require careful navigation of the author's personal bias in their presentation of individuals and events. See: Lois L. Huneycutt, "Female Succession and the Language of Power in the Writings of Twelfth-Century Churchmen," in *Medieval Queenship*, ed. John Carmi Parsons (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 189–202; Sarah Lambert, "Queen or Consort: Rulership and Politics in the Latin East, 1118–1228," in *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe*, ed. Anne Duggan (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1997), 153–169; and Mayer, "The Succession to Baldwin II of Jerusalem," 139.

King's proposal. Prior to his departure, Fulk granted his lands and titles in France to his son, Geoffrey, who had recently married Matilda, daughter and heir of Henry I of England. Shortly after his arrival in Jerusalem in 1129, Fulk and Melisende were married.¹⁹

While the terms of the initial agreement remain a subject of dispute among scholars, they do agree that on his deathbed, King Baldwin II, with the assent of the nobles gathered nearby, designated Fulk and Melisende as joint rulers of the kingdom.²⁰ The couple was consecrated and crowned in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre on Christmas Day, 1131.²¹ It seems, however, that Fulk did not intend to honor Baldwin's arrangement. He not only attempted to rule independently of Melisende, but elevated many of his own supporters to positions of importance at the expense of more established families. Fulk's exclusion of Melisende from government is reflected in two charters pertaining to affairs of the kingdom, issued in 1132 and 1134 respectively, in which he alone appears, described as "the third reigning king of Jerusalem."²² Fulk's attempts to govern solo prompted military resistance in 1134, when Hugh of Jaffa, the cousin of Baldwin II and one of the most powerful nobles in the Kingdom, led a group of nobles in rebellion.²³ Hugh was joined by a number of other high-ranking men, including Ralph of Fontanellis and Walter Brisebarre, lord of Beirut.²⁴ The revolt

¹⁹ Fulk's first wife died in 1126. According to William of Tyre, Baldwin consulted with various leaders of the kingdom, both secular and ecclesiastic on the matter of Melisende's marriage. *Chronique*, 2:633 William of Buris, prince of Galilee and Guy of Brisebarre, lord of Beirut, led the embassy sent West to approach Fulk. Mayer, "The Succession to Baldwin II of Jerusalem," 140. Prior to his departure, Fulk transferred control of his lands in France to his son, Geoffrey. Kathryn Dutton, "Crusading and Political Culture under Geoffrey, Count of Anjou and Duke of Normandy, 1129–51," *French Historical Studies* 29 (2015): 414–444.

²⁰ Mayer argues that Baldwin altered the original agreement, an illustration of the strength of the monarchy by the end of his reign. Mayer, "Wheel of Fortune," 865. His conclusion echoes that of Steven Tibble, *Monarchy and Lordships in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, 1099–1291* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); and Natasha Hodgson, *Women, Crusading and the Holy Land in Historical Narrative* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2007), 75. Bernard Hamilton rejects Mayer's argument based on his evaluation of the language in the charters issued in the years preceding Baldwin's death. He cites in particular a charter issued in 1130 by Baldwin, Fulk and Melisende to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. See: Bernard Hamilton, "Women in the Crusader States: The Queens of Jerusalem (1100–1190)," *Studies in Church History: Subsidia* 1 (1978): 149; and *ULK*, nos. 124, 287–90.

²¹ *Chronique*, 2:634, describes the joint coronation and consecration of Fulk and Melisende. Previous coronations had taken place at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. However, Fulk and Melisende were actively involved in the renovation and reconstruction of the Holy Sepulchre, altering the architectural footprint of the church to integrate several holy sites into a single structure. According to Folda, their attention was part of a larger attempt to transform the Holy Sepulchre into a "state church" where Jerusalem's kings were crowned and buried. Jaroslav Folda, "Melisende of Jerusalem: Queen and Patron of Art and Architecture in the Crusader Kingdom," in *Reassessing the Roles of Women 'Makers' of Medieval Art and Architecture*, ed. Therese Martin (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 460.

²² While these charters cannot be dated precisely, Mayer provides a possible range. See: *ULK*, nos. 128, 297–298; and *ULK*, nos. 131, 303–304.

²³ Hugh had solidified his position among the elite of the kingdom by marrying Emma, the widow of Eustace Grenarius. His elevated status was reflected not only in his command of a seal, but also in his use of the title count of Jaffa in charters. Alan V. Murray, *The Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem: A Dynastic History, 1099–1125* (Oxford: Prosopographica et Genealogica, 2000), 131. See also: Jonathan Riley-Smith, "Families, Crusades and Settlement in the Latin East, 1102–1131," in *Die Kreuzfahrerstaaten als multikulturelle Gesellschaft*, ed. H.E. Mayer and Elisabeth Muller-Luckner (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1997), 1–12. Although he initially enjoyed support, Hugh's attempt to ally with Muslims in Ascalon alienated the others. Fulk commuted his death sentence into a three-year exile, but Hugh died of stab wounds before he could return to the kingdom. John la Monte, "The Lords of Le Puiset in the Crusades," *Speculum* 17 (1942): 100–118.

²⁴ According to Mayer, Walter was forced into exile by Fulk in 1132/33 due to his support of Melisende. He was

is described by William of Tyre as stemming from familial disputes, alluding to the existence of an improper relationship between Melisende and her cousin Hugh.²⁵ However, Orderic Vitalis makes no mention of a marital rift between Fulk and Melisende. Rather, he attributes the revolt to Fulk's attempt to replace "veteran defenders" of the kingdom with "Angevin strangers and other raw newcomers." As a result, "they turned their warlike skills, which they should have united to exercise against the heathen, to rend themselves."²⁶

Most scholars, while differing slightly in their interpretation of events, agree that the revolt was caused by Fulk's attempt to introduce a "conception of royal power" that the nobles of the kingdom opposed.²⁷ Queen Melisende became the focal point of their opposition. As the daughter and designated heir of Baldwin II, Melisende embodied the interests of the older nobility of the kingdom, who resented their marginalization by Fulk and his disregard for the precedents established by Baldwin II.²⁸ The events of 1133 clearly indicate that Baldwin's designation of Fulk and Melisende as co-rulers was accepted and supported by the majority of nobles in the Latin East, who rejected the new king's vision of solo rule in favor of corporate monarchy.

The revolt against the king proved short lived due to the strain it placed on the already strained kingdom. Hugh was exonerated of charges of treason, but forced into a temporary exile from the kingdom of Jerusalem, dying shortly later of wounds inflicted during an assassination attempt. While the departure of Hugh signalled the end of military hostilities, personal hostilities lingered at court. According to William of Tyre, who provides a rare glimpse into the dynamics animating the royal court in the months following the revolt, the ire of the Queen was frequently directed against Fulk's supporters, whom she held responsible for the rupture: "From that time on, all who had informed against the count and thereby incited the king to wrath fell under the displeasure of Queen Melisende and were forced to take diligent measures for their safety. Even the king found that no place was entirely safe among the kindred and partisans of the queen."²⁹ Eventually, "through the mediation of certain

reinstated in 1143 by Melisende immediately following Fulk's death. H.E. Mayer, "The Wheel of Fortune: Seigneurial Vicissitudes under Kings Fulk and Baldwin III of Jerusalem," *Speculum* 65 (1990): 860–877; and Alan V. Murray, "Baldwin II and his Nobles," *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 38 (1994): 60–85. They may have been joined by Romanus of Le Puy, though the dating of his revolt is inexact. It is of note that many of these disaffected nobles sought refuge with Melisende's sister, Alice, the former Countess of Antioch. Alice herself had challenged Fulk immediately following his succession to the throne in 1129 in her second attempt to seize control of the principality. After her failure she was confined to her dower lands at Latakia. Hodgson, *Women, Crusading and the Holy Land*, 184. The most comprehensive study of Alice's role in the politics of the Latin East is provided by Asbridge, "Alice of Antioch: A case study of female power in the twelfth century," in *The Experience of Crusading*, ed. Peter Edbury and Jonathan Philips (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 2:29–47.

²⁵ *Chronique*, 2:652.

²⁶ *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, ed. Marjorie Chibnall (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), vol. 6, book 12, 391. Although William of Tyre was writing from closer geographical proximity to these events, his chronological distance was greater, as he was writing approximately fifty years later. His meticulous examination of the charter evidence leads Mayer to support the version of events provided by Orderic. See: H.E. Mayer, "Angevins versus Normans: The New Men of King Fulk of Jerusalem," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 133 (1989): 1–25.

²⁷ Murray, "Baldwin II and his Nobles," 82; Murray, "Women in the Royal Succession of the Latin Kingdom," 141; Mayer, "The Wheel of Fortune," 865.

²⁸ Mayer, "Angevins versus Normans," 4.

²⁹ William of Tyre specifically identifies Rohard the Elder, the viscount of Jerusalem, as the target of Queen's

intimate friends” the king and queen were reconciled.³⁰ Melisende’s demeanor after the rift was mended suggests she felt no remorse for her role in events, but rather felt vindicated by the outcome of the rebellion and her restoration to power. As William of Tyre reports, “Her wrath was appeased and the king...succeeded in gaining a pardon for the other objects of her wrath—at least to such an extent that they could be introduced into her presence with others.”³¹ Melisende’s restoration to the position of power envisioned for her by her father is reflected in the charters that were issued after their rift was mended. Fulk’s days of governing solo had come to an end. Between 1133 and 1143, the couple issued ten charters in which Melisende was described as “regine.”³² A number of these charters included the affirmation of their son Baldwin, further attesting to the practice of corporate monarchy in the kingdom.³³

The extant narrative sources confirm Melisende’s active participation in the kingdom’s affairs in the decade following her reconciliation with King Fulk. William of Tyre attributes the successful siege of Banyas to the zealous efforts of the Queen, aided by the vigorous work of those who were left in the kingdom during Fulk’s extended absence with the royal army.³⁴ Written sources attesting to a successful reconciliation between the two are supplemented by additional evidence of an emotional bond, including the magnificent prayer book Fulk commissioned for his wife, known as the Melisende Psalter, and the birth of their second son, Amalric, in 1136.³⁵ Additionally, Fulk and Melisende co-founded the abbey of Bethany, which was entrusted to the governance of Melisende’s youngest sister, Iveta. The couple also directed donations to a number of other religious communities throughout their realm, and were active in the renovation and reconstruction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the architectural epicenter of the city of Jerusalem.³⁶

The practice of joint rule established in 1131 by Baldwin II and affirmed (albeit belatedly) by Fulk remained in place after the King’s untimely death in 1143. With the consent of the high court, Melisende continued in her role as Queen, and her eldest son Baldwin replaced Fulk as King.³⁷ The narrative evidence describes a corporate approach to governing in

animosity for his role in marginalizing her from government. *Chronique*, 2:655. Interestingly, Rohard later became one of Melisende’s staunchest advocates during the civil war instigated by Baldwin III. Mayer, “Angevins versus Normans,” 11.

³⁰ *Chronique*, 2:656.

³¹ *Chronique*, 2:656.

³² La Monte, *Feudal Monarchy in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem 1100 to 1291* (Cambridge, MA: Medieval Academy of American, 1932), 11. *ULK*, April 1136, no. 132, 308–9; *ULK*, 1136, no. 133, 308–9; *ULK*, 1136, no. 135, 31–14; *ULK*, 5 Feb 1138, no. 138, 315–21; Rozière, *Cart. du St. Sepulchre*, 1138, no. 31, p. 57–8; *Cart. du St. Sepulchre*, 1138, no. 32, 58–9; *Cart. Gen. des Hospitaliers*, 3 Feb 1143, no. 139, 109; *Cart. de St. Lazare*, 1142, no. 2, 123–4.

³³ *ULK*, 1138, no. 138, 315–321; *ULK*, 1138, no. 139, issued on behalf of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre: “Ego Fulco per dei gratiam rex Latinorum tercius Iherusalem una cum assensu Milisendis regine uxoris mee et Balduini filii mei,” 321–323; *ULK*, 1138 no 141, 325–326; *ULK*, 1142, no. 146, 333–334 and no. 150, 336–338.

³⁴ *Chronique*, 2:751.

³⁵ Exact details of its origination and production are not known, but art historians concur that it was Fulk who commissioned it after their breach. Jaroslav Folda, “A Twelfth-Century Prayerbook for the Queen of Jerusalem,” *Medieval Perspectives* 8 (1993): 1–13. Bianca Kühnel argues that many of the images that adorn the covers are “expressions of the reconciliatory atmosphere dominating the relations between Fulk and Melisende in the year 1136.” See: Bianca Kühnel, “The Kingly Statement of the Bookcovers of Queen Melisende’s Psalter,” *Tesserae: Festschrift Für Josef Engemann* (Munster: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1991), 353.

³⁶ See note 18.

³⁷ La Monte, *Feudal Monarchy in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem*, 15: “Baldwin and Melisende were both crowned, and

which Melisende and Baldwin shared power, dividing duties accordingly. In his description of the events following Fulk's death, William of Tyre described Melisende as acting "by hereditary right" in assuming "the care and administration of the realm."³⁸ The nature of their governing arrangement is reflected in the account of Ibn al-qalanisi: "In this year also came the news from the neighbourhood of the Franks of the death of the Count of Anjou, king of Jerusalem. ... His minor son and the boy's mother were appointed to the kingship in his place."³⁹ Clearly, the narrative evidence reveals a corporate approach to governing in which Melisende and Baldwin shared power, dividing duties along lines similar to those that defined the government of Melisende and Fulk.

The charter evidence supports the characterization of monarchy in Jerusalem as corporate in nature, providing a glimpse of the ways Melisende and Baldwin effectively co-managed the kingdom for nearly a decade. Between 1143 and 1150, Melisende issued numerous charters in conjunction with or affirmed by Baldwin.⁴⁰ In a charter issued 22 June 1150, Melisende, described as queen of Jerusalem, confirmed an exchange of properties involving the convent of St. Lazarus. A second charter was issued by Baldwin sometime later in that year confirming the same transaction.⁴¹ Other charters were issued jointly, such as that issued in February 1147 confirming a donation made to the Hospitallers and dated "anno ab incarnatione domini nostri Jhesu Cristi MCXLVII regnante feliciter supradicto rege Balduino et matre sua regina Milisenda."⁴² On many of these occasions, her younger son Amalric was included as well, further testimony to the extent to which governing in Jerusalem was a family affair. This is illustrated by a charter issued 4 July 1147 by Baldwin, Melisende "ejus mater, eadem gratia eorumdem regina" and Amalric "regis frater and regine filius."⁴³

the double rule which Melisende before had shared with her husband she now shared with her son." In spite of the evidence supporting the existence of co-rule, the language used throughout Mayer's article reflects his view of Melisende as usurping authority. She is repeatedly described in ways I would consider extraordinarily gendered, more reflective of modern notions about female power than those of the Latin East in the twelfth century. Mayer, "Studies in the History of Queen Melisende." This, however, contrasts views presented by Mayer elsewhere, in which he describes Baldwin III challenging "the system of joint rule established for Fulk and Melisende by Baldwin II." For example, see: Mayer, "Wheel of Fortune," 865.

³⁸ *Chronique*, 2:711.

³⁹ Ibn al-qalanisi also provides a sense of how Melisende's contemporaries in the kingdom of Jerusalem viewed the governing arrangement, stating "the Franks were satisfied with this and his position was established." *The Damascus Chronicle of the Crusades. Extracted and Translated from the Chronicle of Ibn Al-Qalanisi*, ed. H.A.R. Gibb (New York: Dover Publications, 2011), 265.

⁴⁰ *ULK*, 1144, no. 169, 349; *ULK* 1145, no. 170, 349; *ULK*, 1 February 1146, no. 171, 350; *ULK*, 19 February 1146, no. 172, 350; *ULK*, 1149, no. 175, 351–54; *ULK*, no. 176, 355. This list is intended to be illustrative, not exhaustive.

⁴¹ While the existence of two distinct charters has been cited as evidence of discord between mother and son, I would suggest that the first charter was issued by Melisende while Baldwin was on campaign. We know that Baldwin travelled north to Edessa in spring of 1150 to supervise the evacuation of the city after Count Joscelin was captured in May and control was transferred to the Byzantines. It was only after affairs in the north were settled that Baldwin returned to Jerusalem, turning his attention to the various domestic matters that had transpired during his absence. It seems logical that following his return, Baldwin would have consulted with the Queen about internal matters, confirming transactions that occurred during his absence accordingly. Mayer, "Studies in the History of Queen Melisende," 115. In this respect, Baldwin's later confirmation would have been routine, rather than an indication of discord.

⁴² *Cart. Gen. des Hospitaliers*, no. 173, 135–136.

⁴³ *Cart. Gen. des Hospitaliers*, no 175, 136–137 and *ULK*, no. 173, 350 for examples.

However, the arrangement that had been in effect since 1143 was disrupted in 1152. Though the precise catalyst remains unknown, tension had been brewing for some time between mother and a son, resulting in the open conflict described earlier. William of Tyre identified two main causes of the rift. The primary reason was growing dislike of Manasses of Hierges, Melisende's cousin. A relative newcomer to the region, Manasses had been appointed constable of Jerusalem by Melisende following Fulk's death.⁴⁴ Manasses' recent marriage to the widow of Balian of Ibelin, one of the 'oldest' families in the region, may have served as a catalyst for Baldwin's decision to alter the ruling dynamic that had been in place for nearly a decade. Perhaps related to the resentment of Manasses was the attempt by certain unnamed nobles to turn Baldwin against Melisende, convincing him that ending their current arrangement was in his best interest and encouraging him to rule the kingdom solo. The decision of Baldwin to resort to military action suggests that any attempts to resolve the issue diplomatically had failed. If he did personally request that Melisende demote her cousin, his request fell on deaf ears. According to William of Tyre, it was only after Melisende refused to dismiss Manasses from his office that the breach erupted into open hostilities.⁴⁵ It is possible that Melisende, in her continued support of Manasses, became collateral damage, targeted directly by Baldwin as the situation spiraled out of control.

When Baldwin first expressed his dissatisfaction with the current situation and demanded he alone wear the crown, he encountered opposition among many leading nobles and ecclesiastical officials, including Patriarch Fulcher of Jerusalem. Initially, the kingdom was formally divided, with Melisende retaining control in the south, including the city of Jerusalem, and Baldwin controlling the north. This compromise failed to appease Baldwin, who resorted to a military attack on his mother Melisende and her supporters, forcing her to concede her rights to the kingdom.⁴⁶ In spite of the continued support of leaders of the church, she did not have enough allies among the nobility to resist Baldwin militarily. Any prolonged breach within the kingdom would make an eventual reconciliation more difficult, jeopardizing future attempts to wield power as well as the safety of the kingdom. Such considerations undoubtedly prompted her capitulation and decision to retire to Nablus.

Scholarly examinations of the conflicts that disrupted the royal family in Jerusalem, first between Fulk and Melisende, and then between Baldwin III and Melisende, tend to position the Queen as the usurper, attempting to wrest power from the men to whom it rightfully belonged. H.E. Mayer's depiction of events adopts this stance, employing gendered language discounting Melisende's position not warranted by the contemporary evidence.⁴⁷ While I do not question that such conflict occurred, I present an alternative interpretation, one that provides a more accurate read of the evidence while simultaneously explaining how such rifts were so easily mended. Baldwin II's designation of his daughter as co-ruler of the kingdom was widely accepted by the nobles, explaining the degree of the hostility directed at Fulk when he tried to usurp her authority. Similarly, if Melisende is accepted as co-ruler rather

⁴⁴ H.E. Mayer, "Manasses of Hierges in East and West," *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 66 (1988): 757–766; Murray, "Kingship, Identity and Name-Giving," 31.

⁴⁵ *Chronique*, 2:775–777.

⁴⁶ This is consistent with the view proffered by Hamilton, who argues that Melisende "was not a regent clinging tenaciously to power after the heir had reached his majority, but the acknowledged co-ruler of the kingdom." Hamilton, "Crusader Queens," 152.

⁴⁷ Mayer, "Studies in the History of Queen Melisende of Jerusalem."

than regent, Baldwin III, not Melisende, would have been viewed by contemporaries as usurping authority in this moment. Melisende was merely acting in accordance with the terms of joint rule dictated by a corporate model of monarchy envisioned by her father, Baldwin II and ideally suited to the demands of governing in the volatile Crusader States.

Historians have often noted the added importance assigned to the king's ability to lead his army into battle in the Latin East, where success over their Muslim foes was as symbolic as it was necessary.⁴⁸ The King of Jerusalem did not just wage wars of conquest. Any battles in which he engaged were understood as Holy War, a continuation of the effort to expand Christendom. Yet, while defense of the realm was central to the King's identity, the extended absences from the capital that resulted could prove problematic. Malcolm Barber estimates that in one seven-year span early in his reign, Baldwin II spent less than 40% of his time in the Kingdom of Jerusalem⁴⁹ Alan Murray argues that Baldwin's repeated forays north into Antioch to secure the region after the death of its Prince proved exceedingly disruptive to government, earning him the animosity of many of his nobles. In fact, Murray suggests that at a certain point, the nobility of Jerusalem grew so resentful of Baldwin's neglect of the kingdom's affairs that they offered the crown to Charles, count of Flanders.⁵⁰

Like his predecessor, King Fulk was also frequently absent from Jerusalem, repeatedly drawn north to deal with the deteriorating conditions around Antioch. In 1133, the King led an army north in response to an appeal by Pons, count of Tripoli, who was trapped in the siege of Montferrand.⁵¹ After liberating Pons, Fulk continued north to Antioch, where he spent several months managing the county's affairs in his capacity as regent. Fulk traveled to Antioch again in the summer of 1135 to ensure the peaceful transmission of power to Raymond of Poitiers, summoned from France to marry Constance, the nine-year-old heiress of the county. The marriage was opposed by Alice, Constance's mother and Melisende's sister, who harbored ambitions of her own in regard to ruling Antioch.⁵² The union of Raymond and Constance effectively foiled Alice's ambitions, forcing her into permanent retirement to her lands in Latakia.⁵³ However, it failed to stabilize the region. Two years later Fulk was back at Montferrand, trapped inside the fortress by the local Muslim leader, Zengi. After holding out for several months, Fulk acknowledged the futility of his situation, surrendering to Zengi in July.⁵⁴ He experienced a welcome reversal of fortune in 1139, leading a successful campaign into Gilead alongside the crusading forces of Count Thierry of Flanders and capturing Banyas in Galilee.⁵⁵ All of these campaigns necessitated Fulk's extended absence from the royal court in Jerusalem.

Like his grandfather and father before him, King Baldwin III was repeatedly lured north, especially after the fall of Edessa in 1144. The situation worsened in 1149 with the death

⁴⁸ Gerish, "Holy War, Royal Wives, and Equivocation in Twelfth-Century Jerusalem," 137.

⁴⁹ Malcolm Barber, *The Crusader States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 137.

⁵⁰ Murray, "Baldwin II and his Nobles," 65: "Justice could not function properly if the king was not present to hold court." See also Riley-Smith, "Families, Crusades and Settlement in the Latin East, 1102-1131," 1-12.

⁵¹ Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, 2:204.

⁵² Claster, *Sacred Violence*, 143. This was Alice's third, and final, attempt to seize control of Antioch. See: Asbridge, "Alice of Antioch: a case study of female power in the twelfth century," 29-47.

⁵³ Runicman, *A History of the Crusades*, 2:204; and Claster, *Sacred Violence*, 144.

⁵⁴ Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, 2:205.

⁵⁵ Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, 2: 227.

of Raymond, Prince of Antioch, forcing the King to spend extended amounts of time attempting to stabilize the north. Baldwin III travelled north to Antioch again in 1152 in a failed attempt to convince his cousin Constance to remarry. He returned to Jerusalem briefly in 1153 before embarking on a campaign in the south targeting the city of Ascalon. As the discussion above indicates, Baldwin III was drawn away from the capital nearly as often as his predecessors, embroiled in numerous military campaigns to secure the safety of the region.

Unlike Baldwin II, however, neither Fulk nor Baldwin III were ever criticized by the nobles of Jerusalem for neglecting the kingdom. I would argue that this was because the presence of Melisende at the royal court prevented the disruption of routine government services. This division of duties that joint rule allowed, and its effectiveness, was described in the history of the kings of Jerusalem. The author explained how “His mother, queen Melisende, ruled the kingdom so faithfully in domestic affairs so that those kings (Fulk and Baldwin) could attend freely to arms and making war.”⁵⁶ As this quote indicates, a corporate approach to ruling was particularly conducive to the political culture of the Latin East, where the King was consumed by the demands of defending the kingdom. Having a stable presence in the royal court in the person of the Queen provided the continuity in administration that would otherwise have been lacking.

Willing to fight for her right to rule, Melisende privileged the good of the kingdom over her personal aspirations when challenged by Baldwin III, choosing to withdraw over a prolonged military conflict that would have inflicted severe damage on the kingdom. In doing so, however, she was able to dictate the terms of her surrender and retain control of key territories along the coast. The Queen’s personal and political calculations proved astute, as the rift between Melisende and Baldwin was quickly mended. Although the pace of their political reconciliation lagged behind the personal, it did eventually occur. Melisende was summoned in 1152 to attend the council of Tripoli, called by Baldwin to secure a husband for his recently widowed cousin, Constance of Antioch.⁵⁷ Constance’s husband would, through her, assume the title Prince of Antioch and the responsibilities of defending the much-beleaguered north, subject in recent months to incessant Muslim attacks. Baldwin feared that without a strong military leader, Antioch would follow the path of the County of Edessa, recaptured by Muslims just several years earlier in 1144.⁵⁸ Baldwin clearly hoped that the presence of her two

⁵⁶ Charles Kohler, “Histoire anonyme des rois de Jerusalem,” *Revue de L’Orient Latin* 5 (1897), 235–236: “Cujus mater, regina Milicenda, tempore suo et sui patris quasi XXXannis regnum in yconomicis satis fideliter rexit ut ispi reges liberius armis et factis bellicis intendere possent.”

⁵⁷ Marriage law in the Latin East was unique in presenting heiresses a pool of three candidates from which to choose a new husband. By the council of Tripoli, however, Constance had rejected all three possibilities, straining the patience of her cousin King Baldwin as well as the nobles of Antioch. James A. Brundage, “Marriage Law in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem,” in *Outremer: Studies in the history of the crusading kingdom of Jerusalem presented to Joshua Prawer*, ed. B.Z. Kedar, H.E. Mayer and R.C. Smail (Jerusalem: Izhak Ben-Zvi Institute, 1982), 258–271; and Peter Edbury, “Women and the customs of the High Court of Jerusalem according to John of Ibelin,” in *Chemins d’outre-mer* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2004), 285–292.

⁵⁸ *Chronique*, 2:772–773: “There was no one to offer powerful protection against the dangers which threatened them. Constance the widow of Prince Raymond, had been left with two sons and two daughters in some charge of the state and principality, but there was no leader to undertake the duties of the prince and to rouse the people from their state of dejection.” Hodgson, *Women, Crusading and the Holy Land*, 221, says Baldwin “persistently asked her to do so, fearing that Antioch would suffer the same fate as Edessa because he was unable to provide personally for the protection of the principality.”

aunts, Melisende and Hodierna of Tripoli, would force Constance to bow to the matrimonial pressure applied by the council. His calculations, however, proved to be inaccurate as Constance remained intransigent in her refusal to accept the proffered candidates, choosing instead Reynald of Châtillon several years later.⁵⁹

Shortly after Tripoli, Baldwin moved on to attack Ascalon, laying siege to the city from January to August of 1153.⁶⁰ While the capture of the city was among the greatest accomplishments of his reign, it too required an extended absence from the capital in Jerusalem. The Queen was ideally suited to manage affairs during his absence, which would explain the number of charters issued in the years after 1152 in which Melisende appears, either alone or granting consent to the actions of Baldwin. During this period Melisende issued four charters in her own name and appeared in conjunction with or consenting to eight charters issued by “her beloved son” Baldwin. In 1156 Baldwin was again drawn north by a Muslim resurgence under Nur al-Din. The arrival of Count Thierry of Flanders and 400 knights from the West in 1157 provided an infusion of much needed forces and the opportunity to turn the tide in the north. The next few months witnessed intense campaigning near Shaizar, culminating in the capture of Harenc in February 1158 and a resounding defeat of Nur al-Din near Lake Tiberias in July.

Melisende’s involvement in internal political affairs continued to escalate as Baldwin intensified his military campaigns across the Crusader States. In addition to issuing a number of significant charters related to properties around Nablus, Melisende provided her consent to a grant of lands and castles made by Humphrey of Toron to the Hospitallers. She was also involved in important negotiations pertaining to the rights of Pisans in the city of Tyre in 1156.⁶¹ William of Tyre relates that while Baldwin was campaigning in Syria, Melisende dispatched royal troops to attack a Muslim controlled fortress along the Jordan River.⁶² She remained active in ecclesiastical affairs as well, conspiring with her aunt Sybil of Flanders and her sister Iveta, Abbess of Bethany, to orchestrate the election of Amaury as Patriarch of Jerusalem in November, 1157.⁶³ Melisende was also actively involved in marriage preparations for her niece, Melisende of Tripoli, betrothed to Emperor Manuel Comnenus in 1159. Although the marriage never occurred (Manuel jilted Melisende in favor of her cousin, Maria of Antioch), Melisende’s role in securing an alliance between Jerusalem and the Byzantine empire provides further evidence of her influence in political affairs in the decade after the breach with Baldwin.⁶⁴ Although the practice of co-rule introduced by Baldwin II was effectively terminated by Baldwin III when he forcibly removed Melisende from power, her

⁵⁹ See: Erin L. Jordan, “Women of Antioch: Political Culture and Female Rule in the Latin East,” in *Medieval Elite Women and the Exercise of Power, 1100–1400*, ed. Heather Tanner (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), 225–246.

⁶⁰ Hamilton argues that Melisende and Baldwin were not reconciled until after the conquest of Ascalon. It is unclear why. Based on Melisende’s presence at the council of Antioch in 1152, I believe their reconciliation occurred earlier. Hamilton, “Crusader Queens,” 155.

⁶¹ *Documenti sulle relazioni delle città toscane coll’oriente cristiano e coi Turchi fino all’anno 1531*, ed. G. Müller (Florence: Società multigrafica editrice, 1966), no. 5, 6–7.

⁶² Hamilton, “Crusader Queens,” 155.

⁶³ Erin L. Jordan, “Hostage, Sister, Abbess: The Edgy Life of Iveta of Jerusalem,” *Medieval Prosopography* 32 (2017): 66–86.

⁶⁴ *O City of Byzantium: The Annals of Niketas Choniates*, trans. Harry J. Magoulias (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1984), 65–66.

later return to government, albeit in a diminished capacity, suggests Baldwin's appreciation for the advantages offered by corporate monarchy.⁶⁵

Examining moments of conflict, and more importantly those of reconciliation, among the royal family of Jerusalem in the twelfth century demonstrates the extent to which medieval monarchy was both fluid and contingent. Contrary to what some scholars have argued, medieval modes of governing were never static nor uniform, but could be adjusted to the demands of a particular time and place, responding to the unique political culture of a particular region.⁶⁶ The type of corporative governance reflected in the charter and narrative sources cited here would have been especially suited to the Kingdom of Jerusalem, which posed a peculiar set of challenges to its rulers. In many respects, the Crusader States in the twelfth century resembled the various kingdoms of the Mediterranean more so than the more established and stable monarchies of Western Europe.⁶⁷ Although embroiled in the occasional internal conflict, Western Europe's kings seldom faced the type of sustained military pressure exerted by the Muslim armies on the frontiers of the Crusader States. As mentioned earlier, Jerusalem's kings did not just provide military leadership, but their presence at the head of an army, alongside the relic of the True Cross, was exceptionally symbolic. Studies of the role of gender in the Latin East have argued that their inability to lead an army is precisely what precluded women from exercising real power, confining them to transmitting authority to men rather than actually exercising it themselves.⁶⁸ I believe this is an oversimplification, as well as a failure to appreciate the corporate and contingent nature of feudal monarchy.⁶⁹ Based on the evidence examined here, I would argue that the association of men with warfare, combined with the extreme volatility of the Latin East, facilitated, rather than circumscribed, the ability of women to actively govern.⁷⁰ The frequent and extended absences of the king from the royal court which resulted with his preoccupation with military activity could have easily strained the administration of domestic affairs. The presence of the queen ensured stability. Not only was corporate monarchy ideally suited to governing the Latin East, but it provided Baldwin II with

⁶⁵ H.E. Mayer interprets the evidence of Melisende's continued involvement in government after 1152, most notably the charters in which she appears, as evidence of Baldwin's desire to spare his mother "public humiliation." He suggests that in the first part of the decade, her involvement was limited to events of a personal or familial nature. Yet even he acknowledges the difficulty of explaining the extent of her political influence in 1156–1157. Mayer, "Studies in the History of Queen Melisende," 172–173.

⁶⁶ Steven Runciman, *The Families of Outremer: The Feudal Nobility of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem, 1099–1291* (London: Athlone Press, 1960), 5–7.

⁶⁷ See note 9.

⁶⁸ Helen A. Gaudette, *The Piety, Power and Patronage of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem's Queen Melisende*, 108; Deborah Gerish, "Holy War, Royal Wives, and Equivocation in Twelfth-Century Jerusalem," 123. Murray advances a similar position regarding queens in the Crusader States generally. Murray, "Women in the Royal Succession of the Latin Kingdom," 134. I believe these views underappreciate the role played by women in governing by underestimating the corporate nature of monarchy in the kingdom.

⁶⁹ This echoes the argument presented by Theresa Earenfight, *The King's Other Body: Maria of Castile and the Crown of Aragon* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 13.

⁷⁰ Sylvia Schein, "Women in Medieval Colonial Society: The Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem in the Twelfth Century," in *Gendering the Crusades*, ed. Susan B. Edgington and Sarah Lambert (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), 148. See also: Natasha Hodgson, "Nobility, women and historical narratives of the crusades and the Latin East," *Al-Masaq: Journal of the Medieval Mediterranean* 17, no. 1 (2005), 61–85, who argues that "the absence of women from the battlefield did not completely exclude them from the political or administrative authority associated with noble duties" (63).

a solution to his succession predicament. He could secure the future of his dynasty even in the absence of a son. In spite of many personal ties to Western Europe, it seems that the political culture of the Latin East was more closely aligned with the Mediterranean kingdoms, where the demands of territorial expansion prompted the formation of political partnerships between kings and queens, underscoring the potential efficacy of corporate monarchy.⁷¹

⁷¹ Earenfight, "Absent Kings," 33.