

**On Hungarian-Serbian Relations in the Thirteenth Century:  
John Angelos and Queen Jelena**

Although the identity of Jelena, Queen of Serbia (d. 1314), has long been a subject of study, it has remained a matter of speculation and hypothesis unproven by argument from written sources<sup>1</sup>. In this paper I would like to propose that she was the eldest daughter of a Hungarian nobleman, John Angelos, ruler of Srem. First I shall show that John Angelos was married to a Frenchwoman named Matildis, who was of the Courtenay family, and that they had a daughter Maria. Then I shall argue that this Maria was Maria de Chau, sister of Jelena, and that the identity of Jelena as daughter of John Angelos and Matildis agrees with both documentary evidence and the geopolitics of mid-thirteenth century Serbia.

I

Pope Innocent IV issued a dispensation<sup>2</sup> and marriage license<sup>3</sup> to Maria and Anselm de Keu dated 15 August 1253 and 13 January 1254 respectively. The first document names Maria's mother as Matildis of Požega, daughter of the Countess of Vianden (... *inter Anselmum de Keu ac Mariam, natam Matildis dominae de Posaga, natae comitissae Viennensis*). The second document states that Maria's father was the late Calojohannes (... *Maria, nate quondam Calojohanni*), or John Angelos, Count or Duke of Srem. Matildis was a daughter of Margaret of Namur and Henri, Count of Vianden, and was not known in any other source. It would be possible that her mother was the Countess of Vienne (*Viennensis*) were Matildis not described as the niece of the Latin Emperor of Constantinople (*imperatore Constatinopolitano, ejusdem Matildis avunculo*). In 1253 this was Baldwin II, brother of Margaret of Namur. Therefore the above identification appears to be reliable. Since Matildis is apparently unknown to her contemporaries and to modern scholars alike, it is impossible to provide any definite information about her. However, it is possible to deduce some approximate chronology prior to 1254.

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<sup>1</sup> The major studies concerning Jelena are K. Mijatović, "Ko je kraljica Jelena", *Letos Matice srpske*, 217 (1902), pp. 1—30; G. Subotić, "Kraljica Jelena Anžujaska — ktitor crkvenih spomenika u Primorju", *Istorijski Glasnik*, 1958/1-2, pp. 131—147; and J. Allen, "An Unknown French Princess — Serbian Queen Jelena," paper delivered at the Fifteenth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies held 21—24 March 1981, Birmingham, England.

<sup>2</sup> *Les Registres d'Innocent IV*, E. Berger, ed., pt. 3, Paris (1897), p. 289, no. 6862.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 351, no. 7178.

Margaret of Namur was the daughter of Peter of Courtenay and Yolanda of Auxerre and Navarre, who were married in June 1193<sup>4</sup>. Margaret had four brothers and five sisters, as far as is known<sup>5</sup>. Her birth-date is unknown but she was most likely the eldest daughter, since she was made heiress of Namur upon the death of the last brother available in Hungary or Greece and therefore unlikely to return to Belgium. Her sisters were married between 1215 and 1219; she herself was likely married to Henri, Count of Vianden, before her mother's departure for Constantinople in 1217<sup>7</sup>. Therefore, it appears that she was born about 1200 and married about 1215. Besides Matildis, Margaret had at least four other children: Frederick; Philip, count of Vianden (1252—1272); Henri, bishop of Utrecht (1249—1267); and Yolanda<sup>8</sup>. Even if Matildis were the youngest, which might explain the lack of information about her in sources originating in the West, she could have been born between 1220 and 1225.

John Angelos was the son of Isaac II Angelos, Emperor of Byzantium, and Margaret of Hungary; he was born before 1205. There seems to be no mention of him before 1227, when the Pope asked him to keep his promise to crusade against the Bosnian heretics<sup>9</sup>. He first appears with the title of ruler of Srem and Count of Kovin in 1235 (*domino Sirmy et*

<sup>4</sup> On the date, see M. Walraet, ed., *Actes de Philippe Ier, dit le Noble, comte et marquis de Namur (1196—1212)*, Bruxelles (1949), p.3. On Margaret, see *Biographie Nationale de Belgique* (hereafter BNB), s. v. Marguerite de Courtenay, v. 13, cols. 629—631.

<sup>5</sup> Her brothers were Philip of Courtenay, Count of Namur (BNB 17: 319—320); Robert of Courtenay, Emperor of Constantinople (BNB 19: 422—425), Henri II, Count of Namur (BNB 9: 188) and Baldwin II, Emperor of Constantinople. Her sisters were Yolanda, married in 1215 to Andrew II, King of Hungary; Agnes, married to Geoffrey II Villehardouin, Prince of Achaia; Mary, married in 1219 to Theodore Lascaris, Emperor of Nicaea; Elizabeth, Married to Odo of Mantague and Chanly; and Sybilla, who became a nun.

<sup>6</sup> BNB 13: 629.

<sup>7</sup> Peter of Courtenay was crowned Emperor of Constantinople in April 1217 by Pope Honorius III. His wife was with him at the time and proceeded directly to Constantinople. Cf. R. L. Wolff, "The Latin Empire of Constantinople", in *A History of the Crusades*, v. II, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Madison (1969), p. 212.

<sup>8</sup> On Philip see BNB, v. 17; on Henri, see H. Bruch, *Chronographia Johannes de Bek*, 's-Gravenhage (1973), s.v. Henricus de Vigena.

<sup>9</sup> The first to identify John Angelos as the son of Isaac II Angelos and Margaret of Hungary was M. Wertner, "Margarethe von Ungarn, Kaiserin von Grichenland und Königin von Thessalonisch", *Vierteljahrsschrift für Wapen-, Siegel-, und Familienkunde* XVIII/2, Berlin (1890), pp. 219—255, esp. 224—226. Also on John Angelos, see M. Dinić, "Jovan Andjel 'dominus Syrmie'", *Glasnik Istoriskog Društva u Novom Sadu* 4 (1931), pp. 301—302; P. Rokai, "O jednom naslovu Kalojana Andjela", *Zbornik radova vizantologskog instituta* 19 (1980), pp. 167—170. The document cited is published by T. Smičiklas, *Codex Diplomaticus regni Croatiae, Dalmatie et Slavoniae* (hereafter CD), v 3, pp. 264—265, no. 238.

*comite de Kewe*)<sup>10</sup>. He died by the end of 1253, since his death was already known to the papal chancellery in mid-January 1254<sup>11</sup>.

It is unknown how Matildis was selected to marry John Angelos, when they were married or whether either had been married previously. I would like to suggest one possibility based upon circumstantial evidence. Margaret of Hungary, sister of King Andrew II and widow of both Isaac II Angelos and Boniface of Montserrat, returned to Hungary between 1217, when her rights to the Kingdom of Thessalonica were transferred to William of Montserrat<sup>12</sup>, and 1222, when she was given lands by her brother<sup>13</sup>. She most likely brought her son John with her at the time. His participation in the Bosnian crusade has already been noted, although it is unclear whether he actually carried out any military action. By 1235, as I have noted, John Angelos had succeeded his mother as ruler of Srem<sup>14</sup>, where he ruled until his death. Since the date of Margaret of Hungary's death is unknown, it is impossible to determine whether certain lands came into John Angelos' possession through inheritance, as claimed by Rokai<sup>15</sup>, or because of a change in his personal situation, namely, marriage to Matildis.

Matildis was quite likely selected as John Angelos' bride because of her dynastic connections. She was not only the niece of Baldwin II, but also the niece of Yolanda of Courtenay, second wife of Andrew II and sister-in-law of Margaret of Hungary. Thus the marriage of Matildis and John Angelos would have been considered a desirable match by the Hungarian court, and as such may have led to Margaret's yielding of her major possession, Srem, to the newlyweds. If this was the case, then Matildis and John Angelos were married in 1234 or 1235, and Maria was born after 1236.

Of Anselm de Keu, Maria's husband, nothing is known outside of the marriage. He was clearly French, since listing Maria's mother and grandmother in the dispensation document most likely indicates that the two were related along that line, and therefore, Anselm had some connection to the Courtenays. His appellation *de Keu* indicates that he was resident in, or held lands around, *Keu* (present-day Banoštor). This is all we can at present surmise about him. However, I would like to follow

<sup>10</sup> G. Fejér, *Codex Diplomaticus Hungariae*, v. 3, pt. 2, Buda (1829), p. 351. Cf. Wertner, *op. cit.*, p. 224.

<sup>11</sup> See document referred to in note 2.

<sup>12</sup> R. L. Wolff, *loc. cit.*

<sup>13</sup> P. Rokai, "Iz srednjovekovne istorije Novog Sada", *Zbornik Matice srpske za istoriju* 11 (1975), pp. 105-110, esp. 109.

<sup>14</sup> Margaret was in possession of Srem from 1229, when she was mentioned in a letter from Pope Gregory (CD, III, p. 305, no. 271).

<sup>15</sup> Rokai, *op. cit.*, merely states that by 1235 she no longer had control of Srem or other possessions such as *Varod*, *Perben*, *Camanc* (Kamenica) and *Zilzeng* (Susek). He does, however, state that John Angelos "inherited" Srem and other property (nasledio svoju majku), but that other possessions reverted to the crown "under otherwise unknown circumstances". Wertner, *op. cit.*, p. 248, was unable to find any documentary evidence on Margaret's death.

a suggestion of K. Jireček that Maria and Anselm de Keu might be the same as Maria and Anselm de Chau<sup>16</sup>, based upon the confirmation of the marriage of Anselm de Keu and Maria issued by Innocent IV's successor, Alexander IV. The confirmation was dated 15 January 1255 and addressed to *nobili viro Anselmo domino de Keu et Marie uxori ejus*. When combined with the preceding discussion, Jireček's suggestion leads to the proposal that Jelena, who was Maria de Chau's sister, was the daughter of John Angelos and Matildis of Požega.

## II

In an exhaustive examination of the question of Jelena's ancestry, K. Mijatović proposed the hypothesis that Jelena and Maria were the daughters of either Elizabeth of Montague or Raul of Courtenay. In so doing, he attempted both to take into account contemporary sources and to explain the conclusions of later historians<sup>17</sup>. It will be helpful to summarize his discussion before proceeding to the new hypothesis which I propose in this study.

Mijatović cited three contemporary sources that include some information on Jelena's ancestry. Her biographer, Archbishop Danilo II, stated only that she was of a French family (ot plemene fruškaago, d'šti sušti slavnyju roditelju), while a continuator of his work added that the family was of royal or imperial blood (ot plemene carska)<sup>18</sup>. Charles I and Charles II of Anjou, Kings of Sicily and Naples, addressed Jelena and Maria de Chau as "cousins" or "relatives" in numerous documents (*consanguinea nostra carissima, cognata nostra, affinis nostra carissima*)<sup>19</sup>. The Byzantine historian Acropolites did not mention Helen by name but stated that Uroš I was the son-in-law of the Hungarian king (ton Hrōson Ourov, tou regos Ougrias epi thygatri telounta gambron)<sup>20</sup>.

Acropolites could not have been correct, Mijatović showed, since neither Andrew II nor Bela IV had daughters that could be identified

<sup>16</sup> K. Jireček, *Istorija Srba*, II, Beograd (1952), p. 265, note 67. This suggestion was based on the confirmation by Alexander IV of the dispensation issued by Innocent IV, allowing *Anselmo, domino de Keu et Mariae uxori ejus* to remain married. See *Les Registres d'Alexandre IV*, M. Bourel de la Roncière, ed., pt. 1, Paris (1895), p. 13, no. 48.

<sup>17</sup> Jireček concurred with Mijatović's dismissal of such theories as Jelena being the daughter of Baldwin II or Louis IX, but not with the proposal about Raoul or Elizabeth of Courtenay. Instead he suggested looking into the French ruling houses in Greece.

<sup>18</sup> *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih*, Dj. Daničić, ed., Beograd (1866), reprinted Variorum, London (1973), p. 58, lines 9-10 (59. 9-10). The continuator's comment is found on 8.14.

<sup>19</sup> Excerpted in V. Makushev, »Ital'ianskie arkhivy i khраниashchiesia v nikh materialy dlia slavianskoi istorii,« *Sbornik Otdeleniia Russkogo Iazyka i Slovesnosti*, VIII/4 (1871), pp. 30-33.

<sup>20</sup> *Georgius Acropolites, Opera*, I. A. Heisenberg, ed., Stuttgart (1903), reprinted Stuttgart (1978), p. 127, lines 2-3 (from chapter 62 of *Hronike syggrafe*).

as Jelena and Maria, and furthermore, no contemporary or later Hungarian historian mentioned a marriage of a daughter to Uroš, which surely would have been done. Mijatović also dismissed claims that Jelena was the daughter of Louis IV of France or Baldwin II, or that she was related to the families of Chauris or Chieriz.

The Serbian and Latin sources led Mijatović to the Courtenay family, rulers of the Latin Empire of Constantinople, and relatives of the French royal family and the house of Anjou. Besides these obvious connections to the French and Anjou ruling houses, there, was also a connection to the Hungarian royal house, since a Courtenay was married to the Hungarian king. Mijatović's attention was drawn first to Elizabeth, a sister of Baldwin II and the second wife of Odon of Montague and Chanly. Citing Baldwin's letter of August 1243 to Blanche of France requesting assistance in persuading Elizabeth to send one of her daughters as the bride for the Sultan of Iconia (Rum), Mijatović noted that this marriage never took place, and suggested that perhaps one of these daughters might have been selected for Uroš (an important possible ally for both Hungary and the Latins in Greece). Raoul of Courtenay, son of Baldwin II's uncle Robert, and count of Chieti, was considered a possibility because of references to Maria de Chau as "de Chieriz" or "de Chiutiz"<sup>21</sup>. Neither hypothesis could be supported by documentary evidence, as Mijatović himself admitted, but his "conclusions", or correlations of the hypotheses with the contemporary sources and later traditions, were and remain sound: the house of Courtenay was closely related to the French royal house, hence a member of the house of Courtenay would be related to Louis IX and Charles I Anjou; Jelena would be related to Louis IX and Charles I Anjou; Jelena would be related to Baldwin II, hence a source could have mistaken her for his daughter; Jelena would be related by marriage to the Hungarian royal family, hence making it possible for Acropolites and some Serbian chronicles to state that she was the daughter of the Hungarian king.

There is now, however, a better candidate from the Courtenay family to consider as the parent of Jelena and Maria, namely Matildis of Požega. All of the reasons Mijatović cited for choosing a member of the Courtenay family remain valid, and indeed some are strengthened by the choice of Matildis. In particular, the Hungarian connection noted by Acropolites would be more supportable if Maria and Jelena were the daughters of Matildis and John Angelos, since the latter was a high-ranking Hungarian nobleman, and both he and his wife were closely tied to the Hungarian court.

Furthermore, there are some additional arguments which make Matildis a more likely possibility than either Elizabeth or Raoul. For example, we can be certain that Matildis had a daughter named Maria, whereas Raoul's only known daughter was named Mathaud or Matildis

<sup>21</sup> Mijatović cited here D. Farlati, *Illyricum Sacrum*, Venetiis (1817): VI, 440 (*de Domo Chieriz de Francia*) and VII, 59 (*de Domo Chiutiz*). For a discussion of these passages, see Subotić, *op. cit.*, pp. 138—140.

and the names of Elizabeth's daughters are not known. We know also that Maria was married in 1254, while it has been assumed that Jelena married Uroš I about 1250. Thus it is clear that they may well have been close in age.

Of central importance in the identification of Matildis as Jelena's mother is the marriage of Maria and Anselm de Keu and the possible identification of Anselm de Keu and Anselm de Chau. For if these two men were indeed one, then clearly Jelena's sister Maria de Chau and Maria, daughter of Matildis, were one and the same, and Jelena was also the daughter of Matildis.

There is no connection between Anselm de Keu and Anselm de Chau recorded in any source. The former is known, as far as I have been able to determine, solely from the three documents quoted above dating between 15 August 1253 and 15 January 1255. In the first and third documents his name is spelled *Keu*, while in the second it appears as *Quo*, both of which are attempts to approximate the original Hungarian name for Banoštor, derived from *kő* "rock"<sup>22</sup>. Anselm de Chau, the vicar general of Albania under Charles I Anjou, is cited in seven documents published from the Anjou archives dating between 13 May 1273 and 13 September 1274<sup>23</sup>. In the first two documents, 13 May and 23 May 1273, his name is given as *de Caen*; in the document dated 5 April 1274 it is *de Chaul* or *de Chaulis*; in all the others, it is *de Chau*.

One wonders why the name of the most important official of the Anjou "kingdom" in Albania was not known well enough at the Anjou chancellery to have been spelled more consistently. Anselm's predecessor, the first captain general in Albania, was more fortunate in this respect. Of eleven citations between 1271 and 1274, Gazoni Chinardo's name was spelled *Chinardo* in all but two, where it appeared as *Genardus* and *Chenardo*<sup>24</sup>. It seems to me that the consistency of the two occurrences of

<sup>22</sup> M. Dinić, "Županija 'Kewe' između Dunava i Fruške Gore", *Glasnik istorijskog društva u Novom Sadu* 8 (1935), pp. 94–95, reprinted in M. Dinić, *Srpske zemlje u srednjem veku*, S. Ćirković, ed., Beograd (1978), pp. 292–293.

<sup>23</sup> The documents are:

1. 13 May 1273 (appointment of Anselm as vicar or captain general); G. del Giudice, "La famiglia di Re Manfredi", *Archivio Storico per le Province Napoletane* V (1880), p. 303 (date given as 18 May); F. Carabellese, *Carlo d'Angiò nei rapporti politici e commerciali con Venezia e l'Oriente*, Bari (1911), pp. 59–60, note 2.
2. 23 May 1273; *Acta et diplomata res Albaniae mediae aetatis illustrantia*, I, L. Thalloczy, K. Jireček and M. Šufflay, eds., Wien (1913), p. 87, no. 303.
3. 13 August 1273; *Acta Albaniae*, p. 88, no. 304.
4. 23 January 1274; N. Nicolini, *Codice diplomatico durante il regno di Carlo I d'Angiò*, Roma (1942, reprinted 1965), pp. 85–86, no. XCII; Cf. Carabellese, p. 61, note 2.
5. 5 April 1274; Carabellese, p. 63, note 2.
6. 12 April 1274; *Acta Albaniae*, p. 89, no. 308; Carabellese, p. 59, note 1.
7. 13 September 1274; *Acta Albaniae*, p. 94, no. 325.

*de Caen*, appearing first in the document appointing Anselm as captain general and in a document ten days later, suggests a misunderstanding about the identity of Anselm, which was cleared up either only after reception of the documents and response by Anselm himself, or perhaps after checking of the documents by a better informed individual at the chancellery. There are some explanations of the origin of the confusion which might support the hypothesis that Anselm de Keu and Anselm de Chau are the same person. Either Anselm was still using the appellation *de Kau* at the time of his appointment as captain general, but the name was not available to scribes in written form and was approximated by *de Caen*, or his name was originally unknown and the name *de Caen* was given him without substantive reason. After his appointment he chose to be known as *de Chau*, which was likely his original name.

Another possibility worth considering is that Anselm always called himself *de Chau*, but scribes in the papal chancellery used his title *domino de Keu* instead, or perhaps they confused Chau with Keu, which they knew to be in or near Srem<sup>25</sup>. Unfortunately, we have none of the other possible documents concerning the marriage of Maria and Anselm from others involved: Baldwin II, Margaret of Vianden, Matildis of Požega, John Angelos, the Hungarian court, or Anselm himself.

On the basis of the names, then, there exists at least a strong possibility that Anselm de Keu and Anselm de Chau were identical.

There are some further considerations which support the thesis that the two Anselms were identical and that therefore Jelena was the daughter of Matildis of Požega and John Angelos. I am inclined to believe that it is not a coincidence that there were two married couples named Anselm and Maria who were associated with the periphery of Serbia in the mid-thirteenth century, and about whom the evidence seems to dovetail and overlap. Both Marias were related to the Anjous. Maria and Anselm de Keu were married in 1254 when Maria was about 15, while Anselm de Chau died in 1274, leaving at least one son<sup>26</sup>. Maria de Chau may have died in the late 1280's since there is no mention of her after 1285<sup>27</sup>. These chronological observations are entirely consistent with the idea that we are dealing with only one Anselm and one Maria.

Finally, within a broader geopolitical context, the relations between Serbia and Hungary during the middle of the thirteenth century make the marriage of the Serbian king to the daughter (most likely the eldest) of the highest-ranking neighboring Hungarian nobleman not only possible but of eminent logic. The recovery of Hungary after the Mongol

<sup>24</sup> Carabellese, pp. 45—59.

<sup>25</sup> Keu appears in documents of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. It was made a bishopric in the province of Kalocsa in 1229: Fejér, VII/5, p. 242.

<sup>26</sup> Maria de Chau was buried alongside her son Anselm. See note 21 above. On Anselm and another possible son, see G. McDaniel, "The House of Anjou and Serbia", in press.

<sup>27</sup> McDaniel, *op. cit.*

invasions and its concurrent conflict with Serbia is well known<sup>28</sup>. The efforts of Béla IV. to secure his southern boundary while moving toward the Adriatic included establishing leaders in Srem (John Angelos) and Slavonia (Rostislav Mikhailovich) who were not only capable but also closely connected to the royal family. It is quite reasonable that an effective way to at least neutralize Serbia under Uroš would be to connect him through dynastic marriage to Hungarian nobility, whether by diplomacy or force. Such use of dynastic marriage occurred, for example, in 1268 when Uroš unsuccessfully attempted to conquer Mačva. The result was the marriage of his oldest son Dragutin to Katherine, granddaughter of Béla IV.

A detailed reexamination of the relations between Hungary and Serbia in the period 1240—1265, and especially around 1250, would be expected to show that the marriage of Jelena and Uroš was a natural outcome of political factors. Such a study would also aid in illuminating later developments in Hungarian-Serbian relations. For example, it is well known that Dragutin was given Mačva, Usor and Soli by his brother-in-law Ladislav IV after yielding the Serbian throne to his brother Milutin in 1282. It has been assumed that he was known as King of Srem because these territories south of the Sava included those which at one time were called *Sirmia ulterior* by the Hungarians, even though only *Sirmia citerior* between the Sava and Danube was normally known as Srem<sup>29</sup>. However, if the hypothesis I propose here is correct, then this difficulty might be resolved by concluding that Dragutin claimed the title by inheritance from his mother, Queen Jelena, the daughter of John Angelos, Count of Srem.

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<sup>28</sup> Jireček, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 175—177. Cf. B. Hóman, *Geschichte des Ungarischen Mittelalters*, II, Berlin (1943), pp. 154—187.

<sup>29</sup> M. Dinić, "Oblast kralja Dragutina posle Deževa", *Glas Srpske akademije nauka*, 203 (1951), p. 76.