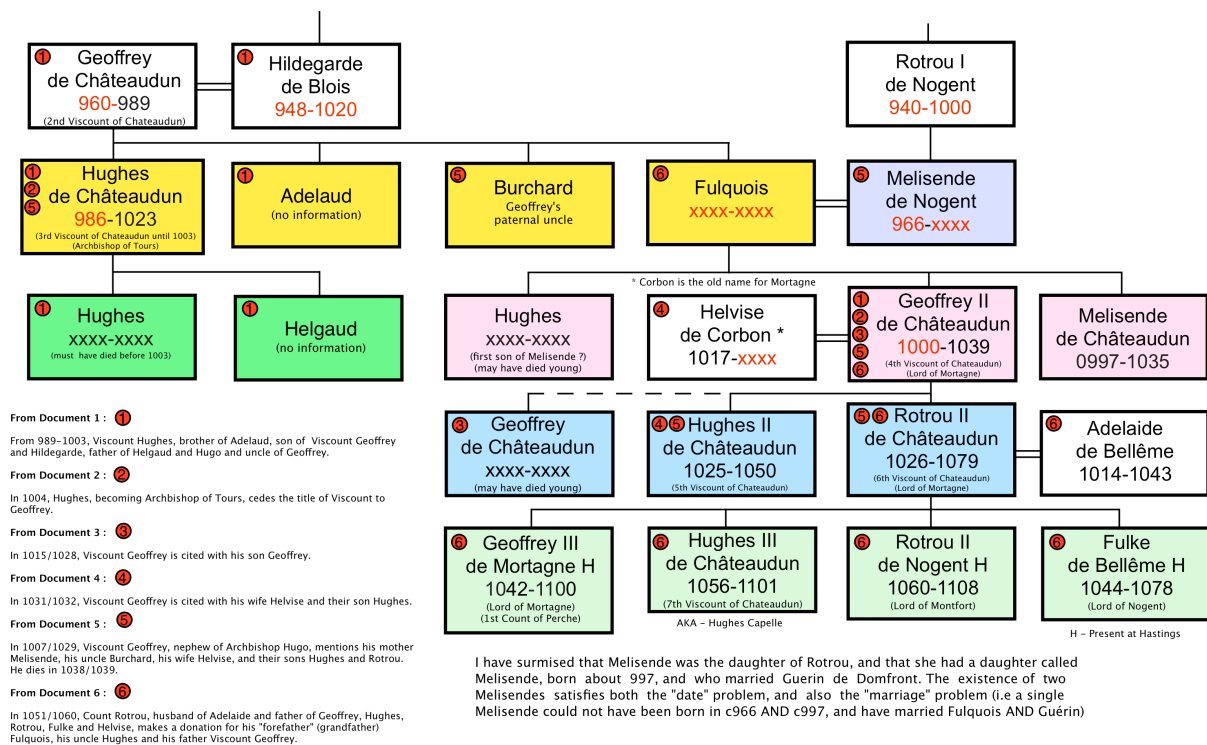


Foulquois (Fulke) de Mortagne



As if we didn't have enough problems with the origins and descent of Mélisende (de Nogent or de Châteaudun ?), we find that we have another problem ! Who did Mélisende marry ? This supplementary problem only serves to underline the lack of information during this period of the Xth Century, before the family warrants a place in history. Before we begin to discuss Mélisende, we must look for a possible father for her children who will satisfy the cartulary documents which we will discover in the years that follow this uncertain period. We will investigate the possible candidates.

As with Mélisende, we can raise questions, and suggest possible solutions, but if we reason with the cartulary documents available at this time, an acceptable solution is possible. However, this solution will also raise a final problem, which we will discuss later.

While digging into the early life of the Rotrou family, we find convincing evidence of the existence of two Mélisendes, probably mother and daughter. While trying to piece together the tiny pieces of the jigsaw puzzle, we soon come across inconsistencies in certain dates and names. Rotrou's daughter Mélisende ¹ clearly marries into the House of Châteaudun. At first, it seemed that she married the current Viscount, Hugh II, but conflicting information soon showed that she may have married Hughes brother, apparently a certain Geoffrey, or even another relative of the Châteaudun family. At

¹ We must admit that no conclusive evidence shows Rotrou as the father of Melisende. However, we have datelines, different names and some level of logic to define Rotrou as Melisende's (1) father, and Melisende's (2) father to be one of the House of Chateaudun, probably the daughter of Melisende (1).

some times she is referred to as Mélisende de Nogent, and at others, she is Mélisende de Châteaudun. She may of course have been attributed the sobriquet "de Châteaudun", after her marriage into this family. However, we soon find two serious flaws in our determination of this part of the family tree. Mélisende appears to have two names (de Nogent and de Châteaudun), two approximate dates of birth (around 960, and around 990), and two different husbands: a Châteaudun relative. and Warin (Guérin) de Domfront. The date of her death is quoted by all as being about 1035, a ripe old age for women of these times, and her marriage somewhere about 980, and also 1005.

Viscount de Romanet proposes a perfectly acceptable solution to these discrepancies : that there were in fact two distinct Mélisendes, and that they were most probably mother and daughter. Christian Settipani, in his precise study of cartulary documents of this era, while not being able to place Mélisende, leaves ample place for two such named women. And so it is this proposition that I show in one of the diagrams of the chapter "The Mélisende Hypotheses". But we have not yet cleared up the mystery concerning the marriage of the first Mélisende (de Nogent). Several documents have proposed that she married, not the current Viscount of Châteaudun, Hugh, nor his brother Geoffrey, but a blood relative of the Châteaudun family, and that this was a certain Foulquois (Fulke) de Mortagne. Settipani clearly places Foulquois as Mélisendes husband, and defines him to be Lord of Mortagne, for his father (uncle ?, grandfather ?), Hervé, certainly was. This raises a problem, because Foulquois was either close relative of the Viscount of Châteaudun, or else our prognostics are false. Perhaps was Foulquois a Châteaudun brother, but also Lord of Mortagne from his "forebear" Hervé. Perhaps he was a cousin/uncle/other blood relative? Several elements of information can be found for this little-known Foulquois. If we suppose that his "forebear", a certain Hervé was also Lord of Mortagne, we may ask why Foulquois was so undefined within the brothers of the House of Châteaudun. If Foulquois married Mélisende de Nogent, he must have been a close Châteaudun relative for the Viscountancy of Châteaudun to fall to Mélisendes son Geoffrey II. However, the fact that he was also Lord of Mortagne, could also explain how this title passed to Geoffrey, Mélisendes son, and also how the vague title of Count of Perche was propagated to the descendants of Rotrou, as Mortagne apparently used to be known as Corbon, and that Corbon covered a substantial part of the Perche, at one time. The plot thickens, for most of this reasoning is subject to conjecture. Finally, if Foulquois was a little-known Châteaudun relation, he would have been born about 950 and must have died about the same time as Geoffrey (about 1004), which will explain why he never became Viscount of Châteaudun. Mélisendes son Geoffrey could then become Viscount, as the only living male within the family, which may explain how the Rotrou family acceded so rapidly to the title of Viscount. However, Dr. Katharine Keats-Rohan² suggests that the father of Foulquois was Hervé II, Lord of Mortagne, which obviously means that Fulquois was not a little-known brother of the Viscount of Châteaudun. We are then left to ask how the son of Mélisende de Nogent could attain the title of Viscount of Châteaudun, if no direct blood-line exists. It may be then that Hervé was effectively, either an uncle or possibly even a grandfather. The cartulary documents

² Dr. Katharine Keats-Rohan, is a history researcher, specialising in prosopography. Collaborating with Christian Settipani, she is widely regarded as one of the founders of modern prosopographical and network analysis research.

of this period, although Christian Settipani has extracted the maximum information from them, will not allow us to go further in a subjective reasoning.

Our quest for the truth does not stop here. As a final adjustment to our family diagram, we must also question the marriage of Geoffrey II, the new Viscount with a certain "Helvise". Some documents define this Helvise as being Helvise de Mortagne (Mortagne once having the name of Corbon). However, Settipani and Keats-Rohan now estimate that Geoffrey married a certain Helvise, but that she was the daughter of Rainard, Lord of Pithiviers, and that her husband Geoffrey became Lord of Mortagne from his "forebear" Foulquois, and not from his father-in-law, as was previously supposed. We then have a satisfactory explanation of the passage of the Mortagne title to the Rotrou family, rather than through the little defined wife of Geoffrey II. We must be glad that Geoffrey's wife was another Helvise, and not the daughter of Foulquois de Mortagne, because that would mean that Geoffrey married his sister !

The existence of Foulquois in our modified family diagram does however provide some problems, principally concerning the place where he fits in to the descent of the Viscounts of Châteaudun. Foulquois' father could not have been Hervé, Count of Mortagne, and Keats-Rohan would prefer to place Hervé as a grandfather. The relationship between Hervé and the early Viscounts of Dunois and Châteaudun cannot be defined, although they must have been close. The title of Lords of Mortagne from Hervé to Foulquois would explain the passing of the title to Geoffrey II, with the notion that Mortagne was the centre of a region called the Corbonais, and that the lords of the Corbonais, ruling over a substantial part of the Perche, were cited as being Counts of Perche. The attribution of that title to the descendants of the early Rotrou would then seem acceptable.

And so we compound the Mélisende Hypothesis with that of the Foulquois Hypothesis, apparently two closely related (by marriage) members of this House of Rotrou in the making. There remains only a closer study concerning the husband of Mélisende.

Who was Mélisendes Husband ?

(or : How did Geoffrey II become Viscount ?)

We have suggested, by evaluating from limited documents, scarce though they may be, that Mélisende was very probably the daughter of Rotrou de Nogent. We are sure that Mélisendes son Geoffrey became Viscount of Châteaudun, but we are left to speculate about the way in which this was possible. There seems to be no way that the grandson of Rotrou could aspire to the title of Viscount of Châteaudun, as there is no convincing proof of blood or marriage ties with the House of Châteaudun at this time. We are left with the compelling suggestion that Geoffrey could become Viscount because of his fathers ties to that family. Documents concerning Mélisendes husband are conflicting, indicating that it could possibly have been the current Viscount of Chateadun, although we are not sure if it was another family

member. Hugh, most probably the Viscount of this period ³ was apparently married to an unknown wife (not Mélisende), and had at least one son, Helgaud. Mélisendes son, Geoffrey could only become Viscount when Hugh rescinded the title in 1003/4, on condition that there was no direct descendant. Information from this period concerning the early Viscounts is scanty, and only becomes uncontested when we reach the 12th Century. but seems to indicate that it was a certain Foulquois (or Fulke) who married Mélisende, but information is incomplete and certainly does not clarify his affiliation.

In the light of extremely limited concrete evidence concerning the descent of the title of Viscount of Châteaudun to Geoffrey II, we must examine the possible options :

1 – Mélisende was a sister of the Viscount of Châteaudun, and married Rotrou de Nogent, and thus Geoffrey was Rotrous son. Mélisende was born around 966, when Rotrou was already about 25. At this time, we do not know where Rotrou lived. As the domain of Nogent was probably not conferred to Rotrou before 979, Rotrou and (unknown) wife and daughter Mélisende probably did not live in Nogent. The most likely home would have been Mortagne. Mélisende's son Geoffrey would be born about 990 when Rotrou was at least 50 years old. However, this assumption would seem rather doubtful, as a Mélisende marriage to a much younger Warin would seem unlikely, to say the least. Mélisende would also marry Warin de Domfront in about 1010, after the death of Rotrou, when she was about 45. This tenuous concept must be discounted because the time-lines would not permit it, and in fact strengthens the theory that there were two distinct Mélisendes. Imagination appears to have been scarce at this time, and there was a plethora of Hughs, Geoffreys, Heloises, Foulquois ... and why not Mélisendes ?

2 - Foulquois was possibly a little known relative of Geoffrey, Viscount of Châteaudun and Hildegarde de Blois ⁴. Hildegarde de Blois has also been given the name Hildegarde de Mortagne. In about 980, Foulquois inherits the title of Count of Mortagne from his uncle (?) Hervé II. Foulquois must have died just before Hughes ceded the title of Viscount when he became Archbishop of Tours (1003/1004). Otherwise, he could have become the next Viscount. The title would then fall to his son.

However, we also have a slightly modified alternative :

3 - A certain Foulquois was Lord of Mortagne at this time, and his father is supposed to have been Hervé II, also Lord of Mortagne before him. If Foulquois married Mélisende de Nogent, this would explain how the title of Lord of Mortagne came into the Rotrou family, but certainly not how the Châteaudun title came into the family of Rotrou. We may then be obliged to consider that Foulquois was a blood relative of the Châteaudun Viscount. Settipani suggests some link, but Foulquois could not be a brother, if his father was identified as Herve II. The Corbonais (the old name for the

³ Combining the scarcity of information, and the numerous Hughs and Geoffreys of this time leaves us unsure as to who was Viscount, and when.

⁴ This would confirm the theory that the generation Hildegarde de Blois - Hugh de Châteaudun did not exist, and that Hildegarde was in fact married to Geoffrey, Viscount Châteaudun. However, the connection between Hildegarde and the House of Mortagne is tenuous.

Mortagne) domain was close, and geographically formed part of the Perche. It is not unlikely that Mortagne had blood ties with Châteaudun (giving more credence to [2], above). In this case, the titles of Lord of Mortagne and Viscount of Châteaudun could both fall to Foulquois's descendant.

Recent research (Keats-Rohan, Settapani ⁵ et alia) insists that Geoffrey II married a certain Heloise de Pithiviers, and thus the title of Lord of Mortagne could not come to Geoffrey II in this way. In addition to this question, if Mélisende married Foulquois de Mortagne, we must ask ourselves, how is it possible that her son Geoffrey II became Viscount of Châteaudun, unless there were close blood ties. Settapani also, is left no option but to suppose that Foulquois was a member of the Châteaudun family, without specifying how.

The title of Viscount de Châteaudun became open when Hugh II of Châteaudun rescinded his title upon becoming Archbishop of Tours in 1003/4. As it seems that Hugh's brother (*Geoffrey*) died relatively young (although he may have held the title of Viscount for a very short time), there was apparently no direct line of descent to the title of Viscount, and so it fell to Geoffrey II, who would (in our supposition) thus have been the nephew of the previous Viscount. It must be made clear that apart from a theory that Foulquois was a member of the Châteaudun family, there is little information concerning his existence. If he married Mélisende about 989, he would have been in his late 30's. Had he married into the House of Châteaudun at an earlier date, and thus was Mélisende's second wife? A charter of 1051 by Rotrou II mentioning a certain Foulquois as his « *avus* » (usually grandfather), confirms the existence of Foulquois, and his relation to Mélisende, but still does not define his origins ⁶. Geoffrey II, although making reference to his mother Mélisende, never mentions his father at all, in the few charters concerning him, which is a little strange, but strengthening the idea that Foulquois may have died earlier. Rotrou II mentions his grandfather as Count, but does not specify over which territory. As Rotrou was clearly Count of Mortagne, it is assumed that his grandfather was also Count of Mortagne before him.

Thus it seems likely that Mélisende de Nogent and Mélisende de Châteaudun both existed, it is easy to propose two different Mélisendes, defining the second as being the daughter of the first, and locating them both in the appropriate time frames. However, there is also a possibility that Mélisende de Châteaudun was the daughter of Hugh, Viscount of Châteaudun, and so the two Mélisendes were cousins. Mélisende de Nogent would be the daughter of Rotrou and her marriage into the Châteaudun family could be shown as a « thank you » to the Rotrou family for services rendered. Whoever Mélisende married, it was probably unforeseen that her son would become Viscount. Hugh is reputed to have had a brother called Alo, but he may have been illegitimate, and discounted from the succession. Hugh also had a son Helgaud who was probably too young to become Viscount. Hugh's brother Geoffrey apparently died at about the same time as Hugh became Archbishop. Mélisende's son Geoffrey then appears to be the only candidate, allowing a

⁵ Christian Settapani – Prosopon Newsletter, 1999 – Les Vicomtes de Châteaudun et leurs Alliés

⁶ Stewart Balwins research into segments of the Rotrou Family (not his main interest) are extremely rigorous, and quoting all possible relationships of the family at this time (including Settapani's deductions), without any partisan attitude. We are left to choose our own solution.

descendant of the Rotrou family to be unexpectedly propelled to a higher level of nobility. Mélisende de Châteaudun was then either Geoffrey II's sister or his niece by marriage, and the time-frame for her to marry Warin de Domfront would be satisfied.

A final historical note can be added here. Mélisende and husband (whoever it was) had another son, Hughes de Perche, who by his marriage to Beatrix de Gatinais had a son Geoffrey de Férreol. This would make Foulquois the root of the Plantagenet line of the future.