

ERMENGARDE THE MYSTERIOUS: AN ESSAY IDENTIFYING A VERY NOBLE WOMAN

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translated from French² by Patrick Evans

ABSTRACT

The article identifies the Countess Ermengarde, who donated considerable riches to the churches of Liège in 1078. This work utilises the analysis of texts by historians who have bent hard over the subject and the genealogies of families living at the time, but its chief basis lies in analysis of the original acts themselves. This approach has been taken in order both to select information from as close as possible to the sources, and to steer clear of doubtful interpretations. In order to allow the reader to follow the reasoning more clearly, certain extracts have been reproduced at appropriate points in the discussion.

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Canon Joseph Daris, a professor at the Grand Seminar in Liège,³ called into question the identity of the Countess Ermengarde who in 1078 donated considerable riches to the churches of Liège. His doubts were aroused by the fact that neither her identity nor her origin were mentioned in the acts of donation; further strengthened by the following:

1. the presence of the names of Otton and Emmon, Counts of Looz, in a donation made the same year. Daris cited this as coming later than Ermengarde's donation⁴

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² The original (French) version of this article is available on the FMG website

³ J Daris, *Histoire de la Bonne Ville et des comtes de Looz* (1864), 394.

"A countess, named Ermengarde, took the veil as a nun from the hands of the Bishop in 1078 and donated on that occasion considerable riches to the college of Saint-Barthelemy, comprising free-fiefdoms or properties in Waremmes, Longchamps, Rummen, Curange, Jaminne, Berlingen and Brée. As the majority of these properties are found in the county of Looz, it has been deduced that the donor was Countess of Looz, and very probably the widow of the Count of Emmo. This deduction is without foundation, for in the same year (1078) Bishop Henri in the presence of Emmon and Otton, Counts of Looz, confirmed the donation of the properties of Jaminne, Berlingen and Brée and added to these several other donations. It is equally unlikely that the wife of Emmon should have taken the veil of religion in her husband's own lifetime. Furthermore the Counts Emmon and Otton do not even figure as witnesses of the charter of Ermengarde, even though they were at Liège when she took the veil and donated these considerable riches..."

⁴ J Daris, *Notices historiques sur les églises du diocèse de Liège* (1868-1892), Vol.XII, p.122.

"There are three charters of the year 1078 (1079) concerning Ermengarde and her possessions. The earliest dates from 5th February 1078 (1079). In none of these three charters can be found either the origin nor the parentage of this Countess. According to the charter of 5th February 1078 (1079) she gave part of her patrimony to the church of Saint-Lambert in Liège, and a few days or weeks later she received the veil and was consecrated into holy service by the Bishop, probably after having spent many years living as a virgin. The gifts which she made to the church of Saint-Lambert are to be found in

- the absence of their names as witnesses to the donation while Daris considered them to have been living in Liège at this time. In calling into question the identity of Countess Ermengarde, Canon Joseph Daris laid false trails which subsequent historians have followed.

Amédée de Ryckel⁵ later relayed and somewhat amplified these doubts when he affirmed:

- "We consider that she is the daughter of Count Albert I of Namur and of Ermengarde of Lorraine," therefore sister to Albert II.
- "Lutgarde became mother to Emmon and Otton....as regards Ermengarde, it is not mentioned that she ever married."
- "In the charter of donation all of her relations appear:
Albert, Count of Namur, her brother;
Henri, Count of Durbuy, also her brother;
Emmon and Otton, her nephews.

This in our [ie Ryckel's] opinion is Ermengarde's true genealogy..."

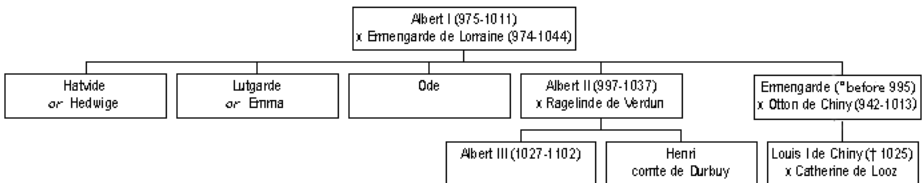


Fig 1 Genealogy of the Counts of Namur
From the University of Notre-Dame de la Paix, Namur.⁶

Considering the above genealogy, Ermengarde, sister of Albert II married Otton de Chiny, widower of Almaide de Gueldre (meaning points 3 and 4 above no longer hold true). Let us note also in passing that Ermengarde of Lorraine, who was Albert III's guardian upon the death of Albert II, died in 1044. Thus neither of these Ermengardes is she whom we seek.

Waremme, Berlingen, Jaminne, Rummen, Curange, Brée and Rode. She had a château at Waremme which was perhaps her home."

⁵ A de Ryckel, *Histoire de la Bonne Ville de Waremme* (1889), 8.

"It is unfortunate that we do not possess a single precise detail concerning this noblewoman or her family. All that is known is that she was extremely wealthy and that she was of illustrious descent: "ab avis atque atavis nobilibus". Different opinions have been offered as to her origins. Naturally these count as no better than hypotheses of meandering plausibility. We for ourselves incline to believe that Countess Ermengarde was daughter to Count Albert the First of Namur and of Ermengarde daughter of Charles of France, Duke of Lower Lotharingie [Lorraine] and brother to the King of France-Lorraine, one of Charlemagne's last children. In fact we may read in the genealogy of Saint Arnould, Bishop of Soissons, that Albert the Second, Count of Namur, had three full sisters: Lutgarde, Ode and Ermengarde."

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Lutgarde was mother of Otton and Emmon, Counts of Looz.⁷ This means therefore that she married the Count of Looz.

Count Arnould, 1st Count of Looz, elder son of Rodolphe de Betuwe, married Lutgarde, Countess of Waremme in Hesbaye, but they had no children. Arnould 1st cannot therefore be the father of Emmon and Otton.⁸

We must therefore deduce that Lutgarde of Namur had her children (of whom Emmon, Count of Looz was one) after having married Gislebert (brother of Arnould and widower of Erlande de Jodoigne) who had become Count of Looz.

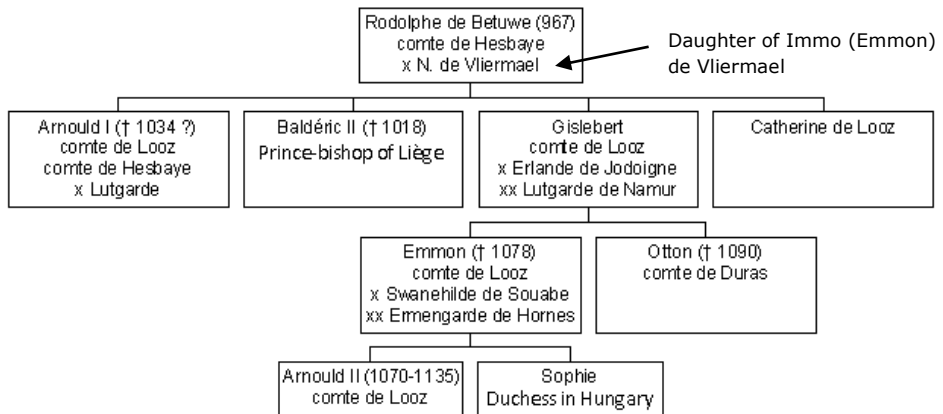


Fig 2 Counts of Looz

Ermengarde de Hornes married Emmon de Looz.⁹ By this title, she was:

- cousin by marriage to
- Albert III, Count of Namur
- Henri, Count of Durbuy

⁷ Genealogy of St Arnould, from Mantelius, cited by A de Ryckel, *op. cit.* p.9.

“Albertus secundus, comes Namurcensis, habuit tres germanas sorores: Lutgardem, Odam, Ermengardem: qui Albertus genuit patrem Godefridi Namurcensis; Lutgardis genuit Emmonem comitem de Los et Ottonem fratrem ejus; Emmo genuit Arnulfum comitem de Los et Sophiam Ducissam in Hungaria...”

⁸ Mantelius cited by A de Ryckel, *op. cit.* p.7.

“Arnulfus comes, Rudolphi primo genitus, duas uxores habuit. Ex priore N. Arnulfum sustulit comitatus haerodem; ex posteriore Lutgarda, comitissa Waremiae in Hasbania, nullos liberos habuit, nec ilius aliud exstat, nisi quod dui vitam protaxerit.”

⁹ M J Wolters, *Codex Diplomaticus Lossensis* (1849), 32, citing Robyns and Miraeus.

“N° 46 Charter by which Ermengarde of Looz and Hesbaie, wife or widow of Emmon, Count of Looz, concedes to the church of St-Barthelemy in Liège the entire properties of Rummen, Curange, Jamines, Beringen (sic) and Brée. Witnesses: Count Conon de Montaigu, Reginhard de Roden, Witman de Molenarken, Godescalc de Cennaco, Lambert de Foron, Turevin de Wodelmont, Lambert de Ponte and others.” 1078.

- relation by marriage to - Henri de Verdun, Prince-Bishop of Liège (Ragelinde de Verdun, wife of Albert II, is sister of Godefroid III the Bearded and therefore aunt of Godefroid the Hunchback and Henri de Verdun).
- Conon, Count de Montaignu became related via the marriage of his daughter to Gislebert de Duras, Ermengarde's nephew.

Thus point 5 no longer holds true. N.B. the terms "her brother", "her brother too", "her nephews.." were used by Amédée de Ryckel because he considered them to be such as part of his conjecture, but they are not to be found in the acts themselves.

Let us take a look at the acts of donation.¹⁰

The donation to the church of St Barthelemy is imprecisely dated, namely *anno MLXXVIII prima indictione*.

The Prince-Bishop Henri de Verdun cited Emmon and Otton in the act of confirmation. The act is also dated imprecisely: *MLXXVIII prima indictione*.

The donation of 5th February 1078 was made to the church of St Lambert "for the salvation of my soul and for that of my parents".¹¹ Otton's name is cited there, but not that of Emmon, and yet Daris used as an argument the absence of both Emmon and Otton as witnesses to the act.¹² Her son, Count Arnould was, on the other hand, present on that occasion. N.B. It was not his brother Otton who succeeded Emmon, because if we follow J Baerten,¹³ he was already Count of Duras and Emmon was therefore dead. Baerten¹⁴ considers him to have died before 5th February 1078.

Genealogies in the Family History Library¹⁵ consider him to have died on 17th January 1078. In fact lengthy research has turned up mention of his death dated the 16th January 1078.¹⁶ There is no evidence that the donation of St Lambert happened beforehand [i.e. before Emmon's death]. In fact, the opposite holds true. Yet points 1 and 2 only hold true if the donation happened beforehand.

As for Ermengarde, she entered the convent¹⁷ not "after having spent many years living as a virgin",¹⁸ but because she was a widow.

In 1981 and in 1986, Jean-Louis Kupper, at that time a researcher at the NCSR [Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique] identified Countess Ermengarde¹⁹ as

¹⁰ J Daris, *Histoire des églises du diocèse de Liège* (1864), 94-95; and J Daris, *Notices historiques sur les églises du diocèse de Liège* (1868-1892), Vol.XII, pp.124-9.

¹¹ "...pro salute animæ meæ et parentum meorum..."

¹² J Daris, *Histoire de la Bonne Ville et des comtes de Looz* (1864), 394.

¹³ J Baerten, *Het graafschap Loon* (1969), 33-6.

¹⁴ J Baerten, *Dictionnaire Biographique National* (1966), Vol. II, col 2002.

¹⁵ Family History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah, USA, Pedigree Resource File - Compact Discs #100 & #135, <http://www.familysearch.org/>

¹⁶ A Marchandisse, *l'Obituaire de la cathédrale Saint-Lambert* (1991), 10.

B XVII kalendas februarii [16th January] *Emmonis commitis*, and the note at the bottom of the page: *Emmon, comte de Looz....*

¹⁷ J Daris, *Histoire de la Bonne Ville et des comtes de Looz* (1864), 394.

¹⁸ J Daris, *Notices historiques sur les églises du diocèse de Liège* (1868-1892), 122.

¹⁹ J-L Kupper, *Liège et l'Eglise impériale* (1981), pp.306-7, notes 96 & 97:

Ermentrude, widow of Gozelon de Montaigu (†1064) and mother to Conon de Montaigu. In so doing he was following C Lambot's interpretation that she wished to be interred with the Bishop. This was based on a phrase of the act of 5th February 1078: "... in loco ubi communiter voluerimus requiescere...", which means "...in this place where we wish to rest together..."

We see here the end result of a sequence of conclusions by respected historians building on each other's opinions, starting with Daris and proceeding through de Ryckel, Vanderkindere and Stiennon until J-L Kupper in 1986 postulated the connection between Ermentrude/Ermengarde. The thesis is completely undermined by a charter of donation of the property of Estinne to the Abbey of Saint-Hubert made by Ermentrude, widow of Gozelon de Montaigu, and reported by the monk Bertholet. She made this donation in 1064 for the repose of the soul of her deceased husband on the express condition that the monks of Saint-Hubert should bury them together in Saint-Hubert cemetery.²⁰ This was related by the monk Bertholet and presented by Baron de Reiffenberg to the Brussels Academy on 7th July 1833.²¹ In all likelihood Ermentrude is not therefore buried at Fosses-la Ville with Henri de Verdun. By the same token, she was not Ermengarde.

In fact, why should Ermengarde (who was not dying at the time) have made such a wish on the 5th February 1078? The death of her husband three weeks previously on the 16th January 1078 provides the answer: as a faithful wife she wished, just as countless others did (including Ermentrude) to be reunited in death with her husband.

Before Jean-Louis Kupper, Jacques Stiennon²² saw in Ermengarde the same person who received gifts from the emperor Henri III in 1041.²³ This concerns the granddaughter of Gozelon, daughter of Godefroid and Mathilde de Saxe (Mathilde Billung, widow of Baudouin III of Flanders), whose gifts received by Henri III were retransmitted by a charter of 5th January 1043, after her death²⁴ as the *Annalista*

"...As C Lambot has demonstrated, this woman related to the prelate was called Ermentrude. The same author believed himself able to identify her with the famous - and problematic - Countess Ermengarde who in 1078 made substantial donations to the church[es] of Liège and to the collegiate of Saint-Barthelemy. This judicious hypothesis must henceforth be regarded as a certitude, since in the charter of 1078 in favour of Saint-Lambert it is clearly affirmed that the Countess Ermengarde and Bishop Henri intended to be buried in the same place...";

Also J-L Kupper, "Mulier Nobilissima Ermengardis Nomine" from volume C II of the *Publications of the Historical Section of the Luxembourg Grand-Ducal Institute* (1986).

"...Ermengarde - the fact now seems proven to us - was widow of Count Gozelon de Montaigu (†1064) and mother to Count Conon, of Raoul, of Guy, of Jean and of Henri de Montaigu..."

²⁰ R P J Bertholet, *Histoire eccl. et civile du Duché de Luxembourg* (1742), Vol. III pp.29 & 140.

"Unde ego Ermetrudis de Harenzey super doloris mei consolata magnitudine pro anima mariti mei Gozolonis ... tradidi legaliter Ecclesie SS Petri et Pauli atque Huberti, tali conditione, dum cuius nostrum dies vitæ ultimus supervenerit, ibit abbas vel Fratres vid diei unius ad deponendum corpus et sepeliendum in cymeterio Sti Huberti. Acta anno Incarnationis Domini MLXIV..."

²¹ Baron de Reiffenberg, "Essai sur l'Histoire des Comtes de Montaigu et de Clermont" in *Mémoire sur quelques anciens fiefs. Bulletin de l'Académie des Sciences et Belles Lettres de Bruxelles*, 8 (1834): 59.

²² J Stiennon, *Etude sur le Chartrier de Saint-Jacques* (1951).

²³ "...Henricus...rex...in villis Harive, Vals, Apine, Falchenberg...in pago Liugowe et in comitate Dietbaldi comitis...Irmingardæ nepti nostræ..."

²⁴ "...beneficium, quod felicitis memoriae pater noster inde ablatum comiti Ottoni tradidit, post obitum Hirmingardæ comitissæ prædicto abbati et fratribus regali nostra munificencia remissimus atque tradidimus..."

Saxo bears witness in the 'Life of Poppon'. She cannot therefore have made a donation in 1078.

Before Stiennon, Vanderkindere saw in Ermengarde the widow in early marriage of Count Arnoul, brother of Gislebert.²⁵ He was clearly confusing her with Lutgarde, but he does at least recognise her as belonging to the house of Looz (p.142). We should note that this is a generation earlier.

Conclusions

The doubts cast by Joseph Daris on the identity of Ermengarde rested on the fact that the name of Emmon did not appear in the act of the 5th February 1078. Yet his name, along with that of his brother Otton appeared in two acts of donation to the church of Saint-Barthelemy in the same year, acts which Daris stated to have occurred subsequently.

Confirmation of the death of Emmon on the 16th January 1078 renders this situation impossible.²⁶ He was present at the two acts of donations to Saint-Barthelemy but was not present (nor was he alive) on 5th February 1078. The 2 acts precede this date. Even better, as Jean Baerten affirms,²⁷ it was the name of Emmon's successor Arnould I which appeared beside that of Otton on the 5th February 1078.

Before Joseph Daris, the following authors were united in saying that the donation had been made by the widow of the Count of Looz: Mantelius,²⁸ Ignatius Alberti,²⁹ Baron Léon de Herckenrode,³⁰ Mathieu Joseph Wolters.³¹

Even after Daris, if Vanderkindere in 1903 and Jacques Stiennon in 1951 were not able to identify with absolute certainty the identity of the Countess Ermengarde, they did not follow the Canon's reasoning to the hilt, affirming instead that she had to be related to the house of Looz.

According to all the evidence two essential elements in identifying Ermengarde - her relation to the house of Namur and the date of Emmon's death - have escaped all historians since Daris.

The analysis of the genealogies, (the witnesses to the act are all from the family of the Counts of Looz), the origin of the gifts,³² the terms themselves of the donation of the 5th February 1078 and the proximity of the date of Emmon's death all indicate clearly that she was the widow of the Count of Looz, and that she made this donation for the repose of her soul beside that of her deceased husband. If, as Jean Baerten affirms, the mother of Arnould I was Suanehilde de Souabe, Ermengarde's taking the

²⁵ L Vanderkindere, *La Formation territoriale des Principautés en Belgique au Moyen-Age* (1903), p.141 § 11, Le Haspinga.

²⁶ A Marchandise, XVII Kal feb cfr *Obituaire de la cathédrale Saint-Lambert à Liège* (1991), p.10; and J Mantelius & L Robyns, *Historiae Lossensis* (1717), XVI Kal feb p.299.

²⁷ J Baerten, *Dictionnaire Biographique National* (1966), p.202 col 2.

²⁸ J Mantelius & L Robyns, *Historiae Lossensis* (1717).

²⁹ Ignatius Alberti, *Historieke aenmerkingen op het Graefschap van Loon ende zyne pretendenten* (1791).

³⁰ Léon de Herckenrode, *Collection de Tombes, Épitaphes et Blasons recueillis dans les Églises et couvents de la Hesbaye* (1845).

³¹ M J Wolters, *Notices historiques sur l'ancien comté de Hornes* (1849).

³² Before Daris, the authors all aligned themselves in recording that the donation had been made by the widow of the Count of Looz because all the gifts belonged to the Count of Looz.

veil is all the more plausible for the fact that the Count of Looz on that day was not her own son.

Baerten³³ cites L Vanderkindere³⁴ who attributed to Emmon,³⁵ father-in-law to Rodolphe, 1st Count of Looz, the title of Count of Hesbaye and Maesgau on the basis of a donation of Meersen, Klimmen, Lith, Angleur and Herten.³⁶

The property of Jamine, given by the Countess, belonged according to G Kurth to the Count Immon thanks to a related exchange made in an act concluded at Aix-la Chapelle on 17th January 966. Dümmler calls this Count Immon, Count of Hesbaye in "*Kaiser Otto der Grosse*". This can only be Emmo de Vliermael, father-in-law to Rodolphe, 1st Count of Looz. This Count Immon was sworn to the Abbey of Saint-Remi in Reims doubtlessly because of lands which the Abbey owned in Hesbaye.

On 10th or 12th of February 968, he signed an act passed at Herten in Maesgau. Accordingly not only did the properties of Jamine and the Villa of Herten belong to the County of Looz, they actually belonged to the Counts of Looz themselves, and therefore only an Ermengarde of Looz could have made this donation.

We must also point out that the Counts of Looz kept their rights of adjudication over Brée after the act of donation (which by the way is also attributed to them).³⁷

Epilogue

One important element passed me by during this work. It is only in re-reading my notes that it has become apparent.

Mathias Joseph Wolters in his *Notices historiques sur l'ancien comté de Hornes* (1850) attributed to Arnould de Looz, son and successor to Emmon, the title of "Lord of Hornes, Steinvorst and Corswarem", thus following the genealogists of the house of Looz. Arnould passed this title to his youngest son Thiéri, the title of Count of Looz passing to the eldest, who was also named Arnould. These two titles thus became once again distinct from one another.

The title of the Count of Hornes had previously been held by Conrad de Hornes, father of Ermengarde of Hornes, one of the twelve signatories of the Tribunal of Peace or the Ring of the Palace instituted by Henri de Verdun in 1088. The title of Hornes can only have been acquired via the Countess Ermengarde, lone heiress by default since there were no male heirs. She must therefore have married Count Emmon and thus transmitted the title to Arnould de Looz.

Historical references to this material have existed since at least 1850.³⁸ It does not behove us to say why Canon Daris ignored them, leading as he did all subsequent

³³ J Baerten, *Het Graafschap Loon* (1969), 11.

³⁴ L Vanderkindere, *La Formation territoriale des Principautés en Belgique au Moyen-Age* (1903), Vol. III, p.267.

³⁵ This concerns Emmo de Vliermael (see the genealogy of the Counts of Looz).

³⁶ Madame C Bernard, "Etude sur le Domaine ardennais de la famille des Regnier" *Le Moyen-Age* 62 (1957): p.13, no.73.

³⁷ "Il est possible qu'elle appartenait alors aux premiers comtes de Looz 1722. En 1078, ceux-ci en firent donation au chapitre de Saint-Barthélemy tout en y conservant les droits d'avouerie" Pascal Carre, Doctoral Thesis in History, University of Liège, 2009.

³⁸ Extracts from *Recueil de Généalogies pour servir de suite ou de supplément au Dictionnaire de la Noblesse contenant les généalogies, l'histoire, la chronologie* by François Alexandre Aubert de la Chesnaye des Bois (1784), Vol 14, pp.329 & 330:

historians into dubious waters. We can take these sources seriously because in fact they are not pieces of wholehearted invention and moreover because they were written before the doubts which Joseph Daris inaugurated. Nothing exists to suggest they are not credible. These elements only confirm the preceding account, and to me they appear rather as the keystone which pins the entire edifice together.

Notes to Figure 3 (see next page):

- 1) Gislebert de Looz (b.1000, d.1050) married Lutgarde de Namur, sister of Albert II de Namur; Emmon married Ermengarde de Hornes b.1048 (married *circa* 1060).
- 2) Albert II de Namur married Ragelinde de Verdun, sister of Godefroid the Bearded.
- 3) Thus Albert III de Namur, Henri de Durbuy, Godefroid the Hunchback and NN, mother of Henri de Verdun, are first cousins of Emmon de Looz and therefore, by marriage, of Ermengarde de Hornes.
- 4) Similarly she is second cousin to Henri de Verdun.
- 5) Present at the donation of 5th February 1078, were: Otto de Looz, Arnould (Count of Looz), Conon de Montaigu (father-in-law of Gislebert, Count of Duras), Albert III de Namur, Henri de Durbuy.
- 6) *"Henri de Verdun and Frédéric de Toul are sons to another Frédéric, Count of Toul."* ³⁹
"Henri, the Peaceful, previously Archdeacon of Verdun, was son of Frédéric, Count of Toul; he died in 1091." ⁴⁰
"Henri de Verdun (son of Frédéric, Count of Toul) is nephew by his mother of Godefroid the Hunchback." ⁴¹

"Henri de Verdun was of the family of Godefroid the Hunchback..."

"Albert III de Namur was first cousin of Godefroid de Bouillon by his mother" ⁴²

"...that in 1071, Conrad, Count of Hornes, with Henri, Bishop of Liege, Albert, Count of Namur, Henri, Count of Limbourg, Arnaud, Count of Loos, & Henri, Count of Louvain, together made an Edict against murderers, thieves and assassins..."

"...the 1740 Amsterdam edition of Morery's Dictionary, a copy of which was sent to us, along with the Paris edition of 1759, gives the Genealogy of the House of Hornes. The Amsterdam edition conforms to that which is attested to and certified by the five Héraluts-d'Armes of the Netherlands, excepting some omissions and the order of birth[s]. This is the one we shall follow, according to a Memoir on Titles which was passed to us..."

"...Arnould-, Count of Loos, grandson of AiMON, & of Hermengarde DE Hornes, daughter and heiress of Conrad, last Lord of the old House of Hornes, married Agnès, sister of Godillon, Duc de Baviere, and continued the posterity of the Counts of Loos. This ARNOULD had a younger brother GUILLAUME, who followed, that some people called Théodoric DE Loos, and who brought back to posterity the extinct House of Hornes in the person of HERMENGARDE, his grandmother."

³⁹ J.L Kupper, *Liège et l'Eglise impériale XIe et XIIe siècles* (1981), citing L Vanderkindere, *La Formation territoriale des Principautés en Belgique au Moyen-Age* (1903), pp.390-1 & 436.

⁴⁰ J-B Christyn, *Les Délices des Pays-Bas* (1785), 7th edition, Vol.4, p.76.

⁴¹ Alphonse Le Roy. *Biographie nationale de l'Académie royale de Belgique* (1897), Vol.9, p.211.

⁴² Chantal du Ry. *Huy: Histoire d'une ville médiévale à travers ses légendes et ses monuments* (2000), p.81.

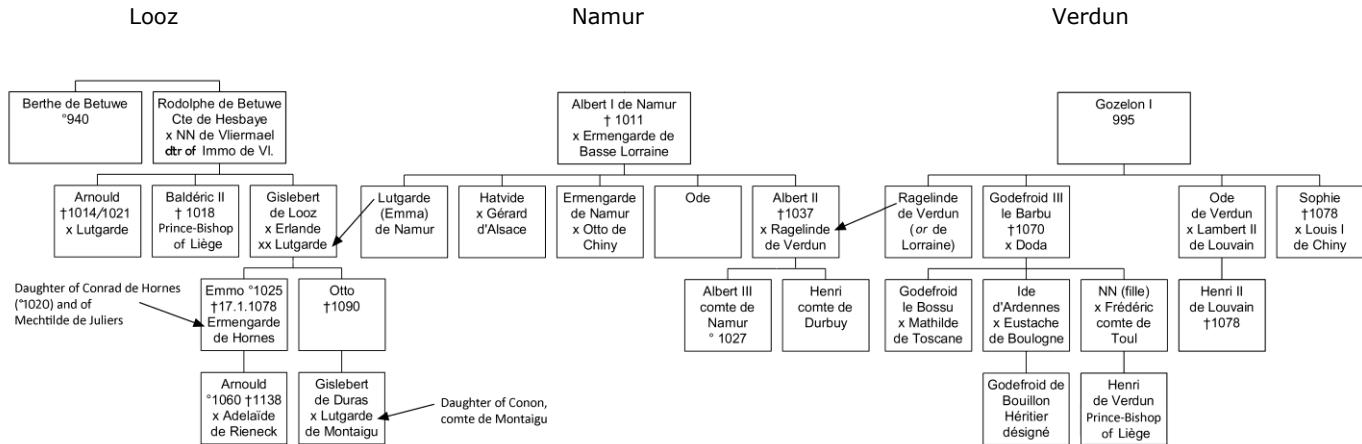


Fig 3 Family relationships of Ermengarde de Hornes

Siblings are not shown in birth sequence, in order better to display marriage relationships

See additional notes on previous page.

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Fig 4 Copy of a memorial plaque in the church of St Jacques, Liège. The brother buried with him would be Arnould († 1014)

"Balderic (II), bishop of Liège, dedicated this house in 1016 in honour of St Jacques, and blessed this crypt where he was buried with his brother the Count of Looz."

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