



## Roger (I) de Tosny.

c.990 – 30 May 1040

Father: Raoul (I) (ii) de Tosny.

Mother: (unknown).

Spouse: Godehildis (Godeheut)

Some say he first married Stephanie (Adelaida) de Barcelona.

Children:

1. Ralph (II) (iii) de Tosny (1029-1102).
2. Béranger (l'Espagnol) de Tosny (1030- ?).
3. Robert de Stafford (de Tosny) (1038-1088).
4. Vuazo de Tosny.
5. Helinand de Tosny ( ? -1040).
6. Helebert de Tosny ( ? -1040).
7. Adeliza (Alice) de Tosny ( ? -1065)

As we have already seen, in 1013 or 1014, along with his father Raoul (I) (ii) de Tosny, Roger was given the custody of the Castle of Tillières-sur-Avre. This implies that he was of-age in the military sense and this, in turn, supports his having been born c.990.

About the year 1015, he shared the 'banishment' of his father but, rather than joining him on the resulting expedition to Italy, Roger determined to go 'on Crusade'<sup>1</sup> against the Moors who were then occupying large tracts of Hispania (Spain). The sources tell us that he was the first Norman to venture forth into Spain<sup>2</sup> and the action reveals a great deal of his character to us. Like his father he was, first-and-foremost, a military knight and by all accounts he had inherited all his father's fearsome talents, if not exceeded them!

Legends still exist in Spain celebrating Roger's astonishing military victories and, if the accounts are true, his triumphs in the bedchamber were just as astonishing! His reputation at the time rivalled that of one of his near contemporaries – *El Cid*, "el

<sup>1</sup> The terms *crusade* and *crusader* were not used by chroniclers to describe these military ventures until the first half of the thirteenth century. [C. Tyerman, 'Were there any Crusades in the twelfth century?' *EHR*, cx (1995), 533.]

<sup>2</sup> "C'est la première en date des croisades françaises d'Espagne." Boissonade, P. 'Les premières croisades françaises en Espagne. Normands, Gascons, Aquitains et Bourguignons (1018-1032).' In: *Bulletin Hispanique*, Vol. 36, No. 1, 1934, pp. 5-28. [https://www.persee.fr/doc/hispa\\_0007-4640\\_1934\\_num\\_36\\_1\\_2607](https://www.persee.fr/doc/hispa_0007-4640_1934_num_36_1_2607)

Campeador" (O.Sp. 'the Champion of the Battlefield') – whose reputation is still a marvel to modern historians and is immortalized in film.<sup>3</sup> Roger was certainly an equal and his biography deserves a wider audience both in Spain, Normandy and England. Boissonade says, "Ce personnage n'était pas, comme on l'a dit, 'un petit seigneur normand', mais un des plus hauts barons de Normandie."<sup>4</sup> Orderic Vitalis called Roger, son of Raoul, "the most famous signifier (standard-bearer) of the Normans."<sup>5</sup>

There is scant information about Roger (I) de Tosny's expedition into Hispania.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, there has grown a wealth of myths and legends whose historical integrity must be questioned. The *provenance* of neither of the two sources given below is Iberian and, indeed, "there are no known references to Roger in any Iberian narrative or documentary source."<sup>7</sup>

Lucas Villegas-Aristizábal, in his PhD thesis, suggests that Roger, "arrived in Spain in 1023, with an army of Normans to fight the heathens."<sup>8</sup>

When Roger arrived in Spain (c.1018) it is believed that he had with him an illegitimate brother whose name has not come down to us. The evidence for this comes from Adémar who writes that, "cum quibus confligens fratrem suum manzerem amisit."<sup>9</sup> However, if we accept that Roger married Adelaida, daughter of Ramon Borrell, Count of Barcelona, then it is possible that Adémar was indeed speaking of a brother-in-law (which was the traditional translation), a brother of Adelaida, who some name as Borrell Ramon.<sup>10</sup>

Roger's primary intention seems to have been a desire to come to the aid of the Countess Ermessenda of Barcelona. Having lost her husband in 1017 she was left to

<sup>3</sup> "El Cid" - Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar (c.1043 - 10 July 1099)

<sup>4</sup> Boissonade (1934), p. 8-9. "This person was not, as has been said, 'a minor Norman lord', but was one of the greatest barons of Normandy."

<sup>5</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History of England and Normandy*, Vol. 2, T. Forester (tr.), London: Henry G. Bohn (1854), 401.

<https://ia802702.us.archive.org/17/items/ecclesiasticalhi02orde/ecclesiasticalhi02orde.pdf> (accessed 20/4/20).

<sup>6</sup> The two main sources are Adémar of Chabannes *History of Aquitaine* and the *Chronicle* of the Abbey of Saint Pierre-le-Vif de Sens.

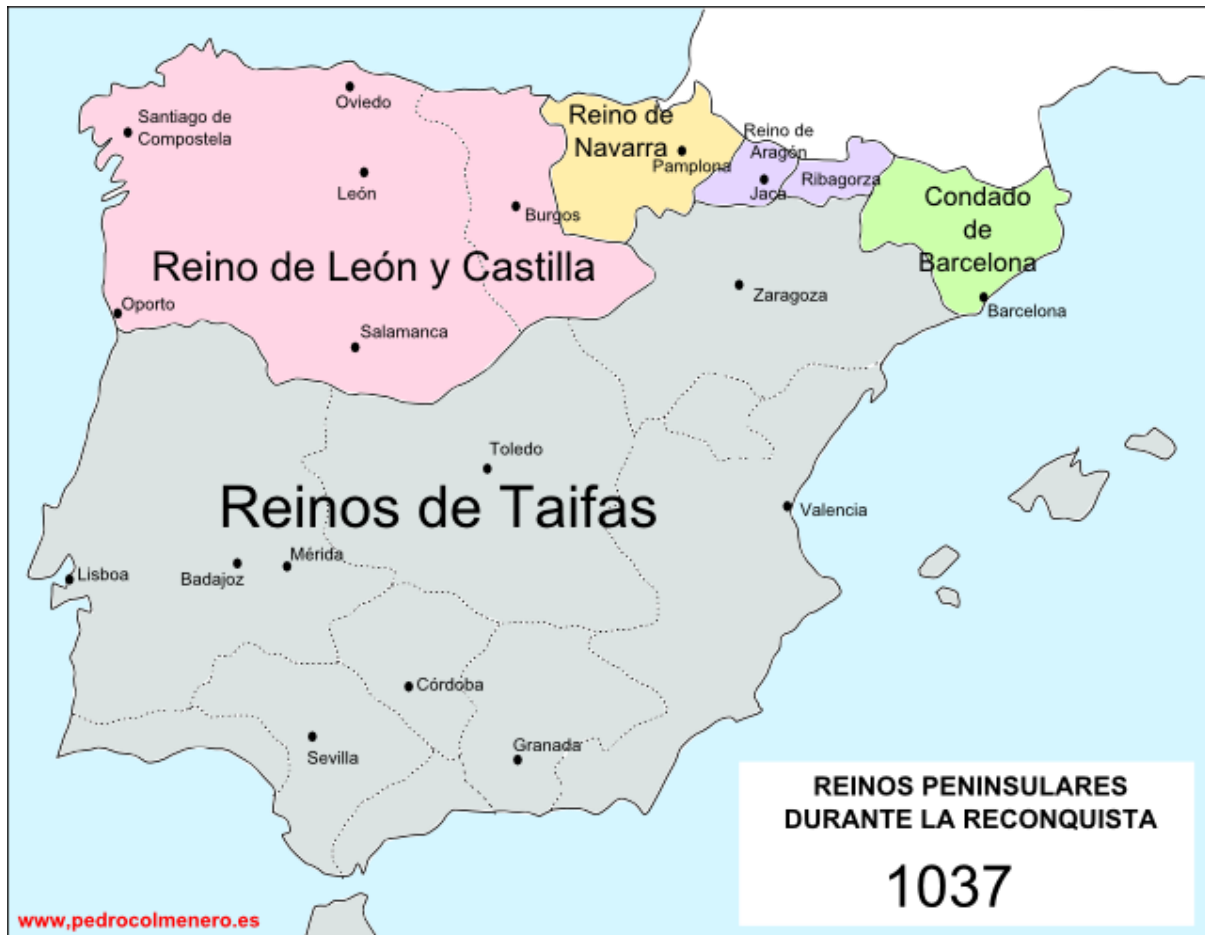
<sup>7</sup> Villegas-Aristizábal, Lucas (2008) Roger of Tosny's Adventures in the County of Barcelona. In: *Nottingham Medieval Studies LII (2008)*, pp. 5-16. Available on Academia [https://www.academia.edu/911617/Roger\\_of\\_Tosnys\\_adventures\\_in\\_the\\_County\\_of\\_Barcelona](https://www.academia.edu/911617/Roger_of_Tosnys_adventures_in_the_County_of_Barcelona) (accessed 20/4/10).

<sup>8</sup> Villegas-Aristizábal, Lucas, (2007) *Norman and Anglo-Norman Participation in the Iberian Reconquista, c.1018 – c.1248*, unpublished PhD Thesis presented to the University of Nottingham, (June 2007), 71. <http://eprints.nottingham.ac.uk/10283/> (accessed 23/4/20).

<sup>9</sup> Adémar of Chabannes, 'Chronicle (on Roger of Tosny)', in *The Normans in Europe*, ed. E. Van Houts (Manchester, 2000), 269-270, 270. In the past, many scholars considered that the most appropriate translation of this passage was: "Engaging with them (the Saracens) he (Roger) lost his brother-in-law." However, it would seem more appropriate, since (L) *manzer* = "illegitimate", to suggest that Roger lost an illegitimate brother rather than a brother-in-law.

<sup>10</sup> <https://fmg.ac/Projects/MedLands/CATALAN%20NOBILITY.htm>

act as Regent for her young son Berenguer Ramon (I) who was about twelve years of age at the time of his father's death. A number of individuals coveted the properties of the County and were hovering like vultures waiting to pick parts of it away. Many of these individuals were, of course, Muslim, and the lands of the Emir of Saragossa (Zaragoza) marched with those of the Countess, creating an unstable border-zone.



Roger and his companions brought a new, more savage, form of warfare to Spain. His conquests were many and he is said to have captured many cities and castles from the Moors in his first expedition. Down the ages we find that Roger (I) also gained the *sobriquet* "Mangeur de Maures" as the result of a well-known tale recounted by Adémar.<sup>11</sup> However, this is not a name used by Adémar himself, nor is there evidence that it was used during Roger's own lifetime. It seems rather to be

<sup>11</sup> Adémar of Chabannes, *Chronicon*, ed. P. Bourgain (Turnhout, 1999), 178; English translation in: Adémar of Chabannes, 'Chronicle (on Roger of Tosny)', in *The Normans in Europe*, ed. E. Van Houts (Manchester, 2000), 270.

one created by later historians. Such was the success of Roger and his companions that Adémar reports that:

“Qua de causa timore exanimata, vicinae Hispaniae Sarraceni cum rege suo Museto pacem a comitissa Barzelonensi Ermensende petunt, at annum tributum persolvere spondent.”<sup>12</sup>

For some time, the Moslem emirs kept this ‘peace’ and paid the tribute due, but it was not an easy situation for either side to tolerate. In the end, as the Reconquista progressed, it was not peace that the Christian sides wished for, but rather the complete expulsion of the Caliphate from the Spanish mainland.

It cannot be doubted that Roger (I) de Tosny must have provided a formidable example to the young Count and to have done much to mould the character of a youth who was at a very impressionable age. The boy must also have watched his mother closely and seen the ways in which she gained a reputation for being ‘energetic’ and ‘decisive.’ However, the effect seems not to have lasted for Berenguer Ramon (I) is described as being weak and indecisive and to have favoured a policy of pacifying the Moors. The young Count died whilst still a young man and was buried with his ancestors in the abbey church of Santa Maria de Ripoll. He had been married twice and had four sons.<sup>13</sup>



Figure 1: Romanesque entrance to the Abbey Church of Ripoll.

<sup>12</sup> Adémar of Chabannes, *Chronicon*, ed. P. Bourgain (Turnhout, 1999), 178.

<sup>13</sup> His first marriage was to Sancha Sancez of Castile (Sons: Ramon Berenguer (I) and Sanç (Sancho) Berenguer); secondly, he married Guisla de Lluçà (Sons: Guillem Berenguer and Bernat Berenguer).

Roger (I) de Tosny descended like a storm on the Moorish territories and exacted a fearful price from a number of cities, towns and castles. However, after this initial field-campaign, he seems to have spent a little time in Barcelona itself no doubt allowing his companions time to recuperate and count their undoubted gains. It is very possible that this was when his relations with the comital family became very close indeed, no doubt as the result of their gratitude for his having relieved the pressure on Barcelona's southern border region. By all accounts Ermessenda's daughter Adelaida was something of a beauty having, perhaps, inherited her mother's renowned good looks and it would have been a very natural thing for the Countess to see in Roger everything that she admired in a man and to think him a very suitable husband for her daughter. No doubt Roger might also have seen this as an opportunity to better himself and to raise his family's honour still further.

One writer, the author of the *Chronique de Saint-Pierre-le-Vif de Sens*, recounts that at some point during his expedition to Spain, Roger married the daughter of Ermessenda, Countess of Barcelona,<sup>14</sup> and identifies this daughter as Estefania.<sup>15</sup> The historical record may be at fault here since, by some, it is denied that a marriage ever took place but rather that there had only been an intention for them to be married.



Figure 2: Effigy of Ermessenda, Countess of Barcelona by Guillem Morell (1385) in Girona Cathedral.

<sup>14</sup> Ermessenda's husband died in 1017, leaving a male heir, but the boy was a 'minor' and so, for some years, the Countess acted as Regent for her young son. In effect, this meant that Roger (I) de Tosny was acting/fighting on behalf of the Countess in his wars against the Moslems.

<sup>15</sup> *Chronique de Saint-Pierre-le-Vif de Sens*, ed. R.H. Bautier and M. Gilles (Paris, 1979), 112. In a number of sources, she is named Adelaida.

As time passed, the attitudes of the local people, not all of whom saw the Muslims as a threat or the enemy, changed towards the main players in the early Reconquista. It would seem that Roger (I) de Tosny in particular came in for a measure of criticism and his presence in Barcelona was not as welcome as it once was. We are told, by both Adémar and the author of the *Chronique de Saint Pierre le Vif*, that an armed force ambushed Roger and that he was lucky to escape. What we are not told is whether the ambushers were Christians or Moslems, or perhaps a combination of both since it would appear that Roger had overstayed his welcome.<sup>16</sup> Some sources find this event difficult to date suggesting it may have happened as late as 1035.<sup>17</sup> But this is manifestly a mistake since both Roger and his father Raoul were, together, given permission by the Duke of Normandy to return to their patrimony and we find that Raoul had indeed returned and then died at Guerny in 1024. Also, Roger (I) de Tosny married Godehildis (Godeheut) c.1025, either having had the previous marriage to Adelaide de Barcelona annulled or being quite free to marry since the marriage in Barcelona was only intended and never actually celebrated. Some say that his Spanish wife died in 1018.

Roger was certainly back in Normandy at a date 'before 1026' when he founded the Church of Sainte-Foy in Conches-en-Ouche. He was a witness to a charter of Robert I, *le Magnifique*, Duke of Normandy (1027-1035), recording a gift of the duke to the Abbey of Mont-Saint-Michel which can be dated to 1030.<sup>18</sup> In 1031x1032, he attested a second charter of Duke Robert I of Normandy in favour of St Wandrille's Abbey.<sup>19</sup>

In 1034, Roger began the construction of what was to become the *caput* of the Tosny lands in Normandy – the Castle of Conches.<sup>20</sup> Roger had been given the *seigneurie* of *Conches* to add to the *seigneurie* de Tosny which he already held, and, from that time onwards, the family were regularly known as "de Tosny de Conches". Conches-en-Ouches is only a little distance (approx. 60km) south-west from Tosny, beyond Évreux.

The year 1035 was witness to another of Roger's great achievements – the foundation of the Abbey of Saint-Pierre et de Saint-Paul in Conches, otherwise known as the

<sup>16</sup> Adémar of Chabannes, 'Chronicle (on Roger of Tosny)', 270; *Chronique de Saint-Pierre-leVif de Sens*, 113.

<sup>17</sup> William of Jumièges, *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, II, 94-95.

<sup>18</sup> Delisle (1867), *Pièces justificatives*, no. 9, Valognes: Martin, Imprimeur Libraire, p. 10. "Concedo denique in comitatu Abrincatensi villam quæ dictur Sancti Johannis [Saint-Jean-le-Thomas, Manche, cant. de Sartilly] sitam supra mare, etc." signed "Rogerii, filii Radulfi".

<https://archive.org/details/histoireduchate00deligoog/page/n337/mode/2up> (accessed 26/4/20).

"Comitatu Abrincatensi" refers to the *pagus Abricantius* (Avranchin) which lies next to the duchy of Brittany.

<sup>19</sup> Saint-Wandrille, Appendice, 13, p. 52. Charter dated [20 Jul 1031/Jul 1032] under which Robert I Duke of Normandy (1027-1035) donated the church of *Arques* to Saint-Wandrille[1161].

<sup>20</sup> Orderic Vitalis mentions four main castles in their Norman barony in 1119: [Conches-en-Ouche](#), [Tosny](#), [Portes](#), [Acquigny](#).

Abbey of Chatillon-les-Conches. Fécamp provided the first two abbots, as well as the monks, for Roger's foundation at Conches.<sup>21</sup>

The building of a castle and an abbey are testament to the tremendous wealth enjoyed by Roger (I) de Tosny. But he was not to enjoy it for much longer!

On the death of Duke Robert I, on 3 July 1035, in Nicaea, on his return journey from a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, his illegitimate son William became Duke in fulfilment of Robert's will.<sup>22</sup> This was too much for Roger (I) de Tosny who publicly declared that "no bastard was going to be his lord"! Roger (whose nature has already been revealed to us) had been arguing violently with some of his neighbours and ravaging their lands during the Duke's absence and he now ramped up these attacks in the hope of bringing William from power. A particular target in these troublesome times was Humphrey of Vieilles.<sup>23</sup> At length, Humphrey had had his fill of Roger and he sent his son who was also called Roger (de Beaumont) and his brother Henri to face the Tosny family down. The date of the encounter is traditionally said to be 31 May 1040 and two weeks later, Roger (I) de Tosny and two of his sons, Helebert and Helinand, were all dead, either having been killed in battle or died some days later from their wounds. This left, as heir to the seigneurie, an eleven-year-old son called Raoul who thus became known as Raoul (II) (iii) de Tosny et de Conches.

Roger and his two sons were all buried in the Abbey of Saint-Pierre de Castillon which he had founded only four years before in Conches-en-Ouches.

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<sup>21</sup> Musset, Lucien, 'Aux Origines d'une Classe Dirigeant: les Tosny, grands barons normands du X<sup>e</sup> au XII<sup>e</sup> siècle', *Francia*, vol. 5 (1878), pp. 45-80, 53.

<sup>22</sup> William was the son of Robert and his concubine, Herleva of Falaise. Robert also had a daughter (possibly by Herleva) called Adelaide. [*The Gesta Normannorum Ducum of William of Jumièges, Orderic Vitalis, and Robert of Torigni*, ed. & trans. Elizabeth M.C. Van Houts, Vol. I (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1992), p. lxxv]

<sup>23</sup> Humphrey de Vieilles was the first to hold the *honour* of Beaumont-le-Roger, an important holding in eastern Normandy from whence the House of Beaumont was founded. Humphrey is said to have been a close relative of Richard I, Duke of Normandy, and so would have been a formidable enemy. Vieilles is the name of a *vill*, now merged with Beaumont-le-Roger. It lies only 20km north-west of Conches-en-Ouche.