

EPILOGUE

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“God and posterity will show me more favour.”

— Lady Jane Grey

The memory of their Spanish queen did not soon fade from the Sicilians’ memory, but their attention turned to focus on the king’s wife. Virtually nothing is known about Joanna’s time as queen consort, except that she bore no children. In the spring of 1184, she went with William to Calabria to comfort its population following a destructive earthquake powerful enough to force the collapse of Cosenza’s cathedral.

The traveler bin Jubayr arrived in Sicily too belatedly to meet Margaret, but he left us a perceptive description of what he found.⁴²¹

A year after Margaret’s death, William arranged the marriage of his aunt, Constance, to Henry, a son of Frederick Barbarossa. This may have reinforced Sicily’s bonds with Germany, but any child of Constance would be a Hohenstaufen, not a Hauteville. The queen dowager Beatrice of Rethel, Constance’s mother, died a few months after the betrothal.

In 1185, while Constance was making her way northward to marry⁴²² Henry Hohenstaufen, William launched an invasion of the Greek lands to the east of the *Regnum*, something he had been considering ever since the Byzantine massacre of the Latins at Constantinople a few years earlier. Leading this incursion was Tancred of Lecce and an able admiral named Margaritus of Brindisi. The Sicilian advance toward Constantinople was stopped by Emperor Isaac Angelus Comnenus, with whom the King of Sicily made peace four years later.

When Saladin captured Jerusalem late in 1187, the only military opposition to arrive from Europe was the Sicilian fleet led by admiral Margaritus. The next year, Margaritus relieved the Knights Hospitaller, who were besieged by Saladin at their large fortress, Krak des Chevaliers.

With other Christian kings, William was already contemplating a Third Crusade to take back the Holy City.

When King William II of Sicily died in November 1189, his aunt Constance was his designated heir.⁴²³ The Sicilians, not wishing to see the *Regnum* fall into the hands of the Holy Roman Emperor, crowned illegitimate Tancred of Lecce their king. Initially, there was nothing Constance could do about this.

Henry II of England died in the same year, succeeded as king by his son Richard Lionheart.

In 1190, Constance's father-in-law, Frederick Barbarossa, met his end while riding across a river in what is now Turkey. His son, Constance's husband Henry VI, was crowned Holy Roman Emperor in Rome the following year.

Queen Joanna, Margaret's daughter-in-law, survived William and in 1191 she went on the Third Crusade with her brother, Richard Lionheart, who tried to marry her off to Saladin's brother as a peace offering. Returning to Europe, she wed Raymond VI of Toulouse as his third wife. (Joanna died following childbirth in 1199.)

Thinking to overthrow Tancred, Constance and her husband invaded the *Regnum*. This incursion ended with Constance being captured. She was rescued in 1192.

With Tancred's untimely death in 1194, Constance again claimed the Kingdom of Sicily as its lawful queen regnant. This time she was successful. By her husband, Henry VI, she bore a son, Frederick II. This ushered in Sicily's Swabian era. Frederick was Holy Roman Emperor, King of the Germans, King of Sicily, and eventually King of Jerusalem. Following in the intellectual tradition of his grandfather, Roger II, erudite Frederick led Sicily into a second golden age.

Margaret's brother, Sancho VI "the Wise" of Navarre, died at Pamplona in 1194. His daughter, named Berengaria (like the daughter of Alfonso VIII of Castile), had wed Richard Lionheart in 1191, thus becoming Queen of England and daughter-in-law of Eleanor of Aquitaine. Berengaria's marriage to Richard was childless.

Margaret's nephew, Alfonso VIII of Castile, is celebrated for his part in Spain's *Reconquista*. He defeated an Almohad force at the Battle of the Navas de Tolosa in 1212, but died two years later.

Looking back across many generations, we can see that the people who touched Margaret's life were the most colourful figures of their era. The patina of the passing centuries has not lessened their legacy, nor has it tarnished hers.

The story of Margaret Jiménez of Navarre is the story of every woman who rises to face the unknown and defeats it. Her story is our story.

MARGARET

Queen of Sicily



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