MARGARET

Queen of Sicily

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Jacqueline Alio

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ORCID identifier of Calogera Jacqueline Alio: 0000-0003-1134-1217

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PREFACE

"Never cease to act because you fear you may fail."

— Queen Liliuokalani of Hawaii

As Queen Regent of Sicily, Margaret Jiménez of Navarre was the most powerful woman in Europe for five eventful years. She was the most important woman of medieval Sicily. If only for that simple reason, her story is worthy of our interest. But there are other reasons to consider her life and times.

Margaret of Navarre represents the dynastic and social bridge between Sicily and the northeastern Iberian lands. This began with the marriage of Roger II, Sicily's first king, to Elvira of Castile, Margaret's cousin. It was destined to reach a fuller fruition with the marriage of Frederick II to Constance of Aragon in 1209 and, of course, the crowning of Peter III of Aragon as King of Sicily in 1282. Coming on the heels of the bloody War of the Vespers, this last development led to Sicily finding herself in the Iberian political orbit for the next few centuries, first as a jewel in the "Crown of Aragon" ruled

from Barcelona, and then as a cornerstone of the Spanish Empire.

Margaret's relationships with Thomas Becket and her Navarrese countryman, the rabbi Benjamin of Tudela, say as much about each of these two men as they do about her and her adopted people, the polyglot Sicilians.

"You have gained praise among your countrymen, and glory among posterity, and made us your debtors," wrote Thomas Becket to Margaret in a letter thanking her for extending hospitality to his family when they were exiled from England by King Henry II, whose daughter ended up marrying Margaret's son.

Like most past ages, Europe's High Middle Ages were not a great era for women. They were benighted times that witnessed very few females groomed to lead nations, or indeed anything more grandiose than a convent or a kitchen. Yet the first century of Sicily's life as a kingdom saw two intrepid women pilot the realm through perilous waters. Margaret of Navarre, as we shall see, became queen regent; a few decades later, Constance of Hauteville, who inherited the Kingdom of Sicily, was queen regnant. They knew each other, and young Constance may even have patterned part of her "leadership style" after Margaret's. A sisterhood, though tenuous, probably existed.

Both were the daughters of kings, the sisters of kings, the mothers of kings. In youth, neither seemed destined for greatness, or even queenship. It was widowhood that prompted their ascents to power. Their lives deserve to be studied, or at least noted, for there is something to be learned from them. Our focus, of course, is Margaret, who arrived in Sicily at the end of her girlhood. Indeed, it was the arrival itself that brought her girlhood to an end.

Inevitably, Margaret's story, like those of the queens who were her contemporaries, is to some degree defined dialecti-

cally by the entrenched patriarchy. In her time there were kingdoms but no true European queendoms. Chroniclers recounted more tales of heroes than heroines.

It is inescapable — a formless subtext lurking in the shadows cast by the long march of centuries. Sooner or later, any biography of a female leader must confront the thorny question of gender. Therein lies a latent sexism, a lingering vestige of the infamous double standard that colors the ages, for nobody writing about a man is expected to address the subject's masculinity as if it were a barrier to be overcome. We need not dwell on this tired topos, nor make it the object of arcane debates, but we cannot ignore it.

Women are different from their brothers, and those differences were far more acute in the twelfth century — an epoch of absolute monarchies, absolute roles and absolute power — than in our time. In practice, the act of ruling was essentially the same regardless of the sex of the ruler; it was the ubiquitous misogynists who created most of the obstacles facing those few queens who found themselves actually governing kingdoms.

During the Middle Ages, Sicily was one of the few places where a woman ruled a population that included many Muslims. Yet the more outspoken men who challenged Margaret's authority were not the kingdom's Muslims, but rather its Christians, including two of her kinsmen.

Anybody familiar with chess, a game introduced in Sicily by the Arabs, knows that the queen is the most versatile piece on the board. She can defend her king or attack opponents. Margaret proved adept at both tactics. Checkmating foes was part of the job.

Medieval queenhood was more grit than glitter. Despite good meals, comfortable beds and occasional pageantry, ruling a kingdom was a burdensome task.

Twelfth-century queens regent and regnant assumed the

duties usually reserved to men. Thus we find Constance of France, the widow of Bohemond of Antioch, a monarch of Sicily's House of Hauteville, acting as her son's regent and knighting the boy herself.

The historiography and method that led to this biography are considered at some length in the following pages. For the moment, let it suffice to say that sound epistemology is key, and if our quest for accuracy is essential so is the balanced presentation of history. Historical biography must never wander into the domain of historical fiction.

Margaret's travels took her from her native Navarre to Sicily, a tortuous path followed, very literally, by the author, albeit using slightly more modern means than horse and galley. From Pamplona to Palermo, across seas and mountains, Margaret edged her way to greatness, step by step, out of simple necessity. It was not an easy road, nor even an expected one.

The lessons learned are general, perhaps abstract. Chief among them is the very simple idea that strength springs forth from our response to adversity. This is something embodied not only by "leaders" but by women who face challenges in their daily lives; the single mother and the businesswoman have much in common with Margaret of Navarre.

Because our journey follows Margaret's, we'll cast an eye over the social environment she found in the Kingdom of Sicily, which included the islands of Sicily and Malta, and most of the Italian peninsula south of Rome. The realm, the *Regnum Siciliae,* boasted a prosperous, multicultural population, a fair degree of independence from the Papacy, a reasonably efficient feudal system of land ownership and, not leastly, a solid legal code, the Assizes of Ariano, inspired by the Code of Justinian. The middle years of the twelfth century found the kingdom with one of the wealthiest economies in Europe and the Mediterranean, having a population distinguished by its ethnoreligious and intellectual diversitude.

We shall, of course, glance over the reigns of three kings Margaret knew, the men who shaped her life. These were her father García Ramírez, her father-in-law Roger II, and her husband William I. Then there was the reign of her son, William II, for whom she was regent. However, ours will not be an exhaustive study of those kingly reigns, to which entire volumes have been dedicated. Nor will it focus exclusively on chronicles and charters, although such sources shall be considered extensively.

Island kingdoms seem to enjoy a special niche in history, and certainly in literature. Tragically, one finds few obvious traces of Liliuokalani's noble legacy in Hawaii. More celebrated are the signs that Margaret left in Sicily, among them the magnificent cathedral at Monreale, which her son built and where she rests.

The name *Margaret* is thought to derive from ancient Persian or Greek words for pearls, clusters of pearls, or blossoms. Saint Margaret of Antioch was a Christian virgin martyred in 304. Queen Margaret's death at forty-eight years was a natural one, though far too premature.

This book is not an encomium. In life, Queen Margaret was loved and despised, praised and disparaged. Such is the fate of queens. Among sage historians her detractors are few, her legacy assured. But nobody has ever seen fit to write a book about her, until now.

The story of Europe's eventful twelfth century is now one step closer to completeness.

Fortitude, thy name is woman.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

"In youth we learn. In age we understand."

— Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach

The road to knowledge can be as difficult as the road to greatness, and often the two cross paths. However, tracing Margaret's footsteps was not nearly so challenging as the queen's personal journey must have been during what we now call the *High Middle Ages*. The author did not risk assassination in La Guardia, Nájera, Pamplona, Logroño, Zaragoza or Barcelona, nor public humiliation in Palermo, Monreale, Canterbury or Maniace. At Tudela, the gentle storks nesting in church towers posed no threat. In New York, where the reliquary shown on this book's cover is housed in serene dignity in Upper Manhattan, the only mild annoyance was the January snow.

The archival sources were readily available and easily consulted, the chronicles published centuries ago.

Nevertheless, a book of this kind cannot be written in a vacuum.

Thanks are expressed to Professor Gwenyth Hood of Marshall University, West Virginia, for making available her cogent

commentary regarding authorship of the chronicle of "Hugh Falcandus."

The author wishes to thank the cooperative staffs at state archives and public libraries here in southern Italy, as well as the archdioceses of Palermo, Monreale and Messina, for granting access to manuscripts in their chartularies. She expresses her gratitude to Paolo Vian, the director of the manuscript department of the Vatican Apostolic Library, and the staff of the Vatican Secret Archives. Thanks also to the accommodating staff of the Archivo Real y General de Navarra in Pamplona, housed in the last vestige of the royal palace, where the author was permitted to consult records even on a Saturday morning in winter. Thanks to the diligent archivists of the Hospital de Tavera (de San Juan Bautista) in Toledo.

Special thanks to the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York) for permission to reproduce an image of the reliquary shown on this book's cover, licensed through the OASC (Open Access for Scholarly Content) program under accession number 63.160. Thanks to the British Library for permission to use the image of the page from the Harley Trilingual Psalter, catalogued as Harley MS 5786, folio 106v.

A number of readers have lent their encouragement over the last few years. They are too many to name, but their support is very much appreciated. I thank my editor, a frenetic New Yorker, for his patience. Last but not least, heartfelt thanks to the two colleagues who very kindly found time in their busy schedules to undertake a diligent peer review of the text.

The author alone assumes responsibility for what is presented in these pages.

— C. Jacqueline Alio

Palermo, December 2016

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INTRODUCTION

M

"Facts can obscure truth."

— Maya Angelou

Writing a biography is an exercise in responsibility and humility, especially when it happens to be the *first* biography of an important historical figure. Some exceptional royal biographies have been written in recent decades, though very few of these deal with the lives of medieval Sicilian queens. So little has been published about Margaret's *sui generis* reign that platitudes are easily avoided.

Discovering the essential facts of Margaret's life was only the beginning. The most difficult task was unearthing Margaret's "self," the *spirit* that made her what she was, and what, in historical memory, she still is. That is an underlying challenge facing any biographer seeking to reveal the details, but also the personality, of a subject who lived so long ago, in a time long before printing, photography, fast travel and faster communication.

But there exists a particular danger, a potential obstacle that

dwells in the depths of the mind. This is the very real risk of presumption and preconception. Seeking facts, the historian must never fall prey to the temptation to embellish or invent details in order to make the object of her study more appealing to the reader, for no historical figure was ever perfect, or perfectly known.

In other words, the biographer must seek to present a universal truth, not a personal one. Psychoanalysis has no place in medieval biography. We cannot presume to know every thought that ever crossed our subject's mind. At best, we can apply the principles of prosopography to our study.

Context, the omnipresent barometer, helps us to ascertain accuracy. While Margaret probably would have agreed that La Rioja and the Nebrodian Mountains are splendid regions, the social milieux of Navarre and Sicily present their own complexities. These were prosperous, multicultural kingdoms of Christians, Muslims and Jews.

Subtext of that kind must never be overlooked. We must seek to know how and why certain things happened. Rarely is it sufficient, or even very satisfying, simply to know that they occurred. History is more than names, places and a few quasi-significant dates.

Then there are the political realities of an age when every kingdom, even powerful Sicily, lived under the constant threat of invasion. As an island and half a peninsula washed by warm waters, the Kingdom of Sicily was especially vulnerable.

In modern fiction, the Middle Ages are much romanticized. In reality, life brought with it daily challenges, even for royalty. Apart from outright regicide, infant mortality was a constant, merciless menace, making a child's survival to the age of three or four seem miraculous indeed. Bishops prayed for young princes to reach adulthood, although the same clerics seemed less concerned with the fate of young princesses.

Disease was rife. Malaria and dysentery were widespread

and homicidal. Plagues did not deign to distinguish between aristocrats and peasants.

Travel was perilous at best. In 1271, a pregnant Queen Isabella of France died when she fell from her horse while fording a stream in Calabria.

Childbirth was blindly femicidal, claiming the lives of mothers in every social class.

Questions of bias and perspective dominate historiography. Every historian, and indeed every thinking adult, should entertain something of a "world view" or philosophy, however rudimentary. Unlike some historical biographies, however, this one has no social or political "agenda" rooted in feminism, Italianism, Sicilianism or revisionism. Its objective is to inform the reader, perhaps offering a few insights garnered from Margaret's life and times. In doing so, the author hopes to shed some light on the experience of a woman too often considered little more than a footnote to history.

True, we must, in a sense, "transport" ourselves to Margaret's times if we are to understand her world. Empathy is not out of place in the field of historical biography. Yet, while we may look to the lives of people who lived in centuries past to inspire us, it is unhealthy when either the biographer or the reader assumes the role of idolater, identifying too closely with a deceased person, as if assuming the personality of a medieval woman. (Fear not: Jackie Alio does not think herself to be Margaret of Navarre.)

More generally, the last few decades have seen a resurgence of interest in Sicily's multicultural "golden age," a trend reflected in academic studies, museum exhibits, books, websites and tourism. That is generally a good thing. So much the better if the women of history are included.

Unfortunately, the annals of medieval history focus on men, not women, so Margaret's early life in Navarre is not documented as well or as fully as one might wish. Obviously, we

know more about her life in Sicily.

We know that she spent more years in Pamplona and Palermo than elsewhere. Knowing something about these cities as they existed during the twelfth century tells us something about the woman who lived in them. Both are magnificent cities where, fortunately, much of the medieval past survives.

That a detailed biography of Margaret Jiménez of Navarre, Queen of Sicily, was not written until 2016 may strike the historian as peculiar, even bizarre, because more is known about her quinquennial regency than the reign of any other Sicilian queen of her century. By way of comparison, far less is known about the brief reign of Constance of Hauteville from 1194 to 1198.

There is an implicit risk when the history of the most consequential years in the life of a woman like Margaret is based on the words of just one or two chroniclers, and especially one so cynical as "Hugh Falcandus." Here there is no perfect remedy, no ideal solution. We have to use context and information from other sources to ascertain the difference between fact and opinion. It is important to recognize that *all* chronicles are biased to some degree. What distinguishes that of Falcandus is that its chronicler was most likely at the court when certain events transpired. For that reason he cannot be ignored, and for that reason his chronicle, with its descriptions of events until 1169, is one of our chief sources for Margaret's regency. One of the shortcomings of Falcandus is a slight ambiguity in the sequence of certain episodes he describes.

William, Margaret's son, reached the age of majority in the second half of 1171. A younger son, Henry, died the following year, leaving the king as her only surviving child.

Another contemporary chronicle pertinent to the reigns of Sicily's two Williams is the *Chronicon sive Annales* of Romuald Guarna of Salerno, who spent some time at the court of

William I and crowned William II. We know that eloquent Bishop Romuald lived in Palermo during the years that Margaret served as her son's regent. As a high-ranking prelate, his perspective bore with it a certain intrinsic bias that favored the Papacy. Romuald's chronicle, which recounts far fewer events than that of Falcandus, takes us to 1179. Margaret died four years later.

Several other chronicles and annals were consulted, some written by chroniclers who lived further afield. In England, Ralph of Diceto and Roger of Howden wrote about Joanna, Margaret's daughter-in-law, who was the daughter of Henry II "Plantagenet," and recorded letters the English king received from William II.

At all events, precedence was given to "primary" sources, that is to say contemporary (or near-contemporary) records, be they chronicles, charters or letters. Some of these were transcribed and published long ago, but several extracts from royal charters, and a few excerpts from the *Chronicon,* appear in this monograph for the first time in English.

The few accounts published at the beginning of the age of printing were carefully considered as they reflect a late-medieval historiographical tradition. Here one *opus* stands out.

Thomas Fazello's post-incunable *De Rebus Siculis* was published in installments beginning in 1558, initially in Latin. At nearly seven hundred pages, this tome was the first major general history of Sicily to see print. Although it is not necessary that we consult Fazello's work for essential facts, it does tell us something about how the Norman kings and their consorts were viewed by historians writing in the sixteenth century, with William I accorded the epithet "the Bad" and William II "the Good." Margaret is mentioned only perfunctorily, in such fleeting passages as *Margaritam Reginam eius uxorem voluit totius regni administratricem,* in this case stating simply that she undertook royal administration. A few lines later the source is re-

vealed. *Quod aliquot post annos sub nomine Hugonis Falcandi dum pararem haec edere.*[1] Tellingly, Fazello does not grant Margaret so much as the dignity of an entry in his book's index.

It is precisely because the important role of women, even queens, is typically overlooked in secondary works like Fazello's that we must look to primary (contemporary) sources for reliable information.

A number of Spanish sources were consulted in order that this volume's first chapters might present a succinct yet accurate profile of Margaret's Jiménez dynasty. These include several chronicles which mention the reign of García Ramírez or his immediate predecessors. Of note are the *Crónica Nájerense* and the *Crónica Navarro-Aragonesa.* Various charters from the reign of García Ramírez were studied, such as those by which he and his wife, Margaret's mother, endowed Pamplona Cathedral.

Rather little has been published in English on young Margaret's parents or their Kingdom of Navarre (Pamplona). Written by Henry Chaytor in 1933, *A History of Aragon and Catalonia* stands the test of time as a good general framework for studying the region during the period considered, and indeed into the era of the "Crown of Aragon," a thalassocracy that included Sicily after 1282.

In the popular mind, for better or worse, perceptions of Margaret's homeland are sometimes inspired by modern writings, such as Ernest Hemingway's enchanting descriptions of Pamplona. An obvious influence on many people of a certain age is *El Cid,* the 1961 motion picture starring Charlton Heston, on which the distinguished scholar Ramón Menéndez Pidal was the historical advisor. Unlike the great majority of cinematic portrayals of famous medieval figures, this one is reasonably accurate.

Although Margaret is *per forza* mentioned in histories dealing with the reigns of William I and William II, there exists no

scholarly consensus of opinion about her regency. It is the author's conviction, based on the available evidence, that Queen Margaret was competent, courageous and decisive.

As medieval biographies go, this book follows a slightly unconventional path. Most readers, understandably, cultivate a "generalist" interest in history, yet the information in these pages reflects the author's original "academic" research, some of it yielding facts published here for the first time. Because it is the first biography of Queen Margaret, this book necessarily follows a prescribed format. The alternative to this would have been a superficial narrative that insults your intelligence.

Apologies are in order to those who may find this endeavour to straddle two worlds, the popular and the scholarly, a distraction. Here the author begs the reader's indulgence.

The translations of excerpts from the charters and the two Sicilian chronicles are the author's, and by intent these are more literal than literary. For the benefit of jurists and scholars, both surviving texts of the Assizes of Ariano, the legal code in force in Sicily during Margaret's lifetime, are presented in their original Latin.

There is no extant proof that Middle Sicilian, reflected in the poetry composed at the court of Frederick II by Giacomo of Lentini and Ciullo of Alcamo, was very widely spoken until the thirteenth century, but it seemed appropriate to dedicate a few words to it, as well as Basque (Euskara), Siculo Arabic, Judeo Arabic and Norman French, *pro forma*. The languages spoken in Navarre and Sicily during the twelfth century are largely extinct.

The appendices present information intended to facilitate a greater knowledge of the topics mentioned in the main text. It was deemed appropriate to include such background details in this monograph because, quite simply, they are difficult to obtain elsewhere, even on the internet.

This book reflects the most meticulous research ever con-

ducted into the life of Margaret of Navarre. Some of the information presented in these pages may differ, if only slightly, from what is published elsewhere. Though corrective in some respects, this biography need not be seen as a rebuttal or revision of the work of other authors, nor the catalyst for esoteric debates. It is hardly academic iconoclasm to conclude that Margaret was married in 1149 instead of 1150, or that she appointed Stephen of Perche her chancellor in 1167 rather than the previous year. The reasoning for such conclusions is explained in the endnotes.

The reader is warned that certain details reported elsewhere are simply incorrect. For example, the statement that a Greek Orthodox chapel once stood on the site where Monreale Abbey was erected is based on the imprecise translation of a phrase in a charter issued in 1176 (see note 346).

More serious misperceptions among otherwise erudite scholars are sometimes rooted in such phenomena as a lack of understanding of the theology and culture of the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches so influential in Sicily during Margaret's lifetime, and even the influence of Islam. This concerns questions regarding the nature of kingship and queenship, the significance of coronations and anointings, and of course such topics as ecclesiastical authority, ecclesial architecture, iconography and, most importantly, the role of religion in the Kingdom of Sicily.

We are not interested in etiology or prolix analyses for their own sake.

While every effort has been made to avoid what the author has sometimes described as "the pedantic and the semantic," the reader's prior familiarity with Navarre and Sicily cannot be presumed, hence the details presented here through maps, photographs, genealogical tables and the introductory chapters, as well as the chronology, appendices and notes.

One rejoices that heaven has seen fit to bestow upon us

enough raw information to write a biography of a very special woman. Even so, an analysis of Margaret's regency beyond what is presented in this volume would be inordinately tedious, adding more verbiage than gravitas.

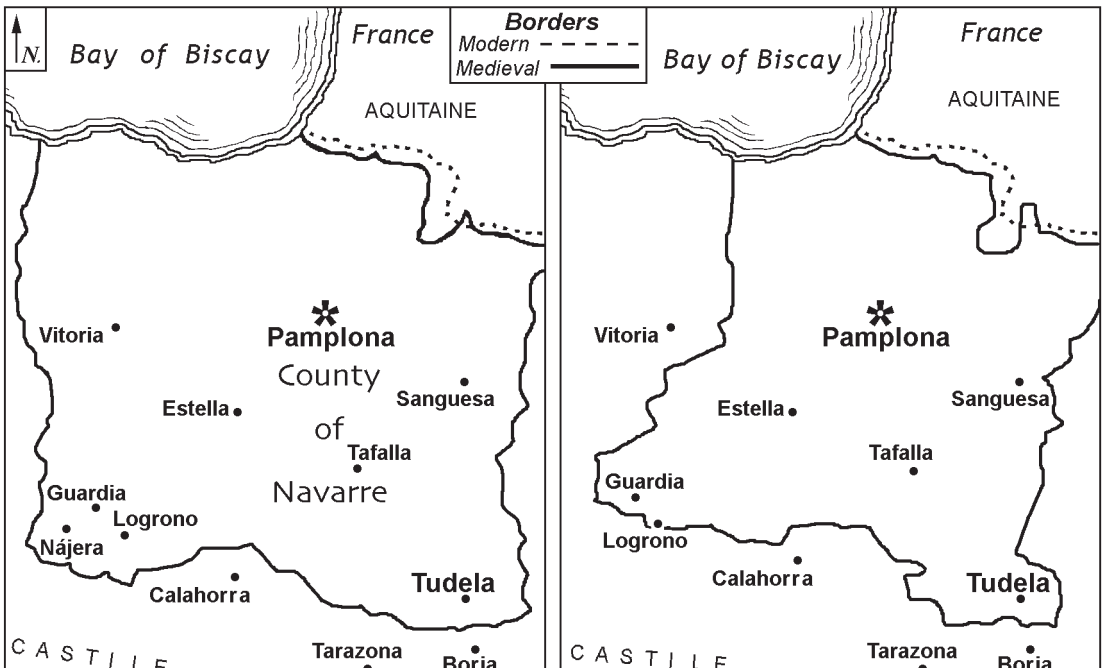
The author lives in Sicily, of course, but she does not have any personal or professional affiliations which might cast her perspective into the murky waters that lead to historiographical bias.

Our journey, like Margaret's, begins in northeastern Spain.

MAPS and IMPRINTS

Regions and Jiménez dominions in northeastern Spain

Northeastern Spain in the Late Twelfth Century



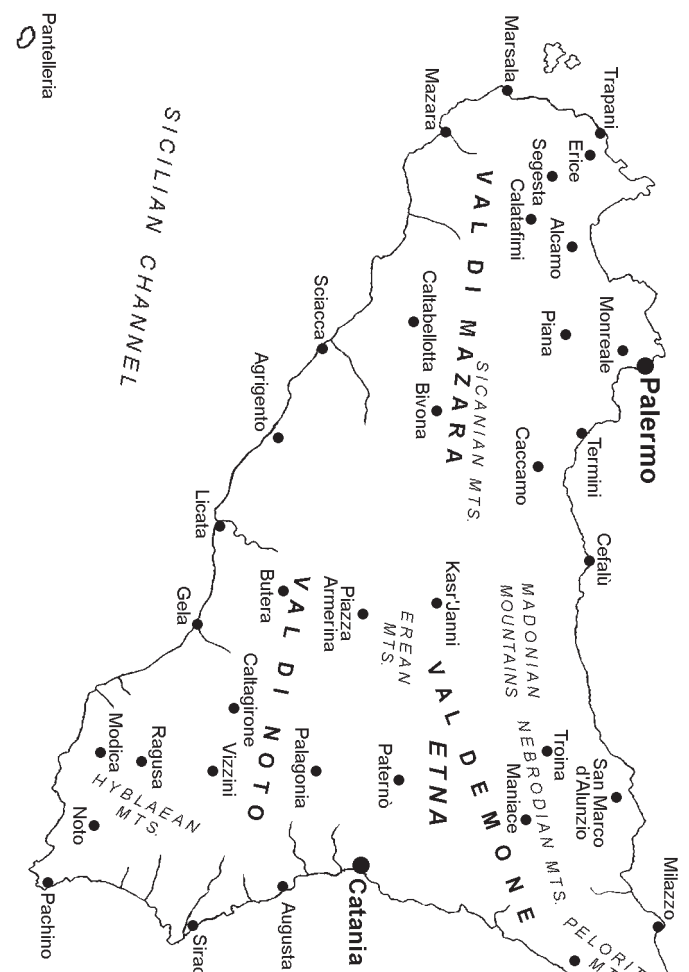
Kingdom of Pamplona under García Ramírez
1135 - 1150

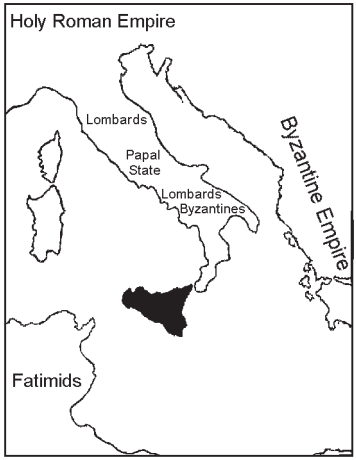
Kingdom of Navarre under Sancho VI the Wise
1150 - 1194

Origins: The peopling of Sicily

Regnum Siciliae: The Norman Kingdom of Sicily


PAPAL STATE
ABRUZZO
Aquila
ADRIATIC SEA
Rome
MOLISE
Loritello
San Germano
Mount Sant'Angelo
Lucera
Benevento
Ariano
Mandra
Barletta
Gaeta
Capua
Trani
Avellino
Troia
PRINCIPATE
Naples
Andria
Bari
Salerno
Eboli
Lucania
Gravina
PUGLIA
Montescaglioso
Taranto
Brindisi
Lecce
Otranto
TYRRHENIAN SEA
Crati Valley
Cosenza
Sila
CALABRIA
Catanzaro
IONIAN SEA
Mileto
Bagnara
Gerace
Reggio


TYRRHENIAN SEA
Lipari
Milazzo
Messina
Palermo
Trapani
Erice
Segesta
Calatafimi
Alcamo
Marsala
Mazara
Monreale
Piana
Caccamo
Termini
Cefalù
VAL DI MAZARA
SICANIAN MTS.
Caltabellotta
Bivona
Sciacca
Agrigento
Licata
Gela
Piazza Armerina
Butera
Kasr'Janni
EREAN MTS.
MADONIAN MOUNTAINS
VAL DEMONE
VAL DI NOTO
Caltagirone
Vizzini
Ragusa
Modica
HYBLAEAN MTS.
Noto
Pachino
Palagonia
Catania
Augusta
Siracusa
Troina
NEBRODIAN MTS.
Maniace
San Marco d'Alunzio
Paternò
ETNA
PELORITAN MTS.
Taormina
IONIAN SEA
SICILIAN CHANNEL
Pantelleria
N

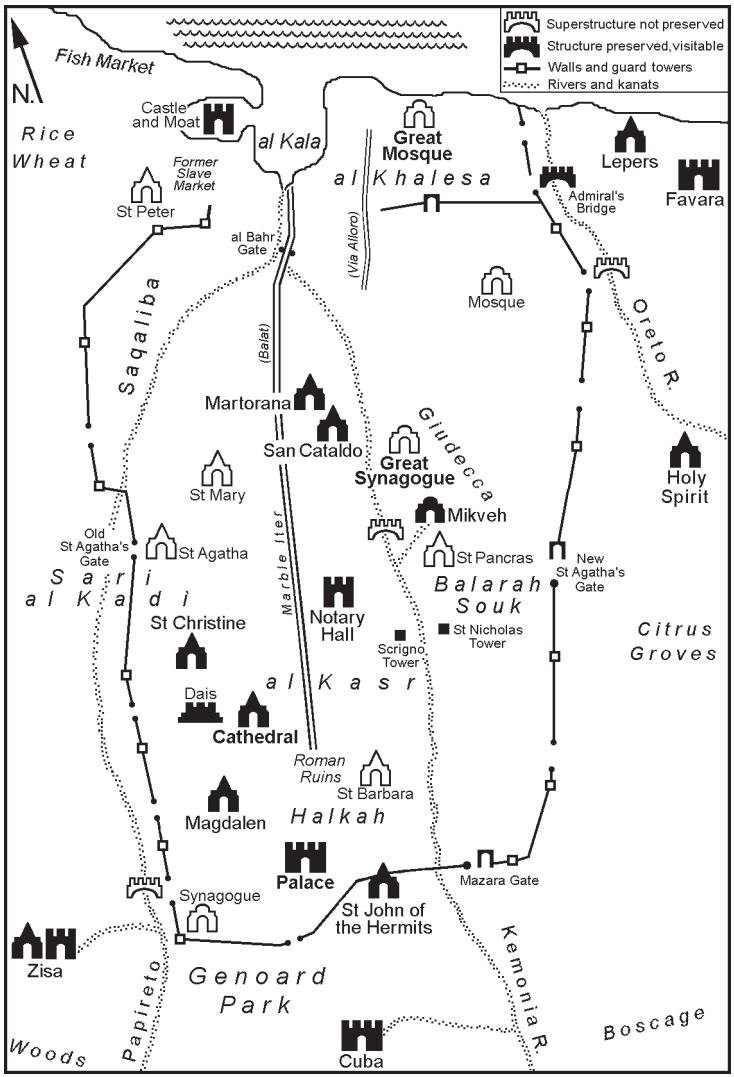


Emirate of Sicily under Kalbids - 948

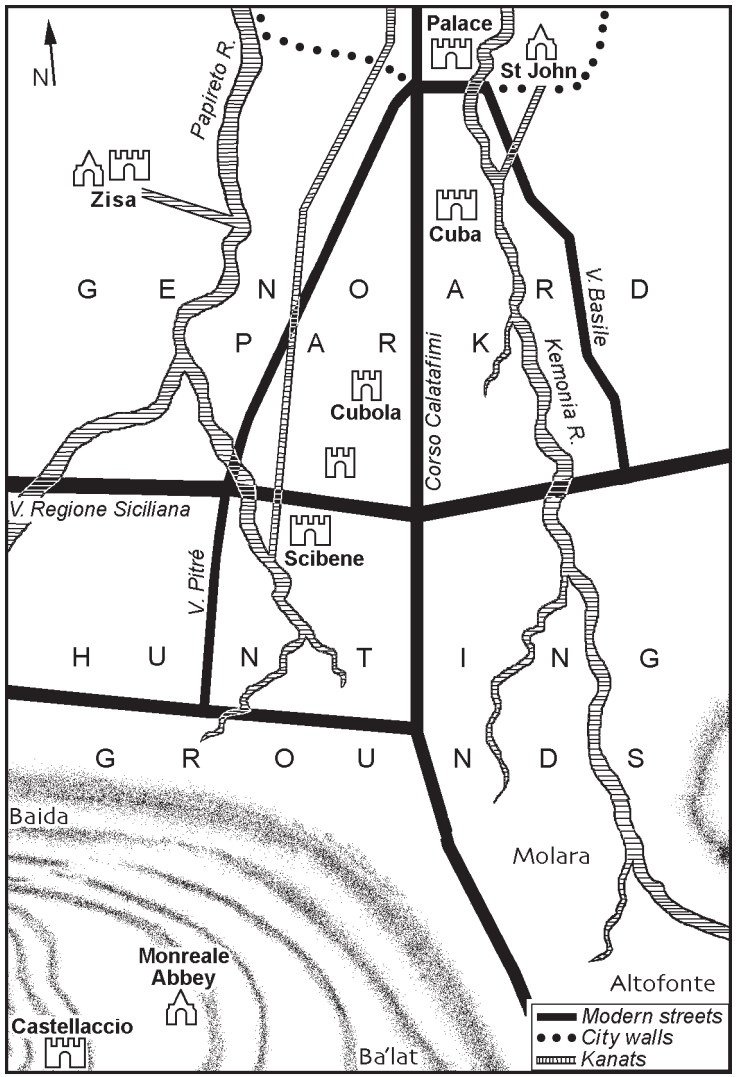
Norman Kingdom of Sicily - 1160

Norman control in 1171: Normandy, Sicily, England, Ireland, Aquitaine, Malta

Shifting Borders: Principal European and Mediterranean states and regions in 1200

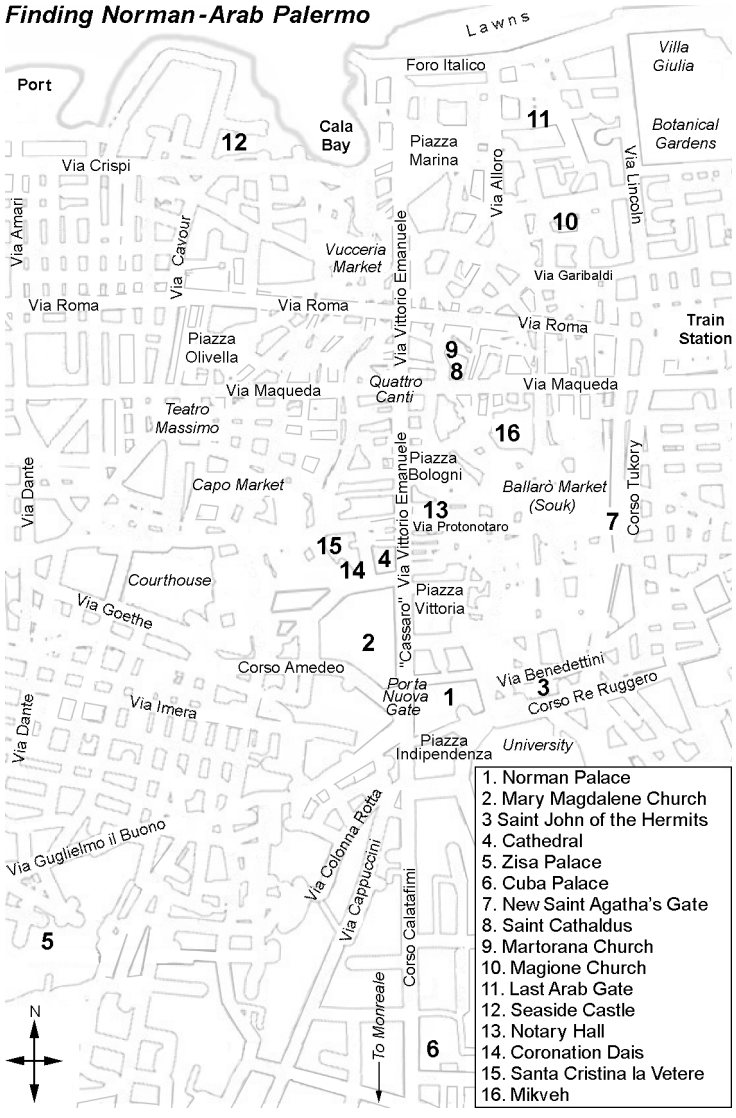


Queen Margaret's Palermo

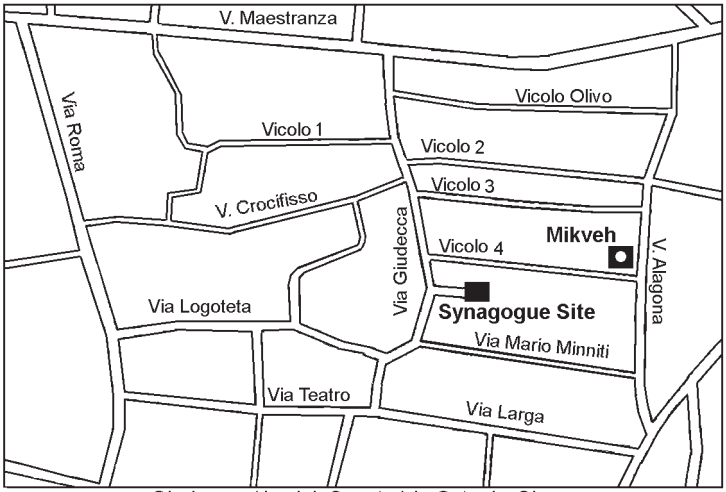


The Genoard in Margaret's time

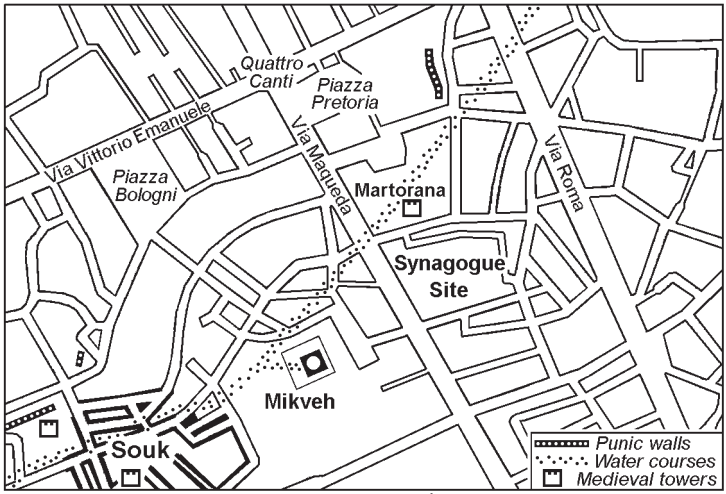
This map dated 1570 shows some streets that existed in Palermo in Margaret's time. The city wall seen here was erected in 1536.


Finding Norman-Arab Palermo
Lawns
Villa Giulia
Foro Italico
Port
Cala Bay
Piazza Marina
Botanical Gardens
Via Crispi
Via Amari
Via Cavour
Vucceria Market
Via Alloro
Via Lincoln
Via Garibaldi
Via Roma
Via Roma
Via Roma
Train Station
Piazza Olivella
Via Vittorio Emanuele
Via Maqueda
Quattro Canti
Via Maqueda
Teatro Massimo
Via Dante
Capo Market
Piazza Bologni
Ballarò Market (Souk)
Corso Tukory
Via Protonotaro
Courthouse
Via Goethe
Piazza Vittoria
"Cassaro"
Corso Amedeo
Via Benedettini
Porta Nuova Gate
Corso Re Ruggero
Via Imera
Via Dante
Piazza Indipendenza
University
Via Guglielmo il Buono
Via Colonna Rotta
Via Cappuccini
Corso Calatafimi
To Monreale
N
1. Norman Palace
2. Mary Magdalene Church
3 Saint John of the Hermits
4. Cathedral
5. Zisa Palace
6. Cuba Palace
7. New Saint Agatha's Gate
8. Saint Cathaldus
9. Martorana Church
10. Magione Church
11. Last Arab Gate
12. Seaside Castle
13. Notary Hall
14. Coronation Dais
15. Santa Cristina la Vetere
16. Mikveh

Jewish Districts of Syracuse and Palermo



Giudecca (Jewish Quarter) in Ortygia, Siracusa
Great synagogue site is St John's Church. Mikveh at Via Alagona 52.



Palermo's Jewish Quarter, Souk (now Ballarò Market) and Kemonia Spring
Great synagogue site is San Nicolò da Tolentino Church. Mikveh under Jesuit cloister.

Chapter 1
IDENTITY

M

"They do not see beyond the superficial to a man's spirit, nor do they regard his virtue, but stand in awe only of his physical presence, his daring, his virility, his agility and his size, and these they judge make him worthy of the purple robe and the crown."

— Anna Comnena

Perched upon a plateau surrounded by plains and gently rolling hills of endless vineyards, La Guardia, as its name implies, stands guard over what is now La Rioja, a region known today for its robust red wine and reddish soil. In the twelfth century, the high town was the perfect place to erect a compact castle for the safety of a warring, wandering nobleman's family, and that is precisely what García Ramírez, Lord of Monzón and Logroño, did some time after his marriage to Margaret of Aigle in 1130.

A small garrison of knights was sufficient to protect the castle and the tiny village, where the Templars had a church and perhaps a small preceptory.

Viticulture was not as widespread in La Rioja in the twelfth century as it is today, and the valleys below La Guardia were covered with woods punctuated by the occasional field, the region populated by an abundance of deer, boar and chamois. Graceful storks nested in the higher trees. The climate was cooler then, with a generous dose of annual snowfall, but artichokes and olives grew in the valleys, where the ground did not freeze.

By the time a daughter named Margaret was born here in 1135, García Ramírez "the Restorer" was about to be crowned King of Navarre[2] and he was already the father of two children. Sancho, an heir, was born in 1132, and Blanca was born two years later.[3]

House of Jiménez

García Ramírez was born to a distinguished family, and some of his kin rest in the stately Gothic church in the charming village of Nájera, the dynasty's effective capital for generations. However, as a solitary sprig of the family tree, he was not born to be king. That was something he would have to fight for.

His destiny was intricately woven into the land of his forefathers, so intricately that it was difficult to discern in the complex tapestry of northeastern Spain at the beginning of the twelfth century when García was born.

La familia meant as much to Spaniards as *la famiglia* did to Italians, and in Navarre the word belied as much complexity as it did in Sicily. García Ramírez's extended family, the House of Jiménez, was full of cousins and siblings who despised each other, often to the point of homicide.

Like the Jiménez themselves, the lands they ruled were steeped in colorful history. As a kingdom, Navarre began its life some distance north of La Rioja near the foothills of the Pyrenees.

Pamplona

Set upon high ground, the city of Pamplona, or Iruña, traces its remote origins to the Vascones who inhabited the region in Roman times, their dominion stretching northward across the Pyrenees into what is now Gascony, where they had contact with the Gauls. Philologists debate the origins of the Vascones' language, thought to be an early precursor of Basque, or Euskara.

To the south were Celtic peoples, to the east Iberians. Such was the cultural landscape encountered by the Phoenicians around 900 BC (BCE).

The arrival of the Phoenicians' descendants, the Carthaginians, brought colonization, and Barcino, now Barcelona, is said to have been named for their leader Hamilcar Barca. The Punic Wars saw the Carthaginians' defeat in 209 BC by the Romans led by Scipio Africanus.

The Romans founded great urban centers like Caesarea Augustus, from which the name *Zaragoza,* sometimes *Saragossa,* which later became the capital of Aragon to the east of Navarre. Except for occasional, isolated rebellions by the indigenous tribes, the following centuries were generally peaceful in the place the Romans called *Hispania,* where Christianity was introduced with the Edict of Milan of 313.

As Rome's vast empire dissolved, the invading Visigoths settled the northeastern part of what is now Spain, *España,* gradually amalgamating with the existing populations while establishing the region's earliest medieval aristocracy.

Having occupied Catalonia, a territory reaching eastward from Aragon to the Mediterranean, the Visigoths entered into a truce with Rome and, ostensibly on her behalf, expelled the other "barbarian" invaders, most notably the Vandals and the Alans. The fall of the Western Roman Empire in 476 found the Visigoths in control of much of Spain and the western

coastal region that became Portugal.

They spent the next century consolidating their power on the peninsula. The Visigoths preferred "heretical" Arianism to the more orthodox Christianity espoused in Rome and Constantinople, and this fostered occasional conflicts. These ended with the conversion of Reccared in 587.

Around this time, the Vascones and their society were described by Reccared's contemporary, the Visigothic chronicler John of Biclaro, who was bishop of the diocese of Girona.

In 711, the Moors — Arabs and Berbers — crossed the Strait of Gibraltar into the Iberian Peninsula, bringing Islam with them. Within a decade, their leader, intrepid Tariq ibn Ziyad, had conquered most of Spain. These Umayyads were Sunnis.

Led by the emir Abdul Rahman al Ghafiqi Abd al Rahman, the Muslims made a major military incursion into what is now France in 732, to be fought back by Charles Martel at the Battle of Tours. This came in the wake of earlier confrontations at Toulouse in 721 and Autun in 725. For the next two centuries the focus of Muslim-Arab expansionism into Europe would not reach far beyond the Iberian lands and Sicily, where the populations increased while science and literature flourished.

Internecine conflicts were not unknown in the Moors' Iberian dominions. The Berbers revolted against the Arabs for several years beginning in 739. Eventually, the Muslims of Spain, united by faith and by the Andalusian dialect of Arabic, made common cause with each other. In future centuries the conflicts among the Spanish Muslim population were many, but they were more political than cultural or ethnic.

By 750, the European part of the Umayyad Caliphate included most of Spain but only part of Navarre. Prosperous Pamplona sometimes attracted the interest of potential suitors from the other side of the Pyrenees. It emerged as an impor-

tant county during the reign of Charlemagne, the Holy Roman Emperor, as a "buffer" region to protect his Frankish dominions north of the Pyrenees from the expanding Muslim empire. Yet it wasn't long before the fiercely independent Pamplonans subtly but effectively rebelled against Charlemagne's authority.

This reflected a trend, as the era found much of northeastern Spain being divided into a patchwork of tiny emirates, such as prosperous Tudela, with its multicultural population of Christians, Muslims and Jews. At times there was a tenuous peace.

The lines were not always very clearly drawn, and not every political conflict could be attributed solely to religious differences. Theoretically united in their opposition to Muslim hegemony, the Christians often warred with each other. The Basques' adamant sense of independence sometimes transcended religious ideologies, pitting them against whichever leader, Christian or Muslim, they viewed as an aggressor or oppressor at some particular moment. Although it dwelled just beyond the fringe of Muslim expansion, Pamplona boasted a few mosques.

In early 778, Charlemagne, allied with a Muslim leader, Sulaiman ibn al-Arabi, who predicted a facile triumph in the region, took Pamplona. Encouraged by this, and seeking a more extensive conquest of the wealthy Iberian lands, he then lay siege to the city of Zaragoza in Aragon.

What happened next was unexpected in view of wily al-Arabi having promised an easy victory. Hussain ibn al-Ansari, Zaragoza's governor, defiantly refused to surrender the city. Finally, in return for Charlemagne lifting the futile siege, al-Ansari remitted a payment in gold and freed some prisoners. This was expedient, for the Christian invader wished to return with alacrity to his own dominions, where some rebellious Saxons were threatening the peace. Havering over details was not

in his nature. On the way home in August, he decided to destroy Pamplona's city walls to rein in the rebellious Basques, effectively "teaching them a lesson." In retaliation, a Basque army ambushed and defeated Charlemagne's arrogant Franks at the Roncevaux Pass in the Pyrenees. Immortalized in the *Song of Roland,* this battle was Charlemagne's only significant military defeat.

As fate would have it, the same pass was to be the site of a later battle, this time against Charlemagne's son. In 824, Iñigo Arista, a Basque leader with Moorish ties, established himself as King of Pamplona after defeating a Carolingian army led by Louis the Pious.

Initially, the Kingdom of Pamplona was, in essence, the northern half of Navarre. Basque culture might extend across the Pyrenees, but Pamplona's territories ended there.

Before long, life in northern Navarre generally conformed to what existed across the mountains in southwestern France. Just as Christianity differed from Islam, European manorialism (feudalism) differed from the traditional Arab system of smallholding.

Knighthood was, in its essence, a contract guaranteeing military service to the king in exchange for feudal tenure, the knight's right to hold land. This arrangement, with its tangible links between the mounted warrior and the king he served, brought a personal sense of duty to the military force that defended the realm, for knighthood, first and foremost, was an obligation.

Navarre

As kingdoms go, nascent Pamplona was small but promising, her borders ever shifting as towns in adjoining regions were acquired, lost, and reacquired.

A Christian nobility was emerging, if slowly, one generation

at a time. Its bloodlines reflected an eclectic admixture, but in northeastern Spain a subtle racism prevailed, with Visigothic ancestry, either real or imagined, prized by the new knightly class. The idea that a nobleman had blue blood, *sangre azul,* probably originated in the ever more frequent act of a knight holding up his clenched fist to reveal a forearm full of blue veins set starkly against pale white skin.

Often, the knight's hand bore a sword.

It was through warfare that the Kingdom of Pamplona expanded, at times reaching the Atlantic coast. Iñigo Arista's dynasty was overthrown by Sancho Garcés, a neighboring ruler, in 905. His dynasty has come to be known as the House of Jiménez, or *Ximenez.*

This was the ancestral family of Margaret of Navarre through her father, and in the two centuries prior to her birth we encounter a bewildering array of Sanchos, Garcías, Ramiros and Alfonsos. (Kinship among the panoply of Jiménez rulers is illustrated in this volume's first genealogical table.)

With the conquest of Moorish lands, Sancho Garcés extended his realm southward to Nájera, in the County of Navarre, a development outlined in the *Chronicle of Albelda* completed around 976. Here we see the seeds of what, over the next centuries, came to be known as the *Reconquista,* which culminated in the conquest of Granada, the last Muslim state, in the southern tip of the peninsula, in 1492.

The Moorish dynasties, like those of the Christian states, changed from time to time, indeed rather frequently. Like the Christian monarchies, these were, in principle, based on male primogeniture; in practice, however, an emir might choose a successor from among many sons. Disputes between brothers or cousins were almost as commonplace among minor Muslim dynasties as among Christians.

In some instances, changes in regional power reflected

more general political trends elsewhere in the growing Muslim world. The gradual decline of the Umayyads in Spain and Morocco resulted from their being deposed by the rising Abbasids in Damascus in the middle of the eighth century, even if they were succeeded by a new dynasty in Spain only much later, in 929. This led to the establishment of the ephemeral Caliphate of Cordoba, which controlled the southern two-thirds of the Iberian peninsula, developing into a *de facto* sovereign Muslim state under the nominal suzerainty of the Islamic rulers of northern Africa. Spain was not unique in Muslim Europe, and we see a parallel development in Sicily where, beginning in 948, the Kalbid emirs ruled independently despite owing fealty to the Fatimids of Cairo. Spanning parts of three continents, from Portugal to Pakistan, the Umayyad Caliphate was the last unified Muslim empire to encompass the entire Islamic world of its era. In its wake, the Muslim nations constituted a loose federation rather than an empire based on something vaguely resembling the Roman model.

By the end of the tenth century, it was no longer possible for Spain's Christians to view their Abrahamic brethren the Muslims as an altogether "foreign" element. The Jews, likewise, were part of the fabric of Spanish society. "Spain," of course, was a geographical expression rather than a political or social reality.

Nevertheless, the restless Christian nobles were no longer content to submit to Muslim rule, even if it meant little more than paying tribute and other sundry taxes.

Chapter 2
KINGDOM

M

"I was born dreaming of monarchies. I want to die that way."

— Letitia Baldrige

The Kingdom of Pamplona reached its greatest extent under Sancho III "the Great" and his successors in the first half of the eleventh century. This they owed to a Christian coalition defeating and killing Al Mansur ibn Abi Aamir, or *Almanzor,* in 1002, an event that freed most of Navarre and Catalonia, and parts of Aragon and Castile, from Muslim dominance.

Expansion

In the remaining Moorish territories civil war ensued as rival claimants sought Almanzor's place as ruler. This internal dissension, more than any Christian effort, divided the Muslim states of the erstwhile Caliphate of Cordoba into a loose network of *taifa* emirates which, over the next few centuries, the Christian kings would defeat one by one. Subdued but not eliminated, the Moors in the taifas of northeastern Spain

would challenge Christian authority from time to time. In 1018, Zaragoza, in what is now Aragon, became the capital of an important taifa.

To meet the Moorish threat while facilitating close administration of his various dominions, Sancho III established his effective capital at Nájera, on a low hill along the Nájerilla River. Its name derives from an Arabic phrase meaning "place between the rocks."

In addition to being King of Pamplona (Navarre), Sancho III was Count of Aragon, which one of his sons inherited. By marriage to the heiress Muniadona Mayor, Sancho was also Count of Castile. He exercised control over Gascony, possibly as its suzerain, and he seized the Kingdom of León. Control of these contiguous dominions made him one of the most powerful rulers in northern Spain. But where did his family of intrepid warriors come from?

The precise geographical origin of the Jiménez dynasty of Sancho III, himself a direct ancestor of García Ramírez, Margaret's father, is unknown, although Sancho was raised in Leyre. A possible ancestor worth mentioning is a certain García Jiménez, sometimes *Garcí Ximénez,* believed to have been Count of Sobrarbe from 724 until 758.

The Sancho Garcés we met earlier, who ruled Pamplona beginning in 905, was probably the son of another García Jiménez, about whom precious little is known.[4]

All we know with reasonable certainty is that the founder of the family (the grandfather of Sancho Garcés) was most likely named *Jimeno,* and he seems to have ruled the County of Alava. A certain Vela Jiménez is mentioned as Count of Alava in the *Codex Vigilanus* compiled around 882.[5]

Whatever their ancestral provenance, by 1000, the Kings of Pamplona were spending more time at Nájera and other localities in La Rioja, in the County of Navarre, than in Pamplona itself. Like most medieval rulers, they travelled

constantly, their realms perpetually under threat.

Out of the northern Iberian morass there emerged several feudal states besides Pamplona-Navarre. Posing the most immediate threat to Navarre were Aragon to the east and Castile to the south.

The County of Aragon, once a vassal state of Pamplona ruled (as we have seen) by Sancho III, became a kingdom in 1035, the year Sancho was assassinated. Until 1097 its capital was Jaca. The Kingdom of Castile was founded in 1065; its first capital was Burgos. Catalonia, a county since 988, was governed from Barcelona.[6]

These states were sometimes united through dynastic marriages, but even during the long union between, for example, Aragon and Catalonia, the inhabitants felt a strong sense of what might be termed "nationalism." Indeed, each of these regions had their own vernacular language, even though Latin was the written one. The Basque[7] and Catalan tongues survive to this day, while Castilian became Spanish just as Tuscan became Italian. Navarro-Aragonese, the mother tongue of the Jiménez for several generations, vanished by the sixteenth century.

As one might imagine, Castile, the southernmost of these kingdoms, came into the most frequent, most direct conflict with the Moors. Here the most celebrated knight of his age was a grandfather of García Ramírez, and therefore a great-grandfather to Margaret.

El Cid

In 1052, García Sánchez III of Pamplona and Navarre, the eldest legitimate son of the empire-building Sancho III, founded the Church of Santa María la Real at Nájera, and this sanctuary became an important pilgrimage stop on the Way of Saint James. The present Gothic structure replaced a Ro-

manesque church, but its pantheon of royal tombs survives from the crypt of the original edifice. A small castle stood nearby. So closely is he associated with this place that García Sánchez III is sometimes referred to as "García of Nájera."

Fernando, another son of Sancho III, became the ruler of Castile and León to the south of Navarre.

Ramiro, the illegitimate son of Sancho III, ruled Aragon to the east of Navarre.

Before long, sibling rivalries eroded any trace of fraternal affection that ever existed among these three sons of Sancho III.

At Fernando's court was a young esquire, a nobleman from Vivar, a village near the Castilian capital of Burgos. Born around 1040, Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar became a knight in the service of Fernando's eldest son, King Sancho II, nicknamed "the Strong," who was crowned King of Castile in 1065. His wife, Alberta, is said to have been a daughter of William the Conqueror, King of England, but Sancho's immediate interests were to be found in his native Spain.[8]

Sancho II of Castile emerged marginally victorious in the War of the Three Sanchos which broke out in 1065 between the three Jiménez cousins who ruled Navarre, Aragon and Castile, each king named Sancho for the same grandfather, namely Sancho III "the Great" of Pamplona. This bizarre conflict was rooted in disputes over the empire left by Sancho III to his sons upon his death three decades earlier.

Most of the battles took place in La Rioja and around Burgos. During one campaign, Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar, the Castilian standard bearer, is said to have defeated his Navarrese counterpart, Jimeno Garcés, thereby earning the nickname *campi doctor,* literally "master of the field," which in literature became *el Campeador.*

This familial war ended in 1067 in what was essentially a stalemate, albeit with the shifting of a few borders. The mili-

tary conflict might well have continued, but Sancho II of Castile, generally viewed as the instigator, now turned his attention to his brothers. The death of Sancha, the widow of King Fernando, opened the way for her quarrelsome sons to wage war on each other.

By now, Sancho II had garnered plenty of experience fighting kin, and he seized León and Galicia from his younger brothers. Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar, who the Moors nicknamed *el Cid,* from their word *sayyid* (lord), led these campaigns, as well as some against the region's Muslims.[9]

In 1072, nasty Sancho II, who seemed to be hated by almost everybody, met his end in a regicide at the hands of a pack of conspirators. His only heir was his younger brother, deposed Alfonso, formerly the King of León, who had been dethroned through the Cid's military prowess. Now, at the restored court of Alfonso VI of León and Castile, the Cid was divested of his rank as a military leader and treated with suspicion, to be exiled in 1081.

He soon found work in the service of the Moors who now ruled the taifa of Zaragoza. A mercenary in everything but name, he fought the Christians of Aragon and Barcelona who were constantly at war with Zaragoza. Over the next few years, the Cid found himself fighting both Christians and Muslims in the complex, interminable wars that plagued the peninsula.

In 1086, an Almoravid force sent from Morocco inflicted a crippling defeat on Alfonso VI, compelling him to make peace with the man he had banished from his court five years earlier. The Cid had ambitions of his own, and while supporting those native Spanish Moors who opposed the invading Almoravids he sought influence at Valencia, which he conquered in 1094. This became a sovereign principality with a mixed population of Muslims and Christians. When the Cid died in 1099, his widow, Jimena (Ximena) of Oviedo, became the city's ruler, but she was forced to surrender it to the Almoravids

three years later.

Cristina, one of the daughters of Rodrigo and Jimena, wed Ramiro, Lord of Monzón, a descendant of Sancho III "the Great" of Pamplona, who we met earlier. García Ramírez, the father of Margaret of Navarre, was Cristina's son. It is through García Ramírez that most of the Cid's myriad descendants claim their kinship from him.

Elvira, a daughter of Alfonso VI of León and Castile by his fourth wife, Isabella, wed Roger II of Sicily, becoming the island's first queen.

Ambitions

The ancestry of García Ramírez was nothing if not distinguished. One could be forgiven for expecting great things from a man of his pedigree, and he was not prone to disappoint. García Ramírez was born around 1100 to Ramiro Sánchez, Lord of the Aragonese town of Monzón, and Cristina, daughter of the Cid.

Ramiro Sánchez, who lived from 1070 to 1116, was the son of Sancho Garcés, Lord of Uncastillo, who was born around 1038 outside marriage to a concubine of García Sánchez III of Pamplona and Navarre, the monarch who established the royal seat of power at Nájera.

In 1076, after the War of the Three Sanchos, the reigning King of Navarre, Sancho IV, eldest son and heir of García Sánchez III, was killed in Peñalén by his siblings. Ramiro's father, Sancho Garcés (the illegitimate half-brother of Sancho IV), was not embroiled in this murder plot.

The death of Ramiro's uncle Sancho IV led to a period of instability in Navarre, which was ultimately invaded by the greedy Jiménez kinsmen who ruled neighboring Castile and Aragon. The Kingdom of Navarre was thus divided between these two kingdoms. Along the Ebro River, La Rioja, the cov-

eted region that included Nájera, was annexed to Castile.

In eleventh-century Spain, as elsewhere in Europe, the evolving concept of the state was fluid, based more on the ambitions of feudal families than on any sense of nationhood. Countries were defined by kings. True, the Basques might regard themselves as a people, but whether their rulers shared that view was open to question. Nevertheless, language and customs identified the region and its population.

By 1100, the Jiménez cousins ruled the better part of the northern third of Spain, but not as anything resembling what most of us might regard as a united family. Indeed, there were frequent quarrels among them.

Where was Navarre? Subsumed, is the simple answer. Like Poland in 1939, partitioned Navarre knew who she was, yet to the rest of the world she was a veiled mistress, present but largely hidden.

Geography complicates matters as often as it simplifies them. Islands like Sicily and Ireland, with their natural frontiers, make "nationality," or ethnicity, a more facile achievement than it might otherwise be, but even islands can be divided by stark differences in culture, religion, and of course language. For centuries, Sicily was divided by Carthaginians and Greeks and their chronic conflicts.

Where the borders separating Navarre from Castile and Aragon were rivers, bridges sufficed to extend the frontier beyond the next hill to the next valley to the next river. That is what happened in La Rioja, where the land is shared by seven rivers.

In the end, identity dwells in hearts, not valleys.

If only for the prestige of his family, young García Ramírez was entitled to the life of a powerful feudal lord. From his father, he stood to inherit the revenues of the town and environs of Monzón, in Aragon. García had a sister, Elvira, but no brothers to contest his inheritance. His patrimony, it seemed,

would make for an ample sinecure.

The reality was to prove far more complicated.

Young García Ramírez knew not his destiny, but he knew his family's roots. The origins of the Jiménez tree were unabashedly Navarrese. One branch would seek to become so again.

Chapter 3
PRINCESS

M

"You may be a princess or the richest woman in the world, but you cannot be more than a lady."

— Lady Randolph Churchill

Margaret of Navarre was born a princess, but barely. In fact, her father had only recently become a king, to be crowned shortly after her birth. The girl was not, strictly speaking, Basque, but Pamplona's Basque culture had an early influence on her and her siblings. Margaret's childhood was shaped by the violent vicissitudes of her times. Her social status, indeed her very destiny, was the direct result of her father's adventures as a warrior king.

Knight Errant

García Ramírez, as we have seen, was descended from a long line of rulers, but not every generation of his ancestral lineage was legitimate. It was because his father's father, Sancho Garcés of Uncastillo, was born *outside* marriage to García

Sánchez III that young García Ramírez ended up a feudal lord and not a royal heir, a baron rather than a prince.

If he wanted Navarre, García would have to carve it himself from the rocky, unforgiving soil of northeastern Spain.

Ramiro Sánchez of Monzón, Sancho's son (who eventually sired García Ramírez), wed Cristina Rodríguez de Vivar around 1098. However humble the status of Sancho of Uncastillo himself, the betrothal of his son to a daughter of the celebrated Cid spoke volumes about the prestige he enjoyed. Cristina's social position is not easily defined. Although the Cid had ruled Valencia, his was not a royal dynasty in the literal sense even if his wife, Jimena, was a cousin of King Alfonso VI of León and Castile (a Jiménez). Cristina was a quasi-princess, part of the high nobility. Certain it is that she brought some lustre to her husband's illegitimate lineage.

García Ramírez was born a year or two following his parents' marriage. His childhood seems to have been tranquil enough, but his father, Ramiro, had trouble holding Monzón, whether it was the Moors or his fellow Christians who were trying to take it from him.

Raised on tales about his mother's father, García Ramírez never had any reason to doubt what his own career would be.

His father, Ramiro Sánchez, died in 1116 at the age of forty-six. As his heir and successor, García Ramírez was probably knighted at this time, slightly earlier than the usual eighteen or twenty years. Such a milestone would have signalled his coming of age. As the daughter of so great a knight as the Cid, García's mother, the widowed Cristina, understood the significance of this rite of passage.[10]

She also understood the importance of finding her son a suitable bride, a maiden of blue blood.[11] Ancestry aside, it would not be a bad thing if García's wife happened to be the heiress to a prosperous estate or two. Here fate intervened in the person of a Norman crusader.

Rotrou of Perche

In 1104, when García Ramírez was still a child, his cousin, Alfonso I, who earned the appropriate nickname "the Battler," became King of Aragon and Navarre.[12] Among the Norman mercenaries in Alfonso's service was a knight distinguished for fighting Muslims in the Holy Land. This was none other than Rotrou III of Perche.[13] Like Alfonso, Rotrou came to be known by a flattering appellation, although its resonance was slightly more generic. To history, he is very simply "Rotrou the Great." To comrades who found French pronunciation challenging he was known by the more Germanic *Rothrud*.

Intrepid if hardly unique, Rotrou was part of a swashbuckling trend that had become something of a tradition among the Normans. During the First Crusade, he served in the army of Robert "Curthose," Duke of Normandy. The Siege of Antioch found him fighting alongside another Norman warrior, Bohemond Hauteville, Prince of Taranto, whose ambitious family ruled Sicily and most of southern Italy. Bohemond himself established a monarchy that gave rise to the Principality of Antioch.[14]

Rotrou's rights to the counties of Perche and Mortagne obligated him to protect a border territory in Normandy, but he enjoyed close familial connections to royalty. Matilda, his wife, was an illegitimate daughter of Henry I of England. Rotrou was a first cousin to King Alfonso, whose mother, Felicia, was a sister of Rotrou's mother, Beatrice; both sisters were daughters of Hilduin of Montdidier (see genealogical table 3).

Tales abound of how Rotrou introduced the Arabian horse in his native Perche, fostering development of the sturdy Percheron breed, and how he founded an abbey at La Trappe that became the cornerstone of the Trappist religious order. The story about the equines may be true; the one about the Trappists certainly is. But there is much more to Rotrou's legacy than destriers and monks.

In northern Spain, where he fought against the Almoravids, he gained a few small estates and, eventually, one of importance, namely Tudela, a prosperous center of learning in Navarre populated by Jewish and Muslim intellectuals. King Alfonso had seized this jewel from Moorish control in 1119. Despite his battles in Spain, Rotrou still spent enough time in Normandy to offer his sister's young daughter in betrothal to García Ramírez.

Sealed in 1121, the marriage contract between Margaret of Aigle and García Ramírez included a large dowry.[15] Contrary to popular belief, however, Tudela was not initially part of it, for Rotrou did not come into possession of the city until two years later, in 1123, and a decade would pass before he was free to give it to his niece, although he eventually did.[16]

Auspicious though the betrothal was for García and his mother, the wedding ceremony was years away. For now, the fatherless young knight had more pedestrian matters to address, like claiming his birthright and forging an identity of his own. He may also have forged the occasional liaison with one or another pretty maiden he found on his own, without the need for a matchmaker.

In Royal Service

For the next few years García Ramírez travelled constantly around his dominions, trying to enlarge his territory as opportunity was wont to allow. On one side his cousin Alfonso might thwart his ambitions; on the other an emir might encroach upon his territory. Most of the time, García scarcely managed to retain the lands he already possessed.

In 1126, the Almoravids seized Monzón and the surrounding territories. A series of power shifts followed. The chronicles and charters of these years tell us that towns and valleys in this part of Spain changed hands frequently, sometimes

from one month to the next. In 1130 García Ramírez led some of the Christian forces that occupied Monzón, but that did not make the city his, even though he had inherited the rights to it from his father.

Most of the time, García Ramírez found himself under the authority of his cousin, Alfonso. In effect, Alfonso was the younger cousin's suzerain. This was an anomalous situation for a man of Alfonso's own dynasty, a junior prince who, understandably, might presume a greater place at court. By inviting foreign nobles like Rotrou of Perche into his realm and endowing them with lucrative estates, Alfonso probably hoped to marginalize the native nobility. Added to this tactic was the relegation of his Jiménez kinsmen to secondary, even tertiary, roles in the Kingdom of Aragon.

King Alfonso's only surviving brother, Ramiro, was a Benedictine monk. To curtail this sibling's potential influence, the monarch impeded the cleric's episcopal appointment to the sees of Burgos and Pamplona. This ran counter to custom as most royal princes in holy orders could expect to become bishops. Ramiro could do little to resolve his predicament so long as Alfonso reigned.

True, Rotrou of Perche was Alfonso's cousin, but he was not a Jiménez. In Normandy and England, Rotrou found himself at the center of political intrigues; in the Iberian lands he was a warrior serving a king intent on prosecuting a "holy war" to oust the Muslims from control. Rotrou posed no threat to Alfonso's authority.

The chief problem that Alfonso would be forced to confront eventually was that he lacked sons who might succeed him as king. His relationship with his wife, ambitious Urraca "the Reckless" of León, with whom he had a politically expedient but loveless marriage, was stormy at best; in what must be the epitome of spousal conflict, he once besieged her at one of her castles.[17] Alfonso's expansion of his territory and

influence was far more successful than his marriage, which was eventually annulled, but who would inherit this burgeoning empire?

Margaret of Aigle

Cristina de Vivar, García's mother, died in 1130. We do not know if she ever met her future daughter-in-law. The next year, her son wed Margaret of Aigle (l'Aigle), the niece of Rotrou of Perche.

Margaret was the daughter of Gilbert of Aigle, a powerful Norman lord, and Juliana of Perche. Her father's family was nothing if not influential.[18] In England, where they were known as *Laigle,* they had been present since the Conquest in 1066. Margaret's elder brother, Richard (Richer), succeeded to estates on both sides of the Channel.

Most of Navarre was in Alfonso's hands, and he had erected a splendid cathedral at Pamplona, seat of a diocese, the region's most important city.

García Ramírez was intent on building a family. He housed Margaret in the castle at La Guardia, a town in his possession. By 1132, he held Logroño on the Ebro River nearby, along with Bolea, near Huesca to the east.[19]

In April of that year Margaret bore a son, Sancho.[20]

Meanwhile, García's sphere of influence was increasing. It may be that his marriage reflected a degree of seriousness that impressed Alfonso and Rotrou to entrust him with more responsibility. Whatever the case, he spent ever more time in Nájera, the historical town of the Jiménez family, and Pamplona to the north. But for now he kept his wife and child at La Guardia, out of harm's way.

Margaret gave birth to Blanca in 1134 while her husband was off campaigning with Alfonso's forces in eastern Aragon.[21]

The Leader

Monzón served as a springboard from which Alfonso's army launched an attack on the Almoravids at Fraga, near what is now the border of Aragon and Catalonia, during the summer. An unexpectedly lengthy siege ensued. Here Alfonso suffered one of his few military defeats when reinforcements arrived to relieve the city, and he was wounded in combat.[22] With what remained of his decimated army, the king, now in the throes of death, retreated to Zaragoza, the capital of Aragon.

García Ramírez was one of just ten knights with him when Alfonso died at the Monastery of San Juan de la Peña in September.[23] The Battler had fought his last battle.

With Aragon and Navarre poorly-defended and lacking a king, or even an obvious successor, the victorious Almoravids wasted no time occupying as much territory as they could. This was not mere religious zeal, but the desire to obtain the greenest, most fertile part of Spain.

But Aragon was more than that. As luck would have it, this happened to be a strategic region that might serve as a convenient gateway to the French territories to the north. Through vassalage, Alfonso had controlled some French regions, such as Toulouse, which might make an enticing objective for the Almoravids.

In life, Alfonso had done much to foster the idea of the *Reconquista,* and future kings would be inspired by his efforts, but now, in the aftermath of his death, his mini-empire began to crumble. In a bizarre twist, the childless king had left his kingdom to the crusading Hospitallers and Templars, with some estates willed to the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre.[24] Unwilling to let the realm fall to the control of the knightly orders, the baronage cast an eye around the kingdom for a suitable heir. There were two obvious candidates.

Alfonso's brother, Ramiro, the Benedictine monk, was supported by a vocal faction that was predominantly Aragonese. García Ramírez gained the support of some Navarrese barons.

The clergy seemed divided, but the bishop of Navarre's most important city lent his unequivocal support, both moral and financial, to García.[25] This was a propitious gesture.

Nevertheless, until a choice could be confirmed, a power vacuum remained. Exploiting this, Alfonso VII of Castile arrived at Zaragoza with a formidable army and asserted his own claim to Aragon on the basis of his mother, Urraca, having once been married to the late king.[26] This did not set well with the ecclesiastics and nobles opposed to the crown falling upon the head of a man who already ruled a sizeable chunk of Spain. Seeking to make his candidature more palatable, Ramiro shed his monk's robes and made known his intention to take a wife.[27]

With Alfonso of Castile excluded from serious consideration, a choice had to be made between a soldier and a friar.

Restoration

In late 1134 the Navarrese nobles and bishops elected García Ramírez their king, while the Aragonese elected Ramiro. The difference was that the Navarrese were only really interested in Navarre, whilst the Aragonese wanted their king to be the ruler of both realms.

The twin kingdoms divided from each other and Navarre was "restored." A reconciliation with Ramiro was attempted but failed. García formed an alliance with Castile while Ramiro established one with the Count of Barcelona, who ruled Catalonia to the east. A war between Navarre and Aragon was averted through this balance of power, forming a delicate detente.

By the time Margaret was born at La Guardia in 1135, her

parents were doubtless preparing to move to Pamplona, but both late pregnancy and early infancy argued for a delay.[28]

Because medieval chroniclers paid little heed to the births of daughters, we know little of the earliest years of Blanca and Margaret of the House of Jiménez. Even their first home offers precious few clues. Virtually nothing remains of La Guardia Castle, their presumed birthplace, where a school now stands.

Some nine centuries later, La Guardia is a charming town of reddish stone full of winding, narrow streets, but its churches and ring walls were erected long after the Jiménez family had departed for their new home, Pamplona, within a year of Margaret's birth.

García Ramírez was not present when Margaret was born. Most of 1135 saw him tending to administrative matters beyond Navarre. In that year, he received Zaragoza as a fief from his ally Alfonso VII of Castile, whose troops still occupied it. This meant that Ramiro, who the Aragonese had elected as their sovereign, did not control his own capital city, whose fortress, the Aljafería, was virtually impregnable to attack. But García did not wish to keep Zaragoza, either for himself or for Alfonso. It was Pamplona and Navarre that interested him.

In late 1135, García Ramírez was crowned King of Pamplona in that city's newly-constructed Romanesque cathedral.[29] Margaret of Aigle was now a queen. The children, Sancho, Blanca and little Margaret, were now part of a truly royal family.

More importantly, Navarre was again a sovereign country, even if, for now, it was called the "Kingdom of Pamplona" for its splendid capital city.

The following year, Alfonso of Castile recognized Ramiro, the former monk, as Aragon's ruler. By that time, García Ramírez had renounced his claim to Zaragoza and most of his lordships beyond Navarre's shifting borders. Rooted firmly in Navarran soil, Tudela was his *jure uxoris,* by right of his wife.

Royal Childhood

Hilltop Pamplona was full of gently-curving streets that branched out from its cathedral and castle. The new cathedral was built just in time for García's coronation by Sancho de Rosas, the Bishop of Pamplona.

The castle[30] was little more than a shadow of its former self. Not much remained of its walls. The city had not been the seat of royal power for some sixty years, and it was too far out of the way to draw much attention from the Almoravids who occupied nearly half of Iberia. Pamplona had defensive walls, but a large, imposing fortress seemed unnecessary. The old one had fallen into crumbling decay, used in recent times to house nothing more illustrious than a few notaries and their horses.

Zaragoza was far away, beyond hills and forests and valleys and rivers. Over the course of nearly six long decades, the Aragonese branch of the House of Jiménez had paid little attention to Pamplona except when it was time to collect taxes. Pamplona had a small Jewish community and a smaller Muslim one. A good part of the Christian population was Basque. Royal governors arrived from time to time, but it was the local bishop who held the reins of true leadership.

Poised at the frontier leading to the Pyrenees and Gascony, Pamplona's identity, however one describes it, was barely Spanish at all, not that a gentilic like *Spanish* had much significance in 1135.

Having spent his entire adult life as a warring knight, García Ramírez was looking forward to a less hectic pace. There would always be battles to fight. But if he could never retreat into leisure and luxury, García might still dedicate more of his time to constructive pursuits like raising his children and founding monasteries. And rebuilding Pamplona's castle.

Ruling a small kingdom entailed a fair degree of day-to-day

administration. The monarch and his family might enjoy a closer familiarity with their subjects, their people, than what could be presumed by the sovereigns of larger kingdoms. In our times, the Netherlands and Denmark are good examples of this. They epitomize what most European monarchies were in the Middle Ages, many of their names now little more than those of regions: Swabia, Aquitaine, Bavaria, Connacht, Hessen, Tolouse, Savoy, Anjou.

Little Margaret's Navarre had a very special status. As a kingdom restored, it had a long history yet a very new sense of sovereignty and what today would be called *identity*. It was almost as if her father, the king, were its founder. This brought with it a certain prestige.

Queen Margaret of Pamplona was accorded an uncommon deference. This may be attributed to the importance of her Aigle family. For evidence of this one need only have considered that Tudela, one of the realm's most prosperous towns, was readily integrated into the reconstituted kingdom through the auspices of Margaret's uncle, Rotrou.

Yet that is not sufficient to explain the presence of her name alongside her husband's on several surviving charters, for Margaret was not a queen in her own right or even a regent. Her position derived solely from that of her husband, who had literally fought for it.

It is most likely that García Ramírez, who in 1135 found himself with but a single male heir, and no Jiménez kinsmen to whom his reborn kingdom could be entrusted in the event of his own early demise, wished to ensure that his wife, the mother of his children, would be viewed as a suitable regent. Several charters issued over the course of just a few years are scarcely enough to form a solid hypothesis, but they lead one to connote Margaret's role as something more than passive, as if she were García's advisor as well as his consort.

Despite having what, for a man of thirty-five, had been a

long military career, García Ramírez may not have had many close confidants. Over the years, the first fealty of many of the knights and nobles who served with him was pledged to his cousin, Alfonso of Aragon. Others were, firstly, the friends of Rotrou of Perche or other nobles, including many from north of the Pyrenees. García does not seem to have cultivated especially close friendships with the clergy or the commanders of knightly orders like the Templars and Hospitallers. He had no brothers.

It was difficult to know who to trust, especially now that he was king. Could he trust his wife?

Many of his first acts as king involved the Catholic Church. In Navarre, as in many western European kingdoms, the Church was the single largest landholder after the sovereign himself. In this region, the constant Almoravid threat increased the importance of the Church in secular affairs because religious institutions such as monasteries were seen as an ideological bulwark against Islam's influence on the established order. Whereas the rulers of kingdoms like England or Denmark might challenge ecclesiastical authority from time to time, a ruler like García Ramírez was more likely to embrace it.

This was equally advantageous for the Church because whilst a Christian king would support the Christian hierarchy a Muslim emir would merely tolerate it.

A number of surviving charters reflect the new king's amicable rapport with Bishop Sancho of Pamplona, who had supported him against Ramiro in 1134, and a few of these very prominently include Margaret's name.

As early as 1135, we find a royal decree confirming the privileges previously granted to Pamplona's diocese by Alfonso I of Aragon, stating that the new sovereign is acting *cum consilio et auctoritate uxoris mee Margarite regine,* "on the advice and with the consent of my wife Queen Margaret."[31]

A similar formula appears in several subsequent decrees.

Of particular note is a charter relative to the city of Tudela, which had come into the actual possession of Margaret and her husband around the time García Ramírez was elected king.[32] Issued in 1138, this charter assigns to the Bishop of Pamplona the Church of Saint Mary at Tudela, "with all the assets therein appertaining to Moors and Christians."[33]

In these years, the children of García Ramírez and his queen enjoyed a playful, pleasant life in a serene city far beyond the turmoil of the constant conflicts between Christians and Moors that so often plagued the other kingdoms of Spain. Their education by monks and nuns was a steady process of tutoring. Blanca and Margaret may have been tutored together. One imagines private lessons in the mornings, with afternoons and Sundays free.

It seems that their mother, the queen, found ways to pass the time while García was making the rounds of Navarre's towns.

Around 1139, she gave birth to a son christened *Rodrigo* in honour of García's grandfather, the intrepid Cid. But, despite his name, baby Rodrigo was not descended from the Cid, for the infant was not the son of King García Ramírez.

Writing about him at the Sicilian court a few decades later, the chronicler Romuald of Salerno described Rodrigo, who the Sicilians took to calling "Henry," simply as *Henricus naturalis frater,* "Henry the natural brother" of Margaret of Navarre.

The words of Hugh Falcandus were more venomous: *Rex navarrorum nunquam filium suum vel esse credidit vel dici voluit, indignum existimans eum quem mater multorum patens libidini vulgo concepisset, regis filium appellari.* "The King of Navarre never considered him his son, nor did he wish him to be called such, for it would be disgraceful if this boy conceived by a woman notorious for her sexual liaisons with various men were identified as the son of a king."

To justify this unflattering comment, Falcandus further ex-

plains that the information was provided by the Navarrese who accompanied Rodrigo to Sicily.[34] Of Rodrigo's name, Falcandus reports that *Roderic* was "abhorrent, derided by the Sicilians as unknown and barbaric, so the queen decided that he should be called Henry."[35]

Although Margaret of Aigle has been tainted by her reputation as a harlot, the number of her lovers is probably exaggerated. Nevertheless, her husband seems not to have been deceived. It is most likely that García Ramírez, who frequently travelled around his kingdom, was not present with Margaret in Pamplona during the period when Rodrigo was conceived, so he knew that the child could not be his.[36]

Margaret of Aigle did not have to bear her disgrace for very long. She died in May 1141.[37] Whatever her foibles may have been in life, in death her funeral in Pamplona's splendid cathedral was one befitting a queen. The celebrant was Bishop Sancho, the same man who had crowned Margaret six years earlier. God might forgive, but posterity never forgot.

Education of a Queen

However inherently stoic her character, a girl of six faces her mother's death only with the greatest unwillingness. A parent who was there one moment is gone the next. Margaret of Aigle may not have been an exemplary wife, but there is nothing to suggest that she was anything but a caring mother.

Blanca and Margaret were too young to understand the harsh words murmured about their mother at court, if, as young children, they ever even heard these rumours. How much of their mother's Norman French tongue would they remember? And her love?

We cannot fathom the sorrow in young Margaret's tears as they cascaded onto the harsh stone floor of a cold cathedral. So frequently were people of her time visited by death that

this may not have been the first funeral the girl ever attended, but it was certainly the one she would live to remember most vividly throughout her youth. Here her childhood had suddenly taken a bad turn.

Time may heal many wounds, but it cannot nullify their memory.

Both sisters were destined to become queens, but neither could know it in 1141. Nobody knew it, for the sisters' betrothals were years away. Nevertheless, their education would be suitable to girls for whom queenhood was a realistic expectation, even a birthright.

Many aristocratic households were full of siblings and aunts and cousins, and perhaps even a grandparent or two. Even the castle of a petty baron might assume the character of a royal court in miniature. But García Ramírez and his wife did not live among an extended family. At the most, a French cousin might pass through Pamplona on his way to Santiago de Campostela on pilgrimage.[38]

Sancho, Blanca, Margaret and Rodrigo had playmates, of course, children chosen from among the nobility. Compared to most children their age, they spent more time around adults, especially their guardians and tutors. With their mother gone, and no aunt to serve as a maternal surrogate, the duty of raising the children fell to monks, nuns and the few women at court who had been the late queen's friends.

Aristocratic girls were educated, for the most part, in convents. Living with the nuns, they learned piety and devotion. Blanca and Margaret lived in a convent just outside Pamplona, and this allowed for frequent visits to the family home near the cathedral. Boys might spend a few formative years at the castle of a neighboring baron.

Many noblewomen were better-educated than their brothers.

Lessons included languages, especially Latin, and simple arithmetic, along with penmanship. The rudiments of botany

and agriculture were studied. Poetry and theology were important. Parts of the Bible were studied, perhaps memorized. Some sense of canon law was inculcated into the children's minds. There might be a touch of music, and such studies as alchemy.

The children learned how to play chess, and the girls were taught to let the boys win.

Queens were inevitably sacrificed to kings, but there was a healthy respect for unpredictable knights, avaricious bishops and ambitious pawns. Royalty, the highest aristocracy, was mindful of the potential power of the nobility, the clergy and the common folk. The children were taught to appreciate the complexities of human nature as these were perceived in the medieval mind.

Horsemanship was important, even for a princess. This began with ponies and ended with palfreys. A knowledge of history, geography, genealogy, architecture, iconography and coinage was part of a young aristocrat's education.

The girls were taught how to recognize good fruit and luxurious fabric, and how to cook and weave. Even if a princess never had to butcher a goat or shear a sheep, her place as the directress of a noble household made it necessary for her to be able to oversee those who did.

For the boys, swordplay, archery and hunting were important. These skills they learned from the king's most trusted men-at-arms. A prince need not be the ablest knight at a tournament or on the battlefield, but he had to be able to defend himself. More importantly, he had to inspire courage, even audacity, in those who looked to him as their leader. His travels might take him to remote regions where the ability to down a stag or boar, and then roast it, would be more necessity than sport.

Chapter 4
BETROTHAL

M

"I feel sure that no woman would go to the altar if she knew all."

— Queen Victoria

An unspoken but very real part of the education of a young princess involved learning about responsibility. As she became a woman, she came to understand what was expected of her, something she must accept without question or complaint. The most important part of her role was easily summed up in two words. Marriage and motherhood.

Coming of Age

Adulthood came quickly, especially for royalty, typically seventeen for a boy and fourteen for a girl.

Some girls were betrothed at an even younger age, and in June 1144 García Ramírez took as his second wife Urraca, who was only twelve. She was the illegitimate daughter of his ally King Alfonso VII of Castile. This union was meant to resolve a short-lived but potentially catastrophic conflict with Alfonso.

The marriage, happy or not, would strengthen the bonds between Navarre and Castile.[39]

Urraca[40] was about the same age as Blanca, so the young bride was hardly a "stepmother" to the daughters of King García Ramírez. They may not have been too accepting of a very young woman who they probably perceived more as a sister than their father's wife. Some semblance of such attitudes existed even in the twelfth century.

Another complexity was Urraca's social, and even dynastic, position. Because she was now Queen of Pamplona, Blanca and Margaret had to defer to her rank and status. Much had changed since the death of the mother of the two young sisters just a few years earlier.

For Sancho, as heir apparent, the new situation was less severe. Whatever he thought of Urraca, or she of him, his dynastic position was assured. At this point in his young life, he was already being taught about geography and politics, as well as the importance of dynastic marriages arranged with both in mind.[41]

In truth, we know virtually nothing about the intricacies of the relationship of Blanca and Margaret with their father's second wife, who eventually gave birth to a daughter.

Though remarried, García Ramírez had not put his first wife completely out of his mind. In August 1145, he seized a synagogue at Estella (Lizarra) which was to be converted into a church that would be ceded to Pamplona's diocese in memory of the late queen, *pro anima uxoris Margarite regine,* as well as the souls of himself and his entire family.[42]

Blanca and Margaret saw their father only rarely during these years. Ever the warrior king, he occupied Tauste in 1146. Though located very near the border, it was claimed by Aragon, and García's father-in-law, Alfonso of Castile, intervened to negotiate an immediate end to what might have sparked a war between Navarre and Aragon.

A few towns in La Rioja, on the southern fringe of Navarre, had already been lost to Castile. Although none were very important economically, at least two had sentimental value. The Jiménez kings rested at Nájera, and García's daughters were born at La Guardia. Nevertheless, García Ramírez had consolidated his power and re-established a kingdom. Navarre was finally at peace with her neighbors, at least for now.

Crowned in a Far Country

The Kingdom of Pamplona, as it was still known officially, was beginning to attract the attention of kings further afield, and it was time to find suitable husbands for the Jiménez sisters.

Here age conferred precedence. Negotiations began for Blanca to marry into the family that ruled Catalonia from Barcelona on the other side of Aragon, a dynastic union meant to neutralize the more zealous machinations that emanated from Zaragoza every now and then.[43]

Late in 1148 there arrived at Pamplona several noblemen and a bishop sent from Palermo by Roger II, the King of Sicily.

Established just eighteen years earlier, the Kingdom of Sicily encompassed the southern half of the Italian peninsula, and its sovereign also controlled part of the African coast. It was ruled by the Hauteville dynasty, which, like the Aigle and Perche ancestors of Margaret's mother, had roots in Normandy. It was through an informal network of such families that the Hautevilles were familiar with Norman activities in the Iberian lands, such as the adventures of Rotrou of Perche.

In the chess board of Norman society, which was a patchwork of kingdoms and counties, there was a great deal of kinship and camaraderie going back several generations. Some of

the same Norman knights present at the Battle of Messina in 1061 fought at Hastings five years later. In 1097, Odo of Bayeux, half-brother of William the Conqueror, died at Palermo, where he rests in the crypt of that city's cathedral.[44]

The Sicilian ambassadors were seeking the betrothal of Margaret to King Roger's son. One imagines the heart of the young princess being filled by equal parts of exhilaration and apprehension.

Rotrou of Perche had died too soon to be involved in the marriage negotiations, although he may have spoken to García Ramírez about the possibility of one of the girls marrying into a Norman family, but his son, Margaret's cousin, was to play a role in Sicilian history.[45]

From England to Spain to Constantinople to Antioch to Tunisia, the Normans had made their influence felt, and no family was more successful than the Hautevilles. It will be remembered that Rotrou himself went on crusade with Bohemond of Hauteville, who established a monarchy at Antioch.

The twelfth century was the Normans' century.

But the Sicilian ambassadors did not bring with them just a marriage proposal. Margaret was being offered queenship. All that was needed was her father's approval. Despite his frequent absences, García Ramírez was probably present in Pamplona on this occasion to receive the Sicilians.

In reality, of course, Margaret had little say in the matter, nay none at all. The decision would be her father's.

It was proposed that Margaret marry William, King Roger's only legitimate, surviving son, who was fourteen years her senior. There was a certain urgency in the wedding arrangements because by late 1148 the Sicilian royal family found itself, rather unexpectedly, with a dearth of heirs to the throne.

Roger's wife, William's mother Elvira, had died the same year Margaret was born, leaving behind four healthy sons. The king loved Elvira so profoundly that he was reluctant to re-

marry after her death. Indeed, when she died he went into seclusion, leading many of his subjects to think he too was dead. Roger mourned Elvira for years. When his sons were all alive, the widower saw no reason to take another wife simply for the purpose of producing more heirs. But with the recent death of William's elder brother the situation had grown dire. Roger now had only one legitimate son and no grandsons.[46]

The ambassadors wanted to see the girl, and perhaps even speak with her. Was she reasonably intelligent and well-educated? Was she pretty enough to become their queen? Most importantly in view of the dynasty's present predicament, was Margaret of childbearing age?

In the case of Sicily, as opposed to a kingdom like England, there was an additional consideration, and it was almost as pragmatic as the others. Could Margaret, devoutly Catholic though she may be, accept the presence of people of other religions and cultures in her own kingdom, perhaps even in her own household?

Palermo had a large Muslim population and a fair number of Jews. It was full of mosques and synagogues. Margaret need not be a theologian, but it was important for her to understand something of Islam and Judaism, and to understand that in Sicily the people of these faiths enjoyed the same rights as Christians. Many held positions in government, and some served in the royal bodyguard.

This matter was not an obstacle, as Margaret was familiar with the Muslims and Jews of her native land. In Pamplona, as in Palermo, there were mosques and synagogues just down the street from the cathedral. Spain's Muslims and Christians had their differences, but the experience of cities like Tudela had shown that peaceful coexistence, even brotherhood, was possible.

Margaret had a tenuous dynastic connection to the man she was expected to wed. Through his mother, William was Mar-

garet's third cousin once removed. King Roger's first wife, the much beloved Elvira of Castile, was a Jiménez.[47]

The precise details of Margaret's betrothal and dower are not known to us, but we do have a well-documented example that offers us some insight into what it was. This is the betrothal of Joanna of England to Margaret's son in 1176.[48] By then, such things had changed, but not very much.

With her father's consent, Margaret was betrothed to William and given a few months to prepare for her voyage to Sicily.

In the late spring of 1149, she said good-bye to her father, brother and sister. She would never see them again. Parting from her sister, Blanca, was especially trying, but Margaret gathered up all the courage her tender years allowed.

Setting off for Sicily, Margaret was accompanied by a few ladies-in-waiting, a few barons, a bishop or two, a small company of knights and around twenty servants and other retainers. In all, there were at least sixty people traveling in Margaret's entourage. A dozen or so would remain with her in Sicily.

Undertaken in early summer, the first leg of the journey would take them across Aragon and Catalonia to Barcelona, through lands ruled by Christians or friendly Moors. From there, they would follow the coast from Girona, passing Perpignan, Marseille, Toulon and other cities along the French coast. Around Nice, they would board a flotilla of galleys sent by the King of Sicily, for Navarre had no fleet to speak of.

The ships would follow the Italian coast to Naples or Salerno, and thence to Messina and finally Palermo. This maritime route along the coasts ensured that the travelers were always in friendly waters.

A faster, direct route from Barcelona to Majorca to Sardinia and then Sicily would have entailed a far greater risk of the flotilla encountering pirates. The ships of the Sicilian navy could very effectively respond to such a threat, but there was

always the danger of a galley or two being lost. Natural hazards posed another danger. Whilst the Mediterranean was usually serene by May, storms were unpredictable, so it was better to stay fairly near the coast.

At Palermo, where she was acclaimed by ecstatic crowds, Margaret met the man she was to marry. William had medium brown hair and brown eyes, essentially the same coloring as Margaret.

The wedding was celebrated in the Palatine Chapel of the opulent royal palace, where the couple took up residence. The setting was nothing if not romantic, but were Margaret and William in love?

Chapter 5
POLYGLOT REALM

M

"How do we create a harmonious society out of so many kinds of people? The key is tolerance."

— Barbara Jordan

The island that greeted Margaret in the summer of 1149 was a cacophony of cultures. George Bernard Shaw famously observed that, "England and America are two countries divided by a common language." What would he have made of Norman Sicily, a place strangely united despite several languages being spoken there?

Languages and Peoples

When the Normans arrived in 1061, they encountered people they generically described as "Greeks" and "Saracens."[49] Devoid of nuance, these descriptions were based on the languages spoken by the majority of Sicilians at that time.

The "Greeks" were the corpus of "indigenous" Sicilians descended from those inhabitants who lived on the island

Chapter 6
MOTHERHOOD

M

"If you bungle raising your children, I don't think whatever else you do matters very much."

— Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy

Margaret's new home was a palace set on high ground between the city of Palermo to the north and the vast Genoard park to the south. She could see both from the arched windows of her residence on the top floor of one of the stout, square towers. Beyond a cityscape of golden limestone buildings, where the cupolas of churches and mosques looked like the bulbous caps of freshly-sprouted mushrooms, was the blue Tyrrhenian. On the other side, looking past the green Genoard, with its trees and streams, she could see rocky mountains.[68] And beyond the mountains were more mountains.

Life in Palermo

Crowning a hill in the Halkah district, the palace was fortified, its massive crenelated walls built to withstand an attack

from any direction, yet its interior was far more luxurious than any castle Margaret or her Navarrese companions had ever seen.

There were walls covered with ornate mosaics depicting the peacocks and palm trees of the Genoard. The designs themselves were simple yet sophisticated, combining traditional Byzantine workmanship with Islamic symmetry, so one encountered such elements as twin leopards rendered in profile, facing each other. The usual background of the mosaic designs was a field of gold tiles. One wall of a room used as a kind of throne chamber and office by Margaret's father-in-law was covered in these tiny golden tiles of uniform lustre.[69]

The capitals of the stone columns were carved into ornate Fatimid motifs inspired by local creatures and plants. Here a Sicilian lizard creeping across an acanthus leaf could wind his tail into a knot.

The walls of some rooms, including the sleeping quarters, were covered by tapestries of velvet in colors ranging from the deepest crimson to a light pastel green. Silk drapes concealed some of the windows. Oil lamps were suspended from the ceilings by endless chains.

Margaret was accustomed to tables made of wood. In Palermo's palace the top of every table was a polychrome plain of pieces of inlayed marble formed into unidentifiable yet pleasing motifs. These too were Arab. The floors bore some of the same geometrical designs, only larger.

She had never seen Baghdad, but the Muslims at court told Margaret that its palaces and mosques were similar to Palermo's.

The palace had two chapels. The older one, constructed during the previous century, served as the crypt of a newer one built by Margaret's father-in-law, King Roger.

The newer chapel, where Margaret and William were wed, had a wooden muqarnas ceiling replete with painted designs

and figures of such things as people playing chess. Spreading his arms across the apse was an imposing icon of Christ Pantocrator rendered in mosaic, similar to another at Cefalù's cathedral up the coast. Here the Byzantine and Fatimid traditions met.[70]

Margaret was not the only bride living in the palace. Around the same time William married Margaret, King Roger, following fourteen years as a widower, wed his second wife, Sibylla of Burgundy, who was about ten years older than Margaret. Roger and Sibylla lived in another tower, but they were rarely in Palermo, so Margaret and William never had a chance to get to know Sibylla very well.

Sibylla had given birth to a son who died in infancy. Before long, she was said to be pregnant with another child.

When Roger travelled, he sometimes took Sibylla with him, usually leaving William in charge in Palermo. Although William seemed to enjoy conjugal life, or at least accept it, he also enjoyed hawking in the Genoard and the hills beyond, leading the life of a wayward knight.

In youth, as the youngest of the king's legitimate sons to reach adolescence, William never had to entertain serious thoughts of ever sitting on the throne and assuming the awesome responsibility kingship entailed. By the time his last full brother died in May 1148, William was long accustomed to the unencumbered lifestyle of a royal prince unlikely ever to be called upon to rule. The *Regnum* was full of pretty girls willing to fulfill his prurient desires. Marriage does not seem to have diminished William's zeal in these hedonistic pursuits.

Some courtiers and barons thought William less intelligent than his brothers. It is quite possible that Roger himself was not entirely convinced of his youngest son's capacity to rule.[71] But William had better produce some heirs.

In late September 1150, news arrived at court that Sibylla had died while giving birth in Salerno. She was buried at the

Benedictine monastery of Cava nearby. King Roger had lost a wife and child in a single moment.

Margaret's father died two months later. Her brother, Sancho, was now king, but not yet married.

Except for such sad news as the death of García Ramírez, Margaret usually enjoyed receiving letters from her sister.

Blanca's Catalonian marriage did not materialize. In January 1151 she wed Sancho, the son and heir apparent of Alfonso VII of Castile, at Calahorra near Logroño in La Rioja's fertile Ebro Valley, not far from La Guardia, her birthplace. In order to ensure the succession, Sancho of Castile had already been crowned, and by 1149 he was styled "King of Nájera." Neither Calahorra or Nájera could compare to Palermo, but they were not without their charm.

Although Blanca got married after her younger sister, she was already a queen. Margaret's turn would come soon. Indeed, 1151 was to prove an eventful year.

Queen Margaret

William was now thirty years old[72] and Roger had not sired any other surviving sons, at least not by his wives.[73] Whatever reservations he may have entertained about William's abilities, he had already declared him to be his successor. With Sibylla's death there was, for the moment, no Queen of Sicily.

Margaret filled those shoes when William was crowned on Easter, which fell on the fifteenth of April in 1151. Her sister, Blanca, had beaten her by only three months.

Attended by numerous barons, this coronation followed the practice of a king crowning his son as *rex filius* to avoid the possibility of later contestations. Though favored by the Normans, it was not an exclusively Norman custom. As we have seen, Alfonso VII of Castile did something similar when he crowned his son, Sancho, who wed Margaret's sister. An heir

who became *rex filius* wore a crown but did not sit on a throne.

It is likely that Margaret was crowned with William, but the fact is not mentioned explicitly in the surviving accounts of the event, which are not highly detailed.

Margaret's monopoly on Sicilian queenhood was not to last. Her father-in-law had not resigned himself to living without a wife, and in the same year that he personally crowned William, Roger wed Beatrice, daughter of Gunther of Rethel, a powerful German count.

This left the Kingdom of Sicily with a queen consort, Beatrice, who was two or three years older than Margaret, and Margaret herself, a kind of "queen designate" as the crowned consort of the heir apparent.[74]

But questions of court precedence were the least important matters confronting Margaret in 1151. By the end of the year she was pregnant with her first child.

The healthy boy born in 1152 was christened Roger.

Producing an heir enhanced Margaret's prestige at court and throughout the *Regnum*. The birth confirmed her fertility, and a male child, naturally, was seen as the better result. Sicily needed future kings more than it needed royal princesses. William and his father had good reason to be happy.

In the eyes of her father-in-law and her subjects, who were granted two days of celebration to mark the prince's's birth, Margaret, at seventeen, had proven her worth. With luck, she would bear more sons. Queen Beatrice, on the other hand, had better get busy.

Did the birth of a grandson encourage King Roger to view William in a better light? Perhaps not. At the very least, though, the child filled a void in the succession.

The kingdom found itself in a rare period of peace. In 1147 and 1148, using the Second Crusade as a pretext, Roger had sent his admiral, George of Antioch, on a campaign to take control of some Greek lands; although most of these territo-

ries were soon lost, the invasion brought an influx of wealth to Sicily. During the same years, Roger obtained a part of the African coast that included Tripoli and the area around Cape Bon; unlike the Greek territory, when Margaret arrived this was still under the control of the Kingdom of Sicily, which had emerged as the chief maritime power of the Mediterranean. Palermo, whose population numbered at least a hundred thousand, was the jewel in the crown.[75]

The Sicilian court boasted some great minds. Maio of Bari, who succeeded the Englishman Robert of Selby, was an efficient chancellor, effectively the kingdom's "prime minister." English-born Thomas le Brun managed the royal treasury using Hindu-Arabic numerals. Abdullah al Idrisi was busy mapping Sicily and other territories and constructing a planisphere of a round Earth. It is clear that Roger was able and willing to delegate a great deal of the realm's daily administration to trusted officials.[76]

Although William assisted his father in the running of the *Regnum,* we have only vague impressions of what his precise responsibilities were. Despite his saturnine temperament, he was not remiss in his conjugal duties, and in 1153 Margaret gave birth to a second son, who was named Robert.

Did Margaret and William have any daughters? We know of none, but it is a distinct possibility.

In truth, we don't even know the names of all the daughters of Roger II.[77] That is hardly surprising since chroniclers usually noted the existence of a royal daughter only when she was betrothed to an important king or prince. Likewise, the birth of a child of either sex who died in infancy was rarely recorded. There were only two chroniclers present in Sicily who were close enough to the court to even learn of such events, and neither Hugh Falcandus nor Romuald of Salerno mention a daughter of Margaret and William.[78]

Margaret may have wished for a daughter or two, but her

husband desired sons. So did her father-in-law.

On the twenty-seventh of February 1154 King Roger II died in Palermo of natural causes at the age of fifty-eight.[79] He was survived by his pregnant wife, Beatrice of Rethel.

William automatically became regnant King of Sicily and Margaret became the realm's unequivocal queen consort.

This royal succession, as it happened, was painless and uncomplicated, but it belied great challenges. Compared to what was to come, the last few years had been a honeymoon.

Chapter 7
QUEEN CONSORT

M

"I work hard in social work, public relations, and raising the Grimaldi heirs."

— Princess Grace of Monaco

Roger had wished to be buried at the cathedral in Cefalù, a splendid church that he founded. Instead, his porphyry sarcophagus was placed in Palermo's cathedral. His successor's decision was challenged but never changed.[80]

Roger had proven himself a remarkable ruler. Not without reason, Sicily's first king is cited by historians as a paragon of intellect, one of the greatest rulers of Europe's High Middle Ages. He united southern Italy into a cohesive state while forming Sicily's diversity of peoples into something resembling a single nation. The Kingdom of Sicily would survive, in one form or another, until the nineteenth century.

First, however, it had to survive William's reign.

The Reign of William I

William I was crowned, or re-crowned, and anointed in

Chapter 8
TRAGEDY

M

"Grief is not too different from illness. In its flames it does not recognize lords nor fear its own peers. It does not respect or fear anybody, not even itself."

— Eleanor of Aquitaine

In the last days of 1159 Margaret's son Robert, the Prince of Capua, died during one of those illnesses that claims the lives of young children. The boy was entombed in the Church of Mary Magdalene attached to the cathedral, within sight of the palace.[94] Grief-stricken by the death of a son who was not yet seven years old, Margaret was unaware of the plotting of a growing number of dissentients beyond the Strait of Messina.

The unruly barons could hardly be trusted under the best of circumstances. By 1160, their cauldron of discontent was boiling over. Here their scapegoat was not the king but his chief minister.

If not overtly arrogant, Maio of Bari was certainly confident in his own abilities. He exercised great control not only in the daily function of government but over policy, and de-

Chapter 9
ESTRANGEMENT

M

"I do not want a husband who honours me as a queen if he does not love me as a woman."

— Elizabeth I of England

It was almost impossible for things to return to normal, whatever normal was. Following a period of mourning, William met with local leaders to reassure them.

Bonello had not given up his ambition to unseat the king. Having assembled a rebel force, he marched toward Palermo from Caccamo, but he retreated as some of the king's galleys arrived from Messina with reinforcements.

The defiant baron was coaxed to the palace, where he was arrested. Some Palermitans protested this, but Bonello died in a dungeon within the palace walls late in 1161. Sporadic revolts around Sicily were suppressed.

If the king could not tolerate open rebellion, he could make a sincere effort to mend his tattered ties with the barons by addressing their grievances. One of his measures in this direction was the restoration of the right of

Chapter 10
QUEEN REGENT

M

"A woman is like a tea bag. You never know how strong she is until she gets in hot water."

— Eleanor Roosevelt

In the spring of 1166, the path before Margaret was obscured by a fog of incertitude. She did not know exactly what to do, but she had very definite ideas about what *not* to do, and she wished to avoid what she and others regarded as the mistakes of her late husband.[154]

Benevolent Rule

William was as prepared for the transition to kingship as a boy of his age could be. Was Margaret ready for regency?

Every scrap of information known to us suggests that she was. When her husband was absent from the capital, Margaret, the progenitrix of the next monarch, was the political point of reference for a city wealthier and more influential than most European kingdoms. During one of these absences, she prob-

Chapter 11
POWER

M

"The question isn't who is going to let me, it's who is going to stop me."

— Ayn Rand

The barons, ecclesiastics and courtiers promised to accord Stephen of Perche the reverence he deserved, even if, in the deepest depths of their hearts, some of them harbored resentment toward a visitor they viewed as an interloper. Despite the warm reception at court, Stephen expressed a certain reluctance to linger in the *Regnum* very long.

The attractions of Palermo were plainly evident. Anybody arriving from elsewhere in Europe was struck not only by its size but by its cosmopolitan ambience. If Messina was Las Vegas, here was New York or Tokyo.

The queen was too busy with the work of ruling the kingdom to partake in Palermo's pleasures. Most of her routine duties were indeed rather banal; a charter of March 1167 finds her acting in the transfer of ecclesiastical property in Palermo.[180]

Chapter 12
JUSTICE

M

"The day will come when man will recognize woman not only as his peer at the fireside but in councils of the nation."

— Susan B. Anthony

Until now, the magnates were reluctant to speak ill of the queen except perhaps through whispers about her poor choice of a chancellor. Whilst Margaret, in the interest of keeping the peace, might attenuate the prosecution of a corrupt castellan like Robert of Calatabiano, she was far less likely to tolerate overt treason against her son or herself.

Margaret's rule as regent was absolute. The occasional *curiae generales,* such as the meeting of barons summoned by King Roger on the eve of his coronation, was not a parliament and the baronage had no official say in royal decisions.[202]

Defamation

If it were difficult to find fault with Stephen of Perche, his detractors might invent flaws they could easily attribute to him

Chapter 13
SOVEREIGNTY

M

"If you want something said, ask a man. If you want something done, ask a woman."

— Margaret Thatcher

By the middle of January in 1168, the majority of Messinians seemed content. Unbeknownst to the queen, however, Henry of Montescaglioso, her troublesome half-brother, was up to his old tricks. In this he was abetted by Bartholomew of Parisio, whose sister, it may be recalled, was once married to Richard of Sai, the man granted a divorce on questionable grounds in order to wed a woman reputed to be a harlot. Bartholomew's conniving may have had less to do with the perceived slight against his sister than with his own maneuvering to achieve greater power for himself through his close alliance with Henry. Not only did Bartholomew exercise a certain influence over some Messinians, a number of Calabrians present in the city to greet the young king were party to his covert machinations.

Chapter 14
PALIMPSEST

M

"No one provokes me with impunity."

— Mary, Queen of Scots

A few days were to pass before detailed reports of the most recent events at Messina arrived at the court in Palermo during the middle of April 1168.[255] For now, Henry of Montescaglioso had seized control of one of Europe's most important cities, a key to shipping and a gateway to the eastern Mediterranean. Ironically, the Messinians were not supporting Henry out of affinity for him so much as the belief that he was their best hope of supporting the monarchy which they believed had been threatened. The unsubstantiated rumours of the young king's death led the people to embrace his uncle.[256]

Odo's Demise

The people wanted odious Odo Quarrel, dead or alive. For the moment, he was still in the royal palace near the sea. The

Chapter 15
LEADERSHIP

M

"Throw me to the wolves and tomorrow I'll return leading the pack."

— Anonymous

One of the differences between a she-wolf and her male counterpart is that the female is more inclined to defend her pups. In Margaret we find that rarity of rarities, the alpha female, ready and willing to lead the pack. By early 1169, it was clear that this would be a solitary duty. The queen regent found herself without familial peers to assist her.

Of course, she was capable of taking decisions on her own. She decided to permit Robert of Loritello, her son's distant cousin, to return from exile; this might bring him into her camp. Other problems were more complex.

In the wake of the resignation and departure of Stephen of Perche, the chancellorship was not filled and the archbishopric of Palermo was vacant. The queen's failure to make these appointments might elicit subtle dissent in certain quarters. No matter.

Chapter 16
THOMAS BECKET

M

"You can kill a man, but not an idea."

— Benazir Bhutto

He was one of the most influential prelates of his century. In death, if not in life, he came to be admired, and then venerated, across Catholic Europe. His letter[318] to Queen Margaret is the only snippet of her correspondence that survives, but the eloquent epistles of Thomas Becket fill many volumes, painting a punctilious portrait of his personal character and his theological views. No discourse on the concepts of national sovereignty, ecclesiastical authority or the separation of church and state is truly complete without a consideration of the unholy feud between Henry II, King of England, and his onetime friend, Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury.[319]

Roots

Thomas Becket was born in London on the twenty-first of December, the feast of Saint Thomas the Apostle, probably

Chapter 17
TRANSITION

M

"The most difficult thing is the decision to act. The rest is merely tenacity."

— Amelia Earhart

Nothing in the first days of 1171 marked the year as beginning very differently from any other.[335] Queen Margaret passed the Christmas season with her sons, as always. There were no serious conflicts within the *Regnum,* and no foreign threats. The seasonal snow on the mountains beyond Palermo was a reassurance that some things never change. The queen was at the pinnacle of her power.

Reginal Duties

The news of the murder of Thomas Becket was startling not only for the death itself, but for the brutality with which the archbishop was said to have been killed. Ultimately, a king was held responsible for the actions of his knights, especially when a few of them acted together and claimed to be exercis-

Chapter 18
BENJAMIN OF TUDELA

M

"He who has courage and faith will never perish in misery."

— Anne Frank

Benjamin of Tudela arrived in Sicily during the summer of 1171. Would that he had borne with him recent news from Navarre, but Benjamin had been travelling around the eastern Mediterranean for years before reaching Sicily along his return route to Spain.[341]

Teacher, Merchant, Traveler

Benjamin ben Jonah was born in the prosperous, multicultural town of Tudela around 1130. It will be remembered that this town came into the possession of Margaret's mother as a gift from Rotrou of Perche. Tudela was the most important center of learning in Navarre. During the twelfth century, Jews and Muslims made up at least half its population.

Benjamin was chiefly a rabbi and merchant, but his travel diary is the best record of its era for its descriptions of the

Chapter 19
MONREALE

M

"You should know that our passion for building is more fervid than ever. It is a diabolical thing. It consumes money. The more you build, the more you want to build. It is an affliction, like being addicted to alcohol."

— Catherine the Great of Russia

Following the monarch's first Christmas as a sovereign ruling his own kingdom, the initial months of the majority of King William II in 1172 were occupied by plans for him to meet Maria, the daughter of the Emperor of Constantinople, in Apulia during the coming spring.

Margaret urged her son to exercise his full authority gradually, one step at a time, eschewing reactions that might lead to open disputes with men whose egos were notoriously fragile. An effort was made at appeasement.

Amongst the few royal charters that survive from these years is one that permits Walter, the Archbishop of Palermo and chief *familiare,* to try adulterers in his archdiocese.[344] Adultery is an example of something that was a crime in both ec-

+HIC REGINA IACES REGALIB
EDITA CVNIS: MARGARITA TIBI
NOMEN·QVOD MORIBVS VNIS:
REGIA PROGENIES PER REGES
DVCTA PROPAGO: VXOR REGIS
ERAS: ET NOBILITATIS IMAGO:
SIC ACERAM QVIBVS IPSA NE
PLES PRECONIA MVNDV: REGE
W: SATIS E PEPERISSE SECVNDV:
+VNDECIES CENTV·DECIES·VIIITV
BVS ANNIS: POST hOMINEM·XPM·
MIGRAS NECIS ERVTA DAMPNIS:
LVX EA·QVA POPVLIS DANT PETRI
FESTA CATENE: hIS TE DE NEBVE
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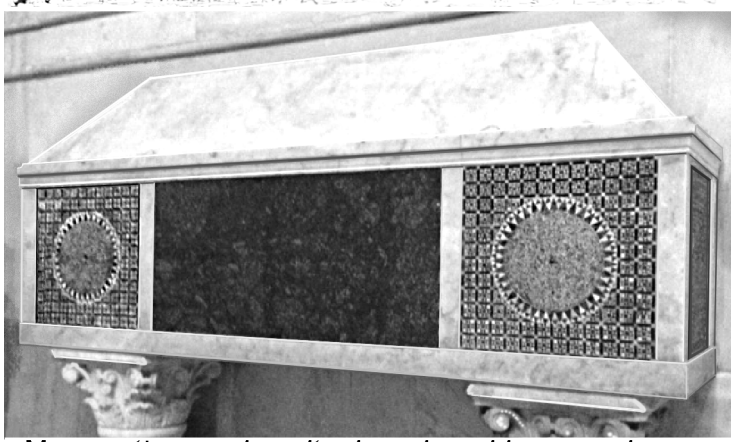


Margaret's mosaic epitaph and marble sarcophagus

Chapter 20
QUEEN MOTHER

M

"To deny fate is arrogance. To declare that we are the sole shapers of our existence is madness."

— Oriana Fallaci

Margaret was no longer regent. Inevitably, the day arrived for William, who was now an adult, to act independently of her. In the early days of May in 1172, the king and his young brother, Henry, who was then twelve, left with a large entourage for Taranto, where they were to meet Maria of Constantinople, to whom William was betrothed the previous year.[359] This was the first time that Margaret's sons left their mother's presence for more than a day or two, and it was to prove a fateful occasion.

Whatever maternal misgivings she had, Margaret knew this to be a necessary step. Apart from its obvious purpose, the excursion into the mainland would give the people of the *Regnum* a chance to see their young king ruling on his own. This could not help but reinforce his authority in the eyes of the nobility and the clergy.

Chapter 21
MOTHER-IN-LAW

M

"Your work is the rent you pay for the room you occupy on earth."

— The Queen Mother, née Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon

In 1176 Margaret found herself working to establish several convents for Benedictine nuns. One of these was established at San Marco d'Alunzio, where the Hautevilles' familial castle was located on a rocky mountain. This nunnery answered to the authority of the abbot of Maniace who, in turn, fell under the jurisdiction of the abbot of Monreale. Founding convents was not Margaret's only effort.

The queen mother was also working to build a family for her son. To that end, she sent ambassadors to England to revive plans for the betrothal of William to Joanna.[374]

Joanna of England

Joanna had been raised, for the most part, in France with her mother, Eleanor of Aquitaine, the estranged wife of Henry II. Queen Eleanor had taken her sons' side in their war

Chapter 22
PATRONESS

M

"The end crowneth all the work."

— Elizabeth I of England

By early 1178, a number of Margaret's projects were nearing completion. An impressive church, dedicated to the Holy Spirit, was being erected outside Palermo's city walls near the Oreto River.[388] It was given to the Cistercians[389] but assigned to the episcopal jurisdiction of Archbishop Walter, perhaps as something of a consolation to him for the lack of a new cathedral in Palermo. Indeed, Walter was showing himself to be uncharacteristically cooperative in order that he might obtain royal support for the grand church he envisaged; he even conceded some additional rights to Monreale's abbot.[390]

Mission

In addition to recent foundations, the crown supported a number of existing monasteries. Amongst the Benedictine abbeys outside local episcopal jurisdiction was one in Calabria

Chapter 23
QUIETUS

M

"In my end is my beginning."

— Mary, Queen of Scots

Margaret learned that, in Spain, her brother, Sancho VI of Navarre, had reached a peace with her nephew, Alfonso VIII of Castile, ending a long feud. This dispute was arbitrated by Henry II of England, whose daughter, Eleanor, was now married to Alfonso. By 1179, Eleanor, who was a few years older than Joanna, had given birth to a daughter, Berengaria, and established a shrine to Thomas Becket in Toledo's cathedral.[402] The martyred Archbishop of Canterbury was being commemorated across western Europe.

Matriarch

Margaret's plan to commemorate Saint Thomas in Monreale was wholeheartedly embraced by Joanna. More immediately, though, what the queen mother most hoped for was that Joanna, who was fifteen, would become pregnant soon. For

EPILOGUE

"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 marry[422] 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.

CHRONOLOGY

"The stream of time, irresistible, ever moving, carries off and bears away all things that come to birth, plunging them into utter darkness, both deeds of no account and deeds which are mighty and worthy of commemoration."

— Anna Comnena

This succinct timeline is intended merely as a general framework to lend context to the history and events recounted in the preceding pages. It is not meant to present in detail those events that occurred during Margaret's lifetime, or to substitute the narrative text in this monograph.

998-1019 - Rule of Jafar al-Kalbi in Sicily. Construction of Favara palace in Palermo is attributed to this emir.

1000 - Norse civilization in northwestern France (Normandy) assimilates with local culture. Approximate period of Norse landings in Newfoundland.

1002 - Defeat of Al Mansur ibn Abi Aamir (Almanzor) leaves most of Navarre and Catalonia in Christian hands.

1004 - Fatimids establish large library and *dar al-hikma* (house of wisdom) in Egypt.

1008 - Fatimids re-establish diplomatic relations with China.

1016 - Norman knights first participate in battles in Italy. First Turkish raids in Armenia.

1018 - Bulgarian lands conquered by Byzantines, who also defeat Italians (Lombards) at Battle of Cannae, in Apulia, where many Norman knights are felled.

1019-1037 - Rule of Ahmed al-Akhal in Sicily.

1035 - County of Aragon becomes a kingdom.

1037-1040 - Rule of Sicily by Abdallah Abu Hafs, usurper.

1038-1042 - Byzantine forces of George Maniakes briefly occupy parts of eastern Sicily; army includes Greeks, Normans, Lombards, and Norse Varangian Guard under Harald Hardrada.

1040 - Hasan as-Samsam begins his rule in Sicily; deposed in 1044.

1042 - Normans establish Melfi as their Italian capital

1044 - Sicily divided into four qadits. Rivalry among emirs worsens.

1045 - Zirids of Tunisia rebel against Fatimids to unite with Abbasids of Baghdad. Cathedral of Gerace (Calabria) consecrated.

1052 - García Sánchez III of Navarre establishes Church of Santa María la Real at Nájera.

1053 - Following death of Hasan as-Samsam and extinction of Kalbid dynasty, three important emirs divide control of Sicily: Ibn al Hawas at Kasr' Janni (Enna), Ibn at Timnah at Syracuse and Catania, Abdullah ibn Hawqal at Trapani and Mazara. Normans defeat Lombards at Battle of Civitate.

1054 - Great Schism between eastern and western Christianity. Sicilian Christians initially remain "eastern" (Orthodox). Supernova observed by astronomers in Asia; becomes Crab Nebula.

1055 - Seljuk Turks occupy Baghdad.

1056 - Agnes of Aquitaine regent of Holy Roman Empire until 1061.

1057 - Tunisia invaded by Banu Hilal of Arabia, with Zirid lands reduced in size.

1060 - Unsuccessful Norman attack in coastal northeastern Sicily.

1061 - Battle of Messina. City and parts of Nebrodian and Peloritan region occupied; permanent Norman presence in Sicily.

1065 - Kingdom of Castile founded. Seljuk Turks invade Georgia.

1065-1067 - War of the Three Sanchos among three Jiménez cousins ruling Castile, Navarre and Aragon.

1066 - Battle of Hastings leads to complete Norman conquest of Saxon England. Battle of Messina forms partial pattern of this invasion of an island from a continent. (Some Norman knights fight at both battles.)

1071 - Normans attack Palermo; Norman invaders are led by Robert de Hauteville, Arab defenders by Ayub ibn Temim. Byzantines lose Battle of Manzikert to Seljuk Turks.

1072 - Battle of Palermo ends in January with Norman occupation under Roger and Robert of Hauteville. Greek Orthodox Bishop Nicodemus removed from authority over Christian community.

1074 - Seljuk Turks seize Jerusalem from Byzantine control.

1075 - Investiture Controversy begins as conflict between Papacy and Holy Roman Emperors.

1077 - Excommunicated Henry IV, Holy Roman Emperor, does penance at Canossa.

1078 - Arab poet ibn Hamdis leaves Sicily.

1079 - Frankish settlement begins along Way of Saint James in northeastern Spain.

1081 - Suppression of revolt led by self-appointed "emir" Bin al Wardi (Bernavert) at Catania; another of his revolts is quashed at Syracuse in 1085.

1083 - Roger I appoints Latin (rather than Orthodox) Bishop of Palermo and Gallican Rite is introduced in new churches.

1084 - Bruno founds Carthusian Order in Germany.

1085 - Alfonso VI of Castile seizes Toledo from Moors.

1087 - Ibn Hammud, Emir of Kasr'Janni (Enna), last major Arab stronghold in Sicily, surrenders to Normans; Noto falls in 1091.

1091 - Byzantine Greeks defeat Pechenegs at Battle of Levounion.

1094 - El Cid conquers Valencia.

1095 - Roger II, future King of Sicily, is born. Pope Urban II preaches First Crusade.

1096 - First Crusade begins; some Norman knights participate under Bohemond of Hauteville (later Prince of Antioch), brother of Roger I.

1097 - Odo of Bayeux, Earl of Kent, younger brother of William the Conqueror, dies in Palermo *en route* to the Crusade while visiting Roger I.

1098 - Roger I, as Great Count of Sicily, becomes Papal apostolic legate, with right of approval over bishops. Cistercian Order founded in France.

1099 - Crusaders conquer Jerusalem. Death of El Cid in Spain.

1100 - Crusaders control Palestine in the wake of the First Crusade and crown Baldwin first King of Jerusalem. García Ramírez (father of Margaret) born in Spain to Ramiro Sánchez, Lord of Monzón, and Cristina, daughter of the Cid.

1101 - Roger I, Great Count of Sicily, dies, succeeded by Simon, his eldest living, legitimate son, who is still a minor. Roger's consort, Adelaide del Vasto of Savona, is regent.

1104 - Alfonso I "the Battler," a cousin of García Ramírez, becomes King of Aragon and Navarre.

1105 - Roger II succeeds his elder brother Simon (1093-1105) as ruler of Sicily under Adelaide's regency.

1108 - Bohemond of Antioch becomes vassal of Byzantine Emperor.

1109 - Bertrand of Toulouse occupies Tripoli (Lebanon).

1112 - Roger is knighted (this ceremony marks his age of majority and sovereign authority following "regency" under his mother).

1113 - Order of Saint John (Knights Hospitaller) based in Palestine chartered by Pope Paschal II. Establish commanderies in Sicily and later (in 1530) receive Malta from Charles V, King of Sicily and Holy Roman Emperor.

1116 - García Ramírez succeeds his father, Ramiro Sánchez.

1119 - In Spain, Alfonso the Battler takes control of Tudela from Moors. Knights Templar founded in Palestine.

1120 - Council of Nablus establishes legal code for Kingdom of Jerusalem.

1121 - Betrothal of young Margaret of Aigle to García Ramírez. Presumed year of birth of William I of Sicily.

1122 - Concordat of Worms between Papacy and Holy Roman Empire.

1123 - First Lateran Council, opened by Pope Alexius II, forbids Roman Catholic clerics wives or concubines; until now Catholic priests were permitted to marry before ordination. Rotrou III "the Great" of Perche takes possession of Tudela.

1125 - Christian army defeats Seljuk Turks at Battle of Azaz.

1126 - In Spain, Almoravids take control of Monzón and its environs.

1128 - Portugal declares independence from León, which recognizes its monarch, Alfonso Henriques, in 1143.

1130 - Roger crowned first King of Sicily (known henceforth as "Roger II"). On his orders Saint John of the Hermits, an Orthodox monastery in Palermo, is ordered rebuilt as Benedictine abbey, completed in 1148. Palatine Chapel rebuilt to present form during this period. García Ramírez occupies Monzón in the name of Alfonso the Battler.

1131 - Cathedral of Cefalù erected.

1132 - Birth of Sancho VI "the Wise" of Navarre, brother of Margaret.

1134 - Birth of Blanca (who wed Sancho III of Castile), sister of Margaret, at La Guardia in La Rioja. García Ramírez elected king by Navarrese nobles and bishops.

1135 - Birth of Margaret Jiménez of Navarre, future Queen Regent of Sicily, at La Guardia in La Rioja. García Ramírez crowned King of Pamplona. Beginning of "Anarchy," a civil war over royal succession, in England.

1136 - Construction of Saint-Denis near Paris; Gothic movement begins.

1138 - Death of Anacletus II ends Papal schism (which began in 1130); Innocent II universally recognized as Pope. Major earthquake around Aleppo.

1139 - Second Lateran Council, convened by Pope Innocent II, makes celibacy mandatory for Roman Catholic priests, reiterating a canon established in 1123 but not widely enforced. Innocent recognizes Roger II as King of Sicily.

1140 - Roger II promulgates Assizes of Ariano, introduces ducat.

1141 - Death of Margaret of Aigle, mother of Blanca and Margaret Jiménez.

1143 - Martorana Church (Palermo) built in Norman-Arab style for Greek Orthodox community by George of Antioch. Nilos Doxopatrios, Orthodox cleric, authors a theological treatise supporting the Eastern Church.

1145-1148 - Second Crusade; participation by Sicilian knights is limited.

1146 - Legal principles expressed in Assizes of Ariano are in force by this time.

1147 - Almohads displace Almoravids in northwestern Africa and southern Spain.

1148 - Betrothal of Margaret of Navarre to William I of Sicily.

1149 - Margaret of Navarre weds future William I of Sicily.

1150 - Death of King García Ramírez, father of Margaret; accession of Sancho VI of Navarre.

1151 - Blanca Jiménez weds Sancho III of Castile. William I of Sicily crowned *rex filius*.

1152 - Birth of Roger, first son of Margaret and William.

1153 - Birth of Robert, second son of Margaret and William. End of "Anarchy" in England. First Treaty of Constance between Papacy and Holy Roman Empire to prevent Byzantine conquests in Italy.

1154 - *Book of Roger* completed by court geographer Abdullah al Idrisi. Roger II dies and reign of King William I begins. Birth of Constance, Roger's posthumous daughter. Accession of Henry II in England.

1155 - Birth of William II, third son of Margaret and William I. Birth of Alfonso VIII of Castile, son of Blanca (Margaret's sister). Frederick I "Barbarossa" Hohenstaufen crowned Holy Roman Emperor.

1156 - Death of Blanca, Margaret's sister. Treaty of Benevento between Papacy and Kingdom of Sicily.

1158 - Birth of Henry, fourth son of Margaret and William. Thomas le Brun (Thomas Brown), treasurer at William's court, returns to England to reform exchequer of Henry II, thus influencing European accounting principles.

1159 - Death of Robert, secondborn son of Margaret and William. Arrival in Sicily of Gilbert of Gravina, Margaret's cousin.

1160 - Mahdia, last Norman stronghold in North Africa, is lost.

1161 - Matthew Bonello leads revolt of Norman barons, resulting in death of Roger, firstborn son of Margaret and William. Rhum Sultanate makes peace with Byzantine Empire.

1165 - Design and construction of Zisa palace begin.

1166 - Death of William I; reign of young King William II begins under Margaret's regency. Arrival in Sicily of Rodrigo (Henry), Margaret's half-brother.

1167 - Margaret appoints her cousin, Stephen of Perche, chancellor.

1168 - At Messina, Margaret oversees trials of Rodrigo (Henry) and others. Stephen of Perche deposed and expelled.

1169 - Major earthquake in Catania and southeastern Sicily. Walter becomes Archbishop of Palermo.

1170 - Thomas Becket murdered in Canterbury Cathedral.

1171 - Margaret's regency ends when William II reaches age of majority. Benjamin of Tudela visits Sicily. Saladin deposes Fatimids, establishes Ayyubid rule.

1172 - Death of Henry, Margaret's fourthborn son. Planning and construction begin on Monreale Abbey.

1173 - Thomas Becket canonized.

1174 - Sicilian fleet led by Tancred of Lecce attacks Alexandria.

1175 - William II signs treaty with Venetians. Henry II of England signs treaty with Irish.

1176 - Betrothal of William II to Joanna of England. Byzantines lose much of Anatolia to Seljuk Turks.

1177 - Wedding of William II and Joanna of England. Treaty of Venice between Pope and Holy Roman Emperor.

1178 - Sicilian treaty with Holy Roman Empire. Romuald Guarna of Salerno leaves Sicily.

1179 - Third Lateran Council convened by Pope Alexander III.

1181 - Sicilian treaty with Tunisia. Pope Alexander III dies.

1182 - Massacre of the Latins in Constantinople.

1183 - Death of Margaret, Queen of Sicily. Monreale becomes archdiocese.

1184 - Major earthquake in Calabria. Bin Jubayr visits Sicily. Construction of Palermo's new cathedral.

1185 - William II invades Byzantine lands.

1186 - Constance, daughter of Roger II, weds Henry VI, future Holy Roman Emperor.

1187 - Saladin captures Jerusalem. William II sends fleet to Palestine.

1189 - Death of William II. Succeeded as King of Sicily by Tancred of Lecce. Richard I "Lionheart" crowned King of England.

1190 - Richard Lionheart, brother of Queen Joanna of Sicily, occupies Messina with Philip II of France for several months *en route* to Third Crusade. Death of Frederick I "Barbarossa," Holy Roman Emperor; succeeded by Henry VI.

1191 - Henry VI and Constance defeated in attempted invasion of *Regnum,* with Constance captured. Construction of Magione church (Palermo) by Matthew of Aiello.

1192 - Constance is rescued. Isabella I crowned Queen of Jerusalem.

1193 - Death of Saladin.

1194 - Death of King Tancred. Holy Roman Emperor Henry VI arrives in Palermo and rules by right of his wife, Constance, Queen Regnant of Sicily,

who gives birth to Frederick II. Death of Margaret's brother, Sancho VI of Navarre.

1195 - Constance crowned Queen of Sicily.

1196 - Joanna, widow of William II, weds Raymond VI of Toulouse.

1197 - Death of Henry VI, Holy Roman Emperor, husband of Constance. Basilica of Saint Nicholas (begun in 1089) consecrated in Bari.

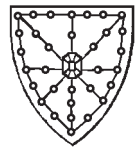
1198 - Death of Constance; she is succeeded by her son, Frederick II. Teutonic Order founded under Hohenstaufen patronage.

1199 - Death of Joanna at Rouen.

GENEALOGICAL TABLES

House of Jiménez

* Ordinals are based on forenames



Jimeno
Count of Alava
fl. 850

García Jiménez

Sancho Garces I — Sancho I *
(Sancho I of Pamplona)
+ 925

García Sanchez I — García I
King of Pamplona
+ 970

Sancho Garces II — Sancho II
(Sancho II of Pamplona)
+ 994

García Sanchez II — García II
the Tremulous
King of Pamplona
Count of Aragon
+1004

Sancho Garces III — Sancho III
the Great
King of Pamplona
Count of Castile
King of León
+ 1035

García Sanchez III
of Pamplona and Navarre
(García of Najéra)
+ 1054

Gonzalo
of Sobrarbe

Ramiro
King of Aragon

Fernando
Count of Castile
King of León

THE THREE SANCHOS

Sancho Garces
of Uncastillo
+ 1083

Sancho Garces IV
King of Navarre
+ 1076

Sancho Ramírez
King of Aragon
King of Navarre
(See table 3)

Sancho II
King of Castile
King of León

Alfonso VI
King of Castile
King of León

Ramiro Sanchez
of Monzón
+ 1116

Pedro I
King of Aragon
King of Navarre
+ 1104

Alfonso I
King of Aragon
King of Navarre
+ 1134

Elvira
∞
Roger II of Sicily
(See table 4)

Garcia Ramírez (Continued on table 2)
the Restorer
King of Navarre
+ 1150

∞ wed
fl. floruit
+ died

Table 1

Family of Margaret of Navarre

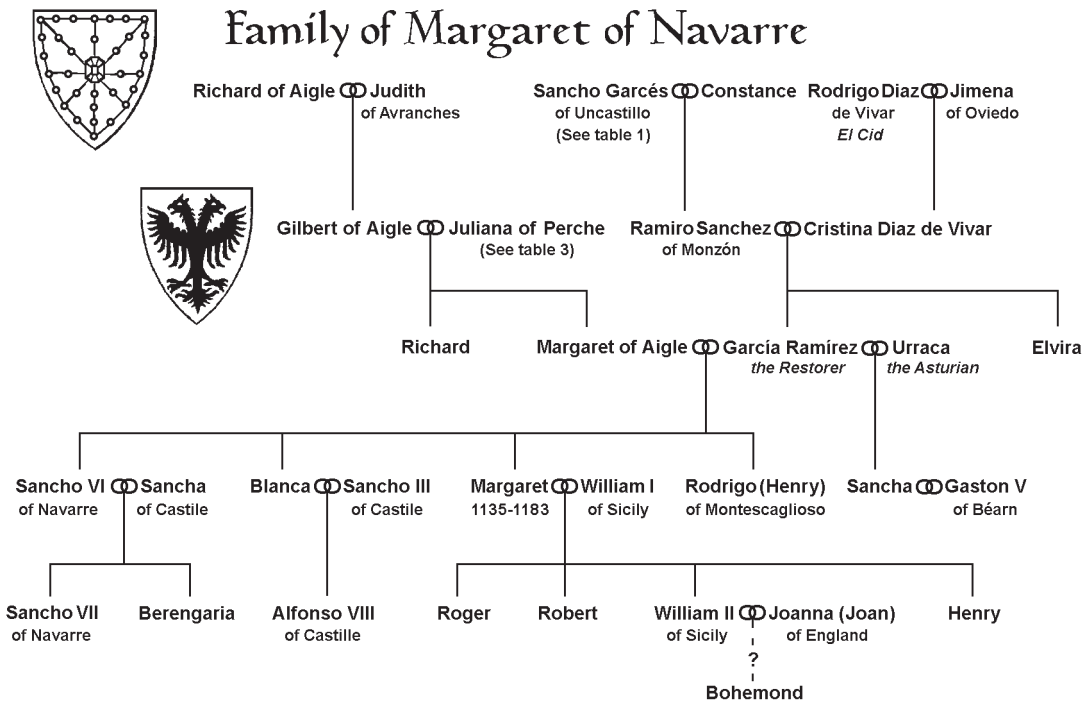


Table 2

House of Perche

Geoffrey of Nogent ⚭ Helvise of Montagne

Rotrou ⚭ Adelise of Belléme

Hilduin
Count of Montdidier

Hugh
Viscount of Chateaudun

Robert

Rotrou

Geoffrey of Châteaudun ⚭ Beatrice
Count of Perche
and Mortagne

Sancho Ramírez ⚭ Felicia
King of Aragon
King of Navarre
(See table 1)

Rotrou III ⚭ Haroise
the Great of Salisbury

Margaret ⚭ Henry
of Warwick

Juliana ⚭ Gilbert of Aigle

Mathilde ⚭ Guy
Maude de Lacey of Lastours

Alfonso I
King of Aragon
King of Navarre
+ 1134
(See table 1)

Bertrand

Rotrou
+1191

Stephen
+1169

Roger

Rotrou
Archbishop of Rouen

Margaret of Aigle ⚭ García Ramírez of Pamplona
King of Navarre
(See table 1)

Gilbert
of Gravina

Sancho VI of Navarre
the Wise

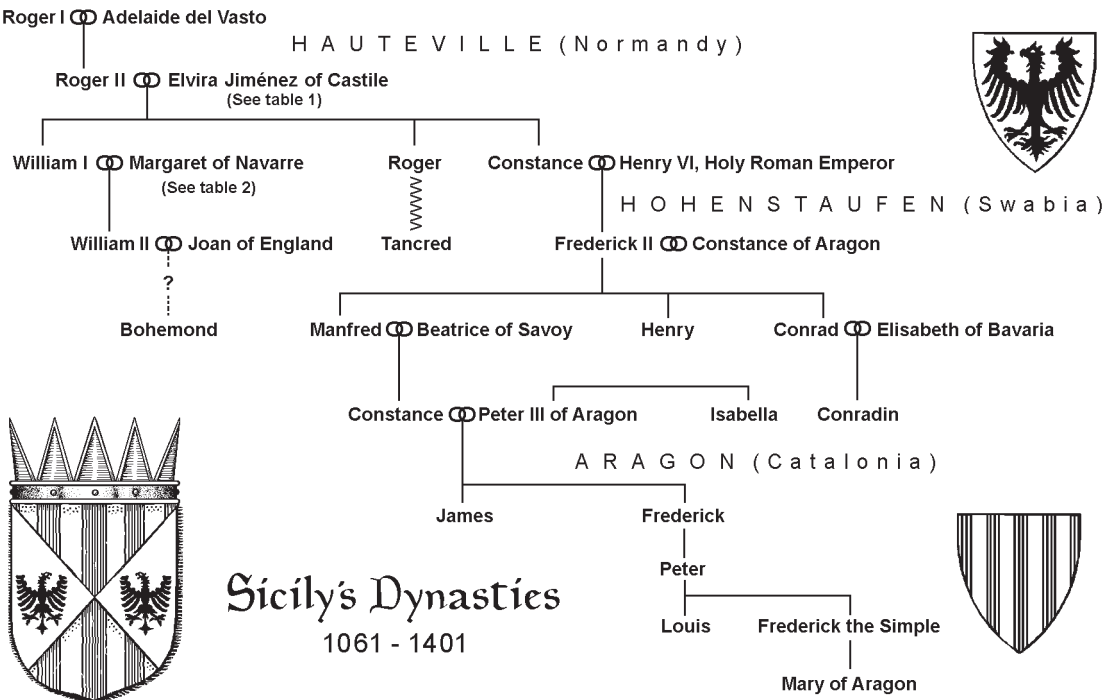
⚭ Sancha of Castile
(See table 2)

Blanca ⚭ Sancho III of Castile
(See table 2)

Margaret ⚭ William I of Sicily
(See table 2)

Rodrigo
(Henry)

Table 3



Sicily's Dynasties

1061 - 1401

Table 4

Appendix 5
LETTERS

A small body of surviving correspondence offers us insight into the rapport between the Sicilian and English courts during the regency and in the years before the wedding between Margaret's son, William, and Henry's daughter, Joanna.

From Thomas Becket to Queen Margaret

A surviving letter sent to Queen Margaret from Thomas Becket late in 1168 thanks her for granting refuge to two of his nephews, as well as other kin, during the exile of the archbishop (and some members of his family). He makes reference to her request to assist in prompting the return of her cousin, Stephen of Perche, formerly the chancellor. The letter is borne by Thibauld, Prior of Saint-Arnoult de Crepy, who shall elucidate (verbally) more information than Thomas does in the correspondence itself. This translation is from the book by John Allen Giles[427] published in 1846; the Latin original was published by him the previous year.[428]

The Translation:

"To the most serene lady and dearest daughter in Christ,

Margaret, the illustrious Queen of Sicily, Thomas, by divine appointment humble minister of the church of Canterbury, sends health, and thus to reign temporally in Sicily, that she may rejoice forever with the angels in glory!

"Although I have never seen your face, I am not ignorant of your renown, its fame supported by nobility of birth and by greatly numerous virtues. But amongst other perfections which we and others praise, we owe a debt of gratitude to your kindness, which we are now endeavouring to acknowledge, for the generosity with which you gave refuge to our fellow exiles, Christ's poor ones, our own kin who fled to your realm from him who persecutes them. You have consoled them in their distress, which is a great duty of religion. Your wealth has relieved their indigence, and the amplitude of your power protected them in their needs. By such sacrifices God is well pleased, your earthly reputation is enhanced and made known, and every blessing is poured upon you. By these means you have bound ourself also to you in gratitude, and we devote all that we possess and all we are to your service. As the first fruits of our devotion, we have used our good services to present your request to the most Christian king, as you may know by the requests which he had made to our dear friend, the King of Sicily, and by the words of the venerable prior of Crepy, whose literary attainments, single-mindedness and sense of justice make him dear to all good men. He is a man of correct life, sound doctrine, and perfect sanctity in human judgment. We beg of you to hear him with as much reverence as you would listen to the entire Western Church were it assembled at your feet. And I beseech you, not only out of respect for his person, but in high regard for the Church of Cluny, whose necessities he is charged with and which is reputed throughout all the Latin world to have possessed, within its walls, all the glory of virtue and perfection from the time of our first ancestors. In other respects also, I ask you, if it so please you, to

place as much confidence in all that he shall tell you as coming from me, as if I myself had said it. Farewell."

The Original:

"Serenissime domine, et in Christo carissimae Margarete, illustri reginae Siculorum, Thomas divina dispensatione Cantuariensis ecclesiae minister humilis, salutem, et sic temporaliter regnare in Sicilia, ut cum angelis aeternaliter exultet in gloria.

"Licet faciem vestram non noverimus, gloriam tamen non possumus ignorare, quam et generosi sanguinis illustrat claritas, et multarum magnarumque virtutum decorat titulus, et famae celebritas numerosis praeconiis reddit insignem. Sed inter caeteras virtutes, quas cum aliis auditoribus gratanter amplectimur, liberalitati vestrae debemus, et qua nunc possumus devotione, gratias referimus ampliores, quae coexules nostros, proscriptos Christi, et consanguineos nostras, fugientes ad partes vestras a facie persecutoris, consolata est in tribulatione sua, quae profecto magna pars verae et Deo gratissimae religionis est, si pro justicia patientibus clementia ferat solatium, si pauperibus opulentia suffragetur, si sanctorum necessitatibus absoluta potestatis communicet amplitudo. Talibus enim hostiis promeretur Deus, exhilarescit et dilatatur gloria temporalis, et omnium bonorum gratiosus conciliatur affectus. His meritis inter alios specialiter tamen promeruistis et nos, qui totum id quod sumus et possumus ad vestrum devovimus obsequium. Cujus devotionis primitias, quas pro tempore potuimus excellentiae vestrae nuper optulimus, preces vestras apud regem Christianissimum promoventes, sicut perpendere potestis ex precibus ejus dilecto nostra illustri regi Siciliae porrectis, et ex verbis venerabilis prioris Crispiniacensis, quem et eruditio litterarum, et vitae sinceritas et integritas famae bonis omnibus amabilem et commendabilem reddunt. Est enim vir

probatissime conversationis sanae doctrinae, et quantum ad humanum spectat examen, perfectae pro tempore sanctitatis, quem tanta reverentia a sublimitate vestra desideramus et petimus exaudiri, quanta totam occidentalem ecclesiam, si vestris pedibus assisteret, audiretis. Et hoc quidem tum pro suae personae reverentia, tum pro merito et auctoritate Cluniacensis ecclesiae, cujus procurat necessitates, quae in orbe Latino dinoscitur, a diebus patrum nostrorum in monastica religione perfectionis gloriam quasi propriam possedisse. In caeteris, quae vobis ex parte nostra dixerit, ei, si placet, credatis ut nobis. Valete."

From Thomas Becket to Richard Palmer

The request of the Archbishop of Canterbury to prevail upon his countryman, Richard Palmer, to seek the return of Stephen of Perche coincides with Margaret's wishes. This is another fine translation by John Allen Giles.[429]

"Your humanity makes us, by comparison, guilty of presumption, and the bounty which you have displayed towards our relations makes us doubly debtors to you and yours. In this interchange of kindnesses we are compelled, and not unwillingly, to contract debts with so kind a creditor, trusting that God will discharge all our obligations, for it is He alone that can release those who fear Him. You have entertained our fellow exiles and kin; and without doubt have thereby entertained Him who promises to repay all that shall be lent to the poor in his name. You have gained praise among your countrymen, and glory among posterity, and made us your debtors. God does not permit us to meet. Receive, therefore, the bearer of this letter as my second self, and trust him as you would trust me. He is distinguished for his literary attainments, as well as his moral conduct, and amongst the monks of Cluny he is a

model for imitation. He is charged with commissions from his brethren, from his most Christian majesty, and from me. By receiving him with respect, you will receive us also, that pious king and me, whose agent he is. There is one thing remaining, which I will whisper into your ear, and which I hope you will grant me: To do your utmost with the king and queen to procure the recall of that noble-minded man, Stephen of Perche, Archbishop-elect of Palermo, both for reasons which at present shall be nameless, and because by doing so, you will confer a lasting favour on the French king."

From William II to Henry II

In the spring of 1173, the sons of King Henry of England and most of his baronage in France rose up against him. The tense situation between King Henry and his sons, Henry and Richard, was eventually resolved, if ever tenuously. When the revolt broke out, he sent letters to a number of brother sovereigns, including William II, who had only recently reached the age of majority. We do not know how much Margaret influenced William's response to the King of England. Henry Riley, whose translation of Joanna's wedding charter appears in another appendix, translated this letter from the *Annals of Roger de Hoveden.*

"To Henry, by the grace of God the illustrious King of the English, Duke of Normandy and Aquitaine, and Count of Anjou, William, by the same grace King of Sicily, Duke of Apulia and Prince of Capua, wishes the enjoyment of health, and the desired triumph in victory over his foes.

"On the receipt of your letter, we learned a thing of which indeed we cannot without the greatest astonishment make mention, how that, forgetting the ordinary usages of humanity and violating the law of nature, the son has risen in rebellion

against the father, the begotten against the begetter. The bowels have been moved to intestine war, the entrails have had recourse to arms, and, a new miracle taking place, quite unheard of in our times, the flesh has waged war against the blood, and the blood has sought means how to shed itself.

"And, although for the purpose of checking the violence of such extreme madness, the inconvenience of the distance does not allow of our power affording any assistance, still, with all the loving kindness we possibly can, the expression of which, distance of place does not prevent, sincerely embracing your person and honour, we sympathize with your sorrow, and are indignant at your persecution, which we regard as though it were our own.

"However, we do hope and trust in the Lord, by whose judgment the judgments of kings are directed, that He will no longer allow your sons to be tempted beyond what they are able or ought to endure; and that He who became obedient to the Father even unto death, will inspire them with the light of filial obedience, whereby they shall be brought to recollect that they are your flesh and blood, and, leaving the errors of their hostility, shall acknowledge themselves to be your sons, and return to their father, and thereby heal the disruption of nature, and that the former union, being restored, will seal the bonds of natural affection."

Appendix 6
THE PENDANT

The only contemporary image of Margaret known to us, which may indeed be a merely symbolic representation, is a gold reliquary pendant made by skilled goldsmiths in Canterbury, a center of this craft. This was given to her by Bishop Reginald of Bath, whose name appears on it: "Bishop Reginald of Bath consigns this to Queen Margaret of Sicily." Clockwise, beginning from the cross at the middle-top of the border, this Latin inscription on the obverse reads: ISTUD REGINE MARGARETE SICULORUM TRANSMITTIT PRESUL RAINAUDUS BATONIORUM.

Seven tiny relics of Saint Thomas Becket were once preserved under a crystal. These are described in the inscription on the reverse side: DE SANGUINE SANCTI THOME MARTYRIS DE VESTIBUS SUIS SANGUINE SUO TINCTUS DE PELLICIA. DE CILITIO. DE CUCULLA. DE CALCIAMENTO. ET CAMISIA. "Of the blood of Saint Thomas Martyr. Of his vestments stained with his blood: of the cloak, the belt, the hood, the shoe, the shirt."

The majuscule characters are typical of the ecclesiastical engraving and inscriptions of the twelfth century; the lettering rendered in mosaic in the epitaph above Margaret's tomb in Monreale is very similar (see the photograph in this book).

Bishop Reginald "Fitzjocelin" (de Bohun) of Bath, whose ambivalent relationship with Thomas was described by Herbert of Bosham, probably presented this pendant to Margaret on the occasion of her son's marriage, in 1177, to Joanna, the daughter of King Henry II of England.

Becket was murdered in late 1170. He was canonized in 1173. Fashioned between 1174 and 1176, the gift was probably an acknowledgment of Margaret's support for Becket, specifically for giving refuge to his kinsmen in Sicily, and for her support of the Church generally. There is debate as to whether the image depicts Margaret being blessed by Reginald, or by Becket himself, though the latter is the majority view among scholars.

Measuring 5 x 3.1 x .7 centimeters (nearly 2 inches in height), the pendant is exceptional for the mere fact of its preservation. The great majority of English goldsmiths' work of this period was melted down over the centuries. Hallmarks were not used in the twelfth century; the gold purity of the pendant is approximately twenty-two karats, which is slightly less than that of gold coins minted during the same period.

The engraving is quite similar in style to various drawings and illuminations of its era. For comparison, particular refer-

ence is sometimes made to those of the unfinished Winchester Bible, and specifically its Ecclesiastes (fol. 268r). Forming the pattern of what were to be painted illuminations, the manuscript's drawings resemble the lines of the pendant's figures.

Margaret is shown bowing slightly for the bishop's blessing. Her gaze seems to be fixed on something she is holding in her hands, perhaps the reliquary itself. Not much can be inferred from this simple representation except that Margaret is depicted as rather slender and statuesque, nearly as tall as the prelate invoking the benediction.

Long and tortuous has been the reliquary's journey from Canterbury to Palermo and then around Italy, finally crossing the Atlantic during the middle years of the twentieth century. It is now part of the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, where it is usually displayed in the Treasury gallery at the Cloisters Museum in Fort Tryon Park in Upper Manhattan, catalogued under accession number 63.160. Part of a significant bequest made in 1963 to the museum by Joseph Pulitzer (1913-1993), who acquired it from the Italian collector and art dealer Piero Tozzi, it was first described at length by Thomas Hoving (op.cit.) in 1965.

Appendix 10
MARGARET'S DECREES

Until her son, William II, reached the age of majority in late 1171, most of the decrees issued in his name made mention of Margaret as regent. What follow are translated extracts from four of the very few royal charters from the regency that have survived into modern times. An effort was made to render these in a style slightly more succinct and clear than the verbose Latin. The essential format of the royal decrees varied very little during Margaret's regency.[444]

Issued in February 1169, the first decree grants Matthew of Aiello the right to establish a convent for nuns on his property on high ground in Palermo's Saqaliba district (corrupted into *Carrabule* in the Latin text). Completed two years later, this was the Benedictine convent that came to be known as "Saint Mary of the Latins," and later "Saint Mary of the Chancellor," erected along what is now Via del Celso between Vicolo Ragusi and the aptly-named Vicolo del Gran Cancelliere (a school now stands on the site). This charter was sealed with the prestigious gold seal reserved for use with the most important royal documents, typically those addressing questions of policy, diplomacy or the general populace; the other charters extracted here bore the more common lead seal.

Issued in May of the same year, the second decree confirms

a privilege granted by John of Aiello, Bishop of Catania, for the Monastery of the Holy Savior of Mount Calanna. Located near Alcara li Fusi (although Mount Calanna itself lies along the slopes of Mount Etna), this was founded earlier as a Greek Orthodox monastery before the arrival of the Normans, and a Sicilian saint, Nicholas Politi, was interred there in 1167. The charter of May 1169 reflects the "latinization" of Sicily's Greek Orthodox monasteries, and the principal abbey at Calanna came to be known as Saint Mary "del Rogato." (Some icon frescos were discovered there recently and restored in 2014.) Consecrated bishop in July 1168, John of Aiello, a brother of Matthew, died in Catania during the earthquake that devastated that city in February 1169.

Both of these royal charters reflect, in some measure, the influence of Aiello and Perche at court; there is no doubt that most decrees of this kind issued during this key period have been lost to time.

We also find Margaret's name alongside her son's in the royal charter of 1170, and one issued early in 1171, where Walter, as witness, is simply "archbishop of Palermo," with Matthew of Aiello referred to as "royal vice-chancellor." William reached the age of majority in 1171; his precise date of birth (see note 88) is not known.

Not surprisingly, Margaret and William are both mentioned in a charter of March 1168 (first indiction) issued by Stephen of Perche, as royal chancellor, conceding the manor of Rahal el Melum Rameth, near Milazzo, to the monastery of Santa Maria delle Scale of Messina, in the care of Antiochia, the abbess.

Most of the letters sent to King William drafted in this era mention his mother. For example, a petition made by the canons of Cefalù in 1169 to entomb Roger II and William I in their cathedral (according to prior royal intent) addresses William II and *clementissima Margarita regina matre,* "most benevolent Margaret the queen mother."

A charter issued during William's majority by the archbishop of Messina in March 1174, relative to the monastery of Maniace founded by Margaret, refers to her in the usual wording as *dominae Margaritae gloriosae reginae matri.*

Nor was this practice anomalous. In a decree of October 1193, the name of Sibylla of Acerra, the queen consort of King Tancred, appears in the decree of her young son, William III, which grants permission for Godfrey Martorana and his wife, Eloise, to establish a nunnery at the church which came to bear Martorana's name. (Tancred's death is usually dated to 20 February 1194 but the date on this charter appears to be correct.)

The bilingual charter of 27 November 1171 (see manuscript H in Sources and note 343), issued toward the end of the minority of William II and therefore the end of Margaret's regency, is presented in the original Latin. The Greek section (the lower portion of the manuscript) is partly damaged where the parchment was folded; lacking a royal seal, the document, which merely confirms rights granted by Roger II and extends these to the monastic refoundation at Maniace, is a contemporary copy (rather than a forgery) of an original charter, and its intent is reiterated by other royal charters of this period. The manuscript is shown in this book. (For the Greek text, see Cusa's *Diplomi Greci ed Arabi* in Sources.)

A fact which lends concordance to Riley's note regarding the royal seal described in the previous appendix is that an identical seal, bearing precisely the same motto, was affixed to the charter of February 1169.

Another observation concerns the status of Walter, Archbishop-Elect of Palermo, referred to (according to the case) as *regis familiarium Gualterii* in the first charter and *regis familiarii Gualterii* in the second one, identifying him literally as a royal *familiare.*

Finally, the listing of the various witnesses at the end of each major charter is useful in establishing the general concor-

dance and accuracy of the chronicles of Falcandus and Romuald, as well as others further afield, such as those of Roger of Howden.

Other royal charters of Margaret's era are mentioned in this book's Sources.

February 1169, of the Second Indiction

+ In the Name of Our eternal Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen. William, benevolent King of Sicily, Duke of Apulia and Prince of Capua, with Lady Margaret his Queen Mother, resplendent in their great and glorious royal generosity, in their ample charity and mercy grant the following:

We respond to the petition of Matthew, high notary and trusted friend, in recognition of his much appreciated service to the late King William [I], of pious memory, by granting him permission to erect on his property, where his house stands, in the Saqaliba district of the city of Palermo, a monastery, free of taxation.

The present, perpetual privilege establishes and confirms his right to dedicate the said monastery to the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, with every human perquisite appertaining to this foundation, that nobody shall ever violate or infringe on the right of Matthew of Aiello, high notary, and his heirs their patronage of the monastery in this place.

We affix our golden seal to the present, perpetual, inviolable privilege, inscribed by Robert, our notary, under the date stated above.

Given at the happy city of Palermo by the hand of the glorious King William in the presence of Walter trusty archbishop-elect of Palermo, Richard [Palmer] venerable bishop-elect of Syracuse, Gentile [Tuscus] bishop of Agrigento, Richard [of Mandra] count of Molise, Caïd Richard the royal master chamberlain, Caïd Martin royal chamberlain, in

the year of the Lord 1169 during the month of February of the second indiction, during the third year of the reign of William, by the grace of God King of Sicily, Duke of Apulia and Prince of Capua.

May 1169, of the Second Indiction

+ In the Name of Our eternal Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen. William, benevolent King of Sicily, Duke of Apulia and Prince of Capua, with Lady Margaret his Queen Mother, resplendent in their great and glorious royal generosity, in their ample charity and mercy grant the following:

At the request of God's servant Stephen, a kind and benevolent soul, and in our desiring to bequeath him his wish, we confirm to his jurisdiction, in perpetuity, the Monastery of the Holy Savior at Mount Calanna earlier conceded to him by a privilege of the late John, venerable archbishop of Catania.

We affix our leaden seal to the present, perpetual, inviolable privilege, inscribed by Robert, our notary, under the date stated above.

Given at the happy city of Palermo by the hand of the glorious King William in the presence of Walter trusty archbishop-elect of Palermo, Gentile [Tuscus] bishop of Agrigento, Matthew [of Aiello] our high notary, Richard [of Mandra] count of Molise, Caïd Richard the royal master chamberlain, Caïd Martin royal chamberlain, in the year of the Lord 1169 during the month of May of the second indiction, during the third year of the reign of William, by the grace of God King of Sicily, Duke of Apulia and Prince of Capua.

October 1170, of the Fourth Indiction

+ In the Name of Our eternal Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen. William, benevolent King of Sicily, Duke of

Apulia and Prince of Capua, with Lady Margaret his Queen Mother, resplendent in their great and glorious royal generosity, in their ample charity and mercy grant the following:

To the venerable Stephen, a hermit monk of the monastery of Mount Gibello, in the district of Paternò where that mountain is located, are granted the rights to the Talarico mill. Also granted to Stephen is the manor of Rahat Senec near Lentini. To this decree our notary John attaches a leaden seal.

Given at the happy city of Palermo by the hand of the glorious King William in the presence of Walter trusty archbishop of Palermo, Matthew our vice chancellor, Gentile [Tuscus] our trusty bishop of Agrigento, in the year of the Lord 1170 during the month of October of the fourth indiction, during the fifth year of the reign of William, by the grace of God King of Sicily, Duke of Apulia and Prince of Capua. Amen.

March 1171, of the Fourth Indiction

+ In the Name of Our eternal Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen. William, benevolent King of Sicily, Duke of Apulia and Prince of Capua, with Lady Margaret his Queen Mother, resplendent in their great and glorious royal generosity, in their ample charity and mercy grant the following:

To the trusty Gentile, bishop of Agrigento, is confirmed the Trululim mill, of which the prelate had been defrauded. To this decree our notary Zacharias attaches a leaden seal.

Given at the happy city of Palermo by the hand of the glorious King William in the presence of Walter trusty archbishop of Palermo and Matthew our vice chancellor, in the year of the Lord 1171 during the month of March of the fourth indiction, during the fifth year of the reign of William, by the grace of God King of Sicily, Duke of Apulia and Prince of Capua. Amen.

November 1171, of the Fifth Indiction

+ Margarita, dei gratia regina domini regis. Veniet at nos abbas sancti philippi de sancto marco quemdam de fratribus ecclesie at nos panormum transmisit cum sigillo quod ipsa ecclesia habet statum a comite rogerio qui eam condidit continens homines eiusdem ecclesie liberos esse ab omni in angaria atque servicio. Significavit autem nobis quod baiuli sancti marcii et maniachii et eorum comunitas hominibus et casalibus eius molestiis inferunt. Recipientes autem sigillum vidimus confirmatum a glorioso rege rogerio beate memorie, quapropter concessimus et confirmavimus quicquid in ipso continebatur. Precepimus igitur firmiter tibi ut baiulis maniachii et sancti marci et comuni populo precipias ut deinceps nec hominibus nec casalibus ecclesie predicte ullam inferant molestiam, et ab angaria et a lignaminibus mascali et ab muraliis et ab omni adiutorio ipsos quietos dimittant nec de forfaturis nec de decima ovium se intromittant, ut amodo super hoc nullam proclamationem audiamus, et postquam legeris cartulam des eam abbati prefate ecclesie sancti philippi pro futeris bailis. Datum panormi XXVII die mensis novembris indictionis quinte.

NOTES

"The cult of the footnote, involving, at its apogee, a page crammed with encyclopaedic detail in small type to a solitary line of text, is no doubt a proof of diligence, but it may also be a tedious form of exhibitionism."

— Sir Harold Acton

Here the author wishes to perpetuate the moribund cult of the endnote.

1. Fazello, Thomas, op. cit. (in Sources), page 463. Here in Italy, where women were granted the right to vote only in 1946 (with the defeated nation's provisional government acting on the orders of the Allied occupiers), it is unsurprising that few detailed biographies were published about historical women until recently. All but ignored were the women who governed Sicily during the twelfth century, namely Adelaide del Vasto (consort of Roger I), Margaret of Navarre, and Constance Hauteville (daughter of Roger II). The dearth of Italian biographies of these women and their male contemporaries (Roger II, William II, et al.) was due chiefly to the unificationist propaganda dominant in the Kingdom of Italy, which strove to focus on national figures rather than "regional" ones such as the medieval rulers of Sicily. (See Alio, op.cit.) In Britain, by comparison, a plethora of works are dedicated to Eleanor of Aquitaine.

2. Formally King of *Pamplona*. His son was to become known, decades later, as *King of Navarre*. Navarre, like Sicily, was initially a county.

3. Margaret's precise date of birth is unknown. The year was ascertained based on such factors as her father's movements and the birthdate of her sister. Additionally, two factors argue for early 1135. Firstly, near-contemporary sources concur that Blanca, Margaret's slightly older sister, was born after 1133. Secondly, sources generally concur that García Ramírez and his wife were wed around 1130. (Through a typographical error in a previous book, the author reported Margaret's year of birth as 1138 when 1133 was intended; at all events, subsequent research in Spain confirmed that 1135 is correct.) William I, who Margaret married, was born around 1121.

4. See Chaytor, op.cit., page 285, for a chronological table listing the various counts of Aragon, Barcelona and Sobrarbe. The author agrees with Chaytor's observation that, "The chronology and order of counts and kings earlier than 950 is extremely uncertain."

5. Consistent with standard Spanish usage, these surnames are simple patronyms, rather than toponyms, so *García Ximenez* literally means "García, son of Ximeno," and *Sancho Garces* literally means "Sancho, son of García." This creates obvious genealogical confusion beyond the identification of just one patrilineal generation. In this book's first genealogical chart, as per general practice, the ordinals are based on given names (forenames), not patronyms. A similar convention gives us the same format for feminine names, according to which the subject of this book would be called *Margarita Garcés.*

6. This book's first genealogical table shows the relationships of the Jiménez rulers of Navarre, Aragon and Castile, and the first map indicates the regions mentioned in this chapter.

7. The Basque language, Euskara, is not Romance, nor perhaps even truly Indo-European. It is believed that the Basques as a people represent a quasi-isolated "pocket" of the civilization that existed long before the Phoenicians landed on the Iberian coasts. Their roots were, in effect, a vestige of the Neolithic era. In recent years, the identification of specific genetic haplogroups and sub-clades among the Basques has supported this theory. However, by the twelfth century the society of the Basques, with its churches and mosques, was generally similar to the cultures around it, in what are now Spain and France.

8. Alas, there is no extant, contemporary record of an *Alberta* among the daughters of William the Conqueror. That hers was a very unusual name in northern Spain during the eleventh century lends credibility to the thesis that she was raised abroad, possibly in Normandy, but there is nothing that attests to William being her father.

9. For *El Cantar de Mio Cid,* see Menéndez Pidal, op.cit. A good modern biography of the Cid is Fletcher, op. cit. Over time, the Cid became the national hero of Spain, his name standing out from the morass of Spanish kings and knights of his century; his exploits were gilded to become something like a folk legend.

10. The knightly dubbing ceremony itself was still quite simple, devoid of the formality introduced later. Many esquires were elevated to knighthood by barons, enfeoffed knights and other feudal lords rather than kings. During this period the status of enfeoffed knighthood in northern Spain was not significantly different from the institution as it existed in France, Italy and England. In Spain, the manorial (feudal) system flourished in territories held by Christians. Nothing precisely identical to this knightly tradition existed among the Muslim population. However, the *furusiyya* code of the Moorish horsemen was vaguely similar to chivalry, and on a few occasions the Cid himself enjoyed the support of brave Muslim horsemen who were knights in everything but name.

11. The expression "blue blood" is thought to have originated in northern Spain (although we know not when), where, as stated earlier, *sangre azul* described the bluish veins visible beneath the skin of those having fair complexions, and perhaps claiming roots in the Visigothic baronage, in contrast to the comparatively swarthy complexions of most of the Moors. The phrase *sangre azul* may well be apocryphal, but the racist concept behind it is not.

12. Much information about the life of Alfonso I is drawn from *Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris* (see the Sources).

13. Our information about Rotrou III "the Great" of Perche comes from various sources, perhaps most reliably the *Historia Ecclesiastica* of Orderic Vitalis. The edition consulted was *The Ecclesiastical History of England and Normandy,* volumes 3 and 4, translated by Thomas Forester (see the Sources). See also the *Chanson d'Antioche* and Thompson, Kathleen, *Power and Border Leadership,* in the Sources.

14. Several chronicles and *chansons* recount the colorful adventures of Bohemond of Antioch. The most famous is Anna Comnena's highly-detailed *Alexiad,* generally regarded as the first European history written by a woman; another is the *Chanson d'Antioche.* (See editions of both in the Sources.)

15. The text of the surviving copy of the marriage contract of 1121 may not be identical to that of the original. See manuscript N in the Sources. In modern usage, the term *dowry* usually refers to property given in the bride's name by her natal family (typically her father but in this case her uncle) to the man to whom the woman is betrothed, whereas *dower* denotes property given the bride by her husband at the time of marriage. The marriage contract was a form of promise, or troth, hence *betrothal.*

16. We find Rotrou of Perche witnessing royal charters of Alfonso I right up until the monarch's death in 1134. However, it is sometimes unclear whether he was a royal lieutenant (Lord *in* Tudela) or a feudal vassal (Lord *of* Tudela). See, for example, the charter of October 1133, document number 270, in *Colección Diplomática de Alfonso I de Aragón y Pamplona* (listed in the Sources). A good analysis of Rotrou's movements during this period is set forth in Nelson, Lynn, op. cit. In 1166, Queen Margaret of Sicily, the daughter of García Ramírez and Margaret of Aigle, referred to her mother's dowry (Tudela) being bequeathed by Rotrou of Perche (see note 179).

17. The Siege of Astorga in 1112. See also note 24.

18. For a few observations, see Thompson, Kathleen, "The Lords of Laigle," in the Sources.

19. Bolea and Huesca were in Aragon.

20. Sancho's birth is usually reported as 21 April 1132. He was probably born at La Guardia.

21. García Ramírez was probably at Monzón when Blanca was born at La Guardia.

22. It seems most likely that Alfonso was indeed wounded but died from a related complication such as an infection. He was almost sixty years old.

23. Here the chief chronicle source is the *Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris.*

24. For the chief surviving reference to this unorthodox royal testament mentioning all three orders, see the decree of October 1131 in Gran Cartulario de la Catedral de Pamplona; *El Libro Redondo,* folios 59-60. For a transcription see *Colección Diplomática de la Catedral de Pamplona* (in Sources), page 167-169.

25. Although he was probably Aragonese by birth (he may have been from Jaca near Huesca), Sancho de Rosas (or Larrosa), the Bishop of Pamplona who crowned García Ramírez the following year, supported Navarrese sovereignty. Angered by opportunistic Ramiro's ready abandonment of holy orders, Bishop Sancho was willing to fund García Ramírez's military campaign against him. Sancho had been bishop since 1122, and the independence of Navarre, like the cathedral consecrated in 1127, could have only enhanced his prestige. In effect, Sancho became the uncontested, if unofficial, "primate" of Navarre; by way of comparison, Tudela's cathedral was erected on the site of that city's great mosque in 1168, leading to the foundation of a diocese. See Fernandez Perez, op.cit., pages 205-225; also Huesca, op.cit.

26. Urraca, aptly nicknamed "the Reckless," had separated from Alfonso I of Aragon in 1110. Their marriage was annulled in 1112 and Alfonso never remarried. Urraca then wed Raymond of Burgundy, by whom she bore a son, Alfonso VII of Castile (and León). It was chiefly on the tenuous basis of his mother having been the first wife of Alfonso I of Aragon that Alfonso VII of Castile claimed the Aragonese crown. Alfonso VII was born in 1105, when his mother was still married to the King of Aragon; the subsequent annulment made Urraca's affair with Raymond moot and her son (born outside wedlock) was legitimized.

27. Agnes, daughter of the crusader William IX, Duke of Aquitaine, was the widow of Aimery V of Thouars, by whom she had three sons. Although the betrothal was negotiated without delay, Agnes' marriage to Ramiro was not actually celebrated (in Jaca Cathedral) until November 1135. Her proven ability to produce an heir was obviously important to the Aragonese, and indeed she gave birth to a daughter, Petronilla, in the summer of 1136. Interestingly, Ramiro's marriage to Agnes was one of the events that prompted the Second Lateran Council (in 1139) to make the marriages of priests canonically null and void; until that time such unions were legitimate but not sanctioned (legal).

28. See note 3 for the calculation of Margaret's birth date.

29. Pamplona's Romanesque cathedral, like many in western Europe, was later rebuilt in the Gothic style, although the Romanesque façade survived until 1783, when it was replaced by an unsightly Neoclassical one. See also note 25.

30. Like the cathedral, the castle has been much altered over time. Sancho, Margaret's brother, built a fortified palace on the site during the second half of the twelfth century. Little of it remains except the crypt (see the photograph) and a few walls. It now houses an archive. A much larger castle, of which no superstructure remains, was erected early in the fourteenth century outside the old town in what is now Plaza del Castillo.

31. Conserved in Gran Cartulario de la Catedral de Pamplona; *El Libro Redondo,* folio 61 recto. For a transcription see *Colección Diplomática de la Catedral de Pamplona* (in Sources), page 173.

32. A document of King Alfonso I of Aragon dated July 1133 and witnessed by Rotrou still identified Tudela with Margaret's uncle. See *Colección Diplomática de Alfonso I de Aragón y Pamplona* (in Sources), document number 265.

33. Conserved in Gran Cartulario de la Catedral de Pamplona; *El Libro Redondo,* folios 72-73. For a transcription see *Colección Diplomática de la Catedral de Pamplona* (in Sources), pages 191-192.

34. In the original, *quem ut eorum plerique qui cum ipso venerant asserebant,* "as was asserted by a number of those who arrived with him."

35. *Hunc ergo regina cum antea Rodericus dicereturm idque siculi nomen abhorrentes velut ignotum et barbarum irriderent, Henricum, appellari praecepit.* Falcandus must have known of the Cid even if many Sicilians did not; he may not have known that *Roderic* was the name of the first Visigothic King of Hispania in 710.

36. As we shall see, Rodrigo eventually sought his fortunes beyond the shores of his native Spain, although there is no evidence of his elder half-brother, Sancho, exiling him. It is remarkable that García Ramírez seems not to have sought to arrange a dynastic marriage for Rodrigo as he did for Sancho, Blanca and Margaret, nor did he grant him any important position or wealthy lands in Navarre.

37. Margaret's death at around thirty-two years of age is thought to have resulted from natural causes. That would not be extremely unusual, but neither would poisoning. If she was as promiscuous as some seemed to believe, and unlikely to change her ways, her death might prove expedient.

38. The *Camino de Santiago,* the Way of Saint James, which is still walked (or hiked) today, was a pilgrim route to Santiago de Campostela in Galicia. Pamplona was a stop along the route for those coming from France.

39. Some historians have characterized Alfonso VII of Castile and León as the "overlord" of García Ramírez, as if the latter were merely a vassal. That may be an oversimplification. Clearly, however, Alfonso was the more powerful "senior partner" in the alliance. Without Alfonso's support, García Ramírez could not ensure the sovereignty of Navarre, which would be vulnerable to a military attack from the combined forces of Aragon and Catalonia (the County of Barcelona) to the east.

40. Urraca survived García Ramírez to return to her homeland, where she was regent of Asturias from 1153 until 1165, hence she is known to historians as "Urraca the Asturian."

41. In 1157, Sancho wed Urraca's half-sister Sancha, a legitimate daughter of Alfonso VII of Castile. Here the difference in age was not very great, as Sancha of

Castile was only about six years younger than Sancho. Blanca was destined to marry Sancho III of Castile, a son of Alfonso VII.

42. Conserved in Gran Cartulario de la Catedral de Pamplona; *El Libro Redondo,* folio 70-71 recto. For a transcription see *Colección Diplomática de la Catedral de Pamplona* (in Sources), page 222.

43. As will be seen, this betrothal was not finalized.

44. Odo, who in his brother's absence sometimes served as the *de facto* regent of England, had stopped in Sicily on his way to the First Crusade, an expedition which he had vigorously promoted.

45. Rotrou III of Perche died from an arrow wound he suffered at the Siege of Rouen in 1144. His son, Stephen, was about the same age as Blanca and Margaret, if not slightly younger.

46. The other legitimate sons of King Roger II to reach the age of majority who predeceased William were Tancred in 1138, Alfonso (Anfuso) in 1144, and Roger in May 1148 (not 1149 as sometimes reported).

47. See genealogical table number 1.

48. See Appendix 9.

49. Referring to the plight of Roger I when besieged at Troina during an unusually cold winter, the chronicler Godfrey Malaterra states that, *Graeci vero et Sarraceni, quibus omnis patria favens pro libito patebat, plurima replebantur abundantia.* "Instead, the Greeks and Saracens received provisions from the entire region and were supplied abundantly."

50. For a general history of the Jews of medieval Sicily, see Simonsohn, Shlomo, op.cit.

51. See Agius, Dionisius, op.cit.

52. For one of the more objective, unbiased histories of this development, which Catholics and Orthodox debate to this day, see Runciman, Steven, *The Eastern Schism* (listed in Sources).

53. For the linguistic implications, see Metcalfe, Alexander, op.cit.

54. Doxopatrios was a distinguished theologian, onetime deacon of Saint Sophia in Constantinople. Composed in Greek at King Roger's court by 1143, his treatise is titled *Orders and Ranks of the Patriarchal Thrones.*

55. This information was provided by the British Library, which kindly permitted the author to view the psalter.

INDEX

Royalty and better known figures are listed by their first names, hence *Benjamin of Tudela*. Others are listed by surname or toponym, so *Aiello, Matthew of* and *Aristippo, Henry*. Entries generally refer to the narrative text and notes rather than appendices. Margaret Jiménez, Queen of Sicily, is treated throughout most of the numbered chapters.