

# MARGARET

## *Queen of Sicily*



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## 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.<sup>444</sup>

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 [Tuscius] 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 [Tuscan] 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 [Tuscius] 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.