

MARGARET

Queen of Sicily



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Appendix 8 CHRONICON EXCERPTS

These are the author's translations of the sections most directly relevant to Queen Margaret, especially those which mention her by name. Part of the *Chronicon* of Romuald of Salerno, which is not as lengthy or detailed as the chronicle of Falcandus, has been published in English translation.⁴³¹ The chronicle of Falcandus ends in 1169, but that of Romuald details events until late 1178. All of the following translations are original; the passages beginning with Thomas Becket are the first translations from the *Chronicon* ever published in English, while the others were effected without reference to existing (published) translations. For ready identification, the initial sentence of each section is also presented in the original Latin of the manuscripts, which, like the *editio princeps*, lack chapters. Details such as dates are indicated within [brackets]. The texts appear in the order in which Romuald presents them.

Construction of the Zisa Palace

Eo tempore Rex Guilielmus palatium quoddam altum satis et miro artificio laboratum prope Panormum aedificari fecit, quod Zisam appellavit, et ipsum pulchris pomiferis et amoenis viridariis circumdedit, et diversis aquarum conductibus et piscariis satis delectabile reddidit.

At that time [1165] King William ordered to be erected near Palermo a rather high palace, built with admirable technical competence, which he called the Zisa, surrounded by fruit trees and splendid gardens, rendering it pleasurable with numerous fountains and lakelets.

Margaret becomes Queen Consort at William's Accession

Defuncto autem Rege Rogerio, Guilielmus filius ejus, qui cum patre duobus annis et mensibus decem regnaverat, illi in regni administratione successit.

With the death of King Roger [February 1154], his son, William, who had reigned alongside his father for two years and ten months, succeeded to the throne. Following the death of his father, and in the presence of the realm's great nobles, William was solemnly crowned on Easter, which was very near [4 April]. Among those in attendance was Robert of Bassonville, Count of Conversano and matrilineal cousin of the King.

Margaret's Marriage to William, Son of Roger II

Rex autem Guilielmus, adhuc vivente patre cum esset princeps capuanorum, Margaritam filiam Garsie Regis Navarre duxit uxorem, de qua plures liberos habuit: Rogerium quem ducem apulie constituit, Robertum quem capuanorum principem ordinavit, Willelmum et Henricum.

When his father was still alive, William, whilst Prince of Capua, wed Margaret, daughter of García, King of Navarre [in 1149], who bore him several sons, namely: Roger, who he created Duke of Apulia, Robert, who he invested as Prince of Capua, and William and Henry.

Frederick I [Barbarossa] was very annoyed to learn of the pact between the King of Sicily and Pope Adrian IV, as well

as the Papal recognition of the investiture (sic) of young William with the Kingdom of Sicily [crowned as *rex filius* in 1151] and the Duchy of Apulia.

Margaret Named Regent

Rex autem Guilielmus circa Quadragesimam fluxu ventris et molestia coepit affligi.

During the beginning of Lent [March 1166], William was struck by a bout of dysentery. For a time the condition subsided, but by the middle of Lent it worsened, and the King believed himself at the gate of death. He repented and confessed himself, freed some prisoners, forgave a redemption tax he had imposed in Apulia, and made his last testament. In this will he named his elder surviving son, William, as his heir, and confirmed the younger, Henry, as Prince of Capua, as he had already designated.

The King left much money to be spent [for the poor and to glorify God] for the salvation of his soul, and decreed Queen Margaret, his wife, to be keeper and governor of all the realm and of his sons.⁴³² Finally, he appointed as royal counsellors [familiares] Richard, Bishop-Elect of Syracuse, and Matthew, his High Notary, both being wise, prudent men who were proven experts in law and known to his wife and sons.

Death of William I

Sed quum praedicta passio ingravesceret, rex Guilielmus Romualdum salernitanum archiepiscopum, qui in arte erat medicinae valde peritus, ad se vocari praecepit.

As the illness became grave, King William called to his presence Romuald, Archbishop of Salerno, who was learned in the art of medicine. Arriving around Easter [24 April], the prelate

was received with honour and he prescribed a number of remedies. However, trusting in the authority of his own counsel, the monarch used only the cures he thought most beneficial. And so, the Saturday following Easter, the fever rose and the dysentery worsened.

The King died, aged forty-six, during the afternoon of the seventh day (sic) of May, of the fourteenth indiction, around the ninth hour of daylight [3 PM], having reigned alongside his father and then alone for fifteen years and ten months.⁴³³ He was entombed in the chapel of Saint Peter [the Palatine Chapel] in the royal palace.⁴³⁴

He was tall, robust and attractive, proud, desirous of prestige, victorious in naval and land battles. He was despised in his realm, where he was feared more than loved. He was greedy in obtaining money for himself and not very generous in spending it on others.⁴³⁵

In bestowing honour and wealth he edified those loyal to him. He prosecuted traitors, condemning some to penury and others to exile.

Frequently did he attend liturgy, and he showed great respect for the clergy. He had the Palatine Chapel decorated with marvelous images in mosaic, enhanced by precious stones, its walls covered in various types of marble. He had it appointed in gold and silver, with lush tapestries. The chapel was served by numerous clerics, endowed by as many ecclesiastical benefices. The monarch ensured every reverence toward God in the divine office celebrated there.

Accession of William II

Quo defuncto, Guilielmus, filius ejus maior, natus annos duodecim, illi in regno successit.

The deceased sovereign was succeeded by William, his eld-

est son, who was aged twelve years. On the Queen's command, and on the advice of the archbishops, barons and people, he was proclaimed King two days following his father's death.

Indeed, on that day of his coronation, he arrived at the Church of Saint Mary [the cathedral] in Palermo escorted in pomp by a royal cortege that bestowed great glory upon him. He was anointed and crowned by Romuald, Archbishop of Salerno, in the presence of numerous archbishops, bishops and barons. In great honour, and to the joy of the people, he processed to the palace with the crown on his head.

Margaret's First Acts as Regent

Regina vero, utpote mulier sapiens et discreta, manifeste cognoscens animos populi sui, propter molestias quas a rege Guilielmo passi fuerant, plurimum esse turbatos, illos ad amorem et fidelitatem filii sui beneficiis credidit provocandos.

The Queen, being a wise and prudent woman, and knowing well the spirit of the populace, which was very disturbed for the mistreatment the subjects had endured under the late William I, undertook through many concessions to instill their love and fealty toward her son. Acting on sage counsel, she opened the jails and released many prisoners, restoring their lands and forgiving their debts.

She allowed counts and barons who had left the realm to return, restoring to them the estates that had been confiscated. By royal grace, she very generously granted many lands to churches, counts, barons and knights.

Through these and many other acts the fealty and spirit of affinity of the people for her son increased greatly, to the point that those who were already loyal became even more ardently loyal and those who were devoted became further devoted to him.

In those times Qaid Peter, a eunuch who was master chamberlain of the palace, fled with some others to the court of the King of Morocco, taking with him much money.

Manuel [Comnenus], Emperor of Constantinople, learning of the death of King William I, sent ambassadors to his young successor in Sicily to convey the message that he wished to establish, of his own volition, peace with him, William II. He proposed to William the betrothal of his only daughter, universal heiress to his [Byzantine] Empire, along with the right of succession.⁴³⁶

The Queen Regent and the King convoked a council to consider this proposal, sending and receiving many ambassadors. They renewed the traditional peace, but the negotiation of the betrothal remained open for the numerous details that had to be stipulated.

For the many concessions made to their subjects, King William and his mother soon earned their esteem, governing the Kingdom in peace and tranquility.

Henry, Margaret's natural [illegitimate] brother, arrived at the court in Sicily. The King granted him the County of Montescaglioso and betrothed to him a daughter of King Roger.

In those same days [in 1166] Stephen, son of the Count of Perche, also arrived in Sicily. This cleric was kin to Queen Margaret, who named him Grand Chancellor and then arranged for him to be consecrated Archbishop of Palermo.

Before long, Stephen was governing the entire realm as he saw fit, having become very familiar with the King and the Queen Regent.⁴³⁷

Murder of Thomas Becket Reported

Illis autem diebus Thomas Cantuariensis archiepiscopus, vir religiosus et Deum metuens, dum pro libertate et ecclesiarum justitiis Henrico regi angliae viriliter repugnaret, de Anglia exire compulsus ad regem

Lodovicum venit in Franciam, qui eum ob suae religionis reverentiam satis officiose recepit, et per aliquos annos in terra sua honeste detinuit, et quae erant illi necessaria, liberalitate regia ministravit.

In those times, Thomas, Archbishop of Canterbury, a devout and god-fearing man, strove to preserve the rights and freedoms of the Church which King Henry II of England tried to usurp. This forced Thomas into exile in France at the court of King Louis VII, who accorded the cleric every courtesy and for some years granted him hospitality in his realm, providing him with every necessity.

Finally, at the request of Pope Alexander III and King Louis, Thomas, Archbishop of Canterbury, made peace with the King of England, who permitted him to return to his church.⁴³⁸ Over time, King Henry, acting on the counsel of malicious men, began to provoke the clergy and deprive the Church of her rights.

Coming to learn of this, Archbishop Thomas, defying all fear and never deviating from the path of justice, defended the Church's freedom through words and deeds as a good shepherd protects his flock.

Since the discord increased day by day, with words and actions annoying the monarch ever more, some English knights decided to act in a manner that would please their sovereign. To that end, Hugh de Morville, William de Tracy, Reginald FitzUrse, Richard le Breton and Robert de Broc (sic)⁴³⁹ ignored the reverence due the priesthood and the fear to be shown in the face of God. On the day following the Feast of the Innocents [29 December 1170], they killed Thomas by striking his head with a sword while he prayed before the altar of the cathedral. They immediately fled, pursued by nobody, keeping their remorse to themselves.

The bells of the city and the abbey rang out to announce news of the evil act. Monks, priests and laity entered the cathe-

dral to find, unspeakably, the body of their pastor who had been cruelly killed next to the altar. Tearfully, between heartfelt groans and sighs, they buried him in honour in his own church during a Pontifical [solemn] liturgy to the sound of hymns.

The just and merciful Lord, who looks upon his own not only in the future but the present, permitted Archbishop Thomas to be venerated as a martyr, as much for the pain he suffered as for the cause he defended. His murder, for having upheld truth, made Thomas famous and celebrated in all the world through many supernatural manifestations and recent miraculous events.

When the Pope [Alexander III] heard of the certainty and veracity of those miracles, the decision was announced to his fellow prelates of the canonization of Thomas as a martyr, his name to be inscribed in the catalogue of martyrs. It was ordered that his martyrdom be celebrated every year on the anniversary of his death.

The King of England heard that public opinion was against him, implying that he had prior knowledge of the crime perpetrated against the Archbishop, and these voices persecuted he who was not to blame. Confident in the purity of his innocence, Henry sent some of his bishops and clerics to Anagni to see Pope Alexander.

Before the Pope and his cardinals, Henry's emissaries publicly swore on the Holy Gospels that their King was innocent of having spilled the blood of that just man, and that he had no part in the crime that was committed. His knights, who did not fear assaulting the Archbishop, had given thought to their deed, recognizing their crime and their dishonesty. They now submitted themselves humbly at the Pope's feet, publicly proclaiming their guilt and their sacrilege, imploring that he permit them to make penance for the crime they had committed.

The Pontiff condemned the guilty knights in the strongest terms for their evil, affirming that the judgement of God

would be visited upon them if they did not atone for their sin with a suitable penance.

He ordered them to go on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, barefoot and clad in cilices [hairshirts], visiting the holy places in pain and piety. He ordered them to go thenceforth to Black Mountain, which is near the city of Antioch.⁴⁴⁰ There, only by fasting, meditating, praying and grieving for the rest of their lives, ever asking for divine mercy, might they repent of so vile a crime.

Maria Comnenus Fails to Arrive

Eo tempore quum Emmanuel imperator Constantinopolitanus frequentibus nuntiis delegatis filiam suam Zura Mariam Guilielmo regi Siciliae in uxorem tradere promisisset, tandem ex conventionem ultriusque partis factum est, quod imperator, praesentibus legatis ejusdem regis, in anima sua jurare fecit, et juramentum suum magnatum suorum jurejurando firmari, quod in termino et loco ab utraque parte praefixo filiam suam regi pro uxore transmitteret.

At that time [1171] Manuel, Emperor of Constantinople, in the frequent messages borne by his ambassadors, had promised the betrothal of his daughter, Maria, to King William of Sicily. At the end of these negotiations, both parties were agreed that the Emperor, in the presence of William's representatives [as witnesses], would swear on his very soul to send his daughter to the King to a place that was mutually agreed upon.

The terms of the betrothal were confirmed by an oath sworn collectively by the Imperial nobles. In the same manner, the King and those near him [the Queen and court] swore to welcome the daughter of the Emperor.

Having done so, William, being a just and god-fearing man, and seeking to honour his oath, went to Taranto with his

younger brother Henry, Prince of Capua, and waited there for a time for the arrival of Maria, who was to be accompanied by Manuel's emissaries.

Then the devout prince went to the shrine of Saint Michael on Mount Gargano to pray before going to Barletta, where he stayed for several days.

But the Emperor, abandoning his oath and his promise, failed to send his daughter to meet the King of Sicily at the time and place agreed upon.

Death of Prince Henry of Capua

Quo rex cognito per terram beneventanam transiens, Henricum capuanorum principem fratrem suum, quia infirmus erat.

Knowing this [that Maria Comnenus had not arrived at Taranto], William, while passing through the Benevento region, sent his brother, Henry, who had fallen ill, ahead to Salerno. Meanwhile, William visited Capua and then made his way to Salerno.

Henry boarded a galley for Palermo. There the illness worsened, and he died in the middle of June in the year of Our Lord 1172, of the fifth indiction, aged thirteen. He was interred with honour next to the tomb of Roger II, his grandfather, in the Church of Saint Mary in Palermo.⁴⁴¹

Having remained in Salerno for a few days, William boarded a galley with Walter, the venerable Archbishop of Palermo, and Matthew [of Aiello] the Vice Chancellor, and returned to Palermo, where, according to proper usage, he immediately learned of the death of his brother. At first William suffered terribly, both mentally and physically, but he eventually accepted the wise counsel of those loyal to him, finding consolation for his pain through his faith in the Lord.

Proposed Betrothal of Beatrice Hohenstaufen

Interea praedictus cancellarius ex mandato imperatoris nuntios ad Guilielmum Siciliae regem transmisit, suadens et postulans, ut ipse, imperatoris filia in uxorem accepta, cum eo pacem perpetuam faceret et ipsi se amicabiliter counciret.

The chancellor of the Holy Roman Emperor [Frederick I “Barbarossa”], acting on his lord’s orders, sent ambassadors to William, King of Sicily, asking him, and prevailing upon him, to stipulate a perpetual peace. To seal this accord, the Emperor asked William to accept his daughter [Beatrice] as his bride.

But King William, being a devoutly religious, Christian ruler, knew that this marriage would not please Pope Alexander III. Indeed, it would have brought with it great damage to the Church of Rome.

Out of reverence for God and respect for Pope Alexander, he chose not to accept a union with the daughter of the Emperor, nor the peace accord presented. For his part, Frederick was greatly offended at this rebuke and did not forget it. His daughter died shortly afterward.⁴⁴²

Joanna “Plantagenet” of England

Interea rex Guilielmus consilio Papae Alexandri, Heliam Trojanum electum et Arnulfum caputaquensem episcopum et Florium de Camerota regium justitiarium ad regem Henricum in Angliam misit, ut ei Joannam minorem filiam suam in uxorem daret.

In those times [1176] King William II, acting on the advice of Pope Alexander III, sent to King Henry II in England as his emissaries Elias, Bishop Elect of Troia, Arnolf, Bishop of Capaccio, and Florio of Camerota, royal justiciar, to ask for

the hand of Joanna, his young daughter.

Henry, accepting the counsel of Pope Alexander and his princes, happily consented to the request of the [Sicilian] sovereign. He sent his daughter as far as the port of Saint-Gilles in the company of the royal emissaries and some of his own nobles.⁴⁴³

Knowing this, King William sent Alfano, Archbishop of Capua, Richard, Bishop of Syracuse, and Robert, Count of Caserta with twenty-five galleys to meet Joanna there. From Saint-Gilles, the three prelates escorted Joanna aboard a galley and set out for Naples. Unaccustomed to sea travel, the girl suffered a bout of sea sickness.

They stopped at Naples to celebrate Christmas. Then they travelled by land via Salerno and Calabria to Sicily. At Palermo, Joanna was met by King William and his great nobles, and received with the great honour due her.

Then King William summoned the most distinguished noblemen of Sicily, and a great multitude of the populace, for his solemn nuptials with the daughter of the King of England in the Palatine Chapel, where the betrothed were married and crowned in the Year of Our Lord 1177 in the month of February of the tenth indiction [on Sunday the thirteenth].