

## **DEI GRATIA IEROSOLIMORUM REGINA**

### **ARTICULATING THE PROPRIETARY QUEEN OF JERUSALEM'S RULERSHIP IN SOLEMN ROYAL DOCUMENTS**

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**ABSTRACT** Between 1131 and 1228, the crown of Jerusalem was held by five women. While it is agreed that women could succeed to the Jerusalemite throne, there remains contention regarding the role of these proprietary queens within the government of their kingdom. Through a comparative diplomatic analysis of seventy-eight surviving royal charters produced during the life and reigns of these five queens of Jerusalem, this article argues that these women retained and exercised royal power and authority within their kingdom, and offers an exploratory survey of how the rulership of the proprietary queens of Jerusalem was formally and publicly articulated. Through its analysis, this article notes key changes in documentary practice and production, namely the disappearance of “ego” documents issued by the queen herself, together with the unfailing reference by the king consort to his wife’s assent to his actions. These changes appeared in the aftermath of the loss of Jerusalem in 1187: a shift in (geo)political reality which resulted in a shift in the nature of female royal rulership within the kingdom—from one of both active participation and legitimization of the king consort to one of passive participation through the legitimization of the king consort.

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## Introduction

Between 1131 and 1228, the crown of Jerusalem was held by five women: Melisende (ca. 1107–1161, r. 1131–1153), Sibylla (ca. 1157/61–1190, r. 1186–1190), Isabella I (1172–1205, r. 1190/92–1205), Maria (1192–1212, r. 1205–1212), and Isabella II (b. and r. 1212–1228).<sup>1</sup> In the Middle Ages, a male ruler was always preferred, especially in the case of a profoundly militaristic kingdom such as Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup> But it is undeniable that dynastic contingency led to female succession within European hereditary monarchies: between 1109 and 1328 alone, a total of sixteen royal women asserted claims or were acclaimed to nine European thrones;<sup>3</sup> more did so in subsequent decades and centuries.<sup>4</sup> In this sense, the proprietary queens of Jerusalem were unexceptional.<sup>5</sup> What *is* exceptional is the concentration of female royal rulers within such a short timeframe and the consecutive succession of four queens between 1186 and 1228—particularly given the kingdom’s brief existence (1099–1291).<sup>6</sup>

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**1** Only the crown of Navarre was held by the same number of women, though over a longer period (1274–1512). See Woodacre, *Queens Regnant*.

**2** Gerish, “Ancestors and Predecessors”; “Holy War”; “Royal Daughters of Jerusalem”; Murray, “Women in the Royal Succession”; Woodacre, “Obstacles and Opportunities.”

**3** In chronological order, they are: Urraca of León-Castile (d. 1126), Melisende of Jerusalem (d. 1161), Matilda of England (d. 1167), Petronila of Aragon (d. 1173), Sibylla of Jerusalem (d. 1190), Isabella I of Jerusalem (d. 1205), Constance I of Sicily (d. 1198), Maria of Montferrat (d. 1212), Isabella II of Jerusalem (d. 1228), Berenguela of Castile (d. 1246), Sancha (d. 1243) and Dulce (d. 1248) of León, Constance II of Sicily (d. 1305), Juana I of Navarre (d. 1305), Margaret of Norway (d. 1290), and Juana II of Navarre (d. 1349). Just three of these sixteen claims were unsuccessful: Matilda in England, Sancha and Dulce in León, and Juana II in France. Waag, “Rulership, Authority, and Power,” 71–104.

**4** Wolf, “Reigning Queens in Medieval Europe.”

**5** In English, a queen who claimed the title in her own (hereditary) right is generally qualified as a queen regnant. However, not all hereditary queens exercised royal power in the manner generally associated with queens regnant. The term “proprietary queen,” borrowed from the Spanish “reina propietaria,” is a much more effective catch-all, as it highlights a queen’s hereditary claim without tying said claim to the exercise of royal power. Waag, “Proprietary Queen,” 74–77.

**6** Within medieval studies there remains a misapprehension that medieval women were marginalized, and that elite women with authority and ability to influence their families, communities, and realms were somehow all exceptions to this general marginalization. Recent scholarship has sought to address this misapprehension, notably the *Beyond Exceptionalism I* (2015) and *Beyond Exceptionalism II* (2022)

Over the last five decades, an extensive and growing body of work has demonstrated the regular political participation of royal and elite women in the Central Middle Ages.<sup>7</sup> This research has provided an important new framework for understanding the exercise of power, as not only direct and public but also indirect and private. This framework, in turn, has led to a reconsideration of medieval monarchy as more than simply the rule of one man (the king), rather as an institution centred on the family, within which members played complementary roles to enable proper government of the realm: from the king, queen, and heir to the throne as a ruling Trinity of sorts, to royal siblings and children who were often given positions of power within the Church or made important marriage alliances with the leading noble families of the realm.<sup>8</sup> However, while this understanding of medieval monarchy is well-established within the fields of queenship, gender, and women's studies, it has yet to achieve wider historiographical recognition.<sup>9</sup> As a result, scholars outside these fields are not always able to appreciate the full and complex spectrum of royal and elite women's political participation, though this participation was certainly acknowledged by the women's contemporaries.

It is in this sense that the proprietary queen is a particularly useful queen to study. Queenship studies have, understandably, prioritized those

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conferences and resulting edited volumes. See Tanner, ed., *Medieval Elite Women* for the BEI conference proceedings; BEII conference proceedings are forthcoming.

**7** Tanner, Gathagan, and Huneycutt, "Introduction." It would be impossible to offer here a comprehensive historiographical overview of the fields of queenship, gender, and women's studies, which includes an ever-expanding collection of monographs, edited volumes, chapters, and articles, as well as conferences, research projects, and research networks. Some notable highlights, beyond what is cited elsewhere in this article, are: Echevarría and Jaspert, *El ejercicio del poder*; Woodacre, Dean, Jones, Rohr, and Martin, eds. *Routledge History of Monarchy*; Woodacre, *Queens and Queenship*; Palgrave Macmillan's Queenship and Power book series; the Spanish Government-funded research project MUNARQAS; the international research project "Examining the Resources and Revenues of Royal Women in Premodern Europe"; and the international academic research network *Royal Studies Network* and its affiliated annual conference *Kings and Queens* and journal *Royal Studies Journal*.

**8** Earenfight, "Without the Persona of the Prince"; Earenfight, "Medieval Queenship"; Krause, *Beyond Women and Power*; Earenfight, *Queenship in Medieval Europe*; Woodacre, *Companion to Global Queenship*; Silleras-Fernandez, "Reginalidad y Metanarrativa."

**9** Earenfight, "Without the Persona of the Prince"; *Queenship in Medieval Europe*; Woodacre, *Companion to Global Queenship*; Silleras-Fernandez, "Reginalidad y Metanarrativa"; Waag, "Medieval Royal Rulership."

queens who were such by right of their marriage to the king—they are far more numerous. But consorts exercised royal power delegated to them from their spouse, while proprietary queens exercised inherited power, and were in fact the ones to delegate royal power to their husbands. Even those proprietary queens who do not *appear* to have exercised royal power undeniably delegated it to their husbands and were key in legitimizing these men's ability to exercise power effectively. Consequently, the proprietary queen—even one who did not actively claim and assert her right to rule and wield power and authority—is an ideal subject to highlight the composite nature of medieval monarchy and manifold nature of medieval rulership. The proprietary queens of Jerusalem in particular present a unique opportunity to examine this composite and manifold nature of monarchy and rulership. Not only did they rule within a short timeframe and largely in consecutive succession, but each of their respective experiences of rulership differed. Melisende, the first of the proprietary queens of Jerusalem, had the fullest experience of political participation, while each subsequent queen had a progressively diminished experience—to the point that the latter queens are chiefly viewed as mere transmitters of royal power who rarely if ever exercised it themselves. Yet, as blood heirs to the Jerusalemite throne, they retained the (real) power that came from the line of succession, even when their husbands governed their kingdom.<sup>10</sup> This is evident when the corpus of surviving royal charters and documents of the kingdom is examined and the presence of the queens of Jerusalem within them analysed.

The present study aims to do just that. First, it provides a brief biography and overview of the political participation and documentary presence of each queen in turn, outlining how they identified and were identified as rulers within their documents. Building on this and making use of the methodological techniques of social diplomatics, it presents a comparative and systematic analysis of these queens' surviving documents.<sup>11</sup> This methodological approach allows for close examination of the use of consent

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**10** Bassett, "Regnant Queenship."

**11** The discipline of diplomatics, originally developed as a method of authentication of official documents or *acta*, is now also used as a method of analytical-descriptive textual criticism; it understands *acta* as social phenomena which can be used in the study of political, cultural, and ideological history. Social diplomatics, more specifically, is a method for textual criticism that allows for the identification of recurring themes and motifs within documents, and that seeks to do so by reintegrating documents into the interactions of which they were originally a part; Waag, "Forms and Formalities," 30–33. See also d'Avray, *Papacy, Monarchy, and Marriage*, 220–24. For more on Crusader charters and diplomatics, see Kölzer,

clauses within these queens' own documents and those of their spouses, and for the identification of shifts in documentary practice and production throughout their respective reigns. Examination shows that while the active political participation and visibility of the proprietary queens of Jerusalem may have diminished over the course of a century, they nonetheless retained and exercised royal power and authority within their kingdoms, even when their husbands were its chief governors and administrators. Thus, this study offers an exploratory survey of how the rulership of the proprietary queens of Jerusalem was articulated within solemn royal documents, and presents initial observations on what their overall documentary presence reveals about the power of these queens, of royal power dynamics within the kingdom, and how these changed over time, particularly following the loss of Jerusalem in 1187 and the reigns of four sequential proprietary queens between 1186 and 1228.

## Sources and Methodology

A wide range of sources documenting the Crusades and the Latin East have survived, written or produced by a diverse range of authors and makers.<sup>12</sup> While the queens of Jerusalem—and women more broadly—are rarely at the centre of these sources, it is possible to unpick elements of their life experiences and political careers from them. Historiographical attention is unbalanced in relation to the five queens. Melisende has received considerable scholarly attention, both individually and together with her husband Fulk of Anjou (d. 1143) and their sons.<sup>13</sup> More recently, attention has broadened to include Sibylla, as well as the five queens as a collective.<sup>14</sup> However, Isabella I, Maria, and Isabella II as individual rulers remain largely over-

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“Diplomatics”; Bull, “Diplomatic of the First Crusade”; Constable, “Medieval Charters”; Boyle, “Diplomatics.”

**12** Hamilton, *Leper King and His Heirs*, 6–22.

**13** Mayer, “Studies in the History of Queen Melisende”; “Succession of Balwin II”; “Angevins versus Normans”; “Wheel of Fortune”; Folda, “Images of Queen Melisende”; “Melisende of Jerusalem”; Gerish, “Ancestors and Predecessors”; “Royal Daughters of Jerusalem”; Gaudette, “Spending Power”; Lambert, “Images of Queen Melisende”; Murray, “Baldwin II and his Nobles”; Jordan, “Corporate Monarchy”; Park, “Wax Kings”; Park, “Memorialisation of Queen Melisende.”

**14** On Sibylla, see Nicholson, “La roine”; “Queen Sybil”; *Sybil*. On the queens of Jerusalem collectively, see Hamilton, “Women in the Crusader States”; “King Consorts”; Lambert, “Queen or Consort”; Hodgson, *Women, Crusading, and the Holy Land*; Murray, “Royal Succession”; Bassett, “Regnant Queenship”; Pagonis, *Queens of*

looked, simply appearing in studies of their spouses.<sup>15</sup> The lack of attention to these three queens in modern scholarship reflects their presence in contemporary sources, particularly narrative and documentary.<sup>16</sup>

Though a considerable body of charter evidence from the Latin East is known, this represents only a part of what was produced within the Crusader States over the course of their two-hundred-year existence, as no royal or princely archive has survived.<sup>17</sup> The documents examined for this study have been collected primarily from Hans E. Mayer's magisterial *Die Urkunden der lateinischen Könige von Jerusalem*, as well as from J. Delaville Le Roulx's *Cartulaire général de l'Ordre des Hospitaliers de S. Jean de Jérusalem 1100–1310*.<sup>18</sup> As seen in Table 6.1, a variety of documents produced within the Jerusalemite chancery have survived. I have categorized them in the following manner: "ego" documents, in which the named queen is the primary or sole issuer, and in which her *intitulatio* (that is, her name and title) is introduced by the pronoun "ego"; "et" documents, in which the named queen issues a charter together with her spouse or son, and in which their *intitulationes* are connected by the conjunction "et"; and "consent" documents, which state the named queen's consent to the issuer's actions, often in the form "assensu et voluntate domne [name] uxoris mee." "Other" refers to documents which have been lost, as well as those issued by others either in a queen's presence or acknowledging donations, confirmations, and sales by a queen for which the charter evidence no longer survives. A total of seventy-eight documents issued either individually or jointly by the queens of Jerusalem have been

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*Jerusalem*. Beyond these studies, the reigns of all five queens are also discussed, to varying degrees, within broader Crusades scholarship.

**15** Abulafia, *Frederick II*; Jacoby, "Conrad Marquis of Montferrat"; Perry, *John of Brienne*; "Isabella II or Yolanda?"; Stürner, "Friedrich II. als König von Jerusalem"; Gilchrist, "Conrad"; Donnachie, "Predicaments of Aimery of Lusignan."

**16** William of Tyre's *History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea* is an invaluable source for studying Melisende's reign and Sibylla's early life. Later chronicles provide some insight into the lives and reigns of Sibylla, Isabella I, Maria, and Isabella II. See Edbury and Rowe, *William of Tyre*.

**17** Hamilton, *Leper King and His Heirs*, 13–15. See also Mayer, *Die Kanzlei*; and Mayer and Sode, *Die Siegel*.

**18** *Cartulaire general de l'ordre des Hospitaliers*, ed. Delaville Le Roulx; and Mayer, *Die Urkunden der lateinischen Könige von Jerusalem*, henceforth *ULKJ*. All four volumes of *ULKJ*, and therefore all documents cited throughout this article, are accessible online: <https://www.dmgd.de/jerus.htm>, accessed August 18, 2023. Many of the documents cited are also cross-referenced and accessible online through the *Revised Regesta Regni Hierosolymitani Database*: <https://www.crusades-regesta.com/>, accessed August 18, 2023.

examined for this study, which includes placing them within the wider context of the queens' "other" documents, and those issued by their fellow Jerusalemite rulers (co-rulers, predecessors, regents, or successors). The initial findings offered in this article must be understood within the context of the source material used, which is comprehensive but not exhaustive.

Table 6.1. Documentary Presence of the Proprietary Queens of Jerusalem.

Doc. type / Queen	Melisende	Sibylla	Isabella I	Maria	Isabella II
"ego" documents	10	4	0	0	1
"et" documents	3	6	5	2	0
"consent" documents	15	7	16	1	2
Forgeries	1	2	3	–	–
Total surviving	29	19	24	3	3
Other: lost; reference	40	11	11	9	7
Total doc. presence	69	30	35	12	10

### Documentary Presence: Personal and Political Identity

While it is agreed that women could succeed to the Jerusalemite throne, there remains contention regarding the role of these proprietary queens within the government of their kingdom. Contemporary chronicles depict their husbands ruling the kingdom, with the queens themselves appearing only occasionally, often to convey pointed examples of feminine behaviour.<sup>19</sup> Documentary evidence can provide more insight into the political role of these women, though their relatively limited documentary presence has been interpreted as further evidence of their distance from government. As a result, these queens are often identified as mere transmitters of royal power who held and exercised little to no power. This is particularly the case for Isabella I, Maria, and Isabella II. However, as has already been noted, monarchy should not be conceived of as the rule of one man, but rather as a familial institution within which members played complementary roles. Even if these roles were unequal, they were never irrelevant—more so when a king ruled by right of his wife. Thus, while the proprietary queens of Jerusalem did not all exercise power in similar ways, and indeed some of them exercised limited power, all five of them occupied essential positions

<sup>19</sup> Lambert, "Queen or Consort"; Hodgson, *Women, Crusading, and the Holy Land*, especially 44–52; Buck, "William of Tyre"; Park, "Wax Kings."

within the government of their kingdom. This is evident when their documentary presence is examined and analysed.

### **Melisende of Jerusalem (r. 1131–1153)**

Born ca. 1105/09, Melisende was the eldest of four daughters born to Baldwin II of Jerusalem and his wife Morphia of Melitene.<sup>20</sup> Due to a lack of sons, Baldwin II designated Melisende as his heir and married her to Fulk V, count of Anjou, in 1129. There is some debate over what role Baldwin II initially promised Fulk, but on his deathbed he designated Fulk, Melisende, and their infant son (the future Baldwin III) as co-rulers.<sup>21</sup> Once on the throne, Fulk both excluded Melisende from power and actively favoured his Angevin men at the expense of the native barons—an untenable situation which soon led to a revolt in 1234. While the revolt ultimately failed, it produced tangible change: in the aftermath, Melisende took a prominent role in government, as demonstrated by her consistent presence within royal charters thereafter. At Fulk's death in 1143, Melisende assumed full control of the realm and exercised sole rulership as co-ruler alongside the thirteen-year-old Baldwin III. By 1150, Baldwin began to challenge his mother for sole rulership, and open conflict erupted in 1152. Baldwin ultimately succeeded in ousting his mother from power, though Melisende remained a presence at his court and within his government until her death in 1161.

Melisende's extensive participation in royal government is attested by her surviving documentary corpus. She first appears in her father's charters, as heir to the throne: twice alone, and once together with Fulk.<sup>22</sup> Though absent from Fulk's earlier charters, Melisende is present in all five of his surviving charters issued following their reconciliation; these consist of both "et" and "consent" documents.<sup>23</sup> Melisende is also present in a sixth charter

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**20** What follows is a very brief overview of Melisende's life and reign. For more detailed studies, see Hamilton, "Women in the Crusader States"; *Leper King and His Heirs*; Mayer, "Queen Melisende"; "Angevins versus Normans"; "Wheel of Fortune"; Lambert, "Queen or Consort"; Gerish, "Royal Daughters of Jerusalem"; Folda, "Images of Queen Melisende"; "Melisende of Jerusalem"; Hodgson, *Women, Crusading, and the Holy Land*; Tranovich, *Melisende of Jerusalem*; Gaudette, "Spending Power"; Murray, "Women in the Royal Succession"; Jordan, "Corporate Monarchy"; Basset, "Regnant Queenship"; Donnachie, "Male Consorts"; Maraszak, "Mélisende"; Waag, "Proprietary Queen."

**21** See especially Mayer, "Queen Melisende"; Hamilton, "Women in the Crusader States"; Jordan, "Corporate Monarchy."

**22** *ULKJ*, docs. 105/153, 109/153a, and 124/155.

**23** *ULKJ*, docs. 135/159, 138/160, 139/161, 141/162, and 146/166.

which Mayer has identified as a later forgery.<sup>24</sup> In a further nine documents now lost, she is supposedly present in three, and a fourth records a summons Fulk made at her request.<sup>25</sup> Melisende's visibility increased following Fulk's death. Nine "ego" documents issued in her name alone between 1149 and 1160 have survived. In these, her *intitulatio* reads "ego Melisendis dei gratia Ierosolimorum regina" or a variation thereof.<sup>26</sup> Three were issued with Baldwin's consent;<sup>27</sup> two with both Baldwin and Amalric's consent, the second of which was also issued with the counsel and approval of her barons;<sup>28</sup> one was issued with the approval of her barons;<sup>29</sup> and a last one was issued at her sons' request, as well as that of Hugh of Ibelin, his brothers, and the patriarch of Antioch.<sup>30</sup> A tenth "ego" document survives, a charter co-issued in 1147 with both her sons.<sup>31</sup> Beyond these "ego" documents, Melisende is present in a further twelve charters issued between 1143 and 1159 in Baldwin III's name, either together with her or with her consent or counsel (and occasionally that of Amalric as well).<sup>32</sup> In these documents, Melisende is generally identified as "Milisendis regina mater mea." These twelve documents represent almost half of Baldwin's twenty-six surviving charters, and notably just six of them were issued in the early years of Melisende's co-reign, while the remaining six were issued in the aftermath of their dispute and reconciliation. Mayer identified an additional twenty documents, now lost, issued in Baldwin's name, of which just two are "et/consent" documents issued together with Melisende.

Much like all medieval European rulers both male and female, and like her father, husband, and sons, Melisende used her full title in her own documents, presenting herself as "Melisende, by the grace of God queen of Jerusalem." This title also appeared in her seal, the obverse legend of which was

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**24** *ULKJ*, doc. 132/157.

**25** *ULKJ*, docs. 133-34, 136, 140, 147-51.

**26** *ULKJ*, docs. 175/218, 177/220/275, 178/276, 179/277, 180, 184/225/278, 188/239/288, 194/247/299, and 196/250.

**27** *ULKJ*, docs. 175/218, 194/2474/299, and 196/250.

**28** *ULKJ*, docs. 177/220/275 and 184/225/278.

**29** *ULKJ*, doc.178.

**30** *ULKJ*, doc. 188/239/288.

**31** *ULKJ*, doc. 173/216.

**32** *ULKJ*, docs. 169/212, 170/213, 171/214, 215-16, 232, 236, 241-42, 244, and 248.

“SIGILLVM MILESENDIS DEI GRATIA IERVSALE REGINE.”<sup>33</sup> In her father’s documents, she is consistently identified as his daughter (“*filia regis*” and “*filia mea*”), while Fulk always identified her as “queen” and “wife” (“*Milisendis regine uxoris mee*”), and both Baldwin III and Amalric identified her as “queen” and “mother” (“*mater mea Milisendis regina*”). In those documents issued by others which record Melisende’s presence, consent, or request, either alone or with her husband or son(s), she is generally identified as “*domne regine Melissendis*” and in similar style to her spouse or son. This pattern is reflected in documents issued by her descendants: in 1178, Baldwin IV identified Melisende as “*domne [avie] mee Milissendis inclite Ierosolimorum regine*,” while in 1185 Baldwin V identified her as “*proavia mea regina Melisendis*.”<sup>34</sup> Evidently, Melisende was widely and consistently identified as queen of Jerusalem, be that by her husband, her sons, her descendants, or her subjects.

### Sibylla of Jerusalem (r. 1186–1190)

Born ca. 1157/61, Sibylla was the eldest child and daughter of Amalric I of Jerusalem and his first wife Agnes of Courtenay, and Melisende’s granddaughter.<sup>35</sup> Her younger brother Baldwin IV’s leprosy meant that her marriage was an important political matter. Sibylla was first married to William of Montferrat, and together they were given the county of Jaffa and Ascalon, but he died within months of their 1176 marriage; soon thereafter, Sibylla gave birth to their son, the future Baldwin V. In 1180 Sibylla was (hastily) married to Guy of Lusignan, and the couple soon began to take a role in Baldwin’s government, giving their consent in a number of his charters. In 1183 Baldwin IV made Guy regent of the kingdom but relieved him of the role within months, and shortly thereafter had his nephew crowned king and co-ruler as Baldwin V. There is debate over the cause of this abrupt turn of events, but what is clear is that Baldwin IV sought to block Guy and Sibylla from government.<sup>36</sup> Baldwin IV died in March 1185 and was soon followed

**33** For more on Melisende’s seal, see Mayer, *Die Siegel*, 92–94.

**34** *ULKJ*, docs. 405 and 453 respectively.

**35** What follows is a very brief overview of Sibylla’s life and reign. For more detailed studies, see Hamilton, “Women in the Crusader States”; “King Consorts”; *Lepor King and His Heirs*; Lambert, “Queen or Consort”; Hodgson, *Women, Crusading, and the Holy Land*; Woodacre, “Questionable Authority”; Murray, “Women in the Royal Succession”; Donnachie, “Crown and Baronage”; “Male Consorts”; Basset, “Regnant Queenship”; Theis, “Herrschaftsrecht und Herrschaftspraxis”; Nicholson, *Sibyl*.

**36** Edbury, “Propaganda and Faction,” 182–83; Hamilton, *Lepor King and His Heirs*,

by Baldwin V, who died in August 1186. Though Sibylla's claim was initially challenged by that of her half-sister Isabella, she quickly secured the throne. However, her supporters did not all agree that Guy should become king, and forced her to set him aside. Sibylla relented, on condition that she be allowed to choose her next husband. On her coronation day, she famously outwitted them when, following her own coronation, she chose Guy as her consort. Sibylla's reign was brief and tumultuous: within ten months of her and Guy's coronation, the Jerusalemite army suffered a crushing defeat at the Battle of Hattin (July 4, 1187). Just three months later, Saladin conquered Jerusalem—an event which sparked the Third Crusade (1189–1192). Sibylla died, together with her and Guy's two daughters, on July 25, 1190, during the siege of Acre.

Sibylla's short life and brief reign is reflected in her small surviving documentary corpus. Still, enough documents survive to give some insight into her participation in royal government. Sibylla's earliest documentary appearance is as countess of Jaffa and Ascalon, a fief which was largely associated with the heir to the throne. Between 1177 and 1180 she issued three "ego" documents as (widowed) countess.<sup>37</sup> More importantly, she is present in several of her brother Baldwin IV's charters, giving consent to his actions: once alone, then together with Guy following their marriage.<sup>38</sup> No documents issued by Sibylla's first husband as count have survived, though we know of at least one donation he made with her consent.<sup>39</sup> Just one document issued by Guy together with Sibylla has survived;<sup>40</sup> a further two joint charters have been lost, as has a third charter issued by Guy with both Sibylla and Baldwin IV's consent.<sup>41</sup> No "ego" documents issued by Sibylla as queen of Jerusalem have survived. When she crowned Guy, she seemingly transferred her authority and power to him; her lack of surviving "ego" documents would suggest that Guy took over government of the kingdom on his own.<sup>42</sup> Yet there was little doubt that he wielded royal power and governed the kingdom solely by right of his wife. This is reflected in surviving royal charters. Guy issued the majority of his charters as king jointly with his wife:

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188–98; Nicholson, *Sibyl*, 82–87 and 101–3.

**37** *ULKJ*, docs. 493, 496, and 501.

**38** *ULKJ*, docs. 413/498, 424/457/504, 430/462/505, and 437/466/506.

**39** *ULKJ*, doc. 448/492.

**40** *ULKJ*, doc. 470/507.

**41** *ULKJ*, docs. 457/502, 471/508, and 459/503 respectively.

**42** Nicholson, *Sibyl*, 124.

two “consent” documents in 1186 and five “et” documents in 1189–1190.<sup>43</sup> Mayer has identified an additional two “et” documents issued in Sibylla and Guy’s names as forgeries.<sup>44</sup> Given Sibylla’s documentary production as countess, it is interesting to consider what her surviving corpus might have looked like had Jerusalem not been lost, her kingdom greatly reduced, and her reign cut short by her early death.

Because no “ego” documents survive from Sibylla’s reign, we do not know for certain how she chose to entitle herself as queen. The closest we can get is a letter she sent to Frederick I in which her *intitulatio* reads, “Sibylla, Regina quondam Hierosolymitana.”<sup>45</sup> But this is not the *intitulatio* she would have used prior to the loss of Jerusalem. Sibylla’s *intitulationes* in her “ego” documents issued as countess of Jaffa and Ascalon might give a better idea: the first reads “Sibilla egregii Amalrici regis Iherusalem filia Dei gratia Ioppes et Ascalonis comitissa,” the second “ego Sibilla comitissa Ioppe et Ascalone,” and the third “ego Sybilla dei gratia Ioppes et Ascalonis commitisse.”<sup>46</sup> Like Melisende, it is likely Sibylla would have used “dei gratia” in her royal *intitulatio*. It is less clear if she would have emphasized her status as Amalric’s daughter: though this identification only appears in the first of her three surviving “ego” documents, the legend of the seal she used as countess reads “SIGILLVM AMAL. REGIS FILIE” on the obverse, and “IOPP. ET ASCALE COMITISSA” on the reverse.<sup>47</sup> In Guy’s documents she is consistently identified as “domne Sibille uxoris mee, eiusdem regni venerabilis regina.” No documents issued by others recording Sibylla’s presence, consent, or request as queen of Jerusalem can be found in the source material used for this article, meaning that it is not possible to draw conclusions regarding how she was identified as queen of Jerusalem by her contemporaries.<sup>48</sup>

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**43** *ULKJ*, docs. 473/510, 474/511 (consent), and 476/512, 477/513, 478/514, 479/515, 480/516 (“et” documents).

**44** *ULKJ*, docs. 472/509 and 518/482.

**45** *Regesta Regni Hierosolymitani*, ed. Röhrich, doc. 681. On questions regarding the letter’s authenticity, see Neocleous, “Byzantines and Saladin,” 94–96.

**46** *ULKJ*, docs. 493, 496, and 501.

**47** Mayer, *Die Siegel*, 151–53.

**48** Such documents survive from when Sibylla was countess. See *ULKJ*, docs. 449 and 495.

## Isabella I of Jerusalem (r. 1190/92–1205)

Born in 1172, Isabella was the youngest daughter of Amalric I of Jerusalem and his second wife Maria Komnene, and Sibylla's half-sister (and also Melisende's granddaughter).<sup>49</sup> Amalric died just two years after her birth, and was succeeded by Baldwin IV, whose ascension saw the return of his mother Agnes to court and the rise of the Courtenay family. Maria and Isabella withdrew to Nablus, Maria's dower-fief, and three years later Maria married Balian of Ibelin.<sup>50</sup> A marked factionalism between the native baronage emerged during Baldwin's reign, with the Courtenays and Lusignans on one side and Maria Komnene and the Ibelins on the other.<sup>51</sup> It is within this factionalism that in 1180 Isabella, aged just eight, was betrothed to Humphrey IV of Toron, the stepson of one of Baldwin's strongest supporters and a later supporter of Guy of Lusignan; they were married in 1183 at Kerak castle. In the aftermath of Sibylla's death, Guy tried to cling to his kingship. But, as Amalric's last surviving child, Isabella was the rightful ruler, and the Ibelins sought to secure her position as queen. However, there was little support for Humphrey as her consort—the Jerusalemite barons preferred Conrad of Montferrat. Isabella's marriage to Humphrey was declared invalid, due to her being under the canonical age of consent at the time it took place, and Isabella was persuaded to set Humphrey aside and marry Conrad. The couple were married in November 1190, and in 1192 Conrad was unanimously elected by the Crusader army as king of Jerusalem. Just days later Conrad was assassinated, leaving behind a pregnant Isabella. Faced with the need for a new king at a tumultuous time, Isabella—still pregnant—was hastily married to Henry II, count of Champagne. Later that year, Isabella gave birth to Conrad's posthumous daughter Maria, and went on to have three daughters with Henry—Marguerite, Alice, and Philippa—before his death in 1197. Isabella was once again swiftly remarried, this time to Aimery I, king of Cyprus and Guy de Lusignan's brother.<sup>52</sup> It is together with Aimery

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**49** What follows is a very brief overview of Isabella's life and reign. For more detailed studies, see Hamilton, "Women in the Crusader States"; "King Consorts"; *Leper King and His Heirs*; Jacoby, "Conrad Marquis of Montferrat"; Hodgson, *Women, Crusading, and the Holy Land*; Murray, "Women in the Royal Succession"; Donnachie, "Crown and Baronage"; "Male Consorts"; Basset, "Regnant Queenship"; Nicholson, *Sibyl*.

**50** Hamilton, "Women in the Crusader States," 163.

**51** On the topic of factionalism, see Jacoby, "Conrad Marquis of Montferrat"; Edbury, "Propaganda and Faction"; Hamilton, *Leper King and His Heirs*; Donnachie, "Crown and Baronage."

**52** In the aftermath of Conrad of Montferrat's election as king of Jerusalem in 1192,

that Isabella was finally crowned queen of Jerusalem in January 1198. Isabella and Aimery had three children together: two daughters, Sibylla and Melisende, and a son, Amalric, who predeceased his parents. Aimery died on April 1, and Isabella just days later on April 5, 1205.

Like Sibylla, no “ego” documents issued by Isabella as queen of Jerusalem have survived. Indeed, it is unclear if she ever issued any. Nonetheless, Isabella is an unfailing presence within her husbands’ surviving documents. Just three charters issued by Conrad as king of Jerusalem survive, and Isabella is present in all three: one is an “et” document, while two are “consent” documents.<sup>53</sup> However, Mayer has identified two now-lost documents from his reign in which Conrad acts alone.<sup>54</sup> Thirteen charters have survived from Henry’s reign, and Isabella gives her consent to his actions in all but one.<sup>55</sup> As for Conrad, Mayer has identified several now-lost documents from Henry’s reign: two additional “consent” documents and three issued solely in Henry’s name;<sup>56</sup> Mayer has also identified two forgeries, including one issued with Isabella’s consent.<sup>57</sup> Lastly, six charters issued during Aimery’s reign have survived, all of which record Isabella’s presence: three are “et” documents and three are “consent” documents.<sup>58</sup> Mayer has identified an additional six now-lost documents: four “et” documents, one “consent” document, and just one issued individually by Aimery.<sup>59</sup> Mayer has also identified two forgeries, both documents issued with Isabella’s consent.<sup>60</sup>

It is difficult to determine, let alone reconstruct, how Isabella chose to entitle herself as queen: no “ego” documents have survived, and no seal is known for her.<sup>61</sup> It is possible, however, to determine her political identity by how her husbands and contemporaries identified her, and that was chiefly as Amalric’s daughter. In both Conrad and Henry’s documents, she is con-

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Guy had purchased the island of Cyprus from Richard I of England and ruled as king until his death in 1194. He was succeeded by his brother Aimery.

**53** *ULKJ*, docs. 529–30/536–37 and 533/538.

**54** *ULKJ*, docs. 531 and 532.

**55** *ULKJ*, docs. 539/568, 541–44/570–73, 546–51/575–80, and 552/582.

**56** *ULKJ*, docs. 545/574 and 553/583 (with Isabella) and 584, 586–87 (individually).

**57** *ULKJ*, docs. 540/569 and 585.

**58** *ULKJ*, docs. 555–57/610–12, 559/614, and 563–64/620–21.

**59** *ULKJ*, docs. 560/615, 562/617, and 566–67/624–25 (“et”), 561/616 (consent), and 619 (solo).

**60** *ULKJ*, docs. 554/609 and 558/613.

**61** Mayer, *Die Siegel*, 157.

sistently identified as “domne Ysabelle uxoris mee, illustris quondam regis Amalrici filie.” This changes in Aimery’s documents, in which he regularly identifies her as “domna Ysabelle uxoris mee, venerabilis regine, quondam illustris regis Amalrici filie.” It is curious that Isabella was only explicitly identified as “queen” following her and Aimery’s coronation. While this is in line with the fact that neither Conrad nor Henry identified themselves as “king,” it is at odds with the fact that Isabella was the hereditary and proprietary queen of Jerusalem since 1190. Isabella’s explicit association with her father has been interpreted as a means by which her husbands associated themselves with Amalric’s unquestionable legitimacy as ruler, particularly given the clouds of illegitimacy surrounding Isabella’s husbands following the annulment of her marriage to Humphrey.<sup>62</sup> However, this political identity can be found in documents issued both before Isabella’s ascension and after her death. A document issued in 1180 by Raynald of Châtillon, Humphrey’s stepfather, records Isabella’s consent to the donation and identifies her as “Elisabet filie regis Ierusalem.”<sup>63</sup> In a 1206 marriage agreement for her daughter Maria, Isabella is identified as “domne quondam Isabelle regine, filie bone recordationis Amalrici regis Ierosolimitani.”<sup>64</sup> Isabella’s husbands undoubtedly used her status as Amalric’s daughter to further legitimize their own kingship. But the centrality of this status to her political identity can perhaps also be understood as a by-product of her convoluted relationship to her immediate royal predecessors—her succession was not a simple vertical one, but a complicated horizontal one. Here it is worth recalling that Sibylla similarly referenced her status as Amalric’s daughter in her comital seal and documents when she was her brother’s heir apparent.

### **Maria of Montferrat (r. 1205–1212)**

Born in 1192, Maria was the only child of Isabella I and her second husband Conrad of Montferrat, and Isabella’s eldest child and daughter.<sup>65</sup> Little is known about Maria’s brief life and reign. She ascended the throne in 1205 at the age of thirteen, and her mother’s half-brother John of Ibelin was

<sup>62</sup> Hamilton, “King Consorts”; *Leper King and His Heirs*; Donnachie, “Male Consorts.”

<sup>63</sup> *ULKJ*, doc. 534.

<sup>64</sup> *ULKJ*, doc. 645.

<sup>65</sup> What follows is a very brief overview of Maria’s life and reign. See Hamilton, “King Consorts”; Haberstumpf, “Maria di Montferrato”; Edbury, *John of Ibelin*; Hodgson, *Women, Crusading, and the Holy Land*; Perry, *John of Brienne*; Murray, “Women in the Royal Succession”; Donnachie, “Crown and Baronage”; “Male Consorts”; Basset, “Regnant Queenship.”

appointed her regent. From her ascension, the High Court sought to find Maria a husband. The first candidate considered was Peter II of Aragon,<sup>66</sup> though the regency government ultimately settled on John of Brienne.<sup>67</sup> John arrived in the Latin East in 1210 and promptly married Maria; a month later the two were crowned and anointed king and queen of Jerusalem. In 1212 Maria gave birth to their daughter Isabella, and died shortly thereafter at the age of just 19 or 20. Maria's life and reign were both short, and this is reflected in her documentary presence. Just three surviving charters bear her name: the document recording the marriage agreement with Peter II of Aragon, a "consent" document issued by her uncle and regent, and an "et" document issued together with her husband.<sup>68</sup> Mayer has identified further documents bearing Maria's name: two lost documents issued by John of Brienne—one "consent" document and one "et" document—as well as a forged "consent" document.<sup>69</sup> An additional lost document issued by Philippe of Ibelin records Maria and John of Ibelin's consent.<sup>70</sup> Just one document issued individually by John of Brienne has survived from 1210–1212, but as we do not know Maria's exact date of death, it is unclear if John issued this 1212 document during her lifetime or after her death.

As for her mother, it is difficult to determine or reconstruct how Maria might have entitled herself, as no "ego" documents in her name have survived and no seal for her is known.<sup>71</sup> Those documents that do survive show she was associated with both her kingdom and her parents. In the document issued by John of Ibelin, Maria is identified as "domne Marie regni honorabilis domne," while in the marriage agreement with Peter II she is identified as "illuxtris puella Maria filia bone memorie Conradi marchionis et domne quondam Isabelle regine, filie bone recordationis Amalrici regis Ierosolimitani." In her sole surviving document issued with her husband, John of Brienne identifies her as "domna Maria uxor mea, illustris regina"; in the forged document issued in her and her husband's name she appears as "domne Marie inclite regine." There are parallels here with her mother Isabella: despite succeeding her at the age of thirteen, Maria seems only to have

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**66** See *ULKJ*, doc. 645 for terms of the marriage agreement between Peter II and Maria of Montferrat.

**67** Perry, *John of Brienne*, 40–48.

**68** *ULKJ*, docs. 645/773, 644/772, and 626/647, respectively.

**69** *ULKJ*, docs. 627–28/648–49 and 629/650 respectively.

**70** *ULKJ*, doc. 646.

**71** Mayer, *Die Siegel*, 174.

been recognized as queen of Jerusalem following her coronation in 1210. Prior to that she was simply “the honourable lady of the kingdom.”

### **Isabella II of Jerusalem (r. 1212–1228)**

Born in 1212, Isabella was the only child of Maria of Montferrat and John of Brienne.<sup>72</sup> Like her mother, little is known of her short life and reign. When she was nine or ten, her father resolved to journey to the West both to appeal directly to rulers there for support for the kingdom and to arrange Isabella’s marriage.<sup>73</sup> Two years later, in 1223, she was betrothed to Frederick II, Holy Roman Emperor, and in 1225, at the age of twelve or thirteen, Isabella married Frederick via proxy in Acre, was crowned queen of Jerusalem in Tyre, and set sail to Italy. On November 9, 1225, Isabella and Frederick were married at Brindisi, and it seems that Frederick soon placed her in seclusion at the imperial palace in Palermo. Isabella died on 4 May 1228, nine days after giving birth to her son Conrad, aged just sixteen. Her documentary presence is, like her mother’s, limited. Just three charters bearing Isabella’s name have survived: one “ego” document and two “consent” documents, one issued by her father and another by her husband.<sup>74</sup> Still, these documents allow a glimpse of Isabella’s political identity. Like Melisende (and all rulers), Isabella used her full title in her sole surviving “ego” document: “Ysabella dei gratia Romanorum imperatrix semper augusta, Ierusalem et Sicilie regina.” This is echoed in Frederick’s accompanying charter, in which Isabella is identified as “consortis nostre Isabelle Romanorum imperatricis semper auguste, Ierusalem et Sicilie regine.”<sup>75</sup> It was likely also echoed in her seal, which has not survived but is referenced in the validation clause of her “ego” document.<sup>76</sup> In her father’s charter, Isabella gives her consent simply as “Ysabellis filie mee,” with no reference to her status as queen or even lady of the kingdom. This perhaps reflected John of Brienne’s insistence that he continued to rule as king, not regent, following Maria’s death.

**72** What follows is a very brief overview of Isabella II’s life and reign. See Hamilton, “King Consorts”; Hodgson, *Women, Crusading, and the Holy Land*; Perry, *John of Brienne*; Murray, “Women in the Royal Succession”; Donnachie, “Crown and Baronage”; “Male Consorts”; Basset, “Regnant Queenship.”

**73** Perry, *John of Brienne*, 119–20.

**74** *ULKJ*, docs. 652, 640/651, and 654, respectively.

**75** The two documents are connected: in doc. 654 Frederick makes a donation, and in doc. 652 Isabella announces her consent to his donation.

**76** Mayer, *Die Siegel*, 188–90.

## Articulating Female Royal Rulership

What exactly do the surviving documents of each proprietary queen of Jerusalem, and their broader documentary presence, tell us about their role within the government and administration of their kingdom? First, that there *was* a role for all five of these women. Second, that this role changed over time, and each queen's experience of rulership differed from that of her fellow proprietary queens. Undeniably, this change was one of diminished participation—but they continued to participate nonetheless. It is evident from the sheer volume of her surviving documentary presence, and the actions recorded within these documents, that Melisende's experience of rulership was unique. She issued the highest number of "ego" documents, and she is a consistent presence in her husband's and son's charters, as co-issuer, consentor, or advisor. She was explicitly recognized as heir to the throne and witnessed several of her father's charters as such. Later royal confirmations made by her successors and descendants attest to further actions for which the original documentation has not survived. Charters and documents issued by her (non-familial) contemporaries attest to her political actions not recorded in surviving royal charters: from donations made and/or confirmed by others in her presence to the sale or exchange of lands, buildings, or *casalia* (villages). Some of these actions were performed together with Fulk or Baldwin III, but others were done individually by Melisende. None of this can quite be said of her successors.

This is partially due to the comparative length of her life and reign. Melisende lived until the age of 52/56 and reigned for thirty years. In contrast, Sibylla died at the age of 29/33 and reigned for just four years, Isabella I died at 33 and reigned for thirteen to fifteen years, Maria died aged 20 and reigned for seven years (though she was a minor for five of these), and Isabella II died at the age of just 16 and, while she was queen her entire life, her minority only ended at her marriage three years before her death. Also relevant are pregnancies: Melisende gave birth once during her entire reign, whereas Isabella I did so at least seven times during hers, while Maria died in childbirth within two years of her marriage, and Isabella II gave birth twice in three years before also dying in childbirth; Sibylla had four daughters over the course of her ten-year second marriage, but because their births were not recorded it is unclear if any were born during her reign.<sup>77</sup> Pregnancy did not incapacitate medieval women, but a regular state of pregnancy and recovery from childbirth, including unrecorded pregnancies and

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<sup>77</sup> Nicholson, *Sibyl*, 95.

miscarriages, undoubtedly affected their routine participation in government. For both Maria and Isabella II, childbirth cut short their young lives and reigns.

However, the most significant factor explaining the uniqueness of Melisende's rulership was the loss of Jerusalem in 1187. In the aftermath, the kingdom found itself reduced in size and in a near-constant state of existential crisis. This, coupled with the successive ascension of four female rulers, fundamentally shifted the nature and characteristics of female rulership within the kingdom. Here, Sibylla's decision to transfer her royal power and authority to her husband doubtless set a precedent. Most contemporaries are clear: Sibylla chose Guy as her consort, and he only held the crown matrimonial.<sup>78</sup> Isabella was not afforded this same privilege. When she succeeded Sibylla and her first husband was found wanting, and when she was later (twice) widowed, the native barons and the High Court (and in the case of her second husband, the Fifth Crusader army) took it upon themselves to elect the next king, and legitimized him through marriage to the acknowledged proprietary queen of the kingdom. Isabella did not physically transfer her royal power and authority to her husbands in the manner Sibylla had when she allegedly crowned Guy—and neither did Isabella's successors. As a result, the nature of female royal rulership within the kingdom seemingly altered, from one of both active participation and legitimization of the king-consort to one of passive participation chiefly through legitimization of the king-consort. But while this undeniably denotes a change in how the proprietary queen participated politically, it did not diminish her importance, as evidenced by the persistent—and increased—use of the consent clause within royal charters, as well as the continued use of “et” documents.

Two shifts in documentary practice and production took place from Sibylla's reign onwards: the almost total disappearance of “ego” documents issued by the proprietary queens of Jerusalem and the consistent reference by the kings(-consort) of Jerusalem to their wives' assent to their actions. The consent clause, most commonly found in eleventh- and twelfth-century donation charters, was not unique to solemn royal documents of the kingdom of Jerusalem.<sup>79</sup> A cursory examination of Delaville's *Cartulaire* readily highlights its use in charters issued not just by the royal family in Jerusalem but by all the rulers of the Crusader States and ruling elites in Western

**78** Hamilton, “Women in the Crusader States,” 171.

**79** For more on the consent clause, also known as *laudation parentum*, in charters, see White, *Custom, Kinship, and Gifts*; Hudson, *Land, Law, and Lordship*, 173–207; Johns, *Noblewomen, Aristocracy, and Power*.

Europe.<sup>80</sup> However, its omnipresence in the surviving documents issued by the kings(-consort) suggests that it acquired a higher degree of importance within the kingdom of Jerusalem, likely due to its usefulness in articulating the political reality of a king who ultimately ruled by right of his wife. The first use of the consent clause in this manner can be dated to Melisende and Fulk's reign. In the aftermath of the 1134 baronial revolt, all Fulk's documents record Melisende's consent to his actions, and occasionally that of their son Baldwin.<sup>81</sup> Melisende's consent is worded slightly differently in each document, but the clause reads as variations of "ego Fulco dei gratia rex Ierusalem Latinorum tercius assensu et consilio uxoris mee Melisendis regine." However, the actions recorded in the charters are still solely Fulk's, as the verbs used are in the first-person singular (e.g. "dono," "concedo"), and in those documents with validation clauses only his seal is referenced: "et ut hec concessio firma et inconvulsa in perpetuum consistat, cartulam istam placuit regio sigillo meo munire et subscriptorum testium veridico testimonio corroborare." Thus, while it was still Fulk who exercised royal authority, there was a parallel recognition of the source of his claim to royal authority.

This dynamic changed slightly during Melisende and Baldwin's co-reign. Documents issued between 1143 and 1152 are "et" documents, issued by Baldwin *and* Melisende, whose actions are recorded jointly in the first-person plural (e.g. "concedimus," "confirmamus," "damus"). The validation clauses reference "sigilli nostri" or "nostro plumbeo sigillo," and while "seal" appears in the singular this construction is notably different from Baldwin and Melisende's "ego" and "consent" documents, which consistently use first-person singular verbs and refer to their respective seals as "sigilli mei." The plurality of action in these documents is made even more evident when compared with Baldwin's documents issued after he secured sole rulership in 1152. When Melisende appears in Baldwin's later documents, it is solely in the context of a consent clause—phrased differently in each instance, and with reference to either her consent or her counsel—while Baldwin's actions are recorded in the first-person singular and are solely validated by "sigilli mei." Presumably, as with Fulk, this allowed Baldwin to acknowledge

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**80** See, for example *Cartulaire general de l'ordre des Hospitaliers*, ed. Delaville Le Roulx, docs. 109, 137, 183, 199, 340, 417, 599, 603.

**81** *ULKJ*, docs. 135/159, 138/160, 139/161, 141/162, and 146/166.

Melisende as the (still living) originator of royal authority while exercising that authority himself.<sup>82</sup>

Consent clauses involving the king's wife disappear completely during Baldwin III and Amalric I's reigns—with just one exception, a document issued by Baldwin recording both his wife Theodora and his brother's consent to an agreement.<sup>83</sup> It is only during the reign of Baldwin IV that the consent clause returns, though slightly altered, as it is his sister's consent which is recorded. Due to his leprosy, Baldwin remained unmarried, and while Sibylla was not explicitly recognized as his heir, she was the heir presumptive. Her consent to several of Baldwin's charters, and later hers and Guy's joint consent, reflects this.<sup>84</sup> However, unlike in Fulk and Baldwin III's documents, Sibylla (and Guy's) consent was always phrased the same: “concessione et assensu [Guidonis, Joppe et Ascalone comitis, et] Sibille, sororis mee, Iop-pensis et Ascalonensis commitisse.”<sup>85</sup> A slightly altered consent clause was also used during Baldwin V's very short reign: three of his four surviving documents record actions he made with the consent of his regency government, with the clause reading: “ego Balduinus...concedo et confirmo assensu et voluntate Raimundi comitis Tripolis et totius regni mei procuratoris.”<sup>86</sup> Sibylla and Guy's ascension to the throne in 1186 saw the return of spousal consent. Guy's only two surviving charters from before the fall of Jerusalem are issued by “Guy, per dei gratiam in sancta civitate Ierusalem Latinorum rex octavus assensu et voluntate domne Sibille uxoris mee, eiusdem regni venerabili regine”; the verbs used are in the first-person singular (“[dono] concedo et confirmo”) and the validation clauses make reference only to

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**82** There are some parallels here with the joint reign of Berenguela of Castile (r. 1217–46) and her son Fernando III of Castile (r. 1217–52). Following her own ascension as proprietary queen of Castile, Berenguela elevated her son as king of Castile, an act widely (though erroneously) interpreted as an abdication. From his very first diploma, and until Berenguela's death, Fernando stated that he acted with the “agreement and approval” of his mother (“ex assensu et beneplacito regine domine Berengarie, genitricis mee”). This phrasing is unique to Fernando's diplomas and to referencing his mother's consent: while he frequently references his brother, wives, and children in his *privilegios rodados*, the phrasing is markedly different (he records his actions “together with” them) and is always a separate clause to Berenguela's. For more on this, see Bianchini, *Queen's Hand*, 140–45.

**83** *ULKJ*, doc. 254.

**84** Two charters (one now lost) record Baldwin IV and Sibylla's consent to donations made by others. *ULKJ*, docs. 396 and 419.

**85** *ULKJ*, docs. 413/498, 424/504, 430/505, and 437/506.

**86** *ULKJ*, docs. 451–52 and 454.

“sigillo meo.”<sup>87</sup> However, the five surviving charters issued after the loss of Jerusalem are “et” documents, issued by “Guy...et domna Sibilla, sponsa mea, venerabilis regina.” They make use of first-person plural verbs (“donamus concedimus et confirmamus”) and the validation clauses reference “sigillo nostro.”<sup>88</sup> This plurality of action is also found in Sibylla and Guy’s only surviving document issued as counts of Jaffa and Ascalon.<sup>89</sup> Presumably the loss of Jerusalem produced the change from consent clause to “et” document.

Isabella I’s reign saw a dual use of both “et” documents and consent clauses. Like Guy, Conrad’s two surviving “et” documents use first-person plural verbs and reference “sigilli nostri” in the validation clause, while his singular document with a consent clause is issued in the first-person singular and references only “sigillo meo.”<sup>90</sup> All thirteen of Henry’s charters include consent clauses, twelve of which give Isabella’s consent; all but two of these documents include validation clauses, which solely reference “sigillo meo.” However, there are a couple of minor differences to consent-clause documents discussed previously. In two of them Isabella’s consent does not appear until later in the document, rather than immediately after Henry’s *intitulatio*, and the second of these makes use of the first-person plural immediately after Isabella’s consent clause, rather than first-person singular verbs as in the rest of Henry’s documents.<sup>91</sup> The consistent use of “consent” rather than “et” documents during Henry’s reign was presumably his personal preference, and suggests he saw himself as the primary ruler in his and Isabella’s partnership. That he could do so is testament to the king consort’s authority—that this preference did not become established practice is testament to that of the proprietary queen.

Isabella’s fourth husband, Aimery, made use of both “et” and “consent” documents: three of each survive. Like his predecessors, his “et” documents make use of first-person plural verbs and reference “sigillo nostro” in the validation clause. However, while all three “consent” documents use first-person singular verbs, the validation clause of two of them is plural, reading “presentem cartam sigillo nostro et testibus subscriptis precepimus com-

**87** ULKJ, docs. 473/510 and 474/511.

**88** ULKJ, docs. 476–80/512–16.

**89** ULKJ, doc. 470/507.

**90** ULKJ, docs. 529/536, 530/537, and 533/538, respectively. While document 530/537 is issued by Conrad and Isabella, it also records the consent of various Western rulers who participated in the Fifth Crusade, all of whom add their *signum* at the end of the document after Conrad’s own; however, Isabella’s does not appear.

**91** ULKJ, docs. 541/570 and 549/578, both granting exemptions to the Genoese.

muniri,” whereas the third uses the usual “sigillo meo.”<sup>92</sup> That Isabella’s consent in the third document appears later in the text, rather than immediately after Aimery’s *intitulatio* as in the first two, further marks this document as an outlier. Stephen Donnachie has argued that Aimery, more than any of Isabella’s spouses, sought to portray himself as a continuator of Isabella’s line, locating his kingship within her royal dynasty.<sup>93</sup> Perhaps Aimery’s insistence on referring to his royal seal as “sigillo nostro” rather than “meo” was a further manifestation of this portrayal. From Maria’s brief reign, just one jointly issued document survives: an “et” document with an *intitulatio* that reads “ego Iohannes per dei gratiam Ierusalem rex decimus et comes Brene et domna Maria uxor mea, illustris regina”; it makes use of first-person plural verbs (“concedimus et confirmamus”) and is validated by “sigillo nostro.”<sup>94</sup> Some years later, John issued a document with his daughter Isabella’s consent in which the *intitulatio* reads “ego Iohannes...laude et concessu Ysabelis filie mee”; like most consent clause documents, the verbs are in the first-person singular (“dono et concedo”) and the document is validated only by “sigilli mei.”<sup>95</sup> While most of John’s surviving documents are issued in his own name, there was evidently an expectation that he include his wife’s consent while she was alive and his daughter’s once she attained a certain age.

Isabella II’s consent was recorded in one of Frederick II’s only two surviving documents issued as king of Jerusalem during her lifetime.<sup>96</sup> However, this document is markedly different and clearly shows the influence of the imperial chancery, particularly the use of the royal “we.” While Frederick mentions Isabella in the document’s *exordium*, he does not state her consent until the *narratio*:

Una cum assensu nostre predictae consortis gratuito concedimus et perpetuo confirmamus eidem sacre domui, omnia privilegio et scripta quelibet, que tam a predecessoribus quam a parentibus predictae consortis nostre dicte domui pia fuerunt liberalitate concessa nex noninsuper castra casalia homines et possessions.<sup>97</sup>

Similar imperial characteristics can also be found in Isabella’s accompanying document, in which she confirmed her consent to Frederick’s charter. Most

<sup>92</sup> ULKJ, docs. 556/611, 564/621, and 563/620 respectively.

<sup>93</sup> Donnachie, “Predicaments of Aimery of Lusignan.”

<sup>94</sup> ULKJ, doc. 626/647.

<sup>95</sup> ULKJ, doc. 640/651.

<sup>96</sup> ULKJ, doc. 654.

<sup>97</sup> ULKJ, doc. 654.

striking is the dating clause, which reads: “Dat[um]...regnante domna nostra Ysabella dei gratia Romanorum imperatrice semper augusta, Ierusalem et Sicilie regina, imperii eius et utriusque regni Ierosolimitani et Sicilie anno primo, feliciter amen.”<sup>98</sup> Such dating clauses were not unknown within the Jerusalemite chancery, but they always referenced the king rather than the queen’s reign, with just one exception, a charter issued in 1146 “regnante feliciter supra dicto rege Balduino et matre sua regina Milisenda.”<sup>99</sup> It is more likely that the dating clause in Isabella’s charter reflected imperial chancery practice as opposed to a recall of Melisende’s reign—particularly as the charter in question concerned a donation made to the Teutonic Order, which was only founded in 1190.

Isabella and Frederick’s charters might be unique to their joint reign, but they are worth highlighting, especially considering that Frederick seemingly sought to isolate Isabella from the government of her kingdom. Isabella’s charter is the first surviving “ego” document of a queen since Melisende’s reign, and her authority as proprietary queen of Jerusalem is more emphatically stated in the dating clause than even Melisende’s, who only appears jointly with her son. Of course, Baldwin III had a hereditary claim to the kingdom that Frederick did not. Yet the dating clauses of Sicilian royal charters issued by Frederick’s mother Constance I during the lifetime of her husband Henry VI only reference his reign, even though she was the proprietary queen of Sicily.<sup>100</sup> The Hohenstaufens were evidently no strangers to imposing imperial chancery practices on newly acquired kingdoms. It is therefore noteworthy that Isabella’s consent is not only recorded within Frederick’s charter but reiterated in a second charter issued in her own name and validated with her own seal. Mayer notes that Isabella’s charter merely contained “empty formula,” and that the legal weight of the royal confirmation lay solely within Frederick’s charter.<sup>101</sup> Yet this reading over-

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**98** *ULKJ*, doc. 652. This dating clause is almost exactly the same as Frederick’s in doc. 654; a number of documents issued by his mother Constance of Sicily have similar individual dating clauses, though the majority of surviving charters bear dating clauses referencing the reigns of both Constance and Frederick.

**99** *ULKJ*, doc. 171/214. For examples referencing the king’s reign, see docs. 214, 218, 220.

**100** For examples, see Kölzer, *Die Urkunden der deutschen Könige und Kaiser*, Vol. 11, Part 3: *Die Urkunden der Kaiserin Konstanze*, docs. 5–20, 28, 37–39. It is only following Henry’s death that Constance appears in the dating clause, initially alone and shortly thereafter together with Frederick: see docs. 42–43 and 44–46.

**101** *ULKJ*, doc. 652, notes.

looks two facts: first, that even the act of confirming another ruler's actions is an exercise of royal power, and second, that there is significance in the mere production and preservation of royal documents—Isabella's charter might contain “empty formula,” but it was certainly not empty of value to its contemporaries.

## Conclusion

The proprietary queens of Jerusalem have not always been recognized as governors and administrators of their kingdom. Indeed, some have been reduced to mere transmitters of royal power and authority. But they should not and cannot be reduced in such a manner. Rather, it is our perception and understanding of medieval monarchy and power (or rulership) which needs to be reconsidered: as an institution centred on the family, within which all members played complementary roles and exercised a broad and multidimensional royal power. While these dynamics are true of and can be found in all medieval monarchies, they are especially evident within those kingdoms which allowed female royal succession. Here, patriarchal models of medieval society may have emphasized men as natural leaders and thus empowered the kings consort as chief governors, but these men did not act in isolation of their royal wives. The documentary evidence bears this out. The close examination and comparative analysis of the surviving documentary evidence in this article shows that the proprietary queens of Jerusalem retained and exercised royal power and authority within their kingdom, even when their husbands were its chief governors and administrators. This article also shows that they did so despite their markedly different—and progressively diminished—experiences of power, authority, and political participation. The composite, familial nature of monarchy is most evident in those documents issued throughout Melisende's reign and “retirement,” not just in her name but also in Fulk's, and in those of their children: between 1134 and 1161, all four regularly issued charters referencing the consent of one or several of the others. This, together with the comparative longevity of both her reign and life, distinguish Melisende's experience of power and political participation from that of the other four proprietary queens. However, Melisende's longevity alone does not explain the uniqueness of her experience. In more than one way, Sibylla's reign represents a watershed in the proprietary queen of Jerusalem's experience. First, it was the start of a sequence of four successive female rulers. Second, she set the precedent—for better or for worse—of transferring her power and authority to her husband and stepping back from active political participation in the manner of

her grandmother. And third—and most importantly—it is during her reign that the city of Jerusalem was lost, with the kingdom greatly reduced in size and in a near-constant state of existential crisis.

This shift in (geo)political reality led to a shift in the nature of female royal rulership within the kingdom, from one of both active participation and legitimization of the king consorts to one of passive participation chiefly through the legitimization of the king consort. Such a shift is reflected in contemporary documentary practice and production: the almost total disappearance of “ego” documents issued by the queen hand in hand with the (almost) unfailing reference by the king consort to his wife’s assent to his actions. While both “et” and “consent” documents were used throughout the reigns of all five proprietary queens, they acquired a distinctively formulaic nature and customary use from Sibylla’s reign onward—so customary in fact that they were codified into law during Isabella and Aimery’s reign.<sup>102</sup> As blood heirs to the throne and proprietary queens of the kingdom, these five female rulers retained the real power that came from the line of succession and legitimized their husbands as rulers through marriage. There is more to examine and say about how the rulership of the proprietary queen of Jerusalem was articulated within solemn royal documents, which falls beyond the scope of the present exploratory study. Future studies will hopefully look beyond the source material used here, as well as offer a deeper examination of these queens’ personal and perceived political identities, through comparative analysis of royal seals (especially of the imagery of seals), of the production and preservation of documents, of the regular inclusion of these queens in surviving forgeries, and of the significance of vocabulary choice in *intitulationes* and *inscriptiones* (e.g. “venerabilis” versus “illustis”). Beyond this, the natural next step is to broaden this study’s comparative approach to include the European contemporaries of the queens of Jerusalem as proprietary queens in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, so as to establish more firmly how unexceptional the dynamics between these queens and their consorts (and occasionally their sons) were.<sup>103</sup> Regardless of how actively and directly or passively and indirectly a proprietary queen exercised power, she was nonetheless recognized as the sovereign of her kingdom and occupied an essential position within its government.

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**102** Greilsammer, *Livre au Roi*, “Chapitre 4.”

**103** This broader comparison is one of the overall objectives of my Leverhulme-funded research project. See Waag, “Medieval Royal Rulership” and “Proprietary Queen.”

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