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The Queens of Jerusalem: The Women Who Dared to Rule

Katherine Pangonis

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The Queens of Jerusalem: The Women Who Dared to Rule. By Katherine Pangonis. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2021. ISBN 978-1-4746-1407-8. xxii + 250 pp. £21.99.

As the title of Katherine Pangonis's *Queens of Jerusalem: The Women Who Dared to Rule* highlights, several Christian queens reigned or co-reigned in the Crusader States from the period of the First Crusade in the late eleventh century to the fall of the city of Acre in 1291. These women ruled on behalf of several noble and royal families of Western Europe following the violent invasion of the Near East, or "Outremer," by Latin Christians in 1099. Pangonis's important study investigates the political authority of the "overlooked" queens and princesses of the Crusader States to bring their reigns to a wider audience and highlight the degree to which female rulers were integral to the function of the Crusader monarchy. In doing so, Pangonis's volume focuses on the careers and lives of Morphia of Melitene, Alice of Antioch, Melisende of Jerusalem, Eleanor of Aquitaine, Constance of Antioch, Agnes of Courtenay, and Sibylla of Jerusalem.

Curiously, Pangonis does not consider the careers of thirteenth-century regnant queens, such as Maria of Montferrat (r. 1205–1212) and Isabella II (r. 1212–1228), since Pangonis ends her investigation with Saladin's 1187 sack of Jerusalem. She similarly does not address the careers of the Islamic royal and aristocratic women who reigned alongside the sultans of North Africa and the Near East during this period. Her brief sketch of Ismat ad-Din Khatun (d. 1186), wife of Saladin, highlights the degree to which studies of Mediterranean queenship in the Crusader period tend to focus on the Christian rulers and not the perspectives and careers of Islamic women. Given that this volume aims to bring the "forgotten" women of the Crusader States to a wider audience, the careers of Islamic women ought to be included in that narrative. Following on from recent works by Shahla Haeri, Taef El-Azhari, and Fatima Mernissi, this volume raises important questions about the ways that scholars view female authority in both the Islamic and Christian contexts. Specifically, how can and should future studies expand ideas about queenship in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Near East to include both Islamic and Christian royal women during the central Middle Ages (*c.*1000–1300)? How can greater inclusion of Islamic elite women in discussions of the Crusader period shape future scholarship on authority in the Near East and its implications for female rule in the broader Mediterranean world? Finally, how can discussions of the rulers of the Crusader period expand beyond the perspective of Christian historical figures?

In the Christian context, this volume challenges existing ideas about the monarchy of the Crusader States in the sixth chapter on the career of Constance of Hauteville (r. 1130–1163) as princess-regnant of the Principality of Antioch. Unlike the other women that fill this volume, Constance found herself in a succession dispute with her son, Bohemond III, after Baldwin III of Jerusalem declared him the lawful heir of Antioch. Constance did not rule Antioch as a queen regnant, but as a mere regent; her place within this volume therefore expands discussions of female rule in the Crusader States to the polities outside the city of Jerusalem and to include the careers of women who exercised political authority beyond the role of a queen regnant. Pangonis's discussion of Constance

highlights both the degree to which female rule was a necessary component for the function of medieval polities and the ways in which female rule kept the Crusader states afloat during a "constant state of crisis" between 1130 and 1291 (xix).

Since the bulk of Pangonis' concentration on "women and power" revolves around political authority, her brief discussion of the recent work of Natasha R. Hodgson, Sarah Lambert, Susan B. Edington, and Sharan Newman works to expand definitions of queenly authority to include the full scope of female involvement in religious orders, on pilgrimage routes, and as patrons. As her discussions of these works attests, medieval definitions of authority, particularly for women, expanded beyond the throne because the political sphere was not the only way that women in the Latin world could exercise authority. The reigns of Constance, Melisende, Sibylla, and the other women highlight the need for future histories of the Crusades to consider gender in discussions of authority in the Outremer and the place of female rule in the Mediterranean world.

In sum, this important study of the Outremer and female rulership highlights the need for a more holistic study of the Christian *and* Islamic women who ruled in the Eastern Mediterranean in the period of the Crusader States and the ways in which their reigns affected the history of that time and place.

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