

Constance of Arles

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Constance of Arles (c. 986 - 28 July 1032), also known as Constance of Provence, was the third wife and queen of King Robert II of France.

Contents

- 1 Life
- 2 Ancestry
- 3 Children
- 4 References
- 5 Additional resources

Life

Born c.986^[1] Constance was the daughter of William I, count of Provence and Adelaide-Blanche of Anjou, daughter of Fulk II of Anjou.^[2] She was the half-sister of Count William II of Provence.^[2] Constance was married to King Robert, after his divorce from his second wife, Bertha of Burgundy.^[3] The marriage was stormy; Bertha's family opposed her, and Constance was despised for importing her Provençal kinfolk and customs. Robert's friend, Hugh of Beauvais, tried to convince the king to repudiate her in 1007. Possibly at her request twelve knights of her kinsman, Fulk Nerra, then murdered Beauvais.^[4]

In 1010 Robert went to Rome, followed by his former wife Bertha, to seek permission to divorce Constance and remarry Bertha. Pope Sergius IV was not about to allow a consanguineous marriage which had been formally condemned by Pope Gregory V and Robert had already repudiated two wives. So the request was denied. After his return according to one source Robert "loved his wife more."^[5]

In the famous trial in 1022 of members of the clergy, including Constance's previous confessor Stephen, on charges of heresy Robert had his wife Queen Constance stand at the door to prevent any mob violence. However as the condemned clerics left the trial the queen "struck out the eye of Stephen... with the staff which she carried". This was seen as Constance venting her frustration at anyone subverting the prestige of the crown.^[6]

At Constance's urging, her eldest son Hugh Magnus was crowned co-king alongside his father in 1017.^[7] But later Hugh demanded his parents share power with him, and rebelled against his father in 1025. Constance, however, on learning of her son's rebellion was furious with him rebuking him at every turn. At some point Hugh was reconciled with his parents but shortly thereafter died, probably about age eighteen.^[8]

Robert and Constance quarrelled over which of their surviving sons should inherit the throne; Robert favored their second son Henry, while Constance favored their third son, Robert.^[8] Despite his mother's protests and her support by several bishops, Henry was crowned in 1027. Constance, however, was not graceful when she didn't get her way.^[9] The ailing Fulbert, bishop of Chartres told a colleague that he could attend the ceremony "if he traveled slowly to Reims—but he was too frightened of the queen to go at all".^[9]

Constance encouraged her sons to rebel, and they began attacking and pillaging the towns and castles belonging to their father. Robert attacked Burgundy, the duchy he had been promised but had never received, and Henry seized Dreux. At last King Robert agreed to their demands and peace was made which lasted until the king's death.

King Robert died on 20 July 1031.^[10] Soon afterwards Constance was at odds with both her surviving sons. Constance seized her dower lands and refused to surrender them. Henry fled to Normandy, where he received aid, weapons and soldiers from his brother Robert. He returned to besiege his mother at Poissy but Constance escaped to Pontoise. She only

Constance of Arles



Queen consort of the Franks

Tenure 1001–1031

Spouse Robert II of France

Issue

Hugh Magnus of France

Henry I of France

Adela of France, Countess of Flanders

Robert I, Duke of Burgundy

House House of Capet

Father William I, Count of Provence

Mother Adelaide-Blanche of Anjou

Born c.986

Died 28 July 1032

Burial Saint Denis Basilica, Paris, France

surrendered when Henry began the siege of Le Puiset and swore to slaughter all the inhabitants.

Constance died 28 July 1032.^[2] and was buried beside her husband Robert at Saint-Denis Basilica.^[11]

Ancestry

Children

Constance and Robert had six children:

1. Advisa, Countess of Auxerre (c. 1003–after 1063), married Count Renaud I of Nevers^[12]
2. Hugh Magnus, co-king (c. 1007–17 September 1026)^[2]
3. Henri (17 May 1008–4 August 1060)^[2]
4. Adela, Countess of Contenance (1009 – 5 June 1063), married (1) Duke Richard III of Normandy (2) Count Baldwin V of Flanders
5. Robert I, Duke of Burgundy (1011–21 March 1076)^[13]
6. Eudes (1013–1056)^[2]

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3. [^] Constance Bouchard, *Those of My Blood: Creating Noble Families in Medieval Francia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), p. 47
4. [^] Penelope Ann Adair, *Constance of Arles: A study in Duty and Frustration'*, *Capetian Women*, ed. Kathleen Nolan (New York;, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 13
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12. [^] W. Scott Jessee, *Robert the Burgundian and the Counts of Anjou: ca. 1025-1098* (Catholic University of America Press,



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13. ^ Detlev Schwennicke, *Europäische Stammtafeln: Stammtafeln zur Geschichte der Europäischen Staaten*, Neue Folge, Band II (Marburg, Germany: J. A. Stargardt, 1984), Tafel 20

Additional resources

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- Moore, R. I. *The Birth of Popular Heresy*, 1975.
- Lambert, Malcolm. *Medieval Heresy: Popular Movements from the Gregorian Reform to the Reformation*, 1991, 9 - 17.

French royalty		
Preceded by Bertha of Burgundy	Queen consort of France 1001–1031	Succeeded by Matilda of Frisia

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Categories: 986 births | 1032 deaths | Duchesses of Burgundy | Frankish queens consort | French queens consort | House of Capet | Women of medieval France

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