

Plain Text Letters: The Primary Sources

This section presents the full translated texts of four surviving charters issued by Queen Constance of Hungary between 1222 and 1236. Displayed in their plain text form, these letters allow readers to encounter the queen's words directly, unmediated by encoding or visualization. Each letter is accompanied by a short summary and interpretive commentary that highlights its historical, legal, and political context. Together, they offer a clear window into how a medieval queen exercised power, communicated authority, and upheld dynastic and spiritual responsibilities.

constance_rajhrad_1222.txt

A letter from Constance of Hungary (1222)

Summary:

Issued jointly by Queen Constance and King Otakar I, the letter confirms the relocation of a toll from Brodskih to Kunovice for logistical benefit. It also confirms that the convent of Rajhrad will continue receiving its seventeenth share of the toll and a tenth of the Mirozlav vineyard, as previously granted by the king's brother, Vladizlaus.

Commentary:

This document underscores the queen's active role in fiscal governance and religious patronage. Her co-signature with the king highlights a shared legal authority, and her inclusion in the formal structure of the charter demonstrates that medieval queens could play an integral part in institutional transactions. Themes of continuity, economic administration, and monastic support all surface here, reflecting a model of rulership where queenship was entangled with both secular and spiritual responsibilities.

constance_olomuc_1233-01-21.txt

A letter from Constance of Hungary (1233, January 21)

Summary:

Queen Constance, with her son Premysl, Marquis of Moravia, donates land in Drozdovice tied to the castrum of Novy Hradek to the nuns serving at the Church of St. Peter in Olomuc. The act includes the participation and approval of the nobleman, Albert, who had held the land. The charter also grants freedom to poor farmers living on the land and confirms the donation through a formal charter with noble and ecclesiastical witnesses.

Commentary:

The 1233 letter strongly emphasizes Constance's rhetorical and legal independence as a widow, while also reinforcing dynastic continuity through her son. The charter spotlights a queenly voice that is no longer secondary to a king's authority. Its focus on land, religious women, and the socially vulnerable shows the queen as a patron of both spiritual and communal welfare. The charter illustrates how medieval queens could function as central arbiters of power, wealth, and justice, even in male-dominated spaces like castles and courts.

A letter from Constance of Hungary (1235, February 12)

Summary:

Here, Queen Constance donates a large set of properties, including towns, villages, a church, and a court, to the hospital affiliated with the monastery of St. Francis in Prague. The recipient institution was founded by her daughter, Agnes of Bohemia. She retains usufructuary rights (right to income) during her lifetime but grants the hospital full hereditary possession thereafter.

Commentary:

This letter highlights dynastic motherhood and the spiritual legacies of royal women. Constance emerges as a political mother working on behalf of her daughter's monastic foundation, combining economic power with maternal care. The donation of entire communities, including churches and courts, reinforces the queen's ability to transfer major assets and wield real property authority. The presence of numerous lay and clerical witnesses, including many sons of notable men, also speaks to the widespread acknowledgment of her authority. This is a queen managing wealth, planning inheritance, and establishing enduring connections between royal power and ecclesiastical institutions.

constance_public_1236-12-07.txt

A letter from Constance of Hungary (1236, December 7)

Summary:

In this final charter, Queen Constance reaffirms that the church in Werben (Vrbno) has historically received tithes from land held by the Teutonic Knights, a right she recalls was once honored during her and her late husband's reign. She issues this document to affirm the rightful claim of her daughter's institution and to restore the tithe in full.

Commentary:

This is perhaps the most forceful expression of queenly authority as legal enforcer and moral guardian. Constance explicitly references justice, conscience, and the continuity of rightful order. Even as a widow, she draws on the memory of her co-reign with her husband to reinforce legitimacy. The letter reflects a deeply juridical and ethical rhetoric, wherein the queen becomes a defender of both divine law and her daughter's religious endowment. It exemplifies a model of female rulership rooted in memory, responsibility, and reparation.

Read together, these four letters reveal a portrait of Queen Constance as more than a ceremonial figure. She appears as a legal actor, landholder, benefactor, and matriarch, issuing charters with lasting material and spiritual consequences. Whether ruling jointly with her husband or acting independently as a widow, Constance's voice is firm, consistent, and authoritative. These plain texts ground the project's larger analysis by showing exactly how power was articulated in words: through formula, command, memory, and justice.

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