



UNIONE EUROPEA



REPUBBLICA ITALIANA



REGIONE AUTÒNOMA DE SARDIGNA
REGIONE AUTONOMA DELLA SARDEGNA

Castle of Monreale

Patrimonio culturale
SARDEGNA Virtual Archaeology



■ Eleonora d'Arborea

The story of Eleonora d'Arborea and of her family is closely linked to the castle of Monreale, which not only defended the borders of the kingdom, but also represented a comfortable residence for the sovereigns.

The famous lady-judge (Fig. 1) was probably born in Catalonia (at the north-eastern point of the Iberian Peninsula), around 1340. Her parents were Mariano de Bas-Serra (brother of the judge of Arborea Peter III) and Timbora de Rocaberti, and she had a brother and a sister, Ugone and Beatrice.

Eleonora lived in Oristano where the family had moved to during her earliest years. At the beginning of 1347 Peter III died and Eleonora's father, Mariano IV, was elected judge and reigned from 1347 to 1376 (Fig. 2).

In 1376, Eleonora married Brancaleone Doria, a member of a powerful family which controlled much of north-western Sardinia and after the wedding she moved with her husband to Castelgenovese (now Castelsardo), where her children Federico and Mariano were born. After the death of her father Mariano IV, her brother Ugone III became the judge, but was assassinated in 1383.

Because of this tragic event, Eleonora, as the only surviving daughter of Mariano IV (her sister Beatrice had died in 1377), imposed her rights of succession to the throne and had her firstborn Frederick elected judge, but as he was still a child, she became his guardian as Regent Lady-Judge.



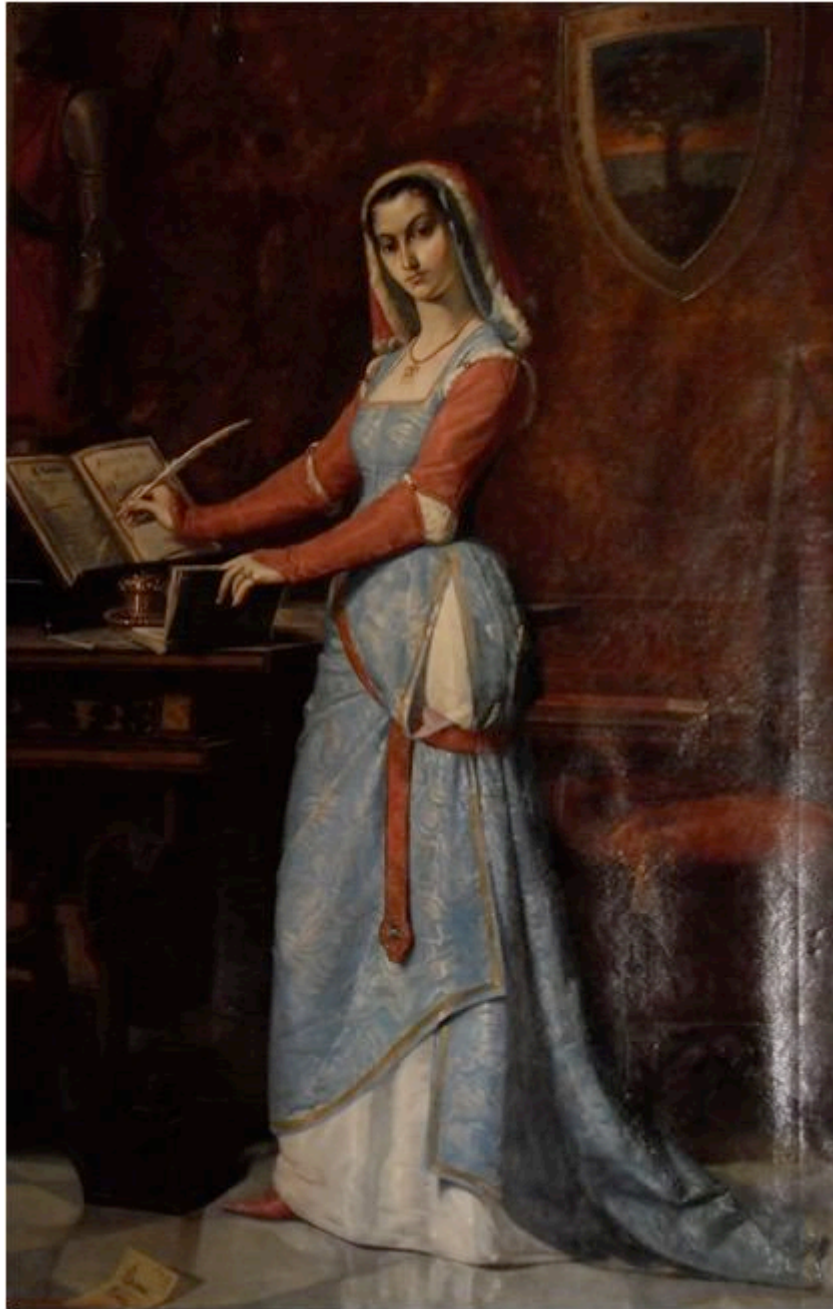


Fig. 1 - Eleonora d'Arborea signs the Carta de Logu, by Antonio Benini (late nineteenth century). Oristano Palazzo Campus Colonna (from <http://www.turistiaoristano.com/2012/05/il-vero-ritratto-di-eleonora-darborea.html>).



Fig. 2 - Mariano IV, a detail of the Altarpiece of the church of S. Nicola in Ottana (from ORTU 2011, cover).

During the reign of Peter III, the Giudicato of Arborea (District) had subordinated alliance relationships with the kings of Aragon, but with Mariano IV of Arborea the foreign policy was directed towards an anti-Aragon position, and war broke out between the two kingdoms in 1353.

After assuming power, Eleonora ruled the territories of the Giudicato on her own, while the king of Aragon tried to limit her power with a bond of vassalage (a mutual trust and safety relationship between lord and vassal).

Events came to a head in 1383, when Eleonora reopened hostilities against the Aragonese.

The decision to continue the war matured precisely when her husband Brancaloneo was in Barcelona both as a loyal subject of the king of Aragon and husband of the rebel lady-judge of Arborea: Brancaloneo was arrested and then transported and imprisoned in Sardinia during the first months of 1384, with the aim of using him to exert pressure on Eleonora in order to quickly reach a peace treaty favourable to Aragona and to receive the young judge Frederick as hostage in exchange for the freedom of her husband.

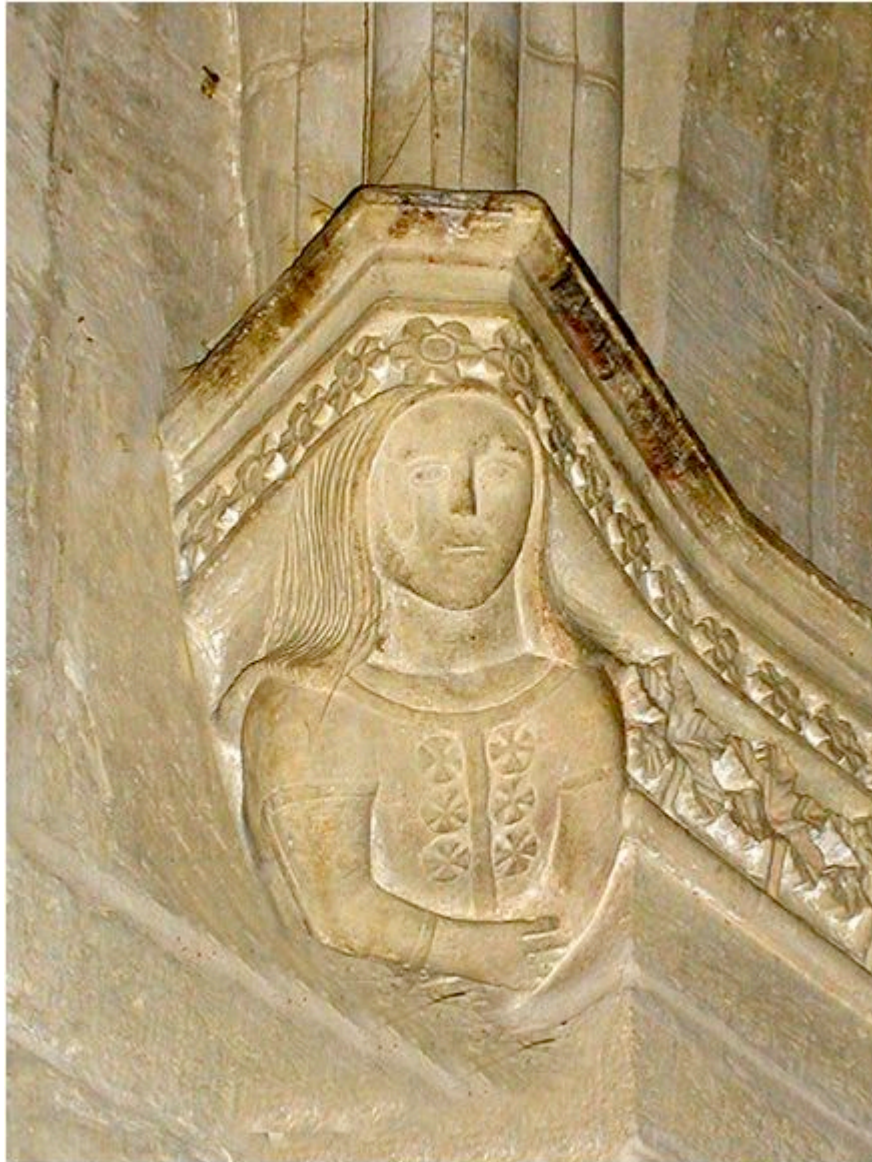


Fig. 3 - Portrait of Eleonora d'Arborea, architectural detail of the church of San Gavino in S. Gavino Monreale (from <http://www.parcodessi.it>).

Undaunted, Eleonora rejected the proposal and confirmed her war policy, even though new tensions had begun emerging within the Giudicato.

After laborious negotiations, peace between Arborea and Aragon was signed in Cagliari on January 24th 1388. Eleonora's son, Judge Frederick, had died the year before and his nine-year old brother Mariano had succeeded him, while Eleonora had kept the regency.

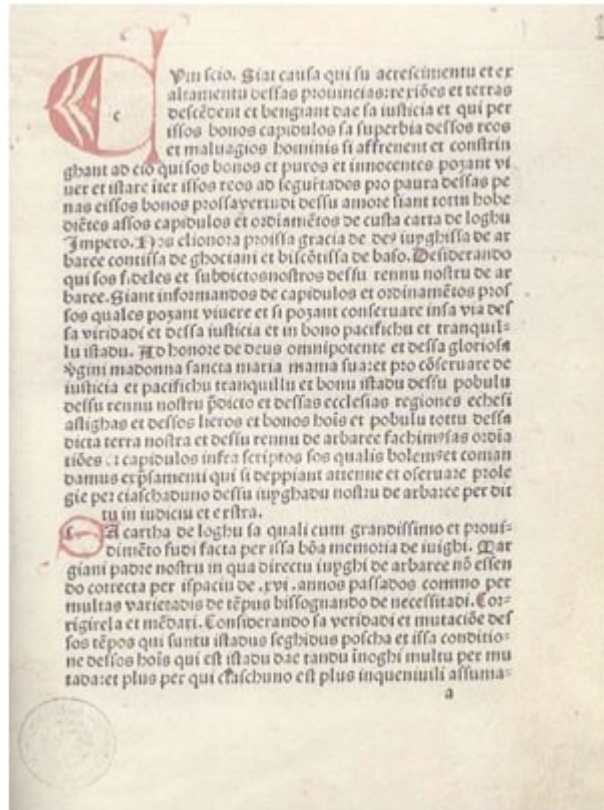


Fig. 4 - First page of the Carta de Logu (from http://www.sardegnaicultura.it/documenti/7_88_20070215114729.pdf)

On 1st January 1390 an agreement was reached for the release of Brancaleone Doria, who was able to leave the castle of Cagliari a few days later.

During her last years, Eleonora retired from active politics, leaving this to her husband and young son Mariano V. According to tradition, she died, perhaps in 1403, at an unspecified location.

Between 1385 and 1391 (we do not know the exact date of the event) Eleonora proclaimed the *Carta de Logu*, an essential work in the Sardinian language, which includes a civil and penal code together with a rural one, drafted at the time of Eleonora's father, King Mariano IV.

The *Carta de Logu* (Fig. 4) outlived the end of the reign of Arborea and of the Sardinian Giudicati, and remained in force even during the Spanish and Savoy periods until the adoption of Carlo Felice's Code in April 1827.

There is no surviving original copy of the document: we know the text through two drafts written relatively late: a fifteenth century paper manuscript now kept at the University

Library in Cagliari, and an incunabulum with no frontispiece or colophon which can be dated to the end of the XVth century.



■ Credits

Deepening card edited by Dr. Maria Grazia Arru.

Preliminary research by Dr. Valeria Paretta and Dr. Daniele Corda.

■ Bibliography

A. MATTONE, s.v. *Eleonora d'Arborea*, in *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, vol. XLII, Roma, 1993, pp. 410-419.

L. ORTU, *Storia della Sardegna. Dal Medioevo all'Età contemporanea*, Cagliari 2011.

F.C. CASULA, s.v. *Eleonora, regina-reggente di Arborea*, in *Dizionario Storico Sardo*, vol. 5, Cles (TN) 2006, pp. 1258-1261.





UNIONE EUROPEA



REPUBBLICA ITALIANA



REGIONE AUTÒNOMA DE SARDIGNA
REGIONE AUTONOMA DELLA SARDEGNA

La Sardegna cresce con l'Europa



UNIONE EUROPEA

Progetto cofinanziato dall'Unione Europea
Programma Operativo FESR 2007-2013

FESR - Fondo Europeo di Sviluppo Regionale - Asse I, Linea di Attività 1.2.3.a