
ROGER II OF SICILY

A ruler between east and west

HUBERT HOUBEN

*Translated by
Graham A. Loud and Diane Milburn*

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I

THE INHERITANCE

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ROGER I, THE CONQUEROR

Roger II was left a considerable inheritance by his parents. His father, Roger I (c. 1040–1101) had created a comital lordship in Calabria and Sicily, which allowed him to become a desirable ally to the ruling houses of Europe. As the youngest of twelve sons of a minor Norman nobleman, Tancred of Hauteville, Roger I could not count on any inheritance. In 1055 he followed his brothers who had sought and found their fortune in southern Italy. In the 1090s Geoffrey Malaterra, a Norman monk, who had settled in the cathedral monastery of Catania, wrote a history of the Norman conquest of Sicily, in which Roger I stood at the centre. He reported that the future count had come to the south at a young age.¹

The first Normans had arrived in southern Italy about the year 1000. When returning from a pilgrimage to Jerusalem they had helped Prince Guaimar III of Salerno (989–1027) to defend that town against the Saracens. This Lombard prince rewarded them handsomely and invited them to stay. Around 1016 other Normans undertook a pilgrimage to the

¹ *Amatus* III.43, p. 159, suggests that Roger came to Italy after the battle of Civitate (1053), although according to *Malaterra* I.19, p. 18, this was only after the death of his brother Humphrey (1057). This latter claim cannot be accepted insofar as, according to the letters of Jewish merchants from Sicily, the conquest of the Island, undertaken by Roger some time after his arrival in the peninsula, was already under way by 1057; see Gil (1995), 120ff. One should therefore correct the chronology, based on Malaterra, in Chalandon (1907), 1.150–2. Malaterra suggests that Roger came to Italy while of *juvenilis aetas*, for which cf. Hofmeister (1926), 315ff, suggesting that he was born c. 1040. The notice in *Romuald*, 202, that he was aged fifty-one when he died in 1101 (and thus was born c. 1050) cannot therefore be accurate. Cf. also Matthew (1981), 266.

shrine of St Michael on Monte Gargano in northern Apulia. There they met Melus, also called Ishmael, the leader of an anti-Byzantine rebellion in Bari, who asked them for help as he tried to free his native town from the rule of the Byzantine emperor. Nor did the Normans have any hesitation in making their military skills available to him. At first they met with some minor success, but at the battlefield of Cannae, which had once witnessed the victory of Hannibal over the Romans, they were defeated by Byzantine troops in 1018. Melus fled to Germany and requested help from Henry II (1002–24). It is possible that the emperor enfeoffed Melus with the duchy of Apulia. However, before Henry was able to set off for the south with an army, Melus died at Bamberg in 1020.²

The first Norman to achieve rank and reputation in southern Italy was Rainulf I Drengot (d. 1045). In 1030 the Duke of Naples, Sergius IV, gave him his sister, the widow of the Duke of Gaeta, in marriage and enfeoffed him with the newly created county of Aversa. Aversa, lying half way between Capua and Naples, was the only town in southern Italy to be founded by the Normans. Otherwise they settled in already existing communities. After the death of his wife in 1034 Rainulf changed sides. He married a niece of the Duke of Naples's enemy, Prince Pandulf IV of Capua (1026–49), and became his vassal. However, he soon changed sides once more; now he supported Prince Guaimar IV of Salerno (d. 1052). In May 1038 Guaimar's rule was recognized by the emperor Conrad II (1024–39), who enfeoffed him in Capua with the county of Aversa. Later, in 1041, he also received the duchy of Gaeta from Guaimar IV. Around this time the brothers William, known as 'the Iron Arm', and Drogo de Hauteville came to the south and entered the service of the Prince of Salerno.³

Both brothers appear to have soon become a nuisance to Guaimar IV. In 1038 he sent them to Sicily – they were supposed to help the Byzantines

² *Amatus* 1.16–21, pp. 21–8. *W. Ap.* 1.1–34, pp. 98–100. Cf. Hoffmann (1969), and with a different, but far from convincing interpretation, France (1991). The whole issue has recently been re-examined by Loud (2000b), 60–6. *Notae sepulchrales Babenbergenses*, *MGH SS* xvii.640. On Melus, Chalandon (1907) 1.42–4, Deér (1972), 44ff; for the Armenian origin of his family, Falkenhausen (1982a), 67. Although, as Martin (1993), 520, notes, the name Melus was widely used at Bari, the fact that his son carried the Greek name of Argyros undoubtedly suggests that he belonged to the Byzantine governing class. The gold-embroidered cloak – the so-called 'starred cloak' – given by Melus appears not to have come from southern Italy, as was once thought, but from southern Germany (perhaps Regensburg). Baumgärtel-Fleischmann (1990). The 'description of the world' (*descriptio totius orbis*) embroidered on the cloak, with its characterization of Henry II as the 'honour of Europe' (*decus Europae*) and the wish that his empire would increase, may perhaps reflect the ideas of the donor.

³ *Amatus* 1.41ff, pp. 52ff; II.6, pp. 63ff. Cf. Chalandon (1907), 1.82ff. Houben (1987), 75ff [reprinted in Houben (1989), 46ff]. Cuozzo (1992), 689–92. Taviani-Carozzi (1991), 930ff, (1996), 145ff. Loud (2000b), 74–80.

reconquer the island which had now been under Arab rule for two centuries. But there disputes arose over the way the booty was shared out. As a result the Hauteville brothers left the island, along with the other Normans and Arduin, a northern Italian who had led their contingent of troops, and made themselves independent. They settled on the border between the Basilicata and Apulia, in an area that had been under Byzantine rule. The town of Melfi became their 'capital'. Mercenaries started to become conquerors. The twelve most powerful amongst the Normans acquired the title of count. In 1042 they elected William 'the Iron Arm' as their leader, the 'Count of Apulia' – his pre-eminent position was also reflected in his marriage to a niece of Guaimar IV of Salerno.⁴

All this was an affront both to Byzantium and to the German king (and Roman emperor). As the successor to Charlemagne, who had incorporated the Lombard kingdom into his empire, he laid claim to rule the whole of Italy. However, Henry III (1039–56) was forced to grin and bear it. When he arrived in the south in 1047 he could not avoid recognizing the status quo which had been created in the meantime. Drogo of Hauteville (d. 1051), the successor of William 'the Iron Arm' (d. 1046), was enfeoffed with the county of Apulia, and Rainulf II 'Trincanocete' (d. 1048) with the county of Aversa.⁵

The pope wanted to play a role in southern Italy as well. When the population of Apulia appealed to Leo IX (1049–54) for help against the invaders, the latter attempted to drive the Normans out of southern Italy with the aid of German and Byzantine troops. However, in 1053 he suffered a crushing defeat at Civitate in the north of Apulia. As a result papal policy towards the Normans changed. Nicholas II (1058–61) concluded an alliance with the invaders. At the synod of Melfi (1059) he enfeoffed the Count of Aversa, Richard I Quarrel (1050–78), with the principality of Capua, which had been conquered by this Norman leader in 1058 and which had previously been under the lordship of the emperor. At the same time he granted investiture to Robert Guiscard, who had succeeded his brother Humphrey (d. 1057) as Count of Apulia, of the duchy 'of Apulia, Calabria, and in the future, with the help of God and St Peter, of Sicily'. The pope did not make clear from where he derived this right. Probably he drew implicitly on the Donation of Constantine, and perhaps also on Carolingian and Ottonian privileges which had allowed the Roman pontiffs lordship over southern Italy and Sicily. The papal–Norman alliance

⁴ *Amatus* II.8, pp. 66–8; II.14, pp. 72ff; II.29, p. 93. Cf. Chalandon (1907), 1.91ff. Jahn (1989), 24, 42ff. Houben (1993b), 314ff [reprinted in Houben (1996a), 321ff]. Taviani-Carozzi (1996), 168ff. Loud (2000b), 92–9.

⁵ *Amatus* III.2, p. 117. Cf. Chalandon (1907), I.113. Kehr (1934), 7ff. Deér (1972), 46ff. Loud (2000b), 106–7.

was though not only a consequence of the battle of Civitate, but also an indirect result of the Lateran synod held a few months previously. It could be predicted that the decrees there about the election of a pope and lay investiture would provoke an adverse reaction from the Roman nobility and the emperor. But for the Normans the investiture by the papacy was a tremendous success – their reputation rose, and their conquests received a new legitimacy.⁶

The Normans had hitherto distinguished themselves by using brutal force and not even stopping at seizing church property. In despair the population turned to the pope for help. In the ‘Life of Pope Leo IX’ we read that many people came to Rome from southern Italy with their eyes gouged out or their noses, feet and hands cut off. Confronted with this wretched sight, the pope decided to fight the Normans, ‘certainly with much love of God, but perhaps with less wisdom’, according to this author alluding to the close of the battle of Civitate. After they had become the pope’s vassals the doers of wrong transformed themselves into doers of good. They gave to churches and monasteries, where prayers were henceforth said for their spiritual salvation. They also founded new abbeys which attracted Norman monks. Soon it was possible in some south Italian monasteries to hear monastic choral music according to the liturgy of Saint-Evroult.⁷

However, the Normans were and remained upstarts. Bishop Benzo of Alba (d. circa 1090) was particularly caustic in his remarks. As a supporter of Henry IV he could not forgive them for having supported Gregory VII (1073–85): ‘Instead of Normans it would be better to call them non-persons (*nullimani*), the most foul-smelling rubbish in the world . . . , sons of filth, tyrants who have risen from the rabble.’ This reputation stuck to them. Incidentally, by no means all these ‘Normans’ came from Normandy – and those that did were mainly men and only a few thousand at that. Probably about a third of the newcomers came from other regions of France, particularly Brittany. For many young nobles there was no place for them at home. They had to seek their fortune abroad. It was their horses and equipment – light chain mail and long almond-shaped shields – that made them superior to their Byzantine and Moslem opponents. They quickly adopted new methods of war such as building mobile wooden towers which facilitated the approach to town walls. Disunity amongst

⁶ *Vita Leonis IX*, in J. M. Watterich, *Pontificum Romanorum Vitae* 1 (Leipzig 1862), 98. Deér (1972), 61ff, 78ff. For the battle of Civitate, see also Bünemann (1997), 20–4, Loud (2000b), 110–21. The acclamation of Robert Guiscard as duke by his army at Reggio in 1060, *Malaterra* 1.35, p. 25, was probably of only marginal significance, see Hoffmann (1978), 141ff, though for a rather different view, Loud (2000b), 190–1.

⁷ Houben (1988a), (1995a), 37ff, 139ff.

the local population prepared the way for the invaders. An important means of integration was marriage into local noble families. The secret of the Normans' success was their ability to adapt rapidly to situations and surroundings.⁸

When Roger I came to the south in about 1055 he helped Robert Guiscard quell a rebellion. However, conflicts soon developed between the two brothers. Roger wanted to build up his own area of rule in Calabria, but his brother was reluctant to allow this. Calabria, like Apulia, had hitherto belonged to the Byzantine empire. The local population tried to use the disunity of the Normans to their own advantage and to drive them out. Robert Guiscard was therefore forced to come to an agreement with his brother and ceded half of Calabria to him. Together the brothers succeeded in consolidating their rule. After the last of the places still in Byzantine hands in the south of the region had fallen, the conquest of Arab-ruled Sicily could be considered.⁹

Under the Romans and the Byzantines, Sicily had only been a peripheral province, which had mainly produced grain. After it was conquered by the Arabs in the ninth century, agriculture there had been intensified. New methods were introduced: terraces and ditches for irrigation, thinning of the soil, and changes in the rotation of crops. The *latifundia*, already reduced under the Byzantines, were shared out further. Apart from grain, rice, cotton, papyrus, citrus fruits, dates and sugar cane were also cultivated. The production of silk and cotton by skilled workers developed. The island, where Muslim Arabs and Berbers lived alongside Jews and Christians, developed into a focus for Mediterranean trade in the tenth and eleventh centuries. The 200-year-old Arab rule had far-reaching consequences for the ethnic and religious composition of the population. The spread of Islam took place via cultural assimilation. Although additional taxes were not particularly high for non-Muslims, they were high enough to encourage the lower classes to convert. A large-scale Arab immigration does not appear to have taken place: Arabs and Berbers were only the ruling class.¹⁰

'Triangular' Sicily – hence its ancient name of Trinacria – consisted of three regions. The west of Sicily, the Val di Mazara, including Palermo and Agrigento, was virtually entirely Islamic. Muslims formed the greater majority in the southeast, the Val di Noto, including Syracuse and Catania.

⁸ Benzo of Alba, pp. 286, 316 (for the schism of Cadulus 1061–4, cf. Oldoni (1978), 97ff, Loud (2000b), 194–5). Ménager (1975a), Martin (1993), 520ff. Cuozzo (1989b), (1995a), Zug Tucci (1995), Settia (1994), 850ff.

⁹ *Malaterra* 1.19–35, pp. 18ff; II.1, p. 29. Cf. Chalandon (1907), 149ff. The supposition that Count Roger was assigned half of Calabria in 1058, based upon *Malaterra* 1.29, p. 22, would appear to be erroneous, cf. here note 1 above.

¹⁰ Goitein (1967–88), Peri (1978), 64ff.

It was only in the northeast, the Val Demone, including Messina, that Christian – Greek orthodox – communities had been preserved in the countryside, particularly in the inland town of Troina. Towns such as Syracuse, Catania, Taormina and Messina on the east coast declined under Arab rule, although they had played an important role under the Byzantines. Trade with Byzantium also declined sharply. The Straits of Messina, which had represented a bridge to the Byzantine provinces of Calabria and Apulia, became the border between two worlds.

Palermo on the other hand enjoyed a rapid rise and became a centre of Mediterranean trade. Merchants from Arab north Africa and Spain met here with their Christian competitors from Naples and Amalfi, and later from Pisa as well. Pilgrims from Andalusia stopped off there on their way to Mecca. Mazara and Agrigento were medium-sized ports for trade with the Maghreb. The principal export was rock salt, which was important for the preservation of meat, also fish, cheese, grain, fabrics, wood, skins, and fruit, especially almonds. Sicily was the granary for the north African Sahel region. However, the quantity of grain exported was limited. Only the upper class was supplied – for white bread was a luxury item. There were smaller ports in Termini and Partinico, which specialized in the export of pulses and dyes. Dried fruit was exported from Carini. Spices, flax, indigo, gold and precious stones, as well as olive oil were imported into Sicily. There were no towns of any significance in the interior of Sicily. Extensive forests prevented erosion during the heavy winter rain. It was only at the end of the Middle Ages that a greater degree of deforestation occurred which would make a major change to the ecological balance. Many country dwellers lived in caves, a practice that was widespread amongst the Berbers in north Africa. The caves protected them from the heat in summer and the cold in winter.¹¹

In the course of the ninth century Sicily had been conquered by an Arab dynasty, the Aglabids, who ruled in Ifrīqiya, present-day Tunisia. In theory they were subject to the Caliph of Baghdad, but in practice they were independent. In the tenth century the Aglabids were driven out by the Shi'ite Fatimids, who in 916 founded the town of Mahdia (al-Mahdiyya) on the coast, south of Monastir. After the conquest of Egypt in 969 and the transfer of the seat of government to the newly founded city of Cairo in 973, Ifrīqiya and Sicily were ruled by Fatimid governors (emirs). The emirate in Sicily became hereditary with the emergence of the Kalbid dynasty, resident in Palermo. The Christian population was accorded the status of 'charges' (*dhimma*), to which followers of monotheistic religions were entitled under Islamic law. Moslem society was exposed to strong internal

¹¹ Peri (1978), 11–12, 14ff, 23, 25ff. Bresc (1993), 291ff. Gil (1995), 131ff.

tensions, and latent conflicts between Arabs and Berbers, Sunnites and Shi'ites were always breaking out.¹²

When a brother of the Emir of Palermo incited an uprising, the ruler called on the Byzantines for help. The latter had been waiting to reconquer the island for a long time. In 1038 an army led by the famous general George Maniakes landed in Sicily. As we already know, William 'the Iron Arm' and Drogo of Hauteville were amongst his soldiers. Although the enterprise initially met with success, it ultimately failed when the commanding general was called back to Byzantium for domestic political reasons. It is therefore not surprising that the Normans soon turned their attention to the rich island.

Until this point Roger I had been overshadowed by his brother. Now he had an opportunity to take the initiative on his own. This was because Robert had to return to Apulia on a number of occasions in order to quell rebellions. In his 'History of the Normans', written in about 1076–78 (which is unfortunately only preserved in an Old French translation, interspersed with Italianisms, dating from the fourteenth century), the monk Amatus of Montecassino reported that it was Robert Guiscard who took the initiative to conquer Sicily. An emir named Vultimin had called on him for help. However, it was probably a joint venture undertaken by both brothers. Malaterra naturally made his hero, Roger I, appear to have undertaken the venture single-handed.¹³

While he was staying at Reggio with his brother the duke, that most distinguished young man Count Roger of Calabria heard that Sicily was in the hands of the unbelievers. Seeing it from close at hand with only a short stretch of sea lying in between, he was seized by the desire to capture it, for he was always eager for conquest. He perceived two means by which he would profit, one for his soul and the other for his material benefit, if he brought back to Divine worship a country given over to idolatry, and if he himself possessed the temporal fruits and income from this land, thus spending in the service of God things which had been unjustly stolen by a people who knew him not.

The first attempt to erect a bridgehead in Messina failed. Suddenly an unexpected opportunity was presented. An emir called Betumen – according to Malaterra's version – approached Roger I who was staying in Reggio. He appealed to him for help against Prince Belcamedus. The Latin chroniclers mixed up the names of the Arab protagonists, but it has emerged from Arab sources that the emir Vultimin/Betumen was really called Ibn at-Ṭumna; he ruled over the southeast of the island with the towns of Catania and Syracuse. His opponent and brother-in-law, Ibn

¹² Cf. Halm (1987–9), (1991), 163ff, 194ff.

¹³ *Amatus* v. 7–8, pp. 229–31; *Malaterra* II.1, pp. 13–19.

al-Ḥawwās, had in his possession the interior of Sicily with the town of Enna (Castrogiovanni). Robert Guiscard and Roger I did not let the opportunity slip away. The invasion was prepared. They began by capturing Messina. Because of its strategic location on the strait to the Italian peninsula the town was of great importance for guaranteeing supplies.¹⁴

However, Roger did not choose Messina as his base and 'residence', preferring instead the town of Troina lying in the interior, although its mainly Greek orthodox inhabitants did not exactly react with great enthusiasm. The conquest of Sicily proved to be lengthy. Victories in battles, such as that at Cerami in 1063, did not have any far-reaching implications. Ibn al-Ḥawwās entrenched himself in his mountain lair at Enna, which could not be taken, and an attempt to conquer Palermo in 1064 was unsuccessful. The brothers therefore resolved that they would first bring the conquest of Apulia to an end. After three years of siege, Bari was finally conquered in the spring of 1071. Under Byzantine rule Bari had been important as the capital of the region. The Normans were then able to concentrate all their energy on Sicily. Catania was conquered in July 1071, and Palermo at the beginning of 1072. The Norman fleet, which made the maritime blockade possible, was extremely important here. The town surrendered relatively quickly because capitulation was made easier for the Moslem inhabitants by the offer of favourable conditions; in return for payment of a tribute they could keep their religious beliefs and remain largely self-governing. They were only put under the command of a Norman town commandant. He bore the title *amiratus*, which was derived from the Arabic title of *amīr* (emir).¹⁵

After the capture of Palermo, the brothers came to an agreement on sharing out Sicily, although only half of the island had yet been conquered. Because of his position as Duke of Apulia, Calabria and Sicily, Robert Guiscard formally ruled the whole island, although in reality Roger I had a free hand to govern it as he wished. In a way very similar to the situation that had been established in Calabria, the duke retained in his possession half of the most important conquests so far (Palermo, Messina and the Val Demone). At the end of 1072 he left the island, which he was never to see again. In Apulia rebellions by Norman nobles needed to be quashed. In the

¹⁴ *Malaterra* II.1–13, pp. 29–33. Cf. Amari (1933–9), II.619ff, Chalandon (1907), 192ff. Rizzitano (1977), 194ff. Loud (2000b), 146–51. Malaterra's dating of the first attack to Messina in 1060–1 conflicts with the Jewish sources, which suggest that Messina was conquered by the Normans before August 1057, for which see above note 1.

¹⁵ *Malaterra* II.13–35, 40–2, 48–50. *Amatus* v.13–18, pp. 235ff; VI.14, pp. 276–8; VI.16–20, pp. 278ff. *Malaterra* II.45, pp. 52–3; *W.Ap.*, III lines 255–339, pp. 179ff. Cf. Chalandon (1907), I.191ff. Bennet (1993), 46ff; Ménager (1960), 23ff, 167ff; Falkenhausen (1977), 351ff. Bünemann (1997), 43–78; Loud (2000b), 150–65.

years that followed, Robert Guiscard was preoccupied with other projects. In 1076 Henry IV offered him ducal investiture from his own hands, but the Norman leader refused this. He had greater freedom of action as a vassal of the pope, since Gregory VII was reliant upon his military assistance. In 1076–7 Robert Guiscard successfully conquered Salerno, the last Lombard principality in southern Italy. However, his main interest was now to be directed towards Byzantium, which he dreamt of conquering. It was during a campaign against the Byzantine empire that he met with his death in 1085.¹⁶

Following the 1072 agreement on the division of Sicily, half of the part of the island still to be conquered should have gone to two important commanders of the Norman army: Serlo, the son of Roger I's brother – also called Serlo – and a certain Arisgot of Pucheuil. These two had distinguished themselves on a number of occasions, notably at the battle of Cerami. It was intended that lordship over Sicily would be divided in this way, but what in fact happened was rather different. Serlo soon fell in battle. Arisgot distinguished himself at the siege of Taormina in 1079; but there is no evidence for him thereafter. Roger I was therefore able to create his own personal region of rule in Sicily. In contrast to his brother in Apulia, he did not have to take into consideration other Normans who had acquired their own counties and lordships. Whilst the sources leave us in no doubt that Roger I was a vassal of Robert Guiscard, in practice the Count of Sicily was in a stronger position than the Duke of Apulia, for unlike the latter he did not need to expend time and resources keeping rebellious vassals under control.¹⁷

Roger I needed almost twenty more years to conquer the rest of Sicily. He may only have had just over a hundred knights and about as many foot soldiers at his disposal (although, we should remember that Malaterra may have downgraded this figure in order to make the Normans' success appear in a more striking light). A complete territorial conquest or occupation was unthinkable. Since the Muslims greatly outnumbered the Normans, the only possible course of action was to keep them under control from fortified bases. Support from the Christians could not be relied on in the overwhelmingly Muslim south of the island. In addition, the count had to leave Sicily on a number of occasions in order to bring military aid to the Duke of Apulia. Roger I therefore proceeded cautiously, adopting a

¹⁶ *Amatus* vi.21, p. 283. *Malaterra* ii.46, pp. 53–4; iii.1, p. 57. *Amatus* vii.27, pp. 320–1; *W. Ap.* v lines 285ff, pp. 253ff. Cf. Chalandon (1907), 1.209ff, 242ff, 265ff. Bünnemann (1997), 79–165. Loud (2000b), 137–44, 196–223.

¹⁷ *Malaterra* iii.18, iv.46, pp. 54, 67; for Arisgot of Pucheuil (dept. Seine Maritime), see Ménager (1975b), 360–1. For Roger's vassalic dependence on Robert Guiscard, Caravale (1966), 22ff, and (with a different interpretation) D'Alessandro (1975). Cf. also Jahn (1989), 124ff.

policy of wait and see. He offered the towns generous treaties of surrender; and what happened at Palermo became the accepted model for this. The conquered region was rendered safe by the construction of castles in strategically important areas. Thus the castle of Paternò on the slope of Etna dominated the plain of Catania, whilst that of Calascibetta kept the hill town of Enna covered. In Mazara a citadel was built in the town, and it was from here that Roger repelled an attack by Muslims from north Africa in 1075.¹⁸

A year earlier pirates under the control of the Zirid ruler Tamīm ibn Mu'izz (1061–1108) had launched a successful raid on the town of Nicotera on the coast of Calabria. According to Malaterra's account, the inhabitants had drunk a great deal of wine on the eve of the Feast of St Peter. It was therefore very easy to massacre them. Women and children were taken prisoner in order to be sold as slaves, the town was plundered and set on fire. It was to avoid a repeat of such episodes that Roger I concluded a treaty, effectively an armistice, with Tamīm. In 1087 he therefore rejected a proposal, made by Pisa and Genoa, to undertake a combined attack on the Tunisian port of Mahdia. The Norman leader did not at this point want to risk his good relations with the Zirids. Malaterra's report is only very brief. However, the testimony of the Arab chronicler, Ibn al-Athīr (1160–1233), which is based on older sources, is more detailed. He saw a connection between the Reconquista in Spain, the Norman conquest of Sicily and the First Crusade:¹⁹

King Baldwin assembled a large army of Franks (i.e. Christians). He sent a messenger to Roger the Frank, who had conquered Sicily and was a relative, in order to inform him: 'I have assembled a large army and am now coming to you in order to set out to conquer the coast of Africa from your bases and so become your neighbour.' At these tidings Roger assembled his companions and asked their advice. All

¹⁸ *Malaterra* II.4, p. 30 (Messina 1061, Roger had 160 knights; Ibn Khaldūn, *BAS*, 202, claimed 700 men); *Malaterra*, II.10, p. 32 (1061, Roger had 150 *militēs*); *ibid.*, II.17, p. 34 (Enna 1061, the combined forces of Robert Guiscard and Roger totalled 700 men); *ibid.*, II.33, pp. 42–4 (at the battle of Cerami in 1063 Roger had 100 knights and his nephew Serlo 36); *ibid.*, II.35, p. 45 (later in 1063 Roger had 200 *militēs*, of whom 100 had been sent by Guiscard). *Amatus* v.20, p. 238, claimed that at Messina in 1061 the army of Robert Guiscard and Roger comprised 1,000 *militēs* and 1,000 *pedites*. For the capture of various fortified centres, see *Malaterra* II.13, p. 33 (Rometta 1061), III.12, p. 64 (Castronovo 1077); IV.2, p. 86 (Syracuse 1085); IV.6, p. 88 (Enna 1086); IV.15, p. 93 (Noto 1090). On the castles, *ibid.*, III.1, 7, pp. 57, 60–1. Cf. Maurici (1992). On the 1075 attack, *Malaterra* III.9, p. 61.

¹⁹ *Malaterra* III.8, p. 61 (Nicotera); IV.3, pp. 86–7 (correctly 1087 rather than 1086). Ibn-al-Athīr, *BAS* I.45off (quote). Cowdrey (1977), Abulafia (1983), 5; Abulafia (1985), 29–30; Cantarella (1996), 225ff. Quite when Roger I's treaty with Tamīm was concluded is unknown; the date of 1075 suggested by Wieruszowski (1969), 21, and Hettinger (1993), 236, is only supposition.

replied: 'By the Gospel, this is an excellent plan for us and for him; thus will all the country become Christian.' But Roger lifted his foot and made a great fart, saying 'By my faith, here is far better counsel than you have given.' When his astonished advisors inquired into his reasoning he explained: 'When the Franks are here I shall have to provide a numerous fleet, and much else besides, to transport it across to Africa, both it and my own troops too. If we conquer the country, then it will be theirs; meanwhile we shall have to send them provisions from Sicily and I shall lose the money I draw each year from the sale of my produce. If on the contrary the expedition is unsuccessful, they will return to Sicily and I shall have to suffer their presence. Moreover Tamīm will be able to accuse me of bad faith towards him, claiming that I have broken my word and that I have severed the links of friendship existing between our countries. In addition, Africa is always within our range; when we have become strong enough we will conquer it.' He therefore sent for Baldwin's messenger and informed him: 'If you want to wage war on the Moslems, it would be better to snatch Jerusalem from their hands; that will bring you glory. As far as Africa is concerned, I am bound by treaties with the rulers there.'

Ibn al-Athīr was wrong to attribute the African venture to King Baldwin I of Jerusalem (1100–18) rather than to Pisa and Genoa. The depiction of Roger as a barbarian is typical of the Arabs' contempt for the Europeans. The reasons which persuaded the Count of Sicily to reject the offer of an attack on Mahdia are well known. Norman rule in Sicily was still not fully consolidated. In the summer of 1084 soldiers of the emir, Benavert of Syracuse, had attacked Nicotera and carried the inhabitants away into slavery. They had plundered and desecrated two churches in Reggio Calabria. Finally they had devastated the nunnery of Rocca d'Asino at Squillace, raped the nuns living there, and taken them away as captives. According to Malaterra, when the count heard about this, he was filled 'to a greater extent than usual' with divine wrath. He resolved to adopt a hard line with the Sicilian Muslims who had not yet been conquered. In the years that followed, those towns still in Arab hands – Syracuse, Enna, Butera and Noto – were rapidly overcome.²⁰

Even before the completion of the conquest of Sicily in 1091 Roger I had started integrating a considerable contingent of Muslim soldiers, mainly archers, into his army. Archbishop Anselm of Canterbury visited the count during the siege of Capua in 1098 and was horrified. His biographer reported that the Muslims were not only permitted to keep their faith,

²⁰ *Malaterra* iv.1–2, p. 85 (1084). See Amari (1933–9), III.167. Chalandon (1907), 1.338, wrote of a '*véritable croisade*', cf. Lopez (1958). Halm (1991), 373 (referring to Ibn 'Idārī = al-Bayān) is in error when he claims that Roger attacked Mahdia in 1088, occupied the suburb of Zawīla and demanded a tribute of 100,000 dinars. This supposed attack was actually that carried out by the Pisans and Genoese in 1087, for which see Cowdrey (1977), Hettinger (1993), 208–26.

but they were even forbidden to convert to Christianity. It is doubtful whether this latter statement is accurate. Roger was probably not interested in converting these soldiers, for as a minority they relied on his protection and therefore submitted to him unconditionally, but this does not mean that the count was at heart favourably disposed towards Islam. Roger only tolerated the Muslims because he needed them. In 1086 he had forced the Emir of Enna, Abū'l-Qāsim ibn Ḥammūd, who had admittedly proved a particularly awkward opponent, not only to capitulate but to convert as well. Furthermore, by calling for the immigration of Christians in Sicily the count was attempting slowly to displace the Muslims from their dominant position. But for practical reasons forced conversion could hardly have been put into effect.²¹

When Roger I conquered Malta in 1090 he freed the Christians who were held prisoner there; these were probably pilgrims and merchants who had fallen into the hands of Muslim pirates. He hoped that they would settle in Sicily. He helped the numerous small Greek monasteries which had become rather run down during the Arabs' rule. He also encouraged the immigration of Italo-Greeks from Calabria. In addition, he founded a few great Latin abbeys such as St Bartholomew on the island of Lipari (before 1085) and the Holy Saviour at Patti on the adjacent north coast of Sicily – these were combined together in 1094. He also founded the monastery of St Agatha at Catania in 1091, which also served as the chapter for the cathedral there, and the nunnery of St Mary at Messina (before 1101). These abbeys lying in the northeast of the island contributed to the Latinization of this hitherto mixed Greek–Arab area. Towards the end of the eleventh century, the Abbot of St Bartholomew on Lipari called on 'Latin-speaking people, wherever they may be' to move to the country. Northern Italians migrated to Sicily in the wake of Roger's third wife Adelaide.²²

Following the conquest of the island, a new church organization had to be created. It was only in Palermo that a bishop was found, who 'albeit timorous and a Greek' (according to Malaterra) was practising Christian worship as well as he could in a poor church dedicated to St Cyriakus. The cathedral had been turned into a mosque by the Muslims. The Normans reversed this process and gave the cathedral back to the bishop. However, he seems soon to have been replaced by a Latin prelate. In 1080 Roger made his base at Troina the seat of a bishopric, personally appointed the

²¹ *The Life of St Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, by Eadmer*, ed. R. W. Southern (London 1962), 111–12; Malaterra iv.6, p. 88. Rizzitano (1977), 204ff; Houben (1994a), 166ff; Loud (2000b), 184.

²² Malaterra iv.16, p. 95. Roger II, *Diplomata*, 64–5 no. 23: *homines quicumque sint, latine lingue*. Cf. White (1938), 84–5, Falkenhausen (1987), 47–9, Houben (1995a), 43–5.

new bishop and fixed the boundaries of the new diocese. He considered that he was justified in these actions because he had reconquered the island for Christianity.²³

The popes were naturally interested in winning back Sicily for the Latin Church; not least because before it was conquered by the Arabs the island's churches had been under the jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Constantinople. In 1050 Leo IX had appointed Humbert of Silva Candida as Archbishop of Sicily; a programmatic act which must have seemed quite utopian at that time, although in reality it was far-sighted. In 1059 Robert Guiscard had in his oath of fealty promised the pope to transfer all the churches in the area under his rule to his jurisdiction. In the first instance this meant only the subordination of the Greek bishoprics to the primacy of Rome, although in the long-term it represented a 'recatholicization' of southern Italy. Sicily, however, first had to be taken away from Islam.²⁴

After the victory of Cerami in 1063, Roger gave Pope Alexander II (1061–73) four captured camels. The pope thanked him by sending him a banner which, according to Malaterra, the count had carried at the front of his army during later battles. This could have been the 'Banner of St Peter', which the popes gave to some rulers in order to lend religious legitimacy to military ventures. On some coins Roger is actually depicted as a knight with a banner on his lance. Malaterra reports that through Divine intervention at the battle of Cerami, a banner with a cross suddenly hung from Roger's lance. Just before that, St George had appeared as a knight in shining armour, riding a white horse, holding a white banner with a shining cross on the lance. Was this perhaps an anticipation of a later crusade? Hardly, since the motivation for the conquest of Sicily was not primarily religious; it was not about freeing holy places or combatting Islam. It was just a by-product of the conquest, so to speak, that Sicily was won back for Christianity. However, this was service enough that even a pope as inflexible as Gregory VII had to tolerate Roger's high-handed church policy; he only cautioned him not to disregard the rules of canon law in future.²⁵

It was only after he had conquered most of Sicily that 'the count started to become pious'. According to Malaterra, he did not want to be ungrateful

²³ Malaterra II.45, pp. 53–4: *quamvis timidus et natione graecus*; *ibid.*, III.19, pp. 69–70. Cf. *Italia Pontificia* x.337 no. 17. Giunta (1994).

²⁴ *Italia Pontificia* x. 186 no. 73. *Liber Censuum*, I.422 c. 163. Cf. Herde (1970), 5–7, Deér (1972), 17–18, 93–5. For the survival of Greek Christianity in Arabized western Sicily, see most recently Johns (1995b).

²⁵ Malaterra II.33, pp. 44–5. Grierson (1993), 124, Travaini (1995), 42–3, table 11 and illustration 160. Erdmann (1977), 134–6, 185. Taviani-Carozzi (1996), 375–6, and most recently Cantarella (1996), 231–2. *Gregorii VII Registrum*, ed. E. Caspar (*MGH Epistolae Selectae* II, Berlin 1920–3), IX.25, pp. 607–8.

for the favours he had received from God. Around 1086/1090 he founded the bishoprics of Syracuse, Catania, Agrigento and Mazara del Vallo. Pope Urban II (1088–99) sanctioned this action. Urban was in a difficult situation because of the conflict with Henry IV and the antipope Clement III (1080–1100). During the early years of his pontificate he remained under the protection of the Normans mainly in southern Italy. Thanks to his conciliatory stance, he managed to get the count to unite the bishopric of Troina with the old diocesan town of Messina in 1096 and transfer the bishop's residence there. But an attempt by Urban to appoint a legate in order to bring Sicily under the control of the Roman Church failed because of the energetic resistance of Roger I. The pope was forced to bestow on the count and his heirs the practice of apostolic legation. The basis for the construction of a 'national church' under the direct control of the ruler was established. As a result, the Count of Sicily had achieved a position enjoyed by no other prince in Europe.²⁶

Towards the end of the eleventh century, Roger I was definitely the dominant personality on the southern Italian stage. It was only with his help that his nephew and overlord, Duke Roger Borsa (1085–1111), was able to assert himself against his half-brother Bohemond I who, even though he was the elder son of Robert Guiscard, had been excluded from the line of succession. Despite this assistance, Roger Borsa had to come to terms with his duchy being reduced to little more than the territory of the earlier principality of Salerno. Bohemond received lordship over a number of areas formerly under Byzantine rule such as the Terra d'Otranto and the Basilicata, as well as Bari and Brindisi. However, Bohemond had to take into consideration the Counts of Conversano and the Lords of Montescaglioso, who soon sought independence from his authority. The Count of Sicily demanded a high price for his help, for Roger Borsa had to cede to him the parts of Calabria and Sicily in his possession. In 1096 he promised Roger I half of Amalfi if he would help him to conquer the town which had risen against his rule. However, the siege had to be abandoned because Bohemond and other Normans preferred to take part in the First Crusade, called for by Urban II. When in 1098 Prince Richard II of Capua, who had come of age after a long minority, appealed to the Count of Sicily for help in order to be able to take up his paternal inheritance, Roger I demanded the right to lordship over Naples. Furthermore, when the Duke of Apulia was not in a position to bring about peace between contending parties, the Count of Sicily intervened.

²⁶ *Malaterra* iv.7, pp. 88–9. Cf. Delogu (1992), 155–6. *Italia Pontificia* x.317–18 no. 70; 290 no. 18; 264 no. 8; 252 no. 1; 337 no. 18. Déér (1972), 166–8. Cf. also Fodale (1977), Fonseca (1977), Becker (1988), 62–4, and most recently Loud (2000b), 174–6, 231–3. For Urban II's itinerary in southern Italy, see Houben (1996a).

Thus Roger mediated in a dispute between the Count of the Principate in the Campania and the abbey of the Holy Trinity in Venosa, in the northeast of the Basilicata, where Robert Guiscard and other brothers were buried.²⁷

Roger only enfeoffed close relatives: he gave Syracuse to his illegitimate son Jordan and, after his death, to his nephew Tancred, the son of Count William of the Principate. He granted Ragusa to his son Godfrey, and Troina to another son called Malgerius. He may also have given Paternò, Butera and other places to his brother-in-law Henry del Vasto (although it is possible that this grant was only made by his widow after his death). Roger was more generous towards monasteries and churches, whose territorial lordships could not pose a threat to him. In the administration of Calabria and Sicily he relied on his Norman countrymen such as Robert Borrell, Robert Avenel, William of Hauteville and Josbert of Lucy, and he also used Latin priests. But since the 1080s the count had increasingly relied upon Greek officials from the former Byzantine administration. The most important were the chamberlain and mystolect Nicholas of Mesa (near Reggio), the protonotary John of Troina, the notary Bonos, and the logothete Leo. Scholarios, Roger's Greek court chaplain, came from Reggio. We should note, however, that the functions of these offices were not yet exactly defined. In Calabria and Sicily cadastral surveys and lists of serfs dating back to the previous Byzantine and Arab administrations were still used. The count issued Greek and a few Latin charters, but there was not yet a chancery in the sense of an organized office.²⁸

It was through the conquest of Sicily that Roger I was transformed from an impoverished adventurer into one of the most respected princes in Europe. Kings asked him for his daughters' hands in marriage. They were mainly interested in the dowry which was to be expected from the proverbially rich count. For instance, King Philip I of France (1060–1180), having illegally disowned his wife Bertha, was alleged to have asked for the hand in marriage of Roger's daughter Emma. According to Malaterra, the count granted this request because he did not know that the king was still married. The bride was to be given away by the Count of Toulouse, Raymond IV of St-Gilles (1093–1105), who had married one of Emma's

²⁷ *Malaterra* III.42, p. 82; IV.17, 24, 26, pp. 96–7, 102, 104. *Annales Cavenses*, *MGH SS* III.190. Cf. Chalandon (1907), 1.308, Girgensohn (1969), Schwarz (1978), 65–7, Jahn (1989), 237–9, 313–15, Houben (1995a), 307–9.

²⁸ Cf. Tramontana (1977), 216–39, reprint pp. 226–49. Falkenhausen (1977), 351–4, for Scholarios, *ibid.*, 355–6 note 172, also Scaduto (1982), 116–18, Dölger (1929), Falkenhausen (1985), Takayama (1993), 26–8, 38–40. For the Byzantine character of the mystolect, a post 'which was in practice reserved for jurists', see Falkenhausen (1985), 176 note 12. For Roger's chancery, see most recently, Falkenhausen (1998b), 268–70.

sisters, Matilda, but after he realized that Philip's intentions in the marriage were not genuine and that he only wanted to get his hands on the dowry, he then tried to snatch this dowry for himself. However, the chaperones Roger sent with his daughter saw through this plan and returned to Sicily with the dowry, but not the bride. Finally Raymond had no alternative but marry his sister-in-law to the Count of Clermont.

However, two of Roger's daughters did actually marry kings. When Conrad, the son of the emperor Henry IV, who had been crowned King of Germany in 1087, rebelled against his father in 1093 and had himself crowned as King of Italy in Milan, Urban II and his ally Matilda of Canossa advised him to marry a daughter of Roger I. He would thus gain what he had hitherto lacked for the status of a proper king: a wife and money. In 1095 he was married to Maximilla (this is what we think the bride was called). However, Conrad's plots against his father soon failed. After his death in 1101 the count's daughter returned to the south. Another of Roger's daughters, whose name is unknown, married King Coleman of Hungary (1095–1116) in 1097.²⁹

At around this time an Arab coin was minted in Agrigento showing Roger I for the first time as *imām* and *malik*, lord and sovereign (in fact king) of Sicily. The *imām* title is a feature of the coin from Agrigento. The title *malik* had been preserved from the coins of Robert Guiscard minted after the conquest of Palermo, who was also referred to there as 'very great duke'. Roger I had to content himself with the more modest title 'count, brother of the duke'. In the Arab charters he issues, the oldest dating from 1095, Roger called himself 'sultan'. Arab scholars are undecided about the meaning of this title. Albrecht Noth argues that 'in the Arab hierarchy of titles' the title sultan 'stands in second place after caliph, therefore it roughly means king'. However, Jeremy Johns regards it simply as the Arabic translation of the title count. Whichever is true, Roger I never used the title 'gran conte', great count, which is often ascribed to him in modern literature. It was only after his death that in documents of Roger II he was described as *magnus comes* ('great count'), although we should remember that *magnus* can also mean 'the elder' to distinguish Roger I from his son of the same name.³⁰

For Malaterra, the Count of Sicily represented the ideal model of a knight: 'He was very handsome, tall, well proportioned, extremely eloquent,

²⁹ *Malaterra* iv.8, 23, 25, pp. 90, 101–3. Cf. Holtzmann (1963), Houben (1990), as cited in revised version (1996c), 88–90.

³⁰ Money of 491 from the Hegirah (9 December 1097–27 November 1098), Johns (1986), 37 no. 8, Travaini (1995), 40, 115. Noth, in Brühl (1978), 246; Johns (1986), 16–17; Enzensberger (1977), 20; Brühl (1978), 81. For the Greek documents, see Falkenhausen (1983), 183–4 note 44, and most recently Falkenhausen (1998b), 292ff.

clever in decision-making, far-sighted in his plans, friendly and affable with everyone, very strong, and fierce in battle.' He was married three times. The count had more than ten children by his first two wives, the two Normans Judith of Evreux and Eremburga of Mortain. When he was about fifty in 1089/90 he married Adelaide del Vasto, who was barely fifteen. Two sisters of Adelaide married or were betrothed to two sons of Roger: one to Jordan, who although illegitimate was regarded as Roger's successor, and the other to Godfrey – however, he died before the wedding could take place. Adelaide's brother Henry married a daughter of the count. By this complex set of marriage alliances Roger I closely tied his family with the Aleramici, a powerful noble family from northern Italy, resident in Liguria and Piemont.³¹

The marriage with Adelaide produced two sons, Simon and Roger, and probably at least one daughter as well. The count's young wife understood the importance of having the sons from the earlier marriages excluded from the succession. Roger I died in June 1101 and was buried at Mileto in Calabria, where he had founded a Benedictine abbey which was intended as his burial place. His wife had him buried in an ancient Roman marble sarcophagus, over which was mounted a canopy made of porphyry. This was evidence of high aspirations: the use of porphyry was actually reserved for the Byzantine emperor. A few years later the popes were buried in this material in order to emphasize their universalist claims. Roger II also chose to be buried in a monument of this type.³²

COUNTESS ADELAIDE AS REGENT

When her husband died in 1101, Adelaide was about twenty-six years old. Since Simon, the intended successor, was only a child she acted as regent for him. Little is known of this period. The Norman monk Orderic Vitalis (1075–1142) reports that Adelaide had entrusted the regency to a son of the Duke of Burgundy. When Roger II came of age she poisoned this regent who was now superfluous. However, there is no evidence for this story in any other source. There is no doubt that Orderic had some excellent information about southern Italy. Norman monks often visited their relatives in the south, and as well as valuable presents they also brought news back with them. However, Orderic's imagination sometimes ran away with him. He also seems to have had a weakness for stories about poisonings

³¹ *Malaterra* 1.19, pp. 28–9: *militia ferox*. For the Del Vasto family, Bordone (1988), and for Roger's children, Houben (1990), and table 2 above.

³² Cf. Deér (1959), Faedo (1982), Herklotz (1985), Houben (1996c), 102, De Lachenal (1995), 179–81.

perpetrated by women. A later anonymous chronicler, the so-called Anonymus Vaticanus (named after the place where the manuscript is now kept: the Vatican Library) reports that Simon only lived for a few years and had to face serious problems. However, the reliability of this source is also doubtful. The author largely follows Malaterra for the early Norman period. Whether he also relied on other (now lost) sources must remain in doubt.³³

What is certain is that the countess suppressed some rebellions by her vassals with great severity. In this connection later Greek charters talk of a 'rebellion of the barons in the whole country of Calabria and Sicily', of rebels being crushed 'like earthenware dishes'. The young regent relied particularly on those who had worked with Roger I. After 1105 the *amiratus* (emir or admiral) Christodoulos took the place of the chamberlain Nicholas, who had previously been the leading official. Christodoulos was a Sicilian, brought up in the Greek-Byzantine culture, and he now became a sort of prime minister. He was also entrusted with the education of young Roger. A sign of his dominant position comes in a later charter, from 1121, in which a document issued in 1109, 'in the time of the *amiratus* Christodoulos', is mentioned. In the same year Christodoulos was decorated with the honorary title of *protonobilissimos* ('most noble') by the Byzantine emperor. Evidence about the others who worked with the countess, such as the notary Bonos, who was also a *protonobilissimos*, and the chaplain John 'the Tuscan' is more scanty.³⁴

³³ Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, ed. M. Chibnall, 6 vols. (Oxford 1969-81), vi, 428-32; Anonymus Vaticanus, *Historia Sicula a normannis ad Petrum Aragonensem*, in Muratori, *RIS* viii.777: 'After this Simon, [his] first-born son, received the rulership; he lived for only a few years, and suffered serious problems from the Apulians'; cf. the version of the Vatican Anonymus in Cod. Vat. Lat. 4936, fol. 24v: 'he lived for only a few years, and suffered serious disturbances from many people [*per paucos vivens annos, graves tamen a plurimis inquietationes sustinuit*]'. For this, and for other episodes (including tales of poison) related by Orderic, see Houben (1996c), 93-6, and cf. most recently Falkenhausen (1998c), 96 and note 55.

³⁴ Cusa, *Diplomi*, 471, 532 (Ca. 42, 149; 1123, c. 1140). Cf. Caspar (1904), 27-8, Falkenhausen (1998c), 98, and for the term *terrérios* (baron), Falkenhausen (1980b), 225-6. Takayama (1993), 40-2. For Christodoulos, see Dölger (1929), Ménager (1960), 28-36, Falkenhausen (1985). Roger II, *Diplomata*, 4 no. 1 (1107): *Iohannes Tuscanus comitisse capellanus*. The supposition of Cuozzo (1989a), 627-8, that Robert *de Urbe* (Pirri, *Sicilia Sacra*, II.843), attested in 1110 as chaplain and chancellor of Roger I (!), had under Adelaide attained a position of pre-eminence vis-à-vis the other chaplains, analogous to that of the later chancellor, is unfounded. This document in fact dates from 1093, and its authenticity is anyway dubious, while Brühl (1978), 38 and note 22, has shown that the reference here to *cancellarius* means only an amanuensis, and has no other significance. Falkenhausen (1998c), 105-15, provides a register of Adelaide's documents.

It appears that Graeco-Byzantine culture and religion exerted a great influence on Adelaide, who no longer resided in Troina, but mainly in Messina. Abbot Gregory of St Philip of Fragalà in the Val Demone was particularly close to the regent. When in 1101 young Roger fell ill with ear trouble (he may have had mumps), Adelaide turned to Abbot Gregory, whose efforts brought about his rapid recovery. By way of thanks the countess gave numerous gifts to his monastery. Her 'prime minister' Christodoulos favoured Abbot Bartholomew of Simeri (in Calabria) who between 1101 and 1105 founded the abbey of St Mary of the Patiron at Rossano.³⁵

Little is known of Roger's childhood. As a rule, medieval chroniclers pass over this period of a man's life in silence. According to the view prevailing among contemporaries, childhood was not a period of particular significance. Alexander of Telesse relates an anecdote which should show how his hero was predestined to rule.³⁶

He [Roger] had an older brother called Simon, who on their father's death succeeded him in his lordship of the province. As is the way of children, they were playing at 'coin' [*nummus*] which was their favourite game, and this degenerated into a fight. When they fought, each with a group of other boys whom they had gathered together, the younger, Roger, was the conqueror. As a result he mocked his brother Simon, saying: 'it would be far better that I should have the honour of ruling triumphantly after our father's death than you. However, when I shall be able to do this I shall make you a bishop or even pope at Rome – to which you're far better suited.' And hence I believe that through these insulting words he foretold that he already intended to be truly the ruler after his father, and, as will be shown below, to extend his lands far and wide, as he was to do following his victories.

This is what actually happened, for Simon died aged twelve on 28 September 1105. Adelaide now acted as regent in the name of Roger II. She succeeded in handing on the counties of Calabria and Sicily in an orderly state to her son. Her brother Henry, along with numerous immigrants from northern Italy (whom south Italian sources refer to as 'Lombards'), had settled in the area of Paternò and Butera, which had been given to him by Roger I, or perhaps Adelaide, as a fief. The settlement of these 'Lombards' drove a wedge between the regions of Moslem settlement in the west and the southeast of the island. In the Arabic section of a

³⁵ Documents redacted at Messina: Ca. 7, 12–14, 20–1, and Collura (1955), 'Appendice', no. 11; at San Marco d'Alunzio (province of Enna), Ca. 1 and 9; at Troina, no. 15; for St Philip of Fragalà: Ca. 1–3, 14–16, 20, 22, cf. Caspar (1904), 26. For the testaments of Gregory (who died after 1108), redacted in 1096–7 and 1105, see Falkenhausen (1983), and Scaduto (1982), 168–9.

³⁶ *Al. Tel.* 1.2, p. 7.

Greek–Arab charter dating from 1109, Adelaide is described as ‘the great female ruler, the *malikah* (sovereign or queen) of Sicily and Calabria, the protector of Christian faith’. In a similar fashion, in Greek charters after 1094 Roger I had occasionally added to his title of count that of ‘the Protector of Christians’; this additional title would later find its way into the Latin chancery of Roger II.³⁷

According to Snorri’s ‘Book of Kings’, the *Heimskringla*, King Sigurd of Norway (1103–30) stopped in Sicily on his way to the Holy Land, probably in 1110.

In the spring King Sigurd came to Sicily, where he stayed for a long time. Rothgeir [Roger] was duke then there, and he greeted the king well and bade him come to a banquet. King Sigurd went and many men were with him. It was a noble welcome, and each day of the feast Duke Rothgeir stood and did service at King Sigurd’s table. On the seventh day of the feast, when the men had taken their baths, King Sigurd took the duke [!] by the hand, led him up to the high-seat, and gave him the name of king and the right of being king over the realm of Sicily; before that time there had been jarls over that realm.

Snorri Sturluson wrote his work between 1220 and 1230, using older oral and written sources. The episode mentioned could of course simply belong to the realm of historical legends, having resulted from the author’s knowledge of Roger’s sensational rise from count to duke and finally to king. Yet, it is possible that Sigurd’s visit did actually take place, and perhaps awakened in Roger II the desire for a royal dignity.³⁸

The charters issued by Adelaide show the countess was only able to act as ruler effectively in the extreme south of Calabria and the northeast of Sicily. However, at the same time a series of Norman barons settled in the mainly Arab south and west of the island, and thus prepared the way for the transfer of the centre of rule from Messina to Palermo.³⁹

Adelaide took this important step shortly before the end of her regency, between March and June 1112. As a result, a large town with a mainly Muslim population became the capital of a Christian kingdom. Ibn Ḥawqal, a traveller from Baghdad who visited the town in 973, reported that it was surrounded by great gardens and that it had five quarters. Two of those were walled, al-Qaṣr, the merchants’ quarter with the principal mosque, and al-Khālīṣah, the government quarter, which contained the

³⁷ For the birth of Simon (1092–3), *Malaterra* iv.19, p. 98. The day of his death is given by the *Necrologia Panormitana*, p. 473. Cf. Bresc (1992), Collura (1955), 556, ‘Appendice’, no. 6. Cf. Johns (1986), 18, Falkenhausen (1998c), 108 no. 11.

³⁸ *Heimskringla or the Lives of the Norse Kings by Snore Sturlasoni*, ed. and trans. E. Mønsen and A. H. Smith (Cambridge 1932), 610. Cf. Elze (1964), 104.

³⁹ Falkenhausen (1998c), 90, lists the recipients of Adelaide’s diplomas.

emir's palace. However, there were no fortifications in the harbour quarter, the so-called New Quarter and the mosque quarter, where most of the inhabitants were soldiers, artisans and small traders. The harbour was secured by towers and harbour chains. According to Ibn Ḥawqal there were more than three hundred mosques in Palermo. In the mosque of the butchers' corporation he claimed to have counted more than seven thousand people at Friday prayers. From this it has been estimated that at that time the town numbered over 300,000 inhabitants, in which case it would have been one of the largest towns in the Mediterranean after Baghdad, Córdoba and Constantinople, each of which had approximately 500,000 inhabitants. That is certainly an exaggeration. Ibn al-Athīr reports that when it was conquered by the Arabs in 831 the town had 70,000 inhabitants, of whom only 3,000 survived the siege. In 1277, 11,000 homes were taxed in Palermo, from which we can conclude that there were approximately 50,000 inhabitants. There are, however, no figures for the centuries in between. The estimates of recent research fluctuate between 20,000 and 100,000 inhabitants for the Norman period. After the sixteenth year of his life Roger II, having spent his childhood in the care of his northern Italian mother in a Greek ambience, therefore grew up in a large town in which Arabic influence predominated.⁴⁰

When Roger II came of age in 1112 Adelaide's mission was at an end. The countess, then about thirty-five, could have retreated into private life. However, she soon had an opportunity to play an important role once again. King Baldwin I of Jerusalem asked for her hand in marriage. He was in dire financial difficulties and needed the generous dowry that he would obtain with Adelaide in order to pay his knights. He was therefore prepared to accept any condition. Adelaide and Roger demanded an assurance that if the marriage did not produce an heir, the succession to the kingdom of Jerusalem would then fall to Roger. Baldwin even agreed to this. It was probably known in Sicily that the king was actually still married; for although he had repudiated his second wife, the Armenian Arda of Edessa, the marriage had not been formally annulled. Clearly it was better to ignore this, for the prospect of a royal crown seemed to be worth the risk. When Adelaide arrived in Jerusalem she brought with her

⁴⁰ Adelaide was still issuing documents at Messina in March 1112: Cusa, *Diplomi*, 407 (Ca. 20), Falkenhausen (1998c), 113 no. 27, cf. Chalandon (1907), 359–60. Ibn Ḥawqal, *BAS* 1.10–11, *Description de Palerme*, trans. M. Amari (Paris 1845), 22ff. Cf. Columba (1910), map after p. 424, De Simone (1971), Johns (1983), 146ff with maps 2–4, 405ff. Ibn al-Athīr, *BAS* 1.369, D'Angelo (1978), 73. Estimates of population: Amari (1933–9), II.349 (more than 350,000), Peri (1978), 107ff, especially p. 112 (a maximum of 100,000 c. 1170), Schack (1969), 17ff. (50,000), Johns (1983), 168 (20,000, from a surface area of about 2.5. km²).

ships heavily laden with weapons and soldiers, provisions and gold, and the marriage was celebrated in great splendour in September 1113.⁴¹

The marriage remained childless. When Baldwin fell seriously ill in the winter of 1116/17 it seemed that the plans made by Adelaide, who by now had turned forty, would come to fruition. However, she had not calculated on the king's vassals and the Patriarch of Jerusalem, who were not prepared to accept the Count of Sicily as Baldwin's successor, for they were afraid that they would have to forfeit their hitherto strong position, acquired at the expense of the weak king. The patriarch therefore raised the argument that Baldwin was still legally married to his second wife. The sick king was as a result forced to repudiate Adelaide. Disappointed, she now left the country as an ex-queen and embarked for Sicily in spring 1117, where she died on 16 April 1118, barely a year after her return. She was buried in the nunnery of the Holy Saviour at Patti.⁴²

Roger II did not forget the affront to his mother. This was the only explanation that the chronicler and chancellor of the kingdom of Jerusalem, William of Tyre (d. 1186), could provide for the failure of the Kings of Sicily to support the Crusader states.⁴³

Adelaide's son was angered beyond measure, because she had been sent back. He conceived a mortal hatred against the kingdom and its people. Other Christian princes in various parts of the world, either by coming in person or by giving liberal gifts, have amplified and promoted our infant realm. But he and his heirs at the present time have never become reconciled to us to the extent of a single friendly word. Although they could have relieved our necessities by counsel and aid far more easily than any other prince, yet they have always remembered their wrongs and have unjustly avenged upon the whole people the fault of a single individual.

Here one individual attempted a psychological explanation of a more complex situation.

Adelaide's plan to provide her son with the royal crown of Jerusalem had indeed failed. However, in her rise to queen she had nevertheless increased the prestige of the comital house of Sicily. When Roger wanted to become king, he indicated in his charters that he was the son of a queen.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Albert of Aachen, *Historia Hierosolymitana* xii.13, *Recueil des Historiens des Croisades, Occidentaux*, iv. 696–7. William of Tyre, *Chronicon*, xi.21, p. 526 [Babcock and Krey, 1.496–7]. Cf. Cohn (1910), 16–17, Pontieri (1964), 500–2, Mayer (1984), 59ff, Favreau-Lilie (1989), 89, Houben (1996c), 103.

⁴² William of Tyre, *Chronicon*, xi.29, pp. 541–2 [Babcock and Krey, 1. 513–14], *Annales Siculi*, in *Malaterra*, 116, *Necrologia Panormitana*, 472. Cf. Mayer (1984), 64 and note 136, Pontieri (1964), 507 and note 194, Siragusa (1910).

⁴³ William of Tyre, *Chronicon*, xi.29, pp. 542–3 [Babcock and Krey, 1.514]. Cf. Loud (1992), 57–9, Hiestand (1993b), 86ff.

⁴⁴ Roger II, *Diplomata*, 37 no. 12 (November 1129), 42 no. 14 (30 December 1129).