The Age of Robert Guiscard

Southern Italy and the Northern Conquest

G.A. Loud

The Medieval World

ROUTLEDGE

THE AGE OF ROBERT GUISCARD: SOUTHERN ITALY AND THE NORMAN CONQUEST

THE MEDIEVAL WORLD

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G.A. LOUD

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

The Norman expansion in eleventh-century Europe is a movement of enormous historical importance which took men and women from the duchy of Normandy to settle in England and Wales, the southern parts of the Italian peninsula, Sicily and the principality of Antioch. These conquests were the springboard for further expansion in the twelfth century into Scotland, Ireland and, for a short time, north Africa, as well as for the transformation of the societies which the Normans took over or infiltrated. The Norman conquest of southern Italy and Sicily is a particularly interesting element in this history, since here the newcomers subdued local princes, drove out the Byzantine and Moslem rulers who claimed authority, and began to unify the territories which, in the twelfth century, became the kingdom of Sicily. They also consolidated their control by a series of complex alliances with the papacy which illuminate how secular and religious powers worked together in the process whereby western Europe and Christianity began the advance to hegemony which characterises the succeeding centuries. Ambition even extended to campaigns across the Adriatic against the Byzantine empire.

Graham Loud's splendid new book in the Medieval World series places the careers of Robert Guiscard and the Hauteville family in a wider framework in order to construct a new history of the expansion of Norman power in southern Europe. Beginning with a survey of southern Italy and Sicily before the arrival of the Normans, it shows how these conditions influenced future events. It deals effectively with long-standing controversies about the date of the Normans' arrival in the south and the precise extent of their participation relative to other peoples from neighbouring regions of northern France. Above all, the book sets out the twists and turns of a conquest which continued throughout most of the eleventh century, and which was still far from complete by the time of Guiscard's death. Almost every aspect of the politics and warfare of the time should be seen as a struggle to achieve limited objectives. The relationship between Guiscard and the papacy was usually ambivalent; Gregory VII's support for the attack on the Byzantine empire in 1081–2 cooled rapidly and Robert's efforts to save Gregory in 1084 were both flawed and subordinate to his wider military

concerns. Although the island of Sicily was more thoroughly subdued than the mainland, here, as elsewhere, the regime which emerged was one which was largely founded on existing structures. Not only were the Normans a small minority in comparison with the peoples they subjected, relations between their leaders were fractious and competitive, and Robert Guiscard's career, while spectacular, was only relatively successful. By the time of his death, the turbulent politics of southern Italy were still dominated by the rivalries of major aristocratic families.

The book draws magnificently on its author's remarkable knowledge both of southern Italian sources and of the region itself. Having published extensively on a great range of aspects of the history of southern Italy and Sicily during the Norman period, Graham Loud's effective use of his own and others' researches to construct an up-to-date and thought-provoking account is exceptionally welcome. As Dr Loud makes clear in his Conclusion, the book's significance extends far beyond the eleventh century since it brings out extremely well the importance of changes which were to have an impact on the whole of western Europe. In analysing so effectively what Robert Guiscard and his contemporaries did – and did not – achieve, this book supplies an indispensable contribution to historical understanding of the Mediterranean regions and the later history of the kingdom of Sicily.

David Bates

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I realise with something of a shock that *The Age of Robert Guiscard* is the result of some twenty-five years' work on Norman Italy, from the time in 1974 when I took my first faltering (and very nervous) steps to commence research on my doctorate. Inevitably, all the debts that have accrued during that long period of gestation are far too numerous to record individually, even if I could remember them with the accuracy that they deserve. None the less, some should be acknowledged here.

First and foremost, the actual preparation and writing of this book have taken much longer than I had originally intended, and I am indebted to the forbearance of the series editor, David Bates, and of Andrew MacLennan, formerly history editor at what was then Longmans, with an author whose prevarications must have been a sore trial to them. I am also grateful to David for contenting himself with the mildest of remonstrance at the eventual size of the manuscript. That this grew from the slim welterweight that was first envisaged into a somewhat portly heavyweight is entirely my fault. Chapter one was written while I was on study leave in the autumn of 1995, and chapters two to four during another period of leave in 1998 which was funded by a fellowship from the Leverhulme Trust. It is not just a duty but a pleasure to thank that organisation for its generosity. I must also thank Jenny Hooper and Alan Murray, to whom I was able to abandon my students with a clear conscience during these leaves, confident that they were in safe and capable hands.

I have over the years made many visits to southern Italy. This book has drawn upon the fruits of my archival research, even if perhaps not as much as it should have done, but especially from my work at the Badia di S. Trinità di Cava, where I was warmly welcomed as far back as 1980 by the late don Simeone Leone, and latterly by Sign. Enzo Cioffe. The British School at Rome generously granted me a research fellowship in 1990, for which I am very grateful. A number of people, but above all Errico Cuozzo, Edoardo and Daniela D'Angelo and Hubert and Marcella Houben, have welcomed me as a friend in what but for them might have seemed an alien environment. I have also been greatly helped – by advice, encouragement, gifts of publications and answers to importunate queries – by John Cowdrey,

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Bernard Hamilton read and commented upon the entire manuscript as it was written, saved me from many a slip, and reassured me that what I was writing actually made sense. But the greatest debt of all is owed to Diane Milburn, despite her total, and inexplicable (not to say downright peculiar), lack of interest in medieval history.

ABBREVIATIONS

Acta SS	*Acta Sanctorum*
Amari, *BAS*	M. Amari, *Biblioteca Arabo-Sicula* (2 vols, Turin 1880)
Amatus	*Storia de' Normanni di Amato di Montecassino*, ed. V. de Bartholomeis (Fonti per la storia d'Italia, Rome 1935)
BISIME	*Bollettino del istituto storico italiano per il medio evo*
Cava	Archivio della badia di S. Trinità di Cava
Chron. Cas.	*Chronica Monasterii Casinensis*, ed. H. Hoffmann (*MGH SS* xxxiv, Hanover 1980)
Chron. Vult.	*Chronicon Vulturnense del monaco Giovanni*, ed. V. Federici (Fonti per la storia d'Italia, 3 vols, Rome 1925–38)
Cod. Dipl. Aversa	*Codice diplomatico normanno di Aversa*, ed. A. Gallo (Naples 1927)
Cod. Dipl. Barese	*Codice diplomatico barese* (19 vols, Bari 1897–1950)
Cod. Dipl. Caiet.	*Codex Diplomaticus Caietanus* (2 vols, Montecassino 1887–92)
Cod. Dipl. Cavensis	*Codex Diplomaticus Cavensis*, ed. M. Morcaldi *et al.* (8 vols, Milan 1876–93: vols ix–x, ed. S. Leone and G. Vitolo, Cava dei Tirreni 1984–90)
Cod. Dipl. Tremiti	*Codice diplomatico del monastero benedettino di S. Maria di Tremiti 1005–1237*, ed. A. Petrucci (Fonti per la storia d'Italia, 3 vols, Rome 1960)
Conquerors and Churchmen	G.A. Loud, *Conquerors and Churchmen in Norman Italy* (Aldershot 1999)
Falco	*Falcone di Beneventano, Chronicon Beneventanum*, ed. E. D'Angelo (Florence 1998)
Gregory, *Reg.*	*Registrum Gregorii VII*, ed. E. Caspar (Berlin 1920–3)
Italia Pontificia	*Italia Pontificia*, ed. P.F. Kehr (10 vols, Berlin 1905–74: vol. ix ed. W. Holtzmann, 1963; vol. x ed. D. Girgensohn, 1974)

Loud, 'Calendar'	G.A. Loud, 'A Calendar of the diplomas of the Norman Princes of Capua', *PBSR* xlix (1981), 99–143
Malaterra	*De Rebus Gestis Rogerii Calabriae et Siciliae Comitis auctore Gaufredo Malaterra*, ed. E. Pontieri (*RIS*, 2nd edn, Bologna 1927–8)
MEFR	*Mélanges de l'Ecole Francaise de Rome – Moyen Age–Temps Modernes*
Ménager, *Recueil*	*Recueil des Actes des Ducs Normands d'Italie (1046–1127)* i *Les Premiers Ducs (1046–1087)*, ed. L.-R. Ménager (Bari 1981) [only vol. published]
MGH	*Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, following the usual conventions: *SS* = *Scriptores*, *SRG* = *Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum*, etc.
MPG	*Patrologia Graeca*, ed. J.P. Migne (161 vols, Paris 1857–66)
MPL	*Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.P. Migne (221 vols, Paris 1844–64)
Orderic	*The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, ed. M. Chibnall (6 vols, Oxford 1968–80)
PBSR	*Papers of the British School at Rome*
Pirro, *Sicula Sacra*	R. Pirro, *Sicula Sacra*, 3rd edn by A. Mongitore (2 vols, Palermo 1733)
QFIAB	*Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken*
Reg. Neap. Arch. Mon.	*Registrum Neapolitani Archivii Monumenta* (6 vols, Naples 1854–61)
RIS	*Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*
Roberto il Guiscardo	*Roberto il Guiscardo e il suo Tempo* (Relazioni e communicazioni nelle prime giornate normanno-sveve, Bari maggio 1973) (Rome 1975)
Romuald	Romuald of Salerno, *Chronicon sive Annales*, ed. C.A. Garufi (*RIS*, 2nd edn, Citta di Castello 1935)
Trinchera, *Syllabus*	F. Trinchera, *Syllabus Graecarum Membranarum* (Naples 1865)
Ughelli, *Italia Sacra*	*Italia Sacra*, 2nd edn by N. Colletti (10 vols, Venice 1717–21)
W. Apulia	*Guillaume de Pouille. La Geste de Robert Guiscard*, ed. M. Mathieu (Palermo 1961)

INTRODUCTION

In or about the year 1046 two young men travelled from their homes in Normandy to southern Italy in the hope of making careers for themselves. Both had the advantage of powerful and influential relatives who had already settled in that region. Indeed, by the time of their arrival men whom the contemporary sources describe as 'Normans' (the validity of that label will be discussed later) had been coming to the south of the Italian peninsula for at least a generation. During the course of the eleventh century these Normans first infiltrated, and then finally conquered, almost the whole of that area, south of a line running diagonally from Terracina in the west north-eastwards to the Adriatic coast just north of Teramo. But of the people responsible for this significant change in the history of Italy and of medieval Europe, the two who arrived in 1046, along with one other who appeared a decade or so later, were undoubtedly the most important. Any study of the Norman conquest of southern Italy must therefore devote close attention to their careers, and particularly to that of the longer-lived and most successful of these two earlier arrivals.

We ought therefore to begin by introducing our protagonists. The first, Richard, came from near Dieppe in the Pays de Caux in eastern Normandy. His uncle Rainulf, who had died a year or so earlier, had been the most important leader among the considerable number of his compatriots who had already settled in southern Italy, and had been the ruler – the count – of their first permanent settlement there, at a newly founded town called Aversa, a few miles north of Naples. He had been succeeded in that position by his nephew Asclettin, Richard's elder brother, but he too had died soon afterwards. We know very little about Richard's background in Normandy, though he was probably from the ranks of the minor nobility, but he appears to have journeyed south in some style. The contemporary historian who was best informed as to his career tells us that:

> Richard son of Asclettin was a fine figure of a man and a lord of good stature. He was a young man with an open countenance and strikingly handsome, and he was held in much affection by all who saw him. He was followed by many warriors and people. By deliberate choice, he rode so

> small a horse that his feet could not avoid touching the ground. He was held in honour and respect by everyone, out of respect both for his uncle and brother, and for his own youth and extraordinary good looks.[1]

Though he had to wait three or four years before succeeding to his uncle's and brother's position, Richard's career in Italy was very soon successful. He acquired influential friends and patrons, soon obtained a lordship for himself, and by 1050 had become count of Aversa. From there he sought energetically and successfully to extend his dominions.

The other emigrant, Robert, whose career was to be even more spectacular, came from the Cotentin peninsula at the western end of Normandy, where his father was lord of a village called Hauteville (not far from Coutances), from which the family derived their name. He was, as an Anglo-Norman monk writing some eighty years later said, 'born of middling parentage in Normandy, neither from very low nor from on high, and a few years before the coming of [Duke] William to England, he went to Apulia along with fifteen knights, to remedy his straitened circumstances by employment with the unworthy people there'.[2]

We may be sceptical about the fifteen knights who allegedly accompanied him – the south Italian sources which briefly mention his arrival certainly do not imply that he had much of a following. But this account seems to have been correct about the 'middling parentage' and, especially, the 'straitened circumstances'. Robert was a younger son. His father, Tancred, had in the course of two marriages sired no less than twelve male children who grew to manhood, of whom Robert was the sixth, the eldest born of Tancred's second wife, Fressenda. At least three and possibly four of his elder brothers had already emigrated to southern Italy to seek their fortunes. In the words of another monk, writing at Catania in Sicily in about 1100:

> They saw that their own neighbourhood would not be big enough for them, and that when their patrimony was divided not only would their heirs argue among themselves about the share-out, but the individual shares would simply not be big enough. So, to prevent the same thing happening in future as had happened to them, they discussed the matter among themselves. They decided that, since the elders were at that time stronger than those younger to them, they should be the first to leave their homeland and go to other places seeking their fortune through arms.[3]

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1 *Amatus*, II.44, p. 110.

2 William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, ed. R.A.B. Mynors, R.M. Thomson and M. Winterbottom (Oxford 1998), pp. 482–3 (my translation).

3 *Malaterra*, I.5, p. 9.

Robert's two oldest brothers, William and Drogo, and perhaps a third, Humphrey (the sources conflict on this), went to southern Italy in the mid-1030s. They served as mercenaries in the invasion of the island of Sicily – at that time under Muslim rule – by the forces of the Byzantine empire in 1038. There William was alleged to have distinguished himself by a notable feat of arms, killing a Muslim emir in single combat.[4] He and Drogo were among the leaders of the Normans when they turned against their erstwhile paymasters and invaded the Byzantine province of Apulia, in the heel of Italy, in 1041. Eighteen months later William was chosen as the overall leader of the loose confederation of warlords who by that time (September 1042) had inflicted several serious defeats on the Byzantine forces and had overrun substantial parts of inland Apulia.

By the time of Robert's arrival in southern Italy William was already dead, and had been succeeded by Drogo as leader of the Apulian Normans. The latter appears to have been less than overjoyed by the appearance of his ambitious half-brother, and flatly refused (or maybe was simply unable) to provide any landed endowment for him, leaving him to make his own way in the world. And by fair means, and more frequently foul, Robert did so. For a time he was little more than a bandit, whose ingenuity, deviousness and lack of scruple soon gained him the nickname *Guiscard* ('the cunning' or 'the weasel'). In the end his career was to surpass those of all his brothers, of whom at least seven others either had already or were later to come to southern Italy. Only his youngest sibling, Roger, who joined him in Italy in about 1056, was to come near to rivalling him. Robert's destiny was closely linked both to him and to that of Richard of Aversa, who soon after he became count married Robert's sister, named Fressenda after her mother. These three men were to be the greatest of the Norman leaders in Italy, and between them they were to rule all the Norman conquests in the southern part of the peninsula. Richard took over the principality of Capua, stretching from just north of Naples to the border with the lands of the papacy half-way between Naples and Rome. Robert created a new principality, comprising Apulia, Calabria (the toe of Italy), the principality of Salerno on the west coast, and the overlordship of Sicily. Direct rule over the island was, however, delegated to Roger, who had been mainly responsible for its conquest in the years after 1061. By the time of his death in 1085 Robert had launched an invasion of the Byzantine empire and humiliated the German emperor – who, like the ruler of Byzantium, claimed to be the

4 *Malaterra*, I.7, p. 11. *Amatus*, II.8, p. 67, said that in 1038 William, Drogo and Humphrey had all recently arrived from Normandy, but *Malaterra*, I.9, p. 12, wrote that in 1041 only the first two were present, 'for none of their other brothers had yet followed them'.

rightful successor to the power of Imperial Rome – by forcing him to an ignominious retreat from that city. He thus became a figure of European consequence, famous (or infamous) throughout Christendom. The same Anglo-Norman monk who described his arrival, William of Malmesbury, claimed that William the Conqueror himself used to rouse his courage by thinking of the mighty deeds of Robert, 'saying that it would be disgraceful to show less bravery than one whom he so surpassed in rank'.

This anecdote may of course have been – indeed probably was – just an invention of the chronicler, though it shows how high Robert's reputation had risen, even in far-away England, by the 1120s. William of Malmesbury also recorded the epitaph on Robert's tomb at the abbey of Venosa, which read:

> Here lies the Guiscard, the terror of the world.
> From the City, the king of the Italians and Germans he hurled.
> Neither Parthians, Arabs, nor the army of Macedon, could Alexius free,
> Only flight: for Venice could prevail neither flight nor the sea.[5]

There was an element of exaggeration in this flowery verse, but only a small one. By 1085 Robert had become the greatest warlord in Latin Christendom; his support and alliance was courted by popes and emperors, and his armies could threaten the heirs to Charlemagne and Constantine.

The spectacular and successful careers of Robert Guiscard, Richard of Capua and Roger of Sicily make them in their own right worthy of study, not least as noteworthy examples of medieval social climbing. The consequences of their actions were even more significant, in that they left a new and very different Italy behind them, and in the long run substantially altered the history of Europe. Certainly their contemporaries thought them worthy of record, because from an age which left relatively few narrative sources (certainly less so than the immediately succeeding century), we possess no less than three works dedicated to the careers of this trio, all written in southern Italy within about twenty years of their deaths.

Soon after 1080 a monk called Amatus of Montecassino wrote a 'History of the Normans' from their first arrival in Italy (which he dated 'before the year 1000') up to the death of Richard of Capua in 1078. He was moved to do this, as he said in his final chapter, by the benefactions they had so generously bestowed on his own monastery, though earlier sections show that he was also influenced by his dislike of the (as he saw it) wickedness and impiety of some of the indigenous local rulers. He recounted at one point a

5 *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, pp. 484–5 (my translation).

story of how a local archbishop was told in a dream by St Matthew that 'God has given this land to the Normans on account of the wickedness of those who hold it'.[6] Amatus dealt in considerable detail with the careers of both Robert and Richard. Unfortunately his work survives only in a French translation of *c.* 1300–30, which must be treated with some care.

Secondly, between 1095 and 1099 a certain William of Apulia, about whom nothing is known except his name, dedicated a long poem in Latin hexameters about 'The Deeds of Robert Guiscard' to the latter's son and successor as duke, Roger *Borsa* ('the purse'). The coverage of this work is uneven: indeed, despite the title, its first book is devoted to the early history of the Normans in Italy before Robert arrived there; but a number of key military episodes are described in detail, including his expedition against Byzantium after 1081. Though there was less overt emphasis than by Amatus on the divine plan that the Normans were fulfilling, William too undoubtedly felt that God had ordained their conquest.[7]

Finally, a year or two after William wrote his poem, Geoffrey Malaterra, a monk in the recently founded Benedictine monastery of St Agatha at Catania, wrote his 'Deeds of Count Roger of Calabria and Sicily, and of Robert Guiscard his brother'. As the title suggests, Roger was the principal hero of this account, though Robert's activities received their fair share of attention. (Writing from Sicily, Geoffrey had little or no interest, or knowledge, of the career of Richard of Capua.) His particular theme was the *strenuitas* of the Normans, and especially of their leaders, a quality that can best be translated as a combination of energy and resolution, particularly in adverse circumstances, which enabled them to conquer the indigenous peoples of the region.[8] God helped them certainly, but only because they helped themselves – in both senses of that phrase – for Geoffrey had no illusions about the lust for power to which he saw the Normans as a whole, but particularly the Hauteville brothers, as prone: 'for the natural and customary inclination of the sons of Tancred was always to be greedy for rule, to the very utmost of their powers'.[9]

We have therefore a fair amount of information about the leaders of the Norman conquest of southern Italy and Sicily, and in particular about

6 *Amatus*, III.38, pp. 151–2.

7 There is a useful discussion of William's poem by K.B. Wolf, *Making History. The Normans and their Historians in Eleventh-Century Italy* (Philadelphia 1995), pp. 123–42. Though its approach is limited, this book is the fullest introduction to the contemporary chroniclers of the conquest.

8 O. Capitani, 'Specific motivations and continuing themes in the Norman chronicles of southern Italy in the eleventh and twelfth centuries', *The Normans in Sicily and South Italy. The Lincei Lectures for 1973* (Oxford 1977), pp. 1–46.

9 *Malaterra*, II.38, p. 48.

Robert Guiscard. In addition, the Normans played a significant role in a number of other historical narratives from southern Italy and the Byzantine empire, and were at least occasionally mentioned in the contemporary historiography from Germany, Rome and northern Italy. The voluminous history of Montecassino by Leo Marsicanus and his continuators, and the considerably later, but still valuable, history of the abbey of St Clement at Casauria in the Abruzzi by the monk John Berard may in particular be cited. Leo's chronicle, covering the history of Montecassino from its foundation in the sixth century up to 1072, but with far the greater emphasis on the eleventh century, is certainly very much a contemporary document, for it was begun on the instructions of Abbot Oderisius I of Montecassino (1088–1105), and Leo's section must have been concluded when he became cardinal bishop of Ostia about the time of the abbot's death. The continuation, most of which was by a monk called Guido, was written at the latest in the 1120s, some of it more or less contemporaneously with the events it describes.[10] The casual reader, if there can be such a person of a work which in the modern printed edition runs to some 600 pages in Latin, may be stupefied into insensibility by the frequent and lengthy lists of pious donations to the abbey which intersperse the narrative, and less edified than a medieval monk by the miraculous appearances of St Benedict which show the saint's concern to defend his abbey, but we are also told a great deal about the relations of the Normans with the richest and most influential monastery in southern Italy.

Yet despite this relative abundance of contemporary historical evidence, one cannot write a biography, in the conventional sense, of Robert Guiscard, or indeed of any other early medieval layman. The works about him were, as has already been implied, self-consciously literary ones, in which reality was, to some extent at least, subsumed by the authors' purposes and their wish to please their patrons or audience. Even such a learned and (relatively) sophisticated monastic chronicler as Leo of Ostia had parameters more or less strictly limited to the interests of his own house, and what might affect its welfare. We have only a little other evidence which directly concerns Robert Guiscard with which to supplement the narrative sources. Documentary evidence for any eleventh-century individual is inevitably very thin. We have only some forty charters issued in Robert's name, nearly

10 See especially Leo's introduction to the chronicle as a whole and to Book III, *Chron. Cas.*, pp. 3, 362. For the composition of this chronicle and the problems of authorship Hoffmann's introduction to his edition is fundamental, along with his 'Studien zur Chronik von Montecassino', *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* xxix (1973), 59–162. Anglophone readers may find a convenient summary in H. Bloch, *Montecassino in the Middle Ages* (3 vols, Rome 1986), i.113–17.

all of them donations of property to churches, and not all of them by any means in complete or absolutely authentic texts. For Richard of Capua the situation is far worse, for we have only sixteen surviving genuine charters, and a couple of very dubious forgeries. For Richard's son Jordan, who ruled the principality of Capua between 1078 and 1090, there are only twenty-four genuine and two forged charters known.[11] Above all, and most frustratingly, one can do very little to approach the actual personality of these men. What we are told of this by the narratives is largely conventional, and once again subordinated to the author's literary purposes. Only for a very few churchmen who have left correspondence or extensive writings (Gregory the Great, Hincmar of Rheims, Gerbert of Aurillac, Gregory VII, St Anselm) might one actually write a medieval 'biography', certainly before the explosion of record-keeping and contemporary historical writing that were among the most significant features of the so-called 'twelfth-century Renaissance'.

What one can do, however, is to produce, if not a 'Life', at least a 'Life and Times' of Robert Guiscard, and there is indeed good reason to do this. We do have the means to describe the 'times', if not the 'life'. If the documentation for particular individuals may be deficient, that for south Italian society in the age of the Normans is surprisingly good, certainly for much of mainland southern Italy. (The situation is less satisfactory for Calabria and, until some way into the twelfth century, for Sicily.) Our documentation is, inevitably, almost all of ecclesiastical provenance. But it *is* extensive, particularly from the more important monastic houses. Thus the so-called 'Register of Peter the Deacon', the Montecassino chartulary from the early 1130s, contains more than 600 charters, the majority from the eleventh century, and this is only a part of the surviving documentation from the abbey of St Benedict. The massive chronicle–chartulary of Casauria (written *c.* 1175) copied some 2,100 charters, albeit that many of these are from the pre-Norman period. The archives of the abbey of the Holy Trinity, Cava, near Salerno, founded before 1025 and still in existence, contain over a thousand original charters from the eleventh century, and more than 3,500 from the twelfth. Another still-surviving medieval monastery, that of Montevergine, near Avellino, has preserved just over a thousand pre-1200 charters. The bad news is that only a part of this rich heritage is available in print. Neither the 'Register of Peter the Deacon' nor the Casauria chartulary

11 See Ménager, *Recueil* i (the only volume so far published); Loud, 'Calendar', pp. 119–27 nos 1–44. This calendar is now in some need of updating, but not for the reigns of the first two princes. Ménager's proposed edition of the charters of Roger I has never appeared, and with his death in December 1993 its eventual publication must be considered problematic.

(now Paris, B.N. MS lat. 5411) has been fully edited.[12] The Cava charters have been published in full up to 1080, but it was only after that date that the Normans really had much impact on the abbey and its surrounding area. Thereafter what editions there are of its documents are scattered and difficult to obtain, and cover only a small proportion of the riches that exist. Only for Montevergine, where all the documents up to 1196 have been published, with a photograph of every charter included in the edition, is the situation as one would wish.[13]

None the less, one should not dwell for too long on such evidential problems. There are a fair number of blessings to be counted. In particular almost all known Norman-era documents – indeed virtually all pre-1250 documents – from Apulia have been published. If there were no monastic houses of the size and importance of the great Campanian abbeys in this region, the survival of quite considerable documentation from, for example, the Benedictine establishments on the Tremiti islands, at Conversano, and the new shrine of St Nicholas, Bari (established in 1087), as well as from the important cathedrals of Bari and Troia, tells us much about the society of Norman Apulia. To complain about the paucity of sources is never a very fruitful exercise for historians, even though undergraduates writing essays all too often display a trusting faith in this ploy as a substitute for informed thought! Compared with those studying the period between the fall of the Roman empire and the first millennium, the historian of eleventh- and early twelfth-century southern Italy is fortunate, as the above – all too brief – survey shows.

Perhaps more to the point is the historical significance of the subject. Though the lands conquered by the Normans in the eleventh century were only later united and consolidated into a single kingdom by Guiscard's nephew, Roger II of Sicily, in the years after 1127, that kingdom lasted as a political unit until 1860. The consequences of the Norman conquest were therefore to last until the age of Cavour and Garibaldi, and were thus of very great importance for the long-term history of Italy. Yet this was not the only aspect of the conquest's significance. The Norman take-over of southern Italy and Sicily was only part of a much wider movement of

12 For detailed guides to their contents, H. Hoffmann, 'Chronik und Urkunden in Montecassino', *QFIAB* li (1971), 96–163, and C. Manaresi, 'Il Liber Instrumentorum seu chronicorum monasterii Casauriensis della nazionale di Parigi', *Rendiconti del istituto lombardo. Classe di lettere e di scienze morali e storiche* lxxx (1947), 29–62.

13 *Codice diplomatico verginiano*, ed. P.M. Tropeano (10 vols, Montevergine 1977–86). The later contents of this archive can be consulted through the printed calendar by G. Mongelli, *Abbazia di Montevirgine: Regesto di pergamene* ii–iii (Pubblicazioni degli archivio di stato, 27, 29, Rome 1956–7).

European expansion, both internal and external, at this period; a process which was fuelled to a considerable extent by demographic imperatives. Internally this was marked by the clearance of land, the extension of settlement, the development of trade and the growth, albeit from a very low base, of towns. Southern Italy was, as we shall see, by no means isolated from such a general European movement. But the coming of the Normans, and their conquest of Byzantine Apulia and Calabria and Islamic Sicily, was in addition part of a process of external expansion which also embraced, not merely the Norman conquest of England, but the Reconquista in Spain, the German *Drang nach Osten* – 'the push to the east' along the Baltic coast which was to take German settlers as far as Latvia and Estonia by the thirteenth century, and the most spectacular manifestation, though in the long run probably the least productive in terms of concrete results: the Crusades. At the self-same time as the Normans conquered Lombard and Greek southern Italy and Islamic Sicily, the Christian Spaniards, hitherto penned in their northern mountains by the power of Islam, were pushing southwards along with their French allies into the Duero valley and the plains of Castile, while from the 1060s Saxon knights were once again pressing forward against the Slav tribes to their east, taking up once more the first efforts of conquest and colonisation which the Ottonians had abandoned eighty years earlier, not least because of their preoccupation with Italy. Sailors from the Italian mercantile ports began to reverse centuries of Islamic domination of the Mediterranean. Their trade expanded, and their fleets on occasion launched attacks on Islamic ports, as the Pisans did to Palermo in 1063 and Mahdia in 1087. Viewed as one pan-European whole, the chronology of this movement is striking. Duke William of Normandy conquered England in 1066, Robert Guiscard took Palermo in 1072, Toledo fell to Alfonso VI in 1085, the conquest of Sicily was finally completed in 1091, El Cid captured Valencia in 1094, and the First Crusade Jerusalem only five years later; all of these events therefore easily within the course of a single lifetime. Indeed, if Robert Guiscard died a decade before the preaching of the First Crusade, his younger brother Roger I of Sicily survived until 1101.

The eleventh century marked the watershed between the Europe of the Dark Ages and the much more confident and assertive Europe of the central and later Middle Ages. Dark Age Europe was inward-looking, on the defensive, backward, and overshadowed by the much more advanced civilisations of Islam to its south and Byzantium to the south-east. The Europe of the second Christian millennium expanded outwards to its natural geographic frontiers and beyond them, exporting its goods, its people and its religion, and presaging the early modern era in which western Europe was to be the major force in the world, remaining as such until the

era of the World Wars and the rise of America, Japan and now China, in the twentieth century. The Norman take-over of southern Italy and Sicily was only one part of this watershed, but it was by no means an unimportant component, helping to end the Islamic dominance of the Mediterranean and greatly facilitating Christian ability to trade and communicate across that sea. However, the south Italian Normans also played an important part in destabilising the traditional Christian 'great power' in the eastern Mediterranean, the Byzantine empire, contributing to the decline of Greek Christendom to the profit of the west.

Furthermore, historians of the Middle Ages have in recent years become much more interested than hitherto in such issues as frontiers, 'frontier' or 'colonial' societies, the acculturation of subject peoples by dominant or invading forces, even if these were often, or indeed usually, numerically inferior, and the accommodations which the conquerors had to make due to such an inferiority and the physical and social differences between their new lands and their original homeland. Settlement and trading patterns, military obligation, ethnic relations as expressed especially through law and language, religious organisation and toleration, customs of marriage and inheritance – even such specialist areas as palaeography, diplomatic and coinage – are all now grist to the historian's mill in his (or her) analysis of these new colonial societies developing in the wake of the expansion of Latin Christendom during the central Middle Ages.[14] But all these are seen to be significant, not just as factors worthy of study with regard to any society of the past, but precisely because the widening of Christendom's boundaries produced hybrid societies, grafting the habits and assumptions of post-Carolingian western Europe onto indigenous stocks that up to that point had produced a very different variety of social structure.

Southern Italy and Sicily had never been part of that Carolingian world, despite the best efforts of Charlemagne and his great-grandson Louis II, and later on of the Ottonians, to extend their sway there. The Germanic society of Lombard south Italy had remained very much on the periphery, both geographically and socially, of the mainstream Christian west. However, the newcomers of the eleventh century came into contact not just with these indigenous Latin Christian inhabitants who were a part, albeit a notably distinct one, of their own society, but also with those whose language, culture and religious practices were alien: Greek Christians on both the mainland and Sicily, and Muslims on the island. Some historians have

14 See especially R. Bartlett, *The Making of Europe. Conquest, Colonisation and Cultural Change 950–1350* (1993). But among many other examples, the earlier essay by E. Lourie, 'A society organized for war: medieval Spain', *Past and Present* xxxv (1966), 54–76 may be cited as a model.

tended to overestimate the significance of the cultural fusion which resulted, but equally one cannot ignore the presence of groups who remained as substantial minorities within the new 'Norman' lands long after the conquest had run its course.

The chapters which follow will devote considerable attention to the actual process of the conquest, to the careers of the principal protagonists, and to the exegesis of the chronicles which are our principal sources for those events. They are whenever possible based on direct study of the sources, and rely on the secondary literature primarily to interpret these texts. But this book will also seek to place the conquest within the context of south Italian society in the eleventh century, and thus to provide a rather different treatment from the only studies of Robert Guiscard previously to have been published – and since these two recent books were in French and German, they will anyway not be accessible to many linguistically challenged Anglophone readers.[15] The first step towards providing that context is to examine its historical background, for without an understanding of the profound differences and divisions within southern Italy from long before the Normans arrived, one cannot comprehend the lengthy and complex process of the conquest.

15 Huguette Taviani-Carozzi, *La Terreur du Monde. Robert Guiscard et la conquête normande en Italie* (Paris 1996); Richard Bünemann, *Robert Guiskard 1015–1085. Eine Normanner erobert Süditalien* (Cologne 1997). I had largely completed this study before I was aware of this latter book.

CHAPTER I

Southern Italy before the Normans

When the first Normans arrived in southern Italy early in the eleventh century, the region to which they came was already very fragmented: divided not only politically but ethnically, religiously and culturally. There were three principal and contrasting areas. Apulia and Calabria were part of the Byzantine empire, ruled from Constantinople. The island of Sicily had been conquered from Byzantium by the Arabs during the ninth century, and remained under Islamic rule. The Campania, the western coastal region, along with the mountainous centre of the peninsula, was ruled by princes, and inhabited by people who considered themselves to be Lombards – descendants of the Germanic invaders of the peninsula in the sixth century. How many of them really were of Lombard blood is immaterial: not least because modern scholarship views the Germanic tribes who invaded the Roman empire as themselves cultural rather than ethnic units, united by language and law rather than race or common descent. But by the eleventh century these 'Lombards' had long since been assimilated, linguistically and socially, with the indigenous inhabitants, rule over whom they had seized from the Roman empire of Justinian. A chronicler writing in the later tenth century referred, significantly, to 'the Germanic language which the Lombards once spoke'.[1] By the year 1000 they may therefore be considered as, in our terms, native Italians.

However, all three of these regions were themselves divided. The provinces ruled by the Byzantine emperors Basil II and his brother Constantine VIII had a mixed population, partly Greek-speaking but also in part (and

1 *Chronicon Salernitanum*, ed. U. Westerbergh (Stockholm 1956), *c.* 38, p. 39.

in some areas almost entirely) Lombard, and that Lombard population was often extremely restive under Byzantine rule and apparently growing more so by the early eleventh century. Sicily was not only subject to frequent internecine disputes among its Arabic rulers, but religiously divided. A combination of immigration from north Africa and the conversion of many of the existing inhabitants meant that by now the majority of the island's population was indeed Muslim, but there remained a substantial Christian minority, perhaps still as much as a third of the total population. These Greek-speaking Christians were concentrated in the north-east of the island, in the area known as the Val Demone, with a few also in the Palermo area. They were to provide a very useful fifth column to the Normans when they invaded the island in the early 1060s. And while the Lombard area proper was culturally and linguistically more united than the other two regions, it was far from being so politically, being split into three contending principalities, based at Benevento, Capua and Salerno, whose rulers were often at odds with each other. In addition, there were several small duchies on the west coast which had never been conquered by the Lombards and retained an at times precarious independence, playing off the Lombard princes against each other and sometimes looking to Byzantium for political and military support. These duchies, from north to south Gaeta, Naples and Amalfi, had only very restricted (and in Amalfi's case extremely mountainous) territories, but derived much of their considerable wealth from commerce, including trade with the Muslim world. To the north of the principality of Benevento in the mountains of the Abruzzi were a number of more or less independent counties, theoretically subject to the duke of Spoleto in central Italy, and thus to the ruler of the north Italian kingdom (from 951 onwards the German emperor). The rulers of this area lying to the north of the River Trigno did occasionally interfere in the southern principalities, and a few southern monasteries (notably Montecassino) had dependencies or held land in the Abruzzi, but it was essentially a barrier region, geographically, politically, and to some extent socially, distinct from the south proper.

We shall return later to the situation at the start of the eleventh century. But to understand the complex political and social divisions of the region on the eve of the Normans' arrival we need to look briefly at its history in the early Middle Ages, to explain how and why the society of the year 1000 had developed. In particular one needs to understand why Lombard Italy was so divided, how Sicily had fallen into the hands of Islam and the way in which Byzantine rule over its south Italian provinces had evolved. The roots of these developments went back a very long way, and it is to these distant origins which we need now to look.

The evolution of southern Italy

The Lombards who had invaded Italy in 568 soon spread through much of the peninsula. In addition to their kingdom of Italy in the north, they had created two other political units, the duchy of Spoleto in the centre and the duchy of Benevento in the south. By the middle of the seventh century the Lombard dukes of Benevento already ruled most of southern Italy. Though the Byzantines seem to have put up a determined resistance in Apulia, the Lombards continued to push slowly southwards, and by the middle of the eighth century the duchy of Benevento comprised virtually all the southern third of Italy. Byzantium was left in possession only of the tip of the Salento peninsula in Apulia, central and southern Calabria, and Sicily. Northern Calabria and all of Apulia north of Otranto was by this stage held by the Lombards. The existing population, probably not very numerous after the plagues of the sixth and early seventh centuries and the economic dislocation of the invasion period, was rapidly assimilated by the newcomers and became 'Lombard', though they in turn exercised a considerable influence on their conquerors in facilitating their speedy conversion to Christianity. However, during this period the hitherto relatively dense urban network of Roman Apulia largely disappeared. Only a small number of coastal towns remained of any importance, and then more as centres of defence and administration than as genuine urban settlements. The contrast between the late Roman and Lombard periods can be seen quite clearly from the Church, for towns of any significance were almost invariably the seat of a bishopric. In the sixth century there had been at least fifteen bishoprics in Apulia; in the ninth century there were only six.[2]

The duchy of Benevento remained separate and distinct from the Lombard kingdom of northern Italy, and though the two ruling dynasties frequently intermarried, the dukes managed to avoid any effective subordination to the northern ruler. The fact that the Lombards never conquered Rome and its surrounding region, and thus never had control of the easiest and least mountainous route between north and south, was undoubtedly an important factor here. Benevento remained independent when the northern kingdom was overrun by Charlemagne and his Franks in 774, and the then duke, Arichis, not only resisted Charlemagne's attempts to enforce his lordship but proclaimed his independence by adopting the title of prince, a style which remained in

2 J.-M. Martin, *La Pouille du VIe au XIIe siècle* (Rome 1993), pp. 248–50, and more generally pp. 116–250.

use by his successors. The late ninth-century chronicler Erchempert claimed, with perhaps more local pride than strict attention to the truth, that:

> Charles and all his sons whom he had now appointed as kings marched to attack Benevento with a great army of warriors, but God, under whose rule we were then prospering, was on our side. After a little while almost all of his men had died of disease and he beat an ignominious retreat with the few survivors.

He then recorded approvingly that when Charlemagne's son Pepin demanded the subjection of Arichis's son Grimoald on the grounds that the latter's father had allegedly been subject to the last Lombard king, Grimoald had indignantly refused, saying that he had been born free and intended to remain that way.[3] Erchempert was a monk of Montecassino, a monastery on the northern edge of the Beneventan zone which benefited both materially and in prestige from the Carolingians' favour, but retained a strong sense of local patriotism. Similar sentiments were to be found at another monastery equally favoured by the rulers of northern Italy, St Vincent on Volturno.[4] Indeed contemporary south Italian Lombard writers often referred to the Franks in terms very little different, and equally unflattering, from those which they used to describe Muslims or Greeks.[5] This sense of local Lombard identity, and not just geographical distance or political allegiance, also helps to explain the clear distinction between Lombard south Italy and the Abruzzi counties to the north: part of the nobility in this latter region were Frankish settlers, and the perception of their Frankish descent remained for a long time.[6] Indeed this sense of 'separateness', not just from the Frankish intruders but between northern and southern Lombards, was to endure: in the eleventh and twelfth centuries it was made clear by an important etymological distinction – the *Longobardi* were the inhabitants of southern Italy, the *Lombardi* the people of the north.

However, the period of relative stability in the south after *c.* 750, which the Carolingians did very little to disturb, lasted only some three-quarters of a century. It was shattered first by the Islamic invasion of Sicily in 827, and then by the break-up of the duchy of Benevento into first two, and then

3 Erchempert, *Historia Langobardorum Beneventanorum*, *c.* 6, *MGH SS Rer. Lang* (1878), pp. 236–7.

4 M. del Treppo, 'Longobardi, franchi e papato in due secoli di storia vulternense', *Archivio storico per le provincie napoletane* lxxiii (1953–4), 55–6.

5 S. Palmieri, 'Un esempio di mobilità etnica altomedievale: i saraceni in Campania', *Montecassino dalla prima alla seconda distruzione. Momenti e aspetti di storia cassinese (secc. VI–IX)*, ed. F. Avagliano (Miscellanea Cassinese 55, 1987), pp. 604–6.

6 Thus a charter of Abbot Roffred of St Vincent on Volturno in 988 described Count Rainald of Marsia as 'ex nacione Francorum', *Chron. Vult.* ii.335.

three separate units. The opportunity for the Arabs to land on the island was provided by a revolt there against the Byzantine authorities led by a disaffected officer called Euphemios; and this precedent was repeated in their subsequent attacks on the mainland. Though the completion of the conquest of Sicily was to take a long time – the last Byzantine fortresses in the east did not fall until as late as 902 – the Muslims soon overran much of the island. Palermo was captured in 831 and Messina in 842, and by then some Muslims had already turned their attention northwards. A group of them had been hired as mercenaries by the duke of Naples as early as 832, but the real opportunity for interference on the mainland came when the murder of Prince Sicard and the disputed succession which ensued led the principality of Benevento to dissolve into civil war in 839. Two rival princes emerged: Sicard's former treasurer Radelchis who ruled at Benevento, and his surviving brother Siconulf who made his base at Salerno, the fortified town on the coast south of the Amalfitan peninsula built by Arichis some sixty years earlier. Both sides sought Muslim assistance, but the erstwhile mercenaries soon ran out of control, seized coastal bases for themselves and launched devastating raids deep into the peninsula. Contemporaries were all too aware of this fatal combination of internecine dispute and external threat. Another chronicler from Montecassino, writing perhaps twenty years earlier than Erchempert, commented: 'If a reader in the future wishes to know the reason why the Saracens ruled over the lands of the Beneventans, the circumstances are like this. Prince Sicard of the Beneventans was killed by his own men . . .', and he went on to recount the succession dispute, and how one of Radelchis's officials invited Muslims to Bari who then seized the town for themselves. Meanwhile the prince was reducing areas loyal to his rival to ashes, and as the chronicler dryly and laconically recorded, 'from then onwards everything rapidly got worse'.[7]

How far the Muslims were seriously intent on the conquest of mainland southern Italy, and how far they were simply intent on plunder, and above all the capture of slaves, is a good question. The chroniclers' references to them 'depopulating' the countryside may well be significant, and a Frankish pilgrim to Jerusalem in the 860s claimed to have seen some 9,000 newly enslaved Christians at Muslim-held Taranto in the process of being sent to North Africa.[8] The raiders also extorted substantial sums in 'protection money', as for example when *c.* 861 the wealthy abbeys of Montecassino and St Vincent on Volturno each paid out some 3,000 gold coins to avoid

7 *Chronica Sancti Benedicti Casinensis*, *c.* 5, *MGH SS Rer. Lang.*, pp. 471–2.

8 F. Avril and J.R. Gaborit, 'L'itinerarium Bernardi monachi et les pèlerinages d'Italie du sud pendant le haut moyen-age', *MEFR* lxxix (1967), 273–4. For 'depopulation', e.g. Erchempert, *Historia*, *cc.* 20, 47, pp. 242, 255.

being burned down.[9] Obtaining ransoms for the return of Christian captives was another profitable enterprise. At the end of the century, by which time the monks of St Vincent were living in exile in Capua, they were able to build only a very modest new monastery there, for much of the money which they had obtained from donations or the lease of property was being used for the redemption of prisoners held by the Muslims.[10] Furthermore it has been suggested that most of the Muslims who ravaged the mainland, as opposed to the invaders of Sicily, were men who were themselves marginalised in the Muslim world, many of them outsiders of low status such as Berbers, acting without the knowledge or approval of the established powers within Islam, and without their help.[11] But given the divisions among the Lombards, and their distrust of outside interference, even when the Carolingian ruler of northern Italy, Louis II, was anxious to assist them, these Muslim raiders were singularly hard to drive out.

The consequences of this period of instability were considerable. The split in the principality of Benevento was formally recognised in 849 when the contending parties came to an agreement mediated by Louis II, then on the first of what was to be a number of campaigns in the south. (One may note that in one of the most significant clauses of this treaty the two princes agreed to expel all Saracens from their lands and not to employ them in future.)[12] Yet, just like the Treaty of Verdun of 843 among the Carolingians and innumerable externally negotiated treaties of more recent ages, this agreement was simply the prelude to further dispute and division. In particular, the gastaldate of Capua, which in the treaty of 849 had been assigned to Salerno, rapidly became detached from its nominal prince, and under its energetic ruler Landulf – described by Erchempert as 'a conqueror most anxious to wage war, by inclination and descent with the cruelty of a snake'[13] – emerged as an independent, and extremely disruptive, political unit. Furthermore the coastal duchies, all of whom were apparently trading with the Muslims, had every reason to welcome the progressive enfeeblement of their potentially threatening Lombard neighbours, and were markedly reluctant to join in proposed anti-Saracen alliances. They may indeed sometimes have profited directly from Muslim

9 *Chron. Vult.* i.357. Erchempert, *Historia*, *c.* 29, p. 245. Cf. *Chron. Cas.* I.35, p. 97.

10 *Chron. Vult.* ii.7–8.

11 N. Cilento, *Italia meridionale longobarda* (Milan/Naples 1971), pp. 150–2; B.M. Kreutz, *Before the Normans. Southern Italy in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries* (Philadelphia 1991), pp. 48–9. A century later (*c.* 977), Ibn Hawkal had a very low opinion of the *ribat* (colonies of volunteers for the *Jihad*) at Palermo: 'men of bad conduct, people of sedition, trash', Amari, *BAS* i.5.

12 *MGH Legum* iv, ed. G.H. Pertz (Hanover 1868), 221–5, at p. 224, *c.* 24.

13 Erchempert, *Historia*, *c.* 14, p. 240.

raids on the Lombard principalities, trading in booty and buying prisoners as slaves.[14]

After being held by the Muslims for almost a quarter of a century, Bari was eventually recaptured by the Emperor Louis II in 871. But the sequel to his success was indicative of south Italian attitudes and particularism. A few months later he was arrested by the prince of Benevento, and forced to swear as the price for his release never again to return to that city. The message was very clear: outside interference, however beneficial, was not wanted. Local patriot as he was, Erchempert was scandalised by this outrage to 'the saviour of the Beneventan province', and sagely quoted the Old Testament proverb, 'Smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered'.[15] This was indeed more or less what happened, for the Muslims still retained a number of other bases, and among other lesser outrages a major attack from Sicily was launched on Salerno in 871–2. When after a year's unsuccessful siege the Muslims retired through Calabria, 'they entirely depopulated it, so that it was like a desert rather than a well-watered land'.[16] More than forty years were to elapse before the Muslims were driven off the mainland completely. In the early 880s other groups of raiders who had established bases at Saepino in the Matese mountains (inland) and on the coast at the mouth of the River Garigliano destroyed both the abbeys of St Vincent on Volturno and Montecassino, whose surviving monks were forced to establish communities in exile, in which state they remained for many years, the monks of St Vincent at Capua until 914, and those of St Benedict first at Teano and then at Capua until 950.

That the Muslims were forced back on the defensive and eventually defeated was due to four related factors. In the first instance there was the determined resistance put up by the handful of Sicilian strongpoints still in Byzantine hands which engaged the attentions of the bulk of Muslim forces up to 902. Secondly there was a resurgence of Byzantine power on the mainland after 870, which was to be extremely significant in that it extended imperial authority over a much more extensive area than hitherto, and more or less fixed the territorial boundaries which were to last until well into the eleventh century. The Lombard garrison of Bari handed the town

14 P. Skinner, *Family Power in Southern Italy. The Duchy of Gaeta and its Neighbours, 850–1139* (Cambridge 1995), p. 285. Palmieri, 'Un esempio di mobilità etnica', p. 624. Cf. also Kreutz, *Before the Normans*, pp. 51–2. However, it is by no means always clear whether such people as the *coloni* purchased from the Muslims by the Bishop of Gaeta in 867, *Codex Diplomaticus Caietanus* (2 vols, Montecassino 1887–92), i.22 no. 13, were being ransomed or bought as slaves.

15 Zachariah xiii.7; Erchempert, *Historia*, *c.* 34, p. 247. Cf. for this episode *The Annals of St Bertin*, trans. J.L. Nelson (Manchester 1991), pp. 175–6.

16 Erchempert, *Historia*, *c.* 35, pp. 247–8.

over to the Byzantines in 876, apparently because they distrusted their own ability to defend it against the Muslims.[17] Taranto was recaptured in 880, and in the next few years under the governorship of Nikephoros Phokas the Byzantine forces in Italy were heavily reinforced, their hold in southern Apulia was consolidated (the creation of a new province called *Langobardia* was a feature of this process), and Byzantine rule extended into northern Calabria, including areas which had previously been part of the principality of Salerno. Settlers were also introduced from Asia Minor and the Balkans to consolidate these gains. Gallipoli, in southern Apulia, was for example repopulated with immigrants from Heraclea on the Asia Minor coast of the Black Sea. In the wake of the military conquests several new bishoprics were set up in Calabria after 886, with an archiepiscopal see at Santa Severina.[18] A mark of this new Byzantine influence was the visit to Constantinople by Guaimar I of Salerno in 887. Indeed, in 891 the Byzantines captured Benevento itself, and although they only retained this for less than four years[19] – it was too far inland to be easily reinforced or, as is obvious, for their naval power to have any effect – it was a potent sign of how much the empire's power in southern Italy had developed.

The immediate consequence of this Byzantine resurgence was to focus Muslim attentions on the west coast and the Lombard principalities, and hence the renewed raiding there in the 880s, which led to the destruction of the monasteries of Volturno and Montecassino. But the relative impunity with which the raiders had operated was largely a product of local disunity, of that spirit which was expressed in the tale Erchempert repeated of the deathbed of Landulf the Elder of Capua, on which he urged his sons to ensure their future profit by never permitting there to be any peace between Benevento and Salerno,[20] and which led Athanasius, the prince-bishop of Naples, so often to ally with the Muslims in the 880s, despite his own clerical position and repeated excommunications by the pope. However, by the turn of the century that situation, which the chronicler roundly and rightly condemned as 'an insane civil war between brothers', was changing.[21] The most important development was the bloodless coup which in 900 installed Count Atenulf I of Capua as prince of Benevento. Capua and

17 Erchempert, *Historia*, *c.* 38, p. 249.

18 V. von Falkenhausen, *Untersuchungen über die byzantinische Herrschaft in Süditalien vom 9. bis ins 11. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden 1967), pp. 18–25, provides an excellent summary. For Gallipoli, Martin, *Pouille*, pp. 224–5.

19 *Chron. Vult.* ii.6 says three years, nine months and twenty days.

20 Erchempert, *Historia*, *c.* 22, p. 43.

21 Erchempert, *Historia*, *c.* 47, p. 256. For Athanasius, *ibid.*, *cc.* 44, 49, 56, pp. 251, 254–5, 257.

Benevento were to be ruled together as one political unit for the next eighty years. Furthermore the local rulers were now more prepared to work together, and also to co-operate with the Byzantines, against the Muslim threat. Landulf I of Capua visited Constantinople in 910 and in 915 dispatched the abbot of Montecassino for a further visit there on his behalf.[22] Indeed up to 920 he even dated his documents by the regnal years of the Byzantine emperor in an implicit acknowledgement of Byzantine overlordship. Admittedly a first attempt to destroy the Muslim colony at the mouth of the Garigliano in 903 had been frustrated by the recalcitrance of the duke of Gaeta. However, in 915 a second attempt was more successful, not least because pressure from both the papacy and Byzantium had forced the rulers of Amalfi and Gaeta not to assist the Muslims.[23]

It might have seemed that with the capture of the last Byzantine stronghold in Sicily, Taormina, in 902 there might be renewed pressure on the mainland. But though the fall of Taormina was followed by an immediate invasion of Calabria, the death of the Sicilian and north African ruler Ibrahim-Abd-Allah at Cosenza in October of that year marked a watershed. Not only did the Muslims withdraw back to the island, but within a year his son had been murdered and his followers were at loggerheads.[24] Thereafter internal instability was to be almost as much of a problem for Islamic Sicily in the tenth century as it had been for the Lombard principalities in the ninth, and the rulers of north Africa had continuing problems in enforcing their rule on the island. Raids on Calabria continued intermittently throughout the tenth century, often being bought off by the payment of ransoms or 'protection money', and they even occasionally affected southern Apulia, but there was no longer the danger that these attacks might provide bridgeheads for further conquest. There were a number of quite lengthy truces negotiated between the Byzantine authorities and the rulers of Sicily (for example between 918 and 922, and again between 952 and 956) and at periods when internal dispute in Sicily was really marked, as in the late 930s and early 940s when there was a genuine civil war on the island, even the payment of tribute money from Calabria ceased. In the period after 964 Sicily's Fatimid overlords were anxious not to become

22 *Le Pergamene di Conversano*, ed. G. Coniglio (*Codice diplomatico pugliese* xx, Bari 1975), pp. 8–10 no. 4. Surprisingly this visit was not mentioned by the Montecassino chronicle of Leo of Ostia.

23 O. Vehse, 'Das Bundnis gegen die Sarazenen vom Jahre 915', *QFIAB* xix (1927), 181–204, remains the best account of this.

24 Ibn-al-Athir, in Amari, *BAS*, i.103. Though writing three centuries later, Ibn-al-Athir based his account on contemporary sources, and was extremely well informed about events in Sicily in the tenth and eleventh centuries.

embroiled with Byzantium while they strove to take over Egypt, and for more than a decade Calabria was left in peace.

Of course when raids on the mainland did take place their effects could be extremely unpleasant. In 925, for example, the Muslims attacked southern Apulia and captured Taranto and Oria, along with the Greek governor of Calabria who had taken refuge there. A later Jewish chronicler from Oria recorded that they 'made havoc of the land, and reduced it to the extremity of distress'.[25] In 950, after internal peace had finally been restored in Sicily, Reggio was captured and Muslim forces reached as far north as Cassano in the Val di Crati. Two years later the governor of Calabria was killed fighting against a renewed Muslim attack. But despite such successes, the incidence of these raids was sporadic, and most of the Calabrian towns were strongly established on hilltop sites and by no means easy to capture. The Muslims besieged Gerace, for example, in both 950 and 952, and on both occasions were unable to take the town and consented to be bought off. The same thing happened when they attacked Cosenza in 976.[26] The most significant long-term effect of these attacks was to push the Greek population of Calabria to move from the coastal areas onto stronger natural sites inland or in some cases to emigrate further north away from the most immediate danger. A later Calabrian chronicler suggested that the fortification of hilltop sites inland was a deliberate policy initiated by the Emperor Nikephoros Phokas (963–9).[27]

Though in the early years of the tenth century Byzantium was undoubtedly exercising considerable influence, at least indirectly, on the Lombard principalities, relations were by no means smooth. In 915 a contingent of Byzantine troops had aided Landulf I of Capua to destroy the Muslim base at the mouth of the Garigliano. But the princes of Capua–Benevento found it difficult to forget that their predecessors before the 840s had ruled over most of what was now the Byzantine province of *Langobardia*. The development of coastal towns like Bari and Siponto which benefited from trade in the Adriatic also made northern Apulia a desirable target for the Lombard princes, and the fiscal demands of the Byzantine government undoubtedly caused dissatisfaction among its subjects. Since in northern Apulia these

25 *The Chronicle of Ahimaez*, trans. M. Salzman (Columbia 1924), p. 98. Oria had what was probably the most important Jewish colony in the region in the tenth century. Ibn-al-Athir (Amari, *BAS*, i.105) said that an epidemic among the Muslim army brought this expedition to a halt.

26 Ibn-al-Athir, in Amari, *BAS*, i.109, 110.

27 E. Caspar, 'Die Chronik von Tres Tabernae in Calabrien', *QFIAB* x (1907), 35. The authenticity of this source has been disputed, but Caspar concluded that it was a genuine, if minor, chronicle.

were almost all Lombards, the princes could hope to find them sympathetic to their incursions. Landulf I invaded Apulia in 921, the governor Ursoleon was killed fighting at Ascoli on the frontier, and the prince then occupied much of the area, apparently with the support of the inhabitants. He sought to justify his invasion by accusing Ursoleon of misgovernment and persuading the imperial government to appoint him as the *strategos* of the province, a suggestion which they were understandably reluctant to fulfil, demanding rather that he evacuate the fortresses which he had captured and send his eldest son as a hostage to Constantinople (in addition to another son who was apparently already there).[28] The Byzantines did succeed in restoring their position in Apulia for a time after 921, but a second invasion in 926 had more serious effects, not least because at the same time Guaimar II of Salerno abandoned his previous neutrality and tried to take over the border regions of Lucania and Calabria which had once belonged to his principality. In addition the Beneventans received military assistance from Spoleto. It took some seven years for the Byzantines to restore their rule, and they did this only by securing the help of the north Italian king Hugh, as well as sending cavalry reinforcements to Apulia.

The real problem for Byzantium when faced with such threats to its south Italian dominions was that the empire had many other calls on its resources. Byzantium was a contemporary 'super-power', but for its rulers southern Italy could be no more than a minor priority compared with the importance of defending the eastern frontier of its Asia Minor provinces against the Arabs, and its European frontier in Thrace against the Bulgarians. In the 920s, for example, it faced a very difficult situation in Thrace, with the Bulgarian ruler Symeon very much on the offensive and at times posing an actual threat to Constantinople itself. It was only some years after his death in 927, when relations with Bulgaria had been put on a reasonably even keel, that troops could be spared for Italy, and then not in very substantial numbers. The force dispatched to Apulia in 934 comprised fewer than 1,500 mounted troops, more than half of whom were new recruits, and 400 Russian infantry.[29] The problem of greater priorities elsewhere was to reoccur later, and indeed was to be an important factor in the final collapse of Byzantine Italy before the Normans. While for much of the tenth century Byzantine power was in the ascendant, aggressive warfare

28 *The Letters of the Patriarch Nicholas Mysticus*, ed. R. Jenkins and L. Westerink (Dumbarton Oaks 1975), pp. 338–42 no. 82.

29 Details of this force are given in Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De Ceremoniis*, ed. J. Reiske (Bonn 1829), lib. II *c.* 44, pp. 660–1. Cf. J. Gay, *L'Italie méridionale et l'empire Byzantin depuis l'avènement de Basile Ier jusqu'à la prise de Bari par les Normands (867–1071)* (2 vols, Paris 1904), i.210.