

Mutations and resilience of a political society: Southern Italy in the 11th and 12th centuries

by Vito Loré

The aim of this article is to describe the primary changes in southern Italy's political society between the end of the 10th century and the 12th, focusing on the Normans' impact on the Byzantine provinces and the Lombard principalities.

L'obiettivo di questo articolo è descrivere i principali cambiamenti nella società politica dell'Italia meridionale tra la fine del X secolo e il XII, concentrandosi sull'impatto dei Normanni sulle province bizantine e sui principati longobardi.

Middle Ages, 11th-12th centuries, Southern Italy, Bari, Salerno, Capua, Lombards, Byzantine Empire, Normans, Counts.

Medioevo, secoli XI-XII, Italia meridionale, Bari, Salerno, Capua, Longobardi, Impero bizantino, Normanni, conti.

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1. *Introduction*

The political history of southern Italy between the 11th and 12th centuries has been covered by a rich tradition of studies.¹ To give a measure of its great complexity, it is sufficient to briefly recall this narrative's main stages: the advent of the Normans as mercenaries at the beginning of the 11th century; their gradual military development and their first autonomous political initiatives; the disappearance of the Lombard principalities and the end of Byzantine domination in the years 1058-1077; the birth of Norman political institutions and the simultaneous spread of rural lordships; and finally, the foundation of the Kingdom of Sicily after a long period of war, being led by Roger II against the aristocracy of continental southern Italy, between 1127 and 1142. In the following pages I will attempt to identify the main avenues of change in macropolitical structures that underlie these events, thus outlining a possible periodization. My attention will be limited to continental southern Italy: the long period of the Muslim domination of Sicily requires us to consider it in its own right, as has been carried out in recent years with excellent results, framing the conquest and construction of Norman power within the framework of the Arab administration.² The main prism through which I will look at these transformations is the spread of local powers and their relationship with the centre. I will start from the last decades of the 10th century; this is necessary in order to describe the different starting points as well as the different evolutions, which were perhaps interrupted before being made homogeneous by the Norman conquest in two distinct phases.

2. *Lombard Capua and Benevento*

Let us start in the north. The principality of Capua and Benevento was a unitary political entity until 981; in that year, it split into two autonomous political entities following the death of Prince Pandolf. From the 940s onwards, territorial districts with an urban base and governed by counts multiplied. The title of count gradually replaced that of gastald: this is a sign of a growth in the prestige of the officials, who constituted only a small group. These counts were almost all related to princes and transmitted their title to their descendants, often retaining control of the same district for two or three generations: it was not the rule, but it happened frequently.³ These counts were largely autonomous: according to a shared principle, they generally held

¹ Loud, *The Age of Robert Guiscard*; Taviani-Carozzi, *La terreur du monde*; Becker, *Graf Roger I. von Sizilien*; Houben, *Roger II of Sicily*.

² Johns, *Arabic Administration*; Nef, *Conquérir et gouverner*.

³ See a recent overview in Di Muro, "Le contee longobarde," 9-33. See also Loré, "I conti nel Mezzogiorno longobardo" and Di Muro, "Ancora sulle contee."

the public property within their territories.⁴ Yet the category of ‘privatisation of power’, which has been used in this respect by Jean-Marie Martin,⁵ does not seem entirely adequate to express this delicate and unstable balance between officials and principles. These counts shared power with princes and, in extreme cases, acted as princes as well. The counts of Teano had their own judges, donated public lands without the prince’s consent, and went so far as to mint coins.⁶ On some occasions, however, exceptionally powerful officials – the same counts of Teano, for example, or those of Avellino – ran for the principality: they evidently felt, and indeed were, part of a unitary group;⁷ many of them habitually resided in the capitals, in Capua or Benevento.⁸ Moreover, the great abbeys of Montecassino and San Vincenzo al Volturno rebuilt – or constituted – their great landed estates with the support of the princes, just as the counts saw their power increase: as Martin himself has noted,⁹ this was the fruit of a precise design which balanced comital power with the return of the two monastic communities to their original seats, after the destruction wrought by the Muslims at the end of the 9th century and their subsequent ‘exile’ in Capua and Teano.

The counts made up a small political society: each of them held a share of power. This consortial conception of power finally became based on agreements. In the final Lombard phase, the relations of the counts and even of some princes with Montecassino were regulated by oaths of non-aggression: these oaths sanctioned the central position assumed by the monastery and the subalternity of the princes.¹⁰ In general, the way the counts understood their power tended to be uniform, was shared by the whole group, and did not depend on whether or not their particular district became dynastic.¹¹ Reference to a particular conception of power is not enough to give an idea of this situation, however: in the final Lombard period, a real dispersion of public prerogatives is evident. Perhaps it was more rapid in Benevento than in Capua, as Jean-Marie Martin thought¹² on the basis of various clues: comital

⁴ Loré, “Beni principeschi e partecipazione al potere,” 21-30.

⁵ Martin, “Éléments préféodaux.”

⁶ Di Muro, “Le contee longobarde,” 17-20, 20-1 and note 252.

⁷ Laidulf, Count of Teano, Prince of Capua (993-9): Cilento, *Italia meridionale longobarda*, 173, note 35 and Thomas, *Jeux lombards*, 86; Landulf of Sant’Agata, Prince of Capua (999-1007): Hoffmann, *Chronica Monasterii Casinensis*, II, 15; Pandulf V, Count of Teano, Prince of Capua (1022-6): Thomas, *Jeux lombards*, 327-30; Adelferius, Count of Avellino, Prince of Benevento (1003-5): Thomas, *Jeux lombards*, 228-9, 302-5.

⁸ There are a couple of references to this in Loré, “Limiti di una tradizione documentaria,” 225-6; however, the best example of the enduring relationship of the counts with the capital cities is probably the late document edited by Petrucci, *Codice Diplomatico*, doc. 35 (1045?): Count Tasselgard donated the town of Gaudia, at the mouth of the Fortore River, to the monastery of Santa Maria of Tremiti; among other things, the citizens of Gaudia were to undertake to provide Tasselgard with two horses each time Altruda, his wife, had to go to Benevento.

⁹ Martin, “Éléments préféodaux,” 574-7.

¹⁰ Martin, “Quelques remarques.”

¹¹ Loré, “Beni principeschi,” 21-30, and above.

¹² Martin, “Éléments préféodaux,” 575, 579; Martin, “Aristocraties et seigneuries,” 232-3.

districts, rights of levy, and justice dispersed through perpetual concessions;¹³ bitter military confrontations between princes, Montecassino, and the counts of Aquino and Alife;¹⁴ and in a few cases, the autonomous construction of numerous castles on lands owned by the counts (although in Molise in the first decades of the 11th century, the Normans had already settled in the area and the climate had changed by then).¹⁵ It is important to note, however, that this dispersion remained until the very end of the Lombard era within a perimeter determined by the public power, to the benefit of those officials and monasteries that were protected by the princes. The autonomous appropriation of public prerogatives by other subjects is absent in the principality of Capua-Benevento until the end of the Lombard period.

3. *Lombard Salerno*

The evolution of the principality of Salerno is in this respect only partly similar and is certainly later. In Salerno, the stability of the public power framework seems absolute until the mid-11th century. Here, the counts' autonomy appears much less pronounced, even if one has to take stock of the documents: the prestige of the counts is 'hidden' by the customs of the Salerno notaries, who evoke them in a uniform manner while managing their personal affairs: name, title, and patronymic, but without any reference to the personal prestige and public role they actually played. In this way the eminent position of the sole *dominus*, the prince, stood out.¹⁶ The fragments of a peripheral archive and the enhancement of a few scattered records, have changed this perspective somewhat, however. In the Salerno principality's inland areas, the prestige of certain counts who were often relatives of princes was exhibited by elevated titles, and public lands were in turn attributed to the official who controlled that area, according to the same principle which held sway in Capua-Benevento.¹⁷ Thus, the comital group – which was large, growing, and open to external contributions – was much more varied than the notaries allow us to see at first glance. In Salerno, however, concessions of justice and military rights are practically absent – apart from a very few exceptions, almost all of which are in favour of the Salerno bishopric¹⁸ – and we have no evidence of the counts in the territory carrying out autonomous military activities. In this area we seem rather to witness a familial articulation of princely power, as a response to an abrupt political change. With the

¹³ Martin, "Éléments préféodaux," 575-9.

¹⁴ Hoffmann, *Chronica Monasterii Casinensis*, 167, 240-1, 304 and ff. on Aquino, 176 (see Martin, *Registrum Petri Diaconi*, doc. 314) on Alife; Di Muro, "Le contee longobarde," 10-3, 24.

¹⁵ Di Muro, 30-2.

¹⁶ Loré, "Limiti di una tradizione;" Loré, "L'aristocrazia salernitana."

¹⁷ Loré, "Limiti di una tradizione," 209-20.

¹⁸ Loré, "L'aristocrazia salernitana," 70; on princely concessions to bishops, see Di Muro, *Mezzogiorno longobardo*, 212-21; Di Muro, *Terra, uomini e poteri signorili*, 17-29.

decisive help of Norman mercenaries, Guaimarius IV had managed to subdue Capua in the 1040s and had even tried to conquer Bari, the centre of Byzantine administration in southern Italy; Salerno's expansion probably followed lines of economic integration which were already active between Campania and Apulia.¹⁹

Guaimarius lost Capua in 1047, and in the following months began to divide into real shares a large landed patrimony which he had hitherto shared with his two male brothers, Guido and Paldulf. The division of this patrimony was not just an economic act, but sanctioned Guido and Paldulf's growth as well as the informal division of the principality into three areas of political-military influence. In the deeds of division the prince's brothers bore the title of *dominus*, which had hitherto been exclusively attributed to the prince, and in the years immediately following they assumed new roles: Guido became count of Conza, an important centre on the Apennine ridge, while Paldulf built his own lordship in Capaccio, at the gateway to Cilento.²⁰ In my opinion, this division of wealth as well as the brothers' political rise should not be read as a centrifugal movement: rather, it seems to me to be a coordinated move, probably a response to the Normans' new role, who after the failure of Guaimarius' 'imperial' policy had settled in the Salerno area. The difference between Salerno and Capua-Benevento thus concerns not only the timing, but also the quality of the 'dispersion' of public powers: in the former it was the limited effect of a revision that had been agreed upon at the top as a response to an external change; namely, the transformation of the Normans from mercenaries into rural lords. In any case, the experiment lasted only a few years: the death of Guaimarius in 1052 as the result of a conspiracy brought the Normans to the spread, and the princes' freedom of action was drastically reduced: Gisulf II, Guaimarius' son, was left with only Salerno, as well as some areas near the city and part of Cilento.²¹

4. *Byzantine Apulia*

Apulia is the best-documented part of the Byzantine provinces, and its situation was different from the previous examples for three reasons: the fact of it belonging to an imperial political formation with a distant capital, the presence of several urban centres with politically active citizenries (not only Bari, the seat of the regional government), and finally the central role of taxa-

¹⁹ Delogu, "La terra del latte e del miele," 11; Travaini, *La monetazione nell'Italia normanna*, 14-9.

²⁰ Morcaldi, Schiani, e De Stefano, *Codex Diplomaticus Cavensis*, vol. 7, docc. 1083 (1047), 1115 e 1116 (1049); Volpini, "Diplomi," docc. 3-4 (1047); Taviani-Carozzi, *La principauté*, 857-65; Loré, "L'aristocrazia salernitana," 74-6; Loré, "Obblighi di lavoro," 337-9.

²¹ Loré, "L'aristocrazia salernitana," 76-8; also Loré, *Monasteri, principi, aristocrazie*, 35-40 and Taviani-Carozzi, *La principauté*, 981-5.

tion in the Empire.²² From the beginning of the 11th century the sources clearly show the active role of citizen leaders, then of citizenries sometimes united against imperial rule and at other times divided into factions with opposing orientations; citizens fought to gain more favourable positions to face the Byzantine Empire, but acting within a broad scenario reaching as far as the Germanic Empire.²³ The conflict within the cities found its material expression in the numerous tower-houses, which were focal points of the military confrontations between the various factions.²⁴

As Vera von Falkenhausen noted some years ago, the Apulian subjects did not aspire to become entirely independent,²⁵ nor to build autonomous territorial domains. In fact, there is nothing to suggest a fragmentation of the territory into autonomous centres prior to the Normans' definitive establishment in the region: the hypothesis of an explosion into seigniories in Byzantine Apulia was elaborated by André Guillou on the basis of the *sigillion* of the Catepan Eustatius (1045), with which he ceded the public revenues of the village of *Pholinianon* to the judge Bisantius. It is an exceptional document, but it witnesses a widespread practice in the Empire and cannot be read as an indication of a seigneurial development.²⁶ The phenomenon that Francesco Carabellese called the 'Apulian commune' should nevertheless be reconsidered in a comprehensive manner.²⁷ It is true that there are no traces of communal-type institutions in Apulian towns; furthermore, when autonomy found an institutional form in the first decades of Norman domination, the towns turned towards the principality: the best-documented case is that of Grimoald, prince of Bari. Despite this, there were many episodes of political self-determination and armed struggle between factions in the Apulian towns between the mid-11th century and the 1220s, which continued until the final establishment of the Norman kingdom.²⁸

²² Cosentino, "Rileggendo un atto pugliese del 1017."

²³ Falkenhausen, *I Bizantini in Italia*, 66-8, 77-8, 114, 121-3; Eadem, "Bari bizantina", 82-3. On Bari in the 11th century, see also recently Galluzzi, "Una storia senza fine," and Skinner, "Room for Tension" (on the 11th and 12th centuries).

²⁴ On this point Delogu, "I Normanni in città," 187-90, and now Carocci, "Nobility, conflicts, and buildings."

²⁵ Falkenhausen, "Bari bizantina," 83: "Nonostante l'opposizione e le varie insurrezioni della nobiltà locale contro il governo imperiale, non si sono mai sviluppate a Bari istituzioni corporative o di autogoverno. Una delle ragioni di questo sviluppo mancato potrebbe risiedere nel costante orientamento verso Costantinopoli del ceto dirigente barese." Here the scholar seems to correct the opinion previously expressed in Falkenhausen, "I Bizantini in Italia," 121, where she mentioned the possibility that the rebels aspired to autonomous rule over the region.

²⁶ Lefort-Martin, "Le *sigillion*;" Martin, "Aristocracies et seigneuries," 235-6.

²⁷ Carabellese, *L'Apulia ed il suo comune*.

²⁸ Wickham, "City Society in twelfth-century Italy;" Oldfield, *City and Community*, 27-81 (46-9 on Bari and Grimoald), 124-62, 165-83 and Carocci, e Loré, "Accedere alla comunità," notably 36-43, with a somewhat different perspective from Oldfield's. On Bari, see now also Galluzzi, "Una storia senza fine."

5. *The norman conquest*

In the transformations I have described, the Normans were in part already there. They were part of the picture, even as troops of the Byzantine army, according to some recently revived and newly-articulated hypotheses, certainly as mercenaries in the pay of one or another of the protagonists. They were 'unforeseen', as Ovidio Capitani wished,²⁹ but their irruption into the southern scenario and the success of their work of conquest were probably not accidental: the Normans were employed as mercenaries in a context which in some respects were similar to that which had seen the Muslims take part in the conflicts between Salerno, Capua, Naples, and Benevento in the 9th century.³⁰ Southern political formations fought each other for supremacy, driven by an aspiration for political integration that had to meet profound economic needs.³¹ The absence of vassal-type relations³² and the relatively intense circulation of money³³ probably led to weakness in the Lombard peoples' armies, which were in fact limited to the populations of the larger centres;³⁴ it may also have led to the imperial army being supplemented by foreign troops.³⁵ The Normans thus responded to a structural need in the southern societies, but they gradually became autonomous political actors, taking advantage of the same weakness that had offered their first opportunity. I believe that a similarity of substratum may explain the profound analogy between the theatres of the 'Norman' conquests, southern Italy, and England: in both cases, kings and princes holding power with a strong public character³⁶ exercised effective control over regional spaces which nevertheless tended towards mutual integration through frequent military confrontation. The systematic use of mercenaries gave them the opportunity to erode the old powers and establish themselves as autonomous political subjects. Even the English kingdoms, prior to 1066, had been subdued and unified by the Danes, who had arrived as mercenaries

Yet, although the Normans had already been present in southern Italy for some time, their definitive establishment turned the tables. The end of the Lombard principalities and Byzantine provinces brought with it a general affirmation of local lordships, which was an effect of the conquest: Norman military leaders established themselves as lords, and even some powerful

²⁹ Capitani, *Storia dell'Italia medievale*, 270-5.

³⁰ Regarding this argument, see recently Di Branco-Wolf, "Terra di conquista," Di Branco, 915. *La battaglia*; Zornetta, *Italia meridionale longobarda*, 231-40.

³¹ Delogu, "La terra del latte e del miele," 8-11.

³² Martin, "Éléments préféodaux," remains the main work on this point.

³³ Martin, "Economia naturale ed economia monetaria," 216-9; Loud, "Coinage, wealth and plunder."

³⁴ On this point, the best examples come from Westerbergh, *Chronicon Salernitanum*, 42-9; Loré, "I gastaldi nella Puglia longobarda," 266-70; Zornetta, *Italia meridionale longobarda*, 156-9.

³⁵ On this topic, see recently Violante, "Alle origini della conquista," with further bibliography.

³⁶ Wareham, *Fiscal Policies*.

Lombards adapted to the new situation.³⁷ It was an abrupt change, occurring in the years 1050-1070, but only became evident in the documentation from the late 1070s onwards, after a redefinition of the relations between the papacy and the Normans. At that time, the series of donations being made by Norman leaders to the monasteries and bishop's churches changed. Until that time, their donations had shown their separateness, and were directed almost exclusively towards those monasteries which had been founded by Norman monks; from the 1070s, these donations were directed also towards bishoprics and monasteries of local origin and grew exponentially in number and importance.³⁸

We have seen that in the previous period lordships were already present, but at this moment there was a leap in scale: rural lordship asserted itself in a short time over the entire southern countryside. These were no longer experiments born in the shadow of public power, but a systemic change, the result of a military conquest: lordship was everywhere. Precisely for this reason, the affirmation of rural lordship also brought with it a new aristocracy, which spread throughout the territory and possessed a strong military character, and also indicated weakness in the central power.³⁹ In earlier decades, the subjects exercising seigneurial powers were few. They were rarely subversives, more often being recipients of princely concessions: there were some large monasteries, emanations of the princely summit, or public officials such as counts – or sometimes gastalds. In this ancient Lombard-Byzantine panorama, which was dominated by public officials, the only exception I know of a seigneurial power that was held by subjects neither ecclesiastical nor endowed with a comital title was the Borrelli family, although they came from the Abruzzi, and thus from an area of Frankish political tradition.⁴⁰

After the Normans' definitive establishment, the holders of seigneurial powers called themselves *seniores*, *domini*: these titles expressed autonomy, rather than inclusion in an institutional hierarchy. The comital title – the only one expressing a privileged relationship with the summit – was reserved for a few, and was often directly related to the dukes; it did not always imply an effective superiority over other lords, however, nor a consistently peaceful relationship with the dukes themselves. I doubt that the counts of Sarno, for example, were more powerful than Roger of Sanseverino, and certainly the relations between Henry of Lesina and Monte Sant'Angelo and the dukes were always conflictual.⁴¹ The new rulers were self-made men, and were not legitimised from above: each held the space they had taken with their own

³⁷ Loré, "Sulle istituzioni," 50-5; Loud, "Continuity and Change," Loré, *Monasteri, principi, aristocrazie*, 35-61; Canosa, "Le conseguenze della conquista."

³⁸ Loré, *Monasteri, principi, aristocrazie*, 41-50. Loud, *The Latin Church*, 84-114.

³⁹ Loré, *Monasteri, principi, aristocrazie*; Loré, "Coesione aristocratica e competizione politica," 338-41.

⁴⁰ Di Muro, "Le contee longobarde," 29-30, with further bibliography.

⁴¹ On Norman counts, see recently Canosa, "Le conseguenze della conquista", and Fernández-Acevez, *County and Nobility*, 13-26 on the ducal period. On Richard the Seneshal, Roger of

followers and weapons. As soon as the conquest was complete, the power of the duke, Robert Guiscard, was drastically reduced, because the need to coordinate the military conquest no longer existed;⁴² Robert's successors counted even less. An expression of this seigneurial dominance and of the dukes' increasing marginality can be found in the administration of justice. The duke continued to hold effective judicial authority in the urban centres directly under his control. When the conflict concerned powerful subjects in the countryside, however, such as lay lords and monasteries, the dispute was handled by a college of peers, who induced the parties to an agreement – one often stipulated in the presence of the duke.⁴³ The dukes were reduced to urban princes, such as William, Guiscard's nephew: in Salerno's private documents, along with the title of duke the notaries gave him that of prince, which had been proper to his Lombard predecessors and ancestors.⁴⁴ Within this new framework, bishops were an element of continuity: they continued to play a marginal role at a political level; they were rarely endowed with seigneurial prerogatives in the countryside; they were never holders of civic powers (as was the case in those areas where the Frankish tradition held sway), and even less so of military ones; and they lacked autonomy vis-à-vis the political power at the top, by which they were appointed according to ancient tradition. They were thus politically irrelevant figures except in very peculiar cases and moments, as in Bari and Salerno in those years which saw the transition to the new Norman power.⁴⁵

6. *The birth of a kingdom*

The date 1127 marks the accidental start of a profound change, which at its climax marked a decisive reversal. In that year, the death of Duke William, who left no heir, led to a dynastic crisis which Roger II of Sicily took advantage of in order to reclaim his rights to the duchy.⁴⁶ This is a well-known story, but insufficient attention is often paid to the effects of this 15-year conflict, which was necessary in order to render Roger's authority effective, once it was extended by the royal title to the whole of southern Italy. Roger was ruthless with his opponents and often eliminated them physically, sometimes dramatically, via a conscious, political use of terror.⁴⁷ The killing of opponents also entailed the acquisition of their dominions, which was probably the main

Sanseverino, Henry of Lesina and Montesantangelo, see especially the short profiles in Martin, *La Pouille*, 740-1; Drell, *Kinship & Conquest*, 187-8; Martin, *La Pouille*, 722-4.

⁴² Loré, *Monasteri, principi, aristocrazie*, 57-61.

⁴³ Loré, 91-5, 100-15; Loré, "La Trinità di Cava nel 1111".

⁴⁴ Loré, *Monasteri, principi, aristocrazie*, 115.

⁴⁵ Delogu, *Mito*, 180-90, on Salerno. Falkenhausen, "Bari bizantina," 94-101, with further bibliography.

⁴⁶ Houben, *Roger II*, 41-50.

⁴⁷ Delogu, *I Normanni in Italia*, 145-9.

instrument in the forging of a new, supra-regional political entity with a huge royal demesne and new governing structures.⁴⁸

A recent re-reading from a completely new perspective of the *Catalogus Baronum* has allowed Sandro Carocci to show the public character of the realm's sovereign authority: the feudal character of the relationship between king and territorial aristocracy did not exist until at least the end of the 12th century.⁴⁹ Despite a recent attempt at reinterpretation,⁵⁰ it also seems to me that the royal ability to control the aristocracies, starting with marriage policies, remains indisputable.⁵¹ In general, royal power was extremely effective: this is confirmed by the creation of centralised forms of administration,⁵² the creation of an inventory such as the *Catalogus*, and the ability of rural communities to appeal to royal justice.⁵³ I would also like to evoke two other useful indicators for defining the strength of royal power, one indirect and one direct. The first is the end of the great cycles of aristocratic donations in favour of the monasteries: they evince unstable political relations, as the history of southern Italy amply demonstrated from the early Middle Ages.⁵⁴ The second indicator is the very peculiar outcome of the Church's reformation in the southern kingdom. The appointment of the Count of Sicily as papal legate (in 1098) had the paradoxical effect of constituting an element of continuity with the previous period, going beyond the specifically Sicilian sphere, where the network of a Roman Church had to be built from the ground up after centuries of Muslim domination and Greek Christianity. The eminent position of the Count of Sicily, and later of the king, gave an institutional framework to the ancient practice and allowed it to continue for decades, crystallising it on the basis of a new legitimacy: bishops continued to be appointed by kings for a long time, although royal control was more nuanced than previously thought.⁵⁵ Of course, this was possible because the assumptions differed: in southern Italy, as I have already mentioned, bishops had never had civil powers, and for this very reason, the kingdom remained outside the investiture debate.⁵⁶

⁴⁸ Houben, *Roger II*, 41-75; Carocci, *Lordships of Southern Italy*, especially 231-8 (it. ed. 220-6), on the great extension of the royal demesne, partly out of confiscations from Roger's enemies in the years after 1127.

⁴⁹ Carocci, *Lordships of Southern Italy*, chapter IV: *Monarchy and Feudalism*.

⁵⁰ Fernández-Acevez, *County and Nobility*.

⁵¹ Carocci, *Lordships of Southern Italy*, chapter V: *King and Lords*, 167-200 (it. ed. 159-90).

⁵² Takayama, *The Administration*, remains the best overview of this topic. On Arabic Sicily, see the works cited above.

⁵³ On the last point, see Carocci, *Lordships of Southern Italy*, 192-200 (it. ed. 183-90).

⁵⁴ Loré, *Monasteri, principi, aristocrazie*, 128-32; Loré, "Poteri locali e congregazioni monastiche;" Loré, "Coesione aristocratica e competizione politica," 341; Zorretta, *Italia meridionale longobarda*, 130-40.

⁵⁵ Kamp, "Der unteritalienische Episkopat," Loud, *The Latin Church*, 265-78.

⁵⁶ Panarelli, "Tyrannus rex imperator," 61.

7. *Times of change*

The times and modes of change are quite clear. In the first phase, movements with different timings and characters (which were earlier and more widespread in Capua, while being later and more restricted in Salerno) led to a disarticulation of central power. In Capua, however, these were partial evolutions: they did not affect the political scene as a whole, which continued to maintain traditional traits. Instead, the change affecting Salerno is probably a response to a systemic change which was induced by the Normans. In either case are these movements to be defined as centripetal: they both start from the centre, either in a spatial sense – the seat of power – or in a familial sense. From this perspective, the outcome of the Norman conquest was radical and unifying: local powers asserted themselves on a large scale, in an abruptly centrifugal movement. The dukes were not actors in this dispersion: they did not make concessions, nor did they in any way direct the establishment of local powers; instead, the spread of lordship severely limited their authority. This phenomenon led to the formation of an aristocracy that was structurally different from that of the previous period: it had a strong military character, was widespread throughout the territory, and had no structural ties to the capitals. The ‘old’ imperial and Lombard aristocracy was instead composed of a group of officers, or functionaries. In this new world, official roles were reserved for second-class positions, especially in the major cities of the Byzantine tradition.⁵⁷ In some respects, the spread of the Norman military aristocracy throughout the territory was the precondition for a revival of the countryside.

Within this framework, two essential points of contention remain. Should the broad assertion of lordship be understood as having been in (relative) continuity with the most recent developments of the Lombard-Byzantine era, or as a clear break? In other words: could it have gone differently? Once again: downstream from this complex evolution, does anything remain of the previous political structures in the Norman kingdom? I will answer the second question first: in the Norman kingdom, the tendency of political societies to orient themselves towards the centre, which was then expressed in a much larger and more articulate political organism, remained, or rather reappeared after the vacancy of the ducal period. In the ducal period, the weakness of the political centre perhaps favoured the ‘supplanting’ role played by the great monastic congregations, which constituted a point of equilibrium in the political society of the time; counter-evidence for this interpretation is their modest affirmation in Sicily, where the comital power was immediately an effective reference point.⁵⁸ After the kingdom’s founding, Palermo, its capital,

⁵⁷ For example, Martin, *La Pouille*, 765-6.

⁵⁸ On comital power in Sicily, see Johns, *Arabic Administration*, 39-90; Nef, *Conquérir et gouverner*, 252-60.

was the centre of an intense and contentious court life in which the interests of aristocracies with different origins and characteristics converged and confronted each other: the military and the civil aristocracy, the latter often being from the larger cities (the best example of this is Maio of Bari).⁵⁹ On the other hand, the main cities also played a fundamental role from an administrative point of view, and not only as recruiting grounds for officers; I am thinking in particular of Salerno, the probable seat of the *Dogana*.⁶⁰ There also remains the completely subordinate role of the bishoprics to royal power. I am not referring to the absence of any civil power held by the bishops, which was by then becoming the norm across Europe, nor to their personal political irrelevance: on the contrary, bishops could personally hold prominent positions at court, as in the case of Romuald of Salerno.⁶¹ I am instead referring to the enduring practice of the appointment of bishops by kings.

It remains more difficult to answer the second question: could it have gone differently? Here I will note only two things, one general and the other more anecdotal. Where veritable lordships were established before the advent of the Normans (I will not take into consideration the autonomy of the counts of Capua in the 9th century, which was an expression of a particular way of interpreting public power), the Lombard lords built castles in great quantity and small size, albeit on lands which were directly controlled by them. The clearest example of this is that of some Benevento counts who were active in the first decades of the 11th century. These families built numerous castles on a land base of likely varied origin, but which was by then entirely allodial.⁶² To make use of ancient categories, it appears to have been a land-based lordship.⁶³ The lords of the Norman era, on the other hand, focused on the foundation of a few large castles, and their power was generally defined in a territorial sense: they ruled over an area, a tendentially-defined space, that did not depend on the extent of their land base: in central Apulia, as Jean-Marie Martin has pointed out, the Norman lordships even lacked a land base.⁶⁴

In the years following the Norman conquest of Salerno, the descendants of Paldolf and Guido, the brothers of Guaimar IV, still held large shares of the ancient princely patrimony as well as the lordship of several centres between what is today Campania and Basilicata. Paldolf and Guido were also directly related to the Norman dukes. They were thus in a position to preserve the eminence their fathers had gained in the final Lombard phase in this new context. Yet this did not happen, because their shares of the princely patrimony were quickly ceded to churches and monasteries, but above all because the descendants of Guido and Paldolf interpreted their lordly presences in a

⁵⁹ Loré, "Coesione aristocratica e competizione politica," 342-4, with an essential bibliography.

⁶⁰ Takayama, *The Administration*, 154.

⁶¹ Loud, *The Latin Church*, 388.

⁶² Di Muro, "Le contee longobarde," 31; Loré, "Alle radici dell'incastellamento laico."

⁶³ See for example Carocci, "Signori e signorie," 412-6.

⁶⁴ Martin, *La Pouille*, 306-17.

strictly patrimonial form; indeed, they were the only ones from among the Norman lords known to me to have done this: they divided them up into identical shares among their heirs, fragmenting them over the generations. The last descendants of Paldolf known to us, who lived in the mid-12th century, resided permanently in Salerno and had by then been completely reabsorbed into the urban notables: their attraction of the city and their inability (I do not know how else to define it) to manage their presence in the territory from a non-patrimonial point of view weakened each other, leading to the extinction of a very numerous and ramified lineage.⁶⁵ This 'patrimonial' way to lordship seems to me to have been characteristic of the late Lombard world, and in the Norman period it found its place of evolution in the monastic lordships where, in my opinion, the relationship between the land base and the exercise of power remained structural.⁶⁶ In this sense, the Norman conquest really steered the course of events: it favoured a much more rapid affirmation of rural lordship, but in forms which were probably different from those that the original arrangement would have spontaneously generated.

⁶⁵ Loré, *Monasteri, principi, aristocrazie*, 87-90, with further bibliography.

⁶⁶ Loré, 155-60, 163-7, on late Lombard Salerno and the monastery of Cava in the Norman era; Carocci, *Lordships of Southern Italy*, 105-9, 292-305 (it. ed. 97-102, 280-92), on *defisi* and *affidati* on ecclesiastical lands.

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