

## PREFACE

The idea for a volume of essays by leading historians of the Norman kingdom of Sicily, to be published in English, was first raised during a conversation between Jeremy Johns and myself on an aeroplane flying from Palermo to London in the spring of 1992. That it has come to fruition is largely due to the encouragement of Julian Deahl, commissioning editor at Brill publishers. The original intention was to commission a series of entirely new essays, both on the various regions of southern Italy and on a variety of themes relating to the kingdom as a whole. The completed volume still bears traces of this plan, but is neither so comprehensive as originally envisaged nor has it been entirely written *de novo*. Considerations of length and the availability of suitable participants, as well as the many other commitments of those who wished to play a part, inevitably modified the original concept. Thus only some provinces have been discussed separately, and while a number of themes have been examined there have been others that might equally merit attention, but which we have been unable to include. A chapter on the aristocratic social structure was commissioned but never delivered, and although several contributors, notably Martin and Metcalfe, touch upon them, in retrospect we might well have devoted more attention to the peasants whose labours underpinned the whole edifice of south Italian society, as indeed they did every medieval society. It was also decided, with regret, to exclude art historical, and intellectual and cultural, chapters. Here the editors were conscious that, while there are many gaps in the field, there is a reasonably broad range of studies available in English, whereas other aspects of the society of the Mezzogiorno have received little or no attention in that language, a state of affairs that this book is intended to remedy. Furthermore, having for some years taught a course on Norman Sicily to university students, first as a second-year option and latterly as a document-based special subject, I was very conscious not just of how limited the scope of the available scholarship in English was, but also of how much Anglophone students missed through being unable to read the work of distinguished historians from Europe who have made important

and stimulating contributions to the study of medieval southern Italy. Hence, while four of the eleven contributors to this book are from the English-speaking world, the other seven, all acknowledged experts in the field, are from Continental Europe and have rarely if ever previously published their findings in English.

Two of our authors, Professors Herde and Houben, who were especially busy with other projects, asked that English versions of previously published essays be included in this collection, and sadly Professor Norbert Kamp died in October 1999, soon after he agreed to take part. With the kind agreement of his widow, the editors have included an updated version of one of his many fine essays on the south Italian Church. The two other essays in this category have also been modified and updated—neither is a straight translation of an existing work. All three of these essays appeared well-worth bringing to the attention of those who would find difficulty reading the original German versions. We have tried to present all the chapters, whether revised or entirely new, in a common format, even if their lengths and focus may have been rather different. However, while we have sought agreement on matters of fact, and have attempted to bring consistency to the referencing, the editors have tried to let the contributors speak for themselves, and not sought to impose a spurious uniformity on those whose views on some issues may differ one from another, even at the cost of some internal consistency within the volume. History remains a subject of debate and discussion, not received truth.

I am very grateful to the contributors for agreeing to take part, for (in most cases) their adherence to deadlines, their patience in answering the editors' queries and tolerating quibbles about footnotes, and their care in checking and correcting English translations. Special thanks should go to Trish Skinner for completing her chapter ahead of time while on maternity leave. The work and encouragement of Alex Metcalfe as co-editor has been invaluable, not least with regard to Greek and Arabic terminology, as has the technical expertise of Mrs. Angela Sofley and Katherine Fenton in remedying the defects of the principal editor's IT education.

Had he lived to read it, Norbert Kamp would have rejoiced to see this collaborative project, for no scholar was more generous than him in giving assistance to others, and especially in encouraging

younger workers in his field.<sup>1</sup> We are pleased and honoured to dedicate this volume to his memory.

G.A. Loud

Leeds, November 2001

---

<sup>1</sup> Details of Kamp's career as a historian and his work as the first elected president of the Georg-August Universität at Göttingen may be found in *Norbert Kamp zum Gedenken*, published in the series 'Göttinger Universitätsreden' by Vandenhoeck & Rupprecht, 2001.