Count Charles of Anjou, the youngest brother of Louis IX of France, conquered the Kingdom of Sicily in two closely fought battles in 1266 and 1268. On 26 February 1266 he defeated and killed Manfred of Hohenstaufen, the illegitimate son of Frederick II, at the battle of Benevento and on 23 August 1268 he defeated and captured Conradian, the son of Frederick’s son Conrad IV, at the battle of Tagliacozzo. Conradian was executed, in an act that was greeted with widespread dismay and disapproval. Manfred’s captured widow died in prison in 1271. His daughter was released in 1284 but his sons remained in prison until their deaths. One was still alive in 1309.

In the wake of Benevento and Tagliacozzo, Charles established a French regime in the Kingdom of Sicily, the Regno, and many thousands of French, Provençal, and other lords, knights, and other soldiers of fortune found their way to the South. Durrieu’s list of those ‘French’ who acquired lands of some kind runs to some 700 names, but there were many others who did not acquire lands but who sometimes rose to high office in any case.1 The few names mentioned here who found service with the fleets in one way or another were only a tiny percentage of all those who found service of other kinds. Moreover, as with other Mediterranean powers, terrestrial and maritime commands were frequently one and the same thing. Many who took service with the king as stipendiarii in the first instance acquired lands and became feudatarii later. The distinction between ‘mercenaries’ and ‘non-mercenaries’ in Angevin forces was frequently imprecise. The more so because even feudatarii might be paid and certainly Regnicoli called to the fleets and armies as oarsmen and infantry were paid. In February 1279 the annual pay of provincial Justiciars, even if feudatarii, was 50 ounces of tarins per year, just over 4 tarins a day.2 Here those Regnicoli who held maritime commands, such as Matteo de Ruggiero di Salerno, who was Vice-Admiral of the Principato and Terra di Lavoro from 1278, and Filippo di Santacroce, who was variously Prothontinus, port master,
of Barletta and Monopoli, and who exercised several commands at sea, have not been included; although, from a methodological point of view the grounds for not doing so might be argued. In some cases they may have been no less ‘soldiers of fortune’ than the French and Provençals.

The enormous archive of the Angevin chancery was destroyed by the Germans outside Naples in September 1943; however, it is an ill wind that blows no one any good for the reconstruction and publication of the archives by Riccardo Filangieri and subsequent archivists in Naples has made a wealth of material readily available that would otherwise have been accessible only in the archives. It is a wonderful gift. That being said, a word of warning. A recent request to acquire photocopies of the transcripts from which a particular document was published was met with an indignant assertion by the current archivist that the document had been published ‘esattamente’ as transcribed. However, it is not true that the published registers are indeed exact transcriptions. There are a great many errors in the published documents; phrases and sentences have been omitted and whole documents have been overlooked. Especially for the period 1283–5, many documents recorded by Minieri Riccio and others have not found their way into the reconstructed registers. The indices are also very unreliable. The task of reconstruction was so massive and the pressure to get the volumes out so intense that the documents as published in the reconstructed registers cannot be trusted. Particularly for any technical matters, it is really necessary to go back to the publications from which they were transcribed, if it was from a publication. Older authorities such as Paul Durrieu and Alain de Boüard can also not be relied upon. In his list of French personnages mentioned in the Angevin registers as having been in the Regno during the reign of Charles I Durrieu made a great many mistakes. He quite often gave dates of death or other events which are incorrect. It is unclear how long De Bouard spent in the archives in Naples and by his own admission what he published was incomplete.

From the point of view of the fleets, Charles’s reign falls into six phases. First, there were the early years which were spent in the acquisition of Corfu and preparation for an expedition against the Byzantine Empire projected for the summer of 1270, but which had to be shelved because of the Tunis Crusade of Louis IX. This was followed by a period in the 1270s in which Charles attempted to consolidate his hold on Albania. At one point his forces even reached as far inland as to