Roger of Lauria
(c. 1250–1305)

'ADMIRAL OF ADMIRALS'

Charles D. Stanton

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To a modern-day 'Admiral of Admirals':
Adm. William J. Crowe USN
PhD, Political Science, Princeton
Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (1985–1989)
US Ambassador to the United Kingdom (1994–1997)
'Sailor, Scholar, Statesman'

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MAPS

All maps produced by Kristy Stanton

PROLOGUE

THE TITLE 'ADMIRAL OF ADMIRALS' was an actual honorific first applied in 1133 by King Roger II of Sicily in its Latin form (*amiratus amiratorum*) to his gifted adviser, George of Antioch.[1] *Amiratus* was derived from the Arabic word *amir* ('emir'), literally meaning 'commander'. In other words, King Roger used the title to designate George as a 'commander of commanders'. At the time, however, the designation carried no naval connotation. George of Antioch was the king's 'minister of ministers' in the sense of a 'first minister' or 'prime minister', responsible for the overall, day-to-day functioning of government. It was only when the '*amiratus*' successfully exploited the royal fleet to extend the power of the crown beyond the boundaries of the kingdom that the position began to take on a maritime aspect. The appellation 'admiral' did not become fully identified with command of the fleet until 1177 when Roger's grandson, King William II of Sicily, bestowed the dignity *regii fortunati stolii amiratus* ('Admiral of the Blessed Royal Fleet') on his first minister, Walter of Moac.[2] But none in all of the Middle Ages deserved the distinction 'Admiral of Admirals' in the sense of a supreme naval commander more than Roger of Lauria who fought for the Crown of Aragon during the War of the Sicilian Vespers in the late thirteenth century.

Revered maritime historian John Pryor offers no caveats when he insists that Lauria, a Calabrian noble, 'has no rival in medieval history, not even among the Genoese and the Venetians'.[3] 'He was one of the greatest naval commanders in the history of the Mediterranean,'

[1] *Rogerii II. Regis Diplomata Latina*, ed. Carlrichard Brühl (*Codex diplomaticus regni Siciliae*, Cologne–Vienna, 1987), no. 24, pp. 66–8; Charles D. Stanton, *Norman Naval Operations in the Mediterranean* (Woodbridge, 2011), p. 125.

[2] Léon-Robert Ménager, *Amiratus- Ἀμηρας, L'Emirat et les origins de l'amirauté (XI–XIII siècle)* (Paris, 1960), p. 94; Stanton, *Norman Naval Operations*, pp. 260–1.

[3] John Pryor, 'The naval battles of Roger of Lauria', *Journal of Medieval History*, IX (1983), pp. 179–216, especially 211.

panegyrizes David Abulafia in *The Great Sea*.[4] He called him the 'new Lysander', referring to the renowned Spartan *navarch* ('leader of ships') who humbled Athens at the Battle of Notium in 407 BC and again at Aegospotami in 404 before eventually forcing the rival city-state to terms with the blockade of Piraeus – thus ending the Peloponnesian War. Roger of Lauria is immortalized in both Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy* and Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron*.[5] To place him in proper perspective, his career should be compared to that of Vice-Admiral Horatio Nelson who won three pitched battles at sea as a fleet commander: the Battle of the Nile in 1798,[6] the Battle of Copenhagen in 1801[7] and, of course, the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805.[8] Lord Nelson also suffered a singular defeat at the Battle of Santa Cruz de Tenerife in 1797, when he lost his right arm.[9] In contrast, Roger of Lauria claimed six signal victories while in command and was never beaten at sea.

Yet he remains an esoteric figure to most scholars and his exploits are almost entirely unknown to the general public. There is a litany of reasons for this, but perhaps John Pryor provides the most perceptive explanation: 'Lauria's fame has been diminished by the minor place awarded to the War of the Vespers by modern medievalists and by its overshadowing by the Hundred Years War.'[10] In this timeframe north-western Europe had begun to emerge as a centre of power while the pre-eminence of such Mediterranean polities as the papacy and the Byzantine Empire was on the wane. Moreover, military historians have traditionally accorded little respect to naval strategy and tactics in the Middle Ages, because warfare at sea during the epoch was regarded simply as land warfare removed to the decks of ships. After all, the galleys of the age boasted no ship-killing technology like the *rostrum* or ram of classical times or the carriage-mounted cannons fired through lidded gun ports of the early modern era. They, instead, had to rely on the same sort of weaponry that had dominated medieval battlefields for hundreds of years: swords, lances and crossbows. Even so, recent analysis by researchers such as Lawrence Mott has proven that Lauria excelled in

[4] David Abulafia, *The Great Sea: A Human History of the Mediterranean* (London, 2011), p. 351.
[5] Dante Alighieri, *Divine Comedy*, trans. H. F. Tozer (Oxford, 1904), 'Purgatory', Canto XX, verse 78, p. 236 and note 2; Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron*, trans. G. H. McWilliam (London, 1972), 'Fifth Day', 'Sixth Story', pp. 409–11.
[6] Roger Knight, *The Pursuit of Victory: The Life and Achievement of Horatio Nelson* (New York, 2005), pp. 288–303.
[7] Knight, *Pursuit of Victory*, pp. 362–84.
[8] Knight, *Pursuit of Victory*, pp. 501–24.
[9] Knight, *Pursuit of Victory*, pp. 241–54.
[10] Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 179.

galley warfare precisely because he possessed a nuanced understanding of the unique nautical characteristics of these vessels and the capabilities of their crews in combat.[11]

Another reason why Lauria has languished in obscurity beyond the confines of the Mediterranean world is more mundane: language. There is a decided dearth of material on the Calabrian–Aragonese hero in English. That does not, however, mean that scrupulous scholarship and solid sources covering his career are deficient. They are not. They are merely in Italian, Spanish, French, Catalan and Latin. Contemporary accounts fall into two principal categories: Catalan chronicles recounting the affairs of the court of Aragon, to which Catalonia (*Catalunya* in Catalan) and the County of Barcelona belonged, and Italian annals detailing the history of Sicily, especially the War of the Vespers.[12] Of the former, there are essentially two that pertain to the period: the *Crònica de Bernat Desclot* on the reign of Peter III of Aragon and the *Crònica de Ramon Muntaner* on the author's exploits as a Catalan soldier of fortune.[13] They are two of the 'Four Grand Chronicles' of medieval Catalan literature. (The other two – the *Llibre del Fets* of James I the Conqueror and the *Chronicle of Pere III* of Catalonia – do not address the War of the Sicilian Vespers and, thus, Roger's career.[14])

Between the two relevant works, scholars consider the chronicle of Bernat Desclot to be the most factually dependable. Desclot, believed to have actually been the Bernat Escrivà identified as having served in various administrative positions within the royal curia (including treasurer) until his death in 1289, probably had access to the crown chancery. This would account for the extraordinary specifics he included in his work on King Peter's African adventure and the subsequent invasion of Sicily in 1282 as well as the monarch's heroic defence of Catalonia against a French incursion in 1285. Unfortunately, Desclot's account ends with Peter's death in November of that year, forcing historians to depend

[11] Lawrence Mott, 'The Battle of Malta, 1283: Prelude to Disaster', in *The Circle of War in the Middle Ages*, eds Donald Kagay and L. J. Andrew Villalon (Woodbridge, 1999), pp. 145–72, esp. 157–63.

[12] Even though *Catalunya* is the correct Catalan name for the region, the more widely used 'Catalonia' will be used throughout the volume.

[13] Bernat Desclot, *Chronicle of the Reign of King Pedro III of Aragon, A.D. 1276–1285*, trans. F. L. Critchlow (Princeton, 1928); Ramon Muntaner, *Chronicle*, trans. Lady Goodenough (2 vols, London, 1920).

[14] James I of Aragon, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon (Llibre del Fets)*, trans. Damian J. Smith and Helena Buffery (Farnham, 2003); Pere III of Catalonia, *Chronicle*, trans. Mary Hillgarth and J. N. Hillgarth (2 vols, Toronto, 1980).

mostly on Muntaner for the Aragonese perspective on the remaining events of a war that lasted until 1302.[15]

Ramon Muntaner's narrative has the advantage of encompassing the entire period under investigation, and does so from the unique perspective of a court administrator and a soldier with an eye for military detail. Moreover, he participated in several campaigns of the war, like the Majorca offensive of 1286–7, and may have personally observed many of the events he describes, making him an expert eyewitness. He almost certainly was familiar with galley operations, having served not only on Lauria's ships but also in the fleet of Roger de Flor's Grand Catalan Company that sold its services to the Byzantine Emperor after the war. He was, however, far from impartial. Peralada, the town in Catalonia in which he had been born around 1265, was destroyed by the very French invasion that Lauria's heroics helped thwart in 1285. Muntaner remained steadfastly loyal to the Aragonese royal family for the rest of his life. After returning from the East in 1309, he governed the islands of Jerba and Kerkenna for King Frederick III of Sicily (Peter's third son) until 1315. In 1332 he became chamberlain for James III of Majorca and died as the king's bailiff of Ibiza in 1336. Not only is Muntaner's chronicle highly biased, but it is also compromised by the fact that it was not begun until 1325 – over four decades after the outset of the War of the Sicilian Vespers (1282–1302). As a consequence, many of the details are inaccurate, Aragonese accomplishments are heavily embellished and the sequence of events is often hopelessly muddled.[16]

Still, the *Crònica de Ramon Muntaner* remains a valuable reference, especially when corroborated by the comprehensive and rigorously researched *Anales de la Corona de Aragón* ('Annals of the Crown of Aragon') by Jerónimo Zurita. A functionary in the court of King Philip II of Spain, this sixteenth-century scholar spent over thirty years (*circa* 1550–80) detailing the history of the Kingdom of Aragon. Using modern standards of document-based inquiry, he was known to have consulted archives from the Spanish Netherlands to Sicily in order to verify his findings in medieval chronicles and other literary references. And, of course, since he completed the work over four centuries ago, there is the tantalizing possibility that he had access to sources no longer available.

[15] Damian Smith, 'Bernat Desclot', in the *Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*, ed. Graeme Dunphy (2 vols, Leiden, 2010), I, p. 517.

[16] Smith, 'Ramon Muntaner', in the *Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*, II, p. 1130.

But, of particular interest for the period in question, Zurita was thought to have relied substantially on contemporary Italian chroniclers.[17]

Of the latter, the three primary ones are Bartolomeo di Neocastro, Niccolò Speciale and Saba Malaspina. The first two were Sicilian partisans, while the third was from the mainland and harboured Guelph (papal party) leanings. Malaspina's work, the *Liber gestorum regum Siciliae* ('Book of the Events of the Kingdom of Sicily'), distinguishes itself from the other two chiefly by offering a more objective, if not overtly pro-Angevin, version of the events.[18] He was apparently a Roman cleric who served as a scribe in the papal curia from 1283 to 1285. In 1286, Pope Honorius IV appointed him to the bishopric of Mileto in Calabria. Captured by Roger of Lauria in the course of a raid sometime in 1288–9, he later escaped to Angevin territory in the Molise region north of Apulia. Nonetheless, his chronicle, begun in 1284, appears to have been based upon documents in the papal curia and, thus, seems reasonably accurate. Its foremost flaw resides in the fact that it ends with the death of Charles of Anjou in early 1285, leaving the rest of the story to be told by its Sicilian counterparts.[19]

There can be no doubt as to where the sympathies of Bartolomeo di Neocastro lay. He was a Sicilian jurist born in Messina around 1240 who helped lead the revolt against Angevin rule during the War of the Vespers. While his *Historia Sicula* is clearly slanted, especially towards James II of Aragon, it has the benefit of providing the most meticulous account of the 1282 siege of Messina by Charles of Anjou. Unfortunately, it, too, fails to span the extent of the war, in that Neocastro died in 1293.[20]

His compatriot and fellow chronicler, Niccolò Speciale, also seems to have resided in Messina, although he may have actually been born in Noto, according to some sources. His work was entitled the *Historia Sicula* as well and, he, likewise, appears to have viewed the Aragonese rule of Sicily as legitimate.[21] After all, he was recorded as having been a

[17] Jerónimo Zurita, *Anales de la Corona de Aragón*, ed. Angel Cannelas López (8 vols, Institución 'Fernando el Católico', Zaragoza, 1967–77).

[18] Saba Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, in *Cronisti e scrittori sincroni napoletani editi e inediti*, ed. Giuseppe del Re (2 vols, Naples, 1868), II, pp. 210–408.

[19] Rosanna Lamboglia, 'Saba Malaspina', in the *Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*, II, p. 1130.

[20] Bartolomeo di Neocastro, *Historia Sicula (1250–1293)*, in *Cronisti e scrittori sincroni napoletani editi e inediti*, ed. Giuseppe del Re (2 vols, Naples, 1868), II, pp. 409–627. See also Angela Tomei, 'Bartholomaeus of Neocastro', in the *Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*, I, pp. 144–5.

[21] Niccolò Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, ed. Ludovico Muratori (Rerum Italicarum Scriptores, X, Milan, 1727), cols 917–1092.

part of a legation sent by King Frederick III of Sicily to Pope Benedict XII in 1334. But Speciale (who died in 1335) was much younger than Neocastro, which means that his narrative covered the entirety of the war and its aftermath, making it a particularly rich source for those events following the Treaty of Anagni in 1295 when Aragon allied with Anjou in an effort to recover the island.[22] Corroborating much of Speciale's account of the war, particularly for the later years and the aftermath, was the *Anonymi Chronicon Siculum*, which covered the period from 820 to 1343.[23] Its author was probably a mid-fourteenth-century archivist from Palermo who had access to royal records, making it reasonably reliable.[24]

Another Italian account, somewhat removed from the action but offering an additional Guelph interpretation of the events, is that of Florentine banker Giovanni Villani (born 1276). Written in the Italian vernacular in the 1320s and 1330s, his *Cronica* includes particulars on the War of the Sicilian Vespers in the context of a sweeping history of Europe and the Middle East from biblical antiquity to 1346 (two years before Villani died of the bubonic plague). It provides a particularly useful reference for those proceedings leading up to the war, such as the Battles of Benevento and Tagliacozzo.[25]

The main fount of information on the structure and management of the Aragonese–Catalan fleet is the *Archivo de la Catedral de Valencia* ('Archive of the Cathedral of Valencia').[26] It contains *pergaminos* ('parchments') that delineate fleet expenditures and standard operating procedures during most of the period that the fleet was based in Sicily (1283–92). Many of the pertinent documents have also been conveniently transcribed in Giuseppe La Mantia's *Codice diplomatico dei re aragonesi di Sicilia* ('Diplomatic Codex of the Aragonese Kings of Sicily').[27] As for the Angevin fleet, Riccardo Filangieri's *I registri della cancelleria angioina* ('The Registers of the Angevin Chancery') serves the same function.[28]

[22] Lamboglia, 'Niccolò Speciale il Vecchio', in the *Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*, II, p. 1142.

[23] *Anonymi Chronicon Siculum*, in *Bibliotheca Scriptorum qui res in Sicilia gestas sub Aragonum imperio retulere*, ed. Rosario Gregorio (2 vols, Palermo, 1792).

[24] Lamboglia, 'Chronicon Siculum 820–1343', in the *Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*, I, pp. 428–9.

[25] Giovanni Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, ed. Francesco Dragomanni (4 vols, Florence, 1845). See also Francesco Salvestrini, 'Giovanni Villani', in the *Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*, II, p. 1478.

[26] *Archivo de la Catedral de Valencia* (ACV), Pergaminos (perg.) 737–8.

[27] Giuseppe La Mantia, *Codice diplomatico dei re aragonese di Sicilia* (2 vols, Palermo, 1917–19).

[28] Riccardo Filangieri, *I registri della cancelleria angioina* (33 vols, Naples, 1950–81).

'The reconstructed [Angevin] registers preserve an exceptionally rich variety of materials for the naval architecture, organization of war fleets, manning, equipment, and rigging, and supplies,' notes John Pryor.[29]

The most complete modern rendition of the conflict is Michele Amari's monumental three-volume study of the mid-nineteenth century, *La Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*,[30] though it remains tainted by his chauvinistic anti-Bourbon bias and some overly melodramatic prose. The only extant account in English is that of Sir Steven Runciman, *The Sicilian Vespers*, but it concentrates on the causes and supplies only sketchy specifics after the first phase of the war, which ended with the demise of Charles of Anjou in 1285.[31] More recently, Salvatore Tramontana furnishes an analysis of the conflict in Italian through the eyes of famous Italian writers in *Gli anni del Vespro: L'immaginario, la cronica, la storia*.[32] Jean Dunbabin delivers an indispensable insight into the Angevin regime's impact on the Kingdom of Sicily before and during the revolt of the Vespers.[33] And Giovanni Amatuccio looks at the war from a military standpoint in *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, leading him to focus on the land war as it played out on the Italian peninsula.[34] More germane to the topic at hand, Lawrence Mott provides an invaluable maritime perspective in his pioneering study, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean: The Catalan–Aragonese Fleet in the War of the Sicilian Vespers*.[35] Finally, the most recent biographical examination of the great admiral himself belongs to Antonio J. Planells Clavero and Planells de la Maza whose Spanish-language *Roger de Lauria, El gran almirante del Mediterráneo* contributes some very worthwhile scholarship, particularly on Roger's early years at the court of Aragon.[36]

From the foregoing, it should be apparent that the story of Roger of Lauria is largely the story of the Sicilian Vespers. The two tales are

[29] Pryor, 'The Galleys of Charles I of Anjou, King of Sicily: ca. 1269–84', *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History*, XIV (1993), pp. 34–103, esp. 35–6.

[30] Michele Amari, *La Guerra del Vespro Siciliano* (3 vols, 9th edn, Milan, 1886).

[31] Steven Runciman, *The Sicilian Vespers: A History of the Mediterranean World in the Later Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1958).

[32] Salvatore Tramontana, *Gli anni del Vespro: L'immaginario, la cronica, la storia* (Bari, 1989).

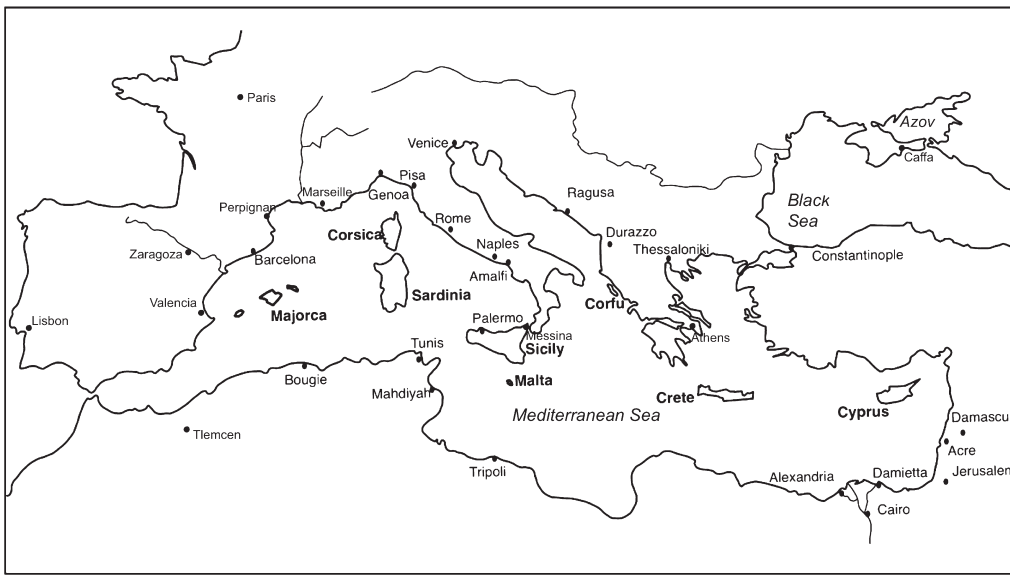
[33] Jean Dunbabin, *Charles I of Anjou: Power, Kingship and State-Making in Thirteenth-Century Europe* (Harlow, 1998); *The French in the Kingdom of Sicily, 1266–1305* (Cambridge, 2011).

[34] Giovanni Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro (1282–1302)* (Bologna, 2012).

[35] Larry Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean: The Catalan–Aragonese Fleet in the War of the Sicilian Vespers* (Gainesville, 2003).

[36] Antonio J. Planells Clavero and A. J. Planells de la Maza, *Roger de Lauria, El gran almirante del Mediterráneo* (Madrid, 2011).

entwined; it is impossible to tell one without recounting the other. The major events and primary players of a conflict that affected nearly every part of the Mediterranean world in the course of twenty years must, of necessity, form the context for this chronological narrative of an exceptional life. (See Map 1.) Accordingly, my account begins with the Battle of Benevento in 1266, the transformative engagement that set the stage for the War of the Sicilian Vespers and Roger's role in it.



1 The Mediterranean (late thirteenth century)

I

BATTLE OF BENEVENTO (26 FEBRUARY 1266)

When Charles, Count of Anjou and brother of King Louis IX of France, emerged with his assembled forces from the Samnite Apennines to arrive on the east shoulder of Monte San Vitale just above the fortified city of Benevento on the afternoon of 25 February 1266, his heart must have sunk. There, camped beneath the walls of the city on the south side of the swollen River Calore, was the entire army of his arch-enemy: Manfred, King of Sicily. He had not expected him to be there.[1]

Charles had just marched his army from Rome, where on the day of the Epiphany (6 January) he had been anointed by the papacy to assume Manfred's crown. His objective was Naples, Manfred's residence and unofficial capital. So he had taken the Via Latina, an old Roman road that ran through Frosinone and Anagni. He faced little resistance as he crossed the River Liri at Ceprano. On 10 February his invading army had even captured the seemingly impregnable castle of Cassino (called San Germano at the time) from a detachment of 2,000 Saracens sent by Manfred to hold the pass.[2] But there he learned that Manfred was waiting in force behind a heavily fortified bridge on the Volturno River near Capua, which blocked the main access route into the *Regno* (the medieval appellation for the Kingdom of Sicily – from the Italian word *regno*, meaning 'kingdom'). Deciding that the most prudent course of action was to flank Manfred to the east, Charles diverted his legions eastward past Telese into the rugged Taburno Camposauro Mountains

[1] Charles Oman, *A History of the Art of War in the Middle Ages* (2 vols, London, 1924), I, pp. 498–9; Steven Runciman, *The Sicilian Vespers: A History of the Mediterranean World in the Later Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1958), pp. 91–2.

[2] *Annali Genovesi di Caffaro e de' suoi continuatori dal MXCIX al MCCXCIII*, eds Luigi Belgrano and Cesare Imperiale di Sant'Angelo (5 vols, Fonti per la storia, Genoa, 1890–1929), IV, pp. 84–6; Saba Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, in *Cronisti e scrittori sincroni napoletani editi e inediti*, ed. Giuseppe del Re (2 vols, Naples, 1868), II, bk III, chs III–V, pp. 246–9; Giovanni Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, ed. Francesco Dragomanni (4 vols, Florence, 1845), I, bk VII, chs V–VI, pp. 325–8. See also Oman, *Art of War*, I, p. 498; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 90–1.

and through the narrow defile of Vitulano just west of Benevento. It was a horrific miscalculation. The track made for an arduous trek in the dead of winter. Seasonal downpours had turned mountain streams into raging torrents. Most of his supply wagons had to be abandoned. By the time his men stumbled out into the Calore Valley, they had devoured most of their beasts of burden and even some of their *destriers* (the costly warhorses of the knights). It was a drained and dispirited force that now faced a well-rested and well-fed adversary, protected by a nearly impassable river in the shadow of a well-defended city.[3]

Manfred, informed by the Saracen survivors of San Germano that Charles was attempting to turn his flank, had brilliantly anticipated him by swiftly moving his forces from Capua through the Valle Caudina, separating the Taburno Camposauro and the Montevergine Massif, to Benevento. Now all that the Hohenstaufen sovereign had to do was wait patiently behind the churning Calore and sup on supplies from a well-stocked city, while his exhausted adversary starved before his eyes.[4] So it had come to this. Anjou's tightly clutched reverie of regal aggrandizement appeared to be at an end. By all accounts, Charles of Anjou was a taciturn, phlegmatic man who was unaccustomed to demonstrative displays of emotion. Contemporary cleric Thomas of Pavia said of him: 'Not garrulous but rather sparing in words, his expression neither happy nor cheerful, not given to breaking into smiles.'[5] Nonetheless, he must have reflected ruefully on the long road that had led him to this point.

Born on 21 March 1227 as the seventh and youngest son of Louis VIII of France (who had died of dysentery on 8 November the year before), Charles grew up in court never having any reasonable expectation of ever wearing a crown. With no appanages (endowments of land to sustain younger royalty) available, the king had determined a clerical career for him. But his lineage and upbringing taught him to aspire for more, nonetheless. After all, his father (Louis 'the Lion') had invaded England as dauphin during the First Barons' War and his mother was the strong-willed Blanche of Castile who had served as queen-regent following her husband's demise. It was his older brother, Louis IX, who had enabled him to plot a different path more in keeping with his personality. The future Saint Louis earmarked the counties of Anjou and Maine for Charles after his older brothers, John and Philip Dagobert, passed

[3] Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, I, bk VII, ch. VII, p. 328. See also Oman, *Art of War*, I, pp. 498–9; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 91–2.

[4] Oman, *Art of War*, I, p. 499; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 91.

[5] Tommaso da Pavia, *Gesta imperatorum et pontificum*, ed. E. Ehrenfeuchter (Monumenta Germaniae Historica, SS, vol. XXII, Hanover, 1872), pp. 483–528, esp. 524.

prematurely in 1232, although it was not until after he was knighted at Melun in May 1246 that Charles was formally invested with the two counties. By then, his aspirations had already been appreciably assuaged by his fortunate marriage to Beatrice of Provence at Aix-en-Provence on 31 January of that same year, giving him control of one of the richest and most powerful counties in the realm. Later, in 1256, Louis granted Charles the county of Forcalquier in Haute-Provence as well.[6]

It was, however, a convoluted series of external events steeped in the papal politics of the era that had unexpectedly offered Charles an avenue to his own kingdom. This sequence of events had been set in motion by the death of the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II of fever at Castel Fiorentino in Apulia on 13 December 1250. The occasion, doubtless, prompted no small amount of exultation within the papal curia. The German House of Hohenstaufen had been the bane of the papacy since Frederick's father, Henry VI, had conquered the Kingdom of Sicily in 1194 from the founding family, the Hautevilles of Normandy, whose illustrious members included Robert Guiscard, Count Roger of Sicily and his son, King Roger II. Pope Gregory IX had excommunicated Frederick, dubbing him 'the Antichrist', and his successor Innocent IV (excluding the brief two-week papacy of Celestine IV) had famously labelled the imperial family 'a brood of vipers.'[7] This was because the Hohenstaufens, as rulers of lands both to the north and the south of the Papal States (essentially the Italian midlands – modern Lazio, Marche, Umbria, Romagna and a part of Emilia), threatened the temporal papal polity with constricting encirclement. And unlike the Hautevilles, they had declined to swear allegiance to the Holy See for the Kingdom of Sicily. Thus, the Italian peninsula subsequently became divided into two hostile camps: the imperial-leaning Ghibellines, named after the Hohenstaufen castle of Wibellingen in the Duchy of Swabia (southern Germany), and the Guelphs (or Guelfs), whose sobriquet sprang from the pro-papal Welf dukes of Bavaria – implacable adversaries of the Hohenstaufens.[8]

All of the foregoing was, of course, why Innocent IV refused to recognize Frederick's son Conrad as his successor, although the young

[6] Jean Dunbabin, *Charles I of Anjou: Power, Kingship and State-Making in Thirteenth-Century Europe* (Harlow, 1998), pp. 9–13.

[7] David Abulafia, *Frederick II, A Medieval Emperor* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 318, 406–11; 'The kingdom of Sicily under the Hohenstaufen and Angevins', in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, ed. D. Abulafia (7 vols, Cambridge, 1999), V, pp. 497–521, esp. 506–7; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 16–17.

[8] H. J. Chaytor, *A History of Aragon and Catalonia* (London, 1933), p. 99; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 18–19.

prince was the legitimate heir to the kingdom and had been formally designated as such by his father. Conrad, king of Germany, assumed the crown of Sicily anyway, but was willing to make concessions. The pope would have none of it. He would not accept rule over both Germany and Sicily by the same sovereign. Instead, Innocent sought a suitor who would be content to govern Sicily solely – and under papal auspices.[9] He approached Henry III of England in August 1252 in hopes that the king would enlist his brother Richard, earl of Cornwall, for the job, but the latter had no interest in conquering a kingdom as a vassal of the pope. Innocent then wrote Louis IX to tender the throne to Charles. The upright French monarch demurred, however, regarding Conrad as the rightful ruler of Sicily.

But the English sovereign suffered no such scruples. Henry III formally offered his son Edmund Crouchback, earl of Lancaster, as a candidate in February 1254 and Innocent IV seemed to respond in the affirmative, referring to the English prince in correspondence dated 14 May 1254 as 'king of Sicily'. The death of Conrad from malaria at Lavello only a week later, however, caused the pope to hesitate for fear of overtly trampling on the sovereign rights of the king's son and heir, Conrad II who was called Conradin ('Little Conrad'). The matter seemed to die with Innocent himself on 7 December of that year.[10]

Since Conradin was only two at the time, his uncle Manfred (Frederick II's illegitimate son by Bianca Lancia) assumed the reins of power variously as vicar or regent until he could come of age. In the interim, Innocent's successor, Alexander IV, resumed on–off negotiations with the court of England, finally confirming the grant of Sicily to Edmund on 13 May 1255 and formally investing him the following October. The covenant rapidly unravelled, however, in the spring of 1258, when Henry's lay magnates refused to supply the exorbitant sums demanded by the papal curia in payment for Edmund's installation. In the meantime, Manfred seized on the rumour of Conradin's death in Upper Bavaria to have himself crowned king of Sicily by the bishop of Girgenti on 10 August in Palermo with the full support of Hohenstaufen stalwarts. Alexander ultimately rescinded Edmund's investiture by papal bull on 18 December 1258.[11]

The papacy's efforts to find a more suitable sovereign for Sicily did not end there, however. Alexander IV died at Viterbo on 25 May 1261 and was replaced two months later by Jacques Pantaléon, a Frenchman

[9] Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 26–30.
[10] Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 30–1, 56–9.
[11] Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 31–5, 60–3.

who took the name Urban IV. Predictably, the new pope soon settled on fellow countryman Charles of Anjou as the Church's champion. The latter now showed an eager willingness to entertain the offer. The reluctance of his brother, King Louis, to condone the enterprise had, at long last, been overcome by the monarch's antipathy towards Manfred whom he now considered a usurper. Nor did Charles blanch at the draconian terms proposed by the pope for his assent. After some months of negotiation, Urban published a bull on 26 June 1263 granting the Kingdom of Sicily to Charles in accordance with a stringent set of conditions, which included his vassalage to the Holy See, his abstention from holding any position of power within the Papal States or the Kingdom of Italy (essentially northern Italy) and an annual payment of 10,000 ounces of gold to the papal treasury. Charles hesitated hardly at all – probably because he had no intention of actually honouring the terms. The count of Anjou ratified the pact by the end of the following month.[12]

Within months, Charles showed himself to be not quite the saviour of the Holy See that Urban had hoped. The Guelph party of Rome offered him the senatorship, and he accepted in direct contravention of the agreement. The pope found himself boxed into a corner without the means to enforce the current contract, so he had no choice but to consent to a new one, which was negotiated by April of the following year with terms much more advantageous to Anjou. The agreement achieved its final form in September 1264, only a few days before Urban himself succumbed to an unspecified illness in Perugia on 2 October. Charles spent the remainder of the year and the first few months of 1265 in Provence preparing for the offensive against Manfred. Anjou's mobilization was funded mostly by church tithes, and on 15 February his cause was bolstered still more by the investiture of yet another fellow Frenchman, Guy Fulquois of the Languedoc, as Pope Clement IV. He would prove to be one of Anjou's stronger supporters. Clement ardently adhered to Urban's advocacy of the Angevin campaign to claim the *Regno*, designating it as a crusade. Only Manfred now stood between Charles and the crown of Sicily.[13]

By the spring of 1265, Charles was ready. At Marseilles on 10 May, he and an armed entourage of several hundred knights and crossbowmen embarked on thirty galleys bound for Rome. Thanks to a fortuitous

[12] Michele Amari, *La Guerra del Vespro Siciliano* (9th edn, 3 vols, Milan, 1886), I, pp. 27–32; Abulafia, 'Sicily under the Hohenstaufen and Angevins', pp. 508–9; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 65–70.

[13] Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, pp. 32–5; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 78–84.

spring storm in the vicinity of Pisa, the Angevin flotilla managed to evade a fleet of around eighty galleys sent by Manfred to interdict it. Upon reaching Ostia, the Angevins easily removed a series of maritime obstacles to gain access to the mouth of the Tiber, enabling them to make the Eternal City by 23 May. On 21 June, Charles was officially recognized as senator of Rome.[14] But the bulk of his forces were yet to be mobilized and marched overland to join him – an expensive evolution for which he still needed to accrue sufficient financing. It was not until early autumn that Charles, in collaboration with Pope Clement, was able to raise enough money to amass his army: some 6,000 mounted men-at-arms, 600 horse archers and almost 20,000 infantry (half of whom were crossbowmen) – according to the exaggerated estimates of the chroniclers. Gilles Le Brun de Trazignies, the Constable of France, and Robert Béthune, the future Count of Flanders, mustered the men at Lyon on or about 1 October. That meant a late-season crossing of the French Alps by way of the Col de Tende to arrive in mostly Ghibelline-held northern Italy sometime in late November. Even then, the men were compelled to take a circuitous route to avoid the inimical Genoese and the forces of the Marquis Oberto Pallavicini, an ally of Manfred who controlled a huge swath of Lombardy centred on Pavia. Therefore, they marched by way of Milan and Mantua to reach Bologna by the end of December; they then proceeded down the Via Emilia into the March of Ancona, a part of the Papal States. It was an arduous journey, but, along the way at Parma, they had the good fortune of being joined by 400 well-equipped Guelph horsemen from Tuscany, captained by Count Guido Guerra. The main force finally crossed the Apennines to reach Rome via Spoleto on 15 January 1266. By that time, Charles was dangerously low on resources and felt compelled to complete the campaign quickly. He led his army out of Rome five days later.[15]

But now, on the morning of 26 February 1266, after having overcome obstacle after obstacle, the long and laborious course to the crown that he so coveted appeared to be hopelessly barred. It was by no want of courage on his part. He had already established himself as one of the foremost warriors of his day, having suppressed multiple revolts in his newly won county of Provence and participated with distinction in his brother's crusade to Egypt, the Seventh. In the *Life of Saint Louis*,

[14] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk II, ch. XVII, pp. 90–3; Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, I, bk VII, ch. III, pp. 322–3. See also Willy Cohn, *Die Geschichte der sizilischen Flotte unter der Regierung Konrads IV. und Manfreds (1250–1266)* (Berlin, 1920), pp. 34–41; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 85.

[15] Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, I, bk VII, chs IV–V, pp. 323–5. See also Oman, *Art of War*, I, pp. 497–8; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 86–90.

Jean de Joinville wrote in glowing terms of Anjou's mettle at the Battle of Mansourah (8 February 1250), saying the count 'won himself great honour' and that Joinville himself owed his life to the great knight's gallantry.[16] But courage was not enough in this case. It simply came down to this: there was but one narrow bridge across the seething Calore and Manfred's men held it. To attack it would have been both suicidal and futile. Charles had effectively been checkmated.

Clearly, Charles must have been chagrined, but, just as certainly, he would not have shown it. Contemporary Florentine chronicler Giovanni Villani described the count thus:

> … valiant in arms, and harsh, and much feared and redoubted by all the kings of the earth, great-hearted and of high purposes, steadfast in carrying out every great undertaking, firm in every adversity, faithful to every promise, speaking little and acting much, scarcely smiling, chaste as a monk, catholic, harsh in judgment, and of a fierce countenance, tall and stalwart in person, olive-coloured, large-nosed, and in kingly majesty he exceeded any other lord.[17]

There is a statue of Charles in the Palazzo dei Conservatori on the Campidoglio of Rome by contemporary Tuscan sculptor Arnolfo di Cambio that seems to bear out such a characterization (Fig. 1). Said to be an excellent likeness by someone who almost certainly saw the man in the flesh, it portrays a stolid, almost expressionless countenance that reflects, if anything, a dour resoluteness.[18] So Charles of Anjou must have had considerable difficulty concealing his glee at what he saw Manfred do that morning. Inexplicably, his Hohenstaufen adversary began moving his men across the bridge in order to give battle. As a man of faith, Charles must have viewed Manfred's actions as positively providential.

At first glance, Manfred's astonishing lack of caution seems quite curious. His position appeared to be unassailable, but, as always, appearances can be deceiving. Perhaps more than military might, power was about perception – whether one is regarded as having the right to rule. Manfred's allies were wavering and he knew it. His vulnerability lay in the nature of his authority. There was no denying that he possessed many of the trappings of kingship. After all, his father was the Holy

[16] Jean de Joinville, *Life of Saint Louis*, in *Chronicles of the Crusades*, trans. M. R. B. Shaw (London, 1963), pp. 215–21.

[17] Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, I, bk VII, ch. I, p. 320. Translation by Rose E. Selfe, *Villani's Chronicle, Being Selections from the First Nine Books of the Croniche Fiorentine of Giovanni Villani*, ed. Philip H. Wicksteed (London, 1906), bk VII, ch. 1, p. 200.

[18] Dunbabin, *Charles I of Anjou*, p. 21.

1 Contemporary marble sculpture of Charles I of Anjou by Tuscan sculptor Arnolfo di Cambio in the Palazzo dei Conservatori of the Musei Capitolini of Rome.

Roman Emperor and king of Sicily, Frederick II, from whom he had inherited many traits, including a fascination with the sciences. Fortune had also blessed him with a charming personality and an uncommon comeliness.[19] An illumination of him in the so-called *Manfred Bible* of the Vatican Library, produced at his behest sometime between 1250 and

[19] Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 35–6.

1258, shows a striking young man with almost Botticelli-like features and fair hair.[20] More practically, he was a skilled diplomat and a valiant warrior who had either outmanoeuvred or defeated outright the papal forces sent against him. Following the Battle of Montiperti on 4 September 1260 in which the Guelphs of Florence were routed by Manfred's Ghibelline allies, he was predominant on the Italian peninsula.[21] Yet the loyalty of many of his subjects remained tenuous at best. The problem, in part, was that he was not considered the legitimate heir to the Hohenstaufen crown. Conradin was – and the rumours of the princeling's premature death had proved to be false.

Manfred was, in fact, born a bastard in 1232 to the Emperor Frederick and his mistress, Bianca Lancia d'Agliano. Contemporaries Matthew Paris and Salimbene de Adam both claim in their chronicles that Frederick married Bianca on her deathbed in order to legitimize their offspring, but the nuptials were later considered non-canonical.[22] Be that as it may, Frederick made provisions in his will that bequeathed to Manfred a massive appanage in southern Italy as prince of Taranto and specifically placed him in the line of succession to the Kingdom of Sicily, should he survive Conrad and his sons.[23] Since Conradin was found to be still alive, Manfred's position as king had eroded considerably. Indeed, he was universally adjudged as a usurper, despite his attestations to reassess the matter when Conradin reached maturity. This enabled allies and followers with flexible faithfulness to reassess their fealty whenever it advantaged them.[24] Nor did Manfred's heavy reliance on his mother's family, the Lancia, for the day-to-day management of the *Regno* endear him to the other noble families who must have felt frozen from the circles of power.[25]

Moreover, Manfred's reputation as a military leader had been impaired by recent setbacks. Motivated by eastern aspirations, Manfred had struck an alliance in early 1259 with the Despot of Epirus, Michael II Komnenos Doukas, by marrying the latter's daughter Helena. This embroiled him in a battle to control the Balkans between Michael of

[20] *Manfred Bible*, Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Ms Vat. Lat. 36, fol. 522v.
[21] Abulafia, *Frederick II*, pp. 410–13; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 31–8.
[22] Matthew Paris, *English History: From the year 1235 to 1273*, trans. J. A. Giles (3 vols, London, 1852–4), III, pp. 183–4; Salimbene de Adam, *Chronicle*, trans. Joseph L. Baird, Giuseppe Baglivi and John Robert Kane (Binghamton, 1986), p. 196.
[23] Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 27.
[24] John France, *Western Warfare in the Age of the Crusades* (Ithaca, 1999), p. 180; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 37.
[25] Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 36.

Epirus allied with William II Villehardouin, the Prince of Achaea, against the Byzantine Emperor of Nicaea, Michael VIII Palaiologos. In the spring of 1259, Manfred sent a contingent of 400 German cavalry along with some Sicilian infantry to aid his father-in-law, but the Epirotes deserted their Hohenstaufen allies in an encounter with the forces of Michael Palaiologos at Pelagonia, leaving them to be slaughtered. The defeat enabled Palaiologos to consolidate his hold on the Greek mainland and eventually, on 26 July 1261, reconquer Constantinople from the Latin Emperor Baldwin II. The affair was a stain on Manfred's stature both as a statesman and a soldier.[26] The second incident curtailing confidence in Manfred's martial abilities occurred in the summer of 1265. Having learned of Anjou's arrival in Rome, Manfred marched his army through the Abruzzi to Arsoli, just 15 miles east of the Eternal City, but Charles, despite having vastly fewer forces, came out and seized the heights around Tivoli, effectively blocking Manfred's way. The bluff worked. Manfred withdrew, ceding north and central Italy to Anjou – a realignment that spurred some of the king's less resolute friends to shift allegiance.[27]

So, on the morning of 26 February 1266, Manfred had every reason to believe that, if the confrontation at Benevento became protracted, many of his confederates (particularly those from Campania) might melt away. Peter of Vico, one of his primary adherents in the region, had already defected;[28] and Count Richard of Caserta, one of the king's brothers-in-law, had just permitted Charles to pass Ceprano virtually uncontested.[29] Besides, Manfred had seen the dismal condition of Anjou's men when they staggered down from the Samnite hills to the north, even as his own troops remained relatively well-rested. And, while he was expecting his nephew, Conrad of Antioch, to bring reinforcements from the Abruzzi, the king had no idea when he would arrive. In any event, Manfred had just welcomed a contingent of around 800 mounted mercenaries from Germany. He evidently reckoned that he could expect no more auxiliaries for the time being and, given the wretched appearance of his adversary's army, he assumed that his currently assembled forces were more than adequate. He would wait no longer. He sent his vaunted Saracen infantry (mostly archers) across the bridge first.[30]

[26] Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 43–50.
[27] Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 85–6.
[28] Oman, *Art of War*, I, p. 499; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 85–6.
[29] Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, I, bk VII, ch. V, p. 326.
[30] Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, I, bk VII, ch. VII, pp. 328–9. See also Oman, *Art of War*, I, p. 499; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 91–2.

Manfred's decision was catastrophic – literally a blunder of historic significance. He had violated a major maxim of military strategy, respected since antiquity: never engage in pitched battle unless given no choice. The fourth-century Roman strategist, Publius Flavius Vegetius Renatus (usually referred to simply as Vegetius), wrote in his treatise *Epitoma Rei Militaris* ('Epitome of Military Affairs') under the subtitle 'General Rules of War': 'It is preferable to subdue an enemy by famine, raids and terror, than in battle where fortune tends to have more influence than bravery.'[31] Vegetius, who seems to have influenced many a medieval commander, later added, 'Good generals never engage in a general engagement except when opportunity offers, or under great necessity.'[32] And Manfred's premise for doing so was fatally flawed. By marching his army across the river, he ceded all tactical advantage to Charles. He now had to form up his troops at the foot of a gently sloping plain called the Santa Maria della Grandella with the roiling river at their backs while the French held the high ground (Map 2). Worse still, his men were compelled to file so slowly across the narrow span that Charles had a surfeit of time to arrange his forces as he saw fit. Finally, Manfred had overestimated the demoralized state of Anjou's army. In actuality, Anjou possessed an enormous advantage in the homogeneity of his forces. They were almost all from southern and central France, whereas Manfred's men were Saracens, Germans and Italians – including some nobles whom he knew to be traitorous.[33] Under no circumstances, should the king have committed his men to combat with barons in their midst that he could not trust. Also, the Angevins and their Guelf comrades-in-arms had their backs to the proverbial wall of the Samnite hills with few supplies and no possibility of retreat. It was either fight or die.

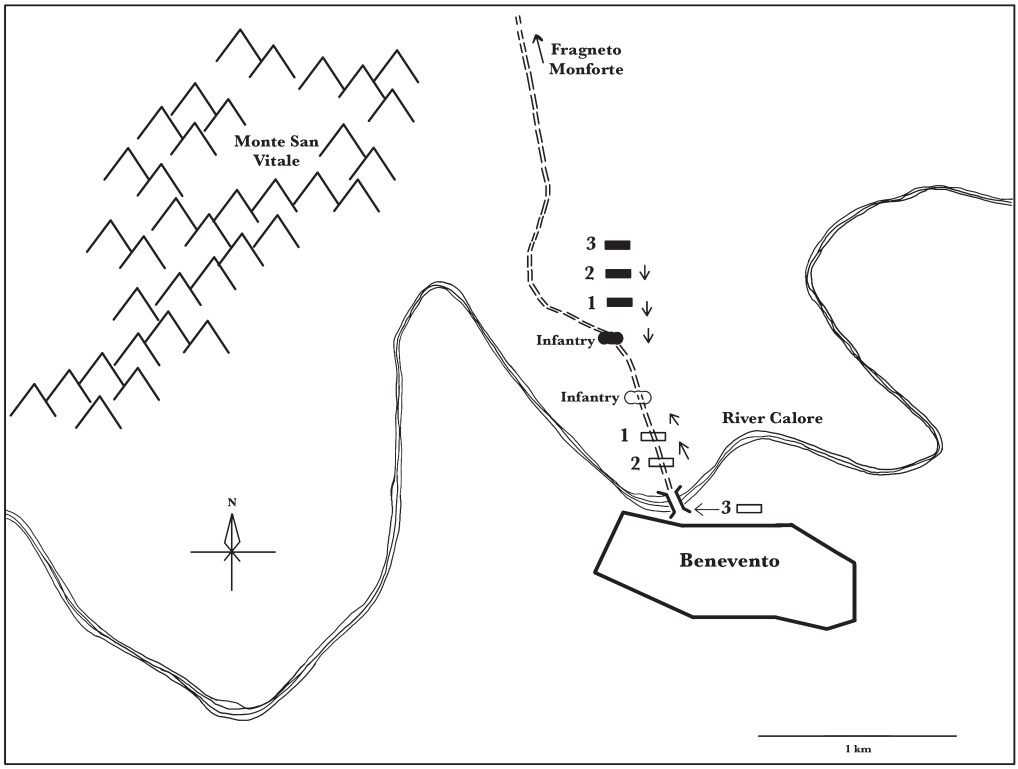
That said, the two sides seemed roughly even at the start. Each had around 3,000 mounted men-at-arms plus infantry divided into three battles, one after the other, that is, a formation in depth. Manfred, recognizing the heterogeneous and perhaps not totally reliable nature of his army, elected to lead with his Saracens – his most trusted troops.[34] Following an unsuccessful revolt among the Muslims of western Sicily,

[31] Vegetius, *Epitome of Military Science*, trans. N. P. Milner (Liverpool, 1993), bk III, par. 26, p. 108.

[32] Vegetius, *Epitome of Military Science*, bk III, par. 26, p. 110.

[33] Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, I, bk VII, ch. VII, pp. 328–9. See also France, *Western Warfare*, p. 180; Oman, *Art of War*, I, pp. 499–501; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 92–3.

[34] France, *Western Warfare*, pp. 179–80; Oman, *Art of War*, I, p. 500; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 92.



Angevin Divisions

1. Montfort and Mirepoix's Provençals
2. Anjou's French Cavalry
3. Reserves under Flanders and Le Brun

Infantry - Ribalds

Manfred's Divisions

1. Giordano Lancia - German Heavy Horse
2. Galvano Lancia - Ghibelline Cavalry
3. Manfred - Reserve Regnicoli

Infantry - Saracen Archers

2 Battle of Benevento

his father (Frederick II) had moved many of them to Lucera, an enclave in Apulia established especially for them. There, in return for military service, they had been allowed to live autonomously and to practise their own faith without interference. Thus, the Saracens of Lucera had become some of the Hohenstaufen monarchy's most loyal subjects and their skill with the longbow had become legendary.[35] Behind these Muslim archers marched the German heavy horse – twelve hundred strong, sporting the new plate armour and long swords. Staunch

[35] Giovanni Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro (1282–1302)* (Bologna, 2012), pp. 9–10.

supporters of the Hohenstaufen crown, these were commanded by the king's cousin, Giordano di Lancia, the Count of San Severino. Following them was an Italian cavalry division composed of around a thousand mercenaries (mostly Ghibellines from Tuscany and Lombardy) and three to four hundred Saracen light horse – all led by Manfred's uncle, Galvano di Lancia, the Prince of Salerno. Manfred himself headed the third mounted battle, comprised of around a thousand feudatories of the *Regno* – several of whom he was deeply doubtful. In addition to Richard of Caserta, he suspected that the allegiance of Count Thomas of Acerra, another brother-in-law, was also for sale. Accordingly, Manfred held the third division in reserve with his chamberlain, Manfred of Maletta (another uncle), and his faithful friend, Teobaldo Annibaldi, to help him keep an eye on his wayward nobility.[36]

As the column of Manfred's Saracens snaked across the Calore, Charles similarly deployed his cavalry in three divisions, fronted by an infantry unit of poorly armed commoners called *ribalds* (i.e., an early form of 'cannon fodder').[37] The first line of horsemen consisted of some 900 Provençals, captained by Count Philip of Monfort and Count Hugh of Mirepoix, the Marshal of France. Charles himself commanded the second and largest battle. It included about a thousand knights drawn chiefly from Champagne and the Languedoc, with the bishop of Auxerre and the count of Vendôme among them. Guido Guerra's 400 Guelph horsemen from Tuscany were probably attached to these. Lastly was the reserve consisting of 700 horse (mostly from Flanders, Brabant, Picardy and Aisne) with Robert of Flanders and Constable Gilles Le Brun in charge.[38]

Manfred's poor unity of command became apparent at the outset. Discipline deserted his ranks in the very first moments of the battle, when his Saracens advanced without orders. This led to a cascading chain of events that spelled disaster for the Hohenstaufen cause almost immediately. Based on Malaspina's testimony, eminent military historian Charles Oman surmises that the Saracens pressed forward to prepare the way for the Germans by breaking up the first line of French

[36] Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, I, bk VII, ch. VII, p. 329. See also Federico Canaccini, 'Battle of Benevento', in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Medieval Warfare and Military Technology*, ed. Clifford Rogers (3 vols, Oxford, 2010), I, pp. 141–2; Oman, *Art of War*, I, p. 500; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 92–3.

[37] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk III, ch. X, p. 253. See also Oman, *Art of War*, I, p. 500.

[38] Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, I, bk VII, ch. VIII, p. 330. See also Canaccini, 'Battle of Benevento', p. 141; Oman, *Art of War*, I, pp. 500–1; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 93.

cavalry, but, in all probability, they were simply caught up in the battle lust of the moment and their *caids* (military commanders) could not restrain them.[39] Whatever the reason, it provoked a countercharge from the *ribalds*, which in turn prompted the highly skilled Saracen archers to unleash a pitiless pall of arrows that Malaspina said 'hissed [through the air] like a snake crawling through stubble'.[40] The minimally equipped *ribalds* had few weapons and no protective armament whatsoever. The result was an appalling slaughter. Hardly any survived. Enraged, Mirepoix and Monfort launched a detachment of mounted sergeants from among the Provençals at the Muslims, who Malaspina said 'had no other weapons but bows'.[41] The Saracens were scattered and decimated 'like sparrows when suddenly the kite beats down upon them'.[42]

Giordano Lancia, apparently having just marched his battle across the bridge, did not bother to wait for Manfred's signal. He hurled the German heavy horse into the Provençals with predictable results.[43] The German mercenaries were big men on big mounts (fifteen-hand *destriers*, measuring about five feet from hoof to withers).[44] More significantly, they wore plate armour, a recent innovation that made them virtually invulnerable to arrows, swords, lances and the like. The sheer weight of their charge must have easily blunted the momentum of the much lighter Provençal cavalrymen, protected only by hauberks and exhausted from their encounter with the Saracens.[45] Then, based upon the account of contemporary observer Andreas of Hungary, Oman says, 'Advancing at a slow trot, and keeping their order so close that no one was able to force his way into their ranks, they slowly but effectively pushed the Provençals before them.'[46]

Faced with certain defeat, Charles of Anjou did not hesitate: he threw his entire second cavalry division, including Guerra's Tuscans,

[39] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk III, ch. X, p. 253. See also Oman, *Art of War*, I, pp. 501–2.
[40] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk III, ch. X, pp. 253–4.
[41] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk III, ch. X, pp. 253–4. See also Oman, *Art of War*, I, p. 502.
[42] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk III, ch. X, p. 254.
[43] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk. III, ch. X, p. 254.
[44] John Clark, *The Medieval Horse and its Equipment c. 1150–c. 1450* (Woodbridge, 2004), p. 23.
[45] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk III, ch. X, p. 254. See also Oman, *Art of War*, I, p. 502; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 93.
[46] Andreas of Hungary, *Andreae Ungari descriptio victoriae a Karolo Provinciae comite reportatae*, ed. George Waitz (Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores, vol. XXVI, Hanover, 1882), pp. 559–80, esp. 575. See also Oman, *Art of War*, I, p. 502.

into the fray. The Germans were now grappling with two mounted battles, but still they seemed to prevail, driving back the French bit by bit.[47] Eventually, however, Charles's men literally found the chink in the Germans' armour. Their plate was an early, primitive version that lacked such refinements as articulating components like *besagews* and *goussets* to cover vulnerable joint areas, such as the armpits where throbbed the vital axillary arteries. Thus, when the German knights raised their sword arms to strike, they exposed a crucial opening to their adversaries.[48] According to contemporary French sources, a cry went up among the Angevin infantry to 'stab under the arm!'.[49] Swinging heavy German long swords in such cramped quarters, Manfred's mercenaries were an easy mark for the shorter, more tapered blades of the French (like the *miséricorde* dagger).[50] Worse still, Villani asserted that the French foot soldiers used their daggers to strike at the steeds of the German knights as well.[51] Within minutes, several knights fell mortally wounded and the close order of their ranks was soon sundered. Broken up into smaller groups and badly outnumbered, the German cavalry corps was quickly overwhelmed.[52]

Evidently, Galvano Lancia was still ushering his Tuscan and Lombard Ghibellines across the bridge while all this was transpiring. By the time he and his men were able to join the mêlée, most of the stout-hearted German horsemen had been annihilated. The Italians soon found themselves engaged with a vastly superior French force, emboldened by their fresh victory over the supposedly invincible Germans. Charles then ensured the rout by commanding his reserves to smash into an Italian flank. Manfred could only watch in horror from the bridgehead while his uncle's men were mangled and dispersed.[53] The king ordered

[47] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk III, ch. X, p. 255; Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, I, bk VII, ch. IX, p. 330. See also Oman, *Art of War*, I, p. 502; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 93.

[48] Kelly DeVries and Robert D. Smith, *Medieval Military Technology* (Toronto, 2012), pp. 75–80.

[49] *Annales clerici Parisiensis*, ed. George Waitz (Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores, vol. XXVI, Hanover, 1882), pp. 581–3, esp. 582; Primat, *Chronique de Primat, traduite par Jean du Vignay*, in *Recueil des historiens des Gaules et de la France*, eds Martin Bouquet et al. (Paris, 1737–1904), XXIII, 1–105, esp. 28. See also Oman, *Art of War*, I, pp. 502–3; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 93.

[50] DeVries and Smith, *Medieval Military Technology*, pp. 22–7; France, *Western Warfare*, p. 179.

[51] Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, I, bk VII, ch. IX, p. 330. See also Canaccini, 'Battle of Benevento', p. 141.

[52] Oman, *Art of War*, I, p. 503.

[53] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk III, ch. X, p. 255; William de Nangis, *Vie de Saint Louis*, in *Recueil des historiens des Gaules et de la France*, eds Martin

his reserves into action, but it was too late. His own *regnicoli* vassals delivered the *coup de grâce*. The counts of Caserta and Acerra, seeing the hopelessness of the situation, abandoned the field with their retinues. Left with only a handful of stalwarts, Manfred had mere seconds to decide whether to fight or flee. He chose the former, plunging boldly into the brawl.[54]

The king was ultimately slain and none of his immediate entourage were believed to have survived the battle, including his steadfast friend Teobaldo Annibaldi, who had dutifully donned Manfred's royal surcoat as a diversion prior to the engagement. Charles had reportedly ordered a pair of *ribalds* to follow each French knight in order to finish off any of the wounded enemy combatants.[55] Malaspina noted, 'They spared none, but slaughtered all barbarously; cruelty washed the hands of the victors in the blood of the killed.'[56] Those who managed to dodge the daggers of the *ribalds* mostly met their end in the frigid Calore, drowned by their own armour, or in the panicked crush on the clogged bridge that was their only avenue of escape. Of Manfred's 3,600 men-at-arms, all but 600 perished.[57] Charles of Anjou had destroyed the flower of Hohenstaufen chivalry on a single day. And, in so doing, he had sown the seed of his own eventual defeat. Among the dead was a middling Calabrian noble by the name of Richard of Lauria, father of the man who would become the greatest admiral of the age and Anjou's nemesis.[58]

Bouquet et al. (Paris, 1737–1904), XX, pp. 312–465, esp. 424–5. See also Oman, *Art of War*, I, p. 503; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 93–4.

[54] Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, I, bk VII, ch. IX, pp. 331–2. See also Oman, *Art of War*, I, p. 504; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 94.

[55] *Annali Genovesi*, IV, p. 87; Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk III, ch. X, p. 255; Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, I, bk VII, ch. IX, p. 332. See also Canaccini, 'Battle of Benevento', pp. 141–2; Oman, *Art of War*, I, p. 504; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 94.

[56] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk III, ch. X, p. 255.

[57] Oman, *Art of War*, I, p. 504; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 94.

[58] Manuel José Quintana, 'Roger de Lauria', in *Lives of Celebrated Spaniards*, trans. T. R. Preston (London, 1833), pp. 79–148, esp. 82–3.

2

A CALABRIAN EXILE IN THE COURT OF ARAGON (1262–1282)

According to a tradition dutifully passed on by some modern scholars, Richard of Lauria (Roger's father) would have been at King Manfred's side in the final moments of his life as the devoted retainer. He would have fought beside the king until the desperate end at that bridgehead by the River Calore near Benevento, and would have actually held his mortally wounded lord in his arms as he breathed his last breath. Richard, himself, would then have been run through from behind by Jeronimo di Sambiase, a Guelph knight who had broken through the last cordon of the king's bodyguard.[1]

The trouble is that there is no contemporary corroboration for such an account. Truth be told, Roger's origins are clouded at best, especially concerning his father. The only specifics that seem certain are that his father was a faithful feudatory of the Hohenstaufen monarch and that he likely died at Benevento with most all of Manfred's other knights. Not even his name is known with absolute confidence. Ramon Muntaner's chronicle, one of the very few contemporary sources to address the issue at all, says only that Roger 'was of noble descent, from banner lords',[2] intimating that his father was a 'knight banneret' – a low-level baron who commanded a company of knights under his own banner. It later substantiates that somewhat by stating that 'his barony was in Calabria, and consisted of twenty-four castles in one district and the principal castle is called Loria'.[3] The notion that Roger's father was killed at the Battle of Benevento actually stems from a much later source, the sixteenth-century *Anales de la Corona de Aragón* of Jerónimo Zurita, which

[1] Antonio J. Planells Clavero and Antonio J. Planells de la Maza, *Roger de Lauria, El gran almirante del Mediterráneo* (Madrid, 2011), pp. 24–5. The authors refer to the knight who dispatched Richard of Lauria as 'Jacopo Sambiase' but the Italian sources call him 'Jeronimo di Sambiase'.

[2] Ramon Muntaner, *Chronicle*, trans. Lady Goodenough (2 vols, London, 1920), I, ch. XVIII, pp. 46–7.

[3] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. XVII, p. 47.

also fails to provide a name. Zurita only identified him as a '*gran privado*' of King Manfred, implying he was a *familiaris regis* ('an intimate of the king'), that is, a member of the royal household.[4] Although Zurita's account was not concurrent with the events, it cannot be disregarded entirely. He may have had access to sources no longer extant. In the course of the thirty years that it took him to compose the *Anales*, Zurita was known to have travelled to Rome, Sicily and Naples, looking for relevant documents beyond the archives of the Crown of Aragon.

Nonetheless, it was not until the early seventeenth century that genealogical studies began to investigate the Lauria line and hazard a forename for Roger's father: Riccardo or Richard. A mid-nineteenth-century Italian genealogy went further and surmised that Richard was the progeny of a certain Gibel di Lauria who could trace his origins back to an Ugone Tudextifen (Ugo Tudabovi in the Italian sources).[5] If the anonymous author was correct, Roger's pedigree is imbedded in the lore of the Norman conquest of southern Italy and Sicily. Called Ugo Tudebus in Latin and Hugues (Hugh) Tuboeuf in old French, he was a petty Norman noble who, along with 250 others, followed the Drengot brothers into southern Italy in the early eleventh century.[6] As the Norman chronicler Orderic Vitalis told the tale, the duke of Normandy (Richard II) exiled Osmond Drengot for slaying one of his viscounts, William Repostel, during a hunting excursion for having supposedly seduced Osmond's daughter at court.[7] Banished with him were his brothers Gilbert Buatère, Asclettin, Rainulf and Rodulf. Orderic Vitalis has the unenviable reputation among modern scholars as being unable to resist relaying a fable, no matter how fantastic, but versions of the tale are contained in the accounts of multiple Norman chroniclers of the era.[8] Amatus of Montecassino, for instance, spread the same story,

[4] Jerónimo Zurita, *Anales de la Corona de Aragón*, ed. Angel Cannelas López (8 vols, Institución 'Fernando el Católico', Zaragoza, 1967–77), bk III, ch. LXXXI.

[5] Davide Andreotti, *Memorie storico-genealogiche di Ruggiero ed Andreotto Loria. Risposta al quesito: La famiglia di Ruggiero Loria è Catalana, Siciliana, o Calabrese?* (Naples, 1878); Rosanna Lamboglia, 'Tessere documentali per le origini dell'ammiraglio Ruggero di Lauria', *Archivio Storico per la Calabria e la Lucania*, LXXVII (2011), pp. 15–54, esp. 33–4.

[6] Amatus of Montecassino, *Storia de' Normanni*, ed. Vincenzo de Bartholomaeis (Fonti per la storia d'Italia, Rome, 1935), bk I, par. XX, pp. 25–6; *The History of the Normans*, trans. Prescott Dunbar (Woodbridge, 2004), bk I, par. 20, pp. 50–1. See also Francesco Augurio and Silvana Musella, *Ruggiero di Lauria, Signore del Mediterraneo* (Lauria, 2000), p. 25.

[7] Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, trans. Marjorie Chibnall (6 vols, Oxford, 1969), II, bk III, pp. 56–7.

[8] *Chronica Monasterii Casinensis*, ed. Hartmut Hoffman (Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores, vol. XXXIV, Hanover, 1980), bk II, ch. 37, p. 237;

with the only variance being that it was Gilbert and not Osmond who dispatched William Repostel by pitching him off a cliff.[9]

The Drengots, along with their company of Norman fortune hunters (including Tuboeuf), joined the revolt of the Lombard patriot Melus of Bari against Greek rule over Apulia in 1017. Unfortunately, the Byzantines under the *Catepan* (provincial governor) Basil Boiannes beat them badly the next year at the Battle of Cannae (the site of Hannibal's 216 BC victory over the Roman legions). Of the original 250 members of the Drengot fellowship, all save ten lost their lives, reportedly including both Osmond and Gilbert, but those few who survived (Hugh among them) went on to eventually win lordships of their own as founding princes of Norman Italy.[10] Rainulf, for instance, became count of Aversa in Campania in 1031.[11]

By 1041, the Normans of Apulia were strong enough to exact retribution upon the Greeks for the slaughter of their compatriots at Cannae. They met Byzantine *Catepan* Dokeianos at the Olivento River between Melfi and Lavello on 17 March. Before the battle, Dokeianos dispatched an emissary to warn the Normans of their impending doom and demand surrender. The Norman-Italian chronicler Geoffrey Malaterra relayed what happened next with no small measure of gloating:

> The envoy whom the Greeks sent was sitting on a very beautiful horse when a certain Norman by the name of Hugh – with the cognomen

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Rodulfus Glaber, *Opera: The five Books of the Histories*, trans. John France (Oxford Medieval Texts, Oxford, 1989), bk III, ch. 3, pp. 96–101; William of Jumièges, *The Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, trans. Elizabeth van Houts (2 vols, Oxford Medieval Texts, Oxford, 1995), II, pp. 154–5.

[9] Amatus, *Storia de' Normanni*, bk I, par. XX, pp. 25–6; *History of the Normans*, bk I, par. 20, pp. 50–1.

[10] Amatus, *Storia de' Normanni*, bk I, paras XXI–XXIII, pp. 27–32; *History of the Normans*, bk I, paras 21–3, pp. 51–2; *Chronica Monasterii Casinensis*, bk II, ch. 37, p. 239. See also Ferdinand Chalandon, *Histoire de la Domination Normande en Italie et en Sicile* (2 vols, Paris, 1907), I, pp. 52–7; Francis Marion Crawford, *Rulers of the South (Sicily, Calabria, Malta)* (2 vols, London, 1900), II, pp. 131–3; John France, 'The occasion of the coming of the Normans to southern Italy', *Journal of Medieval History*, XVII (1991), pp. 185–205, esp. 193–6; Einar Joranson, 'The Inception of the Career of the Normans in Italy – Legend and History', *Speculum*, XXII (1948), pp. 353–96, esp. 358–70; G. A. Loud, *The Age of Robert Guiscard: Southern Italy and the Norman Conquest* (Harlow, 2000), pp. 61–7, 86; L.-R. Ménager, *Inventaire des familles normandes et franques emigrées en Italie méridionale et en Sicilie (XI–XII siècles)*, in *Hommes et institutions de l'Italie normande* (Variorum reprints, London, 1981), pp. 260–390, esp. 302–7; John Julius Norwich, *The Normans in the South* (London, 1967), pp. 19–20.

[11] Amatus, *Storia de' Normanni*, bk I, par. XLII, pp. 53–4; *History of the Normans*, bk I, par. 42, p. 60.

> Tudebus – began to stroke the horse and then suddenly struck it on the neck with his bare fist, knocking it senseless to the ground with a single blow.[12]

The Normans subsequently shoved the hapless animal over a precipice; then, solicitously supplied the badly shaken ambassador with another steed and sent him back to his lines. The next morning they attacked the Greeks and won an overwhelming victory. Afterwards, the Normans apportioned much of Apulia among their twelve leading lords, assigning Hugh the town of Monopoli.[13] It would seem Roger's aggressive battle tactics may have had their roots in Norman audacity.

Unfortunately, this vulgate historiography of Lauria's lineage appears to be based upon onomastic methods, which lend themselves to homonymic error. Besides, researchers like Rosanna Lamboglia of the Università della Basilicata have, thus far, found insufficient archival evidence to substantiate it.[14] This is not to say that she failed to find references to nobles named 'Richard of Lauria'. She did: a justiciar for the Basilicata under Frederick II and one of three brothers mentioned in Angevin diplomas of the late 1260s. But she could positively tie neither to Roger. The former would have been too old to be his father and the latter had obvious Angevin sympathies.[15] There, in fact, appears to be a general lacuna of documentary sources for the mid-level nobility of the thirteenth-century *Mezzogiorno* (southern Italy), causing German scholar Andreas Kiesewetter to list Roger's father in his *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani* as simply an unnamed 'small Calabrian feudatory'.[16] And, barring the unlikely intervention of some preternatural DNA testing, it is doubtful that the exact truth of his heritage will ever be known. Nonetheless, such colourful genealogical theories of Roger's origins remain tantalizing.

[12] Geoffrey Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii Calabriae e Siciliae comitis et Roberti Guiscardi ducis fratris eius*, ed. Ernesto Pontieri (Rerum Italicarum Scriptores, 2nd edn, vol. 5, Bologna, 1927–8), bk I, ch. IX, p. 12; *The Deeds of Count Roger of Calabria and Sicily and of his brother Duke Robert Guiscard*, trans. Kenneth Baxter Wolf (Ann Arbor, 2005), bk 1, ch. 9, pp. 57–8. See also Crawford, *Rulers of the South*, II, p. 147; Norwich, *Normans in the South*, pp. 60–1.

[13] Amatus, *Storia de' Normanni*, bk II, par. XXXI, pp. 95–7; *History of the Normans*, bk II, para. 31, p. 77. See also Chalandon, *Histoire de la Domination Normande en Italie*, pp. 105–6; Loud, *Age of Robert Guiscard*, p. 98.

[14] Lamboglia, 'Tessere documentali per le origini dell'ammiraglio', pp. 33–5.

[15] Lamboglia, 'Tessere documentali per le origini dell'ammiraglio', pp. 40–8.

[16] Andreas Kieswetter, ed., *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani* (multiple vols, Rome, 2005), LXIV, pp. 98–103, esp. 98.

2 Ruins of a Saracen castle overlooking the town of Lauria in the Province of Potenza, believed to have been the seat of the Lauria family fief.

Investigations into Roger's ancestral homeland have also been rendered murky by the above-mentioned gaps in contemporary documentation for southern Italy in the time period, especially for the lower landing-owning nobility. His exact birthplace has long been the subject of controversy. Some observers like Manuel José Quintana favoured Scalea in Calabria, based upon a letter of King James II of Aragon dated 19 July 1297, which is now lost.[17] Others, notably Jerónimo Zurita, have settled upon Lauria, the town of his namesake, which is actually in the Basilicata.[18] Indeed, the modern residents of Lauria have long argued that Roger is their favourite son based upon the extant ruins of the family fortress on the outskirts of the upper town (Fig. 2). Rosanna Lamboglia's exhaustive perusal of what evidence exists, however, points to a lordship that coincided with the medieval county of Chiaromonte, straddling the boundary between modern Calabria and the Basilicata.[19]

[17] Manuel José Quintana, *Lives of Celebrated Spaniards*, trans. T. R. Preston (London, 1833), p. 82. See also Augurio and Musella, *Ruggiero di Lauria*, p. 21.
[18] Planells, *Roger de Lauria*, p. 51.
[19] Lamboglia, 'Tessere documentali per le origini dell'ammiraglio', pp. 27–9.

In truth, it is doubtful that the 'paisans' of the period parsed provincial borders quite that finely. Again, the precise location of his birth will probably be forever shrouded in mystery, but, if Ramon Muntaner who knew Roger personally regarded him as Calabrian, then in all likelihood that is how the great admiral viewed himself.[20]

That said, there is ample circumstantial evidence drawn from an array of primary source materials that propounds Roger's father was, indeed, a Hohenstaufen adherent from the *Mezzogiorno* of sufficient rank to be included among the inner coterie of courtiers. This supposition is based on the fact that his wife, Roger's mother, was the royal nursemaid to Manfred's only daughter, Constance of Hohenstaufen.[21] And it is probably also true that the senior Lauria perished with Manfred at Benevento, if for no other reason than almost all of the king's knights were killed in the battle. That Roger himself did not share his father's fate, he almost certainly owed to his mother, known in Catalan sources as Donna Bella ('Lady Bella').

Donna Bella's status as nursemaid did not in any way imply that she was simply some sort of domestic servant. She was lady-in-waiting to the royal princess, a position high in the hierarchy of European courts of the thirteenth century. It meant that she actually raised Constance as both surrogate mother and confidante. The title 'donna' or '*doña*' attributed to her in Aragonese archival documents alone indicates that she was a lady of rank.[22] And she possessed the pedigree to match. Her full name was actually Isabella Lancia de Amicis.[23] The second part of her surname, 'Amicis' (or 'Amicus'), belongs to one of the great Norman families of southern Italy. The genealogical documentation is inconclusive, but, her father may have been Roger de Amicis, a justiciar for western Sicily under Frederick II, and her brother was perhaps William de Amicis, a diplomat for Frederick and baron of Ficarra (near Messina)[24] – all of whom could trace their lineage back to Amicus, Count of Lesina,

[20] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. XVII, p. 47.

[21] *Archivo de la Corona de Aragón* (ACA), *Real Cancillería* (RC), Reg. 28, fols 108r–109r, 112v–114r. See also Lamboglia, 'Tessere documentali per le origini dell'ammiraglio', p. 27.

[22] ACA, RC, Reg. 16, fol. 211r. See also Lamboglia, 'Tessere documentali per le origini dell'ammiraglio', p. 25.

[23] ACA, RC, Reg. 19, fol. 75v. See also Lamboglia, 'Tessere documentali per le origini dell'ammiraglio', p. 15.

[24] Joachim Göbbels, 'De Amicis (d'Amico, Amici), Ruggero', in *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani* (Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana, Rome, 1987), vol. 33.

and his son Walter, lord of Civitate, who fought shoulder-to-shoulder with the Hautevilles to conquer Apulia in the mid-eleventh century.[25]

Perhaps more significantly, the 'Lancia de Amicis' family name indicates that Bella was a member of a cadet branch of the Lancia kin-group, meaning she was most likely a distant relative of Bianca Lancia d'Agliano: Frederick's consort and King Manfred's mother – thus, Constance's grandmother. Bianca's heritage, in turn, harkened back to Manfred I Lancia, the second margrave of Busca and count of Loreto, who first adopted the surname Lancia (meaning 'lance') as a pikeman for Frederick Barbarossa in the mid-twelfth century.[26] Manfred Lancia was reputedly born of the Del Vasto branch of the Aleramici family of Savona, making him a descendant of Adelaide del Vasto, the third wife of Roger I de Hauteville (the 'Great Count' of Sicily) and the mother of Roger II (the first king of Sicily).[27]

It was not, however, Donna Bella's illustrious ancestry or her stature as a longstanding Hohenstaufen loyalist that ultimately spared her and her son the ignominy of the Angevin conquest of the kingdom. It was her close relationship to Constance. By all accounts, Bella was utterly dedicated to the young royal and, according to Muntaner, 'was never parted from my Lady the Queen, as long as she lived.' 'And so likewise her son, Roger de Luria, was not parted from her,' added the Catalan chronicler.[28] Thus, when Constance journeyed to Montpellier (considered part of Catalonia at the time) to marry the *Infante* Peter, heir to the throne of Aragon, on 13 June 1262, both Donna Bella and Roger were undoubtedly with her.[29] Afterwards, they came with Constance to the court of Peter's father, King James I 'the Conqueror', in Barcelona and stayed there with her. In fact, there is compelling evidence that Bella remained indispensable to the *Infanta*, the future Queen of Aragon. The archives of the Crown of Aragon record that she oversaw the inventory

[25] Amatus, *History of the Normans*, bk II, par. 31, p. 77 and note 52; William of Apulia, *La Geste de Robert Guiscard*, trans. Marguerite Mathieu (Palermo, 1961), bk I, verses 385–90, pp. 118–21. See also Loud, *Age of Robert Guiscard*, pp. 97–8 and 304, Table VI.

[26] Lamboglia, 'Tessere documentali per le origini dell'ammiraglio', p. 26.

[27] Malaterra, *De rebus guests Rogerii Calabriae*, bk IV, ch. XIV, p. 93 and ch. XXVI, p. 105; *Deeds of Count Roger of Sicily*, bk 4, ch. 14, pp. 189-90 and ch. 26, p. 210 with note 82. See also Hubert Houben, *Roger II of Sicily: A Ruler between East and West*, trans. G. A. Loud and Diane Milburn (Cambridge, 2002), p. 24.

[28] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. XVII, p. 47.

[29] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. XI, pp. 30–1, note 1. See also J. N. Hillgarth, 'The Problem of a Catalan Mediterranean Empire 1229–1327', *The English Historical Review*, Supplement 8 (1975), p. 23.

of the queen's jewels and may well have managed her household.[30] As a result, Roger 'was brought up at court', noted Muntaner.[31] This would explain why he did not suffer the slaughter at Benevento alongside his father.

Nor were Roger and his mother the only refugees from the *Regno* in Constance's royal train when she came to the court of Aragon. First of all, there was Roger's little sister, Margherita. Then there were the Lancia children, all kin to Constance.[32] Manfred, Conrad and Margherita di Lancia were the offspring of Galeotto di Lancia, the son of Galvano di Lancia who was Captain General of the *Regno* and King Manfred's uncle, making the three Lancia children second cousins to the *Infanta* herself.[33] All five youngsters were apparently quite close in age to Constance whom Muntaner claimed was only 'fourteen years old' when the Aragonese ambassadors came to Naples in the summer of 1262 to take her to Catalonia in 'ten well-equipped galleys'.[34] A subsequent document of the Aragonese royal chancery refers to Margherita di Lauria as the 'the milk sister' of the *Infanta*, suggesting the two girls were raised together by Bella and, thus, were approximately the same age.[35] Lamboglia interprets this evidence to mean that Roger was probably not much older.[36] Muntaner reinforced the notion by insisting Roger 'was but a small boy when he came to Catalonia'.[37] The other great Catalan chronicler of the period, Bernat Desclot (Peter's biographer), substantiated this by later quoting the queen herself: 'Friend Roger! Full well thou knowest that I fostered thee in thy childhood and my lord the King of Aragon likewise cared for thee and loved thee tenderly.'[38] All this has led scholars to speculate that Roger was probably in his adolescence when he arrived in Barcelona, around eleven or twelve years old, putting his birth year somewhere in the neighbourhood of 1250.[39]

[30] ACA, RC, Reg. 13, fol. 254r; ACA, RC, Reg. 17, fol. 113r; ACA, RC, Reg. 31, fol. 71v. See also Lamboglia, 'Tessere documentali per le origini dell'ammiraglio', p. 27 and note 43.
[31] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. XVII, p. 47.
[32] ACA, RC, Reg. 35, fol. 45v. See also Hillgarth, 'Problem of a Catalan Mediterranean Empire', p. 23; Lamboglia, 'Tessere documentali per le origini dell'ammiraglio', p. 25.
[33] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. XVII, p. 47. See also Planells, *Roger de Lauria*, pp. 62–3.
[34] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. XI, p. 30.
[35] ACA, RC, Reg. 35, fol. 45v.
[36] Lamboglia, 'Tessere documentali per le origini dell'ammiraglio', p. 27, note 42.
[37] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. XVII, p. 47.
[38] Bernat Desclot, *Chronicle of the Reign of King Pedro III of Aragon, A.D. 1276–1285*, trans. F. L. Critchlow (Princeton, 1928), ch. XLVIII, p. 165.
[39] Planells, *Roger de Lauria*, p. 53.

Muntaner insinuated that Conrad and Margherita di Lancia were also juveniles and intimates of the *Infanta* when they arrived in the court of Aragon:

> And, likewise, there came with my Lady the Queen another high-born boy, who was the son of a count and related to my Lady the Queen, and who was called En Conrado Lansa, and a little sister of his, quite young, who had been brought up with my Lady the Queen.[40]

The five children appear to have been faithful friends the rest of their lives. Manfred seems to have been the oldest of the flock, but Conrad and Roger were apparently about the same age and remained particularly close. The *Infante* Peter gave Margherita di Lancia to Roger as his first wife, making the two men brothers-in-law.[41] Later, Margherita di Lauria was married to Conrad.[42] Roger and Conrad collaborated congenially throughout their intertwined careers. After all, Muntaner says that Peter 'made them both knights',[43] so he would have put the two of them on a tightly disciplined training track together the moment they arrived at court, engendering a steadfast allegiance to the *Infante*.

Their instruction would not have exclusively concerned the fundamentals of chivalry and knightly combat. While still in their adolescence, the youngsters would have been entrusted to a 'governor' who would have schooled them 'in all habits and manners as befits a good and noble gentleman', wrote Gutierre Díaz de Gámez, author of *A Chronicle of the Deeds of Don Pero Niño, Count of Buelna* (a Castilian knight of the late fourteenth/early fifteenth century).[44] They would have learned the aristocratic etiquette and chivalric code of the era while living at court and dining on communal meals together in the great hall of their lord. Their governor would also have tutored them in Latin so that they could grasp the fundamentals of governance, jurisprudence, diplomacy and Church doctrine. Their leisure time would have been dedicated to the primary recreational pursuit of medieval nobility: the hunt. Reserved almost exclusively for the aristocracy, hunting was an activity that, according to military medievalist Thomas Asbridge, 'was also deemed

[40] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. XVII, p. 47.
[41] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. XVII, p. 47. See also Planells, *Roger de Lauria*, p. 63.
[42] Planells, *Roger de Lauria*, p. 56.
[43] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. XVII, p. 47.
[44] Gutierre Díaz de Gámez, *The Unconquered Knight: A Chronicle of the Deeds of Don Pero Niño, Count of Buelna*, trans. Joan Evans (1928, reprint Woodbridge, 2004), Part I, p. 17.

to provide valuable training for war, as it honed martial skills, including horse riding and archery'.[45]

But much of their training, especially as they approached the age of majority (normally about sixteen), had to have been devoted to the military arts, for these young nobles were destined to be warriors for the crown. This meant mastery of the two main components of chivalric combat: horsemanship and hand-to-hand fighting. If William Marshal's experience in the mid-twelfth century is any guide, the two would have spent gruelling hours every day learning to expertly control *destriers* (warhorses, 15 to 16 hands in size) in combat situations while wielding a variety of weapons, from a double-edged sword almost three feet long to the couched lance nearly twelve feet in length. They would have done so encumbered with 35 to 50 pounds of armour, which would have included a hauberk of mail, perhaps some plate armour and the cylindrical, flat-topped 'great helm' with narrow sight openings that often provided impaired visibility. A curvilinear wooden shield (triangular in shape), reinforced with leather or metal bandings and slung over the shoulder, completed the ensemble. Manipulating all this equipment under the duress of combat must have been mentally and physically exhausting in the extreme. Amassing the necessary strength and endurance would have required years of intensive practice.[46]

That said, Roger and Conrad could have been sufficiently proficient to have participated in the campaign of King James the Conqueror to subdue Murcia (a coastal region south of the Kingdom of Valencia) in 1265.[47] Combat in actual battle conditions would have been optimal for refining their martial skills and they were probably not too young. Díaz de Gámez testified that Don Pero Niño was only fifteen when he first raised a sword in the service of King Henry III of Castile.[48] There was no way to duplicate the debilitating wages of war that prompted the Castilian chronicler to offer this famous observation on knighthood: 'Many are called and few are chosen.'[49] He described the chivalric life in grim detail:

> Knights who are at the wars eat their bread in sorrow; their ease is weariness and sweat; they have one good day after many bad; they are vowed to

[45] Thomas Asbridge, *The Greatest Knight* (New York, 2014), pp. 44–7.
[46] Asbridge, *The Greatest Knight*, pp. 47–51; Kelly DeVries and Robert Smith, *Medieval Military Technology* (Toronto, 2012), pp. 22, 70–6.
[47] Thomas Bisson, *The Medieval Crown of Aragon* (Oxford, 1986), p. 67; H. J. Chaytor, *A History of Aragon and Catalonia* (London, 1933), p. 90.
[48] Díaz de Gámez, *Unconquered Knight*, p. 30.
[49] Díaz de Gámez, *Unconquered Knight*, p. 12.

> all manner of labour; they are forever swallowing their fear; they expose themselves to every peril; they give up their bodies to the adventure of life in death. Mouldy bread or biscuit, meat cooked or uncooked; today enough to eat and tomorrow nothing, little or no wine, water from a pond or a butt, bad quarters, the shelter of a tent or branches, a bad bed, poor sleep with their armour still on their backs, burdened with iron, the enemy an arrow-shot off.[50]

There is no record of Roger's reaction or that of his mother when news of the defeat at Benevento reached Barcelona in early 1266. Surely there was sorrow and, perhaps, a desire for revenge, but they belonged to the court of Aragon now, as they had since the summer of 1262 when the *Infanta* Constance married the *Infante* Peter in Montpellier. Their loyalty to the future king and queen of Aragon had to take precedence over any thoughts of retribution – at least for the time being. Peter, himself, would eventually advance Constance's claim to the *Regno* as the rightful Hohenstaufen heir to her father's throne, but there was nothing he could do for the moment. He was not the king. His father, James the Conqueror, still wore the Crown of Aragon and his hands were tied by the 1258 Treaty of Corbeil, which obligated him to remain neutral in the conflict between the papacy and the Hohenstaufens in return for papal acquiescence to a marriage alliance with the Capetian crown of France.[51] As for the Lancia children, their father Galeotto and grandfather Galvano had miraculously survived the slaughter at Benevento and had accepted Anjou's offer of amnesty in the aftermath.[52] There was then no immediate impetus on their part for vengeance or the recovery of lost lands. So the six refugees from the *Regno* remained at the court of Aragon, quietly devoted to both Peter and Constance. But it seems a special bond had developed between Constance and Roger – both had lost a father at the hands of the Angevins at Benevento.[53] And their chance would come.

[50] Díaz de Gámez, *Unconquered Knight*, pp. 12–13.

[51] David Abulafia, *The Western Mediterranean Kingdoms 1200–1500* (London, 1997), pp. 47–8; Chaytor, *History of Aragon and Catalonia*, pp. 89–90; Hillgarth, 'Problem of a Catalan Mediterranean Empire', pp. 14–15.

[52] Jean Dunbabin, *Charles I of Anjou: Power, Kingship and State-Making in Thirteenth-Century Europe* (Harlow, 1998), pp. 55–6; Steven Runciman, *The Sicilian Vespers* (Cambridge, 1958), p. 97.

[53] Desclot, *Chronicle of King Pedro III of Aragon*, ch. XLVIII, p. 166 and note 5.

3

BATTLE OF TAGLIACOZZO (23 AUGUST 1268)

If Manfred had truly been the last Hohenstaufen heir standing, then Benevento might have been the last battle that Charles of Anjou needed to fight to secure his kingdom; and perhaps the Crown of Aragon would never have had cause to intervene at the urging of the *Regno*'s refugees. After all, Anjou's victory had, in a solitary stroke, virtually vanquished the Hohenstaufen hierarchy in the *Mezzogiorno*. Manfred's wife, Queen Helena, her daughter Beatrice and three bastard sons had been incarcerated in the Castello del Parco of Nocera; and all Ghibelline resistance had been cowed into conformity. Most of the kingdom's towns and territories, including Sicily, had submitted without a struggle. Even Manfred's formidable fleet surrendered docilely. Charles had assuaged much of the opposition's animus by offering a general amnesty, of which even such staunchly loyal Hohenstaufen supporters as the Lancias had availed themselves, albeit following a brief imprisonment.[1] But, of course, Manfred was not the last of his line: his nephew Conradin was not only alive and safe with his mother, Elizabeth of Wittelsbach, under the protection of his uncle, Duke Louis II of Upper Bavaria, but he was also approaching maturity.[2] He would be at the core of a cascade of challenges to Charles's rule that would eventually usher on stage the Aragonese admiral who would prove to be Anjou's undoing.

Forced vows of faithfulness notwithstanding, the campaign to wrest the crown of Sicily from Charles of Anjou and place it on Conradin's head began bare months after Benevento. And at its heart was the House of Lancia. Galvano, the family patriarch and King Manfred's uncle, had been a Hohenstaufen adherent since before Emperor Frederick II had made him justiciar of Sicily in 1240. He was prominent

[1] Jean Dunbabin, *Charles I of Anjou: Power, Kingship and State-Making in Thirteenth-Century Europe* (London, 1998), pp. 55–6; Steven Runciman, *The Sicilian Vespers* (Cambridge, 1958), pp. 96–7.

[2] Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 101.

among a number of Ghibelline loyalists who made their way to Bavaria in the summer of 1266. There was also Conrad Capece who had been Manfred's vicar for Sicily, soon followed by Conrad of Antioch, the son of Frederick of Antioch who was Manfred's half-brother. Even Manfred of Maletta, the king's former chamberlain whose steadfastness had been suspect, crossed the Alps in hopes of convincing Conradin to claim his crown. But it was Galvano di Lancia along with his brother Frederick who would become critical to rousing martial support for the undertaking.[3] Pope Clement IV had learned of the migration of malcontents to the Bavarian court and sought to circumvent the inevitable. He issued a papal bull on 18 September, threatening any who conspired on behalf of Conradin with excommunication. It failed in its purpose. The very next month the last Hohenstaufen heir to the throne of Sicily proclaimed his intention at a diet in Augsburg to march south and take what he believed to be rightfully his by birth.[4]

The announcement encouraged imperial party sympathizers in northern and central Italy. Florentine Ghibellines had already contacted Conradin. By January 1267, Clement was concerned enough to request that Charles dispatch an army north to quell a growing Ghibelline insurrection in Tuscany. Angevin troops departed the *Regno* in late March and footslogged into Florence on 18 April. On 7 May, Charles himself made his entry into the great Guelph bastion amid appropriate fanfare, despite the pope's misgivings. He managed to quickly pacify most of the region in short order, but Pisa and Siena, along with their satellite cities, proved particularly obdurate. Anjou became bogged down before the fortified town of Poggibonsi, which guarded the road from Florence south to Siena, from the end of June until 30 November 1267, when the city was finally stormed.[5]

In the meantime, Conrad's agents were not idle. The Hohenstaufen claimant to the crown of Sicily was only fifteen at the time, so he must have been in receipt of some shrewd counsel from the recent émigrés from the *Regno*, of whom the most senior military adviser must have been Galvano Lancia. Sometime in the spring of 1267, while Anjou was absent from his kingdom, the young prince dispatched Conrad Capece south to sow the seeds of rebellion on Sicily where he had served as

[3] Saba Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, in *Cronisti e scrittori sincroni napoletani editi e inediti*, ed. Giuseppe del Re (2 vols, Naples, 1868), II, bk III, ch. XVII, pp. 261–2. See also Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 102.

[4] Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 103.

[5] Giovanni Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, ed. Francesco Dragomanni (4 vols, Florence, 1845), I, bk VII, chs XXI–XXII, pp. 347–8. See also Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 100–1.

Manfred's vicar. Capece's conspiracy found a ready reserve of recruits from among the island's inhabitants, already disaffected by heavy-handed Angevin tax collectors. Not content with that effort, he sailed south to the court of Muhammad I al-Mustansir of Tunis, because he knew that the Hafsid Prince had in his service the *Infante* Frederick of Castile, the disgruntled brother of King Alfonso X. Frederick had fought beside Manfred at Benevento and was happy to join the enterprise, which al-Mustansir – justifiably fearing Angevin expansion – was only too eager to support with arms and even some soldiers. Subsequently, a motley mix of Tuscans, Spaniards, Germans and Muslims – amounting to a score of cavalry and a few hundred foot – came ashore at Sciacca to foment an uprising on behalf of the Hohenstaufen heir. On 17 September, Clement informed Charles that Sicily was in full revolt.[6]

As fortune would have it, Frederick's brother, the *Infante* Henry of Castile, was also converted to the cause at roughly the same time. A Ghibelline uprising in Rome led by Angelo Capocci resulted in Henry's installation as senator of the city in July 1267. Henry, who had also been denied any sort of power-sharing by King Alfonso (his older brother), had early on sought his fortune as a friend of Charles of Anjou. He had even lent the count a substantial sum to finance the initial Angevin invasion of the *Regno*. But Charles had reneged on the loan, making an ardent enemy of Henry. At some point, Frederick communicated with his brother, enlisting him in the Ghibelline endeavour. In mid-October, the Castilian prince and freshly installed senator of Rome proclaimed his support for Conradin.[7] A few days later, Galvano di Lancia entered the Eternal City with a small vanguard of troops to pave the way for his newly adopted liege lord, who arrived in Verona on 21 October with around 4,000 German horse.[8]

All the while, Charles remained in Tuscany, much to the chagrin of Pope Clement, in a resolute attempt to subdue the last remnants of the Ghibelline rising. Even after finally reducing Poggibonsi at the end

[6] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk III, chs XVII–XVIII, pp. 262–3; Bartolomeo di Neocastro, *Historia Sicula (1250–1293)*, in *Cronisti e scrittori sincroni napoletani editi e inediti*, ed. Giuseppe del Re (2 vols, Naples, 1868), II, ch. VIII, pp. 421–3. See also Jamil Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib in the Islamic Period* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 122; Michele Amari, *La Guerra del Vespro Siciliano* (9th edn, 3 vols, Milan, 1886), I, pp. 41–3; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 99, 103–4.

[7] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk III, ch. XIX, pp. 263–4; Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, I, bk VII, ch. XXIII, pp. 348–9. See also Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 99, 104.

[8] Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, p. 42; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 99, 104–6.

of November, he lingered in the region in hopes of bringing Pisa and Siena to heel. In December, he sequestered Siena somewhat by capturing nearby Volterra; then moved on to harass Pisa by pillaging the Porto Pisano in January 1268. By then, however, all of Sicily was in rebel hands with the exception of Palermo and Messina. Even the Saracens of Lucera in Apulia had been incited to join the insurrection. Charles had no choice but to obey Clement's entreaties and finally abandon Tuscany. He headed south in March to suppress the uprising in Lucera.[9]

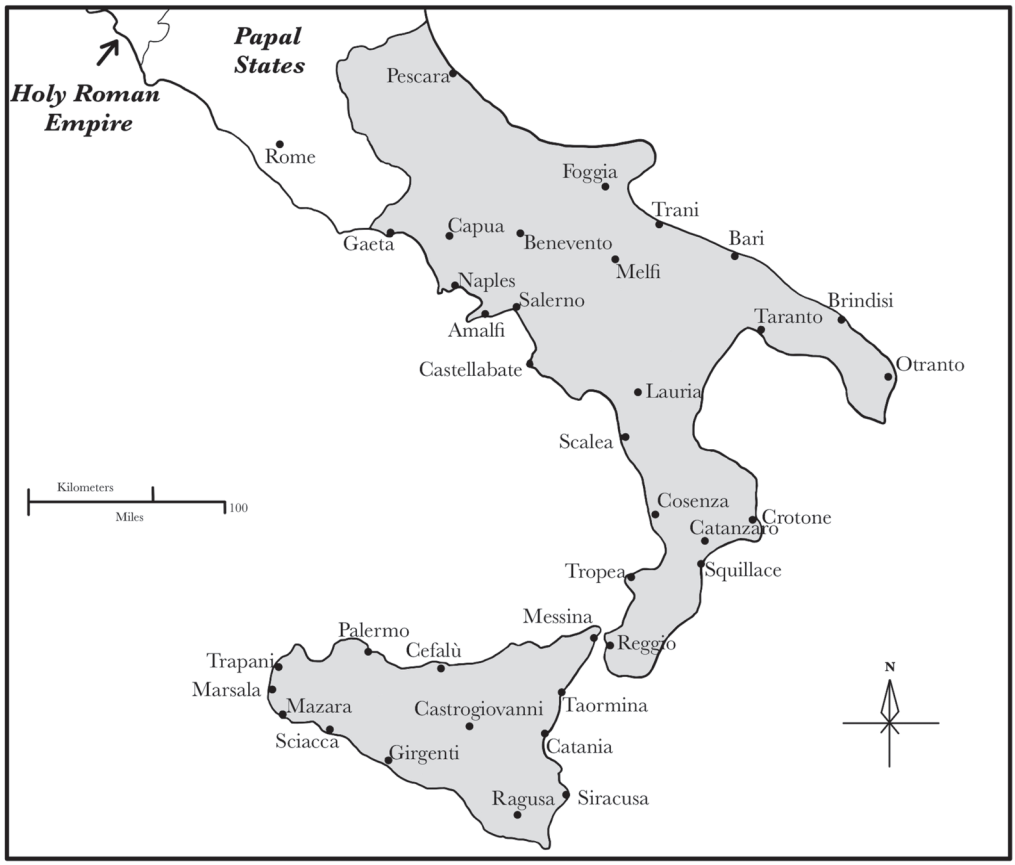
This gave Conradin the opening that he needed. He had departed Verona on 17 January, but travelled no further than Pavia where he paused for several weeks, presumably to be sure of Anjou's movements. The return of Charles to the *Regno* finally enabled Conradin to cross the Ligurian Alps with a small entourage and march to the port of Varazze (6 miles/10km northeast of Savona). From there, a flotilla of twenty-five Genoese vessels (according to Villani) carried him to Pisa, arriving on 7 April. Meanwhile his childhood friend and heir to the Duchy of Austria, Frederick of Baden, led the bulk of the army across the Apennines by way of Pontremoli to join Conradin at Pisa on 2 May. Word of Conradin's presence in Pisa spread. He lingered there for over two months while Ghibelline gold and fighting men poured in. Pope Clement, living in Viterbo because Rome itself had become Ghibelline, could do nothing but excommunicate both Conradin and Henry of Castile, along with their followers. It was a lame gesture that would have no impact on the succeeding events.[10]

Conradin finally led his army out of Pisa on 15 June 1268, heading for Siena. He paused briefly in Poggibonsi, which greeted him rapturously, having already overthrown its Angevin garrison. As he was entering Siena on 25 June, an advanced element of his army provided the expedition with an auspicious augury. When Anjou withdrew to Apulia, he left his Tuscan gains in the hands of a lieutenant, Jean de Brayselve, who commanded a troop of 500 cavalry. Conradin's vanguard surprised the Angevins as they were crossing the River Arno at Pont a Valle near Arrezzo and routed them. Brayselve was among the many captured.[11]

[9] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk IV, ch. III, pp. 268–9; Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, I, bk VII, chs XXI–XXIII, pp. 347–9. See also John France, *Western Warfare in the Age of the Crusades, 1000–1300* (Ithaca, 1999), p. 181; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 104–5.

[10] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk IV, ch. I, pp. 266–7; Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, I, bk VII, ch. XXIII, pp. 349–50. See also Paola Fiorani, *La Battaglia di Tagliacozzo* (Rome, 1968), p. 17; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 104–7.

[11] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk IV, ch. VI, pp. 272–3; Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, I, bk VII, chs XXIV–XXV, pp. 350–1. See also Frederico Canaccini,



3 Kingdom of Sicily (The *Regno*)

Conradin departed Siena about ten days later to make his triumphal entry into Rome, where he was received on 24 July 'as if he had been Emperor', according to Villani.[12]

Alarmed by Conradin's arrival in Rome, Anjou raised the fruitless siege of Lucera and moved to intercept him. Anticipating that the young claimant to the crown would try to avoid the heavily guarded Via Latina to Naples and head east instead for the area around Lake Fucine (now drained) where the Lancias possessed extensive lands, Charles advanced

'Battle of Tagliacozzo', in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Medieval Warfare and Military Technology*, ed. Clifford Rogers (3 vols, Oxford, 2010), III, pp. 342–4, esp. 342; Fiorani, *Battaglia di Tagliacozzo*, p. 18; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 107–8.

[12] Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, I, bk VII, ch. XXV, p. 351.

towards Avezzano in the Abruzzi. He arrived in the region on 4 August, then marched through Scurcola (between Avezzano and Tagliacozzo) on the 9th before finally pitching camp at Ovindoli on Monte Velino (the high ground to the northeast), so that he could monitor the road into Apulia.[13]

After three weeks of florid festivities in his honour, Conradin left Rome on 14 August with an estimated 5,000 mounted men-at-arms, joined by Henry of Castile's 800 Spanish knights. As expected, he spurned the direct but more difficult route into the *Regno* (see Map 3) by way of Ceprano and Cassino, taking instead the Via Valeria eastward past Vicovaro to the castle of Saracinesco where he lay over briefly as the guest of Beatrice di Lancia, Galvano's daughter and the wife of Conrad of Antioch. His intention was probably to join with the Saracens of Lucera, so he then continued on to Carsoli in order to reach the environs of Tagliacozzo by way of the Montebove pass. The terrain made for an arduous march, taking a toll on Conradin's troops that would become clearly evident during the succeeding struggle.[14] 'The difficulties of the route across the side-spurs of the Apennines which cover the whole of the province of the Abruzzi are enormous,' observes Charles Oman.[15] Conradin reached Scurcola on 22 August and encamped on the west side of the Salto River, which runs south to north. Charles, doubtless informed of his adversary's movements by scouts, arrived on the east side only a few hours later. The vanguards of the two forces clashed briefly, but both sides soon disengaged, retiring to opposite banks of the river for the night. It was then that Conradin committed an inexplicable act that would eventually prove counter to his cause: against all the conventions of chivalry, he had his high-born prisoner, Jean de Brayselve, executed.[16]

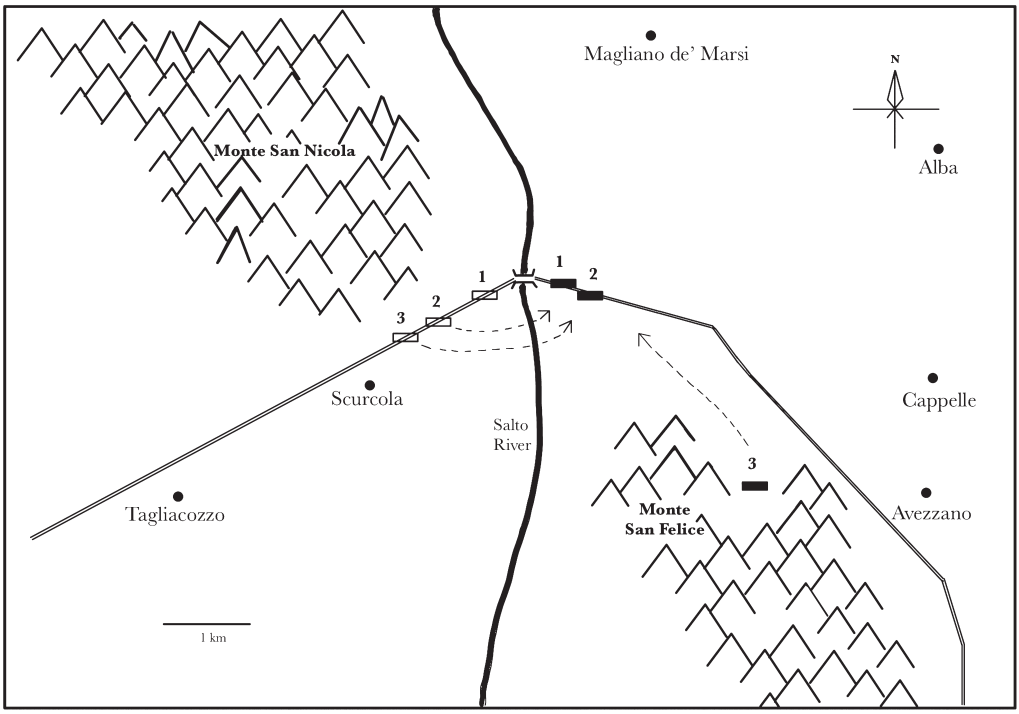
The battle began in earnest the next morning on a plain called the Campi Palentini, bisected by the Salto in the present-day province of L'Aquila (Map 4). Charles, having learned the lesson of Benevento, sought to control the bridge across the Salto by placing two corps on the east side astride the main road. The first consisted mainly of Guelph Italians, bolstered by some Provençal knights; the second division was composed almost entirely of French mercenaries. Some confusion as to who commanded each of the battles persists among the chroniclers.

[13] Fiorani, *Battaglia di Tagliacozzo*, pp. 34–6; France, *Western Warfare*, p. 181; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 109.

[14] Fiorani, *Battaglia di Tagliacozzo*, pp. 21–7; France, *Western Warfare*, p. 181; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 109.

[15] Charles Oman, *A History of the Art of War in the Middle Ages* (2 vols, London, 1924), I, pp. 506–7.

[16] Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 110.



Ghibelline Divisions

1. Henry of Castile - Spanish/Roman Cavalry
2. Galvano Lancia - Tuscan/Lombard Cavalry
3. Conradin's Reserve

Guelph Divisions

1. Giacomo Gaucelmo - Italian/Provençal Cavalry
2. Clary and L'Étendard - French Cavalry
3. Anjou's Reserve

4 Battle of Tagliacozzo

Saba Malaspina reported that a certain Giacomo Gaucelmo led the first unit while Henry of Cousances commanded the second, but Giovanni Villani insisted that Cousances was in charge of the first while Jean de Clary and Guillaume L'Étendard ('The Standard-Bearer') led the second. Modern scholars are similarly split. It seems probable, however, that Gaucelmo would have been the leader of the Italian Guelph cavalry with Provençal support (the first division) while the two illustrious French knights, Clary and L'Étendard, would have commanded the second division. Henry of Cousances, as Anjou's marshal, in all likelihood held overall command of the two divisions. Henry probably physically placed himself in the second corps along with the royal battle standard in order to falsely signal the enemy that this division was the

reserve unit. To complete the deception, Henry was liveried in his sovereign's surcoat. The real reserve unit, comprised of 800 hand-picked veteran cavalrymen, was hidden in the forested fold of a hill some distance away (probably Monte San Felice, about 2 km or over a mile to the southeast) under Anjou's personal control. All this was done on the advice of Érard Saint-Valéry, the chamberlain of France and a seasoned crusader, as a ruse intended to compensate for the numerical advantage of 1,000 to 3,000 enjoyed by the Ghibellines. Estimates for the Guelph army vary between 3,000 and 5,000.[17]

Given Conradin's youth (about sixteen at the time of the battle) and evident inexperience, deployment of his forces was probably left up to Galvano di Lancia and Henry of Castile. Henry directed the first division, composed of his Spanish horse and Roman Ghibellines, while Galvano guided the second, consisting of Tuscan and Lombard Ghibellines augmented by some German heavy horse. The third corps, held in reserve, was in the hands of the two young princes, Conradin and Frederick of Baden. All three battles totalled about 6,000 mounted men-at-arms with an unknown number of infantry.[18] Henry of Castile began the engagement with a feint. He led his men in orderly formation at deliberate speed along the road towards the bridge across the Salto, held by the first Angevin battle. Then, just short of the bridge, he had his men dismount as if to set camp again. But it was ploy. Precisely at nine o'clock, Henry's horsemen leaped into their saddles and rushed the bridge. The Angevins were not fooled, however. The first division easily checked the charge with the second moving up in support.[19]

But the skirmish on the bridge was yet another diversion. It served as cover for Galvano di Lancia's cavalry corps. It and apparently some rear elements of the lead division veered unnoticed south along the Salto in order to ford the river about half a mile (about a kilometre) upstream. These troops soon smashed into the left flank of the Angevin second corps under Clary and L'Étendard. The impact was devastating. The second division was immediately subject to dire duress, which, in turn, must have caused the first Angevin corps under Gaucelmo to pull back in support

[17] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk IV, ch. IX, pp. 275–6; Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, I, bk VII, ch. XXVI, pp. 352–3. See also Canaccini, 'Battle of Tagliacozzo', p. 343; Fiorani, *Battaglia di Tagliacozzo*, pp. 47–57; France, *Western Warfare*, pp. 182–3; Oman, *Art of War*, p. 509; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 110–11.

[18] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk IV, ch. IX, p. 276; Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, I, bk VII, ch. XXVI, p. 353. See also Canaccini, 'Battle of Tagliacozzo', p. 343; Fiorani, *Battaglia di Tagliacozzo*, p. 50; France, *Western Warfare*, p. 182; Oman, *Art of War*, p. 509; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 110.

[19] Oman, *Art of War*, pp. 509–10; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 111.

of the second, allowing Henry's Spaniards to breach the bridge, hot on their heels. Seeing the hard-pressed, first Angevin corps collapse upon the second, Conradin committed the third Ghibelline corps to the clash in order to complete the rout. It is unclear whether the prince's third corps arrived at the mêlée by way of the bridge or the ford, but, in the end, it did not matter. The Angevins were entirely enveloped and almost totally annihilated. Both Jean de Clary and Guillaume L'Étendard managed to fight their way free, but the Angevin royal crest worn by Henry of Cousances made him an obvious target. Taken for Charles, he was slain in short order and the royal banner seized. By the time Conradin arrived on scene, the slaughter must have seemed complete and victory his.[20]

It was not. Charles had apparently watched it all from the brow of the hill that hid his reserve battle. He might have been able to succour the survivors of his first two divisions, if he had acted decisively, but Érard Saint-Valéry urged him to wait until the Ghibellines had dispersed – either to go after Guelphs fleeing the field or to pursue plunder.[21] As Charles Oman points out, it was a cold-blooded decision that most commanders would not have had the stomach to make: 'Few generals in ancient or modern times would have found the heart to allow the greater part of their army to be cut to pieces without striking in to aid them, for the reserve could certainly have saved some of them and covered the retreat.'[22] But that was the sort of man Anjou was. Ultimately, his ruthlessness delivered its reward spectacularly. The *Infante* Henry had left the Campi Palentini entirely to chase the defeated Angevins as far as L'Aquila (about 15 miles or 24 km to the north), while small undisciplined groups of other Ghibellines (Galvano apparently among them) sacked the Angevin camp in search of spoils. By the time Charles unleashed his reserves, Conradin had only a small cohort of knights around him who failed to recognize the charging cavalry as the enemy until it was too late. The impact of the Angevin assault broke the Ghibelline battle before it could fully form up to fight. Both Conradin and Frederick of Baden absconded with a few followers, but most of their knights were slain, including the Hohenstaufen standard-bearer. Isolated pockets of Ghibelline foragers were also caught unawares and

[20] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk IV, ch. X, pp. 276–8; Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, I, bk VII, ch. XXVII, pp. 354–5. See also Fiorani, *Battaglia di Tagliacozzo*, pp. 66–71; Oman, *Art of War*, pp. 510–11; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 111–12.

[21] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk IV, ch. XI, pp. 278–9; Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, I, bk VII, ch. XXVII, pp. 354–5. See also Oman, *Art of War*, p. 511; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 112.

[22] Oman, *Art of War*, pp. 511–12.

massacred. Galvano and son Galeotto evidently managed to make their escape as well, but Conrad of Antioch was captured.[23]

Henry of Castile eventually returned to the field of battle with his men, but their exertions in the summer sun had sapped their strength. The Angevins caught sight of them as they rode down from the hills around Albe a few miles to the north. Charles wisely had his men rest in place to await the arrival of the enervated enemy. As the Ghibellines approached, a feigned flight manoeuvre executed by Saint-Valéry with a few dozen knights caused Henry's men to break ranks in pursuit, which drained them even further, making them easy prey for Anjou's fresher, battle-hardened troops.[24] 'The horses could hardly be spurred to a trot, and the men-at-arms were utterly exhausted,' writes Oman.[25] A single sharp struggle induced the Ghibellines to scatter. Those that could, including Henry, fled the field; the rest were either killed or captured. Charles of Anjou had veritably wrested victory from the clutches of seeming certain defeat.[26]

But the cost was horrific: most of the Angevin army lay dead or dying on the field of battle – including Marshal Henry of Cousances.[27] This time there would be no amnesty. Henry of Castile sought sanctuary in the monastery of San Salvatore between L'Aquila and Rieti, but the abbot recognized him and had him turned over to Charles. He would remain incarcerated for the next twenty-three years. Conradin and Frederick of Baden rode to Rome with around fifty knights, only to find the gates closed to them by those who feared Angevin vengeance. They then retraced their steps back to the castle at Saracinesco to seek refuge with Beatrice di Lancia who was already sheltering her father Galvano and brother Galeotto. The four, with a few followers, soon made their way to a small seaport in the Pontine Marshes southeast of Anzio called Astura, in hopes of procuring a pinnace (*saettia*) to take them to Ghibelline Pisa. They had already embarked when, unfortunately, their attire and aristocratic manner gave them away. They were detained. Learning of their presence, the local lord (an opportunistic Guelph by the name of Giovanni Frangipane) had them imprisoned in the Torre Astura in

[23] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk IV, ch. XII, pp. 279–80; Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, I, bk VII, ch. XXVII, pp. 354–5. See also Fiorani, *Battaglia di Tagliacozzo*, pp. 83–8; Oman, *Art of War*, pp. 511–12; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 112.

[24] Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, I, bk VII, ch. XXVII, pp. 355–6. See also France, *Western Warfare*, p. 183; Oman, *Art of War*, pp. 512–13; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 113.

[25] Oman, *Art of War*, pp. 513–14.

[26] Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, I, bk VII, ch. XXVII, p. 356. See also Oman, *Art of War*, p. 513; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 113.

[27] Oman, *Art of War*, p. 514.

anticipation of an Angevin reward. Robert of Lavena (the commander of a squadron of Provençal galleys) and Cardinal Giordano of Terracina (representing the Holy See) soon collected them in the name of King Charles.[28]

They were initially taken to the king's encampment in the vicinity of Palestrina about 25 miles (40 km) east of Rome, where punishment for the Lancias was precipitate and brutal. Charles was in no mood for clemency.[29] Malaspina described the cruelty meted out by the king:

> The son of Galvano [Galeotto Lancia], in the presence of his father, was decapitated, so that, seeing the suffering of his son, the father would suffer; and so he was most tormented and his mind terrified and appalled by the thought of a similar death also for him.[30]

Conradin and Frederick of Baden were then carried off to Naples in chains and confined in the Castel dell'Ovo until such time as a mock trial for treason could be arranged. The verdict was swift and unsurprising. On 29 October 1268, the two young princes, both still in their teens, were marched onto a scaffold erected on the Campo Moricino (the present-day Piazza del Mercato) and publicly beheaded. The sentence, callously carried out despite papal objections, outraged the realms of Western Europe and galvanized an antipathy towards Anjou that would dog him until the day he breathed his last breath and beyond.[31]

Yet, Charles's repressive reaction to the latest challenge to his rule had just begun. Conrad of Antioch was released from captivity, but only because his wife, Beatrice di Lancia, held several important Guelph nobles in the dungeon of her castle at Saracinesco.[32] But few other Hohenstaufen proponents could expect any sort of leniency. Charles directed his officials to spare none who had borne arms against him and to confiscate the lands of all rebel barons. The experience of John of Procida, Emperor Frederick II's physician and King Manfred's chancellor, was especially cautionary. Though granted amnesty after Benevento, John had joined Conradin's army when the prince descended into Italy

[28] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk IV, chs XIII–XV, pp. 281–4; Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. IX, pp. 423–4; Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, I, bk VII, ch. XXIX, pp. 357–9. See also Fiorani, *Battaglia di Tagliacozzo*, pp. 100–1; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 114.

[29] Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 114.

[30] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk IV, ch. XII, p. 280.

[31] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk IV, ch. XVI, pp. 284–5; Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, I, bk VII, ch. XXIX, pp. 357–8. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, p. 49; Fiorani, *Battaglia di Tagliacozzo*, pp. 102–5; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 114–15.

[32] Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 115.

and was present at Tagliacozzo. He managed to flee the battlefield and make his way to the safety of Venice with Manfred Maletta, but in his absence his estates were sequestrated and, as Runciman reports, '… it was popularly supposed that his wife was maltreated, one of his daughters raped and one of his sons killed by the arrogant French knight who had come to evict them from their home'.[33] Michele Amari, for one, questioned the veracity of these reports, but there can be no doubt that Procida's elevated position in the court of two Hohenstaufen monarchs made him and his family a target of Angevin retribution.[34]

The remnants of the Lancia family, in particular, must have realized that there was no longer any future for them in the *Regno*. Some almost certainly sought refuge with their relatives at the court of Aragon.[35] From these, the three Lancia children (Manfred, Conrad and Margherita) would have learned the fate of their father Galeotto and grandfather Galvano. They now shared with the Laurias (Roger, Margherita and Donna Bella) and the *Infanta* Constance a sense of deeply personal loss and a visceral yearning for vengeance.[36]

[33] Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 203.
[34] Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, p. 143.
[35] Giovanni Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro (1282–1302)* (Bologna, 2012), pp. 24–5.
[36] Antonio J. Planells Clavero and Antonio J. Planells de la Maza, *Roger del Lauria, El gran almirante del Mediterráneo* (Madrid, 2011), pp. 35–6.

4

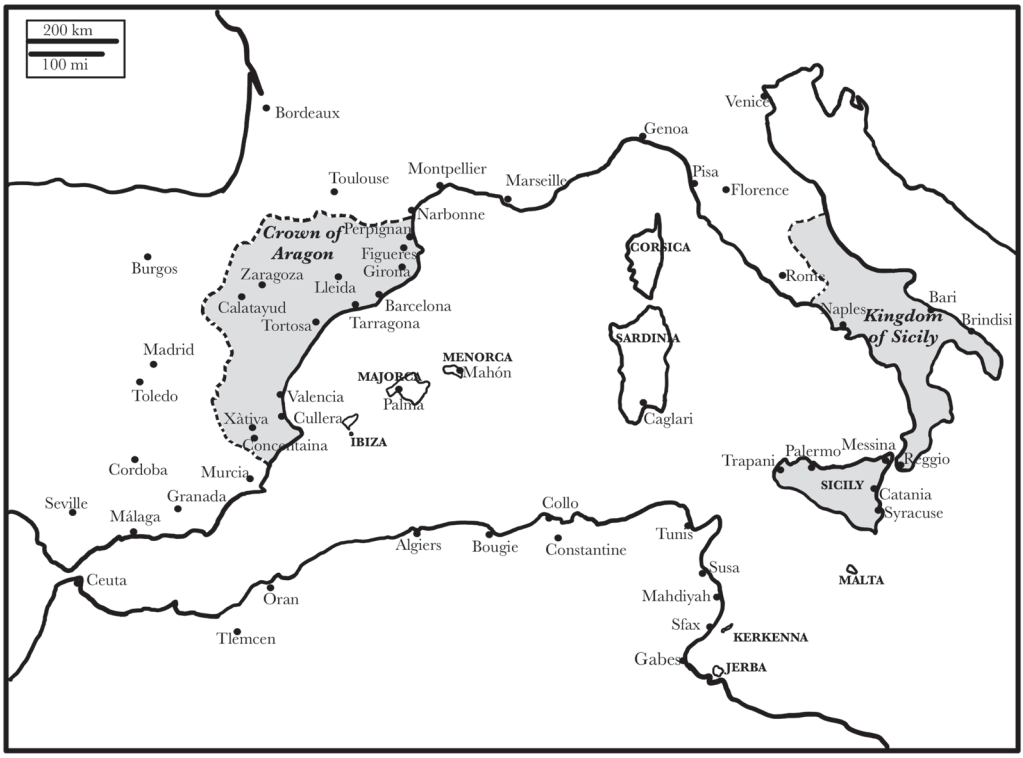
ARAGONESE EXPANSION (1229–1282)

It was, ironically, Charles of Anjou's conquest of the Kingdom of Sicily that put him on a collision course with another emerging Mediterranean power: the Crown of Aragon. At precisely the moment that Anjou was establishing a dominant position in the centre of the Middle Sea, Aragon was in the process of an aggressive eastward expansion that would eventually foist it into direct conflict with Angevin interests and introduce Anjou to the admiral who would ultimately end his aspirations of empire.

Like the Kingdom of Sicily, the Crown of Aragon (as it was commonly known) was a relatively new realm (Map 5). As fortune would have it, they were both established at about the same time – in the early twelfth century. The former was founded on 27 September 1130 when Pope Anacletus II issued a papal bull recognizing Roger II de Hauteville as king of Sicily, and the latter was effectively born on 11 August 1137 with the betrothal of Count Ramon Berenguer IV of Barcelona to the *Infanta* Petronilla of Aragon.[1] And both were destined to become sea powers – Sicily because it was an island kingdom and the Crown of Aragon because its Catalonian component was centred on the vibrant port city of Barcelona. But the two kingdoms did not clash in any significant manner prior to the thirteenth century, largely owing to the fact that Catalonian maritime expansion was impeded by Moorish-held Majorca (Mallorca) and Menorca (Minorca) in the Balearics, which stood astride the trade routes to North Africa and the eastern Mediterranean. All that changed shortly after the accession of James I to the throne of Aragon on 12 September 1213.[2]

[1] T. N. Bisson, *The Medieval Crown of Aragon* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 31–6; Hubert Houben, *Roger II of Sicily: A Ruler between East and West*, trans. G. A. Loud and Diane Milburn (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 52–7.

[2] J. Lee Shneidman, *The Rise of the Aragonese–Catalan Empire 1200–1350* (2 vols, New York, 1970), II, pp. 313–15.



5 The Western Mediterranean

CONQUEST OF MAJORCA BY JAMES I (1229–1231)

Prior to James's coronation, Aragon had been dominated by twelve noble families whose primary ambition comprised extending their power southward into the Muslim-controlled portion of the Iberian peninsula – particularly the kingdoms of Valencia and Murcia. This served as an additional brake on Catalonia maritime penetration into the Mediterranean.[3] But James and his successors realized that the Crown of Aragon's inherent lack of resources severely restricted its potential for aggrandizement at the expense of its Muslim neighbours.[4] Clearly, the most efficacious remedy to the predicament was to increase trade through such Catalonian ports as Barcelona and Tarragona to the lucrative markets of North Africa and the eastern Mediterranean. Standing in the

[3] J. N. Hillgarth, 'The Problem of a Catalan Mediterranean Empire 1229–1327', *The English Historical Review*, Supplement 8 (1975), pp. 1–54, esp. 2–3.
[4] Hillgarth, 'Problem of a Catalan Mediterranean Empire', p. 9.

way, however, were the perennial Muslim pirate enclaves on Majorca and Menorca.[5] Hence, on 10 September 1229 James I invaded Majorca with some 1,300 knights plus an undetermined number of squires and sergeants (common soldiers) aboard about 150 ships, around a dozen of which were war galleys. It was Catalonia's first major naval expedition. The king took the main city of Medina Mayurqa (modern Palma de Mallorca) on 31 December, but the remaining pockets of Muslim resistance did not yield to him until May 1232.[6] By then, James the Conqueror had already intimidated Menorca into accepting his authority: the preceding summer, he had instructed his men to set hundreds of campfires at night on the Capdepera, the eastern tip of Majorca, to make it appear as though he had amassed a mammoth invasion force. The Menorcans promptly made themselves tributaries of the Crown of Aragon by signing the Treaty of Capdepera on 17 June 1231.[7]

It was a watershed moment in the emergence of Catalan maritime might. The gate to commercial and military expansion south and east across the 'Great Sea' had been flung wide open. 'The conquest of the Balearics advanced the Catalans half way to North Africa,' points out J. N. Hillgarth. 'The Balearics are almost 125 miles from Catalonia and only about 150 miles from Algeria.'[8] Once the islands were conquered, Catalonia, which included Montpellier and the counties of Roussillon and Cerdanya in what is now southern France, became the nexus of a highly rewarding trade network extending from northern Europe to North Africa, according to David Abulafia:

> Montpellier, Marseilles, and eventually Perpignan exploited their ease of access to the international cloth traffic passing from Flanders towards the Mediterranean; Barcelona tapped into this trade route, finishing off northern cloths in its dye shops and then redistributing them, particularly towards Muslim Spain, the Maghrib and Sicily, which itself was a significant source of raw cotton for the developing Catalan industries, and of grain for the expanding cities of Barcelona and Majorca.[9]

[5] David Abulafia, *Western Mediterranean Kingdoms 1200–1500* (London, 1997), p. 39; Shneidman, *Aragonese–Catalan Empire*, II, pp. 316–17.

[6] James I of Aragon, *The Book of Deeds (Llibre dels Fets)*, trans. Damian J. Smith and Helena Buffery (Farnham, 2003), Section 2, chs 55–87, pp. 78–110. See also Abulafia, *Western Mediterranean Kingdoms*, pp. 39–40; Bisson, *Medieval Crown of Aragon*, pp. 64–5; H. J. Chaytor, *A History of Aragon and Catalonia* (London, 1933), pp. 84–5; Hillgarth, 'Problem of a Catalan Mediterranean Empire', p. 9.

[7] James I of Aragon, *Book of Deeds*, Section 2, chs 120–3, pp. 131–3. See also Abulafia, *A Mediterranean Emporium: The Catalan Kingdom of Majorca* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 8–9.

[8] Hillgarth, 'Problem of a Catalan Mediterranean Empire', p. 19.

[9] Abulafia, *Western Mediterranean Kingdoms*, p. 51.

Perhaps more significantly for the subject at hand, the conquest of the Balearics marked the first large-scale success for Catalan sea power. The ships and crews for the undertaking were almost entirely gathered from Barcelona and Montpellier. For the first time, Genoese and Pisan support had not been sought. The execution of a complex amphibious assault on a well-defended archipelago demonstrated that the Catalans had acquired the necessary naval prowess to project Aragonese power eastward. Possession of the Balearics subsequently served to hone the nautical skills of Catalonian seamen, particularly with respect to year-round navigation, and elevate the status of Barcelona to one of the great port cities of the Middle Sea. The seeds sown by the Balearics expedition would eventually produce the fleets that would more than match those of Genoa, Pisa and Provence.[10]

Increased tax revenues from Barcelona's burgeoning commerce helped finance the king's subsequent conquest of Valencia at the urging of his Aragonese barons. The splintered remnant of the old Almohad empire was ripe for incursion. James began by acquiring Peñiscola and Burriana in the north in 1233. Valencia City fell to Aragonese–Catalan forces in September 1238. The Conqueror claimed Xàtiva in the south in 1244. But Valencia City was the prize that provided the inflated influx of funds that helped catapult the Crown of Aragon into the top echelon of Mediterranean powers and extend its influence eastward. Abulafia explains:

> Valencia City itself was able to furnish the king with revenues from Muslim bath-houses, bakeries, butcheries, brothels; with poll taxes charged on Muslims and Jews; with taxes on market place transactions and on trade through the port, which grew in importance partly as a result of the fall of Majorca.[11]

Following the fall of Valencia, Aragonese landward expansion was severely limited by a series of accords with its neighbours. On 26 March 1244, James I signed the Treaty of Almizra, the third in a string of covenants with the Crown of Castile (Alfonso X), which set the southern and western boundaries for the Kingdom of Valencia.[12] The 11 May 1258 Treaty of Corbeil with King Louis IX of France essentially accomplished the same function for the northern and eastern borders of Catalonia. Any further advancement of Aragonese interests was effectively channelled eastward through the ports of Valencia and Barcelona into

[10] Abulafia, *Western Mediterranean Kingdoms*, pp. 50–2.
[11] Abulafia, *Western Mediterranean Kingdoms*, pp. 41–5.
[12] James I of Aragon, *Book of Deeds*, Section 5, ch. 348, p. 265. See also Abulafia, *Western Mediterranean Kingdoms*, pp. 45–6.

the Mediterranean and along the coast of North Africa, making Tunis and Sicily critical to Catalan commercial aspirations.[13]

CATALAN COMMERCIAL COLONIZATION IN NORTH AFRICA

The Catalans quickly capitalized on their vastly improved access to establish a permanent presence in North Africa. By 1253, they had a *fonduk* ('warehouse' – essentially a commercial quarter) in Tunis with a tavern, a bakery and lodgings for visiting merchants – all presided over by a consul appointed by the crown. Another *fonduk* was founded in Bougie (Béjaïa) in Algeria in 1259.[14] Catalan commercial interests soon spread to the eastern Mediterranean basin. In 1262, James initiated formal diplomatic relations with Egypt through the good offices of King Manfred of Sicily, with whom he had just concluded the marriage alliance that bound the Hohenstaufen monarch's daughter Constance to his son Peter. James exchanged ambassadors with the Mamluk sultan Baybars I in 1263 and installed a consul in Alexandria the following year. In 1266, he permitted Barcelona to appoint a consul of its own for both Egypt and Syria.[15] Abulafia contends that the Crown of Aragon must even have anticipated eventual trade ties with Constantinople.[16] But, by far and away, the most important foreign base for Catalan commerce remained Tunis.

James clearly understood this and sought to foster strong relations with the Hafsid dynasty of Tunis at the outset. 'Immediately after al-Mustansir's coming to power [in Tunis] in 1249,' notes Jamil Abun-Nasr, 'James the Conqueror banned Catalan corsairs from attacking Muslim ships in the Mediterranean in the interests of improving Aragon's commercial relations with the Hafsids.'[17] The ploy worked. Aragonese sway in Hafsid dominions swelled. Catalan merchants not only landed a number

[13] Abulafia, *Western Mediterranean Kingdoms*, p. 47; Bisson, *Medieval Crown of Aragon*, pp. 67–9; Hillgarth, 'Problem of a Catalan Mediterranean Empire', p. 17; Antonio J. Planells Clavero and Antonio J. Planells de la Maza, *Roger de Lauria, El gran almirante del Mediterráneo* (Madrid, 2011), p. 43.

[14] Jamil Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib in the Islamic Period* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 121; Abulafia, *Western Mediterranean Kingdoms*, p. 54; Charles-Emmanuel Dufourcq, *L'Espagne catalane et le Maghrib aux XIIIe et XIVe siècles* (Paris, 1966), pp. 97, 103; Lawrence V. Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean: The Catalan–Aragonese Fleet in the War of the Sicilian Vespers* (Gainesville, 2003), p. 18; Planells, *Roger de Lauria*, p. 43

[15] Hillgarth, 'Problem of a Catalan Mediterranean Empire', p. 21.

[16] Abulafia, *Western Mediterranean Kingdoms*, p. 53.

[17] Abun-Nasr, *History of the Maghrib*, p. 121.

of *fonduks* in the Hafsid-dominated Maghrib, but Catalan militia enlisted into al-Mustansir's service.[18] There are even indications that by 1270 the Hafsid prince of Tunis was paying a tribute to the Crown of Aragon.[19]

And Tunis would become the first flashpoint between Angevin and Aragonese interests. When Saint Louis answered the papacy's call to rescue the remnants of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem from the Mamluk menace emanating from Egypt, he enlisted his brother Charles in the cause. The objective of the crusade, the Eighth, was ostensibly to prevent the Sultan Baybars I from taking the last Christian ports of coastal Palestine, but Charles managed to inveigle his brother into diverting the expedition to Tunis instead on the premise that Caliph Muhammad I al-Mustansir could be coerced into a joint attack on Mamluk Egypt itself.[20] Many scholars, such as Abun-Nasr, believe Anjou's real motive, however, was to bring al-Mustansir to heel and extort from him the same level of tribute that the Hafsid dynasty had been paying to his Hohenstaufen predecessors. And in the aftermath of the failed crusade, Charles was, in fact, successful in wringing a renewal of the tribute from the Hafsid prince at double the previous rate. Anjou's redirection of the Eighth Crusade to Tunis was probably also in punishment for al-Mustansir's support of the Ghibelline rebels who had helped foment the savage insurgency on Sicily a few years before (in 1267).[21] Underlying it all was, perhaps, a more pervasive concern. In Abulafia's words,

> A further factor of some importance was the involvement of the Catalans in Tunis: an important base of Catalan trade, Tunis was forging dangerously close links with the Aragonese, whose interests were constantly colliding with Charles's, whether in Provence, Sardinia, southern Italy, Africa or the Levant.[22]

And, indeed, Anjou was right to be anxious about the flourishing Aragonese influence just south of Sicily, the cornerstone of his burgeoning Mediterranean empire. On 14 February 1271, just a few months after the collapse of the ill-fated French expedition to Tunis, al-Mustansir concluded a competing treaty with James I, which guaranteed Aragonese commercial interests in Hafsid domains and provided for regular remittances that came to be regarded as tribute.[23]

[18] Abun-Nasr, *History of the Maghrib*, p. 121.
[19] Abulafia, *Western Mediterranean Kingdoms*, p. 48.
[20] Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Crusades* (2nd edn, New Haven, 2005), pp. 209–11; Charles D. Stanton, *Medieval Maritime Warfare* (Barnsley, 2015), pp. 104–5.
[21] Abun-Nasr, *History of the Maghrib*, pp. 121–2.
[22] Abulafia, *Western Mediterranean Kingdoms*, p. 65.
[23] Abun-Nasr, *History of the Maghrib*, p. 122.

PETER'S EXTENSION OF POWER SOUTH AND EAST

Peter continued the expansionist policies of his father just as aggressively, if not more so. By the time James passed away on 27 July 1276, Peter III of Aragon was a 37-year-old veteran of his father's wars, especially in Valencia where he had been born. He was apparently physically imposing. Dante described him as 'robust of limb', while Muntaner somewhat hyperbolically maintained that he was 'the most accomplished knight of the world' at the time.[24] Indeed, Peter had to interrupt his campaign to quell a *Mudéjar* (Muslim) rebellion in Valencia in order to formally accept the Crown of Aragon at Zaragoza on 16 November of that same year.[25] At his side, as they had been for most of his adult life, were his two fiercely faithful friends and followers: Roger of Lauria and Conrad di Lancia.

Roger had served the crown in Valencia since the late 1260s. According to the Archives of the Crown of Aragon, in 1270 he was appointed 'lord in perpetuity of the Seta Valley, near Cocentaina [south of Valencia City] with a duration extended to his descendants', and was commanded to 'reside in the Kingdom of Valencia'.[26] This, in effect, made Lauria the equivalent of an English 'marcher lord' (like a German margrave or a French marquis) whose obligation was to guard 'the march' or border regions of newly conquered territories. It was an assignment given only to the most trusted members of the court. Peter confirmed the concession himself on 28 December 1276.[27] Roger had already been tasked with governing the city of Cocentaina that October, according to some sources. Lauria apparently distinguished himself in the suppression of the Saracen insurrection in Valencia that lasted from early 1276 to September of 1277. Specifically, his actions were instrumental in gaining the surrender of the fortress of Montesa in autumn 1277, which ended the rebellion. This would explain why he was named interim Procurator General of Valencia in October 1278 and later provisional governor.[28]

[24] Dante Alighieri, *Divine Comedy*, trans. H. F. Tozer (Oxford, 1904), 'Purgatory', Canto VII, verses 112–14, p. 179 and note 1; Ramon Muntaner, *Chronicle*, trans. Lady Goodenough (2 vols, London, 1920), I, ch. CXLV, p. 367. See also Steven Runciman, *The Sicilian Vespers* (Cambridge, 1958), p. 260 note 1.

[25] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, chs XXVIII–XXIX, pp. 68–74. See also Bisson, *Medieval Crown of Aragon*, pp. 86–7; Chaytor, *History of Aragon and Catalonia*, p. 97. (Note: *Mudéjar* refers to Muslims of Christian-held areas of Iberia.)

[26] *Archivo de la Corona de Aragón* (ACA), *Real Cancillería* (RC), Reg. 16, fol. 211r. See also Planells, *Roger de Lauria*, pp. 63–4.

[27] ACA, RC, Reg. 32, fol. 11v. See also Planells, *Roger de Lauria*, p. 64.

[28] ACA, RC, Reg. 41, fol. 1r. See also Bisson, *Medieval Crown of Aragon*, pp. 71–2, 87; Chaytor, *History of Aragon and Catalonia*, pp. 91, 97; Planells, *Roger de Lauria*, pp. 65–6.

With Valencia pacified for the time being, Peter turned his attention to consolidating, if not extending, Aragonese influence in North Africa. In this, he had Conrad di Lancia take the lead. Peter made him admiral of the royal fleet in May 1278.[29] The very next year, perhaps in the early spring (the chronology remains garbled), the king dispatched Conrad to the Maghrib with a small flotilla of four galleys on a diplomatic mission headed by Roger to ensure the continuation of tribute in the aftermath of al-Mustansir's death in 1277. The expedition was essentially an exercise in 'gunboat' diplomacy. According to Ramon Muntaner, once the galleys were equipped at Valencia City, Lancia steered them towards Tunis so that Roger could insist on renewal of the annual payment the former prince had promised. Roger was apparently able to accomplish his mission and reaffirm guarantees for the Aragonese *fonduk*, but Conrad conducted a demonstration of force to ensure compliance. He apparently pillaged the port, victimizing a few merchant vessels. From there, the squadron made its way back along the Maghrib littoral, sacking various ports such as Bougie (Béjaïa) as it continued west. When it reached the Zayyanid Kingdom of Tlemcen in the northwest of present-day Algeria, it suffered a chance encounter with ten Muslim galleys filled with Christian prisoners. Conrad linked his galleys together and engaged the enemy vessels, capturing all ten after a fierce and prolonged fight. It was probably Roger's first taste of combat at sea.[30] It would not be his last. The maritime historian Camillo Manfroni notes that by the time the Aragonese entered the War of the Vespers a few years later, Roger's reputation as 'a valiant mariner was already known among the *comiti* [ship captains] and *patroni* [ship owner-operators] of the Catalan armada'.[31]

A royal charter of 26 October 1279 commissioned a 'ship of Roger of Lauria' to participate in another expedition to Tunis.[32] The undertaking to which the diploma refers was most likely that of Conrad di Lancia to engineer a regime change within the Hafsid state to the advantage of the Crown of Aragon. Abu Yahya al-Wathiq had succeeded al-Mustansir as the prince of Tunis but had apparently begun to balk at paying the annual remittance to Aragon. Thus, Peter commanded Conrad to install,

[29] ACA, RC, Reg. 40, fol. 95r; Isidro Carini, ed., *Gli Archivi e le Biblioteche di Spagna in rapporto alla storia d'Italia in generale e di Sicilia in particolare* (2 pts, Palermo, 1884), Pt II, p. 3. See also Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 90; Planells, *Roger de Lauria*, p. 65.

[30] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. XIX, pp. 49–52. See also Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, pp. 18, 90.

[31] Camillo Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana* (3 vols, Livorno, 1897–1902), II, p. 80.

[32] ACA, RC, Reg. 42, fol. 161r. See also Planells, *Roger de Lauria*, p. 65.

by force if necessary, al-Mustanir's brother Ibrahim I Abu Ishaq as the new ruler. Accordingly, Conrad equipped five galleys in Barcelona and another five in Valencia (at least one of which must have been Roger's) and sailed again for Ifriqiya (the north central Maghrib). Conrad landed at Gabès, just south of Tunis on the Gulf of Gabès, and disembarked a detachment of troops that marched on the kingdom's capital. Al-Wathiq was soon forced to abdicate in favour of Abu Ishaq.[33]

PETER'S PREOCCUPATION WITH THE KINGDOM OF SICILY

Aragonese aggrandizement would not stop there. Even if Peter had not been married to Constance of Hohenstaufen, the last surviving heir to the crown of Sicily, he would have needed little encouragement to seek control of the island. He must have anticipated, as Abulafia contends, that 'access to the markets of Alexandria and Constantinople' would be 'much eased once Palermo and Messina were centres of Catalan trade'.[34] And Peter must have become deeply concerned about the growing Angevin influence in Tunis.[35] Nonetheless, the fact is that Peter had to have also been subject to incessant pressure to wrest the kingdom of Sicily from its Angevin usurpers not only by his consort, but also by her entire entourage of exiles from the supplanted Hohenstaufen court. The voices of outrage from Constance, the Laurias and the Lancias that had been given birth by the defeat of Benevento must have grown all the more strident with the debacle at Tagliacozzo. The subsequent executions of Conradin and the senior Lancia lords, Galvano and Galeotto, must have added fuel to the fire in their bowels. They no doubt bombarded Peter with vociferous calls for vengeance, but he could do little while his father James still sat on the throne, for the latter remained constrained by the Treaty of Corbeil that forbade his intervention.[36] For the time being, the *Infante* had to content himself with behind-the-scenes diplomatic manoeuvring to champion Constance's claim to the crown of Sicily. He supported, for instance, a clandestine Castilian mission in 1269 to contact the Ghibellines of Pavia in hopes of recruiting them to the cause.[37] But, as his father's reign waned, another highly influential

[33] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, chs XXX–XXXI, pp. 74–9. See also Abun-Nasr, *History of the Maghrib*, p. 123.
[34] Abulafia, *Western Mediterranean Kingdoms*, p. 53.
[35] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, pp. 18–21.
[36] Abulafia, *Western Mediterranean Kingdoms*, pp. 47–8; Hillgarth, 'Problem of a Catalan Mediterranean Empire', pp. 14–15.
[37] Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 123.

and persuasive advocate for direct action would be added to the others: John of Procida.

To hear contemporary chroniclers – especially Sicilian ones – tell the tale, King Manfred's former chancellor single-handedly orchestrated a Mediterranean-wide conspiracy involving the Byzantine emperor that sparked the revolt of the Sicilian Vespers. While modern scholars have mostly debunked the legend, there can be no denying how crucial his counsel was for Aragonese intervention in the kingdom.[38] As was mentioned earlier, Procida fled the *Regno* in the horrific aftermath of Tagliacozzo when the Angevins confiscated his lands, reportedly assaulting his wife and daughter in the process and killing a son. He sought refuge in Venice at first, but soon migrated with his friend Henry of Isernia (a former Hohenstaufen lawyer) to the court of Frederick I of Thuringia, Margrave of Meissen, who was considered a legitimate Hohenstaufen heir to the crown of Sicily through his mother Margaret, a daughter of Emperor Frederick II.[39] In response to their calls to action, the young prince contacted the Ghibellines of Pavia in August 1269 and vowed to invade Italy with an army of 4,000 knights led by a host of German barons.[40] Frederick was, however, only an adolescent at the time and his bravado was baseless. Procida tarried in Thuringia (central Germany) for some time, hoping the prince would convert his promises into deeds, but ultimately found the yearning futile. He eventually drifted down into the Ghibelline-held areas of northern Italy, seeking support for a Hohenstaufen restoration in the *Regno*. There, he succeeded in securing a position for his brother Andrew in the court of William VII, the Marquis of Montferrat, but that was all. Finally, in June 1275, he migrated with his surviving sons, Francis and Thomas, to the court of Aragon in Barcelona, where he found a willing audience for his anti-Angevin agitation.[41]

Jerónimo Zurita noted that Peter was so impressed with Procida's sagacity and good counsel that he vested the physician with the lordships of Luxen, Benizzano and Palma soon after his coronation as king in 1276.[42] Some sources even intimate that Peter nominated John as Chan-

[38] Michele Amari, *La Guerra del Vespro Siciliano* (9th edn, 3 vols, Milan, 1886), I, pp. 140–53; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 205–9.

[39] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 19; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 203.

[40] Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 122–3.

[41] Hillgarth, 'Problem of a Catalan Mediterranean Empire', p. 23; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 203–4.

[42] Jerónimo Zurita, *Anales de la Corona de Aragón*, ed. Angel Cannelas López (8 vols, Institución 'Fernando el Católico', Zaragoza, 1967–77), bk IV, ch. XIII. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, pp. 145–8.

cellor of Aragon in the same timeframe, based in part on his dedication to Constance's claim to the crown of Sicily. In actuality, John of Procida did not officially assume the chancellorship of the kingdom until 1291, but the chronicles indicate that he took charge of Peter's foreign policy almost immediately.[43] Nevertheless, there was little Procida could do initially, inasmuch as Peter needed time to consolidate his hold on his own realm first. Michele Amari cogently explained why:

> The kingdoms of Aragon and Valencia, and Catalonia or the county of Barcelona, acknowledged rule of the same monarch, but the sovereign power was vested almost entirely in the *Cortes* of the several provinces, which were composed of prelates, barons, knights and representatives of the towns; proud of their franchises, and conscious of their power.[44]

Once the crown had mollified the concerns of the *Cortes* and ensured the loyalty of at least the Catalans in its expansionist endeavours, Procida was empowered to put into operation his diplomatic machinations, beginning in 1279. Since John must have been in his seventies at time, he himself probably remained in Barcelona. In his stead, he dispatched his sons, Thomas and Francis, to liaise with such Angevin adversaries as the Byzantine Emperor Michael Palaiologos VIII, the Ghibelline Genoese and the Sicilian opposition in order to lay the groundwork for Constance to realize her claim to the crown of Sicily. Additionally, John may have had his brother Andrew, in the court of the Marquis of Montferrat, contact the north Italian Ghibellines on his behalf.[45] These intrigues, in actuality, seemed to have achieved at least some success. In his *Istoria del Regno di Romania*, Venetian statesman Marino Sanudo Torsello alluded to a promised subsidy from the Byzantine emperor to Peter of Aragon to fund the fomenting of discontent in the *Regno* in the name of Queen Constance in order to distract Charles of Anjou from entertaining any designs on Constantinople.[46]

By the end of 1280, it was clear that the king of Aragon was determined to seize Sicily for a host of reasons: to clear the way for Catalan commerce to spread eastward to the Levant; to safeguard Catalan trading posts already established in Tunis; and to satisfy Aragonese aspirations

[43] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 19; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 204–5.

[44] Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, p. 137. Translation from Michele Amari's *History of the War of the Sicilian Vespers*, ed. Lord Francis Edgerton Ellesmere, trans. Anne Percy (3 vols, London, 1850), I, p. 137.

[45] Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 208–9.

[46] Marino Sanudo Torsello, *Istoria del Regno di Romania*, in *Chroniques Gréco-Romanes*, ed. Charles Hope (Berlin, 1873), pp. 99–170, esp. 133.

of aggrandizement at the expense of Anjou. But David Abulafia eloquently explains what was probably the most compelling motivation of all:

> The Aragonese kings were products of the chivalric culture of the thirteenth century, a culture which had laid deep roots in south-western France where they still had significant interests, notably the major city of Montpellier. Such a cultural environment stimulated an emphasis on the recovery of rights that their family historically possessed: Aragonese rights in Provence, which were snatched from them by the French prince Charles, count of Anjou; rights in Sicily, which belonged to the wife of King Peter III, Constance, granddaughter of Frederick II. It was the battle for recognition of just rights, rather than the defence of trade, which dominated the policy of the Aragonese kings towards their Christian neighbours.[47]

Peter's purpose was to recover, by force if necessary, the sovereign right of his queen to the Kingdom of Sicily. And Roger of Lauria was destined to be the means by which he would accomplish that task.

ARAGON'S AFRICAN ADVENTURE

The intentions of Peter III of Aragon toward the Kingdom of Sicily were hardly a secret. As early as January 1276 (even prior to his own coronation), he had officially enjoined Philip III of France to compel his uncle Charles to relinquish the *Regno* to its rightful ruler: Peter's wife, Constance of Hohenstaufen.[48] From that moment on, much of Aragonese diplomatic activity and military planning was devoted to achieving that outcome.

In fact, Shneidman argues, 'The invasion [of Sicily] was probably designed shortly after the death of Manfred.'[49] Peter simply waited until he was king before putting the plan in play. In January 1277, barely two months after his enthronement at Zaragoza, he began to neutralize or pacify potential adversaries who could distract him from his desideratum. It was then that he seized the *Infantes* de la Cerda as their mother, Blanche of France who was the *Infanta* of Castile, attempted to bring them across Aragon en route to the court of Philip of France, her brother. The two boys, Ferdinand and Alfonso, were the sons of Ferdinand de la Cerda – the oldest son and designated successor of King Alfonso

[47] Abulafia, *Western Mediterranean Kingdoms*, p. 56.
[48] Shneidman, *Aragonese–Catalan Empire*, II, p. 319.
[49] Shneidman, *Aragonese–Catalan Empire*, II, p. 321.

X of Castile. When Ferdinand (the *Infante* of Castile) died of wounds received at the Battle of Écija in September 1275, Alfonso X named his second son Sancho as his successor instead of the heir apparent, his grandson Ferdinand, in order to preempt a civil war perpetrated by Sancho. Accordingly, Peter let it be known to the court of Castile that he had incarcerated the two young claimants to the crown in the Citadel of Xátiva.[50] 'The *Infantes* de la Cerda were the lever he needed against Castile,' explains Hillgarth. 'With them as hostages he could force Alfonso X and Sancho into an alliance which would safeguard his Spanish frontiers during the Sicilian expedition.'[51] Otherwise, Peter would use them as pretenders to the Castilian throne, threatening the fragile peace of the realm. Ultimately, the scheme resulted in a formal compact of mutual assistance between the two kingdoms at Campillo in March 1281.[52]

At the same time, Ramon Muntaner revealed that Peter had arranged a five-year truce with Muhammad II al-Faqih, the Nasrid emir of Granada.[53] He also sought to placate any who might ally with the Angevins. In 1277, he welcomed a Pisan delegation to Barcelona and confirmed the rights and privileges that the Tuscan maritime power's merchants had historically enjoyed in the kingdom's ports. Peter even solicited the 'benevolent neutrality' of one of Catalonia's most ardent commercial competitors, Genoa. On 12 August 1280, apparently without being petitioned, he commanded the restitution of all confiscated Genoese property in the realm. And Shneidman found evidence that the great Genoese admiral and merchant, Benedetto Zaccaria, 'was in secret correspondence with Pedro [Peter III] and that the latter had promised to restore to the Genoese privileges they had held in Sicily prior to the Angevin occupation'.[54] The inescapable conclusion is that the king of Aragon wanted to insure that the Italian maritime republics would not be tempted to side with Anjou in any future hostilities with Aragon.

Concurrently, Peter presided over an ambitious build-up of the kingdom's naval capability. 'The king set in order all his dockyards, as well in Valencia as in Tortosa and in Barcelona, in order that the galleys should be in safety,' wrote Muntaner, an experienced seaman, 'and he built

[50] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. XL, pp. 98–100. See also Hillgarth, 'Problem of a Catalan Mediterranean Empire', p. 24.
[51] Hillgarth, 'Problem of a Catalan Mediterranean Empire', pp. 16–17.
[52] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. XL, pp. 100–1. See also Shneidman, *Aragonese–Catalan Empire*, II, pp. 322–3.
[53] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. XLI, p. 102. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, p. 177; Bisson, *Medieval Crown of Aragon*, p. 87.
[54] Shneidman, *Aragonese–Catalan Empire*, II, pp. 321–2.

dockyards in every place in which he thought he ought to have galleys.'[55] Muntaner went on to outline a plan by which the king would establish four main arsenals as the backbone of his naval infrastructure. Barcelona and Valencia would be sites for the realm's two primary shipyards while Tortosa and Cullera (about 20 miles or 33 km south of Valencia) would be venues for subsidiary shipyards. Each of the arsenals was to accommodate and maintain twenty-five galleys so that, in Muntaner's words, 'you would have a hundred galleys ready whenever you would want them against your enemies'.[56]

There could be little doubt as to whom Muntaner considered Peter's foremost enemy. 'And so the Lord King En Pedro, when he had heard of the great battles and victories that King Charles had won in the conquest he had undertaken, was greatly displeased, and angry, because of his great love for the Queen, his wife,' he wrote, adding ominously, 'Wherefore he decided that he could never be happy until he had taken revenge.'[57] So, while Anjou was amassing a great armada at Messina in early 1281 for an anticipated invasion of the Byzantine Empire, Aragon was doing the same in Barcelona for an eventual invasion of the Kingdom of Sicily.[58] By June, there were reports of Catalan infantrymen being recruited from the Pyrenees, archers from Tortosa and seamen from Valencia.[59] In contradistinction with Charles, however, Peter sought to disguise the true motive for his mobilization. Aragon's African interests had given him the ideal smokescreen for his real intentions (Map 5).

Ibrahim I Abu Ishaq, the Hafsid prince Peter had placed in power in Ifriqiya through the military machinations of Conrad di Lancia and Roger of Lauria in 1279, now refused to acknowledge Aragonese suzerainty or pay the stipulated tribute. So, in 1281 Peter urged Abu Bakr ibn al-Wazir, the governor of the Hafsid client city of Constantina (modern Constantine in northeastern Algeria, about midway between Algiers and Tunis) to rebel against him. Abu Ishaq then prepared to march on Ibn al-Wazir, prompting the latter to seek Peter's help with the enticement that he would consider conversion to Christianity.[60] This was precisely what the Aragonese sovereign had wanted. An expedition to North Africa could now, in Hillgarth's words, 'be made to look like a crusade and Tunis would be a good staging point for Sicily'.[61] In December of

[55] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. XXXVI, pp. 88–9.
[56] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. XXXVI, pp. 89–90.
[57] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. XXXVII, p. 91.
[58] Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 209.
[59] Hillgarth, 'Problem of a Catalan Mediterranean Empire', p. 25.
[60] Abun-Nasr, *History of the Maghrib*, p. 123; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 210.
[61] Hillgarth, 'Problem of a Catalan Mediterranean Empire', p. 24.

that year, Peter dispatched an envoy to Martin IV, requesting papal sanction and financial support for a crusade. The pope refused it, but Peter had his plausible pretext for fleet preparations, nonetheless.[62]

Probably in early 1282, Peter convoked a *Cortes* in Barcelona to proclaim that all necessary ships, men and materiel should be collected at Port Fangos (at the mouth of the Ebro River near Tortosa) by 1 May. He also appointed as admiral of the fleet his natural son, Jaime Perez, who in turn chose a well-regarded Catalonian knight by the name of Ramon de Cortada as his vice admiral. The two saw to the procurement of ships, soldiers and supplies from Valencia while two other commanders, Ramon Marquet and Berenguer Mallol, were assigned to do the same for Catalonia.[63] The muster must have proceeded apace, because on 20 May both Philip III of France and Pope Martin IV dispatched delegations to Port Fangos to question Peter as to his intentions.[64] The timing of the expedition, coincident with word of a new uprising on Sicily, and the magnitude of the mobilization must have seemed troubling to them at best. Philip's emissaries, in fact, darkly warned that the king of France would not stand idly by, should Peter take undue advantage of the situation. Peter dissembled, offering only the enigmatic response that 'his will and intention were and are that what he did would be done in God's service'.[65]

In truth, Peter had initiated the mobilization well before he learned of the outbreak of yet another rebellion on Sicily. He had done so with the knowledge that Charles had amassed a massive armada at Messina for a long-planned assault on the Byzantine Empire. Therefore, it is more likely that Peter had intended a direct strike upon Angevin Sicily, once Charles departed with the bulk of his forces to conquer Constantinople. Peter was probably just as surprised by the island's fresh insurrection as was Charles. After the Sicilian revolt took hold, he undoubtedly surmised that his next best option was to follow through with his announced 'African crusade' in order to advantageously position himself to exploit events in the region as they unfolded. Even then, Peter kept his precise plans and objectives close to his chest. He told no one, not even his admirals, of the armada's destination until the day of departure: 3 June

[62] Hillgarth, 'Problem of a Catalan Mediterranean Empire', pp. 24–5.

[63] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. XLVIII, pp. 114–15. See also Planells, *Roger de Lauria*, pp. 66–7.

[64] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. XLVII, pp. 113–14. See also Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 25; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 221.

[65] ACA, RC, Reg. 47, fol. 118r. See also Hillgarth, 'Problem of a Catalan Mediterranean Empire', p. 25.

1282.[66] As a matter of fact, Muntaner went so far as to claim that Peter waited until the fleet was 20 miles offshore before having his son, Jaime Perez, personally distribute sealed orders to each galley commander, informing them of their first port of call: Mahon on Menorca.[67]

Though estimates of the size of the force vary, it must have been substantial. Catalan chronicler Bernat Desclot calculated that the land contingent consisted of 800 knights and as many as 15,000 infantry, mostly *almugavars* – lightly clad, highly mobile foot soldiers who fought in the mountainous frontiers of Christian Iberia (Fig. 3).[68] Muntaner described a much larger army of 1,000 knights plus 8,000 crossbowmen and 20,000 *almugavars*.[69] Sicilian historian Bartolomeo di Neocastro offered the inflated figure of 900 mounted men-at-arms and their horses along with 30,000 *almugavars*.[70] As for the fleet that transported them, the two Catalan chroniclers gave remarkably similar numbers. Desclot said that between galleys, transports and small, sixteen-oared scout ships, 'there were a hundred and forty sail and more',[71] while Muntaner claimed 'there were more than a hundred and fifty sails, one with the other'.[72] Neocastro did not provide a total ship count, but indicated that at least twenty-four were standard war galleys,[73] similar to Desclot's count of twenty-two.[74]

Although there is no corroborating documentary evidence, past events and logic suggest that one of the galley commanders was probably Roger of Lauria. After all, he was known to have been close to the king since his arrival at the Aragonese court some twenty years previous, and Peter had already entrusted him with a key diplomatic mission to the region only a few years before. Furthermore, Roger had to have been one of the very few members of the royal retinue with actual maritime

[66] Bernat Desclot, *Chronicle of the Reign of King Pedro III of Aragon, A.D. 1276–1285*, trans. F. L. Critchlow (Princeton, 1928), ch. VII, pp. 29–30. See also Abulafia, *Western Mediterranean Kingdoms*, p. 84; Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, pp. 25–6; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 221–2.

[67] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. XLIX, p. 118.

[68] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. VII, pp. 28–9. See also Chaytor, *History of Aragon and Catalonia*, p. 102.

[69] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. XLVI, p. 112.

[70] Bartolomeo di Neocastro, *Historia Sicula (1250–1293)*, in *Cronisti e scrittori sincroni napoletani editi e inediti*, ed. Giuseppe del Re (2 vols, Naples, 1868), II, ch. XVII, p. 432.

[71] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XVII, 58. See also Chaytor, *History of Aragon and Catalonia*, p. 102.

[72] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. XLIX, p. 118. See also Critchlow, 'Introduction', in *Chronicle of the Reign of King Pedro III of Aragon*, p. XXXIX.

[73] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. XVII, p. 432.

[74] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XVII, p. 58.

3 Fourteenth-century fresco of Catalan infantry, including Catalan crossbowmen and presumably *almugavars*, in the Palau Reial Major of Barcelona.

combat experience. And he had gained that experience in those very waters along the North African littoral under the guidance of his good friend and fellow Hohenstaufen exile, Conrad di Lancia – Peter's first appointment to admiral.[75] A royal charter indicates that Roger probably even commanded a ship of his own during the 1279 expedition to install Abu Ishaq as the Hafsid ruler of Tunis.[76] Finally, both Michele Amari and Camillo Manfroni allude to Roger's presence at Peter's side, as captain and counsellor, on the 'African crusade'.[77] While Manfroni

[75] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. XIX, pp. 49–52. See also Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 90.

[76] ACA, RC, Reg. 42, fol. 161r. See also Abun-Nasr, *History of the Maghrib*, p. 123; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 210.

[77] Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, p. 280; Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, p. 80.

notes a diploma of the Vicar of Aragon dated 7 August 1282 (currently unavailable) that delegated Roger to inspect fortresses in Valencia in that timeframe, there is no evidence that Lauria was actually present to do so or exactly when he was required to accomplish the surveys. In fact, Manfroni himself goes so far as to suggest that Roger's reputation, partly gained on the expedition to Africa, laid the groundwork for his eventual assignment as admiral of the fleet of Aragon:

> The common vote of the mariners, more than the benevolence of King Peter, must have carried to supreme command the son of Lady Bella, the wet nurse of Constance of Swabia, and gave to him the opportunity to demonstrate those learned strategies and tactics that made him the most able and the most renowned among all the fleet captains of the medieval era.[78]

The Aragonese fleet made Mahon as planned after a stormy passage, but soon thereafter the plan began to fall apart. Though a tributary to the Crown of Aragon, Menorca was an autonomous Muslim emirate. Its governor, called *almojarife* (meaning 'government official' or 'tax-collector'), was most solicitous towards Peter and promised to provide all the necessary provisions for the fleet. He surmised the king's ultimate objective, however, and clandestinely dispatched a swift *saettia* (a scout ship) to warn his coreligionists on the Maghrib coast, particularly Abu Ishaq, of the Aragonese armada's impending arrival. Thus, when the fleet departed Mahon a few weeks later, Peter's precaution of informing his ship captains of the designated destination by sealed orders only after they were some miles out to sea served no purpose. By the time the fleet reached the port of Collo on the coast of present-day Algeria on 28 June, Abu Faris (Abu Ishaq's son) had already captured Constantina and decapitated Ibn al-Wazir.[79] The professed purpose for which Peter had mounted his massive expedition had evaporated. Still, there was no question of the monarch's immediate return to Aragon – he had not yet done what he had actually set out to do.

[78] Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, pp. 80–1.

[79] Desclot, *Chronicle*, chs VII–VIII, pp. 28–33; Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, chs L–LI, pp. 119–23. See also Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 26; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 222.

5

ANGEVIN CONSOLIDATION AND AGGRANDIZEMENT (1268–1282)

Following the Battle of Tagliacozzo, Charles of Anjou had wasted no time asserting his authority over north and central Italy while consolidating his control of the Kingdom of Sicily (Map 4). The clemency he had employed in the aftermath of the Battle of Benevento as a means of winning over dissidents had been discarded. He now ridded himself of rivals with a combination of ruthless retribution and relentless repression. He began by opportunistically seizing several key administrative positions. On 12 September 1268, barely three weeks after his victory at Tagliacozzo, Charles wrote to his brother King Louis IX to inform him that the citizens of Rome had chosen him senator for life by 'unanimous' acclamation.[1] And Pope Clement IV, sometime prior to his death at Viterbo on 29 November, had named Charles as Imperial Vicar for Tuscany. Furthermore, temporary leadership vacuums in both the papal curia and the court of the Holy Roman Empire meant that Anjou held in his hands undisputed power on the peninsula.[2]

Charles exploited these newly acquired appointments with dispatch. By the end of September, he was in Rome installing an Angevin autocracy that controlled virtually all aspects of the city's administration.[3] He used his imperial vicariate to eliminate opposition in Tuscany by appointing Jean Bitaud as his representative in the region. The latter led the Florentine Guelphs to victory over the Sienese at Colle di Val d'Elsa on 17 June 1269, prompting Siena's submission in August of the following year. An alliance with jealous Genoa had isolated Pisa and forced it to plead for peace in the spring of 1270. As for northern Italy, most

[1] Saba Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, in *Cronisti e scrittori sincroni napoletani editi e inediti*, ed. Giuseppe del Re (2 vols, Naples, 1868), II, bk IV, ch. XVII, p. 285. See also Steven Runciman, *The Sicilian Vespers* (Cambridge, 1958), p. 118.

[2] Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 119.

[3] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk IV, ch. XVII, pp. 285–6. See also Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 118–19.

of the Piedmont willingly submitted to him, but Lombardy remained resistant – particularly the Ghibelline cities of Pavia and Verona. That said, while the majority of Lombardy's lords and municipalities opposed Angevin domination, they were at least solidly Guelph. Charles contented himself with assigning a seneschal to represent his interests in the province.[4]

ANGEVIN REPRESSION

Anjou was far more proactive with regard to the *Regno*. Remnants of the Swabian rebels had sought safe haven with the Saracens of Lucera who were still in revolt. Charles himself laid siege to the city in April 1269, and by 28 August he had finally starved it into submission. The Muslim inhabitants were shown mercy but dispersed throughout the *Regno*. The Christian rebels, tellingly, were all summarily executed. The remaining cities and towns of Apulia and the Basilicata soon swore their allegiance to Anjou anew.[5]

Charles dealt with the Sicilian insurgency more severely still. He initially sent Philip and Guy of Montfort to reinforce Thomas of Coucy, whose troops had mostly been restricted to Messina and Palermo by the rebellion. This enabled the Angevins to break out of their garrisons and take the fight to the rebels. The suppression of the insurrection did not begin in earnest, however, until the appointment of Guillaume L'Étendard in August 1269 as Anjou's vicar on the island.[6] Saba Malaspina characterized the man as 'more cruel than cruelty itself … contemptuous of all pity and mercy'.[7] Under his callous command, the Angevins rapidly rolled up the revolt with a remorselessly brutal campaign of siege and sack. The *Infante* Frederick of Castile and Frederick di Lancia were cornered at Girgenti (present-say Agrigento) and compelled to surrender on the proviso that they be allowed safe passage to Tunis. The bulk of the rebel army was later besieged at Sciacca, which was eventually forced to capitulate. Its commander, Conrad Capece, escaped to the castle of Centuripe (west of Catania), but was soon seized there. L'Étendard had his eyes gouged out before having him hung on

[4] Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 119–22.
[5] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk IV, ch. XX, pp. 291–2. See also Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 124.
[6] Jean Dunbabin, *Charles I of Anjou: Power, Kingship and State-Making in Thirteenth-Century Europe* (London, 1998), p. 58; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 124.
[7] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk IV, ch. XVIII, p. 286.

the spot. His brothers, Marino and Giacomo, lived only long enough to be transported to Naples where they were publicly beheaded.[8]

The culmination of the campaign was the savage sack of Augusta (a port city between Catania and Syracuse on the Ionian coast) in August 1270 and the subsequent wholesale slaughter of its citizens. Not a soul was spared.[9] Malaspina described the atrocity in dreadful detail: 'The cruel executioner threw heads and torsos onto the sand, piling them up on the seashore.' Writing some fifteen years after the event, the chronicler claimed that the city, 'deprived of its inhabitants to this day, remains completely overgrown and useless…'[10] Though malevolent and murderous, L'Étendard's methods proved effective. The uprising soon dissipated. The eradication of Augusta, however, was an enormity that the citizens of Sicily would not soon forget.[11]

As repugnant as the suppression of the revolt may have been to the *regnicoli* (citizens of the *Regno*), it was the draconian imposition of an Angevin administrative regime that alienated them the most. Once captured rebels were either exiled or executed, their property was promptly confiscated and conceded to Frenchmen or Guelph allies.[12] 'About 700 French and Provençal aristocrats became lords in the *Regno*,' notes Jean Dunbabin.[13] Moreover, she further states that these barons 'became the bastion of the new regime, occupying the chief posts in the central administration and in the royal army'.[14] For instance, the justiciars, who supervised the government of each province, were almost all Frenchmen.[15] In fact, at the king's insistence, the *lingua franca* of the royal curia of Sicily became French.[16]

Accordingly, an overweening Angevin bureaucracy soon supplanted the existing Hohenstaufen hierarchy, while Angevin regulatory practices overlaid Swabian governance. New statutes and taxes were implemented alongside old ones with an inflexible rigour, to which the Sicilians especially were unaccustomed. Charles was punctilious in the pursuit of his perceived sovereign rights. He instructed his officials to employ the

[8] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk IV, ch. XIX, pp. 289–90. See also Michele Amari, *La Guerra del Vespro Siciliano* (9th edn, 3 vols, Milan, 1886), I, pp. 64–5; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 124.

[9] Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, pp. 62–3.

[10] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk IV, ch. XVIII, pp. 287–8.

[11] Dunbabin, *Charles I of Anjou*, p. 58; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 124.

[12] Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 124.

[13] Dunbabin, *Charles I of Anjou*, p. 59.

[14] Dunbabin, *Charles I of Anjou*, p. 60.

[15] Dunbabin, *Charles I of Anjou*, p. 73; Dunbabin, *The French in the Kingdom of Sicily* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 178.

[16] Dunbabin, *French in the Kingdom of Sicily*, p. 174.

autocratic *Enquêtes* ('Inquiries') as a tool of royal rule throughout the *Regno*. He had previously applied this managerial system in Provence to assert his comital authority. Dunbabin explains how it worked:

> He [Charles], with his train of lawyers, notaries and clerks, visited all the principal towns of Provence, calling on the townsmen to give evidence about comital rights both in the towns themselves and in the surrounding villages. … The aim was to record not only existing domanial rights but any other rights, of whatever sort, once claimed or once thought to have been claimed by previous counts of Provence.[17]

Since this was the basis of his bureaucracy, Anjou required assiduous record-keeping. Thus, all directives were issued in triplicate, while financial transactions concerning the crown were registered in quadruplicate by a team of permanently retained archivists. In an era when water-powered paper manufacture was in its infancy, this was an expensive and labour-intensive procedure in the extreme.[18] It is instructive to note that such heavy-handed governance caused such resentment in Provence that, in 1251, it resulted in a rebellion that Charles had to put down with heavy-booted force.[19] The Sicilian reaction to these tactics would prove far more pronounced.

What particularly galled the *regnicoli*, however, was the levying of a burdensome and rigid tax obligation on a population that benefited little from the resultant revenues. Emblematic of this effort was the December 1266 reinstitution, on an annual basis, of the onerous *subventio generalis* – a direct property tax designed to meet exigencies – that the Emperor Frederick II had abolished on his deathbed at the behest of the pope. Charles decided upon the total sum required each year, then charged the eleven provincial justiciars with collecting it by armed force, if necessary. And it was done with unfaltering efficiency. All private enterprise was tightly regulated, with licences required for the importation or exportation of all merchandise. And, of course, incomes of every sort were subject to the tax. Knights were exempted from *subventio generalis* as was much of the higher nobility, who were now mostly either French or Provençal; thus, the greater burden fell upon the indigenous population. The court augmented income from the taxes with fines and confiscations as punishment for any perceived transgressions.[20]

[17] Dunbabin, *Charles I of Anjou*, p. 48.
[18] Dunbabin, *Charles I of Anjou*, pp. 23, 71.
[19] Dunbabin, *Charles I of Anjou*, pp. 46–7; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 73–4.
[20] Dunbabin, *Charles I of Anjou*, p. 57; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 126–8.

Nor was there any attendant relaxation of feudal obligation. Charles demanded that all military service requirements be met without exception, including those for fleet operations. For most men-at-arms, he relied on the *servitium militum* inherited from Norman times, which tasked each fief holder with providing a *milites* (knight) for every twenty gold ounces of the demesne's value along with a certain number of *servientes* (sergeants or common soldiers). Nobles wishing to avoid such service were permitted to pay an *adohamentum* of equivalent monetary value.[21] But Charles filled the lower ranks of his army and the ships of his fleet mostly with conscripts, pressed into duty. 'Towns and villages were scoured by recruiting agents to find adequate supplies of foot soldiers for the royal army and oarsmen for the navy,' writes Dunbabin,[22] who unstintingly depicts the despotic nature of Angevin conscription methods:

> If natives of the *Regno* were sent abroad to fight, they were to be chosen from among those who had wives and goods at home, on whom retribution could be wreaked if they misbehaved. Though an occasional official was berated for failing to carry out the draconian orders, the expeditions were largely manned by those who fought because they could not face the alternative of seeing their homes and orchards destroyed, their wives and families imprisoned, and themselves in exile.[23]

While effective, it is doubtful that such a heavy reliance on punitive threat as a recruitment tool enhanced the commitment of the *regnicoli* to the Angevin cause. In point of fact, enlistment by extortion would go a long way toward explaining the dismal performance of Angevin forces during the subsequent war, particularly against the inspirationally led and highly motivated crews of Lauria's fleet.

The antipathy of the *regnicoli* for Angevin taxes and feudal obligations was amplified by an amorphous and unrealistic longing for the reasoned rule of William II, King of Sicily in the late twelfth century, in which a perceived balance between the powers of the monarchy and the nobility persisted, resulting in moderate taxation and the restrained enforcement of compulsory military service.[24] But it was not simply the tax burden and military impressment that infuriated them. As Runciman observes, 'These repressive measures were all the more intolerable to the easy-

[21] Giovanni Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro (1282–1302)* (Bologna, 2012), pp. 8–9.
[22] Dunbabin, *Charles I of Anjou*, p. 64.
[23] Dunbabin, *Charles I of Anjou*, p. 105.
[24] Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, pp. 66–9.

going Italians because they were enforced with meticulous care and because the King's agents were almost all Frenchmen.'[25]

The Sicilians, in particular, chafed under the yoke of what they perceived to be an occupying foreign power. The superimposition of a fastidious French bureaucracy over an extant Swabian system by an armed French-speaking hierarchy was an especially noisome affront to Sicilian sensibilities. Worst still, Charles chose to maintain his court in Naples instead of Palermo, the traditional capital of the kingdom. Indeed, he visited the island only twice prior to the Vespers: en route to Tunis during the ill-fated Eighth Crusade and on the return journey.[26] As Abulafia highlights, this denial of patronage to the petty nobility and urban elite of the island 'may indeed have sharpened the sense among Sicilian nobles and townsmen that the island was seen as no more than a source of grain and gold with which to pay for Charles's foreign escapades'.[27] At the same time, the elevated tax revenues brought no compensatory investments in the island's infrastructure. For instance, Charles substantially enlarged the arsenals at Brindisi and Trani in Apulia, while the shipyards of both Palermo and Messina on Sicily were neglected.[28] As it turns out, Sicilian suspicions that Anjou simply sought to exploit the island to fuel his desideratum of establishing a Mediterranean empire proved perspicacious. Subsequent events would soon reveal that Charles, indeed, viewed Sicily as a mere stepping stone to Angevin supremacy on the shores of the 'Great Sea'. All this contributed to a simmering witch's brew of Sicilian acrimony and animosity that would eventually boil over in spectacular fashion.

ANGEVIN ASPIRATIONS OF EMPIRE

Even before the Battle of Tagliacozzo, it was readily apparent that Anjou's ambitions extended well beyond the confines of the western Mediterranean. Charles had designs on a much grander prize than the Kingdom of Sicily. In May of the previous year (1267) he had met with Baldwin

[25] Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 125.

[26] Bartolomeo di Neocastro, *Historia Sicula (1250–1293)*, in *Cronisti e scrittori sincroni napoletani editi e inediti*, ed. Giuseppe del Re (2 vols, Naples, 1868), II, ch. XII, p. 426. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, p. 104; Dunbabin, *Charles I of Anjou*, pp. 105–6; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 129.

[27] David Abulafia, *The Western Mediterranean Kingdoms 1200–1500* (London, 1997), pp. 71, 81.

[28] Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, pp. 104–5; Dunbabin, *Charles I of Anjou*, pp. 106, 177; Dunbabin, *French in Kingdom of Sicily*, p. 174; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 128–30.

II of Courtenay, the exiled Latin Emperor of Constantinople, at Viterbo under the auspices of Pope Clement IV. Ostensibly, the purpose was to arrange for the restoration of Baldwin to the throne of Byzantium, but the price the latter was forced to pay for Angevin support gave evidence of Anjou's true intention: to claim the crown of the Eastern Empire for himself (see Map 1/Map 12).[29]

Baldwin came to the conference at Viterbo with almost no martial or monetary means and, thus, little bargaining power. This was because he had unexpectedly been ousted from power by the Greek army of Byzantine Emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos of Nicaea in July 1261 under serendipitous circumstances. Alexios Strategopoulos, Michael's general, was leading a small force past the imperial city en route to the Bulgarian frontier when some of the locals alerted him to the fact that most of the Latin garrison and the bulk of the Venetian fleet were gone – reportedly on an expedition to capture Daphnusia (modern Kefken), an island in the Black Sea about 60 miles (100 km) east of the Bosporus. These Greek villagers also told him of an underground passage into the city. So, during the night of 24 July, Strategopoulos had some of his most trusted soldiers sneak in and overwhelm the guards on the walls and at the gates. By the time Baldwin awoke the next morning, the overthrow was a *fait accompli*. He managed to hold out in the Blachernae Palace just long enough for the returning Venetian fleet to rescue him and abandon the Byzantine capital to its former Greek masters.[30]

Accordingly, Charles of Anjou was able to extract from Baldwin some very generous concessions for his collaboration in the form of an army of at least 2,000 knights. These concessions included overlordship of the Principality of Achaea (the northern Peloponnesus) and the Kingdom of Thessalonica (Macedonia and Thessaly) along with a third of any other territory the Angevin army might conquer for him, with the exception of Constantinople itself. Charles was also formally conceded control of the Adriatic coast between Durazzo and Corfu. (Anjou had previously claimed the island itself by right of conquest as the dowry of Helena, Manfred's queen, whom he had held as captive since the Battle of Benevento.) More importantly, Baldwin consented to have Philip of Courtney (his only son and heir) marry Anjou's daughter Beatrice on the condition that, should Philip perish without issue, Charles would

[29] Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, pp. 119–20; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 136–7.
[30] Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 48–9.

automatically inherit the Eastern Empire.[31] The nuptials were, in fact, celebrated on 15 October 1273, just days before Baldwin himself passed away, leaving the imperial title to Anjou's new son-in-law, Philip.[32]

Charles had intended to embark on his expedition of conquest in the summer of 1270, but his pious brother's passion to prevent what was left of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem from being swallowed up by the Mamluk menace derailed his plans. Sultan Baybars I of Egypt had captured Caesarea on 5 March 1265, followed by Arsuf in April.[33] He had destroyed Jaffa in the early spring of 1268 and annihilated Antioch on 18 May.[34] By that time, King Louis IX had already renewed his crusading vows and had begun making logistical preparations for a new expedition to the Holy Land, which included ship contracts with the main maritime powers of the Christian West: Marseilles, Genoa and Venice.[35] It was inevitable that he would summon his younger brother to join him. So the fleet that Charles had begun amassing in the ports of Campania and Apulia for the conquest of Constantinople had to be redirected to serve the Eighth Crusade instead.

Hoping to salvage something from the delay, Charles managed to deflect his brother's attention from Palestine to North Africa on the premise that Tunis would be a logical stepping stone for an assault on Cairo, the Mamluk capital. He was also rumoured to have convinced Louis that Muhammad I al-Mustansir, the Hafsid ruler of Ifriqiya, was ripe for conversion to Christianity and simply needed some support in dealing with his own generals and imams. Anjou's main motive, however, seems to have been to extort a renewal of the tribute that had been paid annually by Tunis to the King of Sicily since the time of Roger II but had been allowed to lapse upon the death of Manfred in 1266. It amounted to over 34,000 *bezants* (a tranche of Byzantine gold coins, equivalent to about 2,777 ounces of gold) per year, a princely sum that would have contributed nicely to Anjou's mobilization against the Byzantine Empire. And retribution for al-Mustansir's support of the Sicilian

[31] Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, pp. 120–1; Dunbabin, *Charles I of Anjou*, pp. 89–90, 93–4; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 136–7. (Dunbabin is sceptical that Charles wanted the crown for himself, indicating he would have been content with a Latin emperor amicable to Angevin interests in the region, pp. 94–6.)

[32] Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 158.

[33] Thomas Asbridge, *The Crusades* (New York, 2010), p. 633; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 139–41; Peter Thorau, *The Lion of Egypt: Sultan Baybars I and the Near East in the Thirteenth Century*, trans. P. M. Holt (London, 1992), pp. 158–62.

[34] Asbridge, *Crusades*, pp. 635–7.

[35] Charles D. Stanton, *Medieval Maritime Warfare* (Barnsley, 2015), pp. 104–5.

revolt of 1267 was probably also a consideration. Charles, doubtless, wanted to dissuade the Hafsids from further meddling in Sicilian affairs at his expense.[36]

Even so, Charles proved a reluctant participant. While Louis set sail from Aigues-Mortes on 1 July 1270, his younger brother did not leave Trapani with his fleet until 24 August. Charles only arrived off Carthage the morning of 25 August, just as the saintly French king succumbed to the same dysentery that had already decimated his army as it languished beneath the sizzling North African sun.[37] The crusade itself had totally failed in its purpose, but Anjou, nonetheless, succeeded in achieving his own aim. He pressed the siege of the city long enough to convince al-Mustansir to pay reparations for his resistance and resume the tribute to the throne of Sicily at an annual rate even higher than before. Most alarming to the Aragonese, the treaty that the Hafsid ruler was compelled to sign on 1 November also granted the Angevins an autonomous merchants' quarter in Tunis to compete with that of the Catalonians. The expedition was not, however, an unqualified triumph for Charles. His invasion fleet was pummelled by a tempest upon its return to Trapani. Eighteen of his ships were sunk and many others badly damaged, rendering his armada *hors de combat* for the near future – a blow that further postponed his eastern aspirations.[38]

Nevertheless, Charles did not remain idle while his fleet was being refurbished. He took advantage of a succession struggle that had erupted upon the death of Michael II Komnenos Doukas, Despot of Epirus, to occupy earthquake-damaged Durazzo in early 1271, allowing him to claim the title, 'King of Albania'. Significantly, Durazzo was at the western end of the Via Egnatia, the old Roman road that terminated at the gates of Constantinople.[39] This strategic development was enhanced by the fact that in 1269 Charles had negotiated a marriage alliance with King Bela IV of Hungary, whereby the latter's granddaughter, Maria, was betrothed to his oldest son, Charles the Lame. So, by the spring of

[36] Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, pp. 113–15; Dunbabin, *Charles I of Anjou*, p. 97; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 141–2.

[37] Giovanni Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, ed. Francesco Dragomanni (4 vols, Florence, 1845), I, bk VII, ch. XXXVII, pp. 365–7. See also Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 142–3.

[38] Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, I, bk VII, ch. XXXIII, pp. 367–8. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, pp. 116–18; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 143–4.

[39] Dunbabin, *Charles I of Anjou*, p. 90; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 146; Warrren Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society* (Stanford, 1997), p. 740.

1271, the land route for an Angevin assault on the Byzantine capital had been well readied.[40]

But an unforeseen series of events slowed progress on his plans of conquest shortly thereafter. First of all, open hostilities broke out with Genoa in late 1272 when Charles began detaining Genoese Ghibellines in his territory and confiscating their goods.[41] The second development was more serious. Pope Clement IV had passed away at Viterbo on 29 November 1268 and, after a prolonged hiatus, Teobaldo Visconti had replaced him as Gregory X on 1 September 1271. Despite the disappointment of King Louis IX's disastrous second crusade, the new pontiff had not given up on the dream of rescuing the Latin Kingdom from the Mamluk scourge and was convinced that the chances of success would be dramatically improved with the full support of the Eastern Empire. Accordingly, he actively sought to mend the schism that had existed between the Eastern and Western Churches of Christendom since the mid-eleventh century. On 31 March 1272, he convoked the Fourteenth Ecumenical Council, identifying a crusade to liberate the Holy Land and the reunification of the Latin and Greek Churches as its principal themes. Gregory then made overtures to Emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos concerning the participation of a Greek delegation. The negotiations lasted through 1273 and culminated in a formal invitation. Understanding that such discussions might be the best means of staving off an Angevin expedition against him, Michael accepted. While this effort at rapprochement was in progress, Gregory forbade Charles to initiate any hostilities against the Greek Empire. Thus, Anjou's eastern expansion plans were put on hold once again – this time indefinitely.[42]

The Second Council of Lyon, as it came to be known, was officially convened on 7 May 1274 and, after the Greek ecclesiastical envoys tentatively acceded to most of the papacy's demands, a formal ceremony of reunion was celebrated on 6 July. A papal legate, Bernard of Montecassino, subsequently shuttled between Naples and Constantinople to arrange a truce for one year between the King of Sicily and the Byzantine Emperor, beginning on 1 May 1275. Charles agreed because he was still battling with the Genoese and the Ghibellines of northern Italy, but he had to have been somewhat frustrated that his designs on the Eastern Empire had been haltered again. Perhaps as consolation, Gregory

[40] Dunbabin, *Charles I of Anjou*, p. 90; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 138.

[41] Steven Epstein, *Genoa and the Genoese, 958–1528* (Chapel Hill, 1996), p. 156; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 156.

[42] Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, p. 127; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 148, 156–8.

inveigled Maria of Antioch to sell Anjou her claim to the crown of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. The pope died at Arrezzo on 10 January of the next year, but Charles concluded the accord with Maria on 18 March 1277 for 1,000 pounds of gold and an annuity of 4,000 *livres tournois*, allowing him to immediately assume the honorific, 'King of Jerusalem'.[43] Soon afterwards, on 7 June, Anjou dispatched Roger of San Severino, Count of Marsico, to Acre with a flotilla of six ships in order to lay claim to the Latin Kingdom on his behalf as his royal vicar.[44]

Unfortunately for Charles, Gregory's demise offered no change in papal policy. The three succeeding popes – Innocent V, Adrian V and John XXI – all followed Gregory to the grave within eighteen months. None of them had much of an opportunity to influence events, although Innocent V did manage to arrange a peace between Genoa and Anjou on 18 June 1276.[45] Worse still, the man who inherited the keys of St Peter from John XXI on 25 November 1277 was Giovanni Gaetano Orsini, whom Giovanni Villani (among others) believed was steadfastly anti-Angevin. As Pope Nicholas III, he required Charles to relinquish both the senatorship of Rome and the vicariate of Tuscany.[46] And he, too, forbade Charles to attack the Byzantine Empire. That does not mean, however, that Nicholas was pro-Byzantine. Mistrustful of Emperor Michael's commitment to the tenets of the Council of Lyon, the new pope placed draconian demands on the Byzantine *basileus* intended to prove his belief in the primacy of the Roman Church – a position that was pervasively unpopular in the Christian East. Michael endeavoured to comply, but such papal pressure put unsustainable stress on the recently contrived rapport of reunification.[47]

The fragile détente began to unravel with the sudden death of Nicholas III at Viterbo on 22 August 1280 owing to a heart attack. The conclave that convened to choose his successor soon became deadlocked between the French and Italian factions of the College of Cardinals. After six months, Charles essentially forced a favourable outcome by having his troops beleaguer the papal palace at Viterbo. On 22 February 1281, Cardinal Simon de Brion, a spare sexagenarian who had served as chancellor to King Louis IX (Anjou's older brother), was selected as Pope Martin IV. An avowed Gallic chauvinist, the new pope was to

[43] Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 162–70.
[44] Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, pp. 130–1; Dunbabin, *Charles I of Anjou*, pp. 96–7; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 178–80.
[45] Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, I, bk VII, ch. L, pp. 379–81.
[46] Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, I, bk VII, ch. LIV, pp. 383–4. See also Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 182–3.
[47] Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 186–90.

swiftly prove the staunchest supporter of Charles and his predilection for Angevin aggrandizement. Within a month of his enthronement at Orvieto on 23 March, Martin restored Charles as senator of Rome.[48] A few weeks later, on 3 July, he hosted a deliberation at Orvieto attended by Charles, Philip of Courtenay (Anjou's son-in-law and titular Latin Emperor of Constantinople) and representatives of the Republic of Venice. The result was an accord 'for the recoupment of the Roman [Eastern] Empire held by Palaiologos and other occupiers'.[49] The treaty called for Charles to provide around 8,000 men-at-arms and their horses along with the transports to carry them. He was supposedly also obligated to supply twenty large warships and a hundred light galleys, which were to be matched by the Venetians. The entire armada was to assemble by April of the following year. On 18 November, Martin officially terminated the experiment in Church reunification by issuing a papal bull to a Greek delegation at Orvieto, which excommunicated Emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos as a heretic.[50]

The expense of financing such a massive expedition was, of course, exorbitant. This was especially true for the fleet. Larry Mott estimates that equipping the Angevin armada alone must have exceeded 50,000 ounces of gold – about half the annual income of the Kingdom of Sicily.[51] To cover the cost, Charles increased the reviled *subventio generalis* by a staggering 150 per cent in December 1281.[52] By the spring of 1282, he had assembled a daunting armada at Messina. Contemporary Venetian commentator Marino Sanudo Torsello claimed that it amounted to over a hundred warships plus auxiliary vessels.[53] Michele Amari's research supports that figure and specifies that the galleys were accompanied by around two hundred transports.[54] Modern calculations put the number

[48] Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 190–1.

[49] G. L. Tafel and G. M. Thomas, eds, *Urkunden zur älteren Handels-und Staatgeschichte der Republik Venedig* (3 vols, Vienna, 1856–7), III, no. CCCLXXIII, pp. 287–98, esp. 287 and 290. See also Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 194.

[50] Tafel and Thomas, *Urkunden der Republik Venedig*, III, no. CCCLXXIII, pp. 287–98. See also Dunbabin, *Charles I of Anjou*, p. 95; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 194.

[51] Lawrence Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean: The Catalan–Aragonese Fleet in the War of the Sicilian Vespers* (Gainesville, 2003), p. 15.

[52] Filangieri, Riccardo, ed., *I registri della cancelleria angioina* (multiple vols, Naples, 1950–81), CVI, p. 77. See also Dunbabin, *Charles I of Anjou*, p. 102.

[53] Marino Sanudo Torsello, *Istoria del Regno di Romania*, in *Chroniques Gréco-Romanes*, ed. Charles Hope (Berlin, 1873), pp. 99–170, esp. 138.

[54] Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, p. 178.

of galleys at a more realistic, but still imposing, fifty to sixty galleys as well as thirty to forty support ships.[55]

Because the fleet was based at Messina, the Sicilians bore the brunt of equipping and crewing it. It was an onerous imposition on a population that had no vested interest in the campaign and justifiably felt exploited. Already driven to penury to pay for it, the Sicilians were coercively conscripted to man it by overbearing French justiciars, who had not even bothered to learn their language or their customs. The Royal Vicar (governor of the island), Herbert of Orléans, resided not in Palermo (the traditional capital), but in Messina, ensconced in the hated castle of Mategriffon ('terror of the Greeks') that Richard the Lionheart had built to intimidate the mostly Greek inhabitants of the city on his way to the Third Crusade.[56] Herbert's autocratic rule was enforced with forty-two royal castles, garrisoned by what the islanders considered an abusive and foreign military caste, while they themselves were barred from bearing arms.[57] To the Sicilians, the great armada that lay at anchor in the harbour of Messina in March of 1282 was a galling symbol of Angevin oppression.

Charles, of course, was insensitive to Sicilian sentiments. After all, as was stated earlier, he had not even visited the island since the Tunis debacle a dozen years earlier. To him, the fleet represented a means of finally attaining what he had sought for so long: the conquest of the Eastern Empire. 'At the opening of the year 1282,' observes Steven Runciman, 'Charles, King of Sicily, Jerusalem and Albania, Count of Provence, Forcalquier, Anjou and Maine, regent of Achaea, overlord of Tunis and Senator of Rome, was without doubt the greatest potentate in Europe.'[58] Now, in the spring of 1282, he was on the cusp of achieving the crowning glory of his acclaimed career with the most powerful armada he had yet assembled. It would never sail.

[55] David Abulafia, *The Great Sea: A Human History of the Mediterranean* (London, 2011), p. 350; Camillo Manfroni, *Storia della Marina Italiana* (3 vols, Livorno, 1902), II, p. 73; Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 15.

[56] Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 211–14.

[57] Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, pp. 191–2; Dunbabin, *Charles I of Anjou*, p. 107; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 214.

[58] Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 201.

6

REVOLT OF THE VESPERS (30 MARCH 1282)

La Chiesa dello Spirito Santo ('the Church of the Holy Spirit') sits in a serene setting on the outskirts of Palermo (Fig. 4). It is perched just a few hundred yards southeast of the old city walls on the left bank of a lushly foliated ravine through which runs the River Oreto. All around it are the gravestones, mausoleums and sepulchral monuments of the eighteenth-century Cimitero di Sant'Orsola ('Cemetery of Saint Ursula'), interspersed here and there with ancient cypress trees. But in the spring of 1282, the Camposanto di Santo Spirito, as the cemetery is now officially known, was a grassy field covered with vernal blossoms. There could have been nothing in this peaceful scene that would have predicted the eruption of unfettered violence that took place there on the evening of 30 March, the day after Easter – save, perhaps, the dour Norman ecclesiastical edifice itself. Founded in 1178 as an ascetic Cistercian abbey, the Arabo-Norman structure with blind gothic arches and arabesque motifs was built with blocks of tuff stone and lava rock, forming alternating horizontal veins of ochre and grey that give it a grim, austere aspect. Ominously, Walter of the Mill, an English-born archbishop, had laid the foundation stone on the day of a solar eclipse.[1]

THE SPARK

Contemporary chroniclers offer several versions of what happened there some seven centuries ago, but a basic outline of the events is common to all.[2] The account of Sicilian patriot Bartolomeo di Neocastro seems the

[1] Michele Amari, *La Guerra del Vespro Siciliano* (9th edn, 3 vols, Milan, 1886), I, pp. 192–4; Steven Runciman, *The Sicilian Vespers* (Cambridge, 1958), p. 214.

[2] Saba Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, in *Cronisti e scrittori sincroni napoletani editi e inediti*, ed. Giuseppe del Re (2 vols, Naples, 1868), II, bk VIII, ch. IV, pp. 334–5; Ramon Muntaner, *Chronicle*, trans. Lady Goodenough (2 vols, London, 1920), I, ch. XLIII, pp. 104–7; Niccolò Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum (1282–1337)*, ed. Ludovico Muratori (*Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, X, Milan,

4 Arabo-Norman Church of the Holy Spirit, where the Revolt of the Sicilian Vespers erupted on 30 March 1282, still stands in the Camposanto di Santo Spirito (Sant'Orsola Cemetery) on the southeastern outskirts of Palermo.

fullest and most credible. It was tradition at the time for a festival to be held on the grounds of the church on Easter Monday, so the piazza in front of the entrance was filled with city-dwellers and villagers, making merry while waiting for Vespers (evening prayers) at sunset. Amid the singing, dancing and drinking of this convivial scene strolled a group of French soldiers, several of whom were already inebriated. One of their number, a sergeant whom the sources identified as Drouet, pulled a pretty young noblewoman out of the crowd and apparently fondled her on the pretext of searching for arms. The fact that his name was known indicates that he was probably a recidivist offender. In any event, this act of boorish behaviour would be his last. The young lady's incensed husband promptly pounced upon Drouet with a dagger and dispatched him. His Angevin compatriots attempted to come to his defence, but they quickly found themselves engulfed by a broiling mob of men, bent on bloodlust. The cry '*moranu li Franchiski!*' ('death to the French' in

1727), bk I, ch. IV, col. 925; Giovanni Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, ed. Francesco Dragomanni (4 vols, Florence, 1845), I, bk VII, ch. LXI, pp. 394–5.

the Sicilian dialect) went up. Then, as the church bells clanged the call to Vespers, the bloodletting began. None of the French soldiers on scene reportedly survived. According to Neocastro, nearly 200 Angevin corpses littered the piazza.[3]

It did not stop there. Men fresh from the Vespers bloodbath at the Spirito Santo ran through the streets of Palermo shouting what had by now become the refrain of the nascent revolt: 'Death to the French!' Roaming rabbles butchered everyone of Gallic descent they encountered. They combed French neighbourhoods, ravaging their homes and business establishments. Nor were women and children spared. Sicilian wives were slaughtered with their French husbands.[4] Michele Amari describes in ghastly detail how the rioters avenged 'the ruthless massacre of Augusta' by 'ripping open the bodies of Sicilian women who were with child by French husbands, and dashing against the stones the fruit of the mingled blood of the oppressors and the oppressed'.[5] The mobs did not even respect the sanctuary of monasteries, for those of the Dominicans and the Franciscans were ransacked in search of foreign friars: any who could not properly pronounce '*ciciri*', the Sicilian word for chickpeas (apparently all but impossible for French speakers), were slain on the spot. Anjou's justiciar for the region, Jean of Saint-Rémy, tried to hold out in the old Norman royal palace, but the Sicilians soon breached the portals; he just barely managed to escape from a window to the stables from where he rode with a handful of followers to the inland fortress of Vicari.[6] By the time the bloodletting had run its course, the sun had risen on the mortal remains of more than 2,000 French residents of Palermo[7] (some sources indicate that double that number died in the massacre).[8] The murderous frenzy would soon spread well beyond the city limits (Map 6).

[3] Bartolomeo di Neocastro, *Historia Sicula (1250–1293)*, in *Cronisti e scrittori sincroni napoletani editi e inediti*, ed. Giuseppe del Re (2 vols, Naples, 1868), II, ch. XIV, pp. 428–30. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, pp. 194–5; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 214–15.

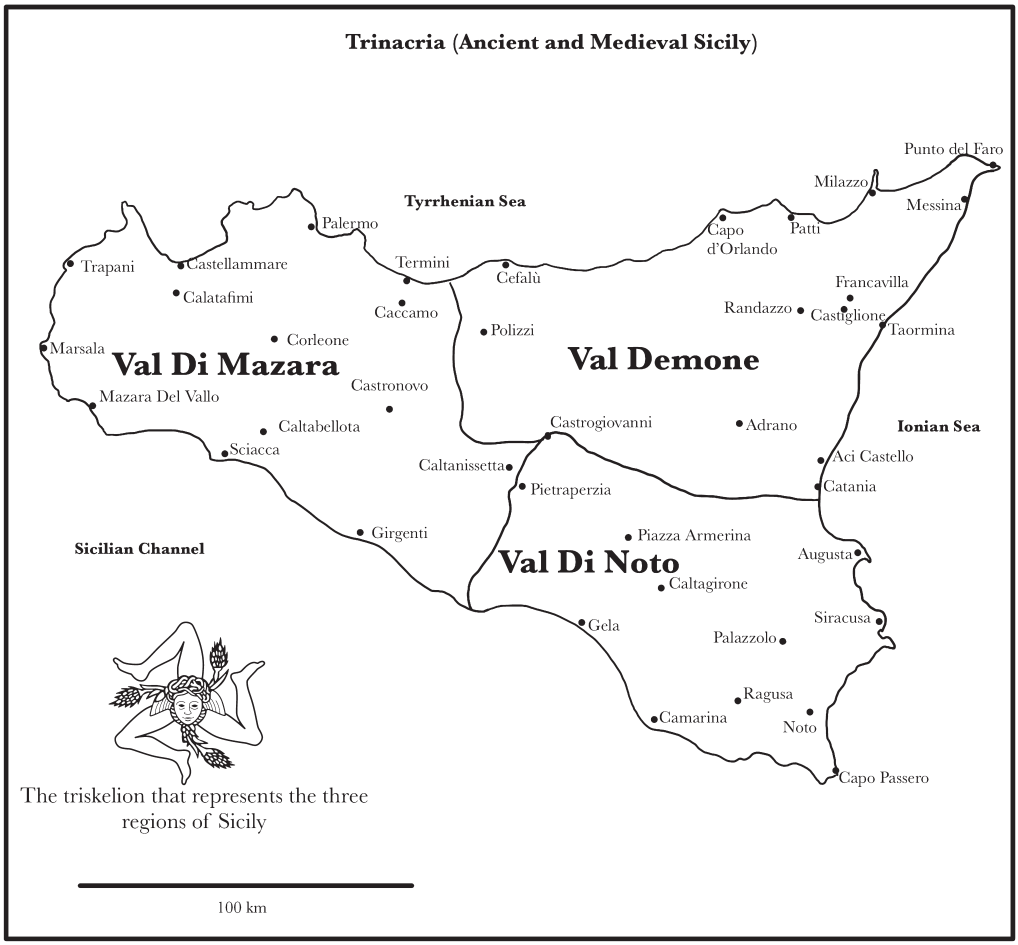
[4] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk VIII, ch. V, pp. 335–6; Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. XIV, p. 430. See also Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 215.

[5] Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, pp. 198–9. Translation by Anne Percy in Michele Amari's *History of the War of the Sicilian Vespers*, ed. Lord Francis Edgerton of Ellesmere (3 vols, London, 1850), I, p. 186.

[6] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. XIV, p. 429. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, pp. 198–201; Giovanni Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro (1282–1302)* (Bologna, 2012), p. 23; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 215.

[7] Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 216.

[8] H. J. Chaytor, *A History of Aragon and Catalonia* (London, 1933), p. 102.



6 Sicily ('*Trinacria*')

Runners rushed to the neighbouring towns and villages to fan the flames of the revolt. Corleone, 20 miles (33 km) to the south, was the first to join Palermo. It sent envoys on 3 April, proposing joint action. The two towns proclaimed themselves self-governing communes under the protection of the Holy See and agreed to collaborate. They combined forces and dispatched armed contingents in three directions to disseminate word of the uprising to the rest of the island: southwards to Calatafimi and Trapani; eastwards to Cefalù and Messina; and towards the centre to Caltanissetta and Castrogiovanni (modern Enna). Men from Palermo had already reduced the fortress at Vicari and assassinated Angevin justiciar Jean Saint-Rémy. Now the movement quickly

gathered momentum. The French either fled before the bow wave of wrath or were overrun by it. According to one estimate, at least 20,000 lost their lives. Within a fortnight, most all of the western and central parts of the island were under rebel control.[9] Messina alone remained as the last Angevin bastion on Sicily.

This was because only Messina benefited from Anjou's reign. It was there where his massive invasion fleet lay at anchor and it was there where his royal vicar, Herbert of Orléans, resided. The Palermitans, led by Captain of the People Roger Mastrangelo, were well aware that the port city would be Anjou's beachhead in a campaign to retake the island, so on 13 April they sent a missive to Messina, beseeching its citizens to join the rebellion. Orléans reacted on the 15th by sending a contingent of 500 crossbowmen under a Messinese knight named Guglielmo Chiriolo to Taormina to secure the city's southern flank. He then dispatched a flotilla of seven galleys under pro-Angevin noble Riccardo Riso to blockade the port of Palermo in a show of force. The Palermitans, however, undercut the effect by displaying the banner of Messina beside their own in a plea for solidarity.[10] The Messinese crews responded with a reluctance to press the blockade, even when braced by a small squadron of four Amalfitan galleys under command of Matteo of Salerno, sent by Charles of Anjou.[11]

Gradually, sentiment in Messina began to turn against the Angevins, since many of the city's inhabitants were transplanted Palermitans who had come to the city seeking work when the island's administrative bureaucracy was transferred from Palermo. Sensing the seething animosity and keenly aware that a garrison of only 600 Angevin troops protected him, Orléans started to lose his nerve. He sent ninety French horsemen under Neapolitan Michelletto Gatta in late April to relieve the Messinese troops at Taormina. Infuriated at the affront, Chiriolo and his men took the Angevins prisoner. A few days later on 28 April, tensions exploded into open rebellion in Messina. Orléans managed to retreat into the Mategriffon castle, but the Angevin invasion fleet in the harbour became the first great casualty of the uprising. Rioters burned the bulk of it to the waterline. When the Messinese flotilla at Palermo

[9] Bernat Desclot, *Chronicle of the Reign of King Pedro III of Aragon, A.D. 1276–1285*, trans. F. L. Critchlow (Princeton, 1928), ch. IX, pp. 36–9, note 4; Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk VIII, ch. VI, pp. 336–7. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, pp. 200–9; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 216.

[10] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. XV, p. 431; ch. XXIV, p. 439. See also Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 217.

[11] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. XXXI, p. 444. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, pp. 210–11; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 220.

received word of the revolt, it attacked the Amalfitan ships, capturing two. Matteo of Salerno was able to escape with the remaining two and return to Naples with word that the revolt was metastasizing.[12] Later, when the Messinese galleys were recalled, Riccardo Riso realized what kind of reception he could expect and crept off to Calabria in his flagship instead.[13] Charles knew then that the matter was far more serious than he had first believed. He was furious. His great campaign of conquest, again, had to be shelved indefinitely. His resultant response to the rebels would not be conciliatory.

In the aftermath of the rising in Messina, Captain of the People Bartolomeo Maniscalco turned leadership of the city over to a former magistrate named Baldwin Mussone. The commune then elected four judges to act as his council: Niccoloso Saporito, Pietro Ansalone, Raynald de' Limogi and Bartolomeo di Neocastro, whose history of Sicily furnishes a first-hand account of the War of the Vespers. Mussone subsequently negotiated the surrender of Herbert of Orléans and his entourage. In exchange for quitting the Mategriffon, the Angevin royal vicar was allowed to depart the island unharmed, provided he sailed straight for Aigues-Mortes in Provence – never to return. He was even provided two galleys for the purpose. Orléans barely cleared the harbour before he broke his promise. He had the vessels immediately head for Catona in Calabria, just across the strait from Messina. There, he linked up with Pietro Ruffo, the pro-Angevin count of Catanzaro, to begin preparations for a counter-offensive to retake the island for Charles.[14] Unfortunately his treachery cost the lives of Theobald of Messy, the chatelain of Mategriffon, and his seventy-man garrison. They had been sworn the same safe-conduct but were drowned instead.[15]

Mussone and his counsellors, meanwhile, sent an embassy to Orvieto to join that of Palermo in entreating the Holy See to grant the protection of the papacy. Martin IV responded on 7 May, Ascension Day, by issuing a papal bull that placed the Sicilians and any who would come to their aid under anathema.[16] The leaders of the rebellion understood then that they were alone and it was only a matter of time before Charles

[12] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. XXIV, p. 439; ch. XXX, p. 444. See also Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 217–18, 220.
[13] Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 219.
[14] Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, pp. 212–17; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 218–19.
[15] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. XXVII, p. 441. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, pp. 217–18; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 218–19.
[16] Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 220–1.

mounted a massive assault to reconquer Sicily. They desperately needed a champion – little did they know that one was already on the way.

ANJOU'S ASSAULT ON MESSINA (SUMMER 1282)

The Angevin effort to retake Messina began even before the Aragonese had landed at Collo. Michele Amari characterized Anjou's reaction to the 28 April 1282 revolt of the city and the concomitant destruction of his fleet in its port as 'uncontrolled fury', and said the sovereign swore to 'leave Sicily a naked and uninhabited rock, as an example of regal justice, and terror to remote ages' (Map 6).[17] Pursuant to that resolution, Charles immediately began gathering a formidable force at Catona, just across the Strait from Messina. He drew men and matériel not just from the mainland *Regno*, but also from Provence, northern France and his holdings in the eastern Mediterranean. He even contracted with Genoa, Venice and Pisa for additional ships to replace some of those he had lost in the harbour of Messina.[18] Contemporary estimates are, of course, hopelessly overstated. Numbers for the ground contingent vary from 5,000 to 24,000 cavalry and 50,000 to 90,000 infantry, while ship counts range from 90 to 300.[19] Bartolomeo Neocastro, for instance, claimed there were 140 galleys, 40 *taride* and 6 other vessels,[20] while Marino Sanudo Torsello gave the inflated total figure of around 200 galleys and other armed vessels.[21] Modern military historian Giovanni Amatuccio utilized documentary evidence to provide more realistic approximations of both ground and naval forces. His scrutiny of the Angevin chancery records indicates Charles had collected a still-imposing 8,000 knights and 23,000 foot soldiers, paired with a fleet of 30 *galeae*, 48 *taride*, two *galeoni* and two *barchette armate* ('armed barques') for a total of 82 vessels.[22]

Even as the Angevin forces were still assembling, Count Hugh of Brienne and Count Pietro Ruffo of Catanzaro made an initial attempt on the island on 2 June, when they sailed a fleet of forty galleys from

[17] Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, pp. 225–6. Translation by Anne Percy in Amari, *History of the War of the Sicilian Vespers*, I, p. 228.

[18] Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, p. 232; Camillo Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana* (3 vols, Livorno, 1897–1902), II, pp. 75–6; Lawrence Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean: The Catalan–Aragonese Fleet in the War of the Vespers* (Gainesville, 2003), pp. 24–5; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 222–3.

[19] Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 26.

[20] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. XXXII, p. 445.

[21] Marino Sanudo Torsello, *Istoria del Regno di Romania*, in *Chroniques Gréco-Romanes*, ed. Charles Hope (Berlin, 1873), pp. 99–170, esp. 148–9.

[22] Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 27.

Catona toward Milazzo. The Messinese, however, hurriedly readied thirty galleys of their own and managed to chase them off before they could land.[23] The Messinese would not be so fortunate the next time.

Three weeks later, on 24 June, Neocastro recorded a second attempt at an amphibious assault in the vicinity of Milazzo – this one would succeed with dire implications for the defence of Messina. The timing, numbers of ships and soldiers involved and the personages in command tend to vary with the source, but the offensive appears to have been part of a well-thought-out grand plan. Neocastro, the chief chronicler of the event, contended that the counts of Catanzaro and Brienne again led the assault force, which consisted of some 500 knights and 5,000 infantry captained by Erberto Aureliano and Bertrando di Accursio. They came in fifteen *taride*, escorted by twenty galleys.[24] Niccolò Speciale was in general agreement but maintained that there were at least sixty *taride*, a more realistic number considering the forces involved.[25] Besides, his estimate fits more reasonably with the fact that Baldwin Mussone, Messina's Captain of the People, felt that the Angevin squadron was too large to challenge with what few ships he could quickly gather. Instead, he hastily cobbled together a militia of 500 horsemen and an undisclosed number of infantrymen, which he forced-marched across the Capo Peloro (the rugged northeast promontory of Sicily) to what he assumed was the intended target of the Angevin armada: Milazzo.[26]

Before Mussone could arrive, the Angevins came ashore uncontested at a place called the *Fonte d'Aleta* ('Fount of Aleta') in the environs of Rometta Marea, a coastal community on the north shore halfway between Milazzo and the Punta del Faro. The Messinese citizen militiamen, exhausted from their arduous trek through tortuous terrain, were no match for the disciplined, well-drilled Angevin troops. Over a thousand of the Messinese were massacred in the subsequent encounter.[27] In the aftermath of the ignominious defeat, Baldwin Mussone was removed as Captain of the People. Alaimo da Lentini, who subsequently assumed the post by acclamation, forsook any further forays in favour of

[23] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. XXXI, p. 445. See also Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, p. 75.
[24] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. XXXIII, p. 446.
[25] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk I, ch. V, cols 925–6.
[26] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. XXXIII, p. 446. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, pp. 235–6; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 30.
[27] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. XXXV, pp. 447–8; Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, I, bk VII, ch. LXVI, p. 399. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, p. 236; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 31; Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, p. 76.

a vigorous defence of the city itself. But, by then, the damage was done. The first great step in the Angevin grand plan had been taken. Anjou's expeditionary force swiftly gained control of both Milazzo and the road to Messina, cutting off a strategic supply route from Palermo and the western parts of the island.[28]

Arriving at Catona on 6 July, Charles himself assumed overall command of the campaign and prepared for the main thrust across the channel, while the counts of Catanzaro and Brienne laid waste to the lands to the north of Messina all the way to its walls. By 25 July, Charles was ready. He executed an uncontested amphibious landing with the bulk of his army at Tremestieri, 4 miles (over 6 km) south of the Port of Messina, and seized the abbey of Santa di Maria Roccamadore as his headquarters. He had hoped to entice the Messinese into sallying forth to engage in a pitched battle, but Alaimo da Lentini, an experienced soldier, refused to take the bait.[29] So the king was compelled to consider two competing stratagems for reducing the city: a full-scale frontal assault on the walls or a long siege. He convened a council of his captains to help him decide on the best approach.[30]

The more aggressive faction advised him to attack immediately before the defenders could become too entrenched and intransigent. After all, the Angevins had the Messinese enormously outnumbered. Amatuccio approximates the population at the time to be in the neighbourhood of 26,000 to 27,000 inhabitants. Using the tax rolls to gauge the number of 'hearth fires' (i.e., family units), he estimates that there were probably only around 8,000 able-bodied males in the city between the ages of 15 and 55. That means the attackers enjoyed a numerical superiority over the defenders of around four or five to one.[31] But Anjou knew from long, gruelling experience, which included two crusades, that men fighting for their homes and loved ones from behind fortified positions tended to be particularly heroic and obdurate. Taking the city by storm would inevitably be bloody and destructive to both sides. Besides, he needed the city intact to serve as his beachhead for the conquest of the rest of

[28] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk IX, ch. V, pp. 355–6; Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, chs XXXVI–XXXVII, pp. 448–9. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, pp. 237–8.

[29] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk IX, ch. II, pp. 350–1; Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. XXXVIII, pp. 449–50; Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, I, bk VII, ch. LXV, pp. 398–9. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, pp. 238–40; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, pp. 29–32.

[30] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk I, ch. VI, cols 927–8. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, p. 242; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, pp. 32–3.

[31] Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 28.

the island, for which he hoped to preserve his army relatively unscathed. Instead, Charles settled in for a long siege, content to sever the critical supply chain from Catania while ravaging croplands and vineyards all around. His expeditionary force performed the same function to the north of the city. The steep Peloritan heights to the west and the strait to the east, theoretically full of his ships, effectively completed the encirclement of the city.[32]

His decision did not, however, mean that he was abandoning the occasional incursion to probe for weaknesses in the city's defences and to increase pressure on the defenders. The first of these occurred on 6 August. Charles attacked, in force, the monastery of Santissimo Salvatore on the Braccio ('Arm') di San Raineri, a sandy sickle of land that enclosed the harbour of Messina. A hundred Messinese in the adjoining Torre di Sant'Anna at the tip of the peninsula, however, managed to hold the Angevins off until Alaimo could bring fresh reinforcements from the city, ultimately compelling Charles to withdraw.[33]

The focus of Angevin assaults then migrated inland to Monte della Caperrina, a hill about a half kilometre west of the port on which sits today's Santuario della Madonna di Montalto. This high ground would have potentially allowed the Angevins to bombard the city with trebuchets and other stone-throwing machines, so Alaimo had it fortified with trenches and palisades. Anjou's men assailed it under the cover of a rainstorm and nearly captured it, but Alaimo again relieved the hard-pressed defenders with hurriedly assembled auxiliaries. The following night, the Angevins returned, hoping to catch the defenders off guard, but two women, named Dina and Clarenza, assigned as sentinels, raised the alarm while beating back the assailants with stones and chunks of masonry. Once more, the raiders were frustrated. If this episode is a myth engendered by exuberant patriotism, it is an enduring one: the street that runs along the southern base of the hill is now called the 'Via Dina e Clarenza' and likenesses of the two ladies adorn the ornate 1933 Orologio Astronomico ('astronomical clock') of the Duomo's campanile as gilded bell-ringers.[34]

Having been thwarted on the battlefield twice, Charles turned to pontifical blandishment to achieve his ends. He sent a papal legate,

[32] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk IX, ch. II, pp. 350–1. See also Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, pp. 29, 31–3.

[33] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. XXXIX, p. 450. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, pp. 242–3; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 34; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 224.

[34] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. XXXIX, pp. 450–1. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, pp. 243–4; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 224–5.

Cardinal Gerardo da Parma, into the city to negotiate terms. The Messinese received him regally and presented him the keys to the city in the hope that he would assume governance of the commune in the name of the pope, who would become its protector. When the cardinal relayed that he had been instructed only to intercede on behalf of the city for clemency with its rightful lord, Charles of Anjou, Alaimo abruptly retrieved the ceremonial keys and ushered him outside the city walls to the king's camp.[35] Charles responded on 15 August with yet another onslaught on Caperrina hill, with much the same result as the previous attempts.[36] Time, however, was still on the side of the Angevins at that point. Without relief, the blockade would eventually starve the city into submission. Unfortunately for Anjou, the imminent entrance of Aragon into the equation would decisively alter the expected outcome.

[35] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk IX, ch. III, pp. 351–4; Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. XLI, p. 452; Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, I, bk VII, chs LXVI–LXVII, pp. 399–401. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, pp. 246–8; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 225.

[36] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. XLI, p. 452. See also Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 225.

7

ARAGONESE INTERVENTION (AUGUST–OCTOBER 1282)

In the late summer of 1282, while Charles of Anjou was conducting a constricting siege of Messina that would quite probably determine Sicily's fate, Peter of Aragon was struggling with a stubborn conundrum in Collo. He had positioned himself almost perfectly to intervene, but he could not do so unless he was invited. Otherwise he would be risking the appearance to the Sicilians and the rest of Europe of simply replacing one unwanted autocrat with another. Peter knew he was the solution to the Sicilian predicament; he just needed to convince the Sicilians of it.

Since arriving in Africa at the end of June, Peter had claimed a nearly deserted Collo and the adjacent coast, but he did not have the manpower to march on Constantina. He could only fortify his encampment and lead the occasional foray inland, while awaiting further developments on Sicily. In the meantime, incessant Saracen raids and the challenges of supplying and motivating a restive soldiery in an inimical environment proliferated.[1] Eventually his counsellors, reportedly including Roger of Lauria, recommended that he dispatch an embassy to the pope, ostensibly to request 'money and indulgences' for the conquest of 'Barbary' for Christianity.[2] But Michele Amari cites French sources to allege that this embassy, composed of Guillem de Castelnou and Pedro de Queralt, pulled into Palermo with their two galleys before ever reaching the papal palace at Montefiascone.[3] Steven Runciman's reading of contemporary references led him to fundamentally concur, except that he believes that

[1] Bernat Desclot, *Chronicle of the Reign of King Pedro III of Aragon, A.D. 1276–1285*, trans. F. L. Critchlow (Princeton, 1928), ch. XII, pp. 44–5; Ramon Muntaner, *Chronicle*, trans. Lady Goodenough (2 vols, London, 1920), I, ch. LI, pp. 120–2. See also Michele Amari, *La Guerra del Vespro Siciliano* (9th edn, 3 vols, Milan, 1886), I, pp. 277–80.

[2] Desclot, *Chronicle*, chs XII–XIV, pp. 44–9; Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. LII, pp. 123–6. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, p. 280.

[3] Amari, *Guerra Del Vespro Siciliano*, I, pp. 280–1.

the Aragonese ambassadors met with the parliament of Palermo on the way back from Rome.[4] No matter – the result was the same: Peter's request for papal support was rejected by Martin IV as he must have expected, but Castelnou's clandestine conference with the Sicilians in Palermo proved fruitful.[5]

In truth, the Sicilians must have realized by this time that they had little choice in the matter – Anjou was literally at the gates of Messina with a huge army, even as the papacy adamantly refused its aegis. They soon dispatched a delegation to Collo that included two envoys from Palermo and three from Messina. They came in a pair of *llenys* sometime in mid-August. Peter played coy, at first, and displayed the appropriate amount of reluctance to accept the royal sceptre of Sicily, but, in the end, came to a mutually acceptable agreement with the emissaries to assume the kingship on behalf his wife Constance, the lawful Hohenstaufen heir to the throne. He swore not only to defend the kingdom against Angevin pretensions with his sword, but also to uphold the hallowed traditions and institutions of benevolent government (i.e., misremembered notions of moderate taxes and measured military service requirements) bequeathed to his Sicilian subjects by William II 'the Good', the venerated Hauteville sovereign of the previous century and grandson of the revered Roger II – the first king of the kingdom.[6]

ARAGON'S ARRIVAL ON SICILY (30 AUGUST 1282)

With that, Peter broke camp soon afterwards and loaded his army onto his armada in late August. According to Ramon Muntaner, the king's forces had grown appreciably since their arrival on the Algerian coast. They had been buoyed with boatloads of fresh recruits coming in from Catalonia almost daily.[7] The chronicler estimated at least 40,000

[4] Steven Runciman, *The Sicilian Vespers* (Cambridge, 1958), p. 226.

[5] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XIV, pp. 48–9; Saba Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, in *Cronisti e scrittori sincroni napoletani editi e inediti*, ed. Giuseppe del Re (2 vols, Naples, 1868), II, bk IX, chs X–XI, pp. 359–61; Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. LII, pp. 123–6; Bartolomeo di Neocastro, *Historia Sicula (1250–1293)*, in *Cronisti e scrittori sincroni napoletani editi e inediti*, ed. Giuseppe del Re (2 vols, Naples, 1868), II, ch. XLIV, pp. 455–6.

[6] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XVI, pp. 52–5; ch. XVIII, pp. 61–2; Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk IX, chs VII–IX, pp. 356–9; Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, chs LIV–LVIII, pp. 127–35; Niccolò Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, ed. Ludovico Muratori (Rerum Italicarum Scriptores, X, Milan, 1727), bk I, chs X–XII, cols 930–2. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, pp. 67–9, 282–8; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 227.

[7] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. LI, p. 122.

infantry,[8] but Marino Sanudo Torsello offered a more credible figure of 8,000 *almugavars* and 600 knights,[9] embarked on what Giovanni Amatuccio calculates was around thirty to fifty ships, of which twenty-two were war galleys.[10] The fleet departed from North Africa around 25 August, arriving at Trapani on the 30th amid the unrestrained jubilation of its inhabitants. From there, Peter rode on horseback to Palermo, while the fleet under Ramon Marquet followed by way of Capo San Vito and the Gulf of Castellammare. The aspiring Aragonese saviour of Sicily entered the city on 2 September – the same day that Charles launched yet another doomed assault on the Caperrina of Messina. Peter was greeted by a fanfare of trumpets and the adulation of adoring crowds as if he were a conquering Caesar returning to Rome for his *Triumphus*. On 4 September, after having repeated his pledge to rule in the fashion of the Norman kings of old, Peter was acclaimed king of Sicily by the assembled nobility.[11]

Peter wasted little time in asserting claim to his new kingdom. All agreed that the first priority should be the rescue of beleaguered Messina.[12] To that end, it was swiftly determined that local reinforcements would be required. According to Bernat Desclot, the Sicilians were less than impressed with Peter's bedraggled army, having come directly from the difficult African campaign:

> And by reason that the knights were come to Palermo with their raiment rent asunder and foul with sweat and their armour besmirched and their faces swarthy from the sun which had changed their colour and with their trappings filthy and ragged, and likewise because the *almugavars* reeked with sweat and were ill-clad and blackened by the sun which had smitten them, the people of Palermo counted them of little worth, thinking in their hearts that such men could never deliver them out of the hands of Charles who was so greatly powerful by sea and land.[13]

[8] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. XLVI, p. 112. See also Giovanni Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro (1282–1302)* (Bologna, 2012), p. 35.

[9] Marino Sanudo Torsello, *Istoria del Regno di Romania*, in *Chroniques Gréco-romanes inédites ou peu connues*, ed. Charles Hope (Berlin, 1873), pp. 99–170, esp. 150.

[10] Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 36.

[11] Desclot, *Chronicle*, chs XVIII–XIX, pp. 61–6; Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk IX, ch. XII, pp. 362–3; Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. LX, pp. 136–8; Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. XLV, p. 456; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk I, ch. XIII, cols 932–3. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, pp. 261–2, 287–9; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 225–8.

[12] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk I, ch. XVI, cols 934–5. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, pp. 294–5.

[13] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XIX, pp. 64–5.

Accordingly, one of Peter's first acts as king of Sicily was to issue a proclamation, ordering all Sicilian males between the ages of 15 and 60 to muster in Palermo within fifteen days, supplied with a month's worth of provisions.[14]

Then, while he waited for his own troops to trickle in from Trapani and for conscripts from all over western Sicily to marshal in Palermo, Peter dispatched an embassy to Messina. Consisting of Aragonese knights Pedro de Queralt and Ruiz Eximenez de Lluna as well as a magistrate from Barcelona named Guillem Aymerich, the deputation was to inform Charles of Anjou that since Aragon had assumed the throne of Sicily in the name of Constance of Hohenstaufen by the will of its people, he should vacate the island posthaste.[15] Shortly thereafter, Peter himself set out with as much of his army as had already gathered, marching by way of Nicosia and Troina (in the northern hinterlands of the island), while his fleet sailed eastwards along the north shore toward the Strait of Messina to cut off Anjou's communication with Calabria (Map 6). He had previously sent messages, directing all other recruits to rendezvous with him at Randazzo (on the northern slopes of Mount Etna about 40 miles or 65 km southwest of Messina).[16] Perhaps of greater importance, Peter directed a vanguard to run ahead and reinforce the city by night. It consisted of 500 crossbowmen from the Balearics led by Sicilian exiles Niccola di Palizzi and Andrea da Procida,[17] plus – most significantly – a contingent of some 2,000 *almugavars*.[18]

Almugavars were widely considered the finest light infantry in thirteenth-century Europe. Descended from hardy shepherd stock of the mountains of Aragon and Catalonia, these battle-hardened frontiersmen survived off raiding the *Mudéjar* (Iberian Muslim) border regions of Castile and Valencia. Lightly armed and entirely without armour, they relied on alacrity and agility to defeat their adversaries. They moved

[14] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. LXII, p. 139. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, p. 295; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 36.

[15] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XX, p. 67; Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. LXI, p. 138; Giovanni Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, ed Francesco Dragomanni (4 vols, Florence, 1845), I, bk VII, ch. LXXI, p. 405. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, p. 297; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 229.

[16] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XX, p. 67, note 1; Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. LXIII, p. 140. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, p. 296; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, pp. 36–7; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 228–9.

[17] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk I, ch. XVII, cols 935–6. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, p. 301; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 37.

[18] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. LXII, pp. 139–40. See also Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 37.

swiftly and silently, attacking without warning, often at night through rough terrain. This made them both feared and fearless. They cowered not even before cavalry. Muntaner related an incident whereby a band of *almugavars* mauled a mounted charge by breaking their lances in half and running among the horses, gutting the animals so that they could then effortlessly slay the dismounted knights with their knives. Their very name was almost certainly derived from the Arabic word *almõgavar*, meaning 'devastator'.[19] Desclot offered the best available description:

> Now these soldiers that are called *almugavars* are men who live for naught save only warfare, and they dwell not in towns nor in cities but in the mountains and in the forests. And they fight continually with the Saracens and make forays within their land for a day or two, pillaging and taking many Saracens captive, and likewise their goods whereby they live. And they suffer many hardships such as other men could scarce endure. And at times they pass two full days, if need be, without food and they eat of the herbs of the field, and this they do without harm to themselves. And the *adalids* who are their chiefs guide them about, for these know the regions of the land and the roads therein. And the *almugavars* wear no raiment than a tunic or shift, whether it be summer or winter, and about their limbs breeches of leather, and on their feet leathern sandals. And they bear at their side a stout blade with a thick strap and a scabbard, which hang from the girdle. And each man hath a lance and two javelins and a scrip [knapsack] of leather wherein to carry his food. And these men are exceedingly strong and are swift to flee or to pursue, and they are Catalans and Aragonese and Saracens (Fig. 3).[20]

Their speed, endurance and toughness made the *almugavars* ideal for the mission Peter had assigned to them. 'Though it is a six-day march [from] Palermo, they reached the city [Messina] in three,' reported Muntaner. 'And they entered the city by night, by a place called Caperrina … so secretly that they were not heard by the host [besiegers].'[21] Like the Palermitans, the Messinese were not encouraged by the rough appearance of their would-be rescuers. According to Muntaner, some were overheard to say, 'We cannot reckon on much succour if all the King of Aragon's followers are like these.'[22] Such sentiments were soon dismissed. The next day the *almugavars* sallied forth from the gates and

[19] Lawrence Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean: The Catalan–Aragonese Fleet in the War of the Vespers* (Gainesville, 2003), pp. 159–62; Charles D. Stanton, *Medieval Maritime Warfare* (Barnsley, 2015), pp. 139–40.

[20] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. VII, pp. 28–9.

[21] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. LXII, p. 140.

[22] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. LXIV, p. 141.

surprised the besieging army with so devastating an assault that more than two thousand Angevins lay dead or dying afterwards, according to Muntaner.[23] More crucially, the episode served to apprise Anjou that the arrival of Aragon with his entire army was imminent.

Bartolomeo Neocastro contended that Charles may have, in fact, been previously advised of Peter's presence on the island by two Carmelite friars who chanced upon Aragon's envoys as they passed through Nicosia. Regardless of how he had received word, Anjou knew by mid-September that he would be attacked by the army of Aragon while he was still engaged in the siege of Messina – that is, unless he could take the city prior to its arrival. Accordingly, he ordered an all-out land and sea assault on 14 September.[24]

Beginning at dawn, the Angevins advanced along the coastal plains to the north and south of the city and from the high ground to the west in order to assail the walls at multiple points at once. They attacked with every conceivable contraption and artifice of the siege. Trebuchets pummelled the battlements and the buildings beyond, while rams called 'cats' battered the bulwarks even as sappers undermined them. 'Cranes' lowered elevated bridges onto the parapets to give the attackers access to the *chemins de ronde* (walkways), and 'storks' hoisted cages full of fighters above the ramparts to rain missiles down upon the defenders. And, of course, hundreds of scaling ladders were leaned against the outworks by intrepid infantrymen.[25]

Alaimo da Lentini and his Messinese compatriots were not, however, idle spectators. They employed all of the available countermeasures of the age to great effect. A storm of stones pelted the assailants while boiling oil and burning pitch set ablaze their engines of war. Those few French fighters who managed to top the battlements were greeted with a fusillade of arrows and crossbow bolts before finally being dispatched by sword.[26] Michele Amari provided a graphic description of the grisly aftermath: 'Around the foot of the walls was wreathed a ghastly girdle of

[23] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. LXIV, p. 141.

[24] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. XLV, p. 456; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk I, ch. XIV, col. 933. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, pp. 251, 299; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 229.

[25] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. XLII, pp. 453–4; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk I, ch. XV, cols 933–4. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, pp. 251–2; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 34.

[26] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. XLII, pp. 453–4; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk I, ch. XV, cols 933–4. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, p. 252; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 35.

broken engines, shivered arms, and soiled and mutilated corpses stiffening in the convulsed attitudes of death.'[27]

At the same time, a battle for the port was waged with much the same savagery, achieving a similar result. The Angevin fleet rode a stiff north wind to sweep into the fortified mouth of the harbour. In the vanguard was a huge, castellated '*nave carica*' – probably a multi-decked sailing ship normally used to carry cargo. Escorted by war galleys, it was covered with hides soaked in vinegar as a fire retardant and furnished with mangonels and trebuchets. Running before the wind, its immense size and weight was intended to break the heavy chain that barred the harbour, but Alaimo had arranged a formidable defence to frustrate the tactic. On the shore opposite the tip of the Braccio di San Raineri that embraces the harbour, he had a wooden redoubt built and garrisoned. In the harbour itself, behind the chain, he posted fourteen fully crewed galleys – six of which were supplied with catapults and *ballistas*. In the centre was a floating battle tower constructed on two *taride*, lashed together. Outside the chain and just below the surface, strong netting was stretched in the hope of entangling the rudders of the enemy ships. It all worked spectacularly. The *nave carica* swiftly became enmeshed in the nets and immobilized, while the Messinese soldiers stationed in the redoubt and on the floating tower swept her decks with projectiles of various sorts. Her sails lacerated and her crew decimated, she was forced to withdraw – presumably in tow by the Angevin galleys – amid a hail of stones from the catapults.[28]

Charles was watching it all unfold from the heights around the Santa Maria delle Monache, in the area of the present-day Santa Maria delle Grazie about a mile west of the port, when a certain Messinese captain called Bonaccorso sited him with his ballista. Fortunately for the French sovereign, two of his knights heroically bounded in front of him to take the death blow. The episode evidently unnerved him, however, to the point that he commanded an immediate retreat. As the beaten besiegers pulled back, the triumphant citizenry burst out of the gates to hound them all the way back to their encampment in the Zaera quarter, about a mile and half south of the city.[29] Charles knew then that his last-

[27] Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, p. 253. Translation by Anne Percy in Michele Amari's *History of the War of the Sicilian Vespers*, ed. Lord Francis Edgerton of Ellesmere (3 vols, London, 1850), I, p. 267.

[28] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. XLII, p. 453. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, pp. 251–2; Camillo Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana* (3 vols, Livorno, 1897–1902), II, p. 77.

[29] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. XLII, p. 454. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, pp. 241, 253–4; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*,

ditch attempt to take the city had failed. Out of desperation, he tried to suborn Alaimo by offering him magnanimous terms: a general amnesty for the citizens of Messina (with the exception of the six, whom Charles deemed to be the worst instigators) and an award of 10,000 ounces of gold to Alaimo himself along with an annual subsidy of 200 ounces and any dignity he might demand. The Captain of the People, now lionized for his inspired defence of the city, dismissed the overture out of hand.[30]

The Aragonese ambassadors finally reached the Angevin camp two days later on 16 September and gained an audience with the king the next day. Charles, of course, roundly rejected Peter's claim to the kingdom, but the exchange served to remind Anjou of Aragon's relentless approach – a hard, cold fact that made his position before the walls of Messina untenable.[31] After dismissing Peter's envoys, Charles summoned his counsellors to consider the alternatives. Some stout-hearted advisers argued for fortifying the camp and ambushing the army of Aragon as it approached through the western hills. They wanted to continue to press the siege until their supplies – sufficient for two months – were exhausted. However, more prudent voices, such as that of the Count Pandolfo of Acerra, pointed out that their failed efforts to take the city up to that moment had left the Angevin army disillusioned, while disease and the departure of several feudal militias whose obligations had expired had decimated its ranks. In any case, it was unlikely that the Angevins would have succeeded in any future efforts, even if their forces had remained at full strength. The Messinese – having, by now, been assured of Aragon's impending arrival by a travelling Genoese merchant who had seen the monarch on the march toward the city – would have resisted all the more doggedly, knowing their rescuers were on the way. Finally, there was the very real possibility that revolt would break out in Calabria, leaving the Angevins hopelessly isolated from any reinforcements. Anjou's admiral, Arrighino de' Mari of Genoa, heartily seconded the latter concern, adding that Aragon's formidable fleet and the onset of winter weather could make withdrawal later impossible. Moreover,

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pp. 33, 35.

[30] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. XLIII, pp. 454–5. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, p. 255; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 226, 229.

[31] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XXI, pp. 70–2; Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk IX, chs XII–XIV, pp. 362–4; Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. XLV, pp. 456–7; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk I, ch. XVII, col. 936; Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, I, bk VII, chs LXXII–LXXIII, pp. 405–6. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, pp. 299–300; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 230.

Anjou considered his own fleet unreliable: it was full of mercenaries.[32] Charles had no choice.

On 24 September, he raised the siege of Messina and began a strategic retreat back to Catona, with the intention of renewing the campaign in the spring. The operation started out smoothly enough, beginning with the evacuation of siege machinery and the monarch himself, but ferrying the massive force with all its attendant horses and equipment across the strait proved a slow, ponderous process. The disparate nature of the transport fleet, composed of Pisans and Venetians as well as the Genoese, probably added to the disorder and confusion. It apparently took a few days. Towards the end of the evolution (around 27 September), the *almugavars*, having patiently bided their time within the walls of the city since that sortie shortly after their arrival, saw their chance. They burst out of the gates and waded among the French knights desperately attempting to board the transport ships, slaughtering at least 500 of them.[33] In fact, Muntaner insisted that as many as 2,000 French men-at-arms were killed and that 'more than 150 galleys and terides' were set ablaze. 'And the fire was so great that it seemed that all the world was burning; whereat King Charles was very grieved, for he saw it all from Catona, where he was,' recalled the Catalan chronicler.[34] And so came to an inglorious close the Angevin siege of Messina.

Once the last of the Angevin besiegers had left the island, the Messinese sent messengers to apprise their new sovereign that the city was his. They found Peter at Randazzo with his entire army. The latter then marched by way of Milazzo, where he compelled the Angevin garrison to capitulate; and then, on 2 October, he finally entered Messina to the unbounded exultation of its citizens.[35] Three days later, on 5 October, in an act redolent of bitter irony and offering a harbinger of ill-tidings for

[32] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk IX, chs XV–XVI, pp. 364–6; Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. LXV, p. 142; Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. XLVI, pp. 457–8; Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, I, bk VII, ch. LXXV, pp. 407–8. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, pp. 301–3; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, pp. 37–9.

[33] Desclot, *Chronicle*, chs XXII–XIII, pp. 75–7; Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk IX, ch. XVIII, p. 367; Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, chs LXV–LXVI, pp. 142–5; Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. L, pp. 462–71. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, pp. 306–7; Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 28; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 230.

[34] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. LXV, p. 143.

[35] Desclot, *Chronicle*, chs XXIII–XIV, pp. 76–9; Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk IX, ch. XIX, pp. 367–8; Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. LXV, p. 143; Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. LIII, pp. 474–5; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk I, ch. XVIII, cols 936–7. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, pp. 311–12; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 230–1.

Charles of Anjou, Peter of Aragon appointed Roger of Lauria captain of Augusta – the same Sicilian port city whose inhabitants Anjou's minions had massacred fifteen years prior in order to suppress the previous Sicilian uprising.[36] Roger was destined to be the nemesis that would prevent Charles from ever setting foot on Sicily again.

BATTLE OF NICOTERA (14 OCTOBER 1282)

Not content with evicting King Charles from the island of Sicily, Peter of Aragon gathered his strength in order to take the fight to Anjou on the mainland. On 5 October, he ordered the count of Syracuse to recruit men for the fleet and dispatch them to Messina.[37] Four days later, his son and admiral of the fleet, Jaime Perez, led a flotilla of twenty-two Catalan galleys into the port, where another fifteen dismantled galleys were reassembled. Other vessels in the harbour were commandeered and refitted for action. Within a matter of days, Michele Amari calculated that the Aragonese had cobbled together a fleet of fifty-two ships to harass the remnants of the Angevin armada (around seventy-two vessels of various sorts).[38]

Charles, himself, unknowingly precipitated the action. After the evacuation from Sicily, the Angevin ruler had collected what was left of his invasion fleet at Reggio (about 4 miles or 6 km south of Catona on the Calabrian mainland), because it offered a somewhat sheltered anchorage to shield his ships from the onset of winter weather.[39] It was, in fact, the coming of winter that forced his hand. His fleet was actually a conglomerate of squadrons hired from various maritime polities – Pisa, Genoa and Marseilles, along with his own Apulian and Campanian contingents. The contract period of service for many of these squadrons and their crews (about three months) was approaching expiration and the vessels themselves required refitting, normally done during the winter months.[40] Accordingly, Anjou released these various naval components to return to their home ports. For those ships bound for Apulian destinations such as Brindisi and Bari, it was a simple matter of sailing south

[36] Antonio J. Planells Clavero and Antonio J. Planells de la Maza, *Roger de Lauria, El gran almirante del Mediterráneo* (Madrid, 2011), p. 67; John Pryor, 'The naval battles of Roger of Lauria', *Journal of Medieval History*, IX (1983), pp. 179–216, esp. 183.

[37] Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 42.

[38] Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, pp. 316–17.

[39] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XXII, p. 78. See also Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 232.

[40] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk IX, ch. XVI, pp. 365–6. See also Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, p. 82.

around the toe of Calabria. But for the others, this meant navigating north through the strait past Messina, in full view of the Catalan fleet.[41]

The Angevin ships bound for the Tyrrhenian Sea made their first serious attempt on 11 October. The chroniclers differ somewhat on the numbers of ships involved, but they are in general concurrence on the basic sequence of events. Bernat Desclot's description is the most complete and credible. The Angevin strategy appears to have relied on numerical superiority to overawe the Aragonese. A fleet of around seventy galleys and transports destined for Marseilles, Naples and the *Principato* ('Principality') of Salerno tried to bluff their way through the strait on the assumption that the much smaller Catalan fleet would not dare attack. That premise proved to be in grave error. Peter immediately directed what galleys he could muster (perhaps as few as fourteen, all Catalan) to challenge the enemy's passage. The Angevins, surprised by the audacity of the Aragonese and ill-prepared for battle, reversed course and headed back to Reggio. The Aragonese galleys pursued, but a stiff headwind prevented them from catching up. They too returned to port. Alerted by the incident, Peter set a watch of ten galleys in the shadow of the Torre di Sant'Anna on the Braccio di San Raineri, guarding the mouth of Messina's harbour.[42] More importantly, he had his son Jaime Perez task two of his most competent naval commanders, Pedro de Queralt and Ramon de Cortada, with monitoring movement through the strait.[43]

The precaution paid off three days later on 14 October. Using a dark tempestuous morning as cover, Desclot reported that a flotilla of 48 Angevin ships (19 from Marseilles, 5 from Pisa and 24 from Naples and the *Principato*) again attempted to scurry through the strait.[44] (Muntaner maintained that there were 90 vessels – 20 Provençal galleys, 15 Genoese, 10 Pisan and 45 *regnicoli* vessels from Naples and the *Principato* – but he characteristically inflated the numbers of combatant vessels.[45]) Queralt and Cortada quickly collected as many galleys as they could (Desclot and Speciale denoted 14, Neocastro 15 and Muntaner 22) and set off in pursuit (Map 7). By the time they got under way, however, the Angevins enjoyed a lead of almost two leagues (about 6 miles or 10 km).

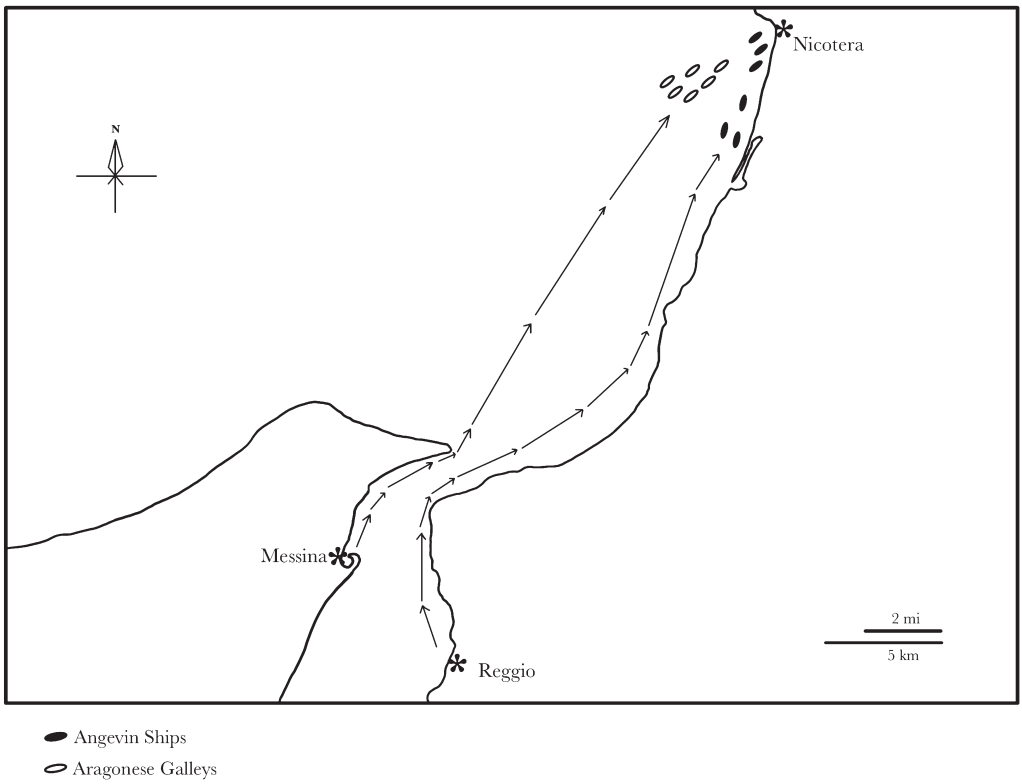
[41] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XXVI, p. 81; Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. LXVII, pp. 145–6. See also Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, 84; Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, pp. 28–9.

[42] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XXVI, pp. 81–2.

[43] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. LXVII, p. 146.

[44] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XXVI, p. 82.

[45] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. LXVII, p. 148.



7 Battle of Nicotera

Furthermore, the Aragonese were, once again, badly outnumbered.[46] At first glance, their task appeared daunting to the point of being foolhardy, but their initial abortive encounter with the Angevins at sea had taught them otherwise. They had learned two invaluable lessons from the hasty Angevin retreat back to Reggio three days before. First, the Angevins had no stomach for battle: they were war-weary and longed to return home. Moreover, many were mercenaries and had no emotional stake in the outcome. Second and most crucially, they lacked unity of command: critical in a heterogeneous force, composed of several antagonistic peoples who traditionally bore each other a deep antipathy. The *regnicoli* regarded the Provençals as unwanted overseers, and the competitive contempt that the Pisans and Guelph Genoese harboured for each other

[46] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XXVI, p. 82; Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. LXVII, pp. 146–8; Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. LIII, p. 475; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk I, ch. XVIII, col. 936. See also Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 28.

was legendary.[47] Ramon Muntaner characterized Peter as having crystallized the Angevin predicament perfectly: 'They are a people fleeing and have completely lost courage and they are of many nations and are never of one mind. … they will not act together.'[48] He was right. None of the various contingents of the Angevin fleet supported one another.

In their panic to outrun the Catalan galleys chasing them, the Angevins sailed their ships too close to the Calabrian shore and lost the wind, enabling their pursuers to close within a league (3 miles). As they approached Nicotera, about 30 miles (48 km) up the Tyrrhenian coast from the Strait of Messina, the Angevins turned to face the Aragonese, but the manoeuvre was poorly coordinated and lacked cohesion. The Catalans lashed their galleys to one another and ploughed into the Pisans at the centre of the disorganized Angevin line. Angevin fleet integrity disintegrated at once. Straightaway, the Provençal ships steered south to escape, while those from Naples and the *Principato* fled for the beach at Nicotera. No thought was apparently given to any sort of collaborative resistance. The Catalan galleys simply separated into smaller fighting units and ran down each fleeing group, even seizing some ships on the beach.[49] Their task, as it turns out, was rendered all the more effortless by the shabby condition of the Angevin ships, many of which seemed to have been sailed by skeleton crews owing to desertions and the wages of war. Genoese Admiral Arrighino de Mari's flagship contained a crew of only eighteen when it was later captured.[50] As a consequence, by nightfall Aragon's Catalan crews had dealt Anjou a crippling defeat. The next morning, Desclot recorded that they triumphantly entered the harbour at Messina towing no fewer than twenty-two Angevin galleys by their sterns with their standards dragging in the water.[51] (Muntaner claimed that a typically exaggerated forty-five enemy galleys had been seized.[52])

[47] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk IX, ch. XIX, pp. 367–8. See also Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, p. 82; Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, pp. 28–9.

[48] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. LXVII, p. 146.

[49] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XXVI, pp. 82–3. See also Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 29.

[50] Iacopo Doria, *Annales Ianuenses*, in *Annali genovesi di Caffaro e de' suoi continuatori dal MXCIX al MCCXCIII*, ed. Luigi Belgrano and Cesare Imperiale di Sant'Angelo (5 vols, Fonti per la storia d'Italia, Genoa, 1890–1929), V, p. 30. See also Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, pp. 84–5.

[51] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XXVI, p. 84. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, p. 317.

[52] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. LXVII, p. 148.

Since few of the Angevins actively contested their capture, many were taken alive. Desclot put the tally at 4,050,[53] while fellow Catalan chronicler Muntaner offered (for him) the almost restrained estimate of 6,000.[54] Both totals seem quite elevated considering the number of vessels involved, but, as Camillo Manfroni perceptively points out, at least some of the captured galleys must have been *taride*, serving as troop transports.[55] In a brilliant coup designed to disseminate his victory and extol the justness of his cause, Peter released the prisoners to return home without retribution. Indeed, he had each man given a silver *livre tournoise* (a Tours pound minted at the abbey of Saint Martin at Tours) and provided all with transportation and provisions. In return, he demanded of them only a pledge to forsake further hostilities against the Sicilians and to spread the word that his new subjects would welcome trade with them in the future.[56]

Thus in a single sea battle, the first pitting an Aragonese–Catalan flotilla against an Angevin fleet, Charles of Anjou suffered a significant loss in both ships and manpower. The blow to the king's prestige was far more devastating. In Manfroni's words: 'The result obtained immensely profited the Sicilian-Catalan cause, since a great terror of the Catalan armada spread along the coasts of Italy and Provence and a contempt grew among the Sicilians for their enemies.'[57] With a single stroke, Peter's naval forces had gained supremacy in the Tyrrhenian Sea, rendering vulnerable the coasts of Calabria and the *Principato* of Salerno. The *Regno* was now open to raids by sea, which would serve to isolate the Angevin army at Reggio from its base of support in Naples. King Peter of Aragon and Sicily was anxious to take full advantage.[58]

[53] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XXVI, p. 85.
[54] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. LXVII, p. 148.
[55] Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, p. 86.
[56] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XXVI, pp. 85–6; Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk IX, ch. XIX, pp. 367–8. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, p. 318.
[57] Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, p. 86.
[58] Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 40; Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 29.

8

STALEMATE
(NOVEMBER 1282–MARCH 1283)

IT WAS NOT LONG BEFORE CHARLES of Anjou realized how precarious his position had become. Correctly fearing communication with the Angevin-dominated northern *Regno* could be compromised by Aragonese amphibious actions, he quickly sought to bolster his diminished forces in Reggio, beginning with the easiest element to reinforce – the ground component. Following the departure of feudal forces that had satisfied their military service obligations, Bartolomeo Neocastro calculated that only 7,000 knights and 10,000 foot soldiers remained of the great army Anjou had massed for the siege of Messina.[1] Saba Malaspina suggested an additional 3,000 salaried crossbowmen plus perhaps a few hundred Saracens from Lucera also stayed.[2] Giovanni Amatuccio speculates that, all told, no more than 5,000 horse and 15,000 infantry withstood the dissolution of the invasion force subsequent to its evacuation from Sicily – and those numbers were dwindling by the day.[3]

So, in early November 1282, Anjou petitioned his brother's heir, King Philip III, for a loan of 5,000 ounces of gold in order to raise 200 mounted men and 3,000 infantry in Provence under Raymond Amiel of Marseilles. In the same timeframe, he summoned from the heart of Capetian France two contingents of mounted men: the first consisting of 600 'armed men' under his son, Charles the Lame; and the second composed of 1,000 knights led by his nephews, Robert II of Artois and Peter I of Alençon.[4] Additionally, Pope Martin IV, who had formally

[1] Bartolomeo di Neocastro, *Historia Sicula (1250–1293)*, in *Cronisti e scrittori sincroni napoletani editi e inediti*, ed. Giuseppe del Re (2 vols, Naples, 1868), II, ch. LIV, p. 477. See also Michele Amari, *La Guerra del Vespro Siciliano* (9th edn, 3 vols, Milan, 1886), I, p. 336; Giovanni Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro (1282–1302)* (Bologna, 2012), p. 39.

[2] Saba Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, in *Cronisti e scrittori sincroni napoletani editi e inediti*, ed. Giuseppe del Re (2 vols, Naples, 1868), II, bk IX, ch. XVI, p. 365. See also Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 39.

[3] Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 40.

[4] Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 40; Steven Runciman, *The Sicilian Vespers* (Cambridge, 1958), p. 232.

excommunicated Peter of Aragon in mid-November,[5] dispatched to Anjou's aid 500 French knights, contracted for a period of six months with coin from the coffers of the papal Curia.[6]

Augmentation of his eroded naval forces was more problematic and protracted. First of all, he ordered Gazo Chinard, son of Philippe Chinard (King Manfred's admiral of the fleet), to take command of the surviving ships of Apulia and the Abruzzi. He then recalled Narjot de Toucy (son of deceased Admiral Philippe de Toucy) from the Principality of Achaea, where he was serving as bailiff, so that he could reassume his old position as admiral of the Angevin fleet. Concurrently, Charles tasked *regnicoli* aristocrats, Riccardo Riso and Luigi de Monti, to oversee the repair of old galleys and the construction of new ones in the arsenals of the *Principato* of Salerno, the Terra di Lavoro ('Land of Work' – southern Lazio and northern Campania), the Abruzzi and Apulia. Camillo Manfroni's review of the Angevin registers revealed that all these orders for new or refurbished vessels amounted to around 200 galleys, available for delivery in April or May of 1283. Charles also sent legates to Venice, Genoa and Pisa to arrange contracts for forty armed galleys from each of the maritime republics for the following year's campaign.[7] Finally, he directed his seneschal for Provence to prepare twenty armed galleys to be ready by spring as well.[8] In the meantime, Anjou would have to suffer the Aragonese advantage at sea.

To compensate for his menaced maritime supply routes, Charles focused attention on maintaining the integrity of his land links with the north (Map 3). Aragonese sea superiority meant coastal Calabria was open to amphibious assault and subsequent inland penetration north of Angevin troop concentrations near Reggio. Accordingly, Anjou took steps to protect the all-important Via Annia-Popilia, also known as the Via Capua-Regium (an old Roman road connecting Capua and Reggio). In November 1282, he ordered three of his most reliable ground commanders – Bertrand Artus, Pons de Blanchefort and Pietro Ruffo di Catanzaro – to secure the route through Calabria. They did so by setting up a series of garrisons that girded the southern slopes of the Sila

[5] Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 6; Thomas Bisson, *The Medieval Crown of Aragon* (Oxford, 1986), p. 88; H. J. Chaytor, *A History of Aragon and Catalonia* (London, 1933), p. 104; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 235, 242.

[6] Bernat Desclot, *Chronicle of the Reign of King Pedro III of Aragon, A.D. 1276–1285*, trans. F. L. Critchlow (Princeton, 1928), ch. XXIX, p. 96.

[7] Camillo Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana* (3 vols, Livorno, 1897–1902), II, p. 87.

[8] Lawrence Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean: The Catalan–Aragonese Fleet in the War of the Vespers* (Gainesville, 2003), p. 30.

Massif (a rugged, mountainous plateau, which effectively obstructs the peninsula just above the Isthmus of Catanzaro) from Belmonte Calabro on the Tyrrhenian coast through Nicastro (near present-day Lamezia Terme) and from Catanzaro to Santa Severina and Crotone on the Ionian side of the toe. They established a special garrison to guard the vital pass of San Mazzeo, through which the Via Annia–Popilia traversed the Sila Massif north of Sant'Eufemia.[9]

But what Charles needed most of all was time – time to rebuild his fleet in order to contest Aragonese naval supremacy. Without it, there was no possibility of mounting a successful amphibious assault on Sicily. Moreover, Aragon's successes on Sicily and at sea up to that point had raised the spectre of rebellion in other regions of the *Regno*, including Calabria.[10] So, in order to distract Peter and play for time, Charles sent a Dominican friar named Simon of Lentini to Messina in early December to propose to the king of Aragon a duel – single combat between the two sovereigns to determine Sicily's rightful ruler. Threatened with loss of face in a chivalric culture where martial prowess and courage were considered vital virtues of kingship, Peter eagerly assented. Six nobles from each court were tasked with engaging in shuttle negotiations across the strait to arrive at a mutually agreed-upon set of conditions for the contest.[11]

By the end of the month, the twelve men reached a consensus, which specified that the two monarchs would meet in the lists at Bordeaux on 1 June 1283 under the auspices of Edward I of England. That particular location was chosen because it was neutral ground within the Duchy of Gascony (the last remaining continental possession of the English crown), equally accessible to Aragonese and Angevin domains. An important change to the original challenge was the conversion from a single combat between sovereigns to a tournament of royal champions: each king was to be accompanied into the lists by 100 specially selected

[9] Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, pp. 41–2; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 232.

[10] Ramon Muntaner, *Chronicle*, trans. Lady Goodenough (2 vols, London, 1920), I, ch. LXXII, pp. 162–3. See also Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 41.

[11] Desclot, *Chronicle*, chs XVII–XVIII, pp. 89–93; Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk IX, chs XXII–XXIV, pp. 369–71; Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. LXXII, pp. 159–64; Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. XLIV, pp. 476–7; Niccolò Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, ed. Ludovico Muratori (Rerum Italicarum Scriptores, X, Milan, 1727), bk I, chs XXIII–XXIV, cols 938–9. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, pp. 336–8; J. N. Hillgarth, 'The Problem of a Catalan Mediterranean Empire 1229–1327', *The English Historical Review*, Supplement 8 (1975), pp. 1–54, esp. 27; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 236.

knights.[12] This was most likely owing to the age difference between the two sovereigns: Charles was about 56 at the time, while Peter was only 43. It is worth noting that Roger of Lauria was named as surety for the resultant covenant – one of 'two score knights of high esteem, from either side, who were to attend the observance of the agreements'.[13] Roger had clearly risen to the upper ranks of Peter's most trusted royal retainers.

Most significantly, an Angevin stipulation that Aragon did not accept was the one calling for an interim truce.[14] Peter must surely have suspected that Charles was stalling for time and he was not about to let him succeed. He knew that his naval power had his Angevin adversary on the defensive, an advantage Peter was determined to press. While he enjoyed not nearly the resources in manpower and money available to Anjou, the king of Aragon did his best to maximize what he had. First of all, he ensured Venetian neutrality with the enticement of irresistible exemptions and concessions throughout his newly acquired kingdom. Genoa and Pisa, as it turns out, were too preoccupied by war with one another to engage in hostilities with Aragon at the behest of Anjou.[15] Then, by the first weeks of 1283, Peter managed to recruit from among the Sicilians an additional 1,200 mounted men-at-arms and around 4,000 infantry, many of whom were archers, to give him a total of about 2,000 horsemen and 12,000 infantry. He was also able to lure 3,000 more mariners and 450 crossbowmen from Aragon. But the core of his fighting forces remained a fleet of around fifty ships, spearheaded by twenty-two Catalan galleys and their crews.[16] Employing *almugavars* as marines, this fleet gave Peter a fearsome quick-strike capability, which he could deploy wherever and whenever he wanted with almost complete impunity.

Mid-January of 1283 provided Peter with the ideal opportunity to exploit his advantage in amphibious warfare. On the 12th of the month, Charles of Anjou formally appointed his son, Charles the Lame (Prince of Salerno), as Vicar-General of the Kingdom; then headed north overland to France. The purpose was ostensibly to prepare for the duel at

[12] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XVIII, pp. 93–5; Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk IX, ch. XXV, p. 371; Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. LXXII, pp. 159–64; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk I, ch. XXV, col. 940. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, pp. 336–9; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 236.

[13] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XVIII, p. 93. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, p. 339.

[14] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. LXXIII, p. 166; Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. XLIV, p. 477.

[15] Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, p. 87.

[16] Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, pp. 42–3.

Bordeaux, but more likely Anjou's true intent was to recruit more men for the spring campaign.[17] The next day, his principal patron, Pope Martin IV, officially proclaimed a crusade against the king of Aragon and the Sicilians, offering the remission of sins to participants just as though they were taking up the cross to liberate the Holy Land.[18] Within days, Peter – urged on by his rapacious *almugavars* – launched a pair of devastating amphibious assaults on Calabria, which rendered irrelevant the enemy defensive line across the Catanzaro Isthmus and discomfited the Angevin military presence in the vicinity of Reggio.[19]

On or just prior to 17 January 1283, Aragonese ships landed a detachment of 500 *almugavars* in the dark of night on the Calabrian coast near Scilla, about 14 miles (23 km) north of Reggio.[20] Led by Sicilian scouts, these men swiftly overwhelmed and sacked the monasteries of Scilla and nearby Bagnara, 'ripping out and transforming all that they found into booty', recorded Saba Malaspina.[21] But those raids were merely in compensation for their real mission: the occupation of the mountainous forests of Solano on the western slopes of the Aspromonte Massif. This enabled the *almugavars* to control the Solano Pass near the hamlet of the same name, through which ran the Annia–Popilia Roman road – the sole land supply route serving Reggio at the time. 'They became inhabitants there and, brandishing sharp lances with both hands, they crossed every day those dark and inaccessible places, cutting off the roads, so that no one could go to Reggio … nor could pass there those who bore provisions,' testified Malaspina.[22] This meant that the Aragonese had effectively cut off the Angevin army on the toe of Calabria from its main base of support in Campania at a point well south of the Catanzaro defensive line. It was a masterstroke that rendered the Angevin position in Reggio tactically untenable.[23]

[17] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XVIII, p. 95; Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. LXXIII, p. 166; Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. XLIV, p. 477. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Sicilano*, I, p. 343; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 238.

[18] Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 6; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 242.

[19] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk IX, ch. XXVI, pp. 373–4; Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. XLVI, pp. 477–8. (Neocastro noted that these events occurred between 6 and 11 November 1282, but King Peter's letters indicate that they happened around 17 January 1283.) See also Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, pp. 43–4.

[20] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. XLVI, p. 478. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, pp. 345–6.

[21] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk IX, ch. XXVI, p. 373.

[22] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk IX, ch. XXVI, p. 373.

[23] Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 43.

Either concurrent with this action or immediately afterwards, the Aragonese executed a much more ambitious incursion on the principal Angevin troop concentration in the environs of Reggio. The goal was to sow apprehension among the Angevin troops by demonstrating just how vulnerable they were. The Angevins themselves made the raid possible through their own hubris and complacency. When they abandoned the siege of Messina, they withdrew to Calabria, where they established an encampment near Reggio and a garrison at Catona to guard the Angevin roadstead (where many of their remaining ships were anchored), but they failed to establish any sort of protective perimeter. They had apparently assumed that the Aragonese would not dare cross the strait to attack the much larger Angevin army and certainly not at night, so they had constructed no stockade, dug no defensive ditches and posted no sentinels.[24] It would prove a deadly dereliction. Peter had learned through one of his negotiators for the upcoming duel in Bordeaux, Bertram de Cannellis, of the lackadaisical conditions of the Angevin camp at Catona. He, thus, had decided to give his *almugavars* the opportunity to acquire the spoils that they had coveted ever since his galleys had returned from the Battle of Nicotera weighed down to the gunnels with plunder. He commanded his son Jaime Perez to assemble a flotilla of ten galleys (Neocastro noted fifteen), some of which were apparently *taride*, to ferry some 2,000 *almugavars* across the strait during the night.[25]

The ships had to shuttle back and forth multiple times to get all the troops and their Messinese guides to the opposite shore, so the Catalans took the precaution of having two armed *llenys* patrol the strait to ensure that the operation would not be interrupted.[26] They need not have worried. Near dawn, the *almugavars* found their Angevin adversaries at Catona in a deep, wine-induced sleep and totally unawares.[27] Night assaults were rare in the Middle Ages. Most commanders scrupulously avoided the chaos of combat in darkness. The *almugavars* were very different, however. 'They look to attack in the dark of night,' wrote Malaspina, '… like ravening wolves who run under the murky mists.'[28] Total surprise quickly turned to almost total slaughter. The French garrison at Catona consisted of around 500 knights under the command of

[24] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk IX, ch. XXVI, p. 373.
[25] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. LXX, pp. 153–4; Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. LIV, p. 477; ch. LVI, pp. 477–8. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, pp. 343–4; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 44.
[26] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. LXX, p. 154.
[27] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk IX, ch. XXVI, p. 373.
[28] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk IX, ch. XXVII, p. 374. See also Hillgarth, 'Problem of a Catalan Mediterranean Empire', pp. 10–11.

Peter of Alençon. Only a few dozen managed to survive through flight. Most of the rest were slain in their sleep. Others roused only in time to realize the horror of their own deaths at the hands of a remorseless enemy.[29]

The raid was not, however, an unqualified success. As commander, Jaime Perez bore overall responsibility for the conduct of the operation, but apparently failed to adequately control the savage truculence of the notoriously obstreperous *almugavars*. Two detrimental occurrences stand out. First, after despoiling the encampment, the *almugavars* surged into the town of Catona itself, where they found Alençon's lodging. According to Muntaner, they violently brushed aside his personal guard of ten knights and butchered the Capetian noble in his bedchamber as he futilely attempted to don his armour. This was certainly not what King Peter had in mind when he authorized the raid. Peter I of Alençon was not only the nephew of Charles of Anjou, but he was also the brother of King Philip III of France. As such, he would have been an extremely high-value hostage. Muntaner claimed that Alençon's entourage promised the assailants that they would be rewarded with 15,000 silver marks, if they simply took him alive.[30] More crucially, Aragon could have used the captured count as an effective bargaining chip, perhaps enabling Peter to forestall a threatened invasion of his Iberian domains by Alençon's sovereign sibling. Instead, in their impetuous bloodlust, the *almugavars* only succeeded in adding familial vendetta to a rather long list of bellicose motivations for both Charles of Anjou and Philip III of France. Some sources say that Alençon actually died of disease a few months later,[31] but, if Muntaner's account is true, King Peter could not have been happy.

The second injudicious incident concerned the well-being of the *almugavars* themselves. Niccolò Speciale contended that Jaime Perez, impelled by youthful ardour to win glory, spurred some of them into a headlong pursuit of survivors fleeing toward Reggio about 6 miles (10 km) to the south, where Prince Charles was bivouacked with the bulk of the Angevin army.[32] Around thirty *almugavars* subsequently became separated from the main force when Charles launched a detachment of 2,000 cavalry to relieve the remainder of Alençon's company at Catona. The cut-off *almugavars* managed to make their way into the forested

[29] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XXX, p. 97. See also Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 45.
[30] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. LXX, pp. 155–6.
[31] Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 55.
[32] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk I, ch. XIX, col. 937.

mountains to the east, but Perez was forced to strand them there as he hastily retreated to his Catalan galleys with the rest of their compatriots. This evidently grieved Peter of Aragon greatly. 'And when the king learned that thirty of his soldiers were left behind in Calabria and that no man knew whether they were slain or captive,' recalled Desclot, 'he was indeed sorrowful.'[33] Such sentiments were not just kingly concern for his comrades-in-arms. The monarch, no doubt, considered these men a martial asset of the highest order. After the Messinese watched them in action during the siege, Muntaner wrote that 'they reckoned each one of the *almugavars* to be worth more than two knights'.[34] Indeed, Desclot described at some length how one of their company commanders, an *adalid*, single-handedly dispatched five mounted French knights during the retreat from Catona. The chronicler then relayed how the king directed two galleys to retrieve the marooned men.[35]

Peter's insistence upon Pedro de Queralt and Ramon de Cortada to command the Aragonese fleet in anticipation of the Battle of Nicotera the previous October instead of Jaime Perez, the appointed admiral of the fleet, connoted reservations the king may have entertained concerning his natural son's command capabilities.[36] The two above-described episodes undoubtedly amplified those apprehensions. As a consequence, the consensus among modern commentators is that the young royal's days as admiral of the fleet were numbered from that moment on.[37] Peter needed only to settle on an adept replacement. That decision – not long in coming – would alter the course of the war and ultimately ensure the defeat of Charles of Anjou.

Be that as it may, the incursions at Scilla and Catona produced the desired result. Prince Charles of Salerno, cordoned off from Campania and constantly menaced by Aragonese raiding, had no strategic alternative other than to relinquish Reggio and relocate his forces north of the Solano forests, infested by Peter's *almugavars*. Toward the middle of February, Charles marched his army some 25 miles (40 km) north to the plain of San Martino in the vicinity of modern Gioia Tauro, just

[33] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XXX, pp. 98–100. See also Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 45.

[34] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. LXIV, p. 142.

[35] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XXX, pp. 98–101.

[36] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. LXVII, 146. See also Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 92.

[37] Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, pp. 344–5; Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 92; Mott, 'Battle of Malta, 1283: Prelude to a Disaster', in *Circle of War in the Middle Ages*, eds D. Kagay and l. Villalon (Woodbridge, 1999), pp. 145–72, esp. 149; John Pryor, 'The Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', *Journal of Medieval History*, IX (1983), pp. 179–216, esp. 183.

above the Aspromonte Massif.[38] A few days later, King Peter traversed the strait and occupied Reggio.[39] He soon set about consolidating his hold on southern Calabria. In so doing, he continued to show increasing confidence in Roger of Lauria, seeing him as one of the most reliable members of his inner circle. Initially, Peter assigned him to oversee the naval arsenal at Reggio, according to Lawrence Mott,[40] but at the end of the month he sent Roger to receive the submission of Gerace on his behalf. Roger did so and installed Naricio Ruggiero, Count of Pagliarico, to govern it. The town of Gerace was on the eastern side of the toe, just above the ancient Greek city of Locri. Possession of it enabled the Aragonese to control a swathe of territory extending across the peninsula from Solano on the Tyrrhenian eastwards to a point on the Ionian coast just below Oppido Mamertina, an Angevin stronghold.[41]

Shortly thereafter, Peter marched north along the Via Capua-Regium (Annia-Popilia) through Calanna and the Solano woods to a place about 4 miles (6 km) above Sinopoli, called Corona in the Sicilian chronicles.[42] It was there that his *almugavars* surprised a Provençal cavalry encampment of 500 horse under Raymond de Baux at night and slaughtered them in their sleep.[43] The location turned out to be ideal for surveilling the Angevin army bivouacked on the plain of San Martino below. Corona was perched atop a mountainous spur, which loomed over the town of Seminara, the southernmost point of the new Angevin defensive line. So Peter decided to have his 300 knights and 5,000 *almugavars* set up camp there with their backs to the Solano woodlands.[44] The problem

[38] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XXX, p. 101; Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. XLVII, p. 478.

[39] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XXX, p. 101; Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk IX, ch. XXVIII, pp. 374–5; Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. LXXV, pp. 168–9; Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. LIX, p. 479; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk I, ch. XXI, col. 938. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, p. 350; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 47; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 238.

[40] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 93; Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 183.

[41] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. LIX, p. 479. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, p. 350; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 47; Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 183.

[42] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XXX, p. 101; Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk IX, ch. XXIX, p. 375; Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. LX, p. 480. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, pp. 350–1; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 48.

[43] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk I, ch. XXI, col. 938. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, p. 351; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 48.

[44] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. LXI, p. 480. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, p. 351; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 49.

was that, while Corona was an excellent vantage point, it formed the limit of any further aggressive action. The Aragonese were still significantly outnumbered, and the superior Angevin cavalry held a decisive tactical advantage on the level plain below. On the obverse of the same coin, however, the prince's French chivalry dared not challenge Peter's *almugavars* on the rugged, thickly forested terrain around Corona that benefited their tactics. It seemed that the campaign had come to a standstill.[45]

Nonetheless, Peter was determined to assert his control over southern Calabria and discourage any southward enemy incursions. Having learned from some locals of Greek extraction that an Angevin garrison of 800 horsemen occupied Seminara (just below his encampment), he decided to arrange a night descent upon the town. The rumour that 6,000 ounces in gold had just been delivered to the town to pay the troops added even more incentive to the raid. On about 13 March, the king led at least 2,000 *almugavars* and around forty dismounted knights down a narrow defile in the darkness and swiftly overwhelmed the town's watch. The alarm was raised, nevertheless. Some of the French knights were cut to pieces in the pandemonium of the moment, but the majority made good their escape – many on unsaddled horses. Five hundred of them regrouped a few miles away and re-entered the town the next morning only to find that the Aragonese had already despoiled it of all valuables (though no rumoured wages in gold) and razed the walls before slipping back into the wooded heights of Corona.[46]

The so-called Battle of Seminara would be the last significant action of the campaign. Charles of Salerno was outraged to learn of the incident but was powerless to respond. His cavalry could not pursue the *almugavars* into the mountains.[47] The onset of hot weather soon gave rise to disease in the Angevin camp at San Martino. In fact, Malaspina maintained that Peter of Alençon had actually survived the Catalan raid on Catona in January only to succumb to fever on the steamy plain.[48] Regardless of whether this was true or not, on 10 April such deleterious conditions pushed the prince to move his forces to Nicotera on the

[45] Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 50.

[46] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XXX, p. 101; Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk X, ch. V, pp. 378–80; Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. LXI, pp. 480–2; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk I, ch. XXII, col. 938. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, pp. 351–3; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, pp. 50–1.

[47] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XXXI, p. 103; Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. LXI, p. 482. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, I, pp. 352–3.

[48] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk X, ch. VI, pp. 381–2.

Calabrian coast, where the sea breezes could attenuate the heat.[49] As for Peter, he simply did not have the manpower to do more. Moreover, his *almugavar* infantry, however formidable in rugged terrain, were no match for French chivalry in the open field.[50] Thus, the stalemate subsequently stiffened into a near immutable semi-permanence. On 21 March at Orvieto, Pope Martin IV formally declared Peter forfeit of his kingdom, causing the latter to realize that it was only a matter of months before he would have to defend Aragon itself from invasion.[51] At the end of the month, he retreated to Reggio and, by 17 April, he had made his way back to Messina, leaving a company of 500 knights and an unnamed number of *almugavars* in Calabria to defend his gains.[52]

As he prepared to return to Barcelona in anticipation of the duel at Bordeaux, Peter seemed to sense that much of the remaining course of the war would have to be settled at sea. Accordingly, before departing Sicily, he would make a decision in regard to his fleet that would ultimately determine the fate not only of the Kingdom of Sicily, but the Crown of Aragon as well (see Map 1/Map 12).

[49] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk X, ch. VII, p. 382. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 2–3; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 55.

[50] Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 50.

[51] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk X, ch. I, p. 376. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 7–8; Hillgarth, 'Problem of a Catalan Mediterranean Empire', p. 27; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 242.

[52] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. LXXV, p. 169. See also Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 52.

9

ADMIRAL OF ARAGON
(20 APRIL 1283)

In April 1283, Peter of Aragon must have realized that the war with Anjou over the destiny of Sicily had reached a pivotal point. While Charles had temporarily been ejected from the island and put on the defensive in Calabria, Peter had reached the limit of his capabilities to advance further. Moreover, the great Capetian lord enjoyed prodigious advantages in manpower and military resources. He could draw upon immense domains that extended from Anjou in the French heartland to Achaea in the Greek Peloponnesus. His allies, Pope Martin IV and King Philip III of France, were two of the most powerful personages in Europe at the time, and they had already announced through concerted action their unstinting support of his cause.[1]

At the same time, Peter could call upon only his loyal Catalans and his already beleaguered Sicilian subjects, even as the fractious Aragonese nobility continued to resist his every entreaty for support. He could not possibly hope to match Anjou's ground forces in the field. His only means of levelling the contest was with naval power. Even then, Aragon faced daunting odds. The Angevin registers reveal that Charles had called for at least two hundred galleys to be equipped and ready for action in the months of April and May.[2] The Siculo-Aragonese fleet would soon be dwarfed by its Angevin counterpart. Peter's only option was to compensate with the quality of his crews and superior leadership. He made sure to deal with both issues prior to setting sail back to Barcelona.

Peter began by summoning Queen Constance from Catalonia to rule Sicily in his stead. While he was still in Calabria, he had heard rumblings of revolt on the island fomented on behalf of Charles by Walter of

[1] Giovanni Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro (1282–1302)* (Bologna, 2012), p. 53.

[2] Camillo Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana* (3 vols, Livorno, 1897–1902), II, pp. 87–9.

Caltagirone, Lord of Butera. The insurrection never fully materialized but the possibility instructed Peter to leave a firm hand that he could trust to tend to the kingdom's affairs in his absence. Constance arrived in Messina on 16 April with sons James and Frederick in tow, along with daughter Yolanda (Violante in Italian) and adviser John da Procida. Three days later, Peter convoked a parliament in that city in which he proclaimed the queen as regent while he concerned himself with the tournament in Bordeaux. He also decreed that James would succeed him as king of Sicily, should he perish, while his older brother Alfonso would inherit the crown of Aragon. Alaimo da Lentini was named Grand Justiciar and, in a fitting bit of irony, John da Procida was designated Chancellor of Sicily.[3] It was, however, Peter's final pronouncement that would influence the course of the conflict the most: his appointment of Roger of Lauria as 'Admiral of the Kingdom of Catalonia, Valencia and Sicily'.[4]

The investiture ceremony probably took place on 20 April 1283 in the Church of the Santa Maria la Nuova, today's Cathedral of Messina. Ramon Muntaner described the event with great gravitas:

> And then the Lord King called the noble En Roger de Luria, whom had had brought up, and made him kneel before him and said to him: 'En Roger, Doña Bella, your mother, has served the Queen, Our wife, well and you have been brought up hitherto by Us and have served Us well; and so We give you, by the grace of God, the admiral's baton, so that henceforth you are Our admiral for all Catalonia and for the Kingdom of Valencia and for Sicily and for all the territories We possess and all God

[3] Bernat Desclot, *Chronicle of the Reign of King Pedro III of Aragon, A.D. 1276–1285*, trans. F. L. Critchlow (Princeton, 1928), ch. XXXII, p. 109 and note 1; Saba Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, in *Cronisti e scrittori sincroni napoletani editi e inediti*, ed. Giuseppe del Re (2 vols, Naples, 1868), II, bk X, ch. VI, p. 381; Ramon Muntaner, *Chronicle*, trans. Lady Goodenough (2 vols, London, 1920), I, ch. LXXVI, pp. 171–2; Bartolomeo di Neocastro, *Historia Sicula (1250–1293)*, in *Cronisti e scrittori sincroni napoletani editi e inediti*, ed. Giuseppe del Re (2 vols, Naples, 1868), II, chs LXI–LXIII, pp. 482–4; Niccolò Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, ed. Ludovico Muratori (Rerum Italicarum Scriptores, X, Milan, 1727), bk I, ch. XX, col 937. See also Michele Amari, *La Guerra del Vespro Siciliano* (9th edn, 3 vols, Milan, 1886), I, pp. 354–72; Steven Runciman, *The Sicilian Vespers* (Cambridge, 1958), p. 240.

[4] *Archivo de la Corona de Aragón* (ACA), *Real Cancillería* (RC), Reg. 54, fol. 227r; Giuseppe La Mantia, ed., *Codice diplomatico dei re aragonesi di Sicilia* (2 vols, Palermo, 1917–19), I, doc. CCXXII, pp. 543–63, esp. 545; Manuel José Quintana, *Vidas de españoles célebres* (Barcelona, 1807), Appendix, 'A la Vida de Roger de Lauria', doc. 1, pp. 348–9. See also Lawrence Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean: The Catalan–Aragonese Fleet in the War of the Vespers* (Gainesville, 2003), pp. 30, 93.

> will grant us to conquer.' And the noble En Roger threw himself on the ground and kissed the feet of the Lord King of Aragon and then his hands and took the baton with such good fortune that may it please God that all the officials to whom the Lord King will entrust his offices in the future will administer them as well as did the said noble.[5]

Of paramount importance is that the appointment appears to have been based primarily on ability. If naval power was crucial to Aragonese fortunes in the war, Peter could no longer permit the position of 'admiral of the fleet' to be a family affair. The debacle at Catona orchestrated by his natural son Jaime Perez had evidently proven that fact to him beyond any doubt. He needed a competent, battle-tested commander to lead his naval forces. Roger, about 33 at the time, was presumably still at the height of his physical and intellectual prowess. Writing in the early nineteenth century, the Spanish poet Manuel José Quintana portrayed him as 'rather small of stature, but endowed with great personal strength; and the gravity and steadiness of his disposition announced, even from his earliest youth, the dignity and power it would one day be his lot to enjoy'.[6] There, in fact, is no contemporary likeness or reliable description of his appearance, but Muntaner attested 'that he was one of the most accomplished knights of the world' (Fig. 5).[7] More importantly, Roger had shown himself capable in campaigns from Valencia to North Africa and had gained invaluable naval combat experience alongside Peter's first appointee to admiral, Conrad di Lancia – Lauria's close childhood companion.[8] Of added advantage were Roger's Calabrian origins. Military exigency imposed by the War of the Vespers required that Peter's naval force be composed of composite Catalan-Sicilian flotillas manned by mixed Catalan–Sicilian crews. Roger's roots in the region would have theoretically enabled him to better relate to its residents and, thus, effectively lead those recruited from it.[9] This was probably why Peter passed over Vice Admirals Pedro de Queralt and Ramon de Cortada in favour of Roger, despite the latter having less command experience. Subsequent events would prove the king correct.

In order to pass the admiral's baton to Roger, Peter first had to retrieve it from Jaime Perez. 'We wish you to resign the office of admiral,' Muntaner claimed the king had told his son, 'for it does not seem to

[5] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. LXXVI, p. 171.
[6] Manuel José Quintana, *Lives of Celebrated Spaniards*, trans. T. R. Preston (London, 1833), p. 147.
[7] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CLXXIX, p. 432.
[8] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 90.
[9] Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, p. 88.

5 Bronze statue of Roger de Llúria (Lauria) on the Passeig Lluis Companys of Barcelona, completed in 1885 by Catalan sculptor Josep Reynes i Gurgui.

Us that henceforth it will be to Our honour and yours that you should be Our admiral.' Peter tried to soften the blow by asking Jaime Perez to act as one of his 100 champions at Bordeaux, telling him his lineage commended him to more aristocratic duties. 'He who is admiral has to do with every kind of people, therefore it would not be suitable, and should not be, that you, who are Our son whom we love so much, should continue with such people.'[10] But Jaime Perez knew better. His father's evident displeasure over the needless death of Peter of Alençon and the imperilment of his prized *almugavars* at Catona was no secret.[11] There were also implications of malfeasance regarding fleet finances.[12] 'During his time in office, Perez had collected 588 ounces of gold in prize money accrued from captured ships and goods,' finds Larry Mott. 'Apparently he failed to turn the money over to the treasurer before leaving office, for Roger was forced to cover the shortfall in crown funds personally.'[13] Jaime Perez was, in effect, 'relieved for cause' and it did not set well with him. He took it out on Lauria. 'All three kings whom Roger served ordered Perez repeatedly to cease molesting the admiral, his family and his lands,' reports Mott.[14]

It must have been a difficult decision for Peter in a period when nepotism was the rule rather than the exception, but it would pay off. In contrast, a corrosive culture of venality prevailed in Anjou's *Regno*. 'All offices below that of justiciar were sold annually to the highest bidder,' states Jean Dunbabin unequivocally.[15] For those positions that specifically pertained to the fleet, Mott notes, 'Charles of Anjou made most of his naval appointments based on political or familial considerations.'[16] It was a self-defeating policy that, in contrast, would soon cost him dearly. 'Promotion based upon nepotism had guaranteed incompetent commanders and crews bedevilled by low morale,' adds Mott.[17] Entrusting his son, Charles the Lame, with the fleet of the *Regno* while he was tending to the duel at Bordeaux, for instance, would have dire repercussions for his reign.

[10] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. LXXV, p. 170.
[11] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 92; Mott, 'Battle of Malta, 1283: Prelude to a Disaster', in *Circle of War in the Middle Ages*, eds D. Kagay and l. Villalon (Woodbridge, 1999), pp. 145–72, esp. 149; John Pryor, 'The Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', *Journal of Medieval History*, IX (1983), pp. 179–216, esp. 183.
[12] La Mantia, *Codice diplomatico*, I, doc. CCXXII, p. 547.
[13] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 92.
[14] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 141.
[15] Jean Dunbabin, *Charles I of Anjou : Power, Kingship and State-Making in Thirteenth-Century Europe* (Harlow, 1998), p. 74.
[16] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 92.
[17] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 150.

Like the Siculo-Aragonese fleet that he was now tasked to lead, the office of admiral assumed by Roger of Lauria followed both Sicilian and Aragonese precedents. But since the mariners who manned Lauria's ships during the War of Vespers were overwhelmingly Sicilian, Sicilian organizational models predominated.[18] Philologically, initial notions of the title 'admiral' were almost certainly Siculo-Norman. When the great Norman adventurer, Robert Guiscard, conquered Palermo in 1072, he installed a knight named Robert as *amiratus palermi* – 'admiral of Palermo'. The title, however, had nothing to do with naval command. *Amiratus* was just a Latinization of the Arab word *amīr* or *emir*, meaning 'governor' or even 'minister' as in the sense of a 'vizier'. In other words, the first *amiratus* was merely the military governor of Palermo. Simply put, Guiscard gave him an Arabic honorific in a nod to the sensibilities of his new Arabic-speaking Muslim subjects. Later, under the Norman kings, the position evolved into that of a true 'first minister' or 'prime minister', responsible for the day-to-day administration of the kingdom; and, since Sicily had essentially become an island kingdom, one of the primary duties of the *amiratus* was to command the royal fleet in defence of the realm's interests. Accordingly, the exploits of George of Antioch, King Roger II's *'maximus amiratus'* ('supreme admiral') or '*amiratus amiratorum'* ('admiral of admirals'), at the head of the kingdom's victorious fleets in the first half of the twelfth century did much to give the title its naval connotation. By 1177, that intimation became official when King William II bestowed upon his first minister, Walter of Moac, the dignity *regii fortunati stolii amiratus* ('Admiral of the Blessed Royal Fleet').[19]

In his role as 'chief minister' or 'master chamberlain' of the Norman realm, the *amiratus* controlled the means for fleet funding and recruitment. With regard to fleet finances, he presided over the two branches of the royal curia responsible raising revenue, principally through the collection of land taxes: the *duana secretis* ('Office of Private Matters') with jurisdiction over Sicily and Calabria; and the *duana baronum* ('Office of the Barons') with responsibility for the remainder of southern Italy, save Calabria. This was why Walter of Moac was later styled *regii fortunati stolii amiratus et magister regie duane baronum et de secretis* ('Admiral of the Blessed Royal Fleet and Master of the Office of Barons and the Office

[18] La Mantia, *Codice diplomatico*, I, doc. CCXXII, pp. 543–63. See also Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 97.

[19] L.-R. Ménager, *Amiratus- Αμηρας: L'Emirat et les origins de l'amirauté (XI–XIII siècle)* (Paris, 1960), p. 94; Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, pp. 52–4; Charles D. Stanton, *Norman Naval Operations in the Mediterranean* (Woodbridge, 2011), pp. 260–1.

of Private Matters'). As for the recruitment of manpower, the *amiratus* appears to have relied on a levy rooted in the feudal system called the *datium marinariorum* ('contribution of mariners'), a sort of quota of sailors required from the *Regno*'s port cities, based upon feudal precedents. Later dubbed simply the *marinaria*, it was expanded to include the matériel as well as the manpower needed to equip the fleet. The *amiratus* probably depended upon smaller magistracies like Messina's *Comitum Galeae Messanae* ('Counts of the Galleys of Messina') to collect the *marinaria*, as well as the *assisa galea* – a tax to support the equipping of the fleet.[20]

The Normans initially procured the ships that they needed through confiscation from the port cities within their domains. They did so on an ad hoc basis for emergent maritime enterprises and military exigencies. Over time, as the process became normalized, these appropriations of vessels eventually evolved into an annual quota system, whereby each port was obligated by royal charter to provide a designated number of ships. This conscription system was, however, clearly inadequate for mustering fleets of war, since most readily available vessels were merchantmen – sailing craft, ill-suited for combat at sea. Thus, to augment fleets of commandeered cargo ships with warships (i.e., galleys), it proved necessary to develop naval arsenals or shipyards in major port cities like Palermo and Messina.[21] Under the Hohenstaufen kings who supplanted the Normans in 1194, a standardized command structure with the *amiratus* at its head inevitably materialized to deal with this increasingly complex procurement process. It was officially codified in the *Capitula pertinentia ad Officium Ammiratae* ('Ordinances pertaining to the office of admiral'), issued in 1239 by the greatest of the Hohenstaufen monarchs, Emperor Frederick II.[22]

According to Larry Mott, 'the *Capitul*a "crystallized" past practices' and set Hohenstaufen guidelines for the contemporary naval command structure.[23] It, in effect, encapsulated Norman and Hohenstaufen operating procedures for the office of admiral inherited by Roger of Lauria. The chain of command was relatively straightforward. Answering directly to the *amiratus* were the *viceammirati* (vice admirals), who commanded regional squadrons and were responsible for the construction, crewing and equipping of new galleys. Beneath them were the *comiti* (from the

[20] Stanton, *Norman Naval Operations in the Mediterranean*, pp. 263–4; Hiroshi Takayama, *The Administration of the Norman Kingdom of Sicily* (Leiden, 1993), pp. 131–5, 152–5.
[21] Stanton, *Norman Naval Operations in the Mediterranean*, pp. 246–8.
[22] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, pp. 61–5.
[23] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 65.

Greek word *komēs* for 'count' – galley commanders), accountable for the provisioning and manning of individuals galleys. These positions were originally filled through hereditary feudal obligation, but, under the Hohenstaufens and Aragonese, the *amiratus* reserved the right to relieve and replace the *comiti* at his discretion.[24]

While the *amiratus* under the Hohenstaufen kings relied upon the royal curia for most operational resources, his requests were rarely rejected. A host of other administrators, responsible for fleet funding and naval infrastructure, reported to the royal curia but served the office of the *amiratus*, either directly or indirectly. These included the *prothontini* (or, more commonly, *protontini*) who supervised the recruitment of sailors and the acquisition of ships for a given naval district, of which there were four: one encompassing the *Principato*, the Terra di Lavoro and the Abruzzi; and one each for Apulia, Calabria and Sicily. Their authority especially embraced oversight of the arsenals within their districts. Closely associated were the *portulani* – essentially harbourmasters in charge of harbour defences and the local coastal watch. They also collected the *ius portus* (port taxes) and customs duties. A *magister portulanus* (lead harbourmaster) had overall supervision of the *portulani* in each district. These officials functioned independent of the *protontini* but collaborated with them on maintaining the arsenals and ensuring the security of the district's harbours and coasts. Of necessity, it was incumbent on the *amiratus* to interact with all of these functionaries, and he did so from a position of special authority sanctioned by the crown. After all, aside from the king, he was their principal client.[25]

The *Capitula pertinentia ad Officium Ammiratae* also outlined a number of obligations and privileges that pertained uniquely to the *amiratus* himself. Since the admiral was accountable for the equipping of existing vessels and the construction of new ones, he was allowed as many as two representatives in each arsenal to ensure that the work was done according to his specifications. He also had access to any surplus equipment stored in the arsenals – such as sails, cordage and rigging. He was expected to engage in crown-sponsored piracy and issue appropriate letters of marque to approved privateers.[26] He was also responsible for monitoring recruitment and making certain that his *comiti* (galley

[24] Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 20; Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, pp. 66–7.

[25] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, pp. 71–6; Stanton, *Norman Naval Operations in the Mediterranean*, p. 264.

[26] Jean Alphonse-Louis Huillard-Bréholles, ed., *Historia Diplomatica Friderici Secundi* (6 vols in 12 parts, Paris, 1852–61), V, Pt 1, pp. 577–9.

commanders) were 'clearly expert and sufficient in the arts of the sea'.[27] Furthermore, the admiral was authorized to adjudicate civil and criminal disputes or charges regarding fleet personnel. Finally, he was required to account for all expenditures involved with equipping and manning the fleet. Assuming his ledgers were in order, he could requisition – without question – from the royal curia the funds needed to pay and provision his crews.[28]

The *Capitula* covered the admiral's compensation as well. His pay was nominally one ounce of gold per day, but this was only to offset expenses. His real remuneration came from prize money.[29] The admiral was entitled to a percentage of all the ships and goods seized, as well as the right to ransom captured captains. Most notably, he was also allotted jurisdiction over shipwrecks, a right normally reserved for the royal curia. Finally, the curia provided the admiral with 100 *salmae* of wine (1 *salma* = about 275 litres) and 100 *salmae* of grain from sovereign domains annually. He was even permitted the use of four crown galleys for his own profit.[30] The bottom line is that the admiral was conceded great leeway in the composition and conduct of the fleet while being well recompensed to do so.

There were also, of course, Spanish precedents. The Castilian concept of the office of admiral was contained in the *Siete Partidas* ('Seven-Part Code'), a wide-ranging statutory code drafted in the reign of Alfonso X from 1256 to 1265. It addressed the duties and prerogatives of *almirantazgo*, as it was called, within the context of a large legal compendium dealing with a variety of topics. Accordingly, it tersely described such functions as supervision of the *atarazanas* or arsenals, recruitment of crews and the provisioning of fleets along with the collection of some maritime-related tariffs.[31] 'The *Siete Partidas* can almost be characterized as a philosophical statement on the nature of the fleet,' comments Mott.[32] In Aragon, the position of admiral or *almirallus* was initially an ad hoc creation for a specific short-term purpose, such as an expedition

[27] Huillard-Bréholles, *Historia Diplomatica Friderici Secundi*, V, Pt 1, p. 580. See also Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, pp. 66–7.

[28] Huillard-Bréholles, *Historia Diplomatica Friderici Secundi*, V, Pt 1, pp. 579–81. See also Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 67.

[29] La Mantia, *Codice diplomatico*, I, doc. CCXXII, pp. 558–9. See also Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 104.

[30] Huillard-Bréholles, *Historia Diplomatica Friderici Secundi*, V, Pt 1, pp. 581–3. See also Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, pp. 67–8.

[31] *Siete Partidas del rey don Alfonso el Sabio*, Real Academia de la Historia (7 pts, Madrid, 1807), Pt II, Title XXIV, Laws I–X, pp. 258–67. See also Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, pp. 83–4.

[32] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 84.

to the Balearics or North Africa.[33] Existing conventions concerning the office of admiral were codified in 1258 by Peter's father, James I, in the *Carta Consular* ('Consular Charter'), which established the *Consolat de Mar* ('Consulate of the Sea') of Barcelona.[34] It eventually evolved into the *Llibre del Consolat de Mar* ('Book of the Consulate of the Sea'), which listed the prevailing maritime laws and customs while establishing a legal venue for adjudicating maritime litigation.[35]

That said, neither code appears to have had much influence on the formation of Roger's admiralty. His office, instead, seems to have followed the guidelines set out by the *Capitula* almost exclusively. The fiscal accounts for Roger's first several months in office reveal that he exercised his authority in a manner closely paralleling that of his Hohenstaufen antecedents. Lauria enjoyed almost unfettered control of the construction and maintenance of vessels assigned to him. He monitored the operation of the arsenals, presided over the recruitment of mariners including the selection of their commanders, meted out justice as he saw fit to all in the fleet, distributed both pay and prize money at his discretion, and supervised the procurement of provisions and maritime matériel.[36] Moreover, the more success he achieved on the high seas, the more his authority aggrandized. After 1285, Roger was granted the right to collect taxes that directly supported the fleet, such as the *marinaria* and the *assisa galea*, through his own *nuntii* ('messengers'). These *nuntii* were essentially notaries upon which Roger relied to communicate his commands for running the day-to-day operations of the fleet, a duty for which they were better paid than galley captains.[37] His vastly expanded powers were officially recognized on 2 April 1297, when he was designated *comitus* of Barcelona and admiral of the Crown of Aragon for life.[38] According to Larry Mott, 'The document entitled *Officium Ammirati pro nobili Rogerio de Loria* ['Office of Admiral for the illustrious Roger of Lauria'], is a virtual restatement of the *Capitula* of Frederick II in format and text, with only a few important changes.'[39] Additionally, Roger pos-

[33] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, pp. 87–90.

[34] James I of Aragon, *Barcelona Maritime Code of 1258*, Fordham Internet Source Book (http://www.admiraltylawguide.com/documents/barcelona1258.html). See also H. J. Chaytor, *A History of Aragon and Catalonia* (London, 1933), p. 96.

[35] *Consulate of the Sea and Related Documents*, trans. Stanley Jados (Tuscaloosa, 1974), http://libro.uca.edu/consulate/consulate.htm.

[36] La Mantia, *Codice diplomatico*, I, doc. CCXLI, pp. 586–638. See also Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, pp. 143–85.

[37] La Mantia, *Codice diplomatico*, I, doc. CCXLI, pp. 594, 604, 610–18, 625. See also Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, pp. 108–15, 138.

[38] ACA, (RC), Reg. 195, fols 8r–10r.

[39] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, pp. 94–5.

sessed near total control over the collection and distribution of tax revenues used to fund the fleet. The Crown of Aragon had wisely entrusted Roger of Lauria with complete command of the kingdom's naval forces. Such confidence would be handsomely rewarded.

In contrast, Charles of Anjou and his successors remained jealous of their royal prerogatives with respect to the fleet and delegated authority to their admirals only sparingly, with attendant deleterious results. The *Capitula officii Amiratiae* ('Ordinances of the Office of Admiral') issued by Charles in March 1269 was bereft of the detailed discussion of responsibilities contained in Hohenstaufen decrees on the admiralty and the broad mandate to fulfil them.[40] 'Under the Angevin administration, virtually every decision was subject to approval by Charles or his curia,' points out Mott.[41] The *Capitula* of 1269 appears to grant the admiral the right to appoint *protontini*, *portulani* and *comiti*, but, in actuality, he could only draw from a list of *fideles* (those loyal to the Angevin crown).[42] Even then, these potentially lucrative offices were not awarded on the basis of merit, asserts Jean Dunbabin, but on the amount of money the 'faithful' were willing to pay.[43] In any event, Charles, himself, routinely issued orders for the arming of galleys directly to those magistrates responsible for the relevant arsenals. Requisitions for provisions and nautical equipment almost invariably came from the curia and not from the admiral's office. Furthermore, he diluted the prestige and authority of the office by granting the title of *amiratus* to a host of local officials throughout the realm. Admirals, as well as *comiti*, were even created for certain specific expeditions. Worst still, the long history of revolts in the *Regno* had convinced Charles to rely almost exclusively on French-speaking nobles to fill these pivotal positions.[44] 'By emasculating the office of the admiral and reintroducing hereditary offices to the fleet, Charles of Anjou created a recipe for poor decisions and disorganized action at critical moments,' charges Mott, who adds, 'Charles of Anjou, and particularly the men who served in his fleet, paid a high price for the mismanagement of such a vital resource.'[45]

[40] Camillo Minieri Riccio, ed., *Cenni Storici intorno I Grandi Uffizii del Regno di Sicilia durante il Regno de Carlo I. D'Angio* (Naples, 1872), pp. 17–19.
[41] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 78.
[42] Minieri Riccio, *Grandi Uffizii del Regno di Sicilia*, p. 19.
[43] Dunbabin, *Charles I of Anjou*, pp. 74–5.
[44] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, pp. 78–81.
[45] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 81.

10

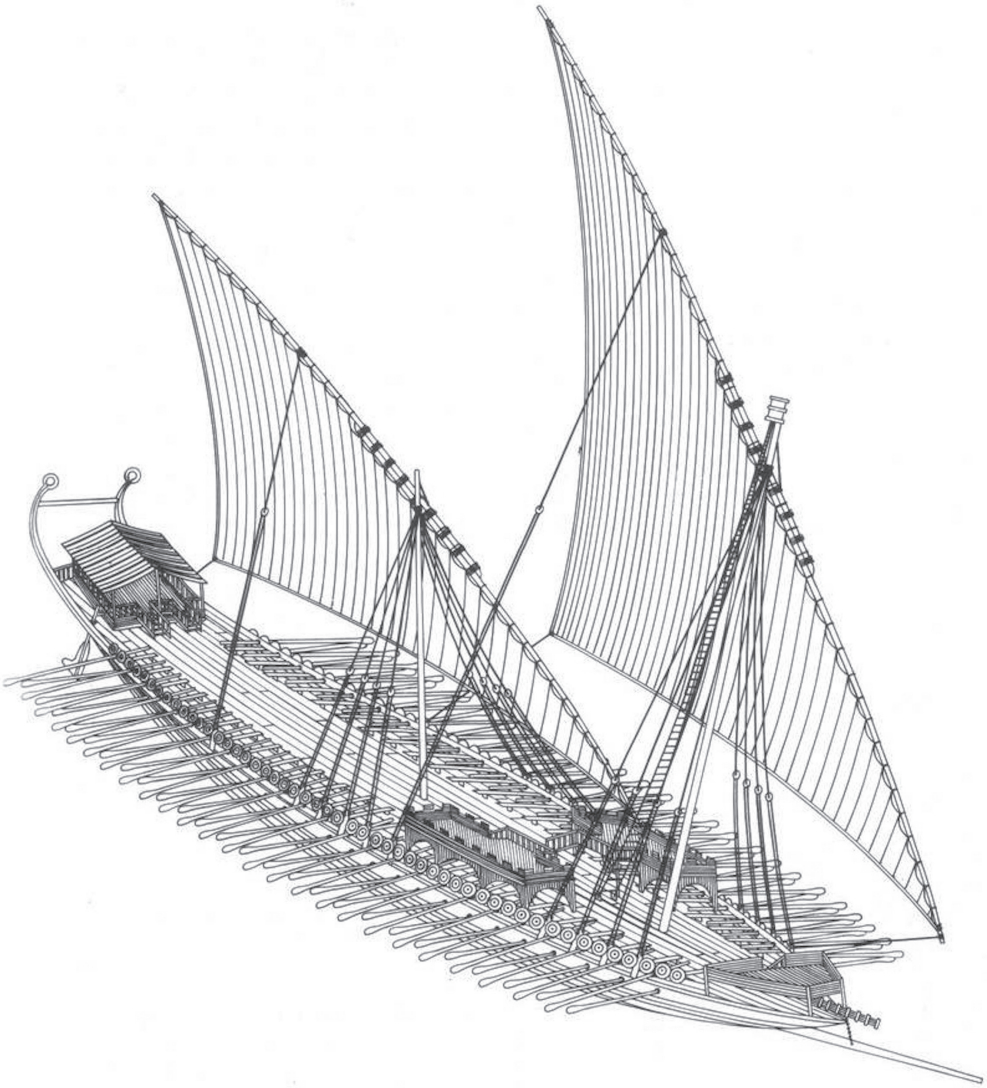
THE OPPOSING FLEETS (1282–1302)

THE MAINSTAY OF THE MEDIEVAL battle fleet was the galley. It had changed little since classical times. It was long and narrow with a length-to-width ratio as high as 10:1, which – along with a minimal keel and a shallow draft – enabled it to cut through the water at great speed relative to other vessels of the era. Oars provided the primary means of propulsion, enabling the craft to cruise and manoeuvre independent of the wind when necessary. One or two sails were generally available to take advantage of favourable meteorological conditions, while side-mounted steering oars supplied directional control.[1] It was the most complex, labour-intensive weapon of war of the Middle Ages. Those commanders who treated it as simply an extension of the battlefield, characterized by hand-to-hand combat, were doomed to eventually fail, while those who grasped its idiosyncrasies and unique capabilities were destined to ultimately prevail. The Angevin admirals fell into the former category, while Roger of Lauria resided in the latter.

The prototype of the medieval war galley was the Byzantine *dromōn* (Fig. 6). Believed to have evolved from the *liburnian* (a light warship of the late Roman period, patterned after the pirate ships of the Liburni people of Illyria), it dominated maritime warfare in the Mediterranean from the end of the fifth century to the beginning of the twelfth.[2] Measuring roughly 31.25 metres (102 ft 6 in) long by about 4.46 metres (14 ft 8 in) of beam, the *dromōn* was a fully decked, bireme galley (two files of

[1] Frederick M. Hocker, 'Late Roman, Byzantine, and Islamic Galleys', in *The Age of the Galley: Mediterranean Oared Vessels since Pre-Classical Times*, eds Robert Gardiner and John Morrison (London, 1995), pp. 86–100, esp. 94–7; Charles D. Stanton, *Medieval Maritime Warfare* (Barnsley, 2015), p. 2.

[2] Hocker, 'Late Roman, Byzantine, and Islamic Galleys', pp. 94–5; John Pryor and Elizabeth Jeffries, *The Age of ΔΡΟΜΩΝ (Dromōn), The Byzantine Navy ca 500–1204* (Leiden, 2006), pp. 123–8, 205 (Fig. 20); John Pryor, 'From Dromōn to Galea: Mediterannean bireme galleys AD 500–1300', in *Age of the Galley*, eds Gardiner and Morrison, pp. 101–16, esp. 101–2.



6 Highly detailed line drawing of a tenth-century *dromōn*, the primary Byzantine war galley and precursor of the Sicilian *galea*, by renowned medieval maritime historian John Pryor.

oarsmen per side) that carried a crew complement of 108 rowers along with around 35 marines and officers. Auxiliary power was provided by two lateen sails on a foremast and a main mast, while steering was

supplied by two quarter-rudders mounted on either side of the stern.[3] A chain-secured spur (for smashing the oars of an enemy ship and to aid in boarding) projected from the prow, replacing the *embolos* or waterline ram of antiquity.[4] The marines manned a forecastle (*xylokastron*) on the bow, which housed a siphon for spewing Greek fire, as well as a pair of castles (*kastelloma*) amidships on either side of the main mast, which served as platforms for *ballistae* or other projectile-launching devices. The *kentarchos* ('captain') commanded from an aftercastle on the stern called a *kravatos*.[5] The oarsmen sat in two banks of twenty-seven (one above the other on the main and lower deck) on each side of the ship, allowing for a slender, hydrodynamic hull. Its fine lines enabled it to achieve 7 to 10 knots for short spurts (about 20 minutes), while its shallow keel lent it manoeuvrability and permitted it to be easily beached for amphibious assaults.[6]

But these capabilities came at a cost: the shallow angle at which the oars had to enter the water for the sake of efficiency (10 to 30 degrees) dictated a low freeboard (the span from waterline to the deck amidships) – perhaps a metre (about 3 feet); and this feature, along with the minimal keel, meant that the vessel was easily foundered in stormy weather. This same characteristic also severely restricted the use of the ship's two lateen sails.[7] John Pryor determined that 'a heel under sail of a mere ten degrees or so would put the edges of the lower oar ports at the flat water line'.[8] Accordingly, the sails could be profitably deployed only in low sea states with light following winds (less than four on the Beaufort Scale – 11 to 16 knots, generating waves between 0.8 and 1.6 metres).[9] Winds abeam could swamp the ship, rendering tacking all but impossible. Contemporary chronicles are rife with tales of galley fleets

[3] Pryor and Jeffries, *Dromōn*, p. 205 (Fig. 20); Pryor, 'Byzantium and the Sea: Byzantine Fleets and the History of the Empire in the Age of the Macedonian Emperors, c. 900–1024 CE', in *War at Sea in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, eds John Hattendorf and Richard Unger (Woodbridge, 2003), pp. 83–104, esp. 85–7; Pryor, 'From Dromōn to Galea', pp. 103–5.

[4] Pryor and Jeffries, *Dromōn*, pp. 143–5.

[5] Hocker, 'Late Roman, Byzantine, and Islamic Galleys', p. 96; Stanton, *Medieval Maritime Warfare*, p. 15.

[6] John Guilmartin, *Gunpowder & Galleys: Changing Technology and Mediterranean Warfare in the 16th Century* (London, 2003), p. 77; John Pryor, *Geography, technology and war: Studies in the maritime history of the Mediterranean 649–1571* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 71–2.

[7] Pryor, 'Types of ships and their performance capabilities', in *Travel in the Byzantine World*, ed. Ruth Macrides (Aldershot, 2002), pp. 33–58, esp. 41–5; Stanton, *Norman Naval Operations in the Mediterranean* (Woodbridge, 2011), p. 3.

[8] Pryor, 'Types of ships and their performance capabilities', p. 45.

[9] Pryor and Jeffries, *Dromōn*, pp. 335–53.

scuttled by tempests. As a consequence, galleys had to have easy access to safe havens in the event of inclement weather. This factor, along with the primitive state of navigation at the time, required them to hug coastlines as much as possible. By extension, fleet commanders were enjoined to get under way only during daylight hours and only during the sailing season from April to October.[10]

Limitations imposed by the needs of the crew were more restricting still. Even in optimal conditions, rowing was gruelling, utterly exhausting labour. During summer when temperatures in the Mediterranean often hover around 35 degrees Celsius (95 degrees Fahrenheit), serving as an oarsman on a medieval galley was unrelenting torment. Poor ventilation below deck and foul air, reeking with the stench of perspiration and urine, created a fetid and claustrophobic environment, which may have been even more debilitating to the oarsmen than the suffocating heat and enervating exertion. Furthermore, owing to the fact that the ship's nautical architecture prevented the sails from being unfurled except in a very narrow set of conditions, the craft was entirely dependent on manpower for thrust for extended periods of time – perhaps as long as eight hours per day. Therefore, dehydration was a dire and ever-present menace to crew performance. The sea trials of the *Olympias*, a replica of an Athenian trireme constructed in 1987 by the Hellenic Navy, revealed that each oarsman needed a consistent supply of water to function: at least one litre per hour. That meant that the requisite water ration for a standard *ousia* or crew complement of a tenth-century *dromōn* was a staggering one metric tonne per day at minimum.[11] Thus, fresh drinking water was the fuel on which a medieval galley fleet ran. It determined endurance, range and speed; and it had to be a consideration in every admiral's strategy.

Dietary requirements were yet another limiting factor to fleet operations. Modern studies have shown that prolonged, high-intensity activities like rowing necessitate a diurnal caloric intake of 4,000 to 5,000 kilocalories (units of food energy, i.e., 'food calories').[12] In order to satisfy a minimum daily ration of 4,000 food calories, Marino Sanudo

[10] Pryor, *Geography, technology and war*, pp. 70–5; Stanton, *Norman Naval Operations in the Mediterranean*, p. 3.

[11] J. F. Coates and J. S. Morrsion, 'The Sea Trials of the Reconstructed Athenian Trireme *Olympias*', *Mariner's Mirror*, LXXIX (1993), pp. 131–41; J. Coates, J. Morrison and N. Rankov, *The Athenian Trireme: The History and Reconstruction of an Ancient Greek Warship* (2nd edn, Cambridge, 2000), p. 238; Pryor, 'Byzantium and the Sea', pp. 88–9; Pryor and Jeffreys, *Dromōn*, pp. 355–7.

[12] John Dotson, 'Economics and Logistics of Galley Warfare', in *Age of the Galley*, eds Gardiner and Morrison, pp. 217–23, esp. 221.

Torsello, an early fourteenth-century Venetian statesman, estimated in his *Liber Secretorum Fidelium Crucis* ('The Book of the Secrets of the Faithful of the Cross' – a blueprint for the recovery of the Holy Land by crusade) that each crewman would need about 715 grams of ship's biscuit, 40 grams of cheese, 50 grams of salt pork and 100 grams of beans each day to function. Nearly 70 per cent of that required caloric intake was comprised of ship's biscuit, called *panis biscotti* ('twice-baked bread') by the Venetians.[13] Both the Angevin and Aragonese archives tend to substantiate these estimates. Each crown fleet strove to supply its sailors and marines with at least 4,000 food calories per day per man. The Angevins rationed every crewman over 20 kg of *biscotti* per month (around 733 grams per day); and, similarly, their Aragonese counterparts allotted about 800–900 grams per day to each man. Rations of *biscotti* were considered so fundamental to fleet operations that a *magister biscotti* or *maestro galletero* ('master of biscuits'), responsible for ensuring ample supplies, was assigned to each arsenal and was responsible directly to the office of the admiral. Hard and dry, a biscuit was palatable only when ingested with large amounts of some sort of libation, notably watered-down wine. Here was where the two fleets differed appreciably in their provisioning practices: while the Aragonese allocated every crewman 0.3 to 0.4 litres of wine a day, the daily Angevin allowance was an indulgent 2.5 litres per man.[14] John Pryor, for one, surmises that this sizable disparity in wine rations may help to account for the atrocious war record of Angevin crews versus the Aragonese.[15]

The need to provision crews with vast amounts of water and nourishment presented a serious storage problem in long narrow vessels, already crowded with men and equipment. John Pryor estimated, for instance, that the average *dromōn* could carry no more than 4.5 to 5 metric tonnes of water, giving it an endurance of around four days and a range in the area of 330 km (205 miles).[16] As a result, fleets were obliged to put into shore almost daily for replenishment. Moreover, en route resupply

[13] Marino Sanudo Torsello, *The Book of the Secrets of the Faithful of the Cross (Liber Secretorum Fidelium Crucis)*, trans. Peter Lock (Farnham, 2011), pp. 108–11. See also Dotson, 'Logistics of Galley Warfare', p. 221.

[14] Giovanni Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro (1282–1302)* (Bologna, 2012), p. 65; Lawrence Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean: The Catalan–Aragonese Fleet in the War of the Sicilian Vespers* (Gainesville, 2003), pp. 215–21; Antonio J. Planells Clavero and Antonio J. Planells de la Maza, *Roger de Lauria, El gran almirante del Mediterráneo* (Madrid, 2011), pp. 127–35; Stanton, *Norman Naval Operations in the Mediterranean*, p. 5.

[15] Pryor, 'The Galleys of Charles I of Anjou, King of Sicily: ca. 1269–84', *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History*, IX (1993), pp. 34–103, esp. 86.

[16] Pryor and Jeffries, *Dromōn*, p. 370.

entailed significant challenges of its own. Water and food sources were frustratingly few and far between. Fresh water was particularly difficult to acquire. Galley crews normally had to draw it from wells or rivers with buckets and then pour it into barrels for transport to the ship by cart – a time-consuming and laborious process, which could easily turn perilous in inimical territory where water sources were often guarded by fortifications.[17]

Combined with a heavy reliance on coastal navigation, this requirement for constant replenishment, shelter from storms and frequent respite from exhausting labour made ready access to friendly (or at least neutral) shores imperative. This is why John Pryor contends:

> Control of the land meant control of the sea, because control of the land carried with it both control of the refuges to which all galley fleets had to have recourse in inclement weather and also control of the water supplies, without which no naval forces could operate for more than a few days.[18]

It also made routing a crucial consideration for fleet commanders, who were often constrained by enemy-controlled coastlines to take a circuitous track to reach their objectives. Thus, over the course of a long-haul voyage, a galley fleet typically made achingly slow progress. Most maritime historians estimated an average of not more than 3 knots per hour. Lionel Casson, an expert on classical shipping, concluded from his examination of dozens of voyages that 'with unfavourable or very light winds, a fleet could do no better than 1 to 1.5 knots'.[19]

Over time, innovations in nautical technology evolved to incrementally extend these limitations in range, speed and endurance. By the early twelfth century, the Normans of southern Italy and the mariners of the great seafaring city-states of the north (Genoa, Pisa and Venice) had developed a swifter, more nimble successor to the *dromōn*. Called simply the *galea*, it quickly became the model for warships of the medieval Mediterranean (Fig. 7). At more than 9 metres (26 feet) longer than the standard *dromōn* and slightly wider, it could accommodate all the oarsmen on the main deck, enabling it to employ the more efficient *alle sensile* oarage system. Instead of rowers stroking from a cramped seated position on two levels (one above the other), the oarsmen on a *galea* sat side-by-side, two per thwart (rowing bench) – port and starboard – on

[17] Pryor, 'Byzantium and the Sea', pp. 94–5; Pryor, 'A view from a masthead: the First Crusade from the Sea', *Crusades*, VII (2008), pp. 87–152, esp. 90.

[18] Pryor, 'Byzantium and the Sea', p. 99.

[19] Lionel Casson, *Ships and Seamanship in the Ancient World* (Princeton, 1971, reprinted Baltimore, 1995), p. 296.

7 Depiction of a late twelfth-century *galea*, mainstay of the Sicilian galley fleet, contained in the Bern manuscript (Codex 120 II, fol. 119r) of Peter of Eboli's *Liber ad honorem Augusti sive rebus Siculis*.

one deck with a generous *interscalmium* (the distance between oarports) of at least 1.2 metres (about 4 feet) as opposed to less than a metre on a *dromōn*. Each man pulled his own oar in a stand-and-sit stroke fashion – the outboard oarsman through the *apostis* (outrigger) atop the gunwale and the inboard rower through an oarport in the hull. This theoretically permitted greater power per stroke, which translated into greater speed. Moreover, the additional rowing space and fresh air environment would have dramatically increased endurance. Range would also have risen, since having all the rowers above deck would have allowed for greater cargo capacity below deck for additional water reserves. Finally, removal of the requirement for a lower deck would have enabled shipwrights to

adopt sleeker hull designs, offering less water resistance, that is, greater speed. The bireme *galea* soon made the *dromōn* obsolete.[20]

The *galea* then, with minor modifications and enhancements, became the premier warship of the late thirteenth-century Mediterranean and, thus, the core combatant craft of both the Angevin and Aragonese fleets. Thanks to the Angevin predilection for scrupulous record-keeping, more is known about this type of vessel than any other war galley of the High Middle Ages. Contained in the *Angevin Registers* is a contract dated 18 February 1275 issued at Brindisi for the construction of a light bireme called 'the Red Galley of Provence', which most likely was intended as a flagship for the planned expedition to Constantinople. It seems to have served, instead, as the prototype for Angevin *galeae* during the War of the Sicilian Vespers. Its dimensions are delineated precisely: 39.55 m (129 ft 9 in) in overall length from stempost to sternpost; 4.61 m (15 ft 1 in) in beam admidships. Attached to the stempost by some sort of iron coupling (or chain) was a *spurone* – a spur extending 6.59 m (21 ft 7 in) from the bow. Graphic evidence indicates that two '*ale*' or ornamental 'wings' curled up from the stern like unfurled scrolls. The hull presented a comparatively low profile with a height of 3.6 m (11 ft 10 in) at the sternpost and 2.99 m (9 ft 10 in) at the stempost, while the depth amidships from the floor planks of the cargo hold to those of the main deck was only 2.04 m (6 ft 8 in) – meaning that the ship's freeboard may have been only around 0.55 m or less than 2 ft, depending on how heavy the craft was loaded. It sported two rather large lateen sails: one on a foremast 15.82 m (51 ft 11 in) tall with a mast yard 26.98 m (88 ft 3 in) in length and the other on a midships mast 11.07 m (36 ft 4 in) in height with a mast yard 20.57 m (67 ft 6 in) long. But these sails were slave to the same narrow set of meteorological conditions (light winds and low sea state) that bedevilled the *dromōn*. The main means of thrust continued to be the 108 oarsmen who rowed standard oars (6.86 m or 22 ft 6 in long) *alle sensile* from the main deck on 27 thwarts (benches) per side angled aft (inside oarsman ahead of the outside, facing the stern), with a *corsia* (raised gangway) down the centre. Finally, a pair of stern quarter steering oars (6.06 m or 19 ft 11 in long) called *temones* was the primary means of directional control, backed up by much longer (16.87 m or 55 ft 4 in) twin steering sweeps called *spati* mounted over the sternposts.

[20] Guido Ercole, *Le galee mediterranee: 5000 anni di storia, tecnica e documenti* (Trento, 2008), pp. 54–7; Pryor and Jeffries, *Dromōn*, pp. 423–44; Stanton, *Norman Naval Operations in the Mediterranean*, pp. 232–7.

8 Depiction of a early fourteenth-century Catalan galley in tempera on a *biga* (painted wooden beam) from the Santuario de la Virgen de la Fuente de Peñarroya de Tastavins in Teruel, Aragon in the Museu Nacional d'Arte de Catalunya, Barcelona.

There were four anchors.[21] A subsequent construction contract for a war galley dated 10 November 1278 (also issued at Brindisi) indicates that the specifications cited above had become standard for the Angevin fleet. It mandated exactly the same measurements as the 'Red Galley of Provence'.[22]

The Aragonese also adopted the *galea* as the centrepiece of their war fleet, but their version possessed key differences, which – under Lauria's direction – gave it a decisive advantage over its Angevin opposite (Fig. 8). In short, Catalan shipwrights sacrificed speed for size. In the course of scrutinizing the accounts of expenditure for the Aragonese fleet preserved in the *Archivo de la Catedral de Valencia*, Lawrence Mott determined that galleys built for the crown in this period commonly carried either 116 or 120 oars.[23] He also deduced from the accounts that the office of admiral under Roger of Lauria favoured the latter variety (120 oars), making it the standard warship of the Sicilian fleet. All five galleys that Roger had built in the arsenal of Messina in 1289, for instance, were of this type.[24] The increase of twelve additional oarsmen over the conventional 108 would have necessitated three extra rows of rowers

[21] Riccardo Filangieri, *I registri della cancelleria angioina* (33 vols, Naples, 1950–81), XII, Reg. 63, no. 486, pp. 126–9. See also Pryor, 'From Dromōn to Galea', pp. 110–14; Pryor, 'Galleys of Charles I of Anjou', pp. 37–74.

[22] Filangieri, *I registri della cancelleria angioina*, XXI, Reg. 89, no. 88, pp. 264–6. See also Pryor, 'Galleys of Charles I of Anjou', p. 37.

[23] *Archivo de la Catedral de Valencia* (ACV), Pergaminos (perg.) 738. See also Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, pp. 190–1.

[24] ACV, perg. 738. See also Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 188.

(four across). At an added *interscalmium* requirement of 1.2 metres per row, this meant that the 120-oared galley must have been at least 3.6 m (nearly 12 ft) longer than the standard Angevin *galea*, that is, 43.15 m (141 ft 7 in) at minimum. Furthermore, the extension in length would have demanded a proportional expansion of the beam, attendant with a commensurate augmentation of the depth – all of which would have substantially enlarged the deadweight tonnage of the vessel. In other words, the Aragonese main battle galley was considerably larger and heavier than its Angevin counterpart.[25] This, of course, rendered it slower and more ponderous, but, in an age when victory at sea was most often determined by missile exchanges and hand-to-hand combat rather than speed and manoeuvrability, bigger was better.

This will become clear as follow-on events are described, but in the meantime it suffices to say that the larger, heavier vessels enabled shipwrights to construct thicker, stouter bulwarks – particularly in the forecastles and aftercastles – to protect shipboard combatants. Moreover, Saba Malaspina spoke of Catalan galleys as 'having high poops and forecastles equally elevated'.[26] Pictorial evidence located in the Palau Nadal of Barcelona confirms that these forecastles and sterncastles were much higher than normal, providing crossbowmen with an elevated platform for firing down on combatants aboard the lower-profile ships of their enemies.[27] Catalan chroniclers, like Ramon Muntaner, referred to such strengthening of the ship's superstructures as *entaulament*, based upon the Catalan term *en taula* – denoting a reinforced, raised platform.[28] These modifications in ship construction conferred crucial advantages on the Catalan crossbowmen, in particular, which would prove decisive in engagement after engagement with their Angevin adversaries.[29]

Correspondingly, in addition to nautical architecture, crew composition also proved critical. Peter III himself seemed to recognize the importance. When he commissioned Roger, the king (according to Muntaner) gave Lauria these specific instructions:

[25] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 190.

[26] Saba Malapina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, in *Cronisti e scrittori sincroni napoletani editi e inediti*, ed. Giuseppe del Re (2 vols, Naples, 1868), II, bk IX, ch. XIX, p. 368.

[27] Mott, 'Ships of the 13th-century Catalan Navy', *International Journal of Nautical Archaeology and Underwater Exploration*, 19.2 (1990), pp. 101–12, esp. 105.

[28] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, trans. Lady Goodenough (2 vols, London, 1920), I, ch. LXXXIII, p. 172. See also Mott, 'The Battle of Malta, 1283: Prelude to a Disaster', in *The Circle of War in the Middle Ages*, eds Donald Kagay and L. J. Andrew Villalon (Woodbridge, 1999), pp. 145–72, esp. 165 note 60.

[29] Mott, 'Battle of Malta, 1283', pp. 164–6; Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, pp. 192–4.

> Admiral, fit out at once twenty-five galleys, and man them so that each has a Catalan boatswain and one Latin, and four Catalan steersmen and four Latin; and the same for sailors in the fore-part of the ship, and the rowers shall all be Latins, and the crossbowmen all be Catalans. And We wish that, henceforth, all fleets you fit shall be thus ordained and that you, on no account, alter this.[30]

The key command here is that 'the crossbowmen all be Catalans'. The *balistarii catalani* ('Catalan crossbowmen') were the most feared in all of Europe, the Genoese notwithstanding (fig. 3).[31] Muntaner was unstinting in explaining why:

> And whilst the galley-slaves [*sic* – oarsmen] row, the crossbowmen are occupied with their crossbows, for all the Catalan crossbowmen are people who can renovate a crossbow and everyone of them knows how to put it together, and how to make light darts and bolts and how to twist and tie the string, and he understands all that pertains to a crossbow. Catalans do not consider anyone a crossbowman unless he knows how to make everything, from the beginning to the end, of what pertains to a crossbow. And so he carries all his tools in a box, and it is as if he had a workshop. And no other people do this, but the Catalans learn it at their mothers' breasts, and the other people of the world do not. Wherefore the Catalans are the most superior crossbowmen of the world. Therefore the admirals and commanders of the Catalan fleets should give every opportunity not to lose this singular aptitude which is not found in other people, but should make their men practice it.[32]

And practise it they evidently did, for elsewhere Muntaner darkly claimed that these crossbowmen 'were so dexterous that they did not discharge a shot without killing or disabling the man they attacked'.[33] He, himself, later gave witness to their grim effectiveness: 'And, assuredly, I wish you all to know (and he who tells you this has been in many battles) that on the enlisted crossbowmen depends the issue of the battle after the galleys tie up the oars.'[34] There were generally at least thirty *balistarii catalani* stationed on every Aragonese galley during the war.[35]

[30] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. LXXVI, p. 173.
[31] H. J. Chaytor, *A History of Aragon and Catalonia* (London, 1933), p. 259; Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 155; Pryor, 'The Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', *Journal of Medieval History*, IX (1983), pp. 179–216, esp. 186.
[32] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. CXXX, p. 330.
[33] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. LXXXIII, p. 192.
[34] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. CXXX, p. 330.
[35] Antonio Capmany y de Montpalau, *Ordenanzas de las armadas navales de la Corona de Aragon* (Madrid, 1787), pp. 19, 25. See also Mott, 'Battle of Malta,

Each man would have been equipped with a *cervelliere* or an iron skull-cap, a leather cuirass (torso armour) and some shoulder armour for protection, while his arms would have included a short sword in addition to his two primary weapons of war: a 'one-footed' crossbow (requiring one foot to cock) and a 'two-footed' one (requiring two feet to cock), each with 300 bolts.[36]

Presumably, Roger required no equivalent royal guidance on the wisdom of employing *almugavars* as marines onboard his galleys. Their agility, quickness and affinity for hand-to-hand combat made them ideal adversaries for the heavily armoured French knights that the Angevins carried aboard their vessels.[37] Nimble and sure-footed, they would have been lethal in the extreme on a pitching, slippery deck in close quarters against an ungainly antagonist, more accustomed to fighting on level ground in open spaces. 'The *almugavars* were always with the fleet during raids,' observes Mott, 'and it seems natural that they served as marines while aboard.'[38] Since raiding was an intrinsic component of Roger's overall strategy, it is inconceivable that he would not have exploited the abilities of these invaluable warriors as much as possible.

Other non-nautical combatants were also carried aboard fleet vessels, especially on expeditions where amphibious operations were anticipated. Light infantrymen called *lancerii* (javelin-throwers) formed about half the complement of *supersalienti* (marines) onboard Angevin ships and may also have served on Aragonese vessels. Both sides employed *stipendiarii* or mercenaries of various sorts (some heavily armoured), used mostly as shock troops. Unique to the Aragonese fleet, however, were the *janeti* – light cavalry, composed mostly of Muslims who fought with javelins and scimitars on small Iberian riding horses call *roncini*. Using low saddles and short stirrups, their favourite tactic was the *torna fuye* ('feigned retreat').[39]

As for the regular ship's company, crew assignments were predictably consistent for both the Aragonese and Angevin fleets. The standard Angevin *galea* crew contained two *comiti* (ship's masters), four *nauclerii* (helmsmen), thirty-six *supersalienti* (marines), two *pueri* (ship's boys) and

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1283', p. 152; Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 233.

[36] ACV, perg. 738; Capmany, *Ordenanzas*, p. 99. See also Mott, 'Battle of Malta', p. 152; Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, pp. 155–7.

[37] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 161; Stanton, *Norman Naval Operations in the Mediterranean*, p. 143.

[38] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 162.

[39] ACV, pergs 737–8; Giuseppe La Mantia, ed., *Codice diplomatico dei re aragonesi di Sicilia* (2 vols, Palermo, 1917–19), I, doc. CCXLI, pp. 586–638, esp. 615–22. See also Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, pp. 163–71.

108 *marinarii* (oarsmen). Among the latter were normally an unspecified number of *protelati*, stroke oarsmen who presumably sat near the stern. There were also a number of deckhands: *proderi*, who manned the prow and handled the anchors, and *palamarii*, who manipulated the mooring lines and rigging.[40]

Similarly, a 120-oared Catalan *galea* carried two *comiti* (ship's masters, referred to as a *comit* and a *patron*), eight *nauclerii* (helmsmen, sometimes called *noxters*), four *proers non bocantes* (deckhands) and 120 *marinarii* (oarsmen, called *rimerii*).[41] Among the *comiti*, the *patron* was considered the senior ship's master and overall commander, probably making for a clearer chain of command. *Tubatores* or trumpeters relayed their commands. The *proers non bocantes* (non-rowing deckhands) seemed to have included a pair of *proderi*, responsible for the anchors at the prow, and two *palamarii* – one called a *magister assisae*, who dealt with the sails and rigging, and another called the *calafatus*, who looked after the caulking and planking. The *rimerii* (rowers) were broken down into several subspecialties. The *spatlers* were the stroke oarsmen who sat in the stern, while the *proderii bocantes* rowed in the prow. The *alerii* rowed just behind the latter, covering their flanks in battle. Next came the *cruellerii* and, finally, there were the *tercerii*, who were evenly divided between the bow and stern sections of oar banks. The precise responsibilities of these latter three sets of crewmen remain unclear.[42] Muntaner also mentioned *tersols*, who were believed to have been extra oarsmen assigned to man a third set of oars on certain thwarts for an added burst of speed in exigent circumstances – probably to compensate for the greater size of the 120-oared Catalan *galea*.[43] All the other oarsmen were simply referred to as *rimers simples*.[44]

Both fleets relied on impressment to some degree to recruit mariners and marines to man their ships, but the Aragonese apparently did so to a much lesser extent. And both fleets compensated their crews fairly for the period at roughly equal levels for a given position. Oarsmen of either fleet each initially received around 8 *tareni* (about a quarter ounce of gold) per month, for instance. A salient exception was the stipend

[40] Pryor, 'From Dromōn to Galea', pp. 110–11; Pryor, 'Galleys of Charles I of Anjou', pp. 81–3.

[41] ACV, perg. 738. See also Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 21; Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 233.

[42] ACV, pergs 737–8; La Mantia, *Codice diplomatico*, I, doc. CCXXII, pp. 548–56. See also Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, pp. 146–54.

[43] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. CXXX, pp. 330–1. See also Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 153.

[44] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 154.

offered the *supersalienti* on Aragonese galleys: the *almugavars* and *janeti* were compensated almost exclusively with booty, while the highly valued *balistarii catalani* were each allotted a generous 18 *tareni* per month as compared to Angevin marines who could expect only 12 and a half *tareni* per man per month.[45] But the largest divergence in recruitment practices between the two fleets was that the Aragonese resorted to an assortment of inducements beyond pay to attract volunteers. Roger of Lauria, for example, regularly raided after nearly every expedition or engagement in order to supplement the pay of his sailors and *supersalienti* with spoils. Moreover, the Aragonese admiralty routinely vacated the debts of recruits upon enlistment with funds from its own coffers.[46] The Angevins, on the other hand, cajoled the compliance of conscripted mariners by threatening mutilation and reprisals against family members. Transgressions and desertions often elicited the amputation of hands and/or feet. The Aragonese were notably less draconian in meting out punishment. Sleeping on duty, for instance, was only punishable by a fine; and, if the offence called for harsher discipline, an ear was taken instead of a hand or foot, because a crewman without an ear was still functional.[47]

Accordingly, motivation was commensurately higher in the Aragonese fleet, which seems to have been a mostly volunteer naval force even in the early stages of the war.[48] The opposite, however, appears to have been true of its opponent. 'The Angevin fleet was manned by conscripts, and evidence indicates that conditions were less than ideal,' writes Mott. 'If the various chronicles are even partially accurate in the portrayal of morale in the Angevin fleet, then conditions were abysmal.'[49] Jean Dunbabin seconds that deduction: 'The [Angevin] registers contain indications that oarsmen were difficult to recruit, had little training and were often reluctant to obey orders.'[50]

All crewmen were considered combatants, that is, they were expected to fight, regardless of assigned regular duties. Each possessed a buckler (small, round shield), some sort of cuirass (torso armour – often

[45] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 180; Pryor, 'Galleys of Charles I of Anjou', p. 89.

[46] *Archivo de la Corona de Aragón* (ACA), *Real Cancillería* (RC), Reg. 66, fol. 25r. See also Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 176.

[47] Jean Dunbabin, *Charles I of Anjou: Power, Kingship and State-Making in Thirteenth-Century Europe* (London, 1998), p. 105; Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, pp. 182–3.

[48] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, pp. 180–1.

[49] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 180.

[50] Dunbabin, *Charles I of Anjou*, p. 176.

of leather), a *cervelliere* (skullcap) and a cutlass or short sword at a minimum.[51] In addition to such personal arms and protective gear, every *galea* was equipped with an array of offensive weaponry – mostly varieties of projectiles. The official inventory of arms for an Angevin *galea* listed 200 lances or javelins, 400 darts, 25 iron rockets, two pots of Greek fire, 40 glass bottles full of Greek fire and 100 pots of powdered quicklime. All of these monstrous missiles could be launched from shipboard catapults mounted in the castles.[52] Some of these galleys must have also been outfitted with bow-*ballistae*, large crossbow-type devices powered by torsion mechanisms, which fired iron quarrels dubbed *mues* ('mice') or *muiai* ('flies'). Naval engagements almost always devolved into horrific exchanges of projectiles. There are even accounts of various venomous creatures such as snakes and scorpions being hurled onto the decks of enemy ships.[53]

With this sort of weaponry, battles were predictably brutal and bloody. Tactics consisted of close-range missile duels followed by messy ship-on-ship mêlées that inevitably involved grappling, boarding and, finally, hand-to-hand combat on the decks of engaged vessels. Such chaotic confrontations were subject to myriad variables that often rendered the outcome unknowable, which is why most experienced commanders strove to avoid pitched battles at sea at all costs. The lack of a ship-killing weapon like the waterline ram or *rostrum* of classical times added to the uncertainty. The objective of a skirmish at sea, in any event, was not the destruction or sinking of an enemy ship – it was its capture as a prize of war.[54] Thus, if hostilities could not be avoided, sound strategy dictated drawing the fleet up into a fighting formation – preferably a 'crescent-shaped' line with the more formidable, high-profile ships on the wings to effect an envelopment of the enemy fleet.[55] Galleys often linked themselves together with chains or cables in order maintain formation integrity. The idea, then, was to use anti-personnel projectile-launching weapons, like *ballistae* and crossbows, to clear the decks of enemy ships prior to boarding.[56] That said, the most common naval actions of the period were not engagements at sea but amphibious

[51] Capmany, *Ordenanzas*, pp. 98–9. See also Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, pp. 151–4.
[52] Pryor, 'From Dromōn to Galea', p. 111; Pryor, 'Galleys of Charles I of Anjou', pp. 78–9.
[53] Stanton, *Norman Naval Operations in the Mediterranean*, pp. 230–1.
[54] Stanton, *Medieval Maritime Warfare*, pp. 5–6.
[55] Leo VI, *The Taktika of Leo VI*, trans. George Dennis (Washington, D.C., 2010), Constitution 19, par. 36, p. 523.
[56] Stanton, *Medieval Maritime Warfare*, p. 6.

assaults and logistical operations in support of land initiatives, hence the dictum of John Pryor: 'Appreciation of the fact that all medieval naval warfare was essentially coastal and amphibious warfare is important, since many of the recommended strategies and tactics were devised in that context.'[57]

Fleets were, of course, also composed of an array of auxiliary vessels. Most tactically important among them was the *tarida*, an oared transport vessel that seems to have been initially developed by the Muslims to carry horses. Its name was apparently derived from the Arabic word *tarrīda*, meaning either 'to be driven away' or 'to charge upon', depending on the grammatical form used.[58] Regardless of its precise origins, most major maritime powers in the Mediterranean had adopted its use by the mid-thirteenth century to transport men and matériel as well as horses. In an era of few port facilities, the *tarida* boasted a distinct advantage over the *navis* or sail-driven supply ship, which had to be moored or docked for loading and unloading: the *tarida* could be rowed right onto the beach to swiftly disgorge its contents through a hatch (or hatches) at the stern that conveniently swung down to form a gangplank. The *tarida* was also much faster en route because it was not totally reliant on the wind.[59]

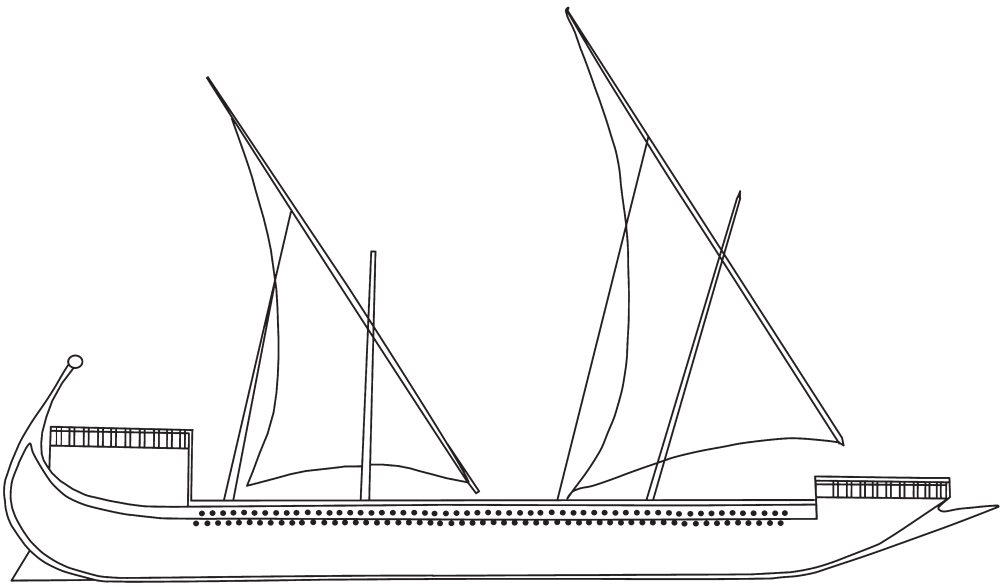
Once again, the *Angevin Registers* provide precise data on the craft's dimensions (Fig. 9). One ordered built in Brindisi by Charles in May of 1278 was 37.97 m (124 ft 6 in) long by 5.01 m (16 ft 5 in) in beam with a depth in the hold amidships of 2.11 m (6 ft 11 in). Its length-to-beam ratio of about 8.7:1 was only slightly less than that of a standard *galea* at around 10.7:1, making it much more svelte than the average round ship or merchant sailing vessel of the period that averaged about 3.8:1. It sported three sails on two masts, but the main motive force remained the 108 to 112 oarsmen. Most crucially, the *tarida* possessed one or two rear ports 2.24 m (7 ft 4 in) high by 1.45 m (4 ft 9 in) wide, for quickly offloading horses, of which the ship's capacity was thirty.[60]

[57] Pryor and Jeffries, *Dromōn*, p. 391.

[58] Dionysius Agius, *Classic Ships of Islam: From Mesopotamia to the Indian Ocean* (Leiden, 2008), pp. 340–1; Pryor, 'From Dromōn to Galea', p. 115; Pryor, 'Transportation of Horses by Sea During the Era of the Crusades: Eighth Century to 1285 A.D.', *The Mariner's Mirror*, LXVIII (1982), pp. 9–27, 103–25, esp. 18.

[59] ACV, pergs 737–8; La Mantia, *Codice diplomatico*, I, doc. CCXXII, pp. 547, 557; doc. CCXLI, pp. 597–8, 620–1. See also Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, pp. 196–7.

[60] Pryor, 'From Dromōn to Galea', pp. 115–16; Pryor, 'Transportation of Horses by Sea During the Era of the Crusades', pp. 109–20.



9 Line drawing of a bireme battle galley of the late thirteenth century, like those commissioned by Charles of Anjou at Brindisi.

The Aragonese likewise employed the *tarida*, but they also deployed a ship specially designed to disembark horses during amphibious assaults: the *galea aperta in puppa* ('galley open through the stern'). There are few specifications available in contemporary documents, but the vessel seems to have been considerably more nimble and battleworthy. It had 116 oars, but carried only twenty horses. Moreover, it bore the same complement of combatants as a conventional 120-oared Aragonese *galea*. The *galea aperta in puppa* appears to have been specifically intended for amphibious landings on contested beaches, a capability that suited Roger of Lauria with his penchant for lightning raids rather well. There was no Angevin equivalent.[61]

For the transportation of bulk supplies as well as large quantities of men and equipment over long distances, both the Angevins and Aragonese resorted to *naves* (ordinary merchantmen), called 'round ships' because their convex stemposts and sternposts lent their profiles

[61] ACV, pergs 737–8; La Mantia, *Codice diplomatico*, I, doc. CCXLI, pp. 597–8, 620–1. See also Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, pp. 197–200.

a rounded perspective.[62] The contracts Anjou's brother, Louis IX, concluded with Marseilles, Genoa and Venice for the construction of such vessels in anticipation of the Seventh (1248) and Eighth (1270) Crusades, paint a precise picture of such round ships at the time of the Vespers. They were generally two-masted sailing ships with either one or two decks, varying in length from 28.9 m (94 ft 10 in) to 35.2 m (115 ft 6 in) and in beam from 7.75 m (25 ft 6 in) to 9.5 m (31 ft 2 in), yielding a displacement of 323 to 806 metric tonnes.[63] Mott, however, believes that the Aragonese (the admiral and his *nuntii*, to be exact) mostly operated more moderate-sized *naves* like the thirteenth-century Contarini vessel discovered in the Po River Delta. It measured a mere 20.98 m (68 ft 10 in) by 5.2 m (17 ft 1 in), but its relatively modest dimensions made it more adaptable to existing shore facilities.[64]

There was also an assortment of smaller vessels with specialized functionality. Muntaner mentioned a light galley with 45 to 80 oars called a *galeas lleugeras*, while other Aragonese accounts referred to a craft of comparable size as a *galionus* or *lleny* (the names were used interchangeably). A Catalan contract of 1360 delineated specifications for such a vessel: powered by a single sail on a single mast and 40 to 80 oarsmen, it measured 21.75 m (71 ft 4 in) long and 5.4 m (17 ft 9 in) wide with a hold depth of 2.1 m (6 ft 11 in). Used largely for maritime patrols and the transportation of high-value cargo and personnel (like crew compensation and ambassadors), the *galionus* was commanded by one *comitus* and steered by four *nauclerii*. Smaller still was the *vaccetta*, which carried only one *comitus* and one *nauclerus*. Driven by a lone lateen sail and 14 to 28 oars, the *vaccetta* served as a scout ship, often tasked with delivering messages. The smallest ship in the Aragonese inventory was the *barca* or 'barge', which possessed a single lateen sail and 16 to 20 oars. Another 1360 contract specified a length of 12.4 m (40 ft 8 in) and a beam of 2.1 m (6 ft 11 in). Probably employed as a lighter for transferring provisions to the fleet, the *barca*'s capacity was about 9 metric tonnes.[65] The Angevin equivalent to these smaller support vessels

[62] Pryor, 'The Mediterranean Round Ship', in *Cogs, Caravels and Galleons: The Sailing Ship 1000–1650*, eds Robert Gardiner and Richard Unger (London, 1994), pp. 59–76, esp. 60.

[63] Pryor, 'The Mediterranean Round Ship', pp. 63–4; Pryor, 'The Naval Architecture of Crusader Transport Ships: A Reconstruction of some Archetypes for Round-hulled Sailing Ships', *The Mariner's Mirror*, LXX (1984), pp. 171–219, 275–92, 363–6, esp. 202–13; Stanton, *Norman Naval Operations*, pp. 240–1.

[64] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 200; Pryor, 'The Mediterranean Round Ship', pp. 62–4.

[65] ACV, pergs 737–8; La Mantia, *Codice diplomatico*, I, doc. CCXLI, pp. 603–21. See also Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, pp. 187, 201–7.

was, in all likelihood, various versions of the *sagitta* (Latin for 'arrow'). Sometimes called *sagetia* or *saetia*, it had been in use as a scout ship since the eleventh century. The earliest editions were only about 12 m (40 ft) long with less than 2 m (6 ft 6 in) in breadth and had just 16 oars. Later Genoese annals indicate that it may have evolved into a larger craft by the thirteenth century, but the evidence is only anecdotal. The term probably came to apply to any small, oared support ship.[66]

Most of the supply ships and support vessels had mercantile applications and, therefore, could be conscripted from private owners into the service of the crown. But war galleys had a specialized military purpose, which did not lend itself to the profitable carriage of commerce; thus, they had to be purpose-built in arsenals equipped for such ship construction. The Angevins enjoyed a modest advantage in such facilities ahead of hostilities. Mott says that a set of ordinances Charles of Anjou issued in 1278 indicated that he controlled arsenals in Sicily and Calabria,[67] as well as those in Provence, Campania and Apulia. After the loss of Sicily and parts of Calabria at the beginning of the war, however, the principal Angevin shipyards appear to have been limited to Marseilles, Naples, Salerno and Brindisi. Charles augmented the output of these facilities by contracting with Genoa and Venice for additional galleys. The chain of command for administering these arsenals was confused at best.[68] The Aragonese, on the other hand, were able to depend on not only arsenals in Barcelona and Valencia after the opening phase of the conflict, but also those in Messina, Palermo and Trapani – all of which were managed by the *Officium Tarsianatuum* ('Office of Arsenals') under the auspices of the admiral.[69]

The *Atarazanas Reales de Barcelona* (Royal Shipyard of Barcelona) or as it is called in Catalan, the *Drassanes Reials de Barcelona*, still stands to this day in the Port Vell area of Barcelona as, perhaps, the finest extant example of a medieval maritime arsenal (Fig. 10). Built during the War of the Vespers at the behest of King Peter himself, the original Gothic edifice contained eight sheds (eventually covered by ogival arches), each about 150 m (492 ft) long by 8.4 m (27 ft 6 in) wide and 9 m (29 ft 6 in) high.[70] Fortified by a rectangular curtain wall and four towers,

[66] Pryor, 'From Dromōn to Galea', p. 108; Stanton, *Norman Naval Operations in the Mediterranean*, pp. 241–2.
[67] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 74.
[68] Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 56; Camillo Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana* (3 vols, Livorno, 1897–1902), II, p. 87.
[69] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, pp. 210, 214.
[70] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, pp. 211–12.

10 Exterior of the refurbished Royal Arsenal of Barcelona, featuring the remaining fortifications of the original late thirteenth-century structure built in the reign of Peter III of Aragon.

Muntaner calculated its cost at a hefty 5,000 *libras* (about 2,000 ounces of gold) and expected it to accommodate twenty-five galleys.[71]

A *magister tarsianatuus* ('master of the arsenal') lived at each arsenal and supervised its operation, which was extremely costly and complex. Not only were the galleys constructed in the arsenal, but they were also preserved, equipped and provisioned there. Periodically, for example, the hulls had to be hauled out of the water and subject to *palmizandus* – a time-consuming process by which the planking was repaired, caulked and pitched before being covered with tallow. The arsenals even produced much of the standard weaponry used to outfit the galleys, such as lances, bucklers, projectiles and missile-launching devices. Feeding the fleet was another huge responsibility of the arsenals. As Mott points

[71] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. XXXVI, p. 89.

out, supplying nourishment to the crews of twenty standard *galeae* for just three months required 230 metric tonnes of *biscotti* alone, costing just under 600 ounces of gold. Overall, arsenal operations were exceedingly expensive. Mott observes that the Crown of Aragon spent 1,731 ounces of gold just to run the arsenal of Messina for the year 1289, minus expenditures for such mandatory materials as cloth and rope for sails and rigging.[72] Similarly, John Pryor estimates the expense of equipping an Angevin squadron of six galleys for six months at a staggering 3,200 ounces of gold.[73]

The inescapable inference, then, is that managing a medieval royal fleet was an immensely elaborate and expensive undertaking that demanded keen supervisory skills and coherent leadership. While the Angevin admiralty was run by an amorphous and ever-changing cast of characters, the Crown of Aragon had, from 20 April 1283, but one admiral of the fleet for the duration of the war: Roger of Lauria. The competent command provided by the latter was the decisive difference between the two fleets. Roger melded his mixed crews of Catalans and Sicilians, both Christian and Muslim, into a unified and highly motivated combat unit with a single purpose,[74] while his Angevin adversaries were never able to successfully fuse the disparate ethnic components of its fleet – *regnicoli* conscripts, French *stipendiarii* and Provençal mariners – into an effective fighting force, nor smoothly integrate hired Genoese and Pisan elements.[75]

[72] ACV, pergs 737–8; La Mantia, *Codice diplomatico*, I, doc. CCXXII, pp. 548–58; doc. CCXLI, pp. 598, 605–16. See also Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, pp. 214–26.

[73] Pryor, 'Galleys of Charles I of Anjou', pp. 89–91.

[74] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, pp. 143–4; Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 186.

[75] Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, p. 146.

II

BATTLE OF MALTA (8 JUNE 1283)

On 1 June 1283, for a brief span of time the struggle for the Kingdom of Sicily shifted to the outskirts of Bordeaux, then a possession of Edward I 'Longshanks' of England. It was there that a set of lists had been set up just outside the city walls, where the two sovereigns and their entourages of royal champions were to fight for the fate of Sicily. And, indeed, the two kings arrived at the appointed place on the appointed day, but it was all a chivalric charade. Neither side had intended for the issue to be settled in the lists.[1]

The Catalan chronicles describing the affair – those by Ramon Muntaner and Bernat Desclot – are remarkably similar. Charles of Anjou had come by way of Rome, where he had petitioned Pope Martin for additional funding and urged him to declare a crusade against Aragon. Martin inveighed strenuously against the 'duel' and even dispatched a letter to Edward forbidding him to act as 'marshal of the field' for the tournament. (Edward's neutrality could also have been in question, since his daughter Eleanor was betrothed to Peter's eldest son Alfonso at the time.) Ultimately, however, the pontiff complied with Anjou's request and formally declared Peter deposed as king of Aragon on 21 March 1283. Charles then went on to Paris, where he had sought the support of his nephew, King Philip III of France.[2] The latter had not only agreed to supply his uncle with sixty of the hundred knights who were to be his champions (the other forty were to come from Provence), but also to accompany him to Bordeaux with his own retinue of knights – 8,000 according to Desclot; 12,000 by Muntaner's estimate. Clearly

[1] Steven Runciman, *The Sicilian Vespers* (Cambridge, 1958), pp. 141–2.

[2] Ramon Muntaner, *Chronicle*, trans. Lady Goodenough (2 vols, London, 1920), I, chs LXXVII–LXXX, pp. 176–84. See also Michele Amari, *La Guerra del Vespro Siciliano* (9th edn, 3 vols, Milan, 1886), II, pp. 19–20; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 238–42.

the aim here was an ambush, under the dubious dodge that the king of France was not a signatory to the duel's stipulated conditions.[3]

Peter of Aragon, for his part, was no fool. He must have suspected treachery all along, because he was circumspect to the point of being outright clandestine in his journey to Bordeaux. Before departing Messina, he had tasked Roger of Lauria, his newly appointed admiral, with secretly outfitting four galleys crewed only by Catalans. The admiral subsequently pretended to direct the small squadron under trusted commanders Ramon Marquet and Berenguer Mallol towards Tunis, but dispatched it instead to Trapani, where the king covertly embarked. The flotilla then sailed a circuitous route to the port of Cullera in Valencia by way of Collo on the Barbary coast. Upon his arrival in the city of Valencia on 19 May, Peter sent messengers to his selected champions, commanding them (according to Muntaner) to meet him at Jaca – the first capital of Aragon about 65 miles (104 km) north of Zaragoza. (Desclot, instead, identified the rendezvous point as Tarazona, about 50 miles or 80 km to the northwest of Zaragoza on the border with Castile and Navarre, but Jaca seems more likely in light of the regional geopolitics of the era.) At the same time, the king charged a trusted noble, Gilabert de Cruilles, with preceding him to Bordeaux to ascertain assurances of his safety from King Edward's seneschal for the Duchy of Guyenne, John de Grailly. Not only were those assurances not forthcoming, but the seneschal bluntly warned of a trap. So Peter decided to travel incognito from Jaca with just three knights (Conrad di Lancia among them) disguised as servants of Domingo de la Figuera, a loyal horse merchant.[4]

Arriving outside the walls of Bordeaux before dawn on the day of the tournament, Peter arranged to have the seneschal meet him at the lists with a notary and 'six most honourable knights' to serve as witnesses. 'And then he urged on his horse and rode all around the lists and down the middle, in the presence of the seneschal and of those who were there,' recounted Muntaner.[5] With that, he headed off to Aragon with his entourage, considering himself as having legally fulfilled the stipulated terms of the competition. The seneschal later reported all this to Charles of Anjou and Philip of France, who were left with little recourse but to

[3] Bernat Desclot, *Chronicle of the Reign of King Pedro III of Aragon, A.D. 1276–1285*, trans. F. L. Critchlow (Princeton, 1928), ch. XXXII, pp. 113–14; Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. LXXXVII, pp. 202–3.

[4] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XXXII, pp. 109–12; Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, chs LXXXV–LXXXVII, pp. 196–205, ch. LXXXIX, pp. 208–14. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 22–4.

[5] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. XC, pp. 215–18.

show themselves at the lists in a matching display of empty bravado.[6] So ended the feigned 'duel of Bordeaux'. Both Charles and Peter had, however, previously set in motion a chain of events leading to a very real contest with very real consequences.

Sometime before arriving at the lists outside of Bordeaux, Charles had paused in Marseilles to enjoin Guillaume de Cornut and Bartholomé Bonvin to arm and crew the twenty galleys that he had previously commanded the seneschal of Provence to prepare. Charles had lost all faith in the *regnicoli* and the various mercenaries who had so ineffectually manned his ships in his first bid to retake Sicily. He now wanted his trusted Provençals to take the lead in countering the Aragonese at sea. It is unclear, however, which of the two admirals was appointed to exercise overall command. Bonvin was listed as fleet commander on a 17 April 1283 requisition for replenishments, but Muntaner specifically named Cornut as 'Commander and Chief Lord' of the fleet. Cornut responded to the appointment by assuring his sovereign that he would not only neutralize the Aragonese fleet, but that he would personally capture or kill its commander. Charles wanted the squadron ready to sail south 'by May at the latest'.[7] And, indeed, Cornut and Bonvin conducted the flotilla into Naples harbour on 21 May, ready to begin operations to reassert Angevin naval power in the region.[8]

They would not, however, be sailing into uncontested waters. Peter's last instructions to Roger of Lauria before leaving Sicily was to equip a fleet of around twenty-five galleys. Requisitioning four for his voyage back to Aragon, Peter gave Roger one final command: 'And you shall remain with the other galleys to guard the island and Our followers who are in Calabria.' Roger was reported to have responded simply, 'Lord, let it be done as you command.'[9] And so the stage was set for a clash

[6] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XXXII, pp. 112–18; Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, chs XC–XCI, pp. 219-21. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 25–6.

[7] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XXXVIII, pp. 137–8; Bartolomeo di Neocastro, *Historia Sicula (1250–1293)*, in *Cronisti e scrittori sincroni napoletani editi e inediti*, ed. Giuseppe del Re (2 vols, Naples, 1868), II, ch. LXXIV, p. 492; Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. LXXXI, pp. 185–6. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 2; Lawrence Mott, 'Battle of Malta, 1283: Prelude to a Disaster', in *Circle of War in the Middle Ages*, eds D. Kagay and l. Villalon (Woodbridge, 1999), pp. 145–72, esp. 155.

[8] Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 13; Camillo Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana* (3 vols, Livorno, 1897–1902), II, pp. 87, 90; Lawrence Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean: The Catalan–Aragonese Fleet in the War of the Sicilian Vespers* (Gainesville, 2003), p. 92; Mott, 'Battle of Malta, 1283', p. 155; Charles D. Stanton, *Medieval Maritime Warfare* (Barnsley, 2015), p. 155.

[9] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. LXXVI, pp. 173–4.

11 Located on the headland of Birgu, Fort St Angelo (as the *Castrum Maris* is known today) glowers over the Grand Harbour of Malta much as it did in the summer of 1283, when Roger of Lauria's Aragonese fleet fought a seminal battle with a Provençal flotilla in order to wrest control of the fortification from its French occupiers.

that would come to characterize the war at sea for the remainder of the conflict.

Adventitiously, it was Roger's childhood friend and fellow Hohenstaufen exile from the *Regno*, Manfred di Lancia, who would unwittingly bring about the encounter between the two fleets. Charles of Anjou had gained control of Malta when he seized suzerainty over Sicily; and the Maltese had proven no more amenable to Angevin rule than their Sicilian neighbours. They, too, attempted to throw off the French yoke in the wake of the Vespers. As a stepping stone to North Africa astride the east–west shipping lanes in the Sicilian Channel, Malta was of great strategic importance, so Peter detailed Manfred di Lancia in late 1282 to foment further unrest on the island. By December, Manfred's rebels had confined Angevin forces to the *Castrum Maris* ('Castle of the Sea' – today's

Fort St Angelo), which occupied a headland jutting out into the Grand Harbour (Fig. 11). Thus, shortly after the Provençal squadron's arrival in Naples, Prince Charles of Salerno (from his headquarters at Nicotera) dispatched Cornut and Bonvin to proceed to Malta and relieve the besieged Angevin garrison of the *Castrum Maris*.[10]

Accordingly, the Provençal fleet was hastily revictualled and augmented with a few additional vessels. When it left port in late May, it consisted of eighteen galleys (surely *galeae*), eight or nine *barques* (*barcae* with about 16 to 20 oars each) and one *panfilus* (a light galley of around 100 oars). The two Angevin admirals avoided the Strait of Messina, because the Aragonese fleet was based at the port of Messina. It would have been foolhardy anyway to attempt to run the narrow passage with its treacherous currents without being observed. Instead they sailed south by way of the Aeolian Island chain and then west along the north coast of Sicily to round the western tip.[11] In a surfeit of caution, however, Ramon Muntaner reported that they sent three of their smaller vessels (presumably *barcae*) to the Boca del Faro at the northern entrance to the Strait in order to reconnoitre the Aragonese fleet. The precaution backfired brutally. Roger, returning from a raid on Calabria with a small squadron, came upon them by chance and surprised them. Muntaner maintained that it was from these scout ships that Lauria learned of the Provençal fleet's ultimate destination.[12]

Desclot disputed this latter version of events, saying that in the vicinity of Palermo the Provençals happened upon some merchantmen (probably Sicilians), who promptly relayed word to Messina, Palermo and Trapani.[13] Bartolomeo Neocastro essentially concurred, reporting that it was observers on the island of Ustica to the north of Palermo

[10] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XXXVIII, pp. 137–8; Saba Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, in *Cronisti e scrittori sincroni napoletani editi e inediti*, ed. Giuseppe del Re (2 vols, Naples, 1868), II, bk X, ch. VII, p. 382. See also Giovanni Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro (1282–1302)* (Bologna, 2012), pp. 56–8; Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, p. 90; Mott, 'Battle of Malta, 1283', p. 155; John Pryor, 'The Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', *Journal of Medieval History*, IX (1983), pp. 179–216, esp. 184; Stanton, *Medieval Maritime Warfare*, pp. 154–5.

[11] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. LXXXII, p. 186; Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. LXXVI, p. 494. See also Mott, 'Battle of Malta, 1283', pp. 155–6; Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 184.

[12] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. LXXXII, p. 188. See also Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, p. 91; Mott, 'Battle of Malta, 1283', p. 156; Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 184.

[13] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XXXVIII, p. 138.

who sounded the alarm.[14] Either way, the Provençal fleet was unlikely to have circumnavigated the island unseen, given the predisposition for coastal navigation at the time. Lauria would almost certainly have been alerted. He was doubtless even aware of the enemy squadron's objective. Roger was known to have erected an extensive intelligence network in the region.[15] The chase was on.

The Provençal fleet skirted the west end of Sicily, according to Desclot, landing briefly in the environs of Trapani before continuing on to Terranova (now known as Gela) on the south-central coast. From there, it presumably headed straight south to arrive in the Grand Harbour of Malta on about 4 June. News of the Angevin fleet's approach prompted Manfred di Lancia to briefly lift the siege of the *Castrum Maris* and retreat toward the Città Notabile ('Notable City' – today's Medina), the island's fortified capital at the time some 6 miles (10 km) to the west. Upon landing, the Provençals pursued Manfred's Maltese rebels to the city's walls but were soon rebuffed and driven back to the Grand Harbour, where Lancia and his men supposedly resumed the siege of the castle and its adjacent Burgum (a fortified hamlet).[16]

Within a few days, Roger set sail in hot pursuit of the Provençals with his fleet of eighteen to twenty-two *galeae* and four *llenys*, according to his own records and the accounts of most chroniclers.[17] Muntaner reported that he, then, headed due south along the Ionian shore of Sicily, skirting Syracuse to pause briefly on the beaches of Scicli just south of Modica in order to resupply.[18] Conversely, Desclot recounted that Lauria, instead, shadowed the Provençal fleet west past Palermo to round the Val di Mazara, stopping at Terranova to seek intelligence. Regardless of the route taken, the Aragonese fleet reached the subsidiary Maltese island of Gozo on the evening of 7 June.[19] After anchoring under the cover of darkness, Lauria sent word to Lancia (probably through local fishermen) and, then, dispatched a pair of armed *llenys* and a small, eight-oared *barca* to reconnoitre the disposition of the Provençal fleet

[14] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. LXXVI, p. 494. See also Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 184.

[15] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, pp. 227–9.

[16] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XXXVIII, pp. 138–9; ch. XXXIX, p. 140. See also Mott, 'Battle of Malta, 1283', pp. 156–7.

[17] Giuseppe La Mantia, ed., *Codice diplomatico dei re aragonesi di Sicilia* (2 vols, Palermo, 1917–19), I, doc. CCXXII, pp. 543–63, esp. 551–3. See also Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 204; Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 184.

[18] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. LXXXII, pp. 188–9.

[19] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XL, pp. 141–2. See also Mott, 'Battle of Malta, 1283', p. 157.

in the Grand Harbour. Cornut and Bonvin had deployed two *llenys* to guard the entrance, but, instead of actively patrolling the half-mile-wide opening, the Provençal picket boats moored on either side of the mouth. Using muffled oars under the umbra of night, the Aragonese reconnaissance *barca*, shepherded by its two armed escorts, was able to slip into the harbour undetected and find the French fleet. Its galleys were beached in an inlet on the southwest side of the headland where stood the *Castrum Maris* and its associated Burgum.[20]

Armed with this vital intelligence, Roger of Lauria stealthily moved his entire fleet to the mouth of the of the Grand Harbour of Malta in the pre-dawn hours of 8 June 1283, just one week after the abortive duel at Bordeaux. Then, supposedly after silencing the sentinel ships, he arrayed the Aragonese galleys in a line abreast across the entrance, bridling them together in an open alignment at stem and stern with iron cables called *frenella*. This sort of configuration enabled the galleys to manoeuvre together under oars while maintaining formation integrity, without which the individual vessels would be vulnerable to being separated out and destroyed in detail. It also formed an impenetrable barrier to prevent the escape of the Provençal fleet. Lauria then, just before sunrise, did something so counter-intuitive that it confounded the chroniclers: he had his trumpeters announce their presence to the Provençals, thereby relinquishing the element of surprise.[21] Desclot even claimed the Aragonese admiral had the audacity to send a message of challenge to his Angevin adversaries by *barca*.[22]

What seemed like chivalrous lunacy was actually well-considered genius that exhibited a nuanced grasp of galley warfare. Attacking a beached galley fleet would have been unmitigated folly. Galleys aligned along a shoreline in close order formed a perfect defensive deployment. This was because these vessels were always beached stern first by pivoting the steering oars through the *luctatoria* (iron rungs) to raise the aft end of the hull onto the beach, thereby placing the heavily fortified bow with its forecastle and *calcares* ('beak' or 'spur') towards the sea. Moreover, the crews of the beached galleys could easily reinforce one

[20] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. LXXXIII, p. 190; Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. LXXVI, p. 495; Niccolò Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, ed. Ludovico Muratori (Rerum Italicarum Scriptores, X, Milan, 1727), bk I, ch. XXVI, col. 942. See also Mott, 'Battle of Malta, 1283', pp. 157–8; Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', pp. 184–5, 188–9.

[21] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. LXXXIII, pp. 190–1; Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. LXXVI, p. 495; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk I, ch. XXVI, col. 942. See also Mott, 'Battle of Malta, 1283', pp. 158–9; Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 185.

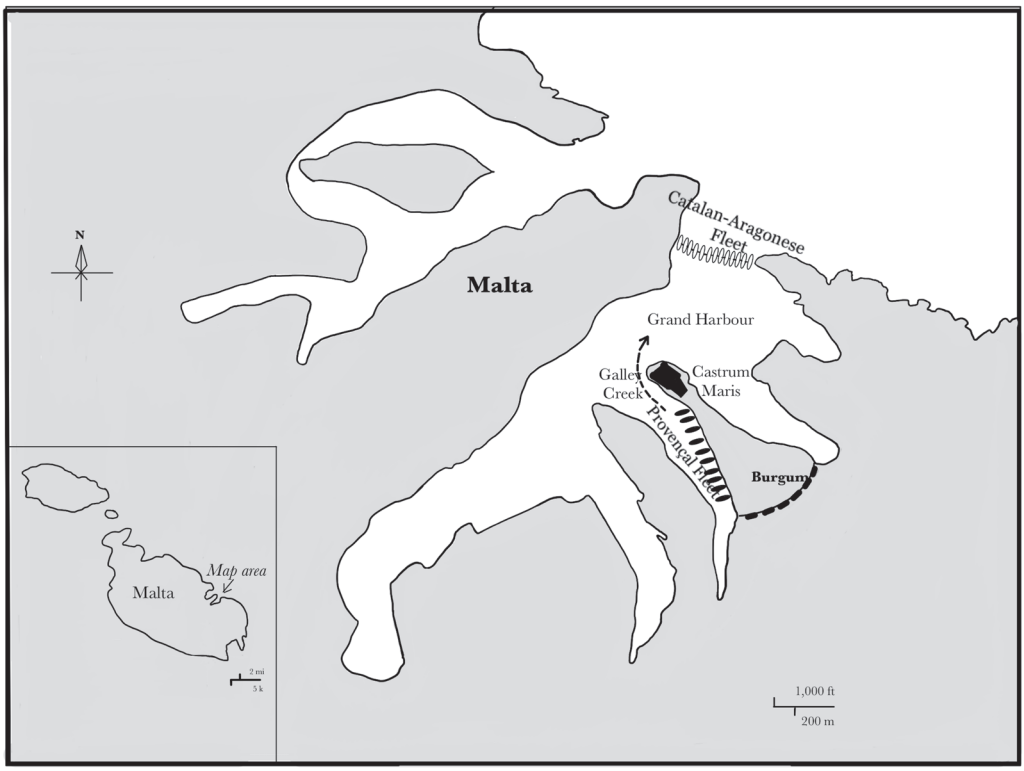
[22] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XLI, p. 143.

another without being encumbered by rowing duties. And, of course, maintaining formation integrity would pose no challenge. There were also physical features peculiar to the Grand Harbour that rendered an assault on the beached Angevin fleet ill-advised at the very least, if not overtly suicidal. The inlet where it was located is called Dockyard Creek today, but in the Middle Ages it was known as the 'Port of the Arab Galleys' or just 'Galley Creek', probably because it was a perfect place to park a galley fleet. It was only 250 m (273 yards) wide and in the shadow of a glowering citadel, garrisoned by enemy troops. The Aragonese galleys would have had to press the attack in single file while being subject to withering missile fire from the castle in the confines of an inlet that left very little room to manoeuvre.[23]

These advantages could not have been lost on the Provençal commanders, but the circumstances imposed drawbacks on them as well. Remaining beached in Dockyard Creek would have exposed them to continuous assault from both land and sea. Manfred di Lancia's forces had trebuchets and probably also catapults with which they could easily have peppered the Provençal crews from the western shore of the narrow inlet. And there would have been no escape: Lauria's galleys could have effortlessly bottled them up in the inlet with no hope of resupply. The Angevin garrison of the *Castrum Maris* and the Burgum, having already been besieged for months by the rebels, must have been on the brink of starvation prior to the arrival of the Provençal fleet. Cornut and Bonvin must have realized that they realistically had little choice. They knew they had to come out sooner or later. A permanently beached fleet was of little use anyway.[24]

The timing of their emergence may well have been determined by one of Roger's ruses. Desclot (normally a reliable source) said the Provençals, when alerted, sent out a scout ship to reconnoitre the Aragonese fleet: 'And the armed *barque* returned to the fleet and they said that there were not more than twelve galleys in number, so that the Provençals deemed them as good as captured.'[25] If this was true, then where were the other six to ten galleys reported to have comprised the Aragonese flotilla? It is not inconceivable that Roger had hidden them outside the mouth of the harbour behind the two promontories that formed the entrance in order to entice his enemy into an imprudent confrontation. Concealing a reserve squadron to be sprung upon an unsuspecting foe at a propitious

[23] Heritage Malta Museum, Fort St Angelo, Birgu; Mott, 'Battle of Malta, 1283', p. 159; Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', pp. 185–6.
[24] Mott, 'Battle of Malta, 1283', pp. 159–60.
[25] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XLI, p. 143.



8 Battle of Malta

moment in an engagement was a common tactic employed repeatedly throughout the medieval era by such maritime powers as Genoa and Venice. Roger himself would do it on several occasions in the course of his career. If this was, in fact, what occurred, it might help explain the lopsided outcome of the clash.

In any event, the Provençals picked up the gauntlet. After embarking about one hundred French knights in full armour from the castle, come out they did. Lauria patiently waited while Cornut and Bonvin shook off the shock of surprise and organized their galleys into battle formation in the centre of the harbour (Map 8). Only when the sun rose and the French fleet began to row towards them did Roger order his crews to advance.[26] As the two lines came within bowshot and the Provençals began to discharge a frightening fusillade of projectiles upon

[26] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. LXXXIII, pp. 191–2. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 15.

the Catalan galleys, Desclot reported that Lauria again did something highly unexpected:

> Then the admiral of the King of Aragon gave the command to the seamen of the galley whereon he was, and the command was passed from one galley to the other, that no weapons be hurled against the enemy save only arrows, but that they should remain under cover and endure the onslaught.

And, according to the chronicler, Roger's Catalan and Sicilian crews responded appropriately:

> … so that thereafter, they hurled no weapons whatsoever, but fought as best they could and suffered the attack of the Provençal galleys wherefrom stones and lance and lime were cast in such deluge that the sight thereof was most fearsome to behold.[27]

The horrific rain of Provençal projectiles lasted nearly till noon, but, in fact, did little real damage. Sheltered by their sturdier forecastles and sterncastles, the Catalan and Sicilian seamen suffered few casualties. It was not until the French began flinging the mortars and pestles used to grind the blinding lime (indicating that they had expended their ammunition) that Lauria unleashed the blistering barrage of his own men on an enemy who could no longer respond in kind. The effect was devastating. The crossbow bolts of the lethal *balistarii catalani* had already decimated the crews of several of the Provençal ships. Now the marines and oarsmen aboard the Catalan galleys launched their lances and a mass of other missiles, sweeping the decks of the enemy vessels of thinly shielded seamen. Most of those who remained standing were probably the heavily armoured French knights. Lauria now had his galleys detach the *frenella* and close so that his *almugavars* could deal with them. And if he had, indeed, held a small squadron in reserve outside the mouth of the harbour, he would certainly have committed it at this time. The result must have resembled more of a mopping-up operation than a battle. Once the Catalan galleys grappled with their Provençal counterparts, the *almugavars* boarded to do their deadly work. The exhausted and encumbered French knights would have been no match for the lightly clad and agile Aragonese infantrymen on the pitching decks.[28]

[27] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XLI, pp. 143–4.

[28] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XLI, p. 144; Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. LXXXIII, pp. 192–3; Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. LXXVI, p. 495; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk I, ch. XXVI, col. 942. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 16; Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, p. 92; Mott, 'Battle of Malta, 1283', pp. 163–5; Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', pp. 186–9.

In the chaos of combat, Bonvin managed to disentangle himself and flee the harbour with seven of the Provençal galleys, but Cornut stayed in the fray and, in doing so, fell prey to the very man whom he had promised to bring back to his sovereign dead or alive. Near dusk, Lauria's flagship apparently engaged and grappled with Cornut's. Desclot described the Aragonese admiral as springing onto the deck of the Provençal galley to square off in hand-to-hand combat with his opposite number in the stern. Lauria took a lance to the thigh, but retaliated with a well-aimed javelin to Cornut's chest, killing him. This essentially ended the battle – resistance petered out thereafter.[29]

The remainder of the French fleet's company faired little better. Muntaner maintained that 3,500 Provençals lost their lives,[30] while his fellow Catalan chronicler Desclot claimed another 860 were taken prisoner – 'many knights and high nobles from Marseilles and from Provence' among them.[31] All the Provençal ships were sunk or seized,[32] save the seven that escaped with Bonvin – and two of those were so heavily damaged that they later had to be scuttled.[33] Yet the price Lauria paid for this signal victory was slight: no ships lost and only around 300 casualties or less than ten per cent of his personnel.[34]

The demographic impact on the seafaring communities of Provence had to have been crippling. 'There was no one in Marseilles that had not lost either his son or his father or his brother or his friend, or some kinsman,' observed Desclot darkly.[35] This was apparently no hyperbolic bombast. The population of Marseilles and the adjacent coastal communities was estimated to have been only around 20,000 at the time. A loss in the neighbourhood of 4,000 men of fighting age would have stripped the region of able-bodied seamen for a generation.[36] Charles of Anjou himself seemed to confirm that fact at the start of the expedition when, according to Desclot, 'he ordered that no seaman in Marseilles

[29] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XLI, p. 144; Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. LXXVI, p. 495. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 16–17; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 59.

[30] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. LXXXIII, pp. 192–3.

[31] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XLI, p. 145.

[32] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk X, ch. VIII, pp. 382–3; Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. LXXVI, p. 495.

[33] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XLI, pp. 144–5.

[34] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XLII, p. 146; La Mantia, *Codice diplomatico*, I, doc. CCXXII, p. 546; Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. LXXXIII, p. 193. See also Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 192; Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 189.

[35] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XLI, p. 145.

[36] Mott, 'Battle of Malta, 1283', p. 164.

nor in all Provence should be left behind that did not embark upon the galleys'.[37] Ships could and would be replaced, but restoring a reserve of men schooled in the ways of the sea was not so simple. As a consequence, Lawrence Mott considers the Battle of Malta one of the most pivotal of the war:

> Not only had it brought to the forefront one of the greatest naval strategists and tacticians of the time, it had inflicted losses on the French fleet from which it would never recover.[38]

On the obverse, Aragonese fortunes at sea surged. Roger's galleys now ruled not only the waters around the *Mezzogiorno* (southern Italy), but those of the Sicilian Channel as well. In the aftermath of the battle, his men joined forces with Manfred's Maltese rebels to consolidate their hold over the island, with exception of the *Castrum Maris*. They even secured the allegiance of Gozo before triumphantly sailing back to Messina with at least ten captured Provençal galleys. The capture of the *Castrum Maris* itself would have to wait. Taking it would be no easy task under the best of circumstances, and Roger had neither the siege machinery nor the time to attempt it. The castle was one of the most redoubtable fortresses in all of human history. With a few modern modifications, Fort St Angelo – as it later came to be called – would successfully withstand the Great Siege of 1565 prosecuted by 30,000 Ottoman troops against a mere 700 Knights of St John and the townspeople of Birgu (the modern descendant of Burgum) for nearly four months. In 1942–3, it would be bombed almost daily by German and Italian warplanes, suffering sixty-nine direct hits. It still stands to this day.[39]

That said, the Angevin defenders of the fortress must have realized that their situation was hopeless. Aragon's evident supremacy in the surrounding seas following Lauria's victory ensured that succour was unlikely to ever come. Indeed, within days of Roger's return to Sicily, he refitted and resupplied his fleet; then – after executing an extended raid of the western shores of Calabria and the *Principato* all the way up to Naples, capturing the islands of Capri and Ischia in the process – Lauria brought his brother-in-law, Manfred di Lancia, back to Malta along with a thousand *almugavars*, a hundred knights and four catapults to finally reduce the citadel. The Angevin garrison inevitably capitulated.[40]

[37] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XXXVIII, p. 137.
[38] Mott, 'Battle of Malta, 1283', p. 172.
[39] National War Museum of Malta, Fort St Elmo, Valletta.
[40] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XLIV, p. 150; Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. XCIII, pp. 224–5; ch. CXIII, pp. 281–2; Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. LXXVI, p. 495.

The broader impact of the battle was that it inaugurated Roger's reputation as a brilliant admiral who would bring apprehension to Aragon's adversaries and solace to its faithful subjects. Moreover, it instilled in Roger a clear understanding that highly motivated and skilled crewmen were critical to his success and that, if he was to burnish his newly won reputation with repeated victories in the future, he would have to engender their unreserved loyalty. Accordingly, when the bloodletting of the battle in the Grand Harbour of Malta had subsided, Roger reportedly told his crewmen 'that any booty any man had taken was his, solely and absolutely, and that he gave up to them all rights the King and he had in the gain'.[41] It was a formula that guaranteed continued success: decisive, tactically sound leadership of well-compensated, highly adept mariners and marines, protected by sturdy ship architecture.[42] He would capitalize again and again on that recipe, with one triumph laying the foundation for the next.

See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 17–18; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 244.

[41] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. LXXXIII, p. 193.

[42] Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, p. 93; Mott, 'Battle of Malta, 1283', pp. 164–5.

12

ANJOU'S DREAMS OF EMPIRE DASHED (JUNE–NOVEMBER 1284)

THE ANGEVIN ANSWER to the devastating defeat at Malta was to assemble overwhelming force. Within weeks of losing the Provençal fleet, Charles of Anjou and his son Charles of Salerno embarked upon an aggressive campaign to construct an armada so massive that it would swamp its Aragonese counterpart by its sheer size. They began by cajoling Pope Martin into contributing ecclesiastical tithes earmarked for crusades to the Holy Land. Loans were acquired from the great banking families of Florence and Lucca; the merchants of Tuscany were tapped as well; and even Edward I of England was convinced to lend some funds to the cause. And, of course, taxes were collected ruthlessly throughout Provence and the *Regno* to finance the effort. Prince Charles even went so far as to garnish his father's crown jewels for cash, but the king derailed the transaction, offering up his silver tableware instead. It is estimated that the two Angevin royals raised around 335,000 ounces of gold between September 1283 and June 1284 alone.[1]

These funds were used to underwrite a vigorous shipbuilding programme in Angevin arsenals from Provence to Apulia. At the same time, the great maritime cities of Genoa, Pisa, Venice and Ancona were approached with lucrative offers to lease fully crewed combat vessels. The House of Anjou petitioned Pisa for fifty galleys, for instance, and Genoa for forty. Unfortunately for Charles and son, both the Genoese and the Pisans demurred because they were, once again, distracted by open hostilities with one another, while Venice (and probably also Ancona) chose to adhere to a policy of strict neutrality concerning the conflict.[2] Nonetheless, the Angevins were able to generate more than

[1] Michele Amari, *La Guerra del Vespro Siciliano* (9th edn, 3 vols, Milan, 1886), II, pp. 33–8; Giovanni Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro (1282–1302)* (Bologna, 2012), pp. 59–60.

[2] Camillo Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana* (3 vols, Livorno, 1897–1902), II, p. 94; John Pryor, 'The Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', *Journal of Medieval History*, IX (1983), pp. 179–216, esp. 190.

enough warships on their own. Upon his return to Provence after the abortive duel at Bordeaux, Charles of Anjou reportedly oversaw the production of thirty-four to thirty-eight galleys at his shipyard in Marseilles, while his son was able to equip another thirty at Naples.[3] To these numbers, Brindisi added as many as forty.[4] The *Angevin Registers* also listed around thirty galleys from Gaeta and another sixty-eight gathered from various ports in Apulia and the Abruzzi. The latter two provinces also produced at least fifty *taride*. Dozens of other transport ships were collected from Calabria, the Basilicata, the Terra di Lavoro and the Capitanata. Altogether, Angevin naval assets must have exceeded 200 by the late spring of 1284.[5]

In opposition, Ramon Muntaner reported that the most Roger of Lauria could cobble together was forty galleys, four armed *llenys* and four combat-ready *barcae*.[6] Bernat Desclot noted only thirty-four galleys with a number of light transports.[7] But the most realistic figure seems to be that provided by Iacopo Doria in the *Annali Genovesi*: twenty-nine. This estimate accords well with the number of Aragonese galleys that Roger took into the Battle of Malta – about a score – plus the ten Provençal galleys that he captured as result of his victory.[8] Roger was surely aware of the forbidding odds he faced. After all, he must have had spies in all the major ports of the *Regno*, at the very least. Besides, it would have been nearly impossible for the Angevins to keep their massive naval build-up secret: there were just too many people involved and too much effort entailed over too long a period of time. Roger implored Peter by letter to send an additional ten galleys from Catalonia, but Aragon was already under threat of imminent invasion from France, and the

[3] Bernat Desclot, *Chronicle of the Reign of King Pedro III of Aragon, A.D. 1276–1285*, trans. F. L. Critchlow (Princeton, 1928), ch. XLVII, p. 163. See also Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, pp. 61–3; Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 190.

[4] Bartolomeo di Neocastro, *Historia Sicula (1250–1293)*, in *Cronisti e scrittori sincroni napoletani editi e inediti*, ed. Giuseppe del Re (2 vols, Naples, 1868), II, ch. LXXVI, p. 495. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 43.

[5] Camillo Minieri Riccio, *Memorie della guerra di Sicilia negli anni 1282, 1283, 1284, tratte da' registri angioini dell'Archivio di Stato de Napoli* (Naples, 1876), pp. 277–309, 500–14. See also Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 190.

[6] Ramon Muntaner, *Chronicle*, trans. Lady Goodenough (2 vols, London, 1920), I, ch. CXIII, pp. 277–8.

[7] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XLVIII, p. 165.

[8] Iacopo Doria, *Annales Ianuenses*, *Annali Genovesi di Caffaro e de' suoi continuatori dal MXCIX al MCCXCIII*, eds Luigi Belgrano and Cesare Imperiale di Sant'Angelo (5 vols, Fonti per la storia d'Italia, Genoa, 1890–1929), V, pp. 59–60. See also Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 190.

king needed to husband his forces for a desperate defence.[9] Accordingly, Lauria adopted the only sound strategy available: destroy one or more of the various components of the immense Angevin fleet individually before they could combine.[10]

Lauria deemed the weakest squadron to be the one in Naples under the inexperienced Charles of Salerno, but the latter's father had prohibited him from ushering his ships out of the sanctuary of the harbour until he could rejoin him with the Provençal fleet.[11] In the postmortem of the Malta debacle, King Charles had recognized the need for improved command and control, so he had vacated all the previous Angevin admiralships in late 1283 and placed the entire fleet of the *Regno* under what he considered to be the reliable leadership of veteran French knights Hugh de Brienne and Jacques de Burson. Brienne was assigned the Apulian fleet, while Burson was given command of the Neapolitan flotilla.[12] As vicar of the kingdom, however, Charles of Salerno retained overall authority, even though he was only twenty-four at the time. Therefore, in the spring of 1284, Roger embarked upon an aggressive strategy to bait the young prince into battle. He began by ruthlessly raiding the coasts of Calabria and the *Principato* – even disembarking a detachment of *almugavars* to seize Scalea and ravage inland behind the Angevin defensive line south of the Sila Massif. Amantea, Policastro, Cetraro and Castellabate all fell to Lauria, as a part of his campaign to lure the Neapolitan fleet out of its safe haven. Charles of Anjou, having anticipated this, had however enjoined the papal legate in Naples, Cardinal Gerardo da Parma, to unceasingly urge restraint upon his son.[13] It all worked for a time, but Lauria would not be ignored.

[9] Isidro Carini, ed., *Gli Archivi e le Biblioteche di Spagna in rapporto alla storia d'Italia in generale e di Sicilia in particolare* (2 pts, Palermo, 1884), Pt II, p. 71. See also Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 190.

[10] Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 190; Charles Stanton, *Medieval Maritime Warfare* (Barnsley, 2015), p. 144.

[11] Niccolò Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, ed. Ludovico Muratori (Rerum Italicarum Scriptores, X, Milan, 1727), bk I, ch. XXVII, col. 943. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 42–3.

[12] Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, p. 94; Pryor, 'Soldiers of Fortune in the Fleets of Charles I of Anjou, King of Sicily, ca 1265–85', in *Mercenaries and Paid Men: the Mercenary Identity in the Middle Ages*, ed. John France (Leiden, 2008), pp. 119–41, esp. 124–5, 131–2.

[13] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XLVII, p. 164; Saba Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, in *Cronisti e scrittori sincroni napoletani editi e inediti*, ed. Giuseppe del Re (2 vols, Naples, 1868), II, bk X, ch. XV, p. 389; Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. CXIII, p. 278. See also Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, pp. 67–8; Lawrence Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean: The Catalan–Aragonese*

BATTLE OF THE GULF OF NAPLES (5 JUNE 1284)

On 3 June, Lauria led his fleet past Salerno and along the south shore of the Sorrento Peninsula, heading towards the Gulf of Naples with the intention of provoking a direct confrontation. Prince Charles got wind of his approach from Angevin agents along the coast of the *Principato* and dispatched a Genoese mariner (probably a Guelph merchant) named Navarro in a sixty-oared light transport ship to reconnoitre the Aragonese–Sicilian fleet. Navarro spied it from a distance as it rounded the Punta Campanella of the Sorrento Peninsula 'in such close array' that he misjudged its size. He reported back to the prince that 'there were not more than a score of galleys besides other light swift vessels'.[14] This flawed intelligence helped create an erroneous impression of Aragonese numerical inferiority, which would later spell disaster for the Angevin fleet. Lauria continued on to Capri, where he and his galley commanders held a council of war overnight to devise an appropriate plan of action.[15]

The resulting stratagem was put into effect the very next day. The Aragonese fleet sailed across the Gulf of Naples to Baia in the Bay of Pozzuoli just to the west of the port of Naples. The demonstration doubtless alarmed the Neapolitans and menaced merchant shipping, but failed to elicit an armed response from the Angevin fleet, despite the obvious threat of a blockade. Then, according to the preconceived plan, the Aragonese fleet sailed south as if it was returning to Sicily, stymied in its purpose. But, as night fell, it turned northwest and headed for the island of Ponza, some 40 miles (64 km) southwest of Gaeta, in hopes of ambushing the Provençal fleet as it passed by en route to Naples (about 70 miles or 112 km to the east). The Aragonese fleet apparently never reached Ponza.[16] At some point in the course of the night (exactly when is unclear), Lauria's galleys intercepted a pair of Provençal *barques*, from which it was learned that the fleet from Marseilles would arrive in a day or two with around thirty galleys plus possibly another ten from Pisa. Given the numerical superiority of the Provençal flotilla, it was decided during another council of captains that it would be prudent to make

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Fleet in the War of the Sicilian Vespers (Gainesville, 2003), p. 33; Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', pp. 190–1.

[14] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. L, p. 168. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 46.

[15] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. LI, p. 170.

[16] Desclot, *Chronicle*, chs LI–LII, pp. 170–1. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 46–7; Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, p. 97; Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', pp. 191–2.

one more attempt at inveigling the Neapolitan fleet into an engagement. So, around midnight, the Aragonese armada moved back into the Gulf of Naples to anchor at the islet of Nisida in the Bay of Pozzuoli just off Capo Posillipo, capturing two Angevin galleys from Gaeta in the process. From there, Roger dispatched a certain Catalan named Don Johan Albert in an armed *barca* to reconnoitre the Angevin fleet in the harbour of Naples. After narrowly evading capture, Albert returned to report that the Neapolitan war fleet numbered 28 galleys. Armed with that crucial intelligence, the admiral steered his ships to Castellammare, just across the gulf at the northern base of the Sorrento Peninsula, to spend the night.[17]

At dawn the next day (5 June), Lauria guided twenty of his galleys out of the anchorage at Castellammare, bound for Naples. He left behind, hidden from view, at least ten of his warships.[18] With the sun rising at its rear, the Aragonese flotilla traversed the gulf and approached to within 'three bowshots' distance of the harbour breakwater. It was an affront to Angevin arrogance that simply could not be disregarded. 'And the Prince came to the mole with all the chivalry and had the trumpet sounded,' recounted Muntaner, 'and proclaimed under pain of death, all should go onboard the galleys.'[19] Aghast, Cardinal Gerardo da Parma naturally begged him to reconsider, but there were factors other than hubris at work here.[20] First of all, Neapolitan merchants, dreading the deleterious effects of a protracted blockade, must have exhorted Charles of Salerno to act. Secondly, the score of Aragonese galleys that the prince saw taunting him from beyond the breakwater happened to dovetail precisely with the scouting report submitted to him by the Genoese merchant Navarro two days previously, reinforcing a false notion of the numerical superiority of his own fleet. Thirdly, the prince was saddled with the sobriquet 'Charles the Lame', because a childhood mishap had left him with a limp, which probably caused him to self-consciously overcompensate in an effort to prove his worth. Finally, as a young heir to the throne of a warrior-king, he must have felt himself under enormous pressure to acquit himself well in battle.[21]

[17] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. LII, pp. 171–2; Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk X, ch. XV, p. 389. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 47; Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 192.

[18] Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, p. 97; Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 192.

[19] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. CXIII, pp. 278–9.

[20] Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 47–8.

[21] Steven Runciman, *The Sicilian Vespers* (Cambridge, 1958), p. 247.

Even so, the recalcitrance of the *regnicoli* to engage a lethal enemy of proven ability nearly saved the day. Guided by a healthy sense of self-preservation, they refused at first to heed the prince's proclamation, 'for no one would go on board', noted Muntaner.[22] It was only after some of the leading lords advised the king's son to set the example by boarding first that the others dared do so. Ironically, one of these was Admiral Jacques de Burson, a man upon whose judgement Charles of Anjou had relied to preclude such a disastrous decision.[23] 'And when the knights and barons that were with him, and his other soldiers likewise, saw that the Prince had gone up into one of his galleys,' recorded Desclot, 'they all pressed forward in great haste into the ships and took with them their weapons.'[24]

As soon as the Angevin galleys began emerging from the port, a jubilant Roger had his flotilla turn stern and run to the southeast – into the rising sun. Emboldened by the apparent flight of their adversaries, the Angevins rowed after them in precipitate pursuit, presumably with the ships of Charles the Lame and his chivalric entourage in the lead. The galleys manned by the reluctant *regnicoli*, doubtless, followed their more fervent French comrades at a less frenetic pace. As a result, the Angevin galleys – strung out and disordered – became separated from the rest as they chased the Aragonese across the 15-mile (25-km) width of the gulf.[25] At one point, a pair of Angevin galleys in the forefront came within shouting distance of Roger's flagship. The captain of one was none other than Riccardo Riso, the Messinese noble and Angevin collaborator who had commanded the seven-ship Angevin flotilla sent to suppress Palermo in the aftermath of the Vespers revolt. His fellow Sicilian turncoat Enrico di Nizza led the other. According to Neocastro, the two men taunted the Aragonese admiral with rope restraints (possibly hangman's nooses) and predictions of his imminent demise – an ill-advised display of bluster that they would soon come to regret.[26] Lauria's flight was only feigned, of course. When his galleys were within a few miles of Castellammare, he sprang his trap. The Aragonese ships

[22] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. CXIII, p. 279.

[23] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk X, ch. XV, p. 390. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 47; Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 192.

[24] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. LIII, p. 173.

[25] Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', pp. 192–3.

[26] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. LXXVI, p. 496. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 48. (Note: Amari's translation of the passage refers to '*le catene*' – Italian for 'the chains' – but Neocastro actually describes Riso and Nizza as '*ostendentes eis funes, quas tenebant in manibus*' – Latin for 'showing them ropes, which they held in their hands', i.e., some sort of 'rope restraints'.)

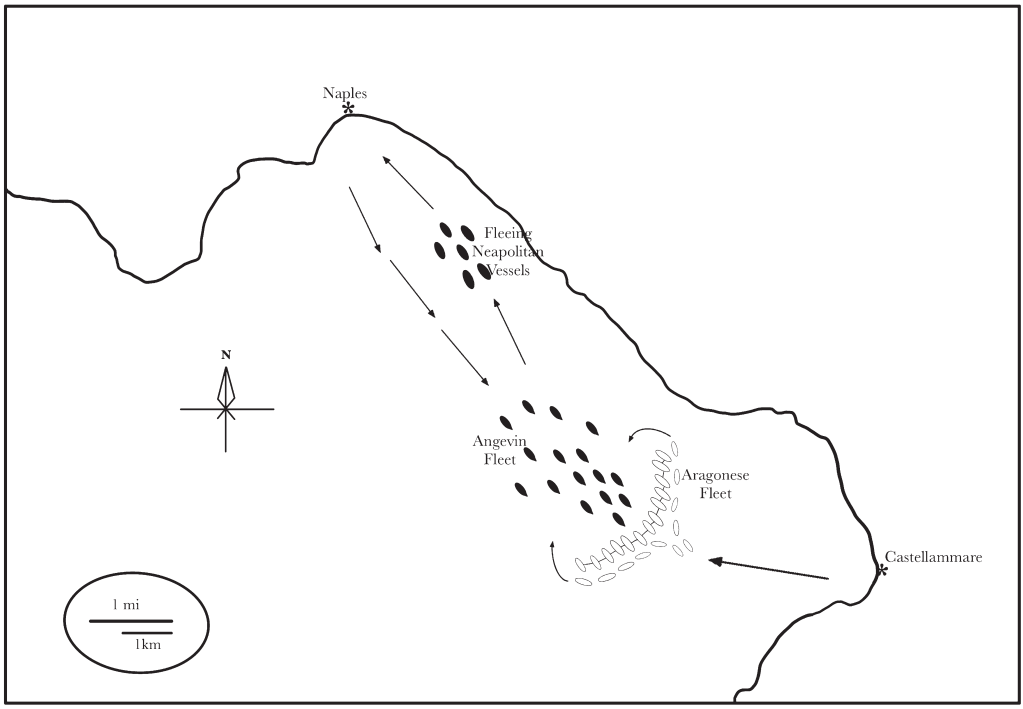
suddenly slowed and came about as one, forming a line abreast.[27] Desclot described what happened next:

> Therewith the galleys were placed in close array, one to the other, and the admiral of the King of Aragon and of Sicily ordered the oarsmen to lay aside their oars, so that the crossbowmen of his ships might be free to shoot at and strike the enemy from afar off and before the galleys had mingled in battle.[28]

By the time the Angevins realized they had been duped, it was too late: they were too far from Naples to return to the safety of its harbour. Their momentum carried them headlong toward the centre of the Aragonese line, offering them little opportunity to align their galleys in a proper fighting formation. Worse still, the arrangement of the Aragonese galleys into a line abreast was almost certainly the signal for the reserve squadron to come out of Castellammare behind the main body. The tight Aragonese array and the bright morning sun must have screened the movements of the reserve squadron as it came up aft of the formation. Some analysts have theorized that the purpose of the reserve unit was to reinforce the centre of Lauria's line, but Muntaner indicated that the admiral's 'galleys were lashed together' – probably in *frenella* (with cables), as was the case at Malta – obviating the need for further strengthening to prevent a breakout.[29] Instead, it seems likely that the reserve squadron split in two, each part sliding astern of and parallel to the back of a classic, crescent-shaped fighting formation in opposite directions to extend the horns in a double envelopment or pincer movement (Map 9). This would explain why Neocastro portrayed the Aragonese fleet as having 'suddenly surrounded' the Angevins and why Speciale outlined how 'the fleet of the Sicilians attacked the fortified enemy from the right and the left'.[30]

When the prince finally perceived what was happening, he was already hopelessly committed. As the vanguard of his fleet (about ten galleys) piled willy-nilly into the centre of Lauria's line, the extended Aragonese wings clenched like the pincers of a crab, crashing into the flanks of the Angevin squadron and crushing it. In this scenario, an Aragonese galley striking an Angevin one amidships from abeam would cause the spur of the attacking ship to smash the oars of the target ship as it rode up over

[27] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. LIV, p. 174.
[28] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. LV, p. 175.
[29] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. CXIII, p. 279. See also Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', pp. 193–4.
[30] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. LXXVII, p. 497; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk I, ch. XXVI, col. 944. See also Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 193.



9 Battle of the Gulf of Naples

victim's *apostis* or outrigger, spilling *almugavar* boarders onto the most sparsely defended part of the assaulted vessel.[31] Malaspina was almost lyrical in his description of the cacophony of combat:

> But like screeching woods agitated by sheering winds under a tempestuous sky, so resounded the arms through the exchange of blows; the clinking of the weapons and the roaring of the sea, having joined to the foamy thrusts of the oars and to the clamour of voices, wounded the air by which an uncertain sound nettled the ears of those who watched from land, while flashing swords sent reverberations everywhere.[32]

The *almugavars* would have made short work of whomever the Catalan crossbowmen had left standing in the Angevin galleys. To give his vaunted light infantry an added advantage, Lauria had pots of soap and tallow tossed onto the decks of the enemy ships that left the mailed

[31] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk X, ch. XV, p. 391. See also Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 193.
[32] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk X, ch. XV, p. 391.

French knights fighting for their footing on a slippery surface. In such a way, Lauria's crews systematically either seized or rendered *hors de combat* all of the Angevin galleys, with the exception of the prince's flagship.[33] The *regnicoli* aboard the trailing Neapolitan galleys (in the number of about fifteen to eighteen) must have seen the disaster unfolding from a distance, for they soon turned their prows back to port and 'left them [the French] between the jaws of the enemy', related Malaspina.[34] Roger had reportedly instructed his men to let them escape,[35] probably because he did not wish to risk losing control of his ships in the middle of an engagement and, more crucially, because he knew the capture of a critical bargaining chip was imminent: Charles of Salerno.

That said, Charles 'the Lame' and his loyal retainers fought ferociously, prolonging the engagement late into the afternoon. A press of the prince's armoured knights valiantly staved off repeated Aragonese attempts at boarding. Among them was the flower of Angevin chivalry: Jacques de Burson, Hugh de Brienne, Guillaume L'Étendard and Rainald Galard as well as the counts of Montpellier and Acerra. Galard, apparently a massive man, proved particularly adept at dealing death, clearing a wide swath around him. The Aragonese finally forced a foothold in the bow through a determined assault, but the French knights formed an impenetrable phalanx in the poop around the prince. These thickly mailed men-at-arms stood shoulder-to-shoulder in a shield wall that nullified the nimble mobility of the lightly clad *almugavars*. And Roger must have been hesitant to unleash his murderous *balistarii catalani*, for fear of striking the prince, who was far more useful as a prize prisoner than as a dead trophy. So Roger sent over a Catalan trumpeter named Pagano, who was also an accomplished diver, to bore half a dozen holes in the hull below the waterline with an iron auger, while another crewman took an axe to the planking in the bow below deck. The ship soon began to take on water at a rapid rate and sink by the bow. Faced with the looming spectre of an inglorious drowning, the heavily armoured French host realized the futility of their circumstances. Galard and L'Étendard counselled capitulation to the prince, who finally proffered his sword to Lauria.[36]

[33] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk X, ch. XV, pp. 391–2. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 49; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 63; Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, p. 98.

[34] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk X, ch. XV, p. 391. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 49.

[35] Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 194.

[36] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. LV, pp. 175–6; Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk X, ch. XV, pp. 392–3; Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. CXIII, pp. 279–80; Neocastro,

12 Constructed by King Roger II in 1140 and renovated by Charles of Anjou in 1274, this castle, which still commands the old port of Naples, was the vantage point from where Maria of Hungary witnessed the defeat of her husband, Prince Charles of Salerno, by Roger of Lauria in the Battle of the Gulf of Naples on 5 June 1284.

Roger managed to rescue the prince and most of his royal entourage before the vessel fully foundered, presumably taking the less illustrious members of the crew with it to a watery grave. The admiral of Aragon treated Charles and his knights with the deference that their station demanded – so much so that when a galley bearing congratulatory envoys from Sorrento arrived alongside the flagship shortly after the battle, said emissaries mistook the prince for Lauria. According to the Florentine chronicler Giovanni Villani, they supposedly said to him, 'If only it had pleased God to let you take the father as you have taken the son,' and adding, 'May it be known to you that we were the first to turn.'

Historia Sicula, ch. LXXVII, p. 497; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk I, ch. XXVI, cols 944–5. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 49–50; Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, p. 99; Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 194.

To which, Prince Charles was reported to have wryly responded, 'By holy God, what faithful subjects these are to the king!'[37]

Roger capitalized on his royal captive posthaste. He dispatched two galleys to the Castel dell'Ovo, which still dominates the port of Naples from a small peninsula at the west end of the harbour (Fig. 12). There, one of Lauria's knights passed a message to the Princess Maria, daughter of King Stephen V of Hungary and the prince's wife, who had stood all day upon the citadel's highest ramparts – staring anxiously seaward in hopes of spying some sign of her husband's fate. The message essentially demanded that Beatrice, the captive half-sister of Queen Constance, be released immediately to the knight's care or Prince Charles would be decapitated in full view of her and the citizenry of Naples. The princess complied forthwith.[38]

His two precious passengers onboard, Lauria was ready to return to Messina for a well-deserved victor's reception, but there was one more matter to which he had to attend. Pausing off Capri, he meted out retribution to the two Sicilian renegades, Riccardo Riso and Enrico di Nizza, whom he had also captured in the course of the battle. Both were summarily beheaded on his own flagship.[39] A few days later, the Aragonese–Sicilian fleet entered the harbour at Messina to the unrestrained rejoicing of the citizenry and the queen. The legend of Lauria had, indeed, begun. After all, he had dared daunting odds to conquer a seemingly superior force and bring home, as spoils of war, not only the heir to the Angevin crown and ten captured galleys, but also the beautiful sister, whom the queen had never known – for Beatrice, King Manfred's daughter with his second wife (Helena Angelina Doukaina of Epiros), must have been little more than a toddler when she was incarcerated by King Charles following his triumph at Benevento. Now, it was Anjou's son who was to be imprisoned. Constance had the prince confined in the castle of Mategriffon with Guillaume L'Étendard ('the annihilator of Augusta') to keep him company. In so doing, she probably spared both from an ugly end at the hands of the mob.[40]

[37] Giovanni Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, ed. Francesco Dragomanni (4 vols, Florence, 1845), I, bk VII, ch. XCIII, pp. 425–6. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 51; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 248.

[38] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. LV, pp. 176–7; Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk X, ch. XVI, pp. 393–4; Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. LXXVII, pp. 497–8; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk I, ch. XXVI, cols 944–5. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 52; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 248.

[39] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. LXXVII, p. 498. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 52–3.

[40] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. LVII, p. 180; Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. LXXVII, p. 498; Ptolemy da Lucca, *Die Annalen des Tholomeus von Lucca in doppelter*

At about the same time (three days after the debacle in the gulf), Charles of Anjou entered Naples – a city in open revolt – to discover that his son had disobeyed his expressed orders and had lost the cream of his Neapolitan fleet. Malaspina quoted him as having lamented out loud, 'O Great King, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, is this the end You give to all Our labours?'[41]

With this triumph, Roger of Lauria set the pattern for all his future victories at sea – often against numerically superior forces. He had turned his limited numbers into a decisive advantage. He understood that, if he exercised tight command-and-control of a well-disciplined smaller force, he could easily dismember and destroy a much larger fleet composed of disparate elements, lacking cohesion. In an era when seaborne communications were restricted to signals of sight and sound sent over relatively short distances, Roger realized that once an engagement was initiated the cacophony and confusion of battle limited an admiral's ability to control action on the fly. Visual and aural commands were frequently lost in the pandemonium. The Admiral of Aragon knew that the only solution was a well-devised but simple battle plan, easily executed in the heat of combat. In an age when few military leaders had a sound grasp of nautical tactics, Lauria stood out. While his competitors viewed shipboard combat as an extension of land warfare in which they could simply rely on armoured knights and numerical superiority, Roger employed the various units of his naval forces as chess pieces in a grand maritime strategy. It was this tactical and strategic genius at sea that made Roger of Lauria the nemesis for which Charles of Anjou had no answer.

RELIEF OF REGGIO (AUGUST 1284)

As dispiriting as the debacle in the Gulf of Naples was, it did not deter Charles of Anjou from continuing his campaign to retake Sicily. Nor was there any reason that it should have. The tactical situation had actually changed little. The Angevins retained an overwhelming advantage in both manpower and ships. Indeed, despite the lopsided defeat, they had lost fewer than a dozen galleys. According to the various contemporary sources, Charles was still able to amass an armada that dwarfed the

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Fassung nebst Teilen der Gesta Florentinorum und de Gesta Lucanorum, ed. Bernhard Schmeidler (Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Munich, 1984), p. 201. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 53.

[41] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk X, ch. XVIII, p. 396. See also Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 34.

Aragonese fleet of Roger of Lauria. Bartolomeo Neocastro described how the king directed thirty galleys of the Neopolitan fleet to proceed by way of Pantelleria, thus avoiding the Strait of Messina, to join forty galleys and twenty-two *taride* at Brindisi.[42] Giovanni Villani estimated the Angevin fleet at 110, 'between galleys and armed uscieri'.[43] Niccolò Speciale gave the figure 158,[44] while Saba Malaspina counted 200 vessels.[45] Perhaps the most dependable approximation was that provided by Charles himself in a letter to his Pisan allies: 61 ships from Naples, 95 from Brindisi and seven from Nicotera, for a total of 163 vessels.[46] Against these numbers, Lauria could pose a fleet of perhaps only forty galleys, recently battered by battle.

Moreover, Anjou's mighty armada was in support of an ample army of 10,000 knights and 40,000 infantry, which he used to brutally quell the brewing insurrection in Naples where he hanged about 150 conspirators, as well as in the neighbouring communities of Campania and the *Principato*. In early July, he then personally led these land forces on a march first to Brindisi and then to the outskirts of Reggio, reclaiming much of what the Aragonese had acquired in the proceeding weeks of raiding and small-scale campaigning. By 19 July, Anjou's naval and ground forces had converged on the Calabrian provincial capital in order to wrest it from the townspeople who (according to Neocastro) were led by a mere 300 Messinese defenders under Catalan captain Guillen de Pons. All the while, Roger could only watch impotently – his fleet restricted to the relatively safe confines of Messina's harbour.[47]

Nonetheless, despite an appreciable numerical advantage, Angevin forces failed to take Reggio, so on 13 August Charles moved his entire army to Catona, anchoring his fleet just off shore in the strait opposite Messina. His apparent intention was to bypass Reggio so as to make a direct assault on Messina. He began with a blockade. The naval sequestering of the port, however, proved ineffectual, because, shortly after it was instigated, a relief squadron from Catalonia of around fourteen galleys under Ramon Marquet slipped into the harbour unchallenged to

[42] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. LXXVIII, p. 500.
[43] Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, I, bk VII, ch. XCIV, p. 427.
[44] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk I, ch. XXVIII, col. 945.
[45] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk X, ch. XX, pp. 397–8.
[46] Minieri Riccio, *Memorie della guerra di Sicilia*, pp. 512–16. See also Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, pp. 71–2; Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 194.
[47] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. LXXVIII, p. 500. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 57–62; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, pp. 71–2.

swell the Aragonese fleet to about fifty-four.[48] At about the same time, Lauria learned through a bit of daring subterfuge that morale within the Angevin fleet was plumbing new depths. Donning the attire of an ordinary fisherman, he and some lieutenants boarded a small *barchetta* and drifted among the Angevin armada at night to gauge the temperament of its crews. What they found was a motley mix of sailors and marines with no stomach to prosecute the fight and a strong desire to be elsewhere.[49] Roger must have realized that patience would soon provide him the opportunity to exploit the apathy of his enemy's rank and file. He set a shore watch around the port and bided his time.

He did not have long to wait. Within a few days (17 August), a savage storm struck the strait at night, dispersing the unprotected Angevin fleet anchored out in the open and allowing the Aragonese fleet to sally out from Messina's sheltered harbour. Prudently, Lauria chose not to risk a direct confrontation with the numerically superior Angevin fleet in darkness during a raging tempest, but instead, after a brief and inconclusive clash with scattered elements of the enemy fleet near Capo Peloro, fled north.[50] He had a much more devastating and decisive strategy in mind.

Lauria began blitzing the Tyrrhenian coast of Calabria north of the Angevin encampment at Catona in an obvious attempt to interdict Anjou's flow of replenishments and reinforcements (Map 3). Most crucially, he took ten galleys and made a lightning lunge in the dark of night on Nicotera, where Pietro Ruffo, the count of Catanzaro, captained an Angevin garrison of 500 knights and 2,000 infantry. The surprise must have been near total. The stunned Angevins abandoned their posts and withdrew into the hinterlands as the Aragonese fleet burned eight ships in the harbour and disembarked a raiding force of rapacious *almugavars* who subjected the city to the sack.[51] 'With the taking of Nicotera', notes Giovanni Amatuccio, 'the Siculo-Aragonese gained possession of the principal Angevin base in the lower Tyrrhenian, which had been, through the campaign of 1283, the safe harbour for the army and the fleet.'[52] It also gave the *almugavars* a second beachhead on the western littoral

[48] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk X, ch. XX, pp. 398–9; Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. LXXX, p. 502. See also Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, pp. 75–6; Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, p. 102.

[49] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. LXXVIII, p. 501. See also Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, p. 102.

[50] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. LXXIX, pp. 501–2; ch. LXXXII, p. 503. See also Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 76; Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 35.

[51] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. LXXXII, p. 503. See also Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 76; Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 70.

[52] Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 77.

of the mainland, in addition to Scalea, from which to make incursions into the interior. The increased menace to Anjou's supply lines made his position at Catona untenable. Rations were already stretched thin, Reggio remained hostile and desertions had begun to skyrocket. Charles had no choice but to pull up stakes and withdraw.[53]

By 22 August, Charles of Anjou was retreating north along the Ionian coast of Calabria. Lauria hounded him with the Aragonese fleet, landing first at Caulonia (55 miles or 88 km south of Crotone), which he captured with a mere 300 *almugavars*. He disembarked another 1,000 at Trebisacce, about 80 miles (130 km) north of Crotone. From there, he struck inland – claiming Castrovillari, Cassano and Cerchia. He then returned to Trebisacce, re-embarked his *almugavars* and steered south to seize Crotone. Meanwhile, another 2,000 *almugavars* under the *adalid* Matthaeus Fortunatus plundered the Basilicata and the bordering Calabrian communities. None of these conquests was lasting, but they served Lauria's purpose – to distract Charles from renewing his assault on Sicily. Anjou, instead, halted his retreat at Brindisi and expended his energies dealing with the *almugavar* devastations, even attempting to retake Scalea, but he was thwarted at every turn. By the end of autumn, he finally retired to northern Apulia to overwinter in Foggia.[54]

At this point, Roger realized that there was little else that could be accomplished for the time being, so he sought to use the hiatus to reward and compensate his crews. According to the Genoese chronicler Iacopo Doria, he steered twenty of his ships south sometime in October to the island of Jerba in Tunisia's Gulf of Gabes, just offshore from the eponymous city.[55] The Ibadi Muslims who inhabited it were reputed to be notorious marauders and were, thus, considered fair game for Christian corsairs. Roger and his crews fell upon them, amid the sort of slaughter typical for such predatory depredations of the age. He even positioned a galley in the narrow channel between the island and the mainland to ensure few would escape. The fact that the island was technically a fief of the Hafsid rulers of Tunis, tributaries of Aragon, mattered little. Those who resisted or could not flee were cut down. Neocastro noted more than 4,000 were massacred while another 6,000 were taken captive, among whom was the island's emir – Margam ibn

[53] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk X, ch. XXII, pp. 400–2. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 65–7; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, pp. 74–5.

[54] Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, bk X, ch. XXIII, pp. 402–3; Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. LXXXII, pp. 503–4. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 71–2; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, pp. 78–80.

[55] Doria, *Annales Ianuenses*, V, p. 60.

Sebir.[56] Muntaner characteristically inflated the number of prisoners to 10,000. The amount of plunder was reported to be equally as prodigious. Muntaner maintained that Lauria 'made so much gain that the expenses of the galleys and the cost of fitting them out were cleared'.[57] And that was the point of the expedition. An outraged Michele Amari labelled it an act 'of thievery and avarice worthy of pirates',[58] but, in truth, it was simply the admiral's method of making up for shortfalls in crown funding for fleet operations. And it endeared him to his crews who were recompensed only sporadically for their services from the royal coffers. Supplying his men with the opportunity to supplement their paltry pay through the acquisition of spoils retained for Roger the fierce loyalty denied his predecessor, Jaime Perez. As a result, Roger routinely led his men on lucrative raids after almost every campaign. It was, in fact, one of the reasons the Aragonese crewmen proved far more committed than their Angevin counterparts.[59]

The occupation of Jerba also had a significant strategic purpose. As the new rulers of Sicily, the Aragonese had a vested interest in controlling both military and commercial traffic through the Sicilian Channel, which flowed between Sicily and North Africa. Mastery of Jerba and Kerkenna (another island about 50 miles, 80 km, to the north, which Roger also raided and later occupied) had long been regarded as key to achieving this very goal, along with suzerainty over Malta – already subjugated. This was why King Roger II had conquered the two islands in the earliest years of the Norman Kingdom of Sicily in the preceding century.[60] And clearly that was Lauria's intent. Before returning to Messina, he had a castle called the Bordj el-Kebir built on Jerba, signalling that he wanted to use the islands to command the sea lanes through the central Mediterranean as had his Norman and Hohenstaufen predecessors while, at the same time, denying it to the Angevins (Map 5).[61]

As it turns out, the effort in no way distracted Lauria from his primary task: to obstruct any attempt by Charles of Anjou to retake Sicily and to so degrade his capabilities that the reviled Capetian would never

[56] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, chs LXXXII–LXXXV, pp. 505–10; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk I, ch. XXX, col. 946. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 74–9; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, pp. 81–2; Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, pp. 103–4.

[57] Muntaner, I, ch. CXVII, p. 292.

[58] Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 79.

[59] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, pp. 124–32.

[60] Charles D. Stanton, *Norman Naval Operations in the Mediterranean* (Woodbridge, 2011), pp. 102–27.

[61] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 126.

be able to mount another serious campaign to do so in the future. This was because, unbeknown to either protagonist at the time, Lauria had already won. To be sure, Charles had every intention of renewing the endeavour the following spring. He had ordered his trusted bailiff, Count Roger of San Severino, to begin collection of a subvention to raise yet another army and had issued directives to his *justiciars* in Calabria, Apulia and the *Principato* to set about gathering arms and provisions for the undertaking. Unfortunately for him, fate had other ideas. Shortly after the turn of the year, Anjou's health deteriorated, and on 7 January 1285 he died in Foggia, ironically not 25 miles (40 km) from the Castel Fiorentino where his great Ghibelline predecessor Frederick II had passed away – his dreams of a lasting empire also frustrated. Wracked by quartan fever (malaria), Charles of Anjou succumbed at the age of 58 with the excruciating realization that he had failed in his life's quest.[62] And Roger of Lauria was, in no small way, at least partly responsible for that. Roger had, at last, exacted a measure of retribution for the slaughter of his father on the battlefield of Benevento nearly twenty years before. But the admiral was far from finished.

[62] Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 94–9; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 83; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 253–5.

13

FRANCE'S CRUSADE AGAINST ARAGON (MAY–NOVEMBER 1285)

NEITHER THE DEMISE OF CHARLES of Anjou nor the continued incarceration of his son and heir brought the bloody conflict to a conclusion. The combustible forces that had ignited it had not yet abated, much less dissipated. The impetus for dynastic territorial expansion, papal power politics and the Sicilian aspiration for some level of self-determination continued to rage like a conflagration burning out of control, consuming all before it.

The war merely entered a brutally destructive new phase, while sustaining a temporary change of venue from the Italian peninsula to the Iberian. The prize in contention was the very Crown of Aragon itself. As was previously noted, Pope Martin IV declared Peter III, whom he had excommunicated on 13 January 1283, forfeit of his kingdom at Orvieto on 21 March. He followed it up in August by dispatching legate Jean de Cholet of Saint Cecilia to Paris to offer the throne of Aragon to Charles of Valois, the third son of King Philip III of France. Philip formally accepted on 2 February 1284 and the papal legate, with all due ceremony and solemnity, invested the young prince with the Crown of Aragon on 27 February. Of course, it would not be as easy as all that to actually claim the crown. Philip and his papal patron realized that Peter was unlikely to relinquish the throne without registering a strong objection, that is, the French would have to take it by force. Accordingly, Pope Martin issued a papal bull on 3 May, formally installing Charles of Valois as King of Aragon and, the following month, he officially proclaimed a crusade to wrest the reins of power from Peter, the excommunicate.[1]

[1] Michele Amari, *La Guerra del Vespro Siciliano* (9th edn, 3 vols, Milan, 1886), II, pp. 112–13; J. N. Hillgarth, 'The Problem of a Catalan Mediterranean Empire 1229–1327', *The English Historical Review*, Supplement 8 (1975), pp. 1–54, esp. 28; Steven Runciman, *The Sicilian Vespers* (Cambridge, 1958), pp. 242–3.

PHILIP'S INVASION OF CATALONIA (SPRING 1285)

Pope Martin passed away in Perugia on 28 March of the following year (1285), but what he had set in motion had taken on a momentum of its own. By the second Sunday after Easter (mid-April 1285), Philip had mustered a massive army at Toulouse.[2] In order to do so, he had collected church tithes with papal permission, heavily taxed his own feudal aristocracy and even borrowed 10,000 *livres tournois* from the bankers of Bruges.[3] According to Bernat Desclot, the effort produced 'the most mighty army that the crown of France had gathered together in that part within a hundred years'.[4] The Catalan chronicler went on to claim that 7,000 knights, 18,000 crossbowmen and at least 100,000 other infantrymen had been assembled.[5] His countryman, Ramon Muntaner, offered only a modestly less exorbitant estimate of 'eighteen thousand armed horse and innumerable men afoot'.[6] Italian contemporary observers gave comparably inflated figures. Giovanni Villani of Florence said there were 20,000 cavalry and 80,000 infantry,[7] while Iacopo Doria of Genoa ventured that Philip led 20,000 horse and an 'infinite number of foot'.[8] Modern scholars, however, posit a more sober approximation of around 8,000 troops altogether – 1,500 knights accompanied by about 6,500 infantry.[9] Still, it was said to have been the largest French expeditionary force to cross the Pyrenees since the time of Charlemagne.[10]

[2] Bernat Desclot, *Chronicle of the Reign of King Pedro III of Aragon, A.D. 1276–1285*, trans. F. L. Critchlow (Princeton, 1928), ch. LIX, p. 188.

[3] J. Lee Shneidman, *The Rise of the Aragonese–Catalan Empire 1200–1350* (2 vols, New York, 1970), II, p. 324.

[4] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. LIX, pp. 187–8.

[5] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. LIX, p. 188. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 126–7; H. J. Chaytor, *A History of Aragon and Catalonia* (London, 1933), p. 106, who pass along similarly bloated numbers like Amari's claim of 17,000 men-at-arms.

[6] Ramon Muntaner, *Chronicle*, trans. Lady Goodenough (2 vols, London, 1920), I, ch. CXIX, pp. 297–8.

[7] Giovanni Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, ed. Francesco Dragomanni (4 vols, Florence, 1845), I, bk VII, ch. CII, p. 433.

[8] Iacopo Doria, *Annales Ianuenses*, *Annali Genovesi di Caffaro e de' suoi continuatori dal MXCIX al MCCXCIII*, ed. Luigi Belgrano and Cesare Imperiale di Sant'Angelo (5 vols, Fonti per la Storia d'Italia, Genoa, 1890–1929), V, p. 69.

[9] T. N. Bisson, *The Medieval Crown of Aragon* (Oxford, 1986), p. 89; Lawrence Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean: The Catalan–Aragonese Fleet in the War of the Sicilian Vespers* (Gainesville, 2003), p. 37; John Pryor, 'The Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', *Journal of Medieval History*, IX (1983), pp. 179–216, esp. 195; Shneidman, *Aragonese–Catalan Empire*, II, p. 324.

[10] Critchlow, Desclot's *Chronicle*, p. 188 note 3.

The Capetian monarch understood, however, they he could not expect to prevail over a maritime power such as Peter's Catalonia without substantial naval forces. As a consequence, the French fleet was even more impressive than the ground contingent. Philip spent 260,000 *livres tournois*, about a quarter of the crusade's total mobilization costs, to assemble and arm it.[11] Predictably, the range of estimates provided by contemporary chroniclers is broad and universally elevated. Desclot declared that the king of France 'caused one hundred galleys to be built on the banks of the Rhône', along with various support vessels constructed in Genoa, Narbonne, Marseilles and other ports of Provence.[12] 'And by sea came a hundred and fifty galleys', wrote Muntaner, 'and fifty ships with victuals, and *llenys*, *taride* and barges innumerable.'[13] Villani asserted that 120 ships, between galleys and other vessels, had been armed in Provence.[14] Lastly, Iacopo Doria contended there were 100 galleys.[15] Modern historians, like Camillo Manfroni and John Pryor, have mostly settled on the latter number.[16] In addition, Lawrence Mott surmises there were another 110 or so auxiliary ships of sundry sorts.[17] To crew this formidable fleet, Philip reportedly recruited men from Narbonne to Pisa.[18]

To oppose this massive military machine, Peter could muster very little. Even in normal times, his power was far from absolute. He never possessed the undivided backing of his barony. The interests of the various regions that comprised the kingdom diverged too greatly. The war made it worse. Support of his Sicilian adventure was far from unanimous. While the barons and bourgeois of Catalonia (whose commercial and feudal interests directly benefited from the enterprise) invested fully in the undertaking, those of Aragon and Valencia were less enthusiastic. Since the campaign offered them no new holdings, they saw little to be gained. They were particularly indignant that they had not been consulted beforehand. So, when Peter attempted to apply the *bovaticum* (a general tax previously levied only in Catalonia under the name *bovatge*)

[11] Camillo Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana* (3 vols, Livorno, 1897–1902), II, p. 147; Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 38; Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 195.
[12] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. LIX, p. 187.
[13] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. CXIX, p. 298. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 126.
[14] Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, I, bk VII, ch. CII, p. 433.
[15] Iacopo Doria, *Annales Ianuenses*, V, p. 69.
[16] Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, p. 147; Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 196.
[17] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 38.
[18] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. LIX, p. 187.

to both Aragon and Valencia, the nobility of these provinces balked. An assembly of Aragon's nobles, knights, church prelates and town burghers (called the *Cortes*) was convened at Tarazona in September 1283 to insist that the king confirm their privileges and seek their counsel before imposing any new taxes. When he disregarded their demands, they convoked a general *Cortes* the following month in Zaragoza, where they formed what came to be known as the Union of Aragon – complete with its own armed forces. Valencia and Catalonia soon followed suit. Peter ultimately had no choice but to accede to their demands. He, thus, became reliant on the *Cortes* for the funding and recruitment of his forces. Now that he was under papal anathema and considered deposed by the church, the recalcitrance of the *Cortes* to comply with the king's requests only escalated. Peter was basically on his own, when it came to defending the realm from the anticipated French incursion. His only recourse was to resort to guerrilla warfare with what few troops he could attract to his personal banner: essentially his own household retainer and the modest numbers of *almugavars* that he, himself, could afford.[19]

To make matters worse, Peter's brother James betrayed him. When their father, James I the Conqueror, passed the Crown of Aragon to Peter upon his death on 27 July 1276, he also bequeathed to James junior the throne of Majorca, which included the mainland counties of Cerdanya and Roussillon along with the city of Montpellier (Map 5). But, on 20 January 1279, Peter compelled his younger brother to pay him homage for Majorca at the royal palace in Perpignan (the capital of Roussillon), earning the latter's everlasting enmity.[20] As a consequence, James II, King of Marjorca, favoured Philip of France early on, recognizing the Capetian sovereign as his overlord for Montpellier in August 1283.[21] Peter, thereby anticipating that James would facilitate Philip's crusade, sought to take his brother by surprise in his castle at Perpignan in early April 1285 (Fig. 13). James, however, escaped through an offal-fouled sewer drain.[22] Now, the latter openly supported Philip's invasion of Aragon, giving the French army free passage through lower Roussillon, the preferred route for traversing the eastern Pyrenees into

[19] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. LX, p. 189. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 121–6; Bisson, *Medieval Crown of Aragon*, pp. 88–9; Chaytor, *History of Aragon and Catalonia*, p. 104; Hillgarth, 'Problem of a Catalan Mediterranean Empire', pp. 27–8; Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, pp. 36–7.

[20] Critchlow, Desclot's *Chronicle*, p. 203 note 16; Hillgarth, 'Problem of a Catalan Mediterranean Empire', p. 23.

[21] Critchlow, Desclot's *Chronicle*, p. 197 note 3.

[22] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. LXII, pp. 197–206. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 126; Chaytor, *History of Aragon and Catalonia*, p. 106.

13 Containing both Romanesque and Gothic aspects, the Palace of the Kings of Majorca was built by James II of Majorca, the younger brother of Peter III of Aragon, in 1276 at Perpignan in Roussillon, from which his ally Philip III of France launched the ill-fated invasion of Catalonia in the spring of 1285.

Catalonia.[23] Peter simply did not have enough troops to hold the region, so he withdrew to a more defensible position in the Pyrenees: a mountain pass on the Catalonian frontier called the Col de Pannisars. The French king arrived on the outskirts of Perpignan in mid-May beneath the royal battle banner *Oriflamme* and pitched camp outside the walls. The city soon declared itself for him.[24] But when the French attempted to march into Catalonia, they found their way barred by Peter and his *almugavars* at the Col de Pannisars and were forced to return in frustration to Perpignan.[25] In all of Roussillon only Elne, about 12 miles (19

[23] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. LXIV, pp. 213–14; Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. CXIX, pp. 296–7.
[24] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. LXVI, pp. 227–32; Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, chs CXX–CXXI, pp. 300–2.
[25] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. LXVIII, pp. 238–9.

km) southeast of the capital, remained loyal to Peter. It was upon this small town that Philip vented his vexation. His forces surrounded it on 22 May and left it in rubble a few days later, strewn with the bodies of nearly every inhabitant regardless of sex or age.[26] Peter had been served notice – the crusade to take his crown had begun in earnest.

Peter probably had only a few hundred men at his disposal, but with them he so strongly fortified the Col de Pannisars 'with redoubts and barrels filled with sand', according to Michele Amari, that he rendered it virtually impassable.[27] For three weeks, he held Philip at bay while the latter endured a deluge of desertions and constant papal prodding from the legate, Jean de Cholet.[28] But Peter must have realized that he could not hold the French host off forever and that he could do little to prevent Philip's immense fleet from bypassing him altogether, so he dispatched a letter at the end of May to Roger of Lauria, summoning him to bring a fleet of thirty galleys and twelve *taride* to harass French naval operations.[29] Relief from Roger, however, was weeks (perhaps months) off, and Peter's position was too precarious to last long. Indeed, in early June the abbot of Sant Pere de Rodes, a Dominican monastery near Peralada populated partly by French friars, appeared in Philip's camp along with a certain Don Guillem de Pau, a knight sent by James II of Majorca. The two men told the French king and his entourage of a rugged mountain pass, called Massana or Manzana, just 9 miles or 14 km east of the Pannisars. Within a few days, the entire French army had crossed the Pyrenees to pitch camp near Peralada – about 30 miles (48 km) north of Girona, the Catalan gateway to Barcelona itself.[30]

Having been outflanked, Peter quickly descended from the Col de Pannisars into the Empordà (northeastern Catalonia, centred on Figueres) to organize a guerrilla resistance to stall the French advance. He then hastened to Girona, which he provisioned as best he could and garrisoned with 100 knights and 2,000 *almugavars* under Don Ramon Folch, Viscount of Cardona. Afterwards, Peter withdrew to fortify

[26] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. LXIX, pp. 244–7; Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. CXXI, pp. 302–3. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 128; Chaytor, *History of Aragon and Catalonia*, p. 106.

[27] Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 130.

[28] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. LXXIII, pp. 256–7.

[29] Giuseppe La Mantia, *Codice diplomatico dei re aragonesi di Sicilia* (2 vols, Palermo 1918), I, doc. no. 78, p. 157. See also Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 196.

[30] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. LXXIV, pp. 261–4. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 132.

14 Medieval ramparts of Girona, which withstood the withering French siege of 1285 for nearly ninety days, effectively exhausting the army of Philip III of France and thwarting the invasion of Catalonia.

Barcelona itself and equip what galleys were available for war.[31] Aside from that, he was relegated to the role of concerned observer as events beyond his control unfolded. It was now up to the courageous defenders of Girona and the adroit admirals of his fleet.

With the path now cleared of all obstacles of consequence, the French host moved inexorably through northern Catalonia to lay siege to Girona in the third week of June (Fig. 14). At the same time, Philip's enormous fleet cruised down the coast of Catalonia to capture Roses (Rosas in Spanish) in the gulf of the same name, not 30 miles (48 km) northeast of Girona. Philip had learned from his travails crossing the Pyrenees that he would have to provision his army by sea rather than overland, so he had the port of Roses rendered the principal supply depot for the campaign. 'And this he did in order that the victuals could

[31] Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 132–4.

not fail him,' reported Muntaner.[32] Thus, Roses ironically became the linchpin of the entire crusade. Philip placed an unheralded admiral by the name of Guillaume de Lodève in command of a squadron of twenty-five galleys to protect Roses and his sea supply chain.[33] The latter subsequently sailed south to take the port of San Feliú, about 12 miles (19 km) southeast of Girona. Most of the inhabitants fled upon the approach of the French fleet, but Lodève lured them back into town with promises of alms. He then incarcerated them in their own homes, which he soon set ablaze.[34] Having 'pacified' the town in such a horrific manner, the French initiated a shuttle of supply barges between Roses and San Feliú, escorted by Lodève's galleys.[35]

Peter reacted by arming as many galleys as he could find at Barcelona – only eleven or twelve – which he placed under the leadership of Ramon Marquet and Berenguer Mallol.[36] Their task was to disrupt French supply-by-sea operations along the Catalonian coast as much as practicable. The two commanders found the undisciplined and ill-experienced French crews easy prey for their *guerre de course*. Philip's most professional mariners would normally have come from Provence, but the disastrous defeats sustained previously at Nicotera and Malta had left the province bereft of seasoned seamen.[37] Worse still, the summer sun had provoked an outbreak of plague among the besiegers at Girona that had spread to the French fleet at Roses, decimating its crews. As a result, a small number of Catalan galleys was able to wreak havoc on the French supply convoys, targeting one or two transport vessels at a time.[38] Nonetheless, Catalan corsair activity could not stem the flow of supplies enough to curtail the French incursion in any meaningful way. Bolder steps were needed, and these would require more ships. Reinforcement from the Sicilian fleet was imperative.

Word of Peter's request for help reached Roger through the *Infante* James sometime in mid-July while he was enmeshed in the siege of Taranto. It took some time for the admiral to disengage from his Apulian

[32] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. CXXII, p. 307.
[33] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. CXXIX, pp. 322–3. See also Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, pp. 148–9.
[34] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. CXXVII, pp. 319–20. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 134.
[35] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. CXXIX, p. 323.
[36] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. LXXXV, p. 307; Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. CXXIX, pp. 322–3. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 134–5.
[37] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 38.
[38] Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, pp. 148–9.

campaign and return to Messina in order to refit his fleet.[39] He finally departed from Sicily in early August with around thirty-four galleys, arriving at La Goletta (La Goulette, the port of Tunis) around the middle of the month (Map 5).[40] Roger sailed from La Goletta after a few days, apparently leaving behind four galleys under the command of a Catalan nobleman of Montoliu for undisclosed reasons. He finally reached Barcelona around 23 August with about thirty warships.[41]

A few days prior to the arrival of the Sicilian fleet, Marquet and Mallol, emboldened by the earlier successes of the *guerre de course*, had decided to pursue more aggressive action: an attack on the French fleet at Roses itself. They found Guillaume de Lodève with around twenty-five galleys between San Feliú and Roses on a Friday just before vespers.[42] Though badly outnumbered, the Catalans were undaunted. It was never about numbers for them; it was about the quality of the crews, and in this they were vastly superior. Each side saw the other well in advance and had ample time to prepare for battle.[43] Muntaner indicated that Lodève divided his flotilla into two – a primary formation of fifteen and a reserve rank of ten,[44] while Desclot insisted that he formed his fleet into three echelons abreast.[45] Evidently, it mattered not at all. Muntaner reported that the Catalan commanders had their eleven galleys lashed together with long ropes, by prow and poop, 'in order that the enemy should not be able to get between them' and simply unleashed the frightful firepower of their Catalan crossbowmen upon the French ships.[46] Before long, the baleful barrage had accomplished its task. 'En Ramon Marquet and Berenguer Mallol saw that the decks of the enemy galleys had been in great part cleared by the crossbowmen who had been dealing mortal wounds,' wrote Muntaner, 'and those who were still left on deck were men of rank, and were more in need of doctors than

[39] Bartolomeo di Neocastro, *Historia Sicula (1250–1293)*, in *Cronisti e scrittori sincroni napoletani editi e inediti*, ed. Giuseppe del Re (2 vols, Naples, 1868), II, ch. XCII, pp. 519–20. See also Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, p. 148.

[40] Niccolò Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, ed. Ludovico Muratori (Rerum Italicarum Scriptores, X, Milan, 1727), bk II, ch. II, col. 948.

[41] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XCIII, 343; ch. XCIV, p. 348. See also Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, pp. 151–2.

[42] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. LXXXV, pp. 311–12. See also William L. Rodgers, *Naval Warfare under Oars, 4th to the 16th Centuries* (Annapolis, 1940), pp. 135–6.

[43] Charles D. Stanton, *Medieval Maritime Warfare* (Barnsley, 2015), p. 146.

[44] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. CXXX, p. 329.

[45] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. LXXXVI, p. 313 and note 1. See also Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, p. 150.

[46] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. CXXX, pp. 330–1. See also Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, pp. 149–50.

of fighting.'[47] Then, the two admirals of Aragon unbridled their galleys so that their *almugavar* marines could deal with the reduced French divisions in detail.[48] The result was a crushing rout. Desclot recorded that seven French galleys were captured along with their crews, Lodève among them. The other French vessels either fled or foundered. The Catalans sank two filled with captives of low rank, towing the others back to Barcelona.[49] Muntaner claimed an implausible 4,000 French mariners perished as compared to a mere 100 Catalans,[50] but there can be no doubt that the French fleet had suffered an humiliating setback, which would presage an even more devastating defeat only days later.[51]

Given the conflicting accounts of the chroniclers, piecing together a plausible sequence of events leading up to the Battle of Les Formigues remains extraordinarily challenging. What is clear is that a profusion of players and circumstances came together serendipitously in the early days of September 1285 to produce for Roger of Lauria a highly propitious opportunity, of which he took full advantage. A basic outline of occurrences emerges from the written records. Philip of France, livid over the lopsided loss meted out to Lodève by Marquet and Mallol, ordered his Genoese admirals Giovanni d'Oreo and Enrico de Mari to take the remainder of the French galley fleet at Roses (around twenty-five to thirty vessels) and 'go in pursuit of them and even though ye follow them to the ends of the earth, turn not back hither at any time until ye have brought them back to me captive'.[52] Bartolomeo Neocastro indicated that the ultimate objective was to blockade Barcelona – the hornet's nest itself.[53]

In the meantime (unbeknown to the French) on or about 2 September, Roger of Lauria left Barcelona (apparently bound for a raid on Roses) and, by chance, rendezvoused with Messieurs Marquet and Mallol shortly thereafter to form a combined Catalan-Sicilian fleet of around forty galleys. And, as luck would have it, the four straggling ships under the knight of Montoliu finally arrived in Barcelona from La Goletta, just missing the main fleet by hours. The four galleys immediately proceeded in pursuit, but apparently overshot the main body, which

[47] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. CXXX, p. 331.
[48] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. CXXX, pp. 331–2.
[49] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. LXXXVI, p. 314. See also Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, p. 150.
[50] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. CXXX, p. 332.
[51] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 39; Stanton, *Medieval Maritime Warfare*, pp. 146–7.
[52] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XCIV, p. 347.
[53] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. XCII, p. 521.

had perhaps beached for the night. The next day, the small squadron instead encountered the southbound French fleet. The Catalans turned stern, of course, and a long chase ensued during which they managed to escape into the looming darkness of dusk. They then fortuitously came upon the Aragonese armada.[54] Thus informed of the approach of the French fleet, it appears Roger set a trap.

On the evening of 3 September, Lauria either had his fleet loiter inshore of the Illes Formigues ('Ant Islets'), a rocky archipelago about 3 miles (5 km) northeast of the port of Palamós, or beached his galleys on the nearby Costa Brava. Sometime during the night, he spied the French fleet heading south toward Barcelona. Roger had each of his galleys hoist several lanterns up to the mastheads to give the impression of overwhelming numbers, then gave the order to attack.[55] The plan seems to have worked to perfection. Ten or so of the French ships under Enrico de Mari (according to both Neocastro and Speciale) promptly made a run for it, leaving their comrades in the lurch.[56] Lauria caught these last in a disorganized line, slamming into them from abeam (Map 10). 'Therewith the admiral drave his galley into the thick of the attack,' described Desclot, 'and bore down so fiercely against the side of a galley from Provence that at the first onslaught the weapons of defence along all that side of the galley were torn asunder and swept away.'[57] The well-attested night-fighting capabilities of his vaunted *almugavar* marines gave the Aragonese a distinct advantage in the subsequent hand-to-hand fighting on the decks of the engaged vessels.[58] All the remaining French galleys were either seized or sunk (about fifteen). Giovanni D'Oreo was among the captured.[59] 'And it was reckoned in this battle there had been slain or lost five thousand or more men from Provence or from France,' gloated Desclot.[60]

The wholesale destruction of the French galley fleet rendered Roses virtually defenceless. Roger quickly moved to capitalize. 'And then he went to the port of Roses where the found more than a hundred and

[54] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XCIV, pp. 348–9. See also Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 198.

[55] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XCIV, pp. 349–50; Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. CXXXV, pp. 344–5; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk II, ch. III, col. 949. See also Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 198.

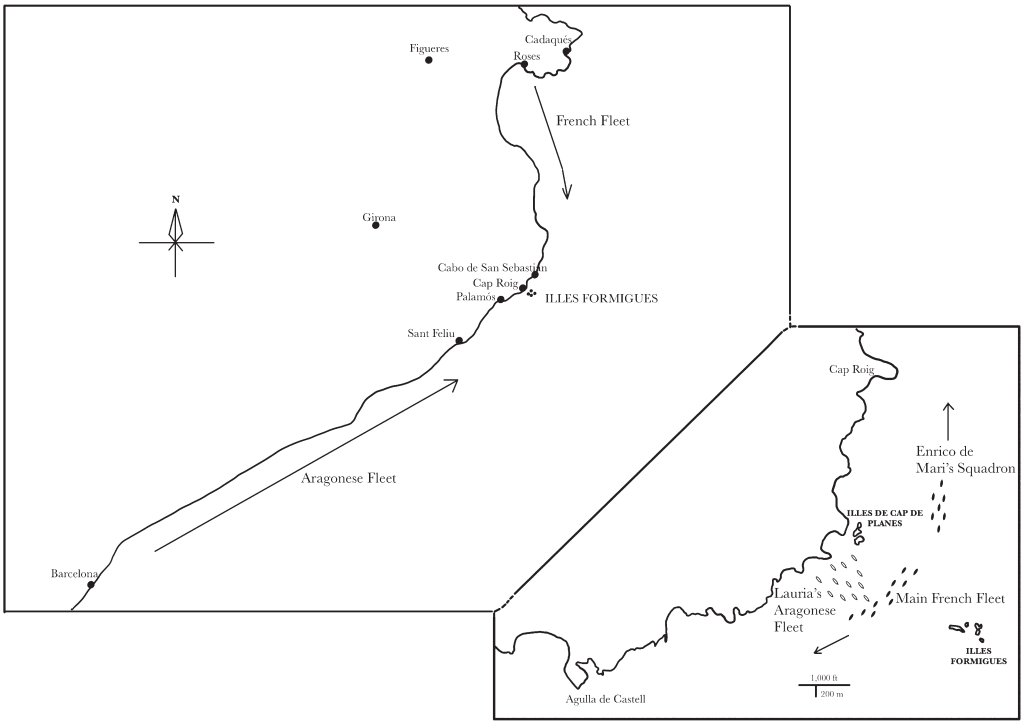
[56] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. XCV, p. 522; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk II, ch. III, col. 949.

[57] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XCIV, p. 350. See also Rodgers, *Naval Warfare under Oars*, p. 138.

[58] Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', pp. 199–200.

[59] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. XCV, p. 522.

[60] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XCIV, p. 351.



10 Battle of Les Formigues

fifty vessels, between *llenys* and ships, and *taride*, and took them all,' recorded Muntaner.[61] Roger's men subsequently ravaged the town, killing 200 French knights in the process. The remaining French defenders fled toward Girona to deliver the bad news to Philip.[62] After installing a garrison, Lauria then proceeded north to capture the port of Cadaqués. It was there, in the castle of Cadaqués, that he received envoys from the king of France: Don Ramon Roger de Pallars and Roger-Bernard III, the Count of Foix. The two noblemen proposed a truce, and the count of Foix famously threatened that Philip would hurl 300 ships against Lauria the following year if he did not accede. Roger's response in the words of Desclot provides a penetrating perspective into the man's psyche: 'I do not believe that any galley he [King Philip] hath nor any other of his vessels whatsoever would venture forth upon the sea save only under a safe conduct from the King of Aragon.' Then, in order to underscore the point in no uncertain terms, Lauria added, 'And I verily

[61] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. CXXXVI, p. 347.
[62] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. CXXXVI, p. 347.

believe that not only a galley or a ship of burthen could sail the seas but that not even a fish would dare rise out therefrom unless it should bear the device or arms of the King of Aragon upon its tail.'[63]

It was no baseless boast. The vanquishing of the French fleet of war by Roger and his Catalan colleagues, along with the subsequent seizure of the French supply depot at Roses, strangled Philip's supply lines and starved his army into infirmity. Contagion did the rest. Girona surrendered to Philip's forces three days after the calamity at Illes Formigues, but by then disease and deprivation ran rampant through the ranks. Philip, himself, fell prey to the pestilence. The Capetian crusade soon collapsed. By late September, the French army began a slow, agonizing exodus from Catalonia, tormented every step of the way by Aragonese guerrilla tactics. Out of compassion, Peter of Aragon granted the gravely ill French king and his entourage safe passage back across the Pyrenees, but such clemency did not extend to the invading army as a whole.[64] It was in this instance that Lauria revealed a disquieting vindictive streak. He and his men, mostly *almugavars*, ambushed the French baggage train as it transited the Col de Pannisars on 1 October. 'And they slew such numbers of the French,' claimed Desclot, 'that all the road was covered with corpses and with the dead bodies of horses and beasts of burden, and likewise with baggage and arms.'[65] In all fairness, Roger was, at least in part, motivated by a desire to compensate his crews with spoils, but, at the same time, he seems to have been intentionally burnishing a reputation for remorseless ruthlessness.[66]

Badly mangled and much diminished, the emaciated remnants of the once great French host staggered out of the Pyrenees and shuffled into Perpignan where Philip the Bold, King of France, finally succumbed on 5 October to the dysentery that had already annihilated much of his army.[67] As for Peter of Aragon, victorious at last, he now turned his attention to retribution. He commanded Roger to embark his son,

[63] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XCIV, pp. 353–4.

[64] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XCV, pp. 357–62; Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. CXXXVIII, pp. 349–52; Ptolemy da Lucca, *Die Annalen des Tholomeus von Lucca in doppelter Fassung nebst Teilen der Gesta Florentinorum und de Gesta Lucanorum*, ed. Bernhard Schmeidler (Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Munich, 1984), p. 205. See also Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 200; Stanton, *Medieval Maritime Warfare*, p. 148.

[65] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XCV, pp. 366–7.

[66] Mott, 'How cruel was Roger de Lauria?', *Calalan Review*, 7.1 (1993), pp. 79–96; Manuel José Quintana, *Lives of Celebrated Spaniards*, trans. T. R. Preston (London, 1833), p. 147.

[67] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XCV, pp. 366–7; Ptolemy da Lucca, *Die Annalen,* p. 206. See also Bisson, *Medieval Crown of Aragon*, p. 89.

Alfonso, along with 500 horse and some 2,000 *almugavars* on the Sicilian–Catalan fleet at the port of Salou (just south of Tarragona) and invade Majorca in order to punish his brother James for his complicity in the Capetian crusade.[68] He, himself, headed off to the castle of Xátiva to release his nephews Alfonso and Fernando, the *Infantes* de la Cerda who were pretenders to the crown of Castile, in reprisal against King Sancho IV of Castile for not having supported him against the French incursion.[69] Fate, however, intervened with a different destiny. En route, Peter, too, fell victim to affliction. On 11 November, at a village called Vilafranca del Panadés about 37 miles (60 km) west of Barcelona, Peter III – the great warrior king of Aragon – passed away barely a month after the death of his French nemesis.[70] Thus, by the end of 1285, all four of the principal protagonists of the conflict (Charles I of Anjou, Peter III of Aragon, Philip III of France and Martin IV of the Holy See) had perished. Yet the War of the Sicilian Vespers was still not nearly at an end and nor was Roger's role in it.

SERVING TWO MASTERS (NOVEMBER 1285–JANUARY 1287)

Since the primary players in the conflict had all changed by the end of 1285, a period of accommodation was required so that the new principals could adjust to their new roles. Thus, something of a pause in the struggle took place. On 2 April 1285, Giacomo Savelli, the scion of a wealthy Roman family, was unanimously elected to replace Martin IV as pope, taking the name Honorius IV. Shortly thereafter, he confirmed Robert II, Count of Artois, as regent for the Kingdom of Sicily in the absence of Charles II – Anjou's heir, still held captive by the Aragonese in Barcelona. Philip IV ('the Fair') of France, barely 17 years old when his father passed away at Perpignan, was preoccupied with assuming the reins of power following his coronation at Reims on 6 January 1286.[71] Alfonso, Peter's eldest son, was in the midst of conquering Majorca with the aid of Roger's fleet when he learned of his father's death. He stayed

[68] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XCVI, pp. 372–3; Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. CXLI, pp. 358–61.
[69] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. CXLII, pp. 361–2.
[70] Desclot, *Chronicle*, ch. XCVI, pp. 373–9; Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, chs CXLIII–CXLVI, pp. 362–8.
[71] Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 149–59; Bisson, *Medieval Crown of Aragon*, p. 90; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 259–62.

on Majorca long enough to subjugate the island before returning to Valencia for his own coronation as Alfonso III in early February.[72]

With regard to Roger, his life had become decidedly disordered and unpredictable. He had lost his primary patron and now, in effect, served two sovereigns who faced divergent challenges. The problem presented itself almost immediately. When word of Peter's passing reached Majorca in mid-November 1285, Lauria found himself caught between Alfonso, who wanted the Sicilian fleet to remain in order to complete the conquest, and the Sicilian sailors, who demanded the right to return home to defend Sicily. The latter feared unless they did so straightaway that they would be integrated into the royal forces of Aragon and become permanently embroiled in Iberian affairs. Roger tried to dissuade them by pointing out that it was too late in the season to risk sailing back to Sicily, but his entreaties fell upon deaf ears when his second-in-command, Vice Admiral Frederico Falcone of Messina, sided with the Sicilian crews. They weighed anchor in calm seas on 23 November, but on 3 December a violent storm struck the fleet somewhere between the Balearic Islands and Sardinia (Map 5). Roger gave orders to run before the wind and had lanterns hoisted up to the mastheads in hopes of preventing inadvertent collisions, but the tempest still took its toll. Six ships were lost: two from Augusta, one from Catania, one from Sciacca and two from Messina – including the one bearing the *Protontino* Frederico Falcone. The remaining forty survived only by jettisoning most of their cargo, including the booty won at Roses. The battered fleet finally limped into Trapani around 11 December.[73]

Roger proceeded to Palermo the next day to advise Queen Constance of the death of her husband, the king. A few days later, she sent word by courier to the *Infante* James, who was in Messina at the time. The latter subsequently convoked a parliament of the island's leading barons and prelates in Palermo to witness his coronation as King of Sicily on exactly the same day as his older brother ascended to the throne of Valencia: 2 February 1286.[74] The state of affairs, whereby the king's two oldest sons simultaneously sat on their respective thrones, was in accordance with Peter's wishes, but it was a situation fraught with peril for their

[72] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CLI, pp. 376–7. See also Chaytor, *History of Aragon and Catalonia*, p. 124.

[73] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CI, pp. 532–3; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk II, ch. VIII, cols 951–2. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 160–2; Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, pp. 156–7.

[74] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, chs CI–CII, pp. 533–4; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk II, ch. IX, cols 952–3. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 162–6.

subjects – especially for key courtiers like Lauria.[75] Shortly thereafter, Roger shrewdly negotiated a mutual defence pact between the two sovereigns with the aid of his lifelong friend, Conrad di Lancia.[76] Lauria's explicit intention was to fuse a unified Aragonese front against the continuing threat posed by the French-backed Angevin–papal coalition. His implicit purpose, however, was almost certainly to prevent the possibility that he, as admiral of Aragon and Sicily, would be compelled to serve two masters at cross-purposes. For a time, it worked.

On 8 March, Roger evidently felt secure enough at the Sicilian court to take his leave of James and head off to Catalonia with two galleys and a *vaccetta* on a recruiting expedition.[77] Another motive must have been to proffer his personal allegiance to Alfonso, because upon his arrival at Tortosa he rode off to attend the latter's formal investment as King of Aragon at Zaragoza on 9 April 1286.[78] While he partook in the coronation ceremonies, he commanded his nephew Giovanni (John) di Lauria to sail south with a small squadron on a raid of Moorish North Africa in order to help compensate his crews and keep them battle ready. Muntaner maintained that, after a brief stop in Valencia, Giovanni ravaged the Maghrib coast all the way to Tunis, capturing as many as 300 prisoners before being recalled by Roger (Map 5).[79]

By late May, Roger had recruited an additional twelve Catalan galleys and a *galionus* at Barcelona, which were subsequently joined by four more galleys from Majorca. These vessels, along with those he had brought with him from Sicily, gave him a formidable flotilla of eighteen galleys, a *vaccetta* and a *galionus*. The admiral apparently had a particular purpose in mind for his newly composed squadron – a purpose that Muntaner made clear when he described what it carried: 2,000 *almugavars* and 100 horsemen (probably a combination of *janeti* and *stipendiarii*). This latter complement of cavalry led Lawrence Mott to believe that at least six of the galleys were *galeae apertae in puppa*. Such a force could only have been assembled for a specific sort of mission: amphibious assault

[75] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. CXLV, pp. 365–7. See also Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 261–2.

[76] Jerónimo Zurita, *Anales de la Corona de Aragón*, ed. Angel Cannelas López (8 vols, Institución 'Fernando el Católico', Zaragoza, 1967–77), II, bk V, ch. LXXV. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 170.

[77] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CII, p. 534. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 172.

[78] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CLIV, p. 383.

[79] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CLV, pp. 384–5.

operations associated with large-scale marauding. Roger revealed the target in early June: Provence.[80]

He started with Serignan, just north of Narbonne (Map 5). There, on the beach at dawn, he disembarked his cavalry and *almugavars* to despoil the environs. Word of the raid soon spread to Beziers (about 6 miles, 10 km, to the northwest) and some 30,000 local residents hastily assembled to confront the invaders. But these were evidently farmers and ordinary citizens of the city with little or no military experience. They were no match for Lauria's battle-hardened professionals who soon put them to panicked flight amid predictable carnage, losing only a handful of their number.[81] With opposition quickly eliminated, the Catalans soon sacked and burned Serignan. It was Agde's turn next. At dawn of the following day, Roger led half of his forces on a successful assault of the town (about halfway between Narbonne and Montpellier) in which Muntaner noted that 'the men over fifteen and under sixty were all put to the sword'.[82] At the same time, the other half of the admiral's contingent took Vias (about 2 miles, 3 km, to the west), presumably slaughtering all the men of fighting age there as well. Tellingly, the Catalan chronicler claimed that his countrymen capped the operation as follows: 'And the light galleys and armed *llenys* went up the canal of Vias, and the large galleys went to the city of Agde and in each of these places they took all the *llenys* and barges they found.'[83] The Catalans remained afterwards, pillaging and despoiling the entire district. 'And when they had done this,' wrote Muntaner, 'the admiral made all his followers embark and he set course for Aigues-Mortes and he found ships, *llenys* and galleys, and all he found he took and sent to Barcelona.'[84]

A few days later, Lauria entered the port of Narbonne on the Aude River and commandeered even more vessels before returning home. Muntaner effused, 'His gain and that of all those who were with him, was infinite.'[85] And, while the acquisition of plunder was certainly in keeping the admiral's policy of generously rewarding his crews to encourage their continued enthusiastic participation, the expedition had a far more strategic objective. Mott explains in stark terms: 'The purpose of the raid, however, was not booty, but to cripple the maritime

[80] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CLII, pp. 378–9; Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CII, p. 534. See also Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, 157; Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, pp. 236–8.
[81] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CLII, pp. 378–9.
[82] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CLII, p. 380.
[83] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CLII, p. 380.
[84] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CLII, p. 381.
[85] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CLII, p. 381.

population of southern France permanently.'[86] By annihilating as many of the able-bodied men of the region as he could and confiscating all the shipping available, Lauria may well have accomplished his aim.[87] 'Following this raid into Provence and Languedoc, French units ceased to play a significant part in the rest of the war,' concluded Mott after some assiduous analysis.[88]

Meanwhile, the Sicilian fleet was not idle in Lauria's absence. In June 1286, James launched two separate squadrons to keep the enemies of his kingdom at bay. The first one departed Palermo on the 8th with Berenguer de Sarrià at the head of twelve galleys (Muntaner indicated twenty), crewed by Palermitans and men from the Val di Mazara. His basic mission was to reconnoitre and ravage the Tyrrhenian coast of the mainland up to Naples and, perhaps, even Rome in order to throw Angevin naval activity into disarray (Map 3). Hence, he coasted up Calabria to Capo Palinuro, some 20 miles (32 km) southeast of Castellabate; and then made directly for Amalfi, the environs of which he terrorized for four days. His men sacked and burnt Maiori, Minori, Ravello and Positano. All 'galleys and *llenys*' found drawn up on shore were destroyed. Sorrento suffered the same ignominy at their hands. Sarriá continued around the peninsula to Castellammare, but was dissuaded from disembarking by Neapolitan chivalry. So he moved on to capture both Capri and Procida, staying in the area most of the summer to wreak havoc on Angevin shipping.[89] Muntaner reported, 'He entered the port of Naples and took away ships and *llenys* and galleys and burnt some and then he sailed along the coast as far as the fief of Rome and took ships and *llenys* and galleys which he sent to Sicily.'[90] Neocastro noted that on 4 September he even invested the Torre Astura, the seaside citadel of the famed Frangipane family (5 miles or 8 km southeast of Anzio) where Conradin had been captured following the Battle of Tagliacozzo. There, in a bit of ironic revenge, his men skewered with a lance Iacopo Frangipane, the son of Giovanni Frangipane who had (in 1268) delivered into the hands of Charles of Anjou the young Hohenstaufen claimant to the throne of Sicily.[91]

[86] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 238.
[87] Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, pp. 157–8.
[88] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 238.
[89] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CXLIX, pp. 373–4; Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CII, p. 534. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 173; Giovanni Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro (1282–1302)* (Bologna, 2012), p. 87.
[90] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CXLIX, p. 374.
[91] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CIII, p. 535. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 173.

The second Sicilian squadron, composed of twenty galleys armed in Messina (Muntaner maintained there were only twelve), sailed from that port under the command of Berenguer Villaragut on 22 June. It cruised along the Ionian coast of Calabria past Capo Colonna on the east side of the toe to Crotone, where the Sicilians seized several Angevin vessels. The flotilla then ventured into the Gulf of Taranto and captured some more ships in the vicinity of the port of the same name before pillaging Gallipoli on the western shores of Apulia. Villaragut subsequently rounded Capo Leuca on the heel to prey on shipping in the environs of Otranto. He attempted to penetrate the port of Brindisi but was thwarted by the harbour chain, so he traversed the Strait of Otranto in order to harry the island of Corfu.[92] At one point, he apparently disembarked his crews, who Neocastro claimed won a skirmish with French mercenaries. Villaragut's squadron returned by the way of the Apulian littoral to arrive back into Messina at about the same time as Sarriá's flotilla reached Palermo: 4 October.[93] Unfortunately, while these two operations succeeded in disrupting Angevin shipping, they did not significantly impede the enemy's efforts to restore his naval capability. Substantial Angevin war fleets were being armed in the arsenals of both Brindisi and Naples. On the obverse, King James had permitted the Sicilian shipyards at Palermo and Messina to fall into disrepair.[94]

In this regard, Roger's role as Admiral of Aragon and Sicily, responsible for a theatre of operations that included the entirety of the Western Mediterranean, was a distinct disadvantage. It imposed upon him repeated absences from one part of the realm or the other, causing him to temporarily neglect a major component of his armada. In this case, it was the Sicilian fleet that suffered the most. After the profitable plundering of Provence and the Languedoc, Roger finally took his leave of Alfonso in early August only to be struck by a sudden summer storm somewhere east of the Balearics, forcing him to return to Majorca for repairs. These were completed by 16 August, at which time he again set sail for Sicily.[95] He, however, did not remain long. Prior to his death, King Peter had granted Roger the island of Jerba, so the admiral was determined to fortify his new fief and consolidate Aragon's sway in the region. Accordingly, he soon equipped a squadron and set course

[92] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. CIX, pp. 266–7; Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CIV, p. 535. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 173–4.

[93] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CIV, p. 535. See also Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, p. 158.

[94] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 41; Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 200.

[95] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 238.

for the Gulf of Gabes.[96] 'The castle on Jerba [the Bordj el-Kabir] was expanded and reinforced so that it could act as a base for the fleet,' concluded Mott.[97] He did not stop there. Roger had previously raided Kerkenna, a sprawling island opposite Sfax; and he now orchestrated a total conquest, followed by occupation.[98] Muntaner reported that he then plundered the Barbary coast all the way to Tolmetta (ancient Ptolemais), about 65 miles (105 km) northeast of Benghazi, Libya.[99] When the flotilla arrived back in Palermo sometime in late September or early October, the crews were able to sell over 1,200 slaves for almost 5,000 ounces of gold.[100]

Even then, Roger's duties did not allow him much of a respite. Later in October, King Alfonso summoned Lauria to bring 'forty armed galleys' to Barcelona for an anticipated invasion of Menorca, according to Muntaner. It was time to exact retribution on the island's Muslim *almojarife* ('treasurer' or 'administrator') who had betrayed the Crown of Aragon by warning the Hafsids of North Africa of the impending arrival of King Peter's expedition to Constantine in 1282. Roger reached Barcelona on All Saints' Day (1 November) to find that Alfonso had already mustered 500 knights with horses and a 'full 30,000 *almugavars*'.[101] These numbers along with the ship count were undoubtedly over-the-top embellishments by Muntaner. Nonetheless, a substantial force departed from the port of Salou near Valencia to arrive at Majorca on 10 December 1286, despite what Muntaner described as a 'winter so severe' that oarsmen 'lost the tips of their fingers owing to the cold'.[102] After Christmas, the fleet forged on to Menorca, but encountered another fierce winter tempest that scattered it. Twenty galleys containing both the admiral and the king managed to reach Mahon, however, and disembark sufficient forces to defeat the *almojarife*'s army in a bloody land engagement outside the town. The *almojarife,* himself, surrendered shortly after Alfonso laid siege to the castle. The conquest of the island was complete by 17 January 1287, after which the king finally released Roger to return to Sicily.

[96] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. CLIX, p. 293.
[97] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, pp. 238–9.
[98] Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, p. 157; Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 129.
[99] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. CLIX, p. 293.
[100] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 129.
[101] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. CLXX, pp. 409–10.
[102] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. CLXX, pp. 410–11.

Some speculate that Roger sailed by way of Roussillon and Provence, so that he could again raid the region,[103] but it is just as likely that he simply sought to avoid the worst of the blustery winter weather by skirting the southern shores of what is now modern France. Whatever his plan may have been, it did not work out well. Squalls in the Gulf of Lion broke up the fleet once again. The scattered ships sought shelter and laid up for repairs wherever they could.[104] It must have been early spring before all the dispersed stragglers were able to make their way to Sicily. By that time, their Angevin adversaries had prepared an elaborate surprise for the exhausted Sicilian seamen and their overstretched admiral.

[103] Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 88; Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 41; Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 200.

[104] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. CLXXII, pp. 413–17. See also Bisson, *Medieval Crown of Aragon*, p. 90; Chaytor, *History of Aragon and Catalonia*, p. 128.

14

BATTLE OF THE COUNTS (23 JUNE 1287)

HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR A HEADSTRONG pope and a fiercely partisan French knight, the papally sponsored Angevin dream of recovering Sicily would have died along with Philip III of France and his ill-fated Aragonese crusade. Weary of his captivity in Catalonia, Charles of Salerno (heir to Charles I of Anjou) signed an agreement on 27 February 1287, known as the Treaty of Cefalù, in which he renounced his claim to the crown of Sicily in favour of James of Aragon, as a condition of his release. The only problem was that it was not his decision to make. On his deathbed in January 1285, Anjou had designated Robert II, Count of Artois, as regent for the *Regno* while his son remained incarcerated. When Honorius IV donned the papal pallium in April of that same year as successor to the deceased Martin IV, he reaffirmed Robert's role by appointing him (along with Gerardo da Parma) as his bailiff for the kingdom, which he considered a papal fief.[1] In February of the following year, the new pope went so far as to excommunicate James in response to his coronation as king of Sicily, along with the entire population of the island.[2] So it was no surprise that both Honorius and Robert of Artois rejected, out of hand, Charles the Lame's pact with the Aragonese as a 'deal with the devil' done under duress; and then renewed preparations to retake the island.[3] Honorius, himself, passed away in Rome in early April 1287, but by then all was in readiness and Robert, a seasoned soldier, was resolved to see the issue through.

The count of Artois laid claim to a long and loyal connection to the House of Anjou, in principle, and Charles, in particular. His father,

[1] Giovanni Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro (1282–1302)* (Bologna, 2012), p. 85; Jean Dunbabin, *The French in the Kingdom of Sicily, 1266–1305* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 103–7; Steven Runciman, *The Sicilian Vespers* (Cambridge, 1958), p. 263.

[2] Bartolomeo di Neocastro, *Historia Sicula (1250–1293)*, in *Cronisti e scrittori sincroni napoletani editi e inediti*, ed. Giuseppe del Re (2 vols, Naples, 1868), II, chs CV–CVI, pp. 535–6. See also Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 262–3.

[3] Dunbabin, *French in the Kingdom of Sicily*, pp. 106–7.

Robert I of Artois, was brother to both Charles of Anjou and King Louis IX of France, making Robert II nephew to Charles. Anjou and the senior Artois fought together in the disastrous Seventh Crusade, in which Saint Louis invaded Egypt. In fact, it was while leading an ill-considered cavalry charge at Mansourah in 1250 that Robert I lost his life. Twenty years later, the son (Robert II) would participate in the French king's final, fruitless crusade that died in the desert outside Tunis, where he would become comrade-in-arms with his Uncle Charles. And when his uncle's siege of Messina in the aftermath of Revolt of the Vespers fell apart in the fall of 1282, the younger Artois was one of the first to respond to Anjou's call for reinforcements with a force of some 600 men-at-arms.[4] The young knight was entrusted with command of the army in Calabria as early as 13 July 1284;[5] and, on 10 August, during the doomed siege of Reggio in anticipation of the invasion of Sicily, Charles – confident of a victory that was never to come – named Robert his Vicar-General for the island.[6] Finally, in the two years since Anjou's demise, Artois had been indefatigable in his defence of the mainland *Regno* against the incessant incursions of the Aragonese.[7] Now, at last, he was poised to go on the offensive once again.

Ever since he became regent, Robert had been overseeing an aggressive restoration of Angevin naval capability. By April 1287 he had amassed, in relative secrecy, a fleet of forty-three galleys at Castellammare on the north side of the Sorrento Peninsula and another forty at Brindisi. If he could combine the two fleets into one mighty armada, the Angevins could theoretically overwhelm the Siculo-Aragonese, who – given the sad state of their naval forces that spring – would have had difficulty mustering a fleet barely half that size. And that was precisely Robert's plan: unite the Apulian and Campanian naval contingents for a joint assault on Sicily.[8] His timing could hardly have been better.

[4] Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, pp. 40–1; Dunbabin, *French in the Kingdom of Sicily*, pp. 101–2.

[5] Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 60; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 246.

[6] Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 74.

[7] Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, pp. 84–7; Dunbabin, *French in the Kingdom of Sicily*, p. 106.

[8] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CX, pp. 541–2; Niccolò Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, ed. Ludovico Muratori (Rerum Italicarum Scriptores, X, Milan, 1727), bk II, ch. X, col. 953; Giovanni Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, ed. Francesco Dragomanni (4 vols, Florence, 1845), I, bk VII, ch. CXVII, p. 445. See also Michele Amari, *La Guerra del Vespro Siciliano* (9th edn, 3 vols, Milan, 1886), II, pp. 179–80; Camillo Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana* (3 vols, Livorno, 1897–1902), II, pp. 159–60; Lawrence Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean: The*

On the Aragonese side, Roger of Lauria had just returned to Messina to find the Sicilian fleet in a sorry state. Realizing the urgency of the situation, the admiral flung himself into renovating the arsenal and refitting the available galleys for war – even to the point of conducting repairs with his own hands.[9] Nonetheless, the situation was sufficiently dire that, according to Bartolomeo Neocastro, Roger's naysayers at court accused him of malfeasance and dereliction of duty over the disrepair.[10] Alerted to the accusations, Lauria hastened directly from the arsenal to the royal court – 'his face smoky, his doublet dirty, and his arms bare' – to present an impassioned defence before the king himself in which he remonstrated with his detractors: 'Consider that while you gave yourself to indolence, I fought; while you were safe, I was in the midst of battle; while you were in idleness, I feared not to confront dangers and death.'[11] Then, after offering his resignation, which was resoundingly refused, he promptly returned to his frantic labours in the arsenal.

Neocastro described in some detail the flurry of activity that the admiral galvanized in the arsenal of Messina:

> The masters of each art, having been summoned first and foremost, all rush in unison to the arsenal. And already a joyous noise from every part commences, already the artisans are putting hands to work and to the tasks, and implements are employed in industrious handiwork. Night falls on the craftsmen, but great lights are borne all throughout the works. Here lies the spruce tree, the iron splits the pine; here it is strengthened, there the oak that buttresses the sides of the hulls is underpinned, here the oars are straightened, there the pitch is liquefied by slow fire; here the hawsers of linen are tightened, there begins the caulking of the wooden planks; here are arranged the compartments of the boats, nor was it an undertaking empty of effort; here are placed the canteens and plates, there are prepared the berths for the repose of the men at night; there men and women strive in competition, large and small they work, each lending a hand to help, these carry planks on their heads, those on their shoulders, and he who with great exuberance hauls the beams.[12]

Catalan–Aragonese Fleet in the War of the Sicilian Vespers (Gainesville, 2003), p. 42; John Pryor, 'The Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', *Journal of Medieval History*, IX (1983), pp. 179–216, esp. 200.

[9] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CX, pp. 545–8. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 181–2; Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, pp. 159–60; Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 200.

[10] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CX, pp. 545–6.

[11] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CX, pp. 547–8. See also Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, p. 160.

[12] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CX, p. 545.

On about 15 April, Robert of Artois put his plan into effect. The Apulian fleet sailed out of the harbour at Brindisi under the command of Reynald III Quarrel, count of Avella. Contained onboard his forty galleys and an unknown complement of support vessels were some 500 knights and around 1,500 infantry. The force first headed for Malta (perhaps as a diversion), but, after a brief perfunctory raid on the island, turned north again to arrive at Augusta (just north of Syracuse) on 1 May. Founded by the Emperor Frederick II in 1232 near the ruins of the ancient Greek city of Megara Hyblaea, the town was still recovering from the appalling annihilation of its inhabitants by Anjou's lieutenant, Guillaume L'Étendard, in 1270. And, in a stroke of luck, most of the city's current citizens happened to be attending a trade fair in the nearby town of Lentini, so Reynald's men were able to effortlessly occupy Augusta and its castle. Encouraged by the ease of their initial success, some of the Angevins made an attempt on Catania to the north, but the city successfully resisted until help could arrive.[13]

That help was supplied by King James himself. Having learned of the Angevin incursion while in Messina, he hurried to Catania on 4 May with a contingent of 400 knights. These were joined by another 400 led by Guglielmo Calcerando and Riccardo di Passanneto. Together with 200 more knights from Catania under Riccardo di Santa Sofia, the Sicilians chased the Angevins back to Augusta where they ensconced themselves.[14] In the meantime, Roger of Lauria had hurriedly armed what ships he could at Messina (about forty) and joined James in Catania. From there, the two contingents made their way to Augusta – the king by land and the admiral by sea. Roger arrived first on 13 May. He promptly disembarked his crews and surged into the city, quickly overcoming all resistance until he reached the castle, to which he immediately laid siege.[15] He was dismayed, however, to find that the Angevin fleet had already departed. Lauria soon learned from a pair of captured Dominican friars aligned with the Angevins that the assault on Augusta had merely been a feint. The Apulian fleet had sailed westward along the south shore of the island, possibly with Marsala as an objective.[16]

[13] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CX, pp. 541–2; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk II, ch. X, col. 953. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 180, 182–3.

[14] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CX, p. 549. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 182–3.

[15] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CX, pp. 551–2. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 184–5; Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, p. 160.

[16] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CX, pp. 552–3. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 185; Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', pp. 200–1.

Fearing that the Angevins would attack the lightly defended west end of island, Roger petitioned the king upon the latter's arrival in Augusta a few days later to permit him to go in pursuit with the fleet. James wanted him to stay and support the siege, but reluctantly agreed as long as the admiral provided some of his ship's carpenters to build siege machinery. One of these men, an engineer named Castiglione, constructed a catapult that he subsequently employed with such deadly accuracy that it destroyed a well within the walls of the citadel – its only source of potable water. The deed would contribute immensely to the eventual surrender of the fortification to the king's forces. In the meantime, the admiral struck off after the Angevin fleet, leaving James to continue the siege of the citadel with the support of Lauria's childhood friend, Conrad di Lancia, who would serve as the king's able envoy to the besieged Angevins.[17]

The enemy flotilla did, indeed, disembark at Marsala, but the attack was a desultory, half-hearted affair that was easily repulsed. It seems the Genoese admiral, Enrico de Mari, joined Reynald for a second assault on Marsala a few days later with a dozen more galleys from the *Principato*, but that too failed. Once again, the Apulian fleet (presumably including Enrico de Mari's twelve galleys) was gone before Roger could reach the assailed city.[18] The sources said Lauria then searched the Tyrrhenian, but, given the near impossibility of interdicting a fleet of enemy galleys in so vast an expanse, this must have essentially consisted of scouring the north shoreline of the island. In the process, he picked up the support of an additional five galleys at Palermo under Palmiero Abate. When he failed to find the enemy, Roger returned to Messina sometime in late May or early June, realizing that he had been misled and outmanoeuvred.[19] The one development he had long dreaded had come to pass.

Up to this point, the actual Angevin plan had worked to perfection. Robert of Artois had achieved his intended objective: the unification of the Apulian and Campania fleets at Castellammare in the Gulf of Naples by the artifice of having the Apulian fleet circumnavigate Sicily clockwise in order to avoid the well-defended Strait of Messina. Now his combined armada was in a position to attack the island with overwhelming force – only this time the beachhead would not be Messina,

[17] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CX, pp. 556–8. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 186–7.

[18] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CX, p. 558. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 185–6; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 89.

[19] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk II, ch. XI, col. 954. See also Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 202.

where the Angevins had failed rather spectacularly twice before. The landing zone would, instead, be the Val di Mazara in the west – a more sparsely populated region with a broad shallow shoreline, susceptible to amphibious assault. The Dominican friars captured at Augusta had warned Roger of this, but he would have been a fool to have completely trusted information extorted from partisan prisoners. Even if he had accepted their word without reservation, it was simply impossible – barring another intelligence coup – to pinpoint precisely where and when the Angevins would come ashore.[20] And patrolling indefinitely the entire western end of the island with his fleet was not practicable, so he must have understood that there was but one option remaining: to seek out the enemy fleet in its home waters and destroy it before it could sail for its uncertain objective.[21] The admiral, in fact, would later convey as much to his crews.

Once Roger had re-equipped and resupplied in the arsenal of Messina, he sailed north with the entire Sicilian fleet – forty to forty-four warships. He cruised into the Gulf of Naples on 16 June, where he himself boarded a small bireme (probably a *lleny*) to scout out the location of the Apulian fleet. He found it beached along the wide waterfront of Castellammare at the northern base of the Sorrento Peninsula, just over 2 miles (3 km) south of Pompeii. His worst fears had been realized: the Apulian fleet had joined with that of the *Principato* to form a combined Angevin armada of at least eighty-four galleys strong. Lauria's fleet was outnumbered nearly two to one.[22] Roger remained, nonetheless, undeterred. Mere numbers had never daunted either him or his Catalan–Sicilian crews. What another admiral might have viewed as a disastrous disappointment, he saw as a rare tactical opportunity. From Lauria's vantage point, Angevin naval power had been conveniently concentrated in a single locale so that it could be decisively demolished in a single pitched battle.

The problem, of course, was that the deployment of the Angevin galleys – beached stern-first along the broad strand of Castellammare's

[20] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CX, pp. 552–3. See also Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 201.

[21] Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, p. 161.

[22] Iacopo Doria, *Annales Ianuenses*, *Annali genovesi di Caffaro e de' suoi continuatori dal MXCIX al MCCXCIII*, eds Luigi Belgrano and Cesare Imperiale di Sant'Angelo (5 vols, Fonti per la storia d'Italia, Genoa, 1890–1929), V, p. 80; Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CX, pp. 561–2; 'Templar of Tyre', *Deeds of the Cypriots*, trans. Paul Crawford (Farnham, 2003), p. 95. See also Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 90; Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 202.

harbour – made them virtually unassailable. If the numerically inferior Sicilian fleet was to have any chance of success, Lauria would have to lure the Angevin armada out so that it could be dealt with in detail. Artois' admiral, Narjot de Toucy – an experienced naval commander – was quite understandably reluctant to relinquish his tactical advantage, so Roger attempted every conceivable ruse to draw him into battle.[23] According to Niccolò Speciale, he plundered both Procida and Ischia at the northern approach to the gulf, doubtless harrying shipping to and from the port of Naples in the process.[24] His fleet demonstrated continuously before the harbour at Castellammare, pitching projectiles and casting aspersions aplenty. His crews hoisted the Sicilian insignia high, while dragging that of Anjou in the water from the poops of their war galleys. Roger even dispatched heralds to deliver a formal challenge to Robert of Artois. By 23 June 1287, the Angevins had endured enough humiliation. Confident in their numerical superiority, they finally emerged from the protected confines of Castellammare.[25]

Neocastro reported that, prior to the battle, Lauria gathered 'all the captains and people of the galleys' and put the stakes of the engagement in stark terms:

> Know you savvy men that we have already fought these foes at other times and, with the help of the Lord, we will return home victorious over them. We have them close now and ready to come against us and against Sicily, our country. Consider now how much danger it would be if they come to the shores of the homeland and begin battle with the Sicilians. War having been born, there would be horrible killing and famine, terrible deaths, and, what's worse, dangerous seditions amongst the people. Because of which, I exhort you, O comrades, to rejoice in your hearts that divine dispensation keeps for us the enemy enclosed in their gates, where fortune has brought us, so that we can destroy those who want to destroy Sicily.[26]

As compelling as that appeal may have been, what the admiral said afterwards was, perhaps, just as motivating if not more so: 'The spoils,

[23] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 42; Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 202; Charles D. Stanton, *Medieval Maritime Warfare* (Barnsley, 2015), p. 149.

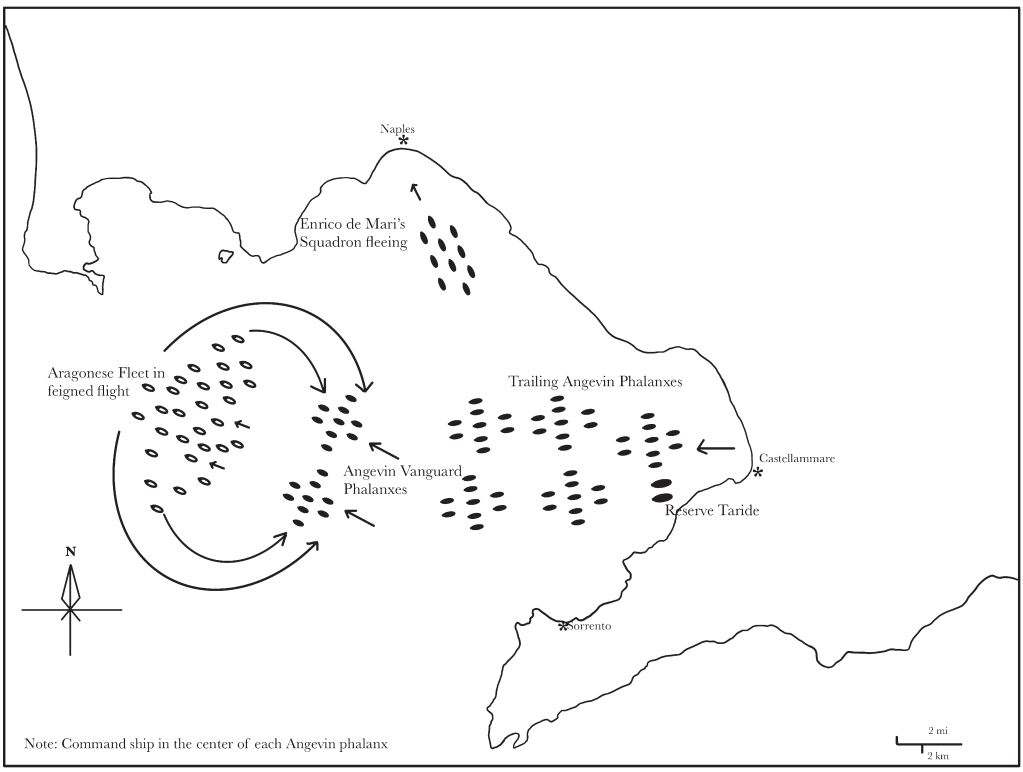
[24] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk II, ch. XI, col. 954. See also Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, p. 161.

[25] Iacopo Doria, *Annales Ianuenses*, V, p. 80; Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CX, pp. 562–3; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk II, ch. XI, col. 954; Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, I, bk VII, ch. CXVII, pp. 445–6. See also Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, pp. 161–2; Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 202.

[26] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CX, p. 562.

the weapons, the treasures of the enemy, when Christ gives us the victory, we leave all to you.'[27]

As is normally the case with medieval maritime engagements, the details of how the battle transpired remain obscured by the conflicting and confused accounts of the chroniclers, leaving enlightened speculation as the sole alternative available to modern scholars for determining what actually may have occurred. That said, contemporary accounts have provided critical clues for piecing together a logical sequence of events in the subsequent struggle. The battle began badly for the Angevins. Crucial mistakes were made before the first blow was even struck. Admiral Narjot de Toucy inexplicably elected to forsake the standard crescent moon formation, which – given the Angevin advantage in numbers – would have easily enabled the Angevin fleet to envelope the wings of Lauria's much smaller line, crushing it in a classic pincer movement. Instead, according to Neocastro, the Angevin



11 Battle of the Counts

[27] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CX, p. 562.

fleet reorganized itself into seven diamond-shaped phalanxes, composed of nine galleys apiece (Map 11). Each squadron was commanded by a count whose ship was fronted by two galleys, trailed by another two and flanked on each side by two more. This would have accounted for sixty-three of the eighty-four Angevin galleys. The others, including Enrico de Mari's twelve Genoese galleys, would have presumably been held in reserve along with the two *taride* bearing the banners of Anjou and the papacy. While the precise whereabouts of Robert of Artois immediately preceding the engagement remains uncertain, Neocastro indicated that Narjot de Toucy led one of the seven squadrons from his flagship. The other squadron commanders were Reynald di Avella, Hugh de Brienne, Guy de Montfort, Jean de Joinville and the counts of Manoppello and L'Aquila. Evidently, the idea was to use the phalanxes to break up Lauria's line.[28] In reality, the stratagem turned out to be a blunder of biblical proportions. All it accomplished was to divide the much larger and imposing Angevin force into a number of undersized units, bestowing upon the Aragonese admiral an opportunity to isolate and eliminate them individually, which apparently was exactly what he did.

The Aragonese–Sicilian battle formation is unknown, but, as events unfolded, it may have been immaterial. Roger may even have wanted his fleet to appear as a disorganized and haphazard muddle in order to draw the Angevins into his ensnarement. Neocastro did, however, note that Lauria carefully briefed his crews prior to the initiation of hostilities. Select fighting units were assigned specific tasks: some squads of *almugavars* were to strike at the enemy's standards, while others were to defend the Sicilian and Aragonese banners; groups of crossbowmen were to aim for the Angevin forecastles and aftercastles, while others were to target enemy oarsmen and provide cover for grappling operations; and so forth.[29] Angevin command vessels were almost certainly singled out for special attention.[30] The ensuing events revealed that Roger must have also given tailored instructions to his individual ship captains. Whatever those orders may have been, it is abundantly clear that he had plenty of time to issue them. After all, it would have taken the Angevins a considerable interval to arrange their galleys in the comparatively complex and precise fighting units described above. And the relative inexperience of most of Narjot's commanders would have made

[28] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CX, pp. 562–3. See also Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', pp. 202–3.

[29] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CXI, pp. 563–4. See also Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 203.

[30] Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, I, bk VII, ch. CXVII, p. 446. See also Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 203.

the undertaking all the more involved and difficult. Lauria, assuredly, would have watched with keen interest.

Both Giovanni Villani and Niccolò Speciale testified that, once the battle began, Lauria feigned flight.[31] This seems quite credible when one considers the lack of combat experience that bedevilled the Angevin galley commanders. Lauria, himself, had ensured this dearth of experienced enemy mariners with his victories at Malta and Les Formigues along with the subsequent ravaging of Provence, Roussillon and the Languedoc. Besides, he had successfully feigned flight before – barely three years earlier in this very setting in the battle that resulted in the capture of the Angevin crown prince. And the canny Aragonese admiral had every reason to believe that numerical superiority and chivalric pride would make the Angevin counts arrogant and foolhardy. In accordance with common notions of Gallic knighthood in such circumstances, they likely competed with one another to catch up with the fleeing Aragonese–Sicilian galleys. Lauria probably let them pursue headlong until a phalanx or two forged well ahead of the others. 'Roger of Lauria, the admiral of the Sicilians, … seeing said armada come on disordered and in disarray, took his advantage,' reported Villani. 'He turned his galleys to attack said armada, especially the galleys of the French lords whom he knew were bad masters of the sea.'[32] It would take no great leap of imagination to envision the Aragonese admiral encircling and stifling the lead Angevin phalanxes before the others could come to their rescue. They would have been easy prey – their oarsmen exhausted from the chase.

Lauria would then have turned his attention to the much more manageable remainder of the Angevin fleet. At this point, Enrico de Mari must have felt he was in the grip of some dire *déjà vu*: he had seen this spectacle before – at Les Formigues in September 1285. And he did what he had done back then – he absconded, taking his twelve Genoese galleys with him.[33] This, of course, generated more uncertainty and turmoil within the ranks of those that remained. Indications are that Lauria then had his galleys corral what was left of the Angevin armada, but apparently restrained his men from attacking at first, so that the enemy

[31] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk II, ch. XI, col. 954; Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, I, bk VII, ch. CXVII, p. 446. See also Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 203.

[32] Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, I, bk VII, ch. CXVII, p. 446.

[33] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk II, ch. XI, col. 954; Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, I, bk VII, ch. CXVII, p. 446. See also Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, pp. 161–2; Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 42; Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 203.

would expend his ammunition and strength in the summer sun. After some time, one of his captains, a Guglielmo Trara, could no longer hold himself in check and advanced against the Angevin fleet. He soon found himself surrounded by four French galleys, but Sicilian ships from Milazzo, Lipari and Trapani immediately leapt to the rescue, followed by some from Syracuse, Catania, Augusta and Taormina. Before Trara was finally extricated, galleys from Cefalù, Eraclea, Licata and Sciacca all joined the fray as well.[34]

By then, a full-fledged free-for-all had set in. French formation integrity had totally broken down. As per Lauria's previous instructions, the Sicilian galleys struck their now-very-vulnerable Angevin counterparts amidships in an attempt to smash their oars and render them 'dead in the water', while Catalan crossbowmen cleared their decks of able-bodied fighting men.[35] The battle became a prolonged bloodletting at this point that lasted well into the late afternoon. When it came to boarding and hand-to-hand combat aboard the engaged vessels, Villani gave evidence that the heavily encumbered French knights, despite their courage and skill at arms, lacked the experience at sea to deal with the nimble *almugavar* marines, who apparently knew to capture but not kill the Angevin counts.[36] All were taken alive, hence the name ultimately bestowed upon the engagement – 'the Battle of the Counts'.

The defeat was an undiluted disaster for the Angevin cause. Moreover, as if to stamp an exclamation point on the significance of the calamity, the Angevin garrison at Augusta – driven mad by thirst and hunger – capitulated to King James on that very same day.[37] As a result of the sea battle alone, Narjot de Toucy and most of the principal barony (at least thirty-two nobles) were among the some 5,000 enemy combatants taken captive.[38] 'The flower of the French nobility who had followed the

[34] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CXI, p. 564. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 189; Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 203.

[35] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CXI, p. 564. See also Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 203.

[36] Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, I, bk VII, ch. CXVII, p. 446. See also Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 203; Susan Rose, *Medieval Naval Warfare, 1000–1500* (London, 2002), p. 49.

[37] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CX, pp. 560–1. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 186–7; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 89.

[38] Iacopo Doria, *Annales Ianuenses*, V, p. 80; Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CXI, pp. 564–5; Ptolemy da Lucca, *Die Annalen des Tholomeus von Lucca in doppelter Fassung nebst Teilen der Gesta Florentinorum und de Gesta Lucanorum*, ed. Bernhard Schmeidler (Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Munich, 1984), p. 214; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk II, ch. XI, col. 954; 'Templar of Tyre', *Deeds of the Cypriots*, p. 95. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 189; Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, p. 163; Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval*

Angevins to Italy had been killed or taken prisoner,' notes John Pryor.[39] Angevin command and control had essentially been decapitated. Roger ransomed back most of the detained lords in order to remunerate his mariners whose pay was appreciably in arrears, but few of these men ever returned to play any substantial role in the Angevin cause.[40] Hugh de Brienne, for example, was saddled with crippling debt for the rest of his life, and Narjot de Toucy never took up his post as admiral of the Angevin fleet again.[41]

Perhaps more importantly, between forty and forty-four Angevin galleys were seized in the Gulf of Naples.[42] 'The fleets of the *Regno* had been decimated,' concluded Pryor.[43] Angevin naval power had, in fact, been rendered *hors de combat* for the remainder of the war. It would never again be a notable factor.[44] This gave the admiral of the Aragonese fleet *carte blanche* to do as he saw fit throughout the entire western Mediterranean basin. Following the clash off Castellammare, Lauria consolidated control of both Capri and Ischia, levying a toll on all traffic in and out of the gulf – and the Angevins were powerless to prevent it.[45] 'If the Aragonese could carry out their amphibious operations with virtual impunity,' observes Mott, 'it was because after the Battle of the Counts in June 1287 the Angevin fleet was too demoralized and disorganized to impede them in any meaningful way.'[46] Clearly, at this stage the Angevin–French–papal coalition no longer possessed the requisite naval capability to reconquer Sicily. The obvious ramification of this indisputable fact was that the conflict would have to either terminate or fundamentally transform. It did the latter, and Roger was at the heart of the transmutation.

Mediterranean, p. 42; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 264; Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 203.

[39] Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 204.

[40] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 42.

[41] Dunbabin, *French in the Kingdom of Sicily*, pp. 143–4, 150–1.

[42] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CXI, p. 564; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk II, ch. XI, col. 954. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 189; Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, p. 163; Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 42; Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 203.

[43] Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 204.

[44] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 42.

[45] Iacopo Doria, *Annales Ianuenses*, V, pp. 80–1; Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CXI, p. 565. See also Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 43.

[46] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 244.

15

TRUCES AND TREATIES (JUNE 1287–NOVEMBER 1291)

FOLLOWING THE BATTLE OF THE COUNTS, the war was transformed *au fond* by a fitful series of failed truces and treaties. Roger of Lauria, himself, inaugurated the process. Rather than subjecting Naples to the sack in the immediate aftermath of his triumph, as his Sicilian confederates would have wanted, he negotiated a truce with Robert of Artois and co-regent of the *Regno*, Cardinal Gerardo da Parma.[1] Sicilian partisans such as Bartolomeo Neocastro were sharply critical of the pact, and some, like Niccolò Speciale, even considered it treasonous, but Lauria's professed loyalty was to the Crown of Aragon, not Sicily, and the circumstances strongly suggest that the admiral's diplomacy was at the behest of King Alfonso III.[2] Along with the throne, Alfonso had inherited from his father all the crown's troubles with the *Cortes*. And the *Cortes* were no more supportive of the Sicilian adventure than they had been under the previous king; nor could they legitimately be compelled to do so, since the Crown of Aragon remained under papal anathema. In fact, rather than accede to the crown's appeals for more funding for the war, the *Cortes* reportedly dispatched envoys to France offering to recognize Charles of Valois as their liege lord in return for acknowledgment of their sovereign rights. Alfonso caved in to their demands on 20 December 1287 before anything could come of the overture, but the message was clear: he had to rid himself of this prolonged,

[1] Lawrence Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean: The Catalan–Aragonese Fleet in the War of the Sicilian Vespers* (Gainesville, 2003), p. 42; John Pryor, 'The Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', *Journal of Medieval History*, IX (1983), pp. 179–216, esp. 204.

[2] Bartolomeo di Neocastro, *Historia Sicula (1250–1293)*, in *Cronisti e scrittori sincroni napoletani editi e inediti*, ed. Giuseppe del Re (2 vols, Naples, 1868), II, ch. CXI, p. 565; Niccolò Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, ed. Ludovico Muratori (Rerum Italicarum Scriptores, X, Milan, 1727), bk II, ch. XI, col. 955. See also Camillo Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana* (3 vols, Livorno, 1897–1902), II, p. 164; Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, pp. 42–3.

coffer-draining conflict.[3] Roger's truce with Robert of Artois was, thus, probably part and parcel of the process of disengagement, authorized by Alfonso himself.

For his part, Roger saw the negotiated ceasefire as a means of compensating his mariners, most of whom had not been paid for months. As was mentioned earlier, the exorbitant ransoms obtained as a result of the agreement satisfied that need. Seizing Naples was not a realistic option in any event. The fleet apparently possessed no siege machinery and, according to Mott, 'was not organized for an amphibious operation against a large city'.[4] Camillo Manfroni confirms this by noting that Lauria had to content himself with 'devastating the neighboring lands, the Neapolitan islands and the cities of Sorrento and Castellammare'.[5] This was when Roger recaptured the islands of Ischia and Capri in order to interdict Neapolitan shipping entering or departing the gulf.

Most significantly, Roger almost certainly regarded the armistice as being in the best interests of the Crown of Aragon. While it seems evident that the admiral did not consult King James of Sicily in advance, documents contained in the Archivo de la Corona de Aragon (ACA) and other Aragonese registries attest that King Alfonso of Aragon not only knew of agreement with the regents of the *Regno*, he confirmed it on 1 June 1288.[6] Indeed, when James learned of Lauria's truce, he requested that his brother revoke it, but Alfonso pointedly refused to do so 'in order not to miss out on the undersigned pacts', according to Giovanni Amatuccio.[7] In other words, Lauria's true allegiances lay at the heart of his actions. Manfroni eloquently explains:

> He was above all Catalan [i.e., Aragonese], if not by birth, by upbringing, sentiment and custom. His king was he who ruled Aragon and his interests were that of the Crown of Aragon. When these were no longer

[3] H. J. Chaytor, *A History of Aragon and Catalonia* (London, 1933), pp. 124–7; Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 43.

[4] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 43.

[5] Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, p. 164.

[6] Giuseppe La Mantia, 'Documenti su le relazioni del Re Alfonso III di Aragona con la Sicilia (1285–1291)', *Anuari de l'Institut d'Estudis Catalans*, 2 (1908), doc. 16 (ACA), pp. 337–67, esp. 355; La Mantia, *Codice Diplomatico dei Re Aragonesi di Sicilia* (2 vols, Palermo, 1917–19), I, doc. CLXVII, pp. 375–7 and doc. CLXXXI, pp. 421–4. See also Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, pp. 42–3; Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 204.

[7] Giovanni Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro (1282–1302)* (Bologna, 2012), p. 90.

> the same as those of the Sicilians …, he abandoned the Sicilian cause without hesitation.[8]

And, in an appropriate illustration of this attitude, Roger utilized the respite provided by this truce to extort from the ruler of Tunis – through the intimidating presence of the Aragonese–Sicilian fleet – a peace 'in which that prince', writes Manfroni, 'recognized himself as vassal, not of the king of Sicily, but of the House of Aragon'.[9]

TREATY OF CANFRANC (OCTOBER 1288)

Moreover, Alfonso's own inclinations were laid bare for all to see the very next month at Oloron (Oloron-Sainte-Marie of Béarn in the Pyrenees region of southwestern France). Edward I of England, whose daughter Eleanor was betrothed to Alfonso and who had long feared that continued conflict in northern Spain and southern France would threaten his holdings in Gascony, convinced Alfonso to accept an arbitration on 25 July 1287. This resulted in an accord by which Charles of Salerno would be liberated in exchange for the following: 50,000 marks of silver, the prince's three oldest male offspring as hostages along with sixty nobles of France and the solemn vow that he would arrange a peace agreeable to all parties within three years. Failure to accomplish the latter clause would result in the Angevin heir's reincarceration or the forfeiture of the County of Provence to the Crown of Aragon.[10] The concordat, however, never came to fruition. Philip IV of France balked at the provision concerning Provence for obvious reasons and, when Girolamo Masci of Ascoli ascended to the papal throne as Nicholas IV on 22 February 1288, he refused to endorse it because he would accept nothing short of Sicily's unconditional submission to the will of the Holy See. The rise of Ghibelline opposition in central Italy, however, later caused the pope to relent. At his encouragement, Edward persisted in his mediation efforts and eventually brokered a treaty signed on 29 October 1288 at Canfranc in northern Aragon on the frontier with Béarn. Its conditions

[8] Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, p. 165.

[9] Isidoro Carini, *Gli Archivi e le Biblioteche di Spagna in rapporto alla storia d'Italia in generale e di Sicilia in particolare* (2 pts, Palermo, 1884), II, no. 150, pp. 214–15. See also Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, p. 166.

[10] Carini, *Gli Archivi e le Biblioteche di Spagna*, II, no. 141, pp. 212–14; Ramon Muntaner, *Chronicle*, trans. Lady Goodenough (2 vols, London, 1920), II, chs CLXVII–CLXVIII, pp. 405–7. See also Michele Amari, *La Guerra del Vespro Siciliano* (9th edn, 3 vols, Milan, 1886), II, pp. 197–200 note 1; Chaytor, *History of Aragon and Catalonia*, p. 129; Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 43; Steven Runciman, *The Sicilian Vespers* (Cambridge, 1958), pp. 264–5.

were much the same as its precursor, except that Edward offered funds and hostages of his own in order to guarantee its ratification by all the signatories.[11]

Charles of Salerno was subsequently released at the end of November, much to the dismay of James whose status as monarch of Sicily was now clearly in jeopardy. To his credit, Charles initially embarked upon a good-faith effort to honour the terms of the agreement. He proceeded first to Paris accompanied by of Aragonese envoys to seek the approval of Philip the Fair, but the latter, instead, arrested the Aragonese ambassadors and sent Charles on his way to Italy with an armed escort. When Charles reached the papal palace at Rieti in the spring of 1289, Nicholas IV was even less receptive. He peremptorily annulled the accord on the rationale that Charles had consented to it under duress. With the backing of Robert of Artois, he formally crowned Charles, King of Sicily, on Whit Sunday (29 May) and endowed him with a tithe on all church property in Italy so that he could persist in the war for Sicily.[12]

SIEGE OF GAETA (SUMMER 1289)

James, having anticipated this adverse turn of events, had already crossed the Strait of Messina on 15 April with a sizable army of around 400 knights and 10,000 infantry, aboard Lauria's fleet of about forty ships. They spent a month in Reggio, organizing themselves into an integrated fighting force for a coordinated, land–sea advance up the peninsula. On 15 May, James began marching his army up the Capua–Reggio Roman road, shadowed by Roger's ships sailing up the Tyrrhenian coast of Calabria (Map 3). They paused at Seminara, just north of the Aspromonte Massif, to consolidate an east–west line from Sinopoli through Santa Cristina d'Aspromonte to Bovalino on the Ionian littoral.

[11] Carini, *Gli Archivi e le Biblioteche di Spagna*, II, nos 242–50, pp. 223–6; Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, chs CLXVI–CLXVII, pp. 403–5; Jerónimo Zurita, *Anales de la Corona de Aragón*, ed. Angel Cannelas López (8 vols, Institución 'Fernando el Católico', Zaragoza, 1967-77), bk IV, ch. CIV. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 197–200 note 1; Chaytor, *History of Aragon*, p. 130; Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, pp. 43–4; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 265; J. Lee Shneidman, *The Rise of the Aragonese–Catalan Empire 1200–1350* (2 vols, London, 1970), II, pp. 337–8.

[12] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CLXIX, pp. 407–8; Giovanni Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, ed. Francesco Dragomanni (4 vols, Florence, 1845), I, bk VII, ch. CXXX, pp. 456–7. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 196–7; Jean Dunbabin, *The French in the Kingdom of Sicily 1266–1305* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 106–7; Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, pp. 43–4; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 265–6.

In the process, the Sicilians clashed with Angevin 'captains of Calabria', Russo di Solliac and Giacomo di Oppido, causing them to seek refuge at Catanzaro – held by Robert of Artois at the time. They then continued northward. Lauria disembarked his crews at Monteleone (modern Vibo Valentia), capturing the city and marina by force. James made himself master of Castel Monardo (near today's Filadelfia) and Maida. Rushing to interdict the invasion, Robert of Artois attempted to block the advance by leading an Angevin contingent from Catanzaro to the north bank of the River Amato, just south of Sant'Eufemia (near Lamezia Terme). The sheer size of the Sicilian force, however, soon intimidated him into retreating eastward back into the interior where he attempted to reduce Aragonese-held Squillace, instead. But James dispatched a detachment under Guglielmo di Calcerando to break the siege, prompting Robert to withdraw all the way back up into the *Principato* to prepare for the defence of Salerno itself.[13]

In the meantime, James and Roger steadily worked their way up the Calabrian coast, seizing in succession Amantea, Fiumefreddo, Paola, Fuscaldo and Cetraro. They encountered only tepid resistance until they reached Belvedere (modern Belvedere Marittimo), where the lord of the region – Ruggero di Sangineto – refused to submit. The latter held the castle of Belvedere against them, while his wife led the defence of the citadel at nearby Sangineto. It was at Sangineto that Roger of Lauria once again showed his ruthless side. At some point in the hostilities, the castle's defenders began targeting the king's tent with catapults. Enraged, the admiral reportedly had the besieged lord's two sons (apprehended earlier in the fighting) strapped to scaffolding constructed with ship's oars, which he then caused to be erected in front of the royal lodging. During a raging tempest amid the continuing bombardment, the scaffolding collapsed – mortally injuring one of the siblings. Stunned by the tragedy, James freed the remaining son and raised the siege. The effort had been a futile distraction in any event.[14]

[13] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, chs CLXIII–CLXIV, pp. 399–401; Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CXII, pp. 566–8; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk II, ch. XIII, col. 956. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 198–201; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, pp. 91–2. Note: Runciman (*Vespers*, p. 266) erroneously identified Alfonso as the sovereign who led the incursion into the *Regno* with Lauria, and Mott later followed suit, but virtually every pertinent contemporary source testified that it was his brother James of Sicily, instead.

[14] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CXII, pp. 569–72; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk II, ch. XIII, cols 956–7. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 201–2; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, pp. 92–3.

The real Sicilian objective was much further to the north, so James and Roger resumed their advance up the Tyrrhenian seaboard, stopping at the Aragonese–Sicilian strongholds of Scalea in northern Calabria and Castellabate in the *Principato*. By this time (early July), the Angevins under Charles II and Robert of Artois had mustered considerable forces at Salerno to block the invaders. But James and his admiral disappointed them – the king embarked his army on Lauria's galleys, which then bypassed Salerno by sailing directly to the Aragonese-held islands of Capri and Ischia. Previous intelligence had indicated to James that Gaeta, a strategic port about 50 miles (80 km) north of Naples, was ripe for revolt against its Angevin masters.[15]

15 Ancient port of Gaeta as viewed from Monte d'Orlando where James II of Aragon and Roger of Lauria bivouacked during their unsuccessful siege of the fortified city in the summer of 1289.

[15] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CLXV, pp. 402–3; Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CXII, p. 573. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 203; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 93.

James and his men came ashore on the Gaetan promontory sometime between 10 and 13 July 1289 (Fig. 15). Bertrand des Baux, the count of Avellino, contested the landing on the beaches of the Spiaggia di Serapo on the south side of the peninsula with a small armed entourage, but was swiftly put to flight by superior forces. The king and his royal retainer then established a fortified encampment on Monte d'Orlando, overlooking the port as it jutted eastward into the Gulf of Gaeta. Concurrently, Roger and the remainder of the troops (including a large contingent of *almugavars*) bivouacked below on the isthmus to the northwest called Montesecco, which connected the Gaetan headland with the mainland. Soon thereafter, the Sicilians learned that word of the city's willingness to submit was entirely bogus: the citizens not only refused to surrender, but resisted fiercely. Resigned to a long siege, the admiral had his men construct an extensive network of trenches and palisades (using beams and boards presumably from the ships) on both the hill above the town and on the level ground to the northwest. The townspeople responded by reinforcing the city walls and building defensive bastions of their own. Lauria's shipwrights then erected siege machines – catapults and *ballistas* – which he used to rain stones down upon the houses of the city in hopes of compelling capitulation. He even ravaged the surrounding districts with his *almugavars* and attacked the marina at Mola di Gaeta (modern Formia) a few miles to the east with his galleys. Nearby Nola, Maranola and Traietto also fell victim to his raids.[16] 'Having heard of these events, the surrounding lands trembled,' wrote Neocastro, 'the enemy fearing all the more upon hearing the name of Lauria.'[17] But it was all to no avail. Gaeta, itself, remained obdurate.

In the days preceding the Sicilian assault on Gaeta, King Charles had ordered a massive mobilization of the *Regno*'s men-at-arms at Salerno, and he himself moved from Naples to join Robert of Artois there on 10 July. Both he and Robert had previously assumed that Salerno was the target of the Sicilian–Aragonese army as it advanced from the south. Once they had been brutally disabused of that supposition, they swiftly shifted strategy. The steadfast resistance of the Gaetans gave the Angevins ample time to redirect their forces in relief of the besieged port city. And, owing in large measure to the pontiff, those forces were considerable. According to Neocastro, they included 'cavalry and infantry

[16] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CXII, pp. 573–5; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk II, ch. XIV, col. 957; Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, I, bk VII, ch. CXXXIV, p. 465. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 204; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, pp. 97–9; Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, p. 167.

[17] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CXII, p. 575.

crusaders, as well as Guelfs from Tuscany, the Abbruzzi, Campania and parts of Lombardy', all under the banner of the Church borne by a papal legate. Even a troop of Saracens from Lucera had been enlisted into the effort.[18]

The Angevin mobilization was complete by early August, and sometime thereafter the great host appeared on the mainland west of Gaeta. King Charles watched from a distance while Robert of Artois hurled his hordes against Roger's palisades on the short peninsula leading up to Monte d'Orlando, where King James observed from his entrenched position overlooking the city. 'At the first furious impact upon the palisades, the admiral immediately called his Messinese to arms and the battle with the enemy began,' reported Neocastro, who described the clash in consummate detail.[19] Missile launchers from *ballistas* to common crossbows, which had heretofore been directed at the city, were now trained with deadly effect on the attacking army. At one point, the Angevins advanced towards the catapult of a certain Messinese engineer named Matteo di Terme 'in such thick, tight ranks that not a stone from the machine went awry or did not kill several in a single strike'. The narrow confines of the promontory doubtless prompted the Angevins to press forward in densely ordered formations, making them vulnerable to such deadly missile volleys. Artois sent wave after wave against the Sicilian lines, engendering 'such a slaughter that the dead could not be counted'.[20]

The initial assault had clearly failed – Lauria's lines had endured the onslaught, forcing the French to fall back some distance away and pitch camp. The besiegers thus became the besieged, caught between the walls of an enemy city and an enemy encampment.[21] Roger attempted to break the Angevin barrier by launching a series of sorties against their lines. Neocastro reported that on the following day the Messinese 'surprised some [of the Angevins] far from camp, killing some, wounding others and taking others prisoner'.[22] The next day they struck the Saracen contingent, killing many and putting the rest to flight. And the day after that, Neocastro recounted that 'the admiral, having attacked

[18] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CXII, p. 578. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 203–4; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 98.
[19] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CXII, p. 578.
[20] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CXII, pp. 578–9. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 204–5; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, pp. 99–100.
[21] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CLXIX, p. 408; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk II, ch. XIV, col. 957.
[22] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CXII, p. 578.

the Tuscans, sent other valiant men against the Apulians, whom they found lying in their tents, and scattered them'.[23] Beyond such biased accounting, there was, of course, bountiful bloodletting on both sides. Neocastro (apparently an eyewitness to the events) alluded to this when he claimed to have personally seen women 'crusaders' (*regnicoli*) attack the Messinese with war dogs (probably Neapolitan mastiffs), who 'came back to their masters with mouths tinted with blood'.[24] Still, the Angevins seemed to have fared worse in the fighting. Charles, viewing the mayhem visited upon his troops, pulled his lines back still further and a tedious stalemate soon settled in.[25] While the Angevin army – which appears to have been substantially superior in size – effectively blocked all exit from the isthmus, Lauria's fleet could resupply the Sicilian forces by sea at will. Yet neither side seemed willing to retire.

TRUCE OF GAETA (24 AUGUST 1289)

The impasse was eventually sundered by Edward of England who was exasperated that the Treaty of Canfranc, which he had so diligently nurtured and guaranteed with his own hostages, had been so brutally shoved aside. He dispatched Odo of Grandison to, in effect, shame Pope Nicholas into advocating a peace by pointing out the unseemly incongruity of the papacy waging a crusade against Christians in Italy only weeks after Tripoli in the Holy Land had fallen to the Mamluks (27 April). Charles, repelled by the bloodshed and looking for a way out of the predicament, proved amenable to the pope's ensuing entreaties.[26] A two-year truce was subsequently signed by the concerned parties on Saint Bartolomeo's day, 24 August 1289. Extending to All Saints Day of 1291, it provided for a cessation of hostilities on the Italian peninsula north of a demarcation line from Castellabate on the Tyrrhenian to Trebisacce on the Ionian (Map 3). Essentially, towns and territories currently in the hands of one side or the other were to remain so, and each side had the right to resupply its respective coastal possessions

[23] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CXII, p. 578.
[24] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CXII, p. 578.
[25] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk II, ch. XIV, col. 957. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 204–5; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, pp. 99–100.
[26] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CXII, pp. 579–81; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk II, ch. XIV, cols 957–8; Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, I, bk VII, ch. CXXXIV, p. 465. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 205–6; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 100; Thomas Asbridge, *The Crusades* (New York, 2010), pp. 650–1.

by sea without threat of attack. The *almugavars*, interestingly enough, were exempted from the terms of the truce, indicating an overt recognition that they simply could not be controlled. Jean de Monfort was assigned to monitor the observance of the peace for the Angevins while that duty befell Roger of Lauria for the Aragonese–Sicilians. Charles decamped first on 27 August, in accordance with the concordat, and James departed three days later.[27]

By and large, the two adversaries conformed to the conditions of the agreement, but there were some notable violations, particularly on the part of the Aragonese–Sicilians. While the Angevins were guilty of isolated, impromptu attacks on Sicilian shipping along the Ionian coast of Calabria in the environs of Squillace and Roccella Ionica,[28] Aragonese actions, mostly directed by the admiral himself, seemed more systematic and sweeping. Mott's research in the Archives of the Cathedral of Valencia reveals that, from December 1289 to June 1290, Roger of Lauria conducted a well-planned, amphibious operation to capture and hold key castles throughout Calabria (Map 3). The fleet first besieged Nicotera on 15 December, claiming control of the city in early January; and then turned its attention to Taurianova to the south, taking it on 6 February. On 19 February, Lauria's crews hauled their siege machines a few miles northeast to San Giorgio, which was seized on 3 March. Turning southward again, Roger's men reduced in succession Oppido, Sinopoli and Santa Cristina by the end of May.[29] Le Castella, just south of Crotone, was sacked at the end of June.[30]

The campaign was carefully concocted to cause maximum confusion among Angevin forces in the province. The admiral began by attacking Nicotera in the north in order to block reinforcements coming from the *Principato*. He then used some twenty galleys (mostly *galeae apertae in puppa*, *taride* and *barcae*) to swiftly move *almugavars*, horses, supplies and siege machines around the Calabrian peninsula to assault the various objectives in an unpredictable manner in order to keep the Angevins off balance.[31] Clearly, such a complex operation was only possible due to the near total supremacy Roger's fleet enjoyed in the seas surrounding southern Italy in the wake of his stunning victory at the Battle of

[27] Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 206–7; III, Appendix, doc. XXXII, pp. 385–91; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, pp. 101–2.

[28] Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 104.

[29] *Archivo de la Catedral de Valencia* (ACV), perg. (*pergamino* – 'parchment') 738, fol. 6. See also Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 239.

[30] Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 104.

[31] ACV, perg. 738, fol. 7. See also Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, pp. 240–1.

the Counts. The Angevin court could do little but impotently complain about treaty transgressions, for which Lauria seems to have offered little more than lip service.

The operation ended in early July, probably because the Aragonese court had given the admiral a new assignment: to conduct an Arab prince back to Cyrenaica (an old Roman province in what is now eastern Libya) with a ransom in gold to reinstall him as a ruler, allied to the Crown of Aragon. Who exactly this prince was remains uncertain, but Neocastro (the principal source for the episode) called him 'Margano', and the town that he sought to reclaim appears to have been Tolmetta (modern Tolmeita, a small coastal village about 68 miles or 110 km east of Benghazi), near the site of the ancient classical city of Ptolemais. According to Neocastro, Roger had his fleet of twenty vessels, sixteen of which were reportedly *galeae apertae in puppa*, resupplied at Syracuse following the Calabrian campaign. He then weighed anchor for North Africa with Margano aboard, along with an escort of some eighty men-at-arms commanded by a Catalan knight named Bernardo di Cannella. Lauria beached the fleet on the coast of Cyrenaica some distance from Tolmetta towards the end of July 1290 and waited with his crews while Cannella and his men completed their mission. It all turned out to be an elaborate ruse. Local Arab tribesmen soon attempted to ambush the Aragonese, but Roger and his mariners fought them off. The admiral then restrained his men from attacking the city in reprisal, because he feared Cannella and his soldiers would be slaughtered in the process. So they waited – several weeks, as it turned out. In the meantime, Margano inveigled his Christian confederates into helping him seize the city by force in return for the gold that had been intended to pay for his reinstallment. When it was done, Margano tried to renege on the deal, but Cannella made him honour it at knifepoint. Reunited, Lauria and Cannella allowed their men to take what they could from Tolmetta; then sailed back to Sicily in early autumn.[32] This adventure, along with the Calabrian campaign, was typical of the admiral's efforts to keep his crews proficient and well compensated – even in times of relative peace.

Speaking of which, the indefatigable Edward of England had never ceased in his efforts to arrange a more permanent peace. In the summer of 1290, his good offices found almost all the principal protagonists willing participants in the process. Alfonso III of Aragon had become embroiled in a border conflict with Castile and longed to crawl out from

[32] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CXIII, pp. 593–4; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk II, ch. XVI, col. 958. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 215–6; Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 241.

beneath the black cloud of papal anathema that darkened his reign; Philip IV of France was desperate to extricate his kingdom from a struggle that had nearly drained its coffers during the catastrophic Catalan crusade; Charles II of the *Regno* simply wanted to retrieve his three sons still held hostage by the Crown of Aragon and needed an end to the fighting so that he could go about setting his realm in order; and even Pope Nicholas IV, a perennial holdout, now desired a resolution so that attention could be directed towards succouring the *Terra Sancta* ('Holy Land'), of which only Acre still stood against the Mamluk onslaught. Accordingly, after months of tense negotiations, representatives of the three monarchs and the pope as well as Charles of Valois and James of Majorca hammered out a mutually agreeable concordat, which was signed by all parties at Tarascon (midway between Avignon and Arles) on 19 February 1291.[33]

The treaty provided key concessions to nearly everyone. In return for homage to the Holy See and the withdrawal of support for Sicilian autonomy, Alfonso's excommunication was expunged; Philip's uncle, Charles of Valois, was compensated with the counties of Anjou and Maine for withdrawing his papally awarded claim to Aragon; Charles II redeemed his sons and won a cessation of hostilities; the demand of James of Majorca for the return of his kingdom was submitted for papal arbitration; and Pope Nicholas IV won from Alfonso the promise to provide assistance for the reintegration of Sicily into the *Regno* and to proceed on crusade to the Holy Land.[34] The only interested party who accrued no benefit whatsoever from an accord ostensibly meant to decide the fate of Sicily was ironically the personage indispensable to its implementation: James of Sicily. He was not even invited to send representatives to the parlay. As a result, the document was a 'dead letter' before the ink could dry.

In the pope's defence, Nicholas had engaged James in talks prior to those at Tarascon, leading to a possible rapprochement. He sent a certain Catalan friar named Raimondo to Sicily, requesting that James dispatch the Sicilian fleet to the Holy Land in support of Acre. In response, the young monarch offered to send thirty galleys along with three hundred horse and 10,000 foot, if the Holy Father were to recognize him as the rightful King of Sicily and grant a five-year truce. To these, Roger

[33] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CLXXIII, pp. 417–20; Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CXIV, pp. 595–8. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 225–8; Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, pp. 44–5; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 267; Shneidman, *Aragonese–Catalan Empire*, II, p. 339.

[34] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CXIV, pp. 597–8. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 227–8.

of Lauria generously pledged an additional ten galleys, one hundred cavalry and 2,000 infantry at his own expense. James later rescinded the offer, however, after Pandolfo di Falcone, along with other Sicilian nobles, convinced the king that the absence of Roger and his mighty fleet would merely invite papal chicanery against what would be a virtually defenceless island. This, of course, caused Nicholas to advocate excluding the Sicilian sovereign from the subsequent peace process.[35]

In the end, it mattered not at all. Alfonso himself rendered the whole affair moot. At the ripe old age of 27, he suddenly contracted a malady associated with a tumour in his groin, according to Muntaner, and died on 18 June 1291.[36] The premature demise of a primary signatory rendered the Treaty of Tarascon null and void even before any attempt could be made to put it into effect. The war would automatically resume when the truce of Gaeta expired in November.

[35] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CXII, pp. 585–7. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 211–13; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 267–8.

[36] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, chs CLXXIII–CLXXIV, pp. 421–2; Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CXV, pp. 600–2; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk II, ch. XVII, cols 958–9. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 228; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 268.

16

RAID ON ROMANIA
(SUMMER 1292)

THE COLLAPSE OF THE PEACE process did not, of course, immediately precipitate a new round of fighting or invite a fresh invasion of Sicily. First of all, as a practical consideration, there was no possibility of mounting a successful amphibious assault on a large island in the middle of the Mediterranean without a substantial maritime capability and, at this juncture – thanks to Aragonese naval prowess under Roger of Lauria – the Angevins and their allies possessed nearly none. Charles II of the *Regno* attempted to effect a temporary remedy by seeking a contract with Genoa for a fleet of some sixty ships in early 1291, but the Aragonese under Frederick of Sicily, the younger brother of James and Alfonso, torpedoed the overture by threatening the Genoese with trade sanctions and a *guerre de course* waged by his feared admiral, if they should stray from their previously professed neutrality.[1]

The underlying cause for the continued hiatus, however, was quite simply war weariness. The conflict had already dragged on for nearly a decade, accompanied by a deleterious drain in money and manpower for all concerned. Moreover, a number of distractions – foreign and domestic – plagued each of the parties, the most significant of which was the final fall of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. Acre, the last great Christian bastion in Palestine, was vanquished by the Mamluks on 18 May 1291 – followed within a month by the ports of Beirut, Tyre and Sidon.[2] As a consequence, Pope Nicholas IV became consumed with mounting a papally sanctioned expedition to liberate the Latin Kingdom. The great military powers of contemporary Christianity understood, however, that such a crusade would be futile without some sort of

[1] Bartolomeo di Neocastro, *Historia Sicula (1250–1293)*, in *Cronisti e scrittori sincroni napoletani editi e inediti*, ed. Giuseppe del Re (2 vols, Naples, 1868), II, ch. CXIV, p. 598 and ch. CXIX, pp. 607–12. See also Michele Amari, *La Guerra del Vespro Siciliano* (9th edn, 3 vols, Milan, 1886), II, p. 228; Camillo Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana* (3 vols, Livorno, 1897–1902), II, pp. 169–70.

[2] Charles D. Stanton, *Medieval Maritime Warfare* (Barnsley, 2015), p. 105.

foothold in the Levant – apart from Cyprus. The pope died disappointed and dispirited on 4 April 1292 in Rome. The aspiration of rescuing Acre and the few remaining Christian ports on the coast of Syria was also what had motivated Edward I of England to promote peace in Western Europe. With that incentive now gone, Edward soon fell out with Philip IV of France over Gascony, England's last remaining continental possession – for which the English crown still paid homage to the French king. Contemporaneously, Charles the Lame was more concerned with shoring up Angevin authority on the Italian peninsula than reclaiming rule over Sicily. All of this provided James of Aragon with a fortuitous respite to perform his required dynastic duty. When his brother Alfonso passed away prematurely on 18 June 1291, he did so without issue. He had long been betrothed to Eleanor of England (Edward's daughter), but he perished before he could even be formally introduced to his bride, much less consummate a marriage with her. Thus, James was compelled to go and claim the Crown of Aragon as his successor.[3]

Roger of Lauria, as it happened, was in Valencia at the time of Alfonso's death. He had been recalled over the winter months at the behest of the king to oversee the defence of the kingdom's coastlines. While there, he joined in nuptials with Saurina d'Entença, the daughter of the Baron Berenguer d'Entença who headed one of Aragon's most ancient and powerful families. His first wife, Margherita di Lancia, had succumbed to an unspecified illness in Messina a couple of years before. She had given him a son, Roger, and three daughters – Constance, Beatrice and Hilaria. With Saurina, Roger would eventually produce another daughter, Margherita, and three more sons – Carlos, Roberto and Berenguer. But that was in the future. Once Lauria learned of Alfonso's sudden death, he quickly returned to Sicily in order to conduct James back for his coronation.[4]

When Alfonso's body was interred at the Convent of Saint Francis in Barcelona, Count Ponç V of Ampurias was chosen to lead a deputation to Sicily in order to retrieve James. It is likely that Lauria was among the count's entourage. It is even possible that Roger captained

[3] Ramon Muntaner, *Chronicle*, trans. Lady Goodenough (2 vols, London, 1920), II, ch. CLXXVI, pp. 424–6; Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, chs CXVI–CXVII, pp. 602–3. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, pp. 227–8; Steven Runciman, *The Sicilian Vespers* (Cambridge, 1958), p. 268.

[4] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CXV, p. 600. See also Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, p. 173; Antonio J. Planells Clavero and Antonio J. Planells de la Maza, *Roger del Lauria, El gran almirante del Mediterráneo* (Madrid, 2011), p. 68; Manuel José Quintana, *Lives of Celebrated Spaniards*, trans. T. R. Preston (London, 1833), pp. 114–15.

the four-galley flotilla that carried the delegation to Trapani. The envoys eventually found Queen Constance and the *Infante* James in Messina, where a council was convoked at the Church of Santa Maria la Nuova so that the count of Ampurias could promulgate Alfonso's testament, bequeathing the kingdoms of Aragon, Catalonia and Valencia to James. The latter then formally designated Frederick, his younger sibling, as his viceroy for Sicily and commanded Lauria to equip a fleet of galleys to take him home.[5] After convening a parliament in Palermo to publicly proclaim the succession, James and his retinue embarked upon Roger's fleet at Trapani on 23 July, reaching Barcelona a few days later.[6]

Once James had paid his respects to his departed brother at the Franciscan convent, he participated in the obligatory festivities preceding his coronation. After some weeks, he proceeded to Zaragoza by way of Lérida for the formal investiture ceremony, which took place on 24 September 1291.[7] The new king then presented himself to his subjects on a royal tour of Aragon before finally ending up in Valencia, where he assumed that realm's crown as well.[8] It was subsequent to these proceedings that an extraordinary event occurred. With the king and queen of Castile (Sancho IV and Maria de Molina) as honoured guests, James attended a 'round table' hosted by none other than Roger of Lauria at Calatayud (54 miles or 87 km southwest of Zaragoza) (Fig. 16). Ramon Muntaner described it as 'one of the most wonderful things ever done'.[9] On the plain of Calatayud, Roger had arranged an elaborate tournament complete with lists and a wooden castle to entertain his royal audience.[10] In an age when merely holding the reins of a sovereign's mount was a privilege reserved for only the most favoured of courtiers, this would have to have been regarded as an exalted honour, indeed. The Crown of Aragon clearly considered Lauria a highly valued vassal, and the admiral made it abundantly plain that he was the king's man.

As if to further illustrate the point, the highlight of the tournament was a remarkable head-to-head encounter in the lists between Roger and a renowned Castilian champion whom Muntaner identified as Berenguer A. de Anguera, a knight of Murcia. The Catalan chronicler

[5] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CXVI, pp. 602–3; Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CLXXV, pp. 422–4.
[6] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CXVII, p. 603; Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CLXXVI, pp. 424–5.
[7] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CLXXVI, p. 426.
[8] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CLXXVII, p. 427.
[9] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CLXXVIII, p. 431.
[10] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CLXXIX, p. 432.

16 Called Ayyub's Castle, the Muslim fortress of Calatayud (dating back to the ninth century) formed the backdrop for an extravagant chivalric tournament that Roger of Lauria held in honor of the newly crowned James II of Aragon in the autumn of 1291.

described the joust in considerable detail, lending some credibility to the account:

> And En Berenguer A. de Anguera hit the admiral so great a blow on the front quarter of the shield that the stave came to pieces, and the admiral so hit him on the visor that the helmet flew off his head to a distance greater than the length of two lance staves, and the lance broke into more than a hundred pieces. And as the visor was hit the helmet came down so hard on the face of said En Berenguer A. de Anguera that it crushed his nose so that it has never been straight since, and the blood was flowing down the middle of his face and between his eyebrows so that every one thought he was killed.[11]

The Castilian knight evidently survived the clash with nothing more than a bent proboscis, but Roger's reputation had been appropriately burnished. 'And so this triumph was his and a fame which spread through the land of Castile,' concluded Muntaner. Medieval chroniclers tend to routinely embellish their accounts, but, totally true or not,

[11] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CLXXIX, p. 433.

the tale almost certainly added to the lore of Lauria's martial prowess, making him in Muntaner's words 'one of the most accomplished knights of the world'.[12]

Roger remained in Iberia for several months after the coronation festivities. At the end of this period, according to Muntaner, James enjoined his admiral 'to return to Sicily and to remain with the Lord *Infante* En Fadrique [Frederick] and to always have fifty galleys in good repair and fitted out'.[13] In fact, on 3 October 1291 James II sent a letter to the *Infante* Frederick, directing him to dispense 3,000 ounces of gold from the royal coffers to the admiral for the recruitment of crews for the coming year.[14] And, in another directive dated 12 February 1292, the king commanded Roger to equip galleys in Valencia, Tarragona and Barcelona with the goal of achieving fleet readiness by March.[15] Thus, Lauria spent much of the winter in recruitment and procurement – mostly in Valencia, where Muntaner said he also 'visited all his towns and castles'.[16] Indeed, on 3 March, he dispatched to Sicily from Tarragona a flotilla of nine galleys, a *galionus* and a *vaccetta* – carrying 207 crossbowmen. Shortly afterwards, Manfred di Lancia conducted this squadron on a three-month patrol of the waters around Sicily. Another pair of war galleys did the same along the coast of Calabria in late April. By May, Roger himself had gathered what additional galleys he could – including his own *navis* called the *Frucculina* – and cruised up the coast from Valencia to Barcelona to take his leave of the king before sailing to back to Sicily by way of the Balearics and North Africa.[17]

By the time Roger reached the island in early June, the arsenals in Palermo and Messina had produced six more war galleys, including the admiral's flagship – the *Red Galley*. With the return of Manfred di Lancia's squadron and the two galleys patrolling *ad discurrendum* ('running to and fro') in the seas off Calabria, Roger was able to coalesce the various components into a fairly formidable naval force by the end

[12] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CLXXIX, p. 434.
[13] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CLXXX, p. 434.
[14] Giuseppe La Mantia, *Codice Diplomatico dei Re Aragonesi di Sicilia* (2 vols, Palermo, 1917–19), II, doc. XXXVI, pp. 51–2. See also Lawrence, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean: The Catalan–Aragonese Fleet in the War of the Sicilian Vespers* (Gainesville, 2003), p. 248.
[15] La Mantia, *Codice Diplomatico*, II, doc. LXVI, pp. 84–5. See also Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 248.
[16] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CLXXX, p. 434.
[17] *Archivo de la Catedral de Valencia* (ACV), perg. (*pergamino* – 'parchment') 737, fols 1–3. See also Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, pp. 248–9.

of July.[18] Iacopo Doria of Genoa indicated there were around twenty galleys; Bartolomeo Neocastro noted about thirty.[19] At least seven were *galeae apertae in puppa*. According to Aragonese records, Lauria loaded onto these vessels 62 *janeti* and 62 knights or *stipendiarii* along with their 124 horses. Also embarked were 106 *almugavars*, 469 crossbowmen and 1,968 armed mariners (mostly Sicilians).[20] The Admiral of Aragon was about to carry out what Lawrence Mott describes as 'one of the most spectacular medieval naval operations' ever recorded: a 'raid into Romania' (the remnants of the old Byzantine Empire) (Map 12).[21]

Roger's fleet departed Messina at the end of June. Its initial objective was the area of Crotone on the Ionian coast of eastern Calabria. Upon expiration of the truce of Gaeta, Angevin forces under Guillaume L'Étendard had moved aggressively to reclaim much of Calabria – including Crotone. In December 1291, L'Étendard had suborned the city's Aragonese captain, a certain Riccardo di Santa Sofia, into switching sides and surrendering the city. The Angevin commander was known to still be operating in the region with several hundred horse, so the admiral's amphibious assault in early July 1292 in the area of Capo Rizzuto, about 15 miles (24 km) south of Crotone, was probably intended to blunt the former's advance into Aragonese-held portions of Calabria. When Lauria marched on nearby Le Castella with forty knights and a large body of foot, L'Étendard attempted to ambush his raiding party. Roger got wind of it, however, and sent half his knights along with most of his infantry to flank the French, while he and the remaining twenty mounted men-at-arms served as decoys. The result was a rout in which L'Étendard was wounded multiple times but managed to escape. The traitorous Riccardo di Santa Sofia, however, was captured and subsequently executed.[22] Aragonese records indicate that the fleet probably also attacked Crotone in the aftermath and perhaps even Brindisi as

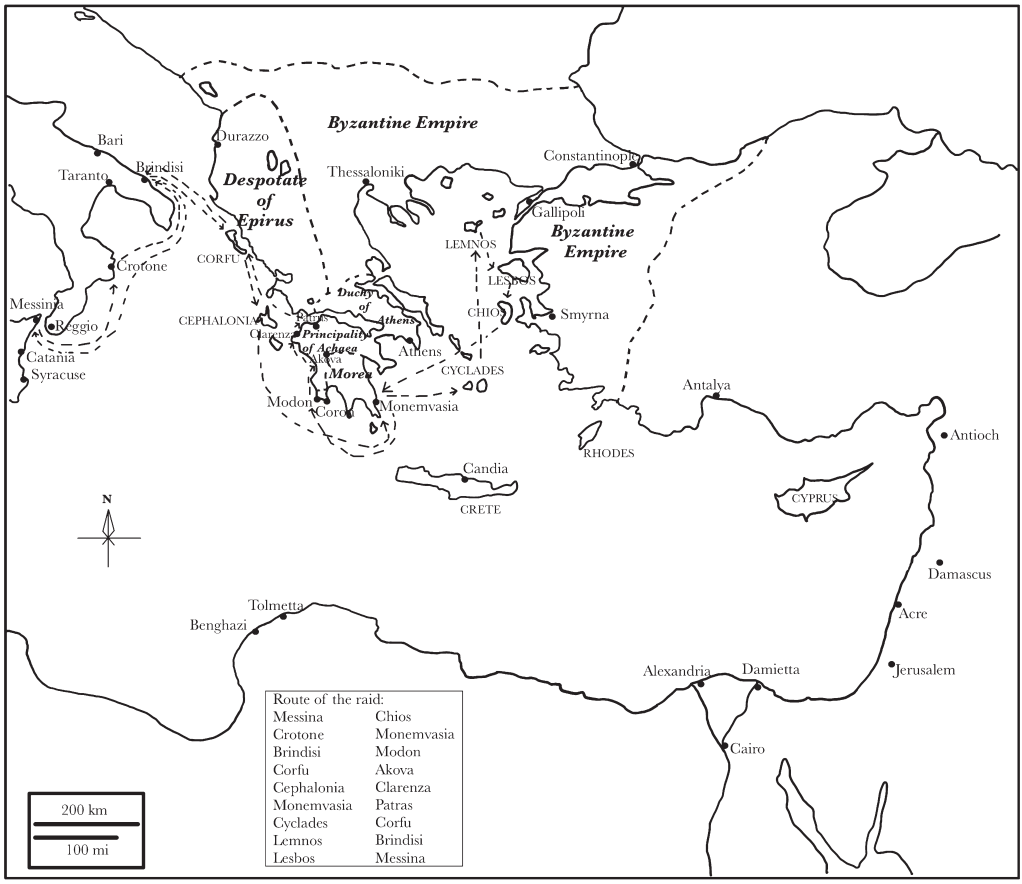
[18] ACV, perg. 737, fol. 3. See also Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, pp. 249–51.

[19] Iacopo Doria, *Annales Ianuenses*, in *Annali genovesi di Caffaro e de' suoi continuatori dal MXCIX al MCCXCIII*, eds Luigi Belgrano and Cesare Imperiale di Sant'Angelo (5 vols, Fonti per la storia d'Italia, Genoa, 1890–1929), V, pp. 145–6; Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CXXI, p. 615.

[20] ACV, perg. 737, fol. 4. See also Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, pp. 249–51.

[21] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 259.

[22] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CXXI, pp. 615–16; Niccolò Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, ed. Ludovico Muratori (Rerum Italicarum Scriptores, X, Milan, 1727), bk II, ch. XIX, col. 959. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 243–4; Giovanni Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro (1282–1302)* (Bologna, 2012), pp. 115–16; Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, p. 174.



12 Raid on Romania

well.[23] Having accomplished his limited aims, Roger left the remainder of the campaign to regain Calabria to a ground force under Blasco d'Alagona and resumed his expedition to 'Romania' (Map 12).[24]

Specifically, Roger set his sights on the Despotate of Epirus (modern Albania plus the Greek region of Epirus) and Morea (the Greek Peloponnesus). The Angevins claimed significant possessions in these lands, stemming from concessions Charles I of Anjou had extracted from the exiled Byzantine emperor, Baldwin II of Courtenay, in May 1267 as the

[23] ACV, perg. 737, fol. 3. See also Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, pp. 252–4.
[24] Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 116.

price for Angevin military support.[25] In mid-July 1292, Lauria attacked the island County of Cephalonia, ravaging it and the adjacent Ionian isles. Not even Corfu was spared. An inducement of over 600 ounces of gold finally convinced the Aragonese to move on.[26] Lauria then took advantage of strong westerly winds to sail all the way to the fortified isle of Monemvasia on the eastern side of Cape Maleas, arriving at the end of the month. At the outset, he attempted to intimidate the inhabitants into submission by parading the fleet offshore. It worked. The citizens sent envoys offering the Aragonese 'friendship', along with livestock and other provisions. This was, however, apparently not enough for the admiral. He expressed scepticism and elected to remain aboard ship while appearing to mull the matter over. But it was only a ploy to induce the citizenry into relaxing their guard. The Aragonese and Sicilian crewmen quietly rowed ashore in the middle of the night and raised the alarm. Many of the Greek men – startled out of a sound sleep – scurried across the causeway to the mainland in a panic, abandoning the women and children as well as the old and infirm. Lauria's men were then left to despoil the town unopposed.[27] The fact that the port was, perhaps, the most strategic outpost on the Peloponnesus of Byzantine Emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos does not seemed to have factored in Lauria's calculations. Aragonese records show that the townspeople eventually ransomed their city back for a little over 200 ounces of gold.[28]

The westerlies then carried the Aragonese–Sicilian fleet into the Aegean in early August. Ramon Muntaner claimed that along the way it landed at Candia (modern Heraklion on Crete), but he was alone in this. Niccolò Speciale, instead, specified that Roger 'invaded the islands of Romania' ('*invasit insulas Romaniae*') at about this time.[29] As to exactly which islands these were, Larry Mott found an entry dated 3 August 1292 in the Archives of the Cathedral of Valencia for an extorted sum of about 115 ounces of gold. Based upon the distance the fleet could conceivably have sailed in the six days since leaving Monemvasia on 28

[25] Jean Dunbabin, *Charles I of Anjou: Power, Kingship and State-Making in Thirteenth-Century Europe* (London, 1998), pp. 89–94; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 136–7.

[26] ACV, perg. 737, fol. 1. See also Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 254.

[27] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CXXII, pp. 616–17; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk II, ch. XIX, col. 960. See also Gabriela Airaldi, 'Roger of Lauria's Expedition to the Peloponnese', *Mediterranean Historical Review*, 10.1–2 (1995), pp. 14–23, esp. 19; Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, p. 174.

[28] ACV, perg. 737, fol. 1. See also Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 254.

[29] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk II, ch. XIX, cols 959–60.

July, Mott speculates that Roger was raiding the Greek Cyclades at the time.[30] Indeed, Muntaner, his confused chronology notwithstanding, confirmed that the admiral 'harried the islands of ... Thermia [Kythnos] and Tinos and Andros and Mykonos', all of which are in the Cyclades archipelago.[31]

Lauria headed into the northern Aegean next, striking the islands of Lemnos and Mytilene before assaulting Chios on or about 25 August (Map 12).[32] This appears to have been his furthest and richest objective. Historically, the island of Chios was the imperial repository of mastic, a chewable resin reputed to have both medicinal and culinary properties. As late as the Ottoman era, this tree sap was said to be worth its weight in gold. Pilfering it was considered a capital offence. At the time of Roger's raid, production of the resultant aromatic gum was controlled by Genoese merchants, a fact that appears to have daunted the admiral not at all.[33] He seems to have employed no special subterfuge or stratagem. Neocastro reported that when the Aragonese–Sicilian crews came ashore, the inhabitants 'with most of their wealth took refuge in the high mountains', which ran down the north–south spine of the island. Roger's men were, thus, able to load massive quantities of mastic aboard their galleys, untroubled.[34] They expropriated so much of the 'tears of Chios', as the substance was called, that they had to purchase a Venetian *tarida* to carry it all – about 159 metric tons in total – worth over 11,500 ounces of gold.[35]

The sheer weight and volume of the fleet's plunder at that point must have been a key factor in Roger's decision to begin the return journey shortly thereafter. There quite simply was not room for much more booty aboard the boats. Accordingly, the Aragonese fleet's next recorded port-of-call was back at Monemvasia on about 31 August 1292, when they extorted still more monies from the inhabitants and took – as a high-value hostage – the town's Greek archbishop.[36] The next victim of

[30] ACV, perg. 737, fol. 1. See also Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 254.

[31] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. CXVII, p. 292.

[32] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, I, ch. CXVII, p. 292. See also Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 255.

[33] Steven Epstein, *Genoa & the Genoese, 958–1528* (Chapel Hill, 1996), pp. 178–9, 210–11; Frederic Lane, *Venice, A Maritime Republic* (Baltimore, 1973), pp. 78–9; Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 255.

[34] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CXXIII, p. 617.

[35] ACV, perg. 737, fols 1 and 4. See also Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 255.

[36] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CXXIII, p. 617. See also Airaldi, 'Roger of Lauria's Expedition to the Peloponnese', pp. 17, 20; Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 244; Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 255.

Lauria's marauders was Modon (modern Methoni) on the west side of the Messenian Peninsula of the southwestern Peloponnesus.[37] Modon, along with its sister seaport Coron (the current Koroni) on the east side of the peninsula, formed what the Venetians considered 'the two eyes of the Republic' that guarded Venice's vital trade routes to the Orient.[38] None of this seems to have mattered in the least to Lauria and his men. The inhabitants apparently had the audacity to resist the raid on about 6 September rather than submit to a ransom, so their temerity was repaid with a savage sacking. Roger also took hostages who were not released until May of the following year.[39]

From there, the Aragonese–Sicilian fleet turned its attentions to the Angevin-held Principality of Achaea. Muntaner relayed that Roger's men stormed the beaches of the Barony of Akova in western Achaea, where they encountered and defeated a contingent of French cavalry.[40] The other chroniclers did not refer to this episode, but both Speciale and Muntaner reported that, in the same general timeframe, the Aragonese–Sicilian fleet attacked nearby Clarenza, a leading port of the Principality situated just up the coast on the northwestern Peloponnesus.[41] Aragonese records substantiate this event with an entry for 11 September, indicating that the townspeople prudently elected to pay off their unwanted visitors. The same source convincingly noted that the Aragonese–Sicilian crews even appropriated some Genoese shipping in the harbour.[42] Furthermore, the foregoing geographically and chronologically fits Muntaner's assertion that the Aragonese subsequently pillaged Patras in the north of the Principality at the entrance to the Gulf of Corinth.[43] Finally, Roger and his corsairs called upon Corfu once again on 16 September and compelled its Angevin captain to dispense another 90 ounces of gold to come no more to his island.[44]

[37] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk II, ch. XIX, col. 960. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 244; Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 256.

[38] John Dotson, 'Foundations of Venetian Naval Strategy from Pietro II Orseolo to the Battle of Zonchio, 1000–1500', *Viator*, 32 (2001), pp. 113–25, esp. 120; Lane, *Venice*, p. 43; Stanton, *Medieval Maritime Warfare*, p. 160.

[39] ACV, perg. 737, fol. 1. See also Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, pp. 256–7.

[40] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CLIX, p. 394.

[41] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CLIX, p. 394; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk II, ch. XIX, col. 960.

[42] ACV, perg. 737, fol. 1. See also Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 256.

[43] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CLIX, p. 394.

[44] ACV, perg. 737, fol. 1; Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CLIX, pp. 394–5. See also Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 256.

Muntaner also maintained that Lauria's amphibious force made yet another attempt on Brindisi on the way home. The Italian sources are mute on the episode, casting doubt on its veracity, but the account is highly detailed. The Catalan chronicler described a cavalry encounter in which some 700 French knights led by a recovered Guillaume L'Étendard opposed an Aragonese–Sicilian raiding party commanded by the admiral, himself. Muntaner specified that the French issued forth from the Santa Maria del Casale (a Romanesque church that still sits to this day a little over a mile north of the city) in order to block the invaders from crossing a bridge leading into Brindisi. 'There might you have seen knightly feats of arms on both sides,' he recounted. 'And the *almugavars*, who saw the press and that the French held their own so strongly, broke their lances short and then went amongst the enemy and proceeded to disembowel horses and to kill knights.'[45] The Aragonese eventually took the bridge, but the assault ended when Lauria's mount was slain beneath him. The French retreated within the city walls and the admiral returned to the galleys with his men. If this incident actually occurred, it was the final exploit of the expedition. Aragonese registers reveal the fleet was back in Messina being decommissioned by 21 September.[46]

While the undertaking seems to have been spectacularly successful, speculation as to its ultimate purpose has run the gamut. Contemporary Venetian statesman Marino Sanudo Torsello offered one of the more prevalent hypotheses for the raid in his *Istoria del regno di Romania* ('History of the Kingdom of Romania'):

> And I have been told by messer Ruzero del Oria [Roger of Lauria] in person, that his going to Romania was with the intention of sacking and causing damage to the land of the emperor, because the said emperor had promised to pay the King of Aragon 60,000 *lipperi* [probably *hyperpyrons* – 12-carat gold coins, weighing about 4.5 grams each] a year as long as the war lasted, and also because the said King of Aragon claimed 6,000 ounces of gold from the emperor for a certain lady from the Kingdom of Sicily, who had been married to the emperor who was then reigning and who was related to King Manfred [Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II's illegitimate daughter, Constance, who married John III Vatatzes, Byzantine Emperor of Nicaea].[47]

[45] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CLIX, p. 395.

[46] ACV, perg. 737, fol. 1. See also Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 256.

[47] Marino Sanudo Torsello, *Istoria del Regno di Romania*, in *Chroniques Gréco-romaines inédites ou peu connues*, ed. Charles Hopf (Berlin, 1873), pp. 99–170, esp. 133.

Certainly, money was a major incentive – after all, Roger had to pay his crews and fund fleet operations. Mott calculates that it cost roughly 12,000 ounces of gold to deploy twenty galleys for a year. Correspondingly, he estimates that the raid netted a profit of around 9,300 ounces of gold from a total haul of about 15,000 ounces.[48] And James, his new king, was assuredly not averse to having the royal treasury replenished after years of war. But remuneration was probably only a peripheral benefit, and punishing the Byzantine Emperor for some perceived inequity was most likely only a pretext. Lauria did not exclusively target Byzantine interests in the region; he also victimized the Venetians, the Genoese and, of course the Angevins. Ultimately, the raid was about simple intimidation. The Admiral of Aragon wanted to menace Angevin mariners and merchants into submissiveness by demonstrating that he could terrorize their shipping and port facilities whenever and wherever he wished. At the same time, he desired to dissuade the Venetians and Genoese from allying with the Angevins, because, without a considerable naval capability of their own, the only way the Angevins could credibly threaten Aragonese Sicily was through a union with one or both of the great Italian maritime powers of the age.

Measured by those ends, the enterprise was exceptionally effective. The Aragonese, in general, and Roger, in particular, suffered no repercussions whatsoever. The quiescence of the Genoese and the Venetians after the series of devastating assaults on their lucrative commercial operations in the Eastern Mediterranean was especially telling. Neither mercantile commune saw the advantage in challenging a maritime power that dominated trade routes through the central Mediterranean. The Aragonese–Sicilian fleet, operating from Sicily and Malta, effectively commanded east–west traffic through the 'Middle Sea' by controlling both the Strait of Messina and the Sicilian Channel (Map 1). A hostile Kingdom of Sicily could have easily strangled Genoa's commerce with the East and Venice's with the West. Worse still, the two maritime city-states remained implacable rivals, and each feared that a conflict with Sicily would push the Aragonese into an alliance with the other. In other words, the antipathy that Genoa and Venice harboured for one another was much greater than their yearning for retribution against the Aragonese–Sicilian fleet, and Roger knew it.[49]

More specifically, neither republic wished to risk an encounter with the greatest admiral of the age. And Roger of Lauria had once again proven that this was a prudent policy. He had just conducted a

[48] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 257.
[49] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, pp. 257–9.

complex, three-month cruise with varying types of vessels and heterogeneous crews in hostile waters, far from any safe harbour in which to rest, replenish and refit. He had done so while, more or less, continually ravaging inimical shores; yet, he had suffered only fifty-eight casualties and lost but a single *vaccetta* – and that to intemperate weather rather than hostile action. In sum, the raid on 'Romania' was persuasive testimony to Lauria's unparalleled leadership and organizational skills.[50] Whosoever commanded his loyalties commanded the seas. Fortunately for the Angevins, along with their French and papal patrons, that was about to change.

[50] Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 259.

17

SWITCHING SIDES
(DECEMBER 1293–APRIL 1297)

If the Admiral of Aragon had, in fact, intended to intimidate the Angevins with his actions in the summer of 1292, he succeeded admirably. Shortly after Roger's return from the raid on 'Romania' in the early autumn, rumours reached Charles II of Naples that Lauria was planning an ambitious assault on the Amalfi coast, ostensibly to punish Positano and other nearby ports for the harassment of Sicilian shipping. At least forty vessels and 2,000 *almugavars* as well as an equal number of Messinese mariners were reported to be involved. The ultimate objective, however, was the occupation of Monte Sant'Angelo a Tre Pizzi (just above Positano) – the highest summit in the Lattari Mountains, which formed the spine of the Sorrento Peninsula. This deeply concerned Charles because he knew that, from this vantage point, Lauria's *almugavars* could ravage the entire region and Angevin cavalry would be helpless to hamper them in the rugged terrain. It was an alarming threat to the heart of the *Regno*. The feared incursion never actually materialized. Nonetheless, the mere possibility frightened Charles into fortifying not just the mountaintop in question, but the entire Amalfi coast.[1]

The king of Naples knew, however, that such preventive measures were only palliative and did not deal with the underlying problem: Aragon's supremacy at sea under the supervision of its gifted admiral. Desperate to counter it, Charles again dispatched envoys to Genoa in December 1292 to propose a mutual military aid pact that would provide the *Regno* the required sea power.[2] To entice the Genoese into an alliance, the Angevin ambassadors offered them the one commodity

[1] Bartolomeo di Neocastro, *Historia Sicula (1250–1293)*, in *Cronisti e scrittori sincroni napoletani editi e inediti*, ed. Giuseppe del Re (2 vols, Naples, 1868), II, chs CXXIII–CXXIV, pp. 617–19. See also Giovanni Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro (1282–1302)* (Bologna, 2012), pp. 118–19.

[2] Iacopo Doria, *Annales Ianuenses*, in *Annali Genovesi di Caffaro e de' suoi continuatori dal MXCIX al MCCXCIII*, eds Luigi Belgrano and Cesare Imperiale di Sant'Angelo (5 vols, Fonti per la storia d'Italia, Genoa, 1890–1929), V,

that they needed the most: the grain of the *Mezzogiorno*. Without the wheat of southern Italy and Sicily, Genoa would all but starve. In order to acquire it, Genoese merchants were compelled to pay the onerous *dazio d'uscita* ('export tax'). The Angevins promised total exemption from the *dazio d'uscita* on the first 30,000 *salme* (1 Sicilian *salma* = 275 litres) from Sicily per year and a reduction of more than half on the next 30,000 *salme* extracted per annum – once the island was conquered for the *Regno*. Until such time, the Genoese were to be permitted to export 200,000 'measures' (presumably roughly equivalent to the Sicilian *salme*) from the ports of Provence, free from duty. Other enticements included the elimination of tariffs on the anchorage of ships and the loading/unloading of cargo as well as the waiver of some royal rights to shipwrecks. In return, the *Regno* expected the maritime republic to furnish it with the use of eighty fully crewed galleys.[3] The extravagantly generous terms spoke volumes. 'Such demonstrates the extreme need that the Angevins had for the help of Genoa,' said Camillo Manfroni of the offer, adding, 'this document is the explicit, open confession of the impotence of the navy of Provence and of the *Regno* against the naval forces of Sicily alone.'[4] Deliberations proceeded from proposal to counterproposal, but, informed by a corporate memory that included broken promises from the Angevin king's Hohenstaufen predecessors (Holy Roman Emperors Frederick I Barbarossa, Henry VI and Frederick II) who all reneged on similar pacts, the Genoese ultimately chose to cling to their neutrality.[5]

RECONCILIATION BETWEEN THE HOUSES OF ARAGON AND ANJOU

A single recourse remained to Charles: diplomacy. In order to recover control of Sicily and alleviate the naval pressure applied by Roger of Lauria, the Angevin king realized he would have to deal directly with the king of Aragon. And, of course, there was the matter of his sons, still held hostage by the Aragonese. He had, in fact, been secretly sending envoys to James as early as January 1292, when, with papal blessing, he dispatched Bonifacio de Calamandrano ('Grand Commander of the

pp. 147–52. See also Camillo Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana* (3 vols, Livorno, 1897–1902), II, p. 171.

[3] Iacopo Doria, *Annales Ianuenses*, V, pp. 152–9. See also Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, pp. 171–2.

[4] Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, p. 172.

[5] Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, pp. 172–3.

Knights Hospitallers of the West') to interface with the court of Aragon.[6] And James proved to be a receptive audience. H. J. Chaytor succinctly explains why in his *A History of Aragon and Catalonia*:

> The pope had forbidden James to accept the crown of Aragon during the continuance of his interdict, and had ordered the population of the Balearic Islands to refuse any ruler except their own king, James [of Majorca], who was driven out [by Peter III]. The clergy within the Aragonese territories were strictly forbidden to recognize James as king. Charles of Valois declared that he had abandoned his right in favour of Alfonso [who had passed away] and not James, and the brother of Charles, Philip [IV] of France, begged the pope to proclaim a crusade against James, with the object of putting Charles of Valois upon the throne of Aragon.[7]

Thus, James of Aragon was understandably open to a peace proposal by which the papal anathema – and thus the threat of another crusade – would be removed.

That said, the king was keenly aware of the sensitivity of the issue for his Sicilian subjects, so he sent a Catalan knight named Gilbert Cruyllas to confer with them. The latter arrived in Messina on 2 April. In response, the Sicilians soon dispatched to Barcelona a delegation composed of three Messinese citizens (Federico Rubeo, Ruggiero di Geremia and Pandolfo di Falcone) and three Palermitans (Giovanni di Caltagirone, Ugone Talac and Tommaso Guglielmo), who emphatically informed the sovereign that the Sicilian people had no interest in returning to Angevin rule. James assured them that he would take their concerns into account, but the parleys continued, nonetheless.[8] The death of Pope Nicholas IV in Rome on 4 April 1292 complicated matters further. The long papal interregnum that followed slowed progress, but deliberations persisted. By late autumn of 1293, these on-again/off-again talks finally began to bear fruit. In November, Charles II himself

[6] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CXXIV, pp. 618–19; Niccolò Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, ed. Ludovico Muratori (Rerum Italicarum Scriptores, X, Milan, 1727), bk II, ch. XX, col. 960; Jerónimo Zurita, *Anales de la Corona de Aragón*, ed. Angel Cannelas López (8 vols, Institución 'Fernando el Católico', Zaragoza, 1967–77), II, bk V, ch. VIII. See also Michele Amari, *La Guerra del Vespro Siciliano* (9th edn, 3 vols, Milan, 1886), II, pp. 246–7; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 119; Jochen Burgtorf, 'A Mediterranean Career in the Late Thirteenth Century: The Hospitaller Grand Commander Boniface of Calamandrana', in *The Hospitallers, the Mediterranean and Europe: Festschrift for Anthony Luttrell*, eds Karl Borchardt, Nikolas Jaspert and Helen Nicholson (Aldershot, 2007), pp. 73–85, esp. 80–1.

[7] H. J. Chaytor, *A History of Aragon and Catalonia* (London, 1933), p. 133.

[8] Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, ch. CXXIV, p. 621. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 253–5.

came to Catalonia and met James at La Jonquera (some sources say Figueres) in the Empordà region just south of the border, where the two ultimately hammered out the outline of an accord on 12 December. Basically, James agreed to renounce his claim to Sicily in return for considerable compensation and the expectation that his excommunication would be lifted. This naturally resulted in a temporary cessation of hostilities, which provided Charles the desired respite from Roger's incessant raiding of the *Regno*.[9]

A permanent peace, however, required papal ratification, which, of course, had to await the selection of a new pope. Unfortunately, a hopelessly divided College of Cardinals remained intractably deadlocked. Finally, an impatient Charles engineered the election of Pietro da Morrone, a holy hermit of the Abbruzzi whom the king felt he could manipulate. Pietro donned the papal pallium as Celestine V on 5 July 1294. The new pope did, indeed, ratify the Peace of La Jonquera (Figueres in some sources) on 1 October, but, without the consent of the Sicilians, this document – like its antecedents – was deceased the second it was signed.[10] In the end, all the political intrigue proved too much for the ageing monk (in his late seventies at the time). Celestine abdicated on 13 December, after holding the 'keys of Saint Peter' for barely five months. He was replaced ten days later by the Machiavellian Benedetto Caetani, who took the name Boniface VIII.[11] A fleshy scion of privileged Italian nobility, the calculating cardinal would later be consigned to the 'Eighth Circle of Hell' by Dante Alighieri in his *Divine Comedy*.[12] Pope Boniface believed avidly in the temporal power of the Church, so he worked diligently to restore Sicily to Angevin authority under papal auspices. Realizing that the key to a workable agreement was the submission of the Sicilians, on 27 February 1295 the pope summoned the personages mostly likely to obtain it: Frederick, the Aragonese viceroy of the island;

[9] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk II, ch. XX, col. 960. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 256; Burgtorf, 'Boniface of Calamandrana', p. 81; Lawrence Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean: The Catalan–Aragonese Fleet in the War of the Sicilian Vespers* (Gainesville, 2003), p. 46; Steven Runciman, *The Sicilian Vespers* (Cambridge, 1958), p. 269.

[10] Odorico Rainaldi, *Annales ecclesiastici ab anno MCXCVIII ubi desinit cardinalis Baronius, auctore Odorico Raynaldus*, ed. Augustino Theiner (37 vols, Paris, 1871), 23, anno 1294, § 15, pp. 135–42. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 256–9.

[11] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk II, ch. XX, col. 960. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p, 261; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 269–70.

[12] Dante Alighieri, *Divine Comedy*, trans. H. F. Tozer (Oxford, 1904), 'Hell', Canto XIX, verses 49–63, p. 80.

John of Procida, the chancellor; and, of course, Roger of Lauria, the admiral intent on assuring Sicily's survival as an Aragonese enclave.[13]

When the three men arrived at the papal residence in Velletri, outside Rome, the pope greeted them warmly. At one point, Boniface turned to Lauria and inquired, 'Are you the enemy of the Church who seized the lives of so many people with the sword?' Roger's rejoinder was reportedly prompt and defiant: 'Father, it was you and your predecessors that gave cause for this to be done.'[14] Nonplussed, the pope proposed a deal designed to win Frederick's approval. He offered the young Aragonese *infante* the hand of Catherine de Courtenay, the only daughter of the titular Latin Emperor of Constantinople, Philip de Courtenay, who had died in December 1283. Included in the package were promises of an army and 130,000 ounces of gold to realize the reconquest of the Eastern Latin Empire.[15] Intrigued, Frederick tentatively accepted on the condition that the nominal empress accede to the proposal by September.[16] Roger was initially supportive of the arrangement, because he believed it served the interests of the Crown of Aragon; and besides, he had already achieved a good measure of vengeance against the House of Anjou. As for Giovanni (John) da Procida, he was 85 at the time and probably just wanted to live out his days in relative peace.[17]

Considering the final obstacle removed, the pope pressed ahead with the peace process. Over the course of the next few months, he and emissaries from the courts of Naples, Aragon and France refined the covenant of La Jonquera, ratified by Celestine V. By summer, a final resolution to the conflict was ready. The resultant treaty, signed on 12 June 1295 at the Caetani family palace in Anagni (Fig. 17), provided for James of Aragon to relinquish Sicily to the Holy See, which was to compensate him with 12,000 *livres tournois* and the lifting of the papal interdiction. As a result, Charles of Valois was required to renounce his claim to Aragon. James was also to receive the hand of Blanche, the second daughter of Charles

[13] *Anonymi Chronicon Siculum*, in *Bibliotheca Scriptorum qui res in Sicilia gestas sub Aragonum imperio retulere*, ed. Rosario Gregorio (2 vols, Palermo, 1792), II, pp. 121–267, esp. ch. LIII, pp. 163–4; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk II, ch. XXI, col. 961. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 263.

[14] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk II, ch. XXI, col. 961. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 265; John Pryor, 'The Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', *Journal of Medieval History*, IX (1983), pp. 179–216, esp. 204–5.

[15] Rainaldi, *Annales ecclesiastici*, 23, anno 1295, § 29, pp. 166–7; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk II, ch. XXI, col. 961. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 265; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 270.

[16] Rainaldi, *Annales ecclesiastici*, 23, anno 1295, § 30, p. 167. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 265–6; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 271.

[17] Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 269–70.

17 Palace of Benedetto Caetani (Pope Boniface VIII) in Anagni, where the namesake treaty was signed on 12 June 1295 in the hope of ending the War of the Sicilian Vespers.

II of Naples, together with a dowry of 100,000 silver marks. In return, King Charles was to take possession of Sicily and Malta as a papal vassal and his third son, Robert, was to marry Yolanda (Violante), the sister of James and Frederick. His hostage sons were also to be released. Finally, at the insistence of Philip IV of France, James II of Aragon was to restore his uncle James to the throne of Majorca while Boniface promised to recompense the former with the investitures of Sardinia and Corsica (actually colonized at the time by Pisa and Genoa respectively).[18] The

[18] Antonio de Capmany y de Monpalau, *Memorias históricas sobre la marina, commercio y artes de la antigua ciudad de Barcelona* (3 vols, 1779–92, reprint Cámara official de comercio y navegación, Barcelona, 1961–3), II, pt 1, doc. 55, pp. 82–5; Ramon Muntaner, *Chronicle*, trans. Lady Goodenough (2 vols, London, 1920), II, ch. CLXXXI, pp. 436–9; Rainaldi, *Annales ecclesiastici*, 23, anno 1295, § 24–8, pp. 163–6; Zurita, *Anales de la Corona de Aragón*, II, bk V, ch. X. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 267–71; J. N. Hillgarth, 'The Problem

Treaty of Anagni, as it came to be called, took into account the interests of nearly all the parties involved, save those of the most pivotal protagonists in the prolonged struggle: the Sicilians. The omission would, once again, ultimately doom the accord.

Pope Boniface must have perceived the possibility that the Sicilians would not accept the terms of the treaty, even if those same terms satisfied their royal vicar, Frederick. Jerome Lee Shneidman in his *The Rise of the Aragonese–Catalan Empire* elucidates:

> Unfortunately for the pope, the de facto ruler of the island was Constanza [Queen Constance], the Hohenstaufen granddaughter. While Pedro III, Jaime II, and, in 1295, Fadrique III [Frederick] may have acted as sovereigns, it was to the granddaughter of Fadrique II (Emperor Frederick II) that the Sicilians owed their allegiance, and nothing would persuade her to relinquish control to the son of the man who had killed her father [Manfred] and beheaded her cousin [Conradin].[19]

And Constance, in fact, opposed the concordat. So Boniface had to have realized that, in regard to the recovery of Sicily, the treaty would have to be enforced militarily; and such action stood a much better chance of success, if the greatest admiral of the age was on his side. Accordingly, the pope sought to convert Roger of Lauria to the cause of the Roman Curia over the course of the next several weeks, even to the point of having Bonifacio de Calamandrano intercede on his behalf. By 11 August, the effort had borne fruit: Pope Boniface issued a bull on that date officially conceding the island of Jerba (and presumably also Kerkenna) as a papal fief to Roger, and the latter demonstrated his inclination to accommodate the papal will by accepting it.[20]

Subsequent events would soon validate Boniface's suspicions that the Sicilians would not willingly comply with the conditions specified at Anagni. The very next month (September) Catherine de Courtenay rejected the proposal to wed Frederick. Shrewd beyond her young years (only 21 at the time), she relayed to the pontiff that 'a princess without

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of a Catalan Mediterranean Empire 1229–1327', *The English Historical Review*, Supplement 8 (1975), pp. 30–1; Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, p. 46; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 270; J. Lee Shneidman, *The Rise of the Aragonese–Catalan Empire, 1200–1350* (2 vols, New York, 1970), II, pp. 343–4.

[19] Shneidman, *Aragonese–Catalan Empire*, II, p. 344.

[20] Rainaldi, *Annales ecclesiastici*, 23, anno 1295, § 37, pp. 169–70. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 266–7; Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, p. 175; Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 205.

lands ought not marry a prince without lands'.[21] After all, she was the Empress of the Eastern Empire in name only and he was merely the king's royal representative in Sicily. Technically, neither of them actually held any real territory of their own. Frederick was left with no option but to pursue making his provisional rule of Sicily permanent. Queen Constance supported him in this endeavour by convening a council to ascertain Aragon's commitment to the island. The assembly appointed a delegation – composed of Cataldo Rosso, Santoro Bisalà and Ugone Talac – to seek a royal audience, but, by the time it reached Catalonia in late October, both King James and the *Cortes* had already ratified the Treaty of Anagni and, as of 1 November, had fulfilled several of its terms.[22] Upon hearing the news, Frederick convoked a parliament in Palermo to announce his brother's abandonment of Sicily. The reaction was predictable. On 12 December, the collected knights, barons and burghers confirmed the secession of Sicily from Aragon and proclaimed Frederick 'Lord of the Island', pending a plebiscite to be held at a general assembly in Catania in mid-January. Accordingly, leading men from every part of the island gathered in the cathedral of Catania on 18 January 1296. Roger of Lauria, sensing the sentiments of the convocation, spoke first and set the tone: he urged the young regent's elevation to the throne. In consequence, Frederick was proclaimed King of Sicily.[23] The coronation was subsequently celebrated on 25 March in the cathedral of Palermo.[24] By almost all accounts, the Sicilians accepted their new monarch with open arms. A flattering mosaic of a fair-featured young Frederick in royal regalia still adorns the *Duomo* in Palermo. Pope Boniface reacted in short order by nullifying the enthronement and excommunicating Frederick along with all his Sicilian subjects.[25]

The struggle for Sicily had taken another telling turn, and Lauria once again found himself caught between two masters with competing objectives. The Treaty of Anagni had obligated James to assist the

[21] Rainaldi, *Annales ecclesiastici*, 23, anno 1296, § 8–9, pp. 183–4. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 272–3; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 271.

[22] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk II, ch. XXII, col. 962. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 273–6.

[23] *Anonymi Chronicon Siculum*, ch. LIV, pp. 168–71; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk II, ch. XXIII, cols 962–3; Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CLXXXV, pp. 445–6. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 277–83, 287–8.

[24] *Anonymi Chronicon Siculum*, ch. LIV, p. 171; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk III, ch. I, col. 965; Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CLXXXV, pp. 446–7. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 288–9; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 123.

[25] Rainaldi, *Annales ecclesiastici*, 23, anno 1296, § 14–15, pp. 186–7. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 306.

Church in re-establishing suzerainty over Sicily by whatever means necessary. To emphasize the point, in January 1296 Pope Boniface conferred upon the king of Aragon the illustrious title of '*Gonfaloniere* ("Standard Bearer"), Captain-General and Admiral of the Church'.[26] James subsequently tasked Catalan knights Ramon Alamanno and Berenguer Villaragut to conduct a recall of all Catalans and Aragonese from Sicily.[27] Many nobles, like Blasco d'Alagona who had won lands on the island, however, chose to remain – as had large numbers of *almugavars* who found fighting for Frederick remunerative. At around the same time (16 January), James sent a missive to Roger, which reaffirmed his status as 'Admiral of Aragon' and reminded him of how vulnerable his properties on the Iberian Peninsula were.[28] A few months later, in March, his brother Frederick completed Roger's quandary at a post-coronation accolade for new knights: he bestowed upon Lauria the dignity of 'High Admiral' of Sicily.[29]

It was likely the most difficult moment of Lauria's career. He was truly conflicted – torn between his allegiance to the Crown of Aragon, which had sheltered and elevated him, and his devotion to the Sicilian comrades-in-arms, by whose side he had fought for over a dozen years. As a practical matter, his estate encompassed substantial holdings in both Sicily and Spain. His Sicilian fiefs included Aci Castello, Castiglione, Francavilla, Novara, Linguagrossa, Tremestieri, San Pietro sopra Patti, Ficarra and Tortorici – all on the northeastern corner of the island in the environs of Messina; while his feudal possessions in Iberia (held at the pleasure of the king of Aragon) comprised Cocentaina, Alcoy, Ceta, Calis, Altea, Navarrés, Puy de Santa Maria, Balsegue and Castronovo – mostly in the Kingdom of Valencia.[30] No matter which side Roger chose, he stood to lose a great deal. So he did what most humans tend to do

[26] Rainaldi, *Annales ecclesiastici*, 23, anno 1297, § 19, p. 204. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 305–6; Hillgarth, 'Problem of a Catalan Mediterranean Empire', p. 31.

[27] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CLXXXIV, pp. 444–5. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 278.

[28] Heinrich Finke, ed., *Acta Aragonensia, Quellen zur deutschen, italienischen, französischen, spanischen, zur Kirchen- und Kulturgeschichte aus der diplomatischen Korrespondenz Jaymes II, (1291–1327)* (3 vols, Berlin, 1908–22), I, doc. 23, pp. 31–2. See also Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, pp. 46–7; Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 205.

[29] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk III, ch. I, col. 965. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 289.

[30] Manuel José Quintana, *Vidas de españoles célebres* (Barcelona, 1807), Appendix, 'A la Vida de Roger de Lauria', doc. 4, pp. 359–60. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 284 note 1; Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, pp. 174–5.

in such a predicament: he procrastinated until the picture was clear and the choice plain … or, more probably, until he was quite simply forced to decide.

Initially, it appeared that events in Iberia would make it easy for Roger to put off the inevitable decision. King James had become distracted by a royal succession dispute in Castile in the wake of Sancho IV's death from tuberculosis on 25 April of the year before (1295). Sancho's oldest son, Frederick (the future Frederick IV) was the designated heir, but, in that he was illegitimate and only nine at the time, his uncle Juan of Castile challenged his claim to the throne. Alfonso de la Cerda soon avowed his own right to rule and allied himself to Juan on the premise that the two would split control of the kingdom. By the spring of 1296, the discord in Castile had metastasized into a full-blown insurrection. Lured by the promise of Murcia, James took advantage of his status as Alfonso's protector to invade both Castile and Murcia in April 1296.[31]

Unfortunately for Roger, the diversion may have had the unintended consequence of bringing about an early reckoning, for it made Frederick feel as though he had a free hand to assert his authority on the Italian mainland without interference from his brother. In early May, the newly crowned king of Sicily crossed the Strait of Messina in force and mounted an incursion into Calabria (Map 3). The expedition was ostensibly to relieve Rocca Imperiale, an Aragonese–Sicilian stronghold on the northeastern Ionian coast besieged by Angevin forces, but it soon became apparent that Frederick's intentions were more expansive. He joined forces with Blasco d'Alagona, already operating on the peninsula, to besiege Squillace (about 8 miles or 12 km south of Catanzaro). Roger was enjoined to support the effort with his fleet. Taking the city proved a fairly facile enterprise: Lauria sent his sailors up into the mountains above the town at the king's behest to seize the two streams that supplied the city its water, thereby compelling its surrender.[32]

It was after the successful reduction of Squillace that signs of strain between Frederick and Roger began to show. At a subsequent council of war, the admiral recommended attacking Crotone next, but the young king brushed his opinion aside to invest Catanzaro, instead. Lauria then entered into a clandestine conciliation with Pietro Ruffo, the lord of the city and a distant relative, which resulted in a truce of 40 days not just for the city but also for the surrounding *Terra Giordana* (comprising the

[31] Chaytor, *History of Aragon and Catalonia*, p. 136.

[32] *Anonymi Chronicon Siculum*, ch. LV, p. 171; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk III, chs I–V, cols 966–8. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 295–8; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, pp. 126–7.

eastern part of the province of Cosenza as well as Crotone and Catanzaro). If no Angevin aid arrived before the expiration of the truce, Ruffo had agreed to capitulate to the king. Frederick, a vainglorious 24-year-old at the time, was apparently irked that he had not been consulted in advance, but reluctantly consented to the terms. From that point on, the chemistry between the two men soured swiftly.[33]

During the truce, Frederick instructed Lauria to relieve Rocca Imperiale with the bulk of the fleet, leaving behind at Crotone a squadron of twelve galleys under the command of Pietro Salvacoscia of Ischia to support the main force. Roger was unable to break the siege of Rocca prosecuted by Angevin captain-general Jean de Monfort, but he landed a detachment of 300 men-at-arms who successfully smuggled supplies into the city. Concomitantly, he took the fleet and raided the nearby Angevin-held marina at Policoro, massacring a contingent of around hundred knights.[34] Meanwhile, the inhabitants of Crotone rose up against the French garrison and beseeched Salvacoscia's sailors to assist them. These sailors subsequently gained entry into the citadel by mingling with retreating French troops, then sacked it. Enraged at the unsanctioned violation of the truce, Frederick sternly scolded the sailors and returned the spoils (although not the citadel itself) to the Angevins. Worse still, he held Roger responsible for the episode, provoking an angry exchange between the two in which Roger reportedly proffered his resignation. Cooler heads like that of Lauria's friend Conrad di Lancia managed to temporarily calm the choppy waters, but the king's scepticism of where Roger's loyalties lay remained.[35]

Nonetheless, the truce that Lauria had negotiated achieved its purpose with very little pain. Charles II had evidently made the calculation that the *Terra Giordana* was not worth additional manpower and money. Thus, when the forty days lapsed without the arrival of Angevin aid, both Catanzaro and Crotone duly capitulated. This freed Frederick's forces for a concerted advance on Rocca Imperiale. Their imminent arrival was enough to convince Jean de Monfort to abandon the Angevin siege of the city. Santa Severina, ruled by the inimical Archbishop Lucifero,

[33] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk III, ch. VI, cols 968–71. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 298; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, pp. 127–8.

[34] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk III, ch. VII, cols 971–2. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 299–300; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 128.

[35] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk III, chs VIII–IX, cols 972–5. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 300–2; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 128.

remained the sole holdout in the region. The Sicilians, however, used the same tactic that they had successfully employed at Squillace to gain the city's surrender: they seized its only external water source. The town of Rosanno soon followed suit.[36]

Meanwhile, Roger crossed the Gulf of Taranto in order to raid the *Terra Otranto* on the heel of Apulia. He marched his crews inland to surprise and sack Lecce at night. Returning to his ships, he then sailed around the heel to blockade Otranto itself, soon gaining its submission. After fortifying and garrisoning the port, he left a small squadron there; then turned his attentions, once again, to Brindisi. Upon arrival, Roger had a stockade set up at La Rosa, a suburb of city, from which his *janeti* launched *cavalcate* (the Italian version of the French *chevauchées* – horseback raids) of the surrounding countryside. One of these cavalry contingents was ambushed near the main bridge leading into Brindisi by an Angevin detachment of 600 knights led by Godfrey of Joinville. All would have been lost had not two brave Sicilian knights, Peregrine di Patti and Guglielmo di Palotta, held the bridge until Roger's arrival with reinforcements. It so happened that Lauria and Joinville chanced upon one another during the desperate encounter; and the Aragonese admiral sent his Angevin adversary tumbling from the bridge, gravely wounded, with a well-placed sword stroke between the cuirass and the helmet. The deadly barrages of Catalan crossbowmen forced the remainder of the French into retreat. Heavy losses of their own, however, prevented the Sicilians from pressing their advantage. It would turn out to be Lauria's last skirmish in the service of the sovereign of Sicily.[37]

In late August, while Frederick was still pacifying eastern Calabria, he received in camp a certain Pedro de Corbelles, a Dominican friar sent by his brother James. Pedro passed to Frederick an invitation to rendezvous with James on Ischia in order to discuss a rapprochement with the Church. The friar also made certain that the young monarch was aware of the veiled threat implicit in his older brother's recently acquired status as Captain-General of the Holy See. Frederick was reluctant to accept, but, sensing a tectonic shift in the years-long struggle, he sought consultation with his Sicilian subjects before responding. He, therefore, appointed Blasco d'Alagona as his vice regent for Calabria and headed

[36] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk III, chs IX–XI, cols 975–6. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 302–3; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 129.

[37] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk III, chs XV–XVI, cols 978–80. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 303–4; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, pp. 130–1.

back to Messina. Once there, he summoned the lords and syndics of the island to attend an assembly. He also recalled Lauria.[38]

When the parliament convened in Piazza Armerina on 20 October, Roger was one of the first to speak. Niccolò Speciale, who may have actually witnessed the event, said the admiral stood in the centre of the congregation with tears welling up in his eyes to offer an impassioned plea for reconciliation – for Frederick to attend the proposed meeting with James. He warned that their 'strength would be insufficient' to resist the combined forces of Aragon and Anjou, adding that 'cities and other places in Sicily would be subject to siege and long famine, and ultimately captured by sword thrust'. 'Who will be able endure the predation, arson, imprisonment and banishment which will befall all of Sicily?' he asked.[39] However compelling Lauria's oratory may have been, neither Frederick nor the majority of the congregants were moved. The king essentially saw no point in a parley with his brother, if the probable end result was the enslavement of Sicily to papally sanctioned Angevin oppression. The conference concluded by issuing a decree prohibiting participation in the proposed summit. For Roger, it was another stinging, royal rebuke.[40]

An incident in mid-October of 1296 set off a chain of events that would ultimately thrust the split out into the open. Neapolitans, exasperated by the excise tax still levied on their wine exports by the Sicilian-held islands of Capri and Ischia, launched nine transport vessels loaded with men-at-arms in a bid to take the latter isle. Pietro Salvacoscia, whose sailors had been party to the Crotone affair that summer, hastily manned five war galleys to challenge the invasion. Though the Neapolitans enjoyed a numerical advantage in ships and perhaps even manpower, it was not a 'fair fight'. The ponderous supply ships, possibly *taride*, were obviously no match for the swift, highly manoeuvrable men-of-war. Salvacoscia's squadron captured five of the enemy ships and sent the remaining four into flight. Charles II was reportedly so incensed by the setback that he had the surviving shipmasters put to

[38] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk III, chs XII–XIV, cols 976–8. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 306–7; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 130.

[39] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk III, ch. XVII, col. 981. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 307–8; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, pp. 128–9.

[40] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk III, chs XVII–XVIII, cols 980–3. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 308–9; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 131.

death.[41] He then prodded Pope Boniface to again insist that James of Aragon honour his treaty-imposed commitment to help bring the Sicilians to heel. The pope, in turn, repeated his summons to James, dangling before the Aragonese monarch the formal investitures of Corsica and Sardinia.[42]

The following February, James sent the bishop of Valencia to make one final plea to Frederick to come confer with him on Ischia.[43] When the latter rebuffed him again, James made his way to Rome in March 1297 to accept the promised investitures in return for his oath of allegiance to the Holy See. At the same time, he vowed to assist Charles in the recovery of Sicily and, in order to seal their alliance, he formally affianced his sister Yolanda to the Angevin heir apparent, Robert of Calabria. Accordingly, James called for his mother, Queen Constance, to conduct Yolanda to Rome for the nuptials.[44] He also sent for Roger, but when the admiral requested permission to take his leave of Frederick, the latter angrily refused in open court, reportedly snatching his hand away to deny Roger the vassal's kiss – an almost 'unheard of' breach of feudal custom. It was not an affront that the proud, perhaps even arrogant, admiral would soon forget. Courtiers later convinced the king to relent, but the damage had been done. All knew that the relationship between the two men had been irretrievably ruptured.[45] Roger, however, remained a favourite of Constance and she rescued him from these intolerable circumstances by requesting he and John of Procida accompany her to Rome as escorts. Frederick grudgingly consented.[46]

[41] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk III, ch. XVIII, col. 983. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 313–14; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 131; Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, p. 176.

[42] Rainaldi, *Annales ecclesiastici*, 23, anno 1297, § 1, p. 199. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 314–16.

[43] Zurita, *Anales de la Corona de Aragón*, II, bk V, ch. XXV. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 314.

[44] Rainaldi, *Annales ecclesiastici*, 23, anno 1297, § 2–16, pp. 199–203; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk III, ch. XX, col. 985; Giovanni Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, ed. Francesco Dragomanni (4 vols, Florence, 1845), II, bk VIII, ch. XVIII, p. 23; Zurita, *Anales de la Corona de Aragón*, II, bk V, ch. XXVIII. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 314–17; Shneidman, *Aragonese–Catalan Empire*, II, p. 345.

[45] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk III, ch. XIX, col. 984. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 317; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, pp. 131–2.

[46] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk III, chs XIX–XX, cols 984–5; Zurita, *Anales de la Corona de Aragón*, II, bk V, ch. XXVI. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 319–20.

18 Awarded as a fief to Roger of Lauria by the kings of both Aragon and Sicily for his service during the War of the Vespers, this Norman fortress of black lava still guards the seaward approaches to Catania on the Ionian Coast of Sicily.

Prior to his departure from the island, Lauria entreated his vassals to remain faithful and await the summons of his nephew, Giovanni di Lauria, to muster at Castiglione – an ominous portent. He then embarked upon four of his galleys along with the queen, the princess and, of course, Procida for the journey north.[47] Roger was received in Rome with open arms. Following the royal marriage, the pope bestowed upon Lauria the commune of Aci Castello, a fortified town on the east coast of Sicily under the auspices of the bishop of Catania (Fig. 18). He also confirmed the investments of Jerba and Kerkenna. On 2 April, James issued the *Officium Ammirati pro nobili Rogerio de Loria*, which created Roger 'High Admiral for Life' of all the king's dominions; and then, so as to bind him yet closer to the crown, the king promised the hand of his cousin, Jaime of Exérica, to Beatrice, Roger's daughter by his first

[47] *Anonymi Chronicon Siculum*, ch. LVI, pp. 171–2; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk III, ch. XX, col. 985. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 320.

wife Margherita di Lancia.[48] The 'die' had, indeed, been 'cast' and the cast set for the final scenes of the great Sicilian struggle.

BATTLE OF CATANZARO (SUMMER 1297)

The fallout from the realignment of adversaries was precipitous and violent. Sometime in the spring after his confirmation as Admiral of Aragon, Roger of Lauria tried to surreptitiously slip into Sicily on a swift sailing ship, presumably with the intention of organizing some sort of resistance or rearguard action among his adherents. Frederick's spies, however, learned of the exploit and informed the Sicilian sovereign, who then stationed two men-of-war in the Aeolian Islands to lie in wait for him. Lauria, always wary of being waylaid, discovered the ambush in time to turn and outrun his pursuers, but the episode sparked a rising among his loyalists, nonetheless. Upon hearing of his uncle's efforts, Giovanni di Lauria rallied Roger's partisans at Castiglione on the northeast slope of Mount Etna and even attempted an assault on nearby Randazzo (Map 6). They were rejected, so they took out their frustrations on little Mascali to the south of Taormina. The alarm raised, Frederick issued a call to arms and led the siege of Castiglione himself. Giovanni, supported by the valiant Guglielmo di Palotta of Brindisi fame and Tommaso di Lentini, battled the besiegers bravely, but the outcome was never really in doubt. Surrounded on three sides and battered incessantly by siege machinery, Giovanni di Lauria surrendered by summer on the condition of free passage for him and his confederates to Calabria. Meanwhile, Francavilla fell to the Messinese. A little later, Frederick utilized a painstakingly constructed wooden tower with a bridge, called a 'crane', to surmount the walls of Aci Castello and gain its submission as well.[49] Thus, Lauria's vassals were vanquished in short order and his holdings on the island confiscated by the Sicilian crown.

For the first time in his storied career, Roger found himself bereft of an Aragonese fleet beneath his feet and without the fierce faithfulness

[48] *Archivo de la Corona de Aragón* (ACA), *Real Cancillería* (RC), Reg. 195, fols 8r–10r; Quintana, *Vidas de españoles célebres*, Appendix, 'A la Vida de Roger de Lauria', doc. 3, pp. 351–9; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk III, ch. XXI, cols 985–6. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 320–1; Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean*, pp. 47, 94–5. The provisions of the *Officium Ammirati pro nobili Rogerio de Loria* were fully discussed in Chapter 9.

[49] *Anonymi Chronicon Siculum*, ch. LVII, p. 172; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk III, ch. XXII, cols 986–8; Zurita, *Anales de la Corona de Aragón*, II, bk V, ch. XXXI. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 327–9; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 132.

of his Sicilian comrades-in-arms at his side. A new disorienting day had dawned for the admiral. Worse still, his first assignment from his new master, Charles II of Naples, was a bitter irony: the reconquest of Catanzaro from his erstwhile Sicilian compatriots with whom he had won the city for Frederick only the summer before (Map 3). The incongruity of the circumstances was heightened by the fact that Pietro Ruffo, the previous lord of the town and his former antagonist, was now his ally in the endeavour, assisted by an Angevin nobleman called Malgerio Collipetra and a Provençal knight named Reforciatus. And holding the city against him was none other than Blasco d'Alagona, his old colleague in the Sicilian cause. Given the paradox of the situation, Roger showed little inclination to engage in hostilities when he arrived outside of Catanzaro in the summer of 1297 with around 400 men-at-arms. He, instead, tried to turn Alagona to the Angevin–Aragonese cause. But, according to Niccolò Speciale, Frederick learned of the attempt to lure away his captain (a Catalan by birth) and hastily recalled him.[50]

With Alagona gone, Roger apparently fomented a rising in the city against the Sicilian garrison, which then barricaded itself in the castle. Even then, Lauria had no taste for unnecessary bloodshed. He granted the garrison a truce of thirty days, at the end of which – without relief from Sicily – the besieged men were to surrender the citadel. Frederick responded by sending Alagona back to Calabria with 200 horse and an unknown number of *almugavars* (plenty remained on Sicily to fight for Frederick), assisted by Guglielmo Calcerando and Guillén Ramón de Moncada (apparently another Aragonese knight loyal to Frederick). Alagona and his men reached Squillace (a few miles south of Catanzaro) on the eve of the truce's expiration. Fatigued from the forced march and facing an uphill advance against an enemy that held the high ground around the city, Alagona confronted steep odds. They got worse. That night an additional Angevin detachment of 300 cavalry under Godfrey de Milly entered the town. Alagona's outfit was outnumbered roughly seven to two. In an effort to maintain morale, Alagona attempted to keep the arrival of fresh Angevin reinforcements from his men, but, when the light of day revealed the mismatch, twenty-four of his knights chose vitality over valour. Undeterred, Alagona accepted the challenge, nonetheless.[51]

[50] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk IV, ch. I, col. 989; Zurita, *Anales de la Corona de Aragón*, II, bk V, ch. XXXI. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 329–30; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, pp. 132–3.

[51] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk IV, ch. I, cols 989–90; Zurita, *Anales de la Corona de Aragón*, II, bk V, ch. XXXI. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 330–1; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, pp. 133–4.

The course of the battle was, in large part, dictated by topography. Catanzaro is strategically situated on the southern slopes of the Sila Massif, a giant mountainous plateau that dominates the midfoot area of Calabria. The city's significance persists to this day in its status as the capital of Calabria. It overlooks the Gulf of Squillace, commanding the Ionian coastline of the province. The medieval fortified city was extremely challenging to assault because it was arrayed along the ridge of a rugged north–south spur of the Sila, rising from 1,000 feet above sea level at the southern end to 2,000 feet at the northern edge where it joined the plateau. The town was further protected by two torrents that ran down deep ravines on either side: the Fiumarella on the west and the Musafalo on the east. The two streams converged just south of the city to form a narrow alluvial plain that Speciale called *Sicopotamum*, meaning 'dry river' (probably because the small triangle of level ground formed by the confluence of the rivers dried up in summer). Thus, the most accessible approach for a mounted host was from the south, that is, from the direction of Squillace. Accordingly, at sunrise Alagona marched his men up from Squillace to reach the *Sicopotamum* near sunset. It was there that he formed his cavalry into a single rank fronted by a small phalanx under a knight named Martino de Ollecta. Calcerando took up a position on the right wing while Moncada held the left. The *almugavars*, Alagona arranged on his flanks along the outer banks of the two merging rivers.[52]

Enjoying the luxury of numbers, Roger was able to organize his forces into three battles (one after the other): the first commanded by himself, the second by Reforciatus and the third by Godfrey de Milly. Unfortunately, numerical superiority was the fickle mistress who would betray Roger in this clash. Her siren call caused him to forsake on land the devoted spouse who had always served him so well at sea: strategy. Eschewing a well-thought-out plan, Lauria simply charged his division headlong downhill as if to inundate and wash away his smaller adversary like a tsunami crashing down upon an unprotected beach. Instead, his battle broke upon the immovable rock that was Martino de Ollecta's small wedge of knights who held firm in the vanguard. The result was shock and disorder among the Angevins. Alagona's Sicilians surged in support. The impetus gone, a confused mêlée ensued with neither side gaining any clear advantage. Reforciatus attempted to break the bloody stalemate with the second rank, but the confined combat zone prevented

[52] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk IV, ch. I, col. 990; Zurita, *Anales de la Corona de Aragón*, II, bk V, ch. XXXI. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 331; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, pp. 133–4.

him from bringing the full weight of his numbers to bear, leaving his rear and flanks exposed to the *almugavars* who now fired a murderous shower of stones, darts, arrows and lances from elevated positions along the outer river banks. A frightful slaughter followed.[53]

By the time, Godfrey de Milly joined the fray with the third division, Lauria had been slashed on the arm and unhorsed. The Sicilians saw their opportunity. Blasco d'Alagona urged his men forward: 'Press on, knights! The enemy yields!'[54] A maniple of men-at-arms attacked Roger's banner bearer, Giacomo di Castrocucco, and wounded him in the face. With blood doubtless blurring his vision and in extremis himself, Castrocucco could no longer see his lord – so he took flight. Seeing the standard in retreat, other Angevins begin to bolt as well. Speciale said Milly provided the final straw. The French knight reportedly heard the men of Roger's entourage attempt to rally one another with shouts of 'Aragona! Aragona!' and mistook it for 'Alagona! Alagona!' Believing himself to be surrounded by the Sicilian commander's confederates, Milly fled the field – drawing his men with him. A general rout resulted.[55]

As the remainder of his mounted host galloped away into the descending darkness towards whatever avenue of escape was available, Roger found himself alone, on foot and scarcely able to defend himself due to his lacerated limb. In the mayhem of the moment, he scurried into some hedges – expecting to be discovered and dispatched at any second. Fate, however, had other plans. One of his fleeing retainers, a knight named Pietro Stallerato, happened to catch sight of Lauria and gave up his own horse to his liege. With tears of rage streaming down his face, according to Speciale, Roger scrambled into the saddle and spurred himself to safety. He stopped only when he reached his castle at Badolato, some 35 miles (56 km) to the south. Lauria did not, however, forget his valiant vassal, who somehow survived. He later granted Stallerato rich concessions from among his lands in the Kingdom of Valencia.[56]

Nothing – not even the relief of reaching refuge – could, nevertheless, assuage the stinging disgrace of defeat, something Roger had

[53] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk IV, ch. I, col. 990; Zurita, *Anales de la Corona de Aragón*, II, bk V, ch. XXXI. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 331; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 134.

[54] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk IV, ch. I, col. 991.

[55] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk IV, ch. I, cols 990–1; Zurita, *Anales de la Corona de Aragón*, II, bk V, ch. XXXI. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 331–2; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 134.

[56] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk IV, ch. I, col. 991; Zurita, *Anales de la Corona de Aragón*, II, bk V, ch. XXXI. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 332; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 135.

never before tasted in pitched battle. He had commanded a force of 700 knights under no fewer than twenty-four banner lords, yet was vanquished by an opponent whose cavalry was less than a third of his own. Several prominent lords littered the field of battle, including the son of Virgilio Scordia and Giordano di Amantea. Reforciatus had been captured along with Enrico di Sinopoli. The former managed to bribe his way to freedom, but his son was found among the fallen. In the aftermath of the debacle, Calcerando claimed the town of Catanzaro for Frederick, while Blasco d'Alagona returned in triumph to Squillace.[57]

The ignominy of Catanzaro seared into Lauria's consciousness, giving him a ruthless determination to make certain that this reverse would be his last. Roger bitterly complained to King Charles that the Angevin and *regnicoli* soldiery at his disposal were evidently unequal to the task of dealing with the Sicilians. The fact that Godfrey de Milly was later punished with the loss of lands for having abandoned the battle indicated that the king concurred, at least in part. Roger further stipulated that Catalan infantry and Aragonese knights would be required. More to the point, he would need a navy upon which he could rely to take Sicily, and that meant Catalan ships and sailors. King James, himself, would have to join the fray, insisted Lauria. Both Charles and Pope Boniface reluctantly reached the same conclusion.[58]

[57] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk IV, ch. I, col. 991; Zurita, *Anales de la Corona de Aragón*, II, bk V, ch. XXXI. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 332; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 135.

[58] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk IV, ch. II, cols 991–2. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 333–4; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, pp. 135–6.

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ARAGON'S INVASION OF SICILY AT ANJOU'S BIDDING (1298/1299)

In the aftermath of Catanzaro, the lack of an effective naval force initially prevented the Angevin–papal coalition from making much progress in its quest to wrest Sicily from Frederick. The only favourable development was the defection to the Angevin cause of Catalan captain Berenguer de Sarrià (a colleague of Lauria), who cobbled together a flotilla of twenty galleys to raid Marsala, Malta and Pantelleria in February 1298. When Frederick quickly equipped around thirty galleys at Palermo to hunt him down, Sarrià set course back to Naples, however, leaving little lasting damage in his wake.[1] Thus, it became painfully apparent that there was no real hope of returning Sicily to Angevin control unless James of Aragon was convinced to assume a more active role in the endeavour. Accordingly, Pope Boniface ardently renewed his entreaties to King James, promising to finance his participation with papal tithes. He also persuaded the king's uncle, James II of Majorca, to pledge his allegiance to the Crown of Aragon as a condition for the return of the Balearics to his suzerainty. This arrangement also satisfied the latter's ally, Philip IV of France, engendering a general peace between the two kingdoms. Furthermore, a truce with Ferdinand IV of Castile temporarily freed Aragon from peninsular entanglements. In sum, the timing was finally right for James to help resolve the Sicilian issue once and for all.[2]

[1] Jerónimo Zurita, *Anales de la Corona de Aragón*, ed. Angel Cannelas López (8 vols, Institución 'Fernando el Católico', Zaragoza, 1967–77), II, bk V, ch. XXXIII. See also Michele Amari, *La Guerra del Vespro Siciliano* (9th edn, 3 vols, Milan, 1886), II, pp. 332–3; Giovanni Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro (1282–1302)* (Bologna, 2012), p. 136.

[2] Zurita, *Anales de la Corona de Aragón*, II, bk V, chs XXXIII–XXXIV. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 333–4; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 136; H. J. Chaytor, *A History of Aragon and Catalonia* (London, 1933), p. 137.

SIEGE OF SYRACUSE (AUTUMN 1298/WINTER 1299)

That spring, James applied his papal bounty to the assembly of an 80-ship fleet (30 Provençal galleys and 50 Catalan).[3] Marino Sanudo Torsello claimed that it carried 1,200 cavalry and 20,000 *almugavars*,[4] but Giovanni Amatuccio relied on Angevin records to reach a more reasonable estimate of 500 knights and 3,000 infantry of mixed ethnic origins.[5] No matter the exact numbers, it was a formidable force that represented a clear and present danger to Frederick and his Sicilian subjects. The arming of such an armada and its purpose could not have been kept secret from the young sovereign. After all, its mariners and military personnel had been recruited from Aragon, Catalonia, France, Provence and the *Regno*. Consequently, on 15 April Frederick hired Corrado Doria, a former Genoese fleet commander and *Capitano del Popolo* ('Captain of the People'), to hurriedly equip a fleet of 64 ships, upon which some 700 horsemen were embarked. In the meantime, James set sail from Barcelona at the head of his mighty armada in early summer and soon arrived at Ostia. Anticipating that his brother would eventually make his way to Naples, Frederick steered his ships to Ischia around the middle of June with the intention of interdicting the Aragonese fleet before it could enter the gulf. Unfortunately for Frederick, James failed to cooperate with the plan. He delayed his arrival, sending instead an admonishment that he commanded a large, well-armed armada and that his status as papal standard-bearer would supersede fraternal devotion. Frederick lingered as long as he could, provocatively parading the fleet before the port of Naples, but eventually limited supplies (probably owing to rushed preparations) compelled him to return to Sicily long before his brother entered the Gulf of Naples on 22 July.[6]

James remained in Naples for about a month, during which time Frederick readied himself for the inevitable invasion of the island by

[3] Niccolò Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, ed. Ludovico Muratori (Rerum Italicarum Scriptores, X, Milan, 1727), bk IV, ch. II, col. 992. See also Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 136; Camillo Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana* (3 vols, Livorno, 1897–1902), II, p. 177.

[4] Marino Sanudo Torsello, *Istoria del Regno di Romania*, in *Chroniques Gréco-romanes inédites ou peu connues*, ed. Charles Hope (Berlin, 1873), pp. 99–170, esp. 168.

[5] Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 136.

[6] *Anonymi Chronicon Siculum*, in *Bibliotheca Scriptorum qui res in Sicilia gestas sub Aragonum imperio retulere*, ed. Rosario Gregorio (2 vols, Palermo, 1792), II, pp. 121–267, esp. ch. LVIII, p. 172; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk IV, ch. III, col. 992; Zurita, *Anales de la Corona de Aragón*, II, bk V, ch. XXXV. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 335–6; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 136; Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, pp. 177–8.

mustering his forces and provisioning his fortresses. When James finally weighed anchor for Sicily on 24 August 1298, in tow were Duke Robert of Calabria (heir to the Angevin throne) and Cardinal Landolfo Volta, a papal legate. But the person he considered most crucial to the success of the campaign was at the helm of his armada: Roger of Lauria.[7] Up until now, an argument could have been made that Roger was a reluctant warrior, hesitant to enter into combat with his old comrades. Recent events had, however, wiped away any such sentiment. Not only did he still smart from the humiliation of Catanzaro, but, in the weeks since, he had been the target of an assassination campaign orchestrated by the court of Palermo. Frederick, on the counsel of two of his advisers, Manfred di Chiaramonte and Vinciguerra Palizzi, had placed a huge bounty on Lauria's head. These men even hatched a far-fetched plot to inveigle Ramon XI Folch, the viscount of Cardona who had led the defence of Girona during the French siege of 1285, to challenge Roger to a duel to the death based upon some spurious charge of treason. None of these schemes ever came to fruition. They only succeeded in inflaming Lauria's antipathy for Frederick and guaranteeing his brother James a highly motivated admiral to command the Aragonese fleet.[8]

Upon the admiral's advice, James caused the armada to make landfall on the north coast of the island near Patti (about 46 miles or 76 km west of Messina). Roger had reasoned that, since most of his possessions had been located in this region, it would still contain partisans willing to assist in the incursion – making it an excellent beachhead (Map 6). Subsequent events proved him correct. Patti surrendered to the Aragonese–Angevin coalition on 1 September. Milazzo, Novara, San Pietro sopra Patti and Monforte swiftly followed. However, outside of a confined corridor north of Mount Etna extending westward from Messina along the north coast for about 50 miles (80 km), the indigenous population remained faithful to Frederick and quite obdurate to any further advance. After almost two months of relative futility, King James came to the conclusion that he needed a more secure, sheltered port for his massive fleet before the onset of winter. He settled on Syracuse. He garrisoned the captured castles and set sail for the ancient port city in late October.[9]

[7] *Anonymi Chronicon Siculum*, ch. LIX, pp. 172–3; Zurita, *Anales de la Corona de Aragón*, II, bk V, ch. XXXV.

[8] Zurita, *Anales de la Corona de Aragón*, II, bk V, ch. XXXIII. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 333.

[9] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk IV, ch. IV, cols 962–3; Zurita, *Anales de la Corona de Aragón*, II, bk V, ch. XXXV. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 337–9; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 137.

The challenge, of course, was convincing the citizens of the city to consent to the use of their port facilities by an inimical fleet. The ancient heart of Syracuse sits on a small islet, called Ortigia (derived from the ancient Greek word *ortyx*, meaning 'quail' – an apparent reference to its shape), which is connected by a short bridge to a stubby promontory jutting into the Ionian. The island commands two harbour facilities: the Porto Piccolo ('Small Port') on the north side and the Porto Grande ('Big Port') on the south side. On the very eastern tip of the island rests the Castello Maniace, a fortification so imposing that the Italian navy maintains and operates it to this day. To safely shelter their ships, James and Roger had to take the Castello Maniace (Fig. 19). Regrettably for them, the castle's defence was directed by the highly competent and fiercely loyal Sicilian stalwart, Giovanni di Chiaramonte. James deployed his forces along the shores to the north and south of city, but could not

19 Built by the Byzantine general Giorgios Maniakes in 1038 on a promontory of Ortygia Island in Syracuse, the Castello Maniace was the scene of several sieges during the War of the Sicilian Vespers and the signing of at least one interim truce.

break through the resistance at the bridge; nor could Roger breach the walls of the island's fortifications from the sea with his galleys. An effort to push inland quickly claimed the towns of Sortino, Ferla, Palazzolo and Buscemi, but was blunted at Buccheri (about 37 miles or 60 km to the west), where the townspeople drove off an Aragonese detachment under Count Ermengol X of Urgell with a shower of stones. A dismal deadlock soon set in around Syracuse.[10]

As the cold, damp weather of winter descended upon both the besiegers and the besieged, a pall of starvation and sickness shrouded the enterprise. Niccolò Speciale asserted that thousands perished. Although this was an evident exaggeration, there can be no doubt that the conditions debilitated the Aragonese–Angevin army and made it vulnerable to the sort of guerrilla warfare Frederick now waged against it. The Sicilian sovereign had gathered what forces he could at Catania and directed his loyal lieutenant Blasco d'Alagona to harry the invaders with cavalry raids. One episode, in particular, highlighted Alagona's effectiveness. A prominent, but venal Sicilian lord named Giovanni di Barresi defected, offering up to the Aragonese his castles in Naso, Capo d'Orlando and, most notably, Pietraperzia. The latter was a hilltop stronghold only 20 miles (30 km) south of strategic Castrogiovanni (modern Enna), a heavily fortified city that dominates the centre of the island from a 3,000-foot plateau. Without hesitation, James dispatched a substantial body of horse and foot under Alvaro, Berenguer and Ramon de Cabrera to take control of Pietraperzia. This theoretically could have allowed the Aragonese monarch to link his main force up with his northern garrisons and, perhaps, split Frederick's support on the island, but it was not to be (Map 6). Alagona learned of the unit's movements from his network of spies and, on a stormy night, sprang an ambush on the column in the area of Giarratana. Few of the Aragonese escaped. The Cabreras were all captured and led back to Catania under guard.[11]

It would be neither the last nor the most significant humiliation that the invaders would suffer. During the winter, the citizens of Patti rebelled against their occupiers and chased them into the castle; they then invited Frederick to reclaim both city and citadel. He responded by sending a band of Messinese behind Benincasa di Eustazio, some Catanese commanded by Napoleone Caputo and a group of Catalan

[10] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk IV, ch. V, cols 993–4; Zurita, *Anales de la Corona de Aragón*, II, bk V, ch. XXXV. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 339–40; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, pp. 137–8.

[11] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk IV, ch. VI, col. 994; Zurita, *Anales de la Corona de Aragón*, II, bk V, ch. XXXV. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Sicliano*, II, pp. 341–2; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 138.

mercenaries under Ugo d'Ampurias. These men soon laid siege to the citadel. The Aragonese reaction to the news was equally swift. While Roger rode overland with 300 mounted men, his nephew Giovanni sailed around the Val Demone (Sicily's northeastern corner) loaded with supplies. The mere approach of the admiral and his cavalry was enough to send Patti's besiegers scurrying. Roger soon restored order and manned the garrison with fresh troops. Shortly afterwards, Giovanni's squadron arrived to reprovision the fortress.[12] It was upon its return to Syracuse that the undertaking was undone. Frederick, recognizing that Giovanni would eventually have to transit the strait again, personally rushed up from Catania to hurriedly organize a fleet at Messina to intercept him. He managed to muster a squadron of sixteen galleys. Fortune favoured his efforts. As the Aragonese flotilla rounded the Punta del Faro to enter the Strait of Messina from the north, the wind died. Left becalmed, the galleys suddenly had to rely on oars to propel them past Messina. Fighting the notorious churning currents of the strait, they made little headway – perhaps to the point of being 'dead in the water'. Frederick saw his chance and pounced. Emboldened by the circumstances and spurred on by Frederick, the Messinese moved with alacrity to engage their hapless prey. Each Sicilian ship claimed a victim, allowing only four of the Catalan vessels to escape. Giovanni di Lauria found himself among the captives.[13]

The unexpected defeat had a significant tactical impact upon the Aragonese. Not only had they lost sixteen galleys and their crews, but their adversaries had gained the use of those same sixteen warships, giving them a capability at sea close to parity – a circumstance of which Roger surely informed the king. Had the reversal been an isolated setback in an otherwise promising strategic situation, it might have been sustainable. But the reality was that, in March of 1299, Syracuse was no nearer to surrendering than the day the siege began. And elsewhere on the island, only the tiny town of Gangi, about 20 miles (30 km) north of Castrogiovanni, had been converted to the king's cause.[14] In the mean-

[12] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk IV, ch. VII, cols 994–5; Zurita, *Anales de la Corona de Aragón*, II, bk V, ch. XXXV. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 340–2; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, pp. 138–9.

[13] *Anonymi Chronicon Siculum*, ch. LX, p. 173; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk IV, ch. VIII, cols 995–6; Zurita, *Anales de la Corona de Aragón*, II, bk V, ch. XXXVI. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 342–3; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 139; Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, p. 178.

[14] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk IV, ch. IX, col. 996; Zurita, *Anales de la Corona de Aragón*, II, bk V, ch. XXXVI. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 343–4; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 139.

time – after some four and half months – disease and malnutrition had decimated the ranks of the Aragonese–Angevin forces, which had long since foraged the available food stores from the surrounding areas. In a council of war prompted by the predicament, Speciale recounted that a respected councillor to the crown named Pietro de Cornel claimed at many as 18,000 had been laid low up to that point.[15] It was an obvious overstatement. Giovanni Amatuccio credibly estimates that the casualty count was only around 1,200 men. Nonetheless, it accounted for about a third of the total ground force, leading to a clear conclusion: the king had little recourse but to abandon the siege. So that is what James did.[16]

Leaving enough men (probably around 1,700) to garrison the conquered towns, the king embarked what was left of his army on Roger's ships and headed north. James, however, pulled ashore at Milazzo in a parting bid for reconciliation. He sent word to Frederick in Catania offering to forsake Sicily permanently in return for the sixteen captured galleys and the attendant prisoners, including Roger's beloved nephew Giovanni. Vinciguerra Palizzi, the royal adviser who had previously advocated Roger's assassination, counselled Frederick to forswear vengeance and accept the offer. Ironically, it was Roger's childhood friend, Conrad di Lancia, who, having remained loyal to Frederick, took the perverse position. He urged the young king to not only reject his older brother's overture, but to even chase after the Aragonese fleet and destroy it. His rage at Roger rekindled, Frederick ordered the immediate beheading of Giovanni and sent the Aragonese ambassadors back to James with a truculent response. As soon as his fleet could be made ready, the impulsive young sovereign launched in pursuit of his brother's diminished armada. It was an intemperate act of anger that Frederick would soon come to regret. A tempest interceded, allowing James to evade the confrontation with the loss of only two more vessels – both due to heavy weather in the Aeolian Islands. Frederick's rashness, however, virtually guaranteed that both the king and admiral of Aragon would return, imbued with a deep-seated sense of retribution.[17]

[15] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk IV, ch. X, cols 996–7; Zurita, *Anales de la Corona de Aragón*, II, bk V, ch. XXXVII. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 345.

[16] Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 140.

[17] *Anonymi Chronicon Siculum*, ch. LXI, p. 174; Ptolemy da Lucca, *Die Annalen des Tholomeus von Lucca in doppelter Fassung nebst Teilen der Gesta Florentinorum und de Gesta Lucanorum*, ed. Bernhard Schmeidler (Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Munich, 1984), p. 235; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk IV, ch. X, cols 997–8; Zurita, *Anales de la Corona de Aragón*, II, bk V, ch. XXXVII. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 345–6; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 140; Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, p. 179.

BATTLE OF CAPO D'ORLANDO (4 JULY 1299)

Roger's retribution would not be long in coming. King James lingered a few weeks in Naples while Queen Blanche bore him a son and during which he fought off a grave illness that nearly ended him, but he soon returned to Barcelona to arm yet another fleet. His able admiral was undoubtedly at his side, because, by the end of May 1299, both men were back in Naples at the head of an armada of 46 galleys, complete with a full complement of Catalan crossbowmen. Nor were Frederick and Corrado Doria idle. The Sicilian fleet had been heavily damaged by the same storm that had covered the Aragonese withdrawal from Sicily earlier that spring, but Doria had it refurbished in the arsenal of Messina and expanded to about forty galleys strong.[18] At the same time, Frederick regained Gangi, while his trusted lieutenant Manfred di Chiaramonte took possession of Pietraperzia. Indeed, the Sicilian sovereign and his vassals soon recovered most all of the castles captured by the Aragonese–Angevin forces during the initial invasion.[19]

James tarried in Naples only long enough to extract a promise of around 20,500 ounces of gold in further funding for the enterprise from his new father-in-law, King Charles II, and to augment his armada with what Angevin naval assets as were available.[20] Finally, on 24 June, he had Roger weigh anchor for Sicily a second time. Supplemented by perhaps a dozen Neapolitan galleys, the fleet now totalled 56 to 58 warships and an unknown number of support vessels, including *taride* loaded with troops and horses. While the king retained overall command, it is clear that he deferred to his gifted admiral in all matters of tactics and strategy. Accompanying James and Roger were Duke Robert of Calabria and Prince Philip of Taranto, the sons of King Charles. Frederick's spies straightaway sent forewarning of its impending arrival on Sicily's shores. The king and Corrado Doria immediately set sail from Messina with the intention of intercepting the Aragonese armada before it could come ashore. The Sicilian fleet was at Milazzo when a speedy scout *barca* brought word that the enemy fleet had transited the Aeolian Islands with prows pointed toward the northeast coast of Sicily. The Sicilians

[18] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk IV, ch. XIII, col. 1000; Zurita, *Anales de la Corona de Aragón*, II, bk V, ch. XXXVII. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 346–7.

[19] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk IV, ch. XI, col. 998; Zurita, *Anales de la Corona de Aragón*, II, bk V, ch. XXXVII. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 347.

[20] Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 350–1; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 137.

made all possible speed westwards along the north shore, but, when they rounded Capo d'Orlando around 40 miles (65 km) west of Milazzo on 3 July, they discovered that they were too late. The Aragonese had already landed on the beach beneath the hilltop town of San Marco d'Alunzio near the mouth of the Zappulla River.[21]

Roger had once again chosen to make landfall on the northern littoral of the Val Demone (Map 6). He realized that most, if not all, his castles had been retaken, but he assumed that some loyalists remained, making this part of the island still the most amenable to their return. He also supposed that Frederick would try to stop the invasion before it could begin, so he was ready. Although Roger was still in the disembarkation process, he had beached his galleys stern first and close abreast with their prows facing seaward in a defensive posture. This made the Aragonese fleet all but unassailable, enjoying every possible advantage. Not only did it possess numerical superiority, but each ship was positioned to support the others without having to manoeuvre, which meant that their oarsmen could all devote themselves to wielding their weapons. Moreover, the crewmen of galleys not engaged in combat could easily reinforce their comrades on vessels that were. On the other hand, an attacking force would have to manoeuvre under oars, leaving the fighting to the embarked marines and crossbowmen. And, of course, the assailants would have considerably greater difficulty supporting one another. It would not be a fair fight, and that is just the way Lauria wanted it.[22]

Frederick, conversely, found himself in an unenviable tactical predicament. John Pryor explained it best:

> In order to smash the invasion, he had to attack. He could not allow the landing to be completed, because, if he did so, he would then be forced to return to Messina to try to meet the invasion on land and would have to leave Lauria's fleet untouched. He had insufficient resources to maintain his fleet on station off Cape Orlando and at the same time raise a land force large enough to attack the invaders from land. Returning to Messina

[21] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk IV, ch. XIII, cols 999–1000; Zurita, *Anales de la Corona de Aragón*, II, bk V, ch. XXXVIII. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 361–2; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 144; Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, pp. 179–80; John Pryor, 'The Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', *Journal of Medieval History*, IX (1983), pp. 179–216, esp. 205.

[22] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk IV, ch. XIII, col. 1000. See also Lawrence Mott, 'The Battle of Malta, 1283: Prelude to a Disaster', in *The Circle of War in the Middle Ages*, eds Donald J. Kagay and L. J. Andrew Villalon (Woodbridge, 1999), pp. 145–72, esp. 159; Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 205.

> would have taken time and would have enabled the Aragonese and the Angevins to consolidate their position on land before Frederick could collect forces and march to oppose them.[23]

Simply put, Frederick had sealed the fate of his fleet the moment he committed it to challenging Lauria's landing.

Niccolò Speciale reported that the Sicilians surged in disorder at the sight of the enemy ships on their shores, but the king managed – with some effort – to restrain them before they became enmeshed in a futile fight with calamitous consequences.[24] In truth, it may have been a deliberate attempt at feigned flight in order to draw the Aragonese off the beach. Whatever the case, Roger refused to take the bait. He unreservedly understood the circumstances better than Frederick and sensed no incentive whatsoever to relinquish his secure situation. The onus to act was all on the side of the Sicilians. Had it been Corrado Doria's decision to make, he would almost certainly have withdrawn the fleet to fight another day, but it was not. Frederick had apparently assumed functional control of the fleet, and felt that retreat was not an acceptable alternative. He and his men were there and eager to engage. He could not now ask them to refuse battle. And, having already lost the element of surprise, this left him with only one sensible option: to wait for reinforcements. Before departing from Messina, Frederick had evidently issued orders for a nobleman named Matteo di Termini to bring eight additional galleys from Mazara del Vallo (on the southeastern tip of the island). Now, he was in receipt of word that Termini was at Cefalù, about 53 miles (85 km) to the west. Accordingly, Frederick elected to stand off at sea and await the arrival of the auxiliaries, anticipated the next day.[25]

The delay proved devastatingly deleterious to the young king's cause. It served only to aggravate his own disadvantage while amplifying the advantage of his adroit adversary. While Frederick and his cohorts bobbed about on seas agitated by stormy weather, Roger was able to offload the remaining soldiers, horses and supplies of the invasion force at his leisure, enabling James to establish a proper beachhead. In the course of the night, the admiral essentially rendered his ships combat-ready by stripping them of all men and material extraneous to battle at sea. He even summoned troops from friendly local towns to bolster his onshore reserves. As for the Sicilians, after a taut sleepless night in

[23] Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 206.

[24] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk IV, ch. XIII, col. 1000. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 362.

[25] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk IV, ch. XIII, col. 1000. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 362; Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 207.

cramped and uncomfortable conditions at sea, the dawn revealed to them the severity of the challenge they faced: in the shallows along the shoreline, Lauria had linked his war galleys together in a classic crescent fighting formation with flying bridges extending from their sterns to the beach so that they could be readily reinforced by well-rested land troops. The Aragonese position was utterly impregnable.[26] 'Not even if the Genoese and the Venetians had come together with the Sicilians, could they then have won this sea battle,' pronounced Speciale unequivocally.[27]

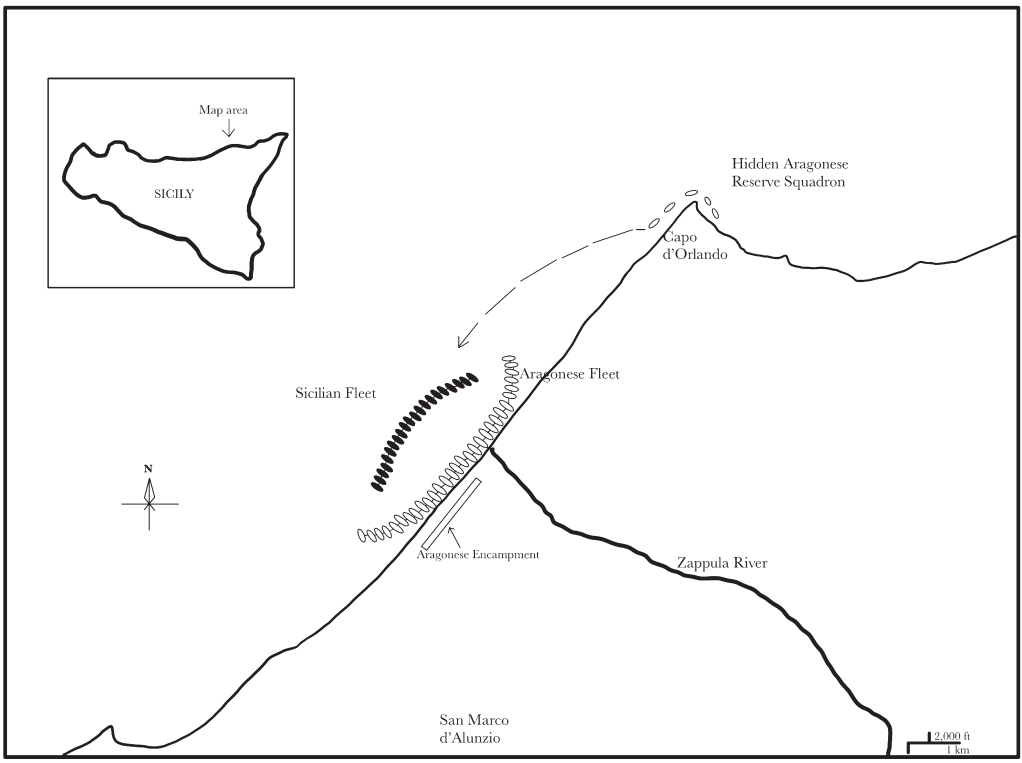
Nonetheless, Frederick persevered. As he was already fully committed, he had little choice at this point. Consequently, when Termini arrived with his eight galleys from Cefalù, the Sicilian sovereign arranged his ships in combat configuration. Like Lauria, Frederick bridled his galleys together in a sickle-shaped alignment with his flagship at the centre. Nineteen vessels extended to the right while twenty held his left flank. Bernardo Ramon, the count of Garsiliato, commanded the stern of the royal galley, while Ugo d'Ampurias, the count of Squillace, took up position on the prow. Catalan nobleman Garcia di Sancio and a cadre of handpicked knights guarded the royal standard amidships. Frederick's flagship stood opposite his brother's, commanded by Lauria and containing the two Angevin princes.[28] The Angevin augmentation to the Aragonese fleet notwithstanding, this was basically to be a battle between royal brothers and former brothers-in-arms, and therefore all the more bitter for it.

Shortly after sunrise on 4 July 1299, the Sicilian fleet advanced toward the Aragonese formation until the two sides were within missile-launching range (Map 13). The blare of trumpets then signalled the start of a murderous exchange of projectiles that persisted for hours. Both sides must have suffered mightily from the furious fusillade, but it is certain that the Sicilians suffered more. As had been his practice in previous engagements, Lauria would have had his crewmen take cover as best they could while the unerring *balistarii catalani* (Catalan crossbowmen) plied their deadly craft. The Sicilian oarsmen, who would have been required to remain at their stations in order to hold their ships in position, would have been especially vulnerable. Sometime in mid-afternoon

[26] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk IV, ch. XIII, col. 1001. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 362; Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, p. 180; Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 207; William L. Rodgers, *Naval Warfare under Oars, 4th to the 16th Centuries* (Annapolis, 1940), p. 140.

[27] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk IV, ch. XIII, col. 1001.

[28] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk IV, ch. XIII, col. 1001; Zurita, *Anales de la Corona de Aragón*, II, bk V, ch. XXXVIII. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 363; Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 207.



13 Battle of Capo d'Orlando

when the searing summer sun was at its worse, Gombaldo degli Intensi, one of Frederick's impetuous young *comiti* (ships captains), grew tired of being a helpless witness to the carnage. He had his men cut the cables binding his galley to the others and charged the Aragonese line. It was the mistake for which Lauria had been waiting. Three of Roger's galleys severed their *frenella* (iron cables) and engaged that of Gombaldo – one at the prow and one on each flank. The young Sicilian knight battled bravely but his fate was sealed the moment he broke ranks. Several of the other Sicilian galleys also detached from their formation to succour their embattled comrades, creating a disordered free-for-all. Frederick himself sought out his brother's flagship and attempted to board it, but the tumult of battle thwarted him. It is likely that Lauria then simply caused the wings of his larger line to collapse on the flanks of the undisciplined jumble that was now the Sicilian fleet. Frederick and his men fought with frantic desperation for about three hours, but, just as Gombaldo degli Intensi finally fell and his ship was taken, a last stratagem by the Aragonese admiral decided the affair: six swift galleys that Roger

had evidently held in reserve and out of sight around the cape, suddenly appeared and smashed into the rear of the Sicilian fleet. A half dozen of its ships immediately took flight.[29]

Seeing the will of his subjects crushed, Frederick reportedly resolved to make a final suicidal thrust into the midst of the Aragonese formation, declaring that 'it was better to die in battle than watch evil befall his people'.[30] But then over-exertion and the enervating heat overcame him. Speciale claimed that he collapsed unconscious on the deck of his flagship. Bernardo Ramon wanted to surrender the king's sword at that point, but Ugo d'Ampurias prevailed upon the crew to flee for Messina, instead. Blasco d'Alagona, in command of another galley, saw the royal standard slip out of the mêlée and struck out in pursuit. In all, twelve Sicilian galleys escaped with the flagship. The remaining Sicilian warships – sixteen to eighteen – were surrounded and seized in short order. The other half dozen or so galleys, unaccounted for, were presumably sunk in the course of the battle.[31]

There are unverified reports that Frederick may have elected of his own volition to escape with what galleys he could. Regardless of the reason, there were persistent rumours that James had, in fact, permitted his brother to abscond out of latent fraternal devotion – perhaps even to the point of preventing Roger from pursuing him. There are several anecdotal references in contemporary sources that indicate that this was so.[32] There were also reports that James suffered remorse over the slaughter of his erstwhile Sicilian subjects at the behest of a penurious Angevin king, whom he knew could not honour his debts in the matter, and a manipulative pope, who had only the interests of the Holy See at heart. Perhaps the most convincing evidence that all of this was

[29] *Anonymi Chronicon Siculum*, ch. LXII, pp. 174–6; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk IV, ch. XIII, cols 1002–4; Zurita, *Anales de la Corona de Aragón*, II, bk V, ch. XXXVIII. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 363–4; Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, pp. 181–2; Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', pp. 207–8.

[30] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk IV, ch. XIII, col. 1003.

[31] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk IV, ch. XIII, cols 1003–4; Zurita, *Anales de la Corona de Aragón*, II, bk V, ch. XXXVIII. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 364–5; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 145; Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 208.

[32] *Acta Aragonensia. Quellen zur deutschen, italianischen, fransösischen, spanischen, zur Kirchen- und Kulturgeschichte aus der diplomatischen Korrespondenz Jaymes II (1291–1327)*, ed. Heinrich Finke (3 vols, Berlin, 1908–22), I, doc. 47, 63–4 and doc. 71, pp. 100–6; Ptolemy da Lucca, *Die Annalen*, p. 236. See also Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean: The Catalan–Aragonese Fleet in the War of the Sicilian Vespers* (Gainesville, 2003), p. 48; Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 208.

true is the fact that shortly after the devastating defeat of his brother and his valiant Sicilians at Capo d'Orlando, James left the balance of the island's conquest to Robert of Calabria and Roger.[33] There were, of course, other factors in the king's decision. For instance, in early August he received a pair of letters from Berenguer de Sarrià, who was in Barcelona at the time, warning James of potential unrest among the nobility of both Catalonia and Aragon just as Castile was beginning to again menace Murcia. 'If you do not come quickly, your kingdoms will suffer,' one of the missives admonished.[34] Nonetheless, the preponderance of indicators suggests that James resolved to remove himself from the Sicilian conflict – mostly out of regret. So, sometime in September, the conscience-stricken king collected his wife and ailing mother in Salerno, made a perfunctory call upon Charles in Naples and departed for Aragon – never to return to the Kingdom of Sicily.[35]

Roger of Lauria, on the other hand, suffered no such scruples. His heart was ruled by a lust for revenge. In the course of combat, he had personally sought out Vinciguerra Palizzi, who had once plotted to have him assassinated and had recently replaced his late friend, Conrad di Lancia, as Frederick's royal chancellor. Palizzi only just managed to evade Roger's wrath by leaping from his hotly besieged galley onto a small boat for transfer to another galley.[36] Most of the rest, especially the Messinese nobility whom Roger viewed as having betrayed him, were not so fortunate. Invoking the name of his beheaded nephew, Giovanni, Lauria urged his men to offer no mercy. Speciale described in gory detail how the majority of these noblemen were summarily executed: 'Some were transfixed with a blade, others were clubbed in the head with an iron rod and others had their throats slit.'[37] The chronicler goes on to relate how the corpses were disembowelled with swords, the entrails cast into the sea over the sterns of the galleys. He also provided a lengthy list of the illustrious of Messina who fell victim to Roger's vengeance: Federico and Perrone Rosso, Raimondo di Ansalone, Giacomo Sordia,

[33] *Acta Aragonensia*, I, doc. 47, pp. 63–4. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 370–1; J. N. Hillgarth, 'The Problem of a Catalan Mediterranean Empire 1229–1327', *The English Historical Review*, Supplement 8 (1975), p. 31.

[34] *Acta Aragonensia*, III, doc. 38, pp. 82–5. See also Hillgarth, 'Problem of a Catalan Mediterranean Empire', pp. 31–2.

[35] *Anonymi Chronicon Siculum*, ch. LXIII, p. 176; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk IV, ch. XV, cols 1007–8. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 371; Steven Runciman, *The Sicilian Vespers* (Cambridge, 1958), p. 272.

[36] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk IV, ch. XIII, col. 1004. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 365.

[37] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk IV, ch. XIII, col. 1005.

Giacomo Capece, etc. The butchery continued at length until Lauria's bloodlust was finally sated.[38]

At that point, the situation had never seemed so dire for Sicilian autonomy. The kingdom's sovereign was on the run, its vaunted fleet vanquished and its aristocracy decimated. Yet, Angevin incompetence and Sicilian resilience would remain obstacles that not even the invincible Roger of Lauria could overcome.

[38] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk. IV, ch. XIII, col. 1005. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 366; Mott, 'How cruel was Roger of Lauria?', *Catalan Review*, 7.1 (1993), pp. 79–96, esp. 84.

19

LAURIA'S LAST GREAT CAMPAIGN (SUMMER 1299–SPRING 1300)

Despite the departure of King James of Aragon after the Battle of Capo d'Orlando, the Angevin reconquest of Sicily seemed to proceed apace, at first. Within three weeks of the victory, Pietro Salvacoscia, one of Frederick's most effective fleet commanders, went over to the Angevins and delivered the islands of Ischia, Capri and Procida to King Charles, who promptly made him *protontino* (vice admiral) – second only to Roger of Lauria.[1] Roger, himself, quickly reclaimed several of his previous possessions in the Val Demone (northeastern Sicily): Castiglione, Rocella and Placa (Map 6). Niccolò Speciale insisted that Francavilla would have also returned to the admiral's allegiance had it not been dominated by the castle enfeoffed to Corrado Doria, his opposite number. Duke Robert of Calabria, whom his father (King Charles II) had appointed as his Vicar-General for the island on 24 July 1299, made slower progress. Marching towards the east coast, he stopped to besiege Randazzo, one of the most densely populated towns on Sicily at the time, but its fiercely independent citizenry steadfastly resisted. Robert eventually accepted Roger's advice and moved on to more fruitful, obliging objectives on the south side of Mount Etna, with Catania as the ultimate objective.[2]

The Angevin army was, thus, able to occupy with ease Adernò (modern Adrano), on the southwestern foot of the volcano. Robert soon laid siege to Paternò, a city a mere 14 miles (22.5 km) northwest of Catania. The local lord, Manfred Maletta, surrendered it on the second

[1] Michele Amari, *La Guerra del Vespro Siciliano* (9th edn, 3 vols, Milan, 1886), II, pp. 366, 373–4; Giovanni Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro (1282–1302)* (Bologna, 2012), p. 144; Camillo Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana* (3 vols, Livorno, 1897–1902), II, p. 182.

[2] Niccolò Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, ed. Ludovico Muratori (Rerum Italicarum Scriptores, X, Milan, 1727), bk V, ch. I, col. 1009. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 377; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 145.

day.[3] Maletta was then induced to also give up Buccheri, another small city under his control in the Val di Noto (southeastern Sicily) about 30 miles (50 km) west of Syracuse (Map 6). From there, Roger took a detachment of troops to nearby Vizzini, which he cajoled into submission through the persuasion (presumably at sword point) of a certain Giovanni Callaro, a favourite son of the city whom Lauria had captured at Capo d'Orlando.[4] Afterwards, Roger rejoined Robert at Palagonia and the two of them marched south beyond Vizzini to Chiaramonte, about 10 miles (16 km) north of Ragusa. Chiaramonte was a fief of the eponymous noble family, one of the most powerful on Sicily and staunchly loyal to Frederick, so its citizens refused to yield without a fight. It was a terrible mistake, for which most of them paid with their lives in ghastly fashion.[5]

Roger and Robert then made Catania, itself, their next mark. They set up camp in a vineyard west of the city centre, but the great port, long a hotbed of Sicilian resistance to Angevin rule, was commanded by none other than the very capable Blasco d'Alagona. Taking it by force would have been difficult and costly, so the two men settled upon subterfuge, instead. They were apparently in receipt of clandestine missives from an influential town father named Virgilio Scordia who shared with them a scheme to deliver the city to Robert.[6] Considering the conspiracy promising, the duke and his admiral pulled up tent stakes after only three days and marched back into the Val di Noto to shore up their hold there. They first attacked Aidone near Piazza Armerina, gaining its acquiescence after only a day. Piazza Armerina itself proved more obdurate, however. Robert and Roger were pressing the siege from two sides when Sicilian stalwarts Guglielmo Calcerando and Palmiero Abate led a small cavalry detachment (sixty horse) through Angevin lines to relieve the city. Robert was eventually compelled to be content with ravaging

[3] Ramon Muntaner, *Chronicle*, trans. Lady Goodenough (2 vols, London, 1920), II, ch. CXC, p. 456; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk V, ch. II, cols 1009–10. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 377–8; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 145.

[4] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk V, ch. III, col. 1010. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 379; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 145.

[5] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk V, ch. IV, cols 1010–11. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 379; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 145.

[6] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk V, ch. IV, col. 1011. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 379–80.

the surrounding countryside before returning to Paternò to regroup.[7] Nevertheless, while he and Roger were thus occupied, Scordia and a co-conspirator named Napoleone Caputo successfully engineered their coup in Catania. They had undermined Frederick's faith in Alagona to the point that the sovereign chose to replace him with the relatively guileless Ugo d'Ampurias.[8] The intriguers then fomented a sudden popular uprising that evicted Ampurias from the city. Duke Robert received word in Paternò shortly thereafter that Catania was his to claim.[9]

News of the Angevin occupation of Catania caused a succession of submissions in the Val di Noto: Buscemi, Ferla, Palazzolo, Cassaro, Ragusa and even Noto itself.[10] In the estimation of the Sicilian historian Michele Amari, this turn of events 'appeared to be the final collapse of Sicily's fortunes'.[11] At least some part of Frederick must have subscribed to that sentiment, for he was indeed in a perilous position. With Angevin ownership of Catania along with multiple strongholds in both the Val Demone and the Val de Noto, the young king's continued presence in either Syracuse or Messina was tenuous at best. Doing so risked isolation from his power base: Palermo and the Val di Mazara (western Sicily). Accordingly, Frederick temporarily established his headquarters in unassailable Castrogiovanni (modern Enna) at the centre of the island, so that he could react to events occurring anywhere on Sicily (Map 6).[12]

BATTLE OF FALCONARIA (1 DECEMBER 1299)

Angevin advances in the east inspired the royal court in Naples to hatch a strategy to hasten the recovery of the remainder of the island. Philip of Taranto, who had accompanied James of Aragon back to Naples following the victory at Capo d'Orlando, persuaded his father, Charles

[7] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk V, ch. V, cols 1011–12. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 380.

[8] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk V, ch. VI, col. 1012. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 381.

[9] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CXC, pp. 455–6; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk V, ch. VII, cols 1012–14. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 381–3; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 145.

[10] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk V, chs VIII–IX, cols 1014–15. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 387; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 145.

[11] Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 387.

[12] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk V, ch. VI, col. 1012. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 381; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 145.

II, to supply him with a fleet and a force of knights supported by a large body of infantry. The purpose was to invade western Sicily with the ultimate aim of ensnaring Frederick between the armies of the two Angevin princes and crush him.[13] Ramon Muntaner maintained there were fifty galleys and 1,200 mounted men-at-arms,[14] but other contemporary chroniclers more soberly estimated around forty galleys and 600 knights plus a substantial number of foot soldiers. Philip sailed out of Naples bay sometime in early November with the newly minted *protontino*, Pietro Salvacoscia, as his fleet commander. As the Angevin armada rounded Capo Gallo (a few miles north of Palermo) heading for the Val di Mazara, it was spotted by lookouts who sent word to Castrogiovanni. Philip's force came ashore at a set of saltpans in a shallow lagoon called the Stagnone, halfway between Capo Lilibeo (the promontory of Marsala) and Trapani. It immediately laid siege to the latter (Map 6).[15]

News of the Angevin amphibious assault on the Val di Mazara flung Frederick's court in Castrogiovanni into a nettlesome conundrum. The choice was to either rush west in order to deal decisively with the new threat or stay put and rely on the city's daunting fortifications atop an impregnable perch to withstand the inevitable onslaught from two well-equipped armies coming from opposite directions. Based upon the advice of Blasco d'Alagona, Frederick understandably feared that if he took the bulk of his forces and headed west to intercept Philip, he would be leaving his rear and the remainder of the island open to the ravages of Robert's army coming from Catania in the east. Alagona offered to lead a detachment himself against Philip, but urged the king to remain safe within Castrogiovanni's walls to direct the overall resistance effort. In the end, however, the argument of a certain Sancio Scada prevailed: only a full-scale counterattack commanded by the sovereign himself stood a chance of halting the new invasion. Frederick issued a summons for the barons of western Sicily to rendezvous with him at Calatafimi, about 25 miles or 40 km east of Trapani. Most of those

[13] Odorico Rainaldi, *Annales ecclesiastici ab anno MCXCVIII ubi desinit cardinalis Baronius, auctore Odorico Raynaldus*, ed. Augustino Theiner (37 vols, Paris, 1871), 23, anno 1299, § 4, p. 242; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk V, ch. X, col. 1015. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 389–90; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 146.

[14] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CXCII, p. 459.

[15] *Anonymi Chronicon Siculum*, in *Bibliotheca Scriptorum qui res in Sicilia gestas sub Aragonum imperio retulere*, ed. Rosario Gregorio (2 vols, Palermo, 1792), II, pp. 121–267, esp. ch. LXVI, p. 177; Rainaldi, *Annales ecclesiastici*, 23, anno 1299, § 5, p. 242; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk V, ch. X, col. 1015. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 390; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 146.

who answered the call would logically have come from Palermo and its environs. Leaving Guglielmo Calcerando in charge of a small garrison, Frederick departed Castrogiovanni with his most trusted fighting men.[16] Following the muster at Calatafimi, Muntaner put the king's mounted contingent at no more than 700, but he contended there were also some 3,000 *almugavars*.[17]

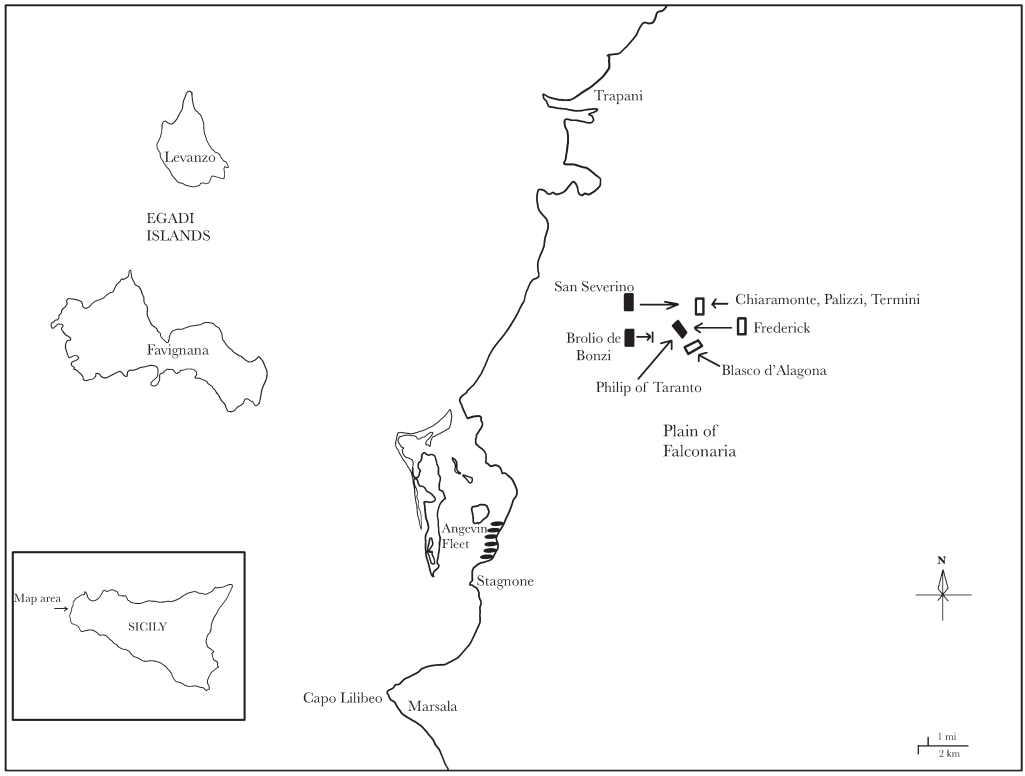
On 1 December 1299, after having abandoned the unsuccessful siege of Trapani, Philip and his men were marching south across the plain of Falconaria to try their luck on Marsala, when they suddenly came upon the army of the king of Sicily. The site, located just east of the coastal community of Marausa (near today's Trapani airport), was relatively level lowland with no prominent topography to offer any cover or advantage. Left with little choice, the Prince of Taranto formed his forces for battle. He drew them up in three divisions abreast with Marshal Brolio de Bonzi holding the centre, the count of Marsico (probably Tommaso II of San Severino) leading the left flank and the royal prince himself in command of the right. Frederick deployed his troops in a similar fashion: Blasco d'Alagona with a few horsemen and many of the *almugavars* stood on the left opposite Philip; the mounted nobility led by Giovanni Chiaramonte, Vinciguerra Palizzi and Matteo di Termini held the right flank facing San Severino; while the king himself commanded the centre with the bulk of the infantry (Map 14). Speciale asserted that Frederick held his division back to bestow the accolade of knighthood on some young nobles, but this makes little sense in the seconds before the first sword clash of battle. Rather, given how the encounter unfolded, the king's decision to remain slightly in the rear seems to have been a tactical one.[18]

The Sicilian cavalry on the Frederick's right flank began the battle by advancing slowly against the Angevin left wing under San Severino. Philip, on the Angevin right flank, then unleashed his mounted Provençal archers against Blasco's *almugavars* directly opposite. The withering torrent of arrows thinned their ranks and staggered them, but the *almugavars* weathered the assault, standing firm. San Severino suddenly charged the Sicilian cavalry. The prince, seeing San Severino

[16] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CXCII, pp. 460–1; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk V, ch. X, cols 1015–16. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 390–2; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 147.

[17] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CXCII, p. 461.

[18] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk V, ch. X, cols 1016–17. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 392–4; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, pp. 147–8. (Speciale identified the count of Marsico as Roger of San Severino, but Roger died in 1285; thus, it was probably his son Thomas II.)



14 Battle of Falconaria

fully engaged with the Sicilian knights and erroneously believing that his Provençals had rendered *hors de combat* Blasco and his *almugavars*, then made the fatal blunder that would decide the battle. With Frederick's standard still in the rear and nowhere in sight, Philip swung his division left to join San Severino's attack on the Sicilian right wing, apparently crossing in front of Marshal de Bonzi's division in the centre – blocking its path. Blasco, the seasoned soldier, plainly saw his chance – he spurred his mounted men-at-arms into Philip's exposed right flank with the *almugavars* in close pursuit. It was at that moment that Frederick chose to bring up the Sicilian centre. The consequences were nothing short of cataclysmic. Philip's cavalry was halted, almost completely enveloped and finally shattered.[19] Muntaner characterized the core of

[19] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk V, ch. X, cols 1017–18. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 394–5; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, pp. 148–9.

the battle as an epic single combat duel between the king and the prince, but it was the ruthless savagery of the *almugavars* that turned the tide in the Sicilians' favour.[20] The *almugavars* ran among the *destriers*, gutting them with their lances; then mercilessly dispatched their riders with long knives.[21] Muntaner described in gruesome detail the handiwork of one called 'Porcell': 'He gave such a cut with his *coutel* [a large combat knife or short sword] to a French knight that the greaves with the leg came off in one piece and beside it entered half a palm into the horse's flank.'[22]

Most of Philip's division was cut down or captured. The prince, himself, was confronted by a great Catalan warrior named Martin Perez de Aros, who unhorsed him and took him prisoner. Once this occurred, Angevin opposition collapsed with many of the men either scattering or surrendering, including San Severino who had tried but failed to rally the Angevin left wing. Ironically, much of Brolio de Bonzi's centre never fully engaged, because Philip's ill-advised manoeuvre impeded its advance and prevented most of its troops from coming in contact with the Sicilians. Its 200 Neapolitan horsemen were hardly able to offer a sword stroke in support. Marshal de Bonzi, who was in the vanguard, was not so fortunate, however. His body was found after the battle, pierced by dozens of wounds. According to Speciale, the Neapolitan cavalry attempted to flee the field, but was run down and corralled before it could reach the relative safety of the fleet at Stagnone. Among the prisoners was Pietro Salvacoscia. He offered his captor, a common Sicilian soldier named Giletto, a thousand ounces of gold for his life, but the latter would have no truck with a man whom he considered a traitor. He slit Salvacoscia's throat.[23]

The impact of Frederick's victory at Falconaria was immediate and far-reaching. By nightfall the Sicilian sovereign had entered Trapani from where he dispatched couriers to all parts of the island with letters hailing the triumph. The one to Palermo, preserved in the anonymous *Chronicon Siculum*, enjoined its citizens to embark upon their galleys and join those of Genoese ally Egidio Doria in hunting down Philip's fleet before it could flee back to Naples.[24] The Angevin fleet evidently evaded

[20] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CXCII, pp. 461–2.

[21] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk V, ch. X, col. 1017. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 195.

[22] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CXCII, p. 463.

[23] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk V, ch. X, cols 1017–18. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 396–7; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 149.

[24] *Anonymi Chronicon Siculum*, ch. LXVII, p. 178. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 397–8; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 150.

detection, though, by anchoring in the Egadi Islands off Marsala.[25] Be that as it may, word of the defeat rapidly reached Robert and Roger.

When Lauria had first learned of Philip's amphibious landing on the Val di Mazara, he feared that the young prince could be outmanoeuvred by the more experienced Frederick. Accordingly, he had advised Robert to immediately undertake a forced march from Catania in the hope of catching Frederick from behind as the latter moved against Philip. The admiral convinced the duke to adopt a two-prong strategy whereby the latter took a direct track across the centre of the island, while Lauria led a force by way of the south coast (supposedly shadowed by his ships). The two were about halfway when they received the news of the fiasco at Falconaria, causing them to promptly reverse course to Catania.[26]

Thus, on the verge of total victory on Sicily, the Angevins found themselves faced with a sudden and remarkable reversal of fortune. An army had been annihilated and a fleet forced to flee. The count of Marsico (San Severino) had been incarcerated in the castle of Monte San Giuliano (modern Erice) and the prince of Taranto was a prisoner in the fortress of Cefalù.[27] The Sicilians were emboldened, while the Angevins had been relegated to the eastern end of the island. The campaign to reconquer Sicily had effectively been brought to a standstill. During a council of war in Catania, Robert and Roger came to the inescapable conclusion that there was nothing more to be done until the spring. In the meantime, Roger was to take a single ship and return to Naples in order to acquire reinforcements and replenishments in anticipation of resuming the campaign the following year. Prior to his departure, Lauria implored the duke to avoid engaging the Sicilians on his own.[28] And, as appears to have been a pattern among the Angevin princes, Robert failed to heed the admonishment.

BATTLE OF GAGLIANO (FEBRUARY 1300)

Barely a few weeks later, in February 1300, the duke of Calabria permitted himself to become the prey in an elaborate Sicilian–Catalan ploy. Speciale related that the castellan of the castle of Gagliano, a Catalan

[25] Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, p. 182.

[26] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk V, ch. X, col. 1019. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 398–9; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, pp. 149–50.

[27] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk V, ch. X, col. 1018. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 398.

[28] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk V, ch. XI, cols 1019–20. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 399.

faithful to Frederick called Montaner di Sosa, deceived one of his charges, a French nobleman named Charles Morelet who was captured at Falconaria, into believing that he wished to defect to the Angevins out of devotion to the papacy. Morelet was then allowed to pass a message to Robert in Catania that Sosa was willing to throw open the gates of the castle at Gagliano to the duke's men. Robert held a council of war during which Cardinal Gerardo da Parma, the papal legate, reminded the duke of Roger's injunction against unilateral action. His voice, however, was drowned out by those that shouted the strategic advantages of capturing a castle not 20 miles (32 km) from Frederick's stronghold at Castrogiovanni (Map 7). The duke declared that he himself would command the expedition. Fortunately for him, his wife Yolanda (Frederick's sister) was well schooled in Catalan cunning. She sensed a trap and beseeched her husband to delegate this task. He acquiesced, leaving leadership of the undertaking to Walter V, Count of Brienne.[29] The latter had just arrived in Catania accompanied by two other prominent Gallic barons, Godfrey de Milly and Jacques de Brusson. These 'great men' led a band of 300 select French knights, sworn to avenge the deaths of their relatives in previous Sicilian campaigns. According to Ramon Muntaner, they called themselves the 'Knights of Death'.[30]

The count of Brienne and his company of vengeful French chivalry started down the road to Gagliano accompanied by some 200 Angevin horsemen, so as to arrive at the castle in darkness – unobserved. In this, they failed. The treacherous castellan, Montaner di Sosa, had kept Blasco d'Alagona informed of the plot from the beginning, and the latter had set watches all along the route to keep him apprised of the enemy's approach. As the French column entered the mountainous terrain encompassing Gagliano, Tommaso da Procida (a son of John of Procida) grew anxious and warned Walter of a possible ambuscade. Accused of cowardice, his concerns were condescendingly brushed aside. Just before daybreak, as the French knights drew close to the hilltop town, Alagona sprung his surprise. Brienne's 500 mounted men-at-arms found themselves confronted in the predawn darkness by a Sicilian force of approximately equal size. There were only 200 Sicilian and Catalan knights, but the remaining 300 warriors were almost all *almugavars*. Brienne arranged his knights in battle array on a small patch

[29] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk V, ch. XII, cols 1020–1. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 399–401; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, pp. 150–1.

[30] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CXCI, p. 456; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk V, ch. XII, col. 1021. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 400; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 151.

of level ground with gradually ascending slopes all around. From Speciale's account, it appears that Alagona and his co-commander, Guglielmo Calcerando, cleverly deployed their infantry in two lines, forming an open 'V' on the surrounding slopes, presumably with cavalry in support; and then waited.[31]

Finally, in the gloom just before first light, a cry went up from the ranks of the *almugavars*: '*Desperta ferres*! *Desperta ferres*!' ('Awake iron! Awaken iron!'). A frightening scene then erupted along the branches of the 'V' enclosing the French formation. 'And, all together, they [the *almugavars*] hit their lances and darts against the stones,' described Muntaner; 'they all struck sparks, so that it seemed as if all the world was ablaze, and especially as it was not yet daylight.'[32] This was a common pre-battle ritual of the *almugavars*, often recounted by Catalan chroniclers. It was specifically intended to strike fear in the hearts of their adversaries, and it appears to have achieved its desired effect on this occasion.[33] Seeing the awe in the faces of his French comrades-in-arms, the count of Brienne ordered them to advance. The *almugavars* responded by unleashing a barrage of javelins and darts.[34] French knights of the late thirteenth/early fourteenth centuries were heavily armoured and, thus, impervious to most missiles, but their horses generally were not. One of the unspoken conventions of chivalry was that knightly steeds were not wantonly slain. Dear to breed and difficult to train, *destriers* (the size of 15 hands or more) were exceedingly valuable.[35] The *almugavars* cared naught for such niceties. They often aimed for the horses. Muntaner depicted what happened next in grim detail:

> And the battle was very cruel, and the *almugavars* hurled the darts so that it was the devil's work what they did, for at the first charge more than a hundred knights and horses of the French fell dead to the ground. Then they broke their lances short and disembowelled horses, and they went amongst them as if they were walking in a garden (Fig. 3).[36]

[31] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk V, ch. XII, cols 1021–3. Conversely, Muntaner (*Chronicle*, II, ch. CXCI, p. 457) claimed that Alagona's cavalry took a position on the left, while the *almugavar* infantry occupied the right wing. In the end, it probably mattered little. The key point is that the Sicilian ranks held the high ground over both French flanks. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 402–3; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 151.

[32] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CXCI, p. 457.

[33] Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 151.

[34] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk V, ch. XII, col. 1023. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 403.

[35] R. H. C. Davis, *The Medieval Warhorse* (London, 1989), pp. 11–67.

[36] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CXCI, pp. 457–8.

The unhorsed knights left floundering in the dirt in their heavy armour were then helpless to defend themselves against the agile *almugavars*, who effortlessly dispatched them with a dagger or short sword through the visor or another convenient opening in the armour.[37]

A well-timed cavalry charge by Alagona and Calcerando broke up the rest of the French formation, leaving the count of Brienne confined to a rock outcropping with about eighty of his knights remaining to make a desperate last stand. His situation hopeless, he ultimately surrendered his sword to Alagona. Few others of his company survived. It was all over by midday. In the end, the 'Knights of Death' acquired for themselves precisely what they had sought. On the obverse, Muntaner asserted that, to attain this lopsided victory, the Sicilians suffered the loss of only 'twenty-two horse and thirty-four foot'.[38] It had been a small skirmish in a long, bloody struggle, but the Battle of Gagliano had an enormous impact on the Sicilian psyche at the time. As Michele Amari observed, 'The warriors and partisans of the enemy were struck with consternation, and all the remainder of the island broke forth into boundless exultation over the second victory, which so materially weakened the power of Robert.'[39] He went on to paraphrase Speciale, saying, 'The Sicilians, as was their wont, raised their crests once more, and forgetful of the vicissitudes of fortune, began anew to be puffed with pride.'[40] It was this revived hubris that would bring them one final ignominy at the hands of the greatest admiral of the age.

BATTLE OF PONZA (14 JUNE 1300)

The victories at Falconaria and Gagliano filled King Frederick and his Sicilian subjects with a sense of invincibility that subsequent events only served to heighten. In the first months of 1300, King Charles of Naples – stridently stoked by Pope Boniface and materially supported by King Philip IV of France – hired *condottieri* to bolster the efforts of his son, Robert of Calabria, in eastern Sicily. Roger of Lauria used the

[37] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk V, ch. XII, col. 1023. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, III, p. 403; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 152.

[38] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CXCI, p. 458; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk V, ch. XII, col. 1023. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 403–4.

[39] Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 404–5. Translation by Anne Percy in Michele Amari's *History of the War of the Sicilian Vespers*, ed. Lord Francis Edgerton of Ellesmere (3 vols, London, 1850), III, pp. 183–4.

[40] Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 405 (referring to Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk V, ch. XII, col. 1023). Translation by Percy in Amari's *History of the War of the Sicilian Vespers*, III, p. 184.

Angevin fleet to transport one such mercenary commander, a Ranieri Buondelmonte, along with 400 Tuscan horse to the Val Demone for the purpose of hunting down a few of Frederick's now famous captains, like the formidable Blasco d'Alagona. Buondelmonte and his men managed to make their way to Catania, but achieved little else. Beyond the walls of that great port city, they found a land wholly inimical to their aims. The fruitless mission was soon abandoned.[41] In another embarrassing episode for the Angevins, Peregrine di Patti, the Sicilian hero who had distinguished himself in an earlier battle at the bridge of Brindisi, surprised a dozen Apulian galleys with a small Sicilian squadron and chased them into the protected harbour of Catania.[42] These incidents served to emphasize that Angevin power on the island was essentially confined to Catania.

All this imbued Frederick with what Michele Amari termed an 'obstinacy' to take the war to the Angevins, even if that meant challenging the great Roger of Lauria at sea.[43] Accordingly, he tasked Corrado Doria with resurrecting the Sicilian fleet during the winter months. The highly regarded Genoese admiral succeeded admirably. Between the arsenals of Palermo and Messina, Doria was able to arm twenty-seven galleys – no mean feat in the aftermath of Capo d'Orlando. To these, the Ghibellines of Genoa (the party of the Doria family) added five more. In early June 1300, Doria loaded much of the island's leading aristocracy onboard his thirty-two warships: such illustrious knights as Giovannni Chiaramonte, Palmiero Abate, Peregrine di Patti, Arrigo d'Incisa and Benincasa d'Eustazio. He then proceeded up the Tyrrhenian coast of Calabria to the *Principato* of Salerno – raiding all along the way – before finally entering the Gulf of Naples. The objective of the operation may have started out simply as an effort to discourage further Angevin assaults on Sicily, but it ultimately evolved into a bid to seek out and destroy Angevin naval capability altogether. After all, deprived of that, an Angevin invasion of the island would be impossible. Doria and his Sicilians wanted to end the threat once and for all. Therefore, their target ended up being nothing less than Lauria's fleet. They found it – forty ships strong, safely ensconced in Naples harbour.[44]

[41] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk V, ch. XIII, col. 1024. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 415–17.

[42] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk V, ch. XIV, cols 1024–5. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 431–2.

[43] Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 408.

[44] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk V, ch. XIV, cols 1024–5. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 432; Manuel José Quintana, *Lives of Celebrated Spaniards*, trans. T. R. Preston (London, 1833), p. 143.

Despite being outnumbered and facing an admiral crowned with more laurel wreaths than any of his predecessors, the Sicilians were so confident that they could prevail in a pitched battle that they sent a message by way of a scout ship, personally challenging Lauria to combat. Given the circumstances, their self-assurance seems almost delusional, but, in point of fact, they had seen Sicilian fleets consistently triumph over their Angevin adversaries – even when numerically inferior. As a result they had developed little respect for the undisciplined, poorly trained and atrociously led *regnicoli* who had often crewed the ships of King Charles in the past. And Lauria's own actions seemed to support that perception: he disregarded the dare.[45] John Pryor's astute analysis is germane here:

> There seems to be little doubt that the quality of Angevin crews was no better now than it had ever been and although they now had a naval genius to lead and train them, Lauria probably reposed little confidence in them. Only this explains his subsequent timidity.[46]

Moreover, Roger probably lacked two of the clear advantages in personnel that he had enjoyed in all of his previous engagements: Catalan crossbowmen and *almugavars*.[47] That being said, his command was not without its benefits. There apparently were some Catalan vessels manned with experienced mariners in his fleet, and Roger held unchallenged unity of command. Charles II made certain that the admiral possessed the prerogative to discipline his crews as he saw fit. 'Arming him with an authority not inferior to that of the Vicar Robert [Prince of Calabria],' wrote Amari, 'he [King Charles] said to him [Lauria] that, when campaigning with the fleet, he could [of his own accord] remit offences, debts, and penalties.'[48] Still, the crafty fleet commander refused to be baited into a battle before he was ready – before he could acquire overwhelming advantage.

Frustrated with Roger's reluctance, Corrado Doria attempted to draw him out by ravaging the offshore islands in the gulf. When this failed to elicit a response, Doria extended the raiding out to the *Isole Ponziane* (the Pontine Islands), about 66 miles or 110 km west of Naples. This

[45] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk V, ch. XIV, col. 1025. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 432; Lawrence Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean: The Catalan–Aragonese Fleet in the War of the Sicilian Vespers* (Gainesville, 2003), p. 48; John Pryor, 'The Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', *Journal of Medieval History*, IX (1983), pp. 179–216, esp. 209.

[46] Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 209.

[47] Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', pp. 209, 212.

[48] Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 430–1.

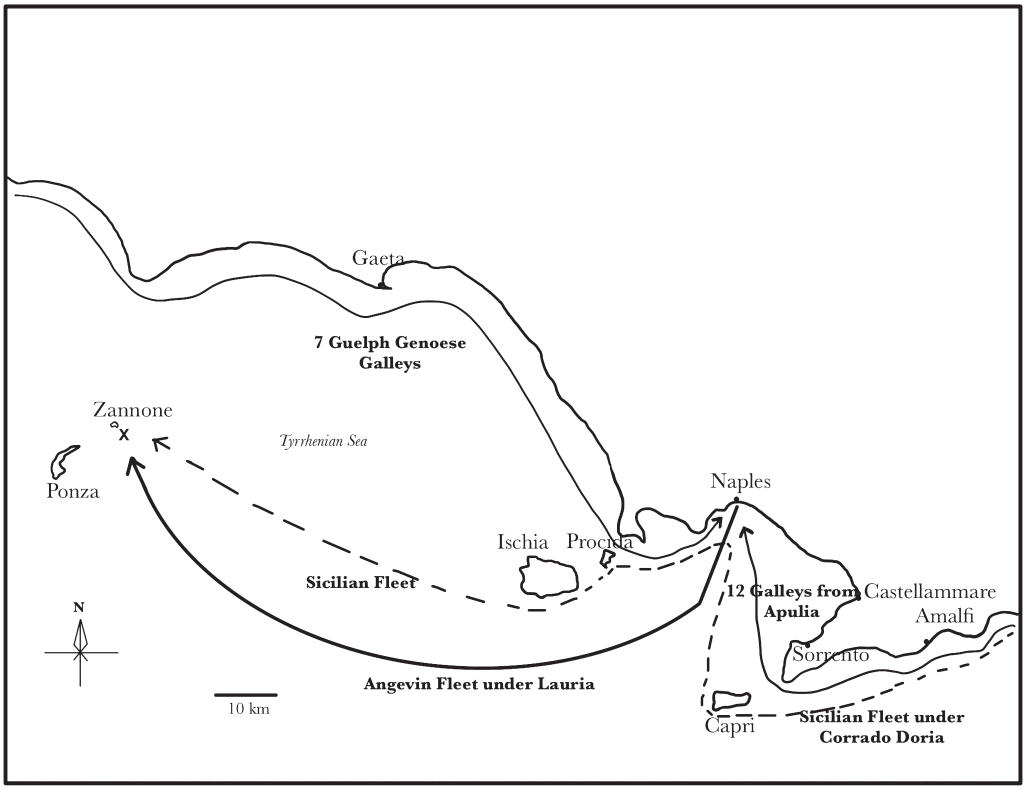
was apparently precisely what Lauria had hoped would occur, because it allowed the twelve Apulian galleys sequestered in the port of Catania to slip untroubled into the gulf between Capri and Punta Campanella at the tip of the Sorrento Peninsula. Around the same time, another seven galleys sent by the Grimaldi (a Genoese family with Guelph sympathies who despised the Doria dynasty) stole unobserved into the Bay of Naples past Procida and Capo Miseno. With nearly sixty warships (58 to 59 galleys by most estimates) at his disposal – almost twice the size of the Sicilian fleet – Lauria finally elected to emerge from the protected confines of Naples harbour and seek battle. He found his quarry on 14 June 1300 off Zannone, the northernmost isle in the Pontine chain about 6 miles (10 km) northeast of the main island of Ponza(Map 15).[49]

Faced with the brutal reality that he may have foisted himself into a fight that he could not possibly win, Corrado Doria conferred with his *comiti* (ship captains). Palmiero Abate, now a revered veteran of the war, validated the Genoese admiral's trepidation, saying there was no shame in retiring before superior forces. Doria, a naturally cautious and well-experienced fleet commander, must have recognized the wisdom of Abate's words, but, in such medieval councils of war, testosterone-charged declarations of unyielding audacity in the face of hopeless odds usually won the day over sober strategy. On that day, the voice for such ill-advised valour was a certain Benincasa d'Eustazio, who loudly impugned the virility of any who would run before the royal fleet of King Charles.[50]

Thus committed by acclamation of the assembled captains, Doria decided upon a single desperate stratagem: he would prosecute an attack on Lauria's flagship with his own in the hope of securing victory by seizing the acclaimed admiral's standard. Accordingly, as the battle began, Doria's ship suddenly surged towards that of Lauria. The latter, however, easily parried the manoeuvre by turning the prow of his vessel towards that of his assailant so as to avoid a direct hit amidships. This caused Doria's galley to strike only a glancing blow to the forward section of Lauria's ship and slide down the beam until its prow was directly abeam Lauria's stern. As a consequence, Lauria's marines massed on the poop were placed in a position to fire down upon Doria's men who were

[49] *Acta Aragonensia. Quellen zur deutschen, italianischen, fransösischen, spanischen, zur Kirchen- und Kulturgeschichte aus der diplomatischen Korrespondenz Jaymes II (1291–1327)*, ed. Heinrich Finke (3 vols, Berlin, 1908–22), III, doc. 40, pp. 88–9; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk V, ch. XIV, col. 1025. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 432; Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 209.

[50] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk V, ch. XIV, cols 1025–6. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 432–3.



15 Battle of Ponza

marshalled on the prow of the Genoese admiral's ship in anticipation of a boarding action. This, of course, enabled Lauria to thwart all attempts to grapple with his own ship while keeping the attacking vessel occupied until other ships of his ample Angevin fleet could surround it.[51]

While this spectacle was playing itself out, the five Ghibelline galleys that had accompanied the Sicilian fleet stood off, observing the scene with keen interest. Once they realized that Doria had been checkmated, they belatedly took Palmiero Abate's advice and chose survival over a pointless display of squandered courage. Ironically, the vituperatively bellicose Benincasa d'Eustazio followed their example after seizing and stripping a single Angevin galley. Six other Sicilian galleys went with him, leaving only twenty ships to deal with a force nearly three times their number. All were eventually seized, save that of Corrado Doria

[51] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk V, ch. XIV, col. 1025. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 434; Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', pp. 209–10.

alone. Full of grimly accurate Genoese crossbowmen, it fought on maniacally, forestalling every effort to board it. Weary of the senseless slaughter, Lauria finally extorted Doria's submission by threatening to send a fireship against him.[52]

After the battle, Roger gave evidence of why combatants at sea fought with such frenzied resolve. Apparently angered over the damage done to his crews, he singled out the Genoese crossbowmen for special treatment: their eyes were gouged out and their hands lopped off at the wrists.[53] Modern historians have excoriated Lauria for perpetrating a senseless cruelty in the name of vengeance. Even the usually adulatory Manuel José Quintana called it 'an act of revolting barbarity'. But the purpose was not mere retribution.[54] Deterrence was probably the prime objective here. Mott offers a compelling explication:

> Rumours were circulating that Genoa might openly declare for the Sicilian cause, which would have complicated the military situation for the admiral. It is quite possible that the Genoese crossbowmen were maimed for the same reason that French sailors had been, a strong message to Genoa not to get involved. If Roger was simply seeking revenge, he could have just as easily executed them and the other prisoners. The reason that this punishment was inflicted on only these Genoese was that the other five Genoese galleys had held back during the battle and then fled when they saw the battle go against the Sicilians. In any case, what we do know is that after the battle Genoese participation in the war stopped and the state declared itself neutral.[55]

So it would appear that Roger was not so much vengeful as he was ruthless.

Nor was he finished extracting maximum psychological benefit from his victory. Roger also regarded naked intimidation as a legitimate weapon of war. Sicilian sea power had effectively been eliminated, and

[52] Ptolemy da Lucca, *Die Annalen des Tholomeus von Lucca in doppelter Fassung nebst Teilen der Gesta Florentinorum und de Gesta Lucanorum*, ed. Bernhard Schmeidler (Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Munich, 1984), p. 237; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk V, ch. XIV, cols 1026–7. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 434; Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', pp. 210–11; Quintana, *Lives of Celebrated Spaniards*, p. 143.

[53] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk V, ch. XIV, col. 1027. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 434; Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 211; Quintana, *Lives of Celebrated Spaniards*, pp. 143–4.

[54] Quintana, *Lives of Celebrated Spaniards*, p. 144.

[55] Lawrence Mott, 'How cruel was Roger of Lauria?', *Catalan Review*, 7.1 (1993), pp. 79–96, esp. 86. See also Steven Runciman, *The Sicilian Vespers* (Cambridge, 1958), p. 273.

he was determined to show the Sicilians precisely what that would mean for their hopes of resistance. Thus, with the encouragement and consent of King Charles, the admiral loaded onboard his fleet several of the more prominent Sicilian nobles taken prisoner at Ponza. He then sailed to Sicily where he conducted a victory cruise, slowly circumnavigating the island with the pride of Sicilian barony displayed in fetters on the decks of his ships in full view of those on shore. The venerable Palmiero Abate – kept in squalid conditions with his wounds untreated – actually succumbed within sight of Catania, reportedly uttering the name of his beloved island with his last breath.[56] At least some of Roger's calculated cruelty was personal. Corrado Doria was also paraded around Sicily and subject to the same sort of maltreatment, if not outright torture. But the hardship visited upon the defeated enemy admiral had a purpose other than projecting the futility of resistance to the island's inhabitants. Lauria was trying to coerce his Genoese counterpart into ceding the fief of Francavilla back to him. In this, he ultimately succeeded – Doria formally transferred the township back to Lauria with Frederick's grudging assent.[57]

Roger soon learned, however, that there were limits to the power of intimidation. It won him almost no other converts to the Angevin cause. The towns along the southern and western shores of Sicily remained steadfastly loyal to Frederick. A few small inland hamlets (Asaro, Racalgiovanni, Taba and Delia) declared for Duke Robert at this time, but none did so because of the threat posed by Roger's fleet. All fell by virtue – or perhaps more aptly the iniquity – of some sort of internal treachery.[58] Lauria made only one notable attempt to gain control of a major city by force during his circuit of the island. Believing Termini on the north coast to be undefended, he himself led a landing party to take it. But it was a trap. Having apparently observed the progress of the fleet from shore, Manfred di Chiaramonte and Ugo d'Ampurias had entered the city the night before with a small detachment of Sicilian horse. They waited until Lauria's men were plundering the lower town, then sprang their surprise. The two nobles used their cavalry to block the retreat of the raiders back to their ships, then cut many of them down and took the rest prisoner. Roger just barely managed to escape capture by hiding in the dark recesses of a public house. Only once the Sicilian horsemen

[56] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk V, ch. XV, col. 1027. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 435–6.

[57] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk V, ch. XVI, cols 1027–8. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 436; Quintana, *Lives of Celebrated Spaniards*, p. 144.

[58] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk V, chs XVI–XVII, col. 1028. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 437.

had departed with their prisoners did Lauria emerge to steal a skiff and row back to the fleet. The mission ended meanly with a desultory assault on Taormina before returning to Naples.[59] The lesson was clear: it was one thing to menace Sicily with a heavy-handed demonstration of naval supremacy; it was quite another to use such superiority at sea to actually subdue the island.

[59] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk V, ch. XVIII, col. 1029. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 437–8.

20

ENDGAME
(SPRING 1301–SUMMER 1302)

CHASTENED BUT UNDETERRED by the mixed results of his last expedition, Roger of Lauria settled upon an even more aggressive naval strategy the following year to bring Sicily to heel. Subduing the island clearly depended upon extending the Angevin power base beyond Catania and the Val di Noto; and the most efficient means of doing that was to impose naval supremacy on Sicily's shores through the vigorous use of the Angevin fleet – especially since the Sicilians no longer possessed a fleet to oppose it. Accordingly, Roger first returned to Naples in order to acquire more supplies to replenish Angevin strongholds on the eastern end of the island and to procure more ships for the fleet. When he sailed back to Catania in the spring of 1301 having achieved his purpose, the admiral shared his strategy with the duke: they would divide the armada into two squadrons with Roger leading one to subjugate the northern shores while Robert took the other to suppress the southern littoral (Map 6).[1]

The plan's implementation, of course, turned out to be much more problematic than its conception. Unsurprisingly, a pronounced dichotomy in seamanship and judgment dictated that Robert would fare far worse than Roger. The former chose to begin his cruise by assailing Syracuse, despite the fact that, two years before, the city had so stubbornly resisted James II of Aragon that the king had been compelled to abandon his first effort to conquer the island altogether, having achieved little. Predictably, the Syracusans summarily dismissed their assailants on this occasion as well, prompting the Angevins to move on to Scicli (just south of Ragusa), which also rebuffed them. In July, Robert's fleet found itself sailing by Scoglitti (a few miles up the coast towards Gela), when a violent storm struck it from the southwest. Gale force winds

[1] Niccolò Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, ed. Ludovico Muratori (Rerum Italicarum Scriptores, X, Milan, 1727), bk V, ch. XIX, col. 1030. See also Michele Amari, *La Guerra del Vespro Siciliano* (9th edn, 3 vols, Milan, 1886), II, p. 439.

drove many of the ships ashore despite frantic attempts to anchor them. Niccolò Speciale reported that twenty-two galleys broke up on the rocks at Camerina just southeast of Scoglitti near modern-day Marina di Ragusa. The duke and the rest of his fleet would have suffered a similar fate, had not the captain of his flagship decided to run before the wind instead of fighting it. By the time the tempest finally abated, they ended up off Capo Passero (the southeastern tip of the Val di Noto). At that point, Robert had little choice but to coax his crippled squadron back to port in Catania.[2]

Roger, on the other hand, wisely elected to bypass mulish Messina in favour of simply resupplying Angevin-held fortresses and towns in the Val Demone. He was at Brolo just east of Capo d'Orlando in July when the same system of foul weather that had decimated Robert's fleet smashed into his. The difference was that the admiral lost only five ships and was able to continue the expedition as planned. Speciale indicated that he even paused at Palermo to confer with Blasco d'Alagona in the hopes of laying the groundwork for an eventual peace, in recognition of the fact that neither side was making any significant headway against the other. Nothing was reported to have come of the talks, however. As he completed his circuit around the island, Roger stopped at Camerina – where many of Robert's vessels went down – in order to salvage what he could. Using grapnels and cranes, his crews gleaned from the sea and its rocky shores such nautical paraphernalia as anchors and rigging. They even managed to dredge up a chest of coins (presumably for crew compensation) belonging to one Guillaume de Gudur (Robert's chancellor), which Roger supposedly retained for himself. So ended this last inglorious attempt to cow the Sicilians into submission through a demonstration of sea power alone.[3]

SIEGE OF MESSINA (AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 1301)

In the wake of these latest setbacks at sea, Robert realized that the island could be retaken only through the dogged, laborious process of reducing its major cities one by one. In this he had an implacable ally: hunger. The years of strife had distracted farmers from cultivating their crops and tending to their livestock. And in the two years since the amphibious

[2] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk V, ch. XIX, col. 1030. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 439–40.

[3] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk V, ch. XIX, cols 1030–1. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 440–1; Camillo Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana* (3 vols, Livorno, 1897–1902), II, p. 186.

assault on Capo d'Orlando, food stocks had been severely depleted through confiscations by the troops of both sides. As a result, famine now reigned supreme on the island. Messina, cut off from the rest of Sicily by the Peloritani mountains and from the rest of the world by a sea it no longer controlled, was particularly vulnerable to the ravages of starvation. So Robert decided to concentrate his efforts here first.[4]

In early August 1301, the duke had Lauria land his army at the abbey of Santa Maria di Roccamadore in the suburb of Tremestieri, a few miles south of Messina's city centre. Robert quickly advanced to the plain of Santa Croce (about a mile west of the port) and set up camp. He then laid waste to the surrounding area, even attacking the city's arsenal where he burned two galleys before being repulsed. In the meantime, Roger, now in command of an armada of around a hundred galleys, established a tight blockade and began patrolling the Strait ceaselessly. The resultant strangulation would have soon begun to suffocate the city, had not King Frederick responded so swiftly. The sovereign sent a sizable relief force under the ever-reliable Blasco d'Alagona and Guglielmo Calcerando. The duke learned of the column when it reached Tripi, about 35 miles (56 km) southwest of the city. He hurriedly had his army evacuate the environs of the city and embark on Roger's ships back to Catona in Calabria. It was not so much the 700 knights of Alagona's cavalry that Robert feared as it was the 2,000 *almugavars* that composed the accompanying infantry. By this time, the duke would have had enough experience with the *almugavars* to envision the panic that would be engendered among his own troops, if these fierce foot soldiers were permitted to descend down from the Peloritani heights into their rear, pinning them against the walls of the city.[5]

Alagona and Calcerando subsequently entered Messina unopposed to the exultation of its citizens, whose tribulations nevertheless were far from finished. The Angevins still had a stranglehold on their food supplies. After all, they continued to control Catania to the south, Milazzo to the north and several strongholds in the mountain approaches to the west – such as Castiglione, Monforte and Francavilla. And, of course, the most adroit admiral of the era ensured few provisions would arrive by

[4] Ramon Muntaner, *Chronicle*, trans. Lady Goodenough (2 vols, London, 1920), II, ch. CXCV, pp. 472–3; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk VI, ch. I, col. 1033. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 442–3.

[5] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CXCV, pp. 472–4; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk VI, ch. I, col. 1033. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 443–4; Giovanni Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro (1282–1302)* (Bologna, 2012), p. 154.

sea.[6] Thus, after the initial euphoria over the relief provided by Alagona and his men wore off, reality soon set in once again. Ramon Muntaner, who was probably an eyewitness, provided a compelling explanation: 'Ten thousand beasts laden with wheat and flour … all this was as nothing, for wheat brought by land amounts to nothing, for the company and the chivalry who accompany it, have already eaten much of it on their return.'[7] As a consequence, the plight of the inhabitants swiftly returned to its previous parlous state.

Succour, however, soon came from an unforeseen source – a soldier of fortune called Roger de Flor. 'Flor' is the Catalan rendering of the German word 'blume' (meaning 'flower'), because Roger's real name was Rutger von Blum. His father, Richard von Blum, was a falconer for the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II of Hohenstaufen; and the emperor must have been quite fond of his falconer because he gave him the hand of an Italian noblewoman with lands around Brindisi. Those lands, however, were lost when Richard, a staunch Hohenstaufen loyalist, fought and died for Conradin at Tagliacozzo in 1268. Disinherited when Charles of Anjou garnished the family's holdings in the aftermath of the battle, young Roger de Flor was left to forge his own way. As Brindisi was a frequent port of embarkation for pilgrims bound for the Holy Land, the lad caught the eye of a French friar from Marseilles named Vassalyll, who was the captain of a vessel belonging to the Knights Templar. Vassalyll took the boy with him to the *Terra Sancta* where he was eventually inducted into the military order. Roger had a falling out with the Templars over disputed custody of a treasure trove acquired during the evacuation of Acre in 1291 and subsequently left the order to embark upon a career as a corsair. He used a generous loan from Ticino Doria of Genoa to purchase his own pirate ship. By 1300, he had established himself well enough to offer his services to Duke Robert at Catania. When the latter demurred, Roger de Flor immediately proceeded to Messina, where he found a receptive audience in King Frederick. From that moment on, he operated as a privateer for the crown of Sicily, preying on dozens of Angevin supply ships bound for the duke in Catania. Frederick was reportedly so pleased with Flor that he made him 'vice admiral of Sicily'.[8]

[6] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CXCV, pp. 472–3.
[7] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CXCVI, pp. 474–5. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 443–4.
[8] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CXCIV, pp. 466–71. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Sciliano*, II, p. 444.

Roger de Flor was just returning to Trapani after an extensive raiding expedition, when he learned of the blockade that was throttling Messina. With the consent of the king, Flor cobbled together a relief flotilla composed of his own six galleys plus another four ships that he purchased from the Genoese at Palermo and Trapani for a total of ten, according to Muntaner. (Speciale claimed that there were twelve.) He then sailed to Sciacca where he loaded them full of wheat, before continuing on to Syracuse. There, he waited for the inevitable rise of the *Sirocco*, the hot dry wind that blew off the Sahara in late summer pushing large swells from the southeast. When it came, this consummate mariner spread the lateen sails of his galleys to ride the wind and waves up the strait to Messina. Roger of Lauria hurriedly put his galleys out to sea (presumably from Catona) in a desperate attempt to intercept him, but it was useless. His oarsmen could make no headway against wind and current, no matter how furiously he goaded them. Roger de Flor easily entered Messina's harbour, taunting his frustrated pursuers in the process.[9]

Perversely, Roger de Flor's heroics proved only a temporary palliative for Messina's predicament. As Speciale pointed out: 'The fertile slopes of Mount Etna could not yield enough grain and the warehouses of Agrigento could not store enough, even if the need had been anticipated, to allay the hunger of that place [Messina] for such a length of time.'[10] Once the sustenance supplied by Flor's flotilla had been consumed, conditions in the city quickly worsened. Dogs, cats and rats were considered delicacies to the inhabitants who were soon reduced to sacks of skin and bone or suppurating cadavers in the streets.[11] The most prominent casualty of such deprivation seems to have been the valiant Blasco d'Alagona, who evidently succumbed after ingesting some tainted rations.[12]

Word of Blasco's death hit Frederick hard. He grieved over the loss of a superb soldier and a loyal lieutenant, but he also came to grasp the severity of Messina's situation. It motivated him to conduct an ambitious resupply mission himself. Hence, he had his troops scour the Val

[9] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CXCVI, p. 474; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk VI, ch. II, cols 1033–4. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 444–5; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 154; Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, p. 186.

[10] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk VI, ch. II, col. 1035.

[11] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk VI, ch. II, col. 1034. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 446–7.

[12] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk VI, ch. III, col. 1035. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 445–6; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 154.

di Mazara for fresh provisions; and then personally led a relief column overland to the outskirts of the city.[13] After having some emergency rations spirited into Messina, he departed to obtain more grain and some cattle. He and his men returned a few days later to shepherd the additional supplies and livestock all the way into the city. The sheer audacity of the undertaking and his reassuring presence galvanized resistance within the walls. It was, perhaps, Frederick's finest moment. Lingering only as long as necessary, the king then evacuated the women, children and other noncombatants, so that the furnished rations would last all the longer.[14] On the way back west, Frederick and his entourage struck one last blow to ease the path of additional victuals bound for the great port. Passing Randazzo, they learned that Castiglione was only lightly guarded, so they surprised the garrison of Lauria loyalists with a rare night raid and captured the castle.[15]

These measures, of course, reduced the effectiveness of Roger's blockade of Messina at a time when the deleterious effects of the famine were beginning to bite hard among Robert's men. By mid-autumn, the duke of Calabria realized that the siege was hopeless. He allowed his wife, Yolanda, to mediate a truce between him and her brother Frederick, with whom she had remained quite close. Eventually, a face-to-face meeting was arranged in Syracuse, where Roger of Lauria himself delivered the duke and duchess to the Castello Maniace for the final negotiations with the king (Fig. 19). The result was a suspension of hostilities lasting several months.[16] 'Robert remained in possession of Catania,' writes Steven Runciman, 'but withdrew his troops from the rest of the island.'[17] His father, King Charles II of Naples, later ratified the pact, but Pope Boniface refused to accept the setback with equanimity.[18] He

[13] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk VI, ch. III, col. 1035. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 447–8.

[14] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk VI, ch. IV, col. 1036. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 448; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 154.

[15] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk VI, ch. IV, cols 103–7. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 448–9.

[16] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk VI, ch. V, cols 1037–8. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 449–50; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 155; Manuel José Quintana, *Lives of Celebrated Spaniards*, trans. T. R. Preston (London, 1833), pp. 144–5.

[17] Steven Runciman, *The Sicilian Vespers* (Cambridge, 1958), p. 273.

[18] *Acta Aragonensia. Quellen zur deutschen, italianischen, fransösischen, spanischen, zur Kirchen- und Kulturgeschichte aus der diplomatischen Korrespondenz Jaymes II (1291–1327)*, ed. Heinrich Finke (Berlin, 1908–22), III, doc. 48, pp. 108–9. See also Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 273.

had one more gambit to play in his plot to return Sicily to its 'proper place' under papal suzerainty.

TREATY OF CALTABELLOTTA (31 AUGUST 1302)

Pope Boniface VIII, sensing that the verve of his Angevin allies for victory on Sicily was faltering, sought support from the one entity that he felt still had a strong vested interest in subjugating the island: the French court – and, in particular, Charles of Valois. It should be recalled that Charles of Valois – the third son of King Philip III of France and the brother of Philip IV – had been designated by the Holy See to assume the Crown of Aragon, had his father's papally sponsored crusade to seize the kingdom in 1285 been successful. Since it was not, Charles was compensated in 1290 with the hand of Margaret, the eldest daughter of King Charles II of Naples whose dowry was Anjou and Maine, making Valois count of Anjou. When Margaret unexpectedly passed away in Paris on 31 December 1299, the pope arranged for him to be betrothed to Catherine de Courtenay, heiress to the Latin throne of Constantinople. The marriage took place on 28 January 1301 at a priory near Paris, transforming Charles into the titular Emperor of Constantinople. In September 1301, while Robert of Calabria was negotiating a truce with Frederick of Sicily, the pope was proclaiming Charles of Valois 'Captain General of the Papal States' at Anagni. Along with the exalted-sounding title came promises of funding from the ecclesiastical tithes of church lands in France, Italy, Greece and the various Mediterranean islands under papal auspices. These funds were to enable him to procure the forces necessary to make his claim to the crown of Constantinople a reality – with one overarching condition: he first had to employ said church-financed forces in an expedition to conquer Sicily for the papacy and Charles of Naples.[19]

In council with the pope at Anagni, Valois agreed to commence the campaign to recover the island in the spring of 1302. In the meantime, Boniface obliged the count of Anjou to establish a Guelph ascendancy in Tuscany. Thus, in November 1301, Charles used an army, which included several thousand knights paid with papal monies, to vanquish

[19] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CXCIII, pp. 464–6; Odorico Rainaldi, *Annales ecclesiastici ab anno MCXCVIII ubi desinit cardinalis Baronius, auctore Odorico Raynaldus*, ed. Augustino Theiner (37 vols, Paris, 1871), 23, anno 1300, § 20, p. 270 and anno 1301, §11, p. 284; Giovanni Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, ed. Francesco Dragomanni (4 vols, Florence, 1845), II, bk VIII, ch. XLIII, pp. 47–8. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 451–4; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 155; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 274.

the papacy-defying *Bianchi* ('Whites') of Florence (Dante Alighieri among them) and install in their stead the pro-papal party, the *Neri* ('Blacks').[20] By March 1302, Valois was ready to do Boniface's bidding with regard to Sicily. He descended to Rome that month to meet with the pope and his Angevin allies, Charles of Naples and his son Robert of Calabria. All vowed to support Valois in his quest to re-establish the Latin Empire of Constantinople at the expense of the current Byzantine Emperor, Andronikos II Palaiologos – once the conquest of Sicily was complete. Boniface further bolstered the count by renewing his excommunication of Frederick and promising the same sort of papal dispensation to participants in the campaign that would normally be expected for those serving in a crusade. In April, Valois was in Naples, where King Charles created him Captain-General of Sicily. The king, disheartened by years of defeat at the hands of the intractable Sicilians, however, had the foresight to authorize the count to conduct peace talks with Frederick, if it came to that. Finally, in May 1302, Valois prepared to launch his offensive to take Sicily back for the Holy See and the House of Anjou.[21]

The conspicuous preparations for yet another Angevin-supported assault on Sicily were, of course, no secret to King Frederick and his Sicilian subjects. Facing overwhelming force with no fleet and limited feudal support from vassals scattered about an island that suffered the existence of several enemy enclaves, Frederick saw no recourse but to resort to guerrilla warfare. Accordingly, he spent the winter months of 1302 readying the various fortresses and towns faithful to him, while shoring up his grip on as much of the island as possible. As soon as the truce with Robert of Calabria had expired, he forcibly occupied Aidone near Piazza Armerina, while his lieutenant Manfred Chiaramonte reclaimed Ragusa. Nonetheless, never since the beginning of the war had Sicily been so susceptible to subjugation.[22]

Sometime toward the end of May, Charles of Valois (accompanied by Robert of Calabria) appeared off the north coast of Sicily with a massive allied armada.[23] Giovanni Villani claimed that there were 'more

[20] Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, II, bk VIII, ch. XLIX, pp. 49–54. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 454.

[21] Rainaldi, *Annales ecclesiastici*, 23, anno 1302, § 1, p. 297; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk VI, ch. VII, col. 1039; Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, II, bk VIII, ch. L, pp. 54–5. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 454–6; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 155.

[22] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk VI, ch. VI, col. 1038. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 457.

[23] Ptolemy da Lucca, *Die Annalen des Tholomeus von Lucca in doppelter Fassung nebst Teilen der Gesta Florentinorum und de Gesta Lucanorum*, ed. Bernhard Schmeidler (Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Munich, 1984), p. 239.

than 100 [ships] between *galee* [*galeas* – war galleys] and *uscieri* [oared horse transports] and *legni grossi* [large supply vessels], not including the *galie sotil* [light bireme galleys]'.[24] Marino Sanudo Torsello testified that there were at least 120 galleys, plus support ships.[25] But Italian maritime historian Camillo Manfroni plumbed a multitude of sources to arrive at the relatively reliable estimate of 82 galleys, 50 transport vessels and nine *galeoni*.[26] Onboard these ships was an army that Sanudo said numbered 3,000 knights and 20,000 infantry.[27] Upon the advice of Roger of Lauria, the main force came ashore at neither Palermo nor Messina, as might be expected, but at Termini on a sparsely populated stretch of the northern seaboard about halfway between Palermo and Cefalù (Map 6). Unopposed, they occupied Termini without a struggle. Simultaneously, Lauria attacked the outskirts of Palermo with a small detachment and took an outlying fortress.[28] These modest initial successes would, regrettably, mark the highpoint of an ill-starred enterprise. Prospects for victory would plummet precipitously from that point.

The allied army suffered the malaise endemic of all the previous feudal forces that had attempted to invade Sicily during the War of the Vespers: it was an amalgamation of mercenaries and feudal levies from a hodgepodge of often-inimical ethnic origins, led by a divided command. Worse still, there seemed to be little in the way of a coherent strategy. Rather than move rapidly inland to capitalize on the successful amphibious landing, Charles and his lieutenants chose to remain encamped near the coast, awaiting the arrival of an additional twenty-two supply ships loaded with grain from Apulia. It seems that Frederick, who had established himself at nearby Polizzi (about 20 miles or 32 km to the southeast), had stripped the surrounding countryside of crops and livestock. Ramon Muntaner wryly reported what happened next: 'And, as a good beginning, there was a great fight at Termini between Latins and Provençals and French, so great that, altogether, over two thousand persons were killed.'[29]

[24] Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, II, bk VIII, ch. L, p. 54.
[25] Marino Sanudo Torsello, *Istoria del Regno di Romania*, in *Chroniques Gréco-romanes inédites ou peu connues*, ed. Charles Hope (Berlin, 1873), pp. 99–170, esp. 170.
[26] Manfroni, *Storia della Marina italiana*, II, p. 186.
[27] Marino Sanudo Torsello, *Istoria del Regno di Romania*, p. 170.
[28] *Anonymi Chronicon Siculum*, in *Bibliotheca Scriptorum qui res in Sicilia gestas sub Aragonum imperio retulere*, ed. Rosario Gregorio (2 vols, Palermo, 1792), II, pp. 121–267, esp. ch. LXX, pp. 179–80; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk VI, chs VII–VIII, col. 1039. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro*, II, pp. 457–8; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, p. 274.
[29] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CXCVII, p. 476.

When the invaders finally marched inland, they seemed to select their objectives more adventitiously than tactically. They then prosecuted the resultant sieges with little vigour or staying power. Their initial target, for instance, was Caccamo – the first substantial town along their route of march, less than 4 miles (7 km) south of Termini. They were easily repulsed by Giovanni Chiaramonte, who commanded the defence of the city from the Castello di Caccamo, an impregnable Norman fortress perched atop a rocky spur. Valois then moved on to Corleone in the mountainous centre of the Val di Mazara. It was a bad choice. Corleone's reputation for contumacious conduct in the face of an external threat was not something simply conjured up in popular literature or a product of folklore. It was rooted in reality. Corleone's citizens were a hard folk who would, in modern times, produce some of the most feared Mafia bosses in history. They had been the first to join the people of Palermo in the Revolt of the Vespers that began the war, and they had lost none of their temerity since. Under the leadership of grizzled veterans Ugo d'Ampurias and Berenguer d'Entença, the townspeople actually threw open a gate when attacked, so that they could slaughter the intruders as they entered. Charles of Valois abandoned the siege after a mere eighteen days.[30]

The count of Anjou then bypassed Palermo, Trapani and Mazara to lay siege to Sciacca on the southwest coast – not because it was strategically vital, but because it appeared to be more attainable, given its proximity to the sea and thus its accessibility to Angevin sea power. Accordingly, the fleet sailed from Termini around the Val di Mazara to Sciacca, stopping only to capture Castellammare del Golfo in the eponymous gulf west of Palermo.[31] Roger of Lauria was presumably with the fleet during all this, although he is not mentioned in the sources. He seems happy to have assumed a subordinate role in this rolling debacle. After all, he was well over fifty at this juncture and more than wealthy enough to retire to his lands in Valencia. More significantly, he probably had little stomach for carrying on the struggle against his erstwhile Sicilian comrades at the behest of his Angevin masters and the French court.

By the time the Angevins and their allies set up camp on the coastal plain adjacent to the city of Sciacca and commenced the siege, it was already the middle of July – when the searing hot winds from North Africa begin to sweep the southern shores of Sicily (Map 6). While a

[30] *Anonymi Chronicon Siculum*, ch. LXX, p. 180; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk VI, ch. VIII, cols 1039–40. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, III, pp. 458–9.

[31] *Anonymi Chronicon Siculum*, ch. LXX, p. 180; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk VI, ch. IX, col. 1040. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 459–60.

certain Frederico d'Incisa, a native of Sciacca, led a stubborn defence of the city, King Frederick established his headquarters at Caltabellotta in the relatively cooler hill country about 9 miles (15 km) north – and waited. It was a wise tactic. Constant catapult bombardments and numerous assaults availed the Angevin–French coalition nothing but exasperation.[32] Frederick added to the enemy's frustration by sending Simon de Valguarnera on a daring relief mission. The courageous Catalan knight stole past Angevin sentries along the beach at night with 200 mounted men-at-arms and accompanying infantry to surreptitiously enter the city and bolster the spirits of its defenders. By mid-August, heatstroke and ill-health visited far more harm upon the invaders than any force Frederick could have fielded against them. An outbreak of distemper among the besiegers' horses reduced their fit mounts to fewer than 500. Virus-borne afflictions then began to ravage the ranks of the men as well.[33] Frederick's finest knights – Ugo d'Ampurias, Berenguer d'Entença, Matteo di Termini and Roger de Flor – all entreated the king to allow them to finish the enemy off, but the sovereign felt no great sense of urgency. After all, Angevin–French ineptitude and the enervating conditions that the enemy now endured were accomplishing the desired aim without the additional expenditure of Sicilian blood. The Sicilian sun alone would soon do what needed to be done. Frederick, instead, called for a muster of feudal forces and municipal militias at – fittingly – Corleone, in anticipation of the denouement of this final act in the great Sicilian struggle.[34]

Charles of Valois could not help but be conscious of how hopeless his situation had become. A *coup de grâce* delivered by a revitalized Sicilian soldiery bent on revenge appeared inevitable. Besides, the entire expedition was only a means to an end for him. After all, his ultimate desideratum was the conquest of Constantinople as the capital of a renewed Latin Empire in the East. And so, against the objections of young Robert of Calabria who remained unwilling to relinquish what had been promised to him, Charles decided to exercise the prerogative granted to him by Robert's father, the king: he sued for peace. On about 19 August, he

[32] *Anonymi Chronicon Siculum*, ch. LXX, p. 180; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk VI, ch. IX, col. 1040. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 460.

[33] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CXCVII, pp. 476–7; Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, II, bk VIII, ch. L, p. 55. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 460; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 155.

[34] *Anonymi Chronicon Siculum*, ch. LXX, p. 180; Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CXCVIII, pp. 477–8; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk VI, ch. X, cols 1040–1. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 460; Amatuccio, *Storia Militare della Guerra del Vespro*, p. 156.

dispatched two of his most 'resolute knights', Teobaldo de Cippio and Amerigo de Sus, to Castronovo (about 30 miles or 48 km to the north-east), where Frederick had gone to prepare for the final assault. They arranged with the Sicilian sovereign the preliminaries of a peace pact. A few days later, on 24 August, the principals (Charles and Frederick) accompanied by their respective entourages met at some peasant dwellings halfway between Sciacca and Caltabellotta to finalize the accord. While Frederick's lead representative was Vinciguerra Palizzi, Charles appropriately chose Roger of Lauria to be his chief negotiator.[35] After all, the count must have concluded that there could be no one more suited to find agreement between the two parties than the man who had served both sides with such distinction throughout the course of the long struggle. Given the circumstances, it was probably upon the admiral's advice that Charles had decided to seek a peace in the first place.

Charles of Valois and Frederick III of Sicily formally signed what became known as the Treaty of Caltabellotta on 31 August 1302. It brought to a close, at long last, the War of the Sicilian Vespers, because, for the first time, its terms addressed the interests of all the concerned parties. It was not the absolute victory that Pope Boniface had coveted, but even he was persuaded to grudgingly ratify it – albeit the following year on 21 May 1303. In return for a tribute of 3,000 ounces of gold to the Holy See, Frederick was to retain uncontested sovereignty over Sicily as 'King of *Trinacria*' (the ancient Greek name for the triangular-shaped island, referring to its 'three capes') until his death, at which time it was to revert to the Angevin successors of Charles II, who would continue to rule the *Regno* on the mainland while holding the title, 'King of Sicily'.[36] Frederick's heirs were then to be compensated with possession of Cyprus, Sardinia or 100,000 ounces of gold. This arrangement was to be sealed by the marriage of Eleanora, the youngest daughter of Charles II, to Frederick. All Angevin troops were to be withdrawn immediately from Sicily, and Frederick was to recall all his forces from the Italian peninsula. Prisoners were exchanged, of course, including Philip of Taranto who had been held captive since Falconaria. But not all was forgiven. Feudatories who had rebelled against one sovereign lord or the other during the course of the war were considered to have forfeited the fiefs they had held under that lord – with two notable exceptions, both

[35] *Anonymi Chronicon Siculum*, ch. LXX, p. 180; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk VI, ch. X, cols 1041–2. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 461–3.

[36] Rainaldi, *Annales ecclesiastici*, 23, anno 1302, § 5–8, pp. 299–300 and anno 1303, § 24–6, pp. 320–2; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk VI, ch. XIII, cols 1047–8. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, pp. 463, 472–3.

of whom happen to be the primary negotiators of the pact: Vinciguerra Palizzi, who was permitted to retain his possessions in Calabria, and Roger of Lauria, who was allowed to keep Aci Castello on Sicily.[37]

So ended a conflict that had cost nearly all involved dearly. While Robert of Calabria was at the 43-day siege of Sciacca, his beloved young wife Yolanda, who was also King Frederick's sister, expired in Termini. Their revered mother, Queen Constance, breathed her last breath in Barcelona around the same time.[38] Spawned by Aragonese and Angevin adventurism mixed with secular papal machinations, the war had ravaged for a generation lands from the Iberian peninsula to the Eastern Empire and the shores of North Africa. It had outlasted four popes and four kings. While the people of Sicily had won some measure of autonomy, they had paid an exorbitant price. Their island would remain racked by famine and ruin for decades. None were left unaffected by its toll, and almost all were diminished to some extent – save one: Roger of Lauria. He had won valuable holdings in Valencia and Catalonia from the Crown of Aragon, while the Holy See had bestowed upon him the islands of Jerba and Kerkenna as papal fiefs.[39] The final concession granted to him may have been the most satisfying, for it represented the high regard in which he was still held by both sides in the struggle and symbolized a certain amount of absolution from his former Sicilian confederates. Before returning to Aragon, Roger of Lauria knelt once again before King Frederick as a loyal vassal in the cathedral of Messina so that he could pay homage for Aci Castello (Fig. 18).[40] It was a suitable finish to a career that had made Roger the most acclaimed admiral of his age. Indeed, Manuel José Quintana went even further: 'No naval or military warrior, either before or since, has surpassed our hero in warlike acquirements, in glory, or in fortune.'[41]

[37] *Anonymi Chronicon Siculum*, ch. LXX, pp. 180–1; Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CXCVIII, pp. 478–9; Ptolemy da Lucca, *Die Annalen*, p. 240; Rainaldi, *Annales ecclesiastici*, 23, anno 1302, § 3–7, pp. 298–300 and anno 1303, § 24–7, pp. 320–3; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk VI, ch. X, cols 1042–3; Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, II, bk VIII, ch. L, p. 55; Jerónimo Zurita, *Anales de la Corona de Aragón*, ed. Angel Cannelas López (8 vols, Institución 'Fernando el Católico', Zaragoza, 1967–77), bk V, chs LVI and LX. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 463; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 274–5; J. Lee Shneidman, *The Rise of the Aragonese–Catalan Empire, 1200–1350* (2 vols, New York, 1970), II, p. 347.

[38] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk VI, ch. IX, col. 1040; Zurita, *Anales de la Corona de Aragón*, bk V, ch. LV. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 462.

[39] Charles D. Stanton, *Medieval Maritime Warfare* (Barnsley, 2015), p. 154.

[40] Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk VI, ch. XIII, col. 1044. See also Amari, *Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*, II, p. 468.

[41] Quintana, *Lives of Celebrated Spaniards*, p. 143.

EPILOGUE

The War of the Sicilian Vespers subtly shifted westward the fulcrum of power in the medieval Mediterranean, and the Catalan fleet under Roger of Lauria served as a strong catalyst for that realignment. The moribund Eastern Empire was gradually receding under Ottoman pressure, and the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem existed in exile only, after the fall of Acre to the Mamluks in 1291. As a result, such traditional maritime powers as Venice and Genoa lost some of their reach and dominance. Catalonian commerce, attended by its newfound naval capability, began to fill the void. By seizing Sicily and the adjacent islands in the course of the war, the Catalans of the Crown of Aragon were able to establish control of the central Mediterranean in much the same way the Normans had under King Roger II.[1] 'If, as was stated, the purpose of the Sicilian expedition were to establish a base for further economic penetration, the project succeeded,' concludes J. Lee Shneidman, who adds, 'Not only were Sicily and Malta brought under Catalan hegemony but the Tunisian islands of Djerba and Kerkenna near Gabes and Sfax were occupied, thus insuring Catalan domination of the narrowest part of the sea.'[2] This, of course, facilitated Catalan expansion eastward into Muslim as well as Christian-controlled lands. Within a few years after the war ended, Catalan merchants were nurturing mercantile networks from Tlemcen to Tripoli in North Africa, while their agents traded in Famagusta on Cyprus, Alexandria in Egypt and in the Syrian towns of Aleppo, Alexandretta and Damascus – not to mention doing an extensive business throughout what remained of the Byzantine Empire.[3]

[1] J. N. Hillgarth, 'The Problem of a Catalan Mediterranean Empire 1229–1327', *The English Historical Review*, Supplement 8 (1975), p. 38; Charles D. Stanton, *Norman Naval Operations in the Mediterranean* (Woodbridge, 2011), pp. 114–27.

[2] J. Lee Shneidman, *The Rise of the Aragonese–Catalan Empire, 1200–1350* (2 vols, New York, 1970), II, p. 335.

[3] David Abulafia, 'Catalan Merchants and the Western Mediterranean, 1236–1300: Studies in the Notarial Acts of Barcelona and Sicily,' *Viator*, XVI (1985), pp. 209–42; Shneidman, *Aragonese–Catalan Empire*, II, pp. 335–6, 348.

All of this, of necessity, entailed the maintenance of an imposing naval capability – one that Roger of Lauria had meticulously developed.

The most spectacular miltary penetration of the East by the Catalans in the aftermath of the Sicilian Vespers was the mercenary enterprise called the Grand Catalan Company (Map 1). Saddled with hosting what was essentially an army of bribed brigands, Frederick was desperate to rid his kingdom of the *almugavars* and other such adventurers-for-profit following the Peace of Caltabellotta. So he sanctioned and materially supported Roger de Flor's scheme to offer his services and those of his fellow soldiers of fortune to the Byzantine Emperor, Andronikos II Palaiologos, who was fending off the incessant assaults of the Ottoman Turks at the time.[4] Not only did the king give his blessing to the enterprise, he supplied Flor with ten galleys and two *llenys* from the arsenal of Palermo.[5] After Andronikos agreed to the extortionate annual retainer of 300 *hyperpyra* (4.45-gram Byzantine coins of 12 carat gold) per horseman and 150 per infantryman,[6] Roger de Flor arrived in Constantinople in the autumn of 1303 with a fleet of eighteen galleys plus an equal number *llenys* and *taride*, carrying around 6,500 troops – 4,000 of whom were *almugavars*.[7] Having been accorded the dignity of *Megas Doux* ('Grand Duke') and the hand of the emperor's niece (Maria Asen),[8] Roger embarked on a campaign into Asia Minor with his Catalan Company that notched victory after victory against the Ottomans. It was so successful that in April 1305 Andronikos awarded Roger the august title of 'Caesar'.[9] The relationship unravelled, however, shortly thereafter that same month. Fearing the threat that the Catalan Company posed to its employers, Michael IX Palaiologos (the junior emperor and eldest son of Andronikos) had Roger de Flor assassinated while the latter was his guest at Adrianople. Most of his Catalan *compadres* were massacred

[4] Ramon Muntaner, *Chronicle*, trans. Lady Goodenough (2 vols, London, 1920), II, ch. CXCIX, pp. 480–1; Niccolò Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, ed. Ludovico Muratori (Rerum Italicarum Scriptores, X, Milan, 1727), bk VI, ch. XXI, col. 1050. See also Michele Amari, *La Guerra del Vespro Siciliano* (9th edn, 3 vols, Milan, 1886), II, pp. 470–2; Shneidman, *Aragonese–Catalan Empire*, II, p. 347.

[5] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CC, p. 484.

[6] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CXCIX, p. 483. See also Warren Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society* (Stanford, 1997), p. 750.

[7] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CCI, pp. 485–6. See also Hillgarth, 'Problem of a Catalan Mediterranean Empire', p. 43.

[8] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CXCIX, p. 483; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk VI, ch. XXI, col. 1050.

[9] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, chs CCIII–CCXII, pp. 489–508. See also David Abulafia, *The Western Mediterranean Kingdoms, 1200–1500* (London, 1997), p. 121; Hillgarth, 'Problem of a Catalan Mediterranean Empire', p. 43; Treadgold, *History of the Byzantine State*, p. 751.

at the same time, but around 1,500 survived.[10] These men formed the core of a rejuvenated Grand Catalan Company headquartered at Gallipoli under new leaders (one of whom was Ramon Muntaner). It soon wreaked its vengeance on Michael, defeating his army on three consecutive occasions and taking ownership of all Byzantine territory on the European side of the Bosporus.[11] Devastating all before it, the Company eventually marched into Greece, where it butchered the French duke of Athens, Walter V of Brienne, at the Battle of Kephissos on 15 March 1311 and subsequently established the Catalan Duchy of Athens and Thebes. This polity endured under the titular auspices of the Aragonese king of Sicily until 1388.[12]

Perhaps more significantly, the emergence of Aragon as a power player in Mediterranean geopolitics had dire consequences for the papacy, which saw its temporal authority dramatically diminished by the Vespers conflict. Since the death of the 'Antichrist' (the Emperor Frederick II), no fewer than thirteen popes had been involved in a concerted campaign lasting over half a century to shape Mediterranean affairs of state in a manner favourable to the papacy by establishing suzerainty over the Kingdom of Sicily. The endeavour entailed numerous excommunications and expenditures of church funds, not to mention copious volumes of blood spilt by countless participants from all over Western Europe in papally endorsed 'crusades' against Christian coreligionists. Yet, thanks in the main to Catalan naval prowess under Roger of Lauria, it was all for naught. The papacy was, instead, left debilitated. Pope Boniface himself met an ignominious end on 11 October 1303 – barely a year after Caltabellotta. He died in disillusionment following his abduction from the papal palace at Anagni and subsequent torture at the hands of Guillaume de Nogaret, Chancellor to Philip IV of France – the pontiff's erstwhile ally in the War of the Sicilian Vespers. It was the tragic denouement to a rather banal dispute over royal rights to tax the French clergy.[13] The Holy See would arguably never again play as influential a role in the statecraft of the region as it had prior to the Vespers.

[10] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CCXV, pp. 512–15. See also Abulafia, *Western Mediterranean Kingdoms*, p. 121; Treadgold, *History of the Byzantine State*, p. 751.

[11] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, chs CCXIX–CCXXXI, pp. 519–52; Speciale, *Rerum Sicularum*, bk VI, ch. XXII, cols 1051–2. See also Hillgarth, 'Problem of a Catalan Mediterranean Empire', p. 43; Treadgold, *History of the Byzantine State*, p. 751.

[12] Muntaner, *Chronicle*, II, ch. CCXL, pp. 575–8. See also Abulafia, *Western Mediterranean Kingdoms*, p. 122; Hillgarth, 'Problem of a Catalan Mediterranean Empire', p. 44; Treadgold, *History of the Byzantine State*, pp. 751–3.

[13] Giovanni Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, ed. Francesco Dragomanni (4 vols, Florence, 1845), II, bk VIII, chs LXII–LXIII, pp. 76–81.

20 Buried beneath a simple stone slab, the great Admiral of Aragon resides forever beside the sepulchre of his beloved royal benefactor, Peter III of Aragon, in the Reial Monestir de Santa Maria de Santes Creus (Royal Monastery of Saint Mary of the Holy Cross) in Aiguamúrcia, Catalonia.

The French and their Angevin clients hardly fared better. The French foray into the Mediterranean in the wake of the victories by Charles of Anjou at Benevento and Tagliacozzo had clearly been blunted by the Revolt of the Vespers and the subsequent entrance of the Aragonese into the fray – particularly the Catalan fleet of Roger of Lauria. The French court had sponsored two 'crusades' in support of the Angevin recovery of Sicily: that of Philip III into Catalonia in 1285 and that of Charles of Valois on Sicily itself in 1302. Both ended in embarrassing and costly failures. No wonder Jean Dunbabin speculates that, from the perspective of the French clergy and the French laity, 'the lengthy war introduced by the Sicilian Vespers and ending with the loss of Sicily by the Treaty of Caltabellotta created cynicism about crusades in general or at least cynicism about papally inspired crusades directed to parts of the world other than Outremer'.[14] Moreover, both the House of Anjou and the court of France had entertained aspirations of conquering Constantinople, but both were stymied by the Sicilian rebellion. The crusade that Charles of Valois proposed to Pope Clement V against Byzantium in the aftermath of Caltabellotta never materialized.[15] And events in northern Europe ensured that there would be no further efforts in the near term to rectify these Mediterranean misadventures. The Treaty of Paris on 20 May 1303 finally ended the long conflict with Edward I of England that had begun in 1294, but it also set the stage for the Hundred Years' War (1337–1453). Worse still, the humiliating defeat that the French nobility suffered at the Battle of the Golden Spurs near Kortrijk on 11 July 1302, in which former regent of the *Regno* Robert II of Artois was killed, signalled a bloody upheaval in Flanders that would last for years.[16] For the French court, the Sicilian affair was a fiasco best forgotten, but, as Steven Runciman pointed out with the following anecdote, that would not be entirely possible:

> More than three centuries later King Henry IV of France [1553–1610] boasted to the Spanish ambassador the harm that he could do to the Spanish lands in Italy were the King of Spain to try his patience too far. 'I will breakfast at Milan,' he said, 'and I will dine in Rome.' 'Then,' replied the ambassador, 'Your Majesty will doubtless be in Sicily in time for Vespers.'[17]

[14] Jean Dunbabin, *The French in the Kingdom of Sicily, 1266–1305* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 199.
[15] Treadgold, *History of the Byzantine State*, pp. 752–3.
[16] Dunbabin, *French in the Kingdom of Sicily*, pp. 279–80.
[17] Steven Runciman, *The Sicilian Vespers* (Cambridge, 1958), p. 287.

The Angevin court of Naples, however, remained obsessed with its lost possession. Charles II was content to abide by the terms of Caltabellotta, preferring to pursue the throne of Hungary for Charles Robert (Carobert – the offspring of his dead eldest son Charles Martel and Clementia of Habsburg), but Robert of Calabria (his third son who succeeded him upon his death on 5 May 1309) had never relinquished the notion of reclaiming Sicily for the *Regno*. Consequently, in 1314 Robert attempted yet another invasion of Sicily. King Frederick III not only easily turned the try aside, he used it as rationale to repudiate the condition of Caltabellotta that ordained Sicily's reversion to Angevin control upon his death. Refusing to desist, Robert launched six additional expeditions against the island, achieving exactly the same result as all the previous efforts. When Frederick finally passed away in Paternò on 25 June 1337 at the age of 64, his oldest son assumed the throne of Sicily as King Peter II. Neither an Angevin nor a French sovereign ever ruled over the island again.[18]

The failure of the papally sanctioned and French-supported endeavour to restore Angevin suzerainty over Sicily was due, in large measure, to the maritime genius of Roger of Lauria. At the behest of the House of Aragon, he wielded the Catalan fleet to thwart French and Angevin ambitions at every turn; and, in the process, laid waste to the designs of the Holy See to establish a temporal dominance over the region. Throughout the course of the conflict, Lauria lost not a single engagement at sea. This denied his French and Angevin adversaries mastery of the Mediterranean shores they needed to achieve their stated aims. He did so, in part, by maximizing the advantages offered by his Catalan galleys and their crews: sturdier ship construction, *almugavar* marines, Catalan crossbowmen and superlative crew discipline. Lauria's tactical talents, however, consistently proved to be his lethal edge. He fashioned his fleets into highly disciplined and well-integrated fighting units, which he manoeuvred in accordance with a clearly enunciated strategy. This enabled him to remain victorious even when he fought briefly for the Angevin cause and, therefore, lacked the obvious benefits of agile *almugavars*, deadly accurate *balistarii catalani* and highly motivated Sicilian oarsmen.[19] It is why John Pryor's assessment is unstinting:

[18] Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, pp. 275–9.

[19] John Pryor, 'The Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', *Journal of Medieval History*, IX (1983), pp. 179–216, esp. 212–13.

> Without a doubt the most successful, the most feared, and most influential warrior of his generation, Roger of Lauria deserves to be ranked amongst the most outstanding war leaders of the Middle Ages.[20]

And, yes, while he did switch sides towards the end of the war in opposition to his erstwhile Sicilian comrades-in-arms, he did so at the behest of the king of Aragon, for whom his fealty was unwavering. Roger of Lauria, in fact, remained intensely loyal to the Crown of Aragon to the end. After the war, he retired to his lands at Cocentaina in the Kingdom of Valencia, where he died only a few years later. He was subsequently interred in accordance with his last testament in the *Reial Monestir de Santa Maria de Santes Creus* (Royal Monastery of Saint Mary of the Holy Cross), a Cistercian abbey in the city of Aiguamúrcia in Catalonia (Fig. 20), beside the sepulchre of his liege lord, King Peter III of Aragon, in a coffin of carved crystal beneath a stone slab with the following unassuming epitaph:[21]

> Here lyeth the noble Roger de Lauria, admiral of the kingdoms of Aragon and Sicily for the Lord King of Aragon; and he passed from this life in the year of the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, one thousand three hundred and four, the sixteenth day before the kalends of February [17 January 1305].[22]

[20] Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 211.
[21] Pryor, 'Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria', p. 209; Manuel José Quintana, *Lives of Celebrated Spaniards*, trans. T. R. Preston (London, 1833), p. 146.
[22] Quintana, *Lives of Celebrated Spaniards*, p. 147.

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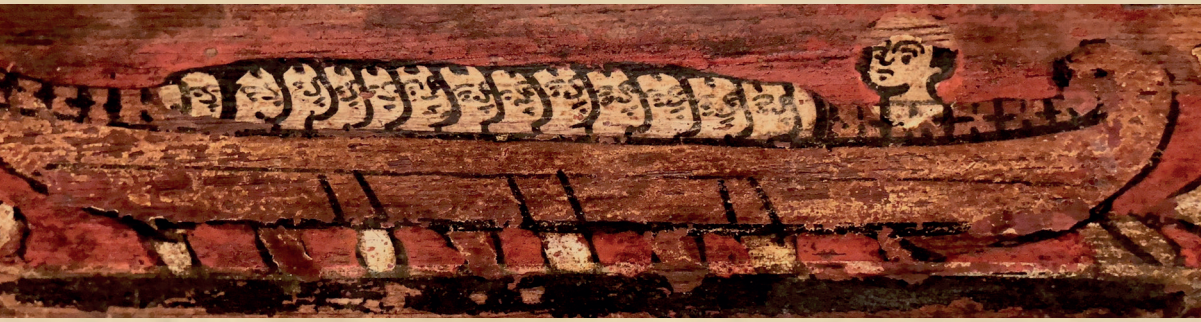

Just before Vespers on 30 March 1282 at the Church of the Holy Spirit on the outskirts of Palermo, a drunken soldier of the occupying French forces of Charles of Anjou accosted a young Sicilian noblewoman. It sparked a bloody conflagration, the so-called War of the Sicilian Vespers, that would ultimately involve every part of the Mediterranean. The struggle for the coveted throne of Sicily eventually enmeshed all the great powers of medieval Europe – the pope, the Byzantine Emperor and the kings of France, England and Aragon. Because the core of the Kingdom of Sicily was a wealthy, strategic island dominating the centre of the Mediterranean, the battles were fought mostly at sea. And in war at sea, a single figure proved pre-eminent: Roger of Lauria – Aragon's 'Admiral of Admirals'. In the course of some twenty years of naval combat, he orchestrated decisive victories in six pitched battles and numerous limited actions, never once suffering a defeat: a feat never equalled – not even by the legendary Lord Horatio Nelson.

Drawing from multiple Sicilian and Catalan sources as well as Angevin and Aragonese registers, this chronological narrative details the tactics and strategy Lauria employed to become the most successful galley fleet commander of the Middle Ages, while highlighting a crucial conflict at a pivotal point in European history, long overshadowed by the Hundred Years War.

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Cover Illustration: Top and bottom images of the front cover are coffered ceiling panel paintings (14th Century) in tempura on wood, portraying knights and a large Catalan war galley (*galea*) from the Santuario de la Virgen de la Fuente de Peñarroya de Tastavins in Teruel, Aragon. The centre image of the front cover depicts a scout galley, possibly a *vaccetta* or *sagetia*, from a coffered ceiling of an aristocratic palace in Barcelona, perhaps the Palau Marquès de Lió. The top image of the back cover represents a light galley called a *lleny*, probably from the Palau Berenguer d'Aguilar of Barcelona. The large sailing vessel (known simply as a *navis*) pictured at the bottom is from the same painted beam (*biga*) as the *galea* on the front cover. All these paintings are currently displayed in the Museu Nacional d'Arte de Catalunya in Barcelona. (Credit: Kristy Stanton/Museu Nacional d'Arte de Catalunya, Barcelona)

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