

## **Introduction**

**N**owadays the term admiral means only the leader of a fleet. In modern times, this title was put into the spotlight with admiral Nelson, victor of Trafalgar. At the beginning, the admiral's sphere was not restricted to this. It is only in the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, that the meaning narrowed down to the navy. The origins of the admiralty are very far from the sea.

As we will see, this office, which survived centuries, is rooted in the Muslim world. We can pinpoint the birth of the admiralty in the Arabic world, at a time when it encompassed the West. It was under Norman rule that the admiralty was shaped, and the origin of the meaning admiral can be put down to the time of the Norman kingdom of Sicily.

In this study we will research the Norman admiralty from different angles, and we will try to trace the changes and the evolution of this office. Studying the Norman admiralty will give us a new perspective on the Sicilian kingdom. Indeed, looking at Norman Sicily from the angle of the admirals may help us to find out aspects of the Norman rule of Sicily which have been underestimated. The first goal of this research is to give renown to an office which had a decisive role in the history of the Normans in the South, and to discover the value added by the office of admiral, especially if we consider that an equivalent office was totally unknown in other kingdoms of that time. Thus, it was a Sicilian exclusive and we do not know what his roles were exactly so far; thus, we must investigate his actions to understand what having an admiral at court meant in comparison to other kingdoms.

### **Chronological terms and subject of the research**

When we talk about the Norman kingdom, defining the exact chronological boundaries is difficult; officially, the Norman kingdom was founded in 1130 with the coronation of Roger II, but we cannot understand Roger's rule without the political experiences of his parents, Roger I and Adelasia. Therefore, we put the official start of the Norman kingdom of South Italy in 1130 but we cannot forget that all the institutional royal procedures have their roots in the years before that, in the years when the political apparatus was assembled by the Great Count and his wife. For this reason, the starting date of this research has been set to the last years of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, during the passage from the Arabian dominion to the Norman conquest.

The Arabs as previous lords of Sicily were fundamental for the shaping of the Norman institutions<sup>1</sup>. In this institutional substratum we can find several offices of great importance during the Norman age of Sicily: among these there is the admiralty.

My research on the Norman admiralty focuses on the development of this office during the years of Norman rule. The first aim is to define the exact functions of this office inside the political mechanism at the beginning of the Norman rule and the changes of its authority in the passage of the years.

Since the *amiratus* was special to Sicily, the development of this office, which was inherited from Arabic times, may show us typical achievements of the Norman people in Southern Italy. Admirals' lives and politics are fascinating to study because they show us crucial developments for the balance of power at court. They help us to understand how the admirals gathered such an amount of authority. In the last years of king Roger and after his death (1154) the admiral be-

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<sup>1</sup> About the importance of the Arabic tradition in the Norman kingdom, see U. Rizzitano, *La cultura araba*, A. Metcalfe, *The muslims of Sicily*.

came a sort of Prime Minister or *vizir*<sup>2</sup>, and he acquired an influence that at times even surpassed the authority of the regent himself<sup>3</sup>. Thus, it is interesting to look at the expedients the admirals used. How did the king come to terms with their exceptional influence? Was there an official method or process how king and admiral dealt with each other, or was the balance of power only acquired unofficially and by way of silent agreement? For this, we must look into the careers of every *amiratus* to discover how they achieved the office and how they exercised their power, what portion of authority they had above all in respect to the king and to the other officers of the court. Until now, we think about the Norman court as a group of officers around the king. Actually, balance of power seems to be different for every reign and indirectly, studying the admiralties, we may discover hidden dynamics, differences among the officers, in other words the balances of court through the years.

Furthermore, it is very interesting to see how the court reacted to the growing powers of the admirals. Therefore, another focus of my research is the study of the relationships between the admirals and other officers and the conflicts that ensued with other members of the *curia*<sup>4</sup>. In this way, we can discover inner dynamics of the court, power shifts which were not focussed on the king but on other members of the court and above all on the admiral. A new picture of the Norman court must concentrate on this network, because the king was not the sole wielder of power. How can we interpret the relations between the officers? How did the admiral gain power, considering that the Sicilian kings and other officers already held much power?

To solve these riddles, the first subjects of study are the origins and the lives of the *amirati*. Their careers were complicated, yet interesting and we may discover dynamics in the development of the office, that were hitherto unknown. Many of the admirals were *magistri* or *archontes*, ambassadors (such as Henry Aristippus who was sent to Constantinople) and chiefs of the fleet. Knowing the admiral's range of influence sheds new light on the political mechanism in the Norman court where power was sought after by every member.

Thus, the principal field of study of this research is the admiralty, a title borne by several men who each fulfilled the office in different ways; it is interesting to study it from many points of view including the political, administrative and cultural side.

As a closing date for my research I set the year when we can find the last admiral who was connected in some way to the last Norman ruler: 1194, the year when Sicily was conquered by the Holy Roman empire.

We will start from the year 1086 onwards, the year of the first mention of the title admiral and we will proceed until the year 1194, when emperor Henry VI conquered the Norman kingdom. However, we cannot take these chronological boundaries as strictly binding, because, sometimes, we shall go beyond them in order to shed light on the office of the admiralty.

The research will follow the chronological order so that we can study the evolution of the office during the years of Norman rule and it will be divided in three parts: the first will focus on the period from 1086 to the death of Philip of Mahedia in 1154, the second concentrates on Maio's political experience and on Henry's admiralty ad interim (1160-1162), the last one will start with the temporary disappearance of the title and its recovery and it will end with the fall of the Norman kingdom. All of these constitute stages in the development of the Norman admiralty. These are the three most important phases, determined by important events which brought significant institutional changes.

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<sup>2</sup> F. Chalandon, *Storia della dominazione normanna*, p. 579.

<sup>3</sup> D. Matthew, *I normanni in Italia*, p. 261.

<sup>4</sup> C. A. Garufi, *Censimento*, pp. 1-100.

## **Modus operandi**

The first step of my research is the examination of the diplomas where we can find a trace of the Sicilian admiral. From the analysis of these documents the political areas of the admiral's responsibilities can be defined. For every charter we will see all the available editions and we will try to give an accurate bibliography so that this research can be useful for further studies. We will use the studies of the most important scholars to have a reliable edition of the charter.

The diplomas provide answers to the following questions: when was the admiral involved and at what occasions? Where did he work? Did he operate on the mainland as well or was he active only in Sicily? We can examine the institutional duties of the admiral from the evidence in this way.

Regarding the evidence for his multiple tasks in the charters, we can discover his factual functions at the Norman court, and we may comprehend the dynamics among the different officers in the environment of the king, in other words, the players in the game of power.

From every charter, document and diploma, we can derive an understanding of the institutional significance of the admiralty. The research on the admiral's relation with the *camerarii*, justiciars and bailiffs help to throw new light on the mechanisms of the royal court. The admiral was, in fact, the very first office created by Robert and Roger I, the first office given out for lifetime as it seems to be evident from most of the careers of these officers. In contrast, *camerarii* and bailiffs served for a term, usually not more than a couple of years, which they could not expand<sup>5</sup>.

Apart from the diplomas, the chronicles and the accounts of the time clarify actions, facts and dynamics, which the documents, because of their institutional nature, do not mention. For example, what military campaign did the admirals lead? How were they seen by the media of that time? Were they loved or not? Was their power seen as a threat by the authors?

Many admirals were also men of culture and writers. Their own works are valuable witnesses of their lives and can show how they fit into expectations of society. They were not only politicians, but they were well educated men of higher social status. What was their education? Reading these works, we find the sources which inspired them, who their teachers were and where they studied.

Another cultural aspect, which has to be investigated, is the construction of monuments ordered by the admirals themselves. Considering the fact, that buildings are a symbol of power, they help us to understand the balance of power at court. Bearing in mind that the principal employer within the Norman kingdom was the king, we may question how it was possible that an admiral had a church in the centre of Palermo? Are these buildings meant to express the admiral's power as person and as authority? A cultural work can be considered as an expression of power and status, and it can be used to be recognized<sup>6</sup>.

All the monuments have been studied by important scholars of art history and I aim to use their results to put them in a different context, the political world. Indeed, a monument is a statement of wealth and it can transport a message. With the help of the art studies we can highlight the political message hidden in the monuments. In the same way, a literary work can hide important hints that can clarify political dynamics which were transformed in literal fiction<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> E. Jamison, *The Norman administration*, p. 383.

<sup>6</sup> About the issue of the royal recognition see L. Strauss, A. Kojeve, *Sulla tirannide*, pp. 162–163, 173.

<sup>7</sup> See A. Gurevič, *Le categorie della cultura medievale*.

## Charters

The first witnesses to reconstruct the Norman admiralty are the charters. They are of different kind: from donations and confirmations to buying and selling acts they cover a big range of situations where the admirals are present and active. Most of them are in archives of Sicilian towns such as Palermo (Archivio di stato), Catania (Archivio diocesano) and Patti and a few can be found in Barletta, Siviglia (Archivio Medinaceli). For the aim of this research the collections of the documents of the Norman period of Sicily have been very useful. They have been made by important scholars like Carlo Alberto Garufi, Francesco Trinchera, Giuseppe Spata, Horst Enzensberger, Léon Robert Ménager, Paolo Collura, Rocco Pirro, Rosario Gregorio and Salvatore Cusa<sup>8</sup>. All of them are valuable sources of information because, even though the editions are very old, they include charters which have hitherto been lost or destroyed in war. All the documents used for this research are edited. Many scholars discussed these charters but above all we must recall Jeremy Johns, Hiroshi Takayama, Léon Robert Ménager and Evelyn Jamison who gave fundamental assertions about the authenticity of the documents. The documents are fundamental in order to get a wider knowledge of the admirals at the Norman court because the diplomas are the best witnesses of their activities. In some charters the admirals are only witnesses while in other ones they play an important role, we have to investigate the ways admirals' power changed in relation to the situation and the role.

Most of documents are issued by the king, in some cases it was the admiral himself who issued the charters and a small part private acts where the admirals appear as private citizens. From all of these, we will achieve the institutional role of the admirals and the powers they wielded and we will discuss the importance of the admirals in relation to the most important offices of the kingdom. A big part of the documents regards businesses in Sicily but there are some others that show that the admirals' sphere of power might extend to the mainland. Looking at the geographical range of power, we can extrapolate from the charters, might help us to understand the extension of their authority and the changes of the political perception of the admirals during the years.

For each charter all the details important to our subject will be indicated in the appendix. We will see if they are genuine or not, where they are now, which scholars studied them but above all we will try to underline the position of the admiralty in relation to the other officers. The order of the signatures can say something important about the balance of power.

Every single charter will be taken in consideration even though it might be forged; indeed, based on external or internal factors some of the charters will be found to be of dubious reliability and as a consequence we will have to be careful in their use. In this last case, it will be mentioned and discussed but forgeries will in general not be considered for possible historical implications. The decision on the authenticity of the charters will be based on the opinion of the most important scholars in diplomatic.

## Historiography

The most important sources are Latin and Arabic and most of them are chronicles or accounts. The oldest Latin source is *De Rebus gestis Rogerii et Roberti Guiscardi* where Geoffrey Malaterra (11<sup>th</sup> century) describes the arrival of Roger in Sicily<sup>9</sup>. It is a very important chronicle which covers the first years of the Norman dominion in the island even though, for our purpose, it is not

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<sup>8</sup> *I documenti inediti. Syllabus. Diplomi greci and Le Pergamene greche. Les actes latins de S. Maria di Messina and Recueil des Actes*. P. Collura, *Appendice al regesto*, pp. 545–625. R. Pirro, *Sicilia Sacra*. R. Gregorio, *Considerazioni*.

<sup>9</sup> Geoffrey Malaterra, *De Rebus gestis*.

fundamental considering that it talks about events before the first appearance of the admiral. It might be useful to understand the political dynamics of the court before the birth of the admiralty or in the years the admiral was not in the spotlight yet. Malaterra was active at the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century and he might come from the monastery St. Evroul even though we cannot be certain about this<sup>10</sup>.

The first mention of an admiral in a historiographical source is in the *Gesta Roberti Wiscardi* written by William of Apulia<sup>11</sup>, who was coeval to the arrival of the Normans and consequently might be considered trustworthy even though we cannot forget that he had an encomiastic aim. We do not know anything about his identity, we only know that he finished his chronicle which was written in hexameters in about 1111<sup>12</sup>.

Following the chronological order, another important source is Alexander of Telesse (ca 1136), abbot of S. S. Salvatore in Telesse (where he spent all his life) who was very close to Mathilde de Hauteville who commissioned him to write his *Ystoria Rogerii regis Sicilie Calabrie atque Apulie*<sup>13</sup>. This work covers the years from 1128 to 1136 and it is handed down only in one manuscript<sup>14</sup>. This biography is encomiastic, but it reveals important details about the political dynamics at court<sup>15</sup>.

Among the other Latin sources, we must mention Falco of Benevento (ca 1070-1144), author of the *Chronicon Beneventanum*<sup>16</sup> and important judge as 16 documents with his name show. He was active from 1133 and maybe he was in the forefront of politics; unfortunately, his *chronicon* talks about happenings until 1140 and ends in the middle of the narrative<sup>17</sup>.

For William I, the most important historical writer is Hugo Falcandus whose *Liber de regno Sicilie* is decisive to understand the developments of the kingdom after Roger's death<sup>18</sup>. His identity is a mystery and for sure he is not impartial but he had to be very close to the main officers of the time considering the accuracy of his account. His work has been doubted for a long time but it is essential for the point of view he takes<sup>19</sup>. Almost coeval to Falcandus is Romuald of Salerno (ca 1115–ca 1185) who was not only a chronicler but also a politician and close to William I. He was appointed to the seal of the church of Salerno in 1153 and involved in the treaty of Benevento (1156). His *Chronicon* starts with the creation of the world and ends at 1178. Recently the first part has been questioned on grounds of a change of style and of the most quotes from important other authors such as Orosius and Paul the deacon, even though there is no certain evidence<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> See G. Resta, *Per il testo di Malaterra*, pp. 399–456. O. Capitani, *Motivazioni*, pp. 59–91.

<sup>11</sup> William of Apulia, *La geste de Robert Guiscard*.

<sup>12</sup> See F. Panarelli, *Guglielmo Appulo*, in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, 60, 2003, pp. 794–797.

<sup>13</sup> Alexander of Telesse, *Storia di Ruggero II*.

<sup>14</sup> Barcellona, Biblioteca Central, cod. 996.

<sup>15</sup> H. Enzensberger, *Alexander von Telesse*, in *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, I, pp. 380–381.

<sup>16</sup> Falco of Benevento, *Chronicon Beneventanum*.

<sup>17</sup> E. Gervasio, *Falcone Beneventano*, pp. 2–129. See also G. A. Loud, *The genesis*, pp. 177–198.

<sup>18</sup> Hugo Falcandus, *Il libro del regno di Sicilia*.

<sup>19</sup> The identification of Hugo Falcandus with Eugenius II (E. Jamison, *Admiral Eugenius*, pp. 143–144, 233–251) does not convince for several reasons. The hate against Maio and the portrait of William I shown by the author does not fit with Eugenius's attitudes who respected the royal authority. Many scholars proposed many hypotheses. For a recent contribute to this issue see E. D'Angelo, *Intelletuali tra Normandia e Sicilia*, p. 325. See also G. Loud, *Le problème du Pseudo-Hugo*, pp. 39–55.

<sup>20</sup> Romuald of Salerno, *Annales*, 387–461. See M. Zabbia, *Un cronista medievale*, pp. 220–250. See also A. Franke, *Zur Identität des Hugo Falcandus*, pp. 1-13 and R. Köhn, *Noch einmal zur Identität des "Hugo Falcandus"*, pp. 499–541.

Peter of Eboli (1194-1221) is author of the *Liber ad honorem Augusti*<sup>21</sup>. It is important for this research because Peter talks about events at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century as a contemporary and thus Peter is usually very well informed. Above all in the first two books which describe the war for the succession to the Sicilian throne. Peter was in the service to the emperor Henry VI and, for this reason, he might be tendentious however the manuscript with his miniatures<sup>22</sup> give us an image of the last years of the Norman kingdom and a vivid picture of the conjures of the last decades of the 12<sup>th</sup> century<sup>23</sup>. Another witness is William of Tyre (ca 1130-1185) who wrote a chronicle (*Historia rerum in partibus transmarinis gestarum*)<sup>24</sup> which was commissioned by Amalric I in 1160. He talks about important deeds in relation to the crusades but he favours the Latin East. There are several continuations which must be treated with caution because they were written later<sup>25</sup>.

In regard to the Arabic chronicles (beyond *Abu Arab*, *Al Baiân*, *Ibn Abi Dinar*, *Ibn al Atîr*, *Ibn Haldûn*, *Ibn Tigâni* which are used in translation), the most important is *An Nuwayri* (1279-1333) even though he wrote in 14<sup>th</sup> century and his work is more encyclopaedic than historical<sup>26</sup>, but he is the one who talks deeply about Sicily. Certainly, the Arabic sources are important to understand the Norman institutions from an external point of view, but we must bear in mind that most of them write about African affairs and only mention Sicilian developments in passing. However, they are significant because they furnish the point of view of the enemy. The collection of Michele Amari<sup>27</sup> is still important as the best translation of the Arabic sources despite the fact that it was published at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Some of the most important Arabic chroniclers have been translated and republished even in recent years, such as Ibn al Athir (1160-1233), famous chroniclers born in Aleppo involved in important diplomatic affairs as emissary of Nur ad Din<sup>28</sup>.

## Cultural works and connections

Another aspect of this research is the study of the cultural works linked to an admiral. We will study the literary works which were dedicated to an admiral or which were composed by the admirals themselves.

For instance, an anonymous poem has been addressed to George of Antioch. This work provides a picture of the admiral it gives and helps to achieve a more complete perception of the admirals by the common folk. George's successor, Maio of Bari, was very active in the literal world as well; he, himself, wrote a commentary about the Lord's prayer (*Expositio orationis Dominice*) which was dedicated to his son. From this work we might have a more balanced vision of the culture of the admiral which is in contrast to his depiction as a monster by Falcanus. For sure, Henry Aristippus was the admiral most active in the cultural world. We might even suggest that his career was furthered exactly by his translations of important Plato dialogues (Meno and Phaedo) and because of the role he played in the scientific world with his translation of the fourth book of *Meteorologica*. Additionally, it was him who brought a copy of the *Almagest* into the West. Furthermore, every translation made by Aristippus is preceded by

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<sup>21</sup> Peter of Eboli, *Liber ad honorem Augusti*.

<sup>22</sup> The manuscript is in Berne, Burgerbibliothek, cod 120 II.

<sup>23</sup> See F. Delle Donne, *Pietro da Eboli*, pp. 511–514.

<sup>24</sup> There are seven manuscripts of the chronicle.

<sup>25</sup> P. Edbury, *The French translation of William of Tyre*, pp. 69–105.

<sup>26</sup> Nuwayri, *Nihât 'al 'arib*, pp. 110–160.

<sup>27</sup> M. Amari, *Biblioteca arabo sicula*.

<sup>28</sup> Ibn Al Athir, *The chronicle of Ibn Al Athir*.

a prologue where we can find important news on the cultural world in general. Eugenius II moved in the same direction. He was a cultural man and active in the translation of important Arabic and Greek works (Ptolomey's *Optica* and *Kalila Wa-Dimna*; the prophecy of the Erythrean Sibyl). Furthermore, he was author of 24 poems which shows his deep knowledge of the past literature (from Archilocus to Simonides, from Homer to Gregory of Nazianzus); the poem written during his imprisonment is very touching and it shows advanced poetic skills.

To these we must add the monumental evidence of the power of the admirals. Eugenius I was patron of an important clerical foundation (S. Michele in Troina) as Christodulo (Patirion). It could be argued that the first two admirals supported Roger's general policy of strengthening Christianity especially in the region which had been dominated by Muslims. Later admirals also adhered to the same traditions. George of Antioch built his church in the middle of the capital and the mosaic inside reveals important implications for the political mindset of the admiral. Side by side to the church of George, St. Cathaldo was built by Maio of Bari. Also, on this occasion we will see what building a church means in the middle of Palermo as the Palatine chapel. Even the latest admirals were active in this field. Walter of Mohac was linked with the church of S. Maria in Corazzo and Margaritus with S. Nicola di Peratico.

Every cultural work contributes to deciphering the political mindset of the admirals and may symbolize particular political ideas. All of them will be analysed to obtain a more complete and detailed vision of the times the admiral in question lived in. Every cultural work will be studied not only for his cultural contribution but for the political message they might convey.

## **Etymology of the term admiral**

As far as we can see, the word *admiral* derives from the Arabic word *amīr* as it is to be found in the Koran as *ùlū l-amr*<sup>29</sup>. In the first centuries after the death of Mohamed, *amīr* (or *'āmil*)<sup>30</sup> is the chief of the army, a man of honour who was rewarded with lands and became leader of small communities. Under the rule of the Umayyads, the *amīr* acquired more military power and this figure is the direct ancestor of the Norman admiral. He organized the army and was of distinctive importance in the businesses of the lands under his control and worked on behalf of the caliph as a representative. His powers vary, but usually can be categorized as administrative and financial tasks<sup>31</sup>. Afterwards, between the 10<sup>th</sup> and the 11<sup>th</sup> century, a militarization of the political structure of the Arabian government led to the *amīr* gaining a military function in addition to his former duties. Then this office transcended the boundaries of the Arabian dominion and arrived in the West.

In Greek sources the first mention of an admiral is in the *chronographia* of Teophane<sup>32</sup> where we find an *αμυραῖοι* appointed by Mohamed, while in the Latin work of Eginard we find the *amiratus*, Abraham, who sent a delegate to the emperor Karl the great (in 801)<sup>33</sup>.

From these first testimonies we can see that the etymologic root is Arabic and *amīr* or *emir* were used without distinction to indicate person who was in command and often worked on behalf of the caliph. From the Arabic *amīr* the Latin *amiratus* derives, admiral in English and German, *ammiraglio* in Italian, *émir* in French<sup>34</sup>.

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<sup>29</sup> *Il Corano*, sura IV, 59–83. See A. J. Wensnick *Concordance et indices*.

<sup>30</sup> Al Tabarī, *Chronique*, I, 184.

<sup>31</sup> See A. A. Dūrī, *Early Islamic institutions*.

<sup>32</sup> Teophanis, *Chronographia*, p. 514.

<sup>33</sup> Eginardo, *Annales*, p. 190.

<sup>34</sup> *Vocabolario etimologico*, Albrighi e Segati, Firenze. See the digital version [www.etimo.it](http://www.etimo.it).

Despite the linguistic evidence that *amiratus* is a loan-word, the dispute about his first competences is not as easily solved. Certainly the office had financial and administrative tasks and it was inherited in that fashion by the Normans.

Before the conquest of Roger and Robert, Sicily was divided into little *regna*, called *ta'ifa*, led by a respective *emir*; Roger I may have suggested to keep some of the previous Arabs in office to avoid a disruptive break with the past. We know in fact, that many Arabian offices were preserved, and the admiralty was the most powerful of these. The Norman admiralty was an office which distinguished the dominion of the Hauteville from other dominions. Afterwards this office was inherited by the Staufen kings, but it was modified in his essence, after a century of changes.

### Status quaestionis

What is the benefit of a study about the Norman admiralty considering the existence of the great work of Ménager<sup>35</sup>? To answer this question, we must take into consideration the date of publication of this study, 1960, at a time when we did not have a thorough knowledge of the Norman institutions. Most of his assertions are based on misleading and old theories which in the following years have been refuted or modified. Many discoveries have been made afterwards and the image of the Norman admirals changed considerably with these new points of view. Furthermore, the French scholar left some blank points about the real tasks of the admirals; for example, he writes that the admiral was a "rank of palace" but this is restrictive. I will try to show a different and more fluid view of the admiralty including the dynamics between the kings and their admiral and the evidence to be gained from cultural aspects which has not been in the centre of thought until now. The work of Ménager is certainly of great value but he depicted the admiral as an unchangeable office, and he does not allow for varying tasks across the years. At any rate, Ménager is still very important because it remains the first thorough study of the admiralty, a starting point and he is to be credited for trying to give a faithful image of an office which was not examined properly before him. Furthermore, he is very fundamental for the solid and thorough use of the sources. However, he writes in conclusion: "nous arrivons donc a cette conclusion necessaire que l'emirat n'a pu être qu'une dignité palatine, ne conferant rien d'autre a son titulaire qu'un prestige particulier, issu du titre decernée par Robert Guiscard au premier gouverneur militaire de Palerme"<sup>36</sup>. In this assumption we can see a misleading interpretation of the Norman admiralty. The first to become aware of the necessity of a revision of this static view on Norman admiralty was Mario Caravale who acknowledges that a new study about this office would be useful to throw light on some of the aspects that have been omitted by Ménager<sup>37</sup>.

The research about the Norman kingdom used in this study can be divided into two groups: one includes all the studies about the Norman institution in general, the second concerns particular fields of research such as cultural, political aspects.

In the first group fall the great works of Caspar or Houben which are fundamental for a first approach to the Norman court, which includes the admiralty as well, but these studies have a wider scope and they do not focus on single offices of the kingdom<sup>38</sup>. In the same way, the work of Chalandon<sup>39</sup> is of great value but although he enumerates all the events linked in some way

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<sup>35</sup> L. R. Ménager, *Amiratus*.

<sup>36</sup> L. R. Ménager, *Amiratus*, p. 87.

<sup>37</sup> See M. Caravale, *Il regno normanno*, pp. 127-136.

<sup>38</sup> E. Caspar, *Ruggero II*. H. Houben, *Ruggero II di Sicilia*.

<sup>39</sup> F. Chalandon, *Histoire de la domination normande*.



with the Norman dominion in South Italy in great detail, the Norman admirals are not at the centre of his research. At any rate, all these studies, including Graham Loud, David Abulafia, Erich Caspar<sup>40</sup>, are a great help to render the final picture of the admiral<sup>41</sup>.

Recent studies which have addressed particular and specific fields such as works about the interconnections of the different cultures of the Norman kingdom<sup>42</sup>, studies about the figure of the great count<sup>43</sup> and his wife<sup>44</sup>, or the ordinary life in the kingdom are part of the second group<sup>45</sup>. Certainly, the institutional side of the kingdom has been studied the most but despite several efforts a coherent picture has yet to be achieved<sup>46</sup>. Takayama was the last to try to paint a complete picture of the Norman institutions by summarizing all the past theories (from Jamison to Garufi and Caravale)<sup>47</sup>. The Japanese scholar's work is the most accurate and meticulous study of recent years. He begins his survey with the official acts, and he uses literary sources as well, giving a total and thorough overview of the administrative world of the Norman institutions. In his work Takayama discusses the admirals' activities thoroughly because he understands that they are the main characters of the Norman institutional world. They forged the bureaucratic apparatus of Sicily and contributed to the establishment of a new system. Takayama was the first to refute the conclusions of Ménager. Nevertheless, he does not delve too deeply in the study of this office because he focuses on the general features of the kingdom and mentions the admiral only when he is important to show some important modification of the institutions.

Other suggestions for this work came from the reading of surveys about the display of power. Strauss-Kojeve's reflexions<sup>48</sup> about authority, for instance, give examples for modes of interaction among different kinds of powers and the use of culture for an ostentation of influence. In this direction the work of Maria Stella Mariani Calò was very useful as well, because she interlaces the cultural phenomena with statements about power. According to her, art can be the means of glorification of kingship and, for this reason, it has an underlying political meaning as well<sup>49</sup>.

Another good example of this kind of study is the work of Evelyn Jamison on "admiral Eugenius of Sicily", where she studied all the activities of the admiral bearing in mind his great interest for the cultural world.

Looking back and reading the very important studies on cultural history by Charles H. Haskins it is easy to see that other important officers of the Norman court<sup>50</sup> distinguished themselves in cultural activities<sup>51</sup>; the cultural world is worth studying because these activities are important for the perception of their figures.

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<sup>40</sup> G. Loud, *Roger II and the Creation of the Kingdom of Sicily*. D. Abulafia, *Italy, Sicily and the Mediterranean*. E. Caspar, *Roger II*.

<sup>41</sup> D. Matthew, *The Norman Kingdom of Sicily*. J. Johns, *Arabic administration*.

<sup>42</sup> U. Rizzitano, F. Giunta, *Terra senza crociati*.

<sup>43</sup> J. Becker, *Graf Roger*.

<sup>44</sup> P. Hamel, *Adelasia*.

<sup>45</sup> J. M. Martin, *La vita quotidiana*.

<sup>46</sup> E. Mazzaresse Fardella, *Aspetti dell'organizzazione amministrativa*. C. A. Garufi, *Censimento*. E. Jamison, *The Norman administration*. M. Caravale, *Il regno normanno*.

<sup>47</sup> H. Takayama, *The Norman administration*.

<sup>48</sup> L. Strauss, A. Kojeve, *Sulla tirannide*, pp. 129, 160.

<sup>49</sup> M. S. Mariani Calò, *I fenomeni artistici*, p. 215.

<sup>50</sup> "Raffinata civiltà di corte", in this way the Norman court has been characterized in F. Franceschi, I. Taddei, *Le città italiane nel Medioevo*.

<sup>51</sup> C. H. Haskins, *Studies in the history of Mediaeval science*, and *La rinascita del XII secolo*.

From what we said, it is clear, that the work of Ménager does not provide us with a well-rounded complete picture and thus, revisiting the office of the admiral in a broader approach is promising.

Culture and history are strictly interlaced and the interest for the extra political activities of the admirals has been re-discovered recently. We can name the commented edition of Maio's works by Valeria De Fraja<sup>52</sup> in 2015 or the studies about the cultural impact of Sicily on the western way of thinking with the surveys and translations of the officers of the Norman court<sup>53</sup>. To these we must add the buildings commissioned by the admirals. For this purpose, the analyses of Patricolo, restorer of the church of S. Maria of the admiral at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>54</sup>, and the reflections of Kroenig are fundamental to acquire a deeper knowledge about the history and the use of styles which has been adopted and which can be used to unveil a hidden political message<sup>55</sup>.

Therefore, the bond between policy and culture can help us to provide a more comprehensive picture of the admirals because many times a difference in the way of thinking can help to explain changes in the way of perception of the kingship, as we will see in the development from Greek predominance to a more or less Latin-based culture.

This study wants to include all the most important aspects related to the institutional world. Indeed, the admiral was one among other officers and we cannot study the admiralty without considering the importance of the other members of the court and the distribution of competences among them.

The work of Hiroshi Takayama has been very useful for this purpose, since he provides a picture of the offices' importance at the Norman court. He designs a pattern of tasks and duties at court. He has already caught in broad strokes how the competences of the admirals are to be understood but it is high time to elaborate.

Jamison's researches<sup>56</sup> have been very important as well, because they enlighten us on the complex division of authorities in Southern Italy. Indeed, the jurisdiction of the admirals did not always stay the same. Thanks to Jamison we can understand what the balances of powers were and how they were managed according to the geographical factor. Knowing tasks and duties of the local justiciars (subject of Jamison's studies) helps to find out the relations with the central court where the admiral was often the main character.

The important debates about the division of competences at the court will be taken into consideration and they will be analysed in order to get new evidence. For example, what was the real task of the dohana? Studying the admirals means facing this kind of investigations because we will see that the admiralty was prominent and fundamental for this bureau as for others. Garufi's theory about the dohana has been the most important and Jamison followed him in the description of this office<sup>57</sup>. Jeremy Johns, Enrico Mazzaresse Fardella and Hiroshi Takayama have been the lasts to give a new representation about the dohana and of the Norman institutional apparatus in general<sup>58</sup>. In order to have a more complete knowledge about the admiral we can-

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<sup>52</sup> Maio Barenensis, *Expositio orationis dominicae*.

<sup>53</sup> F. Giunta, *Bizantini e bizantinismo*. J. M. Martin, *La vita quotidiana*. G. V. Resta, *La cultura siciliana*.

<sup>54</sup> G. Patricolo, *La chiesa di Santa Maria dell'ammiraglio*, pp. 397–406.

<sup>55</sup> W. Kroenig, *Sul significato storico dell'arte*, pp. 291–310. W. Kroenig, *Il duomo di Monreale*.

<sup>56</sup> E. Jamison, *Studies on the history*, and *The Norman administration*.

<sup>57</sup> C. A. Garufi, *Sull'ordinamento*, pp. 225–263.

<sup>58</sup> J. Johns, *Arabic administration*. E. Mazzaresse Fardella, *Aspetti dell'organizzazione amministrativa*.

not ignore the important role which the *dohana*<sup>59</sup> played at the Norman court because we will see that it is connected to the admirals inextricably.

More in general, all the political institutions of the Norman kingdom are, in some way, involved in the admirals' activities. However, the details of interconnection have not been pondered and therefore the real significance and function of the office have not been thoroughly depicted until now.

At the suggestion of Caravale, who understood the need of a revision of common theory admiral's office I will try to throw light on the various aspects which, as Caravale writes, have hitherto been left in shadow but are well worth studying. In every work about the Norman kingdom we can find references to the Norman admiralty, but a comprehensive picture has never been tried save for Ménager. It will be useful to provide new insights not only on the admiralty of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, but also on the conditions of Norman rule in Sicily.

To conclude, the main aims of this research are pointed to renovate the specific study of the Norman admiralty in order to give a new and complete image of this office in relation to the ruler and to the other members of the court. From this, a new picture of the Norman court will emerge.

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<sup>59</sup> The *dohana* was divided in two bodies: the *dīwān at-tahqīq al-ma'mūr* which controlled lands and all the operations such as exchanges and the *ad-dīwān al-ma'mūr* which supervised the royal lands. There have been several debates about the tasks of these offices. See H. Takayma, *The administration*, p. 87. On the contrary C. A. Garufi, *Sull'ordinamento*, pp. 225–263, M. Amari, *Storia dei musulmani*, III, pp. 324–331, E. Jamison, *Admiral Eugenius*, pp. 33–55. See also J. Johns, *Arabic administration*, p. 199.

## ***Birth of the Norman admiralty (1086-1095)***

**W**hat are the first steps of the Norman admiralty? How was it inserted at the court of Roger? We will make use of the first documents, drawn up at the Norman court, to try to give a faithful image of the first two admirals. Unfortunately, the documentary evidence for the first years of the admiralty is very scant and therefore we must analyse what we have in depth. Since we lack strong evidence, it is useful to study the other members of the first official Norman acts in order to get a better understanding of the balances of court where the admiral was inserted. Indeed, the presence or absence of an officer can help us to know how power was managed at the Norman court in the very first years of Roger I.

The information from the chroniclers is equally scarce.

Putting together these two kinds of sources, we can attempt to understand who the first two admirals were and what their duties included. However, we cannot forget the macro-situation, where they lived, nor how the general history and the overall mechanism of the Norman court influenced the developments of this office. For this first phase we will focus on Petrus Bido and Eugenius, who were probably the first two admirals of the Norman kingdom. What was their authority and how did it change in the first decades of the office? To answer this question, we will make use of the cultural world as well. Considering that we do not have significant official acts which can help us, we will use information from the cultural world where the admirals seem to have played an important role. We know, for instance that Eugenius was very important in this field. In this way we will acquire a new perspective on this office. Was the cultural factor important for the start of his career? How was it used for his success?

Analysing all these aspects, the birth of the admiralty can show us typical achievements of the foundations of the Norman realm which was built on features of different nature: from the Arabian world the regents took the admiralty and from the Greek culture they inherited the logothete, for example. Studying these first steps can help us to understand the game of cultures even from a political point of view.

### **The origins of the Norman admiralty and Petrus Bido**

In January 1072, Palermo was conquered by the Norman army<sup>1</sup>. The siege of the town was conducted by sea and by land. The fleet was led by Robert while Roger was the captain of the land army<sup>2</sup>. After the conquest, the two brothers bequeathed liberty of religion to all the people of the island. To avoid a break with the past, Robert and Roger tried to preserve some of the offices which had been founded under the previous rulers (Greek and Arabian). William of Apulia commented about this strategy:

*obsidibus sumptis aliquot castrisque paratis,  
Reginam remeat Robertus victor ad urbem,  
nominis eiusdem quodam remeanti Panormi  
Milite qui Sicilis datur amiratus haberi*<sup>3</sup>.

In these words, we get what is usually assumed the first evidence of the Norman admiral<sup>4</sup>. William writes that he was part of the *milites* who had conquered the island with the duke. Probably Robert chose one of his knights to administrate Palermo during his absence (“appointed as

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<sup>1</sup> See Regesta n° 1.

<sup>2</sup> Geoffrey Malaterra, *De rebus gestis*, II, 45. For a more recent edition see G. Malaterra, *The deeds of count Roger*.

<sup>3</sup> William of Apulia, *La geste de Robert Guiscard*, III, 340–344.

<sup>4</sup> See Regesta n° 2.

his lieutenant a Christian knight with the title of emir of Sicily”<sup>5</sup>. We do not know anything else about this office in the first years of the Norman rule, we can only assume that, while Roger and Robert were away, this admiral ruled in their absence in the same way his Arabian predecessors had<sup>6</sup>. Actually, Roger (who had received the county of Sicily from his brother) had to face Ibn el Werd, an Arab from Castrogiovanni, who had rebelled in 1073<sup>7</sup> and, for this reason, he might have spent some time away from Palermo<sup>8</sup>. Sometimes Roger also delegated the military power such as when he sent Hugh of Jersey to fight against the rebel Ibn el Werd, or his nephew Serlo to the proximity of Rametta and Randazzo<sup>9</sup> or in 1081 when Catania fell into Ibn el Werd’s hand. In this important case, Roger sent his son Jordan with Elijah Cartomense (*ex saracinis ad fidem Christi conversus*)<sup>10</sup> against the rebel, but it was a singular event. It is evident that the military power was in principle in the hands of the Great Count who however could share this competence with other commanders such as Hugh or his son. At other occasions it was Roger in person who led the army as in 1076 when he laid siege to Trapani and conquered Salerno<sup>11</sup> or when he held the military authority in February 1078 during the siege of Taormina and Jato and then of Cinisi<sup>12</sup> freeing Syracuse from the Arabian dominion in 1086<sup>13</sup>. Malaterra is our only source for that time and he does not mention anyone else at the head of the army. Reading the chronicle, it seems that Roger delegated military power only on rare occasions, mostly for skirmishes. What we can deduce is that in this first phase of the Sicilian conquest, the one who had military competence was almost exclusively the count and we might ask why in the following years the admiral acquired military competence that had originally belonged to the ruler.

In general, in these first nine years of the Norman dominion, there was no admiral mentioned who acted in military campaigns. We may suppose that the first admiral had only the task to defend and manage the affairs of Palermo.

While Roger was fighting against the Arabian rebels, Robert prepared an expedition against Byzantium, gathering knights from throughout Southern Italy<sup>14</sup>. Anna Komnene talks about the siege of Dyrrachium which started on the 15<sup>th</sup> of October 1081<sup>15</sup>. Both Anna Komnene and William of Apulia tell many details about this event but neither of them names the leader of the fleet as admiral, probably because the admiral’s tasks did not extend to naval activities yet<sup>16</sup>. In 1085, Robert conquered lands which had been lost by his son; so, he tried to take Corfu and Cephalonia but then he fell sick and died<sup>17</sup>. The most important thing for us is that in the two last campaigns Anna Komnene calls *ηγεμόνες τῶν στόλων*, the leaders of the fleet<sup>18</sup>, which show us that the term of admiral as chief of the fleet was not used yet<sup>19</sup> but more probably it

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<sup>5</sup> H. Wieruszowski, *Roger II of Sicily*, p. 46.

<sup>6</sup> “L’amir maintient la paix et l’ordre”. Amīr in *Enciclopedia de l’Islam*, I, 451.

<sup>7</sup> See Regesta n° 3–8–15.

<sup>8</sup> Geoffrey Malaterra, *De rebus gestis*, III, 10.

<sup>9</sup> Geoffrey Malaterra, *De rebus gestis*, II, 6.

<sup>10</sup> Geoffrey Malaterra, *De rebus gestis*, III, 30.

<sup>11</sup> See Regesta n° 4–5–6–7. Geoffrey Malaterra, *De rebus gestis*, III, 10.

<sup>12</sup> Geoffrey Malaterra, *De rebus gestis*, III, 15.

<sup>13</sup> See Regesta n° 16–19. Geoffrey Malaterra, *De rebus gestis*, III, 10.

<sup>14</sup> See Regesta n° 9–10–11–12–13–14.

<sup>15</sup> Anna Komnene, *Alexiade*, I, XV–XVI.

<sup>16</sup> William of Apulia, *La geste*, IV, 335–350.

<sup>17</sup> Anna Komnene, *Alexiade*, VI, 6.

<sup>18</sup> Anna Komnene, *Alexiade*, V, 4. Bernard Leib (*Alexiade*, V, 4) is wrong when he translates this term with *amiraux*.

<sup>19</sup> In 1038, during the expedition of George Maniace, we find an *ἀρχων τοῦ στόλου*. See V. von Falkenhausen, *La dominazione bizantina*, p. 138. I do not agree with Cohn when he says: “Der Tod Robert Guiscards bedeutet schon das