PREFACE

The Norman kingdom of Sicily is one of the most fascinating and unusual areas of interest within the discipline of medieval history, but until a few years ago those in the anglophone world who wished to study it in any depth were hamstrung by the lack of appropriate literature in English. For many years the only professional historian writing in English on Norman Italy was Evelyn Jamison (1877–1972), to whose pioneering researches on the royal administration and the south Italian nobility we are still indebted. She, however, ploughed a lonely furrow. That lamentable situation has begun to change thanks to the sterling efforts of a number of contemporary scholars, notably David Abulafia, Joanna Drell, John Howe, Jeremy Johns, Donald Matthew, Alex Metcalfe, Paul Oldfield, Chuck Stanton, Valerie Ramseyer and Patricia Skinner, to all of whom I am most grateful, both for their work and for their friendship and collaboration over many years.

But to understand and appreciate the topic, one also needs to read the primary sources, which are often bristling with technical difficulties (and not just linguistic ones). Until recently, none of these had appeared in English translation. In an attempt to remedy this situation I published in this series, twelve years ago, in collaboration with the late Thomas Wiedemann, *The History of the Tyrants of Sicily by 'Hugo Falcandus', 1154–69*. This present book is a companion volume to *Falcandus*, covering the immediately preceding period that saw the foundation of the kingdom of Sicily. It is a substantial volume, for which I must beg the forgiveness both of my readers and of my publisher, but I hope the interest and completeness of the subject matter justifies this. I have always believed that where possible it is better to read, and try to understand, the whole of a text rather than extracts chosen at an editor's whim. One must, obviously, compromise to some extent, especially when dealing with lengthy chronicles only a little of which are about the reign of King Roger, but I make no apology for presenting the complete texts of Alexander of Telese and Falco of Benevento, the principal historians contemporary with the king's reign. It is, for example, impossible to understand the way Falco wrote his chronicle, or his concern with the well-being of his native city, if one omits his account of events before 1127.

These texts were the first two that I translated for my undergraduate special subject on the Norman Kingdom of Sicily, and I must begin by thanking all the students who have studied and discussed them at the University of Leeds since 1989. I am also most grateful to the staff of the Brotherton Library at Leeds, and especially to Neil Plummer and Jane Saunders for their careful stewardship

of the History shelves, and to my colleagues in the School of History for allowing me a semester's study leave to complete this book. In preparing it I have received help from many people, but especially Dione Clementi and Edoardo d'Angelo who presented me with copies of the modern editions of Alexander and Falco; the latter also patiently answered innumerable queries over the years, about Falco and many other matters too. My debt to the late Dr Clementi's commentary on Alexander will be apparent from the footnotes, and it was her contacts that first introduced me to the pleasures of archival work in Italy, for which, I fear, I never properly thanked her in her lifetime.

I am also grateful to Dott. Marino Zabbia for advice regarding the chronicle of Romuald, the new edition of which he is preparing. My work at Montecassino was made possible by don Faustino Avagliano, at Cava by the late don Simeone Leone, don Leone Morinelli and Signor Enzo Cioffe, and at Benevento by Prof. Elio Galasso. Prof. Vittorio de Donato allowed me to consult his unpublished thesis while I was working at the British School in Rome in 1990, during which time and on earlier visits too I was much helped by the kindness of the then Director, Richard Hodges, and the Librarian, Valerie Scott. My colleague Ian Moxon has been, as ever, invaluable in assisting me with translation problems, and has saved me from many egregious mistakes. My former research student Paul Oldfield, now a considerable scholar in his own right, and my current PhD students Isabella Bolognese and Benjamin Pohl have all been a great help and even greater encouragement – Isabella not least in meticulously proof-reading the translation of Falco's Chronicle. Hubert Houben, Alex Metcalfe and Paul Oldfield have all read and commented upon the introduction, and Alex has also checked my translation of the selections from al-Idrīsī. To all of them I am most grateful – needless to say, the faults that remain are entirely my own responsibility. And, as ever, Kate has been the prop and mainstay of this work, as well as the ever resourceful solver of computing problems.

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