

## **Hugo Falcandus, the *History of the Tyrants*, and the Normalization of Norman Sicily**

By Arthur Dixon

### ***“Norman Sicily” and “Hugo Falcandus”***

The historical processes that gave rise to what we call “Norman Sicily” produced a complex, multifaceted, and idiosyncratic kingdom that scarcely fits under the banner of “Norman” in the first place.<sup>1</sup> Sicily in the twelfth century displayed pronounced differences from conventional models of medieval European civilization because it had experienced periods of dominance by the Byzantine Empire and by Islamic peoples, unlike most mainland European kingdoms. The closest sociopolitical parallels to the Sicilian experience can be found in the Christian kingdoms of Iberia as they asserted themselves alongside the remnants of Islamic al-Andalus, but even these nascent states did not accurately mirror the Sicilian experience.<sup>2</sup> In Sicily, phases of settlement and government by Greek Christians and Muslims before the dominance of Latin Christians left an ingrained political, cultural, and social legacy.

When Sicily’s first Latin king, Roger II, created his throne in 1130, he inherited a tradition of centralized, bureaucratic rule on the island (but not on the mainland, which had been subject to more fighting and political chaos).<sup>3</sup> Roger’s new kingdom was culturally plural, with areas of either Muslim or Greek Christian population under the loose control of a Latin Christian elite that relied heavily on the court structures and administrative abilities of Greeks and Muslims. Additionally, the persistent recurrence of foreign conquest had given Sicily a social system that could be anachronistically described as “colonial”. Rule by foreigners was an established norm of Sicilian history up to that point, and in general the inhabitants of the island accepted it with little concern. Yet, after the reign of Roger II, these political, cultural, and social models shifted dramatically.

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<sup>1</sup> Alex Metcalfe, *Muslims and Christians in Norman Sicily: Arabic speakers and the end of Islam* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003), 24.

<sup>2</sup> Hugh Goddard, *A History of Christian-Muslim Relations* (Chicago: New Amsterdam Books, 2000), 98.

<sup>3</sup> Graham A. Loud, trans., *Roger II and the Creation of the Kingdom of Sicily* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), 21.

During the tenures of the following two kings of Sicily, William I “the Bad” (1154-68) and William II “the Good” (1166-89), a paradigm shift occurred in the kingdom. A combination of demographic and political factors increased the presence and power of Latin Christians from mainland Europe, bringing about a new stage in Sicilian sociopolitical history. Under the two Williams, Sicilian politics departed from their previous centralized model and moved closer to the fragmented, feudal norm of mainland kingdoms like France. Sicily also grew increasingly culturally homogeneous, replacing its former tolerance of cultures and faiths with dominance by Latin Christians and clearly delineated subaltern status for Muslims. And, although Sicily would fall victim to multiple conquests in the subsequent centuries, Sicilians became more tangibly opposed to government by foreigners as a defined Sicilian identity arose from the colonial order. The agency behind these changes lay with the social elites of Sicily—primarily the nobles who interacted with the royal court in Palermo. While William I and II reigned, the Sicilian nobility rose to the fore as a force behind political, cultural, and social transition.

In an effort to explain why these changes occurred and how they were justified at the time, I have turned to a well-known chronicle entitled *The History of the Tyrants of Sicily*. The authorship of the *History of the Tyrants* is unknown, but it is popularly ascribed to “Hugo Falcandus”—a stand-in for the real author, as scholars know that no real “Hugo Falcandus” composed the work.<sup>4</sup> The pseudonym appeared on the first printed edition of the chronicle in 1550, and was perhaps reconstructed from the disintegrating flyleaf of the medieval manuscript.<sup>5</sup> The chronicle covers the years from 1154 to 1169, beginning with the succession of William I and ending three years into the reign of William II. Falcandus does not address every element of Sicilian history during this period in equal depth; he focuses on conspiracies and revolts carried out by various elements of the Sicilian elite against others. Especially active as conspirators and rebels are Sicily’s feudal nobles, who appear locked in a constant struggle against the official class that controls the royal court. Through his descriptions of the conspiracies and

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<sup>4</sup> From this point on, I will identify the author of the *History of the Tyrants* as Falcandus without a first name or quotation marks.

<sup>5</sup> Graham A. Loud and Thomas Wiedemann, trans., *The History of the Tyrants of Sicily by ‘Hugo Falcandus’, 1154-69* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 28.

revolts orchestrated by Sicily's aristocracy, Falcandus reveals that nobles perceived Sicily's political, cultural, and social idiosyncrasies as increasingly unnatural and unacceptable; they took action to, as they saw it, *normalize* a kingdom that functioned incorrectly.

This conclusion is drawn from Falcandus's language in connection with more concrete information on demographics and cultural production. The *History of the Tyrants* indicates that Falcandus was a close observer of the nobility, or perhaps even a member himself, so it is an appropriate source for an analysis of elite opinions.<sup>6</sup> Falcandus seems invested in justifying conspiracy and revolt against the bureaucracy, further validating his perspective, and the notion of normalizing Sicily from the top down has interesting implications regarding the mysterious authorship of the *History of the Tyrants*.

### ***Demographics and Cultural Production***

In order to place Falcandus' rhetoric of normalization within its context, it is helpful to consider two more concrete elements of Sicily's medieval development: demographic shifts that made continental Europeans more prominent and cultural production that shifted away from multicultural artistic forms toward Latin norms.

The demography of Norman Sicily reflected its status as a Latin Christian colony with negotiated relationships between the new elite and the previous population. Alex Metcalfe provides linguistic and onomastic evidence of demographic shift based on this colonial system. The demography of Sicily's predominantly Islamic regions did not change rapidly at the outset of Latin Christian rule; as is typical in colonial relationships, the northern European and Italian warriors who moved into Sicily after 1060 maintained existing models of social stratification.<sup>7</sup> Sicilian Muslims—often neighbors of Greek Christians—were familiar with the social and financial system of *dhimmi* status, which provided members of other monotheistic faiths with guarantees of freedom from persecution in exchange for taxation. Newly arrived Latin Christians

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<sup>6</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 28-42.

<sup>7</sup> Metcalfe, *Muslims and Christians in Norman Sicily*, 176-177.

inserted themselves into this structure upon their political conquest of Sicily, having few other options due to the human presence of Islam in their new territory.

But the island's demographic makeup shifted over the course of colonization, especially after Roger II cemented Latin rule through formation of the Kingdom of Sicily. Metcalfe suggests that the opportunity for economic involvement with the growing Latin elite led to a process of "Latinization" among Sicily's Muslim population, with learned Muslims increasingly complicit in the fiscal workings of the Christian government.<sup>8</sup> Rising Latin settlement across social lines brought about two demographic changes: (1) Muslims converted to Christianity, typically the Greek rite but under the direction of the Latin ecclesiastical system; and (2) the remaining Muslim population grew more concentrated in specific regions of the island, particularly the more traditionally Islamic southwest. With the foundation of the abbey of Monreale in 1174, William II entrusted the management of the entire Muslim community neighboring Palermo to a single Latin church.<sup>9</sup> A Muslim population under paternalistic Latin religious control was a manifestation of the Latinizing sociocultural current that dominated Sicily in the second half of the twelfth century. Metcalfe states that by the end of William II's reign in 1189 "large numbers of Latin Christian settlers, merchants, churchmen and aristocratic families from outside Sicily could . . . wield their power more freely at the expense of the dwindling Muslim communities and their reduced political influence around the court and royal palaces."<sup>10</sup> The influx of Latin Christians into Sicily's political apparatus provided the incentive for further Latin settlement, which gradually diminished both the numbers and the status of the Islamic population.

Just as the demographic composition of Sicily shifted toward Latin homogeneity during the reigns of William I and II, the kingdom's cultural production adopted Latin forms and purposes. A salient example of this process is the imposing primary source of the Capella Palatina, the internal chapel of the royal palace complex in Palermo. From the coronation of Roger II to the death of William II, this room changed to reflect a

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<sup>8</sup> Metcalfe, *Muslims and Christians in Norman Sicily*, 180-181.

<sup>9</sup> David Abulafia, "The End of Muslim Sicily," in *Muslims Under Latin Rule, 1100-1300*, ed. James M. Powell (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 109.

<sup>10</sup> Metcalfe, *Muslims and Christians in Norman Sicily*, 181.

sociocultural project of Latinization. The architectural studies of William Tronzo provide a basis for these claims.

Upon its completion under the direction of Roger II in 1140, the Capella Palatina included a variety of structural and decorative features that suggested an inheritance of Greek and Islamic cultures in terms of both taste and function. Two of the church's most striking features were a royal balcony overlooking the nave and a Greek Christian image of Christ "Pantokrator" at the apex of the choir dome.<sup>11</sup> Another non-Latin feature was a set of Arabic inscriptions over the chapel's doorways, now almost entirely lost. The first extant segment reads: "graciously / and you make haste to kiss and to salute him. Roger has competed with". The second reads: "kiss its corner after having embraced it / and contemplate the beautiful things that it holds".<sup>12</sup> According to Tronzo, these Greek and Arabic inclusions in the Capella Palatina indicate conscious efforts on the part of Roger II and his artisans to capture non-Latin styles and meanings. In the case of the king's balcony and the image of Christ Pantokrator, the church was designed to elevate the Latin king above his visitors and physically closer to God during the Greek ritual of the *prokypsis*, also practiced by the emperor in Constantinople.<sup>13</sup> Jeremy Johns postulates that the Arabic doorway inscriptions were coopted from Fatimid Egyptian artwork, reflecting the desire of Roger II to recreate the grandeur of the Fatimid palaces he had heard of from Arabs in his own kingdom.<sup>14</sup> In general, the Rogerian chapel suggested an inheritance and adaptation of Greek and Islamic artistic forms. This does not suggest that Roger or his administration were wholeheartedly in favor of cultural plurality and *convivencia*, but it does imply that continental Latins were willing to Sicilian-ize rather than forcing Sicily to adopt mainland norms.

Under William I and II, the layout and decoration of the Capella Palatina changed to conform to more typically Latin structures. William I had mosaic scenes from the Old Testament and the lives of Peter and Paul added to the walls of the nave and the aisles, and William II had a new superstructure added to the throne platform in

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<sup>11</sup> William Tronzo, *The Cultures of His Kingdom* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 55.

<sup>12</sup> Translations by Jeremy Johns. In Tronzo, *The Cultures of His Kingdom*, 45.

<sup>13</sup> Tronzo, *The Cultures of His Kingdom*, 116.

<sup>14</sup> Tronzo, *The Cultures of His Kingdom*, 105.

the western wall of the nave.<sup>15</sup> The distinctly Christian decoration and textual evidence from Romuald of Salerno indicate that the Capella Palatina was regularly used for liturgical services under William I; under Roger it may have served primarily as a venue for royal audiences, but under his son it adopted a more Christian appearance and employed more canons.<sup>16</sup> William II's expanded throne platform implies a move away from the Greek rituals of kingship adopted by Roger. The coronation program (or "ordo") of William II included recitation of the *laudes regiae*—a traditional royal liturgy for Western Christian kingdoms.<sup>17</sup> The *laudes* does not require as much prostration before the king as the Greek *prokypsis*, and the refurbishment of the throne platform rather than the balcony suggests that the platform replaced the balcony as the royal liturgy switched from Greek to Latin. The form and function of the Capella Palatina shifted from generally Sicilian to specifically Latin under William I and II, representing both a preference for Latin artistic styles and a more continental conception of kingship.

Recent analyses of Sicilian demographics and cultural production from the mid-1100s affirm a pattern of Latinization in both the population and the monarchy. In neither case did this pattern entail a thorough change from one norm to another, and heavy influence from Greek and Islamic traditions remained prevalent despite increased numbers of Latin settlers and shifts to Latin liturgies. Yet, it is certain that Latinization did occur. What remains to prove is that this process, beyond the realms of demography and art, was justified and enacted by nobles as an effort to normalize Sicily.

### ***Normalization through Conspiracy in the History of the Tyrants***

In order to prove this point, I will now turn in earnest to Falcandus' *History of the Tyrants*. Of particular interest in the chronicle are four noble conspiracies that affirm the elite desire for normalization in three different dimensions. The first and second are the conspiracies against Maio of Bari, chief *emir* of Sicily under William I; the third is the conspiracy against *Caid* Peter, a palace eunuch who served on the triumvirate of royal advisers following the fall of Maio; the fourth is the conspiracy against Stephen of Perche, a French relative of the regent queen Margaret of Navarre

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<sup>15</sup> Tronzo, *The Cultures of His Kingdom*, 125.

<sup>16</sup> Tronzo, *The Cultures of His Kingdom*, 125.

<sup>17</sup> Tronzo, *The Cultures of His Kingdom*, 127.

who served as royal chancellor and Archbishop of Palermo. Each of these conspiracies affirms the elite desire for normalization in a distinct part of the Sicilian body politic perceived as abnormal.

Extracting evidence from the *History of the Tyrants* requires an appreciation for authorial bias. Luckily, I plan to focus on the rhetorical position of Falcandus towards each conspiracy rather than the sparse objective facts that he provides. This method turns the *History of the Tyrants* into a far more fruitful historical source. Although the authorship of the chronicle remains unknown, the data provided on military, ecclesiastical, and political affairs confirms that the author was involved in some capacity with the court at Palermo.<sup>18</sup> An illustrative example is the detailed discussion of Caid Peter's botched expedition to North Africa and the loss of the city of Mahdia to Almohad forces.<sup>19</sup> The passage includes accurate information on a treaty with the Byzantine emperor, embassies sent from Mahdia to Palermo, and the logistics of Caid Peter's fleet ("It consisted of about 160 galleys").<sup>20</sup> These observations make it hard to conceive of a Falcandus who did not occupy the environs of the court, and the biased opinions of a participant in the royal court are ideal indicators of Latin elite opinions. I will reflect further on the question of authorship after discussing the four noble conspiracies that most strongly indicate the desire for normalization.

### *Conspiracies against Maio of Bari*

The conspiracies against Maio of Bari suggest that nobles perceived the need to normalize Sicily's extraordinary state of non-feudal political centralization. The bureaucratic centralization personified by Maio was non-feudal in two dimensions: firstly, it implied by its very nature that the baronial class was subordinate to royal officials; secondly, it suggested that noble genealogy was not necessary for political power. Falcandus acknowledges that the claim that Maio's father "used to sell olive-oil at Bari" was only a rumor, but it is true that Maio emerged from the class of Italian urban elites rather than any aristocratic lineage.<sup>21</sup> His rapid rise through the ranks of the

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<sup>18</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 29.

<sup>19</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 78-81.

<sup>20</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 78.

<sup>21</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 69.

Sicilian administration implied genuine usefulness or political skill. He attained the old Arabic title of emir after ten years of service under Roger II and William I as a scribe and chancellor. For most of Roger's reign, the Greek administrator George of Antioch held this position.<sup>22</sup> Maio inherited a post with tremendous potential for political power—the emir was the advisor and representative of the king, connecting the aloof royal presence to the practical operations of the Palermitan bureaucracy. It is impossible to gauge the moral consistency of Maio's character based only on the extant sources, but he occupied an elevated position and demonstrated political capability. Unfortunately, in Falcandus' opinion, Maio was

a beast than whom none more repellant pest could be found, none more effective in achieving the destruction and the overthrow of the realm. For he had an intellect that could grasp anything; his eloquence was equal to his intellect; he had the ability to pretend and dissemble whatever he pleased; his mind, keen on sexual gratification, contrived intercourse with women married and unmarried, especially noble ones. He was particularly keen to overcome the chastity of those who had a reputation for decency. Once he had tasted the desire for power, he turned over many plans in his mind, he exhausted his spirit with many schemes, and was borne forward by constant incitements to wickedness; yet he managed to hide the tempest within his seething mind behind a calm appearance.<sup>23</sup>

In literary terms, Maio is the primary antagonist of the *History of the Tyrants*. He is depicted as a domineering bogeyman who incessantly attempts to bolster his personal power at the expense of others, exploiting his closeness to the king in order to assassinate William and “seize control of the realm.”<sup>24</sup> This scheme requires that Maio eliminate a number of the Latin nobles “with whom Sicily was flourishing at the time,” and against whom he is naturally opposed.<sup>25</sup> Maio's dictatorial power and his ostensible

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<sup>22</sup> Loud, *Roger II*, 41.

<sup>23</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 60.

<sup>24</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 61.

<sup>25</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 61.



hatred of Latin nobles justify the first conspiracy that the nobles enact against the conniving emir.

The conspiracies against Maio begin in the *History of the Tyrants* when Maio attempts to recruit the noble Godfrey, Count of Montescaglioso, into his own plot to assassinate the king.<sup>26</sup> Godfrey feigns agreement and willingness to place Maio on the throne, but he then reveals the scheme to a group of fellow nobles—some from Sicily and some from the mainland—and they concoct a plot to turn the regicide against Maio. Interestingly, they are apparently unconcerned at the thought of murdering the king. Falcandus tells us they did not have “any objection to assassinating the king, because of the tyrannous regime he was exercising against the nobility”.<sup>27</sup> This opinion, which holds true as the web of plots is enacted, underlines the commitment of Sicily’s Latin nobles to their unfairly limited feudal rights. They are willing to dislodge the top of the feudal pyramid and replace the king with his son in order to enthrone a monarch who will sufficiently respect the feudal order. After Maio’s anticipated murder of William I, the nobles plan to turn against him “as though they were the assassinated king’s avengers,” placing William’s son on the throne and eliminating Maio in the ensuing chaos.<sup>28</sup>

Count Godfrey’s counterplot fails when another noble, Count Everard, reveals Maio’s plot to William; the king refuses to accept the notion of Maio’s treachery, but he holds Godfrey in Sicily until Maio has him “blinded and imprisoned”.<sup>29</sup> Maio then takes revenge on Everard. The count goes hunting with his followers one day, and Maio accuses him of leaving the court “with a large force of knights,” which represents “clear proof of rebellion”.<sup>30</sup> Maio has Everard dragged back to court, where his eyes are gouged out and his tongue is cut off. Unsurprisingly, “opposition died down throughout the kingdom” after this demonstration.<sup>31</sup> Maio takes the opportunity to consolidate rule over the mainland, particularly the region of Apulia, placing members of his family in

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<sup>26</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 68.

<sup>27</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 70.

<sup>28</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 70.

<sup>29</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 75.

<sup>30</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 76.

<sup>31</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 77.

important administrative and military positions.<sup>32</sup> These actions inspire violent revolt in Apulia and unrest in Calabria, which is the source of the conspiracy that finally ends Maio's dominion.

The agent of Maio's death is Matthew Bonellus, a young noble with links to the Calabrian aristocracy. He is intimately connected to Maio through his betrothal to the emir's young daughter, although his affections actually lie with an illegitimate daughter of Roger II who Maio keeps out of his reach.<sup>33</sup> Maio sends Matthew as his embassy to Calabria to ease the tensions of the mainland nobles. But, after a long talking-to supposedly delivered by Roger of Martorano, Matthew experiences a change of heart regarding his potential father-in-law. Roger of Martorano condemns the notion of a commoner—even one as wealthy as Maio—rising to greater power than an aristocrat, and he condemns the emir for exploiting a young noble like Matthew in matters of marriage. He explains, “no excuse can permit a young man of the highest nobility and unsullied reputation such as you . . . to gape at filthy lucre”.<sup>34</sup> Roger's rhetorical appeal to Matthew as Sicily's last hope for proper government eventually accomplishes its goal, and Matthew agrees to strike Maio down “as soon as possible”.<sup>35</sup>

After arriving at Palermo from the mainland, Matthew utilizes the existing conflict between Maio and Archbishop Hugh of Palermo to his advantage. Maio is in the process of slowly poisoning the archbishop, and while the emir is visiting his rival's house one night Matthew organizes his knights in the city streets and coordinates an ambush.<sup>36</sup> When Maio exits the house, Matthew himself springs into action and fells the emir with his sword, calling out, “Look, traitor, here I am: I am avenging the nobility you destroyed, even if belatedly, to put a limit to your unspeakable wickedness, and with a single blow against you I will erase both the title of admiral [emir] and of false king”.<sup>37</sup> After Maio's death, Matthew becomes a sort of popular hero while the eunuchs of William's palace work to incite anger against him; he eventually participates in a revolt against the king himself, is briefly pardoned, and is finally accused of treason and

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<sup>32</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 77.

<sup>33</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 86-87.

<sup>34</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 88.

<sup>35</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 90.

<sup>36</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 94.

<sup>37</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 97.

severely punished. The supposedly heroic Matthew ends up blinded and mutilated in the royal dungeons.<sup>38</sup>

Rather than focusing on any character in this drama specifically, I will discuss the rhetoric with which Falcandus describes the noble revolts against Maio. At various points in the text, Falcandus juxtaposes Maio's sinister actions with descriptions that frame him as an opponent of the nobility and of the normal system of feudal rule. A key example comes as Maio consolidates his power after the castigation of Count Everard. Regarding his effort to assassinate and replace the king, Maio "thought that this would be easiest to do if he first won the love of the populace and if he appointed his family and relations to the highest offices of the realm so as to protect himself against the pride of the nobility by their support".<sup>39</sup> Here, as at other points in his description, Maio intends to subvert the standard sociopolitical order, seeking to dominate the entire "populace" of the kingdom from a central administrative position at Palermo, rather than allowing feudal nobles to individually control their fiefs. He intends to establish control over the kingdom through bureaucratic means, replacing the hereditary aristocracy with a bureaucratic class peopled by his "family and relations". He specifically plans to defend his new dictatorial order from the nobility, recognizing that their position is rightful but caring only for his own advancement.

Roger of Martorano's speech to Matthew Bonellus is another key moment of anti-centralist, anti-bureaucratic rhetoric. Roger instructs the younger man,

Hold before your eyes the kind of parents who bore you, and you should understand that every approach to wrongdoing is barred to you, and that an obligation to spurn wickedness is imposed upon you. Indeed, if you were to see no one opposing the crimes of this traitor, then you at least ought to avenge the nobility whom this man is so horribly persecuting.<sup>40</sup>

Matthew's high birth requires him to act against a lowborn bureaucrat who does not know his place in feudal society. Maio's rise to power manifests his "wickedness," and he

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<sup>38</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 124.

<sup>39</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 77.

<sup>40</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 88.

is a “traitor” both to his rightful king and to the social order of the kingdom. But the key notion in this passage is Roger’s exhortation to Matthew to “avenge the nobility”—the administrator supposedly targets the kingdom’s rightful ruling class on purpose, “persecuting” them with the goal of undermining their power and claiming it for himself. Framing Matthew’s mission against Maio as vengeance clearly expresses the notion that Maio is interrupting normality, or that he pertains to a sociopolitical schema that is inherently destructive of the existing system. The nobles are, in a sense, conservatives; they desire a return to the traditional, normal order, whether or not their idea of normality conforms to the truth.

The narrative of Maio’s assassination closes his portion of the *History of the Tyrants* on the same note of vengeance against a violator of sociopolitical normality. When Matthew summons up the image of the “nobility you destroyed” and says he will “erase both the title of admiral and of false king”, he lays out the two sides of the conflict over normality. The feudal nobility is the conservative ideal, while the titled bureaucrats (e.g. the admiral) are social disruptors, tearing apart the fabric of a society that should be dominated by nobles from their fiefs. Maio of Bari, the central administrator who rose from middling origins to a position of great power, must be destroyed in order to normalize the kingdom.

### *Conspiracy against Caid Peter*

The conspiracy against the eunuch Caid Peter sought normalization by opposing the advancement of a cultural outsider to Latin norms. At the time of the conspiracy, Peter offended Latin nobles by virtue of both his position and his personal identity. He served as *familiares curiae* on William II’s regency council during the king’s infancy, a professional bureaucrat (like Maio) in a position of power over nobles.<sup>41</sup> In personal terms, he was a product of Sicily’s Islamic past. Peter was a castrated palace slave in the mold of the eunuchs who once served the Aghlabid and Kalbid emirs of Sicily, and who continued to serve the Fatimid caliphs in not-so-distant Cairo.<sup>42</sup> In episodes before the

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<sup>41</sup> Jeremy Johns, *Arabic Administration in Norman Sicily: The Royal Diwan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 224.

<sup>42</sup> W. Montgomery Watt, *The Influence of Islam on Medieval Europe* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1972), 5.

conspiracy and in his description of the conspiracy itself, Falcandus paints Peter not as a consummate, Maio-esque villain but as a cultural outsider naturally opposed to the Latin order. The nobles conspire against him to remove this unacceptable influence and restore what they see as normality.

Peter came up once before in this study of Falcandus' chronicle, during the loss of the city of Mahdia to Almohad forces. From the outset, Falcandus depicts Peter as a false Christian and a cultural alien: "Like all the palace eunuchs, this man was a Christian only in name and appearance, but a Muslim by conviction".<sup>43</sup> Peter is deployed to North Africa with a fleet to defend Mahdia against the Almohad advance, and Falcandus writes that Sicilian victory is within reach when Peter—"who was commanding the fleet and planned the whole thing"—suddenly abandons the fight and sails off, leaving the important outpost to languish from lack of supplies before submitting to Almohad conquest.<sup>44</sup> Falcandus blames the loss of Sicily's colonial possessions on a traitor to the sociocultural identity of Sicily. During the siege of Mahdia, Peter is established as a dangerous and unacceptable outsider based on his position as a palace eunuch and his supposed religious proclivities. These factors later serve to justify the noble conspiracy that undermines him.

After the death of William I, Sicily's queen Margaret of Navarre is left with the task of constructing an effective regency council until her child son, the future William II, reaches majority. She is already served by a group of three *familiars*, but she makes a critical decision to consolidate power:

Further, she did not wish the *familiars* of the court to remain on the same equal level of honour with one another as they used to have: for she granted supreme power over all affairs to Caid Peter, placing him in a position which overshadowed that of the others, and told the Bishop-Elect of Syracuse and the notary Matthew that as his assistants they should

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<sup>43</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 78.

<sup>44</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 79.

indeed be present at council meetings and call themselves *familiares*, but that they should obey his orders in everything.<sup>45</sup>

The decision to elevate Peter to a position of singular power would not have been a bad one if not for Peter's cultural identity. Falcandus reports that the eunuch would have been a sensible administrator and a strong leader "if the vice of his race had not cancelled out his innate peaceableness and prevented him from genuinely abandoning his hatred of Christianity".<sup>46</sup> Few concrete events in the *History of the Tyrants* provide legitimate evidence of Peter's aversion to Christianity; he is manipulated by Latin Christians against other Latin Christians before the characters fall into place who will put an end to his stint in power.<sup>47</sup>

Peter's key antagonist is Count Gilbert of Gravina, a relative of Margaret's who arrives in Sicily after receiving news of the old king's death, hoping to acquire a position of influence as "Master Captain of the whole realm".<sup>48</sup> He soon realizes that this ambition will not be easily attained, as the queen refuses to place Caid Peter "in second position to anyone" and the count lacks sufficient military support to replace the eunuch by force upon his arrival.<sup>49</sup> So, Gilbert begins to plot Peter's demise with Richard Palmer, the English cleric previously mentioned as the "Bishop-Elect of Syracuse". While the two Latins conspire, Gilbert visits the queen—with Peter by her side—and vocally complains about the travesty of Peter's power. He tells her, "All the leading men were already angry that she had passed over the counts and other prudent men by whose judgment the court ought to be guided, and put a castrated slave in charge of the entire realm".<sup>50</sup> After this apt summation of noble sentiments toward the palace eunuchs, Peter realizes he is in danger.

With Gilbert's desire for Peter's ousting verbally expressed, both the count and the eunuch begin to build up support for a potential military conflict. The breakdown of supporters for each party reveals an interesting truth about the social dynamics of the

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<sup>45</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 139.

<sup>46</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 139.

<sup>47</sup> Johns, *Arabic Administration in Norman Sicily*, 225.

<sup>48</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 144.

<sup>49</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 144.

<sup>50</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 145.

period. Falcandus reports: “the barons and other noblemen who possessed any estates or fiefs preferred the Count of Gravina to be at the head of the court and be appointed captain, while the salaried knights (together with their constable), except for a few from north of the Alps, preferred the rewards of Caid Peter”.<sup>51</sup> The nobles most invested in a continental-style feudal system approve of Gilbert’s moves against Peter while professional soldiers fight for the party with greater access to the institutions of power. Those who perceive the need for continental norms oppose the eunuch while those who simply care about getting paid are disinterested. It is also telling that even salaried soldiers “from north of the Alps” oppose Peter, implying that those who originate from heavily feudal areas such as France and the Holy Roman Empire remain ideologically opposed to Peter’s rule despite its practical benefits. Ultimately, fearful that “a secret plot was being hatched against him,” Peter flees from Sicily and takes up employment—where he belongs, according to Falcandus—at the court of “the King of the Almohads”.<sup>52</sup>

Once again, the rhetoric of this story reveals the noble interest in normalizing Sicily. The conspiracy against Peter mirrors the one against Maio in certain respects. It coalesces around a single noble opponent and it includes a manifesto delivered through oratory. Count Gilbert’s speech to the queen parallels Roger of Martorano’s speech to Matthew Bonellus, and both speeches outline the nobility’s complaints against a figure who disrupts feudal normality. Gilbert’s suggestion to the queen that “it was a miracle that she did not change the organisation of the court, since it could not stay any longer in the condition it was” articulates the need for conservative change.<sup>53</sup> The speech and Falcandus’ narration construct the image of Peter as a cultural outsider who, although not personally evil, simply does not belong in the framework of Sicilian society. Falcandus’ descriptions of Peter are among the most positive character portraits in the *History of the Tyrants*, which is perhaps not saying much, as Falcandus is pessimistic and scathing about almost everyone. Yet, he praises Peter’s “gentle disposition” and “liberality”.<sup>54</sup> In this case, the noble conspiracy does not rely on moral antagonism between nobles and bureaucrats, as was the case with Maio. The only justification for

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<sup>51</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 146.

<sup>52</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 147.

<sup>53</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 145.

<sup>54</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 139, 142.

conspiracy is Peter's abnormality; his post is alien to feudal political norms and his character is alien to continental Latin culture, so he must go.

### *Conspiracy against Stephen of Perche*

The final conspiracy I will analyze is also the most ironic. Stephen of Perche was neither a commoner nor a cultural outsider to Latin norms. In fact, he was a French nobleman who ended up in Sicily as a result of his familial connection to Queen Margaret. On the surface, no better candidate could exist for a leader of Sicily's Latin feudal elite. However, at this point in its history, Sicilian culture was normalizing in another respect: after generations of regular conquest, a distinct Sicilian identity began to emerge and elites as well as subalterns began to resent rule by foreigners. Despite his nobility and Latin identity, Stephen of Perche was rendered abnormal by his non-Sicilian origins, and the conspiracy against him rested on this foundation.

According to Falcandus, Stephen of Perche is the uncle of Count Gilbert of Gravina and the son of the Count of Perche, and Queen Margaret warmly welcomes him upon his arrival in Sicily. In short order, she appoints Stephen chancellor of the kingdom, such that "he undertook the burden of the entire administration and took precedence at court after the queen".<sup>55</sup> Stephen places fellow Frenchman Odo of Quarrel in a position of authority as master of the royal household. Odo had previously advised him to remain in Sicily "until it should happen that some other friends or relatives with whom he could equally share his plans came from France to join him".<sup>56</sup> Even while providing the basic exposition of Stephen's arrival, Falcandus implies the growing French hegemony that the new chancellor will impose over the kingdom of Sicily.

A few sentences later, the nobles of the Palermitan court begin to chafe against Stephen's rising influence:

They unguardedly uttered angry words, saying that it was a disgrace that this foreign-born boy had occupied the highest position of the court and burst out into such confident authority that he thought no one worthy to

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<sup>55</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 162.

<sup>56</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 162.



be his associate, and wanted to administer the government of this great realm on his own and tower over everyone else by virtue of his unprecedented power. They, however, who had grown old in the service of the court, who had taught it to overcome or avoid lots of difficulties and dangers through their advice, were now despised, humiliated and rejected, and thought unworthy of any respect. The queen, who was a Spaniard, was calling this Frenchman her relative, talking with him far too familiarly and looking at him as though with eyes full of desire; there was cause to fear that a forbidden liaison was hiding under the cover of a blood-relationship.<sup>57</sup>

In this outline of noble complaints against Stephen, his foreignness is the main point of contention. His inexperience with the affairs of Sicily makes him inappropriate to rule, and his unacceptability is expounded upon by a rumor of incest. At this early stage in a long-term conspiracy, “Matthew the notary,” along with other administrators and aristocrats, is included among the roster of plotters against the chancellor.<sup>58</sup>

Meanwhile on the Italian mainland, Apulian nobles incite the queen’s brother Count Henry of Montescaglioso to remove his rival Count Richard of Molise—one of the queen’s favorites—from his undue position of power.<sup>59</sup> Count Henry arrives in Palermo to plead his case before the royal court, but Stephen convinces him not to take action against Richard.<sup>60</sup> Count Henry then apparently befriends the chancellor, despite the protests of the Palermitan nobles who continue to jealously oppose Stephen’s elevated status. Claiming that Henry must either “be enslaved to the queen’s dishonourable wishes and . . . be conniving at her sexual, or more properly incestuous, liaison with the chancellor himself,” the nobles convince Henry to join their cause, forming a coalition of Sicilians including the eunuch Caid Richard and the notary Matthew against the chancellor.<sup>61</sup> Hearing rumors of the growing conspiracy, and hoping to avoid what “had

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<sup>57</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 169.

<sup>58</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 172.

<sup>59</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 175.

<sup>60</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 177.

<sup>61</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 180.

happened at the time of Caid Peter,” Stephen attempts to dodge the plot by moving the royal court to Messina.<sup>62</sup>

The change of scenery is futile, for soon a Messinesi noble allied with the conspiracy convinces many locals to join in, and “a large proportion of the citizens secretly took an oath to Count Henry”.<sup>63</sup> Henry even “set a definite date on which he would suddenly attack and kill the chancellor,” but a city judge in league with the conspirators betrays their cause and reports their plans to Stephen. Count Henry is summoned before the queen and the future king, and is scolded (in a moment of high irony) by Count Gilbert of Gravina, the very nobleman who forced Caid Peter out of the kingdom. Henry goes into a fortress dungeon until he can be transported, under the guidance of Odo of Quarrel, back to his ancestral lands in Iberia.

But Odo remains at Messina for the moment, and Henry’s conspiracy merely changes hands. The new leaders are “Caid Richard, Master Chamberlain of the palace, and the notary Matthew and Bishop Gentile of Agrigento”—a multicultural cadre of palace administrators who rely on both noble and popular support to unseat Stephen.<sup>64</sup> The bureaucrats target their rival by bringing up a legal complaint that will garner support. They cite

. . . John of Lavadin, who had recently been given Matthew Bonellus’s estates at the chancellor’s request, [who] was injuring the townsmen under his control to the extent of demanding one-half of the movable property that they owned. He claimed that this was the custom of his own land. They on the contrary asserted the liberties of the citizens and townsmen of Sicily, and stated that they owed no income and no dues, but that they did occasionally let their lords have what they asked for, on their own terms and of their own free will, when there was a pressing need; it was only those Muslims and Greeks who were classified as villeins who had to pay tithes and an annual money rent.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 181.

<sup>63</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 184.

<sup>64</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 196.

<sup>65</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 197.

Matthew Bonellus—the man who ousted the evil Maio of Bari—was replaced by a French aristocrat with no understanding of the traditional feudal arrangements of Sicily, which relied on cultural differences to establish social castes. Stephen ignores their complaint; “he preferred to be seduced by the arrogance of some of those he had brought with him from France”.<sup>66</sup> The Sicilian political scene then seems ripe for a combined noble and popular uprising against the chancellor; the conspirators now have “maximum opportunity to arouse the hatred of many citizens and townsmen against him, claiming that it was his intention that the entire population of Sicily should be forced to pay annual renders and exactions, as was the custom in Gaul, where free citizens did not exist”.<sup>67</sup> Yet, once again, Stephen hears of the conspiracy before it can be brought to fruition and arrests Matthew, Caid Richard, and the Bishop of Agrigento.<sup>68</sup> Without organized leadership, the conspiracy seems doomed for the second time.

According to Falcandus it is Odo Quarrel, Stephen’s assistant in Messina, who enables the conspiracy’s culmination. During his time in the city, Odo supposedly extorts money from the ships passing through to Syria. The citizens of Messina express indignation about his financial wrongdoing, suggesting that he is “allowing foreign-born pirates to carry off to France the treasury of the realm”.<sup>69</sup> Odo also insults groups of urban Greeks in Messina’s gambling dens, and a mob of Greeks assaults the local official known as the *stratigotus* for his inaction against Odo’s effrontery. Next, Messina’s Latin elite act to mobilize the disgruntled Greeks:

When the Latins, who had come to hate the French because of [Odo’s] maritime exactions, saw that the Greeks too had been turned against them by new injustices, they started to urge them to rebel, claiming that what the French intended was to expel the whole Greek community and take over their homes, their vineyards and their other farms . . .<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 198.

<sup>67</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 198.

<sup>68</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 199.

<sup>69</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 200.

<sup>70</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 201.

The monarchy acts to quell the nascent rebellion, sending a sternly-worded letter to the citizens of Messina that affirms royal support for Stephen and Odo, but the message is never heard. When Messina's rebellious population gathers before the *stratigotus* to hear the words of King William and Queen Margaret, a riot breaks out and the crowd moves to "kill Odo Quarrel and then set free Count Henry".<sup>71</sup> The rioters succeed on both counts, releasing Henry before executing Odo in the streets of Messina. As the killing of the hated official takes place, "the Greeks were busy slaughtering anyone from north of the Alps they could find".<sup>72</sup>

The conspiracy comes to a close shortly after. The notary Matthew, while imprisoned in the palace at Palermo, organizes a team of loyal palace guards under the leadership of the castellan Constantine to assassinate Stephen, but his plot is given up once again by the master of the stable. So, Constantine turns to the citizens of Palermo to do the job, sending out servants to stir up different parts of the city against the chancellor.<sup>73</sup> Matthew and Caid Richard are both freed by the crowds that besiege Stephen's residence, eventually driving him into a tall bell-tower where he accepts their terms. He agrees to leave Sicily for good, along with the "Frenchmen" who support him.<sup>74</sup> Count Henry of Montescaglioso arrives triumphantly in Palermo and places himself, along with Matthew and Caid Richard, in power as *familiares*.<sup>75</sup>

The conspiracy against Stephen of Perche is the most idiosyncratic plot (or series of plots) described by Falcandus, and also the hardest to fit into the model of conspiracies for normalization. Nonetheless, the rhetoric of the revolt confirms that normalization was a guiding concern of the elites who directed the conspiracy and the subalterns who participated. From its inception in the *History of the Tyrants*, the multi-phase conspiracy against Stephen conceives of the chancellor as "this Frenchman"—a foreigner issuing commands to Sicilians from a position of ignorance. The nobles who originate the plot, the palace bureaucrats who take over the reins, and the urban

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<sup>71</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 203.

<sup>72</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 206.

<sup>73</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 210.

<sup>74</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 212.

<sup>75</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 214.

commoners who revolt against Odo and Stephen all act based on the injustice of a foreigner taking control of their society. Yet, Sicilian society was built on a series of foreign conquests and cultural amalgamations; Sicilians were used to living under some level of political control from nobles or administrators of diverse cultural and geographic origins. Why should the case of Stephen of Perche have been any different?

Based on the rhetoric of Falcandus, the conspiracy against Stephen—almost unique in its amplitude across levels of society—was an affirmation that the colonial paradigm of Sicily’s history was no longer acceptable. The logic is confusing, as Stephen himself was from the mainland, but the revolt against Stephen still represented a move toward mainland norms. Traditional feudal kingdoms were not meant to be administrated by foreigners with profound cultural differences that made them unable to comprehend the legal and social processes of the land. This in itself was abnormal, even if the foreigner in question came from a more traditional feudal society. Stephen’s status as an alien from Sicilian society made him unsuitable to rule; the nobles of the island wanted a normal, non-colonial system of feudal government. Additionally, the violence in Messina against those “from north of the Alps” was a powerful demonstration of Sicilian displeasure with the colonial paradigm. The massacre foreshadowed another rebellion, over a century later, against another French ruler: the famous uprising known as the Sicilian Vespers. The conspiracy against Stephen by a united front of Sicilians manifested the current of normalization shifting the island away from the status of a Mediterranean colony and toward the status of a European kingdom.

Juxtaposed with more concrete evidence, the *History of the Tyrants* confirms that a desire for normalization toward mainland European models was present and prominent among the elites of twelfth-century Sicily. The growing population and power of mainland Europeans on the island represented the push away from Sicilian idiosyncrasy and toward continental normality in human terms. The alterations in the form and function of the Cappella Palatina represented the same movement in terms of art and ceremony. The *History of the Tyrants* evidences the desire for normality with literary clues. The chronicle’s rhetoric in its description of the causes and justifications of conspiracy proves that continental normality was a profound concern for Sicilian elites. The major conspiracies discussed in the *History of the Tyrants* are all couched in

terms of normalization. Maio of Bari is abnormal as a commoner holding central power, Caid Peter is abnormal as a pseudo-Christian eunuch, and Stephen of Perche is abnormal as a foreigner. Their examples prove that Sicilian elites wanted to live in a politically feudal, culturally Latin, and socially non-colonial land which, in their opinion, constituted a normal European kingdom.

### ***Normalization and Authorship***

The elusive author of the *History of the Tyrants* need not have been Latin himself. Arab, Greek, and Latin courtiers would have been equally capable of writing Latin prose in Sicily's late twelfth century. Yet, the rhetoric of normalization employed by Falcandus does have some bearing on his identity. Falcandus clearly understood the feudal, Latinizing, xenophobic discourse of Latin elites; in fact, such discourse may be so prominent in the *History of the Tyrants* partly because Falcandus amplified it himself. The narrator of the chronicle is typically on board with the conspiracies he describes. He despises Maio and sees his murder as righteous. His presentations of Peter and Stephen are less scathing, but he still acknowledges that their identities make them unsuitable for their roles. Peter is a Muslim who cannot help but hate Christians, and Stephen is a foreigner who cannot understand Sicily. Falcandus's opposition to these figures suggests his own personal investment in the project of normalization. The Latin feudal elite of Palermo benefitted most from this project, so it is tempting to believe that Falcandus himself was a member, a proponent, or an employee of this elite.

I cannot make any definitive suggestions for the chronicle's authorship on this basis alone, but the argument for normalizing discourse erodes the cases for the two candidates cited by Graham A. Loud: Robert of San Giovanni and Eugenius of Palermo, "son of the Emir John".<sup>76</sup> The former was a Latin notary who followed Stephen of Perche. His cultural loyalties match up well, but his personal loyalties suggest that he was not caught up in the move toward normalization.<sup>77</sup> The latter was a Greek palace official and intellectual who would hardly have advocated the reconstruction of Sicily on

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<sup>76</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 32.

<sup>77</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 31.

mainland European foundations.<sup>78</sup> Unfortunately, reading the *History of the Tyrants* as a testament to the normalization of medieval Sicily only offers vague parameters of ethnicity and ideology for the chronicle's elusive author. This study can clarify who Falcandus was not, but it cannot pinpoint who he was.

**“A letter concerning the Sicilian tragedy”**

In closing, I will add a brief observation regarding a text that is typically published as a supplement to the *History of the Tyrants*: a letter to Peter, the “Treasurer of the Church of Palermo”.<sup>79</sup> Scholars believe Falcandus was the other correspondent, based on the long-term connection between the letter and the *History of the Tyrants* and on stylistic similarities between the two. The message to Peter laments the approach of Holy Roman Emperor Henry VI with his wife Constance, a daughter of Roger II and the legitimate heir to the Sicilian throne after the death of William II.<sup>80</sup> Falcandus anticipates the arrival of a new brood of “foreigners”, “Germans” whose “madness” has “no experience of being ruled by the guidance of reason, or being deflected from its aims by human sympathy, or deterred by religious scruples”.<sup>81</sup> He sees Sicily as a victim of treachery:

You are an island whose condition is wretched, and fate damned. You have nurtured and educated your children to the end that when they grow up to the hoped-for strength, they first tested that strength on you, and then—fattened on the abundance of your breasts—trample upon and tear your womb! Many who were once nursed in your lap and by your goodness have later harmed you in this way with many injuries and in many battles. Constance too, brought up from her first cradle for many years in the riches of your delights, educated and moulded by your instruction and manners, later left to enrich foreigners with your wealth, and now returns with huge forces to repay you with a disgraceful recompense, so as to

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<sup>78</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 33.

<sup>79</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 252.

<sup>80</sup> David Abulafia, *Frederick II: A Medieval Emperor* (London: Allen Lane, 1988), 79.

<sup>81</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 253.

violently tear apart the apparel of her most beautiful nurse and stain with foreign filth the elegance with which you exceed all other realms.<sup>82</sup>

Here lies the final irony. Falcandus bemoans the upcoming loss of Sicily's "elegance"—her organic and distinctive style of life and government—to a group of barbarians from the continent. As Henry VI approached in 1194, preparing to put an end to what we call "Norman Sicily" and to initiate the island's Hohenstaufen period, Sicily had its best ever chance at normality.<sup>83</sup> The kingdom would be ruled by a strong, feudal, continental monarch legitimized by his familial connection to the old Norman kings.

Yet, at that critical moment, the former proponent of the normalizing project wrote to a friend bemoaning the prospects of a nonindigenous, purely European regime. The desire for normalization evoked by the *History of the Tyrants* is nowhere to be found in the letter to Peter. This does not mean the theory of shared authorship is false; it means that the impulse of normalization only extended so far, and was mediated by desires for autonomy and elite continuity. The upper echelons of Sicilian society (Falcandus included) may have balked at the idea of dominion by the Holy Roman Emperor, but their desire to rule the kingdom as they saw fit still rang true. Elite opinions were subject to radical change, but the rhetoric of the letter by no means delegitimizes the dominant current in the *History of the Tyrants*: the normalization of Norman Sicily.

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<sup>82</sup> Loud and Wiedemann, *History of the Tyrants*, 255.

<sup>83</sup> Abulafia, *Frederick II*, 80.



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