

A 'Sicilian' Text?

The *Cronica* contains few clues about the author's location or geographical frame of reference. However, *Anonymus* did claim that news of the Normans' first victories in Sicily⁴⁶ spread "from here beyond Faro" (presumably the Punta del Faro to the north east of Messina) in a speech placed in the mouth of Count Roger I⁴⁷. With an eye to this, it is notable that the anonymous author referred to seventeen cities in Sicily and fourteen in mainland southern Italy. Of the fourteen on the mainland, he only described the geographical situation of Bari⁴⁸.

Of the seventeen cities mentioned in Sicily, *Anonymus* only commented on the geographical situations of Trapani and Palermo. Concerning the former, the *Cronica* describes its natural and man-made fortifications, and a strip of pasturage that extended along a narrow spit into the sea. It notes that: "Trapani was built on the brow of a hill, and was so well defended naturally by a steep slope on all sides that the inhabitants never feared an attack by anybody at whatever time"⁴⁹. In another section it describes how: "there was a plain near Trapani, long and surrounded by the sea almost on all sides. Since the people of Trapani did not have access to other places because the army prevented them, each day they led their cattle and their flocks here for pasture"⁵⁰.

However, it is unlikely that these descriptions indicate that their author was familiar with either city: not only are they generically vague,

46) For an overview of the first activities of the Normans on the island, see Alex METCALFE, *The Muslims of Medieval Italy* (The New Edinburgh Islamic Surveys, 2009) p. 88–111, particularly p. 93–95.

47) *Hic et ultra Farum* (V fol. 294r col. II).

48) V fol. 294v col. II.

49) *Erat autem Traianum in supercilio montis constitutum tantoque naturaliter ex omni parte precipitio munitum, quod nullius gentis, quandocumque foret, timere videbatur accessum* (V fol. 290v col. II). The anonymous author appears to be referring to the ancient settlement of Eryx which occupied Monte San Giuliano. This was referred to as 'Old Trapani' into the nineteenth century. See George DENNIS, *A Handbook for Travellers in Sicily: Including Palermo, Messina, Catania, Syracuse, Etna and the Ruins of Greek Temples* (Murray's Handbooks for Travellers, 1864) p. 159 col. II.

50) *Erat autem campus iuxta Trabulum in longitudinem porrectus fere undique a mari colluxtratus. Huc Trabulenses, quoniam ad alia prohibente exercitu sibi transitus non patebat, omni die boves et pecora sua pasceuda deducebant* (V fol. 296r col. I).