



# Cross-cultural Amalgamation Influencing Personalities Across Timeline in the novel ‘The Sicilian’ by Mario Puzo

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Received: 29 Jun 2025; Received in revised form: 25 Jul 2025; Accepted: 29 Jul 2025; Available online: 02 Aug 2025

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**Abstract**— “*Revenge is a dish that tastes its best when it is cold*”, says Maria Puzo in his work *The Godfather*. Here in this we are about to discuss two characters' personalities across time. The Kings of Norman regime and an Italian revolutionary or a bandit Giuliano Salvatore the differences between them and the similarities between them. Their earnestness has to be discussed through the lives of the Kings of the Norman regime. They have come to Sicily to attack and conquer the kingdom from the ruling monarchs. The city of Sicily is an island but with all political instability and with all religious anarchies. The Norman Monarchs, who ruled Sicily particularly Roger II, William I and William II preceded over a period of remarkable culture and political synthesis fostering a unique Norman Arab Byzantine civilization. Initially a diverse population of Latin Christians Muslims and Greek Orthodox Christians survived earlier. After the reign of Normans, the city of Sicily saw a significant cultural exchange and innovation particularly in art architecture and governance. The Norman Kings, especially Roger II, embarked on a multicultural approach employing individuals from various ethnic and religious backgrounds in their administration. This led to a vibrant exchange of ideas and artistic styles, with Norman architecture incorporating multicultural phenomena. In the novel *Sicilian*, Salvatore Giuliano's downfall is orchestrated by a combination of betrayal, the political maneuvering and machinations of the Mafia, specifically Don Croce Mallow. Giuliano, initially a folk hero bandit, is betrayed by his close friend and lieutenant Aspanu, who is motivated by fear and potentially by Don Croce. The political climate in Sicily with its aspirations for autonomy and the rise of leftist parties creates a volatile environment, where Giuliani's actions are seen as both threat and tool by various factions. In the same way, the Norman Kings despite the cultural exchange ultimately represented a Latin Christian regime and their policies often favour their own interests; this led to a gradual decline in the influence and power of the Muslim and Greek communities which in turn resulted in the decline of the Norman regime.



**Keyword**— *Norman, Regime, Catholic, Mafia, Cosa Nostra, Society*.

## Norman intervention into Sicily

“*Revenge is a dish that tastes its best when it is cold*”, says Maria Puzo in his work *The Godfather*. In the year 1084 The Norman Duke Robert and his son Bohemond had tried and failed to conquer the Byzantine Empire. The years that followed saw a little event known as the first crusade where Byzantine Emperor Alexia's Commons was surely surprised to see Duke Bohemond at the gates of Constantinople in 1095 AD. It was not to destroy his empire, as he had very nearly done so ten years prior but to

help the Byzantines fight the Seljuk Turks. The Norman participation in the first crusade was successful. Count Roger I of Sicily, the man who conquered the island from the Muslims passed away in 1101. He was succeeded by his son Roger II, who represented a new breed of Norman leader. While his legendary father and uncle had been born in Normandy, Roger II grew up among the cosmopolitan and multilingual world of the Sicilian Urban Elite. He was educated by Greek and Muslim tutors. Sicily was subdivided into fiefdoms of various independent minded

barons. Roger II inherited the island of Sicily in 1105, after a bloody feud with papacy and various other barons. He was not content with owning one part of the land. Thus, he set about unifying all of Norman Italy.

Furthermore, the papacy, which had a long history of being mishandled by the Normans, certainly preferred their southern neighbours to remain divided and squabbling. Nevertheless, through plots, inheritance claims, and the raising of a bigger army, the brigade had established total feudal control over all Italian Norman domains by 1127. This encouraged the Pope to begrudgingly recognize him as the duke of the united Norman Realm. A year later, they ambushed and destroyed a papal army led by innocent II and captured the pope himself. The Norman realm in Italy was both at peace and unified under a single capable ruler. It was during the enlightened and stable reign of Roger II that multiculturalism grew. Even before the Normans arrived southern Italy was the crossroads of the mediaeval world, where Byzantine Latin West and Islamic South met and coerced. The French Norman conquered the entire region, the people who lived there prior became integrated into the new Norman realm by the reign of King Roger. The Norman ruling presided over a population that was predominantly made up of Lombard Byzantine Greeks and various Muslim ethnicities, mainly Arab and Greek. As a result, the cultures of the Latin, Greek, and Muslim worlds blended together.

### The civil administration of the Norman Kingdom

Interestingly, the language of the Royal Court in Palermo was not Latin or Norman French, but Greek, the language of the eastern Roman Empire. By 1115, all edicts and written documents published by the Royal Court were composed in Greek, although Latin and Arabic were still used in more local levels of government.

Despite the superficially Byzantine nature of the Royal Norman Court, the kingdom's inner administration was distinctly Arabic in design. Inspired by the Islamic caliphates which were among the most wealthy and sophisticated nations in the world. The internal administration of Norman Sicily was mostly modeled on the institutions of Fatimid Egypt. King Roger II was an enthusiastic patron of the fine arts and his royal court in Palermo was abound with the creators of paintings, mosaics, architecture and literature much of which to the great joy of historians survives to this day in terms of intellectual value. Roger II was particularly fond of Arabic culture. The King spoke Arabic fluently and employed many Islamic poets, scholars, architects, and scientists in his court. The King also brought in skilled laborers and scholars from across the Christian world. He imported skilled masons and stone

carvers from all across Italy, England, and France, Rome and Greece.

Roger II brought in mosaicists, logographers, silk weavers, and scribes, all of whom were well versed in the sophistication and grandeur of Constantinople and helped bring some oriental splendor to the Norman realm. The greatest monument to Arab-Byzantine-Latin harmony can be found in the great cathedrals of Sicily in the grand city of Palermo. The Capella Palatina, or Palatine Chapel, features distinctly Byzantine Greek mosaics superimposed over Arabic Egyptian arches and geometric ceiling designs, all interlaced within an overall Norman architectural design. The wealthiest kingdoms are built upon international trade and Norman Sicily, being a multicultural melting pot situated in the middle of the Mediterranean, was perfectly positioned to become an international center of commerce in the medieval world. This brought to its economic apex overall, the economic reflowering of Sicily, brought a new age of prosperity to its people and strengthened its multiculturalism.

The Kingdom began to flourish, Orthodox Christian and Greek-speaking neighborhoods existed side by side with predominantly Muslim and Arabic-speaking communities, while mosques stood alongside churches and synagogues as all peoples of the book worshipped freely on Italy's sun-kissed docks. Traders bringing valuables from all across the Mediterranean world sell their goods. The sound of raucous bartering in many different languages filled the air. As much as cosmopolitan commerce was working for him, King Roger never gave up his warrior's roots. In 1146, he launched a full-scale invasion into North Africa, seizing land from the local emirs in what is now part of Algeria. Tunisia and Libya, thereby opening up more of the mercantile wealth of the Muslim world to Sicilian merchants. Remarkably, at this time there still existed a community of Christians on the Coast, who still spoke a Latin vernacular some 500 years after the Arabs had initially conquered the region from the Roman Empire.

Needless to say, they were eager to accept the protection of their new Norman Christian Overlord, as we've seen many times throughout history, a kingdom's Golden Age often lasts only as long as the reign of its strongest king. Unfortunately for Norman Sicily, this is a rule that would apply to them too. On the 26th of February, 1154, King Roger II passed away at the age of fifty-eight. His son, King William I, who is known as 'William the Bad' by the critics ruled the kingdom. Unlike his father, William I is not the shrewd administrator, he started neglecting his duties by assigning the officials to do all the work for him. This paved the way for the enemies to lodge in, especially the Papacy who gave priority to the religious perspectives.

King William I is actually able to put down the rebellions and fend off the invading Greeks but, in the process, he lost his African realms to the Caliphate. Apart from that, the other social problems too popped out in the latter half of the 12th century where migration from Western Europe tilted the demographics of Sicily in favour of the Western Catholic population. As a result, the multicultural tolerance shown towards the island's non-Catholic faiths began to erode away by the 1160s. After William I's death in 1166 his son William II ruled and there ended the Norman dynasty.

### **Mario Puzo's *The Sicilian***

The Sicilian is a novel by Mario Puzo that was first published in 1984. The book is a sequel to *The Godfather*, which was published in 1969, and it tells the story of Salvatore Giuliano, a Sicilian bandit, who became a folk hero and a symbol of Sicilian resistance against the Italian government in the years following World War II. Puzo's novel is a complex work of fiction that explores themes of power, loyalty, and the struggle for freedom. One of the most striking aspects of 'The Sicilian' is its portrayal of Sicilian society. Puzo presents a world that is steeped in tradition and ruled by a complex system of family and social hierarchies. The novel is set in the mid-20th century. It feels like a throwback to an earlier era where personal relationships and social connections matter more than anything else. The novel's main character, Salvatore is a product of this world, and his actions and decisions were shaped by his deep commitment to the values and traditions of his people.

Puzo's portrayal of Giuliano is one of the novel's most intriguing aspects. The character is depicted as a complex figure, a man who is both a criminal and a hero. Giuliano is a ruthless bandit, who uses violence and intimidation to maintain his power. He is responsible for numerous murders and robberies, and he is feared and respected by many. However, Giuliano is also a champion of the Sicilian people; he fights against the corrupt Italian government, which he sees as a foreign oppressor, and he works tirelessly to improve the lives of his fellow Sicilians. "The government in Rome with its legal forms demanded the truth. The priest in the confessional box commanded the truth under pain of everlasting hell. Giuliano is a contradictory figure, a man who embodies both good and evil. But truth was a source of power, a lever of control, why should anyone give it away?" (TS 228).

Another important theme in *The Sicilian* is the struggle for power. As frequently uttered by the characters in the novel "truth was a source of power, a lever of control, why should anyone give it away?" ( MP, TS) justifies this. The

novel presents a world where power is everything and where people are willing to do anything to gain and maintain it. The Italian government, the Sicilian Mafia, and Giuliano himself are all locked in a struggle for power, and the novel explores the different strategies and tactics that are used to gain the upper hand. Puzo's portrayal of this struggle is complex and nuanced, and it shows how power can be both a source of strength and a corrupting influence.

Finally, the Sicilian is a novel about loyalty, Puzo's characters are fiercely loyal to their families, their friends, and their ideals, and this loyalty is both a source of strength and a potential weakness. Giuliano's loyalty to his people is what drives him to fight for their rights and freedom, but it also makes him vulnerable to betrayal and manipulation. "When we are children, when we are young, it is natural to love our friends, to be generous to them, to forgive their faults.. But as we grow old and have to earn our bread, friendship does not endure so easily. We must always be on our guard" (MP, TS).

The loyalty that his followers have for him is what enables him to maintain his power, but it also puts them in danger and leads to tragic consequences. In conclusion, *The Sicilian* is a rich and complex work of fiction that explores themes of power, loyalty, and the struggle for freedom. Puzo's portrayal of Sicilian society is both fascinating and troubling, and his characters are complex and multidimensional. The novel is a worthy successor to *The Godfather*, and it stands on its own as a powerful exploration of the human condition.

Like the Norman kings of the earlier era, Giuliano wanted to abnegate his opponents. This is evident from one of the chapters in the novel, where we see, "A low moan of terror and exhaustion rose from the crowd. Giuliano remained leaning against the wall, his heavy pistol still in its holster" (TS, 675). He tries to kill all the other Dons which in turn goes against him.

The critics of the infamous Italian novelist Maria Puzo often attribute his novel's ability to bring the Sicilian landscape and culture to life, the vivid setting of characters such as, Michael Salvatore Giuliano Stalvano, Don Zeno, Peter Clementza are all attributions to his narration of Sicily and society. The Society of Sicily, as we come to know it in history, is predominantly intrigued by obnoxiousness, which is either held by France, Spain Crusaders or the Arabs, Puzo's skill as a storyteller is acknowledged. It is a benign story setting. His book offers a compelling blend of action, adventure, and historical fiction, making it an engaging read for those interested in these genres. In the novel *The Godfather*, Michael comes to Sicily to escape from his crime of killing police officer McCluskey in the meantime for his life safety.

In the end of the novel, Gulliano dies. As we know, the multiculturalism of Sicily has contributed to a man like Giuliano, who is a pure Italian, a pure Sicilian, and a free man. But, the society of that time in Sicily is not genuine to his ideas. As we all know, the novels of Maria Puzo sit in between World War II and the modern era. Italy is often ruled by fascists, as well as Sicily. The novel or the folklore presents Giuliano as a rebel chieftain in Sicily. The government of that time tried to put him down. The Dons try to curtail him in action. This is the difference between the organized criminal gangs and the unorganized thugs. The organized criminal gangs, although they were submissive to the government institution, are more powerful in their own traits. But these bands of individuals who have their own ideas of freedom and liberty are submissive in power to the organized criminal gangs. As we know, Don Croce is all more powerful than these thugs, and in America, as we see in the film as well as in the novel, these unorganized thugs are often killed by the organized Mafia gangs easily. As the Norman Proverb states, "*Stand up to your obstacles and do something about them every problem has a need the seeds of its own solution*".

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