



Julia Becker. *Documenti latini e greci del conte Ruggero I di Calabria e Sicilia: Edizione critica.* Rom: Viella, 2013. 365 S. ISBN 978-88-8334-747-4.



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J. Becker: Documenti latini e greci

The publication of this long-awaited edition of the charters of Count Roger I of Sicily marks a major step forward for the study of the Norman conquest and colonisation of southern Italy. The edition was originally projected by Léon-Robert Ménager, but had not been completed at his death in 1993. Julia Becker has now redone this work from scratch, as a companion piece to her excellent 2008 monograph on the count's career, also published under the auspices of the Deutsches Historisches Institut (DHI). Julia Becker, *Graf Roger I. von Sizilien. Wegbereiter des normannischen Königsreichs*, Tübingen 2008. Although the edition only contains the text of some seventy-eight documents, along with details of twenty-four known *deperdita*, this long and difficult genesis is hardly surprising. The surviving documents of the count are scattered, and in many cases their transmission is fraught with problems. Only 6 of these seventy-eight documents now survive in the original, although 7 other originals were destroyed as recently as 1943, when a Wehrmacht unit burned the medieval contents of the Archivio di stato, Napoli, which ironically had been despatched to Nola for 'safekeeping' since the Archivio premises were deemed to be dangerously close

to the heavily-bombed port of Naples. Admittedly there are photographs of all the count's charters destroyed in 1943 in the DHI, and some thirty-three more of these documents survive in twelfth-century copies. But, by contrast, for a third of these charters there is no medieval manuscript tradition at all, surviving in post-medieval copies, or in no less than 13 cases only in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century printed editions, some of which, like Tromby's work on the monasteries founded by St. Bruno in Calabria, are notorious for their unreliability. Benedetto Tromby, *Storia critico-cronologica diplomatica del patriarca S. Brunone e del suo Ordine Cartusiano*, 10 vols., Napoli 1773-1779.

In addition to the disaster of 1943, the problems of survival are essentially three-fold. Some of the early charters were written on paper rather than parchment, the former being much more fragile – hence also the number of surprisingly early parchment copies. Secondly, the majority of the count's charters – and virtually all of those for Sicilian recipients – were written in Greek, which from the thirteenth century onwards became increasingly redundant, as the Greek population of

Sicily, and to a lesser extent that of southern Calabria, became swamped by Latin immigration or succumbed to Latinate acculturation. Only 24 texts in Greek now survive. At least 18 others originally written in Greek are now known only from later Latin translations, from a variety of periods. Some of these were quite early, for example a confirmation charter of January 1092 for the Benedictine abbey of Mileto in Calabria (nonetheless written in Greek) was translated into Latin c. 1200, and preserved in a manuscript copy from soon after that date (no. 21 in this collection). Similarly, the donation of various properties to a Greek abbey in Calabria, St. Nicholas de Grutaria, in March 1092, survives in a notarial copy of 1267 (no. 22). These translations were made at a time when Greek was still a living language in south Italy, with translators readily available, and one might expect them to be reasonably accurate renderings of the original. With others the transmission was much less straightforward. Thus a confirmation of the property of the Greek bishopric of Vibo Valentia from February 1091 was translated into Latin in 1498, but is now known only from a nineteenth-century printed edition (no. 15), while the foundation charter of the abbey of St. John of Messina, written in December 1091, has been preserved only as a seventeenth-century copy in Italian (no. 18). Thirdly, the survival of documents from Calabria, in particular, has been badly affected by the prevalence of earthquakes in this region, as for example that which destroyed the town of Mileto in 1783.

In addition, the predilection of south Italian medieval clerics for forgery has greatly complicated the transmission of these comital documents. At least 12 of those published here are undoubted medieval forgeries, but the texts of a number of others have suspicious features. Thus, we have one of the most celebrated documents of the count, that establishing the bishopric of Catania in December 1091 (no. 17). The authenticity of the foundation charters of the Sicilian bishoprics has been challenged, and vigorously debated, since the Counter-Reformation, not least because of what these documents implied as a precedent for the rule exercised over the Church by the Habsburg government in the early modern period. Becker considers this particular document, which survives in two twelfth-century copies, to be genuine, in contrast to another forged version from April 1092 (no. 23), and also to the supposed foundation charters for the bishoprics of Mazara, Syracuse and Agrigento (nos. 33, 35 and 36). And yet the reference in the Catania document to Urban II, who at that time was ruling the Roman Church (*tunc temporis regebat Romanum ec-*

clesiam), note the use of the past tense, suggests at the very least that the text has been tampered with, even if it may be substantially genuine. Such comments are not intended to be in any way critical of Becker's invaluable edition; rather they illustrate quite how problematic the textual transmission of many of these documents is. The existence of a number of variant texts of the same transaction, especially among the treacherous documentation of the eremitic monasteries of St. Bruno, is also revealing.

Most of these documents were already known to scholars, albeit in some cases only from poor texts transmitted by early-modern *eruditi* such as Rocco Pirri and Antonio d'Amico, and with previous printed versions scattered through a variety of often ancient and hard-to-find publications. By collecting them together in one volume, and by utilising the manuscripts, such as they are, to provide us with the best possible texts, Julia Becker has rendered an immense service. There are, however, only three completely new texts published here for the first time, all documents preserved in the archives of the Dukes of Medinaceli in Seville, which have only been available for consultation in recent years. These are part of a cache of about a thousand medieval documents from the city archives of Messina, taken to Spain after an uprising in the town in 1679. Two of these (nos. 6 and 34) were issued for Greek monasteries in the Val Demone, the mountainous hinterland of the city, and were hitherto unknown; for the third (no. 62), describing a grant of lands in Calabria to a Greek monk, Scholarios, there was a Latin version published by Pirri in the seventeenth-century — Becker now publishes the Greek text, from a relatively early, twelfth-century parchment copy.

While the model for many of these documents was the Greek *sigillion*, as issued by local notaries throughout the region, as Becker is at pains to note there was no one format for Count Roger's documents, and there was no organised chancery producing them. Because so few originals survive we can say very little about those who wrote the documents — and Greek texts would anyway usually not give the notary's name. With those originally written in Latin we can occasionally discover more. So the two originals surviving in the cathedral archive at Patti (nos. 39 and 40) — key documents for the endowment of the wealthy new Benedictine monastery of St. Bartholomew of Lipari — were both written early in 1094 by Fulk, doctor and chaplain of the count, although only the second has his name in the text, and that same year he also wrote a Calabrian donation charter for Bruno of Cologne (the original of which was destroyed in 1943). But such revelations are rare. By contrast, al-

though seals are mentioned in a number of documents, no seal of Count Roger now survives.

While it is easy to emphasise the limitations, not of this edition, but of the surviving documentation of Count Roger, and how much we do not know â and it is clear that the *deperdita* listed here are only a fraction of what has been lost â we may still in some respects count our blessings. The 78 texts edited here compare favourably with just over 40 surviving charters issued in the name of the countâs elder brother Duke Robert Guiscard, and problematic as some of the texts are, the proportion of forgeries is appreciably less than for the Latin charters of Roger II, more than 40% of which are forged. The great majority of these documents of Roger I date from the 1090s, once the conquest of Sicily was complete. They reveal a surprising amount about the territorial settlement of Sicily that followed as well as at least some of Rogerâs religious patronage in Calabria; although the Calabrian documentation is less full, has more obvious gaps, and its transmission is even less satisfactory than that of Sicily. From those documents which contain witness lists, as for example the two Lipari documents mentioned above, we can obtain quite a full pic-

ture of the countâs entourage, including many clearly important followers whose names were not mentioned by Geoffrey Malaterra, the countâs biographer. Those documents containing *arengae* show us how the count wished to present his rule, and in particular the stress laid on, and the obvious pride in, his liberation of the island of Sicily from Islamic domination and foundation and refoundation of Christian churches. This set the pattern for some of the later royal propaganda under his son Roger II.

The publication of this most valuable edition significantly advances our knowledge of the establishment of the Normans in south Italy and Sicily, and complements MÃ©nagerâs earlier edition of the charters of Robert Guiscard. *Recueil des actes des ducs normands dâItalie 1046â1127*, ed. LÃ©on-Robert MÃ©nager, Bd. 1: *Les premiers ducs 1046â1087*, Bari 1980. We now await a third such volume, with the documents of the later dukes of Apulia, which MÃ©nager also left incomplete on his death. The latterâs *Nachlass* has been entrusted to Jean-Marie Martin, and when that edition too is published we shall be in a much better position properly to understand the society of Norman Italy.

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