

848: Decision to Expel the Muslims from the Langobard Duchies

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Abstract: The decision to expel Muslims from the Langobard duchies forms part of the peace treaty between Radelchis of Benevento and Siconulf of Salerno. For a long time, they had fought out their rivalry militarily. For this purpose, they had deliberately recruited Muslims as mercenaries. In the document of 848, Radelchis not only promised to settle these conflicts, but also gave the promise to banish all *Saraceni* from his domain. Only those were to be exempt who had already lived in Southern Italy before the outbreak of the fratricidal war and who had converted to Christianity.

Source

Radelgisi et Siginulfi divisio ducatis Beneventani, ed. Ferdinand Bluhme (MGH LL 4), Hanover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung 1868, pp. 221–225, cap. 24, here: p. 224, trans. Theresa Jäckh.

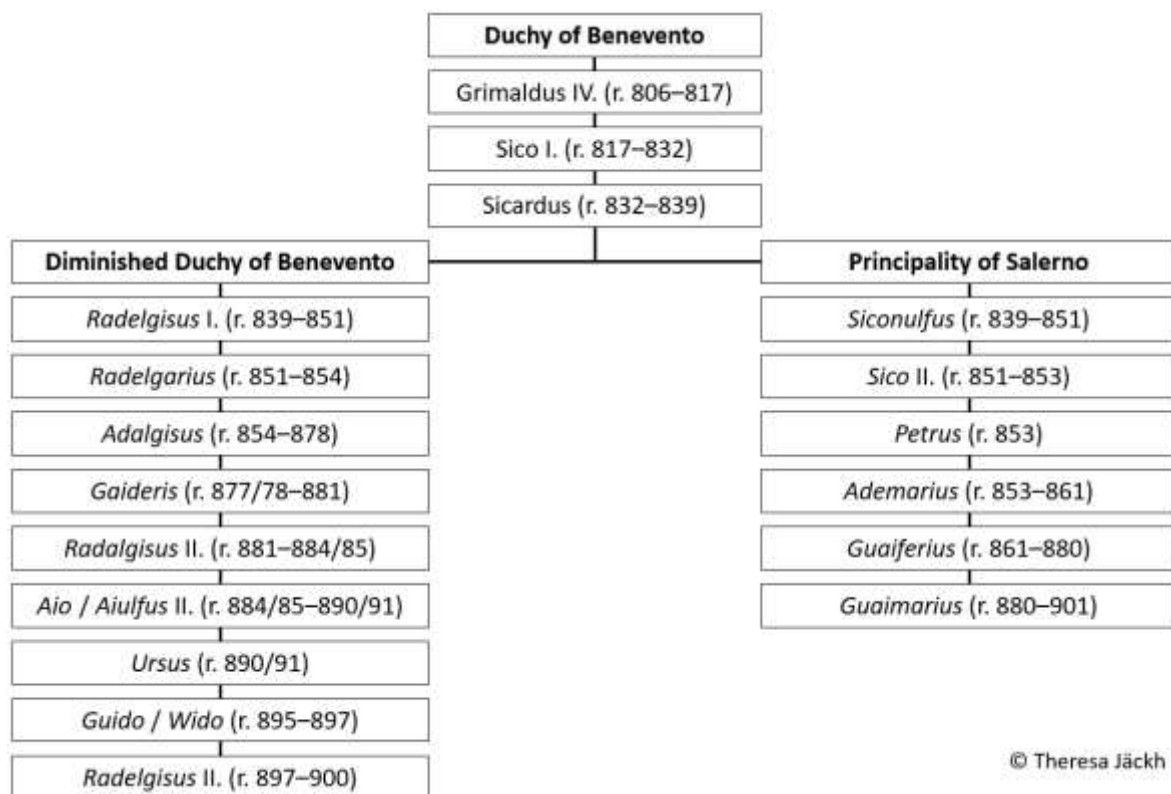
Et amodo nullum Sarracenum in meum vel populi ac terrae meae adiutorium seu amicitiam habere quaerimus, tam de his, qui in omni provinciae Beneventani principatus sunt, quam et de illis, qui extra omnem Beneventanum provinciam sunt; et nunquam eos contra vos irritans irritare faciam, et nullum eis adiutorium impendam vel impendere faciam; et adiuvabo vos absque omni iniusta dilatione usque ad summam virtutem, sicut melius potuero, cum populo meae partis, ut pariter expellamus de ista provincia nostra omnes Sarracenos quomodocumque potuerimus; et amodo, ut dictum est, nullum Sarracenum recipiam vel recipere permittam, praeter illos qui temporibus domni Siconis et Sicardi fuerunt christiani, si magarizati non sunt. Et praesentaliter, antequam dominus Ludovicus rex cum suo exercitu exeat de ista terra, do in vestram potestatem gastaldum Montellam cum omnibus castellis eius et medium

And we determine that no Saracen (i.e. Muslim) shall henceforth find help or friendship either among my people or within my lands; [that is] of those [lands] which lie within all the Beneventan provinces of the Principate, as well as those that are outside the [territory] of the Beneventan province. And never will I incite [*irritans irritare*] them against you; and I will not take support from them, nor threaten you [with them]. And I will support you without any unjust delay to the utmost perfection with the people of my part [of the duchies], as best I can, so that we may equally drive out all the Saracens from these our provinces. And henceforth, as has been said, I will neither receive nor permit any Saracen [to be received], except those who were [already] Christians in the times of the lords Sico and Sicard, and have not again fallen away [from the faith]. And before the lord King Louis shall depart from this land with his army, I hereby give into your authority the Gastald of Montella, with all its

gastaldum Acerentinum, sicut supra fortresses, and half the Gastald of dictum est, si ullo valuerimus ingenio. Acerentinus.

Authorship & Work

[§1] The “Division of the Duchy of Benevento” (*divisio ducatis Beneventani*) is a decree which settled the civil-war-like disputes between the Langobards in southern Italy during the mid-ninth century. The pact is drawn up in the name of Prince Radelchis I (r. 839–851) and contains provisions on how the peaceful coexistence between Radelchis in Benevento and Siconulf (r. 832–839) in Salerno was to be established and permanently maintained. A key aspect of the document’s legal transaction concerns the new definition of the boundaries and possessions of the Langobard province of Benevento. Parts of it were officially granted to Siconulf and the line of Langobard princes he had founded in Salerno in 839. Since Radelchis I hereby formally bequeathed parts of his province to Siconulf, the document was sometimes regarded as a donation charter. The decree further aims to stipulate sovereign rights and regulate norms or standards of interaction between the Langobard realms. This is why the *divisio* is also referred to as a capitulary and is edited as part of the *Leges Langobardorum* in the Monumenta Germaniae Historica.



[§2] The edition dates the document to the year 851.¹ However, the surviving manuscripts which stem from the tenth century (Montecassino) and thirteenth century (Salerno), contain neither a *datum* or *actum*. As such, any conclusions about dating have to be gathered from the historical context: A peace agreement between Radelchis and Siconulf would have taken place after or with the official settlement of their dispute. This was brought about by the conquest of Benevento by King Louis II, who had been King of Italy since 839/840, King of the Langobards from 844 and co-emperor of Rome from 850 onwards. The quoted source passage of the *divisio*

¹ *Divisio ducatis Beneventani*, ed. Bluhme, pp. XLII–XLIII and p. 221.

refers to the presence of King Louis and his army in Benevento. While the editor of the treaty had assumed that Louis II only came south after his coronation as co-emperor in order to deal with the “Saracen threat” the region (especially Bari) was facing, it is now known that this took place before his coronation. Research on southern Italy mainly dates this intervention to the year 849,² information which probably derives from local historians.³ However, according to diplomatic research in the new *Regesta Imperii*, Louis II’s stay and mediation in Benevento took place in the year 848, sometime between January and Pentecost.⁴

Content & Context

[§3] The editor divided the *divisio* into 28 chapters. The document begins with a solemn invocation of peace (cap. 1–3), continues with the promise of granting protection to the churches and monasteries (cap. 4–8), and lays out the division and allocation of power, territory and inhabitants (cap. 9–16). In the case of the population of the now divided Langobard territories, it is recorded whether and under what circumstances fugitive or captured inhabitants should now return to their territories (cap. 15). In addition, the competences of jurisdiction are regulated in cases of legal conflicts across boundaries (for example, murders committed by inhabitants of one dominion against inhabitants of the other, cap. 20; or marriages between inhabitants of the two duchies, cap. 22).

[§4] Chapter 24 of the *divisio*, which is at the centre of our interest, deals with one specific group of people in the Langobard territories: The “Saracens”. The chapter states that the “Saracens” are to be driven out of the Langobard provinces completely and decisively. It also holds that no “Saracens” are to be admitted into the provinces in the future. Moreover, Radelchis assures that he will not use them in internal Langobard disputes. This is a statement which implies that the practice of employing them as mercenaries for internal conflicts had indeed been used previously. It is also interesting that the expulsion of all “Saracens” excludes those who—according to the text—had already converted to Christianity in the two previous generations of rulers, namely under Sico (r. 817–832/834) and Sicard (r. 832–839). Yet, it also states that this only includes those who had not fallen away from the Christian faith in the intervening years.

[§5] Chapter 24 also includes the transfer of the Gastalds of Montella (Campania) and Acerenza (Lucania) to Siconulf, which is also stipulated at the beginning of the *divisio*. Chapter 26 states that Siconulf will be officially recognised as *princeps* and that he would make Salerno the capital of his realm at his own request. The pact concludes with the exchange of prisoners which apparently had been held in pledge: On the side of Radelchis these are two of his sons and a nephew, on the other side a son of the Landonis and one of the Pandulfo family.⁵

Contextualization, Analysis & Interpretation

[§6] As already indicated, the peace agreement was preceded by a long and fierce internal conflict. The root of this dated back to when Radelchis I had Prince Sicard murdered in 839, whereupon Siconulf, the brother of Sicard, fled to Salerno where he founded an independent

² See Kreutz, *Normans*, p. 51; Houben, *Potere*, p. 192.

³ *Chronicon Cassinense*, ed. Waitz (MGH SS rer. Lang. 1), cap. 12, p. 474; *Die Chronik von Montecassino*, ed. Hoffmann (MGH SS 34), pp. 83–84; Andrea Bergomati, *Historia*, ed. Georg Waitz (MGH SS rer. Lang. 1), cap. 12, p. 227.

⁴ *Regesta Imperii I. Die Regesten des Kaiserreichs unter den Karolingern 751–918 (926)*, vol. 3: *Die Regesten des Regnum Italiae und der burgundischen Regna. Tl. 1. Die Karolinger im Regnum Italiae 840–887 (888)*, ed. Böhmer and Zielinski, n. 53–55, pp. 21–23; Poupardin, *Date*, pp. 22–25; Martin, *Guerre*, p. 3, remains unclear as to whether this was in May 848 or 849.

⁵ *Divisio ducatis Beneventani*, ed. Bluhm, p. 225.

line of Langobard rulership. At the same time, the Langobard province of Capua rebelled against Radelchis and his illegitimate seizure of power. To quell this resistance, Radelchis employed Muslim mercenaries – a method of warfare which had been tested in southern Italy shortly before by Andrea II of Naples (r. 834–840).⁶ The Muslim guards ravaged and pillaged the Langobard territories in the service of Radelchis and razed Capua to the ground in 841. Siconulf then also began to place Muslim mercenaries in his service. The Muslims who thus entered into the southern Italian territories may have been recruited from the Aghlabid provinces of Ifrīqiya and parts of Sicily, and they soon began to claim power in their own right.

[§7] The fact that such dynamics triggered an intervention by Louis II may not be surprising in light of the general situation on the southern Italian peninsula. The activity of Muslim mercenaries, raiders and conquerors was by no means limited to the Langobard territories: after raids on Apulian and Calabrian coastal towns, the hinterlands of Campania and Lucania with its monasteries and churches were also attacked. In addition, the city of Rome together with its port in Ostia was threatened and attacked by Muslims. Such activities even brought some places under Muslim domination: In 839, Muslims conquered Byzantine Taranto for the first time, and Bari in 847, where they were able to establish a semi-independent rulership (referred to as the Emirate of Bari) for about 30 years.⁷ On his southern Italian campaign, Louis II attempted to subjugate this Muslim stronghold of Bari but failed. During a second siege, which took place after the negotiations in Benevento, he succeeded to take Bari with the support of a Byzantine fleet in 871.

[§8] Although the Muslim expansions on the southern Italian peninsula posed a considerable danger to the region's stability, we can assume that there was also a degree of contact and cooperation between locals and Muslims. In the context of our source passage, this initially seems obscured: The "Saracens" are only touched upon briefly and in general terms without indicating any further information about their backgrounds or whereabouts. Local chronicles of this time, however, sometimes perceived and distinguished certain groups of Muslims such as *Saraceni*, or *Mauri*. In the case of Benevento, the chroniclers are also informed about their activities and so we learn that "Saracens" not only served as mercenaries, but also acted as significant supports for the controversial ruler. Indeed, Radelchis is said to have used Muslims as his personal guards, among whom a certain *Massar* rose so high in the ruler's favour that he was referred to by the title of *dux*.

[§9] When Louis II intervened in the Langobard conflict and conquered the city of Benevento, Radelchis I submitted himself to the king (Siconulf had already sworn his oath of allegiance to Louis II a few years earlier). Furthermore, Radelchis I readily agreed to repudiate his Muslim mercenaries as well as his trusted ally: *Dux Massar*, who had acted as leader of the Muslim troops,⁸ was summoned and publicly executed.⁹ Subsequently, Radelchis I had to commit himself to peace under the conditions recorded in the *divisio*, which also included the promise to drive out the Muslims of his dominions altogether and to never allow any Muslims to settle there in the future.

[§10] It is unclear as to how and how successfully such an endeavour would have been implemented in practice. An interesting source to consider in this context is the *Codex Diplomaticus Cavensis*, which contains private documents from the late-eighth to the late-eleventh century and has been preserved in the Benedictine abbey of Cava de'Tirreni.¹⁰ It contains several pieces of evidence that hint at a Muslim presence in the Langobard-controlled

⁶ Iohannes Neapolitensis, *Gesta episcoporum Neapolitanorum*, ed. Waitz (MGH SS rer. Lang. 1), cap. 57, p. 431.

⁷ Poupardin, *Date*, pp. 22–25; Musca, *Bari*, p. 38; *Regesta Imperii* I,3,1, n. 54.

⁸ Settia, *Castelli*, pp. 45–46; Houben, *Benevent*, pp. 7–8.

⁹ Poupardin, *Date*, pp. 22–25; Musca, *Bari*, p. 38; *Regesta Imperii* I,3,1, n. 54.

¹⁰ *Codex diplomaticus Cavensis*, vol. 1: a. 792–960, ed. Schiani et al.

areas even after the decision to expel them was reached in 848. Indeed, *Saraceni* or *Mauri* appear in different documents even well after the mid-ninth century. Furthermore, there is evidence of toponymy, e.g. a plot of land called *terra sarracini*, which might suggest that “Saracens” had at some point been integrated into the territory of Lucania and Campania and were possibly still around in later decades.¹¹ Recent research on Muslim settlements along the Garigliano River in the border region between Campania and Latium has shown that Muslim activity can be traced there as late as the second decade of the tenth century.¹²

At this point, an important question remains as to who these “Saracens” that the *divisio* talks about actually were. Are they generally to be identified as Muslims or does the term also include converts or Christian descendants of Muslims? The *divisio* indicates that some “Saracens” under Langobard rule had already converted to Christianity during the first half of the ninth century under Sico and Sicard – and thus before the outbreak of the Langobard civil war. These groups were to be excluded from the expulsion. As such, this passage is quite relevant not only because it indicates a remarkably early arrival of Muslims in the Duchy of Benevento, namely before the commonly accepted time in which they were recruited as mercenaries. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that among these Muslims, some had apparently converted to Christianity – although their motivations are not specified. In any case, the fact that the *divisio* continued to regard them as *Saraceni* suggests that the term ‘Saracen’ did not necessarily have an exclusively religious meaning but could also refer to an ethnic origin. Moreover, it should be considered whether the paragraph of the *divisio* might have been specifically directed against those “Saracens” that were militarily active and involved in the conflict, rather than “Saracens” altogether. In any case, the partition treaty of Radelchis I represents a significant legal text which deals with a new (Muslim or ex-Muslim) minority group under Christian rule in southern Italy and offers a remarkable case of prohibition of interreligious contacts and interaction.

Edition(s) & Translation(s)

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¹¹ Kreutz, *Normans*, pp. 51–52.

¹² Di Branco, Matullo, Wolf, *Insediamiento islamico*.

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