

1142? The Rise and Fall of Focerò in a Greek Petition to King Roger II of Sicily

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Abstract: This Greek petition from Norman Sicily under king Roger II (r. 1130–1154) reports back on events in the post-conquest period of the 1090s when the king's father, count Roger I (d. 1101) was establishing and re-organising a rudimentary form of administration over lands and men on the island. The petition not only sheds light on these processes, but it also recalls that there had been serious and sustained rebellions in Calabria and Sicily against the authority of Roger's wife, Adelaide (r. 1101–1112), the mother of the future king, Roger II. During this time, a new settlement of Focerò, where many families had been ordered to live and work, had been repeatedly attacked and destroyed.

Source

Archivio capitolare della Cattedrale “Arca Magna” di Patti, Fondo Carpetazza, fol. 20. Edition: *I diplomi greci ed arabi di Sicilia*, ed. Salvatore Cusa, Palermo: Lau, 1868–1882; repr. Cologne and Vienna: Böhlau, 1982, pp. 532–535. Re-edited on the basis of the manuscript and translated by Alex Metcalfe. The new edition reproduces lacunas and spacings within the lines. The gaps between the paragraphs, however, are not found in the manuscript, which has a continuous text without paragraph breaks. Greek text that is underlined by dots is now either missing or illegible, and the reading given follows that in Cusa’s edition.

+ Τῷογερίου τοῦ εὐσεβεστάτου, καὶ ἀγιοτάτου καὶ κραταιοῦ ὥργος καὶ νοηθοῦ πάντῶν^a τῶν χρι^β στιανῶν πολλὰ τὰ ἔτη, + γίνωσκε ἄγιε ἀύθ[έν]τ[α] ὅτι ἐν τοῖς καιροῖς τοῦ μακαρίου^β κ[αὶ] ἀγιοτάτου ἡμῶν ἀύθ[έν]τ[ου] τοῦ πατρός σου κρότον μέγαν ἐποίησεν ἐν τῇ χώρᾳ ἐμβολὰ οἱ^β λεγομένη^γ Κατούνα· ἀντίκρης Τραγίν[ας], καὶ ἐστόρευσεν τοὺς ἄρχοντας Καλαυρίας καὶ Σικελίας^δ καὶ ἔκροσεν πρεκόνην ἐν ἡμέρᾳ τετάρτης^η ἀκούσατε ἄρχοντέσ Καλαυρί[ας] καὶ Σικελίας, ^η οἵος δ' ἀν φανῇ ἔχοντα περισσώτερον υελλάνον εἰς τὴν ιδίαν αὐτοῦ πλατεῖαν ἡ σμίζει· ^η ἡ ἀλλάζει, ἡ σινόρον χωρας καταλήσει, ^η ινα ἔχων ἔξουσίαν παιδία τῶν παιδίων μου, ^η μενγγλαβίζειν καὶ πομπεύειν τοὺς ἄρχοντας αὐτὸν· ^{κ[αὶ]} [...] περὶ

May the years of Roger—the most revered, most holy, most powerful king and defender of all the Christians—be many! Know, holy lord, that in the times of our blessed and most holy lord your father, he caused a great clamour in the stretch of land called Katouna^d opposite Tragena [Troina] where he convened the archons of Calabria and Sicily. Then, on the fourth day he announced a proclamation: “Archons of Calabria and Sicily! Listen! Whoever appears to have more villeins on his own register [than he ought to], or confuses or changes or destroys a land boundary, [then] my descendants *have the authority* to flog

^a Cusa, *I diplomi*, reads πάντον.

^b Sic.

^c For references to Κατούνα (“encampment,” “garrison,” “barracks”) as a Sicilian toponym (e.g. Κατούνας Μανιάκου), see Caracausi, *Lessico*, pp. 283–284; Uggeri, *I castra*, pp. 319–336, at pp. 335–336.

αὐτ[οῦ] [.....]αγμα καὶ τοῦ ^ε τὸν δὲ τερρέριν στ[αυ]ρώ[νειν] ⁹ εἰδός κορεύγειν καὶ δοδήν καλάμην εἰς τὸ χαίρειν καὶ φροστεύγειν ἐκ τήν χῶραν· τοῦ ¹⁰

του γέγωνε ἐν ἡμέρᾳ Δ' κ[αὶ] πάλιν τῇ ε' ἡμέρᾳ τὸ αὐτὸ πρεκόνην· καὶ τῇ σ' ἡμέρᾳ ¹¹ ο αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτοῦ ^ε τρεῖσ ἡμέρασ ἔδωκ[ε] τὸ πρεκόνην, καὶ ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν προστάττω τὸν νοτάρ[ιον] Φί ¹² λιππον τὸν Κολοκίν[θον] τὸν ἐν τῷ ἄστει Γερακίου καὶ Φίλιππον Καμινήτην καὶ Ἀνδρέαν Γερα ¹³ κιτάνον· Ὅπου δ' ἂν μου εὑρωσιν ἀνθ[ρωπ]ον ξένον τ[ε] Καλαυρόν καὶ Σικελὸν· ἵνα ἔχων ἔξου ¹⁴ σίαν παρέμουσ τοῦ κόμητος τοῦ σουρεῦσαι αὐτοὺς καὶ οἰκοδομῆσαι τὸν Φωκαιρὸν κα ¹⁵ στρον· καὶ ἵνα μου ποιήσει πῦργον ὃ τι να τὸν υλέπω ἀπὸ τοῦ Μυλίτον + καὶ οίος δ' ἄν ¹⁶ τερρέρησ φανῆ ποιοῦνταν δύναμιν εἰς τοὺς ἐμοὺς δουλευτὰς τὸ ἐγώ Ρωγέρ[ιος]^f προ ¹⁷ στάττω ἵνα ἔχω ἡ ἔξουσίαν ἡ ἐμοὶ δουλευταὶ τοῦ υάλλειν λισίδ[αν] εἰς τὸν αὐτὸν ἀυχέναν, καὶ ¹⁸ μου φέρνειν ἔμπροσθεν, ταῦτα ἐκηρώθ[η] ἐβουλώθ[η] τῇ ἐμοὶ διακήρω βούλλ[η], καὶ ἀπεδώθ[η] ἔχ τοὺς ἐμοὺς δουλευτάς +

οὗτος ὑπήρχε ὁ πρόλογος καὶ ἡ πρόσταξις τοῦ ἀγίου αὐθ[έν]τ[ου] ἡμῶν τοῦ π[ατ]ρ[ό]ς ¹⁹ σου, τῶν καιρῶν ἐκείνον· καὶ ἀφῆκέν σοι εἰς ἀνάμνησιν ἐκ πάντ[ω]ν τῶν τερρερίων + ²⁰ ταῦτα γοῦν νοτ[άριος] Φίλιππος τοῦ Κολοκίνθ[ου] καὶ Φίλιππ[ος] Καμινίτισ ἀκούσας τὴν τοιαύτην πρό ²¹ σταξιν παρὰ τοῦ ὑπερ λάμπρου ἀγίου αὐθ[έν]τ[ου] ἡμῶν τοῦ π[ατ]ρ[ό]σ σου, ἐσουρεύσαμεν φαμιλίεσ Φ' ἀπὸ τοῦ Λιώριν ἀχρι τοῦ Μιλαίου^g τοῦ ἀντικρείσ^h τοῦ Ἅγιου Μάρκου εἰς τὸν Φωκαιρὸν, καὶ μετὰ ²² τοῦ σουρέυσαι αὐτοὺς· ἐξήτησαν ὁ λαὸς χωράφια εἰς τὸ σπέρνην καὶ ζῆν + καὶ ἀπήλθομ[εν] εἰς τὸν ²³ ἄγιον αὐθ[έν]τ[α] τὸν π[ατέ]ρα σου καὶ ἐδείξαμεν τὸ ζητούμενον παρὰ τοῦ λαοῦ, Καὶ ἐπρόσταξεν ὁ ἄγι ²⁴ οσ αὐθ[έν]τ[ης] ὁ π[α]τ[ή]ρ σου ιβ'

and parade these archons; to tonsure landholders in the form of a cross; cane them, and to dismiss and banish them from the land!"

He made this same proclamation three times on the fourth day, and again on the fifth—and on the sixth day. "Henceforth, I order the notary Filippou Kolokinthos in the town of Geraki [Gerace] and Filippou Kaminétes and Andreas of Gerace that wherever they find an unregistered (*xenos*) Calabrian or Sicilian villein (*anthrōpos*), of mine they have the authority from me as count to gather them together and to build a walled settlement (*kastron*) at Fōkairos [Focerò], and to make me a tower that I can see from Mileto! And if any landholder (*terrere*s) should appear to exert control over my vassals (*doulevtas*), then I, Roger, order that my vassals should have the authority to put a chain on their neck and to bring them before me! This wish is announced and declared on my authority and conceded to my vassals!"

This was the proclamation (*prologos*) and command of our holy lord your father in his days, and he left it for you as a reminder for all the landholders. And so, when the notary Filippou Kolokinthos and Filippou Kaminítis heard this command from our excellent holy lord your father, we gathered together at Fōkairon [Focerò] five hundred families from Libiri [Oliveri] as far as Milaio opposite San Marco. After they had brought them together, the people asked for fields to sow and for their livelihood, so we went to the holy lord your father and showed him what had been requested by the people. Thus, the holy lord your

^c The reading of the superscripted addition in the manuscript is tentative.

^e Cusa reads ἡμέρα τὸ αὐτοῦ.

^f Cusa reads Ρωγέρης.

^g Cusa reads Μίλεου.

^h Cusa reads ἀντιχρείς.

ἄρχοντας εἰς τὸ διαχωρῆσαι [τὴν] χώραν τοῦ Φωκαιροῦ

καὶ οὗτοὶ εἰσιν οἱ διαχωρήσαντες τὴν χώραν τοῦ Φωκαιροῦ· ὁ κύριοςⁱ Γεώργιος ὁ θεῖος τοῦ κυρίου Εὐγενίου το ἀμμηρὰ^j καὶ ὁ κύριος Μέλισ ὁ Φράνγκος τῆσ Τραγίνασ καὶ ὁ ἀριφεις μέτουσ^j Μαρσατίνουσ τῆς Τραγίνασ· Πέ^k τρος Φιλονίτ[ης] τῆσ Κατούνασ τοῦ Μανιακή· νοτάρισ Λέων τοῦ Αδριανοῦ· Υασίλισ Τριχάρισ^l τοῦ Αγίου Μάρκου· Μενγλαβίτ[ης]^k τοῦ Αγίου Μάρκου· Μουλέσ τοῦ Μαύρου Χώματο[ς]^l· ὁ ἡγούμενος τ[ῆς] Γαλάτης καὶ ὁ ἡγούμεν[ος] τοῦ ἀρχιστρατήγου Μιχαήλ· νοτ[άριο]ς Λέον ὁ Σακκάς καὶ ὁ νοτ[άριο]ς Φίλιππο[ς]^l τοῦ Κολούκιν[θος]

father ordered twelve archons to define the land of Focerò.

Those who defined the land of Focerò are: Geōrgios, uncle of lord (*kuris*) Eugenios the *amīr*; lord Melis the Frank from Traginas [Troina]; Arifis with those from Marsatinos at Troina; Petros Filonitēs from Katouna tou Maniakē [“the encampment at Maniace”]; the notary Leo of Adriano [Adrano]; Vasilis Tricharis of San Marco; the bodyguard (*manglabitis*) of San Marco; Moules of Mavrochóma; the abbot of Galatē [Galati Mamertino]; the abbot of the Archangel [*archistrategos*, lit. commander-in-chief i.e. of the angelic forces] Michael;^l the notary Leo Sakkas, and the notary Filippos Koloukinthos.

οὗτοὶ εἰσιν οἱ ἄρχοντες οἱ διαχωρήσαντες τὴν χώραν τοῦ Φωκαι[ροῦ]· [ἄρχεται οὗτος]^m τοῦⁿ ἀπὸ τὰ υοτάνια, καὶ ἀπὸ τοῦ υλόρου καὶ ἀναυαίνει εἰς τὴν ἀγίαν θ[εοτό]κον τοῦ ματαί^o νου· καὶ ἀπὸ σώζει εἰς τὴν ἀγίαν Ιερουσαλήμ, καὶ καταυαίνει ἐκ τὰ ἀγριακὰ [καὶ]^o ἐκ τὸν χέτην ἄχρι εἰς τὴν ἀγίαν εκκατερίνην καὶ ἀποσώζει εἰς τὸν ποταμόν τοῦ μαύρου^o χώματοσⁿ καὶ ἀπὸ τὸν ποταμὸν ἀναυαίνει [εἰ]σ τὴν πέτραν· ἄχρι τῆσ τραχίασ· καὶ^o ἀπὸ σώζει εἰς τὸν υασιλικὸν δρόμον + καὶ πάλιν ἀπέρχεται τὸν υασιλικὸν δρόμον ἄχρι^o εἰς τὸ κισσόπετρον· καὶ ἀπὸ τὸ κισσόπετρον ἀπέρχεται ἄχρι εἰς τὰ τρία πηγάδια +^o καὶ ἀπὸ τὰ τρία πηγάδια [εἰ]σ τὸ υασιλικὸν πηγαδ[ιον] ὁ που ὑπάρχει ἡ Διακράτησ[η]ς^o^o τοῦ μοῦντου ἀλυάνου + καὶ καταυαίνει [εἰ]σ τὴν ἐγείρον εἰς τὸ σίνορον τῶν μοναχῶν^o πάκτων + καὶ ἀπὸ τακεῖ[θεν] καταυαίνει ἄχρει τοῦ ποταμοῦ· καὶ νάλλει τὸν ἄγιον^o πέτρον ἔσω + καὶ πάλιν ἀπὸ τὸν

These are the archons who defined the land of Focerò. *It [the boundary] begins thus*: from Ta Botánia [“The Herbs”] and from Brolo, it goes up to the Holy Virgin of Matainos and leads towards holy Jerusalem; it goes down from the uncultivated countryside and from the ridge as far as St Catherine’s and comes to the river of Mavrokoma; and from the river, it goes up to the rock as far as Trachia, and continues to the imperial road, and then it leaves the imperial road [and goes] to Kissopetron [“Ivy Rock”]. From Kissopetron, it goes to the three springs, and from the three springs to the imperial spring where there is the district (*diakratēsis*) of Montalbano; then it goes down to the perimeter, to the boundary of the Patti monks, and then down as far as the river and includes St Peter’s within it; then, back from the river, *it goes up the*

ⁱ Cusa reads κύριος.

^j Cusa reads ἀριφεισμέτους.

^k Unclear reading that appears as either a double gamma or a gamma-lambda monogram. Cusa reads Μενγλαβίτης.

^l Possibly a reference to the monastery of Santissima Trinità at Mileto that was known as the abbey of San Michele Arcangelo in the decades after its foundation by Roger I in 1081.

^m From here to the end of the line are two interlinear tears in the manuscript that slightly obscure the lower parts of the letters in the personal name, Φίλιππος and the place name, Φωκαι[ροῦ]. The phrase ἄρχεται οὗτος in line 28 is entirely missing due to a lacuna. Here, its restoration by Cusa seems justified. Indeed, in cases where the original Greek is now obscure or missing, but was once legible to Cusa, the text and translation appear in italics..

ⁿ Cusa reads τοῦ μαύρου κώματος.

^o Cusa reads διαχράτησης.

ποταμόν ἀναυαίνει τὸν υουνὶν τοῦ ἀγίου ἐπίνι
|^39 κος καὶ ἀποσώζει εἰς ταὶς ρήξες πλησίον
τοῦ Φωκαιροῦ καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν Φωκαιρὸν κα |^40
ταυαίνει τὸν χέτην ἄχρι εἰς τὸν σταυρόν τοῦ
χαλινζέτερει καὶ ἀποδιδὴ εἰς ταῖς Λ' |^41
Δρείαις· καὶ ἀπὸ ταὶς Λ' δρείαις πάλιν
καταναίνει τὸν ρίακα ἄχρι τοῦ ποταμοῦ |^42 τῶν
υοτανιών· καὶ ἀποδιδὴ εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν ὅθεν
καὶ τὴν ἔναρξιν τῶν ση |^43 νόρων ἐποιήσαν οἱ
ἄρχοντες τοῦ ἔστεν τοῦ Φωκαιροῦ,

καὶ ὁ ἄγιος ἡμῶν αὐθ[έν]τ[ης] ἔστερ |^44 ξεν καὶ
ἐνευαίωσεν τὴν διαχώρησιν ἦνπερ
ἐδιαχώρησαν οἱ τίμιοι ἐνδοξότατοι αὐτοῦ |^45
ἄρχοντες τοῦ ἔστεν τοῦ Φωκαιροῦ, ἔως τῆς
συντελείας τοῦ αἰώνος, ἀμήν + |^46 καὶ ἄνα
πέντε ἐνιαυτοὺς ἵνα μου δουλεύει ὁ καθῆσ
κατὰ τὴν ιδίαν αὐτοῦ δύναμιν· |^47 καὶ μετὰ
ὸλίγα ἔτη τέλος τοῦ υίου ἔχρισεν ὁ μακαρίτης
[καὶ] ἄγιος ἡμῶν αὐθ[έν]τ[ης] ὁ π[ατ]ήρ σου·
καὶ ἐμορτένε |^48 ἐν Καλαυρίᾳ καὶ Σικαλίᾳ τῆς
ἄγιας αὐθ[έν]τ[ης] τ[ρίας] τῆς μητρός σου καὶ
[ἀπ]ελ[ύθη τὸ κάστρον τοῦ Φωκαιροῦ διὰ]¶ |^49
σῶν ἀρχόντων οὓς ἐπικράτουσαν τὴν καιρόν
ἐκεῖνον τὴν χώραν καὶ πάλιν^q μετὰ θ[ε]ὸν ἡ
ἄγια αὐθ[έν]τ[ης] τ[ρίας] ἡ μητρά σου ἐνίκησεν
τους τερρερίους, καὶ ἀνοικοδόμησεν |^50 [πάλιν
τὸν]¶ Φωκαιρόν Β' ἄχρι εἰς τὰς Γ' φορὰς, καὶ
ἡς τὴν τρίτην φωρὰν κατάλυσεν αὐτὸν ἡ Αλ |^51
κέρης,^s καὶ ὑπάρχει ἔρημον τὸ κάστρον ἀπὸ
τῆς κυμήσεως τῆς αὐθ[έν]τ[ης] τ[ρίας], καὶ
ἐξόρησαν τὸν σε |^52 [βελλάνον]ς ἀπὸ τοῦ]¶
Φωκαιροῦ οὓς ἐκατοίκουν εἰς τὴν χώραν ὁ
Ἀλγέρις· Διὰ τὸ ὄνομα |^53

[.....]¶ ἐμήρασαν αὐτόνσ [.....]¶
αὐτούς εἰς τὴν νίναν· καὶ εἰς τὸ Λι |^54
[βίριν.....]¶ καὶ εἰς τὸ ἄγιον Πέτρον

hill of St Epinikos (*agios epinikos*) and continues to the vines near Focerò; and from Focerò it goes down to the ridge to the cross of Chalinzeteri and comes out at “the thirty trees.” And from “the thirty trees” it goes back down the stream as far as the river of Ta Botánia and then comes out at the sea where the start of the boundaries is that the archons of Focerò made.

Our holy lord confirmed and established the division of land that his honourable distinguished archons who were at Focerò defined until the end of time. Amen. And, for five years, each man gave labour services to me according to his own ability.^u After a few years, our blessed and holy lord your father reached the end of his life and there was a rebellion in Calabria and Sicily of the holy lady your mother, and [the *kastron* of Focerò was destroyed by] your archons who lorded over the land at that time; and again with [the help of] God the holy lady your mother defeated the land holders and rebuilt Focerò a second time, and then a third time. And on the third time, Alger[iu]s destroyed it, and the *kastron* became deserted after the death of the holy lady, and they drove out the *villeins* from Focerò whom *they settled* on the land. Algeri[u]s, in the name

[.....] they divided them
[.....] them to Bina and Li[biris]
[.....] and to St Peter's
[.....] and to Mavrochóma and to

^p 60mm of text is missing from two lacunas in manuscript. Cusa reads ἀπελύθη τὸ κάστρον τοῦ Φωκαιροῦ διὰ.

^q Lacunas in manuscript from the line above obscure the upper parts of the text, which is only legible with difficulty.

^r Cusa reads πάλιν τὸν.

^s Cusa reads Αλγέρης.

^t Here, the manuscript is severely damaged; 55mm of text is either missing or illegible. Cusa reads βελλάνους ἀπὸ τοῦ.

^u It is unclear to whom “to me” refers. While it is very likely to refer to Roger I, a more literal reading would suggest that the author of the petition was himself a key landholder at the time of the revolt who had been dispossessed of his villeins as a result of the turmoil.

^v 60mm lacuna.

^w 45mm lacuna.

^x 90mm in manuscript text illegible. Cusa reads λιβίριν for the first word of the line.

[.....] ^y καὶ εἰσ τό Μαυρόν χοῦμαν [καὶ] εἰσ τὰ ⁵⁵ [.....] ^z	[.....] whip [.....]
[μενγγλαβίζεται] ^{aa} καὶ ⁵⁶	[.....]
[.....]	[.....] the register (<i>katounoma</i>)... the priest Basileis, son of Mavro[s]
..] ^{bb} ⁵⁷ [.....] ^{cc} κατούνομα αὐτό· ὁ παπᾶς νασιλείσ νιὸς τοῦ μαυρο ⁵⁸ [.....] ^{dd}	[.....] your villein [...] and many others besides. And hence [...] holy lady because there was great turmoil in the whole land of Calabria [...] Sicily, but the holy lady your mother smashed him like a ceramic pot [...] him at the time of her holy rule, and there is not at this time [...] <i>absenting his name only</i> was a means for him through a villein [...] [.....]
[ἄνθρωπος σου] ^{ee} μοσ [...] καὶ ἀλλοι ἔτεροι πολλοὶ, ὅθεν καὶ [...] ⁵⁹ [...] ^{gg} άγιε αὐθ[έν]τα ὅτι ὅπερ ἐμουρδουννίασ φουερὸς ὑπῆρχεν ἐν πάσῃ τῇ γῆ Καλα ⁶⁰ [βρίας] [.....] ^{hh} σικελία[ς] καὶ ἀλλὰ ἡ ἀγία αὐθ[έν]τ[ρι]α ἡ μ[ητ]ρά σου ώσ σκεύη κεράμεωσ συνέτριψεν αὐτόν, ⁶¹ [...] ⁱⁱ αὐτὸν εἰσ τὸν καιρόν τῆσ ἀγίασ αὐτῆσ νασιλεί[ας], καὶ οὐκ ἐστιν ἐν τῷ καιρῷ τοῦ ⁶² [.....] ^{jj} ἀργενών τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ μόνον ^{kk} ἀφορμῇ ἡτον πρὸς αὐτὸν διὰ ἔναν νελλάνον ⁶³ [.....] ^{ll} [.....] ^{mm}	[.....] [.....] <i>you have your villeins</i> whom the tyrannical [...] usurped [.....] seized them after the death of the holy lady your mother until your [.....] <i>he boasts and says with his brother in-law (sungenis) Gēmountos</i> [Guimond] that at this [...] time <i>there is not an archon to expel me</i> , either their own king [...] [...] <i>the lord against him because of the plundering</i> that he had done of Focerò, and he seized all the land of Focerò because of its poor [.....] <i>that made right (λαλλά)</i> i

y 45mm lacuna.

^z 150mm lacuna.

^{aa} The reading here follows that of Cusa. The manuscript text is unclear.

^{bb} An entire line of about 270mm of text is illegible.

^{cc} Lacuna followed by 85mm of illegible text. Cusa reads [λι]βίσιν for the first word of the line.

^{dd} Lacuna followed by 150mm of illegible text.

ee Illegible. Reading follows Cusa's.

ff Lacuna in manuscript.

gg 35mm of text is missing.

^{hh} 40mm of text missing. Cusa reads Καλαβρίας καὶ Σικελίας which makes sense in the context, but which would be too short to fill 40mm of missing text if unabbreviated.

ⁱⁱ 35mm of text is missing.

jj 35mm of text is missing.

^{kk} This phrase follows Cusa's reading. It is difficult to read due to the darkening of the parchment.

¹¹ 90mm of the manuscript text is illegible here.

mm 100mm of text is illegible due to darkening of the parchment.

ⁿⁿ The reading here follows Cusa's.

oo 55mm lacuna.

pp 50mm lacuna.

^{qq} Text illegible due to darkening of the parchment. The reading here follows Cusa's.

rr 40mm of text is missing.

^{ss} Text barely legible due to

Text barely legible due to the darkening of the parchment. The reading here follows that of Caso.

[.....]^{tt} τοῦτον ⁶⁷[.....]^{uu} ὁ αὐθέντης πρὸς αὐτὸν διὰ τὴν ἀρπαγήν ἣν πέπραχεν^{vv} τοῦ Φωκαιροῦ καὶ ἑκατήρ- ⁶⁸ παξεν [.....]^{ww} τὴν χώραν τοῦ Φωκαιροῦ ὅλην ὑπὸ τῆς πονηρίασ αὐτῶν ὅτι καναλλάρισ ἵνα ⁶⁹[.....]^{xx} σει τριῶν ἡμερῶν τὴν διακράτησιν τῆς χώρας [.....]^{yy} ἐπλούτησεν ἄγιε αὐθέντα^{zz} [.....]^{aaa} ⁷⁰ Φωκαιροῦ τοὺς χριστιανοὺς ὅτι καὶ ὁ ἄρχοντες σου καὶ οἱ στρατηγί σου ἐδείλουσαν ⁷¹ τὰ κακὰ τοῦ,

μόνον ἄγιε αὐθέντα εἰ^{bbb} μὲν τὸν θέλεις κακοποιῆσαι διὰ τὰ σφάλματα ⁷² αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν παρακοὴν τὴν ποιεῖ πρὸς τὴν ἀγίαν σου βασιλείαν, οἱ ἀδικία τοῦ ὅρου τοῦ ⁷³ κόνδου ἀρκεῖ τοῦ, στείλας τὸν αὐθέντον μου τὸν δοῦκαν καὶ τοὺς ἄρχοντας αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐμέν ὁ ⁷⁴ γράψας ταύτην τὴν ἐπιστολήν, καὶ ἀπεσώθη πρὸς σε τὸν ἀγιόν μου αὐθέντα σὺν τοῦ ἐμοῦ ἀ- ⁷⁵ δέλφου Ἰωάννου, καὶ ἵνα θαυμάσεις καὶ ξενιαστής ἐκ τὴν ζημίαν ἣν πέπρακεν ⁷⁶ πρὸς σὲ τὸν ἀγιόν ἡμῶν αὐθέντα καὶ ἵνα ὑπάρχωμεν καὶ ἡμεῖς οἱ δοῦλοι τῶν δούλων σου ⁷⁷ πρὸς σέ ἀληθινῆ καὶ πίστει ἔχομεν καὶ ἄλλα πολλὰ σφάλματα τοῦ Ἀλκέρι ⁷⁸ εἰς τὸ σου ὑποδεῖξαι καὶ ἀτονον μὲν γράφονταν, ἀλλὰ ἔως ὁδοῦ ὁ σκόπος + ⁷⁹

[.....] τῆς σικίας νικηφόρος, νικόλαος λύτρις, ἀρκάδιος μαστοῦκας, ἀρκάδιος ⁸¹ τῆς βίνας, λέος τοῦ γεροῦ μουλέ, λέος λουπουλίτης, νικόλαος λουπολίτης, σέργις λουπολίτης, ⁸² βασίλις λουπολλίτης, λέος ἀνεψιὸς τοῦ κοχαλλήτη, οἱ παῖδες τοῦ γεροῦ οὔρσου τοῦ βαπτήστα.^{ddd}

order to [.....] within three days the definition of the land [.....] enriched the holy lord [.....] the Christians of Focerò because both your archons and your officials (*stratēgi*) made his evil deeds clear.

But, holy lord, if you wish to punish him for his errors and for the disobedience that he does against your holy authority, [then] the injustices of his short rule (*horos*) are sufficient. Let my lord send the duke (*douka*)^{ccc} and your archons and me, who has written this letter (*epistolē*), which was conveyed to your holy lordship by my brother Ioannes, so that you might marvel and be astonished at the damage that he has done to you, our holy lord; and we shall be servants of your servants for you in truth and in faith. We have many other crimes (*sfalmata*) of Alkeri [Algerius] to reveal to you, but it would be tedious to write them down, although that is the intention. +

[.....] of Sikias, Nikēforos; Nicholas Lytris; Arkadios Mastoukas; Arkadios of Bina; Leo, son of elder Moule; Leo Loupolitēs; Nicholas Loupolitēs; Sergis Loupolitēs; Basil Loupolitēs; Leo, nephew of Kochallēti; the sons of the elder, Oursos, *son of Baptēsta*.

^{tt} 20mm gap. Possibly a word has been erased here.

^{uu} 20mm of text is missing.

^{vv} Cusa reads πέπρακεν.

^{ww} 25mm missing.

^{xx} 40mm missing.

^{yy} 95mm missing.

^{zz} Text obscured by a tear in the manuscript.

^{aaa} 90mm tear in the manuscript.

^{bbb} The first half of the line is largely illegible due to water damage on the text.

^{ccc} Probably a reference to Roger III, son and heir of king Roger II and duke of Apulia, who died in 1148. He was mainly attested on the mainland, but appears administratively active in Sicily in a charter of Roger II from July 1143 in Messina. See *Rogerii II. regis diplomata*, ed. Brühl, no. 57, pp. 156–162.

^{ddd} Illegible. Reading follows that of Cusa.

Authorship & Work

[§1] This letter or petition (*epistolē*) is kept in the Archivio capitolare in Patti (province of Messina), Sicily.¹ Its author, who was probably the petitioner, is unknown. However, it may be supposed from a self-reference in the text that he was probably a Greek-speaking notable/notary from Calabria or, more likely, from north-eastern Sicily where the main events related in the document occurred.² Based on a charter from December 1142, which may well have arisen as a response to this petition, we might tentatively infer that the document was composed not long before.³

[§2] The text was written in a careful hand in Byzantine Greek from south Italy and it was embellished with intricately drawn banners at the top and towards the foot of the parchment. It shows clear traces of Byzantine diplomatic: a striking example is the acclamation in the opening line wishing that the years of the king be many, which dates back to Late Antiquity and was mainly associated with pre-eleventh-century contexts in Byzantine diplomatic, sigillography and epigraphy.⁴ The textual structure adheres to broadly conceived norms in documents of this type with an *invocatio*, *arenga*, *promulgatio*, *narratio*, followed by a dispositive section containing a boundary definition (*διαχωρισμός*) and then an appeal to the ruler to reclaim his rightful lands. It ends with an incomplete witness list.

[§3] The parchment has been stained dark in many places by severe water-damage, such that the text is often illegible. In several parts, particularly towards the left-hand margin, the document is also lacunose. Much of the damage to the integrity of the document occurred before Salvatore Cusa's *editio princeps* was published between 1868 and 1882.⁵ The water-damage may perhaps be attributed to the period of renovation of the archive in the 1960s and 1970s during which it was flooded. In any event, more of the text was legible to Cusa in the mid-to-late 1800s than it is now.

Content & Context

[§4] The petition was made for the attention of the king Roger II (r. 1130–1154), but opens with a brief retrospective report set in the time of his father, Roger I (d. 1101). For the purposes of summary and analysis, the petition can be divided into three linked sections. First, it reports that an assembly of lords was held near Troina in north-east Sicily by Roger I, the count of Sicily and Calabria. Out of his concern for territorial organisation of the area and its labour force, he ordered that a cadastral survey of the population be conducted from Oliveri to San Marco [d'Alunzio], such that any “villein” whose name did not appear on a landholder's register would be sent to live in the estate of Focerò where there was a walled settlement (*kastron*) and where a tower (*purgos*) was to be built. Second, some 500 families were to be relocated there; thus, the extensive boundaries of the estate with lands for them to work were defined by a dozen named *archons*. Then, after Roger I's death, a revolt led by notables (*archons*) broke out against his wife and regent, Adelaide del Vasto (d. 1118). A focal point of

¹ Archivio capitolare della Cattedrale “Arca Magna” di Patti, Fondo Carpetazza, fol. 20. Manuscript dimensions: 315mm by 800mm; the average line length of text is 270mm.

² Fasolo, *Alla ricerca*, p. 9, suggests that the first-named witness of the document, Nikiforos, may have been its author and the petitioner.

³ See [§5] for references.

⁴ For diverse references to the *polla ta eté tou basileōs* acclamation, see Strinna, Earliest Charter Sources, pp. 339–340.

⁵ *I diplomi*, ed. Cusa, pp. 532–535, with a summary at pp. 705–706; reprinted in Fasolo, *Alla ricerca*, no. 2, pp. 34–36. Register: Caspar, *Roger II*, p. 547 (no. 149); Collura, Appendice, vol. 2, pp. 545–625 at p. 612; Girsengroh and Kamp (eds), *Urkunden*, no. 37, p. 18; Catalioto, *Vescovato*, p. 211.

the violence was Focerò itself, which was sacked, rebuilt, and destroyed again, even though Adelaide was eventually victorious over the rebellious landholders (*terreroi*). A couple of decades or more later, the troubles in the area were still in evidence as the petition denounced the misdeeds of a certain lord, Algerius (a.k.a. Alcherios, Alcheris), against king Roger II, and appeals to the king to regain his possessions.

[§5] No dates are cited in the document.⁶ However, mention is made of Roger I's death in 1101, prior to which the assembly in Troina had been convened; Focerò had been settled with families of non-registered villeins who had worked there for a few years before the count passed away, and his wife's regency began. Working backwards from the time of Roger's death in 1101, it is likely that the survey of villeins and their resettlement occurred around 1095–1096. Moreover, two later documents, at least one of which is dated to December 1142, were likely composed in response to the petition itself, which may thus have been written in the preceding months and probably no later than December 1142.⁷ The petition thus retrospectively reports events from the time of count Roger I in the mid-1090s and the regency of his wife, Adelaide in the early 1100s. In addition, the reference to the δοῦκας in line 73, recalls the the time of Roger III (r. c. 1135–1148) as duke of Apulia under Roger II as king (r. 1130–1154), probably in the late 1130s or very early 1140s.

[§6] The geographical identification of Focerò and its boundaries has been carefully and convincingly made by Michele Fasolo based on toponyms and landscape features cited in later documents from the Patti archive.⁸ To date, the site, which has almost no extant remains above ground level, is unexcavated.⁹ The etymology of Focerò/Fōkairos is unclear, but it might be connected to a nearby micro-toponym, Fossa (delle Neve). The latter, which is frequently found in toponym compounds probably derives from the Latin/Greek φόσσα (Latin, *fossa* “trench”) or φόσσατον (Lat. *fossatum*) “army camp.” An alternative derivation from the Greek φῶς (“light,” “torch”), might suggest that there was a fire-tower used for signalling. If so, it could explain Roger's claim that he wished to see it from Mileto, his Calabrian headquarters, some 120 kilometres away.¹⁰

Contextualization, Analysis & Interpretation

[§7] The following paragraphs will focus on the petition's *narratio* to discuss the broader topic of land administration in the early post-conquest period of Norman rule from 1091 onwards, when the fall of Noto marked the end of Norman-led campaigns to conquer Muslim Sicily that had begun some three decades before. Following the death of Robert Guiscard in 1085, his younger brother, count Roger of Sicily and Calabria, became the most powerful lord in a

⁶ The date of 2 November 1141 given by Caspar is without justification, see Caspar, *Roger II*, p. 547.

⁷ Collura, *Appendice*, no. 4, pp. 609–614; reprinted in Fasolo, *Alla ricerca*, nos. 3 and 4, pp. 36–38; Sidoti and Magistri, *Diocesi*, vol. 2, pp. 225–227; Garufi, *Censimento*, no. 2, pp. 90–91; reprinted in Catalioto, *Vescovato*, pp. 213–215. Register: Dölger, *Beiträge*, no. 40, p. 169; Girsengohn and Kamp, *Urkunden*, nos. 38 and 40, pp. 18 and 19.

⁸ Fasolo, *Alla ricerca*, especially pp. 21–32; for aerial photographs and maps reconstructing the boundaries, see pp. 60–67.

⁹ The co-ordinates of the peak of Monte Saraceno, which is 1,090m high in the Nébrodi mountains are: 38.09161736163795, 14.924540810875808. The identification of Focerò is the subject of Michele Fasolo's short monograph, so it will not be repeated here. I am grateful to the author for taking me and my postgraduate students to the top of the site between Monte Fossa delle Neve and Monte Saraceno, which is the most likely location of the aforesaid watchtower. If there were a signalling system, it would probably have been routed via one of more of the Aeolian Islands which are visible from southern Calabria as far north as Amantea.

¹⁰ On the use of fire-towers as signalling systems in Byzantine Sicily, see Modeo and Cutaia, *Sistema*, pp. 297–328. A strong counter-argument may be made against the putative existence of a fire-tower at Focerò since the common Latin noun *fossa* may also refer to “a ditch,” “trench” or “fosse,” and is frequently found in micro-toponym compounds.

politically fractured island marked by long absences of a clear ruling authority. To understand the documentary value of the petition, its contents will be matched with what we know from other sources about land administration under Roger I (§§8–13) and during the minority of his wife and son (§§14–15).

[§8] From around 1093, the documentary record for Sicily shows systematic and sustained efforts by count Roger to organise a stable basis for his rule. Central to this were concessions of lands and men to his supporters, the main recipients of which were newly founded Latin-rite churches, abbeys, and monasteries, as well as some older Basilian houses. Most relevant for our document was the foundation and unification of the Benedictine abbeys of San Bartolomeo at Lípari and San Salvatore at Patti under a single abbot at Patti itself.¹¹ The former had been founded by Roger and his brother, Robert, in or before 1085; the latter was founded in 1094 by Roger himself. With the patronage of the count, his wife Adelaide del Vasto (d. 1118), and, later, their son Roger II, Lípari–Patti became one of the most powerful landholders in the Val Démone region of north-east Sicily. Its *castella*, *castra*, and *casália* with their population of Christians and a minority of Muslims were scattered along the north-east coast and in the hinterland of the Nébrodi mountains.

[§9] Besides the count and ecclesiastical institutions, there were other landlords in the area. Among these was a certain Algerius of Ficarra (*de Ficaria*).¹² The settlement of Ficarra lies to west of Patti and its lands were contiguous with those of Focerò.¹³ As such, Algerius of Ficarra is a good candidate for the rebel of the same name in the petition. His ethnicity is uncertain, but his brother in-law had a Norman name: Gemountos; that is to say, Guimond. Algerius' son had a Greek name: Alexios.¹⁴

[§10] The regulation and recording of grants were urgent post-conquest concerns. In this period, there is no evidence for centralised forms of governance, but rather as localised attempts to impose order over an old guard of existing institutions, notables, and local strongmen as well as over a new cadre of recently empowered lords who were, in many cases, from outside Sicily. The island's former administration at Palermo under the Muslim rulers had broken down by the 1050s, and Sicily's different languages, customs, faiths, and traditions served only to compound the potential for disorder and chaos. Indeed, in the petition, the dire threats directed by Roger I to those who transgressed his post-conquest authority perhaps express the count's anxieties about ruling effectively without recourse to violence against his own lords.

[§11] Roger I's primary base in Sicily was at Troina, but his rulership was polycentric and itinerant, an important feature of which was the convening of assemblies. In the petition, the comital assembly near (but not *in*) the town is the only description we have of such a gathering. It also makes an important connection between the function of these assemblies and the keeping of “villein” registers. Such registers were vital to record-keeping and became a central plank of the comital and, later, royal fiscal administration in the offices known as the *Dīwān al-ma'mūr* and *Dīwān al-tahqīq al-ma'mūr*. However, back in the 1090s—according to Roger I's words in the petition—lords kept their own registers against which checks could be made. On the other hand, boundaries were said to be indicated by physical markers, and no mention was made of

¹¹ Girsengohn and Kamp, Urkunden, no. 5, p. 11; Pirri, *Sicilia sacra*, vol. 2, pp. 770–771; White Jr, *Latin Monasticism*, pp. 82–83.

¹² For a denunciation of Algerius of Ficarra, probably from late 1142, see Archivio Capitolare della Cattedrale “Arca Magna” di Patti, Fondo Carpetazza, fol. 17; edition in Collura, Appendice, no. 4, pp. 609–614, reprinted in Fasolo, *Alla ricerca*, p. 36. For a tentative identification of Algerius with Gervasius in a donation of Adelaide's from 1111, see von Falkenhausen, *Regentschaft*, p. 98.

¹³ Fasolo, *Alla ricerca*, p. 67.

¹⁴ For the mention of his brother, Alexios, in a boundary description of Focerò from December 1142, see *I diplomi*, ed. Cusa, pp. 525–527, here at p. 526; reprinted in Fasolo, *Alla ricerca*, p. 39.

any written record. These claims are at least partially true based on our understanding of the comital documents from the early-to-mid-1090s when lists of household heads of families that had been granted from the comital demesne were written out in Greek and Arabic by the count's scribes.¹⁵

[§12] One of the most important early registers related to a large grant in favour of the Benedictine abbey of Sant'Agata at Catania in February 1095.¹⁶ It recorded the names of 390 men in Arabic, but it also referred back to "other registers of my lands and of my landholders ($\tau\epsilon\pi\pi\epsilon\pi\omega$) written at Mazara in 1093."¹⁷ When this same register came to be renewed in 1145, the processes of compiling, cross-checking, and copying older registers were made explicit: the church was entitled to those named on the list provided that they were not also cited in any royal register from the *Dīwān al-ma'mūr* or in any landholders' registers (*ğarā'id al-tarrāriya*).¹⁸ If there were any discrepancy of named villeins between different lists, those named would revert to the ruler. Finally, in an oblique reference to the issuing/checking of registers at Mazara in 1093, the list from 1095 was said to have been copied out from one written two years previously. The lists thus served as written instruments of legal entitlement: any villeins whose names were duplicated, were not registered, or were incorrectly registered, were automatically the property of the ruler. But in a region where the rural labour force was essential to make lands productive, and where manpower was in short supply, landholders stood to make catastrophic losses of villeins in a population survey and register-check, such as that announced by Roger I at Troina, if they could not corroborate their claims in writing.

[§13] In the post-conquest period until the establishment of a kingdom in 1130, the rulers relied on a small group of functionaries who were responsible for drafting the outputs of the comital administration, perhaps even with a view to some eventual re-establishment of centralised authority. In Sicily, those who can be identified by their names on charters were often "Greeks" from the Val Démone, particularly around Troina itself.¹⁹ The personal names of the twelve archons who defined the boundaries of Focerò were overwhelming Greek. Among the archons, three were notaries; two were abbots; one was a "Frank;" one had a name derived from Arabic (Moules, from *Mawlā*) that was often used by Christians, and another was a personal guard known only by his Byzantine military title: *manglabitēs* ($\mu\epsilon\nu\gamma\lambda\alpha\beta\iota\tau\eta\varsigma$). A certain Giorgios was named as the uncle of Eugenios "the amīr" a.k.a. "the notary," who was one of the most prominent functionaries in the entourage of Roger I and Adelaide.²⁰ The list of witnesses at the foot of the petition all had Greek names with the exception of "Moulé/*Mawlā*." As for the "villein" population of the area, this may be gauged by an in-house register compiled by the church at Patti that listed the names of 377 tax-payers in the settlements of Naso, Fitalia, Librizzi, and Panagia.²¹ Slightly fewer than one-quarter were Muslims and had Arabic names; the rest were presumably Christians and had Greek names, but for about ten per cent or so who had Frankish or (non-Islamic) Arabic names.²²

[§14] As this petition makes clear, it would be wrong to assume that the post-conquest organisation of lands, men and lords was an orderly and peaceful process, especially after the death of count Roger in 1101. The cause of the initial uprising of lords (*archons*) at Focerò is

¹⁵ Johns, *Arabic Administration*, pp. 42–63 for early registers of men, and pp. 39–42 on division of the land.

¹⁶ *I diplomi*, ed. Cusa, pp. 541–549.

¹⁷ *I diplomi*, ed. Cusa, p. 548.

¹⁸ *I diplomi*, ed. Cusa, pp. 563–585, here at pp. 594–595.

¹⁹ Takayama, *Administration*, pp. 25–46; Johns, *Arabic Administration*, pp. 63–90.

²⁰ On the career of Eugenios from 1092–c. 1105, see Takayama, *Administration*, pp. 31–32, 36, 44, 54, 67, and 91; see also Johns, *Arabic Administration*, pp. 69, 72 and 317.

²¹ A poor reading of the document was made by Garufi, Censimento, pp. 92–100; this was reproduced verbatim in Catalioto, *Vescovato*, pp. 216–220.

²² For an onomastic analysis, see Metcalfe, *Muslims*, pp. 78–84.

not made explicit. However, it is quite likely that lords in the area had lost control over important sources of manpower for their lands. Given that 500 families (perhaps as many as 2,000 people if the figure is to be taken at face value) were transplanted to live and work within the extensive boundaries of Focerò, paying their rents and taxes to the count as lord, then a politico-economic motive for action might suffice. However, the petition also states that a revolt against Adelaide broke out across Calabria and Sicily in what seems to be against her personal authority as regent. If so, then this challenge was an existential threat to the wider rule of the Normans in Sicily and Calabria since she was also mother to Roger's two infant sons—Simon and Roger.

[§15] There are important hints of this rebellion during the minority of Roger I's sons in other sources too. The earliest is a legal case from 1123 in which we learn of “the uprising of the landholders” (τοῦ μιόρτου τῶν τερρέπειον) and the recapture of Ciminna, a mere 30 kilometres to the east of Palermo as the crow flies.²³ Jeremy Johns may be right to suggest that the same rebellion was responsible for the fall of the stronghold of Qal'at al-Širāt and its reconstruction at Collesano, 60 kilometres due east of Palermo.²⁴ Finally, in a section of the anonymous chronicle known as the *Historia Sicula* or *Anonymous Vaticanus* which is datable to the later 1140s or early 1150s, we find a cryptic remark about the death of Simon in 1105, who was about twelve or thirteen at the time, following *inritationes* (“stirrings,” “incitements,” or perhaps “uprisings”) at the hands of the Apulians.²⁵

[§16] In sum, the importance of this petition, which has never been translated, has long been recognised by historians for what it says of the operations of Roger I's comital administration in its shift from memory to written record; the complex post-conquest history of the Val Démone and diocese of Troina–Messina through its rich archive of charter materials; the political theatre of assemblies of lords; the local notables and strongmen, some of whom defined the lands of Focerò, while others sought to destroy it, and the deadly rivalry over lands resources between lords and the rulers. Finally, its importance lies in what it tells us of the hitherto unsung hero of the piece in the guise of the regent Adelaide whose success in defeating the landholders was a *sine qua non* for the continuity of Norman legacy in Sicily and Calabria. As such, the petition grants an unprecedented insight into the complex history of early Norman Sicily during its long transition from a region under Muslim rule to a Christian kingdom.

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²³ *I diplomi*, ed. Cusa, pp. 471–472 at p. 471 (line 12). On the south Italian Greek noun, μοῦλτος, for “uprising,” see Caracausi, *Lessico*, p. 393.

²⁴ Johns, *Arabic Administration*, p. 64, citing al-Idrīsī.

²⁵ *Historia Sicula*, ed. Delle Donne and Brescia, pp. 212–213: “Qui [Simon] per paucos vivens annos graves ab Apulis inritationes sustinuit.” The death date of 28 September 1105 is given in *Necrologia Panormitana*, ed. Winkelmann, p. 473.

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