

The *Cronica Roberti Biscardi et fratrum ac Rogerii Comitis Mileti*: New Considerations on a ‘Forgotten’ Source for the Norman Conquests in Southern Italy and Sicily

By

JOHN ASPINWALL

Introduction

In his *Storia dei Musulmani di Sicilia*, Michele Amari (d. 1889) drew on a Latin text which described the Norman conquests in southern Italy and Sicily. In doing so, he noted that, while its narrative related events in much the same way as the *De rebus gestis* of Geoffrey Malaterra (d. < 1101), he believed it to be an important source for the history of the Normans in the south. In particular, he stressed that it may have been written in Sicily during the reign of its first king, Roger II (r. as count of Sicily 1105–1130, thereafter as king of Sicily 1130–1154). As such, Amari posited that it would appear to offer a unique mid-twelfth century perspective on the events of fifty years earlier, and represent the only Latin chronicle of its type to have been produced on the island of Sicily during the time of the Norman kingdom¹.

Up until the early twentieth century, scholars routinely consulted the source. However, in recent years, it has gained a reputation as a problematic text. Due to similarities with the *De rebus gestis* of Geoffrey Malaterra, it has been dismissed as a ‘derivate 13th-century

1) Michele AMARI, *Storia dei Musulmani di Sicilia* (hereafter SMS²), 3 vols. (1854–1872, repr. and ed. by Carlo Alfonso Nallino, 1933–1939) 3,1 p. 27, n. 1.