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# **THE LITTLE HISTORY OF THE LOMBARDS OF BENEVENTO BY ERCHEMPERT**

**A CRITICAL EDITION AND TRANSLATION OF 'YSTORIOLA  
LONGBARDORUM BENEVENTUM DEAGENTIUM'**

Translated and edited by  
Luigi Andrea Berto



# The Little History of the Lombards of Benevento by Erchempert

This volume presents the analysis, English translation, and critical edition of the Latin text of *The Little History of the Lombards of Benevento*, thus offering an important contribution for a better understanding of early medieval southern Italian (and Mediterranean) history.

In the 840s, having passed the danger of subjugation by Charlemagne, southern Italy's Lombards experienced a bloody civil war that put an end to their unity and turned southern Italy into the playground of several competing powers: Lombard lords, the Neapolitans, the Frankish and the Byzantine Empires, the Muslims, and, sometimes, even the papacy. At the end of the ninth century, the Cassinese monk Erchempert composed a chronicle about this period that blamed the southern Lombard leaders for the terrible crisis of southern Italy. It was Erchempert's desire that future generations could learn from the folly of their forbearers, and his chronicle has since become the most relevant source for southern Italy between the 770s and the 880s.

The book will appeal to scholars and students of chronicles, Lombards, Franks, Byzantines, and Muslims in early medieval Italy, as well as all those interested in medieval Europe.

**Luigi Andrea Berto** is Professor of Medieval History at Western Michigan University, USA. His research focuses on medieval Italy and the Mediterranean, with a special interest in the use of the past in the medieval and modern periods, and the relationships between Christians and Muslims.

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A Critical Edition and Translation of 'Ystoriola Longobardorum

Beneventum degentium'

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A Critical Edition and Translation  
of ‘Ystoriola Longobardorum Beneventum  
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**Translated and edited by  
Luigi Andrea Berto**

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# Abbreviations

MGH = *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*



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# Introduction

## Southern Lombard Italy (774—c. 900)

With the conquest of Pavia in 774, the King of the Franks, Charlemagne, put an end to Lombard domination in Italy. However, the Frankish ruler was unable to seize the southern part of the Lombard Kingdom, known as the Duchy of Benevento whose territory extended over the greater part of the South of Italy. Owing to armed resistance, and then a treaty, which, in theory, recognized the dependence of the Beneventan Lombards from Charlemagne, the Duke of Benevento, Arechis II, was able to prevent the expansion of the Franks into southern Italy. Moreover, Arechis II, underscoring his autonomy, assumed the title of prince and began to act as an independent ruler.<sup>1</sup> Upon Arechis II's death, his son, Grimoald III (787–806), initially followed his father's policy, but later openly rebelled against the Franks, leading to a frontier war, which concluded with the maintenance of the 'status quo'. Clashes continued under his successor, Grimoald IV (806–817), until about 812 when the spheres of influence of the Byzantines and the Franks were definitively settled.<sup>2</sup>

Having passed the danger of subjugation, the Beneventans were forced to confront a problem that would prove to be much more serious for the internal stability of the Principality, namely the struggles between various factions that seemed to have been suspended during the course of the clashes with the Franks. In 817 Prince Grimoald IV, after escaping a conspiracy that the Beneventan noble, Dauferius, had organized with the probable support of the Neapolitans,<sup>3</sup> was murdered.<sup>4</sup> The new ruler of Benevento, Sico (817–832), was not a native of that area,

1 O. Bertolini, 'Carlomagno e Benevento', in *Karl der Grosse: Lebenswerk und Nachleben*, vol. 1: *Persönlichkeit und Geschichte*, ed. H. Beuman (Düsseldorf, 1965), pp. 609–12; S. Gasparri, 'Il ducato e il principato di Benevento', in *Storia del Mezzogiorno*, Part II: *Il Medioevo*, 2 vols. (Naples, 1988), I, pp. 108–11; B. Kreutz, *Before the Normans: Southern Italy in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries* (Philadelphia, 1991), pp. 5–8.

2 Bertolini, 'Carlomagno e Benevento', pp. 656 ff.; Gasparri, 'Il ducato e il principato di Benevento', pp. 111–12; Kreutz, *Before the Normans*, pp. 8–9.

3 C. Russo MAILLER, 'Il ducato di Napoli', in *Storia del Mezzogiorno*, part II. *Il Medioevo*, 2 vols. (Naples, 1988), I, p. 362; Gasparri, 'Il ducato e il principato di Benevento', p. 114.

4 Gasparri, 'Il ducato e il principato di Benevento', pp. 113–15; Kreutz, *Before the Normans*, p. 19.

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and probably relied upon one of the Beneventan aristocratic factions to strengthen his position; his allies profited from the situation by attempting to eliminate their adversaries. This fostered strong internal tensions and continual clashes, which became bitterer during the rule of Sico's son, Sicard (832–839), who, perhaps in order to obtain the abbey of Montecassino's estates in usufruct, imprisoned Abbot Deusededit.<sup>5</sup> The conflict was so extreme that even Sicard's murder could not bring peace. On the contrary, the situation worsened, reaching a point of outright civil war. Upon Sicard's death, Radelchis became prince of Benevento, but a number of Lombards, who were in disagreement with the new ruler, took refuge at Salerno. The dissidents liberated Siconolf, who had been imprisoned by his brother Sicard and kept in captivity by Radelchis, and then proclaimed him prince.<sup>6</sup> With the support of all those who wanted to make themselves independent from the prince of Benevento,<sup>7</sup> Siconolf waged a war on Radelchis that lasted until 849.<sup>8</sup> The use of Muslim mercenaries by both parties aggravated the struggle. On various occasions, the Saracens profited from the Lombards' weakness by establishing their own domination. For example, Massar, who was likely the commander of Prince Radelchis's Muslim troops, even took possession of Benevento and began pillaging the surrounding territories. Several Saracens, responsible for the defense of Bari, seized the city and founded an emirate there.<sup>9</sup>

In the meantime, the Muslim raids became ever more audacious and dangerous, and, in 846, the basilica of St. Peter in Rome, which was then situated outside the city walls, was sacked. The powerful impression this event created resonated throughout Europe, and the Franks and the subjects of the Italian Kingdom, led by their King, Louis II, decided to intervene in southern Italy. The sovereign managed to eliminate Massar and restore Benevento to Radelchis.<sup>10</sup> Louis II realized the tragic consequences that the civil war was entailing. In 849, therefore, he exerted considerable influence in order to ensure that the Principality was split into two parts: the Principality of Benevento and the Principality of Salerno.<sup>11</sup>

The partition of the Principality brought an end to the conflicts between Benevento and Salerno, but it did not represent the return of peace to southern Italy. The long war had, in fact, greatly weakened the two adversaries, and various local

5 Gasparri, 'Il ducato e il principato di Benevento', p. 115.

6 P. Delogu, 'Il principato di Salerno: La prima dinastia', in *Storia del Mezzogiorno*, part II. *Il Medioevo*, 2 vols. (Naples, 1988), I, p. 242; Gasparri, 'Il ducato e il principato di Benevento', p. 116.

7 The Amalfitans, the Count of Capua, Landolf, and the Counts of Conza and Acerenza.

8 Delogu, 'Il principato di Salerno', pp. 242–43; Gasparri, 'Il ducato e il principato di Benevento', pp. 116–18; Kreutz, *Before the Normans*, pp. 29–32.

9 G. Musca, *L'emirato di Bari, 847–871* (Bari, 1967, 2nd ed.), pp. 15–18; L. A. Berto, *Christians and Muslims in Early Medieval Italy: Perceptions, Encounters, and Clashes* (Abingdon – New York, 2020), p. 128. Meanwhile, the Muslim dynasty of the Aghlabids, who had created an autonomous state in North Africa, was conquering Sicily. A. Metcalfe, *The Muslims of Medieval Italy* (Edinburgh, 2009), pp. 9–12.

10 Musca, *L'emirato di Bari*, pp. 38–41; Gasparri, 'Il ducato e il principato di Benevento', pp. 117–18.

11 Delogu, 'Il principato di Salerno', pp. 244–47; Gasparri, 'Il ducato e il principato di Benevento', pp. 118–20; Kreutz, *Before the Normans*, pp. 32–35.

lords, who often only controlled a fortification or a town and its surrounding area, exploited this weakness in order to become independent. The most powerful territory was the county of Capua. After some internal struggles, the Bishop of Capua, Landolf, assumed its control in c. 863.<sup>12</sup> The Muslims obviously took advantage of this situation, effecting ever more appalling raids. Eventually the Prince of Benevento, Adelchis, was obliged to draw up a peace treaty with the emir of Bari, paying him tribute and consigning him several hostages.<sup>13</sup> The monasteries of Montecassino and St. Vincent at Volturno were also forced to pay heavy tributes in order to avoid being sacked.<sup>14</sup>

Louis II's interventions were unsuccessful because he never managed to obtain the support of all the Lombards of southern Italy. Difficulties in forming a common front were further fueled by suspicions regarding the Frankish sovereign who was believed to harbor hegemonic aims over southern Italy.<sup>15</sup> In 866, Louis II organized a large expedition against the Saracens and in 871 succeeded in conquering the Emirate of Bari with the assistance of a Byzantine fleet.<sup>16</sup> This victory was extremely significant, as much from a strategic point of view as from a psychological one, and it seemed that the emperor had paved the way for the Muslims to be completely expelled from southern Italy. The sovereign had not, however, considered the political situation of the area nor the Lombards' overwhelming desire for independence. With the disappearance of the Emirate of Bari, the greatest enemy of the Lombards was, in fact, Louis II himself. The Prince of Benevento, Adelchis, therefore decided to imprison the Frankish sovereign, releasing him after having extracted the promise that he would no longer go to southern Italy on his own initiative. This episode represented a harsh blow to the prestige of the emperor, who, with the exception of an expedition to aid Salerno, when the city was besieged by the Saracens, was never able to interfere in the South again.<sup>17</sup> The death of Louis II in 875 opened up a grave crisis in the Italian Kingdom, after which no other sovereign had the necessary force at his disposal to continue Louis II's policy regarding southern Italy.

In the last two decades of the ninth century, a new positive trend within the Byzantine Empire led to the reconquest of Apulia and part of Calabria, preventing the re-establishment of strong Saracen bases in the lower Adriatic.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, the weakness of the Lombards and of the small duchies along the Campanian

12 N. Cilento, *Le origini della signoria di Capua nella Longobardia minore* (Rome, 1966), pp. 87–90; Gasparri, 'Il ducato e il principato di Benevento', pp. 116–18; Delogu, 'Il principato di Salerno', pp. 244–47.

13 Musca, *L'emirato di Bari*, pp. 62 ff.; Gasparri, 'Il ducato e il principato di Benevento', pp. 123–24.

14 Musca, *L'emirato di Bari*, p. 66; Kreutz, *Before the Normans*, p. 38.

15 Gasparri, 'Il ducato e il principato di Benevento', pp. 123–24; Musca, *L'emirato di Bari*, pp. 64–66.

16 Musca, *L'emirato di Bari*, pp. 96–98; Gasparri, 'Il ducato e il principato di Benevento', p. 125; Kreutz, *Before the Normans*, pp. 42–45.

17 Musca, *L'emirato di Bari*, pp. 117–20; Gasparri, 'Il ducato e il principato di Benevento', pp. 125–26; Kreutz, *Before the Normans*, pp. 46–47, 55–57.

18 V. Von Falkenhausen, *La dominazione bizantina nell'Italia meridionale dal IX all'XI secolo* (Bari, 1978), pp. 20–23; Kreutz, *Before the Normans*, pp. 62–66.

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coast facilitated the continuation of Muslim incursions along the Tyrrhenian shore and the interior until the beginning of the tenth century. It is not a coincidence that during this period both St. Vincent at Volturno (881) and Montecassino (883) were destroyed.<sup>19</sup> Given that Erchempert above all narrated events about Benevento and Capua, I believe that it is appropriate to conclude this brief overview, by describing some key events concerning this area in the last 20 years of the ninth century. In 879, the death of the Bishop-Count of Capua, Landolf, provoked a new series of struggles among his heirs, which were made harsher and more complicated by the expansionistic policy of the Bishop-Duke of Naples, Athanasius II, and the intervention in southern Italy of Pope John VIII. After the ephemeral rules of Pandolf (879–882) and Lando III (882–885), Atenolf took control of the power in Capua and, thanks to his skills and shrewdness, managed to consolidate his position to the point that in 900 he was able to take possession of Benevento.<sup>20</sup> This was made possible by the further crisis of the Beneventans, who, after the failed attempts of their Prince Aio (885–891) to challenge the Byzantines in Apulia, had been ruled by lords who had been either too weak or had other priorities for preserving their control of the Principality of Benevento: Aio's son, Ursus (891–892), the Byzantines (892–895), and the lords of Spoleto (895–900).<sup>21</sup>

#### The author and the characteristics of the chronicle

The only certain biographical information about Erchempert is present in his chronicle.<sup>22</sup> First of all, he gave his name in the prologue,<sup>23</sup> a feature not very

19 Gasparri, 'Il ducato e il principato di Benevento', pp. 126–28; Kreutz, *Before the Normans*, pp. 58–60.

20 I. Di Resta, 'Il principato di Capua', in *Storia del Mezzogiorno*, part II. *Il Medioevo*, 2 vols. (Naples, 1988), I, pp. 167–68.

21 Gasparri, 'Il ducato e il principato di Benevento', pp. 127–31; P. Cammarosano, *Nobili e re. L'Italia politica dell'alto medioevo* (Rome – Bari, 1998), pp. 209–10.

22 In a chronicle written at Montecassino at the beginning of the twelfth century, Leo of Ostia reported that Erchempert's father had been a nobleman, named Adelgarius, who offered his son to the monastery of Montecassino when he was still a child. *Chronica Monasterii Casinensis*, ed. H. Hoffmann, MGH, *Scriptores*, XXXIV (Hannover, 1980), p. 124. According to this chronicler, this happened during the rule of Abbot Ragemprandus, successor of Angelarius, for whom Erchempert himself narrated that he had been ambassador to the pope. Leo of Ostia therefore misunderstood the information at his disposal. P. Meyvaert, 'Erchempert, moine de Mont-Cassin', *Revue Benedictine*, LXIX (1959), pp. 103–05; M. Oldoni, 'Erchemperto', in *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, 43 (Rome, 1993), p. 66. Huguette Taviani-Carozzi considers valid the assertion of the nobility of Erchempert's family, but believes that Erchempert's decision to become a monk occurred at adult age. H. Taviani-Carozzi, *La principauté lombarde de Salerne (IX<sup>e</sup>–XI<sup>e</sup> siècle): Pouvoir et société en Italie lombarde méridionale* (Rome, 1991), p. 48.

23 Erchempert, *Ystoriola Longobardorum Beneventum degentium*, chapter 1: 'Ego Erchempert (I, Erchempert)'. I agree with the observation that this conveys strength, yet I do not believe that these two words emphasized the 'pride and the awareness of belonging to the Lombard people' as Nicola Cilento has argued. N. Cilento, 'I cronisti della Longobardia minore', in Id., *Italia meridionale longobarda* (Milan, Naples, 1971, 2nd ed.), p. 83. Erchempert expressed these feelings in other parts of his chronicle.

common in the early Middle Ages. He also mentioned himself in some 880s-war events indicating that he was personally in contact with the violence of that period and that he acted as a representative of Montecassino in Naples and Rome. In August 881 he was captured in the *castrum* of Pilano<sup>24</sup>—conquered by the Count of Capua, Pandolf—, forced to go to Capua on foot under guard of soldiers on horseback and deprived of all the belongings he had acquired since his childhood.<sup>25</sup> Another unpleasant experience occurred probably in 886. While on the road from Montecassino to Capua, Erchempert and his fellow travelers—among whom there was a ‘preceptor’—were victims of a robbery at the hands of some Greeks—probably in the service of the bishop of Naples. Forced once again to travel to Capua on foot, he and other persons (likely Montecassino’s monks) then went to Naples to seek compensation for the losses, but to no avail.<sup>26</sup> Around 887,<sup>27</sup> Atenolf seized power at Capua and confiscated the properties that the community of Montecassino owned in that city. The Abbot of St. Benedict, Angelarius, then sent Erchempert to Rome to seek the intervention of Pope Stephen V. According to the chronicler, the mission succeeded and the properties that had been taken were restored, but Atenolf withheld Erchempert’s own goods and also seized from him the ‘cella’ that Abbot Angelarius had granted him.<sup>28</sup>

Erchempert never stated in his work that he was a monk of Montecassino, but the definitions ‘frates (brothers)’<sup>29</sup> for the monks of St. Benedict and ‘nostrum cenobium (our monastery)’ for Montecassino<sup>30</sup> confirm this.<sup>31</sup> More complicated, however, is the question of when Erchempert became a monk. It has been hypothesized that the aforementioned episode of 881 indicates that in this period Erchempert had not yet become an ecclesiastic, since the fact that he still possessed property is considered incompatible with his monastic status.<sup>32</sup> Yet the chronicler specified that he still owned property during the events of 887, when he does appear to have been a member of the community of Montecassino.<sup>33</sup> In order to solve this apparent contradiction it has been suggested that Erchempert

24 It was probably located near Teano.

25 Erchempert, *Ystoriola Longobardorum Beneventum degentium*, chapter 44.

26 Erchempert, *Ystoriola Longobardorum Beneventum degentium*, chapter 61.

27 This date has been hypothesized by Taviani-Carozzi, *La principauté lombarde de Salerne*, p. 47.

28 Erchempert, *Ystoriola Longobardorum Beneventum degentium*, chapter 69.

29 Erchempert, *Ystoriola Longobardorum Beneventum degentium*, chapter 69.

30 Erchempert, *Ystoriola Longobardorum Beneventum degentium*, chapter 69.

31 The chronicler has been identified with a Cassinese monk, named Erchempert, who composed a *Martyrologium*. U. Westerbergh, ‘The So-Called “Martyrologium Erchemperti”’, in Ead., *Beneventan Ninth Century Poetry* (Stockholm, 1957), p. 74: ‘ab erchenperto monacho monasterii sancti benedicti de castro casino editi sunt’.

32 G. Falco, ‘Erchemperto’, in *Albori d’Europa* (Rome, 1947), pp. 265–66; Oldoni, ‘Erchemperto’, p. 66. Nicola Cilento, however, maintains that in this period the chronicler was already a monk. N. Cilento, ‘Cultura e storiografia nell’Italia meridionale fra i secoli VIII e X’, in Id., *Italia meridionale longobarda* (Milan, Naples, 1971, 2nd ed.), p. 68.

33 In this part of the work, indeed, he called the monks of Montecassino ‘brothers’ and Montecassino ‘nostrum cenobium’, performed an important mission for the monastery, and stated that the abbot had assigned him a ‘cella’.

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was not a monk but rather an oblate who lived in a ‘cella’ outside the monastery and, therefore, he could have his own goods.<sup>34</sup> Huguette Taviani-Carozzi has pointed out that, based on the Lombard rules concerning inheritance and on the management of ecclesiastical properties in southern Italy, there is no contradiction between a monk’s vow of poverty and the usufruct of properties belonging to his family and the assignment of a ‘cella’ and of the properties connected to it.<sup>35</sup> According to this French scholar, Erchempert became a monk between 881 and 886 because there is no reference to his monastic status in the first episode.<sup>36</sup> However, even if the ‘preceptor’ mentioned on that event was a prior and not a tutor,<sup>37</sup> it is incorrect to consider Erchempert as a simple lay brother and the ‘preceptor’ as his master.<sup>38</sup> The chronicler did not say that he had been a monk in that period. For example, he could have been a layman traveling with the ‘preceptor’ of Montecassino. Yet, the fact that there is no connection between the author and Montecassino in the events of 881 does not constitute a clear indication that he was not an ecclesiastic on that year. In my opinion Erchempert was already a monk on that period since it is unlikely that in the brief space of a few years he would have been able to reach an important position in the abbey of Montecassino such as representative of his monastery to the pope.<sup>39</sup> Erchempert was a rather rare name among the Lombards,<sup>40</sup> but this fact and the information available to us do not provide sufficient grounds for claiming that the chronicler should be identified with the ‘Erhemperto’ who acted as a witness at Salerno in 877 and/or the notary ‘Erchempertus’ attested at Benevento in May 884.<sup>41</sup>

That both in 881 and in 887 Erchempert was punished by the Capuan rulers seems to indicate that he, and probably his family, had taken the side of the Prince of Benevento, Aio (884–891), a fierce adversary of the Capuans, and that perhaps the chronicler’s bitter hatred for the latter was already well-known at the time.<sup>42</sup>

The *Ystoriola* is not dedicated to anyone, but, on the folio 105r, 105v of the ‘Codex Vaticanus Latinus’ 5001—the only medieval manuscript reporting

34 Cilento, ‘I cronisti della Longobardia minore’, p. 84, note 32.

35 Taviani-Carozzi, *La principauté lombarde de Salerne*, p. 47. B. Visentin has hypothesized that this ‘cella’ was a Cassinese ‘prepositura’ where some monks lived with Erchempert. The latter would have been in charge of supervising the economic interests of Montecassino in that area and the behavior of his brothers. B. Visentin, *La nuova Capua longobarda: Identità etnica e coscienza civica nel Mezzogiorno altomedievale* (Manduria – Bari – Rome, 2012), p. 194. As one can see, Erchempert did not say this.

36 Taviani-Carozzi, *La principauté lombarde de Salerne*, p. 48.

37 Taviani-Carozzi, *La principauté lombarde de Salerne*, p. 48. It has also been hypothesized that the correct reading is ‘perceptor’, that is, a person responsible for taking the census. Falco, ‘Erchemper-to’, p. 266, note 2.

38 Cf. Oldoni, ‘Erchemper-to’, p. 67.

39 This is just an hypothesis because this case could be an exception.

40 See the index of *Regesti dei documenti dell’Italia meridionale (570–899)*, eds. J. M. Martin, E. Cuozzo, S. Gasparri, M. Villani (Rome, 2002).

41 For this hypothesis, see W. Pohl, *Werkstätte der Erinnerung: Montecassino und die Gestaltung der langobardischen Vergangenheit* (Vienna – München, 2001), p. 34.

42 Taviani-Carozzi, *La principauté lombarde de Salerne*, p. 48.

Erchempert's chronicle<sup>43</sup>—there is an anonymous dedicatory poem addressed to the Prince of Benevento, Aio, separated from the chronicle by a brief text known as the 'Pauli Diaconi Continuatio Casinensis' (Cassinense Continuation of Paul the Deacon).<sup>44</sup> According to Ulla Westerbergh, this work is the proem of the *Ystoriola* and it constitutes proof that the chronicle was written for that Beneventan ruler.<sup>45</sup> This would indicate that Erchempert either was a member of the court of Benevento's entourage or had a certain familiarity with it. Yet this hypothesis is essentially based on the fact that the anonymous author of the verses offered to Aio an 'ystoriola'<sup>46</sup> a word used by Erchempert to describe his own work.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, there are elements against this attribution. First, it seems strange that the verses are not placed immediately before Erchempert's chronicle in the manuscript.<sup>48</sup> On this point, in the second chapter of the *Ystoriola* the author stated that the duke and later Prince of Benevento, Arechis II (758–787), had been 'gener iam fati Desiderii (son-in-law of the already mentioned Desiderius)'.<sup>49</sup> This information is correct, but this is the first time that the King of the Lombards, Desiderius, is mentioned in the *Ystoriola*. As has already been mentioned, a short text known as the 'Pauli Diaconi Continuatio Casinensis' where some information on the last Lombard sovereigns—from Liudprand (712–744) to Desiderius (757–774)<sup>50</sup>—is positioned between the dedicatory *carmen* and Erchempert's chronicle. It is presumed that this was the original arrangement of the works and that Erchempert used a text composed in Montecassino that would fill the gaps left by Paul the Deacon.<sup>51</sup> We should not rule out the hypothesis that Erchempert himself was the author of the 'Continuatio',<sup>52</sup> a possibility that would explain why the verses were placed before the 'Continuatio'.

It is however strange that the chronicler would have stated his name in the first chapter of his work and not in the dedication. Moreover, the poem seems to demonstrate a knowledge of Latin superior to that of the prose text.<sup>53</sup> But the

43 Erchempert's work is found on folios 106v–131v. For further information on this codex, see the section devoted to the manuscripts of the chronicle.

44 'Codex Vaticanus Latinus' 5001, folios. 105v–106v. This text has been edited in *Pauli Diaconi Continuatio Casinensis*, ed. G. Waitz, in MGH, *Scriptores rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum saec. VI–IX* (Hannover, 1878), pp. 198–200.

45 U. Westerbergh, 'Erchempert, a Beneventan Poet and Partisan', in Ead., *Beneventan Ninth Century Poetry* (Stockholm, 1957), pp. 11–29. H. Taviani-Carozzi agrees with this opinion. Taviani-Carozzi, *La principauté lombarde de Salerne*, pp. 51–52.

46 Westerbergh, 'Erchempert, a Beneventan Poet and Partisan', p. 9, line 3.

47 Erchempert, *Ystoriola Longobardorum Beneventum degentium*, chapter 1.

48 This is a late manuscript and it is therefore possible that the original order of the texts was changed, but, as far as I know, this would be the only case for a chronicle.

49 Erchempert, *Ystoriola Longobardorum Beneventum degentium*, chapter 2.

50 *Pauli Diaconi Continuatio Casinensis*, pp. 198–200.

51 L. Capo, 'Le tradizioni narrative a Spoleto e Benevento', in *I Longobardi dei ducati di Spoleto e Benevento* (Spoleto, 2003), p. 279, note 46. Paul the Deacon's work ends with the death of King Liudprand.

52 Taviani-Carozzi, *La principauté lombarde de Salerne*, pp. 44–45.

53 Several sophisticated words that are employed in the verses are not present in the *Ystoriola*. For a detailed analysis see Appendix B.

## 8 Introduction

principal discrepancy lies in the fact that, while in the supposed dedication Aio's talents were extolled<sup>54</sup> and the prince was described as a sort of initiator of a new shining era<sup>55</sup> after the dark times that had characterized the Principality of Benevento, in the chronicle, Erchempert did not report anything glowing about him. Moreover, the annalistic style with which he described Aio's actions<sup>56</sup> is certainly quite distant from the flattery tone of those verses.<sup>57</sup> Even though the poem and the *Ystoriola* belong to two different genres, I believe that it is very unlikely that in his work an author can move so much from what he foreshadowed in the introduction of that text.<sup>58</sup> This incongruity is further marked by the fact that in the first chapter of the *Ystoriola* Erchempert asserted that he found nothing in his own time significant and praiseworthy enough to justify the trouble of describing it.<sup>59</sup> These discrepancies lead to the conclusion that the verses do not represent the dedication of the *Ystoriola*. If Erchempert was the author of that poem, this means that he wanted to give Prince Aio a chronicle that was completely different from the *Ystoriola*.

54 Aio is called *vir bonus, dulcis, amans, mitis, serenissimus princeps*, and *armis Dei ausiliove potens*. Westerbergh, 'Erchempert, a Beneventan Poet and Partisan', p. 8, lines 1–2.

55 Westerbergh, 'Erchempert, a Beneventan Poet and Partisan', lines 16–21.

56 Erchempert, *Ystoriola Longobardorum Beneventum degentium*, chapters 48, 54, 59, 66, 71, 72, 76, 80.

57 This detail is not taken into account by Ulla Westerbergh.

58 Lidia Capo and Salvatore Michele Lotito have also noticed this. According to Capo, that poem might indicate that at one point Erchempert considered to give his chronicle to Aio, but those verses do not prove that the *Ystoriola* was delivered to the prince and that the chronicle was composed with the spirit present in them. Capo, 'Le tradizioni narrative a Spoleto e Benevento', p. 282, note 48. On the other hand, Lotito believes that Erchempert was the author of the poem, that he composed it before the failure of the Beneventan Prince's campaign against the Byzantines in Summer 888 and that the chronicler used it for asking pardon to Aio for what he had written about him in the *Ystoriola*. In his opinion, Erchempert decided to do this because he wanted to protect himself and his chronicle from Atenolf and his supporters after this Capuan lord had taken possession of Capua at the beginning of 887. However, this would not explain the terminological differences between the verses and the *Ystoriola*. Moreover, in my opinion, it is very unlikely that the chronicle circulated immediately in Benevento and Capua and that Aio would have accepted two works whose tone was so different. A. M. Lotito, 'Il *Carmen ad Aionem principem* di Erchemperto', *Quis ut Deus: Rivista dell'Istituto Superiore di Scienze Religiose di Foggia* I, 1 (2008), pp. 126–29. The authorship of the poem has been recently attributed to Erchempert also by C. Bottiglieri whose linguistic analysis, in my opinion, does not prove anything and who follows Lotito's hypothesis about the moment in which the *carmen* was composed. She, however, admits the existence of a contradiction between the two works and the fact that the author never considered the *carmen* as a part of the *Ystoriola*. C. Bottiglieri, 'Cultura e culture nella Capua longobarda', in "*Felix Terra*": *Capua e la Terra di Lavoro in età longobarda*, ed. F. Marazzi (Cerro a Volturno, 2017), pp. 154–58. On the contrary, S. Palmieri has not seen any contradiction and, only using the poem, he has argued that Erchempert perceived Aio as the ruler who could save southern *Langobardia*. Moreover, he believes that the chronicler composed the *Ystoriola* before Aio's defeat. S. Palmieri, 'Cronache e cronisti dell'Italia meridionale longobarda', *Rivista storica del Sannio* VII, 14 (2000), pp. 298–99; S. Palmieri, 'Paolo Diacono e l'Italia meridionale longobarda: Identità e memoria del ducato di Benevento nella "Historia Langobardorum"', in *Studi per Marcello Gigante*, ed. S. Palmieri (Bologna, 2003), pp. 319–20.

59 Erchempert, *Ystoriola Longobardorum Beneventum degentium*, chapter 1.

I also believe that the enthusiasm with which Erchempert celebrated the victory of Atenolf against the Neapolitans and their allies<sup>60</sup> does not represent the proof that the chronicler dedicated his work to that Capuan ruler.<sup>61</sup> As already emphasized, the only information available about the relationship between the chronicler and Atenolf actually indicates that it was not good at all. Furthermore, as we shall see in the section devoted to this Capuan lord, the author's attitude toward him was multi-faceted.<sup>62</sup>

Erchempert did not dedicate his work to anyone, yet he highlighted his objectives in the prologue. He stated that he did not want to imitate Paul the Deacon, who had not narrated the end of the Lombard Kingdom, thus acting like those historians who, in recounting the events of their own people, report only the facts useful for increasing their glory. Rather, 'I will tell not their [the Lombards of Benevento] domination, but their end, not their happiness, but their misery, not their triumph, but their ruin, not how they advanced but how they declined, not how they conquered others but how they were conquered by others. Drawing forth great sighs from the depth of my heart and though knowing that the account will be succinct and rough, I will pursue this subject so that this might be an example to posterity'.<sup>63</sup>

With this clear statement of purpose, which is without parallel in the works of the other early medieval Italian chroniclers, Erchempert wished to communicate his intense unease with the desperate situation his people was facing at that time. Yet the hope he placed in the lessons that future generations could draw from this crisis shows that his pessimism was not absolute. Following the dictum 'historia magistra vitae (history is a teacher of life)', the author believed that even a history characterized by death and violence could prove instructive.

In his introduction, Erchempert explained that he composed his chronicle at the urging of many people,<sup>64</sup> which indicates that he intended to address an audience. Unfortunately, it is not easy to determine this audience, but it is clear that it had the ability to understand the sometimes intricate narrative structure of the text and its allusions, and was well acquainted with the individuals mentioned in the chronicle.<sup>65</sup> Since in the descriptions of the actions of a certain Dauferius,

60 Erchempert, *Ystoriola Longobardorum Beneventum degentium*, chapters 73–74.

61 Cf. Pohl, *Werkstätte der Erinnerung*, pp. 37–42. Lidia Capo has hypothesized that Erchempert did that a few years after composing his chronicle. Capo, 'Le tradizioni narrative a Spoleto e Benevento', p. 267, note 30.

62 This particular has not been taken into account by Stefano Palmieri, who believes that Erchempert was a supporter of Atenolf. Palmieri, 'Cronache e cronisti', pp. 298–99.

63 Erchempert, *Ystoriola Longobardorum Beneventum degentium*, chapter 1.

64 Erchempert, *Ystoriola Longobardorum Beneventum degentium*, chapter 1. It could be a *topos*, but, except for Agnellus of Ravenna, who maintained that he had written his work at the urging of Ravenna's ecclesiastics, Erchempert would be the only early medieval Italian chronicler to use it. Agnellus of Ravenna, *Liber pontificalis ecclesiae Ravennatis*, ed. D. Mauskopf Deliyannis, Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis, CCCM 199 (Turnhout, 2006), pp. 143–46.

65 Also of this opinion is Capo, 'Le tradizioni narrative a Spoleto e Benevento', p. 274.

Erchempert explained that he was the ‘father of our Dauferius’,<sup>66</sup> probably the Dauferius whom the chronicler shortly after called ‘our deacon’,<sup>67</sup> the monks of Montecassino were part of that audience.

As for the period covered by the chronicle, in the prologue Erchempert stated that he wished to recount the history of the Lombards of Benevento from the beginning and in particular the times of Adelchis (Prince of Benevento from 854 to 878).<sup>68</sup> The *Ystoriola*, in fact, begins with the conquest of the Lombard Kingdom by Charlemagne (774) who did not however capture the Duchy of Benevento—a fact that permitted the creation of an autonomous Lombard principality in southern Italy. The last episode mentioned in the chronicle occurred in January 889. Although the last sentence of the chronicle is a complete sentence, the work is clearly incomplete. In the final chapter, the author briefly narrated the clash between Guy II of Spoleto and Berengar of Friuli for control of the Italian Kingdom and, after explaining that they had reached a truce that lasted until Epiphany, stated that he would next recount other events that pertained to it.<sup>69</sup>

Unless we wish to attribute the incompleteness of the chronicle to the author’s death,<sup>70</sup> it is possible that the unhappy events for the Beneventans, which followed the passing away of Aio,<sup>71</sup> led Erchempert to put down his *stilus*.<sup>72</sup> While the

66 Erchempert, *Ystoriola Longobardorum Beneventum degentium*, chapter 71.

67 Erchempert, *Ystoriola Longobardorum Beneventum degentium*, chapter 80.

68 In chapter 1 Erchempert wrote that ‘ultimo autem compulsus a compluribus ego Erchempert quasi ab ortu praecipueque ab Adelgiso, insigni sagacique viro, hystoriam condere Langobardorum Beneventum degentium’. It is not clear, however, if the author meant that ‘Adelgisus’ (that is, Adelchis) was also among them, or if he meant to say that he wished to recount the history of the Lombards of Benevento from their origins, and in particular, from Adelchis, that is the prince of Benevento (the chronicler called this ruler both *Adelchis*—Erchempert, *Ystoriola Longobardorum Beneventum degentium*, chapters 20, 32—and *Adelgisus*—Erchempert, *Ystoriola Longobardorum Beneventum degentium*, chapters 28–30, 34–35, 38–39, 48—but used the latter name much more frequently). Although Erchempert did not glorify this ruler, he mentioned that Adelchis had been ‘mitissimus et amabilis cunctis, tantaque mansuetudinis, ut etiam ab exteris diligeretur’. Erchempert, *Ystoriola Longobardorum Beneventum degentium*, chapter 20. This description does not appear to me at odds with the adjectives ‘insignis’ and ‘sagax’ with which the author described Adelgisus in the prologue. This detail and the fact that Adelgisus is not mentioned immediately after the ‘complures’ who encouraged the author to compose his work makes me inclined toward the second hypothesis. Taviani-Carozzi, *La principauté lombarde de Salerne*, pp. 38–39, agrees with this interpretation. G. Falco, on the other hand, maintains that Erchempert wrote his work at ‘the suggestion of many people, principally that of an Adelgis unknown to us’. Falco, ‘Erchemperto’, p. 268.

69 Erchempert, *Ystoriola Longobardorum Beneventum degentium*, chapter 82. On the basis of these facts, the position of Ulla Westerbergh, who believes that the chronicle should not be considered incomplete because Erchempert recounted everything he promised ‘to the very end, and his readers are not left inquiring and wondering’ and that what happened in northern Italy was not part of his plans, is mistaken. Westerbergh, ‘Erchempert, a Beneventan Poet and Partisan’, pp. 15–16.

70 Palmieri, ‘Cronache e cronisti’, p. 299.

71 i.e. the Byzantine rule over Benevento.

72 Taviani-Carozzi, *La principauté lombarde de Salerne*, p. 53. Lidia Capo, who maintains that Erchempert wrote the last seven chapters as a sort of diary, attributes the incompleteness of the *Ystoriola* to the disinterest of the author in composing his work in a different manner than he had used in the previous part. Capo, ‘Le tradizioni narrative a Spoleto e Benevento’, pp. 271–72, note 37.