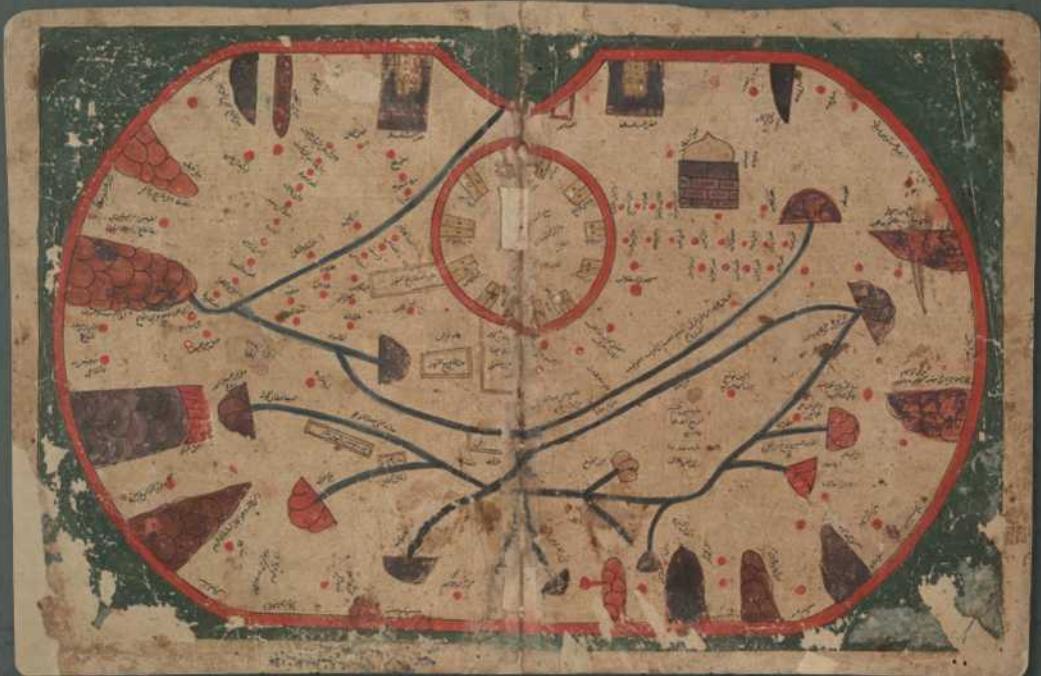


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# MUSLIM SICILY

## ENCOUNTERS AND LEGACY



EDITED BY NUHA ALSHAAR

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# MUSLIM SICILY

*Encounters and Legacy*

**Edited by Nuha Alshaar**

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Cover image: Map of Sicily in the manuscript of the *Book of Curiosities*, published by Rappoport and Savage Smith. Produced at the Fatimid court in the mid-11th century.

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## PREFACE

The collection of articles in this volume is largely the result of a project that I first organised in Sicily in December 2017. I have always been fascinated by Sicily, by its charm, natural beauty, and history, which is one of shaping and reshaping individual and collective identities. It is where different cultures, languages and creeds were never fully superseded, but were assimilated and even partly adopted. This fascination resulted in a conference that I organised in cooperation with colleagues from the Arab-German Young Academy of Sciences and Humanities (AGYA), namely Dr Beate Ulrike La Sala, Dr Ammar Abdulrahman, Dr Oliver Korn and Dr Norman Domeire, as well as from the University of Palermo. This conference was funded by AGYA, which is supported by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). Over the years, I expanded the scope of this project by inviting other scholars to contribute articles to this volume, in order to explore more widely the rich intellectual and artistic legacy of Muslim Sicily in its own right, an area which is still in need of more research.

The publication of this volume was interrupted by a long period of my own illness and the sad passing of Professor Massimo Campanini. The support and love of so many friends, family members and colleagues carried me through this difficult time. I am particularly grateful to my friend Dr Delia Cortese and to Dr Shainool Jiwa, who have been instrumental in providing me with advice and guidance throughout the process of preparing this book for

publication. I am also grateful to my friend and colleague Lisa Morgan for her meticulous editorial support and to my friend Russell Harris for beautifully refining the poetry cited in my own chapter in this volume. I cannot thank enough Mr Roberto Condie and Dr Larry Lahey for their unlimited love and support. Larry's comments on my introduction and on the various chapters in this volume were invaluable. I would like also to thank Professor Antonino Pellitteri and Dr Nesma Elsakaan from the University of Palermo, Dr Omar Ali-de-Unzaga and Professor Zayn Kassam from the Institute of Ismaili Studies, and Professor Mahmoud Anabtawi and Professor David Wilmsen from the American University of Sharjah.

Last but not least, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Professor Aaron Hughes and to Dr Abbas Aghdassi for their limitless support during the process of reviews and preparing this volume for inclusion in their Edinburgh University Press series (EUP).

I would also like to acknowledge the professionalism and assistance that I received from the editorial team at EUP, namely Emma House, Isobel Birks, Nina Macaraig, Eddie Clark and Louise Hutton. I also want to particularly thank the external reviewers of this volume, and the EUP publishing Committee, whose excellent comments pushed me to improve this book. Finally, I cannot begin to express my gratitude to the AGYA Managing Director Dr Sabine Dorpmüller, AGYA Principal Investigator Professor Verena Lepper, Dr Masetto Bonitz, Nicola Beissner, Viktoria Fink, Dominik Ceballos and Dr Maria Röder-Tzellos for making the open access publication of this book possible, as well as for their invaluable support and assistance.

*In memory of Massimo Campanini (3 November 1954–9 October 2020),  
a kind soul that departed our world and is greatly missed.*

# 1

## SICILY'S ISLAMIC HERITAGE: A PERVERSIVE CULTURE

*Nuha Alshaar*

The Islamic legacy in Sicily represents a major epoch in the island's history and an integral part of its cultural and architectural landscape. During the period from 800 to 1300, the island underwent major social and political changes, as well as developments in religion, language and demographics, which contributed to Sicily's unique and distinct character.<sup>1</sup>

Academic interest in early medieval Sicily has resulted in an ever-growing body of literature over the past two centuries. Over time, two patterns of research have taken shape in analysing this period of history. First, Italian historians contributed work that shaped ideas of national identity in light of the socio-political situation since Italy's unification in 1861. With the development of the field of Italian Studies, a large amount of scholarship has been devoted to exploring and reviving Sicily's Greek, Roman and Norman past, in an attempt to link Italy, and Sicily in particular, to broader European history and recreate its European identity.<sup>2</sup> To date, the study of Norman history, of

<sup>1</sup> See Leonard C. Chiarelli, *A History of Muslim Sicily* (Malta: Midsea Books, 2018), xvii.

<sup>2</sup> For example, Christopher J. Smith and John Serrati published an edited volume that greatly emphasises the notion of identity in relation to the Romans who articulated their image and hybrid identity in Sicily in different ways. The book provides the historical narrative needed to place Sicily at the centre of events in the ancient world from the Iron Age to the Augustan Empire and its European identity; see also Christopher J. Smith and John Serrati (eds), *Sicily*

which the Norman kingdom of Sicily was an important part, remains one of the most popular subjects of European history.<sup>3</sup> As rightly suggested by Alex Metcalfe, after the arrival of the Normans in 1061 in Sicily, . . .

The kingdom of Sicily that emerged 70 years later has been widely studied for its role in the ‘second-phase’ formation of European states and frontiers after the fall of Rome, and because of its interaction with the national histories of France, Italy, Germany, England, Malta, and others [ . . . ] As a result, far more has been said about the construction of Norman rulership and its multifaceted identity in Sicily post-1130 than about the socio-political situation that the Normans inherited from the Muslims.<sup>4</sup>

Contributing to this situation is the relative scarcity of administrative or legal sources from Sicily’s Islamic period when compared to the greater availability

*from Aeneas to Augustus: New Approaches in Archaeology and History* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000). Norwich also presents the Norman period of Sicily as the golden age; see John Julius Norwich, *The Kingdom in the Sun, 1130–1194: The Normans in Sicily, Volume II* (London: Faber & Faber, 2018). Drell and Oldfield edited a collection of essays on Norman Italy in the eleventh and twelfth centuries in different areas including historiographies, identities and communities, religion and Church, and conquest, presenting Norman Italy as a key player in the medieval Mediterranean; see Joanna H. Drell and Paul Oldfield (eds), *Rethinking Norman Italy: Studies in Honour of Graham A. Loud* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021). Claudia Karagoz and Giovanna Summerfield also edited a number of chapters that focus on Sicily’s role in the formation of European identity, as well as its links to the Normans and the rest of Europe, including Malta and Greece; see Claudia Karagoz and Giovanna Summerfield, *Sicily and the Mediterranean: Migration, Exchange, Reinvention* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); see also Jacqueline Alio, *Margaret, Queen of Sicily (Sicilian Medieval Studies)* (New York: Trinacria Editions, 2016).

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Leonie V. Hicks, *A Short History of the Normans* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2016). See also David Abulafia’s study of the economic development of twelfth-century Italy. He explores the relations of the Norman Kingdom of Sicily, important for its maritime ports and the wealth of its rulers, with Northern Italy as well as with those in Germany and Byzantium, who sought to conquer Sicily and Southern Italy; see David Abulafia, *The Two Italies: Economic Relations Between the Norman Kingdom of Sicily and the Northern Communes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

<sup>4</sup> Alex Metcalfe, ‘Before the Normans: Identity and Societal Formation in Muslim Sicily’, in *Sicily, Heritage of the World*, edited by Drik Booms and Peter Higgs (London: British Museum Research Publication, 2019), 102.

of documentary sources for the Norman Kingdom.<sup>5</sup> In light also of this disparity, Italian historians made Sicily's Islamic era only a 'cameo appearance', in as much as it feeds into the story of the Normans and subsequent dynasties up to 1300.<sup>6</sup>

The second pattern of scholarship has been focusing on re-reading or re-evaluating the role and presence of the Arabs and Muslims in pre-modern Sicily and Europe (which in the Sicilian context has been mostly discussed through the lens of Norman society),<sup>7</sup> a topic of intense debate between Arabists and European historians.<sup>8</sup> As a result, the 'Arabo-Norman construct' that shaped many studies evaluating the encounter between the incumbent Sicilian Muslim rulers and the Christian Norman conquerors has come under intense scrutiny. Albeit systematically used, this framework favours the Normans at the expense of the Islamic past as the dominant contribution to that cultural fusion. Barbara Zeitler observed that this construct was somewhat distorting in that the 'syncretism and eclecticism' of the Norman court was limited to Palermo and the Sicilian coastline.<sup>9</sup> Metcalfe also added that most of the available studies and sources on Muslim Sicily are limited to military campaigns, while the diverse and rich period of Sicilian history between 800 and 1300 'remains relatively unexplored, particularly so for questions of Muslim powers and society'.<sup>10</sup> Mirella Cassarino rightly states that scholarship on Muslim Sicily has recently witnessed a widening of horizons and an increased interest in the topic from the

<sup>5</sup> Alex Metcalfe, *The Muslims of Medieval Italy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 110, notes that most of the sources were written after the end of the Muslim rule on the island and that many rely on earlier sources that are now lost; see also Michael Jennings, 'Review of the Muslims of Medieval Italy', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 130/1 (2010): 131–32.

<sup>6</sup> See Metcalfe, *The Muslims of Medieval Italy*, 2.

<sup>7</sup> See below discussion and references.

<sup>8</sup> Antonino Pellitteri argues that Sicilian historiographers had to negotiate between two poles: the study of Islam in Sicily and the political and historical re-articulation of the engagement with Europe and nineteenth-century Italy; see idem, 'Reflections on the Study of Muslim Sicily: History, Politics, and Nineteenth-Century Sicilian Historiography', in *New Approaches to the Study of Muslims in Medieval West*, edited by Brian A. Catlos and Karla Mallette, *Scripta Mediterranea* 19/20 (1998–99), 109.

<sup>9</sup> Barbara Zeitler, "Urbs Felix Dotata Populo Trilingui": Some Thoughts about a Twelfth-Century Funerary Memorial from Palermo', *Medieval Encounters* 2/2 (1996): 138–39.

<sup>10</sup> See Metcalfe, *The Muslims of Medieval Italy*, 1.

perspective of different disciplines,<sup>11</sup> yet there is still room for further expansion of knowledge on Muslim Sicily.

Furthermore, although it is not possible to write about medieval Sicily while ignoring the convergence of these two cultural traditions, the aim of this volume is to unpack the ‘Arabo-Norman construct’ in order to shift the balance between its two components. Thus, more space is predominantly given to the period of Muslim rule and to major aspects of Arabic and Islamic contributions to the history of Sicily in its own right.

Building on recent significant contributions of scholars – including Jeremy Johns, Alex Metcalfe, Lucia Arcifa, Annliese Nef, Mirella Cassarino, William Granara, Leonard Chiarelli, Nicola Carpentieri, Henri Bresc, David Abulafia, to name but a few – this book adds to the existing studies on medieval Sicily by focusing on its Arabic and Islamic legacy *per se* rather than being mainly overshadowed by Byzantine and Norman ‘filters’. With contributions exploring the multi-faceted aspects of the culture, politics, literature, art and intellectual history of Muslim Sicily, this book reevaluates the Islamic legacy of the island against that backdrop of its interconnection with that of other parts of the Islamic world, thus filling an acknowledged scholarly need.<sup>12</sup>

### **Previous Scholarship on Muslim Sicily**

With the increasing availability of sources in the modern era,<sup>13</sup> important early studies emerged. In the nineteenth century, Michele Amari (1806–89), who is regarded as the father of modern scholarship on Muslim Sicily, published two

<sup>11</sup> Mirella Cassarino offers an excellent overview of recent scholarship on Muslim Sicily until 2015; see Mirella Cassarino, ‘Studies on Islamic Sicily: The Last Fifteen Years’, in *Islamic Sicily: Philological and Literary Essays*, edited by Mirella Cassarino, special issue of *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 10 (2015): 3–11.

<sup>12</sup> See note 4 above.

<sup>13</sup> Alex Metcalfe and Leonard Chiarelli have pointed out that the annalistic chronicles that deal with the Islamic period of Sicily are almost all distant in time and place from the period which they describe. These sources were not very precise when relating the history of the Muslim conquests of the island or the governors who ruled the island during this period; see Metcalfe, *The Muslims of Medieval Italy*, 2; Chiarelli, *A History of Muslim Sicily*, xxvii–iii.

major studies: *Biblioteca Arabo-Sicula* and *Storia dei Musulmani di Sicilia*.<sup>14</sup> Although he discussed the Norman period over as many pages as he devoted to the Muslim period, his works provided the first comprehensive survey of Arabic sources on Sicily under Muslim rule. He considered the Muslim period a positive development to replace the Byzantine rule that had impoverished the island.<sup>15</sup> Amari's work contributed to renewing the interest in Islamic studies in Palermo. Following Amari's pioneering work, studies on Sicily's Islamic period followed, authored by Celestino Schiparelli, Francesco Gabrieli and Umberto Rizzitano.<sup>16</sup> Rizzitano's works in particular has covered the historical development of the presence of Arabs and Muslims in Sicily and their relations to the Christians of the island.<sup>17</sup>

In the twentieth century, Adalgisa De Simone and Antonino Pellitteri further developed the field of Sicilian Islamic studies.<sup>18</sup> De Simone explored the Arab-Sicilian cultural centres outside Palermo,<sup>19</sup> and Pellitteri expanded our knowledge of Fātimid Sicily as well as Sicily's link to Ifrīqiya.<sup>20</sup> He also highlighted the need for new approaches to deal with these topics.

The Mediterranean historian Henri Bresc studied medieval Palermo and greatly contributed to Sicilian historiography. He widened its scope by investigating the social and economic context, the feudal system of Islam,

<sup>14</sup> Michele Amari, *Biblioteca Arabo-Sicula* (Torino: Loescher, 1880); idem, *Storia dei Musulmani di Sicilia* (Florence: Firenze Le Monnier, 1854); cf. William Granara, *Narrating Muslim Sicily: War and Peace in the Medieval Mediterranean World* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), x.

<sup>15</sup> Amari, *Biblioteca Arabo-Sicula*, 1880.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Granara, *Narrating Muslim Sicily*, xi.

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, Umberto Rizzitano, *Storia e cultura nella Sicilia saracena* (Palermo: S. F. Flaccovio, 1975).

<sup>18</sup> See Adalgisa De Simone, *Splendori e Misteri di Sicilia: In Un'opera di Ibn Qalaqis* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 1996). Pellitteri, 'Reflections on the Study of Muslim Sicily', 109–20; see also idem, 'The Historical-Ideological Framework of Islamic Fātimid Sicily (fourth/tenth century) with Reference to the Works of the Qādī L-Nu'mān', *Al-Masāq: Journal of the Medieval Mediterranean* 7 (1994): 111–63; idem, *Sicilia e Islam: Tracciati oltre la storia* (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2016).

<sup>19</sup> See Adalgisa De Simone, 'I luoghi di cultura arabo-islamica', in *Centri di produzione della cultura nel Mezzogiorno normanno-svevo: Atti delle dodicesime giornate normanno-svevo, Bari, 17–20 Ottobre 1995*, edited by Giosuè Musca (Bari: Dedalo, 1997), 55–87.

<sup>20</sup> See Pellitteri, 'The Historical-Ideological Framework of Islamic Fātimid Sicily', 111–63; idem, *Sicilia e Islam*.

the Fāṭimids and their fortresses, as well as by re-evaluating the peaceful co-existence between different communities in the Norman period.<sup>21</sup> The maritime historian David Abulafia added important work on the economic, political and social contexts of the Norman period, including Muslims in Sicily as seen through Norman eyes and as one of the ethnic components living under Christian Norman rule. This approach, nevertheless, once again put the spotlight on the activities of the Normans, especially Frederick II and his policies towards the Jews and Muslims.<sup>22</sup>

Over the past twenty years, there has been renewed interest in Muslim Sicily so that more studies have appeared. However, as outlined by Mirella Cassarino, in spite of the diversity of topics introduced, most of these studies have continued to explore the subject from a historical viewpoint,<sup>23</sup> and mostly using the ‘Arabo-Norman’ framework. The seminal works of Jeremy Johns and Alex Metcalfe added significantly to the social and administrative history of the Arab-Muslim populations.<sup>24</sup> These two authors offered detailed studies of the continued Muslim presence, although their contributions were largely from

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, Henri Bresc, *Livre et société en Sicile (1299–1499)* (Palermo: Centro di Studi Filologici e Linguistici Siciliani, 1971); idem, ‘Féodalité coloniale en Terre d’Islam: La Sicile (1070–1240)’, in *Féodales et féodalisme dans l’Occident méditerranéen Xe–XIIIe siècles* (Rome: École française de Rome, 1980), 631–47; idem, *Politique et société en Sicile, XIIe–XVe s* (London: Routledge, 1991); idem, *Una Stagione in Sicilia*, edited by Marcello Pacifico (Palermo: Associazione Mediterranean, 2010); idem, *Arabes de langue, juifs de religion: L’évolution du judaïsme sicilien dans l’environnement latin, XIIe–XVe siècles* (Paris: Éditeur Bouchène, 2001); on the topic, see also Brian Catlos, *The Victors and the Vanquished: Christians and Muslims of Catalonia and Aragon, 1050–1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

<sup>22</sup> See David Abulafia, ‘Ethnic Variety and Its Implications: Frederick II’s Relations with Jews and Muslims’, in *Intellectual Life at the Court of Frederick II Hohenstaufen*, edited by William Tronzo (London: National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1994), 213–24; idem, *Frederick II: A Medieval Emperor* (London: Allen Lane, 1988); idem, ‘The End of Muslim Sicily’, in *Muslims under Latin Rule, 1100–1300*, edited by J. M. Powell (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 103–33; idem, ‘The Norman Kingdom of Africa and the Norman Expedition to Majorca and the Muslim Mediterranean’, *Anglo-Norman Studies 7* (1985): 26–49; idem, ‘The Crown and the Economy under Roger II and His Successors’, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 37 (1983): 1–14.

<sup>23</sup> Cassarino, ‘Studies on Islamic Sicily’, 3.

<sup>24</sup> See Jeremy Johns, *Arabic Administration in Norman Sicily: The Royal Dīwān* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); see also Alex Metcalfe, *Muslims and Christians in Norman Sicily: Arabic-Speakers and the End of Islam* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003).

a perspective under the umbrella of Norman Sicily. Johns showed the influence of Islamic practices, especially those practised in Fātimid Egypt, on the fiscal administration of the Norman kingship in Sicily.<sup>25</sup> He also pointed out in a previous study the artistic connections involving Norman Sicily, Fātimid Egypt, Zirid and Ḥammādīd Ifrīqiya.<sup>26</sup> His article titled 'Arabic Sources for Sicily' offers a valuable contribution to the field.<sup>27</sup> In his turn, Metcalfe studied Sicilian Arabic language and its use in Norman Sicily.<sup>28</sup> The works of these two authors focused largely on Norman rulership and society, without neglecting the multi-faith and multi-cultural population who, in different ways, contributed to the art, culture and cosmopolitan world of Sicily.

The imbalance between pre- and post-Norman conquest scholarship has shifted over the past twenty years, with a large expansion of research into early Christian–Muslim relations.<sup>29</sup> Attention to this theme seems to be the result of greater interest in Islam's transcultural encounters due to current issues of mass migration,<sup>30</sup> which may benefit from a historical framework that can provide a positive example of the interaction between these two groups over centuries, as opposed to current increasing conflict. Metcalfe, working with Graham Loud, explored the position of Christian Arabs and Muslims within the complex society of Norman Sicily from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Johns, *Arabic Administration in Norman Sicily*.

<sup>26</sup> Jeremy Johns, 'The Norman Kings of Sicily and the Fātimid Caliphate', *Anglo Norman Studies* 5 (1993): 133–59.

<sup>27</sup> This study offers important information about the nature of the sources concerning Sicily; see Jeremy Johns, 'Arabic Sources for Sicily', in *Byzantium and the Crusade: The Non-Greek Sources, 1025–1204*, edited by Mary Whitby (London: British Academy, 2007), 341–60.

<sup>28</sup> Metcalfe, *Muslims and Christians in Norman Sicily*.

<sup>29</sup> See Alex Metcalfe, 'Before the Normans: Identity and Social Formation in Muslim Sicily', in *Sicily, Heritage of the World*, edited by Dirk Booms and Peter Higgs (London: British Museum Research Publications, 2019), 102.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> G. A. Loud and Alex Metcalfe, *The Society of Norman Italy* (Leiden: Brill, 2002); see also Alex Metcalfe, 'The Muslims of Sicily under Christian Rule', in *The Society of Norman Italy*, edited by Graham A. Loud and Alex Metcalfe (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 289–317; *idem*, 'De Saracenico in Latinum Transferri: Causes and Effects of Translation in the Fiscal Administration of Norman Sicily', *Al-Masāq: Islam and the Medieval Mediterranean* 13 (2001): 43–86; see also Alex Metcalfe and Jeremy Johns, 'The Mystery at Chūrchuro: Conspiracy or Incompetence in Twelfth Century Sicily?' *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 62/2 (1999): 226–59.

In 2003, Julie Taylor also provided insight into Christian–Muslim relations by exploring the lives of Muslims within the social and political complexities of the southern city of Lucera in medieval Italy, as well as the legal status of Muslims in Christendom and their contribution to the economy and the defence of the kingdom of Sicily.<sup>32</sup> In *Arabs and Normans in Sicily and the South of Italy* by Adele Cilento and Alessandro Vanoli, we find a shift away from looking at the Muslims through the Normans' experience. The first part of this book explores Muslim Sicily in the ninth century, especially the expansion, society and activities during the Fātimid period and their governors of Sicily, the Kalbids.<sup>33</sup> The second and largest part of the book deals with Norman Sicily.

In his significant 2009 work, *The Muslims of Medieval Italy*, Metcalfe also noted the existing gap in scholarship and offered a fresh survey of the social and political history of the period of Muslim rule between 800 and 1300.<sup>34</sup> This book is considered the most comprehensive history of Sicily's past since the works by Amari, Ferdinando Maurici and Aziz Ahmad.<sup>35</sup> Metcalfe made a ground-breaking contribution to which the present book will now add more Muslim-centred nuance. He discussed the Arab and Muslim activities during the Aghlabid and Fātimid dynasties, covering the period from the establishment to the decline of the Arab-Muslim rule in Sicily and South Italy. The remainder of his book was devoted to the Normans' conquest of Sicily and the conditions of Muslims under Norman rule, containing valuable details of military campaigns and discussing the short- and long-term impact that Muslim rule in Sicily had on the Central Mediterranean region.

The dynamic relationship between Norman Sicily and the Muslim world – namely, its Zirid counterparts of North Africa – is also the subject of Matt King's recent study.<sup>36</sup> He followed a perspective similar to that of

<sup>32</sup> See Julie Taylor, *Muslims in Medieval Italy: The Colony at Lucera* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003).

<sup>33</sup> Adele Cilento and Alessandro Vanoli, *Arabs and Normans in Sicily and the South of Italy* (Riverside, NY: Riverside Book Company, 2007).

<sup>34</sup> Metcalfe, *The Muslims of Medieval Italy*.

<sup>35</sup> See Aziz Ahmad, *History of Islamic Sicily* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1975); see also Ferdinando Maurici, *Breve storia degli arabi in Sicilia* (Palermo: Flaccovio Editore, 2006).

<sup>36</sup> Matt King, *Dynasties Intertwined: The Zirids of Ifriqiya and the Normans of Sicily* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2022).

Jeremy Johns by exploring the complex economic, political, cultural and military situations of Norman Sicily during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. His investigation focuses on the Norman kingdom's relation not to Europe, but to the Zirids of Ifrīqiya, which the Normans replaced when they established their own Kingdom of Ifrīqiya, which lasted until the Almohad conquest of Mahdia in 1160. The theme of Christian–Muslim relations remained the prominent lens through which King assessed this relationship.

Recently, the process of Islamisation in Sicily has been re-evaluated and analysed not only in relation to al-Andalus, but also to the entire region of the Central Mediterranean.<sup>37</sup> Leonard Chiarelli has offered a historical view of the Arab conquests of Sicily during the Aghlabids and Fātimids, as well as the Kalbids in the context of the Maghribi immigration, which was triggered by political and social disturbance in Ifrīqiya.<sup>38</sup> He also discussed the role of various Berber tribes in connection with the Ibādī movement and so on.<sup>39</sup> As mentioned by Henri Bresc, the value of this work is 'in putting into proper perspective the Muslim period in Sicilian history still evident in its heritage, rather than concentrating only on the Roman-Byzantine period, and leap-frogging toward the Norman-Swabian future'.<sup>40</sup> The discussion shows a complex, hybrid and culturally plural Sicilian Muslim society in the western part of the island in Mazara del Vallo. William Granara equally provided a detailed account of the history of Muslim societies in Sicily. His *Narrating Muslim Sicily* re-imagined Sicily as a historical subject and literary trope by dealing

<sup>37</sup> See Amira Bennison (ed.), *The Articulation of Power in Medieval Iberia and the Maghrib* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); cf. Cassarino, 'Studies on Islamic Sicily', 4.

<sup>38</sup> See Leonard Chiarelli, *A History of Muslim Sicily* (Malta: Midsea Books, 2018). For further discussion of the cultural transmissions and migrations between North Africa and Sicily, see Henri Bresc, 'La Sicile et le Maghreb: Relations politiques, migrations, transmissions culturelles', in *Villa 4: Histoire et Archéologie de L'Occident Musulman (VIIe–XVe Siècle): Al-Andalus, Maghreb, Sicile*, edited by Philippe Sénac (Toulouse: Presses universitaires du Midi, 2012), 201–19.

<sup>39</sup> For other studies on the Berber component of Sicily, see Leonard Chiarelli, 'The Ibādiyya in Muslim Sicily: From the Muslim Conquest to Lucera?' in *Ibadi Theology: Rereading Sources and Scholarly Works*, edited by Ersilia Francesca (New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 2015), 129–44.

<sup>40</sup> Henri Bresc, 'Preface', in *A History of Muslim Sicily*, xii.

with questions of representation as well as Sicily's political conflict and social changes based on how Arab and Muslim historians, geographers, jurists, poets and philologists between the ninth and the twelfth centuries presented these events.<sup>41</sup>

Apart from the historical approach, a number of scholars, including Karla Mallette, explored the literary history of Sicily during the Norman period in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.<sup>42</sup> Mallette argued for the existence of multi-lingual, multi-cultural coherent traditions, and for rich and influential Arab and Islamic traditions that have left their impact on modern European culture.<sup>43</sup> Scholars have also continued to explore the influence of Sicilian Arabic in the wider Mediterranean region.<sup>44</sup>

Several valuable edited volumes have also been published by scholars such as Antonino Pellitteri, Anniese Nef and Patrice Cressier, Maribel Fierro and John Tolan, and Mirella Cassarino. These volumes include papers on the Fatimids and their role in Sicily; on the legal status of *dhīmmīs* in the Islamic West; on Muslim Palermo; and on Arabic literary traditions in medieval Sicily.<sup>45</sup> Mirella

<sup>41</sup> Granara, *Narrating Muslim Sicily*.

<sup>42</sup> Karla Mallette, *The Kingdom of Sicily, 1100–1250: A Literary History* (Pittsburgh: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005); see also idem, ‘Translating Sicily’, *Medieval Encounters* 9 (2003): 140–63; see also Karla Mallette and Suzanne Conklin Akbari (eds), *A Sea of Languages: Rethinking the Arabic Role in Medieval Literary History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013).

<sup>43</sup> See Karla Mallette, *European Modernity and the Arab Mediterranean: Toward a New Philology and a Counter-Orientalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

<sup>44</sup> See below discussion; see also Dionisius Aguisse, *Siculo-Arabic* (London: Routledge, 1996). Cristina La Rosa, *L'Arabo di Sicilia nel contest magrebino: Nuove prospettive di ricerca* (Roma: Istituto per l'Oriente, 2019). For Metcalfe's study of Arabic during the Norman Period, see his *Muslims and Christians in Norman Sicily*; idem, ‘Sicilian Arabic’, in *Encyclopaedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics*, edited by Kees Versteegh et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2009), iv, 215–19.

<sup>45</sup> See Antonino Pellitteri (ed.), *I Fatimidi e il Mediterraneo* (Palermo: Palermo University Press, 2008); Anniese Nef and Patrice Cressier (eds), ‘Les Fatimides et la Méditerranée centrale (Xe et XIIe siècle)’, *Remm 139* (2016): 13–28; Anniese Nef (ed.), *A Companion to Medieval Palermo: The History of a Mediterranean City from 600 to 1500* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), with Palermo under the Islamic period covered on pages 39–132; see also Maribel Fierro and John Tolan (eds), *The Legal Status of Dhīmmīs in the Islamic West (Second/Eighth-Ninth/Fifteenth Centuries)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013); Mirella Cassarino (ed.), *Islamic Sicily: Philological and Literary Essays*, special issue of *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 10 (2015). For early studies

Cassarino and Antonella Ghergetti, Oriana Capezio, Francesco Grande and Cristina La Rosa also produced significant studies on Arab-Sicilian and Andalusian grammarians.<sup>46</sup> These studies underlined the close and productive relationships between scholars operating in religious and grammar study circles in al-Andalus and Sicily between the ninth and tenth centuries.

The last decade has been a prosperous one in scholarship on medieval Sicily. While some of these publications have continued to focus on Norman Sicily and the Christian–Muslim relations,<sup>47</sup> others, especially with more sources becoming available and with archaeological discoveries, contributed to further exploration of the Muslim period of Sicily in its own right,<sup>48</sup> notably in this context the work of Lucia Arcifa, Alessandra Bagnara and Annliese Nef, which discussed archaeological discoveries that have increased our understanding of Sicily and its Mediterranean neighbours.<sup>49</sup> The process of urbanisation and economic issues also received attention.<sup>50</sup>

on Palermo, see Rosario La Duca (ed.), *Storia di Palermo, vol. 2: Dal tardo-antico all'Islam* (Palermo: Nabu Press, 1999); see also Francesco Gabrieli and Umberto Scerrato (eds), *Gli arabi in Italia: Cultura, contatti e tradizioni* (Milan: Garzanti-Scheiwiller, 1979). For other studies on the role of the Fāṭimids in Sicily, see also Michael Brett, *The Rise of the Fatimids: The World of the Mediterranean and the Middle East in the Fourth Century of the Hijra, Tenth Century CE* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 73–99; Antonino Pellitteri, ‘Reflections on the Study of Muslim Sicily,’ 109–20. There is still a need for more extensive studies on Fāṭimid Sicily, as mentioned in Metcalfe, *The Muslims of Medieval Italy*, 66, note 1.

<sup>46</sup> See Mirella Cassarino and Antonella Ghergetti (eds), ‘Arab-Sicilian and Andalusian Grammarians’, *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Literatures* 17 (2017): 65–137.

<sup>47</sup> Giovanna Palombo, ‘The Normans of Sicily from “the Other Side”: The Medieval Arabic Sources’, in *Sicily and the Mediterranean*, edited by Claudia Karagoz and Giovanna Summerfield (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 29–59.

<sup>48</sup> See Metcalfe, ‘Before the Normans: Identity and Societal Formation in Muslim Sicily’, 102–19; idem, ‘Messaging and Memory: Notes from Medieval Ifrīqiya and Sicily’, in *Sicily, al-Andalus and the Maghreb: Writing in Times of Turmoil*, The Medieval Globe 5/1, edited by Carol Symes and Nicola Carpentiero, 87–104 (Yorkshire: Arc Humanities Press).

<sup>49</sup> Lucia Arcifa, Alessandra Bagnara and Annliese Nef, ‘Archeologia della Sicilia islamica: Nuove proposte di riflessione’, in *Villa 4: Histoire et Archéologie de L'Occident Musulman (VIIe–XVe Siècle): Al-Andalus, Maghreb, Sicile*, edited by Philippe Sénac (Toulouse: Presses universitaires du Midi, 2012), 241–74.

<sup>50</sup> See Federico Martino and Adalgisa De Simone, ‘Un documento arabo e il diritto comune alla corte di Ruggero II’, *Rivista internazionale di diritto comune* 19 (2008): 93–136; Adalgisa

## This Volume

The contributions in this volume build on the achievements highlighted above. The goal here is to add more of a Muslim-nuanced centre by exploring Sicily's Islamic past via a multi-disciplinary approach that fuses social, literary, intellectual and cultural histories with archaeology and art. In short, the volume deals with the period of Arab-Muslim rule in Sicily – what Metcalfe has described as an essentially 'Arabic-speaking Muslim Island'<sup>51</sup> – and the way in which this island interacted with the rest of the Muslim world. Contributions cover major aspects of Muslim Sicily's legacy and will showcase the following topics: trade; artistic and archaeological links between Sicily and the Eastern Mediterranean; relations between Fātimid Africa and their stalwarts, the Kalbids of Sicily; the appropriation of knowledge and the Arabo-Islamic philosophical and linguistic legacy; the shared experiences of women working in textile production in Fātimid Egypt and Norman Sicily; the art history of Sicily and its borrowing of spiritual, intellectual and ceremonial elements from the Fātimid court in Cairo; Sicily's poetic traditions under the Kalbids; Muslim accounts of medieval Sicily; the linguistic relationship of the Siculo-Arabic ancestor to other varieties of Arabic; and Sicily's multi-cultural population and their interactions with respect to language, religion and social habits.

## The Muslim Presence in Sicily

Sicily came under Muslim rule in 800, with attempts at conquering the island going back to about 652, when Muslim raids against Sicily were launched from the coast of Syria.<sup>52</sup> Once installed as rulers in Sicily, the Arabs encountered well-established Greek and Byzantine cultures, and their presence was marked by dynamic exchanges with other groups, which together would one

De Simone, 'In margine alla fiscalità islamica in Sicilia', in *Les dynamiques de l'Islamisation en Méditerranée Centrale et en Sicile*, edited by Annliese Nef and Fabiola Ardizzone (Bari: École française de Rome-Edipuglia, 2014), 59–68; in the same volume, see Maria Amalia De Luca, 'L'islamizzazione del sistema monetario in Sicilia nel periodo aghlabita (827–909): L'apporto del medagliere del museo archeologico Salinas di Palermo', 69–88. For the processes of urbanisation, see in the same volume Chokri Touihri, 'La transition urbaine de Bysance à l'Islam en Ifriqiya vue depuis l'archéologie: Quelques notes préliminaires', 131–40.

<sup>51</sup> See Metcalfe, *Muslims and Christians in Norman Sicily*, xv.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Metcalfe, *The Muslims of Medieval Italy*, 5.

day give shape to a distinctive Sicilian multi-cultural identity. The legacy of the Muslim past has remained alive in the collective memory of the Sicilian people and continues to exist in various aspects of their lives.<sup>53</sup> 'I saraceni' live on in the cultural imaginaries and the popular memory of Sicilians.<sup>54</sup>

The Muslim and Arab rule in Sicily can be characterised, according to Ibn Khaldūn's understanding, into six phases: (i) a period of conquest based on natural solidarity and religious sentiment; (ii) the years of consolidation in the form of a strong army and a strong government; (iii) the period of financial success and comfort, fortified by a well-developed (urban) infrastructure and civil institutions; (v) a period of contentment and expected wealth; and (vi) a final period of decline.<sup>55</sup> The first Muslim dynasty to rule over Sicily was that of the Sunnī Aghlabids, who, with their base in Raqqāda-Qayrawān in today's Tunisia, acted as vassals of the 'Abbāsid caliphs in Baghdad. With the appointment of Ibrāhīm b. al-Aghlab in 799 as the amīr of Ifrīqiya by the 'Abbāsid caliph al-Manṣūr, order was established there, and a powerful independent dynasty was founded. In 827, Arab and Berber tribes from North Africa, the Middle East and even from al-Andalus invaded Sicily, thus contributing to the massive demographic diversification of the island.

After initial rapid success, the Aghlabids took a long time to conquer most of Byzantine Sicily.<sup>56</sup> In 831, Palermo was captured. The Arab historian Ibn al-Athīr reported that its population was significantly reduced in number, and the continuity of Christian institutions was interrupted. In the early 840s, the Aghlabids conquered the area of Platani, Caltabellotta and Corleone, as well as the port of Trapani. Thus, the larger region of the Mazara del Vallo was transformed into land grants allocated to the leading families of the *jund* (army).<sup>57</sup> The last strongholds to fall under Arab control were those in the north-eastern triangle with Taormina and Rametta (Rometta), conquered in 902 and 967, respectively. From 967 onwards, the island was under the control of Muslims

<sup>53</sup> See Gaetano Cipolla, *Siciliana: Studies on the Sicilian Ethos and Literature* (New York: Legas, 2014), 58.

<sup>54</sup> Gaetano Trovato, *Sopravvivenze arabe in Sicilia* (Monreale: Casa editrice Vena, 1949); cf. Pellitteri, 'Reflections on the Study of Muslim Sicily', 109.

<sup>55</sup> Granara, *Narrating Muslim Sicily*, 3.

<sup>56</sup> Metcalfe, *The Muslims of Medieval Italy*, 14.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 13.

until the Norman conquest in 1061. By 1092, the whole of Sicily was under Norman rule. The Norman kingdom of Sicily would eventually extend to the mainland peninsula of Italy and as far as North Africa.

During the period of Muslim rule, Sicily became part of the *dār al-Islām* (Islamic world). The Aghlabid rulers of Sicily introduced their religious leadership and their self-determined form of governance. Although Sicily did not become completely independent from its masters in Ifrīqiya, this form of authority may have resulted in tensions between the new force of elites in Sicily and those in Qayrawān in Ifrīqiya.<sup>58</sup> The Aghlabid rulers of Sicily aspired to maintain a strong political, cultural and commercial relationship with Ifrīqiya and the wider Islamic world. Naturally, they shaped the political scene in Sicily and Southern Italy, which resulted in dynamic Christian–Muslim relations determined by mutual interest in a volatile political situation.<sup>59</sup> Mohamed Hassen’s contribution to this volume persuasively shows how Sicily was well-placed in the Mediterranean as a key point in shipping routes, maritime networks and ports of call, as well as in trade and shipping strategies from the eighth to the twelfth centuries.<sup>60</sup>

Sicily’s long-held role as a crossroads and a place of cultural diversification in the Mediterranean has been studied archaeologically and through other material evidence by prominent scholars including Lucia Arcifa.<sup>61</sup> There has been slow progress in the field of Islamic archaeological research in Sicily; this is the result of a complex legacy preventing the development of an ‘autonomous’ collection of materials related to the Islamic age, which has often been rather overlooked or considered a parenthesis between Late Antiquity and the re-emergence of the island within the Western and Latin Middle Ages.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>58</sup> For more discussion, see *ibid.*, 16.

<sup>59</sup> There are examples of the role played by Muslims, including their involvement in decades of civil conflict, the split of the duchy of Benevento and the economic, political and propagandist effect of their raiding activities, which included attacks on the foundation of the Muslim amirates at Bari and Tárento. The Muslims also developed relationships with the Maritime Duchies of Naples and the South Italian mainland (832–71); see Metcalfe, *The Muslims of Medieval Italy*, 16–22.

<sup>60</sup> See Chapter Two in this volume.

<sup>61</sup> Lucia Arcifa et al., ‘Le vie del lino nel Medioevo: Nuovi dati dal contesto bizantino di Rocchicella di Mineo (CT)’, *Archeologia Medievale* 48 (2021): 353–69; see also Claudia Karagoz and Giovanna Summerfield, ‘Introduction’, in *Sicily and the Mediterranean*, 1–13.

<sup>62</sup> Arcifa, Bagnera and Nef, ‘Archeologia della Sicilia islamica’.

The island underwent a process of social and cultural Islamisation, as evidenced by recent archaeological research detecting traces of this transformation around the Mediterranean basin.<sup>63</sup> Exploring material culture, including pottery from ninth- and tenth-century Islamic Palermo, and comparing it with other contemporary contexts from Mediterranean cities, such as in North Africa, Lucia Arcifa and Alessandra Bagnera highlighted similarities in the basic elements and peculiarities of these products. There is also evidence of links between Sicily and North Africa at the early stages of cultural exchanges, the movement of people and possible Eastern Islamic influences.<sup>64</sup>

Indeed, Sicily's close proximity to North Africa as well as to Europe has been an essential aspect of its history, which facilitated movement of communities between these regions.<sup>65</sup> According to Mohamed Hassen, Sicily had a strong intercultural relationship with Ifrīqiya (especially during the Fātimid dynasty) where the population of Arab origins was concentrated on the coastline. This facilitated the movement of people between Sicily and Ifrīqiya over several centuries. Settlers from Ifrīqiya lived in smaller estates and were encouraged to practice farming. The fertile land in the west and southwest thus were the earliest sites of Muslim settlement in Sicily. Hassen also explores how the intercultural relationship between Ifrīqiya and Sicily resulted in similarities between the Sicilian (Siculo) and Ifrīqyan dialects, and between people and place names. He provides examples of the large number of Sicilians who belong to the lineages of tribes (*nisba*) or towns and villages of Ifrīqiya. The

<sup>63</sup> Annliese Nef and Fabiola Ardizzone (eds), *Les dynamiques de l'islamisation en Méditerranée centrale et en Sicile: Nouvelles propositions et découvertes récentes = Le dinamiche dell' islamizzazione nel Mediterraneo centrale e in Sicilia: Nuove proposte e scoperte recenti* (Rome-Bari: École française de Rome-Edipuglia, 2014), 8.

<sup>64</sup> See Lucia Arcifa and Alessandra Bagnera, 'Palermo in the Ninth and Early Tenth Century: Ceramics as Archaeological Markers of Cultural Dynamics', in *The Aghlabids and Their Neighbors: Art and Material Culture in Ninth-Century North Africa*, edited by Glaire D. Anderson et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 382–404. For other articles on the Islamisation process of the material culture as explored through the early ceramic contexts of Palermo, see also Arcifa, Bagnera and Nef, 'Archeologia della Sicilia islamica'.

<sup>65</sup> For a study of the key role played by Sicily from the Romans to the Normans, see Sarah Davis-Secord, *Where Three Worlds Met: Sicily in the Early Medieval Mediterranean* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017); see also Louis Mendola and Jacqueline Alio, *The Peoples of Sicily: A Multicultural Legacy* (New York: Trinacria Editions, 2014).

majority of these names originated from the tribes of southern Ifrīqiya, namely the region between Gabes and Tripoli.<sup>66</sup> There are similarities in genealogy and the names still used by Sicilian people, in their dialect and to some extent in their look and characteristic attitudes.<sup>67</sup> Michele Amari mentioned 328 names derived from Arab origin, and these names are spread across the island.<sup>68</sup>

The Aghlabids also contributed to the development of the city of Palermo, which was known as al-Madīna (the city). It was re-populated and flourished as a major city and one of the wealthiest centres in Europe for over four centuries. For this reason, as stated by Metcalfe, Palermo became undoubtedly ‘the greatest surviving legacy of Muslim rule in Sicily’.<sup>69</sup> The city was managed by several strong Arab-Muslim families from the Aghlabid *jund*, after whom some of the city’s quarters were named.<sup>70</sup>

### **The Fātimids and the Kalbids**

If one follows the division of Ibn Khaldūn mentioned above, Muslim Sicily experienced periods of financial success, comfort, urban development, good infrastructure and civil institutions, and expected wealth during the Fātimid period, especially while under the rule of the Fātimids’ vassals, the Kalbids. Under the Ismā‘īlī Fātimids, Palermo continued to be the main political and cultural centre for the activities of the Fātimid-appointed governors of the island. The Ismā‘īlī missionary Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Shī‘ī was able to assemble an army consisting of mainly Kutāma Berbers that, by defeating the Aghlabids, made Sicily fall into the hands of a new regime in 908.<sup>71</sup> With the foundation of the Fātimid dynasty following the enthronement of the Imām-Caliph al-Mahdī in Ifrīqiya, the Fātimids took hold of Sicily.

<sup>66</sup> See Chapter Two in this volume.

<sup>67</sup> Cipolla, *Siciliana*, 58.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 58–59.

<sup>69</sup> See Metcalfe, *The Muslims of Medieval Italy*, 13.

<sup>70</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> For an account of the military activities of the Fātimids and their conquest of Sicily, see *ibid.*, 44–69; ‘Alī b. Muḥammad b. Sa‘īd al-Zahrānī, *al-Hayyāt al-‘ilmīyya fī Ṣiqillīya* (212–484 H – 826–1091 CH) (Um al-Qurā: Maktabat Fahd al-Waṭṭaniyya, 1996); Chiarelli, *A History of Muslim Sicily*, 67–145. For sources on the Fātimids, the Mediterranean and Sicily, see also note 12 above.

Sicilian notables were taken to Ifrīqiya to be introduced to Fātimid law and administration.<sup>72</sup> Nevertheless, the Ismā'īlī Shī'ī doctrine of the Fātimids was met by opposition from the majority of the population, given the strong presence of the Sunnī Malikīs in Sicily and Ifrīqiya. There were also ongoing tensions between the Arabs and Berber tribes. These issues resulted in instability and public revolts against the Fātimids, leading to the change of several governors during their rule.<sup>73</sup> Between 945 and 948, the Fātimid dynasty was threatened by a Kharijite uprising led by Abū Yazīd and by violent disorder in Palermo against their governor. This background of political insecurity provided the ground for the Arab-Ifrīqiyān tribe of the Banū Kalb to rise to power as the Fātimid stewards in Sicily.<sup>74</sup> Thus, al-Hasan b. 'Alī b. Kalb, a former Fātimid governor of Tūnis, was dispatched to Sicily, having quelled the revolt of Abū Yazīd.<sup>75</sup>

The Kalbid governors played a major role in strengthening Fātimid rule in Sicily. After the transfer of the Fātimid capital to Cairo, the Kalbids gained much more independence with the tacit approval of the Fātimid sovereigns, and they were able to bring political stability and to transform the island from 'a frontier province organized for war into a relatively peaceful centre of Islamic civilization'.<sup>76</sup> In fact, the Sicilian Kalbid household became a significant political power, which for several generations was able to influence the dynamics of the Fātimid rule in Ifrīqiya, as discussed by Shainool Jiwa in her chapter in this volume.<sup>77</sup> This relationship placed the legacy of Sicily under the Kalbids at

<sup>72</sup> Cambridge Chronicle in BAS 2 Ar. 1: 2020, BAS 2 It. 1 292; cf. Metcalfe, *The Muslims of Medieval Italy*, 44–45.

<sup>73</sup> For an account of the situation, see Metcalfe, *The Muslims of Medieval Italy*, 46–48; Chiarelli, *A History of Muslim Sicily*.

<sup>74</sup> For more details, see Metcalfe, *The Muslims of Medieval Italy*, 53–69; Chiarelli, *A History of Muslim Sicily*, 95–145.

<sup>75</sup> For a genealogy of the Kalbid rulers, see Clifford. E. Bosworth, *New Islamic Dynasties: A Chronological and Genealogical Manual* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 33; see U. Rizzitano, 'Kalbids', in *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*, edited by P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel and W. P. Heinrichs <[http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\\_islam\\_SIM\\_3822](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_3822)> (accessed 22 February 2023).

<sup>76</sup> Johns, 'Arabic Sources for Sicily', 342.

<sup>77</sup> See Chapter Three in this volume.

the heart of the Fāṭimid Empire, under which it became a major cultural and political centre that played a vital role in shaping the heritage of Fāṭimid lands.

Sicily was important for the Fāṭimids who were eager to maintain their presence in the island for political, economic and agricultural reasons. They also envisioned their religious duties as defenders of the faith and fought against the expansion policy of the Byzantines.<sup>78</sup> The Fāṭimids wanted to extend their rule around the Mediterranean coast and make Sicily a base to rebuke the Byzantines' attacks.<sup>79</sup> According to Hasan, the Fāṭimid conception of this Mediterranean was unified, representing a medium for cultural exchange.<sup>80</sup> Therefore, Sicily was seen as having a growing influential role in the Fāṭimids' strategy for the control of the Mediterranean, especially North Africa.<sup>81</sup> This is also indicated by Sicilian Muslims having achieved high positions in the Fāṭimid administration in Ifrīqiya and contributed to the expansion of the Fāṭimid dynasty. One such figure was the famous slave-general Jawhar. Known sometimes as al-Šiqillī, the Sicilian, he was possibly Sicilian-Byzantine by origin. His fame rested on having led campaigns that extended Fāṭimid rule over the whole of North Africa and in 969 conquered Egypt.<sup>82</sup>

Sicilian society under the Fāṭimids and their Kalbid governors, and later under the Normans, was defined by its multi-cultural nature and multi-layered population. The island was subject to two distinct linguistic shifts: first, when the island became a predominantly Arabic-speaking Muslim domain by the middle of the tenth century, and second, when it became a

<sup>78</sup> A lasting truce concluded in 931–32 between the Mahdī and the Byzantine emperor represented a double victory for the Fāṭimids, who acquired the material benefit of gold payments in exchange for the deferral of further raids on South Italy, in addition to forcing the first diplomatic recognition of the regime by Constantinople; cf. Metcalfe, *The Muslims of Medieval Italy*.

<sup>79</sup> Metcalfe, *The Muslims of Medieval Italy*, 76–77.

<sup>80</sup> See Chapter Two in this volume.

<sup>81</sup> The Fāṭimids claimed both political and spiritual authority on the basis of a line of Imāms descending from ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, the cousin and son in law of Prophet Muḥammad and Fāṭima, the daughter of Prophet Muḥammad. On the Fāṭimids, see Brett, *The Rise of the Fatimids*; see also idem, *The Fatimid Empire* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017); Shainool Jiwa, *The Fatimids 2: The Rule from Egypt* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2023); idem, *The Fatimids 1: The Rise of a Muslim Empire* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2018).

<sup>82</sup> Metcalfe, *The Muslims of Medieval Italy*, 29.

Latin-speaking Christian island. These linguistic shifts were accompanied by demographic, religious, social, political and administrative changes.<sup>83</sup> The island hosted various communities, including Jews, Muslims and Christians, especially Greek immigrants, who found in Sicily a permanent home. Giovanna Summerfield's chapter in this volume discusses how these communities practised cultural hybridisation that brought change in Sicily with respect to language, religion and social habits.<sup>84</sup> Although the wave of migrants and the different communities tried to maintain some of their unique characteristics and continued to exist separately and harmoniously, they all contributed to a sense of Sicilianism that manifested itself in various ways. Since there was no clear way to integrate all these communities into a homogeneous population, the Fātimids adopted policies of expediency and tolerance. In 962, the Fātimid Imām-Caliph al-Mu'izz (d. 975) ordered that largesse be distributed to the people of Sicily to celebrate the circumcision of his three sons. Repeating a ritual already staged in Ifrīqiya, thousands of children were circumcised to promote a bond between the island community and the Fātimid leadership.<sup>85</sup>

Many of the Christian towns remained in the eastern part of the island, while the Muslim population and the migrants resided in the Mazara del Vallo region. For all these people, the Fātimids introduced an administrative and tax system. There were two types of taxes: the *khums* (fifths), land on which the tithe was paid, and the *kharāj*, a land tax.<sup>86</sup> The legacy of this Fātimid system was revived in the twelfth century by the Norman kings who followed in the Fātimids' footsteps in many aspects of administration, as well as adopting, as we shall see, their taste in the arts. Indeed, in addition to their military and architectural expansion, craft and trade activities, and the development of an administrative system, the Fātimid and Kalbid legacy on the island can be characterised by the promotion of a literary culture by the Fātimid rulers and their governors. As I argue in my contribution to this volume, these rulers saw in

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Metcalfe, *Muslims and Christians in Norman Sicily*, xv.

<sup>84</sup> See Chapter Thirteen in this volume.

<sup>85</sup> See al-Qādī al-Nu'mān, *al-Majālis wa al-Musāyarāt*, edited by al-Habib al-Faqqī, I. Shabbūh and M. al-Ya'lawī (Tunis: al-Jāmi'ah al-Tūnisīyah, 1978), 291; cf. Metcalfe, *The Muslims of Medieval Italy*, 56.

<sup>86</sup> Metcalfe, *The Muslims of Medieval Italy*, 53.

knowledge a way to build the façade of their dynasties.<sup>87</sup> These governors were very interested in promoting Sicily as a major intellectual centre in order to attract many philologists, litterateurs, ascetics and jurists, so as to build their court protocol, aristocracy and social prestige. In her contribution to this volume, Patrizia Spallino explores the sociolinguistic aspects of life in Sicily and the richness of Arabic and Islamic knowledge in this period by looking at Ibn Makkī al-Šiqillī's *Tathqīf al-lisān wa talqīh al-janān* (Guide on the Language and Fertilisation of the Spirit).<sup>88</sup>

As mentioned above, one of the most defining characteristics of Muslim Sicily was the rapid growth of cities and urban centres, such as Palermo, which became densely populated and the seat of the island's government.<sup>89</sup> The Fātimid rulers and their governors particularly took great interest in building new districts and suburbs. For example, the Fātimid governor al-Khalil b. Ishāq ordered the construction in Palermo of al-Khāliṣa, a fortified suburb, which followed the model of the Fātimid capital al-Mahdiyya.<sup>90</sup> Al-Khāliṣa, ‘the pure’, a term evocative of early Isma‘īlism, grew into today’s Kalsa district in Palermo.<sup>91</sup> Al-Nuawyrī reported that, coinciding with the preparation to transfer their seat of power from Ifrīqiya to Egypt, the Imām-Caliph al-Mu‘izz aimed to strengthen the Fātimid administration of Egypt by ordering in 967 the Kalbid governor Aḥmad to start the immediate reinforcement of the wall of Palermo. In addition, Aḥmad was instructed to build a fortified city with

<sup>87</sup> See Chapter Nine in this volume.

<sup>88</sup> See Chapter Five in this volume.

<sup>89</sup> For detailed studies on the role of Palermo during Muslim rule, see Annliese Nef, ‘Islamic Palermo and the Dār al-Islām: Politics, Society, and the Economy (From the Mid-9th Century to the Mid-11th Century)’, in *A Companion to Medieval Palermo: The History of a Mediterranean City from 600 to 1500*, edited by Annliese Nef (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 39–59; see also in the same volume Alessandra Bagnera, ‘From a Small Town to a Capital: The Urban Evolution of Islamic Palermo (9th-mid-11th Century)’, 61–88; and Mirella Cassarino, ‘Palermo Experienced, Palermo Imagined: Arabic and Islamic Culture between the 9th and the 12th Century’, 88–130.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. Aziz Ahmad, *History of Islamic Sicily*, 27. Ibn al-Athīr, *BAS2 Ar. I:299; BAS2 It. I413–15*.

<sup>91</sup> Names also carried a fiscal connotation, especially in the eastern provinces where they referred to lands held as the personal property of the ruler; cf. Metcalfe, *The Muslims of Medieval Italy*, 51.

a mosque and *minbar* (pulpit) in each province and to encourage people to settle there. Shaykhs were dispatched to supervise and teach people the faith.<sup>92</sup>

The early Muslim conquerors of Sicily were concerned with spreading Islam as well as promoting a culture of learning. Abū ‘Abdallāh Asad b. al-Furāt, who led the Aghlabid army to take control of Sicily, was a judge of Ifrīqiya and a learned scholar. He took with him to Sicily many scholars and encouraged the acquisition of knowledge there.<sup>93</sup> The many mosques built presented a model of the mosque-school, acting as centres for learning, especially among the Aghlabid and the Kalbid elites. In these institutions, teachers were exempt from participation in *jihad*.<sup>94</sup> Mosques were often the main centres where intellectual activities took place and where Arabic and religious sciences were taught.

There occurred a transformation of arts and culture, science and learning, as well as fundamental shifts in social and economic dynamics. The Arabs and Muslims conquered Sicily when Islamic culture in the East was at its prime. The Eastern Muslims by then had developed sciences and knowledge in different disciplines, and Christian Arabs endeavoured translations into Arabic from other languages. Thus, one could argue that, in comparison to the Umayyad dynasty in al-Andalus, the Muslims in Sicily benefited greatly from the connection with cities such as Qayrawān and, thus, from staying connected with the Islamic East. The Tunisian scholar Ḥasan Ḥusnī ‘Abdul Wahhāb provides another example of this, showing how the Aghlabid rulers utilised Christian Sicilian monks by bringing them to Qayrawān to have them translate the classics into Arabic. He proposed that these monks were charged with doing the same in Sicily.<sup>95</sup> The close religious, intellectual and at times political connections between Sicily and Ifrīqiya made it possible for some scholars to have joint positions and offices in the two lands. Furthermore, because of political and

<sup>92</sup> Cf. ibid., 56.

<sup>93</sup> On Ibn al-Furāt, see Abū l-Arab Muḥammad b. Alḥmad, *Ṭabaqāt ‘ulamā’ Ifrīqiya*, edited by Muḥammad b. Abī Shanab (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī, n. d.), 81–83; see also Jonathan Brockopp, ‘Asad b. al-Furāt’, in *Encyclopedia of Islam, Third Edition*, edited by Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Mattinge, John Nawas and Devin J. Stewart <[http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\\_ei3\\_SIM\\_0332](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_SIM_0332)> (accessed 13 March 2023).

<sup>94</sup> Yāqūt al-Ḥamwī, *Mu‘jam al-buldān* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1995), vol. 5: 376.

<sup>95</sup> Ḥasan Ḥusnī ‘Abdul Wahhāb, *Waraqāt* (Tunis: al-Manar, 1965–72), vol. 1: 196, 200–3.

social troubles in North Africa, especially during the eighth and ninth centuries, many leading scholars migrated to Sicily and resettled there.<sup>96</sup> Many Sicilian scholars also embarked on travels to seek knowledge from the Islamic East and to learn under well-known scholars there.

Moreover, Sicily also maintained close connections with al-Andalus, and there existed tight links of travel, trade and pilgrimage between the two. These links also facilitated the exchange of knowledge, objects and artistic styles between the two regions.<sup>97</sup> This exchange encouraged a culture of knowledge and learning in Sicily and kept it at the heart of Islamic scholarship for generations to come. The resulting learning contributed to Sicily becoming part of the social and cultural imagination of Muslims and a destination for many Arab and Muslim scholars and travellers. Nesma Elsakaan's chapter in this volume analyses Muslim accounts and travel descriptions of medieval Sicily, which were inspired by Islamic religious themes and sentiments that shaped the culture and identity of these authors.<sup>98</sup>

### *Craft and Trade*

The Muslim rulers of Sicily, especially in the Fātimid-Kalbid period were interested in promoting agriculture, irrigation, crafts and other commercial activities in the Sicilian economy.<sup>99</sup> From around 970 onwards, the city of Palermo became a metropolis and a place of thriving economic activity, where many producers, middlemen and merchants facilitated the rural supply of commodities with urban and overseas demand. Political stability, cooperation and the circulation of gold and silver in Sicily resulted in the circulation of the 'gold dinar' there.

The influence of the Aghlabids is seen in the first coinage with the Arabic legend *Siqilliya* struck at the siege of Castrogiovanni as early as 829. Within four years of the fall of Palermo, the first coins bearing the name of its governor are attested. The Fātimids were successful in introducing a new, small

<sup>96</sup> Cf. Metcalfe, *The Muslims of Medieval Italy*, cf. also Ahmad, *History of Islamic Sicily*, 41.

<sup>97</sup> See Lev Kapitaikin, "The Daughter of al-Andalus": Interrelations between Norman Sicily and the Muslim West', *Al-Masāq: Journal of the Medieval Mediterranean* 25/1 (2013): 113–34; see also Cassarino and Gheretti (eds), 'Arab-Sicilian and Andalusian Grammarians'.

<sup>98</sup> See Chapter Eleven in this volume.

<sup>99</sup> For a description of these activities, see Metcalfe, *The Muslims of Medieval Italy*, 62–66.

gold coin that they named *tarī* in order to keep with the greater level of fiscal complexity found in the Mediterranean region by the tenth century, as stated by Metcalfe.<sup>100</sup> The *tarī* as a currency continued in the Norman period, until it was abandoned under the Angevin dynasty.

### ***Medical Knowledge***

The contribution of the Arabs and Muslims to Sicilian society and culture was also manifested in medicine and its practice. Due to its proximity to North Africa and being considered part of the *dār al-Islām* during the period of Muslim rule, Sicily was seen as an important centre for the practice and study of medicine. As discussed by Leonard Chiarelli, the Aghlabids established medical learning circles at Raqqāda and Qayrawān, which seem to have been attended by well-known figures such as Ishāq ibn Sulaymān al-Isrā'īlī (d. 955) and his student, Ibn al-Jazzār (d. 980).<sup>101</sup> Thus, the study and practice of medicine there surely had an impact on Sicily,<sup>102</sup> and the island seems to have been part of the medical regime of Qayrawān. Documents indicate that, during the period of Muslim rule, Sicily followed the same administrative framework as other Muslim regions, with the offices of 'Chief Physician' and *muhtasib* (market inspector) active in examining, certifying, licensing and overseeing medical practitioners.

Even though medical learning was concentrated in Ifriqiya, Sicily had not only its medical practitioners but also personages who lectured in medicine. The renowned religious scholar Abū Sa'īd Luqmān ibn Yūsuf al-Ghassānī (d. 931) of Qayrawān spent fourteen years teaching religious law and medicine in Sicily. The medical standards set by the Aghlabids in Sicily were continued and enhanced under the Fāṭimids. There are in fact many examples of Sicilian physicians such as 'Alī ibn al-Ḥasan ibn al-Tūbī (fl. eleventh century) who followed and taught the medical teachings of the famous ninth-century Baghdad physician Yuhanna ibn Masawayh (d. 857).<sup>103</sup>

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>101</sup> For a study of the Arab activities in the field of medicine in Sicily, see Leonard Chiarelli, 'A Preliminary Study on the Origins of Medical Licensing in the Medieval Mediterranean', *Al-Masāq: Journal of the Medieval Mediterranean* 10 (1998): 1–11.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>103</sup> See Chiarelli, 'A Preliminary Study on the Origins of Medical Licensing', 28.

Medical knowledge and practices coming from the Islamic East, especially North Africa, continued to be adopted and to influence medical practices in twelfth-century Norman Sicily and later the procedures for the practice of medicine in Europe, and they were found in other parts of Italy, then Spain and France in the following century.<sup>104</sup> Arab medical institutions were still in practice and seem to have inspired King Roger II (1095–1154) to promulgate the practices of the *Assizes*, which is the requirement that physicians must be examined before they could practice medicine and that every physician be approved in a convened public examination by the Masters of Salerno.<sup>105</sup> Roger II's medical laws appear to have incorporated some of the laws of the Muslim community, as well as the practices of Arab officials, who at the time held many royal positions of importance. These laws seem to have been an attempt by Roger II to unify the administrative system to incorporate the traditions of Latin and Greek Italy and those of Muslim Sicily.<sup>106</sup>

There are reports that Sicily had a number of libraries containing Greek sources, which attracted the attention of many scholars in al-Andalus.<sup>107</sup> It is also reported that in 951 the Umayyad caliph ‘Abd al-Rahmān III (912–961) in al-Andalus sought the assistance of the Sicilian physician Abū ‘Abd Allāh (fl. tenth century) to help translate the *Materia Medica* of Dioscorides.

### ***The Arabic Legacy in the Norman Period (1071–1194) and Beyond***

By the end of the tenth century, Sicily was predominantly an Arabic-speaking Muslim island. Even after Sicily fell into the hands of the Normans in 1061,

<sup>104</sup> Joseph Shatzmiller, *Jews, Medicine, and Medieval Society* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), 15; Michael R. McVaugh, *Medicine before the Plague: Practitioners and Their Patients in the Crown of Aragon, 1285–1345* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 69, 78.

<sup>105</sup> Muhammad Ibn Jubayr, *Riblat ibn Jubayr*, edited by Karam al-Bustānī (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 2012), 298–305; *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr*, translated by R. J. C. Broadhurst (London: Jonathan Cape, 1952), 340–47; Hiroshi Takayama, *The Administration of the Norman Kingdom of Sicily* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 165; Thomas Curtis Van Cleve, *The Emperor Frederick II of Hohenstaufen* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 238; see also Chiarelli, ‘A Preliminary Study on the Origins of Medical Licensing’, 2.

<sup>106</sup> Chiarelli, ‘A Preliminary Study on the Origins of Medical Licensing’, 46–47.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 4, 28.

the majority of the population in Sicily remained so throughout the twelfth century, and aspects of Arabic and Islamic culture continued to be part of the fabric of Sicilian Society and to influence later dynasties.<sup>108</sup> When the Normans finally controlled the whole of Sicily, they found a Muslim state that had just entered its prime.<sup>109</sup> Although the Normans managed to put an end to Islam as a political and religious force by 1250, changing the island's demography to consist almost exclusively of Romance-dialects-speaking Christians, the influence of Arabic-Islamic culture continued to persist. This continuity manifested itself in the Norman rulers' adoption of Arabic ceremonial court traditions to the extent that King Roger II and Frederick II were called 'the two baptised sultans of Sicily'.<sup>110</sup> They promoted a multi-lingual court and administrative offices,<sup>111</sup> much like those that had existed under the Fātimid and Kalbid dynasties. These were examples of cooperation and goodwill between different groups in times of change and insecurity. Noelia Silva Santa-Cruz argued that the process of cultural assimilation and the wide-ranging adoption of both Byzantine and Islamic royal conventions were important to establish the glory of the Norman Sicilian monarchy. This combination was modelled after examples of kingship in the East, including the Fātimids of Egypt.<sup>112</sup>

In the twelfth century, there was a great exchange of writers between Sicily, al-Andalus, North Africa and Egypt, and many of the authors who continued to write in Arabic came from these areas.<sup>113</sup> Alex Metcalfe demonstrated how Arabic was used or known among the Norman elites and their administrative staff.<sup>114</sup> The Norman rulers, after establishing their government, started to issue registers of lands and men that were conceded to landlords,

<sup>108</sup> See Johns, 'Arabic Sources for Sicily', 346; idem, *Arabic Administration in Norman Sicily*.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. Mallette, *The Kingdom of Sicily*.

<sup>110</sup> Montgomery Watt, *The Influence of Islam on Medieval Europe* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1972), 5.

<sup>111</sup> Cilento and Vanoli, *Arabs and Normans in Sicily and the South of Italy*, 1.

<sup>112</sup> Noelia Silva Santa-Cruz, 'Siculo-Arabic, Andalusi and Fatimid Ivory Works: Iconographic Transfers and Visual Propaganda', in *Artistic and Cultural Dialogues in the Late Medieval Mediterranean*, edited by María Marcos Cobaleda (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 207–21.

<sup>113</sup> Metcalfe, *Muslims and Christians in Norman Sicily*, xvi.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

and many of these registers were bilingual (Arabic-Greek or Arabic-Latin), as were almost all of the villein registers issued by the Norman chancery after ca 1140.<sup>115</sup> Jeremy Johns showed that these registers indicate the extent to which the Norman fiscal administration had modelled itself on the practices of contemporary Arabic-Islamic chanceries, particularly those of Fātimid Egypt.<sup>116</sup> He discussed how an Arabic bureau, established by Roger II and his successors, was closely modelled on that of the Fātimid caliphs of Egypt and was designed less as an efficient organ of administration than as a medium for the projection of the royal image. As stated by Metcalfe, these registers which were transcribed from Arabic into Latin offer a great opportunity for recovering the traces and changes of the Arabic dialect over 700 years.<sup>117</sup>

The variety of the forms of Arabic in Sicily continued to influence the wider context of the Mediterranean region. Many scholars, including Dionisius Aguise and Geoffrey Hull, have provided deep insights into the sociolinguistic situation of Sicily during the Islamic and Norman period.<sup>118</sup> Geoffrey Hull's contribution in this volume presents further etymological evidence to demonstrate that the lexical base of Maltese derives from a variety of Maghrebine Arabic formed in Sicily on a Berber substratum from the ninth century and that claims of a Punic stratum existing in Maltese are spurious.<sup>119</sup> According to Hull, the oldest strata of vocabulary in Maltese faithfully reflect the facts of history: how, after the European Christian conquest of Greater Sicily, the Siculo-Arabic of Maltese survived the expulsion of Muslims in the mid-thirteenth century, but subsequently evolved in isolation from Classical Arabic and the dialects of North Africa. The result is both a product of Sicilian history and one of the cultural paradoxes of the Western world: a national language of modern Europe with Arabic origins. Thus, the Maltese language is a living example of the legacy of Siculo-Arabic. It should be celebrated rather than misrepresented for political reasons, as the supposedly Punic-derived vernacular of an allegedly non-Italian people.<sup>120</sup>

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., xvi.

<sup>116</sup> Johns, *Arabic Administration in Norman Sicily*.

<sup>117</sup> Metcalfe, *Muslims and Christians in Norman Sicily*.

<sup>118</sup> See Aguise, *Siculo-Arabic*.

<sup>119</sup> See Chapter Twelve in this volume.

<sup>120</sup> See Chapter Twelve in this volume.

### **Arabic Thought at the Norman Court**

Sicilian intellectual culture in the Norman period interacted with and was influenced by Arabic thought and philosophy, which became available through the translation of Arabic texts into Latin. These translations were commissioned by Norman rulers in cities such as Palermo during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In comparison to Toledo, Sicily had the advantage of bilingual Arabic-Greek and Greek-Latin translators, as well as access to texts in Greek which were preserved in Arabic.<sup>121</sup> At the court of Frederick II (r. 1220–50), and later at the court of his son Manfred I (r. 1258–66), there are many examples of Latin translations of Arabic authors – including, the translations of Ibn Rushd (also known as Averroes, d. 1198) by Michael Scott (d. ca 1232) and by William of Luna (d. ca thirteenth century). In his chapter in this volume, Massimo Campanini explores Michael Scott's translation of Arabic works. As shown by Campanini, Averroes' theories continued to be especially influential in Europe in the thirteenth century, and they influenced Dante among others.<sup>122</sup>

Evidence of intellectual exchange at the court of Frederick II and the knowledge that medieval Sicilian intellectuals had of Arabic philosophy was the famous work of the Andalusian philosopher 'Abd al-Haqq b. Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. Naṣr Ibn Sabīn (d. ca 1270) – namely, *al-Masā'il al-Šiqilliyā* (The Sicilian Questions). Patrizia Spallino's contribution to this volume introduces the debate and the context of the collection of letters exchanged between Frederick II and Ibn Sabīn. She sheds light on intellectual exchanges between Byzantine, Jewish and Muslim intellectuals by exploring Ibn Sabīn's knowledge of Maimonides' *Guide*.<sup>123</sup> This discussion provides much of the background needed for Beate Ulrike La Sala's detailed treatment of Ibn Sabīn's epistemological and psychological account of the soul and the related theory of intellect as described in his answers to the questions raised by Frederick II. La Sala argues that Ibn Sabīn seems to have followed a Neoplatonic-Aristotelian theory, and that his account can be seen as an amalgamation of al-Fārābī's, Ibn Sīnā's and al-Ghazālī's philosophical ideas on the subject. This discussion is important since it explains the reception of philosophical ideas that were

<sup>121</sup> For further discussion on the role of patronage in Norman Sicily in promoting scholarship and the translation of Greek and Arabic literary and scientific texts, see Metcalfe, *The Muslims of Medieval Italy*, 254–74.

<sup>122</sup> See Chapter Four in this volume.

<sup>123</sup> See Chapter Five in this volume.

discussed amongst Arab-Andalusian intellectuals in the thirteenth century, during the reign of the Almohads, at the court of Frederick II and by the later Sicilian School of poetry. Furthermore, this contribution adds to our knowledge of Sicily's reception of philosophical ideas coming from the Islamic East.<sup>124</sup>

Major aspects of the economy of Islamic Sicily continued to exist in Norman Sicily, including the production of silk and other practices such as those relating to irrigation techniques and land use. In fact, as Timothy Smit discusses, these silk connections continued to move along the trade routes of the Central Mediterranean until the expulsion of Muslims from Sicily by the mid-thirteenth century.<sup>125</sup> As part of the process of cultural assimilation during the Norman period, Noelia Silva Santa-Cruz argues that the circulation and transmission of ivory works and lustre pottery, textile exchange, the production of painted ivories and the decorative patterns of representative spaces echo images of glory and royal power used in the Arab courts of the Fātimids in Egypt as well as the courts of al-Andalus.<sup>126</sup>

The interest in commercial activities and the production and consumption of textiles, promoted in Sicily by the Arabs, continued in Norman Sicily. As shown in Delia Cortese's chapter in this volume, women in Norman Sicily were instrumental in textile production, and their practices echoed those of their counterparts in Fātimid Egypt. Cortese offers a detailed description of the working conditions and practices of women employed in textile ateliers in Fātimid and Norman contexts and argues that these practices were reflective of standards typically shared across the Mediterranean region of the eleventh and twelfth centuries.<sup>127</sup> This can be seen as further evidence of continued Muslim cultural influence and of how the Normans built on the style and techniques of textile production that had been introduced to Sicily in the tenth century.

This cultural interaction and exchange between Norman Sicily and the Islamic world, especially Fātimid Egypt, continued in the fields of arts and architecture. This Arab and Muslim presence can be seen especially in the western part of Sicily, in the architectural details of churches and other buildings.<sup>128</sup> The Normans adopted features of Arabic-Islamic art and building

<sup>124</sup> See Chapter Six in this volume.

<sup>125</sup> See Timothy Smit, 'Weaving Connections: Sicilian Silk in the Medieval Mediterranean', *Textile History* 52 (2022): 5–22.

<sup>126</sup> Silva Santa-Cruz, 'Siculo-Arabic, Andalusī and Fātimid Ivory Works'.

<sup>127</sup> See Chapter Seven in this volume.

<sup>128</sup> Cipolla, *Siciliana*, 58.

style, which resulted in a distinct Arabic-Norman art and architecture. Looking at architectural evidence, Ammar Abdulrahman in his contribution to this volume shows how the interaction between Sicily and historical Greater Syria during the Umayyad period (661–750) became visible in Sicilian architecture in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. This visibility manifested itself in the use of Syrian architectural features of the Umayyad period in Sicilian buildings constructed during the Norman period. He explores the shared features and demonstrate that elements of Arabic architecture such as domes and gardens were used in Sicilian buildings and that a new style of architecture – consisting of a mix of Arabic and Byzantine design and decorative features, such as *muqarnas* and calligraphy – emerged in the Norman period. These features form the basis of their similarities in palaces, forts and castles. Although much has been said about the influence of the style of the architecture of North Africa, especially from Tunis, on Sicilian buildings, this exploration shows that these building were also greatly influenced by the style of architecture from Syria and Jordan.<sup>129</sup> Exploring other material evidence in the form of coins, Alaa Aldin Al Chomari (in the second half of the chapter co-authored with Ammar Abdulrahman) shows that some of the coins minted in Sicily during the Norman period in terms of their symbols and language are similar to those found in Syria.

Norman art as discussed by William Tronzo in his contribution to this volume reflects the attempt of Norman kings to project their power through objects and by commissioning buildings. He shows that these kings, like the Byzantines before them, borrowed elements of art and architecture, costume and ceremony from the Fāṭimid court in medieval Cairo. The Normans' adoption of Islamic culture is visible in the omnipresence of Arabic inscriptions in Palermo's churches, such as the Royal Chapel or Cappella Palatina and the Monreale. These Arabic inscriptions range from spiritual and intellectual to the more mundane, from symbolism to the cultivation of a luxurious lifestyle. Tronzo's exploration shows that Islamic art continued to play a role in Sicily and Southern Italy. The intertwined themes of nation-building, social integration, princely patronage, technical accomplishment, opulence and visual pleasure resonated for centuries in the historical and literary imagination of Sicilians.<sup>130</sup>

<sup>129</sup> See Chapter Eight in this volume.

<sup>130</sup> See Chapter Nine in this volume.

## Conclusion

Sicily's rich Islamic past within its diverse medieval history stands as an example of a vibrant and prosperous multi-cultural society.<sup>131</sup> The chapters in this volume explore aspects of the Arabic and Islamic legacy of the island that highlight a culture of interaction between Sicily, Ifrīqiya and the Islamic East, thus stretching the investigation of Sicily's Islamic past beyond simply being a middle period between the Byzantine and the Norman history of Sicily.

People from different ethnic and religious communities integrated and produced one of the world's finest civilisations. Sicily's legacy constitutes an example for today's world of how human creativity can flourish when different cultures respect each other and look beyond race and religious boundaries. Exploring the Muslim legacy in Sicily brings fresh insight and serves as a starting point for dialogue to face current challenges, as new waves of Muslim migrants venture to the shores of the island. Even though Sicily's Islamic period was short-lived, Arabs and Muslims left behind a rich cultural and intellectual heritage, as articulated by Alex Metcalfe: 'The high points in the Islamicisation of Sicily followed by its "Europeanisation" are rare and worth treasuring. Those precious moments are well remembered, especially when they are understood as evidence of tolerance and interfaith harmony'.<sup>132</sup>

The history of Sicily is one of shaping and re-shaping individual and collective identities where different cultures, languages and creeds were never superseded but assimilated and even partly adopted. The latter is seen in a Muslim culture and legacy that not only was enriched by the island's already existing cultures, but also continued to influence later developments in Sicily. The Sicilian population, as Summerfield pointed out, was renewed multiple times, incorporating what had been learned in earlier times of co-existence with other groups. Thus, this example of Sicily offers guidance to the present and the future.

<sup>131</sup> Louis Mendola and Jacqueline Alio provide an excellent account of Sicily as a melting pot of different faith communities and its multi-cultural diversity and the integration between different civilisations in twelfth-century Sicily, including the Greeks, Byzantines, Arabs, Normans, Germans and Jews; see Louis Mendola and Jacqueline Alio, *The Peoples of Sicily: A Multicultural Legacy* (Chicago: Trinacria Editions, 2014).

<sup>132</sup> Metcalfe, *Muslims and Christians in Norman Sicily*, 1.

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# **Part 1**

## **SICILY AND NORTH AFRICA: SOCIOCULTURAL AND POLITICAL LINKS**



# 2

## SOCIOCULTURAL LINKS BETWEEN SICILY AND IFRĪQIYA IN THE MIDDLE AGES<sup>1</sup>

*Mohamed Hassen*

Ifriqiya was the name given by the Arabic sources to the lands in eastern North Africa. It stretched from the west of Bejāya (Bougie) in eastern Algeria to north-western Libya, just at a point east of Misrata and west of Sirte. Ifriqiya was first conquered by the Arabs in 643, and it remained under Muslim rule until the sixteenth century. In that period, it witnessed the coming and going of numerous governors during the Wullāt (from 670–800) – the period of the governors – and experienced the rule of several dynasties in its lands: the Umayyads (661–750), the Abbasids (750–800), the Aghlabids (800–909), the Fāṭimids (909–72), the Zirids (972–1146), the Almohads (1160–1230) and the Ḥafsids (1230–1574).

Although there had been a reduction in the territory of the *wilāya* (the administrative and political division of the empire) of Ifriqiya under the Umayyads (r. 661–750) and the ‘Abbāsids (r. 750–1258) from 742 onwards, as well as a loss of hegemony due to the creation of independent entities (emirates) at the extreme and central Maghreb (western and central Algeria and Morocco) – in Tlemcen (Algeria), Tahert (Algeria), Salé (Morocco), Sijilmasa (Morocco) and Fes (Morocco) – in the ninth century Ifriqiya witnessed a period of ship-building at its ports and anchorages which extended from Bejāya to Tripolitania

<sup>1</sup> All maps provided in this chapter are my own, unless indicated otherwise.

(the east of Misrata, Libya). In 916, the foundation of the city of Mahdia by the Fātimids in the east of Tunisia brought some changes, including the establishment of port networks and maritime ports of call,<sup>2</sup> as will be discussed below. In fact, the Fātimid period was characterised by a new expansion of maritime territory, as much as by expansion, at the same time, into the district of Barqa and the old territory of the Rustamid dynasty (r. 776–909), Tahert in the central Maghreb.

Ifrīqiya can be divided into four areas:

1. the northern area, extending from the east of Algiers (Bejāya, Skikda, Jijel, Bône, Marsa al Kharaz, Ṭabarqa) to Bizerte (Tunisia);<sup>3</sup>
2. the insular area, made up of large and medium-sized islands (Sicily, Malta, Jerba and Kerkennah), as well as some small ones, often found near the coast, including islands such as Cossyra (Pantelleria), Qamlāriyya (Jalta), al-Jāmur al-Kabīr wa'l-Saghir (Zembra and Zembretta) and al-Quriyatayn (Kuriyate), among others;
3. the Oriental coastal fringe, stretching from Bizerte to Jerba; and
4. the southern zone of Tripolitania, stretching to Suwayqat Beni Matkud (Misrāta).

Along the eastern coasts of the third area, the multiplication of port facilities was linked to the development of Mediterranean maritime trade. Apart

<sup>2</sup> G. Jehel, *La Méditerranée médiévale de 350 à 1450* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1992), 122. For other studies on the development of port networks and maritime ports of call, see Dominique Valérien, *Ports et réseaux d'échanges dans le Maghreb médiéval* (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2019); see also idem, ‘La course et la piraterie en Méditerranée occidentale à la fin du Moyen Âge: Entre activité économique et instrument politique’, in *Les territoires de la Méditerranée: XIe–XVIe siècle*, edited by Anniese Nef et al. (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2013), 35–50; see also idem, ‘Les ports d'Ifrīqiya dans la conjoncture du XVe siècle’, in *Mercados y espacios económicos en el siglo XV: El mundo del mercader Torralba*, edited by David Abulafia and María Dolores López Pérez (Barcelona: Universitat de Barcelona, 2020), 211–26.

<sup>3</sup> A. Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-Buldān*, edited by M. De Goeje (Leiden: Brill, 1892), 351. See also Dominique Valérien, *Bougie, port maghrébin, 1067–1510* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 2006), 129.

from Marsa al-Kharaz, situated between Tabarqa and Bône, there were new arsenals, such as those of Tunis, Sousse, Mahdia and probably those of Nûba and Qaṣr Zyād.<sup>4</sup> In these areas, navigation witnessed a new era, characterised by the construction of a fleet of Ifrīqiya. This fleet developed in perfect harmony with the shipping routes and seaports, which were composed of a port, an arsenal and a fort (*ribâṭ*).

This chapter will discuss the relationships between Sicily and Ifrīqiya, two shores of the Central Mediterranean, by examining three lines of research: the shipping routes, the main actors in this relationship and the dialects. It will use historical and legal sources to elucidate the role of Sicily and Ifrīqiya in the different trade and shipping strategies and examine the main manifestations of interculturality between the two areas.

## I. The Mediterranean Sea, ‘A Frontier without Borders’

### *1. Strategy of Empires in the Mediterranean, Eighth to Tenth Century*

From ancient times, the Mediterranean Sea was the site of intense rivalries between Athens and other Greek cities, Rome and Carthage. Starting from the seventh century, the various leading powers of the time – including the Greeks, the Latins and the Arab-Muslims – sought to expand their hegemonies around the Mediterranean. Thus, the Mediterranean was divided in many areas. The co-existence of numerous and varied populations along the shores of the Mediterranean led to clashes among the groups as they sought to expand their lands and spheres of power. It is possible to see the Mediterranean Sea as a border along which there was competition between two key entities, however: the Christians and the Muslims. Sicily was convulsed by the rivalry between them, as will be discussed below.

#### *a. Sea of Empires*

At first, the Umayyads adopted a defensive policy by establishing the capital of Ifrīqiya, Qayrawān, inland of Tunisia. This resulted in the depopulation of Ifrīqiya’s coastline and the creation of a coastal route for fear of

<sup>4</sup> Abou-Obeïd El-Bekri, *La description de l’Afrique septentrionale* (Paris, Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1965), 117–18.

Byzantine incursions. Yet, after the construction of the arsenal of Tunis, they decided to lead a policy of reorganising the coastline and occupying the territory.

In 697, the Umayyads' conquest of Byzantine Africa – and particularly that of Carthage (or Carthagena, as it was called in Byzantine sources) – resulted in the emigration of Romani people from Ifrīqiya's coastline to the Mediterranean islands, especially Sicily.<sup>5</sup> These people gathered in Kelibiya (on the coast of Tunisia) before sailing to Cossyra (present-day Pantelleria) and heading to Sicily. Furthermore, the foundation of the arsenal at Tunis, which had replaced that at Carthage, was part of a coordination strategy between the eastern ports of Tyre (in Lebanon) and Acre (in Palestine),<sup>6</sup> as well as the western ports at Alexandria and Ifrīqiya.

Since the reign of the Umayyad Caliph Walīd b. ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 705–715), the governor of Ifrīqiya, Mūsā b. Nuṣayr, had pursued a policy of conquest of the Mediterranean islands. Many of those who took part in the conquest of Sicily remained there. In the month of Rabī’ II 91/February 710, Egypt’s governor Qurra b. Sharīk sent a letter to a high official of Ashquwwa (located on the Nile in Upper Egypt), asking him to count the number of sailors who had returned to Ashquwwa and those who had stayed in Ifrīqiya, and to obtain information about those who had been lost during the war.<sup>7</sup>

Unlike the Umayyads, the ‘Abbāsids followed a very active occupation policy of the coastal areas of the Mediterranean Sea. The judge Ibn Ghanīm (d. 806) gave land to the people of the *ribāṭ* in order to increase the population along the coastline.<sup>8</sup> The construction of *ribāṭs* (military and religious fortifications), arsenals (in Sousse, for example) and ports confirms the maritime vocation of Ifrīqiya. The inauthentic or pseudo-*hadīths* of the Prophet Muhammad speak of the virtues of *murābaṭa* (coastal settlements) and of two *ribāṭs* in particular: Monastir and Radès.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>6</sup> The two cities of Tyre and Acre were situated in the region historically well-known as Shām – an area which includes today’s Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Occupied Territories, as well as Jordan.

<sup>7</sup> Jāsir Ibn Khalil Abū Ṣafīyya, *Bardīyyāt Qurra b. Sharīk al-‘Absī* (Riyadh: King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies, 2004), 256–57.

<sup>8</sup> A. Ibn Abū Zayd, *Al-Nawādir wa al-ziyādāt* (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1999), vol. 10: 490.

While the ‘Abbāsids attempted to actively occupy many coastal areas around the Mediterranean Sea, the Fātimids, who came to power after the Aghlabids, concentrated their efforts on Mahdia (founded in Tunisia in 916) by building a new maritime space from Barqa (in Libya) to Oran (in Algeria) through Sicily. The map of the Mediterranean area in this period may be characterised by a dividing line running from east to west, separating three maritime areas: Byzantine, Fātimid and Umayyad (see Map 2.6). Hence, Sicily, based on its location, was caught amidst the rivalry between these three powers.<sup>9</sup> Thus the history of the relationships between the different people in the Mediterranean was often perceived from the perspective of empires and powers that were seen as centres of decision-making. This led to wars and conflicts, although sometimes the groups would alternate between warring and trading, out of economic, political or ideological expediency. For instance, the Byzantines formed an alliance with the Umayyads in order to fight against the Fātimids. Thus, one would wonder whether it was necessary to deconstruct the expected stereotypes of the dualities: the north and south of the Mediterranean. It is thus fair to say that these borders around the Mediterranean did not prevent exchanges and contacts across the three spaces: Byzantine, Fātimid and Umayyad.

At the centre of the map created by the Fātimid-era geographer Ibn Hawqal was the outer harbour of Qayrawān: Mahdia. The boundaries lay at Barqa in the east, Tenès in the west and Sicily in the north. The Fātimids were able to secure the maritime passage running between Sicily and Ifrīqiya, and they sought to occupy the Strait of Messina, which runs between the eastern tip of Sicily and the southern tip of Italy, in order to subvert the Byzantine and Andalusian marine trade,<sup>10</sup> by impeding the traffic of commercial vessels between Andalusia and the Levant.

<sup>9</sup> The fact that many groups of people wanted to rule the Mediterranean explains why the Sea of Rūm had its name changed from when al-Nu'mān had called the southern part Bah̄r al-Maghrib or *al-maghribi*.

<sup>10</sup> Q. Nu'mān, *Al-Majālis wa'l-musāyarāt*, edited by H. Faqih, I. Shabbūh and M. Ya'lawī (Tunis: University of Tunis, 1978), 168, 174, 176, 193; see also Dominique Valérian, ‘Les ports d’Ifrīqiya et les stratégies des califes fatimides dans le Maghreb central’, in *Les Fatimides et la Méditerranée centrale (Xe–XIIe siècle)*, special issue of *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 139 (2016–17): 93–105.



Figure 2.1 The Fāṭimid port of Mahdia. Source: Author.

*b. The Complexity of Relationships between Communities around the Mediterranean*

In spite of these political aspects – namely, the rivalry between the three empires – the Mediterranean Sea had been a meeting place, a place of trade and cultural exchange, between the different people who lived by its shores. Not only was this conception of the sea conditioned by direct or indirect decisions of the powers operating within it, but also by the activities that the communities of merchants and sailors established among themselves. Thus, we hypothesise that the movements of the populations between the two shores of this sea – Sicily and Ifrīqīya, in particular, and the two shores of the Mediterranean, in general – were necessitated by economic constraints and demographic growth. For example, the concentration of the population with Arab origins on the coastline of Ifrīqiya at the end of the eighth century was such that it led to rivalries between the two clans that sought to exploit the territories of

a *ribāṭ* in the southeastern part of Cape Bon, Tunisia. In fact, the *hīma* (an 8 kilometre wide and 10 kilometre long pasture) situated between Qaṣr Sa‘d and Qaṣr Lubnā had been fought over since 799 by the Marsā Quraysh and the clan of the Banū Layth.<sup>11</sup> This rivalry resulted from the large numbers of Arabs and Berbers living at Cape Bon. As a consequence of this dense occupation of the coastline, an expansionist policy towards the Mediterranean islands was formulated: in this case, towards Sicily.

In the *Book of Curiosities* (*Għarāib al-funūn wa mulaḥ al-‘uyūn*),<sup>12</sup> written at the end of the eleventh century, the map of the Mediterranean area was represented as an ellipse (see Map 2.7). This book reflects more the collective will of the Fāṭimid hegemony and less the way in which the Mediterranean actually appears geographically as a sea united, at the centre of which is the triangle composed of Egypt, Ifrīqiya and Sicily. The latter country, Sicily, was also represented by a map showing fifteen fortifications. The literary sources give the distance between Sicily and Ifrīqiya as six days, and that between Sicily and Calabria as approximately one to two miles.<sup>13</sup>

## **2. The Sea Routes and Geography of the Ports between Ifrīqiya and Sicily**

In his work about the ancient maritime routes, Pascal Arnaud traced the route between Ifrīqiya and Sicily, passing by Missua (Nūba) or Cluēa (Kelibiya) and Cossyra.<sup>14</sup> During the Middle Ages, the Aghlabids and then the Fāṭimids established good relationships with Sicily and tried to

<sup>11</sup> Ibn Abū Zayd, *Al-Nawādir wa al-ziyādāt*, vol. 9: 27, and vol. 12: 123.

<sup>12</sup> Anonymous, *Għarāib al-funūn wa mulaḥ al-‘uyūn* (*The Book of Curiosities of the Sciences and Marvels for the Eyes*) (MS of the Bodleian Library, London, Art Fund, 2002).

<sup>13</sup> J. Johns and E. Savage-Smith, ‘The Book of Curiosities: A Newly Discovered Series of Islamic Maps’, *Imago Mundi* 55 (2003): 7–24. The length of the Strait of Messina (the strait between Sicily and Calabria) is short, and it is measured in the literary sources in miles, while the distance between Sicily and Ifrīqiya is given in the number of days of navigation. See ‘Distance measurements’ below.

<sup>14</sup> P. Arnaud, *Les routes de la navigation antique* (Paris: Éditions Errance, 2005), 154–55, 161. On trade and sea routes, see also Shelomo D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, 6 vols (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967–93).

maintain their contacts with it. In the twelfth century, this route experienced intense activity, even during critical moments of the Norman conquest of Ifrīqiya's coastline.

*a. Routes and Distances between Ports around the Mediterranean  
(Tenth to Sixteenth Century)*

*Distance measurements:* These consisted of the day, the mile and the *majrā* (the distance covered by a day's sailing). Naturally, the navigation of a sea depended on good weather conditions. The navigation season on the Mediterranean Sea extended from early March to mid-November, or at least from late May to mid-September. According to al-Lakhmī (an eleventh-century Ifrīqiyan jurisconsult), if the contract between the trader and the owner of the vessel was signed in the summer, then its validity would end in the winter season.<sup>15</sup>

According to Arnaud, a vessel sailing in favourable winds would travel the distance of 700 stadia during daytime (from 12 to 17 hours). This distance is accepted by the ancient Greek geographer Herodotus as well as the majority of researchers. Knowing that the Roman nautical unit of one stadium is equivalent to 185m, 700 stadia thus equals 129.5 kilometres.<sup>16</sup> According to Christophe Picard, a day's sailing corresponded to a distance of 50 to 60 miles or 80 to 120 kilometres. The distance covered in a day by a vessel following the route is also mentioned by the Arab geographer and traveller al-Idrīsī (d. ca 1165 or 1175)<sup>17</sup> as being between 100 and 150 kilometres. All in all, the *majrā* did not exceed 100 kilometres<sup>18</sup> on average.

<sup>15</sup> A. Burzuli, *Jāmi‘ masā‘il al-ahkām*, edited by Muḥammad al-Hābib al-Hīla (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 2002), vol. 3: 646.

<sup>16</sup> Arnaud, *Les routes de la navigation antique*, 74–79.

<sup>17</sup> Al-Idrīsī travelled around Northern Africa, the Mediterranean Sea and Europe. He oversaw the creation of more than seventy maps.

<sup>18</sup> Ch. Picard, *L'océan atlantique musulman: De la conquête arabe à l'époque almohade. Navigation et mise en valeur des côtes d'al-Andalus et du Maghreb occidental (Portugal, Espagne, Maroc)* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1997), 189–93.

*The Stops between the Cabotage and Off-Shore Navigation:* Along the eastern area of the coastline of Ifrīqiya, there was a series of ports and port facilities (fortifications, arsenals and so on). These ports were fairly close to each other, and they had strong relationships and cabotage to trade with one another. Cabotage can be explained by the right to operate by sea within a particular territory and technical refuelling requirements, or by waiting for a favourable wind. It is not synonymous with off-shore/coastal navigation but was rather segmented between capes (ports of call which served as places for re-supply) and ports.

The continued practice of stop-overs by ships from the tenth to twelfth centuries may be explained by the nature of specific commercial practices that would have required ships to stop at several maritime ports of call on their journey. Ships would also have had to make stop-overs in order to restock with whatever was necessary or wait for a favourable wind. It is difficult to make a clear distinction between off-shore navigation and cabotage, because a combination of both practices was the norm in most cases.

As far as maritime travel is concerned, anchorage points were not only ports (spelled *minā'*, *marsā'*), but also capes, islands and estuaries. The unit of measurement used when referring to maritime distances was the *majrā*. According to al-Zuhri, the distance of 2,400 miles was equivalent to 420 *majrās*, meaning that a ship would travel 5.71 miles in one *majrā*. This was a very limited distance compared to that covered in a day (*al-yawm*): 270 miles are covered in nine days, or 30 miles per day. According to al-Bakri, who used *al-majrā* to indicate the distance between the ports of the Maghreb and those of al-Andalus, the distance did not exceed 100 kilometres,<sup>19</sup> approximately.

*b. The Distance between the Eastern Coastline Ports of Ifrīqiya and Sicily (Tenth to Twelfth Centuries)*

The table below provides the distance between the eastern coastline ports of Ifrīqiya and Sicily, as noted by sources from the tenth to the twelfth centuries.

<sup>19</sup> M. Zuhri, *Kitāb al-jughrāfiya*, edited by Hadj Sadok (Boursaïd: Maktabat al-Thaqāfa al-Dīniyya, n. d.), 3, 79, 80, 138. El-Bekri, *La description de l'Afrique septentrionale*, 163–74.

Table 2.1 Distance between the eastern coastline ports of Ifriqiya and Sicily

Ports of Ifriqiya	al-Bakrī (1094)	Għarib ib-funūn wa- mulaḥ al-'uyūn	al-Idrisī (1150) ( <i>Book of Curiosities</i> ) (1050)	Piri-Reis (1525)	Lanfreducci Boosio (1525)
Cosyra		+ 60 miles		60 miles	
Kilibya	+	+	+	+	+ Calibia
Qaṣr Gabes			+ [?] (distance mentioned, but accuracy doubtful)		
Qaṣr Abū Marzūq		Qaṣr Nurīq [?] 6 miles	+ 7 miles		
Qaṣr Lubnā		12 miles	+ 8 miles		
Qaṣr Sa'ad		Qaṣr Sa'īd 6 miles	+ 4 miles		
Qurba			+ 8 miles		
Tarf Tūshūn		Qurna 17 miles		+ 10 miles	
Qaṣr Tūshān			+12 miles	4 miles	
Qaṣr Nābil					

<b>Ports of Ifriqiya</b>	<b>al-Bakrī (1094)</b>	<b>Għarri ib-al-funūn wa- mulaḥ al-ṣuyān</b> <i>(Book of Curiosities) (1050)</i>	<b>al-Idrīsī (1150)</b>	<b>Piri-Reis (1525)</b>	<b>Lanfreducci Bosio (1525)</b>
Qaṣr al-Khayyāt			8 miles		
Qaṣr al-Nakhil			6 miles		
Tarf al-Hammamāt			7 miles	+ 60/35 miles (Hammamat)	Maometta: 50 miles
Qaṣr al-Manār	+ 12 miles		5 miles		
Qaṣr al-Marsad	+ 15 miles				
Qaṣr al-Marsad	+ 15 miles		6 miles		
Qaṣr al-Murabitūn			6 miles		
Tarf Qirttil al-Madfuñ		+ 16 miles (al-Harqin)	8 miles		Recalia: 18 miles
Hisn Ahirqaliyya	Marsa				
Marsa Qaṣr Ibn ‘Umar	+				
Sūsa		12 miles	18 miles	35 miles	12 miles
Qaṣr Shaqqānis	Marsa Khafānis	16 miles	8 miles		
Qaṣr Ibn al-Ja‘d			4 miles		

Ports of Ifriqiya	al-Bakrī (1094)	Għarāib al-funūn wa- mulah al-uyun <i>(Book of Curiosities)</i> (1050)	al-Idrīsī (1150)	Piri-Reis (1525)	Lanfreducci Bosio (1525)
Qusūr al-Munastir	15 miles	2 Qilibiya/Ketlibya Munastir: 120 miles along the coast (tagħvir), 100 miles direct (rīżyaa)	12 miles	12 miles	8 miles
Jazīrat Qūriyya	Marsa Qaṣr al-Qūriyatayn	9 miles	12 miles	iles Conigliere	
Tabulba				1,5 miles	
Lamta		10 miles			
Dimas		Al-Bartūl [?]: 15 miles	12 miles		
Mahdiyya	Mat. al-Sufun	30 miles	20 miles	25 miles	Africa: 12 miles

Note: The plus sign before numbers or names indicates that the information given is mentioned in the relevant book in definite terms; a question mark means that there is a doubt about the validity of the information provided.

The map below also shows the sea route between Kelibiya (Klibya) and Mahdia according to al-Bakrī.

In the list of al-Bakrī as displayed in Map 2.8, eight sea stops between Mahdia and Kelibiya are mentioned. This number is less important than that of the *ribāṭs* along this coast. Al-Bakrī's stops correspond to capes and islands. A fairly long crossing between Kelibya and Marsā al-Madfūn is followed by a series of small sea stops along the coastline opposite Qayrawān: Hirgla → Qaṣr Ibn ‘Umar → Sousse-Shqānis → Monastir → Quriates Islands, and from there to Mahdia. All along this coast, there is no mention of the distance covered by a day's sailing (*majrā*).

*The Maritime Route according to Geographical Sources:* According to a map that probably dates back to the tenth century, the number of maritime ports of call was twelve, depending on the curved distance. The total distance was 181 miles, which meant that there was, on average, a distance of 15 miles between each sea stop. Unlike in the list of al-Bakrī, the northern part was of more importance than the southern part. In fact, there were six stops at Cape Bon on the journey from Sousse to al-Bartūl, situated at the same level as Lamta. The importance of the ports at Cape Bon might be closely related to the development of trade relations between Sicily and this area in the eleventh century.

In the twelfth century, the number of maritime ports of call in a curve between these two capes, Kelibiya and Mahdia, was twenty-two. The distance was 120 miles to Monastir, which means about 8 miles for each sea stop, whereas the distance between the sea stops of Monastir and Mahdia was 10 miles.

The stops roughly corresponded to the ports and anchorages, on the one hand, and the *ribāṭ* or *qaṣr* (fortification), on the other. Hence, we have a route which consisted of a number of stops, but there were three major stops: Kelibiya, Monastir and Mahdia.<sup>20</sup> This route was very important during the period of the Normans in Sicily because the Normans followed an

<sup>20</sup> M. al-Idrīsī, *Nuzhat al-mustāq fī ikhtirāq al-āfāq*, edited by Hadj Sadok (Algiers: Office des Publications Universitaires, 1983), 152–54.

expansionist policy along these coastlines of Kelibia, Monastir and Mahdia. How can we explain the high number of stops? Is it related to the intensity of commercial activities between the coastlines of Sicily and Ifrīqiya, or is it explained by the technical limitations of navigation related to the nature of the sail, the use of the compass and the astrolabe?

*c. The Maritime Routes according to Other Literary Texts  
(Thirteenth to Fourteenth Centuries)*

In spite of the sparse data on this topic, it is possible to establish the main sea routes used during the Middle Ages and to track their evolution from one period to another. The data from the late Middle Ages are more substantial, in both the Arabic and the Latin sources.

During the eleventh and twelfth centuries, there were several references to the merchant vessels which left Mahdia for Barqa and Alexandria, or left Mahdia (or Sousse) for Sicily. There existed a great deal of information on wind direction, which allows us to surmise the deviations of the ships' journeys. For instance, ships on the Sousse-to-Sicily route would have deviated towards the Sea of Tunis; on the Sicily-to-Mahdia route, they would have deviated towards Tripoli; and on the Sicily-to-al-Andalus route, they would have deviated towards Barqa. As far as the duration of the journey is concerned, there are few indications of this in the Arabic literary sources, except in travelogues (*riḥla*), which tell us the number of days that a ship sailed on a particular route and how long the journey would take – for example, the route Mahdia to Sousse to Hammamet to Tunis would take three days (one day between each stop).<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> A. Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil fī al-tārīkh* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1978), 8, 63. M. Ibn Rushayd, *Mil‘ al-‘ayba*, edited by A. Haddadī (Oujda: Imprimerie Joussour, 2012), 7, 175–76. Khālid b. ‘Isā Balawā, *Tāj al-mafraq fī taqlīyat ‘ulamā’ al-Mashriq*, edited by al-Hasan b. Muḥammad al-Sā‘ih (Muhammadiya [Maroc]: Imprimerie Fadhāla, n. d.), vol. 1: 146–48, 193–97; vol. 2: 93, 115, 151. A. Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-‘ibar* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī, 1983), vol. 7: 591–92. Burzulī, *Jāmi‘ masā’il al-abkām*, vol. 3: 646–47, 651–52, 655. A. Qalsādī, *Riḥla*, edited by Muḥammad Abū al-Ajfnān (Tunis: Maison Tunisienne d’Edition, 1978), 112, 122, 124–25, 158, 159, 160, 161.

In conclusion, despite the conflicts and conquests that may have arisen, the geography made intercultural exchanges between Ifrīqiya and Sicily easy. The following section will examine the main manifestations of the Arab-Berber component in Sicily.

## **II. Ifrīqiya's Presence in Sicily between the Ninth and Twelfth Centuries: A Toponymic and Anthroponymic Approach**

Section I discussed the migratory movements of peoples between Sicily and Ifrīqiya over several centuries, particularly in the twelfth century. In this section, we rely especially on sources of jurisprudence (*Fatāwā al-Māzirī*) and Sicilian *Jarā'id* (lists of taxes paid by peasants [*rījāl al-jarā'id*]).<sup>22</sup> These registers were developed by the Normans and preserved in their headquarters during the twelfth century. The lists of anthroponyms published by Salvatore Cusa prove the Ifrīqiyan origins of a large number of Sicilians who belong to the tribes (*nisba*) or towns and villages of Ifrīqiya.<sup>23</sup>

### **1. Homonyms in Sicily and Ifrīqiya**

The cultural interactions between these two spaces were numerous. Thus, several places in Sicily and Ifrīqiya have the same name, as in the following examples.

#### *a. Qaṣr Sa‘d*

Qaṣr Sa‘d was a *ribāṭ* on the eastern coast of Cape Bon in Tunisia (Ifrīqiya). The second Qaṣr Sa‘d is a distance of 4 to 5 kilometres from Palermo, according to al-Himiyarī. It is located by the sea, not far from Qaṣr Ja‘far. It is surrounded by a large Muslim cemetery and has both a source of water and a well. It consists of cells and a well-organised system of housing. Following the model of the *ribāṭ* of Ifrīqiya, the *masjid* in Qaṣr Sa‘d is on the first floor.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> See Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī at-Tamimī Māzirī, *Fatāwā*, edited by T. Ma’mūrī (Tunis: Maison Tunisienne d’Edition, 1994), 254, 284, 285.

<sup>23</sup> S. Cusa, *I diplomi greci e arabi di Sicilia*, 2 vols (Palermo: Stabilimento Tipografico Lao, 1868).

<sup>24</sup> Muḥammad Himiyarī, *Al Rawḍ al-mi‘ṭār*, edited by Ihsān ‘Abbās (Beirut: Lebanon Library, 1984), 476.

*b. Alcamo/‘Alqama*

The Alcamo in Sicily is a fortified agglomeration with a market and a mosque. In Ifrīqiya, ‘Alqama is a place between Sousse and Mahdia, near Muknīn. ‘Alqama is also the name of a historic district in the north of Nefta. This toponym may have originated from a Yemeni tribe (the Banū ‘Alqama) instead of being an anthroponym.<sup>25</sup>

*c. Melilli*

Malila is the name of a Berber tribe originally from Huwwāra (Libya). It seems that the Malila had settled near Syracuse in Sicily, since an agglomeration there still carries the name of Melilli.<sup>26</sup>

*d. Nūba/Nūbia*

Nūba was the ancient port of Missua located on the northern coast of Cape Bon, west of Hawwāria. It was the main town of this district in the eighth century. In the south of Trapani, Sicily, modern maps mention Nūbia and Torre Nūbia. It is likely that Nūba is the Arabic pronunciation of the Latin term *nova*.<sup>27</sup>

*e. ‘Āliyā*

‘Āliyā is the name of a fortress in the south of Mahdia, which dates back to the Fātimid era. Aliyā is also the name of a locality in the centre of Sicily.<sup>28</sup>

*f. Manzil Naṣr*

The name Manzil Naṣr was mentioned in the Sicilian *Jarā’id*. Manzil Abū-Naṣr is located in Ifrīqiya, in the north of Sousse.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 412. M. Ibn Jubayr, *Ribla* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1980), 307.

<sup>26</sup> L. Ibn Sallām, *Tārīkh*, edited by W. Schwartz and S. Ben Ya‘qūb (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1986), 131.

<sup>27</sup> R. Brunschwig, ‘À propos d’un toponyme tunisien du Moyen Âge: Nūba – Nūbiya’, *Revue Tunisiennne* 21 (1935): 149–55.

<sup>28</sup> M. Hassen, ‘Les ribats du Sahel d’Ifrīqiya: Peuplement et évolution du territoire au Moyen Âge’, in *Castrum VII*, edited by Jean-Marie Martin (Rome and Madrid: École Française de Rome et Casa de Velazquez, 2001), 151–52.

<sup>29</sup> M. Hassen, *La ville et la campagne en Ifrīqiya à l’époque hafside (al-Madīna wal-bādiya bi Ifrīqiya fī l-‘abd al-hafṣī)* (Tunis: University of Tunis, 1999), vol. 1: 61, 65, 258. Cusa, *I diplomi greci e arabi di Sicilia*, vol. 1: 228.

*g. Kundār*

A ditch near Corleone is called Kundār. It is also a homonym of a village in the north of Sousse.<sup>30</sup>

*b. Sardagna*

A Sardinian community that settled in Ifrīqiya could have given its name to the caliphate's castle, called Sardagna, located 30 kilometres from the north of Qayrawān. At present, we can find it in the valley of Sardaniya (wadi Sardaniya), and it is also a homonym of an agglomeration. Furthermore, the name Sardagna of Qayrawān may be of Berber origin, stemming from the Berber settlement on Sicily.<sup>31</sup>

**2. The Transition of North African Tribes to a Rural Agglomeration in Sicily: The *Rahal*<sup>32</sup>**

The list of names of the *Jarā'id* published by Cusa date back to an era prior to Muslim domination. The anthroponymic study of 2,734 names (*ism/s*) allows us to detect several series of lineages (*nibas*), which are names referring to a geographical origin, or affiliation with a city or tribe in Ifrīqiya, in particular, and in the Maghreb, in general.<sup>33</sup>

\* Lineage (*Nisba*) to Berber Tribes

*a. Lmāya*

The Berber Lmāya tribe belonged to the larger Berber tribe of Dharisa. Among the Lmāya, one may also mention Medyanīn, Malīza and Jerba,

<sup>30</sup> Cusa, *I diplomi greci e arabi di Sicilia*, vol. 1: 235.

<sup>31</sup> G. Contu, 'Sardinia in Arabic Sources', in *Magáz: Culture e contatti nell'area del Mediterraneo: Il ruolo dell'islam*, edited by A. Pellitteri (Palermo: La Memoria, Annali della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia dell'Università di Palermo, 2003), 43–50. El-Bekri, *La description de l'Afrique septentrionale*, 70–71.

<sup>32</sup> *Rahal* refers to a number of small agricultural communities of Arab and Berber settlers in Sicily in the twelfth century during the Norman period.

<sup>33</sup> A. Nef, *Conquérir et gouverner la Sicile islamique au XIe et XIIe siècles* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 2011), 492–515.

which equally are all Berber tribes. The Lmāya's territory encompassed the southeast of Ifrīqiya (from the plain of Jefara to Tripolitania). In Sicily, there are more than 200 families that originated from the *rahal* Lmāya's territory. Alongside the *rahal* Lmāya, there exist Sicilian anthroponyms that are related to this tribe: Ḥassen ben Almāya and Yaḥyā ben Almāya.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, we know that the Lmāya's emigration increased during the crises of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Originally, this tribe was based in Tripolitania. Before that, some of its factions had emigrated to various parts of Ifrīqiya and the Maghreb, such as the regions of Gabes, Tahert and Fez, and the province of Lmāya in Malaga and Sicily. After 1040, the Lmāya settled on the island of Jerba, where a village with the name Houmat Lmay exists today. We therefore assume that the Lmāya who arrived in Sicily travelled there from either Tripolitania or Jerba.<sup>35</sup>

*Jerba*: A group of the Lmāya who inhabited the island of Jerba. The *nisba* Jerbi is mentioned four times in the *Jarā'īd*.<sup>36</sup>

#### b. *The Fatnāsa*

The Fatnāsa belonged to the Berber tribe Zanāta (according to Ibn Khaldūn) or to the Berber tribe of Mezāta (according to al-Ya‘qūbī). They had lived in Tripolitania and in the region of Nefzāwa. Twenty names in the district of Corleone were part of the *rijāl* Fatnāsa (men of Fatnāsa).<sup>37</sup>

#### c. *The Lawāta*

The Lawāta originally settled in the region of Barqa before moving on to Tripolitania, the mountains of Gabes and Jarid, and so on. In Sicily, about twelve anthroponyms carry the *nisba* Lawāta.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Cusa, *I diplomi greci e arabi di Sicilia*, vol. 1: 208–9.

<sup>35</sup> A. Bouzid, ‘Catalogue des tribus berbères “Butr” au Maghreb d’après les sources arabes médiévales’ (PhD diss., University of Tunis, 1992), 60–62.

<sup>36</sup> Cusa, *I diplomi greci e arabi di Sicilia*, vol. 1: 263, 264, 564, 615.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., vol. 1: 131, 234.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., vol. 1: 6, 12, 46, 66, 67, 106, 132, 165, 506, 586.

*d. Huwwāra*

The Huwwāra are a Berber tribe of Tripolitania. Many Sicilian anthroponyms end with the *nisba* Huwwārī.<sup>39</sup>

*Zammūr*: A group of the Huwwāra (according to Ibn Ḥazm) or the Nefousa (according to Ibn Khaldūn). They were established in Jebel Nefousa and Demmer. In Sicily, the Zammūrī were about twelve in number in the twelfth century, as mentioned in the Sicilian *Jarā'īd*.<sup>40</sup>

*Malīla*: A group of the Huwwāra according to Ibn Ḥazm and Ibn Khaldūn. However, Temlilet, a Berber form of Malīla, appeared among the subdivisions of Zanāta. The name Ibrāhīm bin Malīla can be found in Sicily. It seems that the Malīla settled near Syracuse, since an agglomeration there today carries the name Melilli.<sup>41</sup>

*M'sellāta*: A group of Huwwāra.<sup>42</sup>

*Musrāta*: A group of Huwwāra.<sup>43</sup>

*e. Zanāta*

The Zanāta constitute a great Berber tribal confederation. There is a place in Sicily called Ḥajar al-Zanātī, and only three names are related to this tribe.<sup>44</sup>

*Righa*: A group of Maghrāwa that belongs to the Zanāta. They settled in the mountains in the north of the Hodna. Two carried the *nisba* Righi.<sup>45</sup>

*Banū Barzāl*: A group from the Demmer of Zanāta. They lived in the Jabal Demmer.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., vol. 1: 10, 492, 493, 498, 499, 506, 577, 581, 582.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., vol. 1: 2, 155, 158, 223, 254–55. Bouzid, ‘Catalogue des tribus berbères’, 133–34.

<sup>41</sup> Bouzid, ‘Catalogue des tribus berbères’, 314–15.

<sup>42</sup> Cusa, *I diplomi greci e arabi di Sicilia*, vol. 2: 566.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., vol. 2: 572.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., vol. 1: 204, 478, 498. Nef, *Conquérir et gouverner la Sicile*, 468, 536, 712.

<sup>45</sup> Cusa, *I diplomi greci e arabi di Sicilia*, vol. 1: 43; vol. 2: 506.

*f. Nefzāwa*

The Nefzāwa are a Berber tribe from the oases of the Tunisian southwest, which bears the name of this tribe. Among its groups, we can mention Meklāta, Sumāta and Welhāsa. The *Jarā'īd* mentions one Nefzāwī.<sup>46</sup>

*Sumāta*: A group of the Nefzāwa.<sup>47</sup>

*Meqlāta*: A group of the Nefzāwa.<sup>48</sup>

All these tribes of southern Ifrīqiya were under Ibāḍī control until the twelfth century.

**\*\* Lineage to Other Maghrebi Tribes**

*Kutāma*: This tribe played an important role in the arrival of Fāṭimid power in Ifrīqiya. Three Sicilian names kept the *nisba* Kutāmī.<sup>49</sup>

*Sinhāja*: Their settlement in Sicily may date back to the Fāṭimid period.<sup>50</sup>

*Nefza*: A place known as Hajar al-Nefzī.<sup>51</sup>

*Barghawāta*: Two names belong to the ethnonym of Barghawāta.<sup>52</sup>

*'Ajīsa*: One name belongs to 'Ajīsa.<sup>53</sup>

*Masmūda*: One name belongs to Masmūda.<sup>54</sup>

*Bjāwa*: One name belongs to this lineage.<sup>55</sup>

*Barbarī*: Six names belong to this ethnonym.<sup>56</sup>

**\*\*\* Lineage to Afāriqa**

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., vol. 2: 525.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., vol. 1: 141.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., vol. 2: 571.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., vol. 1: 144, 164; vol. 2: 506.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., vol. 1: 251.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., vol. 1: 226.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., vol. 2: 567, 569.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., vol. 2: 569.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., vol. 2: 525.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., vol. 1: 475.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., vol. 1: 136; vol. 2: 566, 569, 576, 578.

*Al-Afāriq/al-Afāriqa*: They are the Afrī (as they were called in Roman times), descendants from the Byzantine era and Christianised Africans. They continued to speak the *langue roman*, which was Latin mixed with Berber, until the twelfth century.<sup>57</sup>

Based on the above, it appears that the majority of these names originated from the tribes of southern Ifrīqiya (the region between Gabes and Tripoli). However, the non-existence of a tribal structure in Sicily explains the limited but significant number of tribal *nisbas* in the *Jarā'id*. Moreover, some *nisbas* became nouns, adding to them the term ‘son of’ (*ben*). Examples include Ben al-Kutāmī, al-‘Ajisī, al-Hawwārī, al-Meqlātī, al-Barbarī and al-Ifrīqī.

### ***3. Anthroponyms Derived from an Ifrīqiyan Town or Village***

#### *a. Lineage (Nisba) to a City*

By ranking these cities in descending order, we obtain the following results:

Bône: 6 *nisbas* in Bûnî [M], Bûniyya [F];<sup>58</sup>  
 Tripoli: 5 *nisbas* in Trâbulsî;<sup>59</sup>  
 Nabeul: 4 *nisbas* in Nâbulî;<sup>60</sup>  
 Qalânîs, between Gabis and Sfax: 3 *nisbas* in Qalânîsî;<sup>61</sup>  
 Sfax: 2 *nisbas* in Sfaxî;<sup>62</sup>  
 Sousse: 2 *nisbas* in Soussî;<sup>63</sup>  
 Raqqâda: 2 *nisbas* in Bû-Raqqâdî;<sup>64</sup>  
 Barqa: 2 *nisbas* in Barqî;<sup>65</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., vol. 1: 164, 166, 173, 174, 242, 262, 267, 271, 285.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., vol. 1: 135, 258, 259, 263, 271; vol. 2: 571.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., vol. 1: 264, 265, 270, 279, 572.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., vol. 2: 543.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., vol. 2: 566, 575.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., vol. 1: 264.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., vol. 1: 276; vol. 2: 542.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., vol. 2: 588.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., vol. 2: 547, 592.

Tunis: 1 *nisba* in Tūnisi;<sup>66</sup>

Mahdia: 1 *nisba* in Mahdawī;<sup>67</sup>

Oran: 1 *nisba* in Wahrānī;<sup>68</sup>

Fes: 1 *nisba* in Fāsī.<sup>69</sup>

### *b. Lineage to an Ifriqiyan Village*

Zerjouna (a village in Bizerte): a homonym is mentioned in the Jarida of Qabiāna;

Fernāna (a village in the Tabarqa region): al-Fernānī ‘Alī;

Badrana (a village in the region of Sfax): a *nisba* in Badranī;

Tereshga (a village in the region of Mahdia that disappeared): a *nisba* in Turushgui;

‘Urwa (a village in the region of Mahdia that disappeared): a *nisba* in ‘Urwi;

Gamart (a village in the region of Tunis): a *nisba* in Gamartī; and

Darj (an oasis south of Ghdāmis): a *nisba* in Darjī.<sup>70</sup>

It seems that the coastal villages of Ifriqiya were the key sites from which the migrants came to Sicily.

### ***4. Arab-Berber Anthroponymy in Sicily***

\* Names of Berber origin

‘Abderrahmān Ben Yedder, Khazar, Oulad Bū Bakr ben Yadrāsen, ‘Ali, Mekhlouf ben Dunas, Dahman ben Meswar, Hassin ben Hidūs.<sup>71</sup>

\*\* Names with Lineage (*Nisba*) to an Arab Tribe

Yemenite (Lakhm: 1, Ansar: 3, Azd: 2, Kinda: 2, Ghafiq: 2, Hadhramawt: 2).

Mudhari (Qays: 6, Tamīm: 11, Ḥijāz: 1, Zi‘b: 1).<sup>72</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., vol. 1: 210–58, 263.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., vol. 1: 573.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., vol. 2: 564, 570, 571, 572, 590, 573, 575.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., Yemenite: vol. 1: 6, 43, 67, 101, 112, 493; vol. 2: 570, 571, 775, 779, 786. Mudhari: vol. 1: 40, 46, 67, 106, 498; vol. 2: 574, 588, 775, 776, 779, 783, 786, 788.

Quraysh: 5.<sup>73</sup>

\*\*\* Names with a Nickname (*Quniya*) Referring to the Ifrīqiyan Dialect  
 Ben Deggāz, Bū-Sboula, Qattūs, Mūsā Furṭās, Hassen al-dubb, Hammūd al-dubb, Ahmed ben al-Ganfūd, Bū-quttāya, Bū-zwīta, Bū-lanjās, Jellūl al-Teggāz, Umm Deggāz, Hassen Slougui, Ali ben Fartattū, Maymūna al-Hadba and so on.<sup>74</sup>

\*\*\*\* Matrimonial Names

Ben Fatma, Ben al-Barghwatiyya, Ben Jlasiyya, Ganfud ben Qaysiyya, Qurshiyya, ‘Arbiyya, Fatma, Habiba, Maryam, ‘Atfa, Maymuna, M’luka, Umm al-‘Izz, Zakiyya, Umm al-Khir, Umm Yumn, Slama, Farha and Hakima.<sup>75</sup>

\*\*\*\*\* Hybrid Names and First Names with Christian and Muslim Characteristics  
 N’qūla (Nicolas) ben ‘Ali and Iyuhan (Jean) ben ‘Abderrahmān.<sup>76</sup>

From the well-confirmed Ifrīqiyan presence evidenced in these lists of names, one may surmise that the settlement in Sicily occurred not only by more or less regular migration following the Aghlabid and Fātimid conquest in the ninth and tenth centuries, but that it was also renewed in a partial way between the eleventh and twelfth centuries in times of crisis. In the Zirid period, Ifrīqiya imported wheat from Norman Sicily in exchange for the dinar minted in Mahdia, Tripoli and Marrakesh. This trade was encouraged by the Normans in order to deal with the mass exodus of Ifrīqiyans to Sicily caused by the crisis of scarcity and under-production of 1143.<sup>77</sup>

Sicily became an attractive destination for the emigrants due to its strong historical relationship with North Africa and other places around the Mediterranean. Yāqūt mentioned the existence of a community of Ibādīs in Cossyra

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., vol. 1: 46, 67, 106, 112, 491; vol. 2: 588.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., vol. 1: 137, 139; vol. 2: 476, 497, 545, 565, 567, 576, 578, 580, 581, 582, 590.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., vol. 2: 570, 578, 579, 580, 581, 582, 593, 594.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., vol. 2: 666, 687.

<sup>77</sup> See Māzīrī, *Fatāwā*, 254, 284, 285.

which continued to live there until the fifteenth century. They had their own judge; Ibn Nājī (of the fifteenth century) said about them: ‘When I was a judge in Jerba in 1398, I had the opportunity to get a document containing the stamp of a Judge of Cossyra. But I did not approve of it [the stamp of a Judge of Cossyra] as long as the Muslims of this island, who are dominated, could leave it and return there whenever they wanted’.<sup>78</sup>

The diversity of anthroponyms reflects a diversity of religions and origins: Arab-Berber, Greek, Sicilian and Norman. Moreover, it denotes a kind of syncretism that is sometimes manifested by the absence of a surname, which is replaced by a nickname (*quniya*), a profession, or the name of a woman.

### **III. Some Common Cultural Aspects: A Dialectological Approach**

#### **1. *The Sicilian and Ifrīqiyan Dialects in the Middle Ages***

The comparative study of the languages spoken in Ifrīqiya and Sicily confirms the intermingling of populations in these two areas. In fact, the Sicilian dialect of the eleventh century was influenced by Berber dialects used on the island. In addition, there is a similarity between the Ifrīqiyan dialect and the terms and phrases used in the *Jarā'íd*. One can identify this analogy from the work of Ibn Makkī (d. 1107), *Tathqīf al-lisān wa talqīb al-jinān*.

##### *a. Some Terms of the Sicilian Dialect according to the Jarā'íd*

The Siculo (Sicilian dialect) of the *Jarā'íd* is considered to be akin to the Middle Arab dialect, which is a form of Arabic between literary Arabic and dialect. A number of terms refer to a dialectal use: *lanjāsa*, *ferrouj*, *tābuna*, *zammīta*, *saghrūna*, *sbūla*, *fertāss*, *nās mlāh*, *fartattu* and *dekkāz*.<sup>79</sup> These terms were mentioned in the same way in Ifrīqiya during the Middle Ages, and they are still used today.

<sup>78</sup> A. Ibn Nājī, *Sharḥ al-risālah* (MS 18753, Tunis National Library), vol. 2: 406. Burzulī, *Jāmi‘ masā'il al-abkām*, vol. 3: 89–90.

<sup>79</sup> S. Cusa, *I diplomi greci e arabi di Sicilia*, vol. 1: 134, 139, 167, 216, 223, 262, 263, 279; vol. 2: 565, 566, 569, 578, 590, 668.

*b. The Characteristics of the Sicilian (Siculo) and Ifrīqiyan Dialects according to Ibn Makkī*

We can detect the specificities of the pre-Hilālian dialect, in both Ifrīqiya and Sicily, from Ibn Makkī's book *Tathqīf al-lisān wa talqīb al-jinān*, which refers to the written language and its oral uses.<sup>80</sup>

Table 2.2 Characteristics of the Sicilian and Ifrīqiyan dialects according to Ibn Makkī

Standard Arabic	Sicilian Dialect	Ifrīqiyan Dialect	Observations	Page number in Ibn Makkī, <i>Tathqīf al-lisān wa talqīb al-jinān</i>
<i>tha'r</i> ئار	<i>tār</i>	<i>thār - tār</i>	<i>tba</i> pronounced <i>tā</i> in Berber	49
<i>harshaf</i> حرف	<i>khurshf</i>	<i>khurshf</i>	<i>h</i> replaced with <i>kh</i>	55
<i>jabadha</i> جبذا	<i>jabada</i>	<i>jabada</i>	<i>dhāl</i> pronounced <i>dāl</i> in Berber	60
<i>qunfudh</i> قفده	<i>qunfud</i>	<i>qanfūd</i>	Same	60
<i>mudhabdhab</i> مذنب	<i>mudabdab</i>	<i>mudabdab</i>	Same	61
<i>faqā'</i> فقا'	<i>faqa'</i> ففع	<i>faqa'</i> ففع	<i>a</i> replaced with 'ayn	74
<i>hada't</i> هدأت	<i>Hadayt</i> هديت	<i>hadit</i> هديت	<i>a</i> replaced with <i>ya'</i>	74
<i>abṭa't</i> أبطأت	<i>abṭayt</i> أبطيٰت	<i>bṭayt</i> بطيٰت	Same	77
<i>jashīsh</i> جشيش	<i>dashīsh</i>	<i>dashīsh</i> دشيش	<i>j</i> replaced with <i>d</i>	81
<i>sirdāb</i> سرداد	<i>zirdāb</i>	<i>zirdāb</i> زرداب	<i>s</i> replaced with <i>z</i>	85

<sup>80</sup> U. Ibn Makkī, *Tathqīf al-lisān wa talqīb al-jinān*, edited by A. Matar (Cairo: Dār al-Tahrīr, 1966). J. Lentin, 'Sur quelques spécificités du Moyen Arabe en Sicile', in *XII Incontro Italiano di Linguistica Camito-semitica (Afroasiatica)*, edited by Marco Moriggi (Soveria Mannelli: Rubettino, 2007), 46–47.

Standard Arabic	Sicilian Dialect	Ifriqiyan Dialect	Observations	Page number in Ibn Makkī, <i>Tathqīf al-lisān wa talqīb al-jinān</i>
<i>sour</i> سور	<i>sour</i> صور	<i>sour</i> صور	<i>sin</i> replaced with <i>sad</i>	89
<i>rabadh</i> ربض	<i>rabaṭ</i> ربط	<i>rabaṭ</i> ربط	<i>dhād</i> replaced with <i>tād</i> : Berber influence	90
<i>fayjan</i> فيجن	<i>fayjal</i> فيجل	<i>fijal</i> فيجل	<i>n</i> replaced with <i>l</i>	96
<i>kilyat</i> كلية	<i>kilwat</i> كلوة	<i>kilwat</i> كلوة	<i>ya'</i> replaced with <i>wāw</i>	97
<i>jawāñ</i> جوان	<i>jī'ān</i> جياعان	<i>Jīān</i> جياعان	<i>wāw</i> replaced with <i>ī</i> ( <i>yā'</i> )	97
<i>afā</i> أفعى	<i>lafā</i> لفعة	<i>lafā</i> لفعة	<i>a</i> replaced with <i>la</i>	99
<i>'asāya</i> عصاي	<i>'asāti</i> عصاتي	<i>'asāti</i> عصاتي	addition of <i>ti</i>	101
<i>'arūs</i> عروس	<i>'arousa</i> عروسة	<i>'arousa</i> عروسة	addition of <i>a</i>	103
<i>'ar'ar</i> عرعر	<i>'ar'ār</i> عرعار	<i>'ar'ār</i> عرعار	addition of <i>ā</i>	105
<i>Hamma</i> حمة	<i>Hāmma</i> حامة	<i>Hāmma</i> حامة	addition of <i>ā</i>	106
<i>faq'</i> فقع	<i>fuqqā'</i> فقّع	<i>fuqqā'</i> فقّع	Same	107
<i>sullum, burnus</i> برس، سلم	<i>sullūm,</i> <i>burnūs</i>	<i>sullūm,</i> <i>burnūs</i>	addition of <i>ū</i>	108
<i>Moīsa</i> موسى	<i>Mous</i> موس	<i>Mous</i> موس	male instead of female	110
<i>dimās</i> ديماس	<i>dāmūs</i> داموس	<i>dāmūs</i> داموس	<i>ya</i> and <i>ā</i> replaced with <i>ā</i> and <i>waw</i>	173
<i>qamar</i> قمر	<i>qamra</i> قمرة	<i>qamra</i> قمرة	female instead of male	174
<i>ṣabba al-matar</i> صبّ المطر	<i>sabbat</i>	<i>sabbat</i>	Same	174
<i>dhubāba</i> ذبابة	<i>Dhubbāna</i> ذبابة	<i>dhubbāna</i> ذبابة	<i>b</i> replaced with <i>n</i>	194

Standard Arabic	Sicilian Dialect	Ifriqiyan Dialect	Observations	Page number in Ibn Makkī, <i>Tathqīf al-lisān wa talqīb al-jinān</i>
'a'rāsa al-rajulu bi imr'ātibī	'arrasa عَرَس أُعْرِسُ الْرَّجُلَ بِالْمَارَأَةَ	'arrasa عَرَس	ā and r deleted and replaced with rr	195
<i>Qayrawānī</i> قِبْرُوْانِي	<i>Qarawī</i> قرُوي	<i>Qarawi</i> قَرْوَى	<i>yā</i> and <i>ān</i> deleted	208
<i>Darqala</i> (game played by 'ajam)	<i>Dargala</i> درَكْل درَقْل	<i>Dargala</i> درَقْل	<i>g</i> replaced with <i>k</i>	222
<i>Safarjal</i> سَفَرْجَل	<i>Asfarjal</i> إِسْفَرْجَل	<i>Sfarjal</i> سَفَرْجَل	<i>a</i> deleted	238

This list could be extended, but these examples already exhibit strong similarity between the terms in both columns.

## 2. Some Modern Terms Common in Sicilian and Ifriqiyan Dialects

To further support this hypothesis concerning the nature of the relationship between Siculo and the Tunisian dialect, I have conducted a comparison between some terms from the current Sicilian and Tunisian dialects which are of Latin, Arabic, Berber and Persian origins. The chosen words are not found in the works of scholars who have surveyed this area, such as Pellegrini, Caracausi or Ruffino.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>81</sup> G. B. Pellegrini, *Gli arabismi nelle lingue neolatine* (Brescia: Paideira Editrice Brescia, 1972); G. Caracausi, *Arabismi medievali di Sicilia* (Palermo: Centro di Studi Filologici e Linguistici Siciliano, 1983); G. Ruffino, *Mestieri e lavoro nei soprannomi siciliani* (Palermo: Centro di Studi Filologici e Linguistici Siciliani, 2009).

Table 2.3 Comparison between Sicilian and Arabic terms

Arabic	Sicilian	Origin and Meaning of the Term	References
<i>'ujja</i> ( <i>Lisān al-'Arab</i> , IV: 2813)	<i>Ajja - àggbia</i>	Dish made of eggs, garlic and oil	Sottile and Gench, 60.
<i>Albassānī-al-hi-sa</i>	<i>Alàssani</i>	Vegetables to be eaten boiled	Sottile and Gench, 60.
<i>Al-fārisī</i>	<i>Anfarisi</i>	Over-cooked bread	Sottile and Gench, 63.
<i>Qaliya</i>	<i>Càlia, Caliatu</i>	Grilled beans and chickpeas	Sottile and Gench, 80, 81.
<i>Knastru</i> (made of cane)	<i>Cannistru, cannisce</i>	Basket in which to put something that is produced at home	Sottile and Gench, 83.
<i>Gartella</i> ( <i>Lisān al-'arab</i> , V: 3593): <i>al-qirtalla</i> : the load of an animal	<i>Cartedda</i>	Breadbasket	Sottile and Gench, 90.
<i>Shikuriya</i>	<i>Cicoria</i>	Chicory	Sottile and Gench, 99.
<i>Furnaqui</i>	<i>Fornaciaio, furnacaru</i> (from the Latin <i>fornacula</i> )	Small oven	Sottile and Gench, 33, 113.
<i>Furn</i> (non-Arabic term, <i>Lisān al-'arab</i> , V: 3405)	<i>Furnaio, furnuru</i>	Oven	Sottile and Gench, 34, 113.
<i>Bagrāj</i>	<i>Bacaredda</i>	Water vessel	Sottile and Gench, 75; Ruffino, 75.
<i>Jalam</i> ( <i>Lisān al-'arab</i> , I: 667)	<i>Càlamu</i>	Wool shears	Ruffino, 78.
<i>Qidr</i> ( <i>Lisān al-'arab</i> , V: 3549)	<i>Qadararu</i>	Sealed cooking pot	Ruffino, 133–34.
<i>Trīza</i> ( <i>taraza</i> : <i>Lisān al-'arab</i> , IV: 2655)	<i>Trizza</i>	Decoration on clothing	Rizzo, 17.
<i>Qardash</i>	<i>Curdazza</i>	Wool cleaning machine	Rizzo, <i>Zimmilaru</i> , 21.

Notes: Sottile and Gench = R. Sottile and M. Gench, *Lessico della cultura dialettale delle Madonie* (Palermo: Centro Studi Filologici e Linguistici Siciliani, 2010); Ruffino = G. Ruffino, *Mestieri e lavoro nei soprannomi siciliani* (Palermo: Centro Studi Filologici e Linguistici Siciliani, 2009); Rizzo = G. Rizzo, *Zimmilaru/Cuffaro* (Palermo: Università della Studi di Palermo, 2010).

## Conclusion

The existence of many civilisations around the basin of the Mediterranean Sea – such as Arab-Muslim, Greek-Byzantine, or Latin – did not create strict boundaries or divisions but encouraged great cultural interactions. Despite the existence of regional spaces such as Baḥr al-Maghreb and Baḥr Ifrīqiya with all their differences, the Mediterranean was a meeting place of cultures. The Fāṭimid conception of this sea was unified, as shown on the map of the Mediterranean drawn up in Egypt in the eleventh century (Map 2.6).

The strong relationship between the two shores of the Mediterranean, between Sicily and Ifrīqiya, was present from Antiquity and made possible through the migratory movements in both directions, whereby Sicilian, Sardinian and Maltese communities have existed in Tunisian cities and Tunisian communities in Sicily for generations. This sort of interchange explains the appearance of similarities, after the Middle Ages, in the material and immaterial cultures of the two shores: in ceramics, architecture, toponymy, anthroponymy and dialects. Considering the constraints of geography, the Mediterranean is a unity that cannot support the establishment of barriers.

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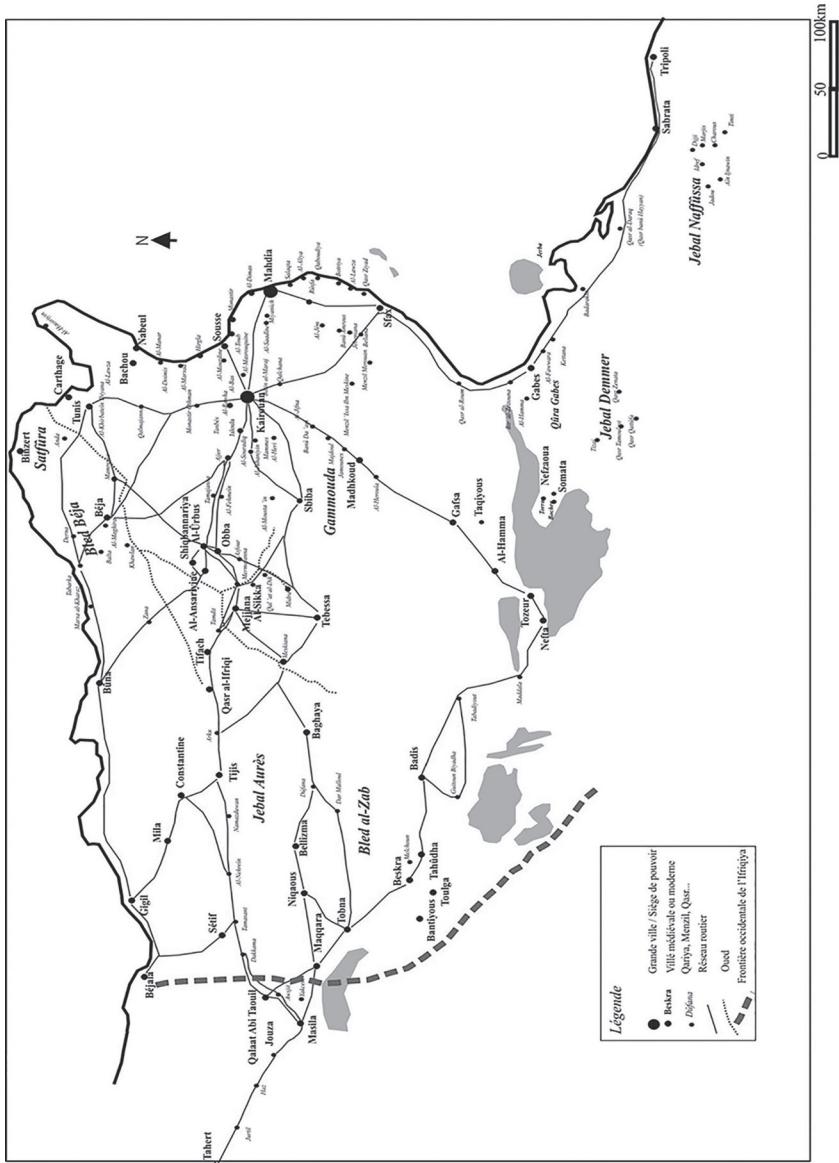
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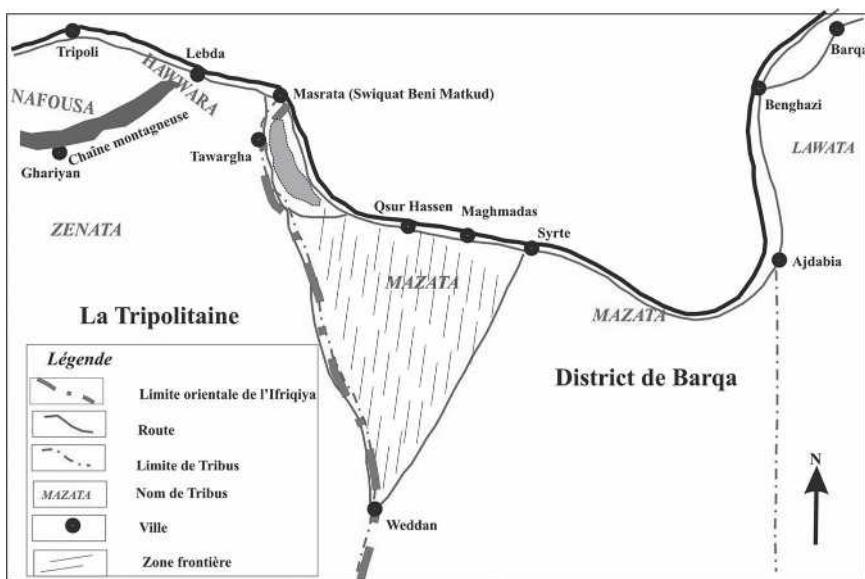
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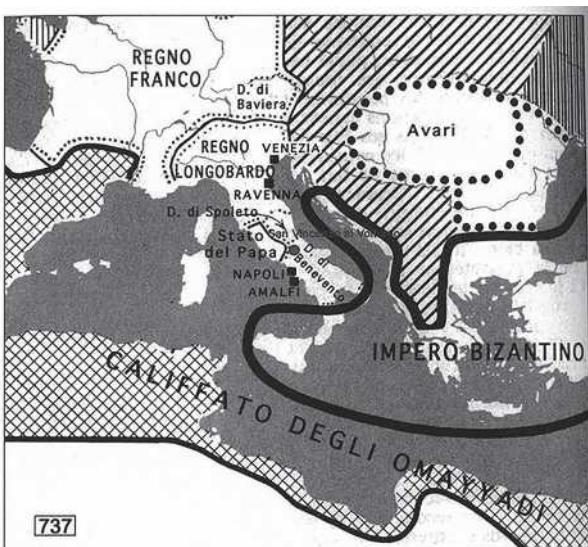
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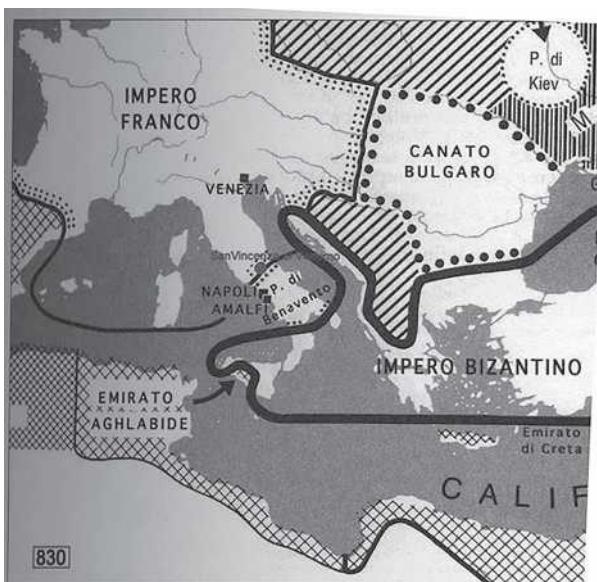
Map 2.1 Ifriqiya in the ninth century and the principal ports. Source: Author.



Map 2.2 The Oriental frontier of Ifriqiya: Tripolitania, eighth to ninth century. Source: Author.



Map 2.3 Europe and the Mediterranean Sea in 737. Source: F. Marazzi, *San Vincenzo al Volturno: Introduzione ad un cantiere di archeologia medievale* (Naples: Istituto Universitario, Suor Orsola Benincasa, 2002).



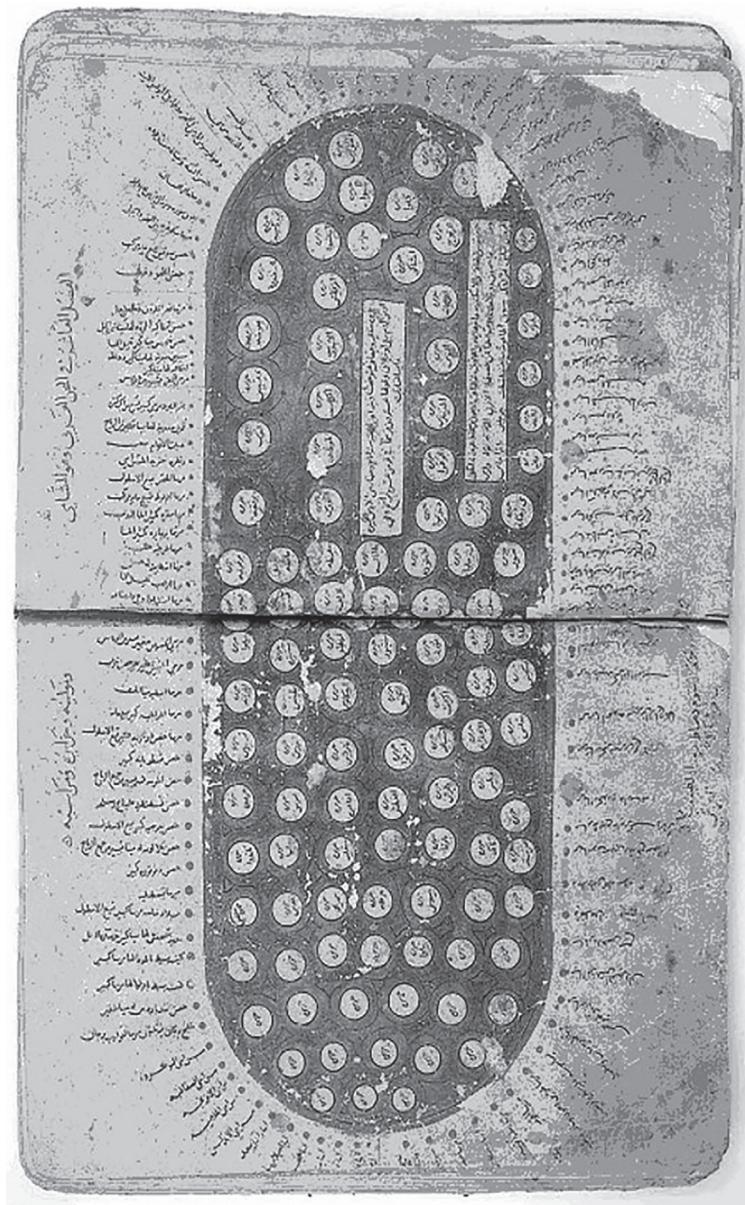
Map 2.4 Europe and the Mediterranean Sea in 830. Source: Marazzi, *San Vincenzo al Volturno*, 19.



Map 2.5 Military expeditions in the Aghlabid era, which preceded the Fatimid period. Source: Author.



Map 2.6 The Fatimid maritime space of Ifriqiya. Source: Author.



Map 2.7 Map of the Mediterranean. Source: Anonymous, *Gharā'ib al-funūn wa mulah al-ṣayrūn*.



Map 2.8 Sea route between Kelibia and Mahdia according to al-Bakrī. Source: Author.



Map 2.9 Maritime route between Kelibia and Mahdia according to al-Idrīsī (twelfth century).  
Source: Author.

# 3

## THE KALBIDS OF SICILY: STALWARTS OF FĀTIMID IFRĪQIYA

*Shainool Jiwa*

The distinctive status of the Kalbid *amīrs* as the only governing dynasty<sup>1</sup> of Muslim Sicily, and as Fātimid viceroys, is well-known in scholarship.<sup>1</sup> They were descendants of Arabian tribesmen of the Kalb who had settled in Ifrīqiya over the previous centuries and in the first half of the fourth/tenth century had entered Fātimid service; the governorship of the Kalbids began with the appointment of al-Hasan b. ‘Alī al-Kalbī (d. 964) as governor of the island in 948, during the reign of the third Fātimid imām-caliph, al-Manṣūr bi’llāh (r. 946–53). Thereafter, the Kalbids continued their rule as Fātimid viceroys,

<sup>1</sup> For a summary of the political fortunes and legacies of this family, as well as a comprehensive bibliography of earlier works on the Kalbids, especially in Italian, see U. Rizzitano, ‘Kalbids’, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition* (hereafter *EI2*), edited by P. Bearman et al., [http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\\_islam\\_SIM\\_3822](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_3822). More recently, Metcalfe has provided a detailed survey of Kalbid rule in Sicily, especially their administrative policies, as part of his broader study of Muslim history in Italy. See Alex Metcalfe, *The Muslims of Medieval Italy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 53ff. The Muslim history of Palermo has also recently received scholarly attention in Annliese Nef (ed.), *A Companion to Medieval Palermo: The History of a Mediterranean City from 600 to 1500* (Leiden: Brill, 2013). Hamid Haji’s critical edition of the *Sīrat al-Ustādh Jawdhar* provides a wealth of information on the Kalbid family and their fortunes, especially during the reign of al-Mu’izz li-Din Allāh. See Manṣūr al-‘Azīzī al-Jawdhari, *Sīrat al-Ustādh Jawdhar*, edited and translated by H. Haji as *Inside the Immaculate Portal: A History from Early Fatimid Archives* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012).

with brief interruptions, until 1053. The century of Kalbid rule saw the flourishing of Muslim Sicily, as an agricultural powerhouse, as a centre of Mediterranean trade and as a locus of cultural efflorescence. Yet, the largely exclusive focus on the Kalbids' Sicilian rule has often eclipsed their salient influence in Fātimid Ifrīqiya. This has characterised the Kalbids as an important but ultimately provincial dynasty of governors, whose agency in broader Fātimid history remains one removed from the Fātimid mainland. It has similarly rendered Sicily itself – whose economic integration with Fātimid Ifrīqiya is now well established – as an important frontier island province, but one where its own elites and power-relations had little impact on the internal dynamics of the Fātimid court.

A close reading of primary accounts of the Ifrīqiyān phase of Fātimid history – including tenth-century Fātimid accounts, such as the *Sīrat al-Ustādh Jawdhar* – demonstrates that the political and dynastic involvement of the Kalbid household extended beyond Sicily and impacted various spheres of the Fātimid polity. This extended role of the Kalbids is largely obscured in the reports of medieval Sunnī Muslim chronicles, but it becomes increasingly evident when read in conjunction with Fātimid accounts. This wider role is furthermore apparent not only in the careers of the Kalbids based in Sicily, but also among their family members residing in the Fātimid capital.

The sources attest that, whilst in Ifrīqiya, the Fātimid imām-caliphs appointed several members of the Kalbid household to leading positions in the Fātimid army and navy, in major military encounters. Perhaps more importantly, select members of the Kalbid family were also entrusted as guarantors of the succession process to the Fātimid caliphate. These roles reflect an intimate intertwining of familial relations between the Kalbid and Fātimid households, according the Kalbids a dynastic presence second only to that of the imām-caliphs.

This chapter situates the broader role of the Kalbids not just in Sicily, but in Fātimid Ifrīqiya and beyond, signalling the dynamic integration of the Sicilian elites with the elites of the Fātimid mainland. This earmarks Sicilian political power as a significant factor in the dynamics of the Fātimid capital in Ifrīqiya, thereby repositioning Sicily at the heart of the Fātimid venture rather than at a remove on the political periphery. This chapter analyses the relations between various members of the Fātimid dynasty and the Kalbids,

which spanned several generations. It also explores the careers of the Kalbids as Sicilian dynasts and stalwarts of the Fātimid state, from the reign of the second Fātimid imām-caliph, al-Qā’im bi-Amr Allāh (r. 934–46), through that of his successors, al-Manṣūr bi’llāh and al-Mu’izz li-Dīn Allāh (r. 953–75). Cumulatively, these reigns spanned the careers of the first noteworthy Kalbid, ‘Alī b. Abi'l-Ḥusayn al-Kalbī (d. 938); its preeminent figure, al-Hasan b. ‘Alī al-Kalbī; and the prominent scions of the house: Aḥmad b. al-Hasan al-Kalbī (d. 969), Muḥammad b. al-Hasan al-Kalbī (d. 974) and al-Hasan b. ‘Ammār al-Kalbī (d. 1000), amongst others.

### The Kalbids in the Arabic Historical Tradition

The vicissitudes of the Kalbid dynasty receive significant coverage in medieval Muslim chronicles, in the annalistic works covering major developments in Muslim history as well as in those specific to the history of North Africa and Egypt. These include the writings of Abu'l-Fidā' (d. 1273), Ibn al-Athīr (d. 1233), Ibn 'Idhārī (fl. eighth/fourteenth century), al-Nuwayrī (d. 1333), Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1382) and al-Maqrīzī (d. 1442).

The dominant focus in the wider non-Fātimid Arabic historiographical tradition is in reporting accounts of the political events regarding the Kalbids as governors of Sicily, with particular emphasis on their military confrontations with the Byzantines in the eastern regions of the island and in Southern Italy. Nonetheless, these non-Fātimid sources vary significantly in the scope of their coverage as regards the internal dynamics of the Kalbid house and the Kalbids' relations with the Fātimid mainland. Abu'l-Fidā' is notable for his reporting on several critical aspects of the broader Kalbid reach, which include Aḥmad b. al-Hasan's visit to the Fātimid capital to offer his oath of allegiance (*bay'ah*) to al-Mu'izz, his report on the circumcision ceremonies of Sicily ordered by the Fātimid imām-caliph, as well as his coverage of the departure of the Kalbid household on the eve of al-Mu'izz's transfer to Egypt.<sup>2</sup>

The predominant concern in the non-Fātimid sources, for the Ifrīqiyan phase of Fātimid history, nonetheless remains affixed on Kalbid military history. Instructive here are the treatments of Ibn al-Athīr, al-Nuwayrī and Ibn

<sup>2</sup> Abu'l-Fidā', *Al-Mukhtaṣar fī akhbār al-bashar* (Cairo: Al-Maṭba'ah al-Ḥusayniyyah al-Miṣriyah, n. d.), vol. 2: 96.

Khaldūn of the two most prominent figures of the Kalbid house, al-Hasan b. ‘Alī al-Kalbī and his son and successor Aḥmad b. al-Hasan, who, between them, established the Kalbid presence in Sicily. In Ibn al-Athīr’s *Al-Kāmil*, the events following the initiation of the Kalbid governorship of Sicily under al-Hasan b. ‘Alī al-Kalbī in 948 during the reign of al-Manṣūr, and his subsequent pacification of civil strife in Palermo, find extended coverage.<sup>3</sup> Thereafter, references in *Al-Kāmil* to the important reign of Aḥmad b. al-Hasan – whose rule was instrumental in the consolidation of Kalbid authority on the island – appear mainly in relation to those campaigns of Aḥmad that clustered around the conquests of Taormina (*Tabarmīn*) in 962.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, but with a distinct shift in focus, al-Nuwayrī also mentions the arrival of al-Hasan al-Kalbī during the reign of the Fātimid Imām-Caliph al-Manṣūr, and the subsequent appointment of his son, Aḥmad b. al-Hasan.<sup>5</sup> These brief reports serve as introductory paragraphs for al-Nuwayrī’s subsequent extended narrative on the campaigns of the Kalbids at Taormina and on the events that unfold thereafter, leading to the conquest of Rametta, including the famous ‘Battle of the Pit’ (*waq’at al-hafra*) in 964.<sup>6</sup> Al-Nuwayrī’s narrative is textured and includes renditions of Ibn ‘Ammār al-Kalbī’s prayers to God when the Muslim armies seemed to be overwhelmed, as well as reports on the progress of individual battles.<sup>7</sup> Ibn Khaldūn follows a similar thematic focus on military affairs in his coverage of the Kalbids, focusing principally on the naval encounters between the Fātimids and the Umayyads of Andalusia where the Kalbids played prominent roles, and on Fātimid-Byzantine clashes in Sicily and mainland Italy, including the above-mentioned campaigns.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil fi'l-tārikh*, edited by ‘Umar ‘Abd al-Salām al-Tadmurī (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, 1417/1997), vol. 7: 222–25.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., vol. 7: 275–76.

<sup>5</sup> Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-'arab fī funūn al-adab* (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub wa'l-Wathā'iq al-Qawmiyya, 1423/2002), vol. 24: 369.

<sup>6</sup> On these campaigns, see Michael Brett, *The Rise of the Fatimids: The World of the Mediterranean and the Middle East in the Fourth Century of the Hijra, Tenth Century CE* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 240–42.

<sup>7</sup> Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-'arab*, vol. 24: 370–74.

<sup>8</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *Dīwān al-mubtada' wa'l-khabar fī tārikh al-'arab wa'l-barbar*, edited by Khalil Shahādah (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1408/1988), vol. 4: 57–60.

In the biographical dictionaries of the period, al-Maqrīzī's *Kitāb al-Muqaffā* is distinct for its sustained coverage of the Kalbids, including notable entries on a number of scions of the family.<sup>9</sup> While important background information pertaining to their broader role is posited – especially in the case of Muḥammad al-Kalbī, to be explored below – the focus on their political and military roles is similarly apparent. The added caveat here is that al-Maqrīzī's main concern consisted of those Kalbids who had some impact in Fātimid Egypt. Geographical accounts, including that of Ibn Ḥawqal (d. ca late tenth century), whose reports on Sicily have been mined by historians in delineating the economic and social conditions of the island, yield little further information on the role of the Kalbids in the political history of the mainland.<sup>10</sup>

Fātimid Ismā'īlī sources provide a significant body of otherwise unknown historical information on the Kalbids, leading to a revision of their role as Sicilian dynasts. Foremost amongst these sources is the *Sīrat al-Ustādh Jawdhar* (The Biography of al-Ustādh Jawdhar), a compilation of letters and documents from the archives of the most senior bureaucrat of Fātimid North Africa.<sup>11</sup> Al-Ustādh Jawdhar himself was the initial patron of the second generation of the Kalbids on behalf of the Fātimid imām-caliphs, a relationship that began in 938 and continued over the following decades when he served as advisor and mediator for the Kalbid household. Compiled by Jawdhar's own scribe, Maṇṣūr al-‘Azīzī al-Jawdharī, in Fātimid Egypt during the reign of the

<sup>9</sup> Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Muqaffā al-kabīr: Tarājim maghribiyah wa mashriqqiyah min al-fatrat al-‘Ubaydiyyah*, edited by Muḥammad al-Yālāwī (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1407/1987). For Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Kalbī, see 240–42; for Ja‘far b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Kalbī, see 316–19; for al-Ḥasan b. ‘Ammar al-Kalbī, see 371–78; for Ja‘far b. Yūsuf al-Kalbī, see 413–14.

<sup>10</sup> Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣurāt al-Ard* (Beirut: Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayāt, 1996). See, for example, p. 116 for the brief comments of Ibn Ḥawqal on Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan al-Kalbī's constructions in Palermo.

<sup>11</sup> A slave of Slavic origins serving the previous Aghlabid administration, al-Ustādh Jawdhar entered Fātimid service as a young man upon the commencement of the state in 269/909; he was personally chosen by the first imām-caliph al-Mahdī bi’llāh. By the end of the reign of al-Qā’im in 334/946, Jawdhar had ascended to become the *major domo* of the royal household and a chief administrator of the state. Manumitted during the era of al-Manṣūr, Jawdhar's principal position as chief administrator continued until his demise in 362/973, during the reign of al-Mu‘izz li-Dīn Allāh.

fifth imām-caliph, al-‘Azīz bi’llāh (r. 365–86/975–96),<sup>12</sup> the *Sīra* presents an array of documents and letters directly involving the Kalbids. These cover a number of themes, including the religious proclivities of the Kalbids, their internal family dynamics, their relations with the Fātimid household, as well as their extended role within the Fātimid polity. Another Fātimid account that provides distinct renditions of events in Kalbid history is the *Kitāb al-majālis wa’l-musāyarāt* (The Book of Audiences and Excursions) of Qādī Abū Ḥanīfa al-Nu‘mān (d. 363/974).<sup>13</sup>

### The Kalbids in Sicily: An Overview

The Banū Abi’l-Ḥusayn al-Kalbī rose to prominence and likely entered Fātimid service soon after the proclamation of the Fātimid caliphate. Their origins in the pre-Fātimid period remain relatively unknown. The clan progenitor is named as Abū’l-Ḥusayn al-Kalbī, with al-Maqrīzī seemingly alone in giving his full name as Muḥammad b. al-Faḍl b. Ya‘qūb. Little else about him is mentioned in the historical record.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, the history of the Arabian tribe of Kalb, from whom the Kalbids of Sicily emerged, is famous.<sup>15</sup> Notably, in his genealogical exposition of the Arabian tribes, al-Qalqashandī

<sup>12</sup> On Manṣūr al-‘Azīzī al-Jawdhārī, see al-Jawdhārī, *Sīrat*, 11.

<sup>13</sup> Qādī al-Nu‘mān, *Kitāb al-majālis wa’l-musāyarāt*, edited by al-Habīb al-Faqī, Ibrāhīm Shabbūḥ and Muḥammad al-Yālāwī (Beirut: Dār al-Muntaṣar, 1996).

<sup>14</sup> Al-Maqrīzī, *Muqaffā*, 371. Ya‘lāwī noted in the entry on al-Ḥasan b. ‘Ammār that al-Maqrīzī’s reference to the Kalbīs as the ‘shaykhs of the Kutāma’ refers to their close association with this Berber confederation rather than their ethnic origin; he describes the Kalbīs as being ‘Arabs of Yemeni origin’.

<sup>15</sup> The Banū Kalb b. Wabara, whose homelands lay in the desert regions between Syria and Iraq, played a prominent role in the history of the early centuries of Islam. As a leading tribe of the Quḍā‘a ‘Yemenī’ confederation, the Kalbid tribes formed the backbone of Umayyad support during the Sufyānid and early Marwānid periods and maintained military potency as Bedouin tribesmen well into the ‘Abbāsid era. For the early Kalbī chieftains, see, for instance, Patricia Crone, *Slaves on Horses: The Evolution of the Islamic Polity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 93–94. In light of the fact that tribesmen from the Kalb constituted part of the conquest armies that settled in Ifrīqiya and Andalusia from the first to third/seventh to ninth centuries, the Banū Abi’l-Ḥusayn al-Kalbī likely stemmed from these North African iterations of the Kalbid tribes who, by this time, were settled across the Islamic world.

(d. 821/1418) lists the Kalbid governors of Sicily (under his entry for Banī Abī'l-Ḥusayn) and ascribes them to the Banū Kalb b. Wabara.<sup>16</sup>

The path bearer of the clan in Fāṭimid service was 'Alī b. Abī'l-Ḥusayn al-Kalbī (d. 938), a notable military figure and son-in-law of Sālim b. Abī Rāshid, the Fāṭimid governor of Sicily between 925 and 936.<sup>17</sup> The details of 'Alī al-Kalbī's own career in the Fāṭimid state are obscure. However, it is apparent that the close association of the Kalbids with Sicily commences during his era and that, by the time of his demise, the Kalbid household was already of special interest at the Fāṭimid court. *Sīrat Jawdhar* records that, when 'Alī's career was cut short – he was killed while fighting rebels in Agrigento (*Jirjent*) in 938 – the Fāṭimid Imām-Caliph al-Qā'im issued instructions to al-Ustādh Jawdhar to take the Kalbid's two sons, al-Ḥasan and Ja'far, into his care.<sup>18</sup> Of these two sons of 'Alī al-Kalbī, it was Abū'l-Ghanā'im al-Hasan b. 'Alī al-Kalbī who next attained a high-ranking position in the Fāṭimid realms. Al-Hasan likely rose through the ranks of the military before coming to the fore during the rebellion of Abū Yazīd al-Nukkārī (d. 947) between 943 and 947. It was in Sicily, however, that al-Hasan al-Kalbī and his kinsmen made their mark.

By the mid-fourth/mid-tenth century, Fāṭimid administration in Sicily had succumbed to the same challenges as faced by the previous Aghlabid rulers in instituting their rule over the island.<sup>19</sup> The amalgam of ethnic groups in the armed forces sent by the Aghlabids to conquer and settle in Sicily in the third/ninth century – comprising Arabs, Slavs, Andalusians and Berbers – resulted in endemic rivalries erupting between them over the following decades. With Palermo (*Balarm*) serving as the new capital of Muslim rule in Sicily, political and economic power remained vested in the Arab elites based in the city, who oftentimes controlled the island's fertile estates to the exclusion of other

<sup>16</sup> Shihāb al-Dīn Abu'l-Abbās Aḥmad b. 'Alī al-Qalqashandī, *Nihāyat al-'arab fī ma'rifat ansāb al-'Arab*, edited by Ibrāhīm al-Ibyārī (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnāniyyīn, 1400/1980), 33–34.

<sup>17</sup> al-Jawdharī, *Sīrat*, 6.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 146.

<sup>19</sup> The Aghlabid conquest of the island began in Rabī' I 212/June 827 and resulted in the capture of the capital of Syracuse in 878, but it remained incomplete until the onset of Fāṭimid rule. For a summary of the conquest process, see R. Traini et al., 'Ṣikilliya', *EI2*. For a comprehensive account of the intricacies of this period see Metcalfe, *Medieval Italy*, 25–44.

groups. Yet, while rivalries within the Muslim groups in Sicily often cut across ethnic lines, with descendants of Arab tribesmen who had settled in Sicily pitted against those of Berber descent, the period also witnessed the emergence of a localised Muslim Sicilian identity, with the ‘People of Sicily’ (*Ahl Ṣiqilīyya*) considering their local interests as being at loggerheads with the imperial priorities of the Aghlabids in North Africa. These hostilities were overlaid by rivalries between the newly arrived Muslim settlers on the west of the island and the earlier Greek-speaking settlers who, in the east, were still under Byzantine rule. Intense rivalries within the island, and between the periphery and the centre, thus became a perennial feature.<sup>20</sup> Metcalfe characterises these tensions as being three-way – among Muslims and Christians, Arabs and non-Arabs, Sicilians and Ifrīqiyans.<sup>21</sup>

Fāṭimid rule in Sicily began in this maelstrom. As per the Aghlabid experience, Fāṭimid efforts to impose centralised control and provincial bureaucratisation were resisted, especially by the settled descendants of the Arab *jund* (army).<sup>22</sup> The rebellion of the Arabs of Palermo led by the Banū'l-Ṭabarī in 335/947 highlighted the continued difficulties faced by the Fāṭimids.<sup>23</sup> It was only following the arrival of the Kalbids in the mid-fourth/mid-tenth century that Muslim Sicily flourished.

Following the pattern of appointing prominent Arab Ismā'īlīs as mediators of Fāṭimid governance in especially fractious regions, the Imām-Caliph al-Manṣūr bī'llāh sent al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī al-Kalbī to Sicily after the revolt of 948.<sup>24</sup> Al-Ḥasan's era began with an immediate pacification of Palermo. This followed a series of major victories against the resurgent Byzantines on the east of the island and the Italian mainland around 951–52, which cemented the Muslim presence on the island and elevated the stature of the Kalbids in the Fāṭimid

<sup>20</sup> The Aghlabid governors' efforts to stabilise the island by redirecting the populace's martial energies against the Byzantine presence in Sicily and mainland Italy remained elusive. See Metcalfe, *Medieval Italy*, 6–17.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>22</sup> For the initial phase of Fāṭimid rule in Sicily see ibid., 44–53.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>24</sup> For the appointment of al-Ḥasan as mediator in Sicily, see Abu'l-Fidā', *Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 2: 112; Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil*, vol. 7: 196; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-'arab*, vol. 24: 369; Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārikh*, vol. 4: 266; al-Maqrīzī, *Muqaffā*, 184.

domains.<sup>25</sup> Following the death of al-Manṣūr bi’llāh and the accession of the Imām-Caliph al-Mu‘izz li-Dīn Allāh in 953, al-Hasan returned to the Fāṭimid capital where his career as a stalwart of the Fāṭimid realms continued its ascent. Here the importance of the Kalbids becomes distinctly apparent. Following a tentative Umayyad-Byzantine alliance against the Fāṭimids, al-Hasan was appointed by al-Mu‘izz to lead a successful Fāṭimid naval expedition against the Umayyad port of Almeria in Andalusia, this representing a rare example of direct Fāṭimid-Umayyad military confrontation.<sup>26</sup> Al-Hasan later was to return to Sicily to lead further expeditions against the Byzantines – this time assisting his son and brother – before passing away on the island in 964.<sup>27</sup>

The rise of other members of the Kalbid clan was concurrent with that of al-Hasan. His brother, ‘Ammar b. ‘Alī al-Kalbī, also had distinguished himself during the rebellion of Abū Yazīd, by routing Khārijī forces in Tunis. Retaining prominence during the reigns of al-Manṣūr and al-Mu‘izz, ‘Ammar was dispatched by his brother al-Hasan to lead a naval fleet against Byzantine Italy but met his demise at sea in 956.<sup>28</sup> In Sicily, the prominence of the Kalbid family translated into the genesis of a dynasty with the emergence of the third generation of Kalbids in Fāṭimid service. Following the return of al-Hasan b. ‘Alī to Ifrīqiya in 953, his son Abū'l-Ḥusayn Ahmad b. al-Hasan (d. 970) was selected to succeed his father in ruling over the island.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>25</sup> In 951, al-Hasan, alongside a Fāṭimid Ṣaqlabī commander, co-led Fāṭimid armies against the Byzantines on the Italian mainland, with al-Hasan winning a major victory against the Byzantines at Gerace in 952. For his building of the mosque at Reggio on the Italian mainland, as well as the highly favourable terms negotiated as a result between the Fāṭimids and the Byzantines, see Heinz Halm, *The Empire of the Mahdi: The Rise of the Fatimids*, translated by Michael Bonner (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 334–35; Brett, *Rise*, 240–42.

<sup>26</sup> This provides one of the occasions where al-Nu‘mān’s *Kitāb al-majālis* (164) reports on Kalbid military history. For a translation of al-Nu‘mān’s account, as recorded in the *‘Uyūn al-akhbār* of Idrīs ‘Imād al-Dīn, see Idrīs ‘Imād al-Dīn, *‘Uyūn al-akhbār wa funūn al-āthār*, translated by Shainool Jiwa as *The Founder of Cairo: The Fatimid Imam-Caliph al-Mu‘izz and his Era* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2013), 110–12; cf. Abu'l-Fidā, *Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 2: 96–97. See also Metcalfe, *Medieval Italy*, 54.

<sup>27</sup> Al-Jawdhārī, *Sīrat*, 66.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 154

<sup>29</sup> Abu'l-Fidā, *Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 2: 96. Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-‘arab*, vol. 24: 369, has Ahmād initially deputising for his father al-Hasan and then being officially appointed in 343/955.

Aḥmad b. al-Hasan's reign ushered in prosperity in Sicily. Under instruction from the Imām-Caliph al-Mu'izz, Aḥmad oversaw the reform of Sicily's provincial administration that resulted in increased integration between the central government based in Palermo and the provinces of the island.<sup>30</sup> As Metcalfe noted, Kalbid Sicily under Aḥmad b. al-Hasan was to strengthen its 'bases of power, stability and wealth for which it would be famed in the second half of the tenth century'.<sup>31</sup> Aḥmad's military successes against the Byzantines heightened his fame. Especially notable, as mentioned above, was his conquest of Taormina in 962 – one of the last Byzantine strongholds on the island – which he renamed al-Mu'izziyya in honour of the Imām-Caliph al-Mu'izz.<sup>32</sup> Further victories against the Byzantines followed, including the famed 'Battle of the Straits' in 965.<sup>33</sup> Aḥmad's own reign came to an end with his demise during the Fāṭimid transfer to Egypt in 970, as will be discussed further below.<sup>34</sup>

Similarly prominent among the new generation of Kalbids was Aḥmad's paternal cousin, al-Hasan b. 'Ammār al-Kalbī (d. 1000). Alongside his cousin, Ibn 'Ammār commanded Fāṭimid forces and gained renown for major victories against the Byzantines, most notably at the above-mentioned 'Battle of the Pit' near Rametta in 964.<sup>35</sup> Ibn 'Ammār would subsequently become the most prominent Kalbid in the Egyptian phase of Fāṭimid rule. The Kalbids continued to rule effectively over Sicily following Aḥmad b. al-Hasan's departure. A brief and unsuccessful reign of a Kalbid freedman called Ya'ish, punctuated by a return to civil war between the Arabs and Berbers on the island, demonstrated the stabilising influence of the now-absent Kalbid chiefs.<sup>36</sup> In response, the imām-caliph in 359/970 appointed as governor Abū'l-Qāsim 'Alī b. al-Hasan, another son of al-Hasan b. 'Alī al-Kalbī, and he reigned over the island until his

<sup>30</sup> Metcalfe, *Medieval Italy*, 57.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>32</sup> Abu'l-Fidā', *Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 2: 96–97; Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil*, vol. 7: 240; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-'arab*, vol. 24: 370–73; Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārikh*, vol. 4: 267. For the contours of the campaign see Halm, *Empire*, 405–6.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> See Brett, *Rise*, 320–21.

<sup>35</sup> Halm, *Empire*, 405–7.

<sup>36</sup> Metcalfe, *Medieval Italy*, 58.

death in battle in 372/982.<sup>37</sup> The history of Kalbid Sicily in the Egyptian phase of Fātimid rule falls outside the scope of this paper. Suffice it to say that Kalbid rule continued in Sicily until the early decades of the fifth/eleventh century, ending with the ninth Kalbid ruler, Aḥmad al-Akhāl (d. 427/1036), a fourth-generation descendant of al-Ḥasan b. ‘Alī. Through these generations, the Kalbids remained, by and large, attached to the Fātimid house.

### The Kalbids on the Mainland: Intimate Scions of the Fātimid House

The political career of the Kalbids outlined above points to the broader role of the family beyond their governance of Sicily. It is apparent that their prominence as stalwarts of the Fātimid house in North Africa preceded their careers as Fātimid viceroys in Sicily. It is furthermore notable that at critical junctures – namely, the defence of major Fātimid heartlands during the rebellion of Abū Yazīd and the heading of the Fātimid naval campaigns against the Umayyads – it was the Kalbids (and especially al-Ḥasan al-Kalbī) to whom principal command was entrusted by the Imām-Caliphs al-Mansūr and al-Mu‘izz. This was further reflected in the appointment of the Kalbids, including Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan and Ibn ‘Ammār, as respective heads of the Fātimid naval expeditions for the grand transfer to Egypt, the further significance of which will be discussed in the following section.

While the prominence of al-Ḥasan al-Kalbī prior to the onset of his Sicilian career is reiterated across the source narratives, the details of al-Ḥasan’s critical importance in the overall Fātimid military effort during the rebellion of Abū Yazīd, between 943 and 947, become notably apparent in medieval Ismā‘īlī accounts. In the *‘Uyūn al-akhbār* of Imād al-Dīn Idrīs (d. 1468), al-Ḥasan al-Kalbī emerges as a principal figure in the Fātimid struggle against the Khārijī rebellion. As governor (*‘āmil*) of the strategically located town of Tunis, al-Ḥasan led the Fātimid defence of the coastal region of northern Ifrīqiya against Abū Yazīd’s force in Muḥarram 333/September 944, with his brother ‘Ammār leading cavalry and infantry under his command.<sup>38</sup> After civil strife

<sup>37</sup> Abu’l-Fidā’, *Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 2: 96–97, indicates his reliance on earlier sources in noting that, as a result of his death in battle, ‘Alī was thereafter known as ‘the martyr’ (*al-shahīd*); al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-‘arab*, vol. 24: 374–75; Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh*, vol. 4: 267–68.

<sup>38</sup> Idrīs Imād al-Dīn, *‘Uyūn al-akhbār wa funūn al-āthār*, edited by Muḥammad al-Yā'lāwī as *Tārīkh al-khulafā' al-fātimiyin bi'l-maghrib: Al-qism al-khāṣṣ min ‘uyūn al-akhbār* (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1985), 278.

forced the Kalbids to relocate to Sousse, al-Hasan led further assaults against Abū Yazīd's forces, scoring victories and seizing significant resources from the rebels.<sup>39</sup> Over the first phase of the rebellion, al-Hasan is further recorded as having mediated support amongst the Berber tribes for al-Qā'īm and as having been dispatched by the imām-caliph to send financial aid and military support to other areas of Ifrīqiya.<sup>40</sup> When subsequently being forced to retreat to the homelands of the Kutāma, al-Hasan's successful defence of the region saw a consolidation of Fāṭimid power in the area around Constantine.<sup>41</sup> Following Imām-Caliph al-Manṣūr's tide-turning victory against Abū Yazīd in 946 outside Qayrawān, he dispatched a strong force against the recalcitrant elements in the Kutāma homelands. This led to further mobilisation of the Fāṭimid tribal support base, which then coalesced under the command of al-Hasan al-Kalbī around Constantine.<sup>42</sup> Together, they set out to secure the critical northern Roman road from Constantine to the eastern coast of Ifrīqiya, including the recapture of Bāja and Tunis.<sup>43</sup> Al-Hasan's defence of the northern regions played a crucial role in al-Manṣūr's final campaign against Abū Yazid, culminating in the latter's death in Muḥarram 336/August 947. By the end of the rebellion, the role played by al-Hasan and 'Ammār augmented the status of the Kalbids as preeminent generals and governors of the empire.<sup>44</sup>

The medieval Sunnī chronicles indicate knowledge of the seniority of al-Hasan, and of the Kalbid family more broadly, prior to their coverage of the Kalbids' Sicilian venture. Al-Nuwayrī related that, when al-Manṣūr first appointed al-Hasan to Sicily, this was because al-Hasan enjoyed a 'privileged position' (*makīn*) with al-Manṣūr, 'because of his love [for al-Manṣūr], his advice, and the service of his forefathers to his [al-Manṣūr's] fathers'.<sup>45</sup> In noting that al-Hasan's entire career had resulted from Fāṭimid patronage, Ibn Khaldūn referred to him as one of the 'inventions' (*sanā'ihim*) of the Fāṭimids. He similarly presents al-Hasan as being one of the elites of

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 280, 335.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 320, 331.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 335–36.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 382–85.

<sup>43</sup> See Halm, *Empire*, 316–17, 331–32.

<sup>44</sup> For 'Ammār b. 'Alī, see al-Jawdhārī, *Sīrat*, 154.

<sup>45</sup> Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-'arab*, vol. 24: 369.

al-Manṣūr's generals (*wujūh quwwādihī*) prior to his Sicilian career. Ibn Khaldūn adds that al-Ḥasan 'had an elevated status in the state' (*wā kāna laḥū fi'l-dawla mahāl kabīr*) due to his services during the rebellion of Abū Yazīd.<sup>46</sup>

Thereafter, as is apparent from the *Sīrat Jawdhar*, the transfer of the Kalbids to Sicily emerged alongside the maintenance of their prominent position in the Fāṭimid capital. Noting the continued presence of the Kalbids at the Fāṭimid capital, the *Sīrat Jawdhar* indicates that they held a distinct status at the court, leading to courtly jealousies. In a noteworthy letter, the affinity between Jawdhar, al-Ḥasan b. al-Kalbī and his brother Ja‘far al-Kalbī seems to have been affected by local disputations:

There were many rumours about the great concern of the ustādh for them [Ja‘far and al-Ḥasan], and someone even went so far as to say that al-Ḥasan b. ‘Alī was devoted to Jawdhar, as a slave to a master and that he never passed by the house of the ustādh to go to the palace of our lord, the Commander of the Faithful, without visiting [the ustādh], or other similar things.<sup>47</sup>

The noted instance led Jawdhar to request from the imām-caliph a break of his relations with the Kalbids, so as to squash the rumours, but he was prevented from doing so by al-Mu‘izz.

The distinctive status of the Kalbids at the Fāṭimid court, and their being subject to factional rivalry, is also evident in earlier controversies which unfolded during the reign of al-Manṣūr. Seemingly targeted specifically to diminish Kalbid influence, they were only curbed through the direct intervention of Jawdhar and al-Mu‘izz (then serving as heir-apparent):

You know that when arrows of their enemies hit them [that is, the Kalbids], when they had almost perished by the anger of their imam, you appealed to us and we appealed to al-Manṣūr bi’llāh (to spare them), and he acted towards them in a way which is worthy of him. Since you did not abandon them at that time, you must (not) abandon them today.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārikh*, vol. 4: 266.

<sup>47</sup> Al-Jawdharī, *Sīrat*, 145.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 149.

While the *Sīrat Jawdhar* remains silent as to the identity of the ‘enemies’ who flung arrows at the Kalbids – and the nature of their misdemeanour that required al-Mu‘izz’s intervention with his father – they nonetheless indicate that the Kalbids had an established presence in the Fātimid state.

In addition to their presence in the capital, the intimacy between the members of the Banū Abi'l-Ḥusayn and the Fātimid household that spanned generations is apparent in the accounts of the *Sīrat Jawdhar*. As noted, the Kalbids’ access to the Fātimid court began with their status as protégés to Ustādh Jawdhar. Following al-Qā'im’s instruction to Jawdhar to take ‘Alī al-Kalbī’s sons into his care, the bond between the Kalbid brothers and Jawdhar continued into adulthood and survived the above-mentioned controversies.<sup>49</sup> A crucial consideration here is that the status and position of Jawdhar, a freedman (*mawla*) of the Fātimid imām-caliphs, were intimately tied to the Fātimid household, where Jawdhar himself served as a *de facto* extension of the family itself.<sup>50</sup> This becomes especially apparent when Jawdhar was tasked by the Fātimid imām-caliph to take charge of recalcitrant members of the Fātimid family.<sup>51</sup> The role of Jawdhar as the Fātimid imām’s quasi-custodian of the Kalbid house, first established by al-Qā'im, was subsequently reinforced by al-Mu‘izz. Following the demise of al-Ḥasan b. ‘Alī, Ustādh Jawdhar continued overseeing the care of his heirs.<sup>52</sup> The importance of Jawdhar’s own role within the Kalbid family is also evident in his serving as a mediator. When tensions became heightened among some sons of al-Ḥasan al-Kalbī against their brother and the Sicilian governor Ahmād b. al-Ḥasan, Jawdhar turned to al-Mu‘izz, who censured the transgressors.<sup>53</sup> The relationship between the Fātimids and the Kalbids extended beyond the mediation of Jawdhar and was linked across various members of the two households.<sup>54</sup> That al-Mu‘izz held the family as a whole in

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 145–46.

<sup>50</sup> An important institution with significant degrees of variance and nuance depending on time and context, the notion of legal ‘clientage’ (*walā*) has a deep and complex history in the first centuries of Islam, varying according to the legal status of the *mawlā*. For a summary, see A. J. Wensinck and P. Crone, ‘Mawlā’, *EI2*.

<sup>51</sup> For Jawdhar’s role within the broader Fātimid family, see al-Jawdhari, *Sīrat*, 7–8.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 123–24.

<sup>54</sup> Of the subsequent generation, the friendship between Tāhir b. Ahmād b. al-Ḥasan al-Kalbī and Tamīm b. al-Mu‘izz was subject to rumours that had to be quelled by the intervention of Jawdhar and al-Mu‘izz (Ibid., 130–31).

high regard is apparent in his correspondence with Jawdhar, stating that ‘the place that his (al-Hasan al-Kalbī’s) children and family hold in our regard is such that, by God, in our opinion, the gift of the most considerable favours of God would not be too great for them’.<sup>55</sup>

While the role of the Kalbids as conduits of the Ismā‘ilī *da‘wa* in Sicily is obscure, the evidence from the *Sīrat Jawdhar* allows for the incidental references to the Kalbids pertaining to the *da‘wa* on the island to be set in firmer context. Notably, in his terse coverage, al-Qalqashandī mentions the Kalbids as those who ‘upheld the *da‘wa* of the Ubaydids [*al-qā’imūn bi-da‘wat al-‘ubaydiyyīn*] on the island of Sicily’.<sup>56</sup> While the religious proclivities of the earlier progenitors of the Kalbid house remain unclear, the Ismā‘ilī affinity of the Banū Abī'l-Ḥusayn to the Fātimids becomes evident. Pertinent here are the pronouncements of al-Mu‘izz regarding various members of the Kalbid household. Al-Mu‘izz is said to have proclaimed that God had granted for al-Hasan al-Kalbī ‘His most perfect favours, outwardly and inwardly’.<sup>57</sup> Elsewhere, the imām-caliph adds that al-Hasan b. ‘Alī was as ‘blissful in his death as he was in his life’ and that God ‘has reserved for him a handsome reward and a noble place of return’.<sup>58</sup> The Ismā‘ilī commitment of the women of the Kalbid family becomes apparent from a report concerning al-Hasan b. ‘Alī’s mother. *Sīrat Jawdhar* records that the mother of al-Hasan and wife of ‘Alī b. Abī'l-Ḥusayn had ‘requested to be allowed to buy a house close to the palace of the Commander of the Faithful because of the blessing associated with it’.<sup>59</sup> Al-Mu‘izz acceded to her request, saying that, ‘if she had asked us to lodge her in our palace, it would have been easy and proper’, noting that he himself would pay the necessary sum.<sup>60</sup> It is in keeping with these inclinations that the

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>56</sup> Al-Qalqashandī, *Ansāb al-‘arab*, 32.

<sup>57</sup> Al-Jawdharī, *Sīrat*, 153.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 142. The *Sīrat Jawdhar* is replete with such invocations. It has al-Mu‘izz remark that al-Hasan’s bond with Jawdhar was the result of God’s Favour upon him. It adds that ‘after the death of al-Hasan b. ‘Alī, our lord [al-Mu‘izz li-Dīn Allāh] continued to invoke God’s mercy upon him and spoke appreciatively of him every time he was mentioned. One day he spoke of him at great length and praised his zeal and the sacrifices he had made for the cause of God’ (Ibid., 141). Further, it says that al-Mu‘izz pronounced that al-Hasan himself ‘departed happy to his Lord at the time of his happiness’ (Ibid., 117).

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

Kalbids likely served as the conduits of the Ismā‘ilī *da‘wa* in Sicily. A report that Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan, while serving as the governor of Sicily, led a delegation of Sicilian notables to give the *bay‘ah* (oath of allegiance) to al-Mu‘izz is here similarly noteworthy. As reported by Abu'l-Fidā’, . . .

In the year 347 [959], from Sicily, Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan, alongside him being thirty from the elites of the island [*wujūb al-jazīra*], came to al-Mu‘izz in Ifrīqiya. They gave al-Mu‘izz the oath of allegiance [*bay‘ah*], and he enrobed them [*khala‘a ‘alayhim*], and then reappointed him [Aḥmad] to his position in Sicily.<sup>61</sup>

### The Kalbids as Guarantors of the Succession

Perhaps the most critical aspect of the broader role of the Kalbids – and one that has remained dormant in scholarship – is their importance in acting as guarantors to the process of succession within the Fāṭimid caliphate. The salient point about the succession process of the Ismā‘ilī imāmate was that it was a complex and critical affair requiring deft and delicate handling. Claims by disaffected members of the Fāṭimid family were a recurrent source of controversy.<sup>62</sup> The custom of the Fāṭimid imām-caliphs to privately name their successors to their closest and most trusted advisors, ahead of the public pronouncement, was evident in al-Qā’im’s confiding of his son al-Manṣūr’s succession to Ustādh Jawdhar.<sup>63</sup>

It is in the reports on Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Kalbī, one the lesser-known sons of al-Ḥasan al-Kalbī, that the critical role of this clan within the broader Fāṭimid realms is first made apparent. Born in 933, two years after the Fāṭimid Imām-Caliph al-Mu‘izz, Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan likely grew up in the same circles as the future imām-caliph, and the two seemingly formed a very close bond. In his adult years, Muḥammad is described as one of ‘the

<sup>61</sup> Abu'l-Fidā’, *Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 2: 96; cf. Halm, *Empire*, 405–6. Halm’s comment that Aḥmad was also ‘initiating himself into the *da‘wa*’ needs to be reconsidered in light of the fact that Aḥmad, as the son of al-Ḥasan, was likely an adherent of the imām, and this expectedly represented his mediation with the Sicilian nobles whom he accompanied into the *da‘wa*.

<sup>62</sup> On controversies within the Fāṭimid household regarding the line of succession, and especially those involving the sons of al-Mahdī bi’llāh, see Brett, *Rise*, 163, 178.

<sup>63</sup> Al-Jawdharī, *Sīrat*, 27–28.

select (companions) of al-Mu'izz, and the closest one to him'.<sup>64</sup> Muḥammad accompanied al-Mu'izz in the grand migration to Egypt, where the strength of the personal friendship between the Kalbid and the imām became apparent upon the latter's death in 974. As al-Maqrīzī notes, while Qādī al-Nu'mān led the prayer over Muḥammad al-Kalbī, the imām-caliph himself and his heir-apparent, 'Abdallāh (d. 975), personally placed his body in the tomb.<sup>65</sup>

Albeit a close friend of al-Mu'izz, Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan seems to have held no major governmental position equivalent to that of his brothers Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan and 'Alī b. al-Ḥasan, the successive governors of Sicily. Al-Maqrīzī's own account of the friendship between al-Mu'izz and Muḥammad therefore remains at the personal level. It is in the *Sīrat Jawdhar* that Muḥammad finds mention as a prominent figure in the succession process of the Fāṭimid imāmate.

In 969, when al-Mu'izz appointed his son 'Abdallāh as his heir-apparent, Jawdhar was the first to be told. Seven months later, however, according to the *Sīrat Jawdhar*, the circle was extended to encompass three of the most influential members of the Fāṭimid court, including a leading figure of the Kutāma Berbers, as well as Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Kalbī.<sup>66</sup> With the inclusion of Muḥammad in this entrusted coterie, the Imām-Caliph al-Mu'izz was likely underwriting the smooth succession of his son. By informing a chieftain of the Kutāma, al-Mu'izz thus involved the bedrock of the Fāṭimid military as guarantors of the succession. Through Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Kalbī, the role of the distinguished Kalbid clan to serve as guarantors was similarly secured.

It is in this vein that one of the more enigmatic features in the career of Muḥammad's father, the famous al-Ḥasan al-Kalbī, can be contextualised. As repeatedly noted in the sources, al-Ḥasan's governorship of Sicily ended with his return to the Fāṭimid capital, upon the accession of al-Mu'izz in 953. The specific cause of al-Ḥasan's departure from Sicily, while directly correlating

<sup>64</sup> Al-Maqrīzī, *Muqaffā*, 240.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 240. See also al-Jawdharī, *Sīrat*, 117, n. 244.

<sup>66</sup> Al-Jawdharī, *Sīrat*, 156. The first named figure, Muḥammad b. 'Alī, is understood to have been a senior figure at the Fāṭimid court, but not much else is known about him. The second named person is Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Kalbī. The third figure, 'Uslūj b. al-Ḥasan al-Danhājī, was a Kutāma chieftain who in 363/973 was appointed alongside Ya'qūb b. Killis to oversee the financial administration of Egypt.

with the timing of al-Mu‘izz’s accession, is not given.<sup>67</sup> Ibn Khaldūn’s report is perhaps the most indicative in asserting that, ‘when al-Manṣūr died, al-Ḥasan set out towards him [al-Mu‘izz]’ by leaving the island.<sup>68</sup> Following an extended stay on the mainland, during which al-Ḥasan led the Fāṭimid naval encounters against the Umayyads, he returned to Sicily, which was now under the governorship of his son Aḥmad. He led further campaigns on the island and passed away there. As Ibn Khaldūn notes, his death was mourned by the Sicilians (*hazan al-nās ‘alayh*).<sup>69</sup> It can be suggested that al-Ḥasan’s departure to the mainland was to reiterate Kalbid support for the new imām-caliph at this critical juncture. Equally, al-Ḥasan’s arrival at the Fāṭimid court could be understood as his way of securing his own governorship and that of his sons, in the presence of the newly appointed imām-caliph. It is noteworthy that the coinciding of al-Ḥasan’s departure from Sicily with the accession of al-Mu‘izz had an earlier precedent. As noted by Halm, almost a decade earlier, al-Ḥasan b. ‘Alī al-Kalbī rode with 300 horsemen in 948 to acknowledge the new Imām-Caliph al-Manṣūr bi’llāh.<sup>70</sup>

While the role of al-Ḥasan as a ‘guarantor’ of the succession of al-Mu‘izz remains speculative, that of his son Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan in the appointment of ‘Abdallāh is apparent. Notably, the pattern of the Fāṭimids having leading Kalbids serve as guarantors for successors was to be repeated in Egypt some two decades later. As is well established, the fifth imām-caliph, al-‘Azīz bi’llāh, on his deathbed in Bilbays entrusted the famous cousin of Muḥammad, the now elder al-Ḥasan b. ‘Ammar al-Kalbī, alongside the eunuch Barjawān to oversee the succession of his young son al-Ḥakim bi-Amr Allāh (r. 996–1021).<sup>71</sup> In doing so, al-‘Azīz was following his father’s precedent of securing the imām’s succession through the tried and tested loyalty of the Kalbid house.

<sup>67</sup> See, for instance, Abu'l-Fidā, *Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 2: 96; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-'arab*, vol. 24: 369.

<sup>68</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārikh*, vol. 4: 267.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2: 68.

<sup>70</sup> Halm, *Empire*, 331–32.

<sup>71</sup> For this appointment and Ibn ‘Ammār al-Kalbī’s career in the period of the ‘regency’ of al-Ḥakim, see, for example, Paul E. Walker, *The Caliph of Cairo* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2009), 15–48.

## The Kalbids and the Transfer to Egypt

The importance of the Kalbids to the Fātimids in North Africa is further amplified by the reports on al-Mu‘izz’s own command to have them accompany him – *en masse* – in the transfer of the Fātimid state and capital from Ifrīqiya to Egypt following the Fātimid entry into the country and their construction of Cairo in 969 under the general Jawhar al-Šiqillī (d. 992). While the reports on al-Mu‘izz’s command for the Kalbids to leave Sicily to accompany him to Egypt are known, the significance of the Kalbids’ departure and then immediate return to the island and continued presence there into the eleventh century has been understated, even though it testifies to the broader role of the clan within the Fātimid polity that extended beyond Sicily.

Reports on the preparations for the transfer of the Fātimid capital to Egypt repeatedly assert that al-Mu‘izz had ordered Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan, the reigning governor of Sicily, to leave the island and join him in the venture to Egypt. Closely reflecting Abu'l-Fidā’, al-Maqrīzī notes that al-Mu‘izz instructed Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan al-Kalbī to leave Sicily and come to the capital al-Manṣūriyya with ‘his family, his wealth, and all those who are attached to him’.<sup>72</sup> The scale of this departure and its intended permanence is, however, more emphatically reported by al-Nuwayrī, who states that, in the year 969, ‘Al-Mu‘izz ordered the *amīr* Aḥmad to leave Sicily and come to Ifrīqiya. So he [Aḥmad] left with his entire family, his wealth, his son, and his brothers. They rode on thirty vessels, and none of them remained in Sicily’.<sup>73</sup> Upon their arrival on the Fātimid mainland, the Kalbids were given significant positions in the Egyptian campaign. As noted earlier, Aḥmad was given command of the Fātimid fleet which was to accompany the retinue of the imām-caliph. Meanwhile, al-Ḥasan b. ‘Ammār led a contingent of the Fātimid army to reinforce Jawhar’s expedition to Egypt. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan accompanied al-Mu‘izz to Egypt as part of his retinue.

The scale of the Kalbid departure indicates that al-Mu‘izz had seemingly planned a prominent role for the Kalbids in Egypt. As a noteworthy Arab clan, they would have found a befitting avenue in al-Mu‘izz’s broader approach to

<sup>72</sup> Abu'l-Fidā’, *Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 2: 96–97; al-Maqrīzī, *Muqaffā*, 240. See also Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil*, vol. 7: 304; al-Jawdhārī, *Sīrat*, 117, n. 244.

<sup>73</sup> Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-‘arab*, vol. 24: 374.

draw upon various constituencies, including the ‘Alid *ashrāf* and the Egyptian notables, to mediate Fātimid rule in Egypt.<sup>74</sup> Circumstances, however, dictated otherwise. The former Sicilian governor, Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan, died along the way in Dhu’l-Hijja 359/October 970 at Tripoli.<sup>75</sup> The failed rule of his father’s *mawla* Ya‘ish over Sicily – one that led to a resurgence of factional fighting – required al-Mu‘izz to instruct Aḥmad’s brother Abū’l-Qāsim ‘Alī to return to reign over Sicily.<sup>76</sup> Al-Mu‘izz’s companion, Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan, died soon after their arrival in Egypt.

The deaths of Aḥmad al-Kalbī and Muḥammad al-Kalbī, and the requirement to send ‘Alī b. al-Ḥasan to restore stability to Sicily, meant that by 974 three of the most prominent of the Kalbids were no longer by al-Mu‘izz’s side in the new Egyptian phase of his rule. It is apparent, however, that the Kalbids nonetheless retained significant gravitas in Egypt. As noted above, the role of Ibn ‘Ammar al-Kalbī during the earlier years of al-Ḥākim’s reign is well studied. A further pertinent example of the continued prominence of the Kalbids can be found in the case of Ja‘far, the son of the above-mentioned Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan.

In 982, the death of Sicily’s third Kalbid governor, ‘Alī b. al-Ḥasan, led to the succession of his son Jābir b. ‘Alī (r. 982–83). However, Jābir’s heavy-handed rule led the Sicilians to petition al-‘Azīz bi’llāh to appoint another governor over them. Al-‘Azīz responded by dispatching Ja‘far b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Kalbī as the new Fātimid governor of Sicily.

The reasons for Ja‘far’s departure to Sicily are also linked to rivalries triggered by the prominence of the Kalbids at the Fātimid court in Egypt. Al-Maqrīzī notes that a son of Ja‘far was serving in the vizierate and was held in good regard. Consequently, the Fātimid vizier Ya‘qūb b. Killis (d. 991) feared him and sought to distance him from the capital. He, thus, persuaded al-‘Azīz to appoint Ja‘far as governor and to despatch him and his family to Sicily.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Shainool Jiwa, ‘Kinship, Camaraderie and Contestation: Fātimid Relations with the Ashrāf in the Fourth/Tenth Century’, *Al-Masāq: Journal of the Medieval Mediterranean* 28/3 (2016): 242–64.

<sup>75</sup> Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-‘arab*, vol. 24: 374.

<sup>76</sup> See, for instance, Abu’l-Fidā, *Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 2: 97.

<sup>77</sup> Al-Maqrīzī, *Muqaffā*, 317.

The account by Abu'l-Fidā' provides further detail. Noting the friendship between al-Mu'izz and Muḥammad al-Kalbī, Abu'l-Fidā' indicates that this was replicated in a close friendship between their two sons, al-'Azīz and Ja'far b. Muḥammad:

Ja'far was a devoted follower of al-'Azīz and was extremely close to him [*qarīban 'alayhī jiiddan*]. Al-'Azīz had a vizier called Ibn Killis, who became jealous of Ja'far. When Abū'l-Qāsim [that is, 'Alī b. al-Ḥasan] was martyred, Ibn Killis suggested that Ja'far be appointed [to govern] over Sicily, so al-'Azīz sent him. Ja'far proceeded to Sicily, although he did not want to do so. He remained the governor of Sicily until his demise in 375 [985].<sup>78</sup>

The continuity of Kalbid rule in Sicily under Ja'far, followed by his brother 'Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad (d. 989) and thereafter the descendants of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Kalbī, shaped the course of Muslim Sicily over the following decades. Their history as the dynastic rulers of Sicily is inextricably intertwined within the larger frame of the Kalbids as one of the trusted principal stalwarts of the Fāṭimid of Ifrīqiya.

### Concluding Remarks

It was under the Kalbids that Sicily became a vital province of the Fāṭimid realms. The recently re-discovered Fāṭimid maritime maps produced during the reign of the seventh Fāṭimid imām-caliph, al-Ẓāhir li-I'zāz Dīn Allāh (r. 1021–36), pictorially demonstrate the island's continued importance in the Fāṭimid Mediterranean, with Sicily forming (alongside al-Mahdiyya) the western-most boundary of the Fāṭimid naval trading network, showcasing the power and reach of the Fāṭimid Caliphate during its Egyptian phase.<sup>79</sup> While Kalbid rule would face its own vicissitudes over the first half of the fifth/eleventh century, the survival of gold coins minted in Palermo in 1023 or 1032 in the name of the Imām-Caliph al-Ẓāhir, and subsequently during the imāmate of al-Muṣṭansir bi'llāh (r. 1036–94), testify to the continued impact of Fāṭimid authority over the island. That the Kalbids were integral

<sup>78</sup> Abu'l-Fidā', *Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 2: 97.

<sup>79</sup> See Y. Rapoport and E. Savage-Smith, *Lost Maps of the Caliphs: Drawing the World in Eleventh-Century Cairo* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 157–62.

to the flourishing of Sicily in the Muslim era is well-established. From a reading of Ismā‘īlī and Sunnī chronicles, it is evident that during the North African phase of Fātimid history, the power of the Kalbids as Sicily's elite family extended far beyond the island and that the scale of functions and influences on the Ifrīqiyan mainland rendered the Kalbids a dynastic household second in importance only to that of the Fātimids themselves.

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# **Part 2**

## **ARABO-ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHICAL AND INTELLECTUAL TRADITIONS OF SICILY**



# 4

## FROM AVERROES TO DANTE: A MEDITERRANEAN ENCOUNTER BETWEEN PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

*Massimo Campanini<sup>1</sup>*

Sicily played a major role in the exchange of knowledge between the Islamic East and Europe during the period of Muslim ruling in the Island and that of the Normans. A number of philosophers, including Jewish scholars and Theodor who came from Syria and was a learned scholar in horoscopes and astrology, visited the island, and especially Palermo in order to learn about and contribute to the translation of Arabic books into Latin.<sup>2</sup>

To be more precise, in the thirteenth century, the court of Emperor Frederick II in Palermo valued learning; it was a crucible of ideas where new thoughts were tested, producing cultural trends and influential figures. The poets of the Sicilian school (a small community of poets associated with the court of Frederick II), such as Giacomo da Lentini and Cielo d'Alcamo, flourished in that environment and were considered to count among the very first Italian poets to write in *volgare* (the people's language). For the first time in

<sup>1</sup> This chapter is the last piece of writing by the late Professor Massimo Campinini, who submitted the draft of this chapter and sadly passed away before the completion of this edited volume. As editor of this volume, I tried to copy-edit the chapter, but since Professor Campinini was not able to respond to feedback, this chapter will be published in its present form. I am very grateful for the help of Dr Beate Ulrike La Sala and Dr Silvia Lauzzana in translating the Latin and Italian passages in this chapter.

<sup>2</sup> Ernst Kantorowicz, *L'Empereur Frédéric II* (Paris: Gallimard, 1987), 320–24.

Italy a common, high culture emerged, one which mixed West and East – Northern European and Arab-Byzantine influences – to produce a variegated, albeit cohesive, intellectual community. It was one which could be said to match Dante's description, in *De vulgari eloquentia*, 'whose scent is in every city/civilisation, but whose home is in none' (*in qualibet redoleat civitatem nec cubat in ulla*). In *De vulgari eloquentia*, Dante described this new character, the secular (*laicus*, non-clerical) poet, who composed his/her poetry in the people's language (the *volgare*) yet was both an 'aulic' and a 'Curial' rhymer – that is, someone working in the highest realm of society and using the most elaborate language.<sup>3</sup>

This chapter will explore the intellectual life of Palermo and Arabo-Islamic philosophical thought during the reign of Frederick II of Sicily and its influence on Europe in the thirteenth century. It particularly discusses the legacy of Averroes' theories and their influence on Dante's *Convivio*, especially the idea that a person achieves happiness through reason and knowledge, as well as Averroes' idea of the Possible Intellect's unity, and that perfection is achieved only by the whole of humanity organised in civil and associate life. Also treated is Dante's knowledge of the 'medieval' hierarchical structure of the cosmos, which was largely inspired by Arabic astronomy.

Dante was initially impressed with the politics and culture of Frederick II's court, but his opinion of the emperor changed over the years. In the *Convivio*, which Dante wrote between 1305 and 1307, Frederick is respected, both as a person and as an emperor, but in the *Commedia* (written ca 1308–20) Dante puts him in the Inferno among heretics such as Cavalcante Cavalcanti and Farinata degli Uberti (*Inf.*, X, 119) and judges him very negatively also in the *canto* XXIII.<sup>4</sup> The motive may have been political. It is likely that Dante, exiled from Florence at the time of the *Convivio*'s composition, was still seeking the help of the Ghibellines (supporters of the empire) and was thus obliged to pay lip-service to the greatest of the last emperors. However, not much later, he

<sup>3</sup> Dante, *De vulgari eloquentia*, edited by M. Tavoni (Milan: Mondadori, 2017); Carlo Dionisotti, *Geografia e storia della letteratura italiana* (Torino: Einaudi, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> Dante, *Commedia*, edited by A. Chiavacci Leonardi (Milan: Mondadori, 1998); idem, *Convivio*, edited by G. Fioravanti (Milan: Mondadori, 2014).

no longer had reason to conceal his Guelf feelings (broadly speaking, he was a supporter of the papacy, albeit condemning the harshness of popes like Boniface VIII).<sup>5</sup>

Yet two other men of Frederick II's Palermo are worth mentioning, as they stand out in the Inferno: Pier delle Vigne (d. 1249) and Michael Scot (d. 1232). Pier delle Vigne appears as one of the damned in the Inferno, for having committed suicide (*Inf.*, XIII, 54–108). He was, for a time, the most powerful man at Frederick II's court, but he fell into disgrace and was imprisoned and blinded. He killed himself rather than enduring the shame. In Dante's presentation, however, Pier delle Vigne is portrayed as morally honest. Michael Scot, a translator and mathematician, is a character more important for this article's purposes. He studied in Toledo at the beginning of the thirteenth century. At that time, Toledo was a centre of great interaction between the Islamic East and the Christian West. There, many works had been translated from Arabic into Latin since the end of the eleventh century. Scot subsequently went to live in Palermo, ca 1220, under the protection of Frederick II. In Sicily, his fame was largely linked to the 'heretical' sciences: astrology, magic and other dangerous disciplines. Dante damned him too in the Inferno.

***'Veramente / delle magiche frode seppe il gioco' (Inf. XX, 116–17).***

Michael Scot undertook many translations from Arabic, especially the works of Averroes. Indeed, a number of scholars credit Scot with introducing Averroes' Aristotelian commentaries to Europe.<sup>6</sup> Among others, Scot also translated the works of the Andalusian Muslim astronomer al-Bitrūjī (Alpetragius, well-known to Dante who quotes him in the *Convivio*) and Averroes' commentaries to *De Coelo* and *Metaphysica*.

<sup>5</sup> Dante's biography is very problematic because there are few sound facts and much conjecture. His political views, for example, are hard to decipher and make the interpretation of his thought more difficult. Among the up-to-date essays, see Giorgio Inglese, *Vita di Dante: Una biografia possibile* (Rome: Carocci, 2015); Marco Santagata, *Dante: Il romanzo della sua vita* (Milan: Mondadori, 2017).

<sup>6</sup> See Charles Burnett, 'Michael Scot and the Transmission of Scientific Culture from Toledo to Bologna via the Court of Frederick II Hohenstaufen', *Micrologus* 2 (1994): 101–26.

Scot's translation into Latin of works as significant as Averroes' Great Commentary (Arabic) to Aristotle's *De Anima* (Greek)<sup>7</sup> was one of the most important enterprises for the future development of Western medieval or Latin philosophy, especially in universities. It was through Averroes' Great Commentary (Arabic) to Aristotle's *De Anima* (Greek), along with a thorough reflection upon Aristotle's *Ethica Nicomachea*, that the theory of 'mental happiness' (*felicità mentale*) was elaborated. This theory proved influential in the works of later scholars and philosophers, as well as to others who used their works in turn. For example, as Paolo Falzone argues, Dante's knowledge of Averroes' Great Commentary to *De Anima* may have been indirect, perhaps through Thomas Aquinas.<sup>8</sup> The theory of mental happiness, one of the most important theoretical issues of the so-called Western medieval philosophy, was inspired by Arab-Islamic heritage and is critical to understanding the Mediterranean framework shared by Arab Islam and Latin Christianity.<sup>9</sup>

This point leads us to the topic of Dante and Islam, which has been widely discussed by scholars,<sup>10</sup> as has Averroes's influence on Dante. Broadly speaking, Dante was well enough acquainted with Islamic culture and philosophy to have mastered its main theses. This is apparent in the *Convivio* and the *Commedia*, where Dante shows his knowledge of Islamic astronomy and cosmology (intellect's theory aside). Additionally, Dante appeared to have not only knowledge of, but also a strong regard for Islamic authors such as Averroes and Avicenna, whom he situates in distinguished places in his works. For instance, Dante's appreciation of Averroes' commentaries to Aristotle is clear, as Dante granted

<sup>7</sup> There are at least two contemporary editions: Averroes, *Commentarium Magnum in Aristotelis de Anima Libros*, edited by F. Crawford (Cambridge, MA: Medieval Academy of America, 1953), and the updated *Long Commentary on De Anima of Aristotle*, edited by R. Taylor and A. T. Druart (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011).

<sup>8</sup> Paolo Falzone, 'Convivio di Dante', in *La filosofia in Italia al tempo di Dante*, edited by Carla Casagrande and Gianfranco Fioravanti (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2017), 241.

<sup>9</sup> See Maria Bettetini and Francesco Paparella (eds), *Le felicità nel Medioevo*, Proceedings of the Conference SISPM (Louvain-la-Neuve: Fédération Internationale des Instituts d'Études Médiévales, 2008). See also the pioneering book by Maria Corti, *La felicità mentale: Nuove prospettive per Cavalcanti e Dante* (Torino: Einaudi, 1983).

<sup>10</sup> See the interesting recent collected volume by Jan Ziolkowski (ed.), *Dante and Islam* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015).

the Muslim thinker a seat in Limbo, in his Inferno, among the greatest men of all times (*spiriti magni*). However, it is unlikely that Dante knew Islamic theology or the Qur'an itself, because Islamic culture was studied in the West and at Western universities only in relation to philosophy, technology and the sciences, and not at all with regard to religion or theology. Undoubtedly, the Inferno exhibits stimulating assonances and parallelisms between Dante's journey through Hell and the Prophet Muhammad's *mi'rāj* (night journey to the Heavens), although they are not in themselves indicative of a direct influence of the latter over the former.<sup>11</sup> Conversely, some scholars take a different view altogether, arguing that Dante hated Islamic culture and interpreting the mysterious cry of Nimrod in *Inf.*, XXXI, 67 (*Raphèl mai amèche zabì àlmi*) as an Arabic sentence expressing Dante's aversion to the Islamic sciences.<sup>12</sup> It is telling that Muḥammad and 'Alī are damned in one of the deepest Inferno's *bolge* as schismatic.

### **'Seminator di scandalo e di scisma' (Inf., XXVIII, 30–36)**

This section will now focus on the *Convivio*. A widely discussed question is whether the *Convivio* is a philosophical work, in that it is intellectualist and rationalist. Dante's later work, the *Commedia*, which represents a kind of mystical conversion from philosophy to theology, seems to betray the previous treatise's rationalist inclination.<sup>13</sup> The debate and its solution (impossible to resolve in absolute terms, I fear) are of no matter here, however.<sup>14</sup> Rather, I am

<sup>11</sup> The issue of Dante and the *Liber schalae Machometi* (the text most similar to Dante's *Divine Comedy*) is a topic that has been discussed by scholars, starting with the renowned Miguel Asín Palacios, *La escatología musulmana en la Divina Comedia* (Madrid: Maestre, 1921). For a more recent study, see Angela Longoni (ed.), *Il Libro della scala di Maometto* (Milan: BUR Rizzoli, 2013).

<sup>12</sup> Richard Lemay, 'De la Scholastique à l'Histoire par le Truchement de la Philologie', in Proceedings of the Conference *La diffusione delle scienze islamiche nel Medio Evo europeo*, edited by Fondazione Leone Caetani (Rome: Accademia dei Lincei, 1987), 399–535, especially 488–90.

<sup>13</sup> This issue has been addressed in Massimo Campanini, *Dante e l'Islam: L'empireo delle luci* (Rome: Studium, 2019). The work supports the idea of a growing mystical inclination in Dante from youth to maturity.

<sup>14</sup> See Bruno Nardi, *Dal Convivio alla Commedia* (Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano per Il Medio Evo, 1960); idem, *Saggi di filosofia dantesca* (Milan: Società Editrice Dante Alighieri, 1930); Gregory Stone, 'Dante and the *Falasafi*: Religion as Imagination', in *Dante and Islam*, edited by Jan Ziolkowski (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 114–32.

interested in highlighting the issues of intellect, whose starting point is gnoseological, while its outcome is metaphysical and political.

My argument rests on the presupposition of a linkage (not necessarily strict, but effectual) between Dante and university culture. From a biographical point of view, the problem concerns Dante's possible acquaintance with university curricula. When still young, from around 1290 to 1293, Dante may have attended the Dominican and Franciscan *Studia* of Santa Maria Novella and of Santa Croce in Florence, but it is only a highly likely hypothesis, lacking definite proof. Moreover, Dante may have lived in Bologna, on at least two separate occasions, and it is possible that he attended lessons at Bologna's *Studium*. Even much more uncertain is the journey to Paris that Dante is alleged to have made when he was about forty-five, for, again, this is purely speculative as the documentation is lacking. In any case, Dante had no official scholastic preparation, nor can he be deemed to have been a *magister* like the university teachers of Bologna and Paris. Recently, however, Gianfranco Fioravanti has argued that, in the second treatise of the *Convivio*, Dante constructed an elaborate allegory relating the structure of the universe to that of the sciences: the seven planets of the Ptolemaic system correspond to the seven liberal arts; the fixed stars' heaven corresponds to Physics and Metaphysics; and the last heaven corresponds to Moral Philosophy. In the same vein, Paolo Falzone acknowledges the *Convivio* as being a true work of philosophy, naturally grounded upon Aristotle, and not simply a popular encyclopaedia of philosophy.<sup>15</sup> In conclusion, I believe that Dante was well acquainted with and skilled in philosophy; he attended philosophical circles without being a *magister* in the proper sense of the term.

The main issue of the present article is a reconsideration of the relation between *this* Dante (the Dante skilled in philosophy) and Averroes, without claiming to overturn the *status quo* of the studies, however suggesting a few precise remarks. Two *loci* are of particular importance: the first is the famous passage from Dante's *Monarchia* (I, 3, 7–8) and the second is from the passage of his *Purgatorio* (XXVI, 61–6).

<sup>15</sup> Gianfranco Fioravanti, 'Filosofi e la medicina: Una progressiva autonomía', and Paolo Falzone, 'Convivio di Dante', in *La filosofia in Italia al tempo di Dante*, edited by Carla Casagrande and Gianfranco Fioravanti (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2017), 65–264.

In the passage from the *Monarchia*, Dante explicitly acknowledges that Averroes' doctrine of the possible unity of the intellect paves the way for the idea that intellectual perfection is the highest aim of human society; that this perfection is attainable not by individuals but by humankind:

Est ergo aliqua propria operatio humanae universitatis, ad quam ipsa universitas hominum in tanta multitudine ordinatur; ad quam quidem operationem nec homo unus, nec domus una, nec una vicinia, nec una civitas, nec regnum particulare pertingere potest. Quae autem sit illa, manifestum fiet si ultimum de potentia totius humanitatis appareat. [ . . . ] Non est ergo vis ultima in homine ipsum esse simpliciter sumptum . . . [quae] esse apprehensivum per intellectum possibilem: quod quidem esse nulli ab homine alii competit vel supra vel infra. Nam, etsi aliae sunt essentiae intellectum participantes, non tamen intellectus earum est possibilis ut hominis, quia essentiae tales spesies quaedam sunt intellectuales et non aliud, et earum esse nihil est aliud quam intelligere quid est quod sunt; quod est sine interpolatione, aliter semperne non essent. Patet igitur quod ultimum de potentia ipsius humanitatis est potentia sive virtus intellectiva. Et quia potentia ista per unum hominem seu per aliquam particularium comunitatum superius distinctarum tota simul in actum reduci non potest, necesse est multitudinem esse in humano genere, per quam quidem tota potentia hec actuetur; sicut necesse est multitudinem rerum generabilium ut potentia tota materiae primae semper sub actu sit: aliter esset dare potentiam separatam, quod est impossibile. Et huic sententiae concordat Averrois in Comento super hiis quae De Anima.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Dante, *Monarchia*, edited by D. Quaglioni (Milan: Mondadori, 2015), 29–39: ‘Vi è dunque un operare che è proprio dell’intero corpo dell’umanità, cui l’umanità stessa nella sua così vasta multitudine è ordinata, al quale operare non potrebbe pervenire un uomo solo, né una sola comunità domestica, né una vicinia sola, né una sola città e nemmeno un solo regno particolare. Quale poi sia quella operazione, diverrà manifesto se si chiarirà il grado ultimo della possibilità dell’umanità nel suo insieme. [ . . . ] L’ultimo grado della forza dell’uomo non si trova dunque nel suo puro e semplice essere . . . è nell’essere capace di apprendere per mezzo dell’intelletto possibile, capacità che non appartiene a nessun’altra creatura, superiore o inferiore che sia, tranne che all’uomo. Benché infatti esistano altri esseri cui appartiene l’intelletto, il loro però non è l’intelletto possibile com’è dell’uomo, poiché tali esseri sono delle specie intellettuali e non altro, il cui essere in null’altro consiste che nell’intendere quel che esse sono; cosa che avviene senza interruzione, altrimenti non sarebbero eterne. E’ pertanto manifesto che il grado ultimo della possibilità dell’umanità in quanto tale è la potenza o virtù

There is, then, a certain activity peculiar to the human universe, to which the universe itself in so great a multitude is directed; to which work (deed) neither one human being, nor one house, nor one neighbourhood, nor one city, nor one particular kingdom can reach. But what it is, will become clear if the ultimate (last) of the power of all humanity appears. [ . . . ] Therefore, the ultimate power in a human being is not simply to be himself [ . . . who] to be apprehensive through the potential (possible) intellect: which, indeed, belongs to no other being than the human being, either above or below. For, although there are other essences that partake of the intellect, yet their understanding is not possible (potential) as that of a human being, because such essences are of some intellectual kind and nothing else, and their existence is nothing but to understand what it is that they are, which is without change, otherwise they would not be eternal. It is clear, therefore, that the ultimate power of humanity itself is power or intellectual virtue. And since this power cannot be brought into action at the same time by one human being or by any of the particular communities distinguished above, it is necessary that there should be a multitude in humanity, through which indeed all this power will act; just as a multitude of generable things is necessary, so that the whole power of the first matter may always be in action: otherwise there would be a separate power, which is impossible. And this proposition Averroes agrees with in the commentary on these things *De Anima*.

Perfection is achieved only by the whole of humanity, organised in civil and associate life, through the unification of the singular individuals' intellectual capacities into a unique Super-Intellect. Reason is displayed not in singular persons, but in humanity in its entirety, as Bruno Nardi argues.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, it is not properly a 'human' reason, but a kind of 'Divine Intellect'. The fact that humanity achieves its complete perfection realising the entirety of its intellect's *potentia* in the human species' actualisation, is an

intellettiva. E poiché questa potenza non può essere ridotta in atto tutta quanta in una sola volta ad opera di un solo uomo o di qualcuna delle comunità particolari distinte più sopra, è necessario che il genere umano sia costituito da una moltitudine, per mezzo della quale questa potenzialità sia attuata interamente, così come è necessaria una moltitudine di cose generabili perché tutta la potenzialità della materia prima si traduca sempre in atto; altrimenti si darebbe una potenza separata, la qual cosa è impossibile. E con questo giudizio concorda Averroè nel commento al *De Anima*'.

<sup>17</sup> Bruno Nardi, *Dante e la cultura medievale* (Rome: Laterza, 1983), 62.

evident outcome of the unity of Possible Intellect – the very controversial and discussed ‘Averroist’ doctrine – preparing ‘mental happiness’.

It is necessary to consider, in depth, Averroes’ argument.<sup>18</sup> It is articulated in three main steps:<sup>19</sup>

- 1) First of all, it is impossible that an intellect – like the human one – linked to matter, and in particular to the matter of a singular individual man/woman, can grasp abstract intelligibles separated from any kind of matter (for that would be contradictory and metaphysically absurd): ‘Who contends that material intellect is not generable nor corruptible cannot, in my [Averroes’] view, find out a natural way through which we can join ourselves (*continuari*) with the separate intelligibles. Actually, intellect (*intellectus*) must be identical to the intelligible (*intellectum*) from all points of view, and consequently *maxime* in relation to things separated from matter’.
- 2) However, human intellect is composed of an *intellectus in habitu* which is united with the agent intellect: *intellectus in habitu* is the instrument of thinking able to grasp whichever intelligible we want and to draw out from matter whichever abstract form we want; agent intellect is the instrument translating the forms grasped by the *intellectus in habitu* in pure ideas, in intelligibles finally deprived of any contact with matter. Therefore, our human intellect is composed of the (human) *intellectus in habitu* and the (heavenly connected) agent intellect.
- 3) From the two previous premises, it derives that the necessary condition for human intellect to receive the pure intelligibles is that it must be unique. Now, ‘because I [Averroes] have stated that material intellect is eternal while abstract intelligibles are generable and corruptible, and that material intellect thinks both the material and separated forms, it is manifest and obvious that the subject of the abstract intelligibles and of the agent intellect is unique, that is the material intellect’.

<sup>18</sup> For reasons of expediency, I quote from Averroes, *L'intelligence et la pensée: Sur le De Anima*, edited by A. De Libera (Paris: Flammarion, 1998), textus 38.

<sup>19</sup> See Averroes’ Great Commentary to Aristotle’s *De Anima* (*Ibn Rushd Metaphysics: A Translation with Introduction of Ibn Rushd’s Commentary on Aristotle’s Metaphysics, Book Lam*, edited by C. Genequand [Leiden: Brill, 1986]), Book Lam/lambda, textus 36, corresponding to *De Anima*, III, 7, 431 b 16–19.

Averroes postulates the unity of material/possible intellect as the condition by which the agent intellect and the *intellectus in habitu* can produce thought – that is, the condition by which man and woman are able to think. But just as thinking, according to Averroes, is the only way through which the human being can join the separate Intellects and God and achieve happiness, so too is unity of the material intellect the condition through which the human being can realise the *continuatio* (or *copulatio*) with the separate Beings/Intellects (and God), thus enjoying happiness:

Intentio mea in hoc tractatu nobilissimo est declarare secundum principalem intentionem philosophorum beatitudinem ultimam animae in supremo ascensu ipsius. Et cum dico ascensum intelligo quod perficiatur et nobilitetur ita ut coniugatur cum Intellectu abstracto et uniatur cum eo ita ut cum eo unum fiat. Et hoc sine dubio est supremus gradus sui ascensus. [ . . . ] Ideoque cum dicitur de anima quod ascendit, intelligitur coniunctio ipsius cum aliquo abstractorum intellectuum. Et quia cognosco principalem intentionem philosophorum fuisse apud eos et apud ueritatem contemplari ultimam perfectiōnem et ultimam beatitudinem in essentia ascensus huius entis, uisum est mihi declarare hoc sermone breui intelligenti.<sup>20</sup>

My intention in this noblest treatise is to clarify, according to the main intention of the philosophers, the ultimate happiness of the soul in its supreme ascent. And when I say ascent, I understand that it is so perfected and ennobled that it is united with the abstract intellect and is united with it in such a way that it becomes one with it. And this is undoubtedly the highest stage of

<sup>20</sup> Averroes, *Long Commentary on De Anima of Aristotle*, 2011, 135 and 137. ‘E’ intenzione mia, come del resto di ogni filosofo, accertare in questo nobilissimo trattato cosa sia la beatitudine ultima dell’anima umana nella sua ascensione suprema. Intendo con ciò che sia nobilitata e perfezionata al punto di congiungersi con l’Intelletto Astratto [= l’Intelligenza Agente], unendosi ad esso fino a diventare una sola cosa: questo senza dubbio è il grado supremo della sua ascesa. [ . . . ] Perciò per ascensione dell’anima si intende la sua congiunzione con qualcuno degli intelletti astratti. Ben sapendo che principale intento dei filosofi sempre fu secondo verità di contemplare [che] l’essenza di questo ente [l’intelletto] è [di raggiungere] la suprema beatitudine, mi è parso opportuno chiarire tali cose in un breve opuscolo’. Italian translation, slightly modified, by Augusto Illuminati in *Completa beatitudine: L’intelletto felice in tre opuscoli averroisti* (Chiaravalle: L’Orecchio di Van Gogh, 2000), 121.

his ascent. [ . . . ] Therefore, when the soul is said to ascend, its unification is understood with abstract intellects. And because I know that the main intention of the philosophers was with them and with the truth to contemplate the ultimate perfection and the ultimate happiness in the essence of the ascent of this being, it appeared to me to clarify (explain) this with a short and intelligent sermon (speech).

Performing the *continuatio* (in Arabic it would be *ittisāl*), however, human intellect's destiny is to disappear, to vanish. Upon achieving its supreme perfection and *entelechia*, human intellect loses any potentiality, and in (con)joining (with) the separate Agent Intellect, it annihilates itself in the separate Intellect. This is the supreme outcome that Averroes describes in the *Epistle on the Possibility of Conjunction with the Active Intellect*: 'as the fire, touching a combustible body, burns it and transforms it in its own nature'.<sup>21</sup> The Agent Intellect (the fire) touching the material intellect (the combustible body) burns it and transforms it in its own nature. Only One Intellect remains in existence, immortal and separate. Consequently, uniting with the immortal and separate intellect, man/woman himself/herself becomes immortal, although this kind of immortality is not individual, but impersonal, absorbed in the eternal permanence of Divine Intellect.

Later on, in the same *Epistle*, Averroes points out again how the conjunction, producing human supreme happiness, can be achieved: exclusively by study and speculation.<sup>22</sup> This purely intellectual *continuatio* is, however, justified in Islamic religious law too:

Because *shari‘a* has been established in order to remember God and the spiritual world, that is the Intellects' world, performing that activity is of the foremost importance in order to achieve happiness [ . . . ] we have been prescribed to pray in order to remember God and keep ourselves away from injustice; [prayer's] effectuality is the most complete of all acts as It [God] – can be

<sup>21</sup> Averroes, *Epistle on the Possibility of Conjunction with the Active Intellect* by Ibn Rushd with the Commentary of Moses Narboni, edited by K. P. Bland (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1982), 197. See the Italian translation in Illuminati, *Averroè e l'intelletto pubblico* (Rome: ManifestoLibri, 1996), 187.

<sup>22</sup> See again ibid., 198–99.

exalted – said: ‘... those who remember God’s Holy Name standing ...’ (Q. 3:191), meaning: ‘you will remember Me through them’; and Its [God’s] statement: ‘prayer preserves from wickedness and evil, and God’s remembrance is the highest thing’ (Q. 29:45). Therefore, the path to achieve happiness involves studying, remembering God and eliminating from knowledge all those things which hamper this aim.<sup>23</sup>

Now we are equipped to return to Dante and deal with his ‘Averroism’. Dante strongly contested Averroes’ theory of the unity of the Possible Intellect in the *Purgatorio*, XXVI, 61–66, for example, where he hints explicitly at Averroes:

*Ma come d’animal divegna fante,  
non vedi tu ancor: quest’è tal punto,  
che più savio di te fè già errante,  
sì che per sua dottrina fè disgiunto  
da l’anima il possibile intelletto,  
perché da lui non vide organo assunto,*

But how from animal it turns to human  
you do not see as yet. This is the point  
at which a wiser man than you has stumbled  
in that his teaching rendered separate  
the possible intellect from the soul,  
because he could not find the organ it could live in.

Nardi, however, has argued convincingly that Dante was in some way an ‘Averroist’, and I have no room here to discuss thoroughly the contrary opinions. Be that as it may, even if Dante could not by any means be judged an ‘orthodox’ Averroist, the thought of Albert the Great and of Siger of Brabant – two philosophers strongly indebted to Averroes – exerted a meaningful influence on him. Thus, it is no surprise that Dante would reward a thinker so irregular and controversial like Siger with the bliss of Paradise:

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 199–200.

*essa è la luce eterna di Sigieri  
che leggendo nel vico de li strami  
sillogizzò invidiosi veri (Par. X, 136–8)*

It is the eternal light of Siger,  
who, instructing in the Street of Straw,  
demonstrated enviable truths.

If Nardi and Ruedi Imbach are to be believed, Dante was by no means a Thomist: rather, he manifested close affinities with the so-called ‘radical Aristotelians’.<sup>24</sup> Siger was not deemed by Dante a heretic because Dante was sympathetic to Averroism, although he refused the purely Averroist doctrine of the possible intellect’s unity insofar as it was incompatible with the Church’s teachings.

Following this Averroist path, Dante must have studied in universities or read university texts. In the *Convivio*, Dante argues:

- 1) ‘Knowledge is our unique perfection’ (*il sapere è l’unica perfezione nostra*) (II, xiii, 6);
- 2) ‘Human nature enjoys two kinds of happiness: civil and contemplative’ (*l’umana natura non pur una beatitudine abbia, ma due, sì come quella della vita civile e quella contemplativa*) (II, iv, 10);
- 3) knowledge is the cause of perfection, in accordance with Aristotle’s theory in *Nichomachean Ethics*. In a number of the *Convivio*’s passages, Dante argues that contemplative life leads to happiness, because speculation is our proper *beatitude*. Actually, ‘[the] human soul [...] through the ultimate power’s nobility, that is reason, participates in the Divine nature, in the guise of eternal Intelligence’ (*l’anima umana [...] con la nobilitade della potenza ultima, cioè ragione, partecipa della divina natura a guisa di sempiterna intelligentia*) (III, ii, 14). The same concept is repeated in *Convivio* III, xv, 2–4, when Dante argues that, looking in the eyes and smile of Knowledge, ‘the human perfection is achieved, that is the perfection of

<sup>24</sup> Ruedi Imbach, *Dante, la philosophie et les laïcs* (Paris: Cerf, 1996), 144–48.

reason' (*l'umana perfezione si acquista, cioè la perfezione della ragione*), and consequently man becomes *beato*, supremely happy.<sup>25</sup>

*Mutatis mutandis*, it is the same as Averroes' framework. Obviously, Dante's gnoseology, the outcomes of which are political insofar as they are leading to the construction of a real, civil and just society (the final aim of his treatise on *Monarchia*), presupposes a precise cosmology. Let us consider the following passage from the *Convivio*:

Li numeri, li ordini, le gerarchie narrano i cieli mobili, che sono nove, e lo decimo annunzia essa unitade e stabilitade di Dio. [ . . . ] Per che ragionevole è credere che i movitori del cielo della Luna siano de l'ordine de li Angeli, e quelli di Mercurio siano gli Arcangeli, e quelli di Venere siano li Troni; li quali, naturati de L'Amore del Santo Spirito, fanno la loro operazione connaturale ad essi, cioè lo movimento di quello cielo, pieno d'amore, dal quale prende le forma del detto cielo uno ardore virtuoso per lo quale le anime di qua giuso s'accendono d'amore (II, v, 13).

The moving heavens, which are nine, declare the numbers, the orders, and the hierarchies, and the tenth proclaims the very unity and stability of God. [ . . . ] Consequently it is reasonable to believe that the movers of the heaven of the Moon belong to the order of the Angels, and those of Mercury to that of the Archangels, and those of Venus to that of the Thrones; all of whom, receiving their nature from the love of the Holy Spirit, perform their operation, which is innate in them, namely, the movement of that heaven, filled with love, from which the form of the said heaven derives a potent ardour by which the souls here below are kindled to love, according to their disposition.

<sup>25</sup> The *Quaestio de felicitate* by Giacomo da Pistoia (whose biographical data are scanty) is a useful touchstone to collocate Dante in the environment of the 'Aristotelian radicals'. Giacomo could be considered a forerunner of Bologna's 'Averroist' school, which flourished in the first half of the fourteenth century. See Irene Zavattero, 'La "Quaestio de felicitate" di Giacomo da Pistoia: Un tentativo di interpretazione alla luce di una edizione critica del testo', in *Le felicità nel Medioevo*, Proceedings of the Conference SISPM, edited by Maria Bettetini and Francesco Paparella (Louvain-la-Neuve: Fédération Internationale des Instituts d'Études Médiévales, 2008), 355–94.

The so-called ‘medieval’ – properly Neo-Platonic or Greek-Arabic – image of the cosmos underlies this description. Averroes was perhaps the last perfectionist of this ‘medieval’ cosmos, structured in nine concentric spheres, above which there is the tenth sphere of the Prime Mover or First Heaven. The spheres are moved by separate Intellects, or Angels, as Dante calls them. The separate Intellects love God, who is love in His own regard. Man yearns to (con)join with these separate entities through a loving tension, which elsewhere Dante calls ‘*amor intellectualis*’ (Intellectual love). This conception is clearly a consequence of that synthesis between Neo-Platonist and Aristotelian cosmologies; the first articulated and complete structure of that synthesis was elaborated by Arab Muslim philosophers such as al-Farābī and Avicenna. Averroes resumed and completed the same world’s image, stressing the more Aristotelian concept of movers in respect to Neo-Platonic emanation. Through intellect, the philosopher projects himself/herself towards the lofty dimension of the Heavens, conjoining with God as far as it is possible without overcoming the necessary ontological distance between the Creator and the creatures. In the *Convivio*, this vision is mainly intellectual and reason-justified, while in the *Commedia* it is mystical and intuitive. The *Convivio* is more ‘Averroistic’, as it were, while the *Commedia* has numerous Neo-Platonic suggestions.

It could be argued that in no place does Dante’s theory correspond exactly to Averroes’. Actually, this is true: if we look at singular aspects of his theory taken in isolation, Dante’s outlook is very different from Averroes’ outlook. Yet, the overall perspective is the same: as in Averroes’ commentaries and in his booklets on intellect and happiness, so in the *Convivio* a Greek-Arab conception of man arises: the conception that, in a precise cosmological structure, when humans realise completely their humanity, they become similar to separated Intellects, as Averroes suggested.

Moreover, the *Convivio* strictly connects the perfectly structured harmony of the world with the perfect political order:

... insofar as the speculative faculty is convenient for them [the separate substances], in the same way the [separate substances’] speculation produces the Heaven’s circulation, which governs the [sublunar] world; and it resembles a well-ordered civilisation as comprehended in the Movers’ speculation (*Come la speculativa [facoltà] convegna loro [alle sostanze separate], pure alla*

*speculazione di certe segue la circulazione del cielo, che è del mondo governo; la quale è quasi una ordinata civilitade, intesa nella speculazione dell'i motori* (II, iv, 13).

All in all, my thesis is that Dante must be considered in some way an Averroist in the middle of his intellectual evolution (when he composed the *Convivio*; that is, in 1305–7); in any case, the problem of the mental happiness (*felicità mentale*) linked to the spheres' cosmic order *via* the progressive perfection of intellect(s) is deeply Greek-Arab, or even better Islamic, even though we should remain cautious of labelling it 'Avicennian' or 'Averroist' or otherwise in the strictest sense. Due to this concealed fidelity to Greek-Arab rationality, Dante kept alive, even in the mystical outcome of the *Commedia*, that vein of positive rationalism that his compliance with Christianity in the very last years of his life could have challenged.<sup>26</sup>

Averroism – although difficult to be defined and explicated even in thinkers like Boethius of Dacia and Siger of Brabant<sup>27</sup> – was a mentality, a common framework of reference deriving its foundation from the (often disguised or denied) Arab-Islamic heritage. The Arab-Islamic East and the Christian West are bridged by the perspective of a philosophical goal which, on the one hand, provides free space for the mind's activity and feeds an intellectual aristocracy very far from brute materiality, while, on the other hand, it provides the paths of the *homo politicus*. Averroes' *Decisive Treatise on the Connection between Islamic Religious Law (shari'a) and Philosophy (hikma)*, if correctly read, contains the same message. This includes an awareness that a peaceful and just political order needs the masses' integration into the city's life.<sup>28</sup> This is to say, Averroes attributed to the Almohad caliphs the duty to rule by connecting

<sup>26</sup> See again Campanini, *Dante e l'Islam*.

<sup>27</sup> I am tired of the dull polemic about Averroism often discussed. That there are no exclusive doctrines leading to define a philosopher as a pure Averroist is completely true. Averroism was, however, condemned as heretical by the Church from 1270 to 1489, and this fact cannot be casual. Averroists never concealed their admiration of Averroes and quoted him many times directly. All this demonstrates that something intended as Averroism existed, in one way or another. Moreover, in my view, philology can never have the upper hand over speculation.

<sup>28</sup> Averroes, *Decisive Treatise and Epistle Dedicatory*, edited by C. Butterworth (Provo: Brigham Young University, 2008); idem, *Averroes, the Decisive Treatise*, edited by M. Campanini (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2017).

religion and philosophy, and in the same way Dante's universal civil monarchy (that is, the Roman-German Empire) had to rule in parallel harmony with the universal moral institution of papacy.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> It is not by chance that in *Monarchia* III, vol. x, 7–10, Dante says that the happiness (*beatitudo*) of this world is assured by the emperor while the pope assures the Hereafter's spiritual happiness.

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# 5

## TWO EXAMPLES OF ARABIC TEXTS IN SICILY, BETWEEN LINGUISTICS AND PHILOSOPHY

*Patrizia Spallino*

In recent years, particularly over the last fifteen years, studies on Islamic Sicily – considered in their multiple facets – have grown considerably. Evidence of this is provided by the works, individual or the product of collegiate approaches coordinated by individual scholars, which have demonstrated a widening of horizons in historiographic reflection from the methodological to the hermeneutical point of view.<sup>1</sup>

Starting from these excerpted considerations noted in the interesting article by Mirella Cassarino, this contribution aims to illustrate two texts which are exemplars of the cultural relations between Sicily and Islamic civilisations. The first is titled *Tathqīf al-lisān wa talqīḥ al-janān* (Guide on the Language and Fertilisation of the spirit), which was written by Ibn Makkī al-Šiqillī,<sup>2</sup> a grammarian and linguist. The *Tathqīf al-lisān* is the

<sup>1</sup> Mirella Cassarino, ‘Studies on Islamic Sicily: The Last Fifteen Years’, in *Islamic Sicily: Philosophical and Literary Essays*, edited by Mirella Cassarino, special issue of *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 10 (2015), 3.

<sup>2</sup> Ibn Makkī al-Šiqillī, *Tathqīf al-lisān wa-talqīḥ al-Janān*, introduction by Muṣṭafā ‘Abd al-Qādir ‘Atā (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1990). For information on Ibn Makkī al-Šiqillī, see Umberto Rizzitano, ‘Ibn Makkī’, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1960–2005).

only work of *lāhn al-‘ammā* (common language mistakes) from the Islamic West, specifically Sicily. The work is an example of the Arabic language spoken in Sicily in the eleventh century, when the island was an emirate under Islamic rule. The second text to be examined here was written three centuries later. It is a collection of letters exchanged between the Emperor Frederick II of Hohenstaufen and the Andalusian Sufi philosopher Quṭb al-Dīn Abū Muhammad ‘Abd al-Haqq Ibn Sabīn.<sup>3</sup>

These are two texts which shed light on the Arabic Islamic tradition in Sicily,<sup>4</sup> but which had remained untranslated into any European language for centuries. Their eventual translation (from Arabic) has disclosed documents that had not been very well known in the Western world and has given voice to authors who may have been considered ‘minor’ and who may otherwise have been forgotten. Drawing on these sources and bringing them to the attention of the Western academic community allows Arabic philologists, linguists and scholars of Islamic philosophy, theology and spirituality to more deeply understand their fields, which may be rich in historical facts yet poor in textual evidence.

Let us proceed, in chronological order, by first analysing the *Tathqīf al-lisān* and discussing the sociolinguistic aspects of life in Sicily during the Kalbid era (948–1040). Comprised of fifty chapters, this treaty lists the grammatical errors made by Sicilian speakers of Arabic, whether common people (*al-‘āmma*) or learned people (*al-mukhassīṣūn*).<sup>5</sup> Each listed error is followed by its correct

<sup>3</sup> For more on Ibn Sabīn, see Patrizia Spallino, ‘Ibn Sabīn’, in *Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy: Philosophy Between 500 and 1500*, edited by Henrik Lagerlund (London: Springer, 2010).

<sup>4</sup> A detailed discussion of the philosophical ideas of Ibn Sabīn in his collection of letters with the Emperor Frederick II is provided in Chapter Six of this volume.

<sup>5</sup> It is not the purpose of this paper to engage in detailed linguistic discussions or arguments of Ibn Makkī. For further discussion on Ibn Makkī al-Šiqillī and his work on Siculo-Arabic and *Tathqīf al-lisān*, see Dionisius A. Agius, *Siculo-Arabic* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1996); idem, ‘Who spoke Siculo Arabic?’ in *XII Incontro italiano di linguistica camito-semitica (afroasiatica)*, edited by Marco Moriggi (Soveria Mannelli: Rubettino, 2007), 25–33. The term *muhassīṣūn* (plural of the participle *mukhassīṣ*), also known as *abn al-khaṣṣa* (aristocrats, nobles, the high or cultured class, the elite), deserves special attention. Giuseppe Mandalà writes: ‘The constellation of people and positions that revolved around the ruler is defined by the Arabic term “ḥaṣṣa”, which included vizier, advisors

form. During the Kalbid era, the island gave birth to several important philologists, grammarians, writers and poets. Among those who distinguished themselves in the field of jurisprudence, literature and science in that period were Abū Bakr Muḥammad Ibn ‘Alī Ibn al-Birr al-Šiqillī (d. 1068),<sup>6</sup> his disciple ‘Alī Ibn Ja‘far ibn ‘Alī Ibn Muḥammad, otherwise known as Ibn al-Qatṭā‘ (d. 1121)<sup>7</sup> and Ibn Makkī al-Šiqillī (d. 1107).<sup>8</sup>

Ibn Makkī al-Šiqillī (whose date of birth is not known) was an excellent orator, poet, grammarian, linguist, jurist and scholar of Arabic. He lived most of his life in Sicily, presumably in Palermo, until the Norman conquest in 1060. Umberto Rizzitano writes:

Before going to Tunis he lived in Sicily where he remained probably until the beginning of the Norman occupation in 452/1060. This can be deduced first from his *nisba*, then from the fact that he had as his *shaykh* Ibn al-Birr, who lived in Sicily at this time, and finally from an even more convincing

(“*ashāb ar-ra'y*”), judges, secretaries, intelligence services, ambassadors and interpreters, as well as army commanders, leaders of the troops, border governors, the “jund” and tax collectors. All belonged to the “*khaṣṣa*”, a multiconfessional community in the service of the ruler. They represented an elite, or rather a group of chosen people with official roles for specific offices who depended directly on the sovereign who gave them orders and paid them wages’. Giuseppe Mandalà, ‘The Martyrdom of Yuhānnā, Physician of Ibn Abī'l Husayn, Ruler of the Island of Sicily: Editio Princeps and Historical Commentary’, *Journal of Transcultural Medieval Studies* 3/1–2 (2016), 47–48.

<sup>6</sup> Abū Bakr Muḥammad Ibn ‘Alī Ibn al-Birr al-Šiqillī was a lexicographer and philosopher who was born in Sicily in the late tenth century. He studied in Alexandria and in Mahdia in Tunisia, then returned to the island at the end of the Kalbid period.

<sup>7</sup> Ibn al-Qatṭā‘, a Sicilian Arab philologist, was the author of a history of Sicily and an important anthology of Arab-Sicilian poets, *Al-Durra al-khaṭīra*.

<sup>8</sup> Regarding the epithet ‘al-Šiqillī’, Alex Metcalfe states: ‘In terms of insular regional identity, it was not uncommon to find individuals with names containing references to some ancient Arab tribe or to the island itself: for example, the scribe Abū l-Hasan al-Šiqillī al-Anṣarī; the scholars ‘Alī al-Rabī‘ī al-Šiqillī and Aḥmad al-Qurayshī Ibn al-Šiqillī; or the poet Ibn Ḥamdis al-Azdī al-Šiqillī. Nor was it unusual to find the demonym “Sicilian” in naming strings alongside Arabic names: its use was not confined to Muslim émigrés and notables, but was also found in a cross-section of the population’. Alex Metcalfe, ‘Before the Normans: Identity and Societal Formation in Muslim Sicily’, in *Sicily: Heritage of the World*, edited by Dirk Booms and Peter John Higgs (London: British Museum Press, 2019), 107.

circumstance, the inclusion of some poetical fragments of Ibn Makkī in *al-Durra al-Khaṭīra*, the well-known anthology of the poetry of the Arabs of Sicily compiled by Ibn al-Qaṭṭā<sup>9</sup>.

There are scant records of Ibn Makkī al-Šiqillī's works: a few have been preserved but many have been lost.

The *Tathqīf al-lisān* is one of those works by Ibn Makkī al-Šiqillī which has survived to the present day. According to 'Abd al-'Azīz Matar, the text was written between 1063 and 1067 (456 and 460 AH).<sup>10</sup> The *Tathqīf al-lisān* belongs to a category of works, found as early as in the eighth century CE, known as *kutub laḥn al-āmma* (treatise on common language mistakes). These works aim at correcting Arabic sayings that deviate from the norm, and they highlight the difference between widespread customs and the standards approved by grammarians and lexicographers. Treaties often classified within this category usually resort to this formula: the error is introduced with the words 'they say' (*wa yaqūlūna*), followed by the saying in question, and then the correct expression preceded by the phrase 'but the correct form is' (*wa al-sāwābu*). Apart from following the same structure, many of these works also have recurring titles.<sup>11</sup>

With regard to the word *laḥn*, its meaning has been translated historically as 'double entendre, variant or idiom'. These meanings, however, have been lost because of the codification of the *al-fuṣḥā* standard of the language. This resulted in the term *laḥn* acquiring the new meaning of 'grammatical error', from the verb *laḥana* (to err), the meaning of which is: to speak broken Arabic, to blunder, to make grammatical mistakes.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Rizzitano, 'Ibn Makki'.

<sup>10</sup> Ibn Makki al-Šiqillī, *Tathqīf al-lisān*, 4.

<sup>11</sup> Some examples, in chronological order according to the death dates of their authors, are: *Laḥn al-awām* by al-Zubaydī (d. 989); *Al-Talwīḥ fī sharḥ al-faṣīḥ* by al-Hirawī (d. 1041); *Durratu al-ghawwāṣ fī awḥām al-khawwāṣ* by al-Ḥarīrī (d. 1122); *Al-Iqtidāb fī sharḥ adab al-kuttāb* by Ibn al-Sayyid (d. 1127); *Al-Madkhal ilā taqwīm al-lisān wa-ta'līm al-bayān* by Ibn Hishām al-Lakhmī (d. 1181); *Taqwīm al-Lisān* by Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 1200); and *Sharḥ durratu al-ghawwāṣ* by al-Khafājī (d. 1658).

<sup>12</sup> For further information on the term *laḥn al-āmma*, see the entry of that title in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., by Ch. Pellat. He writes that *laḥn al-āmma*, "errors of language made by the common people", is an expression which characterises a branch of lexicography

In grouping the grammatical errors in the *Tathqif al-lisān*, Ibn Makkī al-Šiqillī adopted one main criterion: he privileged the grammatical rules of the Arabic language.

Arabic speakers consider following the grammatical rules of their language a duty, since language forms a bond among members of the community and gives them the means to communicate with each other. The criterion that considers language as part of ‘what is right’ implies a social rule of the community imposed on individuals that accepts what is correct while rejecting errors in the spoken language; thus, linguistic errors are moral errors. Georgine Ayoub states:

The aim of these treatises is puristic: the authors do not intend to understand the errors but rather to denounce them and to recall the *kalām fasīḥ*. [ . . . ] In some treatises, the correct form is legitimized by a sentence from the *kalām al-‘Arabī*: a Qur’ānic verse, a line of poetry.<sup>13</sup>

But let us now analyse several passages from our author’s treatise. Ibn Makkī al-Šiqillī also classified errors according to the following categories: paradigms and word structures, conjugation and etymology, the specialists’ errors in reciting the Qur’ān, errors made by the *ahl al-hadīth* and errors pertaining to medical science. To strengthen his linguistic theories, he used verses of poetry and Arab proverbs that added value to his linguistic work, making the text a true guide to the language.

designed to correct deviations by reference to the contemporary linguistic norms, as determined by the purists. [ . . . ] Apart from its ancient connotations such as “word with double meaning, obscure allusion”, “intelligence” etc., between which a subtle line of association may be traced, *lāhn* also appears to have signified originally, “manner of speaking”, “use of a word or pronunciation of a phonem peculiar to an individual or ethic group”, in such a way that it could be considered an equivalent of the word *lugha*, adapted by the grammarians to take on the technical meaning of “dialectical or regional variation” [ . . . ] Having become a synonym of *khaṭā’*, it is with this meaning that it figures twice in the *Kitāb* of Sibawyh. In the following century, the use of the term in this precise sense had become so widespread that al-Djāhiz himself, commenting on a verse in which *lāhn* signifies “word with double meaning, obscure allusion”, spontaneously, but erroneously, gave it the name of “fault”.

<sup>13</sup> Quote taken from Georgine Ayoub, *Encyclopaedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 629.

The *Tathqīf al-lisān* opens with a prolegomenon (*muqaddima*) and helps us to define the representations relating to language in the Kalbid era:

Once the demonstration had been completed and the argument clarified, decay spread through the language. The inconvenient mixed with the good and it insinuated itself in the tongue of the Arabs. Every day the pillars of this language are destroyed, and its knights die and its honour is offended and its essence is made impure, its traces are deleted and its lights turned off. Many people continue to make mistakes believing [themselves] to be correct while many laymen use the right words without knowing it. In some cases, the person that is wrong teases the person that is right and thinks to have won and, in fact, people have become equals in being wrong and in making grammatical mistakes, except for a few. Those few people, despite being a minority, distinguish themselves in arguments, in writing, in reading books and in researching them. During an argument or a debate, these cannot disagree with what is in people's mouths and is used by the masses. The error continues to spread among people and takes the lead, retaining control to the point that [the people make] mistakes in reading and quoting the most famous sayings of the Prophet, making blunders in the most clear and common sayings. In addition, in the chapters of the book of God, the Mighty and Glorious, [these people make] interpretations where interpretations are not allowed. They [have] changed the poems of the Arabs, making mistakes in the pronunciation and transcribing the text wrongly, and they have wrongly classified the legal books and other works without [conducting] due diligence [of] the structure of the terms used and without noticing errors made while reading. Actually, when they hear the correct word, they deny and contradict it because they are used to incorrectness and loathe correctness.<sup>14</sup>

The following observations can be drawn from this *muqaddima*: firstly, Ibn Makkī observes that the ‘āmma social class has an imperfect knowledge of classical Arabic but does not ignore it; on the other hand, the *ḥassa* (élite) is made up of Arabic-language specialists who still continue to make some mistakes. Moreover, the author notices that the ‘āmma often communicates more correctly than the *ḥassa*, the ‘true erudites’. Lastly, Ibn Makkī acknowledges his

<sup>14</sup> Quote taken from Ibn Makkī al-Šiqillī, *Tathqīf al-lisān*, 15–17.

own mistakes, thus reporting on his personal experience.<sup>15</sup> *Lah̄n* often consists of an incorrect ending or an error in pronunciation, and for this reason Ibn Makkī devotes many chapters to matters of pure pronunciation of some consonants. But among the most serious errors listed are those concerning the sacred text.

Chapter 35 of the book, titled ‘*Ghalatū qurrā’ al-Qur’ān*’, is a very important section of the *Tathqīf al-lisān*. Here, our grammarian lists the errors made by the specialists (*mutakhaṣṣiṣūn*) during their recitation of the Qur’ān. For example, he states errors in pronunciation like that of the *nūn al-khafīfa* (by ‘light *nūn*’ the author means a distinct pronunciation of the letter *nūn*, especially when it is between two words). He also lists grammatical errors caused by the wrong intonation of voice and by the ignoring of the *al-tajwīd*, that is, the rules that dictate the correct way to recite the verses of the Qur’ān – the articulation of words, the pauses and so on.

By way of example, Ibn Makkī states:

And I asked Abū ‘Aliyy al-Ḥalūlī – may God have mercy on him – [his opinion on the matter of] praying standing behind the imām who pronounces the light vowels ‘*nūn*’ and ‘*tanwīn*’ on the letter *yā’* and the letter *wāw*. He said: ‘We detest performing the prayer behind him because he broke the unanimous consensus (*ijmā’*) as well as he recited the Qur’ānic verses as no one had recited them before’. And said the Shaykh Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq – God help him – ‘Someone among the people of science (*abl al-ilm*) believes that the inadmissible grammatical error such as [not] clearly pronouncing the light vowel *nūn* and *tanwīn* on the letter *yā’* and *wāw*, and changing the letter *dād* to *zā’* and vice versa and so on, if it did not occur in the Umm al-Qur’ān, the prayer behind someone reciting that way is permissible.<sup>16</sup>

In Chapter 36, titled ‘*Ghalatū ahli al-hadīthi*’, Ibn Makkī al-Ṣiqillī continues in much the same way, as he exposes errors made by the scholars of

<sup>15</sup> A careful analysis on *Tathqīf al-lisān* was conducted by Annliese Nef in her study: ‘Analyse du *Tathqīf al-Lisān* d’Ibn Makkī et intérêt pour la connaissance de la variante sicilienne de l’arabe: Problèmes méthodologiques’, *Oriente Moderno* 16 (1997): 1–17.

<sup>16</sup> See Ibn Makkī al-Ṣiqillī, *Tathqīf al-lisān*, 202; see also Patrizia Spallino, ‘La faute de grammaire entendue comme mal et le mal de la faute de grammaire dans le *Tathqīf al-lisān* de Ibn Makkī al-Ṣiqillī’, *Studi Magrebini* 20/1 (2022): 29–46.

*aḥadīth*. In particular, he refers to the inaccurate pronunciation of the titles of some important texts, of the names of people and places and of several words. For example, . . .

They say: ‘Muwaṭṭā Mālik’ without the hamza, instead the correct thing is: al-muwaṭṭa’u with the hamza. They say: al-mulakhkhaṣ (summary, compendium) with the vowel *fatḥa* over the consonant *khā’*, but it is correct al-mulakhkhiṣu with the vowel *kasra* under the letter *khā’*, so named by its compiler because he summarized what is referred to in his *isnād* of the ḥadīth of the practical handbook of Islamic law al-Muwaṭṭa’u. They say: He performed the major ritual ablution with a vessel that removes the state of severe impurity, called al-farqu, with the *iskān* on the letter *rā’*. They brought the envoy of God a basket made of palm leaves filled with dates, called ‘arqi, also with the *iskān* on the consonant *rā’*. Instead, it is correct to put the *fatḥa* over the consonant *rā’* in both terms.<sup>17</sup>

Likewise, the author does not omit documenting the linguistic errors of juris-consults (*al-fuqahā’*, Chapter 37) and errors pertaining to the medical lexicon (Chapter 39).<sup>18</sup>

A clear tone of superiority emerges in the *Tathqīf al-lisān*, and it is directed towards the ignorant speakers noted above. It does so in a way that is reminiscent of that found in a description of Palermo by the Iraqi traveller and geographer Ibn Hawqal during his visit to the Kalbid city in 973. In this passage, the writer scathingly comments on the *mu’allimūn*, the so-called schoolteachers:

Various categories of stupidity and folly, superior in folly and stupidity to the schoolteachers and the fools of any other place [ . . . ] Around 300 or less are present in the city, a quantity nowhere to be found anywhere else. And they are many despite their poor value, thanks to their repugnance for military expeditions and the holy war, [even though] their country is at the border with the land of the Rūm and a war zone where the *Jihād* is always in force and the call to arms permanent since the conquest of Sicily [ . . . ] There was in fact a rule in force for some time that made schoolteachers exempt from hard work

<sup>17</sup> Ibn Makkī al-Šiqillī, *Tathqīf al-lisān*, 206.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 222–24.

in exchange for a tax, and so all the idiots took refuge in teaching, and this became a desirable profession for these illiterates.<sup>19</sup>

Similar remarks follow in Ibn Hawqal regarding the grammatical errors of the imāms who did not seem to give due regard to the importance of the declination and conjugation of verbs.<sup>20</sup>

Let us now fast-forward several years, to when Sicily found itself in a very different historical scenario. The Arabs were no longer the rulers, because by 1061 the Normans had conquered Sicily. When the Normans landed in Sicily, they encountered a mixed population of Arabic-speakers, whom they called Saracens, and Christians, whom they called Greeks.<sup>21</sup> Invested with the title Grand Count of Sicily and Calabria by Pope Urban II, in 1099 Roger I inaugurated the dynasty which ruled Sicily until the coronation of Henry VI in 1194. The Hohenstaufen, a new dynasty, ruled the island (1194), and after a decade of turmoil, on 26 December 1220, fourteen-year-old Frederick II started his reign as emperor of Sicily. Here, we will look at a cultural aspect of the emperor's rule: his philosophical correspondence with 'Abd al-Haqq Ibn Sabīn (d. 1269 or 1270), a Sufi master from the other side of the Mediterranean.

In 1853, the famous Sicilian historian Michele Amari notified the academic community of the existence of a manuscript in the Bodleian Library at Oxford University (Hunt. 534), titled *al-Masā'il al-Šiqillīyya* (The Sicilian Questions). In his article, the scholar stressed that this was a work of 'the highest importance for the history of philosophy'.<sup>22</sup> Having recognized the importance of this work,

<sup>19</sup> Michele Amari, 'Descrizione di Palermo e vituperi dei siciliani in Ibn Hawqal', in *Gli Arabi in Italia*, edited by Francesco Gabrieli and Umberto Scerrato (Milan: Garzanti-Scheiwiller, Credito Italiano, 1979), 735.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Charles H. Haskins, *The Normans in European History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1915); Alex Metcalfe, *The Muslims of Medieval Italy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009); Annliese Nef, *Conquérir et gouverner la Sicile islamique aux XI et XII siècles* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 2011).

<sup>22</sup> Michele Amari, 'Questions philosophiques adressées aux savants musulmans par l'Empereur Frédéric II', *Journal Asiatique* 1 (1853), 1. I will hereafter refer to my previous article with reference to the studies around the manuscript *Al-Masā'il al-Šiqillīyya*: Patrizia Spallino, 'Al-Masā'il as-Šiqillīyya', *Annali dell'Università degli studi di Napoli 'L'Orientale'* 56/1 (1996): 52–62.

Amari presented it to his Orientalist colleagues, demonstrating that the recipient of the *Sicilian Questions* was the Emperor Frederick II of Hohenstaufen. The date of the correspondence is fixed between 1237 and 1242, and the questions posed to the emperor are on the following topics:

- the Aristotelian thesis on the eternity of the world;
- the search for the goal of divine science by the ancient Greeks and the Sufis;
- the Aristotelian categories and their number;
- the immortality of the soul and the difference on the subject between the psychological theory of Aristotle and that of Alessandro of Afrodisia;
- an explanation of the saying of the Prophet Muhammad: ‘The heart of the believer is between two fingers of the Compassionate’.<sup>23</sup>

As can be noticed at first sight, the text introduces the reader to questions that were avidly debated by medieval Latin, Byzantine, Jewish and Muslim thinkers alike. It is an authentic proof of the arguments debated at the court of Frederick II, a court where the discourse followed Platonic, Aristotelian, Neoplatonic and Sufi speculative traditions.

Unfortunately, apart from some excerpts and translations, Amari did not publish the work, preferring to leave the task to others. The Danish Orientalist August Ferdinand Mehren welcomed Amari’s invitation and in 1879 published a study on the *Sicilian Questions* in the *Journal Asiatique* in relation to the translation of only the fourth question, that on the immortality of the soul. In 1928, the French Orientalist Louis Massignon published an article titled ‘Ibn Sab‘in et la critique psychologique’. Much later, Otto Pretzl in Munich resumed the study of the *Sicilian Questions* in collaboration with Şerefettin Yaltkaya, professor of theology at the University of Istanbul, who translated the work into Turkish and curated the unabridged publication of the text in Arabic with a preface by Henry Corbin. The translation of the entire work continued to be an unfinished project, even after 1956, when Mario Grignaschi translated the second question on the aim of divine science. I consider mentioning these preliminary notions key to introducing the next step, which raised my own interest in this text, in its translation and, within my limits, its critical and philological analysis.

<sup>23</sup> For further discussion of Ibn Sab‘in’s *Al-Masā'il al-Siqillīyya*, see the following chapter.

A prologue, which here I prefer to quote in its entirety, opens the epistles and describes the events that led to Frederick II commissioning the answers written by Ibn Sabīn:

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate, whom I implore for help, the *shaykh* said, the *imām*, his eminence, the *imām* of the community, the prince of *imāms*, the example of the two holy cities, our lord Quṭb al-Dīn Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq ibn Sabīn, may God make him useful and may he reiterate his blessings to the Muslims with the answers to the questions posed by the king of the Rūm, emperor, prince of Sicily, when he sent a copy of them to the East, and to Egypt, to Shām, to Ḥarāq, to the Durūb, to Yemen. But the answers of the learned among the Muslims did not please him. So, he asked in Ifriqīya, to those within it who could [ . . . ] answer, but he was told there was no such person. He enquired about the Maghreb and the Andalus, and he was told there was a man called Ibn Sabīn [hereafter referred to as Quṭb al-Dīn]. So, he wrote to the caliph al-Rashīd, of the dynasty of ‘Abd al-Mu’min, about the matter. And the prince of the believers wrote to his governor in Ceuta to send for the man in question so he could answer these questions. The king of the Rūm had already sent a ship with his ambassador and a sum of money. Ibn Khalāṣ sent for *imām* Quṭb al-Dīn and, as ordered by the caliph, showed him the questions; he smiled – may God be pleased with him – and took it upon himself to answer them. Ibn Khalāṣ offered him the money the king of the Rūm had given him, but he [Quṭb al-Dīn] rejected it [ . . . ] saying: ‘I will answer these questions to gain favour with God and for the triumph of the Islamic community’. He then read the words of the Most High: ‘Say: I ask this for no reason but the love of others’ (Qur’ān XLII, 23), and he answered [the questions]. Then, when the answers reached the king, he was satisfied by them and sent [Quṭb al-Dīn] a precious gift, which was refused like the first, and so the Christian understood he was not good enough and God granted victory to Islam, elevating it above the Christian faith with decisive arguments. Praise be to God, the Lord of the worlds. Answer to the said questions, and success is through God.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Ibn Sabīn, *Le Questioni Siciliane: Federico II e l'universo filosofico*, introduction, translation and notes by Patrizia Spallino (Palermo: Officina di Studi Medievali, 2002), 55–56. An indispensable study on the prologue of *Sicilian Questions* was conducted by Giuseppe Mandalà, ‘Il Prologo delle Risposte alle questioni siciliane di Ibn Sabīn come fonte storica:

The most notable fact is the request for knowledge made by Frederick II to the Islamic world. This element initiated a whole topic of research by historians and scholars of Frederick II and beyond.

As mentioned in the prologue of the *Sicilian Questions*, Frederick II had sent the same questions to several regions of the Islamic world before his cultural encounter with Ibn Sab‘īn. As a matter of fact, it is well known that, by the time of the crusade of 1228–29, the emperor had already promoted a policy of cultural cooperation with the Islamic world. During the negotiations for the surrender of Jerusalem (February 1229), he argued on various scientific topics with *shaykh al-shuyūkh* Fakhr al-Dīn (d. 1250) whilst formulating a series of questions on philosophy, geometry and mathematics addressed to Malik al-Kāmil (d. 1238), to test the intellectual prowess of the sultan’s scholars. Al-Kāmil gave the task of answering mathematical questions to *shaykh* ‘Alam al-Dīn Qaysar (d. 1251), ‘master of this art’, while all other questions were answered in their totality by a group of scholars.

The questions cited within the prologue were sent to Mosul, an important centre for the training of Islamic scholars; specifically, they were sent to the school of Kamāl al-Dīn Ibn Yūnus (d. 1242), who was a theologian, philosopher, medical doctor and one of the best-known Muslim intellectuals of the thirteenth century. Several renowned thinkers studied at the school of Kamāl al-Dīn. Among them were the jurist, theologian and grammarian Ibn Khallikān (d. 1282);<sup>25</sup> the astronomer and philosopher Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 1274); al-Mufaddal b. ‘Umar Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Abkharī (d. ca 1265); the logician and philosopher Sirāg al-Dīn al-Urmawī (d. 1283); and the Christian

Politica mediterranea e cultura arabo-islamica nell’età di Federico II’, *Schede Medievali* 45 (2007): 25–94. The prologue has also been studied by Anna Akasoy, ‘Reading the Prologue of Ibn Sab‘īn’s *Sicilian Questions*’, *Schede medievali* 45 (2007): 15–24.

<sup>25</sup> As specified by Dag Nikolaus Hasse, Ibn Khallikān was not a student of Kamāl al-Dīn, but rather a ‘family friend’. Dag Nikolaus Hasse, ‘Mosul and Frederick II Hohenstaufen: Notes on Atīraddīn al-Abhārī and Sirāgaddīn al-Urmawī’, in *Occident et Proche-Orient: Contacts scientifiques au temps des Croisades: Actes du colloque de Louvain-la-Neuve 24 et 25 Mars 1997*, edited by Isabelle Draelants, Anne Thion and Baudooin van den Abeele (Louvain-la-Neuve: Brepols, 2000), 146.

philosopher Teodoro d'Antiochia (d. ca 1250).<sup>26</sup> The last two travelled to the court of Frederick II. There, Teodoro took on the role of imperial philosopher and was often tasked with writing letters in Arabic to the governor of Tunis. Thus, it is probable that he might have had a role in the writing of the letters containing the Sicilian questions.

As noted by Giuseppe Sermoneta, it should be understood that the scientific and cultural curiosity that characterised the emperor was not due merely to his desire to acquire personal knowledge. Rather, it was a tool of cultural politics and diplomacy that Frederick wielded in the context of the war that he was waging against the papacy. By looking to 'other cultures and religious traditions' to grapple with the key theological issues of the time, Frederick II was undercutting the papacy's hegemonic status as the absolute cultural authority.<sup>27</sup>

But let us go back to the text. The first question posed by Frederick II in his epistles within the *Sicilian Questions*, and quoted by Ibn Sabīn, is as follows:

You [that is, Frederick II] said: The wise man [meaning Aristotle] clearly affirms the eternity of the world in all his writings and there is no doubt this was his opinion. Notwithstanding this, if he demonstrated it, what was his demonstration? And if he did not demonstrate it, of which kind would his reasoning be in this regard? This is the matter of your argument.<sup>28</sup>

Ibn Sabīn responds to the question thus:

Concerning your statement 'and there is no doubt this was his opinion', this means you are delving into a demonstration (of eternity). Otherwise, how could you have reached this conclusion? And if you did not reach it, and you

<sup>26</sup> D. Ciccarelli, 'Teodoro il filosofo, Mazzeo di Ricco, Stefano Protonotaro: Nuovi apporti documentali', *Schede medievali* 6–7 (1984): 99–110; Charles Burnett, 'Master Theodore, Frederick II's Philosopher', in *Federico II e le nuove culture: Atti del XXXI Convegno storico internazionale (Todi, 19–21 Ottobre 1994)* (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 1995), 225–54.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Giuseppe Sermoneta, 'Federico II e il pensiero ebraico del suo tempo', in *Federico II e l'arte del Duecento italiano: Atti della III settimana di studi di storia dell'arte medievale dell'Università di Roma (15–20 Maggio 1978)*, edited by Angiola Maria Romanini, 2 vols (Galatina: Congedo Editore, 1980), 183–97.

<sup>28</sup> Ibn Sabīn, *Le Questioni Siciliane*, 58–59.

wish to know (what is the right conclusion), formulate your question and we will later illustrate it to you, by the power of God [ . . . ] And your statement ‘And if he did not demonstrate it, of which kind would his reasoning be in this regard?’ could lead one to think that you are either looking for an elucidation or information, or you are testing the other [to see if they know the answer].<sup>29</sup>

During the translation of the *Sicilian Questions*, the reason behind why Frederick asked whether Aristotle had demonstrated the eternity of the world remained unclear and, if so, which would be the proof or whether he had not demonstrated it.

A plausible explanation of the nature of Frederick’s curiosity could be related to the emperor’s connection with a fundamental text of medieval Jewish culture, *The Guide of the Perplexed* by Maimonides. Here, the philosopher dedicates around twenty chapters to the question of the creation and the eternity of the world, chapters which Frederick probably knew well. Thus, we can consider this yet another example of the circulation of ideas in medieval Sicily. Further research should then lead us to investigate the extent of Ibn Sab‘in’s knowledge of Maimonides’ *Guide* as well as the influence this had on the Andalusian philosopher’s thinking. In fact, the *Guide*, as Mauro Zonta reports, . . .

. . . was also well-known in the Islamic world in the late middle ages, especially in the mystical circles of the Sufis, who were very interested in the esoteric traits of the work: it was certainly known by both the Spanish Sufi philosopher Ibn Sab‘in (1217–70), who was in contact with the emperor Frederick II, and the Sufi al-Hassan Ibn Hud (thirteenth century), and there are reports that it was still being read within the mystical circles of Fez in the first decades of the fourteenth century.<sup>30</sup>

Each one of Ibn Sab‘in’s answers follows the same structure. The author starts by criticising the way in which the question is formulated; focuses on the

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>30</sup> Mosè Maimonide, *La Guida dei perplessi*, edited by Mauro Zonta (Torino: UTET, 2003), 56; Patrizia Spallino, ‘Les questions siciliennes de Ibn Sab‘in: Nouvelles perspectives de recherche’, *Schede Medievali* 45 (2007), 101.

definition of the terms used in formulating it; discusses the various arguments on the topic according to Aristotle, Greek philosophy and Islamic sources; critiques the theses of these arguments; and finally formulates his own theory based on his own observations and conclusions.

In light of the questions raised, Ibn Sab‘īn mentions the profound subject knowledge of his community of Muslim scholars who, in his opinion, would regard these topics as trivial matters not worth dwelling on:

All of the questions you have asked are clearer than a fire on a mountain for our community whose minds are sharper than a sword or a dagger. Ask more difficult questions, deeper and more intelligent than these, so that an erudite Muslim scholar may answer you, not wise men. They are not concerned with these matters; according to them, these questions are inconvenient to those who ask and to those whom are asked. And if they knew I gave you answers to these [questions], they would regard me as they regard these [matters].<sup>31</sup>

The question on the immortality of the soul also brings forth similar responses:

You don’t know how to argue, and you give your opponent that which he can use to reprimand you from the start; and it will suffice him to make this preamble against your stubbornness [ . . . ] Talking to you is like talking to someone who is distracted and asleep; and for he who wants to teach you, it would be like striking cold iron,<sup>32</sup> because you enquired about that which is unknown

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>32</sup> By ‘like striking cold iron’, he means here that the person is unteachable. Cold iron no longer changes shape. Only when the iron is hot can one work on it. Beating on the cold iron means not obtaining results. Regarding the offensive tones with which Ibn Sab‘īn addresses the emperor, some scholars have discussed the motivation. The Franciscan Arabist Dario Cabanelas reports this hypothesis: ‘Lo que tal vez pudiera sospecharse es que la obra no fuera dirigida al Emperador en la forma en que hoy la conocemos, pues resulta difícil creer que llegara la impertinencia de Ibn Sab‘īn, no sólo a amonestar a Federico, interpelándole con frases ofensivas, sino hasta a excusarse, con la prisa, de tratar superficialmente las questões, remitiendo la explicación más pormenorizada a un abocamiento personal o a consultas epistolares, procedimiento que, si puede admitirse, por ejemplo, en su *Budd al-‘ārif*, dirigido, al menos aparentemente, a un particular, en la respuesta a unas questões propuestas por un emperador que se pagaba tanto del saber, resulta sumamente inoportuno. Sin conocer todavía el carácter de Ibn Sab‘īn en sus múltiples facetas, no es fácil predecir

by vague means. [ . . . ] And besides this, your religion and your cognitive skills made an effort to guide you, but your desires and convictions led you astray. He who moves away from what is true will have to bear the consequences; every man uses that which he has; [thus], leave the matter with God – may He be blessed and exalted – may you be saved. Find what is true through what is true and learn. Escape your routine and do not count on it, go first towards your innate disposition and entrust yourself to it.<sup>33</sup>

hasta dónde podría llegar su impertinencia. Tal vez pudiera tratarse de dos redacciones, una más sobria, dirigida al Emperador, y otra con retoques ortodoxos y parenéticos, como la que poseemos, destinada a sus correligionarios' (What perhaps could have been suspected is that the work of art was not directed to the emperor in the shape that we know it today. This is because it is difficult to believe that the impertinence of Ibn Sab'in not only to admonish Frederick, calling him with offensive phrases but including to excuse himself with a rush to treat superficially the issues requiring minimal explanation. For example, in his *Budd al-'ārif* directed at least apparently to one person in response to several issues proposed by an emperor who took great pride from knowledge resulting in something extremely unnecessary without yet knowing the character of the person. It is not easy to predict how far his impertinence could reach. Perhaps, the emperor could reach the impertinence level. With Orthodox and parental approval); cf. Dario Cabanelas, 'Federico II de Sicilia e Ibn Sab'in de Murcia: Las 'Questiones Sicilianas', *Miscelánea de Estudios Árabes y Hebraicos* 4 (1955), 52; see also Esteban Lator, 'Ibn Sab'in de Murcia y su Budd al-'Ārif', *Al-Andalus* (1944), 382–83. Many of Ibn Sab'in scholars have come across the Sufi's irreverent language towards Frederick II, but not all have wondered why; cf. August Mehren, 'Correspondance du philosophe soufi Ibn Sab'in Abd Oul-Haqq avec l'Empereur Frédéric II de Hohenstaufen', *Journal Asiatique* 14 (1879), 392, which refers to a 'langage insolent'). Salvatore Tramontana defined Ibn Sab'in's tone as 'ironica insolenza', an attitude of annoying superiority that excludes the possibility of a useful confrontation between the philosopher and the politician: 'Ibn Sab'in [ . . . ] dimostrava chiaramente di non volere prendere in considerazione l'universo mentale che stava alla base delle domande di Federico [ . . . ]. La sostituzione delle analisi dei contenuti con considerazioni su questioni di metodo, era un modo elegante di sfuggire alla discussione'; cf. Salvatore Tramontana, *Il Regno di Sicilia: Uomo e natura dall'XI al XIII secolo* (Torino: Giulio Einaudi Editore, 1999), 255. Another possible hypothesis could be that Ibn Sab'in considers himself as the *mursqid* (the one who guides) and that Frederick in the text is called *mustarshid* (the one who asks to be guided). The Sufi does not consider the temporal power of the emperor but places himself above him as holder of wisdom. The wise man is superior to the ignorant, but even in this there is no real justification for the use of offensive tones.

<sup>33</sup> Ibn Sab'in, *Le Questioni Siciliane*, 164–65.

The *Sicilian Questions* ends with a direct invitation by Ibn Sab‘īn to discuss these matters again but in a personal meeting, proof of the actual interest of the philosopher in educating the emperor and of his wish to continue in person a dialogue that started via correspondence: ‘And I proceeded with you as per your request, and should I meet you in person, we would speak on these topics verbally, which is the best way. Learn all this and may God grant you his gift, grace and generosity’.<sup>34</sup> Unfortunately, we have neither proof of any reply by the emperor nor traces of his reaction to these answers. What is important in the effort to translate these texts – and this ultimately eases the pain and risks associated with moving on uncertain grounds – is to give voice and therefore life to characters who would otherwise have remained silent forever in a cultural tomb. Translating medieval correspondence allows us to peek into the details of a debate that is full of personal considerations. It allows us to enter a reserved atmosphere and reveal a more intimate character compared to that of work redacted for the purpose of presenting a theory.

The two cited texts deal with differing themes the analysis of which requires complex and technical knowledge in the domains of linguistics, philosophy and Islamic mysticism. All the studies realised to date on the Islamic documents of Sicily – from philological essays to poems, literary pieces, administrative acts, or epistolary exchanges – constitute one unique puzzle. Only the contribution of each Arabist, devoted to each of these pieces, will allow us to altogether understand one of the most important cultural periods of our time.

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 221.

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# 6

## PSYCHOLOGICAL AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL CONCEPTS IN IBN SABĪN'S *AL-MASĀ'IL AL-SIQILLIYYA* (THE SICILIAN QUESTIONS)

*Beate Ulrike La Sala*

### 1. Introduction

Sicilian intellectual culture in the Middle Ages was strongly influenced by Arabic philosophy. Evidence of this can be seen in the Latin translations of Arabic authors during this time – for example, the translations of Abū'l-Walīd Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Ibn Rushd (also known as Averroes, d. 1198) by Michael Scott (d. ca 1232) and William of Luna (d. ca thirteenth century)<sup>1</sup> at the court of Frederick II (r. 1220–50), and later at the court of his son Manfred I (r. 1258–66).<sup>2</sup> Another work exhibiting Sicilian knowledge of Arabic thought at the court of Frederick II was by Leonardo Bonacci (also known as Fibonacci, d. ca 1250) – the *Liber abaci*, which introduced

<sup>1</sup> Little is known about the dates of William of Luna's life. However, he most probably had died by the second half of the thirteenth century, as a consolation letter testifies. See Fulvio Delle Donne, 'Un'inedita epistola sulla morte di Guglielmo de Luna, maestro presso lo *Studium* di Napoli, e le traduzioni prodotte alla corte di Manfredi di Svevia', in *Recherches de théologie et philosophie médiévaies* 74/1 (2007): 225–45.

<sup>2</sup> For a brief introduction to the Latin translations of Averroes provided by Michael Scott and William of Luna, see the short study by Dag Nikolaus Hasse, *Latin Averroes Translations of the First Half of the Thirteenth Century* (Hildesheim: Olms, 2010). See also Daniel König, 'Latin and Arabic Entanglement: A Short History', in *Latin and Arabic: Entangled Histories*, edited by Daniel König (Heidelberg: Heidelberg University Publishing, 2019), 71–73.

the Hindu-Arabic numerical system into European thought.<sup>3</sup> Evidence of the knowledge that medieval Sicilian intellectuals had of Arabic philosophy can also be found in the original, non-derivative contributions of contemporary Arabic philosophers, such as 'Abd al-Ḥaqq b. Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. Naṣr Ibn Sabīn (d. ca 1270). The first and most famous work by this Andalusian thinker, *Al-Masā'il al-Ṣiqilliyā* (The Sicilian Questions), is the focus of this article.<sup>4</sup>

Ibn Sabīn was born into a noble family of Moroccan origin in the Andalusian city of Murcia in 1216 or 1217, during the reign of the Almohads. He was a thinker who became the eponymous founder of a school of Sufism called *as-Sabīniyya*; as a result, he later came to be referred to as *shaykh as-Sabīniyya*.<sup>5</sup> His philosophical interpretation of Sufism was considered rather controversial. He appears to have been accused by the famous Arabic-Islamic historian Ibn Khaldūn of having introduced a divide into Sufism with his philosophical interpretation.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> For Fibonacci's reception of Arabic mathematical theories, see Roshdi Rashed, 'Fibonacci et les mathématiques arabes', in *Micrologus II: Il Scienze Alla Corte di Federico II*, edited by Véronique Pasche (Turnhout: Brepols, 1994), 145–60. For the use of Arabic numerals in Sicily, see Charles Burnett, 'The Use of Arabic Numerals among the Three Language Cultures of Norman Sicily', *Römisches Jahrbuch der Bibliotheca Hertziana* 35 (2003–4): 39–48.

<sup>4</sup> For background information on Ibn Sabīn and his encounter with Frederick II, see Chapter Five in this volume. Throughout this chapter, I refer to the following edition for the Arabic text of *Al-Masā'il al-Ṣiqilliyā*: 'Abd al-Ḥaqq Ibn-Ibrāhīm Ibn Sabīn, *Correspondance philosophique avec l'Empereur Frédéric II de Hohenstaufen*, Arabic text by Şerefettin Yalatkaya, foreword by Henry Corbin (Paris: Éditions de Boccard, 1941). All English translations are mine. There is currently no standard English translation of the text, although the book has been translated into other modern European languages. Complete translations into Italian and Spanish exist: 'Abd al-Ḥaqq Ibn-Ibrāhīm Ibn Sabīn, *Le questioni siciliane: Federico II e l'universo filosofico*, introduced, translated and annotated by Patrizia Spallino, presented by Bakri Aladdin (Palermo: Officina di Studi Medievali, 2002); 'Abd al-Ḥaqq Ibn-Ibrāhīm Ibn Sabīn, *Las Cuestiones Sicilianas*, introduced, edited, translated and annotated by Luisa María Arvide Cambra (Granada: Grupo Editorial Universitario, 2009). A partial German translation of the book exists: Anna Akasoy, 'Abd al-Ḥaqq Ibn-Ibrāhīm Ibn Sabīn, *Die sizilianischen Fragen, Arabisch-deutsch*, translated and introduced by Anna Akasoy (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2005).

<sup>5</sup> See Patrizia Spallino, 'Introduzione', in Ibn Sabīn, *Le questioni siciliane*, 17.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 39.

Ibn Sabīn's *Al-Masā'il al-Šiqilliyā* was a highly influential work in the Sicilian context, as it consists of his answers to a catalogue of philosophical questions posed by Frederick II. The king would frequently either send letters containing philosophical questions to Arab rulers, who in turn would have their scholars answer these questions, or directly interrogate scholars at his court. This was beyond the format of an epistolary correspondence and has to be understood as a typical genre of the time. Ibn Sabīn is thought to have composed his answers between 1237 and 1242. He claims in the introduction to *Al-Masā'il al-Šiqilliyā* that Frederick had addressed his questions to the Almohad caliph 'Abd al-Wāhid ar-Rashīd (r. 1232–42), who in turn ordered his governor Ibn Khalāṣ in Ceuta to find a scholar capable of responding to the questions. Regarding the actual authenticity of Frederick's questions little is known.<sup>7</sup> Frederick's original questions can only be inferred from *Al-Masā'il al-Šiqilliyā*.<sup>8</sup> However, Ibn Sabīn's philosophical responses seem to have contributed to his expulsion from Ceuta by Ibn Khalāṣ.<sup>9</sup>

*Al-Masā'il al-Šiqilliyā* is of great importance, for two reasons. First, it is a compendium that reflects the philosophical ideas that were being discussed amongst Arab-Andalusian intellectuals in the thirteenth century, during the reign of the Almohads who promoted scientific and philosophical studies.<sup>10</sup> Second, it is, in fact, a source that indicates the knowledge of Arabic philosophy that was held by Frederick II and that was circulating in the Sicilian cultural milieu. Traces of the Arabic philosophical discourse may be found in the poetry of the Sicilian School (*la scuola siciliana*). Frederick II is considered the founder of this school due to his cultural politics and as one of its important representatives due to his own literary production together with Giacomo da

<sup>7</sup> In her introduction to the text, Anna Akasoy expresses doubt that Frederick's questions were genuine and suggests that Ibn Sabīn only pretended to have been explicitly ordered to write his answers. Anna Akasoy, 'Einleitung', in Ibn Sabīn, *Die Sizilianischen Fragen*, 22–23. Other translators of the text have not expressed such doubt.

<sup>8</sup> See Spallino, 'Introduzione', 48–50.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>10</sup> See Madeleine Fletcher, 'The Almohad Tawhid: Theology Which Relies on Logic', *Numerus* 38/1 (1991), 111.

Lentini (d. ca 1260).<sup>11</sup> Giacomo da Lentini appears to have adopted Arabic Aristotelian optical theory and psychology in the conception of love that he unfolds in his poems. In the sonnet with the starting line ‘Or come pote’, for example, Lentini understands love to be based first on vision; it is then transported to the heart, where the work of imaginative faculty takes place.<sup>12</sup> The Arabic as well as the Sicilian texts appear to have also impacted the writings of the Tuscan poets Chiaro Davanzati (d. 1304) and Dante Alighieri (d. 1321), whose works mention Lentini by his byname ‘notaro’, owing to the fact that he functioned as a notary at the court of Frederick II.<sup>13</sup> Dante also famously mentions Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rushd in his *Divina Comedia*, as is well-known.<sup>14</sup>

One important philosophical concept drawn upon in the poetry of the Sicilian school is the theory of the soul. Decoding Ibn Sab‘īn’s psychological and epistemological theory, thus his theory of the soul and his theory

<sup>11</sup> See Frede Jensen, ‘Scuola Poetica Siciliana’, in *Medieval Italy: An Encyclopedia*, vols 1–2, edited by Christopher Kleinhenz (New York: Routledge, 2004), 1018–20; Edoardo Gerlini, *The Heian Court Poetry as World Literature: From the Point of View of Early Italian Poetry* (Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2014), 114–17.

<sup>12</sup> See Dana E. Stewart, *The Arrow of Love: Optics, Gender, and Subjectivity in Medieval Love Poetry* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2003), 50–52. The specified poem can be found in Giacomo da Lentini, *The Complete Poetry of Giacomo da Lentini*, edited by Akash Kumar and Richard Lansing (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 114–15. For the Avicennian influence on the poetry of Giacomo da Lentini, see Richard Lansing’s ‘Introduction’ in the same volume, 3–16.

<sup>13</sup> See Francesco Carapezza, ‘Giacomo da Lentini’, in *Encyclopedia of Italian Literary Studies: A–J Index*, edited by Gaetana Marrone (New York: Routledge, 2007), 834. See also Noemi Ghetti, *L’Ombra di Cavalcanti e Dante* (Rome: L’Asino d’Oro Edizioni, 2010), 47–58.

<sup>14</sup> The research literature on the topic of Dante’s knowledge of, and access to, Arabic-Islamic philosophy is both widespread and controversial. For an orientation to the discussions, see the following works: Carmela Baffioni, ‘Aspetti delle cosmologie islamiche in Dante’, in *Il pensiero filosofico e teologico di Dante Alighieri*, edited by Alessandro Ghisalberti (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 2001), 103–22; Paul A. Cantor, ‘The Uncanonical Dante: The Divine Comedy and Islamic Philosophy’, *Philosophy and Literature* 20/1 (1996): 138–53; Gotthard Strohmaier, ‘Die angeblichen und die wirklichen orientalischen Quellen der “Divina Commedia”’, *Deutsches Dante-Jahrbuch* 68–9/1 (1994): 183–98; Gotthard Strohmaier, *Von Demokrit bis Dante: Die Bewahrung antiken Erbes in der arabischen Kultur* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1996), 449–50; and the excellent anthology by Jan M. Ziolkowski (ed.), *Dante and Islam* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015).

of knowledge, in *Al-Masā'il al-Siqilliyya* and in his other works allows us to obtain a better understanding of the philosophical knowledge held by Frederick II and his Sicilian contemporaries. In this respect, Ibn Sabīn can be understood as an important early figure bridging the divide between classical Arabic and medieval Latin thought. In addition to this work by Ibn Sabīn, his other work titled *Budd al-ārif* likely influenced the philosophical discourse that later developed in Italy and the rest of Europe.<sup>15</sup> These works contributed to the dissemination of Arabic Aristotelian philosophical psychology in medieval and early Renaissance Italian writing in which the Avicennian and Averroistic theories influenced not only the poets already mentioned, but also the works of philosophers such as Galeotto Marzio (d. ca 1497), Andrea Cattani da Imola (fl. late fifteenth/early sixteenth century) and even Marsilio Ficino (d. 1499).<sup>16</sup>

## 2. Ibn Sabīn's Discussion of the Soul

In *Al-Masā'il al-Siqilliyya*, Ibn Sabīn draws on the positions of ancient Greek philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, and Alexander of Aphrodisias, as well as Arabic thinkers such as Abū Naṣr Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Fārābī (d. ca 950), Abū ‘Alī al-Ḥusain b. ‘Abd Allāh Ibn Sīnā (also known as Avicenna, d. 1037), Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (d. 1111), Abū Bakr Muḥammad Ibn-Yahyā ibn aṣ-Ṣā’igh, or Ibn Bājja (also

<sup>15</sup> ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq Ibn-Ibrāhīm Ibn Sabīn, *Budd al-ārif*, edited by Georg Kattura (Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1979). For a discussion of the influence of the *Budd al-ārif* on the works of logic by Raimundus Lullus (d. ca 1315), see Anna Akasoy and Alexander Fidora, ‘Ibn Sabīn and Raimundus Lullus: The Question of the Arabic Sources of Lullus’ Logic Revisited’, in *Islamic Thought in the Middle Ages: Studies in Text, Transmission and Translation in Honour of Hans Daiber*, edited by Anna Akasoy and Wim Raven (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 434–59.

<sup>16</sup> Andrea Cattani da Imola composed a commentary on Aristotle’s *De Anima* that was inspired by Ibn Sīnā’s *Kitāb al-shifā’: Al-ṭabi‘iāt, al-nafs*, edited by J. Bakos, *Psychologie d’Ibn Sīna (Avicenne) d’après son oeuvre as-Sīfa*, 2 vols (Prague: Éditions de l’Académie Tchécoslovaque des Sciences, 1956). The work of the latter also appears to have impacted the theory of intellect that Cattani da Imola developed in his *Opus de intellectu et de causis mirabilium effectuum* (ca 1507). See Paola Zambelli, ‘L’Immaginazione e il suo potere: Da al-Kindi, al-Fārābī e Avicenna al Medioevo latino e al Rinascimento’, in *Orientalische Kultur und Europäisches Mittelalter*, edited by Albert Zimmermann and Ingrid Craemer-Ruegenberg (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1985), 202–6.

known as Avempace, d. 1138), and the already mentioned Ibn Rushd. Ibn Sab‘īn’s treatise is sub-divided into five major parts: theories of the eternity of the world, the divine sciences, the categories, the concept of the soul and an interpretation of a *hadīth*. The question has been raised about whether the last part containing the *hadīth* exegesis originally belonged to the manuscript and whether it was even authored by Ibn Sab‘īn himself. At the moment, there is no conclusive answer to this question.

In the fourth part of his *Al-Masā'il al-Siqilliyā*, Ibn Sab‘īn focuses on the philosophical conceptions of the soul. There, he makes explicit reference to the related psychological theories of Socrates (d. 399 BC), Plato (d. 346 BC), Aristotle (d. 323 BC), Alexander of Aphrodisias (fl. 200 BC), Theophrast (d. ca 287 BC) and Themistios (d. 388), as well as some Arabic-Islamic authors such as the rather unknown Anbiṭās al-Ankalī, al-Fārābī and Ibn Bājjā. Most probably, Ibn Sab‘īn engaged directly with Ibn Bājjā’s *Kitāb al-Nafs* and quotes from its discussion of motion. Furthermore, there is evidence that he might even have known Ibn Bājjā’s commentaries of Aristotle.<sup>17</sup> Influences of other Arabic-Islamic thinkers not mentioned explicitly are to be found as well – for example, Ibn Sīnā, al-Ghazālī, or Ibn as-Sīd al-Baṭalyusī.

In *Al-Masā'il al-Siqilliyā*’s chapter on the soul, as in the other chapters in the work, Ibn Sab‘īn’s doxography of the theories of other authors culminates in the development of a psychological and epistemological concept of his own. His discussion concentrates on theories of the soul, in general, but looks specifically at the theme through a classical philosophical lens, which has simultaneous relevance for religious discussions of the immortality of the soul. Ibn Sab‘īn examines first the claim that the question of the immortality of the soul is an illegitimate question if the concrete, immortal part of the soul is not defined and no differentiation between particular and universal souls is undertaken. In order to approach the question at hand, he names five parts of the soul which must be investigated and which, at the same time, constitute his concept of soul: the vegetative (*nabātiyya*), the animal (*hayawāniyya*), the rational (*nātiqa*), the wise or philosophical (*bikmiyya*) and the prophetic (*nabawiyya*) soul. The first two parts he clearly defines as not immortal and,

<sup>17</sup> See Anna Akasoy, *Philosophie und Mystik in der späten Almohadenzeit: Die Sizilianischen Fragen des Ibn Sab‘īn* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 259–62.

based on this, claims to be less important for the discussion at hand. However, apparently trying to incorporate a scheme that proves to be rather strongly inspired by the Aristotelian tradition, Ibn Sabīn simultaneously describes a tripartite soul consisting of a vegetative, animal and rational part.

Ibn Sabīn's enumeration of the parts of the soul strongly corresponds with the accounts of his philosophical predecessors al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā and al-Ghazālī, as well as those of Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd Allāh Ibn Muḥammad Ibn as-Sīd al-Baṭalyusī (d. 1127). Anna Akasoy even argues that Ibn Sabīn owes his understanding of the soul mainly to the account of al-Baṭalyusī in his *Kitāb al-Hadā’iq* (Book of Circles). However, concentrating merely on the influence of the account of al-Baṭalyusī overshadows the fact that Ibn Sabīn's psychological concept of the soul has much in common with al-Ghazālī, although Akasoy acknowledges Ibn Sabīn's knowledge of this author elsewhere.<sup>18</sup> Ibn Sabīn generally takes a rather critical stance towards Ibn Sīnā's works. In his major philosophical work titled *Budd al-‘arif*, which Ibn Sabīn composed at a young age, he accuses Ibn Sīnā of misinterpreting Aristotle's works and producing a mere compilation of Plato's account.<sup>19</sup> Thus, it is not astonishing that he neither explicitly mentions Ibn Sīnā's psychological approach nor does it seem to have impacted his own discussion of the soul directly. Regarding al-Fārābī's account, the situation is different, which is evident not only upon closer comparison of both approaches but also due to the fact that Ibn Sabīn presents al-Fārābī in the chapter on the soul as the *falāsifa* who arrived at truthful considerations about the eternity of the soul. He formulates this as follows:

<sup>18</sup> Akasoy, *Philosophie und Mystik in der späten Almohadenzeit*, 148 and 230–48. Marc Geofroy has repeated this claim: Marc Geoffroy, ‘Abū Muḥammad ibn al-Sīd al-Baṭalyusī’, in *Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy: Philosophy between 500 and 1500*, vol. 1, edited by Henrik Lagerlund (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011), 149. For an Italian translation of *Kitāb al-Hadā’iq*, see Abū Muḥammad ibn al-Sīd al-Baṭalyusī, *Il libro dei cerchi* (*Kitāb al-Hadā’iq*), translated and introduced by Massimo Jevolella (Milan: Archè, 1984). For a general introduction to the life and work of al-Baṭalyusī, see Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ‘Abu-l-‘Abbās Shams-al-Dīn Ibn Khallikān, *Kitāb Wafayāt al-a‘yān wa-anbā’ abnā’ az-zamān: Ibn Khallikan’s Biographical Dictionary*, translated by William MacGuckin de Slane (Paris: Oriental Translation Fund of Great Britain and Ireland, 1843), 61–63.

<sup>19</sup> Ibn Sabīn, *Budd al-‘arif*, 144. For a discussion of the related passage, see Dimitri Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition: Introduction to Reading Avicenna's Philosophical Works*, 2nd rev. ed., including an inventory of Avicenna's authentic works (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 125–26.

From the philosophers of Islam, al-Fārābī, may God rest his soul, who was confused about it [the soul] and varied his words and his convictions about it in three subjects, withdrew from this [the confusion] afterwards and abstained and said the truth and turned to the way of mysticism [Sufism].<sup>20</sup>

The fact that Ibn Sabīn describes al-Fārābī as having arrived at right insights after a turn towards Sufism is important in Ibn Sabīn's evaluation of the work of the latter. This says less about al-Fārābī's actual philosophical thought and more about the epistemological notions that Ibn Sabīn held. For Ibn Sabīn, Sufism was an ideal intellectual development for all humans, as it emphasised the combination of rational philosophical knowledge and mystical knowledge to achieve divine insight, as will be evident upon further investigation of the concept.<sup>21</sup> One might add here that al-Ghazālī expresses a similar conviction in his famous application of the mirror metaphor in his *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*, namely in the book titled "Ajā'ib al-qalb", where he explains the necessity of an interplay between rational philosophical knowledge and intuitive inspired knowledge in order to achieve truthful insights into the divine.<sup>22</sup> Ibn Sabīn appears to have been familiar with this account and with other works of the author, even though he pretends to keep a critical distance from al-Ghazālī's thought. In his *Budd al-ārif*, Ibn Sabīn refers to al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā'*, particularly to the *Sharḥ ajā'ib al-qalb* and the following three other works from al-Ghazālī's oeuvre: *Ma'ārij al-quds fī madārij ma'rifat al-nafs*, *Mishkāt al-anwār* and *Kīmiyā' al-sa'āda*.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, Ibn Sabīn seems to have

<sup>20</sup> Ibn Sabīn, *Correspondance philosophique*, 74.

ومن فلاسفة الإسلام الفارابي رحمة الله اضطرب فيها وتتنوع كلامه واعتقاده عليها في ثلاثة مواطن ورجع عن ذلك بعد ذلك وزهد وقال بالحق وما إلى طريق التصوف.

<sup>21</sup> Yousef Casewit has argued that Ibn Sabīn, along with Ibn 'Arabī (d. 1240) and Tilimsānī (d. 1291), even though being convinced that Sufism was one important way of thought, was nevertheless not convinced that it led to perfection among human beings. See Yousef Casewit, *The Mystics of al-Andalus: Ibn Barrājān and Islamic Thought in the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 73.

<sup>22</sup> See Abū-Ḥāmid Muḥammad Ibn-Muhammad al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-Dīn* (Cairo: Dār Iḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabiyya, 1957), vol. 3: 21.

<sup>23</sup> Ibn Sabīn, *Budd al-ārif*, 144–45. See Akasoy, *Philosophie und Mystik in der späten Almoravidenzeit*, 230–31, 323; Frank Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 200.

shared a rather critical attitude towards al-Ghazālī with other Andalusian authors, including Ibn Rushd and Abū Bakr ibn al-‘Arabī (d. 1148).<sup>24</sup> Yet, Ibn Sabīn’s psychological account appears to remain strongly indebted to al-Fārābī and al-Ghazālī, which becomes manifest upon closer investigation.

Ibn Sabīn starts his analysis with a discussion of the vegetative and animal parts of the soul. He classifies the vegetative soul as being both the libidinal and the preserving part of a human being, with the conserving function being fulfilled by nutrition and reproduction. According to him, the vegetative soul is supposed to have nine faculties, of which Ibn Sabīn actually names the following eight: the attracting (*jādhiba*), the seizing (*māsaka*), the digesting (*hādīma*), the nutritive (*ghadhiya*) and the defending or resisting (*dāfa‘a*) capacities, as well as the capacity of growth (*munammiya*), the form-bearing (*musawwira*) capacity and the capacity of discernment (*tamyīz*). By way of function, Ibn Sabīn’s vegetative soul corresponds partly to al-Fārābī’s description of the nutritive faculty (*al-quwwa għadhiya*) of the soul. Al-Fārābī applied an Aristotelian understanding of the soul in the tenth chapter of his famous and influential *Mabādi’ ārā’ ahl al-Madīna al-Fādila*. In talking about the faculties of the soul, al-Fārābī mentions the nutritive (*al-quwwa għadhiya*), the sensual (*al-quwwa al-hāssa*), the imaginative (*al-quwwa al-mutakħayyila*), the rational (*al-quwwa nātiqa*) and the appetitive faculties (*al-quwwa al-nazawiya*).<sup>25</sup> Regarding Ibn Sabīn’s discussion of the animal soul (*al-nafs al-ħayawāni*), this appears to correspond partly to al-Fārābī’s concept of the sensual faculty (*al-quwwa al-hāssa*) of the human soul. Ibn Sabīn describes the animal soul as the part of the soul from which desires arise and in which sense-perception takes place.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> For this criticism, see Delina Serrano Ruano, ‘Why did the Scholars of al-Andalus Distrust al-Ghazālī? Ibn Rushd Al-Jadd’s *Fatwā* on Awliyā’ Allāh’, *Der Islam: Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kultur des Islamischen Orients* 83/1 (2006): 137–56.

<sup>25</sup> See Abū-Naṣr Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Fārābī, *Al-Farabi on the Perfect State: Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī’s Mabādi’ Ārā’ ahl al-Madīna al-Fādila*, introduced, translated and commented by Richard Walzer (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), vol. 10: 164–70.

<sup>26</sup> Ibn Sabīn, *Correspondance philosophique*, 62: ‘It is possible that it may be the vegetative soul, the animal soul, or the rational or wise soul, or the blessed Prophetic soul’ (*yuhħtamalu an takuna al-nafs al-nabātiyya wa al-ħaywaniyya aw al-nātiqa, aw al-hikmiyya, aw al-nabawiyya al-mukarrama*).

Even though the animal part of the soul appears as a fallible and corrupted part of the soul, Ibn Sabīn devotes a great part of his chapter to its discussion. He presents the opinions of various philosophers on this topic, pointing out differences between the psychological concepts of Aristotle and Alexander of Aphrodisias. At the centre of this doxography stands Aristotle's *De Anima*, which was the ancient Greek text of philosophical tradition most influential on classical Arabic writers. Ibn Sabīn here gives the impression that he had at least basic knowledge of the Aristotelian psychological and epistemological approach. However, given his discussion mentioned above, it seems that Ibn Sabīn's related argument was not based on a first-hand reading of *De Anima*, but rather was a mediated perception of it, achieved probably by reading works by authors from the Peripatetic school of Baghdad, particularly the works of al-Fārābī.<sup>27</sup>

Interestingly, Ibn Sabīn assigns little space to the examination of the imaginative faculty of the soul in his account. However, he does discuss some of the features and capacities of the general human imagination in the context of the animal soul. In contrast to al-Fārābī, Ibn Sabīn does not include the imaginative part of the soul in his itemisation of the five parts of the soul. He only states that the animal part of the soul may contain the capacity for imagination, even though it is devoid of intellectual comprehension. He formulates this as follows:

[The animal part of the soul] has intentional and chosen movement. In it are the five senses, but in some [animal souls] some senses might be missing, and in general pain and lust belong to it. Some of it also has the imagination, the estimation, the familiarity with man and the confidence in him and the understanding of the signs and the refinements of some of the practical arts according to the imagination and the estimative visualisation, but not due to differentiation and intellectual understanding.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> For more on the Peripatetic school of Baghdad, see Cleophea Ferrari, 'La scuola aristotelica di Bagdad', in *Storia della filosofia nell'Islam medievale*, vol. 1, edited by Cristina D'Ancona (Torino: Piccola Biblioteca Einaudi, 2005), 352–80.

<sup>28</sup> Ibn Sabīn, *Correspondance philosophique*, 66.

ولها الحركة الإرادية والاختيارية وفيها الحواس الخمس إلا البعض منها مما ينقصه بعض الحواس والجملة لها الألم واللذة، ولبعضها التخيل والوهم والأنس بالإنسان والركون إليه وفهم الإشارة وإحكام بعض الصنائع العملية بحسب الخيال والتصور الوهمي لا بالتمييز والنفهم العقلي.

The above description shows that Ibn Sabīn includes none of the functions that classical Arabic philosophical accounts usually also connected to the imagination, be it the capacity to store (*bifz*) impressions from sense-perceptions – that is the sensibles, the recomposition of these impressions (*tarkīb*), the imitation of impressions (*muḥākāh*), or memory (*dhikr*) and reflection (*tafakkur*).<sup>29</sup> However, it is evident from the second chapter of the *Masā'il al-Šiqilliyā*, ‘Principles and Divine Things’ (‘al-Mabādī wa al-Ilāhiyyāt’), that he was familiar with these related concepts. There, he gives a short summary of philosophical psychology as a science discussed in various philosophical accounts and writes that ancient philosophers spoke of a five-part soul (vegetative, animal, rational, wise and prophetic) with the following faculties:

They saw that it has inner and outer faculties like the sense-perception and the sensible faculty and the natural faculty, and the [faculties of] estimation and imagination and memory and thinking and desiring, and wrathful forces as well as those which move the limbs.<sup>30</sup>

The mentioning of the faculty of estimation in this context and in the chapter on the soul, a feature that was very typical of Ibn Sīnā’s psychology, might indicate that Ibn Sabīn knew the Aristotelian concept of the soul via the Arabic philosophical tradition. Memory (*dhikr*) is no longer integrated in his own psychological theory by the fourth chapter of the *Masā'il al-Šiqilliyā*, although the capacity for reflection (*fikr*) is discussed in the context of the rational soul. Instead, the concept of the quinquepartite soul, with its mentioned parts, is taken over verbatim from the introduction of the book to the chapter on the soul. The idea of the imagination as a mediating faculty between sense-perception and the rational faculty – which was developed by al-Fārābī, who said that ‘the faculty of representation is intermediate between the faculty of sense and the rational faculty’<sup>31</sup> – is also never openly expressed

<sup>29</sup> The first three are mentioned, for example, by Al-Fārābī: Al-Fārābī, *Al-Madīna al-fāḍila*, chap. XIV, para. 2, p. 210.

<sup>30</sup> Ibn Sabīn, *Correspondance philosophique*, 33.

ورأوا أنها قوى باطنية وظاهرة كالحس والقوة الحسائية والقوى الطبيعية والوهم والخيال والذكر والفكير والقوى الشهوانية والغريبية والتي تحرك الأعضاء.

<sup>31</sup> Al-Fārābī, *Al-Madīna al-fāḍila*, chap. XIV, para. 1, p. 210.

والقوة المتخيلة متوسطة بين الحاسنة وبين الناطقة

in Ibn Sabīn's account. However, he clearly describes the psychological capacity to abstract forms from material things experienced by the means of sense-perception as an imaginative process:

The soul divests the material things from their matter and conceptualises [taṣawwur] them in its self in the absence of the forms and the visualised [muṣawwira] things and in that manner are the things that the soul contemplates on in the state of sleep when they are divested from matter, imagined in the soul [mutakhayyila fi al-nafs] and like this the things which visualises the soul in the state of sleep when they are abstracted from matter, imagined in the soul.<sup>32</sup>

For Ibn Sabīn, these processes of abstraction take place during sleep. Thus, the functioning of the imagination appears to be restricted here to periods of sleep. However, Ibn Sabīn fails to elaborate this point any further.

Ibn Sabīn subsumes certain capacities of the imaginative faculty (discussed in the texts of al-Fārābī and other Arabic-Islamic authors regarding the specificities of the prophetic imagination and its epistemological status) under his concept of the prophetic soul, which he believes to belong to the rational part of the soul. Ibn Sabīn's subsumption of the prophetic imagination under the concept of the prophetic soul in his account indicates a strong familiarity with al-Ghazālī's approach, as will become evident upon further investigation.

Ibn Sabīn describes the rational part of the soul as the place in which the major intellectual activities and processes of knowledge generation take place. For Ibn Sabīn, thinking (*fikr*), deliberation (*rawīya*) and scientific consideration fall under the psychological and epistemological human capacities undertaken by the rational soul. He formulates this as follows: 'The rational soul is the one in which thinking/reflection, deliberation and love for science and knowledge is to be found. And it is the one which disposes of the syllogistic and the non-syllogistic arts'.<sup>33</sup> This description is still very much in line with

<sup>32</sup> Ibn Sabīn, *Correspondance philosophique*, 68.

النفس تجرب الأشياء المادية عن موادها وتصورها في ذاتها مغيب الصور والأشياء المchorة وكذلك الأشياء التي تتصدرها النفس في حال النوم إنما هي متجردة عن المادة متخيلة في النفس.

<sup>33</sup> Ibn Sabīn, *Correspondance philosophique*, 71.

القول على النفس الناطقة النفس الناطقة هي التي فيها الفكر والرواية ومحبة العلم والمعرفة وهي التي تملك الصنائع القياسية وغير القياسية

al-Fārābī's or Ibn Sīnā's psychological approaches, as it recalls an Aristotelian repertoire of which those very authors made use. However, Ibn Sabīn's further discussion of the rational soul appears to deviate from that found in the texts mentioned, since he speaks of prophetic knowledge and the capacity for divine inspiration (*ilhām*) as integral parts of the rational soul. He describes the rational as follows:

In this soul, the sublime forms and the divine prophetic faculty manifest themselves. It receives the revelation, the inspiration, the connection with the active intellect, the rectification of the souls' deviation from the truth and guidance of the human, until he acts like he ought to act and does what he ought to because of what he ought to in the moment he ought to.<sup>34</sup>

Interestingly, Ibn Sabīn's integration of the prophetic aspect into the rational part of the soul appears to be novel with respect to the *falāsifa* conceptions mentioned. Authors within an Aristotelian-Arabic intellectual tradition usually consider prophetic insights to be part of the imaginary soul, at least as far as al-Fārābī's and Ibn Sīnā's psychological discussions are concerned. Prophetic cognition is not discussed at all in Ibn Bājjā's *Kitāb al-nafs*, neither in the context of the imagination nor of the rational faculty.<sup>35</sup> Al-Ghazālī, however, further elaborated the concepts of his predecessors. In the last three discussions of his *Tahāfut al-falāsifa* (The Incoherence of the Philosophers), especially the eighteenth discussion, he appears to take a theologically critical stance towards the psychological theories of al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā.<sup>36</sup> Al-Ghazālī incorporated

<sup>34</sup> Ibn Sabīn, *Correspondance philosophique*, 71–72.

وفي هذه النفس ظهرت الصورة الشريفة والقوة الإلهية النبوية المعمظمة وتلقى الوحي الكريم والإلهام والاتصال بالعقل الفعال وتقديم النفوس المنحرفة عن الحق وارشاد الإنسان حتى يفعل ما ينبغي له أن يفعل والذي ينبغي من أجل ما ينبغي في الوقت الذي ينبغي (...).

<sup>35</sup> Muḥammad Ibn-Yahyā Ibn Bājjā, *Kitāb al-nafs*, edited by Muḥammad Şagır Hāsan Maşumī (Damascus: Matbū'at Al-Majma' Al-'Ilmi Al-Ārabi Bi-Dimashq, 1960), especially 90–120. For a detailed discussion of Ibn Bājjā's psychological and epistemological project, see David Wirmer's excellent in-depth study, *Vom Denken der Natur zur Natur des Denkens: Ibn Bāggas Theorie der Potenz als Grundlegung der Psychologie* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014).

<sup>36</sup> Abū-Ḥāmid Muḥammad Ibn-Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers/Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, translated, introduced and annotated by Michael E. Marmura (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 2000), especially 178–200.

the terminology and repertoire of the psychological philosophy of the *falāsifa*, and thus a Neoplatonic-Aristotelian approach, into his own project. In his book *Mishkāt al-anwār* (The Niche of Lights), which he wrote late in life, he introduces a fifth part of the soul that goes beyond the rational and deliberating soul; he calls this the ‘holy prophetic spirit’ (*al-rūḥ al-qudsī al-nabawī*). Al-Ghazālī describes it as follows:

The fifth is the holy prophetic spirit that [is] singled out for the prophets and some of the friends of God. Within it are disclosed flashes of the unseen, the properties of the next world, and some of the knowledge of the dominion of the heavens and the earth, or, rather, some of the lordly knowledge that the rational and the reflective spirits cannot reach.<sup>37</sup>

One can trace this terminology in Ibn Sabīn. However, in Ibn Sabīn’s approach, there is a new application of the concept of the prophetic soul. Whether the passage where it appears is to be understood as an attempt to rationalise the inspirational and the prophetic capacities is unclear, given that it is short and does not constitute a fully developed psychological approach. It might have been an attempt on his part to increase the credibility and authoritativeness of prophetic visions. This seems plausible, considering that Ibn Sabīn ascribes a higher status to prophecy than to rational deliberations in his *Budd al-‘ārif*.<sup>38</sup> This can also be substantiated by a further analysis of the related passage in *Al-Masā'il al-Siqilliyā*.

Another remarkable feature of Ibn Sabīn’s discussion of the soul in *Al-Masā'il al-Siqilliyā* is the fact that the rational prophetic soul does not receive its insights from the active intellect. The role and influence of the active intellect for prophetic cognition had been part of the psychological approaches

<sup>37</sup> Abū-Ḥāmid Muḥammad Ibn-Muhammad al-Ghazālī, *The Niche of Lights/Mishkāt al-anwār*, edited and translated by David Buchman (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1998), vol. 2: 37.

الخامس الروح القدس النبوى الذى يختص به الأنبياء وبعض الأولياء، وفيه تتجلى لواحات الغيب وأحكام الآخرة وجملة من معارف ملوك السموات والأرض، بل من المعرفات الربانية التي يقصر دونها الروح العقلى والفكري.

<sup>38</sup> Anna Ayşe Akasoy, ‘The Muhaqqiq as Mahdi? Ibn Sabīn and Mahdism among Andalusian Mystics in the 12th/13th Centuries’, in *Endzeiten: Eschatologie in den Monotheistischen Weltreligionen*, edited by Wolfram Brandes and Felicitas Schmieder (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008), 320.

of al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā. This doctrine was always connected to the problem that the active intellect can be understood as a direct divine voice only with difficulty, since it is the last intellect in a hierarchy of intellects coming into being by emanation or creation. Therefore, a theological interpretation of it could, at best, interpret it as an angel speaking to man. The latter was an interpretative road that was undertaken by Ibn Sīnā, who equated the archangel Gabriel with the active intellect in his *Hayy ibn Yaqzān*. The interpretation mentioned was, at least partly, accepted by Ibn Sīnā's later Persian commentators and by al-Ghazālī.<sup>39</sup> Ibn Sabīn appears to offer a solution to this theological problem by arguing that the rational prophetic soul communicates directly with the first one without mediation – that is, without the mediation of the active intellect. He writes on this question:

Whenever the wise soul cannot be ordained, the prophetic soul takes the order from the first truth [ . . . ] without mediator or composition, not in speech and not in research. The wise soul mostly [ . . . ] [focuses on] the consideration of the universals of things. In sum, it is [because of] this soul, I mean the rational [soul], [that] the human is called [a] rational animal, and by it, God [ . . . ] has taught the explanation.<sup>40</sup>

Adopting this argumentation, Ibn Sabīn can argue for a form of direct divine revelation and, in this way, avoid the theological paradoxes connected with the concept of a revelation informed by the active intellect and, by this, a mediator.

Nevertheless, Ibn Sabīn still maintains the conviction, also to be found in al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā, that the active intellect initiates or activates the potential intellectual capacities existent in human beings. In addition, he also follows the Aristotelian epistemological scheme of his predecessors, that the human intellect is developed through a passage from the potential passive intellect to

<sup>39</sup> For the interpretation of the intellect theory as angelology in Ibn Sīnā and his recipients, see Henry Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), especially 48–49.

<sup>40</sup> Ibn Sabīn, *Correspondance philosophique*, 72.  
وَكُلَّمَا لَا تقدِّرُ النَّفْسُ الْحَكِيمَةَ عَلَيْهِ فَإِنَّ هَذِهِ النَّفْسَ التَّبَوِيَّةَ تَأْخُذُ الْأَمْرَ مِنَ الْأَعْلَى حَقَّ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ وَتَقْسِيسَ وَالْكَلْمَةَ الْمُعْظَمَةَ وَالذَّاتِ الْعُلِيَّةِ الْمُنْزَهَةِ بِغَيْرِ وَاسْطَةٍ وَلَا تَرْكِيبٍ وَلَا بِالْقُولِ وَلَا بِالْبَحْثِ وَالنَّفْسُ الْحَكِيمَةُ مَا لَهَا أَكْثَرُ مِنَ النَّظَرِ فِي كُلِّيَّاتِ الْأَشْيَاءِ خَاصَّةً وَهَذِهِ النَّفْسُ بِالْجَمْلَةِ أَعْنَى النَّاطِقَةِ الَّتِي بِهَا قِيلَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ حَيْوَانٌ يَعْقُلُ وَبِهَا عَلِمَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ الْبَيَانَ.

an actual intellect. This intellectual part of the soul he denotes as substance (*jawhar*), and it is this substance that is considered the essential feature of a human being. Ibn Sabīn describes the process of the intellectual development of human beings as follows: ‘When we take a look at the human being in childhood, he does not know and think rationally and visualise, [but] then he is brought to perception and cognition until he becomes a scientist, a sage, a prophet and a messenger’.<sup>41</sup> Again, this passage appears to allude to and emphasise Ibn Sabīn’s epistemological ideal of a unification of rational and mystical insights and knowledge acquisition. The apparent ideal consists of a human being also developing the prophetic part of his rational soul. Whether or not this path theoretically remains open to all human beings or depends on a specific divine grace is not further discussed by the author.

Another notable aspect of Ibn Sabīn’s account is the fact that he substantiates his argumentation for the immortality of the soul as a simple, independent, spiritual, non-temporal substance not only with Arabic Islamic texts or texts of classical Greek philosophy, but also with the major Jewish and Christian source texts: the Torah (*al-Tawrāh*), the Gospels (*al-Injīl*), the Psalms (*al-Zabūr*) and revealed texts (*Subūf*)<sup>42</sup> in general. He writes in this context:

What I mentioned here to you comes from the translators and we do not say that it is God’s true and believed speech [ . . . ] But certainly, we have to say that it is wisdom and a truth as a concept and as a significance. And all this is subject to persuasion and affability and nothing else. As for the philosophers, for this they have composed a number of writings that cannot be counted and they are the keystone of their [writings] and on their attainment rotates every one of them and because of them there are the three sciences and researches – logic, physics and divine [sciences] – and for them they are the ladder of ascent to truth.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Ibn Sabīn, *Correspondance philosophique*, 74.

إذا لحظنا الإنسان في حال طفولته لا يعلم ولا يعقل ولا يتصور ثم ينتقل بادراته و معارفه حتى يصير عالماً و حكيمًا ونبياً ورسولاً.

<sup>42</sup> Patrizia Spallino explains that the term *Subūf* usually refers to Mosaic and Abrahamic texts in Qur’anic writings. See her comments in Ibn Sabīn, *Le questioni siciliane*, 196.

<sup>43</sup> Ibn Sabīn, *Correspondance philosophique*, 80.

وهذا الذي ذكرته له إنما هو من المترجمين ولا نقول إنه كلام الله الصادق المصدق عز وجل ولا بد لكنني نقول به إنّه حكمة وحق المفهوم والمدلول هذا كلّه إنما هو في معرض الإقناع والتأنيس لا غير وأما الفلسفة ففهم في ذلك من التوالييف جملة لا تعد وهي القطب عندهم وعلى تفصيلها يدور كل واحد منهم ومن أجلها كانت العلوم والبحوث الثلاثة المنطقية والطبيعية والإلهية وهي سلم المراجعة عندهم للحق.

With this formulation, the teachings about the soul from the different religious and intellectual traditions mentioned become a shared, universal truth. In addition, the theme of the soul, be it regarding its knowledge or its immortality, becomes the core undertaking of all intellectual endeavour.

Ibn Sabīn's inclusion of varied religious and intellectual traditions may be symbolic of the type of transcultural knowledge transfer that was occurring at the time in his culturally diverse Andalusian environment. However, it is also worth considering that Ibn Sabīn adopted this as an argumentative strategy suited for addressing his intended audience, namely Frederick II and his court. Referring to Jewish, Christian, Islamic and Greek sources allowed Ibn Sabīn to address the entire intercultural community existent at this court. It also helped to underline the claim towards universality that was implicit in his approach. This is supported by the fact that Ibn Sabīn alludes to different intellectual traditions, including Aristotelian and Hermetic philosophy, Sufism and other religions in his *Budd al-‘ārif*.<sup>44</sup> Ibn Sabīn is able to argue for his findings as universally true convictions by proving, in the *Masā'il al-Siqilliyā*, that his line of thought is not only compatible with, but can also be found in at least the four traditions mentioned. Interestingly, a similar kind of argumentative proceeding is used by later Italian Renaissance philosophers.<sup>45</sup>

### 3. Conclusion

In Ibn Sabīn's account of the soul and the related theory of intellect, we can see an amalgamation of his predecessors' Arabic philosophy (for example, of al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, al Ghazālī). He develops his concept following a

<sup>44</sup> Vincent J. Cornell argues that this form of interconfessionalism is typical of Ibn Sabīn's thought. See Vincent J. Cornell, 'The All-Comprehensive Circle (*al-Iḥāṭa*): Soul, Intellect, and the Oneness of Existence in the Doctrine of Ibn Sabīn', in *Sufism and Theology*, edited by Ayman Shihadeh (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 31–34.

<sup>45</sup> Take, for example, Pico della Mirandola's discussion of a universal truth content of Christian, Islamic, Judaic and Greek thought in his famous *De hominis dignitate* (*Oration on the Dignity of Man*, composed in 1486). For similarities between al-Ghazālī's and della Mirandola's account in general, see Craig Truglia, 'Al-Ghazali and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola on the Question of Human Freedom and the Chain of Being', *Philosophy East and West* 60/2 (2010): 143–66.

Neoplatonic-Aristotelian theory, making strong reference to al-Fārābī. This is precisely true when it comes to the theory of the passive and active intellect. However, one can also observe the influence of Ibn Sīnā's and al-Ghazālī's psychology. Al-Ghazālī's account might have been particularly important to Ibn Sabīn because they had a shared interest in the contribution of mystical, intuitive knowledge to perfect knowledge.

Ibn Sabīn's attempt to merge Aristotelian epistemology with religious thought in the description of the prophetic capacities of the rational soul is remarkable. It is also astonishing that the insights about the rational prophetic soul are not obtained from the active intellect but from the first intellect, which appears as an argument for a direct and non-mediated revelation – namely, via the active intellect. That Ibn Sabīn's account drew upon different monotheistic and philosophical traditions directly and represented his formulated concept as universally true underlines the transcultural origins and intentions of the work. This might very well have contributed to its readability in Sicilian and later Italian culture.

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# **Part 3**

## **SICILY AND ITS TEXTILE AND ARTISTIC TRADITIONS**



# 7

## COMMON THREADS: WOMEN AND THE MAKING OF FĀTIMID AND NORMAN TEXTILES

*Delia Cortese*

Sometime in the 1170s, the French poet Chrétien de Troyes (fl. 1165–1180) wrote *Yvain, le chevalier au lion*, a text in Old French that belongs to the Arthurian cycle of romance literature. At a certain point in the narrative, we are shown the hero, Yvain, entering the sinister Castle of Ill Adventure. Once inside, Yvain is described as seeing 300 emaciated and starving girls held in captivity and dressed in rags, all sewing and stitching away with silk and gold threads. Prompted by Yvain, the female overseer of these girls tells him about their miserable working conditions, amounting to enforced hard labour all days and most nights, to make beautiful, costly silks for their master. In spite of this, we are told, they did not have any money to buy clothes for themselves, nor did they have enough to eat, for they were paid a pittance and fed only the odd crust of bread while their master grew rich from selling the silk that they wove. The narrative does not explain who these female silk workers were, except to say that they came from an unspecified Isle of Maidens.<sup>1</sup>

As works of fantasy, romance literature can be easily dismissed as unreliable documentation of a given social reality. However, the passage describing Yvain's encounter with the 300 female silk workers not only greatly contrasts

<sup>1</sup> The tale was paraphrased from Ruth Harwood Cline's translation of Chrétien de Troyes' poem *Yvain or the Knight with the Lion* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1975), 147–51.

with the tone and style of the rest of the poem but also contains many factual details to merit the premise that a level of realism must have been at play in this section of the text. Such a premise has led several scholars of French literature and European medieval studies to investigate where and how Chrétien de Troyes might have found inspiration for this specific adventure of Yvain.<sup>2</sup> By the twelfth century, the practice of women weaving and embroidering silk was well established in France, but such work was carried out as a cottage industry. Nothing existed in twelfth-century Northern Europe that could mirror the industrial scale of production described by Chrétien. Industrial-style textile production had only developed by the fourteenth century in Italy, in Lucca, as a form of organised labour that soon spread northwards into the rest of Europe. When looking south, however, one finds in Norman Sicily reported practices in silk textile production that could be regarded as credible sources of inspiration for the story of Yvain.<sup>3</sup> No doubt, stories of the Normans in Sicily would have reached France, and the Norman kings are known to have had a textile atelier within the royal palace in Sicily.<sup>4</sup>

Inspired by Yvain's story, in this chapter I will focus on occasions that brought medieval women close to the production and consumption of textiles. In light of this, I will examine the broader Mediterranean context in which textile production took shape in Sicily under Islamic rule, an industry that came to be embraced by the Normans. I will discuss the commonalities between practices found in Fāṭimid Egypt and those in Norman Sicily that are reflective of standards typically found across the Mediterranean in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The academic literature on Islamic textiles in general,

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Robert A. Hall Jr, 'The Silk Factory in Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain*', *Modern Language Notes* 56/6 (1941): 418–22. Jane E. Burns, *Sea of Silk: A Textile Geography of Women's Work in Medieval French Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009). In the second chapter of her study, Burns provides a comprehensive analysis of this theme and the literature associated with it.

<sup>3</sup> Hall, 'The Silk Factory in Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain*'.

<sup>4</sup> Alexander Metcalfe, *Muslims and Christians in Norman Sicily: Arabic Speakers and the End of Islam* (Abingdon: Routledge Curzon, 2003), 110. Royal palaces in Sicily had their own small-scale silk workshops. It has been argued that silk was prepared in the royal treasury (U. Monneret de Villard, 'La tessitura palermitana sotto i Normanni e i suoi rapporti con l'arte bizantina', in *Miscellanea Giovanni Mercati* [Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1946], vol. 3: 464–71).

and on the Fātimid production in particular, is vast but tends to fall into the following main categories: histories of textiles, works of art history and publications that focus on technical aspects of textile production. In contrast, little attention is paid to the socio-historical dimension that was at the heart of the making of fabrics.<sup>5</sup> Here, I seek to overcome disciplinary boundaries by combining a variety of sources to zoom in on women, who often unfairly have been deemed unworthy of investigation, even though they appear in the source material on the social history of the medieval Islamic world.

In 1147, an army sent by King Roger II (d. 1154) raided Thebes and Corinth, took Greek and Jewish workers captive and transported them to Palermo to work in the silk factories. The intake of this workforce was instrumental in adding Byzantine and Jewish motifs and techniques into the rich tapestry of the Islamic tradition that had defined Sicilian textiles. Roger's invasion of Thebes and his plunder of its silk workers were known in the West, as they were recorded by Odo of Deuil (d. 1162) in his *Croisade de Louis, roi de France*, among other sources.<sup>6</sup> It has been suggested that it was these historical events that inspired the story of Yvain and the imprisoned female silk workers. Plausible as this might be, there is evidence against this hypothesis. First, the Greeks and the Jews captured in 1147 were a mix of men and women, and most tasks were known to have been performed by men.<sup>7</sup> Second, whenever mention is made in the sources of superintendents of textile production in Norman Sicily, they are indicated as being male, as witnessed by the Valencian writer Ibn Jubayr (d. 1217) in 1184 in Palermo.<sup>8</sup> These and other discrepancies tell us that we must therefore go further in time and space to find practices that resemble even more comprehensively those described by Chrétien. While by the twelfth century Sicily had become an important centre for the distribution

<sup>5</sup> Focused on silk, notable contributions to the economic and social aspects of textile production are David Jacoby's 'Silk Economics and Cross-Cultural Artistic Interaction: Byzantium, the Muslim World, and the Christian West', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 58 (2004): 197–240, and, on medieval Sicily in particular, Timothy Smit's 'Weaving Connections: Sicilian Silk in the Medieval Mediterranean', *Textile History* 52 (2021): 5–22.

<sup>6</sup> Noted in Burns, *Sea of Silk*, 43.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>8</sup> [Ibn Jubayr], *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr*, translated and edited by R. J. C. Broadhurst (London: Jonathan Cape, 1952), 341.

and production of textiles, particularly silk, their manufacture on the island – contrary to common belief – had not been inaugurated by the Normans. Sicily was not a social, cultural or economic vacuum when the Normans invaded; in fact, the Normans inherited styles and techniques in the production of textiles and more that had long since been in operation in Sicily. It is generally agreed that the pro-‘Abbāsid Sunnī Aghlabids who ruled over vast territories in North Africa in the ninth century had introduced sericulture, among other things, in Sicily following their conquest of the island.<sup>9</sup> It was, however, during the Fātimid period of Sicilian history that Sicily’s silk production grew to sustain the Fātimids’ luxury trade. In time, Sicily would become the only Fātimid domain with a successful sericulture.<sup>10</sup>

To provide further historical background, in the early tenth century the Shī‘ī Ismā‘īlī Fātimids had ousted the Aghlabids, annexing Sicily in the process. By the eleventh century Sicily was ruled by the Kalbids, a dynasty that nominally acted on behalf of the Fātimids – who by now were based in Egypt – but that became *de facto* semi-independent. In the 1050s, the Kalbids had lost their grip on the island, thus leaving the way open to the Latin Christian Normans. Initially, the Byzantines – whose presence in the island had been retained in the form of a substantial Greek Christian population – pushed the Normans to reconquer Sicily on their behalf. However, later the Normans sought to

<sup>9</sup> See Jacoby, ‘Silk Economics’, 198–201, for a succinct description of the main steps that eventually led to the arrival of silk in Sicily, keeping an open mind about the role that the Aghlabids might have played in it. The establishment of a silk industry in Sicily and the role of Muslims in introducing it are altogether questioned by André Guillau, ‘La soie Sicilienne au Xe–Xie s.’, in *Byzantino-Sicula II: Miscellanea di scritti in memoria di Giuseppe Rossi Taibbi* (Palermo: Istituto Siciliano di Studi Bizantini e Neoellenici, 1975), vol. 8: 285–88, who argues that Arab Sicily derived its silk cocoons from Byzantine Calabria. About silk exports from Spain and the debunking of the Normans as having introduced silk into Sicily, see also Shelomo D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society, Vol. 1: Economic Foundations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 102, and *Vol. 4: Daily Life*, 193. For a broad overview see Farideh Talebpour, ‘Textiles in Sicily During the Islamic Era’, *Honar-Ha-Ye-Ziba: Honar-Ha-Ye-Tajassomi* 23 (2018): 75–82 [in Farsi].

<sup>10</sup> Irene Bierman, ‘Art and Politics: The Impact of Fatimid Uses of *Tirāz* Fabrics’ (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1980), 107. Geniza documents testify to the massive export of silk from Sicily to Egypt during the Fātimid period; see Moshe Gil, ‘References to Silk in Geniza Documents of the Eleventh Century A. D.’, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 61 (2002), 33–34.

conquer the island for themselves, and they did so progressively from 1060 to 1091. An independent Christian kingdom was inaugurated by the Normans in 1130. However, the Normans eventually modelled themselves on the Fātimids with regard to many aspects of court life, including the adoption of their ideas on textile production and design which, in time, also came to incorporate some Byzantine motifs. Notwithstanding rivalries, on the whole, the Normans and the Fātimids maintained a cordial relationship marked by ambassadorial exchanges, reciprocal gifts and trade.<sup>11</sup> In the twelfth century, the Fātimids were importing, beside finished silk textiles, silk cocoons from Norman Sicily as well as Spain and Tunisia, in order to produce silk-finished products for export from Egypt: from the early twelfth century onwards, Sicily had also become a major exporter of raw cotton. By contrast, it relied on the import of flax from Fātimid Egypt for its production of linen cloth.<sup>12</sup>

In most cases, the lack of extensive documentary and archival evidence to complement material and literary sources means that we cannot reconstruct people's life experiences in the medieval Islamic period but can only draw inferences based on the descriptions of narratives produced in the medieval Islamic world. The study of the Fātimids, however, offers us an insight into what people's lives might have been that is not always matched when studying other dynasties. The Fātimids were the only long-lasting Shī‘ī Ismā‘īlī dynasty to reign over an extensive territory in a medieval Islamic world that was dominated by Sunnī rulers loyal to the ‘Abbāsids in Baghdad. The Fātimids thus attracted the attention of several medieval writers – whether for hagiographical, polemic or chronicling purposes. Pre-eminent among such writers was the Mamluk historian al-Maqrīzī, who made extensive use of sources contemporary to the Fātimids. These authors often commented – intentionally or by default – on aspects of people's lives under their dynasty. As a regime which endorsed a Muslim religious denomination that remained a minority among the mostly Sunnī people over whom they ruled, the Fātimids generally

<sup>11</sup> On Norman-Fātimid relations and the Normans' adoption of Fātimid models in their court, see Jeremy Johns, 'The Norman Kings of Sicily and the Fatimid Caliphate', *Anglo-Norman Studies* 15 (1993): 134–59, and idem, *Arabic Administration in Norman Sicily: The Royal Diwān* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), ch. 10.

<sup>12</sup> Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society, Vol. 1: Economic Foundations*, 128. About the medieval Sicilian trade in cotton and linen, see Smit, 'Weaving Connections', 7.

maintained a tolerant stance towards the people of other minority religious communities in their lands. On the whole, Jewish traders and Christian craftsmen saw their activities grow under Fātimid tutelage. It was, for example, thanks to the presence and activities of Jewish merchants in Egypt that documents came to be eventually deposited and preserved in Cairo. The trading of textiles, linen and silk in particular, constitutes one of the dominant themes as far as the content of these documents is concerned. Because of this relative wealth of sources at our disposal, we can contextualise textiles within the history of the society that produced them and used them.<sup>13</sup>

Textile factories of various sizes existed in all medieval Islamic cities, and these factories employed slaves, forced labour and paid male and female workers at various stages of the production process. Textiles represented the major industry in the medieval Mediterranean. Notwithstanding regional variants and fluctuating figures over time, most of the working population and the distributing classes (that is, traders, from shopkeepers to wholesalers) were engaged in this branch of the economy. Indeed, the basis of the Fātimids' vast affluence was the production and distribution of textiles; they became internationally famous for their export of flax and linen cloth as well as the quality of their inscribed *tirāz* (decorative bands).<sup>14</sup> From the main Egyptian factories in Tinnīs, Alexandria, Cairo and the Fayyūm, the most expensive *tirāz* would feature inscriptions made with gold, silver and silk threads. The textile industry was also the primary field of paid occupation for women, and working the spindle was the most widespread labour occupation that women were known to have engaged in across the medieval Islamic world.<sup>15</sup> Women of all ranks

<sup>13</sup> For a general discussion on women's labour in medieval Islam, see Maya Shatzmiller, *Labour in the Medieval Islamic World* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), ch. 7.

<sup>14</sup> *Tirāz* is a word of Persian origin, mostly used to indicate a textile featuring embroidered – or, in the case of the Fātimids, woven – inscribed bands. Typical inscriptions consist of benedictory and laudatory formulae, the name of the ruler and his ancestry, the name of the ruler's vizier, the nature of the production workshop (private or public), and the place and date of production. The word *tirāz* can also be used to indicate the type of workshop where such textiles were produced. *Tirāz* was also an architectural term used to denote friezes on buildings. For an overview of *tirāz*, see Yedida K. Stillman and Paula Sanders, 'Tirāz', *Encyclopaedia of Islam, New Edition* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), vol. 10: 534–38.

<sup>15</sup> Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, Vol. 1, 128. See also Shatzmiller, *Labour in the Medieval Islamic World*, 351.

and backgrounds spun for a variety of reasons – out of necessity for their own consumption, as a pastime, to earn money, out of marital duty, or to serve a religio-political cause. Within the Fātimid court, for example, Rāshida the daughter of the Imām-Caliph al-Mu'izz (d. 975), earned her living through spinning.<sup>16</sup> Among ordinary women, there were those who spun for personal and family use and those who did it for wages. Typical, but not exclusive of the latter category, would be spinsters, widows, divorcees, orphans and the poor – that is, women who lacked the financial support that men would be typically expected to provide. In the Delta region of Egypt, it is likely that, even for industrial purposes, this activity was practiced mainly by Coptic Christian women, since Copts had formed the backbone of the Egyptian textile industry for a long period.<sup>17</sup> Among Jews in Fātimid Egypt, custom and statutory law sanctioned spinning as one of the duties of the wife, as shown in some Jewish marriage documents from the Cairo Geniza.<sup>18</sup>

The most common yarns that women used for their work were flax and wool, materials that would be typically supplied by vendors in the bazaar. The gendered character of spinning meant that female customers would have to interact with male traders. This brought the two into a proximity that – in a society bent on enforcing gender separation at most levels – led to the devising of a code of conduct and, at least in legal theory, regulations. In medieval police manuals, we find specific instructions on how the transactions between vendors of yarns and female buyers should be conducted.<sup>19</sup> The potential risk of sexual misconduct that could arise from the close proximity between men and women during such trade transactions was not lost on medieval observers, who saw spinners and weavers – among those women who plied a trade – as ‘popular with lovers’.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>16</sup> [al-Qādī b. al-Zubayr], *Book of Gifts and Rarities* (*Kitāb al-Hadāyā wa al-Tuhaf*), translated by Ghāda al-Ḥijjāwī al-Qaddumi (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 224.

<sup>17</sup> Delia Cortese and Simonetta Calderini, *Women and the Fatimids in the World of Islam* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 189.

<sup>18</sup> Shelomo D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society, Vol. 3: The Family* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 132.

<sup>19</sup> See Ahmad Ghabin, *Hisba, Arts and Crafts in Islam* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2009), 223–24.

<sup>20</sup> Shatzmiller, *Labour in the Medieval Islamic World*, 350, 359, on medieval negative attitudes to female workers based on moral grounds.

Silk is the other yarn that would be typically associated with women's workmanship. A common practice across all silk-growing areas was for women to carry around on themselves silkworms in order to support their incubation with the warmth of their bodies.<sup>21</sup> Women would unravel, reel, spin, weave and dye silk threads – that is, they were occupied with activities that demanded high levels of skill. A twelfth-century letter written to Peter, Treasurer of the Church of Palermo, captures the author's astonishment at the complexity of silk spinning in the workshops that belonged to the palace of the Norman king William II (d. 1189) in Palermo:

[T]he threads of silkworm are spun most finely into separate threads of different colours before being knitted together to make multiple strands. Here you can see how single-stranded, double-stranded and triple-stranded thread is finished with less skill and expense; and there six-stranded thread is pressed together using richer material.<sup>22</sup>

That women were involved – albeit not exclusively – in carrying out this skilled technical work can be inferred from further information in the same letter. In describing William II's Joharia palace in Palermo, the author talks of the 'various mansions placed all around [the palace] for the married ladies, the girls of the harem, and the eunuchs who are assigned to serve the king and the queen'.<sup>23</sup> Since the royal textile factory was located in the palace compound, it is safe to assume that the reference to those assigned to serve the court included girls who worked in the palace textile factory. This view is corroborated by an observation made by Ibn Jubayr who, in commenting on the king's palaces, remarked that '[the king] has about him a great number of youths [for which, read eunuchs] and handmaidens', variously called slave girls and concubines, and noted in his narrative that, 'of the good works of these handmaidens there are astonishing stories'.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 349.

<sup>22</sup> The letter is appended in Hugo Falcandus, *The History of the Tyrants of Sicily by 'Hugo Falcandus', 1154–1169*, translated by Graham A. Loud and Thomas Wiedemann (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 259.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 259. For a fuller discussion on women as textile workers in this specific context, see Burns, *Sea of Silk*, 57–58.

<sup>24</sup> [Ibn Jubayr], *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr*, 340–41.

Spindles were the obvious essential items that women needed in order to spin. These would be typically purchased in markets; thus, the trading of spindles would have to be regulated too. Police manuals set out not only a code of conduct, but specific standard to ensure that spindles would meet the appropriate quality specifications and thereby prevent women from being sold tools of inferior quality.<sup>25</sup> The Cairo Geniza documents indicate that indeed a small but thriving industry existed to produce tools for the making of textiles, such as spindles, for which there must have been high demand.<sup>26</sup>

After spinning, embroidery was the second-most popular activity that links women to textile production in the medieval Mediterranean. Embroidered items were not only for personal use but also used commercially – with women reported to have sold, on occasion, their needlework products through female brokers. However, professional embroidery, and its supervision in workshops, was typically a male preserve. For example, in Palermo, Ibn Jubayr's informant on the palace's female workers was a Yaḥyā b. Fitān, 'who embroidered in gold the King's clothes'.<sup>27</sup> That professional embroidery was a male preserve might be because embroidery patterns for formal production were 'copy-righted'. According to police manuals, whoever was commissioned to carry out the work of transferring a particular design on cloth by needlework had to swear not to replicate the same pattern elsewhere without the permission of the commissioner of the work.<sup>28</sup> The imposition of such an oath necessitated that the embroiderer be a person in a position of responsibility and accountability. In this social context and time, this would pertain to males. Also, large-scale weaving and dyeing for industrial production was a male preserve, particularly in manufacturing where the use of gold and silver thread was involved. In Fātimid Egypt, the use of gold for textile production was supervised by a government-appointed high dignitary since the production of gold thread was closely related to the activities of the mint, a typically male-dominated realm.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Ghabin, *Hisba, Arts and Crafts in Islam*, 225; Robert B. Serjeant, *Islamic Textiles: Material for a History up to the Mongol Conquest* (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, [1972]), 199.

<sup>26</sup> Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, Vol. 1, 99–100.

<sup>27</sup> [Ibn Jubayr], *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr*, 341.

<sup>28</sup> Ghabin, *Hisba, Arts and Crafts in Islam*, 235.

<sup>29</sup> Yedida K. Stillman, *Arab Dress: A Short History: From the Dawn of Islam to Modern Times* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 131.

Very little is known about the working conditions of the women who contributed to the textile industry of the Fātimids. However, within the ‘Abbāsid domains, it is reported that workers at the *tiraz* factory in Baghdad might have included slaves or harem girls who were not given salaries but supplied with provisions.<sup>30</sup> Egyptian textile workers were captured and resettled in Baghdad to work as weavers during the rule of the caliph al-Mu‘taṣim (d. 842).<sup>31</sup> In Egypt, before the advent of the Fātimids, the Christian patriarch Dionysius who visited the country ca 815 lamented the harshness, for both men and women, of living and working in a private atelier in Tinnīs, the town that would become the most important centre of textile production under the Fātimids. The following record of a worker who informed the patriarch about his and others’ working conditions shows some close similarities with Yvain’s story:

Our trade is exclusively that of linen which our women spin and we weave. We get from the dealers half-a-dirham per day. Although our earning is not sufficient to feed our dogs we yet have to pay 5 dinars a head in taxes. They beat us, imprison us, and compel us to give our sons and daughters as securities. For every dinar they have to work two years as slaves.<sup>32</sup>

In the tenth century, the traveller Ibn Hawqal observed the severe working conditions imposed on Tinnīs workers by the famous Fātimid vizier Ibn Killis (d. 991). However, in the middle of the eleventh century, the Persian Ismā‘īlī poet and missionary Nāṣir-i Khusraw visited Egypt and observed that working conditions had changed for the better.<sup>33</sup> In Sicily, during the reign of William I, the palace girls were reportedly raped during the sacking of the palace in 1161. Some kind of hardship is also alluded to by Ibn Jubayr in his account of the Muslim slave girls and Frankish Christian women who worked side-by-side in the palace factory in Palermo during William II’s reign. He claimed that the Christian girls had converted to Islam under the influence of their female

<sup>30</sup> Serjeant, *Islamic Textiles*, 157.

<sup>31</sup> On the deliberate and forceful resettlement of silk workers across regions in the medieval Byzantine and Islamic empires, see Jacoby, ‘Silk Economics’, 224–27.

<sup>32</sup> From *The Chronicle* of Michael the Syrian (d. 1199), quoted and translated by Adam Mez, *The Renaissance of Islam* (Patna: Jubilee Printing and Publishing House, 1937), 46.

<sup>33</sup> Serjeant, *Islamic Textiles*, 138, 141–43.

Muslim co-workers, but kept their new faith hidden to escape the wrath of the king who, as a Christian, deplored the practice.<sup>34</sup> Beyond the author's possibly partial stance, the implication here is that Muslim female workers were still the majority at this stage. Ibn Jubayr had the full view of Muslim influence – at least in fashion if not in faith – on Christian women when he saw them dressed like their Muslim counterparts: 'They go forth [to Church] on this Feast Day dressed in robes of gold-embroidered silk, wrapped in elegant cloaks, concealed by coloured veils, and shod with gilt slippers'.<sup>35</sup>

It is unclear how much of the large-scale textile work was done by women collectively in workshops and how much work was done individually or in small groups at home. The Fātimids established an administrative department, the *dār al-ṭirāz*, that oversaw the work of two categories of *ṭirāz* factories: those which specialised in the production of textiles to serve the imām-caliph and his court, and those that, while belonging to the ruler, produced textiles for the general public. However, in times of high demand, the latter would also produce goods for the court. Women working in ateliers that served the court were given the distinctive title *arbāb al-sana'i min al-qusūriyyat*. Following his arrival in his new capital, Cairo, in 973 the Fātimid Imām-Caliph al-Mu'izz ordered the establishment of a special government tailoring department known as *dār al-kiswā* which served as an official bureau overseeing the production, storage and distribution of costumes for the court members and the palace staff. Over time, the great demand generated by the court's needs caused an exponential growth in staffing, size, number and productivity of state textile factories in Egypt, which were supervised by officials who controlled the quality of the products.<sup>36</sup> An example of the scale of such a demand is provided by al-Maqrīzī. He reports that, in twelfth-century Tinnīs, a workforce of 150 workers was employed to make one special royal tent and that it took nine years to complete.<sup>37</sup>

Given the wall of inaccessibility around the imām-caliph, constructed through an elaborate protocol, it is somewhat remarkable to find that those

<sup>34</sup> [Ibn Jubayr], *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr*, 341.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 349–50.

<sup>36</sup> Cortese and Calderini, *Women and the Fatimids*, 80–81.

<sup>37</sup> Serjeant, *Islamic Textiles*, 160.

who spent time in physical proximity to him were the women who worked as his outfitters. A woman who held the title of *zayn al-khuzzān* (ornament of the treasurers) would have some thirty women working for her, and her responsibilities were the handling of the most precious robes reserved for the court and, more importantly, the organising of the caliph's private wardrobe. Towards the end of the Fātimid dynasty, the *zayn al-khuzzān* was known to have been a slave-girl of Greek Byzantine origin, thus indicating that neither gender nor social status nor religious affiliation stood in the way of a woman occupying such a crucial position at the heart of the court.<sup>38</sup> Among the royal Normans, too, the ceremonial clothes were kept and possibly produced in what they also called *khizāna*. However, there is no evidence that the Normans had a courtly administrative institution for managing *tiraz* production that was comparable to the one set up by the Fātimids.<sup>39</sup> There is some evidence of women running silk weaving enterprises from their homes in Alexandria.

The ownership of clothing and textiles gave the women at court the potential to exhibit their agency and power in more active ways. The vast quantities of the finest textiles and dresses recorded as having belonged to the royal Fātimid princesses indicate that such items were not merely intended for personal use. Textiles were among the most prized commodities of the Fātimid royal women. Recorded among their most treasured assets were tens of thousands of bolts of Sicilian cloth.<sup>40</sup> Textiles were highly desirable assets for women (and men) because they maintained their value and were durable, easily movable products that could be traded in lieu of cash if necessary. The monetary collateral power of Fātimid-style textiles in the possession of European royal women was not lost on some Crusader kings. When in 1113 Adelaide del Vasto (d. 1118), the mother of Roger II of Sicily, married King Baldwin of Jerusalem, the gold in

<sup>38</sup> Cortese and Calderini, *Women and the Fatimids*, 81.

<sup>39</sup> See Isabelle Dolezalek, *Arabic Script on Christian Kings: Textile Inscriptions on Royal Garments from Norman Sicily* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 80–91. On the women working the silk in Alexandria, see Miriam Frenkel, 'Medieval Alexandria-Life in a Port City', *Al-Masāq: Journal of the Medieval Mediterranean* 26 (2014), 25.

<sup>40</sup> [al-Qādī b. al-Zubayr], *Book of Gifts and Rarities*, 224. It is worth remembering, however, that 'Sicilian cloth' could mean cloth manufactured in Sicily as well as cloth that came to be known as 'Sicilian' even though it was not made there.

her Sicilian-made textiles and carpets made her dowry so valuable that with them Baldwin was able to pay his debts and the salaries of his soldiers.<sup>41</sup>

Similarly, among ordinary women, the textiles and fine garments of their bridal trousseau were not only intended for the bride's personal use but also considered an investment which was often passed from parents to children and could be transformed into cash when needed. Documents from the Cairo Geniza show that the dowry hardly ever consisted of money but rather of objects, with textiles being by far the most copious. Sometimes, Sicilian cloth featured in the list of textiles that were part of Egyptian bridal trousseaus.<sup>42</sup> Selling a piece from her wardrobe could provide a woman with months of sustenance, and women are known to have dispensed with their furnishing to pay debts. A woman's practice of exchanging textiles for cash was quite widespread. Even well-to-do ladies sold through eunuchs items from their wardrobe. It is therefore not surprising that dealers of second-hand clothes had a bazaar of their own in old Cairo.<sup>43</sup>

In general, information on the lives of women in medieval sources is scarce, even more so for those who were the marginals of the marginal. Nonetheless, we can collate fragments from written and visual sources,<sup>44</sup> which help to shed light on the role that textiles played in the fabric of life of medieval women in Egypt and the Mediterranean region. Unfortunately, however, we do not know of extant textiles that can be proven with any certainty to have been worked on or owned or used by a woman. Luxurious fabrics vanished over the centuries, leaving us only with fragments mostly found in burial sites, some hosting the remains of women. To many, the value of these objects rested in

<sup>41</sup> Bierman, 'Art and Politics', 111.

<sup>42</sup> See, for example, document 1 in Shelomo D. Goitein, 'Three Trousseaux of Jewish Brides from the Fatimid Period', *Association for Jewish Studies Review* 2 (1977): 77–110.

<sup>43</sup> Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, Vol. 1, 150.

<sup>44</sup> Many miniatures found in medieval Islamic manuscripts depict women working the spindle or involved in textile-related activities. There are two notable examples. The first is the illustration of women spinning in the garden, in the manuscript of Firdawsi's *Shāhnāme*, Qazwin (ca 1570), housed in the John Ryland Library, Manchester. The second is the miniature by the thirteenth-century Iraqi painter al-Wāṣīṭī of a woman working with the spindle, shown with a female broker and a male trader, in the manuscript of the *Maqāmāt* by al-Harīrī (d. 1122) held at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris.

their gold and silver content. As a result, in times of need or regime change, or with the rise of new contenders in the international trading of textiles, most Fātimid and Sicilian textiles were destroyed to extract the precious metals that had been used to decorate them.

In Egypt, the regime change that came with the end of the Fātimids in 1171 brought about a new taste in fashion, along with a new use of apparel to communicate status. This went hand in hand with new land management systems and taxation as well as changed agricultural policies that caused a decline in the production of fabrics. Under the Mamluks, the planting of cotton, rather than flax, became the cultivation of choice, and fur and brocade, rather than *tirāz*, became the preferred indicators of class distinction. Meanwhile, the textile export industry was flourishing in Northern Europe. This was a game changer in the international trade of fabrics that over time finished off the desirability of large-scale, Fātimid-style production. In Norman Sicily, however, the legacy of Islamic textiles prospered for another century or so after the Fātimids. In particular, the tradition of female silk workers was documented in the twelfth century during the reigns of William I and II. While it is understood that in the thirteenth century the Emperor Frederick II Hohenstaufen (d. 1250) had female slaves working in his palaces in Sicily and Southern Italy,<sup>45</sup> it is unclear whether, or to what extent, this workforce was involved in textile-making. Under this emperor, Sicilian silk production declined sharply due to, among other factors, the either voluntary or forced exodus of Muslims from the island after 1220.<sup>46</sup>

If destined for extinction as objects, Fātimid *tirāz* made a surprising re-appearance between the thirteenth and fifteenth century in Italian paintings. This time, the feminine connection came in the shape of the painted representation of exquisite veils and cloaks adorning the ultimate symbol of womanhood in Christendom: the Virgin Mary. Inscribed bands of gold that, in Muslim contexts, were used to signify power and glory were replicated by

<sup>45</sup> Burns, *Sea of Silk*, 58.

<sup>46</sup> David Jacoby, ‘The Movement of Silk and Silk Textiles: Italy and the Mediterranean in the 12th–14th Centuries’, in *Textiles and Wealth in 14th Century Florence: Wool, Silk, Painting*, edited by Cecilie Hollenberg (Firenze: Giunti Editore, 2017), 20. About the long-term effects of the Muslims’ exodus on the Sicilian economic trajectory, see Smit, ‘Weaving Connections’, 6.

Italian artists as pseudo-Arabic inscriptions ornamenting Mary's outfit. These inscriptions symbolised her spiritual majesty and evoked the Eastern origins of the sacred family. It has been suggested that Sicily was the springboard from which the memory of Fātimid textiles as the ultimate symbol of luxury was catapulted into the minds of Northern Italian artists in the late-medieval era and the early Renaissance.<sup>47</sup> However, one can observe that pseudo-Arabic does not feature as a decorative device on Mary's mantles painted by Southern Italian Renaissance painters. Up until the end of the fourteenth century, textiles manufactured in the Eastern Mediterranean continued to be exported, albeit in lesser quantities, to Northern Italy and Northern Europe, however not from Sicily.<sup>48</sup> Before that, the presence of Islamic textiles in Europe was also largely due to the Crusaders who brought back textiles as holy relics.<sup>49</sup> In my view, it was these imports that gave Italian artists access to fabrics which they might have believed to constitute a credible visual reference of what Mary might have worn. It is significant to note that the only complete pieces of Fātimid clothing surviving in their entirety are items that were preserved in Europe as relics. Both are found in France. One, a veil/shroud placed on the head of Christ preserved among the relics of the Abbey of Cadouin in the Perigord, dates back to the period of the Fātimid Caliph al-Musta'lī and was brought back to France by the Crusaders. The other, the most sumptuous of the Fātimid pieces that still exist, is associated with a female figure, Anne, the mother of Mary, and is known as the 'Veil of St Anne'. It is preserved in the cathedral of Apt in France and was venerated as a relic until the nineteenth century. The Arabic inscription on it contains the Muslim faith formula, the names of the Fātimid Caliph al-Musta'lī and of his vizier al-Afdal, as well as the place where the textile was woven: Damietta, Egypt. It was, in all probability, produced in 1096 or 1097.

<sup>47</sup> Bierman, 'Art and Politics', 50, 96, 100.

<sup>48</sup> Jacoby ('Silk Economics', 201) notes how the manufacture of silks in Central and Northern Italy in the late Middle Ages relied almost exclusively on the importation of raw materials from the Eastern Mediterranean.

<sup>49</sup> Sarah-Grace Heller, 'Fashion in French Crusade Literature: Desiring the Infidel Textiles', in *Encountering Medieval Textiles and Dress: Objects, Texts, Images*, edited by D. J. Koslin and Janet E. Snyder (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 103–11. Descriptions of luxurious Islamic textiles occur regularly in old French Crusade cycle literature, where they were understood to signify high rank and status.

It arrived in Europe as result of the first Crusade.<sup>50</sup> The public display, knowledge and descriptions of these and other relics might have inspired Northern Italian painters to include the *tiraz* motif in their iconography of Mary.

The combined use of scanty references in a variety of sources – documents belonging to disciplines ranging from Medieval French Literature to Byzantine Studies, as well as documents of the Fātimid period from the Cairo Geniza – has yielded a wealth of information on medieval women's experiences with textiles in the pre-modern Mediterranean. Whether as workers or consumers of textiles, or just symbolically associated with textiles, women emerge as important yet hitherto unsung agents in an industry that produced much of the wealth that the Fātimid and Norman regimes enjoyed.

The commonality in the thread of life that women belonging to seemingly disparate societies shared fits within the broader context of similarities noted between the Sicilian and the Egyptian dynasties. On the whole, contacts and exchanges between the Fātimids of Egypt and the Normans of Sicily remained extensive throughout their overlapping reigns. The Fātimids and the Normans had much in common: both arrived as newcomers in the lands that they conquered; both endorsed minority religions and creeds while reigning over mostly majority Sunnī populations; both used textiles as a form of branding (with the Normans embracing the Fātimid use of Arabic inscriptions on clothes and textiles);<sup>51</sup> both shared a taste for the marvellous, the innovative and the beautiful to project dynastic magnificence. The cosmopolitan character at the heart of textile production, distribution and appreciation, as well as the intertwined lives of women (and men) who worked in its industry in the medieval Mediterranean challenge the notions of single identity and categorisation. The Fātimids and the Normans – the representatives of golden ages in their respective contexts – remind us that, in any given fabric of society, at any given time, excellence can only be achieved through the transfer of know-how,

<sup>50</sup> See Georgette Cornu, 'Les tissus d'apparat fatimides, parmi les plus somptueux le "voile de St. Anne" d'Apt', in *L'Egypte fatimide: Son art et son histoire: Actes du colloque organisé à Paris les 28, 29 et 30 Mai 1998*, edited by Marianne Barrucand (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1999), 331–38. See also Lisa Golombek and Veronika Gervers, 'Tiraz Fabrics in the ROM', in *Studies in Textile History: In Memory of Harold B. Burnham*, edited by Veronika Gervers (Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum, 1977), 110.

<sup>51</sup> For a comprehensive study of this phenomenon, see Dolezalek, *Arabic Script on Christian Kings*.

mobility of human capital, shared experiences and inclusivity, irrespective of geography, gender and religious boundaries.

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# 8

## ARCHITECTURAL AND NUMISMATIC TRACES OF ARABIC CULTURAL EXCHANGE BETWEEN SICILY AND GREATER SYRIA

*Ammar Abdulrahman and Alaa Aldin Al Chomari*

The cultural and civilisational interaction between the East and the West has been occurring for millennia, and the study of this subject is endlessly fruitful. This chapter aims to further mine this rich history by examining such interchanges between the East and Sicily. Sicily has had contacts with the East since the first millennium BC, when the Phoenicians arrived on its shores. The first part of this chapter will explore the wide range of commercial and other activities that were established between the Phoenicians and the Sicilians. The second part will survey the Arab Muslim influence on Sicily through the architectural and archaeological evidence; it will explore especially the use of Syrian architectural features of the Umayyad period (661–750), which became visible in Sicilian buildings constructed during the Norman period (1071–1194). The third and final part of the chapter will explore the exchange of culture between Sicily and Syria based on numismatic evidence. It is hoped that these examinations will contribute to a better understanding of the cultural and architectural interrelationship between Sicily and the Islamic East.

### **The Phoenician Influence on Sicily during the First Millennium BC**

Phoenician civilisation arose in the eastern part of the Mediterranean during the twelfth century BC. The Phoenicians were renowned seafarers and sea-merchants, and they traversed the Mediterranean, not only exploring it but

also establishing several successful and famous towns and centres throughout the lands washed by its sea. From the eleventh century BC, they began to settle in western Sicily, and later they established major colonies at Solunto, Palermo and Motya. These colonies were directly controlled by the Phoenician centre on the north African coast, at Carthage.

The commercial activities of the Phoenicians were controlled by rich families who owned the ships in the cities of Tyre and Byblos. These families would send their representatives abroad for commerce and to establish new colonies. Such forays resulted in the spreading of Phoenician culture in the cities of the emerging new colonies. An architectural example of this was evidenced when a portion of the lagoon surrounding the city of Motya (present-day Mozia) was drained, revealing an ancient Phoenician temple. This temple, so notes Lorenzo Nigro of the University of Rome, is ‘unique’ in the West: ‘You have to go all the way to Amrit in Syria to find a similar one’. He explains that ‘the Phoenicians placed their cities on the coast near water springs, which for them meant that there was a divine presence there’.<sup>1</sup>

There is continuing evidence of a long-standing connection and influence between the East and the West in the period after 400 BC, when, for example, a shrine with offerings to the Phoenician goddess Tanit was established in the cave at Es Cuyram in Eivissa (Ibiza) and when the Balearic Islands entered the Phoenician commercial orbit.<sup>2</sup>

## **The Early Islamic Interaction with Sicily**

### ***The Umayyads (661–750)***

The Umayyad caliphate of Mu‘awiya Ibn Abū Sufyān began its military expansion from Syria in 661. By the late seventh century, its armies, under the

<sup>1</sup> Quotes taken from Lorenzo Nigro, ‘Phoenician Tombs Found in Sicily’, *Italy Magazine* (24 August 2006), <https://www.italymagazine.com/italy/sicily/phoenician-tombs-found-sicily>. See also Lorenzo Nigro, ‘Il Tempio del Kothon e il ruolo delle aree sacre nello sviluppo urbano di Mozia dall’VIII al IV sec. a.C.’, in *Phönizisches und punisches Städtewesen: Akten der internationalen Tagung in Rom vom 21. bis 23. Februar 2007*, edited by S. Helas and D. Marzoli (Mainz am Rhein: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 2009), 241–70.

<sup>2</sup> See ‘Phoenician Settlements Outside the Motherland’, *Phoenicia.org*, <https://phoenicia.org/colonies.html>.

command of Musa b. Nuṣayr, had reached the shores of the Atlantic Ocean in Morocco. The first contact between Muslims and Sicily occurred under the rule of Mu‘āwiya, when he sent ‘Abd Allāh b. Qays b. Mukhled, his naval admiral-in-chief, to invade Sicily. Mukhled also led a raid against the island of Crete, along with the famous Arab general al-Faḍl ibn ‘Ubayd. These contacts were followed later by the embedding, in these lands, of cultural influences brought by the newcomers.

### ***The Aghlabids (800–909)***

The centre of the Islamic caliphate moved from Damascus to Baghdad when the ‘Abbāsid caliphate rose to power. During this time, the most extensive communication between Sicily and the Islamic world began with the reign of the Aghlabids. The Aghlabids were a dynasty founded by Ibrāhīm ibn al-Aghlab and served as proxy rulers for the ‘Abbāsids. In 827, the Aghlabid military and religious leader Asad ibn al-Furāt succeeded in taking control of the western coast of Sicily,<sup>3</sup> forcing the Byzantine rulers to retreat to the fortified towns of Palermo and Syracuse on the island’s northern and eastern coasts, respectively. The Aghlabids established important port and commercial centres,<sup>4</sup> with their elements of influence such as coarse ceramics,<sup>5</sup> which contained Arabic food, including vegetable and fish.<sup>6</sup>

### ***The Fāṭimids (909–1171)***

With the formation of the Ismā‘īlī Shī‘ī Fāṭimid caliphate in Egypt and North Africa, the Arabo-Islamic influence in Sicily became apparent. Sicily

<sup>3</sup> Muḥammad al-Juhaynī, *Siqiliyya wa ‘amā‘irihā al-Islāmiyya fī al-‘asr al-Fāṭimī* (Cairo: al-Akādimiyya li’l-Kitāb al-Jāmi‘i, 1998), 8.

<sup>4</sup> Adele Cilento and Alessandro Vanoli, *Arabs and Normans in Sicily and the South of Italy* (Riverside, NY: Riverside Book Company, 2007), 57.

<sup>5</sup> Lucia Arcifa and Alessandra Bagnera, ‘Palermo in the Ninth and Early Tenth Century: Ceramics as Archaeological Markers of Cultural Dynamics,’ in *The Aglabids and Their Neighbors: Art and Material Culture in Ninth-Century North Africa*, edited by Glaire D. Anderson, Corisande Fenwick and Mariam Rosser-Owen (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 403.

<sup>6</sup> Jasmine Lundy, Lea Drieu, Lucia Arcifa et al., ‘New Insights into Early Medieval Islamic Cuisine: Organic Residue Analysis of Pottery from Rural and Urban Sicily’, *PLoS ONE* 16/6 (2021), 18, <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0252225>

was fully controlled by Muslims only in the period of the Fāṭimids.<sup>7</sup> In this period, the Muslims erected several monuments, including mosques. The geographer Ibn Hawqal, who visited Palermo in 950, described this architecture, as well as the people: ‘There were nearly two hundred mosques, and its public schools had three hundred teachers. The people were characterised by righteousness and piety, and [they were the] greatest people and of good appearance’.<sup>8</sup>

The Fāṭimid era was associated with several architectural innovations, including the use – for the first time – of carved stone instead of brick on the façades of mosques. These façades were then decorated with engravings on stone, rather than on bricks. This is noticeable at the Mosque of Ibn Tulūn in Cairo, where we see engraved on the façade an exquisite flower that is technically and stylistically superior to its counterpart in Cordoba.

The domes of that era were small and simple,<sup>9</sup> whether viewed from the inside or outside. The rib, a new architectural feature of the dome, appeared for the first time in the dome of the mausoleum of Sayyida Attika at Cairo in the twelfth century. In Sicily, this style of dome is also clearly visible in buildings constructed during the twelfth century: the Palatine Chapel and the Church of San Cataldo are two examples.

### **The Syrian Influence on Sicilian Architecture in the Norman Period (1071–1194)**

Later, in 1071, when the Normans took control of Sicily, they were influenced by the old style of Arabic architecture. A new style that mixed Arabic and Byzantine design and decorative features emerged, such as *muqarnas* and calligraphy,<sup>10</sup> and also inlays in mosaic or metals, sculptures from ivory or porphyry and from stones. Additionally, bronze foundries sprang up and,

<sup>7</sup> A. Shalabī ‘Abd al-Jalil, ‘Haḍārat al-‘arab fī Ṣiqilliyahwa atharaha fī an-Nahḍah al-‘Urūbiyah’, *Majalat al-Umma* 3/27 (1983): 28–32.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Robert Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture: Form, Function and Meaning* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 441–42.

<sup>10</sup> Jonathan Bardill, ‘The Church of Sts. Sergius and Bacchus in Constantinople and the Monophysite Refugees’, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 54 (2000): 1–11.

in the realm of textiles, silk began to be manufactured.<sup>11</sup> These Arabic and Byzantine industries were adopted by the Normans; later on, Sicily became the main centre of silk manufacture and held the monopoly of silk for all of Western Europe.

This section will discuss an overlooked area of Muslim influence on Sicily's architecture: that of the early Syrian style of architecture and ornamentation. It will compare buildings in Sicily with others in greater Syria (*al-Shām*) – which include today's Jordan – during the Umayyad period. The aim is to show that Sicily was not only influenced by the North African style of architecture, but also, and even more so, by the architecture of Syria and Jordan.

### ***About Arabic Architecture***

In order to develop a better understanding of the influence of the Syrian style of architecture in Sicily and the similarities between the eastern buildings and those found in Sicily, it is important to outline some of the basic elements of Arabic architecture (including the use of domes and gardens) and Arabic design (such as the use of *mugarnas*). A significant feature of Arabic architecture is the incorporation of gardens. Gardens were intended to be spaces of contemplation and rest and provided a sensory experience through the presence of water and plants. The use of gardens and domes became features commonly found in all mosques.

A new standard of architecture was invented by the Umayyads, and this was replicated by subsequent generations. The Umayyads built palaces and mosques that used wooden trusses anchored on stones to support wooden roofs. Decorative openings in the walls were mostly rectangular, and semi-circular arches were used to support the weight of the walls. The walls were decorated with mosaics, and alabaster was used on the floors. The Umayyad Mosque in Damascus, considered to be the pearl of the Islamic buildings, showcases many Islamic architectural features. It was converted by the Umayyads from an ancient temple, and it has a rectangular layout, one majestic dome (called the dome of the eagle) and three minarets. On the side of the *qibla*, there are several roofed porticoes in the

<sup>11</sup> George H. Forsyth and Kurt Weitzmann, *The Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai: The Church and Fortress of Justinian* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1973).

middle of the dome, and on the opposite side there is a corridor extending along a row of columns. In the centre of the mosque, there is a large rectangular open courtyard, which is filled with columns.

The Islamic elements noted above left their mark on the architecture of Sicily. They are particularly visible in a number of palaces whose small, high-ceilinged rooms are arranged around a central courtyard that was Islamic in its inspiration.<sup>12</sup> The most important of these palaces is the 'Al Azizia' in Palermo. The impact of Arab architecture can also be seen in the forts built to defend Sicily. Their design with their pointed arches, arrow holes and square-shaped walls is of Arab Islamic influence.<sup>13</sup> The Arabic style of forts and castles was already found in Sicily by the time of Frederick II, and during his campaign on Jerusalem he introduced the style to other European countries.

Arab architecture also featured the use of courtyards (*al-sahn*), which are spaces without ceilings between rooms. Courtyards were adopted in Spain, and then in other Mediterranean countries, such as Sicily. Another distinctive form of ornamentation found in Arabo-Islamic architecture consists of *muqarnas*, in design similar to honeycombs. It was used in mosques in painted layers and also in architectural decoration. *Muqarnas* is a transitional element found variously on the facades of mosques and residences, under domes and in the crowns of columns and wooden ceilings.<sup>14</sup> The forms of *muqarnas* differ according to time and place. This type of Arabic ornamentation is complex in the sense that its motifs are intersecting and represent geometric shapes, flowers, leaves and fruits. It is a distinctive feature found in Islamic ceramic art and in Islamic architecture. Gustav Le Bon noted: 'The Arabs were the first to invent the *al-muqarnas* (Fig. 8.1); no other nation used it before them'.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Rafique Ali Jairazbhoy, *An Outline of Islamic Architecture* (London: Asia Publishing House, 1972), 116–17.

<sup>13</sup> Muṣṭafā Shīḥa, *Dirāsa fī al-‘amāra wa al-funūn al-qubṭiyya* (Cairo: Hay’at al-Athār, 1988), 57.

<sup>14</sup> Giovanni Curatola, *Eredità dell'Islam: Arte Islamica in Italia* (Venice: Silvana Editoriale, 1994), 187.

<sup>15</sup> Gustave Le Bon, *La Civilisation des Arabes* (Beirut: Edition Al-Bustane, 1977), 126.

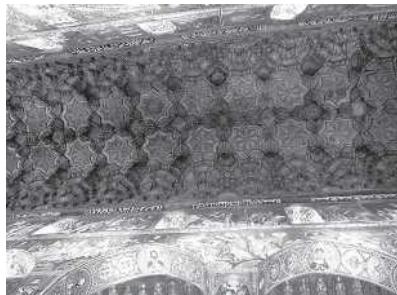


Figure 8.1 *Muqarnas* ceiling in the Capella Palatina. Source: © Directorate General of Antiquity in Syria.

The following section will highlight the interaction between East and West by demonstrating the overlap in architectural style and features found in the buildings of Sicily and Syria.

### *Examples of Syrian Architectural Influence*

*The Monreale Cathedral.* It was built during the reign of William II of Sicily (r. 1166–89) in 1172. William spoke, read and wrote Arabic, and he had many Muslim advisors and administrators in his court. Like other Arab-Norman buildings, this was constructed by Muslim and Christian Byzantine artisans working together. The contribution of the Christian Arabs to the development of Norman churches of Palermo has already been explored.<sup>16</sup> Thus, in this most spectacular example of cultural fusion taking place in twelfth-century Sicily, these artisans created one of the largest displays of mosaic art in the world, covering more than 6,000 square metres. This can be seen on the outside of the principal doorways and their pointed arches. This lavish use of mosaic decoration in a locus of sacred ritual performance exhibits parallels with the displays that may be seen at the Great Umayyad Mosque of Damascus (Fig. 8.2) and the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem.

<sup>16</sup> For a discussion of the contribution of the Christian Arabs to the development of the Norman churches of Palermo, see Henri Bresc and Annliese Nef, ‘Les Mozarabes de Sicilie (1100–1300)’, in *Cavalieri alla conquista del Sud*, edited by Enrico Cuozzo and Jean-Marie Martin (Bari: Laterza, 1999), 134–56.



Figure 8.2 Great Mosque, Damascus, completed AH 96 / 715 AD. Source: © Directorate General of Antiquity in Syria.

*The Church of Saint John of the Hermits.* It was built in Palermo around 1143–48 by Roger II of Sicily, under his reign as king (r. 1130–54), in the Arab-Norman style. The church is notable for its brilliant red domes which clearly show the persistence of Arab influences in Sicily at the time of its reconstruction in the twelfth century. In her *Diary of an Idle Woman in Sicily*, Frances Elliot described it as such: ‘totally oriental, it would fit well in Baghdad or Damascus’.<sup>17</sup>

*La Zisi Palace.* The name is inspired by the Arabic ‘al-azīz’. Construction was begun by the Arabs and later completed by the Normans when William II controlled Sicily. This palace is surrounded by lush agricultural plantations of fruit trees and irrigated field crops and has direct connections with similar palaces set in agricultural estates in North Africa, Egypt and Syria,<sup>18</sup> including early Umayyad desert palaces such as Qaṣr al-Ḥayr.<sup>19</sup> The Zisi Palace’s mosaic decorations show hunting scenes and floral depictions that are very similar to those adorning the Qaṣr al-Ḥayr al-Gharbī in the Jordanian desert (which was then part of Syria).

<sup>17</sup> Frances Elliot, *Diary of an Idle Woman in Sicily* (Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1882), 67.

<sup>18</sup> ‘Azīz Ahmad, *Tārīkh Ṣiqilliyah al-Islāmiyya*, translated by Amīn al-Ṭaybī (Cairo: al-Dār al-‘Arabiyya li'l-Kitāb, 1980), 115.

<sup>19</sup> Renata Holod-Tretiak, ‘Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi: A Mediaeval Town in Syria’, *Archaeology* 23/3 (1970): 221–31.

*San Giovanni dei Lebbrosi*. This monument was built by the Arabs as a castle or palace and later modified by the Norman King Roger I (r. 1071–1101)<sup>20</sup> into a church, making it the first Christian church in Norman Palermo. In spite of the Norman renovation, the Arab influence is obvious from the outer gardens and domes.

*San Cataldo*. This church, the seat of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre, and constitutes another example of early Arabic architectural influence in Sicily. This church was built during the time of King William I (r. 1154–66), and the work was undertaken by his emir (admiral) Majone di Bari from 1154 to 1161. This church is located near the church La Martorana. San Cataldo is built in the shape of a cube, reflecting features of Islamic and Byzantine architecture, with their preference for cubic forms. The façade of the church is decorated with protrusions and has small windows present only on its upper portion. Sitting atop its roof, on the church's longitudinal axis, are three hemispherical domes, each perched on a cylindrical drum with windows.<sup>21</sup> The upper part of the church below the domes is decorated with historically significant Kufic inscriptions. With its three hemispherical domes and Norman-style stonework, this church serves as another example of Arab-Norman fusion in twelfth-century Sicily. The church is considered to be the last building to have been designed and erected in the Arab-Norman architectural style.

*Santa Maria dell'Ammiragliato*. It was founded in 1143 as a Greek Orthodox church by George of Antioch, the chief officer of Roger II. In 1184, the Arab traveller Ibn Jubayr visited the church and described it as ‘the most beautiful monument in the world’. After the Sicilian Vespers revolt of 1282,<sup>22</sup> the island’s nobility gathered in the church for a meeting that resulted in the Sicilian crown being offered to Peter III of Aragon.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Klaus-Peter Todt, ‘Roger, I., Graf von Sizilien’, *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon* (Herzberg: Bautz, 1994), vol. 8: 541–43.

<sup>21</sup> Brigit Carnabuci, *Sizilien: Griechische Tempel, römische Villen, normannische Dome und barocke Städte im Zentrum des Mittelmeeres* (Ostfildern: DuMont, 2011), 77.

<sup>22</sup> Steven Runciman, *The Sicilian Vespers: A History of the Mediterranean World in the Later Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), 26ff.

<sup>23</sup> Slobodan Ćurčić, ‘The Architecture’, in *The Mosaics of St. Mary’s of the Admiral in Palermo*, edited by Ernst Kitzinger (Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1990), 15–21.

Certain elements of the original church are very fine, such as the bell tower, which is a good example of a mix of Arab-Norman art. Its exterior decorations show the influence of Islamic architectural adornments: a frieze bearing a dedicatory inscription runs along the top of the exterior walls; although its text is in Greek, its architectural form references the Islamic architecture of North Africa,<sup>24</sup> as well as the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus. Also, there exists an inscription around the base of the dome on a wooden frieze, a hymn to the Virgin in Arabic. The church's mosaics are some of the best mosaics ever executed in Sicily and executed by the finest Byzantine masters of the era.<sup>25</sup> These mosaics in shape and craftsmanship are very similar to the ones found in Umayyad mosques or palaces.

*The Palatine Chapel.* This was the royal chapel of the Norman kings of Sicily, and it is part of the architectural complex of the Norman Palace in Palermo.<sup>26</sup> It was built by Roger II in 1132. The chapel combines a variety of styles: Norman (as seen in the portal's décor), Arabic (as seen in the arches and the inscriptions adorning the roof) and Byzantine (notably the presence of the dome and mosaics). The cultural influences sometimes merge into one; this is visible, for instance, in the clusters of four eight-pointed stars, of typical Islamic design, arranged on the ceiling so as to form a Christian cross.

Other remarkable features of the chapel include the *muqarnas* ceiling. The hundreds of facets are painted, not only with many purely ornamental vegetal and zoomorphic designs, but also with scenes of daily life and other subjects that have not yet been explained. Stylistically influenced by Iraqi 'Abbāsid art, these paintings are innovative in their more spatially aware representation of personages and animals. This sort of representation is clear in the *al-Jugmuqia* school and in other monuments in Damascus. In the Hall of Roger II, there is a mosaic scene with a depiction of trees and animals similar to the mosaic in the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus; even the style and colours are remarkable

<sup>24</sup> Bruno Lavagnini, 'L'epigramma e il committente', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 41 (1987): 339–50.

<sup>25</sup> Ernst Kitzinger, 'Conclusion', in *The Mosaics of St. Mary's of the Admiral in Palermo*, edited by Ernst Kitzinger (Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1990), 261–62.

<sup>26</sup> Slobodan Ćurčić, 'Some Palatine Aspects of the Cappella Palatina in Palermo', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 41 (1987), 125.

for their similarity. And even if one takes a more general view of the architectural style of the Umayyad Mosque, these influences are visible in Sicily, as, for example, in the Monreale Cathedral's arches and crown of columns. Moreover, the depiction of faces in the Monreale Cathedral, which took a circular shape, is very similar to the style found in Qaṣr al-Ḥayr al-Gharbī in the Syrian desert from the Umayyad period.

The Norman Kingdom of Sicily was distinguished by an exceptional affinity between the cultures that co-existed on the island, especially the Byzantine and Islamic cultures, which led to the emergence of new concepts of space and decoration in art and architecture. This intercultural exchange generated a unique blend of elements drawn from different techniques. It also resulted in an unusual, new stylistic syntax that incorporated Byzantine, Islamic and Roman elements and contributed to the development of culture throughout North Africa and the Mediterranean region.<sup>27</sup> For example, La Favara constitutes a significant link between architectural antecedents in North Africa and the later, better known suburban palaces of La Zisa and La Cuba in Sicily.<sup>28</sup>

Finally, the idea of exchange should be addressed. When considering the *muqarnas*, one may recognize Roger II of Sicily depicted on the ceiling of San Cataldo in an Arabic style, wearing Arabic garments. A similar depiction can be seen on the Arabic coins of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, the Sultan of Islam and Muslims (r. 1174–93), and also on a coin of Sayf al-Dīn Abū Bakr b. Ayūb (d. 1218), the ruler of Maiyāfārikīn, minted in Mayāfārqīn, where they are depicted wearing a hat similar to Roger II's (Fig. 8.3). Turning to the Norman coins, these had Arabic emblems, much like the gold coin of Roger II: on this coin is an image of the façade of the Umayyad Mosque. The Church of Saint John of the Hermits is reminiscent of Quṣayr ‘Amra in Jordan with respect to its dome and also its windows and spaces (Fig. 8.4).

<sup>27</sup> See ‘Palermo arabo-normanna e le cattedrali di Cefalù e Monreale’, Palermo: Fondazione patrimonio UNESCO Sicilia, 2018, 161, <https://www.unesco.it/it/PatrimonioMondiale/Detail/161>. See also Eugenio Galdieri, ‘A Proposito della Cuba di Palermo’, *Oriente Moderno* 90/2 (2010): 305–41.

<sup>28</sup> Dana Katz, ‘A Changing Mosaic: Multicultural Exchange in the Norman Palaces of Twelfth-Century Sicily’ (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2016), 165.

سيف الدين أبو بكر بن أنيب الملك العادل ٥٩٩هـ / ١٢٠٢ م ضرب عيافارقين



Figure 8.3 Left: Roger II depicted on the ceiling of the Church of San Cataldo, Sicily, 1154. Right: Sayf al-Dīn Abū Bakr b. Ayūb. Source: © Directorate General of Antiquity in Syria.

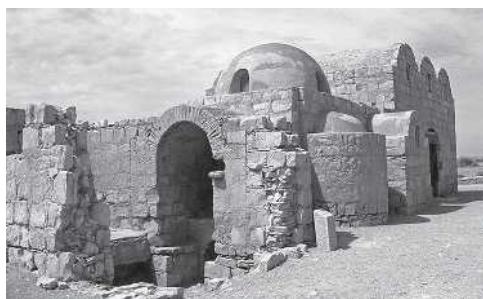


Figure 8.4 Qusayr 'Amra, Jordan, AH 125 / 743 AD. Source: © Directorate General of Antiquity in Syria.

Even the Arabs borrowed Byzantine artists and profited from their services. The mosques of Damascus, both in the methods of their construction and in the detail of their ornamentation, reproduced Byzantine styles.<sup>29</sup> This is visible in the façade decorations of the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus and in the mosque's use of the dome instead of a ceiling. In this way, we can trace the interaction between the East and the West.

### **Traces of Trade Relations between Norman Sicily and the Islamic World Based on Coin Finds**

Having examined the architectural and design features of the East that were employed in the buildings in Sicily and having also highlighted the influence

<sup>29</sup> ‘The Making of Europe/Early European History’, from Hutton Webster’s *Early European History* (1917), edited by Ellopos, <https://www.ellopos.net/politics/european-history/default.asp>.

of the Syrian monuments of the early Islamic period on Sicilian architecture, this chapter will now turn to another example of East-West interaction, which can be traced through the Norman-era Sicilian coins found in Syria. This following section will first look at Norman coins in Sicily.<sup>30</sup> It will then examine why these coins turned up in Syria and how they reached this region. Did they arrive on Syrian soil as result of the wars fought there? Or did they get there as result of commercial exchange? By analysing the historical documents on Norman coins and comparing them to other regions from the same period, we hope to shed further light on the relationship between Sicily and the Islamic world.

### ***Norman Coins in Sicily***

Norman coins were primarily minted in Sicily, mainly in its capital Palermo and in the city of Messina. The first Islamic coins to be found on the island were dirhams minted in al-Andalus during the Spanish Umayyad period. In the Aghlabid period, coins were minted in the city of Palermo, with the word غلاب / *ghalab* (to have victory), as in the period of Muhammad I (r. 840–56).<sup>31</sup> Coins were also minted in the Fātimid period, mostly in the city of Ṣiqillīyah, the capital of Sicily. Typical denominations of coins issued on the island were the golden coinage named رباعي / *rubā'i*<sup>32</sup> and the initially silver and later bullion (alloyed silver) coinage خروبة / *kharūbīya* (Fig. 8.5).

<sup>30</sup> Presented here are a few typical examples of Sicilian coins which belong to the Bibliotheca Communal in Palermo.

<sup>31</sup> See Abū-l Faraj al-'Ush, *Monnaies Aglabides étudiées en relation avec l'histoire des Aglabides* (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1982), 35–50; J. Farrugia de Candia, 'Monnaies aghlabites du Musée du Bardo', *Les Cahiers de Tunisie: Revue des Sciences Humaines* 4/13 (1936): 95–118; Maria Amalia De Luca, 'La riforma monetaria dell'aglabita Ibrāhīm II', in *The 2nd Simone Assemani Symposium on Islamic Coins*, edited by Bruno Callegeri and Arianna d'Ottone (Trieste: Edizioni Università di Trieste, 2010), 90–110.

<sup>32</sup> By the Norman period, the Rubā'i was called the at-Tari (al-Ṭarī / supple) and in shape it was similar to the Fātimid quarter dinar. According to the story of al-Mazīrī (d. 1141), the al-Ṭarī was not of pure gold (good fineness). As was the case in the Norman period, Muslim merchants who went to Sicily to trade were obliged to go to the mint to hand over the Islamic dinars in their possession. The workers at the mint added to each dinar a quarter of its weight in silver, then the coins were reminted. See al-Mazīrī, Muḥammad ibn 'Alī at-Tamīmī, *Fatāwī al-Mazīrī*, edited by al-Ṭāhir al-Mā'mūrī (Tunis: Dār al-Kutub al-Sharqiyah, 1994), 207–10.



Figure 8.5 1/4 Dinar, 455 AH / 1063–64 AD, Siqilliyyah. Source: De Luca, *Le monete con leggenda araba*, N° 316, p. 308; Nicol, *A Corpus of Fatimid Coins*, N° 1821, p. 268.

Obv.

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ / لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ مُحَمَّدُ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ وَلِيُّ اللَّهِ / مُحَمَّدُ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ أَرْسَلَهُ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينٍ  
الْحَقُّ لِيُظَهِّرُهُ عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ

*Lā ilāha illā Allāh wāḥdahu / lā sharīka lahu Muḥammad Rasūl al-Allāh,  
'Alī walī Allāh / Muḥammad Rasūl al-Allāh, arsalahu bil-hudā wa dīn  
al-ḥaq liyudhbhirahu 'alā al-dīn kullih.*

(There is no God but God, the Only / He has no associates, and Muḥammad is the messenger of God, and 'Alī is His friend, and Muḥammad is the messenger of God and He sent him with the guidance and the religion of truth, that He may proclaim it above every religion.)

Rev.

عَبْدُ اللَّهِ وَوْلِيْهِ الْإِمَامُ / مَعْدُ أَبُو تَمِيمِ الْمُسْتَصْرِ بِاللَّهِ أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ / بِسْمِ اللَّهِ ضُرِبَ هَذَا الدِّينُ بِصَفْلِيَّةٍ  
سَنَةُ خَمْسٍ وَخَمْسِينَ وَأَرْبَعَمَائِةٍ

*'Abd Allāh wa walīyuh al-Imām / ma'd Abū Tamīm al-Muṣṭanṣir bil-llāh, amīr  
al-mū'minīn / bi-ismi Allāh ḏuriba hadhā al-dīnār bi-Ṣiqillīyah sanat khams  
wa khamsin wa arba'mā'a.*

(The servant of God and His friend, al-Imām / Ma'd Abū Tamīm al-Muṣṭanṣir  
bi-llāh, the commander of the believers / in the name of God, this dinar is  
minted in the year 455 in Siqilliyyah.)

These coins explicitly expressed religious statements of the Fātimid Shī'ī doctrine. After the arrival of the Normans in Sicily, the epigraph or inscriptions



Figure 8.6 Dinar, 464 AH / 1071–72 AD, Siqilliyah. Source: De Luca, *Le monete con leggenda araba*, N° 1, p. 317.

on coins instead expressed Sunnī sentiments (Fig. 8.6–10). Why did this happen? Is it that the population was Sunnī but had converted to Shi'ism with the presence of the Fāṭimids? Or is it that the princes who ruled the regions were Sunnī, and they re-minted the money as it had appeared before the Fāṭimid presence in Sicily? Perhaps there was a kind of cooperation among the princes, the local population and the Normans against the Fāṭimids, resulting in the replacement of the Fāṭimid doctrinal tendency with a Sunnī one immediately after the Normans took control of Sicily.

Obv.

بامر / ربارت الدوقة / الأجل ملك / صقلية  
 (بسم [الله] ضرب هذا الدينار بصفلية سنة أربع وستين وأربعمائة)

*Bi-amr / Robārt al-dūqa / al-ajal malik / Siqilliyah*

*Bi-is̄m [allāhi] d̄uriba hadha al-dīnār bi-Siqilliyah sanat arba‘ wa sit̄n wa arba‘mā‘a*

(Under the command of / Rabārt al-dūqa / the magnificent, the king of / Siqilliyah

In the name of God, this dinar was minted in Siqilliyah in the year 464.)

Rev.

الله / لا اله الا / محمد رسول / الله  
 (محمد رسول الله أرسله بالهدى ودين الحق ليظهره على الدين كله)

*Allāh / lā ilāha illā / Muḥammad Rasūl / Allāh  
 Muḥammad Rasūl al-Allāh arsalahu bil-hudā wa dīn al-ḥaq liyudhhirahu  
 ‘alā al-dīn kullih.*

(God/ there is no God, but God/ Muḥammad is the messenger / of God.  
 [Muḥammad is the messenger of God and He sent him with the guidance and  
 the religion of truth, that He may proclaim it above every religion.])<sup>33</sup>

We note that the phrases on this coin express no Shī‘ī sentiment, as had been the case before. The *al-dūqa* was the highest rank of honour in sequence after the king. Thus, the inscription ‘Robārt al-dūqa’ refers to the name and title of the ruler.

Obv.

الملك رجار المعتر با الله / ضرب بمدينة صقلية سنة

*Al-malik Rujār al-Mu’taz bi-llāh/ duriba bi-madīnat Ṣiqilliyah sanat*  
 (The king Rujār, al-Mu’taz bi-llāh / this was minted in the city of Ṣiqilliyah in  
 the year [?].)

Rev. IC XC/ NI KA.

ضرب بمدينة صقلية سنة ثمان تلثين خمسماة



Figure 8.7 538 AH / 1143–44, Ṣiqilliyah. Source: De Luca, *Le monete con leggenda araba*, N° 53, p. 334.

<sup>33</sup> This phrase refers to Q. 9:33 and contains *verbatim* citation of part of the verse.

*duriba bi-madīnat Ṣiqilliyah sanat thamān thalathīn khamsmā'a*  
 (It was minted in the city of Ṣiqilliyah in the year 538.)

During his rule, Roger II used the honorific ‘al-Mu‘taz bi-llāh’ (Fig. 8.7).<sup>34</sup> This title was used by the ‘Abbāsid caliphs, followed by the Fātimids. Roger II decreed that all minted coins should bear his honorific. The successors of Roger II maintained this tradition (Fig. 8.8), while on the reverse of the coin they inscribed Greek characters alongside the Arabic (meaning Jesus Christ wins).

Obv. REX / W.

ضرب بمسيني عام خمسين و خمسماة

*duriba bi-Messina ‘ām khamsin wa khamsmā'a*  
 (It was minted in Messina in the year 550.)

Rev. Virgin Mary and the Infant Jesus.



Figure 8.8 550 AH / 1155–56 AD, Messina. Source: Coll. FINT, Tübingen, N° 2014-3-11.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>34</sup> After the Normans occupied Mahdia between 1151 and 1163, they minted dinars there in the name of Roger II, in imitation of Fātimid-style coins. Roger II called himself on this coin al-Mu‘taz bi-llāh and al-Malik (for example, on the dinars in 543 AH and 549 AH). For more, see Hasan Husni Abdul-Wahab, ‘Deux dinars normands de Mahdia’, *Revue Tunisienne* 1 (1930): 215–18.

<sup>35</sup> Coll. FINT. Tübingen = Forschungsstelle für Islamische Numismatik Tübingen (FINT), Tübingen University.

The coins that were minted during the first period of the reign of William I were called *al-Hādi bi-Amr Allāh*. These coins were similar to those from the period of Roger II, but the images on the coin, which was called a Fals (*fulūs*), are an image of the Virgin Mary and Christ on the obverse and writing in Arabic on the reverse (Fig. 8.8). The Fals, which was concave, was originally minted using the Byzantine method of production. Coins continued to be inscribed with Arabic phrases until the post-Norman period. The last appearance of the Arabic language on Sicilian coins was during the revolution of Muḥammad b. ‘Abbād in 1220 (Fig. 8.9).

Obv.

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ

*Lā llāh illā / Allāh wa Muḥammad / rasūl Allāh*

(There is no God but God, and Muḥammad is His messenger.)

Rev.

مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ عَبْدِ الْمُطَّلِبِ رَسُولُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

*Muḥammad bin /‘Abbād amīr / al-muslimīn*

(Muḥammad bin ‘Abbād, the commander of the believers.)

### *Sicilian Coins Discovered in Syria*

It must be noted that Sicilian coins came from Antioch (the ancient capital of Syria), where a Crusader state was founded in 1098 and lasted until 1268,



Figure 8.9 616 AH / 1219–20 AD. Source: De Luca, *Le monete con leggenda araba*, N° 20, p. 391.



Figure 8.10 Follaro, Ruggero II (r. 1105–30). Source: Dr. L. Ilisch Special Private Collection, Hayingen.

when it fell to the Mamluks led by al-Zāhir Baybars. Bohemond I was the first Norman ruler of the province of Antioch; he reigned there from 1098 to 1111.

The first example of Norman coins discovered in Syria (Fig. 8.10) consists of a Follaro (Arabic *fels*), and it dates back to the time of Roger II in Sicily (r. 1105–30). This piece was purchased by L. Ilisch in Germany from the Syrian coin dealer İşmat Buzān in 1986. It was discovered in Syria. In weight and diameter, it is equal to the Byzantine coins of Manuel, called Tetarteron.

The second example is a half-Follaro (Fig. 8.11), and it was discovered in Aleppo. It is housed in the Museum of Münster and was sold by the Syrian coin dealer İşmat Buzān. These coins were minted in Messana during the time of William II. Written on the reverse is the Arabic (الثاني / غليام / الملك) (*al-malik / Gilyām / al-thānī* [the king / Gilyām (William)/ the second]); and on the margin ضرب بأمر الملك المعمظ المستعز با الله (*duriba bi-amr al-malik al-mu'azam al-Musta'iz bi-llāh* (it was struck at the command of the greatest King al-Musta'iz bi-llāh).

### ***The Reason for the Presence of Sicilian Coins in Syria***

Bohemond I continued his Crusade, leaving Antioch in 1100 for Fort Afāmiyā in Northern Syria. There, he was defeated by the Seljuqs and held captive until 1103. Tancred, Bohemond's nephew, came to power and took his place in disguise, and when Bohemond came out of captivity, he went straight to Italy for support in 1105. In 1109, Bohemond I was able



Figure 8.11 Mezzo Follaro: Messana Guglielmo II (r. 1166–89). Source: Peter Ilisch, ‘Follaro Normanno’, p. 236.

to expand and take control of Ṭarṭūs and Latakia in Syria. He took control of Bāniyās and imposed a tax on Shaizar, then continued to Ḥiṣn al-Akrād and finally went on to Aleppo in 1110. He lost these cities after the Battle of Balīkh and Ḥarrān. He was subsequently defeated by the Romans and signed a treaty to bequeath to them control of Antioch after his death (which occurred in 1111).

Tancred died in 1112 and was succeeded by his nephew Roger di Salerno. Roger ruled Antioch until 1119, when he was killed in battle. His emirate (province) fell to the Kingdom of Bayt al-Maqdis (Jerusalem) and came under the oversight of Baldwin II, who served as guardian until 1131. The principality was inherited by Constance, Princess of Antioch, who was married to Raymond of Poitiers until his death during the Zengid attack in 1149. Raynald of Chatillon, Constance’s second husband, then took over in Antioch. He was held captive in Syria from 1160 to 1176. After his release, Raynald found that his wife had died in 1163 and that the principality had been passed on to her elder son with Raymond, Bohemond III. Raynald captured Bohemond III in 1164 at the site of Harem and the River al-Āṣī. The following year, Bohemond III returned to Antioch. After his death in 1201, he was succeeded by Bohemond IV, who ruled until his death in 1233. Next came Bohemond V, followed by Bohemond VI, under whose rule in 1260 Antioch became a subsidiary of the Mongol Empire. The Mongols fought alongside him when invading Aleppo and Damascus. However, after defeating the Mongols in the Battle of ‘Aīn Jälüt, al-Zāhir

Baybars began a campaign against Antioch in 1268, when he took control of it, burned it and plundered its coins.<sup>36</sup>

In the course of this history, many coins that had been minted in Sicily during the reign of William I made their way to Syria. The Normans sent these coins to assist in military operations in Antioch due to the weakness in Antioch caused by the Byzantine state, as well as the capture of Raynald and then Bohemond III in Syria. There exists a historical reference to the reign of William I al-Hādī bi-Amr Allāh: his fleet lieutenant Margreus participated in Christian hostilities near Latakia and may have carried the coins from this period with this military campaign.

However, it should be noted that the two above-mentioned rulers from two different periods, Roger II and William I, both used the *fulūs* (copper coins). It is known that the *fulūs* was not used to pay the military their salary, except in cases of economic crisis. According to our research, the monetary production in Antioch for that period was more than adequate, and Seljuq coins were used. This means that there was no need to pay the soldiers' salaries with Norman coins. These coins therefore were likely carried by trade from Sicily to Antioch and then to Syria in the Norman period.

### **The Normans and the Pope**

Here, we will compare the coins of the Norman kingdom of Sicily with those of the Kingdom of Castile (Toledo), which was not under Norman rule. This will show the influence of the papacy and the form of government on the minting of coins and what is inscribed on them. As mentioned above, in Messina in Sicily, the coins of 550/1155–56 (Fig. 8.8) depicted Jesus and Mary, but they did not display any words referring to the pope, as did those in Castile in Spain (Fig. 8.12). This indicates that Sicily was not ruled dually by the king and the pope, as was the case in Catalonia or the Frankish country.

<sup>36</sup> See Al-Ḥmad al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk li ma'rifat duwal al-mulūk* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub, 1997); Alex Metcalfe, *Muslims and Christians in Norman Sicily: Arabic Speakers and the End of Islam* (London: Psychology Press, 2003); Runciman, *The Sicilian Vespers*; Donald Matthew, *The Norman Kingdom of Sicily* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Hubert Houben, *Roger II of Sicily: A Ruler Between East and West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).



Figure 8.12 Alfonso VIII, 1220 Safar (570-77 AH / 1174-1217 AD), Madinat Toledo. Source: Zeno.ru, n°.176141.<sup>37</sup>

Obv.

إمام البيعة / بابا المسيحية / روما العظمى  
 (بسم الآب والابن والروح القدس الإله الواحد من أمن وتعهد يكون سالماً)

*Imām al-Bay'a / bā bā al-Masihiyya / Rūmā al-'uzmā*  
*bism al-ab wa al-ibn wa al-rūh al-quds al-ilāh al-wāhid man āmana wa*  
*ta'ammad yakūn Sāliman*  
 (The *imām* of the pledge / the Pope of Christianity / the greatest Rome.  
 In the name of the father, the son and the holy spirit, the one God, he, who  
 believes and is baptised, will be saved.)

Rev.

امير / القتولقين / الفنس بن سنجة / ايده الله / و نصره

*Amir / al-qatūlqīn / al-Fans bin Sanja / ayyadahu al-Allāh / wa naṣarah*  
 (The prince / *al-qatūlqīn* / *al-Fans bin Sanja* / may God aid him / and support  
 him.)

(ضرب هذا الدينار بمدينة طليطلة سنة عشرين و مئتين و ألف الصفر)

*(duriba hadhā al-dīnār bi-madīnat Ṭulayṭila sanat iṣhrīn wa mi'atayn wa*  
*alf al-ṣifr)*  
 (This dinar was minted in the city of Toledo in the year 1220 Safar.)

<sup>37</sup> Antonio Medina Gómez, *Monedas hispano-musulmanas: Manual de lectura y clasificación* (Toledo: Diputación Provincial de Toledo, 1992), 385.

Despite the conflict between them, the various popes and the rulers of Sicily exhibited the same rank. This is unlike the caliph of Islam, who was always at the top of the hierarchy, holding both religious and political power. In Catalonia, the pope's title was inscribed on the gold coins to give legitimacy to the local government. This government followed the principle of Islamic coins by respecting the rules of coin minting (*sika*) by mentioning monotheism first, then the name of the caliph, then the emir and so on. The situation was different in Sicily, where the name of the Pope was not inscribed on Sicilian coinage. This is because the rulers of Sicily followed the principles of the Islamic caliphate, where the ruler, much like the caliph, possessed both religious and political authority.

According to historical sources, in 1098, Pope Urban II offered protection to the ruler of Sicily and ceded to him the Apostolic Embassy. This situation resulted in the Pope's unwitting interference in Roger I's affairs. During the reign of Roger II, when two people were elected to the papal chair in 1130, Roger II helped Anacletus II, who announced him as King of Sicily. Roger II was a pastor in the Christian church, and he sought to emulate the behaviour of a sultan of a national church (Greek Orthodox). In this respect, he sought to possess both religious and political power, in a way similar to Muslim caliphs. It is due to the lack of subordination to the pope that the name of the pope was not inscribed on the Sicilian coins, unlike on the coins of Toledo and Salerno.

Norman coins were also minted in Salerno and Bari, but these were different from Sicilian coins. Unlike in Sicily, where the coins contained Islamic phrases, these coins were engraved with Christian phrases, such as *Nāṣir / al-naṣrāniyya* (Fig. 8.13). This may have been the case because of Salerno's proximity to the Roman Empire and the pope. In this city, imitation coins were minted in the Fāṭimid period.

Obv.

الملك / غليام / الثاني  
al-malik / Gilyām / al-thānī  
(The King / Gilyām (William) / the second.)

Rev.

ناصر / النصرانية  
*Nāṣir / al-naṣrāniyya*  
(*Nāṣir / Christianity*)



Figure 8.13 Salerno. Source: Numisbids: 26 June 2016, Lot. 1094.<sup>38</sup>

## Conclusion

The influence of the East on Sicily started with the Phoenicians, with the mercantile exchange of goods. With the early Arabs came the Sicilian adoption of Byzantine decoration in religious buildings. After the spread of Islam throughout Sicily, monuments were built using Islamic architectural styles and architectural features.

Comparisons between the inscriptions on coins in Sicily and other cities in Southern Italy and in the Kingdom of Castile in Spain show that, unlike those of other regions, Sicilian coins did not display phrases referring to the pope. Only some *fulūs* coins displayed the image of Jesus and the Virgin Mary, symbolising the Christian religion but not Sicily's dependence on the pope. During the second part of Roger II's reign, the inscription of the phrase denoting the concept of the monotheistic principle of God's Oneness (*tawḥīd*) on coins ended, but Sicilians continued to inscribe Arabic phrases on coins (see Fig. 8.9) even after the end of Norman rule. Roger II and William also wrote the Arabic phrase 'in praise of God' on their documents; for example, this phrase appeared stamped on their seal *al-hamdu li-lلāh ḥaqq ḥamdih* (praise be to God as He is worthy of Praise).

As soon as the Fāṭimids had left Sicily, the phrases on Norman coins began to be written without reference to Shi’ism, indicating the cooperation between the princes and the local population with the Normans to occupy Sicily and

<sup>38</sup> Lucia Travaini, *La monetazione nell'Italia normanna* (Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo, 1995), 362.

expel the Fāṭimids from the island. This chapter has also shown that Norman coins minted in Sicily were circulating in Syria, indicating that there existed relations between the two regions during that period, via the Normans of Antioch.

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# 9

## ON THE ARTISTIC CULTURE OF MEDIEVAL SICILY

*William Tronzo*

In this chapter I would like to frame – with a selected number of key examples – an important chapter in the history of Sicily and the Islamic world, whose intertwined themes of nation-building, social integration, princely patronage, technical accomplishment, opulence and visual pleasure remained resonant for centuries in the historical and literary imagination.

Much like 1945, the end of World War II, and 1453, the Fall of Constantinople, the year 1066 marked a well-known turning point in history: the Battle of Hastings, when William, Duke of Normandy, defeated King Harold of England, thus changing the course of English history.<sup>1</sup> The other conquest that the Normans accomplished in the 1060s, I would venture to guess, is considerably less well known. At approximately the same time as William was taking his soldiers across the English Channel, another band of knights

<sup>1</sup> Cosimo Damiano Fonseca, ‘La conquista normanna del mezzogiorno nella storiografia europea moderna’, in *Roberto il Guiscardo tra Europa, Oriente e Mezzogiorno*, edited by C. D. Fonseca (Potenza: Congedo Editore, 1990), 13–26. In addition, see the classic study by Charles Homer Haskins, *The Normans in European History* (New York: Ungar, 1966 [original date of publication 1915]), and Ferdinand Chalandon, *Histoire de la domination normande en Italie et en Sicile* (Paris: Librairie A. Picard Fils, 1907); John Julius Norwich, *The Normans in the South, 1016–1130* (London: Longman, 1967); Graham Alexander Loud, *The Age of Robert Guiscard: Southern Italy and the Norman Conquest* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2000).

under the leadership of the Norman clan of the Hauteville (Altavilla) had made their way south, first to Rome, then to Southern Italy and eventually to Sicily, where they established a state that in the twelfth century became a kingdom under the Norman ruler Roger II.<sup>2</sup> They did so in large part by wresting control of these lands away from indigenous princes, including the Kalbids of Sicily, the semi-independent hereditary dynasty of governors connected to the Zirids of North Africa and the Fāṭimids of Egypt.<sup>3</sup> The island had already been under Muslim domination for over two centuries (827–1061).<sup>4</sup> In hindsight, one might interpret the Norman move as the decisive shift in the fortune of a swing state: the fate of Sicily could easily have gone with that of Muslim North Africa, but the Normans re-affirmed and made permanent its attachment to the Christian medieval world.

It is one of the ironies of history that the Norman kingdom of Sicily, albeit now less well known, was far richer and more powerful than the Norman kingdom of England in the twelfth century; the most overt manifestation of its importance was in material form. The Norman rulers of the south were not modest men, and they devoted a considerable portion of their immense wealth to proclaiming their power in buildings and on objects commissioned by themselves or by members of their court. A case in point is the portrait of King Roger that adorns the Church of St Mary's of the Admiral (La Martorana) in Palermo, built by Roger's second-in-command, the admiral George of Antioch.<sup>5</sup> The image, derived from an established convention in Byzantium,

<sup>2</sup> Hubert Houben, *Roger II of Sicily: A Ruler between East and West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> On the political role of the Kalbid emirs, see Chapter Two in this volume. For a discussion of the poetic and literary activities that flourished during the Kalbid period, see Chapter Ten. On the relationship between the Zirids of North Africa and Norman Sicily, see Martin King, *Dynasties Intertwined: The Zirids of Ifriqiya and the Normans of Sicily* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2022).

<sup>4</sup> Alex Metcalfe, *Muslims and Christians in Norman Sicily: Arabic Speakers and the End of Islam* (London: Routledge, 2003); idem, *The Muslims of Medieval Sicily* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009); Annliese Nef, *Conquérir et gouverner la Sicile islamique aux XI<sup>e</sup> et XII<sup>e</sup> siècles* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 2011).

<sup>5</sup> Ernst Kitzinger, *I mosaici di Santa Maria dell'Ammiraglio a Palermo, con un capitolo sull'Architettura della Chiesa di S. Curcic* (Palermo: Istituto Siciliano di Studi Bizantini e Neoellenici, 1990).

shows the ruler being crowned by Christ, indicating the political and theological proposition that the ruler's power derived from God alone. But Roger pushed this proposition a step further by making his portrait resemble that of Christ (which had not been done previously in Byzantine depictions), thereby proclaiming himself to be the true and unique embodiment of God's authority on earth. In this seemingly simple change, the claim to a status, rather radical for the time, was thus made.

It is interesting to observe that, in the image, King Roger's opulent, bejewelled regalia closely resemble that of the Byzantine emperor.<sup>6</sup> The point is one to which we shall return, but it suffices now to make the observation that this connection gives us an insight into how attuned the Norman rulers of Southern Italy and Sicily were to the cultures that surrounded them in the Mediterranean, how susceptible they were to the luxurious and deeply ideological life-styles propagated in other courts, and how open they were to appropriating images, forms and ideas from these courts when the perceived need arose.<sup>7</sup> In many ways, the Byzantine Empire, a venerable and prestigious state tracing its roots to ancient Rome, set a standard for court culture in the twelfth century. Its claim to continuity with the empire of ancient Rome reified, in no uncertain terms, its prestige. But Byzantium had its rivals, as, for instance, the Fātimid court in medieval Cairo, from which Byzantium had borrowed elements of art and architecture, costume and ceremony.<sup>8</sup> And so too did the Norman rulers of Sicily borrow from the Fātimids.

<sup>6</sup> See, for instance, Elisabeth Piltz, 'Costume in Life and Death in Byzantium', in *Bysans och Norden: Akta för Nordiska forskarkursen I bysantinsk konstvetenskap 1986*, edited by Elisabeth Piltz (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1989), 153–65, and idem, 'Middle Byzantine Court Costume', in *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, edited by Henry Maguire (Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1998), 39–51.

<sup>7</sup> In this respect, see Oleg Grabar, 'The Shared Culture of Objects', in *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, edited by Henry Maguire (Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1998), 115–130.

<sup>8</sup> See Cyril Mango, *Byzantium and Its Image* (London: Variorum, 1984), chap. III, 'Discontinuity with the Classical Past in Byzantium', and chap. V, 'Antique Statuary and the Byzantine Beholder'; Alicia Walker, 'Meaningful Mingling: Classicizing Imagery and Islamicizing Script in a Byzantine Bowl', *The Art Bulletin* 90 (2008): 32–53; idem, *Exotic Elements and the Imaging of Middle Byzantine Imperial Power, Ninth to Thirteenth Centuries C.E.* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

The fact that the Normans conquered an Arabic-speaking land in Sicily helps us only partly to understand their adoption of Islamic culture.<sup>9</sup> Pragmatic considerations such as, for instance, communication with the indigenous Arabic-speaking population was clearly an important issue for the Normans, who eventually took up the tongue themselves. This is visible in the omnipresence of Arabic inscriptions in Palermo, in churches (witness inscriptions of the words ‘Sanctus’, ‘Hosanna’ and ‘Gloria’ in Kufic at the base of the dome in St Mary’s of the Admiral; a column, probably from a house with an augural inscription proclaiming victory and good fortune to the proprietor; and the nave ceiling of the Cappella Palatina), on palaces (the Zisa) and on monuments (the water clock of 1142 in the Palazzo dei Normanni).<sup>10</sup> But other factors and interests clearly came into play, ranging from the spiritual and intellectual to the more mundane, from symbolism to the cultivation of a luxurious life-style.

With regard to art and architecture, however, pre-Norman Islamic Sicily has left us with barely a trace, suggesting that whatever existed there in the Islamic period was probably quite modest.<sup>11</sup> In order to obtain the level of display that they desired for themselves, that would keep them competitive among the courts of medieval Europe and the Near East, the Norman kings had to go further afield. They had to import not only ideas but also artisans from elsewhere, and they did so to extraordinary effect. I have used the term ‘borrowing’ to describe the connection on which I would like to focus in the remainder of paper, but I have to admit that it is only partly correct. Norman artisans and artisans from

<sup>9</sup> Jeremy Johns, *Arabic Administration in Norman Sicily: The Royal Diwan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>10</sup> Jeremy Johns, ‘Arabic Inscriptions in the Cappella Palatina: Performativity, Audience, Legibility and Illegibility’, in *Viewing Texts: Inscriptions as Image and Ornament in the Late Antique and Medieval Mediterranean*, edited by Antony Eastmond and Elizabeth James (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 124–47. See also Isabelle Dolezalek, *Arabic Script on Christian Kings: Textile Inscriptions on Royal Garments in Norman Sicily* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017).

<sup>11</sup> Francesco Gabrieli and Umberto Scerrato (eds), *Gli arabi in Italia: Cultura, contatti e tradizioni* (Milan: Garzanti, 1993), 35–105; Ferdinando Maurici, *Breve storia degli arabi in Sicilia* (Palermo: Flaccovio, 1995). See also the insightful study of Ruggero Longo and Jeremy Johns, ‘The First Norman Cathedral in Palermo: Robert Guiscard’s Church of the Most Holy Mother of God’, in *The Italian South: Transcultural Perspectives, 500–1500*, edited by E. Sci-rocco and G. Wolf, special issue of *Convivium* 5/1 (2018): 16–35.

elsewhere working for the Normans fashioned what they took into new and original ensembles for the Norman kings. At the same time, their sources are never far from being clearly recognizable, which I believe is very much worth bearing in mind: equally clearly, Islamic culture provided a great many of them.

What I mean to say is illustrated in the Cappella Palatina of Palermo. The Normans made Palermo their capital even before the Norman kingdom was created in 1130 under Roger II, but with the kingdom came the need for a palace, a palatium, a great representational house for the ruler. Roger built one at the highest point in the city, and at the centre of it he had constructed a chapel for liturgical and royal services, the Royal Chapel or Cappella Palatina.<sup>12</sup> This building has the plan of a church, with a nave for the congregation on one side and an apse and altar for the priests on the other. What is unusual about it is its articulation above the level of plan. On the altar side, the Cappella Palatina is shaped like a Byzantine church, with a mosaic-encrusted dome containing a portrait of Christ and scenes from Christ's life. The nave, on the other hand, is covered with a vault made of a hard, locally harvested wood, the likes of which are attested only in the Islamic world.<sup>13</sup>

As a formal entity, the vault is divided into two parts: a central field of twenty-two star-shaped compartments and a wide surrounding frame executed in a technique called *muqarnas*, or stalactite, in reference to the faceted stalactite-shaped

<sup>12</sup> Beat Brenk (ed.), *La Cappella Palatina a Palermo = The Cappella Palatina in Palermo*, 4 vols (Modena: Franco Cosimo Panini, 2010). See also Ernst Kitzinger, 'The Mosaics of the Cappella Palatina in Palermo: An Essay on the Choice and Arrangement of Subjects', *The Art Bulletin* 31 (1949): 269–92; Thomas Dittelbach (ed.), *Die Cappella Palatina in Palermo: Geschichte, Kunst, Funktionen: Forschungsergebnisse der Restaurierung* (Künzelsau: Swiridoff Verlag, 2011); Slobodan Curcic, 'Some Palatine Aspects of the Cappella Palatina in Palermo', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 41 (1987): 125–44; William Tronzo, *The Cultures of his Kingdom: Roger II and the Cappella Palatina of Palermo* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); Beat Brenk, *The Mosaics of Roger II in Sicily: Visualizing Sacred Authority*, with contributions by Herbert Kessler and Andreas Kronz (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2022).

<sup>13</sup> The locus classicus for the study of the ceiling has been Ugo Monneret de Villard, *Le pitture musulmane al soffitto della Cappella palatina in Palermo* (Rome: La Libreria dello Stato, 1950). See also Ernst Grube and Jeremy Johns, *The Painted Ceilings of the Cappella Palatina* (New York: Bruschettini Foundation for Islamic and Asian Art, 2005); *La Cappella Palatina a Palermo*, vol. 2, figs 871, 934 and 935. In addition, see Johns, 'Arabic Inscriptions in the Cappella Palatina', 124–47; Beat Brenk, 'Il concetto del soffitto arabo della Cappella Palatina del Palazzo dei Normanni di Palermo: Narrazione, exempla, retorica', in *Studi sull'iconografia dei soffitti dipinti nel Medioevo Mediterraneo*, edited by Licia Buttà (Palermo: Edizioni Caracol, 2013), 9–39.

forms that appear to hang as if suspended from above. *Muqarnas*, according to scholars, were probably invented a century or two earlier, perhaps in Mesopotamia or North Africa; one of the closest comparisons that one might adduce to the nave vault in the Cappella Palatina occurs in Fez, Morocco, in some stucco forms that decorate the vault of a bay in the central nave of the al-Qarawiyyin mosque, which was renovated in the mid-twelfth century.<sup>14</sup> Unlike the ceiling in the Cappella Palatina, however, the Fez stuccoes are covered with abstract ornamental designs.

The *muqarnas* in the Cappella Palatina are gilded and painted with figures and scenes of a remarkable liveliness, and of a striking un-religious character. There is an abundance of representations of the good life: dancing, drinking, music-making and game-playing, including an early representation of chess, all of which seem to occur within the precincts, not of a church, but of a palace or garden. The figures are rendered in a style that one encounters elsewhere in the Islamic world, in other vault fragments from Fustat (medieval Cairo), or in decorated ceramics from Egypt, supporting an interpretation that the vault derives from foreign artisans, perhaps from Egypt or North Africa.<sup>15</sup> The nave vault, in both architectural form and painted decoration, is so complex and yet at the same time so perfectly realised that I have no doubt that this was the case.

Yet, how to explain its presence, and particularly its decided lack of religious accent, in a church?<sup>16</sup> One key may lie in the fact that the nave was not

<sup>14</sup> Tronzo, *Cultures*, figs 69–75.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> There have been several recent attempts to give a Christian reading to some of the vignettes on the nave vault of the chapel; see, for instance, David Knipp, ‘Image Presence and Ambivalence: The Byzantine Tradition of the Painted Ceiling of the Cappella Palatina, Palermo’, in *Visualisierungen von Herrschaft: Frühmittelalterliche Residenzen, Gestalt und Zeremoniell: Internationales Kolloquium 3./4. Juni in Istanbul* (= *Byzas* 5), edited by Franz Alto Bauer (Istanbul: Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, 2006), 283–328; Jeremy Johns, ‘Muslim Artists and Christian Models in the Painted Ceilings of the Cappella Palatina’, in *Romanesque and the Mediterranean: Points of Contact across the Latin, Greek and Islamic Worlds c. 1000 to c. 1250*, edited by Rosa Maria Bacile and John McNeill (London: Routledge, 2015), 59–89; Lev Kapitaikin, ‘David’s Dancers in Palermo: Islamic Dance Imagery and its Christian Recontextualization in the Ceilings of the Cappella Palatina’, *Early Music* 47 (2019): 3–23. I remain completely unconvinced, partly for reasons of iconography and partly for reasons of placement and composition. The issue is one that I hope to take up more fully at a later point in time.

only the place of the congregation; it was also the place of the king, who occupied a platform at the west end of the church spanning the width of the nave.<sup>17</sup> In the decoration of the ceiling, one might envision, therefore, the world as it manifests the effects of his rule: an earthly paradise full of pleasure and delight. This earthly realm, perfected by the king, would have stood side by side with the heavenly realm in the sanctuary to the east, overseen by Christ (God), as two halves of a whole. In this way, the Cappella Palatina may be understood as the representation of a duality that constituted the foundation of a medieval reality, the dual worlds of heaven and earth, conjoined like the figures of Roger and Christ, the earthly and heavenly rulers, in a single space.

If this interpretation of the imagery of the nave ceiling of the Cappella Palatina is correct, then it points to a kind of pleasure principle at work in Norman court culture, the operation of which leads me to explore another context. Whereas the city of Palermo was relatively constrained geographically, enclosed as it was by two stream beds that seasonally filled with rushing waters and the sea, the plain in which it was situated extended from the mountains to the coast in a great sweeping arc, giving rise to the name by which it is now known, the Conca d’Oro.<sup>18</sup> This stretch of land was renowned for its fertility and for its beauty in the Middle Ages, as it is today. Given the growth of the city of Palermo in the twentieth century, which has sprawled across the Conca d’Oro from end to end, this beauty is harder to recognize now than it was before, when it was recorded in views such as the one by the eighteenth-century artist Juan Ruiz now in the Collezione Torta.<sup>19</sup> The painting conveys some of the extraordinary quality of the region in a less developed state.

Beginning with Roger II, the potential for pleasure in the Conca d’Oro was realised in a series of hunting parks, gardens and garden pavilions.<sup>20</sup> Roger II

<sup>17</sup> Curcic, ‘Some Palatine Aspects’, 125–44.

<sup>18</sup> Cesare DeSeta and Leonardo Di Mauro, *Le città nella storia d’Italia: Palermo* (Bari: Laterza, 1981), 1–31; Henri Bresc and Geneviève Bresc-Bautier (eds), *Palerme 1070–1492: Mosaique de peuples, nation rebelle: La naissance violante de l’identité sicilienne* (Paris: Autrement, 1993), 33–65 (with essays by Bresc, Adalgisa De Simone and Gianni Pirrone).

<sup>19</sup> Annliese Nef (ed.), *A Companion to Medieval Palermo: The History of a Mediterranean City from 600 to 1500* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

<sup>20</sup> Hans Rudolf Meier, *Die normannischen Königspaläste in Palermo: Studien zur hochmittelalterlichen Residenzbaukunst* (Worms am Rhein: Wernersche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1994).

built one called the Fawara, probably the earliest in the sequence.<sup>21</sup> It is now sadly only a husk of its former self. Considerably better preserved are the Cuba and the Zisa. The names are interesting. The term Cuba was given to the structure in question by tradition, in the belief that it once had a dome over its large central space.<sup>22</sup> Zisa, on the other hand, is the name applied to this building in an inscription in Arabic on its façade, ‘al-‘aziz’. It means ‘noble or splendid one’.<sup>23</sup> Both of these pavilions are independent structures that once were situated in landscaped precincts with elaborate water features. Most of this surrounding landscape framework has since been lost, but a reconstruction proposed by Rocco Lentini in 1935 gives some sense of the original settings.<sup>24</sup>

When I first encountered the Cuba, it was an unredeemed ruin serving as a laundry facility for a nearby family. It has since been restored. Around a square central space that once could have been crowned by a lofty vault if not open to the sky, are arrayed sequences of rooms, some of which open onto the outside. Traces of *muqarnas* are visible here, which indicates a level of sumptuousness to the outfitting of the interior. In the Zisa, a grand hall, too, forms the focus of the ground floor.<sup>25</sup> At its far end is a stepped fountain crowned by a *muqarnas* hood and a mosaic panel with arches. Water from the fountain once flowed into the room through a channel in the floor, decorated with coloured marbles. The channel bisects the room and would have emptied into the pool that surrounded the Zisa on the outside. In the middle of this pool would have been an island, and probably another architectural feature in the form of a pavilion. Views from inside out and *vice versa* were guaranteed by the large opening in one of the Zisa’s walls. Above the grand salon, the Zisa rose several

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Susanna Bellafiore, *La Cuba di Palermo* (Palermo: Flaccovio, 1984); G. Caronia and V. Noto, *La Cuba di Palermo* (Palermo: Flaccovio, 1988).

<sup>23</sup> Ursula Staacke, *La Zisa, un palazzo normanno a Palermo: La cultura musulmana negli edifici del Re* (Palermo: Assessorato Beni Culturali, 1991).

<sup>24</sup> Guido Di Stefano, *Monumenti della Sicilia Normanna, seconda edizione aggiornata e ampliata a cura di Wolfgang Krönig* (Palermo: Flaccovio, 1979), fig. 259.

<sup>25</sup> William Tronzo, ‘The Royal Gardens of Medieval Palermo: Landscape Experienced, Landscape as Metaphor’, in *Le vie del medioevo: Atti del convegno internazionale di studi, Parma 28 Settembre–1 Ottobre 1998*, edited by Arturo Carlo Quintavalle (Milan: Electa, 2000), 362–73.

more stories with multiple rooms on each floor. One can only imagine the rooms filled with the kinds of activities depicted on the ceiling in the nave of the Cappella Palatina.

These buildings and the landscaped spaces in which they were situated are indebted to the garden culture of Islam, by which I mean not simply the architectural and artistic forms, but the life-styles for which they were created to serve. Anachronism notwithstanding, the point is best made in this context, not by intricate argumentation with poorly preserved fragments and textual sources, but by looking to the fourteenth-century palace of the Alhambra in Granada, simply because of its extraordinary state of preservation.<sup>26</sup> What distinguishes this architecture is the interpenetration of open and closed; light and dark; the natural and the man-made; water and pavement; and of course the abundance of decoration, intricate, intensely worked and brilliantly coloured, like the *muqarnas*. Needless to say, nearly all of the relevant elements are attested earlier in the Islamic world in one way or another, in fragments and parts, in Fez and Fustat, Baghdad and Madinat al-Zahra.<sup>27</sup> As with the *muqarnas* ceiling of the Cappella Palatina, Norman patrons must have had Muslim architects for these buildings in their direct employ.

Given the setting, what was the king to wear? The Byzantine regalia that Roger II sported in his portrait with Christ adduced earlier was almost certainly never actually owned and worn by the king in reality.<sup>28</sup> It was simply the way in which he wanted himself to be pictured. Roger's regalia, as depicted in the mosaic, reflect not the contemporary usage of Byzantium but the fashion of a century earlier, and its direct source must have been a pictorial and not an actual one.

One of the king's garments, however, still exists, a rare survival from the Middle Ages for the art of textiles, which are notoriously fragile. Now preserved in the Schatzkammer or Treasury of the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, the garment is a mantle.<sup>29</sup> It is made of red silk, heavily encrusted with

<sup>26</sup> Oleg Grabar, *The Alhambra* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978).

<sup>27</sup> Elisabeth B. MacDougall and Richard Ettinghausen (ed.), *The Islamic Garden* (Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1976); D. Fairchild Ruggles, *Gardens, Landscape, and Vision in the Palaces of Islamic Spain* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000).

<sup>28</sup> Kitzinger, *I mosaici di Santa Maria dell'Ammiraglio a Palermo*, 191–98.

<sup>29</sup> Maria Andaloro (ed.), *Nobiles Officinae: Perle, filigrane e trame di seta dal Palazzo Reale di Palermo*, 2 vols (Palermo: Giuseppe Maimone Editore, 2006).

jewels and embroidered with a truly extraordinary image of a palm tree flanked by lions, each of which holds a camel tightly in its grip. There are several other kings' mantles that survive from the Middle Ages, such as the star mantle of Henry II, but none quite like this in the drama and power of its imagery.<sup>30</sup> The figures here are not diminutive motifs, as on the star mantle, but almost *dramatis personae*; the image as a whole, almost a narrative. Along the edge of the mantle, in addition, is an inscription in Arabic proclaiming the virtues of the king.<sup>31</sup> The inscription also gives a date for the piece, 1133–34, and ascribes its manufacture to the *tiraz* of the royal palace.

*Tiraz* is a term that refers to both an entity and an institution.<sup>32</sup> The entity is an inscribed band, either woven or embroidered – until the thirteenth century – in Kufic, which served as the border of a garment. These textiles were popular in the late medieval Islamic world. They were produced in workshops, also called *tiraz*, which could be directly associated with the ruler. According

<sup>30</sup> *Sakrale Gewänder des Mittelalters: Bayerischen Nationalmuseum, München: 8. Juli bis 25. September 1955* (Munich: Hirmer, 1955), 18ff. (no. 19), figs 11–18; Percy Ernst Schramm and Florentine Mutherich, *Denkmale der deutschen Könige und Kaiser, I: Beiträge zur Herrschergeschichte von Karl dem Grossen bis Friedrich II, 768–1250* (Munich: Prestel, 1981), no. 130, and in addition, nos 131 (Mantle of Kunigunde), 132 (Mantle of Henry II), 179 (Mantle of Roger II), 189 (Reitermantel), 190 (Mantle of Philip of Swabia) and 193 (Mantle of Otto IV). See also 'Kaisergewänder und Paramente', in *Die Zeit der Staufer: Geschichte – Kunst – Kultur*, edited by Reiner Hausscherr (Stuttgart: Württembergisches Landesmuseum, 1977), vol. 1: 607–44, and vol. 2: figs 566–603; Josef Kirmeyer, Bernd Schneidmüller, Stefan Weinfurter and Evamaria Brockhoff (eds), *Kaiser Heinrich II, 1002–1024: Katalog zur Bayerischen Landesausstellung 2002: Bamberg, 9. Juli bis 20. Oktober* (Augsburg: Haus der Bayerischen Geschichte, 2002), 379–87 (no. 203).

<sup>31</sup> Dolezalek, *Arabic Script on Christian Kings*. For the text, see also Et. Combe, J. Sauvaget and G. Wiet (eds), *Répertoire chronologique d'épigraphie arabe* (Cairo: Impr. de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1937), vol. 8: 184ff., no. 3058; Tarif Al Samman, 'Arabische Inschriften auf den Kronungsgewandern des Heiligen Romischen Reiches', *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien* 78 (1982): 7ff.

<sup>32</sup> Lisa Golombek and Veronika Gervers, 'Tiraz Fabrics in the Royal Ontario Museum', in *Studies in Textile History: In Memory of Harold B. Burnham*, edited by Veronika Gervers (Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum, 1977), 82–125; Jochen A. Sokoly, 'Between Life and Death: The Funerary Context of Tiraz Textiles', in *Islamische Textilkunst des Mittelalters: Aktuelle Probleme* (Riggisberg: Abegg-Stiftung, 1997), 71–78; idem, 'Towards a Model of Early Islamic Textile Institutions in Egypt', *ibid.*, 115–22.

to our sources, there were *tiraz* in Sicily before the advent of the Normans, and it is possible that the one in Roger's palace that made the mantle derived from some earlier local workshop. But the level of quality of the mantle would suggest otherwise.

Scholars have had no qualms about associating the mantle with the Muslim world, but herein lies a conundrum that may get to the heart of the Norman use of Islamic art. Doubtless, the *tiraz* was an Islamic institution; in fact, the style of the imagery on the piece also has close analogues in Islamic art.<sup>33</sup> But among pure *tiraz* products there is nothing that even vaguely resembles the mantle. The form, a half circle, is western, and the imagery, apart from the way in which it is rendered, finds a context in Norman culture. The combination of palm and lion, for example, occurs on Norman coins.<sup>34</sup> Thus, the mantle is not simply a pure borrowing, but a unique product of Norman patronage, which could not have existed, however, without the decisive input of the Islamic world.

The Norman dynasty in Sicily essentially flourished only briefly, from 1130 to 1189, through the reigns of three kings, Roger II, his son William I and his grandson William II. With the passing of the latter, the historical fortune of the island changed. The German Emperor Henry VI married Roger's daughter, Constance, and through this union, the Western Roman Empire claimed the kingdom, which it absorbed under Henry's son, Frederick II.<sup>35</sup> Roger's mantle became part of the coronation regalia of the German emperor, making its way eventually to the imperial Hapsburgs, which accounts for its presence in the Treasury of the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna.<sup>36</sup>

Throughout this story, Islamic art continued to play a role in Sicily and Southern Italy, and there is something to be gained by looking at this role through the lens of an extended timeframe. In fact, there is a significant change to be discerned. At the very end of the Norman period, Sicily witnessed the

<sup>33</sup> William Tronzo, 'The Normans in the Italian South from Melfi to Palermo', in *L'Officina dello Sguardo: Scritti in onore di Maria Andaloro*, Vol. 1: *I luoghi dell'arte*, edited by G. Bordi et al. (Rome: Gangemi Editore, 2014), 57–62.

<sup>34</sup> William Tronzo, 'The Mantle of Roger II of Sicily', in *Robes and Honor: The Medieval World of Investiture*, edited by S. Gordon (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 241–53, fig. 10.4.

<sup>35</sup> David Abulafia, *Frederick II: A Medieval Emperor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

<sup>36</sup> *Nobiles Officinæ*, vol. 1: 45–50.

most grandiose building project undertaken by a Norman king. On a rise to the west of the city, William II, grandson of King Roger, in the 1170s and 1180s erected a great monastery and cathedral complex called Monreale, dedicated to the Virgin and intended to serve as his final resting place. The enormous basilica houses the most extensive stretch of mosaics to have survived from the medieval period as a whole, while the adjacent cloister preserves one of the largest ensembles of sculpture from the twelfth century.<sup>37</sup> Here, too, there are elements that reflect artistic practices that prevailed in the Islamic world. To cite two examples: on the rear wall of the apse, which faced the city of Palermo to the east, there is an intricate revetment of interlaced arches and decorative motifs; in the cloister, there is a fountain in the form of a palm tree.<sup>38</sup> Yet, in contemplating Monreale, especially as opposed to the earlier Cappella Palatina, it becomes clear that the Islamic component has diminished not only in scale but also in importance. Whereas in the Cappella Palatina an entire space, the nave, could be defined by its Islamic affiliation and then set against the ‘Byzantinising’ sanctuary, at Monreale, the overwhelming impression is that of the Christian tradition, Christian imagery and architectural form, with a few decorative flourishes (such as the revetment of the exterior of the main apse) in an Islamic mode. The Islamic component has been demoted from a position of parity with the Christian and relegated to the edge, to the frame and to decoration.

I believe that this shift signals more than a change in taste; it betokens the change in a world view, but to explore the issue with the focus that it deserves now would take us too far afield. Suffice it to say that this, the latter approach, informs the relationship between the artistic culture of Islam and that of the West in Sicily and Southern Italy in the thirteenth century, particularly under the world-renowned (or perhaps more accurately, infamous) ruler of these territories in the first half of the thirteenth century, Frederick II. It is interesting to observe that Frederick’s policies towards the Muslims who continued to inhabit this part of the world occasionally took an extreme form, as witnessed

<sup>37</sup> Ernst Kitzinger, *The Mosaics of Monreale* (Palermo: Flaccovio, 1960); Roberto Salvini, *Il chiostro di Monreale e la scultura romanica in Sicilia* (Palermo: Flaccovio, 1962).

<sup>38</sup> Wolfgang Krönig, *The Cathedral of Monreale and Norman Architecture in Sicily* (Palermo: Flaccovio, 1965).

by his deportation, isolation and virtual imprisonment of the Muslim population of Sicily in Lucera in Apulia in the 1230s on religious grounds.<sup>39</sup> Such an event contrasts sharply with the Norman predisposition towards integration and acceptance, at least in the reigns of the first two Norman kings, Roger II and William I. I cannot help but feel that these shifts, which I interpret as an effort on the part of the state to make out of this community an ‘Other’, has some bearing on the phenomenon of borrowing in the realm of the visual arts and architecture. I suspect that what enabled the earlier usage – in the Cappella Palatina, for example, in which not just a motif but an entire world was evoked in an architectural space – was, in a sense, a lack of commitment to what that world stood for: Roger, the king, had no intention of becoming a Muslim prince any more than he aspired to be the Byzantine ruler. The styles employed in his chapel were just that – styles; they were not the representation of intrinsic beliefs. One might say that they were used superficially, in a purposeful but rather loose and free manner. Once a concern for beliefs became paramount and became expressed in extremity in terms of worry or even antagonism, it would no longer have been possible to use them in the same way and maintain conviction as a Christian king. Under the impact of this new awareness and attitude towards the Other, it was almost inevitable that the Islamic component in Sicilian and Southern Italian art would be diminished and thereby neutralised in meaning.

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<sup>39</sup> Abulafia, *Frederick I*.

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## **Part 4**

# **SICILY, LITERATURE, LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY**



# 10

## THE POETIC TRADITIONS OF SICILY UNDER FĀTIMID AND KALBID RULE

*Nuha Alshaar*<sup>1</sup>

The history of Arabo-Islamic rule in Sicily began with the establishment of the first Arab settlement in Sicily at Mazara in 827. This Islamic presence was initiated under the Aghlabids (827–909) and then the Fātimids (909–65) and their allies, the Banū Kalb who, appointed by the Fātimids as proxy rulers, established an independent emirate in Sicily (948–1053). During these periods, the island was home to a flourishing Arab culture, including a wealth of literary and poetic traditions that lasted long after the Normans took control of the island between 1061 and 1072. There have been several scholarly works on this rich corpus.<sup>2</sup> This chapter builds on current scholarship to further

<sup>1</sup> All translations in this chapter are my own. I am very grateful to my friend and colleague Russell Harris for reviewing the translations and for putting them in eloquent poetic English.

<sup>2</sup> Mirella Cassarino edited a special issue titled *Islamic Sicily: Philological and Literary Essays* in *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 10 (2015). This volume contains several papers that explored the Sicilian poetic traditions. The volume included contributions by Brigitte Foulon, ‘Analyse de la figure du poète d’origine sicilienne Ibn Hamdis dans la Dahira d’Ibn Bassam et le Nafh al-tib d’al-Maqqari’; Nicola Carpentieri, ‘At War with the Age: Ring Composition in Ibn Hamdis n. 27’; Francesca Maria Corrao, ‘The Poetic of Exile in the Siculo-Arab Poet Ibn Hamdis’; Ilenia Licitra, ‘L’ode del disinganno: Intimismo e retorica nei versi di Ibn Qalāqīs’; and Arie Schippers, ‘Arabic and Hebrew Love Poetry in Sicily in the Middle Ages and their Contacts’.

investigate the poetic traditions in Sicily that arose under Kalbid rule, although this is an area that still requires further research. This chapter will explore the role of the Kalbid rulers in promoting a literary and intellectual culture in Sicily, which became an attractive destination for many philologists, litterateurs, ascetics, jurists, poets and high-ranking people, from places such as Qayrawān and al-Andalus. It will especially assess the function of literature in the context of social and political changes in this period. Special attention is given to the link between power and knowledge, and the ways in which different Kalbid emirs promoted knowledge in order to emphasise courtly etiquette, as well as the social prestige associated with an aristocratic class. The chapter examines the artistic achievements of specific Kalbid emirs who promoted culture and civility, and their relationships with poets. In doing so, it discusses the characteristics and function of poetry, both panegyric and descriptive, as it relates to society, empire, buildings and other aspects of culture and civility in Sicily, with the aim of showing the modes of interaction between literature, religion and politics in the literary production of this period.

with Early Romance and German Poets in Sicily: Suffering of Love in Sicilian Poetry'. See also William Granara, *Ibn Hamdis the Sicilian: Eulogist for a Falling Homeland* (London: OneWorld Academic, 2021); idem, 'Sicilian Poets in Seville: Literary Affinities across Political Boundaries', in *A Sea of Languages: Rethinking the Arabic Role in Medieval Literary History*, edited by Suzanne Conklin Akbari et al. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 199–216; idem, 'Ibn Ḥamdiš and the Poetry of Nostalgia', in *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: The Literature of al-Andalus*, edited by María Rosa Menocal et al. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 388–403. See also Nicola Carpentieri, 'Adab as Social Currency: The Survival of the *qaṣīda* in Medieval Sicily', *Mediterranea: International Journal for the Transfer of Knowledge* 3 (2018): 1–18. See also Ilenia Licitra, 'Poetic Portrayals in the Dīwān of Ibn Qalāqis: William II de Hauteville and Șalāḥ al-Dīn', *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 12 (2017): 29–44; and idem, 'La Rappresentazione Animale Nella Poesía Venatoria Arabo-Sicula', in *L'Arca di Noè: Studi in onore di Giovanni Canova*, edited by Antonella Ghergetti, Oriana Capezio and Francesca Bellino, special issue of *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 14 (2019): 105–22; see also Cristina La Rosa, 'Animali marini e ḥağā'ib nelle opere di geografia e odesporica arabo-sicula e andalusa', in *L'Arca di Noè: Studi in onore di Giovanni Canova*, edited by Antonella Ghergetti, Oriana Capezio and Francesca Bellino, special issue of *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 14 (2019): 123–44. For a study of Arabic poetry at the court of Roger II, see Nathaniel Miller, 'Muslim Poets under a Christian King: An Intertextual Reevaluation of Sicilian Arabic Literature under Roger II (r. 1112–54)', *Mediterranean Studies* 27/2 (2019): 182–209.

## Intellectual Life in Sicily under the Fātimids and the Kalbids

Like the Aghlabids, the Fātimids not only aspired to establish their political authority in Sicily but were also invested in promoting the intellectual culture of the island and in attracting the most brilliant scholars of the time. The conflict between the Aghlabids and the Fātimids between 904 and 909 had forced many scholars from al-Qayrawān to migrate to Sicily, not only for their personal safety,<sup>3</sup> but because – despite the political upheavals that the Kalbid rulers encountered – Arabic and Islamic culture continued to flourish there. This was greatly manifested during the reign of al-Hasan b. ‘Alī Ibn Abī al-Husayn al-Kalbī (d. 964) and his descendants. Al-Hasan b. ‘Alī had been appointed by the Fātimid caliph al-Manṣūr as his representative in Sicily in 947, as a reward for his loyalty and for his suppression that year of the revolution of Abū Yazīd al-Nukhārī al-Khārijī (d. 947).<sup>4</sup>

Before the appointment of al-Hasan b. ‘Alī as the Fātimid governor, Sicily had been in turmoil. The people had revolted against the acts of repression carried out by the Fātimid governor Sālim b. Abī Rāshid and his representatives, who had treated them unjustly.<sup>5</sup> However, under the rule of the Kalbids, especially the period between the reign of al-Hasan b. ‘Alī and that of Yūsuf b. ‘Abd Allāh (also known as Thiqat al-Dawla, r. 990–98), Sicily witnessed a greater degree of political stability and became an independent emirate. The Kalbid

<sup>3</sup> Usāma Ikhtiyār, *Al-Shi'r al-'Arabī fī Jazīrat Ṣiqilliyā: Ittijāhātuh wa khaṣā'isabu al-faniyya mundhu al-Fath hatta nibāyat al-wujūd al-'Arabī fīhā 212–647* (Damascus: al-Hay'a al-'Āmma al-Sūriyya li'l-Kitāb, 2008), 10.

<sup>4</sup> See ‘Alī b. Muḥammad Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil fī al-ta'rīkh* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1966), vol. 8: 471. For discussion of the revolution of Abū Yazīd al-Nukhārī al-Khārijī, see Alex Metcalfe, *The Muslims of Medieval Italy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 53; see also Chapter Three in this volume.

<sup>5</sup> For an overview of the history of the Kalbids in Sicily and their activities, see Metcalfe, *The Muslims of Medieval Italy*, 53–69; see also Sarah Davis-Secord, *Where Three Worlds Met: Sicily in the Early Medieval Mediterranean* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017), 100–110; see also Leonard Charles Chiarelli, *A History of Muslim Sicily* (Santa Venera, Malta: Midsea Books, 2018), 95–145; idem, *Sicily during the Fatimid Age* (PhD diss., University of Utah, 1986), 43–70; ‘Alī b. Muḥammad b. Sa'īd al-Zahrānī, *Al-Hayāt al-'ilmīyya fī Ṣiqilliyā al-Islāmiyya* (202–484/826–1091) (Mecca: Markaz Buḥūth al-'Ulūm al-Ijtima'iyya, 1996), 78–89; see also Chapter Three in this volume.

family – especially Hasan al-Kalbī and his son and successor Aḥmad – was therefore popular with the Sicilians,<sup>6</sup> and it was able to bring peace, prosperity and cultural flourishing to the country after a period of intense turmoil.

During Kalbid rule, especially under Emir Yūsuf al-Kalbī, Muslim Sicily reached its peak politically and culturally. Palermo became an important capital of the *dār al-Islām* (Islamic world) and an intellectual centre that was able to compete with other European kingdoms in attracting the best scholars and poets of the time.<sup>7</sup> Palermo also became a place where transculturality became manifest: various civilisations, including Arabo-Islamic, Roman and Greek, interacted to form a unique Sicilian intellectual culture in the pre-modern Mediterranean.<sup>8</sup> However, it was Arab culture that flourished in Sicily under Kalbid rule.<sup>9</sup> This can be ascribed to two main reasons: the first is that the Kalbid emirate actively promoted Arabic and Islamic culture to build solidarity at court; the second is intrinsic to Sicily's unique and central geographic location between two major intellectual centres, namely al-Qayrawān in Ifrīqiya and Cordoba in al-Andalus, although Sicily's relationship with the former was relatively stronger owing to its political proximity – hence it was more influential.

<sup>6</sup> This popularity of the Kalbid family among the Sicilians was expressed in 965, when the Fāṭimids recalled Aḥmad, the son of al-Hasan al-Kalbī, to North Africa. The Sicilians of Palermo rebelled against this action and demanded that Emir Aḥmad be reinstated to his position. The Fāṭimid Caliph al-Mu‘izz responded to the demands of the Sicilians by dispatching Aḥmad's brother, Abū al-Qāsim, in 970 to Sicily with an official appointment to the emirate.

<sup>7</sup> Annliese Nef, ‘Islamic Palermo and the *dār al-Islām*: Politics, Society, and the Economy (from the Mid-9th to the Mid-11th Century)’, in *A Companion to Medieval Palermo: The History of a Mediterranean City from 600 to 1500*, edited by Annliese Nef (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 39–59; Mirella Cassarino, ‘Palermo Experienced, Palermo Imagined: Arabic and Islamic Culture between the 9th and the 12th Century’, in *A Companion to Medieval Palermo: The History of a Mediterranean City from 600 to 1500*, edited by Annliese Nef (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 89–129; see also Alessandra Bagnera, ‘From a Small Town to a Capital: The Urban Evolution of Islamic Palermo (9th–Mid-11th Century)’, in *A Companion to Medieval Palermo: The History of a Mediterranean City from 600 to 1500*, edited by Annliese Nef (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 61–88.

<sup>8</sup> ‘Ali Ḥasan al-Kharbūṭlī, *Al-‘Arab wa al-hadāra* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Anjūlū al-Maṣriyya, 1966), 320.

<sup>9</sup> ‘Ali Ibrāhīm Ḥasan, *Tārīkh Jawhar al-Ṣiqillī* (Cairo: Maṭba‘at Ḥijāzī, 1933), 20.

Medieval Arabic historical accounts underline the cultural achievements of different Kalbid emirs;<sup>10</sup> there were countless scholars, jurists, poets, writers and grammarians in Sicily.<sup>11</sup> One of the most important government offices during this period was the *dīwān al-inshā'*, the chancellery and epistolary office. Among the prestigious scholars who headed this *dīwān* was Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan Ibn al-Ṭūbī (d. 1150)<sup>12</sup> during the rule of Abū al-Futūḥ Yūsuf (r. 989–98), who was given the title Thiqat al-Dawla by the Fāṭimid caliph.<sup>13</sup> Ibn al-Ṭūbī continued to head this *dīwān* under the descendants of Thiqat al-Dawla.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, according to the author of *Al-Rawd al-mī'ṭār*, Sicily attracted and hosted some of the best minds of the age.<sup>15</sup> Among the famous scholars who travelled to Palermo from the Islamic East in the fourth/tenth century was 'Alī b. Ḥamza al-Lughawī (d. 980) who composed a number of books, such as his response to Ibn al-Sikkīt's *Fī iṣlāḥ al-manṭiq* (In the Restoration of Logic) and his response to al-Jāḥiẓ's *Kitāb al-ḥayawān* (The Book of Living).<sup>16</sup> Other renowned scholars who made

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Carpentieri, 'Adab as Social Currency: The Survival of the *Qasīda* in Medieval Sicily', 1–18; see also Ismā'il b. 'Alī Abū al-Fida', *Al-Mukhtaṣar fī akhbār al-bashar* (Baghdad: Maktabat al-Muthannā, 1968), vol. 2: 89–96; Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-'arab fī funūn al-adab*, edited by Mufid Qumīḥa et al. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, 2004), vol. 24: 201–8.

<sup>11</sup> For an account of the rich intellectual culture in Sicily during this period, see Chapters Four, Five and Six in this volume. See also Metcalfe, *The Muslims of Medieval Italy*, 254–74; Chiarelli, *A History of Muslim Sicily*, 303–38; Aziz Ahmad, *History of Islamic Sicily* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1975), 41–47. Al-Zahrānī, *Al-Ḥayāt al-īlmiyya fī Siqilliyā al-Islāmiyya* (202–484/826–1091); Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abd al-Mun'im al-Ḥimyarī, *Al-Rawd al-mī'ṭār fī khabar al-aqtār* (Beirut: Maktabat Lubnān, 1974), vol. 1: 185.

<sup>12</sup> For more information on Ibn al-Ṭūbī, see Usāma Ikhtiyār, *Jambarat ash'ār al-Siqilliyān: Dirāsa wa taḥqīq* (Damascus: Dār al-Muqtābas, 2016), vol. 1: 172–97.

<sup>13</sup> Ahmad, *History of Islamic Sicily*, 30–36.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>15</sup> Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥimyarī, *Al-Rawd al-mī'ṭār fī khabar al-aqtār*, vol. 1: 366.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Iḥsān 'Abbās, *Al-'Arab fī Siqilliyā* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1959), 9. James Montgomery translated the title of this book as *Book of the Living*. The book is also normally translated as *Book of Animals*. For a detailed study of this book, see James Montgomery, *Al-Jāḥiẓ: In Praise of Books* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013).

their way to Sicily were the jurist Khalaf b. Abū al-Qāsim al-Azdī al-Barādhīrī (d. 1039) and the philologist Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. al-Ḥasan (d. 1066), who came from al-Qayrawān; the famous *ḥadīth* scholar Abū al-Rabī’ Sulaymān al-Andalusī; and the famous philologist and litterateur Mūsā b. Aṣbagh al-Murādī al-Qurtubī.<sup>17</sup> Sicily also produced many scholars of its own, including Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. al-Mufarrij b. ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Ṣiqillī, who later travelled to Mecca and was appointed to the office of head judge there,<sup>18</sup> and the polymath ‘Alī b. Ḥamza al-Ṣiqillī.<sup>19</sup>

Sicily witnessed the establishment of many intellectual schools which attracted scholars from North Africa, al-Andalus and as far afield as Baghdad. Mosques in Sicily became centres for learning the sciences of Arabic language and grammar,<sup>20</sup> as well as the traditional Islamic sciences, including the reading and recitation of the Qur’ān, *tafsīr* (Qur’ānic commentarial traditions), *ḥadīth* and Islamic jurisprudence. Ibn Ḥawqal states that during the Kalbid emirate there were more than 300 mosques in Palermo and in the city known as al-Khāliṣa (translated as ‘the Perfect One’).<sup>21</sup> In these mosques, there were many teachers<sup>22</sup> who were very influential in Sicilian society, to the extent that ‘they were outspoken about the sultan concerning his dealings and choices. They would voice freely their dislike of his shortcomings and

<sup>17</sup> Abū Iṣhāq Ibrāhīm Ibn Farkhūn, *Al-Dibāj al-mudhabhab fī ma’rifat a’yān ‘ulamā’ al-madhab*, edited by Muḥammad al-Āḥmadī Abū al-Nūr (Cairo: Dār al-Turāth, n.d.), vol. 1: 349; Abū al-‘Abbās al-Ghubrīnī, *Inwān al-dirāyya fi-man ‘urifa min al-‘ulamā’ fī al-mi’ā al-sābi’ā bi-Bijāya*, edited by Rābiḥ Būnār (Algiers: al-Shārika al-Waṭaniyya li’l-Nashr, 1970), 239; Abū al-Mahāsin al-Yamānī, *Ishārat al-ta’yin fī tarājim al-nuḥāt wa al-lughawiyān*, edited by ‘Abd al-Majid Diyāb (Riyadh: Markaz al-Malik Fayṣal li’l-Buhūth, 1986), vol. 2: 332; Abū al-Walīd Ibn al-Faraḍī, *Tārikh ‘ulamā’ al-Andalus*, edited by Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb, 2010), 853.

<sup>18</sup> See Taqī al-Dīn al-Fāsī, *Al-‘Iqd al-thāmin fī tārikh al-balad al-amīn*, edited by Fū’ad Sayyid (Beirut: Dār al-Risāla, 1986), vol. 6: 296.

<sup>19</sup> See Abū al-Qāsim Ibn Bashkuwāl, *Al-Ṣīla*, edited by Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb, 1989), vol. 2: 625.

<sup>20</sup> See Chapter Five in this volume.

<sup>21</sup> See Ibn Ḥawqal, *Šūrat al-ard* (Beirut: Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayat, 1965), 115. Al-Khāliṣa was built by the Fāṭimid governor Khalil b. Aḥmad, who was able to restore the Fāṭimid hold on the city of Palermo.

<sup>22</sup> See Ibn Ḥawqal, *Šūrat al-ard*, 120.

weigh his praiseworthy traits against his blameworthy traits'.<sup>23</sup> Ibn Hawqal mentions that the number of students in the study circles of these teachers would reach eighty and included students from different countries.<sup>24</sup> In these circles there was significant interest in Arabic poetry and in Arab and Greek philosophy.<sup>25</sup> This vibrant scholarly culture was in no small part due to the dynamic and diverse nature of the Sicilian population, and in turn it played a significant role in inspiring creativity and promoting Arabic and Islamic forms of knowledge, philosophy and culture, not only in Sicily but in Europe more widely. Indeed, the spread of this knowledge coming from Sicily greatly contributed to the European Renaissance.

Poetry in particular flourished in Sicily under Kalbid rule. Many poets and litterateurs, including Ibn Qādī Mīlā, Ibn al-Mu'addib, Muḥammad b. 'Abdūn al-Sūsī and the critic Ibn Rاشiq al-Qayrawānī migrated to Sicily to advance their careers and sought to make it their home. This was due to a number of factors that will be discussed below.

### **The Kalbid Emirs and the Art of Patronage**

While the founders of the Kalbid emirate in Sicily were preoccupied with the task of establishing political and economic stability rather than developing intellectual interests *per se*, later Kalbid emirs were faced with the challenge of building their own court, with its attendant aristocracy and social prestige. In order to maintain social and political stability amid the competing ethnic ideologies in Sicily,<sup>26</sup> it was necessary for the later Kalbid emirs to find ways to highlight their common ethos with their Fāṭimid masters in North Africa, as well as with rulers in other parts of the Islamic world. To be more precise, the Kalbids had inherited a society riven by ethnic and confessional rivalries which were manifested in tensions between the Berber and the Arab settlers, as well as the various other components of the fabric of Sicilian society. The Kalbids

<sup>23</sup> See *ibid.*, 89.

<sup>24</sup> See *ibid.*, 121.

<sup>25</sup> See Chapters Four and Six in this volume.

<sup>26</sup> The people of Sicily rejoiced at the arrival of the first Kalbid Emir al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī al-Kalbī, who proved to be a just ruler; they trusted that Sicily would progress under his rule. See an account of this in Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil*, vol. 8: 472, 610.

were faced with the challenge of keeping the island under Muslim rule. Furthermore, as supporters of the Fātimids and having Shī‘ī tendencies, it was not easy for the Kalbid emirs to maintain social cohesion and to rule a country with a largely Sunnī Mālikī majority, as was the case in Sicily.<sup>27</sup>

These issues shaped the nature of intellectual attitudes and paradigms in this period and contributed to the production of a culture that could unify the identity of the emirate. The Kalbids found it to their advantage to promote Arabo-Islamic culture in Sicily and to be seen as its patrons and guardians. For example, in Palermo, these emirs embraced a structure of polity that followed Arab-Islamic forms of governing. They also promoted themselves as avid patrons of learning and the arts, in an attempt to gain equal footing with other long-established elite intellectual centres, such as Qayrawān, Cordoba, other Andalusian cities and even Baghdad, the cradle of Islamic civilisation at the time.

Thus, many of these emirs fostered the careers of professional scholars and poets and attracted to their courts some of the most brilliant intellectuals of the age from within Sicily, as well as from North Africa, al-Andalus and other places of the Islamic world. This conscious attempt to offer literary patronage and to foster the production of knowledge can be seen, as expressed by Granara, as the Kalbids' articulation of power and their attempt to create a medium of interaction that transcended ethnic and religious boundaries.<sup>28</sup> This was particularly true for Emir Ja‘far b. Muḥammad Abū al-Hasan al-Kalbī who was able to organise the affairs of Sicily and to return the island to security and prosperity.<sup>29</sup> He invested in building the power of his emirate by appreciating scholars and rewarding their efforts, and in return he was held in the highest

<sup>27</sup> There were a number of revolts against the Fātimids in Sicily in 913, when Sicilians proclaimed allegiance to the caliphate in Baghdad. In 937, the Berbers of Agrigento also revolted against the Fātimid governor of Sicily until order was restored by Khalil b. Aḥmad, who reconsolidated Fātimid control over Sicily; see Metcalfe, *The Muslims of Medieval Italy*, 46–49.

<sup>28</sup> William Granara, ‘Rethinking Muslim Sicily’s Golden Age: Poetry and Patronage at the Fatimid Kalbid Court’, *Alifbā: Studi Arabo-islamici e Mediterranei* 22 (2008): 95–108 [= Antonino Pellitteri (ed.), *I Fatimidi e il Mediterraneo: Atti del Convegno (3–6 Dicembre 2008)* (Palermo: Accademia Libica in Italia–Università degli Studi di Palermo, 2008)].

<sup>29</sup> See Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn*, edited by Suhayl Zakkār (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 2010), vol. 4: 448; see also Aziz Ahmad, *Tārīkh Ṣiqilliyā al-islāmiyya*, translated by Amīn Tawfiq al-Tibī (Cairo: Al-Dār al-‘Arabiyya li'l-Kitāb, 1980), 39.

esteem by the educated class for his commitment to learning and by the rest of the people of Sicily for his generosity and benevolence.<sup>30</sup>

Poetry continued to be a defining element of high culture in Sicilian society, as it was in other major centres such as Baghdad and Cordoba. The Kalbid emirs therefore made sure that good relations with poets were maintained. One emir who was most famous for his generosity towards poets was Abū al-Futūḥ Yūsuf, Thiqat al-Dawla (r. 990–98).<sup>31</sup> Thiqat al-Dawla was described as ‘a great king and a generous man. Poets and scholars would come to him from everywhere, so he elevated their ranks and was very charitable towards them’.<sup>32</sup> He also established stability in Sicily, defeated the Byzantines and was known for his great generosity.<sup>33</sup>

Another reason for the great interest in poetic traditions in this period can also be ascribed to the fact that a number of Kalbid emirs themselves were competent poets and men of art and culture. Originally from North Africa, from the tribe of Banū Kalb which traced its ancestral origins to Southern Arabia, they came from a long line of naturally gifted poets. Furthermore, the Kalbid emirs were critics of poetry and had the ability to decipher its deepest meanings. The Syrian historian Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-‘Umarī mentions in his *Masalik al-abṣār* that ‘the historical records and *adab* collections are full of [accounts] that describe the beauty of Sicily during the days of Islam. There were many litterateurs (*udabā’*) and the noblest among the litterateurs (*a'yān al-udabā’*) who, whenever someone approached and praised them, would shower and extend their gifts to the poet’.<sup>34</sup>

Many of the Kalbid emirs held literary and cultural assemblies and sessions (*majālis al-adab*) and openly celebrated their love of poetry and other forms of literary production. For example, the Kalbid Emir Mustakhliṣ al-Dawla ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. al-Hasan al-Kalbī (952–69) took pride in these sessions and

<sup>30</sup> See Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh*, vol. 4: 448.

<sup>31</sup> Ahmad, *History of Islamic Sicily*, 39.

<sup>32</sup> See Ibn Sa‘īd ‘Alī b. Mūsā, *Al-Mughrīb fī ḥulā al-Maghrib*, edited by Shawqī Dayf (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1955–64), 341.

<sup>33</sup> ‘Abbās, *Al-‘Arab fī Ṣiqilliyā*, 46.

<sup>34</sup> Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-‘Umarī, *Masālik al-abṣār fī mamālik al-amṣār*, edited by Kāmil Sulaymān al-Jubūrī and Mahdī al-Najm (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 2010), 152.

invited talented scholars and litterateurs to join them. Addressing an unnamed *kātib* (court secretary), he said [Appendix, Text 1]:

We two are bound together by *adab*,  
as sacred to us as our breeding

Seek shelter with us, for our company  
amply repays the rigours of literary passion.<sup>35</sup>

This verse expresses to the scribe and to the people of the arts the emir's own commitment to generous patronage. He advocates an equal relationship with the scribe and a common lineage based on a shared interest in knowledge and the arts. This, in turn, sends a positive signal to the people of *adab* to encourage them to join his court and invokes a form of reciprocity between the emir and the poet in terms of mutual loyalty and reward.

Another Kalbid emir who was a renowned litterateur and poet was Abū al-Qāsim al-Šiqillī ('Abd Allāh b. Sulymān b. Yakhluṭ al-Kalbī).<sup>36</sup> He followed the style of the Eastern Muslim poets, applying their imagery and use of simile to his poems. He says [Appendix, Text 2]:

Would that the long nights of separation,  
Could make up for the short nights of union.<sup>37</sup>

The expression 'the long nights' brings to mind the pre-Islamic poetic images of Imru' al-Qays in his golden ode and his complaints: 'alas long night, will you not dispel, revealing dawn'.<sup>38</sup> These forms of expression show how Sicilian poetic and intellectual culture, much like the intellectual culture of al-Andalus, was influenced by the traditions of the Islamic East.

<sup>35</sup> See the section on the poets of al-Maghrib in 'Imād al-Dīn al-İsfahānī, *Al-Kharīda*, edited by Muḥammad al-Marzūqī (Tunisia: al-Dār al-Tūnisīyya li'l-Nashr, 1973), 85. Arabic text from İhsān 'Abbās, *Mu'jam al-'ulamā' wa al-shu'arā' al-Šiqillīyyin* (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1994), 234.

<sup>36</sup> Muḥammad b. Shākir al-Kutubī, *Fawāt al-wafayāt*, edited by İhsān 'Abbās (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1974), vol. 2: 176.

<sup>37</sup> Al-Kutubī, *Fawāt al-wafayāt*, vol. 2: 176.

<sup>38</sup> See Imru' al-Qays, *Dīwān Imru' al-Qays*, edited by Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1984), 18.

## The Socio-Political Function of Poetry

Poetry played an important role in facilitating the social agenda and political ambitions of the Kalbid emirs. The role of poetry as a tool to legitimise the ruling party has been already discussed by Suzanne Stetkevych in her analysis of the poetry of Akhṭal in the Umayyad period, of Abū Tammām and al-Mutanabbi in the ‘Abbāsid era, and of Ibn Darrāj al-Qaṣṭallī in al-Andalus in the tenth and eleventh centuries.<sup>39</sup> Tahera Qutbuddin has also explored the potential of poetry to be used as an accepted source of political history, showing how Fātimid poetry and its literary expressions and contents systematically combine ‘both categories of information, the mundane and the abstract’.<sup>40</sup> Qutbuddin notes that the use of poetry as a historical source has its own limitations and that poetry alludes to events and ideas without providing a full account of them; yet, as she says, poetry informs the reader about the way in which specific historical events were understood by the people of the time and what ideological meaning they conveyed.<sup>41</sup>

This is arguably also the case with Sicilian panegyric poetry, which seems to provide important information about the hegemonic aspirations of the Kalbid emirs of Sicily and their military activities. In his study of the *qasīda* (the poem) as ‘social currency’, Nicola Carpentieri argues that the Kalbid emirs and their entourage ‘fostered, through the reproduction of the canonical forms of the *qasīda*, a non-normative code of behaviour which granted social cohesion’ in a society that was divided across ethnic, confessional and political lines.<sup>42</sup> He explains that poets at the Kalbid court, and their successors at Norman courts, used the *qasīda* to crystallise the court as

<sup>39</sup> Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, *The Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy: Myth, Gender, and Ceremony in the Classical Arabic Ode* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 2002), 80–109, 144–79, 180–240, 241–82.

<sup>40</sup> Tahera Qutbuddin, ‘Fatimid Aspirations of Conquest and Doctrinal Underpinnings in the Poetry of al-Qā’im bi-Amr Allāh, Ibn Hāni’ al-Andalusī, Amīr Tamīm b. al-Mu’izz, and al-Mu’ayyad al-Shīrāzī’, in *Poetry and History: The Value of Poetry in Reconstructing Arab History*, edited by Ramzi Baalbaki, Saleh Said Agha and Tarif Khalidi (Beirut: American University of Beirut Press, 2011), 195.

<sup>41</sup> Qutbuddin, ‘Fatimid Aspirations of Conquest’, 196.

<sup>42</sup> Carpentieri, ‘Adab as Social Currency: The Survival of the *Qasīda* in Medieval Sicily’, 2.

a unifying social space.<sup>43</sup> This underlines the political function of poetry – how it was utilised both to promote a courtly culture that adopted Arabic values and codes of behaviour to overcome social divisions and rivalries, and to re-establish links with the Islamic East, especially the Fāṭimids in Cairo.

Many poets were attracted to the Kalbid court over the years. These poets developed forms of shared loyalties with Kalbid emirs, sang their praises and supported them in establishing their courts. This relationship meant that these poets were instrumental in providing a cohesive narrative of the events that took place in Sicily during the rule of the Kalbid emirs. One of the most famous poets who devoted much of his poetry to the praise of the Kalbid emirs was Abū al-Ḥasan al-Rabī‘, known as Ibn al-Khayyāt. Ibn al-Khayyāt is considered to have been the most skilful panegyric poet during Arab rule in Sicily. He had a close relationship with different Kalbid emirs and resided in their palaces. Therefore, his poems provide a window into the political events and culture of Sicily during this period. He praised the Kalbids' constant attempts to defend Sicily from Byzantine attack and to promote a strong culture, bringing about prosperity and aesthetic beauty on the island. He particularly praised Abū al-Futūḥ Yūsuf, Thiqat al-Dawla, in one of his poems [Appendix, Text 3]:

A king who has the earth in his grip,  
bringing all under his control.

He charges into the fray on a pitch-black horse (*adham*), showing  
the swords gleaming white against its body.<sup>44</sup>

The poet displays narrative power and a command of the use of *badi‘* (linguistic embellishment). There is a play on the black (of the horse) and white (of the swords), which the poet may have used to symbolise the change from dark days to brighter ones at the hand of this emir. The predominant purpose here is to praise the character and achievements of Thiqat al-Dawla and to highlight his historical importance and the significance of his ‘acts of kingship’. Ibn al-Khayyāt praises the emir for his military genius and restless, unbounded energy and as a powerful man who protected people and the Islamic faith from

<sup>43</sup> See *ibid.*, 3.

<sup>44</sup> See Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Nayfar, *Inwān al-arīb ‘ammā nasha‘a bi'l-mamlaka al-Tūnisīyya min 'alim adīb* (Tunisia: al-Maṭba‘a al-Tūnisīyya, 1932), vol. 1: 133.

the constant attacks of the Byzantines.<sup>45</sup> Here the poet ascribed to the emir qualities that are quasi-divine as expressed in the phrase ‘*malik tadum al-ard qabdatahu* (a king who has the earth in his grip)’. This phrase alludes to the Qur’ānic expression ‘and the earth entirely is in His grip’ (Q. 39:67). This panegyric composed by Ibn al-Khayyāt thereby creates a form of national biography that contributed to the legitimacy and prestige of the Kalbid dynasty.

It is evident that Sicily’s political situation and the Byzantines’ constant attacks on the island whetted the imagination of poets, who praised the wars led by the Kalbid emirs against the Byzantines and celebrated the shared joy of victory. For example, Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī praised Emir Aḥmad b. Thiqat al-Dawla and congratulated him for his victory over the Byzantines, while also calling for the people to defend Sicily [Appendix, Text 4]:

It is our custom to go after enemies.  
 Call upon them and let each answer.  
 Their fortresses cannot hold you out, even had  
 they been built by [the people of] ‘Ād.  
 How many poisonous fortresses of error have you  
 entered with your upright demeanour!  
 Where the souls of people lived in confusion until  
 from you a guide arose.  
 You sent the horse [men] up to the [high] valleys,  
 and the strong men you sent down to the lowland  
 How many brave soldiers have you kicked out, and  
 how many sharp [swords] and steeds!  
 May [the enemy’s] fear of you stay his hand, and  
 make him as one shackled.  
 They sought safety in an inaccessible place [ . . . ] but  
 you brought death to the mountain peaks.  
 Your sword went through them like water, and  
 their blood saturated the ground.  
 With your swords you harvested their heads like plants.  
 How many mares your sword gave you, when it  
 passed over the horses’ necks  
 Soon you reach Rome

<sup>45</sup> For an account on Thiqat al-Dawla, see al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-‘arab fī funūn al-adab*, vol. 24: 376–77.

[wearing] and attack with your conquering swords  
 Your slaves are your captured enemies,  
 and whatever you can seize is your land  
 You are the one! Your Honour, be decisive,  
 take ‘Iram of the Pillars’ should you wish.  
 You turned away from song and singing girls,  
 [directing] your love to the transgressors and the enemies.  
 Your group came back on horses whose  
 hooves were red, the blood of the slaughtered.  
 How long your eyes remained alert,  
 unsleeping yet requiring the benefit of sleep.  
 When someone greatly endeavours to acquire,  
 pleasure, you greatly endeavour to fight [the enemy].  
 Your one hand is a sea brimming with wishes,  
 and the other is a source of fear for others.<sup>46</sup>

In these verses, Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī tries to highlight the place of Ta’yīd al-Dawla in society and history and presents him as both the protector of Islam and a courageous fighter who defeated his enemies. This poem displays several characteristics of Sicilian poetry, through the play on words, alluding to the name of the person being praised without openly expressing it and using metaphorical language and imagery borrowed from the Qur’ān, as in ‘the people of ‘Ād’.

In another poem, Ibn al-Khayyāṭ praises Intiṣār al-Dawla and his son Mustakhliṣ al-Dawla and openly expresses the mutual benefit between the poet and these emirs [Appendix, Text 5]:

Place all your hope in al-Ḥusayn and his son,  
 for relationships with honourable people are bonds.  
 Know that if you seek their generosity,  
 with your praise then you are a winner.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>46</sup> See al-Nayfar, *Inwān al-arīb*, vol. 1: 130; see also Abū al-Qāsim ‘Alī b. Ja‘far al-Sādī Ibn al-Qaṭṭā‘ al-Ṣiqillī, *Al-Durra al-khaṭīra fī shu‘arā’ al-jazīra*, edited by Bashīr al-Bakūsh (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al- Islāmī, 1995), vol. 1.

<sup>47</sup> See Abū al-Tāhir Ismā‘īl b. Aḥmad b. Ziyādat Allāh al-Tajibī al-Barqī, *Al-Mukhtār min shi‘r bashshār ikhtiyār al-khālidiyīn*, edited by Muḥammad Badr al-Dīn al-‘Alawī (Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Itimād, 2012), 174.

Ibn al-Khayyāṭ's poem portrays Intiṣār al-Dawla and his son as worthy of respect for their generosity towards those who seek their help; indeed, generosity is one of the most celebrated themes of traditional Arabic panegyric poetry. The poet also seems to draw on pre-Islamic poetic values and imagery by describing success in securing a place at the court of Intiṣār al-Dawla and his son Mustakhliṣ as a source of hope which never failed anyone.

It may therefore be argued that panegyric poetry offers deep insights into political events and functioned as a significant public relations tool that both voiced the aspirations of the Kalbid emirs and played a major role in helping them realise their hegemonic goals. The poems thus served two main purposes: the first was that they constructed the image of the Kalbid emirs as guardians of the Islamic faith in Sicily and adherents of Arabo-Islamic values; the second was that they acted, as observed by William Granara, as a marker of identity and reflected the mindset of 'a frontier mentality that sought identity in being in the main, being more Arab, more Islamic, more orthodox, more Mālikī, more conventional than the free-thinking urban centres of Córdoba, Cairo, and Baghdad'.<sup>48</sup>

Indeed, some panegyric poets followed the poetic conventions of the pre-Islamic *qaṣīda*, including the love prelude, before reaching their main purpose, that of praise [Appendix, Text 6]:

A king who has the earth in his grip,  
bringing all under his control.<sup>49</sup>

Poetry celebrated the emotional bond that Muslim Sicily throughout its history maintained with its perceived motherlands. This is evident in the religious and military sentiments expressed by some panegyric poets. Ibn al-Khayyāṭ, for example, was keen to depict Thiqat al-Dawla in this light and expressed in a very artistic style the emir's profound religious knowledge [Appendix, Text 7]:

<sup>48</sup> Granara, 'Ibn Ḥamdis and the Poetry of Nostalgia', 401.

<sup>49</sup> See the section on the poets of al-Maghrib in 'Imād al-Dīn al-Isfahānī, *Al-Kharīda*, vol. 1: 85.

You have treated charitably every difficult situation,  
 [for] righteous virtue distances every disease.<sup>50</sup>

Ibn al-Khayyāt highlighted the acts of charity that Thiqat al-Dawla performed and implicitly invited the latter to continue these good deeds by alluding to the Prophetic *hadīth*: ‘protect your money by giving charity and treating your ill ones with charity’.<sup>51</sup> The poet seems to speak to the religious background of his audience and to incite their religious sentiments. In this sense, the Sicilian praise-poet, especially Ibn al-Khayyāt, is not just concerned with direct praise, but seems to have occupied an official position as court poet and to act as mediator between the emirs and their subjects. In other words, when Ibn al-Khayyāt reminds Thiqat al-Dawla of his wisdom in overcoming every difficult situation by giving charity to his people, part of the purpose is to ensure that this powerful ruler does not forget his duty to be generous and protect his subjects.

The influence of the Islamic ethos on the poetry of this period is evident in many poems that borrow fragments of Qur’ānic verses. For example, Ibn al-Khayyāt alludes to Q. 2:261 and Q. 12:46 when he says [Appendix, Text 8]:

The best plant to nurture is  
 a good deed you have ordered or sponsored.  
 When close [you see] that its ears are seven,  
 And [have sprouted] from seed the Compassionate One blessed for me.<sup>52</sup>

The ‘good deed with its seven ears’ alludes to Qur’ānic imagery likening those who spend their wealth for the sake of God to a grain of corn that sprouts seven ears and in every ear is a hundred grains (Q. 2:261). This allusion is not only a testimony to the way in which Sicilian poets of this period saw the Qur’ān as a rich linguistic source to borrow from, but also as a means of legitimising their Kalbid patrons by placing special emphasis on their Islamic identity.

<sup>50</sup> See al-Barqī, *Al-Mukhtār min shi'r bashshār*, 116.

<sup>51</sup> Abū Dawud, *Marāṣil Abī Dawud*, the chapter on *Zakāt*, *ḥadīth* nos. 105, 127, 128.

<sup>52</sup> Al-Barqī, *Al-Mukhtār min shi'r bashshār*, 116.

Sicilian panegyric poetry also borrowed imagery from the poetry of the Islamic East. One example is the poem by Muḥammad b. ‘Abdūn al-Sūsī which describes Thiqat al-Dawla as the full moon [Appendix, Text 9]:

When I saw the full moon, I stood up to greet it  
and showed submission to it.  
I declared to it: ‘Like you, the emir Ibn Yūsuf  
is so hard to reach.  
Be my go-between and remembrancer,  
When you reach him to convey [my] regards’.<sup>53</sup>

The moon became a common trope in poetry. In this poem, we can see clearly that the poet imitated the verse of the ‘Abbāsid poet, Ibn al-Rūmī (d. 896), when he said [Appendix, Text 10]:

By God, O the moon of the dark night,  
be my go-between to my moon.<sup>54</sup>

Both poets metaphorically request the real moon to convey their greetings to the person being praised in their poetry, namely Thiqat al-Dawla in the case of al-Sūsī.

Sicilian praise poets continued to depict their subject’s best moral virtues through imagery taken from nature. Ibn al-Khayyāt says the following in praise of the Kalbids [Appendix, Text 11]:

Their faces are as if God said to them,  
move demurely and dilute [your] splendour with generosity.  
As if they are stars on their thrones,  
like lucky stars, but when loosed in battle, they are the lions [of God].<sup>55</sup>

The Sicilian poets borrowed imagery and tropes from traditional Arabic panegyric poetry and applied similar moral and religious standards when

<sup>53</sup> Ḡalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ṣafadī, *Al-Wājīt bi'l-wafāyāt* (Beirut: Dār Ihyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 2000), vol. 3: 206.

<sup>54</sup> See al-Barqī, *Al-Mukhtār min shi'r bashshār*, 41.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 173.

describing the persons being praised. Thus, values such as generosity and bravery were also celebrated in Sicilian panegyric poems, which were not only informed by the poetic traditions of classical Arabic, but also influenced by the political and social changes occurring in Sicily.

As Sicilian poetic practices developed, there was a tendency to bring forth new meanings and new forms of expression and to incorporate musical rhythm. In the degree of relative stability during this period, a refined urban style was introduced, the language was simplified, and the poetry was accompanied by music. Long and complex poetic meters were replaced by shorter and freer meters more adaptable to music. This approach to poetry seems to have been influenced by changes that were introduced in al-Andalus, as represented by *al-Muwashshahāt*;<sup>56</sup> poets became more attentive to sound and musical rhythm. For example, the emir Ja'far b. Yusūf Tāj al-Dawla al-Kalbī said [Appendix, Text 12]:

When fire touches my body,  
I exude delicious perfume.  
Just as when time bites into a day,  
it shows the virtue of the generous one.<sup>57</sup>

In these verses, Tāj al-Dawla glorified himself, referring to his noble descent by using a lively poetic meter.

Sicilian poetry continued to reflect the social and political changes on the island. Towards the end of the Kalbid dynasty, many poets described the state of chaos, confusion and moral decline that Sicily witnessed at the hands of several weak rulers. Abū Muḥammad al-Qāsim b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Tamīmī (d. 1207/8) lamented the past and drew a gloomy picture of his time, when transgression, greed and deceit became the norm. He said [Appendix, Text 13]:

<sup>56</sup> *Al-Muwashshahāt* (singular *muwashshah*) is a type of new and lively poetry that developed in al-Andalus. This poetry rose from the fusion of Arabic and Provencal cultures. The *muwashshah* is usually a love poem, and it is composed of rhymed Arabic strophes joined by recurrent two-line kharjah, or envoi, which is usually in Romance or colloquial Arabic; see Hakan Özkan, ‘Muwashshah’, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Three*, edited by Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas and Devin J. Stewart (Leiden: Brill, 2021), [http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\\_ei3\\_COM\\_40656](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_40656) (accessed 22 April 2023).

<sup>57</sup> See the poetry in Ibn al-Qaṭṭā‘ al-Šiqillī, *Al-Durra al-khaṭīra fī shū‘arā’ al-jazīra*, 13.

We drifted so far apart from our kin that we see,  
 that he who seeks something other than transgression is [still] a sinner.  
 A young man among us may be obsessed about his own money,  
 yet be killed as an enemy by his own brother!  
 The people's guide oversteps the paths of reason,  
 and he transgresses while knowing he is wrong.  
 We go back and forth about matters,  
 and if a dreamer glimpses them, he will not regain his sleep.  
 It is as if the seas are in turmoil and [as if],  
 our battles are [just] as the ever-rotating seasons.  
 Sometimes we push death away, sometimes,  
 we die like noble defenders [of the people].<sup>58</sup>

The poet appealed to the senses of his audience by using figurative images to describe the transgression, killing among brothers and endless war and disorder between Sicilians, which he imagined as ‘seas in turmoil’ and battles as ‘the ever-rotating seasons’.

Sicilian poets reverted to nature and borrowed imagery that is very specific to the Sicilian landscape. For example, Sicily’s geography was unique in this respect in that it combined two main elements: namely, water (since Sicily is an island surrounded by water) and fire (caused by its volcanoes). This duality was a source of inspiration for many poets. Ibn al-Khayyāt, for instance, lamented in nostalgic sentimentality the time of the Kalbids on the island, and he contrasted the beauty and prosperity of Sicily during their rule with its destruction and ruin afterwards. He described this destruction as lava ejected from the volcano which swept verdant meadows and turned their flowers into ashes [Appendix, Text 14]:

Take comfort that the island [Sicily] after you,  
 became a pile of bones, as the proverbs say.  
 You have left the remains of your beauty in its ruins,  
 like flowers that have faded in boiling lava.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>58</sup> These verses are mentioned in al-Nayfar, *Inwān al-arīb*, vol. 1: 136; Ibn al-Qatṭā‘ al-Šiqillī, *Al-Durra al-khaṭīra fī shu‘arā‘ al-jazīra*, vol. 1: 340. Usāma Ikhtiyār ascribes these verses to the poet ‘Abd al-Halīm al-Sūsī; see Ikhtiyār, *Jamharat ash‘ar al-Šiqilliyīn*, 210–13.

<sup>59</sup> Al-Barqī, *Al-Mukhtār min shi‘r bashshār*, 120.

Thus, Sicilian poetry of the Kalbid period exhibited many of the characteristics of the traditional Arabic *qasida* and its imagery, including Qur'anic imagery, while still maintaining its unique features.

The remainder of this chapter will discuss poetic depictions of Sicily's urban society and aspects of life during the Kalbid period.

### Poetry and Urban Society in Sicily

The relative political tranquillity which Sicily witnessed under the Kalbid dynasty resulted in social stability and urban renaissance. According to al-İşṭakhrī, in the tenth century Sicily had 'its share of abundance and the production of herbs and pasture, and seed-produce [ . . . ] which makes it [Sicily] better than all the other Muslim kingdoms that are located by the sea'.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, although the Kalbids consolidated the presence of Muslims and many of the population converted to Islam during their rule, other religious communities including the Christians and the Jews were given control over their civil and religious matters, and they had their own judges who ruled in their disputes.<sup>61</sup> In fact, the great prosperity and autonomy of Sicily during the rule of Kalbid emirs such as Abū al-Futūḥ Yūsuf, Thiqat al-Dawla, was enjoyed by all citizens, regardless of their religious affiliation.<sup>62</sup> The large number of markets and the variety of crafts show the economic prosperity of Sicily during this period. Ibn Hawqal travelled to Sicily during the rule of Abū al-Qāsim al-Kalbī; he visited the market there and described the various craftsmen, including oil-sellers, flour-mixers, money-dealers, perfume-makers, carpenters, shoe-makers and so on.<sup>63</sup>

There were many palaces, mosques and other buildings which were manifestations of the boom in artistic and urban development in Sicily under this dynasty. In turn, this development left its mark on Sicilian poetry, in which poets describe the elegance of its built environment of palaces and parks and suchlike alongside waterfalls and other features of Sicily's beautiful natural landscape.

<sup>60</sup> Abū Ishaq Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad al-İşṭakhrī, *Masālik al-mamālik* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 70.

<sup>61</sup> See Gustave Le Bon, *Hadārat al-‘Arab* (*La civilisation des Arabes*), translated by ‘Ādil Zaytir (Cairo: Dār Ihyā’ al-Kutub al-‘Arabiyya, 1948), 332.

<sup>62</sup> ‘Abbās, *Al-‘Arab fī Ṣiqilliyā*, 46.

<sup>63</sup> Ibn Hawqal, *Sūrat al-ard*, 114 ff.

## Portrayals of the Wealth of Sicilian Society

One of the main preoccupations of Sicilian poetry during this period was to portray the more luxurious aspects of the Sicilian way of life. Sicilian poets made references to precious stones, perfumes, jewellery and expensive decorated clothes. They also captured the wealth of Sicilian society as manifested in the various magnificent buildings around them.

The Sicilian poet Ibn Bashrūn combines such luxurious images with his depictions of nature. For example, he speaks about the great park and palace gardens as being bedecked in finery and perfumed [Appendix, Text 15]:

Indeed, its gardens are covered,  
with plants as [their] glamorous jewels.  
The scent of its soil is covered  
by fine silk brocade.<sup>64</sup>

Another park that evoked the imagination of poets at the time was the famous one known as al-Burūj, near Palermo. Many poets wrote about it in great detail; for example, the Emir Abū al-Qāsim ‘Abd Allāh b. Sulaymān Ibn Yakhlaф al-Kalbī al-Šiqillī, who was described as ‘someone who combined the honour of his office (*al-manṣib*) with deep knowledge and *adab*, and composed different genres of poetry while excelling in similes and the description of wine’.<sup>65</sup> In these verses, the similes display the emir’s poetic talent and also reflect the influence of Sicily’s maritime environment (note the equating of daffodils with lighthouses) [Appendix, Text 16]:

What a day we spent in al-Burūj,  
A day miserly of light and generous of rain.  
As if the cheeks of a poppy,  
were gleaming with shyness.  
As if the colour of the violet appeared like

<sup>64</sup> See Abū ‘Abd Allāh ‘Imād al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Īsfahānī, *Kharīdat al-qāṣr wa jarīdat al-‘aṣr*, edited by Aḥmad Amīn, Shawqī Dayf and Ihsān ‘Abbās (Cairo: Lajnat al-Nashr, 1951), vol. 2: 115.

<sup>65</sup> See Ibn al-Qattā‘ al-Siqillī, *Al-Durra al-khatīra fī shu‘arā’ al-jazīra*.

A blend of darkness and the light of day.  
 Its lillies [shone] white like domes,  
 set atop columns of green.  
 The luxuriant narcissus on their stalks,  
 resembled the lantern of a lighthouse.<sup>66</sup>

Another poet, namely Abū ‘Alī al-Hasan b. Muḥammad al-Kātib, known as Ibn al-Asṭabī (a chancery official), described being among a flock/army of nightingales and other birds in the famous park of al-Mu‘askar. The birds were all singing together in a harmonious melody. He said [Appendix, Text 17]:

I am in al-Mu‘askar alone with a host,  
 of cooing turtledoves and singing nightingales.  
 who seem to direct their voices to me,  
 like the opening melodies in a temple.<sup>67</sup>

Spring in this park was truly amazing, especially with the trees rapidly recovering a multitude of lost hues and the land being ornamented with different colourful blooms. In describing this joyful time, al-Hasan b. Aḥmad al-Kātib said [Appendix, Text 18]:

See how the blossom of al-Mu‘askar has  
 clothed the trees with fire-like light.  
 Spring is generous to us, it is as if,  
 it colours our cheeks and clads the trees [with blossom].<sup>68</sup>

Among the other poets who evoked the beauty of Sicily and its parks was ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. Abū al-‘Abbās al-Kātib al-Atṭābānshī. He was fascinated by the park known as al-Mu‘taziyya, near Palermo; it was also called Qaṣr al-Fawāra and had been built by Emir Ja‘far al-Kalbī. This palace and its park were facing a lake surrounded by palm trees. ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. Abū al-‘Abbās al-Kātib describes the lake as follows [Appendix, Text 19]:

<sup>66</sup> See al-Kutubī, Muḥammad b. Shākir, *Fawāt al-wafayāt*, vol. 2: 176.

<sup>67</sup> Ibn al-Qaṭṭā al-Šiqillī, *Al-Durra al-khaṭīra fī shu‘arā’ al-jazīra*, 99.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 104.

O, Fawāra with your two lakes, you fulfil our hope,  
 Of a delightful life and a glorious view.  
 Your waters, divided into nine streams,  
 flow so cheerfully in their divisions.  
 Where your two seas meet lies the dwelling of love,  
 Where you join the canal, passion has found a camp for itself.<sup>69</sup>

The poet relays detail after detail in order to create a cumulative effect and raise the emotions of the audience. The poet describes the two seas and the canal in Fawāra as the place where passion and love evolve, and he captures the smallest details of the park – including tree branches touching the water, the large fish and birds, the lemon and orange trees – through the vivid imagery that the poet presents to his audience [Appendix, Text 20]:

As if the garden branches were reaching out,  
 To look at the fish in the water and smile.  
 The large fish are swimming in their pure water,  
 The birds in the gardens are singing.  
 In blossom, the orange trees on the island  
 Are like fire burning on a gemstone.  
 The lemon trees have the pale colour of a lover  
 suffering the pain of separation.  
 The two palm trees are like two lovers,  
 Who have sought refuge from an enemy in an impregnable fortress.<sup>70</sup>

Full of sweeping metaphors and similes, these verses reflect the glory of al-Mu'taziyya park and the attention that the Kalbid emirs paid to gardens. The imagery of the palm trees as two lovers symbolises joy and harmony. In fact, Mallette takes the two lovers in this poem as a metaphor for the two groups of people of Sicily, namely the Muslims and the Christians.<sup>71</sup> Thus, the

<sup>69</sup> See al-İsfahānī, *Kharīdat*, vol. 1: 35.

<sup>70</sup> See the section on the poets of al-Maghrib in 'Imād al-Dīn al-İsfahānī, *Al-Kharīda*, vol. 1: 35.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Arie Schippers, 'Arabic and Hebrew Love Poetry in Sicily in the Middle Ages and their Contacts with Early Romance and German Poets in Sicily: Suffering of Love in Sicilian Poetry', in *Islamic Sicily: Philological and Literary Essays*, edited by Mirella Cassarino, special issue of *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 10 (2015), 91.

poet may be alluding to the tolerant policies of the Kalbids towards the Sicilian Christian population, which accepted a culture of intermarriage between the communities. In addition to describing places and parks, Sicilian poets in this as well as in the Norman period engaged with aspects of courtly culture such as wine-drinking sessions, singing girls, female dancers and musical instruments.

People explored different ways to seek pleasure in this period; singing was prevalent in Sicilian society, and there was a specific type of dancing accompanying it. One of the Kalbid emirs, ‘Abd Allāh b. Sulaymān al-Kalbī, described the atmosphere of music, instruments and singing girls that he experienced on his visit to one of Sicily’s parks [Appendix, Text 21]:

We respond with the sound of our wine-jars to the singing girls,  
when they reply to the singing of the turtle doves.  
Our lutes join together to make a joyful sound,  
as those birds sing out their disagreement.<sup>72</sup>

Sicilians also enjoyed the scene of a dancer who translates music into elegant and lively movement. One of the popular images of Sicilian poetry is of that a dancer who gazes at her feet as if playing a lute with them. Ibn al-Ṭūbī said [Appendix, Text 22]:

She dances like the shoot of a flower,  
in the darkness beneath a bright moon.  
In her dance, she blazes like a fire,  
[As she bends her body], she is as joyful as water.  
As if to her foot she had a lute attached,  
and the piper sounds her movements.  
As she starts to dance among us,  
my heart starts dancing inside me.<sup>73</sup>

This attention to detail in describing the movements of the dancer’s legs and their synchronicity with the tune is unique to Sicilian poets and sets them apart from their Eastern counterparts. Their works are characterised by lively poetic

<sup>72</sup> Al-Kutubī, *Fawāt al-wafayāt*, vol. 2: 76.

<sup>73</sup> See the section on the poets of al-Maghrib in ‘Imād al-Dīn al-Isfahānī, *Al-Kharīda*, vol. 2: 815.

meters which can easily be set to music. This form of Sicilian poetry seems to have been passed to al-Andalus by poets such as Abū al-'Arab al-Šiqillī and Ibn Ḥamdis, both of whom made it to al-Andalus.

Sicilian poets, however, also borrowed imagery and used techniques similar to those in Umayyad and 'Abbāsid poetry. For example, Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. 'Abdūn al-Susī, originally from Qayrawān, describes how the wind is a messenger conveying to him the news from the palace of Thiqat al-Dawla [Appendix, Text 23]:

By God, O mountain of al-Mu'askar,  
let the south wind ply its way around you.  
So that I may ask it, and it may give me news,  
of what the companions are doing in the palace.<sup>74</sup>

This personification of the wind and asking it for news about the beloved recalls imagery used by poets such as Ibn al-Damīna al-Akla'bī, who spoke of the soft wind from Najd and confessed the intensity of his love and that the scent of Najd increased his languishing.<sup>75</sup> Thus, while evoking aspects of Arabic poetry from the Islamic East, Sicilian poetry still retained its very own unique character and charm.

### Conclusion

The chapter has shown the rich Sicilian Arabic poetic traditions of the Kalbid period. Self-glorification and panegyric poetry reflected the special attention that different Kalbid emirs paid to knowledge, in general, and to poetry, in particular, as a tool to exhibit their political power and to build their own court protocol and social prestige. Many aspects of this poetry remained loyal to the Arabic traditions developed in the Islamic East; however, Sicilian poetry also shared characteristics with that of al-Andalus and drew upon meanings and imagery from their specific Sicilian context and environment, which remained an inexhaustible source of inspiration. The latter can be seen in the

<sup>74</sup> See Al-Nayfar, *Inwān al-arīb*, vol. 1: 48.

<sup>75</sup> See Ibn al-Damīna al-Akla'bī, *Dīwān Ibn al-Damīna*, edited by Aḥmad Rātib al-Naffākh (Cairo: Dār al-'Urūba, 1960), 85.

breath-taking descriptions of Sicilian nature, parks, aspects of life and urban developments of this period. Thus, Sicilian poetry remains an abundant source for the examination of a unique artistic culture, as well as a window to many political and social events of this period, and the ways in which politics, religion and literary production interacted under Kalbid rule.

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# 11

## ARAB-MUSLIM ACCOUNTS OF MEDIEVAL SICILY AND THE QUR'ĀN: AN INTERTEXTUAL READING

*Nesma Elsakaan*

*The meaning of a text depends [...] on the kinds of connections made in a particular community between it and other texts.*

Jay Lemke<sup>1</sup>

Sicily was one of the most important destinations that attracted travellers in medieval times. Many Muslim historians, geographers and poets wrote about this Mediterranean island that had been ruled by Arabs for more than two centuries. Arab-Muslim accounts of Sicily have been a rich subject to study from a range of points of view. This chapter compares Muslim accounts of medieval Sicily with texts from the Qur'ān and prophetic narrations.<sup>2</sup> The major focus is to trace the similar themes and semantics within these texts. The objective of this comparative study is to demonstrate that Muslim travellers'

<sup>1</sup> Jay L. Lemke, 'Intertextuality and Text Semantics', in *Discourse in Society: Systemic Functional Perspectives: Meaning and Choice in Language: Studies for Michael Halliday*, edited by Peter H. Fries and Michael Gregory (Norwood: Ablex Publishing, 1995), 85.

<sup>2</sup> In this chapter, I use the term 'medieval' to refer to Sicily between 800 and 1300. For more about medieval Sicily, see Alex Metcalfe, *The Muslims of Medieval Sicily* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), and Sarah Davis-Secord, *Where Three Worlds Met: Sicily in the Early Medieval Mediterranean* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017).

descriptions of the Sicilian landscape and people were influenced by their religion, which had shaped their culture and identity. Their representation of Sicily, its landscape and people is permeated by references and allusions to the Islamic tradition. In order to address the intersection between religious and historical texts, I will read these sources intertextually. I claim that the Sicilian landscape evoked Qur'ānic imagery and themes in the minds of Muslim travellers. The analysis will demonstrate how this led them to adopt Qur'ānic language and themes in the description of various aspects of the island. The connection that Muslim travellers made between Sicily and the Qur'ān reveals that, for them, the value of this island was almost holy as it reminded them of God and His magnificence.

One may question whether it is valid to compare human texts and the Qur'ān's sacred discourse. In 2016, Angelika Neuwirth wrote that . . .

. . . the connection between literary discourses and their Qur'ānic predecessors is usually bypassed in present scholarly works on profane Arabic literature. There is still a reluctance to involve the Qur'ān in literary debates – too remote is the field of Qur'ānic Studies from Literary Studies. Or more precisely: the Qur'ān is still being considered something apart from literature, be it as a sacred text, or a text whose origins are considered precarious.<sup>3</sup>

This excerpt was taken from the foreword to a book that Neuwirth was praising for investigating the Qur'ān's influence on the system of *adab*<sup>4</sup> and its

<sup>3</sup> Angelika Neuwirth, 'Foreword', in Sarah R. Bin Tyer, *The Qur'an and the Aesthetics of Premodern Arabic Prose* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), vii.

<sup>4</sup> The term '*adab*' corresponds, more or less, to what we mean by literature today. However, literature as a modern conceptualisation of literary texts is not an accurate translation of the word '*adab*'. The first reason is that '*adab*' refers to premodern literary texts. The second is that, according to Wolfhart Heinrichs, it connotes three dimensions: '(1) "good, correct, polite behaviour", (2) "a genre of anecdotal and anthological literature which serves as a quarry of quotable materials (*muḥādarāt*) for the bel-esprit", and (3) "a body of knowledge in the linguistic and literary field which comprises the genre of literature just mentioned, but include further ancillary disciplines like grammar etc."' Bin Tyer, *The Qur'an and the Aesthetics of Premodern Arabic Prose*, 9. For more on the definition of '*adab*', see Nuha Alshaar, 'Introduction: The Relation of *Adab* to the Qur'an: Conceptual and Historical Framework', in *The Qur'an and Adab: The Shaping of Literary Traditions in Classical Islam*, edited by Nuha Alshaar (Oxford: Oxford University Press in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2017), 6–11.

artistic language. My concern is to be part of the scholarship examining how Muslim writers drew on the Qur'ān to encode meanings that would resonate with their readers and to show how this influenced the development of Arabic literary and historical texts. I agree with Sarah Bin Tyeer when she says that 'Arab-Islamic literary and artistic endeavours where premodern,<sup>5</sup> and to some degree modern and contemporary literary expressions, show a continuum of influence with [ . . . ] the Qur'ān, and its influence on the creative process'.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, the concern of this study is not to investigate the religious behaviours of the Muslim travellers that I discuss here. Rather, it is to explore how the religious nuance enriches literary and historical writings.

### **Methodological Approach**

In this chapter, I will undertake an intertextual reading, comparing a selection of Arab accounts of medieval Sicily with the Qur'ānic text. More precisely, I will focus on the thematic and semantic relations between these texts. To do this, I will use the thematic model of Jay L. Lemke, according to which . . .

. . . the texts may not share words, but use thematically equivalent synonymous or even figurative expressions. It is *semantic* patterns that the texts must share: the intertextual tie is stronger as more semantic relations among equivalent thematic items are shared between texts.<sup>7</sup>

Lemke points out that 'intertextual relations transcend the context of situation and depend on context of culture'.<sup>8</sup> Hence, the analysis of meaning should be considered according to the social, historical and cultural dimensions of the community.<sup>9</sup> In my analysis, I will shed light on the religious experience and on memory to demonstrate why the travellers examined in

<sup>5</sup> In Bin Tyeer's book, the term 'premodern' refers to the Arab-Islamic literary tradition until the nineteenth century.

<sup>6</sup> Bin Tyeer, *The Qur'an and the Aesthetics of Premodern Arabic Prose*, 2.

<sup>7</sup> Lemke, 'Intertextuality and Text Semantics', 91.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>9</sup> Xiaxia E. Xue, 'An Intertextual Discourse Analysis of Romans 9:30–10:13', in *Modeling Biblical Language*, edited by Stanley E. Porter et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 279.

this chapter were so impacted by specific features of the landscape of Sicily and by the customs of its people. Lemke also talked about the use of ‘thematic formations’, which he defined as ‘a recurrent pattern of semantic relations used in talking about a specific topic from text to text’.<sup>10</sup> Usually, writers employ patterns (repeated words or phrases) which are common to a specific community. According to Lemke, ‘the thematic formation abstracts from its stances in one or more texts the common lexicogrammatical semantic relations [ . . . ] actually shared by the texts’.<sup>11</sup> It is these relations on which I will focus in the travellers’ descriptions of nature and traditional customs in medieval Sicily.

### The Corpus

This chapter analyses portions of the following texts:

1. *Muruj al-dhabhab wa ma‘ādin al-jawhar* and *Al-Tanbih wa-l-‘ashrāf* by Abū al-Hasan ‘Alī Ibn al-Husayn al-Mas‘udi (d. 956);
2. *Tuhfat al-albāb wa nukhbat al-‘ijab* by Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Gharnātī (d. 1170);
3. *Nuzhat al-mushtaq fi ikhtirāq al-‘āfāq* by Abū ‘Abdullāh Muḥammad al-Idrīsī (d. 1166);
4. *al-Masālik wa-l-mamālik* by Abū al-Qāsim Muḥammad Ibn Hawqal (d. 977).

It is important to note that this study does not aim to provide a historical or political reinterpretation of the examined accounts. Also, it is not relevant whether the testimony of these travellers was the result of their own observation or based on second-hand information. Instead, this article unearths the intertextual relations between their accounts and the Qur’ān. As with many authors in premodern and modern times, the Qur’ān inspired Muslim travellers in direct and indirect ways. This is because the language used in the sacred text to describe the scenes of Hell and Paradise is very subjective and has

<sup>10</sup> Lemke, ‘Intertextuality and Text Semantics’, 91.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 91–92.

strongly affected many Arab writers, linguistically and artistically.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, as Roberto Tottoli noted: ‘Eschatology constitutes one of, if not the, major topics of the Quran and early Muslim traditions (hadith)’.<sup>13</sup> This chapter examines how this is evident in the Arab-Muslim travellers’ discourses on features of the natural world in Sicily, such as volcanoes, rivers and vegetation.

Arab accounts of medieval Sicily have been widely studied by historians searching for fundamental information on the island and its history during and after Muslim domination. Historians have found a rich resource in the very important work of the Italian scholar Michele Amari (d. 1889), *Biblioteca Arabo-Sicula*, first published in 1880. Amari compiled Arab travellers’ writings on Sicily in a collection that displays the texts in both the original language and Italian translation. The main scholarly works on these accounts have engaged with their historical, geographical, social and political aspects.<sup>14</sup> However, analysis of the linguistic features has been largely neglected due to the fact that most of the scholars in this field are historians. This is not to say that this kind of analysis did not arouse any attention at all. There are some survey histories

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Christian Lange, *Paradise and Hell in Islamic Traditions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015); idem (ed.), *Locating Hell in Islamic Traditions* (Leiden: Brill, 2015); Samuela Pagani, ‘Un paradiso in terra: Il Hammām e l’economia della salvezza’, in *Hammām: Le terme nell’islam*, edited by Rosita d’Amora and Samuela Pagani (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 2015), 133–58.

<sup>13</sup> Roberto Tottoli, ‘The Morsico Hell: The Significance and Relevance of Aljamiado Texts for Muslim Eschatology and Islamic Literature’, in *Locating Hell in Islamic Traditions*, edited by Christian Lange (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 271.

<sup>14</sup> For an overview of the foundational studies in this field, see Mirella Cassarino, ‘Studies on Islamic Sicily: The Last Fifteen Years’, in *Islamic Sicily: Philological and Literary Essays*, edited by Mirella Cassarino, special issue of *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 10 (2015): 3–11; William Granara, ‘Review of *A History of Muslim Sicily*, by Leonard C. Chiarelli’, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 135/1 (2015): 166–68; Antonino Pellitteri, ‘Reflections on the Study of Muslim Sicily: History, Politics, and Nineteenth-Century Sicilian Historiography’, *Scripta Mediterranea* 19–20 (1998–99): 109–18; Biancamaria Scarcia Moretti, ‘La storiografia arabistica italiana di fronte alla questione della presenza islamica nel mezzogiorno medievale’, in *Il Mezzogiorno medievale nella storiografia del secondo dopoguerra: Risultati e prospettive* [= Proceedings of the Fourth National Congress of Associazione dei Medievali Italiani, University of Calabria, 12–16 June 1982], edited by Pietro De Leo (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 1985), 113–21.

that consider the linguistic issues of the text, but they do not do so in a systematic way. For instance, the Italian scholar Antonino Pellitteri has addressed the terminology used by Muslim historians.<sup>15</sup> In his ‘La Sicilia nella visione arabo-musulmana: Immagini nel testo e immagini del testo’,<sup>16</sup> Pellitteri presents a historical reading of historians such as Muḥammad Ibn ’Aḥmad al-Muqaddisī (d. 990), Abū ’Alī al-Hasan Ibn Rاشِق al-’Azdī al-Qayrawānī (d. 1064), Abū al-Hasan ’Alī Ibn al-Husayn al-Mas’ūdī (d. 956), Muḥammad Ibn ’Aḥmad Ibn Jubayr (d. 1217) and the Andalusian poet Abū al-Qāsim Muḥammad Ibn Hānī (d. 972). In it, he addresses some Arabic terms which he identifies as encapsulating the geographical importance and emotional significance of Sicily to the medieval Muslim community. He writes:

In the works of al-Mas’udi and the Andalusian Ibn Jubayr the perception was conditioned by the expressive codes of the time as well as the social context and norms of the group of which they were members. In this sense, the texts of the Muslim authors exemplified here [in the article] can be considered truly ‘representative’. In other words, the authors expressed an idea as well as a historical moment, and in doing so, they legitimately represented the community.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Pellitteri has written several works on Medieval Sicily. In 2016, he published a study that addresses the central position of Sicily in the Mediterranean during the Fāṭimid period, presenting a new reading of Arabic and Italian historical resources with a focus on the terminology used in the Arabic accounts. See Antonino Pellitteri, *Sicilia e Islam* (Palermo: Franco Angeli, 2016). Recently, he has published a comparative study that points out the sociocultural relationships between Sicily and Egypt in the Fāṭimid period. In this work, he compares Arabic sources, Sicilian historical and literary works, as well as popular culture data, in order to highlight the role that the Fāṭimids played in strengthening the relationships between Sicily and Egypt. For example, he traces the popular representations of the ‘Papireto river’ in Palermo, which was considered the son of the Nile. According to him, this demonstrates the deep connections between Sicily and Egypt during the tenth and eleventh centuries. See Antonino Pellitteri, “From the Nile My Water Comes and Papyrus Is My Name”: A Way of Representing a Connection/*Nasab* between Palermo and Egypt’, in *Viaggio e ansia del ritorno nell’Islam e nella letteratura araba*, edited by Antonino Pellitteri and Laurence Denooz (Rome: Aracne, 2019), 77–92.

<sup>16</sup> Antonino Pellitteri, ‘La Sicilia nella visione arabo-musulmana: Immagini nel testo e immagini del testo’, in *Lo spazio letterario del medioevo, Vol. 2: La cultura arabo-islamica* (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 2003), 727–47.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 741. This translation and the following translations of this work by Pellitteri from Italian into English are mine.

Even if in his article Pellitteri does not talk overtly about intertextuality, he addresses some intertextual relations between the Qur'ān and the poems of al-'Azdī and Ibn Hānī. For instance, he notices that both authors quote the Qur'ānic verse 'By the fig and the olive' (Q. 95:1) when referring to Sicily.<sup>18</sup> Pellitteri comments:

It is difficult to say whether by attributing the Qur'ānic sacredness of the olive tree and the safety of the district to Sicily, a typical quality of Meccan territory, al-Azdī did not want to re-propose, albeit unconsciously, the vision of another Andalusian poet [ . . . ] Abu al-Qasim Ibn Hani [ . . . ] who held that [ . . . ] the light of prophecy was shining on the island, albeit thanks to the caliph and imām al-Mu'izz li-Din Allah.<sup>19</sup>

As noted earlier, when historians address the linguistic features of a text, they do so with the aim of uncovering the social and political circumstances pertinent for inclusion in the historical record. Intertextuality is not a key analytical tool employed in their studies. Many Muslim authors have used references and allusions to the Qur'ān as a literary technique to give more value to their oral and written works.<sup>20</sup> I will underline the use and role of Qur'ānic verses in the travellers' imagery and descriptions of Sicily. This kind of analysis is still not sufficiently dealt with in the available scholarly works. Exploring the influence of the Qur'ān on the travellers' writings can contribute to a better understanding of these sources. Moreover, it reconsiders the historical records in the light of the religious and cultural memory of the writers.

### **Which Reader?**

Reading Arab-Muslims' accounts of medieval Sicily is an interactive process, especially among those who are Muslim and Arabic native speakers. From the first pages, there is, among this group of readers, a sense of cultural complicity

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 728.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> See Na'im 'Ammūrī, 'Al-Tanāṣṣ al-qur'ānī fī 'ash'ār 'Adīb Kamāl al-Dīn', *Majallat Markaz Dirāsāt al-Kūfā* 1/47 (2017): 205–20; Alexander Knyshev, 'Multiple Areas of Influence', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Qur'ān*, edited by Jane Dammen McAuliffe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 211–32.

with the author. The semantic features and the thematic formations used in the description of some scenes call to these readers' minds a central book for Muslims: the Qur'ān. Once the readers' complicity with the author as well as with the text is forged, and once the text starts calling other text(s) to mind, then we can talk about intertextuality. I believe that travellers wanted to create a bridge to their future readers, and they did so through a textual nexus that goes beyond time and engages communal memory.

It is important here to refer to Julia Kristeva's considerations on the reader and the text. Kristeva argued that a text has two axes: horizontal and vertical. The horizontal axis 'determines the relationship between the reader and the text'. The vertical one 'contains the complete set of relations of the text to other texts'.<sup>21</sup> These axes are surrounded by a 'framework of pre-existing codes that governs and shapes every text and every reading act'.<sup>22</sup> The writer creates a system of correspondences with readers from a similar culture by activating shared elements in them. The former communicates with the latter using discursive and thematic patterns. In the case of Muslims who are Arabic speakers, the communication is stronger, since the discourse and themes draw not only on culture, but also on religion.

I argue that, in their description of the lands and the people of Sicily, Muslim travellers used Qur'ānic language in order to emotionally involve the reader as well as effectively convey the described scenes. Through the 'act of reading', which in fiction puts the author's and the reader's created selves into agreement,<sup>23</sup> the reader is required to perceive cross-references to other traditional texts. This is possible only if authors and readers share commonalities. In the context of this chapter, I am referring to the emotions and faith which, as 'Abdullāh Ibrāhīm noted, influenced Muslims' perceptions of the past and history, as well as their imagination and aspirations.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, in their adoption of religious language and themes, Muslims were motivated by the

<sup>21</sup> Peter Childs and Roger Fowler, *The Routledge Dictionary of Literary Terms* (London: Routledge, 2006), 121.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 30.

<sup>24</sup> 'Abdulla Ibrahim, 'ālam al-qurūn al-wusṭā fi 'ayun al-muslimīn (Abū Dhabī: Al-Mujamma' al-Thaqāfi, 2001), 14.

ideology of the *dār al-Islām* (territory of Islam),<sup>25</sup> which shaped their representations and perceptions of the ‘self’ and the ‘Other’.<sup>26</sup>

## Intertextuality

Intertextuality (in Arabic *ilm al-tanāṣṣ*) is concerned with the subtext that readers interweave with the text that they are reading. The term ‘intertextuality’ was coined in the 1960s by Kristeva who combined the theories of language and literature expounded by Ferdinand Saussure (d. 1913) and Mikhail Bakhtin (d. 1975).<sup>27</sup> According to Janine Ungvársy, intertextuality ‘refers to the use of a text or elements of a text within the body of another work. The word itself is derived from the Latin word *intertextus*, which means “intermingling elements of a weaving”’.<sup>28</sup> Intertextuality conveys ‘an additional layer of meaning to a text by referring to a known character or concept from another work’.<sup>29</sup> This kind of allusion exists beneath the surface of the text, and it takes a dedicated reader who is widely read and well-versed in the culture to discover the author’s subtle intentions. Intertextuality is more usually applied to literary works in which the author uses direct reference to another work (with respect to a specific title, character, scene, or plot, for example).<sup>30</sup>

According to Lemke, constructing intertextual relationships is a kind of ‘contextualizing practice’ or ‘a making sense of the texts, or portions of them, by placing them in the context of only some and not other texts or recurring discourse pattern’.<sup>31</sup> Thus, the choice of the texts to which intertextuality could be applied is important. One should be aware of the relevant texts in a specific community. To quote Lemke, ‘the study of intertextuality is concerned with the recurrent discourse and activity patterns of the community

<sup>25</sup> *Dār al-Islām* is a juridical concept that has been used to indicate territories where Islamic law prevailed. For more about this concept, see Giovanna Calasso and Giuliano Lancioni (eds), *Dār al-Islām/Dār al-harb: Territories, People, Identities* (Leiden: Brill, 2017).

<sup>26</sup> Ibrahim, *Ālam al-qurūn al-wustā*, 13.

<sup>27</sup> Graham Allen, *Intertextuality* (London: Routledge, 2000), 3.

<sup>28</sup> Janine Ungvársy, ‘Intertextuality’, in *Salem Press Encyclopedia*, <https://bit.ly/34bOSIV> (accessed 17 October 2020).

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Lemke, ‘Intertextuality and Text Semantics’, 86.

and how they are constituted by, instanced in, and interconnected or disjoined through particular texts'.<sup>32</sup>

Intertextuality holds a significant place within the Arabic literary tradition, with the incorporation of images and ideas from other texts being a common practice since the inception of Arabic literature. Cassarino points out that Arab authors establish intertextual connections with preceding traditions and construct links between texts deemed essential to their own discourse. This phenomenon elucidates the presence of similarities in their texts, without diminishing the originality inherent in their works. Arab authors, according to Cassarino, establish 'a subsystem of sources within the literary system to which each of them chooses to refer'.<sup>33</sup>

### Literary Texts and the Qur'ān

For Muslims, the Qur'ān is a divine text and the most important literary text that has ever existed in the Arabic language. Many scholars have studied the intertextuality that exists between literary texts (poems and prose) and the Qur'ān.<sup>34</sup> One of the recent scholarly works investigating the relationship between the sacred text and classical Arabic literary works is *The Qur'ān and Adab: The Shaping of Literary Traditions in Classical Islam* by Nuha Alshaar.<sup>35</sup> According to Alshaar, '[t]he Qur'ān as a text has an effect on its readers (the *'udabā'*<sup>36</sup> in this context), with its content and literary devices causing readers to respond and in turn create meaning'.<sup>37</sup> The classical *'udabā'*<sup>38</sup> 'extract meaning from the Qur'ān'; however, their texts are not determined by the Qur'ānic narrative.<sup>39</sup> The sacred text – as Alshaar explains – 'was one of many sources that they might employ in developing a narrative on a specific

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Mirella Cassarino, 'Système, genres et mode dans la littérature arabe classique', *Synergies Monde arabe* 6 (2009): 57. The translation from French is mine.

<sup>34</sup> Ammuri, 'Al-Tanāṣṣ al-qur'āni', 206.

<sup>35</sup> For a review, see Helen Blatherwick, 'The Qur'an and Adab: The Shaping of Literary Traditions in Classical Islam' by Nuha Alshaar, ed.', *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 22/2 (2020): 129–33.

<sup>36</sup> The term *'udabā'* here refers to the classical *literati*. Alshaar, 'Introduction', 2.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>38</sup> In Alshaar's work, the term 'classical' refers to the period between pre-Islamic times and the ninth/fifteenth century. Ibid., 45.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 4.

topic in their own texts'.<sup>40</sup> This process of intermingling and weaving characterised classical literary works.

In the Islamic interpretative tradition, intertextuality is a very practical exegetical approach which, as articulated by Hussein Abdul-Raouf, 'is concerned with establishing textual links within the Qur'ān in terms of an expression, an individual phrase, or an *āyah* [Qur'ānic verse]'.<sup>41</sup> By intertextuality, Abdul-Raouf means an interpretative traditional approach known as *tafsīr al-Qur'ān bi-l-Qur'ān*.<sup>42</sup> According to this approach, the Qur'ān interprets itself.<sup>43</sup> Abdul-Raouf demonstrated that intertextuality could be applied to the Qur'ān's leitmotifs, for they refer to each other and establish thematic connectivity.

Due to its literary techniques, stylistic features, and linguistic mechanisms, the Qur'ānic text has wielded significant influence within Arabic literature.<sup>44</sup> From the time of the very first Muslims, writers and poets have referred to the sacred text's themes and semantics. The figurative speech found in many Arabic texts is resonant of that of the Qur'ān, where it exists as a distinct textual strategy.<sup>45</sup> The linguistic features of the Qur'ān are deeply expressive and evoke strong emotions, leading Muslims to regard its language as almost magical. Because of the power of the language of the Qur'ān, Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, was accused of being a sorcerer (*sāḥir*). His figurative reading of the world made people accuse him of 'magically manipulating their word[s]' through the magic of speech (*sibr al-bayān*).<sup>46</sup> During the seventh century, the Qur'ānic language challenged Arabs' linguistic and poetic skills. It created a 'paradigm shift on the intellectual, artistic, and religious levels[;]' it also created a paradigm shift on both the literary and cultural levels'.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, the Qur'ān was the main source from which grammarians established the rules of Arabic grammar. The Qur'ān is also a narrative through which God tells the stories of different people and prophets. For all these reasons, many scholars – for instance, Amīn al-Khūlī (d. 1966), 'Ā'isha 'Abd al-Rahmān (d. 1998) and

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Hussein Abdul-Raouf, *Theological Approaches to Qur'anic Exegesis: A Practical Comparative-Constructive Analysis* (London: Routledge, 2012), 10.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>44</sup> See Chapters 7, 8, 9 and 16 of Alshaar, *The Qur'an and Adab*.

<sup>45</sup> Neuwirth, 'Foreword', vii.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., viii.

<sup>47</sup> Bin Tyer, *The Qur'an and the Aesthetics of Premodern Arabic Prose*, 5.

Naṣr Hāmid Abū Zayd (d. 2010) – consider the Qur’ān the most valuable literary model to have ever existed in Arabic. The religious, linguistic and artistic dimensions of the Qur’ān have made it a central text in Arabs’ everyday lives, thoughts and expressions. For these reasons, it is possible to trace Qur’ānic nuances in works of different genres.

In the next section, I will focus on portions of the above-mentioned accounts of Sicily and compare them to Qur’ānic verses. The analysis will take into consideration the ‘co-thematic intertextuality’ which is concerned with texts that construct ‘the same pattern of semantic relations among their themes’.<sup>48</sup> There are three types of meanings: (1) a lexical meaning, which corresponds to the meaning-potential of a word; (2) a use meaning, which seizes the contextualised meaning of a word as part of a particular text; and (3) a thematic meaning, which connects the first two as well as corresponds to the meaning that ‘the word realizes in a recurrent discourse pattern that is familiar in many texts and which forms the basis of co-thematic intertextual relations’.<sup>49</sup> The meaning of a word – as Lemke explains – derives from the thematic meaning and ‘only very indirectly from its lexical meaning’.<sup>50</sup>

How could two texts match through the meaning of a word? According to Lemke’s theory, discursive formations play an important role in this process. They ‘combine a particular set of semantic relations among topical themes with a particular rhetorical or genre structure. They are clichés [ . . . and] they in effect paraphrase one another, being small variations within a recognizable constant pattern’.<sup>51</sup> Each community uses certain words to communicate familiar things. In Muslim-majority communities, the religious language has systematically influenced persons’ thoughts and expressions. For example, the phrase ‘*jahannam wa bi’s al-maṣīr*’, which means ‘(for you is) the Penalty of Hell: and evil is (such) Destination’ is a reference to the Qur’ānic verse that says: ‘For those who reject their Lord (and Cherisher) is the Penalty of Hell: and evil is (such) Destination’ (Q. 67:6).<sup>52</sup> This is a cliché commonly used in situations where someone is doing something forbidden, and someone else

<sup>48</sup> Lemke, ‘Intertextuality and Text Semantics’, 87.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> For the English translations of the Qur’ānic verses reported in this chapter, see Yusuf Ali on the Qur’ānic Arabic Corpus website, <http://corpus.quran.com/translation.jsp> (accessed 28 January 2020).

discovers that person doing it. Imagine a child who eats the chocolate that his/her mother has hidden, and a sibling catches the child doing so. In this case, the sibling could use this selected part of the verse as a saying to tell the child that he/she is in trouble. Of course, the child will not suffer the ‘penalty of Hell’ just for having eaten a piece of chocolate. Consequently, it is misleading to interpret *jahannam* in the light of its lexical meaning: Hell. Rather, it is the thematic meaning and the context that make us understand the nuance.

In the following section, I will use thematic and semantic relations as well as Lemke’s notions of meaning as analytical frameworks to examine the themes and the terminology of Arab accounts of medieval Sicily. I will focus on two aspects that have to do with the Sicilian landscape, along with one aspect pertaining to its inhabitants: (1) Mount Etna; (2) the Sicilian springs, rivers and vegetation; and (3) the habits of the people of Palermo. This analysis will show how the language adopted by the authors derives from the Islamic tradition and its sources.

### **Mount Etna**

*Jabal al-nār* (Mount of the Fire) and *al-burkān* (the volcano) are terms that Muslim travellers used in reference to Mount Etna. This mountain is widely described in their sources.<sup>53</sup> It is almost the first landscape feature that they mentioned, for its impressive view. Although no proper attention has been given to intertextuality in this regard,<sup>54</sup> Sir Jivanji Jamshedji Modi (d. 1933), a prominent Indian Zoroastrian priest and scholar, also known as *Shams al-‘Ulamā’* (Sun of the Scholars),<sup>55</sup> addressed some linguistic and thematic features in al-Mas‘ūdī’s work *Murūj al-dhahab*. Modi was interested in the natural sciences<sup>56</sup> and had written a work entitled *Maçoudi on Volcanoes*, published in 1908. In it, he notes that, at the time of writing, scientific European writers had not mentioned al-Mas‘ūdī in

<sup>53</sup> See Adalgisa De Simone, ‘L’Etna dei geografi e viaggiatori arabi del Medioevo’, *Quaderni del corso ‘Al-Imam al-Mazari’* 5 (1982): 13–33. Alessandro Vanoli, *La Sicilia Musulmana* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2012), 168–73.

<sup>54</sup> I have authored a paper addressing this topic, see Nesma Elsakaan, ‘L’Etna nei resoconti di al-Mas‘ūdī e al-Ārnātī tra memoria, intertestualità e Corano’, *In Verbis Lingue Letterature Culture* 2 (2023): 97–110.

<sup>55</sup> Michael Stausberg and Ramiyar P. Karanjia, ‘Modi, Jivanji Jamshedji’, in *Encyclopædia Iranica*, 2015, Online Edition, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/modi-jivanji-jamshedji> (accessed 28 January 2020).

<sup>56</sup> For a biography on Modi, see *ibid.*

their discourses on volcanoes. Consequently, he decided to introduce to the volcanologists al-Mas‘ūdī’s contribution on this ‘grand phenomenon of nature’.<sup>57</sup>

Here is how al-Mas‘ūdī describes Mount Etna in *Murūj al-dhabab*:

أَتَيْنَا عَلَى [ . . . ] خَبْرِ الْجَزِيرَةِ الْمُعْرُوفَةِ بِالْبَرْكَانِ وَهِيَ الْأَطْمَةُ الَّتِي تَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا أَجْسَامٌ مِنَ النَّارِ  
كَأَجْسَامٍ بِلَارُؤُوسٍ فَتَعْلُوْفَاهُ بِالْهَوَاءِ بِاللَّيلِ ثُمَّ تَسْقُطُ فِي الْبَحْرِ فَتَطْفُوْفَاهُ عَلَى الْمَاءِ.

We have already spoken about [ . . . ] the island which is known by *al-burkān*. It is *al-’atma* that evicts inflamed objects (*’ajsām min al-nār*) which look like headless bodies (*ka-’ajsām bilā ru’ūs*) that rise high in the air during the night then fall back into the sea and float on the water.<sup>58</sup>

Modi was interested in various linguistic and religious features as well as superstitious characteristics of al-Mas‘ūdī’s description. He used these to unearth the scientific significance of al-Mas‘ūdī’s observations. Modi pointed to al-Mas‘ūdī’s use of religious terminology when describing natural facts.<sup>59</sup> He noted that religious persons perceived volcanoes as Hell. This perception was quite normal for him since he was religious and he personally experienced that.<sup>60</sup> Modi explained that religious writers had received their conception of Hell from the volcanoes.<sup>61</sup> In addition, in the Italian tradition – as Modi

<sup>57</sup> Jivanji Jamshedji Modi, ‘Maçoudi on Volcanoes’, *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 22 (1908): 135.

<sup>58</sup> Abū al-Hasan ‘Alī Ibn al-Husayn al-Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj al-dhabab wa ma’ādin al-jawhar*, in *Biblioteca Arabo-Sicula*, vol. 1, compiled by Michele Amari (Palermo: Accademia Nazionale di Scienze Lettere e Arti, 1988), 4. All quotations are translated from Arabic into English by me.

<sup>59</sup> For example, Modi addressed al-Mas‘ūdī’s use of the term ‘Antichrist’ (*dajjāl*) that appears in his description of the volcanoes situated in the Sea of China, precisely in this passage: ‘The mariners who have voyaged on these sea-coasts [of the sea of China] say that it is there that the Dajal [ . . . ] the Antichrist, has fixed his abode’. According to Modi, al-Mas‘ūdī re-proposed the idea of Christian mariners who had considered these volcanoes ‘the seat of Hell itself and of those who do not believe in Christ. Modi, ‘Maçoudi on Volcanoes’, 138.

<sup>60</sup> Modi says: ‘[T]he allusion to these volcanoes as the seat of Hell, or as the seat of the punishment of the sinful, is natural. The first impression upon my mind, when I stood at the edge of the crater of the Vesuvius on 28<sup>th</sup> July 1889, and when I heard the terrible and frightful sounds from within, with the occasional showers of stone that rose from it, was that of Hell. I noted the first impression in my notebook there and then, thus ‘Oh! the sounds! They are of Hell’. Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 138, 139.

explains – Mount Vesuvius in Naples and Mount Etna in Sicily were considered Hell: ‘That part of Sicily in which Mount Etna is situated is called *Valle Demone*, because popular tradition believed that the inside of the volcano was a region of demons’.<sup>62</sup>

According to Modi, ‘perhaps it is from the appearance of [ . . . ] phantoms or fantastical shapes of vapours, added to the terrible sound from within, that the ancients thought that the volcanoes were the localities of Hells where the bodies of the sinful were burnt in suffocating flames and smoke’.<sup>63</sup> Modi tried to unearth the relationships between the fantasies of al-Mas‘ūdī and the scientific explanation of this natural phenomena. He assumed that the representation of the volcanoes as Hell was due to the religious thought of al-Mas‘ūdī. Nevertheless, he located this idea in the role that Zoroastrian and Christian religions as well as the Italian popular tradition at the time had played in the thoughts of travellers and historians in medieval times (al-Mas‘ūdī in this context). Curiously, Modi did not propose the potential impact of the Islamic tradition on al-Mas‘ūdī, despite the latter’s Muslim background. In the next section, I will do what Modi had missed. In other words, I will demonstrate that in their discourse on Mount Etna, al-Mas‘ūdī as well as al-Gharnātī were influenced first and foremost by the sacred text of Islam.

### **Travellers’ Representations of the Volcano and the Qur’ān**

The importance that Muslim travellers assigned to Mount Etna, as the first element described in their sources, is understandable if we read it in relation to the Qur’ānic verses about Hell (*jahannam*). In *Murūj al-dhahab*, al-Mas‘ūdī represented the fire and the flames of Etna, which are inanimate, in human terms,<sup>64</sup> such as ‘inflamed objects’ (*ajsām min al-nār*) and ‘headless bodies’ (*ka’ajsām bilā ru’ūs*).<sup>65</sup> In another text, *al-Tanbih wa-l-ashrāf*, he used the expression ‘corpses similar to human bodies’ (*juthath ka-’abdān al-nās*) to

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 138. For the representations of Mount Etna as Hell in Greek and Latin mythology and in medieval popular tradition, see Teresa Leslie, ‘Etna Mount’, in *Trade, Travel, and Exploration in the Middle Ages: An Encyclopedia*, edited by John Block Friedman and Kristen Mossler Figg (New York and London: Routledge, 2000), 179–80.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Al-Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab*, 4.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

refer to the volcano's flames.<sup>66</sup> These expressions realise a thematic intertextuality between al-Mas'ūdī and the Qur'ānic verses about Hell. Al-Mas'ūdī alludes to the Qur'ān, using the motif of individuals enduring fiery torment in Hell. This can be traced in the following verse which speaks about people burning in the fire of Hell:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قُوْا أَنْفُسُكُمْ وَأَهْلِكُمْ نَارًا وَقُوْدُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ [ . . . ]

O ye who believe! save yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is Men and Stones (Q. 66:6).

Another verse that underlines the torment of burning in Hell is the following:

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يُجَادِلُ فِي اللَّهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَلَا هُدًى وَلَا كِتَابٍ مُّنِيبٍ (8)  
ثُلَّتِي عِطْفَهُ لِيُضِلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ مُّلْئِهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا خَرْزٌ وَنَذِيقَهُ يَوْمُ الْقِيَامَةِ عَذَابُ الْحَرِيقِ (9).

(8) Yet there is among men such a one as disputes about Allah, without Knowledge, without Guidance, and without a Book of Enlightenment (9) (Disdainfully) bending his side, in order to lead (men) astray from the Path of Allah: for him there is disgrace in this life, and on the Day of Judgment We shall make him taste the Penalty of burning (Fire) (Q. 22:8–9).

Now let us see how al-Gharnātī comments on the volcano in his accounts. While he was travelling towards Alexandria, al-Gharnātī briefly stayed in Sicily. Based on this visit, he gave a detailed description of Mount Etna. The following quotation refers to information that he gathered from a Sicilian religious scholar, Sheikh Abū al-Qāsim Ibn al-Hakīm al-Šiqillī:

وأخبرني الشيخ أبو القاسم بن الحاكم الصقلي حين سأله عن تلك النار قال: إن تضيء [ . . . ]  
تلك النار على عشرة فراسخ لا يحتاج معها أحد إلى ضوء ولا إلى سراح [ . . . ] لكثرة الضوء.  
ويخرج من تلك النار جمر كبار [ . . . ] وإن وقع جرمن [ . . . ] تلك احترق الحجر ولا يحرق  
الحشيش ولا النبات ولا الثياب ولا يحرق إلا الحجارة والحيوان بهذه تشبه نار جهنم التي قال الله  
تعالى ”وقودها الناس والحجارة“ أعادنا الله منها ومن عذابها أمين يارب العالمين.

<sup>66</sup> Al-Mas'ūdī, *Al-Tanbīh wa-l-'ashrāf*, in *Biblioteca Arabo-Sicula*, vol. 1, compiled by Michele Amari (Palermo: Accademia Nazionale di Scienze Lettere e Arti, 1988), 7.

When I asked Sheikh Abū al-Qāsim Ibn al-Hakīm al-Šiqillī about the fire, he said: ‘This fire could light up [the way] for a distance of ten leagues without the need for light or lamps [ . . . ], thanks to its abundant light. Big embers come out from the fire [ . . . ] and if one of these embers falls, it will burn the stones, but it does not burn the grass or the plant, nor the clothes; only stones and animals will burn. This [fire] is similar to the fire of Hell where, according to the words of God Almighty, “its fuel is Men and Stones”. May God protect us from the fire of Hell and its torment. Amen, O Lord of the worlds.<sup>67</sup>

Al-Gharnāṭī makes a more explicit reference to Q. 66:6 when he writes: ‘This [fire] is similar to the fire of Hell, where according to the words of God Almighty, “its fuel is Men and Stones”’.<sup>68</sup> He uses a direct reference to the Qur’ān in order to emphasise that the fire of Etna would be similar to that of *jahannam*. Moreover, al-Gharnāṭī’s report about the objects that the fire of the volcano would burn seems to be derived from the Qur’ān; the fire would burn only stones and animals: ‘it does not burn the grass or the plant, nor the clothes; only stones and animals will burn’.<sup>69</sup> Be it the words of al-Gharnāṭī or Sheikh al-Šiqillī, this thesis could not be the result of the act of watching. It is not possible that the fire does not burn the grass. Rather, it is the Qur’ānic notion of Hell that unconsciously affected the narrator/observer and made him think that the fire of Etna would burn only ‘stones’ and ‘animals’, just as the fire of Hell is fuelled by ‘people’ (which are animate objects, like animals) and ‘stones’.

Another example of intertextuality can be traced in the application of one of the most famous Arab names to Mount Etna: *’atma*. The term *’atma* is often used in the accounts in reference to volcanoes. In al-Mas‘ūdī, Mount Etna is called *’Atmat Šiqiliyya* (the *’atma* of Sicily). In *Nukhbāt al-dahr*, Shams al-Dīn Abū ‘Abdullāh Ibn Abī Ṭālib al-Anṣārī (d. 1327) used the term *’atma* to refer to a volcano located in the sea of China as ‘*Aṭma bi-jazīrat*

<sup>67</sup> Abū Hāmid Muḥammad al-Gharnāṭī, *Tuhfat al-’albāb wa nukhbāt al-’iṭjāb*, in *Biblioteca Arabo-Sicula*, vol. 1, compiled by Michele Amari (Palermo: Accademia Nazionale di Scienze Lettere e Arti, 1988), 76.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

*al-mibrāj fī bahr al-Śīn'* ('atma in the island of the Maharaja in the sea of China).<sup>70</sup> It is apparent that 'atma' is synonymous with 'volcano'. This is actually the meaning that has been attributed to the term in the modern period. Indeed, it appeared as a synonym of volcano in the journal *Majallat al-majma' al-ilmī* in Damascus.<sup>71</sup> However, 'atma also has another connotation in al-Mas'ūdī:

وجزيرة صقلية وما يليها من جبل البركان ومنه تخرج عين النار التي تعرف بأطمة صقلية  
[ . . . ] يرى في شراره إذا علا لهبه في الجو جثث كأبدان الناس.

In the island of Sicily, we find *Jabal al-burkān* which contains a fire hole ('ayn *al-nār*) known as the 'atma of Sicily [ . . . ] When its flames [that is, of *Jabal al-burkān*] rise high in the air, one can see corpses (*juthath*) similar to human bodies (*ka-'abdān al-nās*).<sup>72</sup>

Al-Mas'ūdī differentiated between *Jabal al-burkān* (the volcano mount) and '*ayna al-nār*' (the fire hole). He referred to '*ayn al-nār*' as 'atma'; that is, 'atma here does not refer to the volcano, but the fire hole. The relative pronoun '*allatī*' refers to a singular female noun, which is '*ayna al-nār*', since *Jabal al-burkān* is a singular masculine noun. Consequently, I would say that in this context, 'atma means 'crater', not volcano, also because al-Mas'ūdī defined it as 'a fire hole rising from the earth'.<sup>73</sup>

Furthermore, I suggest that 'atma may be invoking one of the Qur'anic names for *jahannam* (Hell). I will perform a linguistic comparison between the two nouns '*atma*' and '*Hutama*' which, first, will shed light on the reason why the Arabs may have called Mount Etna by this name and, second, underline how 'atma invokes the semantic and thematic elements associated with Hell in the Qur'an. '*Atma*' derives from the verbal root <*a-ṭa-ma*> or <*a-ti-ma*>.<sup>74</sup> The dictionary of

<sup>70</sup> Ahmad Taymūr Pasha, *Al-Tadhkira al-taymūriyya: Mu'jam al-fawā'id wa nawādir al-masa'il*, edited by Muḥammad Shawqī 'Amīn (Cairo: Lajnat Nashr al-Mu'allafat al-Taymūriyya, 1953), 76.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Al-Mas'ūdī, *Al-Tanbih wa l'asbrāf*, 7.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 5. Alessandro Vanoli claims that the word 'atma probably comes from the Greek noun *Aitna*. Vanoli, *La Sicilia Musulmana*, 169.

<sup>74</sup> Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-‘arab*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1410/1989), s. V. '*a-ṭa-ma*'.

Ibn Manzūr (d. 1311/12), *Lisān al-‘arab*, gives another two nouns derived from the same root. The first one is *’at̄ama*, whose meaning is castle (*ḥiṣn*). The second one is *’at̄īma*, whose meaning is fire stove (*mawqid al-nār*).<sup>75</sup> Hence, the semantics of the verbal root <*a-ṭa-ma*> delineates ‘height’ and ‘fire’. We could say that *’at̄ma* (in both its verbal and nominal derivations) was a suitable term for Mount Etna, since it is ‘high’ and sends forth ‘fire’.

Now let us examine the semantics of *Huṭama*. *Al-Huṭama* or ‘the Fire which Breaks to Pieces’, is mentioned in the Surah of *al-Humaza*:

كَلَّا لَيُبَدِّئَ فِي الْحُطْمَةِ (4) وَمَا أَذْرَاكُمْ مَا الْحُطْمَةُ (5) نَارٌ اللَّهُ الْمُوَقَّدَةُ (6)

(4) By no means! He will be sure to be thrown into That which Breaks to Pieces (*al-Huṭama*), (5) And what will explain to thee That which Breaks to Pieces (*al-Huṭama*)? (6) (It is) the Fire of (the Wrath of) Allah kindled (to a blaze) (Q. 104:4–6).

*Huṭama* is a noun derived from the second verbal form <*ha-ṭa-ma*>, which means ‘to break’ or ‘to destroy’. Hell is called *Huṭama*, because its fire breaks into pieces everything that ends up inside.<sup>76</sup> Fire is the first element of meaning that *Huṭama* shares with *’at̄ma*. It is also interesting to note the morphological and phonological similarities between *’at̄ma* and *Huṭama*. Let us compare their verbal roots:

- <*a-ṭa-ma*> the verbal root of *’at̄ma*
- <*ha-ṭa-ma*> the verbal root of *Huṭama*<sup>77</sup>

Morphologically, the two roots construct a sort of minimal pair, since they differ only in the first phonological elements, which are the consonant letters

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. Michele Amari pointed out that originally *’at̄ma* meant castles and that it derives from the plural *’utūm* or *’utm*. For him, the term *’at̄īma* used by al-Mas’ūdī in *Murūğ al-dahab* refers to a new meaning which Arab scientists adopted to refer to volcanoes. Michele Amari (comp.), *Biblioteca Arabo-Sicula: Versione italiana* (Palermo: Accademia Nazionale di Scienze Lettere e Arti, 1997), vol. 1: 2.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., s. v. *ḥa-ṭa-ma*.

<sup>77</sup> This is the verbal root from which the second verbal form <*ha-ṭa-ma*> is derived.

<’a> and <ḥa>. Hence, ’atma and *Hutama* share similarities, not only semantically as we saw before, but also morphologically and phonologically. Consequently, I argue that the name ’atma, which refers to Mount Etna, invokes the Qur’ānic name of Hell: *Hutama*.

But why were these travellers so strongly affected by the Qur’ān in their discourse on the volcano? *Jahannam* is mentioned in the Qur’ān on about 145 occasions. Fear of it is pervasive in Islamic thought; consequently, it is embedded in the subconscious of many believers. As Modi explained, the fire of volcanoes would remind devout believers of Hell. Undoubtedly, for al-Mas‘ūdī and al-Gharnāṭī, the importance of Mount Etna was not simply geographic or topographic. Contemplating nature reminds Muslims of God; the Qur’ān itself invites people to reflect on nature, so as to perceive the Divinity (Q. 88:17–21). Al-Mas‘ūdī would thus have applied the themes and the semantics of the Qur’ān in artistic and stylistic ways for two reasons: first, to express the subconscious emotion-based relation that he (as a believer) had with the sacred text; and second, to effectively convey the impressive landscape of the volcano to the reader through the evocative imagery of Hell. Al-Mas‘ūdī applied human characteristics to the volcano’s fire and embers in order to introduce scenes that would stimulate the reader’s imagination as well as evoke an emotional response.

In al-Gharnāṭī’s description, it is hard to say whether the quotation of the Qur’ānic verse had come from him or from Sheikh Abū al-Qāsim al-Šiqillī. We know that in *Tuhfat al-’albāb*, al-Gharnāṭī did not provide first-hand information about Sicily; rather, he reported the news about the island from Sheikh al-Šiqillī as well as from al-Mas‘ūdī<sup>78</sup> (hence, the probability that his text also contains intertextual references to al-Mas‘ūdī is high). Whoever the narrator was (whether al-Gharnāṭī or Sheikh al-Šiqillī), it is clear from the description of the objects that the narrator perceived the fire of Etna through a religious lens.

In concluding this section, it is evident that al-Mas‘ūdī and al-Gharnāṭī, whether consciously or unconsciously, utilized the artistic and narrative techniques found in the Qur’ān. These techniques served to engage the readers of their time while also resonating with contemporary Arab-Muslim readers. They achieved this through intertextual themes rooted in communal religious,

<sup>78</sup> Michele Amari (comp.), *Biblioteca Arabo-Sicula: Versione italiana*, xxvii.

linguistic, and cultural experiences, which are embedded within circles of memory. These circles establish a connection between the travellers and contemporary readers, conveying meanings and emotions that resonate across time. Consequently, these historical accounts exhibit semantic and thematic links to the Qur'an, resulting in a subtle subtext initiated by the authors and interwoven by the readers.

### Bodies of Water and Vegetation

Apart from Mount Etna, Arab travellers contemplated other, more pleasant types of landscape on the island. This section will address the poetic language used in their accounts of the rivers, springs and fields of Sicily and show how this language approaches the Qur'anic one.<sup>79</sup> The sacred text has an internal poem-based linguistic style, especially in the verses about Paradise. Below, I will discuss three quotations from al-Idrīsī, which focus on his fascination with the rivers and vegetation of the island. In *Nuzhat al-mushtāq*, al-Idrīsī describes the gardens (*jannāt*) and rivers (*'anhār*) of *al-Qārūniyya* in this way:

القارونية أول أقليم دمنش [ . . . ] لها جنات وأنهار وكرום وأشجار [ . . . ].

*Al-Qārūniyya* is the first [village] of the region of *Dimansh* [ . . . ] It has gardens, rivers, grapes and trees [ . . . ].<sup>80</sup>

He also praises Palermo and its flowing springs (*'uyūnuhā jāriya*) and abundant fruit (*fawākibuhā kathīra*):

والمياه بجميع جهات مدينة صقلية مخترقة وعيونها جارية متذقة وفواكهها كثيرة [ . . . ].

The water permeates all parts of the city of Sicily [Palermo]; there are flowing springs and abundant fruit [ . . . ].<sup>81</sup>

<sup>79</sup> Alex Metcalfe addressed how ‘the Quranic idea of “gardens beneath which rivers low” was reproduced in the description of ‘water gardens’ during Norman Sicily. For example, he pointed out that ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Buthīrī – a poet of Roger’s al-Mannānī palace – described the gardens of the palace of Palermo in Qur’anic terms. Metcalfe, *The Muslims of Medieval Sicily*, 245.

<sup>80</sup> Abū 'Abdullāh Muḥammad al-Idrīsī, *Nuzhat al-mushtāq fi 'ikhtirāq al-'āfāq*, in *Biblioteca Arabo-Sicula*, vol. 1, compiled by Michele Amari (Palermo: Accademia Nazionale di Scienze Lettere e Arti, 1988), 43.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

Later on, al-Idrīsī mentions another area, *Shalyāṭa*, with its running rivers (*'anhāruhā jāriya*), its agriculture (*zirā'atuhā*) and its low-hanging fruits (*khayrātuḥā mutadanniya*). He says:

وَشَلِيلَاتُهُ مُنْزَلٌ فِي مَسْتَوِ الْأَرْضِ أَنْهَارٌ هَا جَارِيَةٌ وَزَرَاعَتُهَا نَامِيَّةٌ وَخَيْرُهَا مَتَانِيَّةٌ وَغَلَاثَهَا كَثِيرَةٌ وَيَنْصُلُ جَرِيَّ نَهْرِ الْعَسْلِ بِغَرْبِيِّ أَرْضِهَا.

*Shalyāṭa* is an area at sea level with flowing rivers, flourishing agriculture and [emerging] fruits hanging low. [It] produces abundant grain [ . . . ] *Al-'Asal* (the Honey) river flows on the western side of its territory.<sup>82</sup>

In the above-mentioned quotations, al-Idrīsī uses dynamic language in the description of the bodies of water and agriculture, such as ‘permeates’ (*mukhtariqa*), ‘flowing’ (*jāriya*) and ‘flows/runs’ (*jarā*). Many other Muslim travellers adopted very similar terminology to talk about the abundance of water and the agriculture of the island.

The intertextual ties between al-Idrīsī and the Qur'ān are striking. The following verse of surah *al-Nisā'* describes Gardens (*jannāt*) with flowing rivers beneath (*tajrī min taḥtihā al-'anhār*) Paradise:

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَنُدْخِلُهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ [ . . . ] (57).

But those who believe and do deeds of righteousness, We shall soon admit to Gardens, with rivers flowing beneath [ . . . ] (Q. 4:57).

In the Surah of *al-Ghāshiya*, there is another verse that describes the Garden (*jannatin*) and its flowing spring (*'uyūnun jāriya*):

فِي جَنَّةٍ عَالِيَّةٍ (10) لَا تَسْمَعُ فِيهَا لَغْيَةً (11) فِيهَا عَيْنٌ جَارِيَّةٌ (12).

- (10) In a Garden on high (11) Where they shall hear no (word) of vanity  
 (12) Within it is a flowing spring (Q. 88:10–12).

It is possible to trace the thematic and semantic intertextuality between the above-mentioned Qur'ānic verses and the passages of al-Idrīsī. On the

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 60.

thematic level, all of them represent similar landscapes in Paradise and on earth. On the semantic level, there are three repeated keywords: ‘garden/s’ (*janna/jannat*), ‘river/s’ (*nahr/anhar*) and ‘spring/s’ (*‘ayn/‘uyun*). Consistent also is the use of the verb *jarā* and its derived forms *tajrī*, *jāriya* (flow/ing and run/ning). Another significant example of intertextuality can be traced in the following verse which explains how God produces vegetation from water:

وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجَنَا بِهِ بَيْتَنَا كُلَّ شَيْءٍ فَأَخْرَجْنَا مِنْهُ خَبْرًا لُّخْرُجُ مِنْهُ حَبَّا  
مُثْرَكَبًا وَمِنَ النَّخْلِ مِنْ طَلْعِهَا قُنْوَانٌ دَانِيَةٌ وَجَنَّاتٌ مِنْ أَعْنَابٍ وَالرَّيْبُونَ وَالرُّمَّانَ مُسْتَشِيهَا وَغَيْرَ  
مُسْتَشِيهِ انْظُرُوا إِلَى تَمَرٍ وَيَنْعِمٍ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكُمْ لَذَائِتُ لَقُومٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ (99).

It is He Who sendeth down rain from the skies: with it We produce vegetation of all kinds: from some We produce green (crops), out of which We produce grain, heaped up (at harvest); out of the date-palm and its sheaths (or spathes) (come) clusters of dates hanging low and near: and (then there are) gardens of grapes, and olives, and pomegranates, each similar (in kind) yet different (in variety): when they begin to bear fruit, feast your eyes with the fruit and the ripeness thereof. Behold! in these things there are signs for people who believe (Q. 6:99).

Also, here, we could construct thematic and semantic relations. A contextual reading of the last verse and al-Idrīsī’s quotations reveals:

1. a similar structural sequence of three elements: water/bodies of water (rivers, springs and rain), agriculture, particularly crops of grain (*ghallātuhā*), and fruits – grapes (*a‘nāb*);
2. a similar semantic use of the adjective *dāniya* (hanging low), which is used in the Qur’ān in reference to fruits: ‘its sheaths (or spathes) come clusters of dates hanging low – *ṭal’ihā qunwānūn dāniya*’. Al-Idrīsī used the adjective *mutadanniya* ‘emerging fruits hanging down – *khayrātuhā mutadanniya*’, which has the same meaning and derives from the same verbal root of the Qur’ānic adjective *dāniya*.

In concluding this section, I argue that the text of al-Idrīsī shares many features with the Qur’ān. These thematic and linguistic similarities can also be traced in other accounts. The island had a two-fold effect on Muslims: on the one hand,

the volcano reminded them of Hell, but, on the other, the water resources and vegetation evoked Paradise. It is not by chance that one of the most famous Arabic toponyms in Sicily is Genoard, which derives from the Arabic *Jannatu al-'ard* (Paradise of earth). According to Theresa Jäckh, this expression refers to the fertility of the island, in particular Palermo.<sup>83</sup> Paradise represents a recurrent theme in the religious consciousness of Muslims throughout time. This notion influenced the imagination of the Sicilian poet Ibn Ḥamdiṣ (d. 1133),<sup>84</sup> who in his exile considered Sicily a lost Paradise:

وراءك يا بحر لي جنة  
لبيت النعيم بها لا الشقاء

Beyond you, oh Sea, there is a paradise (*janna*)  
where I lived in happiness, not sadness.<sup>85</sup>

### The Social and Ethnographic Dimension in Ibn Hawqal and the Qur'ān

The thematic relations between the accounts of medieval Sicily by Arab Muslims and the sacred text may be examined also from an ethnographical point of view. This section will shed light on how Ibn Hawqal's descriptions of Palermo and its people were influenced by Islamic notions and expressions. *Kitāb al-masālik wa-l-mamālik* gives much information about the city and its urban aspects, as well as the traditions and customs of the people within.<sup>86</sup> Ibn Hawqal's documentation of the customs of the Arabs of Palermo was less than complimentary. This Iraqi traveller's harsh judgement of Sicily reflects the historical moment and the socio-political context in which he visited Sicily and wrote his text. Francesco Gabrieli (d. 1996)

<sup>83</sup> Theresa Jäckh, 'Water and Wealth in Medieval Sicily: The Case of the Admiral's Bridge and Arab-Norman Palermo (10th–13th Centuries)', *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Water* 6/5 (2019): e1363: 2, 1–12.

<sup>84</sup> For an overview of Ibn Ḥamdiṣ, see Francesca Corrao, 'Ibn Hamdiṣ, 'Abd al-Giabbâr Ibn Abî Bakr Ibn Muhammad', *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature* 1 (1998): 330.

<sup>85</sup> Al-Munjī Qilfat, *Al-Insān wa-l-makān fi l-shi'r al-'arabī al-qadīm* (Tunis: Al-Dār al-Tūniyya li-l-Kitāb, 2016), 88. Translation from Arabic into English is mine.

<sup>86</sup> For more about Ibn Hawqal's description, see William Granara, 'Ibn Hawqal in Sicily', *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics* 3 (1983): 94–99.

explains that, when Ibn Hawqal arrived in Sicily, he judged the island, which had been Islamised for little more than a century, in relation to ‘the great metropolises of the Islamic world and [ . . . ] centers of ancient Islamic civilization’.<sup>87</sup> Consequently, for Ibn Hawqal, the island and its Arab denizens fell short culturally and socially.<sup>88</sup> Ibn Hawqal’s narratives have garnered attention for his negative portrayals of Palermo and its people. It is intriguing to investigate how, in doing so, the Qur’ān has impacted his descriptions of the Arab residents of Palermo and some zones of the city.

In his accounts, Ibn Hawqal mentioned *al-ribāṭāt*, a sort of settlements located by the coast of Palermo. He describes them as follows:

وبها رياضات كثيرة على ساحل البحر مشحونة بالبطالين والفساق [ . . . ] منتصبين لأخذ الصدقات  
وقذف المحسنات [ . . . ].

By the sea-coast, there are many *ribāṭāt* full of workless and bawdy men [ . . . ] who are there just for begging and slandering chaste women [ . . . ].<sup>89</sup>

It is interesting to highlight the language adopted by Ibn Hawqal in his description of *al-ribāṭāt*, where loafers gathered, according to the quotation. He ascribes negative adjectives to the persons of *al-ribāṭāt*, such as ‘workless’ (*battālīn*) and ‘bawdy’ (*fussāq*). He also underlined their ‘self-degradation’ (*mahānat al-nafs*).<sup>90</sup> Ibn Hawqal was unimpressed by their indecent deeds, particularly towards women, which is noticeable from his use of the expression ‘slandering chaste women’ (*qadhf al-muḥassanāt*). This expression is a direct reference from the Qur’ān; precisely, it comes from surah *al-Nūr* in which God curses those who ‘slander chaste women’ (*yarmūn al-muḥassanāt*):

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَرْمُونَ الْمُحْسَنَاتِ الْغَافِلَاتِ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ لَعْنًا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالآخِرَةِ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ (23).

<sup>87</sup> Francesco Gabrieli, ‘Ibn Hawqal e gli Arabi di Sicilia’, *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* 36 (1961), 251. Translation from Italian into English is mine.

<sup>88</sup> For more about Ibn Hawqal’s motivations and judgment, see *ibid.*, 251–53.

<sup>89</sup> Abū al-Qāsim Muḥammad Ibn Hawqal, *Al-Masālik wa-l-mamālik*, in *Biblioteca Arabo-Sicula*, vol. 1, compiled by Michele Amari (Palermo: Accademia Nazionale di Scienze Lettere e Arti, 1988), 15.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

Those who slander chaste women, indiscreet but believing, are cursed in this life and in the Hereafter: for them is a grievous Penalty (Q. 24:23).

Ibn Hawqal also negatively characterised the people of Palermo when he wrote of ‘their foolishness’ (*naqṣ uqūlibim*) and ‘their turbulence’ (*khifat al-admigha*),<sup>91</sup> as well as of ‘their bad breath’ (*fasād hawāshihim*).<sup>92</sup> According to him, all this was due to their overconsumption of raw onion.<sup>93</sup> This habit disturbed Ibn Hawqal; consequently, he talked about how the raw onion ‘disturbed their perception’ (*afsada takhayyulahum*), ‘decreased their comprehension’ (*naqasa afhāmabum*) and ‘altered the look of their face’ (*afsada sibnat wujūbihim*).<sup>94</sup> It is interesting to note that there is something similar in the *hadīth* tradition. According to one tradition, Prophet Muhammad dissuaded people from eating raw onion and garlic because their resulting bad breath would bother people, especially during the prayers in the mosque. Some narrations reported that the Prophet advised them to cook them and not to eat them raw:

عَنْ مَعْدَنِ بْنِ أَبِي طَلْحَةَ، أَنَّ عُمَرَ بْنَ الْخَطَّابِ، قَالَ إِنَّكُمْ أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ تَأْكُلُونَ مِنْ شَجَرَتَيْنِ [ . . . ]  
مَا أَرَاهُمَا إِلَّا حَيْثَتِينَ هَذَا الْبَصْلُ وَالثُّومُ وَلَقَدْ رَأَيْتُ نَبِيًّا اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِذَا وَجَدَ رِيحَهُمَا  
مِنَ الرَّجُلِ أَمْرَ بِهِ فَأَخْرَجَ إِلَى الْبَقِيعِ فَقَنْ أَكَلُوهُمَا فَلَمْ يَمْتُهُمَا طَبَّخًا.

It was narrated from Ma‘dn Ibn ’Abi Ṭalḥa that ‘Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb said: ‘O people, you eat of two plants which I do not think are anything but bad, this onion and garlic. I have seen the Prophet of Allah (pbsl), if he noticed their smell coming from a man, ordering that he be taken out to *al-Baqī'*. Whoever eats them, let him cook them to death’.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>92</sup> The source reports this word as *hawāshihim* (their senses). However, the footnote specifies that the Arabic word could, rather, be *hawāshibim* (their interiors) (ibid.). For me, *hawāshihim* is more plausible, since Ibn Hawqal was talking about the consequences of eating raw onions (*li-kathrat tagħadhibhim min al-nayyi' minhu*). I think it is more likely that he meant their bad breath resulting from this, not their senses.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Hāfiẓ al-Nisā'i, *The Book of the Masjids* (English translation), vol. 1, book 8, hadith no. 709, <https://sunnah.com/nasai/8> (accessed 25 February 2020).

Ibn Hawqal did not criticise the consumption of onions. He just pointed out the consumption of large amounts of raw onion. This is the theme that connects his text to the Islamic narrations. To conclude, Ibn Hawqal could have had other reasons (for instance, political) for his harsh criticisms. What I contend is that – similarly to al-Mas‘udi, al-Gharnātī and al-Idrīsī – Ibn Hawqal’s comments are permeated by Islamic notions and religious terminology, which could convey messages that a Muslim reader would easily recognize.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter provided an intertextual analysis of the accounts of some Muslim travellers concerning Sicily. The analysis highlighted the influence of the Qur’ān and prophetic narratives on the travellers under examination. It elucidated that beyond serving as mere historical records, these narratives serve as reflections of the religious convictions of the authors. While Muslim travellers engaged in physical exploration, their perspectives were also shaped by their religious beliefs, with the imagery and teachings of the Qur’ān guiding their perceptions. Their travels yielded not only historical chronicles but also enriched the religious outlook of both themselves and their readers, as they discerned divine signs in their observations. The way they perceived places and people was invariably influenced by their religious worldview, resulting in accounts with dual layers of significance: one conveying factual information and another, more subtle layer, reflecting upon religious themes, sometimes explicitly and at other times implicitly. Their interest in phenomena such as fire, bodies of water, vegetation, and specific habits can be traced back to their religious traditions and cultural beliefs.

The intertextual analysis served as a method for reconstructing transmitted traditions and uncovering the nuanced messages conveyed by the writers to their readers. It transcends literal interpretations, enabling the comprehension of underlying aspects crucial for a deeper understanding. By juxtaposing Arab narratives on Sicily with Islamic sources, particularly the Qur’ān, a framework for comprehending these historical and literary accounts is established. Consequently, intertextual examinations of historical texts hold potential for unveiling new perspectives. Nonetheless, further scholarly endeavours are imperative to advance this area of study.

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# 12

## CONSEQUENCES OF THE RECONQUISTA IN GREATER SICILY FOR THE CORE VOCABULARY OF MALTESE

*Geoffrey Hull*

Prior to the 1960s, it was commonly assumed that vernacular Arabic was introduced into the Maltese archipelago directly from North Africa sometime after the Aghlabid conquest of 869/70. However, subsequent historical and linguistic studies (the latter comparing the forms and lexis of Maltese with the surviving data of now-extinct Siculo-Arabic) have made it increasingly clear that Malta under the Arabs – just as previously under the Byzantines and Romans – was in every sense a dependency of Sicily, the usual source of demographic as well as linguistic and cultural innovation and renewal.

Moreover, a few decades ago evidence came to light that Malta and Gozo were largely, if not totally, depopulated between 870 and the year 1048, when the new Fātimid rulers of Sicily sent Muslim pioneers from the larger island to resettle the archipelago with their Christian slaves. It is likely, then, that the history of Arabic in the Maltese archipelago begins with this event in the mid-eleventh century, and not in the late ninth century, as previously thought.<sup>1</sup> As for the beginnings of Latin Catholic Malta, they certainly do not predate the twelfth century. In Malta, the Reconquista did not commence in 1091,

<sup>1</sup> Giuseppe Brincat, *Malta: Una storia linguistica* (Le Mani: Università degli Studi Udine, 2003), 53–64.

the date assigned to it in popular history.<sup>2</sup> Although in that year Roger I had invaded the islands and obliged its mainly Muslim inhabitants to acknowledge his sovereignty, the local Islamic social order remained undisturbed, and the Normans' symbolic act of overlordship had to be repeated in 1127 by Roger II. It was not until the last decade of the century that a Sicilian Christian administration was installed in the archipelago. Moreover, everything indicates that among the new settlers arriving from Sicily, Arabophones outnumbered those speaking Greek or some form of Romance.

While the Sicilian origins of Maltese are now generally recognized,<sup>3</sup> the exact relationship of this Siculo-Arabic ancestor to other varieties of Arabic is still an important area of research, as is the subsequent evolution of Sicilian Arabic in Malta and Gozo.

### **Maghrebine Arabic Characteristics of the Maltese Vocabulary**

The Siculo-Arabic from which modern Maltese is descended is classified as a form of vernacular Arabic belonging to the Maghrebine (North African) group. The specifically North African Arabic lexical component can be divided into three main categories: (1) words derived from Arabic with possible changes in meaning; (2) words from the Latin substratum of coastal Ifriqīya including Greek adstratal elements; and (3) words from the Berber substratum of the southern variety of Siculo-Arabic from which Maltese evolved, ultimately derived from languages of inland Ifriqīya.

In the first category are lexemes which, albeit genuinely Arabic (and thus recorded in dictionaries of classical or standard Arabic), are 'Maghrebine' choices, localised in North Africa (and, naturally, Malta) and often contrasting with the current lexical preferences of Levantine and Mesopotamian Arabic. Table 12.1 below sets out some typical examples of such items of vocabulary and compares them with equivalent lexemes in Eastern and Classical Arabic. Eastern Arabic concordances with Maghrebine (*Derīža*, *Derža*) dialects are highlighted in boldface:<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Anthony Luttrell, *Approaches to Medieval Malta* (London: British School at Rome, 1975), 30–31.

<sup>3</sup> Dionisius Agius, *Siculo Arabic* (London: Kegan Paul, 1996).

<sup>4</sup> The system of Latin transliteration for Standard Arabic employed here is that of Hans Wehr (*A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic* [Wiesbaden: Harassowitz, 1961]), with the

Table 12.1 Equivalent lexemes in Maltese, Maghrebine and Eastern/Classical Arabic

English	Maltese	Maghrebine <sup>5</sup>	Eastern/Classical Arabic
'time (occasion)'	<i>darba</i>	<i>darba</i> (L, T), <sup>6</sup> <i>marra</i>	<b><i>marra</i></b>
'vine'	<i>dielja</i>	<i>délyya, kerma</i>	<i>karm(a), dāliya</i>
'peach'	<i>ħawha</i>	<i>ħūha, ħawha</i> (A)	<i>durrāqa, bawha</i> <sup>7</sup>
'pear'	<i>langasa</i>	<i>nğāṣa, lanğāṣa</i> (A)	<i>kumišra/kummitra, armōṭa</i> (I), <i>nağāṣa</i> <sup>8</sup>
'fennel'	<i>buzbież</i>	<i>besbēs</i>	<i>šumra, basbās</i>
'man (human)'	<i>bniedem</i>	<i>bnēdem</i>	<i>insān, ibn ādām</i> (lit. 'son of Adam')
'brother-in-law'	<i>silf</i>	<i>self</i>	<i>ṣabr, silf</i>
'foreigner'	<i>barrani</i>	<i>barrāni</i>	<i>ḡarīb, ažnabī, barrānī</i>
'nose'	<i>mnieħer</i>	<i>menħār,<sup>9</sup> ḥešem, nīf</i>	<b><i>anf</i></b>
'fish'	<i>ħut</i>	<i>ħūt</i>	<i>samak, būt</i>
'bowl'	<i>qasgħa</i>	<i>qaṣ'a, tāṣa</i> <sup>10</sup>	<i>bātiya, zabdīya, qaṣ'a</i>
'house'	<i>dar</i>	<i>dār</i>	<i>bayt, dār</i> <sup>11</sup>

exceptions of <g̚> for Wehr's <j> (ج), <g̚> for <g̚> (ݣ), and <ħ> for <k̚> (ݣ). Two phonemes now obsolete in most varieties of Maltese, etymological ڇ and ڻ, will be noted as <ħ> and <gh>, respectively (non-standard graphies), to distinguish them from <ħ> (= ڇ) and <gh> (<ڻ>). Also to be noted are the abbreviations M = Maltese, CA = Classical Arabic, Ar. = Arabic, NA = North African Arabic, T, TA = Tunisian Arabic, NTun. = Northern Tunisian Arabic, STun. = Southern Tunisian Arabic, A, AA = Algerian Arabic, Mor. = Moroccan Arabic, L, LA = Libyan Arabic, I = Iraqi Arabic, It. = Italian, Sic. = Sicilian, Gk. = Greek, lit. = literally, id. (= Latin *idem*, having the same meaning), vt. = transitive verb, vi. = intransitive verb. Symbols commonly used in linguistic studies are: > (became, evolved to), → (changed its meaning to), = (the same as), ≠ (is not the same as), ~ (contrasts with), \* (reconstructed form, i. e., not attested in historical texts).

<sup>5</sup> The forms given in the column below are proper to the Northern Tunisian dialect unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>6</sup> Lit. 'blow, stroke', cf. Occitan *còp* 'blow', 'time'. In Tunisian, *darba* is used mostly in the expression *darba wahda* 'all at the same time' (Maltese *darba wahda* = 'once, one time').

<sup>7</sup> Denotes a plum in Syrian Arabic.

<sup>8</sup> Denotes a plum in Egyptian and Iraqi Arabic.

<sup>9</sup> The Maltese and Maghrebine (Algerian, Moroccan) forms are actually the plural of *minħār*, 'nostril'. This semantic transfer is not unknown in Levantine dialects.

<sup>10</sup> Maltese *tazza* 'glass' is an Italian-mediated Arabism.

<sup>11</sup> In Syrian Arabic, *dār* denotes the covered inner hall of a house; in Iraqi Arabic, it denotes a small house. By contrast, in Maghrebine dialects *beyt, bīt* means 'room' (tending to oust *gurfa*), while in Maltese *bejt* now means 'flat roof'.

English	Maltese	Maghrebine <sup>s</sup>	Eastern/Classical Arabic
‘shop’	<i>ħanut</i>	<i>ħanūt</i>	<i>dukkān, ħanūt</i>
‘bridge’	<i>qantra</i>	<i>qanṭra</i>	<i>žisr, qanṭara</i> ‘(arched) bridge’
‘mill’	<i>mitħna</i>	<i>matħna, taħuna</i>	<i>taħuna, mitħana</i>
‘to remove’	<i>neħha</i>	<i>naħha</i>	<i>naqala, azäħxa, šäl, naħħha</i>
‘to dance’	<i>żifex</i>	<i>zfen, štaħ, šteħ</i>	<i>raqaşa, zafana</i>

Semantic change has created a second sub-category of the Arabic lexical core in Maltese and other Maghrebine-derived varieties – for example, CA **galla** ‘crops’ → ‘fruit’ (M. *għallia*); **baṭṭiħ** ‘watermelon’ → ‘rockmelon’ (*bittieħiż*); **ħabib** ‘sweetheart’ → ‘friend’ (*ħabib*);<sup>12</sup> **haġġām** ‘copper’ → ‘barber’ (*haġġiem*); **tallāb** adj. ‘demanding’ → ‘beggar’ (*tallab*); **sāq** ‘shank, leg’ → ‘foot’ (*sieg*); **ħāġa** ‘necessity’, ‘object’ → ‘thing’ (*ħāġa*);<sup>13</sup> **baṭħa** ‘plain’ → TA *betha* ‘public square’, M. *bitħa* ‘courtyard’; **ahšan**, **ħašin** ‘coarse’ → NA *ħesin*<sup>14</sup> ‘thick’, ‘stout, fat’ (*oħxon*); **qāsin** ‘hard’, ‘harsh’ → NA *qāsiħ, kāsiħ* ‘stiff’ (*kiesaħ* ‘frozen’, ‘cold’); **adda** ‘to cross’ → ‘to pass’ (*għadda*); **hadama** ‘to serve’ → ‘to work’ (*ħadem*); **ṣab** ‘to hit on, attain’, ‘to obtain, get’ → ‘to find’ (*sab*); **ħallaşa** ‘to save’, ‘to pay duty’ → ‘to pay (in general)’ (*ħallas*); **ṣafā**, **ṣafā** ‘to become clear, to settle’ → NA *sfā*, M. *safa* ‘to end up, to find oneself, to become’; **istaqqaṣā** ‘to inquire, make inquiries’ – for instance, ‘to go far/deeply into a matter’ (tenth form of *qaṣā, qaṣū* ‘to go far’) → NA *s(t)aqṣa*, M. *s(t)aqṣa* ‘to ask’; **sta'dana** ‘to ask permission to enter’, ‘to take leave’ (tenth form of *adana* ‘to permit’) → NA *stēden*, M. *stieden* ‘to invite’.

Examples of metaphoric transfers within this subcategory are **‘ayn baqra** ‘cow’s eye’ → ‘plum’ (M. *għanbaqra*); **ħarṭa** ‘stripping action’ → ‘backhander, slap’ (*ħarta*); **mazaġa** ‘to mix up’ → NA *mazazz* ‘to stir up, incite’, M. *mazaġ* ‘to irritate’; **qašqaša** ‘to sweep out’ → NA *qešqeš* ‘to rummage’, M. *qaxqax* ‘to glean’. Certain verbs which are transitive in Classical Arabic acquired intransitive meanings in Maghrebine dialects, cf. **ħabasa** ‘to hold back, restrain’ → NA *ħbes* ‘to desist’, M. *hebeż, ħebeż* ‘to recede, retreat’;

<sup>12</sup> But also ‘friend’ in literary Arabic.

<sup>13</sup> Also Egyptian, and in Syrian Arabic ‘clothes’ (= M. *ħwejjeġ*, pl.).

<sup>14</sup> Appears to have developed from a crossing of CA *ħašin* ‘coarse’ and *sabīn* ‘thick’.

**ġalaba** ‘to overcome’ → NA *ġleb* ‘to be exhausted’, M. *għolob* ‘to grow thin’. Some Maltese words also perpetuate specifically Maghrebine coinings – for example, *għażżeen* ‘lazy’ < NA ‘aġzān, id., based on CA ‘aġż ‘weakness, impotence’.

The third contingent, Berber substratal elements in Maltese, having been analysed in a detailed recent study,<sup>15</sup> will not be examined here. However, worthy of special mention is a small but historically interesting stratum consisting of cases where Maghrebine Arabic has borrowed a word from the Latin substratum of Ifriqīya, preferring it to one of Arabic origin: (**fīcūs**) **bifera** ‘twice-bearing fig’ > NA *bitra*, id., M. *bajtra* ‘prickly pear’ (~ Ar. *tīna šawkiyya*); **căttus** ‘cat’ > M. *qattus* (~ Ar. *qitt, bīr*); **gavia** ‘seagull’ > M. *gawwija* (~ Ar. *nūris*); **pullus** ‘chick’ > M. *fellus* (~ Ar. *ṣūṣ*); \***carnītus** (for *carnūtus* ‘fleshy’) ‘octopus’ > M. *qarnit* (~ Ar. *ubṭubūt*); **quercus** ‘cork oak’ > M. *qorq* ‘(cork) sandals’ (~ Ar. *qabqāb*); \***cāburus** (< Gk. *κάβουρος*) > M. *qabrus* ‘crab’ (~ Ar. *sarṭān*); \***stafilinagria** (< Gk. *σταφυλίνη ἀγρία* ‘wild carrot’) > NA *sfinnērya*, M. *zfunnarija* ‘carrot’ (~ Ar. *ğazar*); **compacto** ‘I press together, compact’ > NA *bqet* ‘to stick’, M. *baqat* ‘to clot (of milk)’.

Most, if not all, of the foregoing lexical material can be classified (much like the basic structure of Maltese itself) as ‘Pre-Hilalian’ – that is, going back to the initial Arabicisation of the cities of North Africa and their peripheries in the eighth century – and thus established before the mid-eleventh century, when the Banu Hilal arrived. The Banu Hilal were an Arabian tribal confederation sent with the Banu Sulaym from Egypt to Ifriqīya by the Fātimids, who were seeking to re-establish their political control over the region. The region was at that time administered by their Berber Zirid viceroys. It is interesting to note that the advent of the Banu Hilal, which inaugurated the second Arabicisation of much of rural North Africa and brought linguistic innovations from the Middle East to the local Arabic, occurred in 1048, the very year of Malta’s resettlement by Sicilian Muslims. After the intervention of the Bedouin invaders in Africa, the Fātimids ruled Sicily in name only, and under their autonomous Kalbid vicars Sicily escaped this second wave of Arabicisation. As a result, the nascent Maltese vernacular (Melito-Arabic) remained a

<sup>15</sup> Geoffrey Hull, ‘Exploring the Berber Element in Maltese’, *Leben il-Malti: Rivista tal-Għaqda tal-Malti – Università* 38/88 (2019): 123–57.

Pre-Hilalian variety after certain parts of the Maghreb developed ‘Hilalian’; that is, orientalising and innovative varieties of Arabic.<sup>16</sup>

For Tunisia and Algeria, it can be stated, by and large, that Hilalian dialects implanted themselves in inland Berber-speaking zones and areas where Arab newcomers settled thickly, whereas the Pre-Hilalian vernaculars were spoken by the descendants of former Latin speakers. Similarly, in Sicily, the Pre-Hilalian Arabic of the native population (as opposed to Arab immigrants) was the natural successor of Greek. There is thus also a broad parallel between Pre-Hilalian dialects and residual (and in the case of Malta, revived) Christianity, on the one hand, and between Hilalian dialects and Islam, on the other.

In spite of Malta’s political integration into the Norman Kingdom of Sicily, its Arabic vernacular was destined to survive to the present day. By contrast, the spoken Arabic of Sicily was displaced and, by the year 1300, definitively replaced within the Christian population by the new Siculo-Italian *koine* that had been forming in the island since the late eleventh century. The last speakers of the language were local Jews, and these appear to have given up their Arabic vernacular by the end of the fourteenth century.<sup>17</sup> A dialect parallel and similar to Maltese was spoken on the island of Pantelleria (Ar. *Qawṣira*) until the eighteenth century, when its population completed its language shift to Sicilian. The incoming Italian dialect (*Pantesco*) inherited, however, a good number of Arabic words from the extinct *Qawṣri* vernacular.<sup>18</sup>

### **Maltese Lexical Idiosyncrasies**

In spite of the fundamental agreements of the Maltese lexical core with Maghrebine Arabic, the divergences are numerous and often puzzling. The

<sup>16</sup> See Martine Vanhove, ‘De quelques traits préhilaliens en maltais’, in *Peuplement et arabisation au Maghreb Occidental (dialectologie et histoire)*, edited by J. Aguade et al. (Madrid: Velázquez, 1998). The principal Pre-Hilalian (PH)/Hilalian (H) contrast in Maghrebine Arabic concerns *qāf* being pronounced as [q] (PH) or [g] (H). Pre-Hilalian dialects still predominate in coastal Tunisia from Sfax to Bizerte, Jerba; the Constantinois, Lesser Kabylia, Tlemcen and the Trara Mountains in Algeria; and the Western Mediterranean coast of Morocco and its Rif hinterland with Fez and Rabat. The speech of North African Jews is also Pre-Hilalian. Most of the remaining non-Berber areas speak Hilalian/Sulaymite dialects.

<sup>17</sup> Godfrey Wettinger, *The Jews of Malta in the Late Middle Ages* (Valletta: Midsea Books, 1985), 197.

<sup>18</sup> Giuseppe Staccioli, ‘L’ultima isola musulmana in Italia: Pantelleria’, *Symposia Melitensis* 11 (2015): 193–225.

focus of interest in the remainder of the present study will therefore be the fate of the basically North African lexical core in Maltese after the pivotal demographic crisis in the history of medieval Malta: the expulsion of the islands' remaining Muslim population in or around the year 1245, shortly before the last Muslims were banished from Sicily after twenty-three years of official repression in response to frequent rebellions.<sup>19</sup> This watershed event in Malta not only confirmed the Romance influence on the local Arabic that had begun with the founding of the Norman County of Malta in 1192 and intensified after the mass installations of Arabic-speaking Sicilian Christian settlers from the year 1224.<sup>20</sup> Just as importantly, the radical de-Islamicisation of Malta permanently cut the country off from the influences of both Classical Arabic and (with a few exceptions) North African Arabic dialects.

While comparative study of the phonology, morphology and syntax of Maltese is beyond the scope of the present article, it is worth noting here that archaisms occur in these areas as well, making Maltese superficially less typically Maghrebine and closer to Classical (and Eastern) Arabic than its immediate Semitic neighbours. Examples are the preservation of Classical Arabic diphthongs that tend to (but do not universally) undergo monophthongisation in Maghrebine Arabic (for example, M. *zejt* 'oil' = NTun. *zīt* < CA *zayt*); the preservation of tonic short vowels in paroxytones, syncopated in North African Arabic, for instance, *kiteb* (<*kátaba* 'he wrote') for NA *kteb*;<sup>21</sup> and the persistence of the affricate pronunciation of *ğīm* in Malta: [dʒ] as in Algerian and Iraqi Arabic, as opposed to Tunisian and Moroccan [ʒ]. However, a number of these conservative traits of Maltese are still shared by dialects of southeastern Tunisia (such as Sfax and its region<sup>22</sup>). Yet, in Maltese, typically Maghrebine syncope does affect

<sup>19</sup> Anthony Luttrell, 'Giliberto Abate's Report on Malta: Circa 1241', *Proceedings of History Week* (1993), 11.

<sup>20</sup> Geoffrey Hull, *The Malta Language Question: A Case Study in Cultural Imperialism* (Malta: Said International, 1993), 321.

<sup>21</sup> This was also a feature of the now-extinct Arabic dialect of Pantelleria, which would suggest that Qawṣri was an off-shoot of Tunisian rather than Sicilian Arabic.

<sup>22</sup> See Martin R. Zammit, 'The Sfaxi (Tunisian) Element in Maltese', in *Perspectives on Maltese Linguistics*, edited by Albert Borg, Sandro Caruana and Alexandra Vella (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014), 23–44.

the pretonic vowels of bisyllabic oxytones (*ktieb* = NA *ktēb* < Ar. *kitāb*). In the realm of grammar, one notes the typically Maghrebine marker *n*- in the first person forms of verbs (*nikteb* ‘I write’, *niktbu* ‘we write’ for CA *iktib*, *niktib*); the loss of gender distinctions in second-person singular pronouns and verbs, as in Northern Tunisian; and the use of typically North African function words such as *hemm(a)* ‘there’ (cf. AA *hemma*, variant of *temma* influenced by *hena* ‘here’), *bhal* ‘like, as’ (< *bi* ‘with’ + *hal* ‘condition’), *illi* (< *alladī*) ‘that’ (conjunction), and *biex* ‘in order to’ (< *bi ayyi šay*’, lit. ‘with which thing’).

The re-ordering of the consonantal radicals of both Arabic and Romance words through metathesis is fairly common in Maltese. Metathetic transposition of vowels is even more frequent. Certain cases of consonantal metathesis have long been recognized by local etymologists, for example, M. *ħafas* ‘prickly heat’ < Ar. *ḥaṣaf* ‘dry mange’, M. *magħad* < Ar. *ḡamada* ‘to chew’, M. *barax* ‘to scrape’ < Ar. *bašara*. However, in several instances metathetic distortions have prevented etymologists from recognizing the cognates of Maltese lexemes. Cases in point are *gieled* < Ar. *taḡādala* ‘to quarrel, fight’,<sup>23</sup> *għar(gh)ax* ‘to tickle’ < Ar. *raġaša* ‘to stir up, incite’;<sup>24</sup> *xeraq* ‘to be fitting, appropriate, to suit’ < Ar. *rašaq* ‘to be elegant, graceful’;<sup>25</sup> and *raħż* ‘bud’<sup>26</sup> < Ar. *ħarṣ* ‘wooden stopple, plug’, re-applied metaphorically, cf. the other Arabic meanings ‘leafless palm branch’ (that is, one that has not sprouted) and ‘point of a reed lance’.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Aquilina plausibly but incorrectly derived this metathetic Maltese form from Ar. *ḡalada* ‘to fight’, third form of *ḡalada* ‘to whip, flog’ (*Maltese-English Dictionary* [Malta: Midsea Books, 1987, 1990], vol. 1: 408). However, this verb has no derived forms in Arabic, whereas *ḡādala* has derivatives that clearly generated (directly or indirectly) other Maltese words, for instance, *ġidāl* > \**ḡilād*, *ġlied* ‘quarrel(ling)’, *ġadal* > \**ḡaddālī* > \**ḡallādī* > *ġelliedi* ‘quarrelsome’. The existence of Algerian Arabic *meġadla* ‘dispute, quarrel’ would appear to confirm the derivation from *taḡādala*. As a compromise position, one might hypothesise a crossing of *ḡalada* and *ḡādala*.

<sup>24</sup> Francis Joseph Steingass, *Arabic-English Dictionary* (London: Allen, 1882), 422.

<sup>25</sup> Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, 342.

<sup>26</sup> Maltese *raħż* has been erroneously identified with the Arabic homonym *raħṣ*, but Ar. *raħṣ* is an adjective, meaning ‘supple, tender’, not a noun denoting a bud, which in any case is compact and hard, not soft.

<sup>27</sup> Steingass, *Arabic-English Dictionary*, 319.

After phonology, the greatest casualty of the historic isolation of Maltese Arabic was its core vocabulary. Romance influence began to affect Maltese Arabic strongly from the mid-thirteenth century, when it became the low variety in a diglossic relationship with Sicilian.<sup>28</sup> In addition to direct Sicilian loanwords, there are many cases of semantic change within the Semitic lexical core due to loan translations. A prime example is Ar. *ħazīn* ‘sad’, continuing as M. *ħażin*, but altered in meaning to ‘bad’ = Old Sicilian *tristu* ‘sad’ and ‘bad’. Similarly, Maltese *bagħal* (< Ar. *ba‘al*) ‘mule’ is used as a metaphor for ‘bastard, illegitimate child’. This secondary meaning is foreign to Arabic but is typically Sicilian, as in *mulu* ‘mule’, ‘bastard’.<sup>29</sup> A common replacement of *nbieta* ‘shoot, sprout’ is *rimja*, from Arabic *ramya* ‘throw, toss’, albeit with a local secondary meaning which is a loan translation of Sicilian *jettitu* ‘shoot, sprout’, but literally ‘throw’ (see *jettari* ‘to throw’). The Arabic noun *guf* ‘belly’ changed its meaning to ‘womb’ on the model of Sicilian *ventri* ‘belly’, ‘womb’ (although note also NA *bel-żūf* ‘pregnant’), while *laqat* ‘to strike, hit’ (< Ar. *laqaṭa* ‘to gather’, NA *lqaṭ* ‘to pluck, depilate’) and *laqqat* ‘to pick up, glean’ together calque Sicilian *coggħiri* (= It. *cogliere*) ‘to pick up’, ‘to collect’, ‘to hit, strike’. The noun *luħ*, cognate with Classical Arabic *lawħ* ‘board, plank’, changed its meaning from ‘piece of timber’ (Tunisian *luħ*) to ‘shovel’ in the speech of bilingual Maltese who were already confusing the Sicilian terms *palu* ‘stake’ and *pala* ‘shovel’.<sup>30</sup> Certain other Maltese words of Arabic origin have secondary meanings which are clear calques on Sicilian; for instance, *talab* ‘to request, entreat’ → ‘to pray (to God)’ (= Sic. *prigari* ‘to request’, ‘to pray’), *misjur* (< Ar. *masyūr*) ‘cooked’ → ‘ripe’ (= Sic. *cottu* ‘cooked’, ‘ripe’), *għalqa* ‘enclosure’ → ‘field’ (= Sic. *chiusa*),<sup>31</sup> *tqila* ‘heavy’ →

<sup>28</sup> In diglossia (where there are two languages co-existing without the same social status), the official/literary language is the ‘high/standard variety’, and the local dialect (often unwritten) is the ‘low/non-standard variety’. All Arabic dialects are ‘low varieties’ subordinated socially and culturally to Standard Arabic.

<sup>29</sup> Giorgio Piccitto, *Vocabolario siciliano* (Catania and Palermo: Centro di Studi Filologici e Linguistici Siciliani, 1985), vol. 2: 886.

<sup>30</sup> *Luħ* and *pala* are synonyms in modern Maltese. Interestingly, the latter Italian term established itself as the ordinary term for ‘shovel’ in the Maghreb (TA, AA *bāla*, Mor. *bāla*).

<sup>31</sup> Sicilian also has the Arabism *garċa* ‘enclosed vineyard’ <*ġalqa*.

‘pregnant’ (cf. Sic. *gravusu* ‘heavy’, *gràvita* ‘pregnant’), *xiħ* (< Ar. *šayḥ*) ‘old man’, ‘elder’ → ‘old, elderly’ (adj.) (= Sic. *anzianu* ‘old man’, ‘elderly’).

Other markedly un-Arabic semantic developments arose in Malta as adaptations reflecting aspects of European culture, such as Ar. *sudda* ‘couch, divan’ (NA ‘sleeping plank’) → M. *sodda* ‘bed’, since before the Normans the typical sleeping place in Arab culture was a mattress and bedding placed directly on the floor, hence also Ar. *farša* ‘bed’ → M. *farxa* ‘shelf’. The diminished physical dimensions of small, low, rocky islands and their natural features also had an effect on the evolution of Melito-Arabic, as in Ar. *ğabal* ‘mountain’ → M. *ȝebel* ‘rocks’, Ar. *naġġār* ‘carpenter’ → M. *naġġar* ‘stonemason’, Ar. *sāfara* ‘to travel’ → M. *siefer* ‘to go overseas’. As for the loss of the Arabic noun *arnab* ‘rabbit’, replaced in Maltese by *fenek*, it is unlikely that there was a semantic alteration of Maghrebine Arabic *fanak* ‘fennec fox’ (*Vulpes zerda*). The Classical Arabic etymon (from Persian *fanak* ‘sable; marten’)<sup>32</sup> denoted in the Middle Ages the beech or stone marten (*Martes foina*, *Mustela foina*), the weasel and similar animals whose pelts were used to make clothing. When the word entered Maltese, it thus had the general sense of ‘small furry animal’. This is a case of North Africans and Maltese assigning different meanings to a semantically open Arabic lexeme.<sup>33</sup>

In many other instances where Maltese has altered the meaning of a word which in Maghrebine varieties remained semantically unchanged, it is simply a consequence of the archipelago’s ongoing isolation from the Arabophone world and its literary language. In the following list of concepts, the corresponding lexeme in Standard Arabic (usually absent from Maltese) is given in square brackets:

**barr** ‘desert’ : Ar. *barr* ‘open land’ [*sahra*].

**ziffa** ‘breeze’ : *zaffa* ‘blast’ [*nasīm*].

**ħatar** ‘staff’ : *ḥitr* ‘branch’ [*‘asā*].

<sup>32</sup> Francis Joseph Steingass, *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957; first published 1892), 149. *Fanak* has been replaced by *smur* in modern Farsi.

<sup>33</sup> R. Dozy and W. H. Engelmann, *Glossaire des mots espagnols et portugais dérivés de l’arabe* (Leiden: Brill, 1869), 102–3.

**nibta** ‘seedling’ : *nabata* ‘plant’ [šatala].

**xitla** ‘plant’ : šatala ‘seedling’ [nabāta].

**ħafur** ‘oats’ (*Avena sativa*) : *ħafur* ‘wild winter oat’ (*Avena sterilis*)<sup>34</sup> [ħurtāl, suħfan].

**ġurdien** ‘mouse’ : ġirdawn, pl. of ġurad ‘rat’ [fär].

**far** ‘rat’: fär, fa'r ‘mouse’ [ġurad, ġirdawn].<sup>35</sup>

**lsir** (< \*il-asir) ‘slave’ : al-asir ‘the captive, prisoner’ [‘abd].

**ħalq** ‘mouth’ : halq ‘throat’ [fumm].<sup>36</sup>

**ħanek** ‘gum’ : hanak ‘palate’ [lita].

**minkeb** ‘elbow’ : minkib ‘shoulder’, ‘flank’ [ku‘, mirfaq].

**fwied** ‘liver’ : fu'ād ‘heart’, ‘innards’ [kabid].

**żaqq** ‘belly’: ziqq, zaqq ‘wineskin’ [batn].

**żokra** ‘navel’ : zukra ‘belly’, ‘wineskin’ [surra].

**tifwiq** ‘belching’: fuwāq ‘hiccoughs’ [tağħaśšu].

**lenbuba** ‘rolling pin’ : al-anbūb ‘the pipe, tube’ [ħawbak].

**għamara** ‘furniture’ : amāra, īmāra ‘building, structure’, ‘refurbishing, renovations’, ‘gun loading’, ‘crew’, ‘fleet’ [atāt].<sup>37</sup>

**sarima** ‘muzzle (cover)’ : sarima ‘bit (of bridle)’ [kimām].

**ikrab** ‘ugly’ : kariħ ‘loathsome’ [baśi‘, qabīħ]

**kiefer** ‘cruel, barbarous’ : kāfir ‘unbelieving, irreligious’, ‘ungrateful’ [zālim, qāsi].

**ħniena** ‘mercy’ : hanāna ‘compassion, pity’ [rahma].<sup>38</sup>

**niket** ‘grief, sorrow’ : nakd ‘worry, trouble’ [għamm, karb, hamm].

<sup>34</sup> The word is rarely recorded in Arabic dictionaries, but it is well established in Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, among the Sinai Bedouins and elsewhere.

<sup>35</sup> Fär is used for both ‘rat’ and ‘mouse’ in Libyan and Egyptian Arabic and some Tunisian dialects, but not exclusively for ‘rat’, as in Maltese.

<sup>36</sup> Fumm survives in Maltese as fomm, although this word is now limited to certain idioms.

<sup>37</sup> The Maltese sense of ‘furniture’ developed from a particular meaning of the Arabic verb ‘ammara ‘to give life to’, ‘to rebuild, refurbish’, but also ‘to fit out, furnish’. M. għammar means ‘to dwell, live’, as well as ‘to furnish’ and ‘to mate (animals)’.

<sup>38</sup> The corresponding Arabic adjective, hanīn means ‘longing, desirous’, but its Maltese reflex, hanin, means ‘merciful’, ‘compassionate’, ‘kind, sensitive’. This last meaning is that of Maghrebine Arabic hnīn.

**ħila** ‘skill’ : *ħila* ‘trick, ruse’ [ħadāqa].

**mar** ‘to go’ : *marra* ‘to pass’ [amma, rāha].

**resaq (lejn)** ‘to approach’ : *laṣaqa* ‘to stick, adhere’, NA *lseq*, id. [qariba].<sup>39</sup>

**qiegħed** ‘to put, place’ : *qa’ada* ‘to sit, set (vt.)’ [wada‘a, hatta].

**ħatt** ‘to unload’ : *ħatṭa* ‘to put down, place’ [nazzala al-haml].

**żamm** ‘to hold’, ‘to keep’ : *zamma* ‘to tighten’, ‘to tie up, truss’ [masaka].

**ġabar** ‘to pick up’, ‘to gather’ : *ġabara* ‘to put together’, ‘to set (bones)’ [laqata; ġama‘a].

**tafa** ‘to throw’ : *dafa* ‘a ‘to push, shove’, ‘to drive away’ [ħadafa].

**ħammeġ** ‘to soil’ (whence *maħmuġ* ‘dirty’): *hammaġa* ‘to rot, corrupt’ [wassaha].

**sibek** ‘to strip (leaves)’: *zabaqa* ‘to pluck (hairs)’ [ċarada].

**reżah** ‘to feel chilly, to freeze’ : *razaha* ‘to drop from fatigue’ [ċamada].

**xedd** ‘to constipate’, ‘to dry out’ : *ħadda* ‘to make firm, solidify’ [qabbaħa; ġaffa].

**fieq** ‘to heal’ (vi.) : *afāqa* ‘to come to, recover from fainting’ [ħsafa].

**għad** ‘to say’ : *a āda* ‘to repeat’<sup>40</sup> [qāla].

**sejjah** ‘to call’ : *sayyaha* ‘to shout, bawl’ [nadaha, saraha].

**karab** ‘to groan’ (vi.) : *karaba* ‘to distress, worry’ (vt.) [nāħ, naħaba].

**widdeb** ‘to warn’ : *addaba* ‘to educate, discipline’ [ħadara, andara].

The Maltese vocabulary is also characterised by a number of genuine archaisms: classicisms contradicted by the usage of all or most Maghrebine dialects. Lexemes now absent from, or very rare in modern Maghrebine dialects, are displayed in Table 12.2:

<sup>39</sup> For the semantic development, see Moroccan *lseq f-* ‘to bother, be obnoxious towards’ (Richard Slade Harrell and Harvey Sobelman [eds], *A Dictionary of Moroccan Arabic: Moroccan-English, English-Moroccan* [Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 1966, 1963], 72) – that is, ‘to accost, approach’ in a negative sense.

<sup>40</sup> Algerian and Moroccan Arabic present the middle phase of the semantic shift: ‘awed ‘to repeat, redo’ thence ‘to tell, recount’ (= M. *għawed* ‘to change one’s mind’) < CA ‘awwada) (Harrell, *Dictionary of Moroccan Arabic*, 254). The defective verbs *qal* (< CA *qāla*) and *għad* combine to provide the Maltese term ‘to say, tell’.

Table 12.2 Archaisms in Maltese vocabulary

English	Classical Arabic	Maltese	Maghrebine
'time'	<b>bīn</b>	<i>bin; waqt</i>	<i>waqt</i>
'morning'	<b>gūdwa</b>	<i>għodwa</i>	<i>sbēb<sup>41</sup></i>
'blossom'	<b>zabraq</b>	<i>żabraq,<sup>42</sup> nwara</i>	<i>nawwāra</i>
'branch'	<b>farr</b>	<i>fergħa</i>	<i>'arf, 'erx (Mor.)</i>
'fig'	<b>tīna</b>	<i>tina</i>	<i>karmūsa<sup>43</sup></i>
'hazelnuts'	<b>ġillawz</b>	<i>ġellewż</i>	<i>bufriwa, bendqa</i>
'sesame'	<b>simsim</b>	<i>simsem, ġulġien</i>	<i>żenžlén</i>
'wine'	<b>nabīd</b>	<i>nbid</i>	<i>šrēb, ḥamr</i>
'lion'	<b>dīrbās</b>	<i>dorbies</i>	<i>sbē, sīd</i>
'chicken'	<b>katkūt</b>	<i>ketkut, farruġ</i>	<i>ferruġ</i>
'cockroach'	<b>bint werdāna</b>	<i>werdiena</i>	<i>grellu (&lt; It.), qerwaṭa</i>
'thigh'	<b>wirk</b>	<i>wirk</i>	<i>fħed</i>
'tail'	<b>danab</b>	<i>denb</i>	<i>ba'būs, dil</i>
'son'	<b>ibn</b>	<i>iben</i>	<i>weld, wled<sup>44</sup></i>
'son-in-law'	<b>ħatan</b>	<i>ħaten</i>	<i>rbib</i>
'tool'	<b>udda</b>	<i>għoddha</i>	<i>ma'ün, mwā'en, ēla (Mor.)</i>
'manure'	<b>damal</b>	<i>demel</i>	<i>ġbér, zbel</i>
'flowerpot'	<b>qasrīya<sup>45</sup></b>	<i>qasrīja</i>	<i>maħbes</i>
'shoe'	<b>zarbūna, zurbūla</b>	<i>żarbuna,<sup>46</sup> sabbata</i>	<i>ṣabbata, sbāta</i>
'shirt'	<b>qamīṣ</b>	<i>qmis</i>	<i>qmezzha, għmiżża<sup>47</sup></i>

<sup>41</sup> The Maltese cognate *sbieħ* means 'dawn'.<sup>42</sup> This word passed into the Romance Sicilian dialect as *zagara* 'orange blossom'.<sup>43</sup> Maltese *karmusa* is an unripe fig. In Morocco, *tīna* denotes a dried fig.<sup>44</sup> Libyan Arabic has, however, preserved *ben(n)* as a common term for 'son'.<sup>45</sup> The Romance Sicilian dialect inherited the word *casiria, casaria* 'flowerpot'. *Qasrīya* (< Ionian Greek γάστρη = Attic γάστρα) does occur in Tunisia and Algeria, but there it has the secondary Arabic meaning of 'chamber pot'. Moroccan Arabic *qesrīya* denotes a 'large earthenware bowl for kneading dough' (Harrell, *Dictionary of Moroccan Arabic*, 117).<sup>46</sup> Borrowed from Byzantine Greek σέρβουλα 'buskin' and ultimately Latin: *sērvula* 'slave's footwear'. Now obsolete is M. *sabbata*, cf. Spanish *zapato*, Portuguese *sapato*, French *savate*, Italian *ciabatta* (< Ar. *ṣabbāṭ-a*, from Ar. *ṣabbaṭa* 'to bang, slam').<sup>47</sup> These western Maghrebine forms, although from the same ultimate source (Latin *camīsa*, from Gaulish), were borrowed directly from Spanish *camisa*, at a time (before the sixteenth century) when intervocalic -s- was still voiced [kamiza] ~ modern [kamisa]. This is therefore an 'Almohad' lexeme from Morocco and Algeria which eventually penetrated as far east as Libya, although Ghadames Berber perpetuates the Pre-Hilalian lexeme (*tkamīs*).

English	Classical Arabic	Maltese	Maghrebine
'rag'	<i>birqa</i>	<i>ħarqa⁴⁸</i>	<i>ʃulliqa, zif</i>
'shelter' (n.)	<i>kann</i>	<i>kenn⁴⁹</i>	<i>melža, māwa</i>
'beautiful'	<i>sabīḥ</i> <sup>⁵⁰</sup>	<i>sabiħ</i>	<i>żmil, bēhi, zin, mlīħ</i> (A), <i>ġazal</i> (Mor.)
'lukewarm'	<i>fātir</i>	<i>fietel</i>	<i>mledded</i>
'silly, stupid'	<i>ablāb</i> <sup>⁵¹</sup>	<i>iblab</i>	<i>blid, aħmaq, basel, safih</i>
'love' (n.)	<i>māħabba</i>	<i>mħabba</i>	<i>hobb⁵²</i>
'good sense'	<i>dibn</i>	<i>deben, għaqal</i>	<i>fetna, 'aqal, swāb</i>
'to devour'	<i>ġara'a</i>	<i>ġerragh</i>	<i>eftres</i>
'to become numb'	<i>badila, badira</i>	<i>ħedel</i>	<i>żmed, fašel</i>
'to scrape'	<i>bašara</i>	<i>barax</i>	<i>qarqaš, kerret</i> (Mor.)
'to set ablaze'	<i>haġġaġa</i>	<i>heġġegħ/heġġeg</i>	<i>leħbeb</i>
'to attack'	<i>habba</i> <sup>⁵³</sup>	<i>hebb/hebb</i>	<i>hžem, rdem, zdem</i>
'to work carefully'	<i>abbaka</i> <sup>⁵⁴</sup>	<i>ħabrek</i> 'to be diligent'	<i>est'ażel</i>
'to prepare'	<i>hayyā'a</i>	<i>hejja/hejja</i>	<i>haddar,<sup>⁵⁵</sup> weżżeed</i> (Mor.)
'to sew'	<i>bāt</i>	<i>ħat</i>	<i>heyyet</i>
'inside'	<i>ġawwan, ġawwā</i>	<i>gewwa</i>	<i>(ed-) dēħel</i>
'never'	<i>qatlu</i> <sup>⁵⁶</sup>	<i>qatt</i>	<i>'omr-, ebeden</i>

<sup>⁴⁸</sup> The usual modern meaning is 'nappy, diaper'.

<sup>⁴⁹</sup> North African Arabic has only the associated verb *kenn* (< CA *kanna*), used in the sense of 'to be holed up, to hide'.

<sup>⁵⁰</sup> A literary term in modern Arabic, the commoner synonyms being *ħasan, ġamil* (cf. M. *ġmiel* 'beauty' < *ġamāl*), *kuwayyis* and *malīħ*.

<sup>⁵¹</sup> Another literary term. The more usual Arabic terms for 'stupid' are *balid, aħmaq* and *ġašim*.

<sup>⁵²</sup> However, Libyan Arabic has *mħabba* in both senses of 'friendship' and 'love'.

<sup>⁵³</sup> Modern Maghrebine Arabic has this verb (*hebb*), but only in the secondary sense of 'to blow'.

<sup>⁵⁴</sup> Form IV of *habaka* 'to weave tight', cf. *iħtabaka* (VIII) 'to carry out well'; Steingass, *Arabic-English Dictionary*, 261.

<sup>⁵⁵</sup> The Maltese cognate *ħaddar* is used only in the sense of 'accompany a bride and bridegroom to church'.

<sup>⁵⁶</sup> Ar. *qatlu* 'ever', 'never', is used with the past tense (Wehr, *Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, 785). This adverb is now rare in North African Arabic, which prefers reflexes of *abadan* and 'umr '(in my) life' (LA *ebedén*, 'umr; TA, AA *ébeden*, 'omr; MA *ábaden*, 'emmer).

Sometimes, an Arabic term that has disappeared from Tunisian and Algerian Arabic survives peripherally in Morocco as well as in Malta. Such is the case with *xitwa* ‘winter’ = Mor. *šetwa* < Ar. *šatwa*, id.,<sup>57</sup> *xwiereb* ‘moustache’ = Mor. *šwāreb* < CA *šawārib* (~ TA *šelğūm*, AA *šelğūma*), *tarbija* ‘baby’ = Mor. *terbīya*, id. < CA *tarbīya* ‘rearing, upbringing’,<sup>58</sup> *żifen* ‘to dance’ = Mor. *zfen*, *carruta* ‘rag’ = Mor. *šeरwiṭa*, id., diminutive of *šeṛṭa* ‘strip’, ‘stripe’ (cf. Syrian Ar. *ṣurṭa* ‘rag’),<sup>59</sup> *għażel* ‘to choose’ = Mor. *zel* ‘to pick out, choose’ < Ar. *azala* ‘to set aside; to separate’.<sup>60</sup> A shared semantic innovation is M. *bżar* ‘pepper’ = Mor. *ibżar* ‘black pepper’ < CA *abzār* (pl.) ‘spices’ (with reflexes of Ar. *fīlīl* ‘pepper’ elsewhere in North Africa). At the opposite extreme are rare Maltese lexical links with Egypt rather than the Maghreb, perhaps an echo of the time when the people of Greater Sicily, under Fātimid rule, were in contact with Egyptians, including Melkite Christian missionaries. To this category belong *ċpar* ‘mist, fog’, which developed (via the metathetic variant *\*šubār-a*) from the Egyptian Arabic *šābūra*, *šabbūra*,<sup>61</sup> *gerrex* ‘to drive away’ = E. *karraś* ‘to expel’, *xellel* ‘to baste’ (second form of *xell* < Ar. *šalla* ‘to stitch’) = E. *šallil* ‘to baste’, *fixkel* ‘to confuse’ = E. *faškil*, id., *berghen* ‘to be inflamed with anger’ = Egyptian *ba'rar* ‘to open one's eyes wide expressing vexation’.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Steingass, *Arabic-English Dictionary*: 529. In Syrian Arabic, *šatwa* denotes a rain shower, and the plural of this word, *šetwēt*, survives in Tunisian and Algerian Arabic with the meaning ‘rains, rainy period’.

<sup>58</sup> In what is evidently an areal Western Mediterranean phenomenon, this semantic transfer of the abstract concept of ‘rearing, upbringing’ to that of ‘infant; child’ has parallels in Southern Romance languages, with derivatives of the Latin verb *creare* (‘to create, produce’, ‘to beget’) evolving the secondary meaning ‘to rear, to bring up, breed’, cf. Portuguese *criança* ‘child’ (originally ‘rearing’), Sicilian *criatura*, *criaturu*, *criaturi*, Southern Italian *criatura*, Central Italian *creatura*, Spanish, Catalan *criatura* (< Lat. *creatūra* ‘creature’) ‘child’, Spanish *cria* ‘young of animals’ (cf. *criar* ‘to rear').

<sup>59</sup> The root verb here is M. *ċarrat* ‘to tear’ and Moroccan *żeṛṛet* ‘to scratch’ < CA *ṣarraqa* ‘to tear’, ‘to scratch, scarify’, ‘to slash’. Maltese appears to be the only Maghrebine variety that retains the original primary acceptation ‘to tear’.

<sup>60</sup> The acceptation ‘to separate litigants in a fight’ is still available in Maltese.

<sup>61</sup> The Maghrebine dialects (including Libyan) use feminine reflexes of Classical Arabic *dabāb*: TA *ḍbēba*, LA *ḍubāba*.

<sup>62</sup> Joseph Aquilina, *Maltese-English Dictionary*, vol. 1: 106. Less semantically close is Western Algerian *ba'rer* ‘to bleat’, ‘to blabber’ ‘to be drunk’ (Jihane Madouni-La Peyre, *Dictionnaire arabe algérien-français: Algérie de l'ouest* [Langres: L'Asiathèque, 2014], 61).

In one other large category of lexemes where two synonymous Arabic terms co-exist in many or most Maghrebine dialects, Maltese distinguishes itself by presenting only one term. Here it is often difficult to determine whether it is simply a question of impoverishment in Maltese, or whether the second, missing term is in fact Hilalian and therefore was never part of the Maltese lexicon. The latter is possible at least in cases such as ‘monkey’ and ‘broom’, where the first term is either a rare word in Classical Arabic or an obvious Maghrebinism (see Table 12.3 below).

Table 12.3 Maltese terms with two synonymous Maghrebine terms

English	Maltese	Maghrebine (First Term)	Maghrebine (Second Term)
‘star’	<i>kewkba</i>	<i>kūkeb</i> (A) < CA <b><i>kawkab</i></b>	<i>nežma</i> < <b><i>naġma</i></b>
‘rain’	<i>xita</i>	<i>šta</i> <sup>63</sup> < <b><i>šitā'</i></b>	<i>mter</i> < <b><i>maṭar</i></b>
‘apricot’	<i>berquqa</i>	<i>berqūqa</i> (A) < <b><i>barqūqa</i></b> <sup>64</sup>	<i>mesmēša</i> < <b><i>mišmiša</i></b>
‘egg’	<i>bajda</i>	<i>bayḍa</i> (A) < <b><i>bayḍa</i></b>	‘adma ‘egg’ < ‘ <b><i>azma</i></b> ‘bone’
‘widow’	<i>armla</i>	<i>ármela</i> < <b><i>armala</i></b>	<i>beżżebla</i> < <b><i>haġġāla</i></b>
‘monkey’	<i>xadin</i>	<i>šādin</i> , <i>šādī</i> (A) <sup>65</sup>	<i>qerd</i> < <b><i>qird</i></b>
‘body’	<i>għisem</i>	<i>żesm</i> , <i>żisem</i> (L) < <b><i>ġism</i></b>	<i>żesed</i> < <b><i>ġasad</i></b> , <i>bden</i> < <b><i>badan</i></b>
‘neck’	<i>għonq</i>	<i>‘onq</i> (T), ‘anq (A), ‘enq (Mor.) < ‘ <b><i>unq</i></b>	<i>raqba</i> < <b><i>raqaba</i></b>
‘window’	<i>tieqa</i>	<i>ṭāqa</i> (T, A)	<i>šebbek</i> < <b><i>šubbāk</i></b> , <i>šeरżem</i> (Mor.)
‘broom’	<i>mselha</i>	<i>mṣallha</i> (T), <i>mċlaħha</i> (A) <sup>66</sup>	<i>mckensa</i> < <b><i>miknasa</i></b> , <i>šeṭṭāba</i> (Mor.)
‘tired’	<i>ghajjen</i>	‘eyyēn < ‘ <b><i>ayyān</i></b>	<i>te'bēn</i> < <b><i>ta'bān</i></b>
‘stingy’	<i>xhiħ &lt; šabib</i>	<i>meħbeh</i>	<i>bbil</i> < <b><i>babil</i></b> , <i>qmisiš</i>

<sup>63</sup> Also means ‘winter’, the main meaning of CA *šitā'*, its secondary meaning being ‘rains, rainy season’. See also the reference to M. *xitwa*, above.

<sup>64</sup> In Tunisia, the referent is now a species of wild plum. *Barqūq* (< Lat. *praecōquus* ‘early ripening’), a North African word, was also the term for ‘apricots’ in Andalusian Spanish (*al-barqūq* > Sp. *albaricoque*). In Classical Arabic, the meaning is ‘plum’.

<sup>65</sup> This word occurs as *šādī* in both Algerian and Iraqi Arabic. The Classical Arabic *šādīn* denotes, instead, a gazelle fawn.

<sup>66</sup> The etymon here, *maṣlaħa*, coincides in form with the CA term for ‘administration’, but the root verb *sallaħha* ‘to put in order, settle, tidy’ reveals its semantic development. Aquilina’s (*Maltese-English Dictionary*, vol. 2: 1289) derivation from *selah* ‘to flay’ (< Ar. *salāḥa*) is implausible on both semantic and phonetic grounds (the third radical is /ħ/ in both Maltese and Maghrebine Arabic, not /ħ/).

English	Maltese	Maghrebine (First Term)	Maghrebine (Second Term)
‘to descend’	<i>nizel</i>	<i>nzel</i> < <i>nazala</i>	<i>hbet</i> < <i>babata, della</i>
‘to fall’	<i>waqa'</i>	<i>wqa'</i> < <i>waqa'</i>	<i>ṭāḥ</i> < <i>ṭāḥa</i>
‘to pour’	<i>sawwab</i>	<i>ṣebb</i> < <i>ṣabba</i>	<i>kelb</i> < <i>kabba</i>
‘to spend’	<i>nefaq</i>	<i>nfeq</i> < <i>nafaqa</i>	<i>sref</i> < <i>ṣarafa, dfe'</i>
‘to finish’ (vt.)	<i>temm</i>	<i>temm</i> < <i>atamma</i>	<i>kemmel</i> < <i>kammala, fedā</i> (Mor.)
‘to see’	<i>ra</i>	<i>ra</i> < <i>ra'ā</i>	<i>šāf</i> < <i>tašawwafa</i> ‘to observe from afar’ <sup>67</sup>
‘to be frightened’	<i>beż'a'</i>	<i>fzē</i> <sup>68</sup> < <i>faza'</i>	<i>ḥaf</i> < <i>bāfa</i>
‘to forgive’	<i>hafer</i>	<i>ḡfer</i> <sup>69</sup> < <i>ḡafara</i>	<i>smeħ</i> < <i>samuḥa</i>
‘to lick’	<i>lagħaq</i>	<i>l'aq</i> < <i>la'iqa</i>	<i>lħes</i> < <i>laħisa</i>
‘to cough’	<i>sogħol</i>	<i>s'al</i> < <i>sa'ala</i>	<i>kebħ</i> < <i>kaħħa</i>
‘yes’	<i>iwa, iva</i>	<i>aywa</i> < <i>ayyawa</i>	<i>n'am</i> < <i>na'am</i>

These patterns notwithstanding, the need for caution in speculating on the lexical content of early Maltese is clear in the light of written records of Sicilian Judeo-Arabic – for example, a group of apparently fourteenth-century poems which present reflexes of numerous Arabic words unknown in Maltese, such as *insān* ‘man’, *ahl* ‘people’, *ḡarad* ‘intention’, *munām* ‘dream’, *alīl* ‘ill’, *dalīl* ‘despicable’, *ḥaka* ‘to recount’, *šakara* ‘to thank’, *naṣara* ‘to help’, *istanżar* ‘to await’ and *sağada* ‘to prostrate oneself’.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, in any attempt to identify a specifically ‘Pre-Hilalian’ lexical component in modern Maghrebine dialects, it is important to bear in mind that lexical areas are broader than zones where archaic phonological and morphological features occur, so that, for instance, the dialect of Tunis, while structurally Pre-Hilalian, now has Hilalian *šāf* as its ordinary term for ‘to see’, not *rā*. These anomalies, repeated all over the Maghreb, make Maltese unique in that its post-Reconquista isolation guaranteed a continuing correlation

<sup>67</sup> M. *xaf* ‘to lie in wait/prowl (in order to attack)’ appears to be a rare modern-era borrowing from Arabic, originating in the slang of slaves of the Order of St John.

<sup>68</sup> In more conservative Maghrebine vernaculars, the distinction is still made between *ḥaf* ‘to fear’ and *fza'*, *fzē* ‘to be startled, to take fright’, but in Tunisia at least the two verbs are often synonymous, as in Classical Arabic. The Maltese reflex of *ḥaf* appears to have been lost in the wake of the phonemic merger of /h/ and /ħ/ to avoid confusion with *haf* ‘to gad about’.

<sup>69</sup> In Muslim parlance, this verb is used in reference to divine forgiveness.

<sup>70</sup> Wettinger, *The Jews of Malta*, 193.

between *both* structural and lexical features of Pre-Hilalian Arabic. Consequently, it is questionable whether in all of the above instances the lack of synonyms is always a case of impoverishment. It is true, nevertheless, that survivals of pairs of Arabic synonyms are comparatively rare, and more often than not one of the two known terms is now obsolete, as in the examples in Table 12.4 below.

Table 12.4 Pairs of Arabic synonyms

English	Maltese	Maghrebine	Maltese	Maghrebine
'breast'	<i>żejža</i>	<i>zīza</i>	= <i>beżżula</i>	<i>bazzūla</i> <sup>71</sup>
'hernia'	<i>bażwa</i>	<i>bazwa</i> (A)	= <i>ftuq, ftiq</i>	<i>fitāq</i> < CA <i>fitāq</i> , <i>fteq</i> < <i>fatq</i>
'ship'	<i>ġifen</i> < <i>ḡafna</i>	<i>ḡafan</i> (A) <sup>72</sup>	= <i>mirkeb</i> < <b>markab</b>	<i>merkeb</i>
'to make, do'	<i>għamel</i> < <i>'amala</i>	<i>'mel</i>	= <i>fagħal</i> < <i>fa'ala</i>	<i>fe'l</i>

While occasionally preserving both of two Pre-Hilalian synonyms extant in Maghrebine Arabic, Maltese has assigned a new meaning to one of them: M. *ħajra* (< Ar. **hyāra**) 'cucumber' ~ M. *faqqusa* 'small watermelon' (≠ NA *feggūsa*), M. *għasfur* (< Ar. **‘asfūr**)<sup>73</sup> 'bird' ~ M. *tajr* (< **tayr**) 'fowl' (≠ AA, Mor. *teyr, tir* 'bird'), M. *ħaruf* 'lamb' (< **ħarūf**) ~ *gellux, qellux* 'calf, 'male animal too young for breeding' (≠ NA *ellūs*), M. *għorfa* (< **ġurfa**) 'room' ~ M. *bejt* (< **bayt**) 'roof' (≠ NA *beyt, bīt* 'room'), M. *mħabba* (< **maħabba**) 'love' ~ M. *ħobb* (< **ħubb**) 'breast' (≠ NA *ħobb* 'love'),<sup>74</sup> M. *xogħol* (< **šuġġl**) 'work' ~ M. *ħidma* (< **hidma**) 'particular work' (= It. *opera*) ≠ NA *ħedma* 'work'; M. *seta* 'to be able' (< **istatā**) ~ M. *qadar* (< **qadara**) 'to dare' (≠ NA *qder = neġem*), M. *ħaseb* (< **hasaba**)<sup>75</sup> 'to think' ~ M. *dann* (< **zanna**) 'to suppose' (≠ NA *dann*).

<sup>71</sup> Based on CA *bizz, buzz*.

<sup>72</sup> CA *ḡafna* 'bowl'. This meaning continues in Moroccan Arabic *żefna*. The uniting semantic concept here is 'vessel'. However, the formal CA equivalent of the Algerian and Maltese terms, *ḡafan*, means 'eyelid'.

<sup>73</sup> Libyan, Algerian and Moroccan Arabic, like Classical and Levantine Arabic, still distinguish *tayr* 'large bird' and *‘asfūr* 'small bird', but Tunisian *‘asfūr*, like Maltese *għasfur*, denotes a bird of any size, while the reflexes of *tayr* (M. *tajr*, TA *tir*) mean 'fowl, poultry'.

<sup>74</sup> The probable semantic progression was: 'love' → 'heart' → 'breast'.

<sup>75</sup> In Maghrebine varieties, it means 'to count' rather than 'to think'.

However, at other times, Maltese has preserved the original meaning of an Arabic term, while its innovative Maghrebine synonym is (today at least) unknown (see Table 12.5).

Table 12.5 Maltese terms preserving the original meaning of the Arabic term

English	Maltese	Maghrebine	Maghrebine Only
‘eel’	<i>sallura</i>	<i>ṣennūr</i> (Mor.) < <i>sillūr</i> <sup>76</sup>	<i>ḥnēš el-bħar, nūna, bumeblet</i>
‘moustache’	<i>xwiereb</i> <sup>77</sup>	<i>šwēreb</i> < <i>šawārib</i>	<i>šelġūm(a), z'afer</i> (Mor.)
‘armpit’	<i>abt</i>	<i>baṭ</i> (L, Mor.) < <i>ibṭ</i>	<i>debbūṭ, tābeq</i> (Mor.)
‘place’	<i>mkien</i>	<i>mekān</i> (L) < <i>makān</i>	<i>mūḍe‘</i> < <i>mawda‘, madreb, mahell</i> < <i>maħall</i>
‘mad, crazy’	<i>miġnun</i>	<i>mažnūn</i> (L) < <i>mağnūn</i>	<i>mehbūl, hmeq</i> (Mor.)
‘to jump’	<i>qabeż</i>	<i>qefez</i> < <i>qafaza</i>	<i>negez, neqqez</i>
‘to want’	<i>ried</i>	<i>rād</i> (Mor.) < <i>arāda</i>	<i>bġa, ħabb</i> < <i>aħabba</i>
‘to be ashamed’	<i>staħha</i>	<i>estaħha</i> (A) < <i>istħaħha</i>	<i>ħšem</i>
‘how much’	<i>kemm</i>	<i>kemm</i> (A) < <i>kam</i>	<i>qeddaš, šħal</i>

In some cases, a Maghrebine semantic innovation is contradicted by Maltese conservatism. Maghrebine *akħal* (= *aswad*) now means ‘black’, and *ħall* (= *ftah* < CA *fataħa*) is ‘to open’, but Maltese *ikħal* and *ħall* retain the original meanings of ‘dark blue’ and ‘to untie’, respectively, contrasting with *iswed* ‘black’ and *fetaħ* ‘to open’, respectively. Maltese *tajjeb* ‘good’ continues Classical Arabic *tayyib*,<sup>78</sup> the term still normal in Libya and surviving in Moroccan Arabic (*ṭiyyeb*) with the meaning ‘nice, pleasant’. However, other terms now denote ‘good’ throughout most of the Maghreb: *mlīħ* (Algeria and Tunisia) and *mezyān* (Morocco). Typically North African, on the other hand, is the associated verb *tayyeb, ṭiyyeb* ‘to cook’ (= M. *tejjeb* ‘to improve’).

<sup>76</sup> From Gk. στλούρος ‘catfish, sheatfish’, used also in Syria and Egypt; the CA term is *ankilis*.

<sup>77</sup> Obsolete in Maltese (replaced by the Sicilianism *mustacči*), but perpetuated in the local surname *Xwiereb*.

<sup>78</sup> The Siculo-Arabic word is perpetuated in the Sicilian noun *taibbu* ‘good wine’ as well as in the local surname *Taibbi*.

All the genuine foregoing cases of Maltese semantic conservatism suggest that the Maghrebine innovations in question belong to the post-1245 period, although again one should exercise caution in drawing particular conclusions, given the possibility that a common North African neologism was once used in Maltese but became obsolete before the first recording of the language's vocabulary in the seventeenth century. Moreover, one qualification to the general statement regarding the mutual isolation of Maltese and Maghrebine Arabic after 1245 is the fact that, despite the official mutual hostility between the Muslim world and Christian Europe, North African trade links with Malta, Sicily and the rest of Italy continued to flourish. One of the Romance loanwords that maritime contacts with mainland Italy in the Middle Ages brought into Maghrebine Arabic is Venetian (*bissona*) *dogaressa* 'doge's wife (boat)', the name applied to a large type of festive gondola, and the source of Southern Sahel Tunisian *dğ̴isa*<sup>79</sup> and Andalusian Arabic *düğayyas*, *düğayyaṣ* 'small boat'. This entered Maltese via Arabic as *dğ̴ajsa*.

One salient feature of Maltese is its replacement of Arabic adverbs of quantity with noun-based metaphors, apparently all locally coined, such as *ħafna* 'a lot': Ar. *bafna* 'handful', *bosta* 'a lot' : Ar. *basta* 'display of wares',<sup>80</sup> *wisq* 'a lot; too much': Ar. *wasq* 'a load', *qatīḥ* 'a lot': Ar. *qati'* 'herd, flock', *fīt* 'few': Ar. *fatīt* 'crumbs'.<sup>81</sup> An interesting example of Maltese further developing an existing semantic shift in Maghrebine Arabic is the transitive verb *sajjar* 'to cook', cognate with Algerian *sayyar* 'to pickle, preserve' (= Ar. *kabasa*). Its meaning in Arabic (as the second form of the verb *sāra* 'to become' > NA *sār*, M. *sar*) is 'to make something out of/into'; see also M. *misjur* above. Apparently unique to Maltese is the transformation of the adverb *ebda* (< Ar. *abadan* 'never', 'not at all') into an adjective of negation, such as (*l-*)*ebda ktieb* 'no book' = Ar. *la āy kitāb* (lit. 'not any book'), *la yūgħad kitāb* (lit. 'there is

<sup>79</sup> Zammit, 'The Sfaxi (Tunisian) Element in Maltese', 38.

<sup>80</sup> *Basta* is still used in this sense in Iraqi Arabic; see Beverly Clarity, Karl Stowasser, Ronald Wolfe, D. R. Woodhead and Wayne Beene, *A Dictionary of Iraqi Arabic: English-Arabic, Arabic-English* (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2003), 36, from the verb *bassat* (CA *bassata*) 'to spread out, display'; root verb *basaṭ* 'to spread out'.

<sup>81</sup> Maltese *ħafna* (lit. 'what is seized by the hand') might seem more suitable to indicate small quantities, but the underlying idea here is to amass as much as possible with the hand. Southern Tunisian also has *ftiyyta* 'a bit' (Zammit, 'The Sfaxi [Tunisian] Element in Maltese', 37).

no book'). The catalyst for this transformation was the typical Maghrebine insertion in such phrases of the emphatic adverb of manner *ħatta* 'even', for example, (*la*) *ħatta* (*wāhed*) *ktēb*, 'no book', lit. 'not even one book'; in Malta (or, earlier, in Sicily), *abadan* became the equivalent of *ħatta* in this role.<sup>82</sup> Other terms coined in Siculo-Arabic – or later in Maltese – from elements of the core vocabulary include *ħalliel* 'thief', from \**ħallāl* 'unfastener, loosener (of purse strings)', in reference to a pick-pocket in the days of suspended purses,<sup>83</sup> *xagħat* 'caterpillar', reduction of an earlier \**dud xagħbat* 'tousled/hirsute worms' (Ar. ša 'it 'dishevelled'), and *issa* 'now' (< *din is-siegha* 'this hour'), recalling the Palestinian and Iraqi Arabic *hessa* (*hadi as-sa'a*) 'now', formed in the same manner, although the Maltese adverbial could also be a calque on the (Siculo-)Greek *τώρα* (< τῇ ὥρᾳ) 'now'.

### Lexical Evidence of a Punic Substratum in Maltese?

In 1961, Prosper Grech investigated the long-standing question of an alleged Punic substratum in Maltese, concluding that direct evidence for a Phoenician vernacular in pre-870 Malta was lacking.<sup>84</sup> He did, however, highlight two groups of lexical items which he believed were nonetheless capable of raising doubts, as they could not be explained etymologically in terms of North African Arabic: a largish word group of 'uncertain origin' and a smaller number of lexemes of 'Syrian' origin. Practically all of these elements have subsequently been

<sup>82</sup> The usual term for 'never' in Maltese is *qatt*; see n. 55 above. In archaic Maltese, *ebda* retained its original meaning of 'never' – for instance, *minn hemm ma jiġi ebda* 'from there he'll never come back' (Aquilina, *Maltese-English Dictionary*, vol. 1: 269).

<sup>83</sup> The link with *ħall* 'to loosen, untie' was recognized by Erin Serracino-Inglott (*Il-Miklem Malti* [Malta: Klabb Kotba Maltin, 1975–89], vol. 1: 40) but not by Aquilina (*Maltese-English Dictionary*, vol. 1: 488), who resorted to a dubious connection with the Classical Arabic verb *istahalla* 's'approprier le bien d'autrui quand on n'y a aucun droit' (Reinhard Dozy, *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes* [Leiden: Brill, 1881], 312). The Maltese lexeme is unknown elsewhere, Arabic terms for 'thief' being CA *sāriq*, *sarrāq* (> M. *serrieq* 'robber'), *ħarāmī*, *luṣṣ*, *naṣṣāl*; LA (*m)**ħāneb*, TA, AA *sāraq*, AA *ħāyin*, Mor. *ħuwwān*, *serrāq*. The ordinary verb for 'to steal' in Maltese remained *seraq* (< Ar. *saraqa*), cf. *serq* 'theft' (< *sarq*).

<sup>84</sup> Prosper Grech, 'Are There Any Traces of Punic in Maltese?' *Journal of Maltese Studies* 1 (1961): 130–38.

shown to be of Maghrebine or Berber provenance.<sup>85</sup> However, in two articles of 1996 and 2007, the Maltese Semitist Alexander Borg revived the question by highlighting a series of phonological, morphological, syntactic and lexical agreements between Maltese, Syrian Arabic and (as the closest congeners of the very imperfectly-known Punic language) Aramaic and Hebrew. These were arguably indications of the Maltese language's 'harbour[ing] pre-Arabic Semitic traits inherited from a Phoenico-Punic substrate'.<sup>86</sup> While such parallels are certainly interesting, virtually all of them prove, upon closer scrutiny, to be due to the archaic character of Maltese as an isolated Pre-Hilalian Maghrebine variety of Arabic, or else merely coincidental.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>85</sup> Serracino-Inglott, *Il-Miklem Malti*, vols 1–9; *Maltese-English Dictionary*, vols 1–2; Hull, 'Exploring the Berber Element in Maltese', 128.

<sup>86</sup> Quote taken from Alexander Borg, 'Between Typology and Diachrony: Some Formal Parallels in Hebrew and Maltese', *Symposia Melitensis 4* (2007), 1. Superficial phonological similarities of this nature were first commented on by Hans Stumme (*Maltesische Studien: Eine Sammlung prosaischer und poetischer Texte in maltesischer Sprache nebst Erläuterungen* [Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1904], 83). Such claims rely on the very slight likelihood that the Punic once spoken in Malta (and not necessarily as the vernacular) lived through the entire Roman period and then survived the three centuries of Byzantine rule when Greek was the main spoken language in the Greater Sicilian region. It is regrettable that the discredited Punic hypothesis has been uncritically accepted as scientifically plausible by certain historians; see, for example, Joseph Busuttil, Stanley Fiorini and Horatio Caesar Roger Vella, *Tristia ex Melitogaudio: Lament in Greek Verse of a XIIth-century Exile on Gozo* (Malta: The Farsons Foundation, 2010), xciv.

<sup>87</sup> For instance, the velarisation of Maltese tonic ā is obviously a secondary phenomenon (i. e., ā > ō in rural Maltese). If the original pronunciation of ā had not been at least semi-palatal, *imala* culminating in the diphthong [iɔ] could not have developed, i. e., *da:r* > *do:r* (in rural varieties only) ~ *ka:n* > *kion*. Velarisation of tonic-stressed Latin a is common enough in Romance dialects of Italy, and it constitutes a feature of Auvergnat and other Occitan vernaculars. It is similarly futile to point to the reduction and loss of Arabic emphatic consonants or the fusion of the velar and pharyngeal fricative phonemes in Maltese as possible links with Syrian Arabic and Western Aramaic, as these changes occurred after the thirteenth century. Moreover, the alleged morphosyntactic links with Levantine Arabic given by David Wilmsen and Amany Al-Sayyed ('On Morpho-Syntactic Levantisms in Maltese', in *Studies on Arabic Dialectology and Sociolinguistics*, edited by Catherine Miller et al. [Aix-en-Provence: IREMAM, 2019], 1–14) happen also to be Maghrebine and/or Egyptian traits, while the 'Levantine' marking of personal objects with a preposition meaning 'to' (M. *lil*) is typical of Sicilian as well as Spanish and other Romance vernaculars.

As regards the lexical similarities in question, Maltese words of clear or likely Punic origin – for example, *ħanut* ‘shop’, *andar* ‘threshing floor’ and *dullieġħ* ‘watermelon’ (cf. Hebrew *dla‘at* ‘pumpkin’) – are also demonstrably Maghrebine, and therefore would have been part of the word store of early Ifriqiyan Arabic. Among the supposed direct Aramaisms in Maltese, *felli* ‘slice’ is clearly Greek and evidently of Siculo-Greek derivation, cf. Calabrian Greek *affeddi* (< \**affelli*) ‘slice’ = Demotic Greek φελλί ‘slice’ (< ὀφέλλιον < Lat. *offella*). The Greek word is obviously much closer in form and meaning to M. *felli* than either Neo-Aramaic *pala* ‘a piece, part, slice’ or Jewish Aramaic *plā(h)* ‘to split’.<sup>88</sup> Also unquestionably Greek in origin (which Borg admits) is *fisqija* ‘swaddling clothes’, from φασκία (and ultimately Latin *fascia*), but this time inherited through common Arabic which, like Late Hebrew and Aramaic, borrowed the word.<sup>89</sup> Other putative Punicisms are constructions that are typical of Italian dialects and thus far more probably Romance calques, *barra minn* ‘apart from’ = Sic. *fora di*, *gewwa d-dar* ‘inside the house’ = Sic. *dintra la casa*, It. *dentro la casa*: an adverb functioning as a preposition.<sup>90</sup>

Practically all the alleged semantic links between Maltese and Levantine Arabic or Syriac proposed by Borg are in fact words with cognates in Maghrebine or at least Egyptian Arabic (see *bergħen*, *gerrex*, *fixkel*, *xellel*, as examined above), and at least one is clearly Berber: *dliel* ‘mane’.<sup>91</sup> All typically North African are *nir* ‘heddle, warp cord (of a loom)’ = T. A. *nir*, *nira* ‘heddle’, Mor. *nira* ‘weaving shuttle’ (< CA *nīr* ‘yoke’); *għelgħul* ‘spout’, cf. *gelgel* ‘to gurgle’ (= AA *għelġel*); *tagħġix* ‘frying pan’ (= AA *tāġġen*); *għaksa* ‘joint’ (= Southern Tunisian Marazig *eksa* ‘knot of hair’); *herra* ‘gruffness’ (= Marazig *thāra* ‘to scold’, *harra* ‘to tear’); *għaqqux* ‘nasty, perverse’ (= Marazig *ākex* ‘peevish’); *bera* ‘to glint’ (= Mor. *bra*, id.); *bewwaq* ‘to blow up’, ‘to hollow out’ = Tunisian (Sfaxi) *bawwaq*, id.;<sup>92</sup> *ċarċar* ‘to stream, trickle’ (= NA *šaršar*, id.); *dendel* ‘to hang’ (= NA *deldel*, id.); *farrak*

<sup>88</sup> Borg, ‘Between Typology and Diachrony’, 40.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 29, n. 36; 33.

<sup>91</sup> Hull, ‘Exploring the Berber Element in Maltese’, 128. The Southern Tunisian Arabic cognates that follow and are marked ‘Marazig’ belong to the Hilalian dialect of an Arabicised Berber tribe inhabiting the district of Douz in the Nefzawa region.

<sup>92</sup> Zammit, ‘The Sfaxi (Tunisian) Element in Maltese’, 38–39.

‘to crumble’ (= TA *farrak*, id.); *f(t)aqad* ‘to inspect’ (= AA *fqed*, TA *faqqad*); *kaħħal* ‘to plaster’ (= AA *keħħel* ‘to whitewash’, ‘to apply make-up’); *laħlaħ* ‘to rinse’ (= AA *leħleħ* ‘to shake out’); *qarmeč* ‘to crunch’ (= AA *qarmaš*, id.); *regħex* ‘to make tremble’ (= Marazig *r'áš* ‘to tremble’); *sagħan* ‘to lean’ (= AA *za'n*, id.); *sakkar* ‘to bolt’ (= NA *sekker*, id.); *seħet* ‘to curse’ (= NA *shet*, id.); *xandar* ‘to divulge, broadcast’ (= Marazig *ċiantar* ‘to scatter by hand’<sup>93</sup>); *xela* ‘to accuse’ (= Marazig *ċala* ‘to make menacing gestures’);<sup>94</sup> *xellef* ‘to chip’, ‘to blunt’ (= TA *ċallaf* ‘to strike at’, to notch’); *warrab* ‘to put aside’ (= AA *wreb*, id.); and *żabar* ‘to prune’ (= NA *zber*, id.). Maltese *xehet* ‘to fling’, but originally ‘to stretch’ (cf. *mixħut* ‘stretched out in bed, laid up’), is cognate with Marazig *šahāt* ‘to stretch’, and Algerian *ħet* ‘to flog’, that is, ‘to stretch a whip’, ‘to slap hard’ (< Ar. *šahāta* ‘to drag out’, ‘to strand’), while *xewlaħ* ‘to hurl, fling’<sup>95</sup> matches Moroccan *śelweħ* ‘to swing, to sling’;<sup>96</sup> Tunisian (Marazig) *šálwah* ‘to thrust one’s legs forward, to stride’<sup>97</sup> and Algerian *šalwah* ‘to rake the ground (in reference to a horse)’<sup>98</sup>.

Other putative Syrianisms are among the isolated archaisms (*ħatar*, *werdiena*) or independent semantic developments (*żokra*, *ħobb*) of Maltese, as mentioned above. It would appear, then, that there is little or nothing else significant in the basic structure or core vocabulary of Maltese that cannot be explained within the broad frameworks of medieval Maghrebine Arabic, of Siculo-Greek, or of Romance vernaculars.

## Conclusion

Modern Maltese cannot be accurately described as an Arabic dialect, being typologically a mixed language in which the foreign (mostly Sicilian and Italian) element numerically far outweighs the native (Semitic) core of its vocabulary. Nevertheless, this lexical base, which includes Berber substratal elements, remains strong and productive. It bears witness not only to the Siculo-Arabic and Maghrebine origins of the language but equally, through

<sup>93</sup> Boris Gilbert, *Lexique du parler arabe des Marazig* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1958), 324.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 321.

<sup>95</sup> Etymologically distinct from *ċewlaħ* ‘to ill-treat’ ‘to make shabby’.

<sup>96</sup> Harrell, *Dictionary of Moroccan Arabic*, 154.

<sup>97</sup> Boris, *Lexique*, 321.

<sup>98</sup> Marcelin Beaussier, *Dictionnaire pratique arabe-français contenant tous les mots employés dans l'arabe parlé en Algérie et en Tunisie* (Algiers: Adolphe Jourdan, 1887), vol. 2: 435.

its many idiosyncrasies, to almost eight centuries of isolation from the Arabic-speaking world. Although the material vestiges of the Arabic, Berber and Islamic civilisations have long since disappeared in Malta, whose culture continues to be basically Italian in spite of its 164-year subjection to Great Britain, the Maltese language (*il-Malti*) is unique today as the last living off-shoot of European Arabic. This distinction of being genetically distinct from the majority Indo-European languages (while having been powerfully influenced by certain of them) is one shared with five other indigenous languages spoken within the European Union: Basque, Hungarian, Estonian, Finnish and Sami.

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# 13

## TRINACRIA: THREE WORLDS IN ONE ISLAND (CHRISTIANS, JEWS AND MUSLIMS)

*Giovanna Summerfield*

Sicily has been in the headlines over the last decade, as it is often the first landfall on European soil for refugee men, women and children who brave the crossing of the Mediterranean Sea. They do so in a bid to escape war, famine and poverty in their home countries on the African continent, within Eastern Europe and Southeast Asia. Since the end of 2010, for instance, the unrest in the Middle East and North Africa has generated a wave of migration directed from Tunisian and Libyan shores to Sicily. A representation of this occurrence can be seen on the tiny Sicilian island of Lampedusa,<sup>1</sup> which, lying just 96 miles east of the Tunisian coast, experienced an influx of migrants that exceeded 50,000 by the end of August 2011. The stream of migrants seeking a better life has continued relentlessly since then.

Following Campania with 164,268 foreigners, Sicily has the second-highest foreign population in Italy – 140,000, according to ISTAT in 2011 – with legal immigration accounting for 3.1 per cent of the national

<sup>1</sup> Lampedusa covers an area of 25.83 square kilometres and has 6,299 inhabitants, according to the latest statistics, ISTAT 2011, as published on the island's official website: <https://www.comune.lampedusaelinosa.ag.it>.

total. This foreign presence is composed, in order of ascending size, of communities of Romanians, Tunisians, Moroccans, Sri Lankans, Albanians, Chinese, Poles, Bangladeshis, Filipinos and Mauritians, with new arrivals from Nigeria, Senegal, Ivory Coast, Eritrea, Somalia and Libya.<sup>2</sup> This influx is not a recent phenomenon, however. In modern times, mass migration towards Italy became pronounced between the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s. Before then, the migrant population was composed primarily of post-colonial immigrants, returning migrants and European upper-class merchants. By the end of the 1970s, however, new routes of migration appeared: in Sicily, the first Tunisians arrived between 1964 and 1969. During the 1980s, they were joined by individuals from Morocco, Algeria and Egypt. In the 1990s, Sicily experienced yet a new set of migrants, this time from China, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Albania and subsequently the entire Balkan area.<sup>3</sup>

Sicily's proximity to North Africa and Europe, and its location between them, helped it to become both a stepping stone for many civilisations and a multi-cultural setting within the Mediterranean. The outcome of its unique geographical position is mirrored by its peculiar physical configuration. Sicily is triangular in shape, hence its ancient name Trinacria, meaning 'three-cornered'.<sup>4</sup> The three headlands making up the triangle are Capo Peloro (also known as Capo Faro) in the province of Messina in the northeast; Capo Passetto, in Syracuse in the south; and Capo Lilibeo, in the province of Marsala in the west. More than being just a reflection of the island's triangular topography, Sicily's three-legged symbol – the triskelion – is indicative of Sicily's early Greek heritage. The triskelion is attributed to the three terrifying Gorgons of Greek mythology (the sisters Stheno, Euryale and Medusa), whose gaze could turn anyone who looked upon them to stone and whose blood

<sup>2</sup> Maria Sorbello, 'Multiculturalism in the Mediterranean Basin: An Overview of Recent Immigration to Sicily', in *Sicily and the Mediterranean: Migration, Exchange, Reinvention*, edited by Claudia Karagoz and Giovanna Summerfield (New York: Palgrave, 2015), 183–86.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 180–89.

<sup>4</sup> Alex Metcalfe, *Muslims and Christians in Norman Sicily: Arabic Speakers and the End of Islam* (London: Routledge, 2003), 45.

could either revive or kill someone instantly.<sup>5</sup> The triskelion was clearly a symbolic warning to all potential invaders. But it was also a reference to Sicily's bountifulness (highlighted by the wheat intertwined with the snarly snakes of the Trinacria on the Greek coins and Sicily's flag), its resourcefulness and the cycle of life, death and rebirth.

The pattern of the three is carried through in the three worlds that gave rise to Sicily's multi-cultural, multi-layered population: Christian, Jewish and Muslim all in one. But did these three cultures meet and co-exist in harmony? Or did they collide and transform into what Braudel spoke of as 'the unity of a coherent system, where all is mixed and recomposed into an original unity' (*all'unità di un sistema coerente, dove tutto si mischia e si ricompone in una unità originale*)?<sup>6</sup> And is it possible that the lessons of the past can inform the challenges posed by today's migratory waves? Let us look at some of the historical facts and draw our own conclusions.

For centuries, traders and warriors arrived daily on the shores of Sicily. After being ruled by Greeks and Romans, Byzantine Sicily from the sixth to the early ninth century swarmed with ships, coming from Constantinople, Rome, Egypt and North Africa. These ships brought a range of people who contributed to the overall diversity of the island's demography. Although it preserved Greek and Roman customs and languages, Byzantine Sicily emerged as one of the most important Christianised regions of the early Middle Ages. This is evidenced by the multiple religious icons and buildings found on the island from that period – like the Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul (built in 560, then destroyed and rebuilt in the 1100s). Such Christian-influenced architecture and art continued to have an impact after the Muslims defeated the Byzantines in the tenth century, as is visible in the Norman Palace with its famous Palatine chapel. Further cementing Christianity in Sicily, Constans II moved the Byzantine Empire's capital from Constantinople to Syracuse in 663.<sup>7</sup> He did this not only for political reasons but

<sup>5</sup> For details on the Gorgons, see Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Book IV, 604–803 (A. S. Kline's version), <https://ovid.lib.virginia.edu/trans/Metamorph4.htm>; Hesiod, *Theogony*, <https://msu.edu/~tyrrell/theogon.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Fernand Braudel, *Civiltà e imperi del Mediterraneo all'epoca di Filippo II* (Torino: Einaudi, 1953), 34.

<sup>7</sup> Syracuse had been 'evangelised' by Paul in the year 59. The description of his journey and visit to the Sicilian city is to be found in Acts 28 of the Bible.

also as part of a military strategy. As Gian Luigi Scarfiotti and Paul Lunde write, '[f]rom its strategic location in the Mediterranean the Byzantines were able to control shipping and launch naval attacks against the coastal cities of the Muslim Levant and North Africa'.<sup>8</sup>

Although Muslim forces had raided Sicily since the seventh century,<sup>9</sup> it was the power struggle between Euphemius and the military governor Constantine Souda that created the opportunity for Muslim control, which started in 827, with Palermo finally falling in 831. Some of the Sicilian population migrated to the mainland, but many parts of the northeast of the island continued to be home to robust Christian communities.<sup>10</sup> A similar pattern emerged when the Normans took over from the Muslims, as Sarah Davis-Secord reminds us:

Minority population groups remained under both regimes – in the case of Greek Christians, throughout the Muslim period and in the case of Muslims, until the final descendants of Sicily's Muslims were expelled from the island under Frederick II in the thirteenth century.<sup>11</sup>

She emphasises the fact that these trends of movement entailed cultural hybridisation and change in Sicily with respect to language, religion and social habits. It also demonstrated the complexity of the cross-cultural relationships in and around the island. The tenth-century Muslim geographer Ibn Hawqal confirms in his accounts the hybrid cultural zone that resulted from the blend of Islamic customs and the local customs of the Berber and the Greek inhabitants. He wrote:

Most people [ . . . ] are bastardised Muslims [ . . . ] and think that marriage to Christians is [allowed] provided that their male child follows the father by being a bastardised Muslim [ . . . ] and that a female [child] becomes a Christian

<sup>8</sup> Gian Luigi Scarfiotti and Paul Lunde, 'Muslim Sicily', *Saudi Aramco World* (November/December 1978): 22–32.

<sup>9</sup> Leonard Chiarelli, *A History of Muslim Sicily* (Venera: Midsea Books, 2011), 72; Alex Metcalfe, *The Muslims of Medieval Sicily* (Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 6; Sarah Davis-Secord, *Where Three Worlds Met: Sicily in the Early Medieval Mediterranean* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017), 29–30, 78–83.

<sup>10</sup> Metcalfe, *Muslims and Christians in Norman Sicily*, 11–15.

<sup>11</sup> Davis-Secord, *Where Three Worlds Met*, 110.

with her mother. They neither pray nor perform ritual ablutions [ . . . ] nor pay the alms tax, nor perform the pilgrimage [to Mecca].<sup>12</sup>

Ibn Hawqal also criticised the institutions of Islamic society that he saw in Sicily, such as mosques, schools and military establishments. He did not hide his disdain for the size and opulence of the central mosque of Palermo, which was able to fit 7,000 worshippers. Nor did he like the fact that it co-existed with 300 smaller mosques in the city. For him, this proved that the Sicilian Muslims were full of vanity, and that they sought to keep their privacy in not adhering to the rules of joining in prayer according to Muslim tradition. Ibn Hawqal's comments about several schools flourishing in the city were equally negative. He believed that the large number of schools was due to schoolmasters trying to avoid participating in the military expeditions of *jihad*; this Ibn Hawqal saw as proof again of non-adherence to Muslim tradition.<sup>13</sup>

In spite of Ibn Hawqal's harsh criticism, his records show the rights that existed in Sicily at that time for individuals to practice any religion they chose, even though this may have jeopardised some of the privileges that the majority enjoyed. This is true of the *dhimmi*, the Jews and the Christians who were protected but subordinated throughout the Muslim world in the Middle Ages; of the Jews in Byzantium and much of Western Europe; and of the Muslims in the Christian kingdoms in Sicily and in Spain. The *abl al-kitāb* – the people of the book (Jews and Christians) – were expected to pay a poll tax (*jizya*), but it was decreed that they must not be converted to Islam by force.<sup>14</sup> David Abulafia, in *The Great Sea*, remarks that there are grounds to believe that non-Muslim merchants had a greater advantage during the Muslim domination of Sicily, for 'Muslims were constrained by legal rulings that forbade them from living or even trading in infidel lands'.<sup>15</sup> They also had to pay a special tax on

<sup>12</sup> Metcalfe, *Muslims and Christians in Norman Sicily*, 16.

<sup>13</sup> Davis-Secord, *Where Three Worlds Met*, 135–36.

<sup>14</sup> John Tolan, 'The Legal Status of Religious Minorities in the Medieval Mediterranean World: A Contemporary Study', in *Hybride Kulturen im mittelalterlichen Europa/Hybrid Cultures in Medieval Europe: Papers and Workshops of an International Spring School*, edited by Michael Borgolte and Bernd Schneidmüller (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2010), 142.

<sup>15</sup> David Abulafia, *The Great Sea: A Human History of the Mediterranean* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 258.

imported goods, starting from the second half of the twelfth century. There were, to be fair, some bans imposed by Muslim rulers on public displays of faith by Jews and Christians, as well as on their constructing or repairing religious buildings.

The conflicting narratives of the diverse communities of the time are at the fore of recent publications, authored by scholars like Leonard Chiarelli, *History of Muslim Sicily* and William Granara, *Narrating Muslim Sicily: War and Peace in the Medieval Mediterranean World*.<sup>16</sup> Drawing from the fundamental work of Michele Amari,<sup>17</sup> *Storia dei Musulmani di Sicilia*, and having the advantage of knowing the Arabic language, both authors, through their reading and understanding of the chroniclers of the time, are able to map a more precise history of Muslim Sicily and the complexities of political, social and economic status of the island, focusing on the challenges of ongoing struggles and successions (the Sunnī Aghlabids, the Shiīte Fāṭimids, from North Africa, and the Shī‘ī dynasty of the Kalbids), an ever-changing, transcultural community in the midst of strife and peace, conforming to the predominant expectations. ‘The Norman entry into a precariously divided Arab Sicily and thirty-five years of relatively easy victories ended the Muslim rule over the island’. The continuous deceit and power-shift giving rise to a consequent destabilisation is in net contradiction with the mainstream view of a coherent Islam against a specific enemy, such as an opposite faith-based community.<sup>18</sup>

For much of the twelfth century, Norman Sicily – referred to as a period of utopia of co-existence, *convivencia*, but where, amazingly contact zones were indeed established, as Granara underscores<sup>19</sup> – remained home to a mixed

<sup>16</sup> Leonard Chiarelli, *History of Muslim Sicily* (Malta: Midsea Books, 2011, reprinted 2018); William Granara, *Narrating Muslim Sicily: War and Peace in the Medieval Mediterranean World* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2019).

<sup>17</sup> Amari had already understood the limited knowledge and in a way transparency of the recording of a Muslim Sicily: ‘Indi mi è paruto probabile che la tradizione [ . . . ], fosse derivata da unica sorgente arabica. Se altre notizie vi erano su la dominazione musulmana, i cronisti siciliani, secondo la ignoranza e pregiudizii della età loro, le doveano trascurare, o volontariamente sopprimere’ (introduzione).

<sup>18</sup> Granara, *Narrating Muslim Sicily*, 34–35.

<sup>19</sup> William Granara interviewed by Chris Gratien, in ‘Muslim Sicily and its Legacies’, *Ottoman History Podcast*, 2020, <https://www.ottomanhistorypodcast.com/2020/02/muslim-sicily.html>.

population, with Muslims making up the majority.<sup>20</sup> Greeks comprised the second-largest group, Jews the third-largest and northern settlers from Liguria, Tuscany and Provence the smallest group. Each group was free to practice its own religion, had its own law courts for cases between co-religionists and was guaranteed the court's protection, subject to payment of the poll tax, if they were Muslims or Jews. Hence, under this Norman rulership, there was a reversal, with Christians now exempt from paying the poll tax while Muslims were liable to do so.<sup>21</sup>

All three communities, the Christian, the Jewish and the Muslim, shared the same language<sup>22</sup> and cultural heritage. That there was an intermingling of cultures among the communities is observable in the following description from the twelfth-century geographer Ibn Jubayr. In Palermo, young Arabic-speaking Christian women caught his eye as they passed him on their way to the Church of Santa Maria dell'Ammiraglio. He recalled that 'the Christian women's dress is the dress of Muslims; they are eloquent speakers of Arabic and cover themselves with veils [ . . . ]. They appear at their churches bearing all the finery of Muslim women in their attire, henna and perfume.'<sup>23</sup>

When Roger II began his rule as King of Norman Sicily in 1130 and of Africa in 1148, he adopted the structure of the Arab courts. He had at his

<sup>20</sup> Metcalfe has discussed the key role played by the majority Muslim population in Norman Sicily during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; see *The Muslims of Medieval Italy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 141–59. Chiarelli states that 'a hundred years after Muslim rule [ . . . ] most of the population was speaking Arabic', even in Messina, 'one of the least Arabized cities', and that already by 1030 'at least half of the population was Muslim'; see *A History of Muslim Sicily*, 173, 181.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 282.

<sup>22</sup> 'The linguistic history of medieval Sicily is both intriguing and complex. From the classical Roman and Byzantine periods until the Arab invasions of 827, the majority of the island's population spoke either dialects of Greek or Latin or both. On the arrival of the Normans around 1060, Arabic was the dominant language, but by 1250 prestigious Romance vernaculars could be heard almost everywhere. Of particular importance is the formative period of Norman rule (1061–1194), when the key transitions from an Arab-Muslim to a Latin-Christian island were made. During that time Romance dialects were spoken by many among the ruling elite but most of the indigenous population continued to communicate in Arabic' (Metcalfe, *Arabic Speakers in Norman Sicily*, ii).

<sup>23</sup> Metcalfe, *Muslims and Christians in Norman Sicily*, 96–97.

court *janib* (military aids), *silabi* (servants), *ḥājjib* (chamberlains) and *jandar* (bodyguards). He also instituted a *dīwān-al mazḥālim* (a court of law against abuses), where he personally was involved in righting the wrongs of those offended.<sup>24</sup> His court in Palermo was multi-cultural: alongside Latin officials, there were Greek and Arab colleagues. Alongside talented Byzantines, such as the monk and writer Neilos Doxapates, there was the renowned Muslim geographer, botanist and pharmacist Muhammad al-Idrīsī. Al-Idrīsī was commissioned by Roger II to write a geographical text in Arabic that contained a map in the Islamic style. Al-Idrīsī completed this work, *The Book of Roger*, in 1154. The world map within it depicted Sicily for the first time in history as a large triangular island in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea.<sup>25</sup>

Even though a document of the time, written by Bishop John of Catania in 1168, states that ‘every person is judged according to her/his law’ (*Latini, Greci, Judei et Saraceni, unusquisque iuxta suam legem iudicetur*), the reality is that specific rules were applied to Muslims and Jews in the service of the Christianisation plans of the Normans and the subsequent rulers of Sicily. In spite of his ‘encouraged tolerance in this multi-ethnic state when it was politically necessary, overall, Roger expected strict obedience to his rule’.<sup>26</sup> While drafting laws that sealed complete subjection of the Church and government to him, he maintained compliance to the Codex Justinianus, a sixth-century document coding Roman law. The Codex’s ninth title contains a series of mandates establishing both the rights and the duties of Jews. Among others, this section of the Codex prohibited Jews from attacking or insulting converts from Judaism to Christianity, from marrying Christians, from engaging in defamatory acts against Christians and from proselytising and building new synagogues, although they were allowed to repair old ones. The Codex also guaranteed protections for Jews. For example, soldiers could not be billeted in synagogues, and the Jews could not be summoned to court on the Jewish sabbath. Jews were also protected from being insulted by Christians.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Giovanna Palombo, ‘The Normans of Sicily from “the Other Side”: The Medieval Arabic Sources’, in *Sicily and the Mediterranean: Migration, Exchange, Reinvention*, edited by Claudia Karagoz and Giovanna Summerfield (New York: Palgrave, 2015), 36.

<sup>25</sup> Davis-Secord, *Where Three Worlds Met*, 230–31.

<sup>26</sup> Christopher Kleinhenz, *Medieval Italy: An Encyclopedia* (London: Routledge 2004), 972.

<sup>27</sup> Tolan, ‘The Legal Status of Religious Minorities in the Medieval Mediterranean World’, 143.

The Jewish community in Sicily was one of the most ancient in Europe. (It was also a very large one, economically and culturally active, as Bresc and Goitein note,<sup>28</sup> with about 10 per cent comprising the local population, making Sicily the land with the highest percentage of Jews in Europe. By comparison, in Spain the number of Jews was estimated to be 2.5 per cent of the population). There exists evidence that the first community of Jews settled in Sicily in the first century.<sup>29</sup> Unfortunately, records of the Jewish presence on the island are scarce, except for the *Registrum epistolarum Gregorii I Papae* and the *Encomio di San Marciano*. These documents give us insight into the communities of the island, specifically at Messina, Palermo, Agrigento and Syracuse. Europe's oldest *mikveh* (Jewish ritual bath) is found in Syracuse.<sup>30</sup> A visit to the bath was obligatory for Jews to cleanse themselves of impurities, an act crucial for married men and women. Also, immersion in the bath was a must for all practicing Jews on Friday afternoons in preparation for the celebration of the Sabbath, prior to Yom Kippur and to the celebration of Rosh Hashanah. According to Jewish law, one was also compelled to immerse pots, plates and kitchen utensils in the *mikveh* if these were made by a Gentile or if they were being used for the first time.<sup>31</sup>

Each Jewish community in Sicily had its own neighbourhoods known as *giudeccas*. These were created spontaneously by Jews who, although free to travel and have businesses anywhere, wished to have their own locales in which to practice the precepts and customs of their religion. In them, one could find kosher meat-butchering facilities, places for the teaching of the Torah and synagogues or *meschitas* (*meschita* being a word derived from the Arabic *masjid*, meaning 'mosque' denoting a conciliation between Muslims and Jews). During the Arab conquest, in fact, Jews enjoyed prosperity and harmony. Cultural

<sup>28</sup> Henri Bresc and Shelomo D. Goitein, 'Un inventaire dotal de Juifs siciliens (1479)', *Mélanges d'Archéologie et d'Histoire* 82 (1970), 903.

<sup>29</sup> Gaetano Cipolla, 'The Jews of Sicily', *Italics Magazine* (May 2020), <https://italicsmag.com/2020/05/07/the-jews-of-sicily/>.

<sup>30</sup> Susanna Valpreda, 'Gli ebrei nella Sicilia bizantina: Testimonianze letterarie e ritrovamenti archeologici', *MediterraneoAntico.it* (2017): 2, 5.

<sup>31</sup> Angela Scandaliato and Nuccio Mulè, *Percorsi ebraici a Siracusa: Il mistero della chiesa che non fu mai sinagoga e della sinagoga trasformata in chiesa* (Firenze: Casa Editrice Giuntina, 2014), 44–51.

connections took place also through ongoing translations of Arabic works by Jews, and of Jewish works by Arabs; thus, Jews were actors in the political world of the time. Their commercial activities also increased with the advent of the Normans.<sup>32</sup>

In the Norman period, the island was indeed a multi-cultural world, but not necessarily a peaceful one. Under William I (1154–68) and William II (1171–89), outbreaks of ethnic and religious strife, some of them enabled by the tyranny of the two royals, as remarked by Hugo Falcandus in his *History of the Tyrants of Sicily*, destroyed the Sicilian façade of unity, proving that even in previous times this exceptional co-existence of cultures was more an achievement attained only for pragmatic reasons and convenience.<sup>33</sup> The palace Saracens, for example, who served the Crown in Sicily were royal dependants, not community leaders, and were mostly unrelated to the island's Muslim population.<sup>34</sup> Many of the Arab servants of William II were secretly Muslims who pretended to be Christian in order to maintain their roles in the palace. There are also several references that show sons and daughters of Muslims being baptised as Christians to rebel against their own families and creeds. Christians played a key role in mediating between the upper classes of the Latin lords and their Muslim subjects. They also connected with mainland Italy, while the Muslims were more confined. In that controlled environment, Muslims could not challenge royal authority, and they benefited the crown through taxes and military service.<sup>35</sup>

Frederick II, like his predecessors William I and William II, was a ruler of contrasts in his approach to the Arab communities and their culture. He was fluent in Arabic, to the extent that he impressed even his Arabic court members. While compiling his own treatise on falconry, *De arte venandi cum avibus*, he consulted several scientific Arabic resources along with Western

<sup>32</sup> Moshe Ben Simon, 'La presenza ebraica in Sicilia: Tra memoria e oblio', *Agorà* 10/3 (2002): 8–9, [www.editorialeagora.it](http://www.editorialeagora.it) (accessed 16 July 2019).

<sup>33</sup> See Hugo Falcandus, *The History of the Tyrants of Sicily by 1154–69*, translated by G. A. Loud and Thomas Wiedemann (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998).

<sup>34</sup> Charles Dalli, 'From Islam to Christianity: The Case of Sicily', in *Religion, Ritual and Mythology: Aspects of Identity Formation in Europe*, edited by J. Carvalho (Pisa: Plus Ed., 2006), 153–58.

<sup>35</sup> Julie Taylor, *Muslims in Medieval Italy: The Colony of Lucera* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2003), 99.

works.<sup>36</sup> Because of his openness to the Arabic culture, the clergy and the pope himself considered Frederick II a heretic. The paradox is that he was at the same time an admirer and a persecutor of his Muslim subjects, a contradiction that Henri Bresc attempts to solve by stating that

Les campagnes de Frédéric contre ses propres sujets révoltés et leur déportation à Lucera n'étaient en rien déterminées par une volonté abstraite d'unité religieuse [ . . . ] L'écrasement des musulmans de Sicile n'a donc pas d'autre cause que la volonté de discipline politique.

Frederick's campaigns against his own rebellious subjects and their deportation to Lucera were in no way determined by an abstract will for religious unity [ . . . ] The crushing of the Muslims of Sicily therefore had no other cause than the will for political discipline].<sup>37</sup>

During Frederick II's reign, from 1194 to 1250, the Jews continued to successfully conduct their business activities (mostly having to do with gold, coral, iron, dyes and fishing), under his personal protection, as stated by his Charter (1231). In addition, Frederick II declared that it was legal for Jews to practice money-lending as long as they did not charge more than 10 per cent interest.<sup>38</sup> Yet, various measures were adopted in order to differentiate Jews from Christians. Jews were made to wear a distinctive badge, primarily with the aim of preventing sexual intercourse between individuals of different faiths. Due to the wish to create a more cohesive Christian community in the face of increased urbanisation (that led to Jewish businesses being seen as economic rivals rather than just economic contributors) and the rise of new intellectual trends, Pope Benedict XII requested that Peter IV of Aragon (then king of Sicily) stop Jews and Muslims from living together with Christians. As for what life was like for the Muslim population, Ibn Jubayr wrote:

<sup>36</sup> Karla Mallette, *The Kingdom of Sicily, 1100–1250: A Literary History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 49–50.

<sup>37</sup> Bresc, 'Frederic II et l'Islam', 87–88.

<sup>38</sup> Cipolla, 'The Jews of Sicily'.

The Muslims of this city (Palermo) preserve the remaining evidence of the faith. They keep in repair the greater number of their mosques, and come to prayers at the call of the muezzin. In their own suburbs, they live apart from the Christians [ . . . ] in general, these Muslims do not mix with their brethren under infidel patronage, and enjoy no security for their goods, their women, or their children.<sup>39</sup>

It is to be noted that the Muslims were deported by Frederick II to Lucera, in Apulia, between 1220 and 1240.<sup>40</sup>

*Stupor mundi*<sup>41</sup> Frederick II occasionally demonstrated respect also for the Jews. Of great significance is an episode that took place in 1236, as mentioned by historian Hubert Houben, where Frederick II pardoned Jews who were accused of killing young Christian boys, purportedly so that they could use their blood for ritualistic purposes. Introducing the case, Frederick explained that he had already decided on their innocence before listening to the facts, based on his knowledge of their sacred texts and the Constitution of Melfi's laws that protected religious minorities (see Book I, 27), providing Jews and Muslims with the right to appeal abuses and injustices even against the governing authorities and the king himself. Yet, as with the Muslims, Frederick II was also discriminatory towards the Jews.<sup>42</sup> With the same Constitution (Book I, 28), for example, he imposed differing fines on the local community if they were unable to seize a murderer, depending on the victim's religious

<sup>39</sup> Davis-Secord, *Where Three Worlds Met*, 213.

<sup>40</sup> Dalli, 'From Islam to Christianity', 152, 159.

<sup>41</sup> *Stupor mundi* is a 'Latin phrase meaning the marvel of the world, an object of admiring bewilderment and wonder; it was originally used by the 13th-century chronicler Matthew Paris to describe the Emperor Frederick II of Germany (1194–1250) for his enormous contributions and great talents' (Oxford Reference).

<sup>42</sup> It was the next Sicilian monarch, Frederick III, who in 1312 expelled the Jews from Palermo's city centre, relegating them to quarters located outside the city walls (Nadia Zeldes, 'The Legal Status of Jewish Converts to Christianity in Southern Italy and Provence', *California Italian Studies* 1/1 (2010): 1–3). The Jewish population eventually was forced to leave the island due to an infamous decree of 1492 by Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain; it is safe to assume that at least a quarter of the Jewish population became Christian in order to remain in the island while others departed. A few years later Sicily became predominantly Roman Catholic; see Cipolla, 'The Jews of Sicily'.

affiliation. If the victim were a Christian, the fine was 100 *augustales*; if the victim were a Jew or Muslim, it was only 50 *augustales*.<sup>43</sup> Further evidence of Frederick's contradictory approach to the Jews is seen, on the one hand, in his ordering all Jews to wear a distinctive badge, the *rotella rossa*, to grow a beard and to wear specific clothing and colours in order to be easily distinguishable, while, on the other hand, allowing them the monopoly of the silk industry and freedom from certain fiscal controls. And although Frederick declared Jews slaves to the Camera Regia – that is to say, they were the personal belongings of the king – he allowed Jewish and Muslim counsellors, doctors and scholars to operate within his court, which testifies to a certain level of respect.<sup>44</sup>

John Julius Norwich also mentioned this element of tolerance in his observations about Sicily in this period. He wrote:

Norman Sicily stood forth in Europe – and indeed in the whole bigoted medieval world – as an example of tolerance and enlightenment, a lesson in the respect that every man should feel for those whose blood and beliefs happen to differ from his own.<sup>45</sup>

Houben, however, takes issue with the use of the word 'tolerance'. Tolerance, he reminds us, used in the sense of a recognition of the equality of religious communities, is, indeed, a concept born in the modern era.<sup>46</sup> Making a parallel point, Karla Mallette notes that it would be a mistake to view the Kingdom of Sicily as a nation in the modern sense of the word, to ignore the difference between medieval Sicilian constructions of cultural identity and modern ones. Instead, we should keep in mind how medieval writers manipulated markers of cultural identity – such as languages and textual practices that they borrowed from different literary traditions – in order to produce

<sup>43</sup> Hubert Houben, 'Il rispetto interetnico e interreligioso da Ruggero II a Federico II', *Tabulae del centro studi federiciani* 39 (2008), 144.

<sup>44</sup> Simon, 'La presenza ebraica in Sicilia', 12.

<sup>45</sup> John Julius Norwich, *The Normans in Sicily: The Magnificent Story of 'the Other Norman Conquest'* (London: Penguin, 1992), 751.

<sup>46</sup> Houben, 'Il rispetto interetnico e interreligioso da Ruggero II a Federico II', 125–27.

and deploy a geographical and temporal self-consciousness.<sup>47</sup> Thus, it would be more fitting to adopt the term ‘respect’ instead of ‘tolerance’. According to Houben, inter-ethnic and inter-religious respect refers to a type of respect that was typically found in the multi-cultural regions of Spain and Southern Italy in medieval times. In these regions, living with others of different origins and creeds allowed for the realisation and appreciation of cultural pluralism.

It would seem logical that, because the Normans were the minority group in Sicily, they had to respect the Muslims, who were the majority, and the Jews, who made up a substantial portion of the population. Yet, as Abulafia notes, ‘the transformation of Sicily into a Christian island was also, paradoxically, the work of those whose culture was under threat’.<sup>48</sup> The responses to such threat were, in fact, either the relocation of Muslims and Jews or their conversion to Christianity. In trying to understand the reasons for these religious and cultural transformations, it is worth considering the issue from the economic perspective— that is, through the economic relations that were so crucial to the trade, the composition and economic role of Sicily, relations that needed to be nurtured or switched according to the particular circumstances. Bearing in mind the multi-faceted identity, language and social mores of Sicily, it is not difficult to understand why the Normans capitalised on this richness and originality. The Normans adopted and adapted the practices they found in Sicily. They took over institutions established by their predecessors, used Arabic alongside Greek and Latin as the language of business and hired Arabic artists and artisans to build their architectural projects.<sup>49</sup> They used what had already flourished or was flourishing in Sicily to establish themselves as ‘Mediterranean’ rulers. They asserted their own power by utilising local assets and idioms to network and compete with the rest of the Mediterranean world, in order to expand their rule across the sea. The cultural mosaic in Sicily took the form of monarchic patronage of Arab men of letters and architects during the Norman era and Christian appropriation of Muslim culture during the thirteenth century. For instance, there were performances by Arab girls who played music and danced at the

<sup>47</sup> Mallette, *The Kingdom of Sicily*, 9–10.

<sup>48</sup> David Abulafia, ‘The End of Muslim Sicily’, in *Muslims under Latin Rule, 1100–1300*, edited by James M. Powell (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 109.

<sup>49</sup> Mallette, *The Kingdom of Sicily*, 5.

court of Frederick II. There were strategies employed to restore the cultivation of crops once produced in the island, after the 1200s, particularly through the assistance of North African Jews,<sup>50</sup> and then Arab, Greek and Tatar slaves.<sup>51</sup> All this not only demonstrates the ongoing presence and appreciation of Arabic culture in Sicily, but also teaches us also not to oversimplify the history of cultural relations in the medieval Mediterranean.<sup>52</sup>

Indeed, we ought to think of this history of Sicily as that of an interesting shaping and re-shaping of individual and collective identities.<sup>53</sup> As mentioned earlier, the different cultures, languages and creeds were never superseded but were partly adopted and repackaged under the new regime; the Sicilian population was renewed, never shedding what had been learned and incorporated in earlier times of co-existence with other groups. The history of Sicily's imprints is definitely indelible. The Sicilian language itself is a testament to this, as it amalgamates several languages spoken by the different civilisations present on the island at various points in history. In this sense, it is an incomparable cultural language. Peter of Eboli (1196–1220), court poet to Henri VI, Holy Emperor and King of Sicily, spoke of Palermo as a happy city inhabited by 'a trilingual people' (*un popolo trilingue*), confirming what Roman poet and philosopher Apuleius had already noted, two centuries after Cicero, by referring to the island's population as *Siculi trilingues* himself.<sup>54</sup> Charles Dalli also comments about this trilingualism, which can be found in charters from the Norman period in Sicily:

The collection of charters in the three administrative languages of Norman Sicily by Salvatore Cusa and his students remains to date, 'an essential tool for researchers' despite containing some serious errors [...] These charters – forty-six in all, dating between 1093 and 1242 – were composed in Arabic, together with Greek and/or Latin.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Giuseppe Mandalà, 'La migrazione degli ebrei del Garibaldi in Sicilia (1239)', *Materia Giudaica: Rivista dell'Associazione italiana per gli studi del Giudaismo* 11/1–2 (2006), 179.

<sup>51</sup> Abulafia, *The Great Sea*, 104, 120.

<sup>52</sup> Mallette *The Kingdom of Sicily*, 14–15.

<sup>53</sup> Dalli, 'From Islam to Christianity', 161.

<sup>54</sup> Alessandro Vanoli, 'Musulmani in un'isola Cristiana: Brevi cenni di una lunga storia', *Edad Media: Revista de Historia* 17 (2016): 166–67.

<sup>55</sup> Dalli, 'From Islam to Christianity', 156–57.

Iolanda Lanzafame and, before her, linguists such as Alberto Varvaro and historians such as Henri Bresc also underscore the existence of the fascinating Sicilian *mozarabico* (with its Graeco-Arabic linguistic roots, as Latin was the lingua franca during the Christian restoration of the Norman era until 1250) and of a new linguistic medium (an illustrious Sicilian with some idioms in Latin and Provençal, created by the Scuola poetica siciliana at the court of Frederick II).<sup>56</sup> Also of interest within this linguistic context is the *Educazione della lingua*, authored by lexicographer Ibn Makkī, who lived in Sicily during the Norman period. It is a treatise that highlights the errors made by Sicilian locals while speaking Arabic. These were mostly mispronunciations that were clearly indicators of regional specificities prior to the Norman conquest. The work identifies the Arabic spoken by certain communities in Sicily which had been altered through the intermingling with different languages, mostly Greek and Latin.<sup>57</sup> However, in the nineteenth century, with the unification of Italy, all regions experienced a shift from dialects to standardised Italian; yet, Sicilian is still alive and well and has actually been revitalised through use in schools, churches and everyday life.

Sicily, the tri-cornered, trilingual, largest island of the Mediterranean Sea, served and continues to serve as a space of interactions between three different cultures. In ancient times the island was the scene of conflicts between Carthaginians, Greeks and Romans. Defeating the Byzantines in the 800s, the Arabs made Sicily their home for two centuries. The Islamic culture existed alongside the long-seeded Jewish communities' traditions practiced *in loco* for fourteen centuries. Other conquering forces included the Normans (and Swabians), the Spanish, the French, the Austrians and ultimately the British. Sicily is undoubtedly 'a vital region for asking and answering questions of concern to both medieval and contemporary people',<sup>58</sup> a 'key to everything', as Goethe described it in his *Journey to Italy*, after witnessing the rich and enduring legacies that the island boasts. It is hoped that in such pressing times as the current ones, when the Mediterranean is experiencing a surge of migratory waves, scholars and

<sup>56</sup> Iolanda Lanzafame, 'Linguistic Contaminations in Sicily: From the Roman Rule to the Present', in *Sicily and the Mediterranean: Migration, Exchange, Reinvention*, edited by Claudia Karagoz and Giovanna Summerfield (New York: Palgrave, 2015), 115–19.

<sup>57</sup> Alessandro Vanoli, *La Sicilia musulmana* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2012), 205.

<sup>58</sup> Davis-Secord, *Where Three Worlds Met*, 28.

statesmen will cease to neglect its past and rather learn from it to apply those lessons to the present to arrive at future solutions.

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## APPENDIX OF ARABIC POETRY CITED IN CHAPTER TEN

[Text 1]

الأمير مستخلص الدولة عبد الرحمن بن الحسن الكلبي يحضر أحد الكتاب على حضور مجلسه  
نحو كلامنا يضمّنا أدبٌ      حرمتنا فيه حرمة النسب  
وأجنب إلينا فإن الفتنة      تدفع باليمن (حرفة الأدب)

[Text 2]

يقول أبو القاسم عبدالله بن سليمان بن يخلف الكلبي الصقلي :  
فليت ليالي الصدود الطوال      فداء ليالي الوصال القصار

[Text 3]

أبو الحسن علي بن محمد بن علي الربعي الملقب بابن الخياط في مدح ثقة الدولة :  
ملك تضم الأرض قبضته      حتى تكون جميعها طبقاً  
يغزو بأدهم في العجاج ترى      لمع السيف بجسمه يلقا

[Text 4]

أبو عبدالله الحسين بن علي يمدح تأييد الدولة و عميدها أحمد بن ثقة الدولة :  
على العادات فاجر مع الأعادي      ونادي يجبك منهم كل نادٍ  
ولو أن البناء بناء عادٍ      بما لحسونهم منك امتناع

سلكت إليه منهاج الرشاد  
إلى أن قام فيهم منك هاد  
وأنزلت الوعول إلى الوهاد  
ومن عصب ومن طرف جواد  
فيضحي كالموثق في صفاد  
 فأصعدت المنون على الصعاد  
 رويت به وإنهم صواد  
 فلاقتها سيفك بالحصاد  
 حسامك حين مر على الهوادي  
 تصبحها بداعمة الحداد  
 وأرضك ما تروم من البلاد  
 تقل إن رمتها "ذات العماد"  
 هواك إلى العوادي والأعادي  
 مُخضبة الترائب بالجساد  
 سهاداً يقتضي طيب الرقاد  
 فإنك ذو اجتهاد في الجهاد  
 وأخرى تستهاب بها الأيدي  
 فكم من معقل لغلي سام  
 وقد حارت نفوس القوم فيه  
 فأصعدت الخيوط إلى الأودي  
 وكم أخرجت منها من كمي  
 يُغَلِّ يديه خوفك عن شباء  
 نجوا في حيث لا يرقى إليهم  
 لقد أوردتهم بالسيف ماء  
 لأن رؤوسهم كانت نباتاً  
 وكم أهدى إليك من الدراري  
 وأما رومة فإلى قريب  
 عبيدك من تؤم من الأعادي  
 فدونك يا عميد الملك فاعمد  
 صرفت عن الأغاني والغوانى  
 وقدمت الركاب على كعب  
 وكم باتت جفونك ساهدات  
 ومن يك في اللذاذة ذا اجتهاد  
 يداك بحر يدق بالمنايا

## [Text 5]

ابن الخطاط بمدح انتصار الدولة وابنه مستخلص الدولة :  
 عَلَّقْ رجاءك بالحسين وبابنه  
 إِنَّ الْعَلَاقَ بِالْكَرَامِ أَوَاصِيرُ  
 بِلَوَاءِ مَدْحُومَهَا فَإِنَّكَ ظَافِرٌ  
 وَاعْلَمْ بِإِنَّكَ إِنْ غَزَوتَ نَادِهَا

## [Text 6]

ابن الخطاط في مدح ثقة الدولة :  
 مَلَكَ تضمُّ الأَرْضَ قَبْضُهُ  
 حَتَّى تَكُونَ جَمِيعُهَا طَبْقاً

## [Text 7]

ابن الخطاط في مدح ثقة الدولة :  
 دَاوَيْتَ بِالصَّدَقَاتِ مَعْضَلَ دَائِهِ  
 وَالْبَرُّ يَدْفَعُ كُلَّ دَاءٍ

[Text 8]

ابن الخطاط يقول مادحأ ثقة الدولة :

صنيعة أنت مولاها وموليها  
فربها إنها سبع سنابلها

وإن أولى نباتاً أن تُثمره  
في حبة بارك الرحمن لي فيها

[Text 9]

محمد بن عبدون السوسي في مدح ثقة الدولة :

ولما رأيتُ البدر قمت مسلماً  
عليه وأظهرتُ الخضوع لديه  
شبيهُك قد عزَّ الوصول إليه  
إذا جئته تبغي السلام عليه

وقلت له: إنَّ الأمِير ابن يوسف  
فُكنْ لي شفيعاً عنده ومذكراً

[Text 10]

يقول ابن الرومي:  
كن لي إلى قمري شفيعاً

بالله يا قمر الدجى

[Text 11]

ابن الخطاط يمدح الكلبيين :

ترقرق حياء وامزج الحسن بالكرم  
سعودٌ وفي الهيجا ضراغمة بهم

وجوهٌ كأنَّ الله قال لمانها  
كانهم فرق الأسرة أنجُم

[Text 12]

الأمير جعفر بن يوسف ناج الدولة الكلبي يقول مفتخراً :

إن مسئت النار جسمي      أبديت طيب نسيمي  
كالدهر إن عضن يوماً      أباً فضل الكريم

[Text 13]

أبو محمد القاسم بن عبد الله التميمي يقول :

رزينا بذات البين حتَّى كأننا  
يغيِّر الفتى مثنا على مال نفسه  
ويجوز دليل القوم عن غير رشده  
نروح ونخدو في أمور لو أنه  
كأنَّ بحاراً بالوغى وكأنما  
فطَّوراً نذوذ الموت عنَا وتارةً

رنى أن من يبغى سوى البغي آثم  
ويقتله عدواً أخوه الملام  
ويمضي على المكروه من هو نادم  
رأى بعضها ما عاود النوم حالم  
معاركنا طول الزمان مواسِع  
نموت كثاً ماتَ الحمامُ الأكارمُ

[Text 14]

ابن الخطاط يقول :

كما قيل في الأمثال لحم على وضمـ	ليسلكم أنـ الحزيرة بعدكم
كما ذبل التوار في خلل الحمـ	تركت بقايا حسنكـ في خرابها

[Text 15]

ابن شرون يصور الترف العراني في صقلية :

من نبتها حللاً بهيـة	فقد اكتست جناتها
غمـطـ عـبـرـ تـرـابـها	بـمـدـجـاتـ سـنـدـسـيـه

[Text 16]

الأمير أبو القاسم عبد الله بن سليمان بن يخلف الكلبي الصقلي يقول في وصف منتزه البروج :

بـخـيلـ الضـيـاءـ جـوـادـ القـطاـرـ	أـلـاـ ربـ يـوـمـ لـنـاـ بـالـبـرـوـجـ
بـآخـرـهاـ لـمـعـةـ مـنـ عـذـارـ	كـأـنـ الشـقـيقـ بـهـاـ وـجـنـةـ
أـخـتـلـاطـ الـظـلـامـ بـضـوءـ النـهـارـ	كـأـنـ الـبـنـفـسـجـ فـيـ لـونـهـ
بـأـوـسـاطـهـ عـمـدـ مـنـ نـضـارـ	وـسـوـسـنـهـ مـثـلـ بـيـضـ الـقـيـابـ
مـثـلـ الـمـصـابـحـ فـوـقـ الـغـصـونـ	تـرـىـ النـرجـسـ الـغـضـنـ فـوـقـ الـغـصـونـ

[Text 17]

أبو علي الحسن بن محمد الكاتب، المعروف بابن الأصطبة يقول في وصف منتزه المعسكر :

أـنـاـ فـيـ الـمـعـسـكـرـ مـفـرـدـ فـيـ جـحـفـ	مـنـ نـوـحـ قـمـرـيـ وـرـتـهـ بـلـلـ
نـغـمـاتـ مـعـدـ فـيـ الثـقـيلـ الـأـوـلـ	فـكـأـنـاـ يـلـقـيـ عـلـيـ بـصـوـتـهـ

[Text 18]

يقول أبو علي الحسن بن أحمد الكاتب في وصف ورد المعسكر :

أـنـظـرـ إـلـىـ وـرـدـ الـمـعـسـكـرـ قـدـ كـسـاـ	عـيـشـ يـطـيـبـ وـمـنـظـرـ يـسـتـعـظـمـ
جـادـ الـرـبـيـعـ لـنـاـ بـهـ فـكـأـنـاـ	فـوـرـةـ الـبـحـرـيـنـ جـمـعـتـ الـشـنـىـ

[Text 19]

عبد الرحمن بن أبي العباس الكاتب الأطرابنشي يقول في وصف منتزه المعتزية المعروف بالفواره :

يـاحـبـذـاـ جـرـيـانـهـ	فـُسـمـتـ مـيـاهـكـ فـيـ جـداـولـ تـسـعـةـ
وـعـلـىـ خـلـيـجـكـ الغـرامـ مـخـيمـ	فـيـ مـلـقـىـ بـحـرـيـكـ مـعـتـرـكـ الـهـوـيـ

## [Text 20]

عبد الرحمن بن أبي العباس الكاتب يقول متابعاً وصف منتزه الفوار :

ترنو إلى سمك المياه وتبسم	وكأنَّ أغصان الرياض تطاولت
والطيرُ بين رياضها تنزَّم	والحوت يسبح في صفاء مياهها
نار على قصب الزبرج تضرم	وكأنَّ نارنج الجزيرة إذ زرها
قد بات من ألم النوى يتآلم	وكائناً للليمون صفرة عاشق
حضر العدا حصناً منيعاً منهم	والنخلتان كعاشقين استخلاصاً

## [Text 21]

يقول الأمير عبد الله بن سليمان الكلبي في وصف نزهة :

نجيبُ وصوت القناني القيان	إذا ما أجبت غناء القماري
ونصبح عيداننا في اصطخاب	يلدُ وأطيارنا في اشتجار

## [Text 22]

يقول ابن الطوبى في وصف راقصة :

راقصة كالغصن من فوقه	بدر منير تحت ظلماء
تلہب مثل النار في رقصها	وهي من التعمة كالماء
زامر يتبع بالثاء	كائناً في رجلها عودها
يرقص قلبى بين أحشائى	اذا بدلت رقص ما بيننا

## [Text 23]

يقول أبو عبدالله محمد بن عبدون السوسي في وصف الريح :

بالله ياجبل المعسکر دع	ريح الجنوب ترق أو تسري
كيمَا أسائلها فتحبرنى	مايفعل الجيران بالقصر

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