

Commerce and Coexistence:  
Muslims in the Economy and Society of Norman Sicily

A DISSERTATION  
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA  
BY

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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September 2009

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## **Acknowledgements:**

The completion of this dissertation would not have been possible without the assistance of a number of people, and I am very grateful to all of them. My advisor, Kathryn Reyerson, has read and commented on these chapters numerous times and I owe her many thanks for the subsequent improvements. I also owe for her patience and guidance as I found my way to this topic and the end of my graduate studies, and I am thankful for all her help. The other members of my committee, Lianna Farber, Michael Lower, William Phillips, and JB Shank, have also given me fine advice and needed criticism to push me to present this story in the best possible fashion. I also want to thank others in the Department of History, particularly Bernard Bachrach, Ruth Karras, and James Tracy, for their influence on this work and my development as a scholar. I am grateful for the rich community of historians and medievalists that have been available to me at the University of Minnesota.

I am also deeply grateful for the community of graduate students I was lucky enough to have as my peers in the History Department, and for their help both academic and social. My cohort of medievalists, Greg Halfond, Luis Morera, and Liz Swedo, were a pleasure to share classes with, as were Tovah Bender, Thomas Farmer, Chris Freeman, Phil Grace, Don Leech, Jim Hart, Jeff Hartman, Kira Robison, and John Wing. I also was greatly aided by the support, inside and outside of the classroom, of Will Cremer, Chris Marshall, Jeff Manuel, Eric Otremba, Eric Richtmyer, Eric Roubinek, Ed Snyder,

Andy Urban, and Aaron Windel. My thanks to all of you for making graduate school as pleasant a time as possible.

The History Department at the University of Minnesota has provided me with generous support, with fellowships and as a teaching assistant. The summer funding of a Graduate Research Partnership Program Fellowship allowed my travel to Palermo for archival research. I also benefitted greatly from the libraries at the University of Minnesota, in particular Wilson Library and its Interlibrary Loan department. In addition, I would like to thank the U.S. Department of Education for generously sponsoring my graduate education with a Foreign Language Area Studies Fellowship. Finally, I would also like to thank the History Department at St. Olaf College for supporting me and providing with the opportunity to teach during the final year and a half I was finishing my dissertation.

Finally, I want to thank my family for all their encouragement and support. My parents, James and Eileen Smit, my brother Michael Smit, and my sister Soo Smit, thank you for all your help. I turned to all of you often during the writing of this dissertation, and you were there with support when I really needed it. Hopefully I can someday return the favor.

## Table of Contents:

<b>List of Figures:</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>List of Abbreviations:</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>Chapter One: Historiography and Sources</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter Two: Historical Introduction</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Chapter Three: The Social and Economic Landscape of Norman Sicily</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Chapter Four: Cross-Cultural Commercial Relationships</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>Chapter Five: The Professions of Sicilian Muslims</b>	<b>116</b>
<b>Chapter Six: Muslims in Sicilian Industry and Commerce</b>	<b>157</b>
<b>Conclusion:</b>	<b>194</b>
<b>Bibliography:</b>	<b>201</b>
<b>Appendix:</b>	<b>228</b>

**List of Figures:**

<b>Figure 1: Map of Sicily</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Figure 2: Mourning the death of William II</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Figure 3: Tancred's triumphal entrance into Palermo</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Figure 4: The trilingual scribes of the royal chancery</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Figure 5: Map of the <i>Valli</i></b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Figure 6: Map of al-Idrisi's Description of Sicily</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Figure 7: Palermo in 1190</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Figure 8: Map of the <i>Jarā'id</i></b>	<b>119</b>

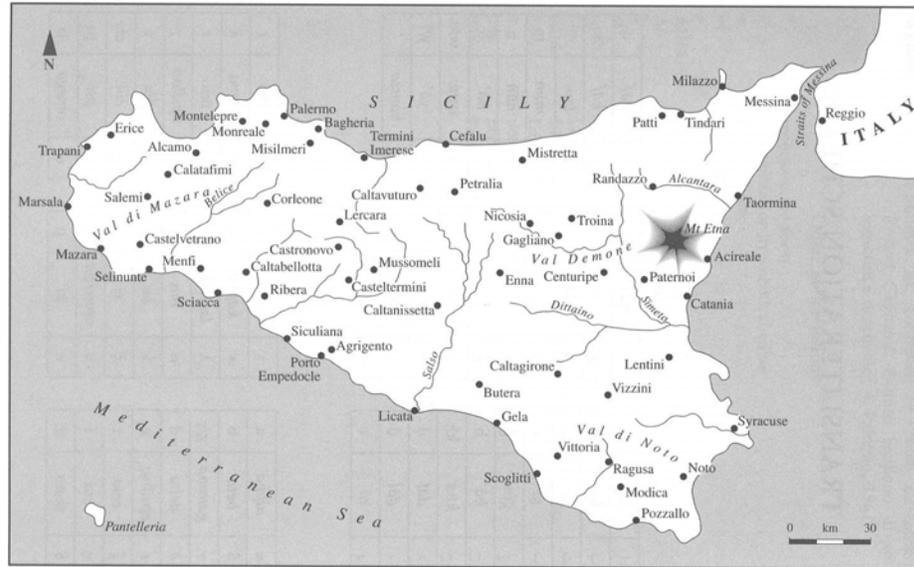
## List of Abbreviations:

- Cusa: Cusa, Salvatore, ed. *I diplomi greci ed arabi di Sicilia pubblicati nel testo originale tradotti ed illustrati*. Köln: Böhlau, 1982.
- Idrisi (Arab.): Al-Idrisi. *L'Italia descritta nel "Libro del Re Ruggero" comp. da Edrisi*. Edited by Michele Amari and Celestino Schiaparelli. Rome: Coi tipi del Salviucci, 1883.
- Idrisi (Eng.): Chiarelli, Leonard Charles, trans. "Al-Idrisi's Description of Sicily." M.A., University of Utah, 1977.
- Johns: Johns, Jeremy. *Arabic Administration in Norman Sicily: The Royal Diwan*. Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Jubayr: Ibn Jubayr. *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr, Being the Chronicles of a Mediaeval Spanish Moor Concerning his Journey to the Egypt of Saladin, the Holy Cities of Arabia, Baghdad the City of the Caliphs, the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, and the Norman Kingdom of Sicily*. London: J. Cape, 1952.
- Metcalf: Metcalf, Alex. *Muslims and Christians in Norman Sicily: Arabic Speakers and the End of Islam*. Edited by Ian R. Netton, Culture and Civilization in the Middle East. New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003.
- Simonsohn: Simonsohn, Schlomo, ed. *The Jews in Sicily. Vol. 1, 383-1300*. A Documentary History of the Jews in Italy, 13. Leiden: Brill, 1997.
- Tudela: Benjamin of Tudela. *The World of Benjamin of Tudela: A Medieval Mediterranean Travelogue*. Teaneck: Farleigh Dickinson Press, 1995.

## **Chapter One: Historiography and Sources**

### **Question and Scope:**

This dissertation aims to assess the economic role that Muslims played in Norman Sicily, and how that economic role tied them into the society of Norman Sicily in general. Muslims in Sicily were allowed considerable autonomy and tolerance by the Christian rulers of the island, and the tolerance shown to them was always tied to their usefulness to the crown. Others have looked at this phenomenon in the context of their role in the administration of the Regno, how Muslims served the crown in that fashion. I would argue that their economic role was just as important, particularly in the early years of Norman control. With Muslims making up the majority of merchants, a situation which continued into the late twelfth century in places such as Palermo, they provided an integral service in creating the vaunted wealth of the island. Beyond the role played by the commercial elite of the cities, the more humble Muslims of the island also played a vital economic role. They were the majority of cultivators, and as agriculture was always the primary source of wealth of the island they were necessary for that wealth as well. They were also involved in other kinds of production, in particular in the textile trade. Because of this, they remained important to the counts and kings of Sicily after the Normans became more established in their rule. Even as their role diminished over the course of the twelfth century, as Muslims lost their majority status and were replaced in some of their economic roles by Latin Christian peasants and Italian merchants, they still



Map of Sicily

**Figure 1: Map of Sicily<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Metcalfe, xiv.

remained important. Their economic role fueled their coexistence with the Christians of the island.

With this coexistence, there were possibilities for close interactions between Christians and Muslims based on their economic role. Profit was also a powerful motivator that brought people together, and Christians and Muslims traded, even entering into partnerships and loaning money to one another. These close interactions could continue, even with the backdrop of inter-religious violence. There was violence not only in the context of the Mediterranean with the Crusades, but there were riots involving anti-Muslim violence that took place within Sicily. But while that violence was taking place, Christians and Muslims continued to live next door to each other and enter into all sorts of commercial interactions. In short, even the rising level of tension between Muslims and Latin Christian immigrants could not end their mutually beneficial cross-cultural interactions.

But it was a situation that came to an end, and I would argue that the conditional nature of the tolerance shown to the Muslims of Sicily eventually came into play. The protection offered them by the de Hauteville rulers of Sicily declined and ceased with the death of William II. The recent immigrants to the island became dominant, and they did not share an appreciation for the usefulness of the Muslims. Coming from regions without Muslim populations of their own, they were more rigid and less inclined towards cooperation with those of other religions. Faced with this situation, the Muslims of Sicily retreated to isolated and homogenous communities in the mountainous regions of the Val

di Mazara, revolting soon after the death of William II. While they would ally themselves with Latin Christians in the civil conflicts of the next twenty years, Sicily no longer had the coexistence and cooperation of the Norman period.

This dissertation will focus on the economic role of Muslims during the period of Norman rule, when there was fruitful coexistence and cross-cultural commercial interaction between Christians and Muslims. This period, the late eleventh and twelfth centuries, was a time when Muslims played active and varied roles while under Christian rule. Muslims remained in Sicily well into the thirteenth century, but they had declined in number, no longer making up as large of a part of the Sicilian population; and they no longer played as important and varied roles in the Sicilian economy.

## **The Historiography of Norman Sicily and Contribution of the Dissertation:**

Any discussion of the historiography of the Muslims of Sicily must begin with the work of Michele Amari. The nineteenth-century historian's work, *Storia dei Musulmani di Sicilia*, a general history of the Muslims in Sicily, is a work that is still in use more than a hundred years later and covers both the Muslim and Norman periods in Sicily.<sup>2</sup> Amari was also responsible for collecting and editing numerous sources that relate to the Muslims of Sicily. Much of his work is out of date, such as his suppositions regarding the distribution of Arabs and Berbers throughout the island, but it still stands as the only comprehensive treatment of the topic. Other early historians of Norman Sicily include Charles Homer Haskins, who drew comparisons between Norman Sicily and Norman England, and Lynn White, who wrote a study of the Latin Christian monasticism of the island that is still the only work on the subject.<sup>3</sup> More recently, Aziz Ahmad wrote a work on the subject of Muslim Sicily, but it is short and lacks the scope of Amari.<sup>4</sup>

Many historians have studied the Byzantine presence in Sicily and Southern Italy. Vera von Falkenhausen has worked extensively on the topic and has examined the interplay between the Greeks and other groups there, and has also argued for the heterogeneous nature of ethnic groups there.<sup>5</sup> There have been a few general histories of

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<sup>2</sup> Michele Amari, *Storia dei Musulmani di Sicilia*, 2nd ed., 3 vols., (Palermo: Romeo Prampolini - Editore, 1933).

<sup>3</sup> Charles Homer Haskins, "England and Sicily in the Twelfth Century," *The English Historical Review* 26, no. 103 (1911). Lynn T. White, Jr., *Latin Monasticism in Norman Sicily* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1938).

<sup>4</sup> Aziz Ahmad, *A History of Islamic Sicily*, *Islamic Surveys*, 10 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1975).

<sup>5</sup> For example, in Vera von Falkenhausen, *Untersuchungen über die byzantinische Herrschaft in Süditalien vom 9. bis ins 11. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz, 1967).

Norman Sicily; the most recent of the Kingdom of Sicily is by Donald Matthew.<sup>6</sup> The best general coverage of southern Italy in the period of the Norman conquest is *The Age of Robert Guiscard* by Graham Loud.<sup>7</sup> Loud has written extensively on the Normans on the mainland of Italy in particular and has produced a definitive work on the Latin Church there.<sup>8</sup> He has had little focus on Sicily specifically, however, and his interest is primarily the Latin Christians living in the south of Italy.

There have been a few studies of the economic history of Norman Sicily. One of the main works is *The Two Italies*, by David Abulafia, who looked at the economic relationship between the Kingdom of Sicily and the towns of the north of Italy.<sup>9</sup> His arguments in this work regarding the economic relations that developed between Sicily and the north of Italy will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four. In addition, his article, "The Crown and the Economy under Roger II and His Successors," is the only general study of the economy of the Kingdom of Sicily.<sup>10</sup> While *An Island for Itself*, a book by Stephen Epstein, deals more with Sicily in the Later Middle Ages, it still has some coverage of the economy of Norman Sicily.<sup>11</sup> The rural economy of Norman Sicily has been a topic explored by the historian Henri Bresc, although he too has focused more on

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<sup>6</sup> Donald Matthew, *The Norman Kingdom of Sicily* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

<sup>7</sup> Graham A. Loud, *The Age of Robert Guiscard: Southern Italy and the Norman Conquest*, The Medieval World (London: Longman, 2000).

<sup>8</sup> Graham A. Loud, *The Latin Church in Norman Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

<sup>9</sup> David Abulafia, *The Two Italies: Economic Relations between the Norman Kingdom of Sicily and the Northern Communes*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

<sup>10</sup> David Abulafia, "The Crown and the Economy under Roger II and His Successors," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 37 (1983).

<sup>11</sup> Steven A. Epstein, *An Island for Itself: Economic Development and Social Change in Late Medieval Sicily*, Past and Present Publications (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

the Later Middle Ages.<sup>12</sup> In general, there has been little treatment of the economic history of Norman Sicily.

The most recent work on the Muslims of Norman Sicily has been that of Englishmen, Jeremy Johns and Alex Metcalfe. Johns' doctoral thesis is still the only general study of the Muslims of Norman Sicily.<sup>13</sup> His focus since then has been on the role of Muslims in the administration of Norman Sicily and its borrowing from the Islamic World, in *Arabic Administration in Norman Sicily*, in which he argues that the Normans imported administrative techniques from elsewhere in the Islamic world, namely Fatimid Egypt, rather than borrowing from previously existing Sicilian structures.<sup>14</sup> He has written on a number of topics, including the Norman activities in North Africa.<sup>15</sup> Alex Metcalfe has also written about the Muslims of Norman Sicily, in *Muslims and Christians in Norman Sicily*, looking at the transition from a Muslim to a Latin Christian majority through the lens of linguistic change.<sup>16</sup> Herbert Houben has written about the Muslims of Sicily as well, but more in the context of the cultural mixing of the court of Roger II.<sup>17</sup>

Medieval Spain has seen a number of works on Muslims that have been used in this study to offer a framework for looking at Muslims under Christian rule or in the

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<sup>12</sup> He has covered Norman Sicily, however. See for example, Henri Bresc, "Féodalité coloniale en terre d'Islam. La Sicile (1070-1240)," in *Structures féodales et féodalisme dans l'Occident méditerranéen (Xe-XIIIe siècles): Bilan et perspectives de recherches (Congrès Rome, 1978). Collection de l'Ecole française de Rome, 44* (Rome: 1980).

<sup>13</sup> Jeremy Johns, "The Muslims of Norman Sicily, c. 1060-c. 1194" (D.Phil, University of Oxford, 1983).

<sup>14</sup> Jeremy Johns, *Arabic Administration in Norman Sicily: the Royal Diwan*, Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>15</sup> Jeremy Johns, "Malik Afriqiya: The Norman Kingdom of Africa and the Fatamids," *Libyan Studies: annual report of the Society for Libyan Studies* 18 (1987).

<sup>16</sup> Alex Metcalfe, *Muslims and Christians in Norman Sicily: Arabic Speakers and the End of Islam*, Culture and Civilization in the Middle East (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003).

<sup>17</sup> For example: Hubert Houben, *Roger II of Sicily: a Ruler between East and West*, trans. Graham A. Loud and Diane Milburn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

economy of the Mediterranean. In particular the work of Olivia Remie Constable, in *Trade and Traders in Muslim Spain*, has provided an example of how to look at the role of Muslim traders in the Mediterranean.<sup>18</sup> John Boswell's *The Royal Treasure*, a study of Muslims in Aragon, is a valuable model for the role of Muslims in a Latin Christian society,<sup>19</sup> as is the work of R.I. Burns, who has discussed the economic value of Muslims to the crown of Aragon and their professional roles there.<sup>20</sup>

This study addresses a topic that has not been discussed in any detail in previous studies of Norman Sicily, namely the role that Muslims played in the economy of the island, and how that economic role shaped their place in the broader society of the island. In doing so, it also examines the general economic history of Norman Sicily, a topic that has previously either been dealt with in article length<sup>21</sup> or with a focus on the economic interactions of the island with other regions.<sup>22</sup> Likewise, others have examined the importance of Muslims for the Norman kings of Sicily as the reason for their tolerance, but not from an economic perspective. Through focusing on this aspect of the lives of Muslims in Norman Sicily, their economic role, this study aims to add to our understanding of the economic history of Norman Sicily, the role Muslims played in that economy, and their place and tolerated status in Sicilian society in general.

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<sup>18</sup> Olivia Remie Constable, *Trade and Traders in Muslim Spain: The Commercial Realignment of the Iberian Peninsula, 900-1500*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

<sup>19</sup> John Boswell, *The Royal Treasure: Muslims under the Crown of Aragon in the Fourteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977).

<sup>20</sup> For example, see Robert I. Burns, "Muslims in the Thirteenth-Century Realms of Aragon: Interaction and Reaction," in *Muslims under Latin Rule, 1100-1300*, ed. James M. Powell (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

<sup>21</sup> Abulafia, "The Crown and the Economy."

<sup>22</sup> Abulafia, *The Two Italies*.

## Sources and Method:

The available source base for Norman Sicily is quite limited, both for narrative works of history, such as chronicles, and particularly for documents of practice. Three chronicles have been used extensively in constructing the history of their conquest of Sicily and Southern Italy in the late eleventh century: the *Ystoire de li Normant et la Chronique de Robert Viscart* of Amatus of Montecassino, the *Gesta Roberti Wiscardi* of William of Apulia, and the *De rebus gestis Rogerii Calabriae et Siciliae comitis et Roberti Guiscardi ducis fratris eius* of Geoffrey Malaterra. The works of Geoffrey Malaterra and William of Apulia survive in Latin; the only surviving copy by Amatus of Montecassino is a fourteenth-century translation in Old French. While some have questioned the reliability of this copy, I am relying on the edition of Prescott Dunbar and Graham Loud which differentiates between the text thought to be by Amatus and that by the translator.<sup>23</sup> These chronicles were written about the conquests and deeds of Robert Guiscard, his brother Roger de Hauteville, Richard of Capua, and others. All three chronicles were written within a twenty-year span in a relatively small geographic area. The *Ystoire de li Normant* was produced at Montecassino between 1078 and 1086, mostly

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<sup>23</sup> I am using the English editions of Geoffrey Malaterra, *The Deeds of Count Roger of Calabria and Sicily and of his Brother Duke Robert Guiscard*, trans. Kenneth Baxter Wolf (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005). and Amato di Montecassino, *The History of the Normans*, trans. Graham Loud (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2004). Quotes in English from these chronicles have been taken from those editions; any English translations of William of Apulia are my own. For the original texts, the editions I am using, the most recent available to me, are: Amatus of Montecassino, *Storia de' Normanni di Amato di Montecassino*, *Fonti per la storia d'Italia*, 76 (Rome: dall'Istituto storico italiano per il Medio Evo, 1935)., William of Apulia, *Le geste de Robert Guiscard*, trans. Marguerite Mathieu, *Testi e monumenti*, 4 (Palermo: Istituto Siciliano di studi Bizantini et neoellenici, 1961)., and Geoffrey Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii Calabriae et Siciliae comitis et Roberti Guiscardi ducis fratris eius*, ed. Ernesto Pontieri, *Rerum Italicarum scriptores*, 2nd ed, vol. 5, pt. 1 (Bologna: N. Zanichelli, 1928).

likely around 1080. The *Gesta Roberti Wiscardi* was written in the late 1090s, and the *De rebus gestis Rogerii* was written at Catania in Sicily near the turn of the century, likely being finished in the second half of 1098.<sup>24</sup> Despite this, each seems to have been written without knowledge of the other two,<sup>25</sup> though they may have borrowed from common written sources, such as the *Annals of Bari*.<sup>26</sup> In addition, all these chronicles were written within a generation of the events they describe, so that the authors could draw on their own first-hand knowledge or the first-hand knowledge of others.

Amatus of Montecassino and William of Apulia, as their names indicate, lived on the mainland of Southern Italy. Amatus is more easily identified; he was a monk of Montecassino to whom other literary works have been attributed.<sup>27</sup> He likely joined the monastery as an adult after serving as the bishop of Paestum, near Salerno. Many of the choices he made in his narrative can be explained by the fact that he was at Montecassino when he produced the chronicle, during the tenure of the famous abbot Desiderius.<sup>28</sup> The focus he gave to Richard of Capua was very likely due to the patronage and protection Montecassino enjoyed from him. Some of Amatus's vitriol about Muslims in Sicily may

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<sup>24</sup> Graham A. Loud, "Southern Italy in the Eleventh Century," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History, Vol. IV c. 1024-c. 1198, Part II*, ed. D.E. Luscombe and Jonathan Riley-Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 1., and Kenneth Baxter Wolf, *Making History: The Normans and their Historians in Eleventh-Century Italy*, Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 123,46-47.

<sup>25</sup> This is the argument of Kenneth Wolf, and also that of Ernesto Pontieri. Wolf, *Making History: The Normans and their Historians in Eleventh-Century Italy*, 5. Ernesto Pontieri, "Goffredo Malaterra, Storico Del Gran Conte Ruggero," in *Tra i Normanni nell'Italia Meridionale* (Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1964), 229-30,36.

<sup>26</sup> Emily Albu, *The Normans in their Histories: Propaganda, Myth and Subversion* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2001), 110. Pontieri, "Goffredo Malaterra, storico del Gran Conte Ruggero," 221. Ferdinand Chalandon, *Histoire de la Domination Normande en Italie et en Sicile* (Paris: Librairie A. Picard et fils, 1907), xxxix.

<sup>27</sup> For this biographical information about Amatus of Montecassino, I am drawing on the work of Graham Loud in his introduction to the English translation of *The History of the Normans*, Loud, "Southern Italy in the Eleventh Century," 1-36.

<sup>28</sup> Pontieri, "Goffredo Malaterra," 220-21.

have to do with the fact that the monastery was sacked by Muslims in 883 and had to be abandoned. His view of Muslims was probably shaped by his knowledge of their past activities on the mainland and not by interactions that he had with them himself.

The identity of William of Apulia is more difficult to ascertain. Kenneth Wolf argues that he was a Lombard; other scholars suggest that he was a transplant from across the Alps, perhaps from Normandy.<sup>29</sup> Whether or not he was a cleric is also disputed, but it is assumed that he was a member of the court of Roger Borsa, Robert Guiscard's son and later duke of Apulia, whom he acknowledged as his patron.<sup>30</sup> William addressed the duke at the end of his work: 'Roger, you know that our verses are written for you.'<sup>31</sup>

The situation of Geoffrey Malaterra in Sicily was very different. Malaterra was a cleric who, in his own words, came 'from a region on the other side of the mountains, having only recently become an Apulian and indeed a Sicilian.'<sup>32</sup> He came to Sicily as part of the project of Roger de Hauteville to restore the Latin Church there, and he was attached to the monastery of St. Agatha in Catania in 1091.<sup>33</sup> This monastery was founded after the city of Catania was conquered by Norman forces in 1071 and served as the cathedral seat for the bishopric of Catania.<sup>34</sup> Malaterra was firmly established there at the monastery of St. Agatha. Malaterra dedicated his chronicle to 'Angerius, bishop of the people of Catania, most revered of our memory,' who also served as the abbot of St.

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<sup>29</sup> Wolf, *Making History*, 127.

<sup>30</sup> Ewan Johnson, "Normandy and Norman Identity in South Italian Chronicles," in *Anglo-Norman Studies XXVII, Proceedings of the Battle Conference 2004*, ed. John Gillingham (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2005), 87. Albu, *The Normans in their Histories: Propaganda, Myth and Subversion*, 110.

<sup>31</sup> Apulia, *La Geste De Robert Guiscard*, V.410.

<sup>32</sup> Malaterra, *The Deeds of Count Roger*, Prologue.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-7.

<sup>34</sup> White, *Latin Monasticism in Norman Sicily*, 105.

Agatha.<sup>35</sup> His work was written at the behest of Roger, count of Sicily, because, as Malaterra claimed:

That most renowned prince Roger, familiar with many such authors, having had the histories of the ancients recited to him, decided, on the advice of his men, to commit to writing for the sake of posterity his laborious and perilous victories, specifically how he subjugated by force first Calabria and then Sicily with his army – and ordered me to devote myself to the task of dictating this work.<sup>36</sup>

As the patronage of Richard of Capua and Roger Borsa played a role in how Amatus of Montecassino and William of Apulia constructed their chronicles, the patronage of Roger de Hauteville was the reason Malaterra gave for writing a chronicle about the deeds of the count of Sicily.

Unfortunately, the surviving chronicles of Norman Sicily decline after the end of the eleventh century. The first half of the twelfth century is particularly poorly covered. Other than Alexander of Teleso's chronicle of Roger II, little survives that discusses affairs in Sicily.<sup>37</sup> The chronicles of Romuald of Salerno and Falco of Benevento discuss Sicily briefly, but they are primarily concerned with events on the mainland.<sup>38</sup> The primary chronicle of twelfth-century Sicily is the history of the anonymous historian Hugo Falcandus, who offers a very detailed portrait of Palermo and the Muslims living

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<sup>35</sup> Malaterra, *The Deeds of Count Roger of Calabria*, Prologue.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> The edition I am using is Alexander of Teleso, *Alexandri Telesini Abbatis Ystoria Rogerii Regis Sicilie Calabriae atque Apulie*, ed. Lucovica de Nava, *Fonti per la Storia d'Italia*, 112 (Rome: Nella Sede dell'Istituto Palazzo Borromini, 1991).

<sup>38</sup> Falco di Benevento, *Chronicon Beneventanum: città e feudi nell'Italia dei Normanni*, ed. Claudio Leonardi, *Per Verba, Testi mediolatini con traduzione*, 9 (Florence: SISMEL-Edizioni del Galluzzo, 1998). Romuald of Salerno, *Romualdi Salernitani Chronicon*, ed. L.A. Muratori, *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, 7:1 (Castello: S. Lapi, 1935).

there.<sup>39</sup> While it is impossible to identify the author of this work, given his close knowledge of the affairs of the Norman court, it is usually assumed that he served there in some capacity. The transition of the island from de Hauteville to Hohenstaufen rule has some coverage in the work of Peter of Eboli about Henry VI.<sup>40</sup>

Early evidence of commercial practices in Sicily survives in documents in the Geniza archive in Cairo. The Geniza is a collection of letters stored in a space behind the wall of a synagogue, placing them in storage rather than destroying them for fear that they might have had the name of God written on them. These documents were forgotten until uncovered in the nineteenth century during a renovation of the synagogue, which had been abandoned in the meantime. They have proven to be a treasure trove for the study of medieval social and economic history in the Mediterranean. The documents of the Geniza also contain many references to Sicily, as that was one of the main regions with which the Jewish traders of Cairo dealt.<sup>41</sup>

There are brief mentions of Norman Sicily by some Arabic historians in the Middle Ages, but they focus more on interactions with the Muslims of North Africa than on Muslims living in Sicily.<sup>42</sup> Michele Amari collected all mentions of Sicily in medieval Arabic sources, which included the works of geographers, biographers,

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<sup>39</sup> The Latin edition I am using is Hugo Falcandus, *La historia o Liber de Regno Sicilie e al Epistola ad Petrum Panormitane Ecclesie Thesaurarium*, Fonti per la storia d'Italia pubblicate dall'Istituto storico italiano, 22 (Rome: Forzani e c., tip. del Senato 1897). There is also an English translation available, Hugo Falcandus, *The History of the Tyrants of Sicily by "Hugo Falcandus" 1154-69*, ed. Rosemary Horrox and Janet L. Nelson, trans. Graham A. Loud and Thomas Wiedemann, Manchester Medieval Sources Series (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998).

<sup>40</sup> Peter of Eboli, *Liber ad Honorem Augusti*, ed. G.B. Siragusa, Fonti per la Storia d'Italia, 39 (Rome: Forzani e C. Tipografi el Senato, 1906).

<sup>41</sup> The documents from the Cairo Geniza that deal with Sicily have been collected and translated from their original Judeo-Arabic into English by Schlomo Simonsohn.

<sup>42</sup> In the transliteration of Arabic names and words into English, I am following the English transliteration guide of the International Journal of Middle East Studies.

travelers, and historians, into the *Biblioteca Arabo-Sicula*, which is still an invaluable source for the study of the Muslims of Sicily.<sup>43</sup> Even more than a hundred years later, Jeremy Johns could only add a few works of poetry to the Arabic sources that pertain to the Muslims of Norman Sicily.<sup>44</sup> Arabic historians have little to contribute about Muslims in Norman Sicily, but the work of Ibn al-Athīr offers a useful contrast to Latin historians and provides information about the Normans in North Africa.<sup>45</sup>

The works of Arabic geographers and travelers, however, offer some of the few first-hand accounts of Sicily and its Muslim population under Norman rule. The geography of al-Idrisi, written under the patronage of Roger II, gives much detailed information about the landscape and people of Sicily in the mid-twelfth century.<sup>46</sup> In addition, the accounts of two twelfth century travelers are invaluable sources. Abū al-Husayn Muhammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Jubayr, a Spanish Muslim, traveled to Sicily in 1184 and 1185 at the end of a long period of travel in the Mediterranean.<sup>47</sup> Although he was not favorably inclined towards the Christian rulers of Sicily, he offers a unique perspective on the status of Muslims in Sicily at the end of Norman rule. A Jewish traveler who visited Sicily in 1173, Benjamin of Tudela, offers the other non-Christian account of the island. He too, offers much unique information about the economy and

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<sup>43</sup> Amari produced a edited collection of these sources, Michele Amari, *Biblioteca Arabo-Sicula*, Arabic ed. (Lipsia: F.A. Brockhaus, 1857)., and an Italian translation of them Amari, *Storia dei Musulmani di Sicilia*.

<sup>44</sup> Jeremy Johns, "Arabic Sources for Sicily," in *Byzantines and crusaders in non-Greek sources, 1025-1204*, ed. Mary Whitby, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 132 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

<sup>45</sup> Amari, *Biblioteca Arabo-Sicula*, 214-317. Portions of Ibn al-Athīr have been translated into English, Ibn al-Athīr, *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athīr for the Crusading Period from al-Kāmil fī'l ta'rīkh, Part 1*, trans. D.S. Richards, *Crusade Texts in Translation* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).

<sup>46</sup> Edited in the BAS and also in al-Idrisi, *L'Italia descritta nel "Libro del re Ruggero" comp. da Edrisi*, ed. Michele Amari and Celestino Schiaparelli (Rome: Coi tipi del Salviucci, 1883). A English translation exists, in Leonard Charles Chiarelli, "Al-Idrisi's Description of Sicily" (M.A., University of Utah, 1977).

<sup>47</sup> Amari, *Biblioteca Arabo-Sicula*, 76-104.

society of the island in the second half of the twelfth century.

There are a number of diplomatic sources for Norman Sicily that survive. The charters of the Norman counts and kings of Sicily have also been collected into edited volumes, and they offer useful information about the Muslims of Sicily through their appearances in royal grants and legislation.<sup>48</sup> A code of laws collected under Frederick II, the Constitutions of Melfi, has several pieces of legislation attributed to Norman kings that deal with Muslims.<sup>49</sup> Finally, the diplomatic records of the Republic of Genoa, which include several treaties with the Kingdom of Sicily that discuss commercial matters, have also been collected.<sup>50</sup>

Few documents of practice have survived from Norman Sicily, a fact which is a severe limitation for the study of Sicilian trade in the twelfth century. Collections of royal charters survive, along with a few trading contracts and deeds of sale for buildings and property, but on the whole the documentation from Sicily for the twelfth century is very slight. This is not entirely surprising; social unrest in Sicily in the late twelfth century led to the destruction of repositories of government documents, and natural disasters, such as the earthquake that rocked Sicily in 1169, added to the loss.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Collections have been made of the legislation of Roger II: Carlrichard Brühl, ed., *Rogarii II. Regis Diplomata Latina*, Codex Diplomaticus Regni Siciliae, Series I, tomus II,1 (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 1987)., William I: Horst Enzensberger, ed., *Guillelmi I. Regis Diplomata*, Codex Diplomaticus Regni Siciliae, Series I, tomus 3 (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 1996)., Tancred and William III: Herbert Zielinski, ed., *Tancredi et Willelmi III Regum Diplomata*, Codex Diplomaticus Regni Siciliae, Series I, tomus 5 (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 1982)., and Constance: Theo Kölzer, ed., *Constantiae Imperatricis et Reginae Siciliae Diplomata (1195-1198)*, Codex Diplomaticus Rogerii Siciliae, 2nd Series, vol. I,2 (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 1983).

<sup>49</sup> James M. Powell, ed., *The Liber Augustalis, or Constitutions of Melfi Promulgated by the Emperor Frederick II for the Kingdom of Sicily in 1231* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1971).

<sup>50</sup> Cesare Imperiale, ed., *Codice diplomatico della Repubblica di Genova*, 3 vols., vol. 1, Fonti per la storia d'Italia, 77 (Rome: Tipografia di Senato, 1936).

<sup>51</sup> Land registers were destroyed during riots in Palermo in 1161, Abulafia, "The Crown and the Economy," 2. The earthquake referred to took place in Catania on 4 February 1169, Falcandus, *The History of the Tyrants of Sicily*, 216-17.

Documents of practice for the commercial activity of the Muslims of Sicily are particularly scarce. Because Muslims were under the jurisdiction of the leaders and judges of their own community, these dealings would have been under the authority of those courts, and their records do not survive.<sup>52</sup> In fact, Arabic documents disappear from Sicily altogether from 1111 to 1132. This was most likely not because such records were not produced, rather because they were not stored in safe places. In contrast ecclesiastical archives preserved many Norman sources. Indeed, the uneven survival may have to do with the fact that documents produced by the Muslim community were possibly written on paper, and were they more perishable, as was the practice in the Islamic world, rather than on the parchment used by Latin Christians in Norman Sicily.<sup>53</sup> Documents of practice that survive catalogue deals between Sicilian Muslims and Christian merchants from Christian sources, with a few exceptions.

A few notarial collections from Genoa from the twelfth century survive that detail trading contracts, sales, wills, and other commercial and legal interactions. The notarial collections that were produced during the period of Norman Sicily, intermittently from 1154 to 1192, are those of Giovanni Scriba, Oberto, and Guglielmo Cassinese.<sup>54</sup> Giovanni Scriba was prominent figure in Genoa in the twelfth century, and seems to have

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<sup>52</sup> Johns, "The Muslims of Norman Sicily, c. 1060-c. 1194".

<sup>53</sup> Metcalfe, 42.

<sup>54</sup> For this work I am using the printed edition of these notarial records, published as Mario Chiaudano and Mattia Moresco, eds., *Il cartolare di Giovanni Scriba*, 2 vols. (Turin: S. Lattes & c., 1935). Mario Chiaudano, ed., *Oberto Scriba de Mercato (1186)* (Torino: Editrice Libreria Italiana, 1940). Mario Chiaudano and Raimondo Morozzo Della Rocca, eds., *Oberto Scriba de Mercato (1190)* (Torino: Editrice Libreria Italiana, 1938). M.W. Hall, Hilmar C. Krueger, and R.L. Reynolds, eds., *Guglielmo Cassinese*, 2 vols. (Turin: S. Lattes, 1938). Because of my reliance on published sources, I have been unable to access the other collections of Oberto which have not yet been edited and published. My primary interest in this study was on interactions in the mid-twelfth century, so I have focused on the collection of Giovanni Scriba.

been an official notary to the consuls of Genoa.<sup>55</sup> His notarial collection includes a great number of transactions, including a large number that deal with Sicily, but the collection still does not necessarily present a representative picture of Genoese trade in the 1150s and 1160s. First, the fact that it survives rather than any other notarial collection is a matter of happenstance. Despite the fact that it contains some of the only commercial evidence for that period, it cannot be taken as representative. As in the case of other commercial documents that survive from the Middle Ages, there is a bias towards large-scale trade that involved greater amounts of capital. Smaller exchanges and trading contracts, which would likely have involved local or regional rather than trans-Mediterranean trade, were probably more common but also more informal and ad hoc, given the smaller amount of risk involved. Consequently, they would not have been recorded by a notary. But despite these limitations, the notarial records of Giovanni Scriba are invaluable as sources of commercial activity from this period regarding Norman Sicily. They do provide useful information about commercial interactions between the Genoese and merchants in Sicily.

The final collections of sources for the study of the Muslims of Sicily are the *jarā'id*, Arabic registers of the names of Muslims bound to various landholders. Often very perfunctory, listing only the name of the head of a household, nevertheless these registers offer useful information about the Muslim communities of Sicily. What is more, they are the only sources for Muslims who were not part of the commercial and administrative elite living in coastal towns. They remain almost the only sources that give historians any information about the rural inland communities of Sicilian Muslims.

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<sup>55</sup> Abulafia, *The Two Italies*, 18-19.

Many of these registers were preserved in ecclesiastical archives, and the collection of the privileges of the church of Cefalù, called the *Rollus Rubeus*, also contains information about the villeins of its estates in its many privileges.<sup>56</sup> A number of these *jarā'id* were collected by Salvatore Cusa in the nineteenth century; his remains the only edition of these sources.<sup>57</sup> Some individual edited *jarā'id* have been collected in other places.<sup>58</sup>

Given the paucity of sources for Norman Sicily, particularly for the twelfth century, it would be impossible to provide a comprehensive examination of the Muslims of the island and its economy. Rather, I will aim to illuminate, in as much detail as possible, those aspects of Sicilian society that are available to us in order to show what they reveal about these topics, such as the landscape that Muslims worked, the professions they held, or the partnerships they entered into. While this information is scattered across the island and throughout the eleventh and twelfth centuries, it will hopefully illuminate enough to provide a convincing picture of Sicilian Muslims and their economic roles.

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<sup>56</sup> Corrado Mirto, ed., *Rollus Rubeus, privilegia ecclesie cephaeditane, a diversis regibus et imperatoribus concessa, rocollecta et in hoc volumine scripta*, Documenti per servire alla storia di Sicilia, 29 (Palermo: Società Siciliana per la storia patria, 1972).

<sup>57</sup> While his transcriptions have been called into question, it remains the only edited collection available which contains all the *jarā'id*, which are drawn from a variety of archives throughout Europe. Salvatore Cusa, ed., *I diploma greci ed arabi di Sicilia pubblicati nel testo originale tradotti ed illustrati* (Köln: Böhlau, 1982).

<sup>58</sup> For example, M.E. Gálvez, "Noticia sobre los documentos árabes de Sicilia del Archivo Ducal de Medinaceli," in *Del nuovo sulla Sicilia Musulmana: giornata di studio, Roma, 3 maggio 1993* (Rome: Accademia nazionale dei Lincei, 1995).

## **Chapter Summary:**

Chapter One is an introduction to the historiography and sources of Normans Sicily, and Chapter Two is an introduction to the history of Norman Sicily. Chapter Three will examine the landscape of Norman Sicily. It will look at the dominant populations of the towns of Sicily, and the products produced in its various regions. In addition, it will demonstrate the commercial connections these towns had with other regions of the Mediterranean. Chapter Four is a study of the cross-cultural commercial interactions that took place in Sicily in the Middle Ages. Chapter Five sets out the professions of the Muslims of Sicily from the *jarā'id*, and how these professions tied them into the economy and society around them. Chapter Six looks at the commercial roles Muslims played in Norman Sicily. It will examine their participation in various trade networks, such as that of grain and slaves, but its main focus is on the role Muslims played in the production and trade of textiles.

## **Chapter Two: Historical Introduction**

### **The Rulers of Norman Sicily:**

The story of the Muslims of Sicily begins more 200 years before the Norman rule of the island, with its conquest by Muslims from North Africa. Sicily was brought under Muslim rule in a manner similar to the Muslim conquest of the Iberian Peninsula. Arabs and Berbers from the North Africa crossed the Mediterranean at one of its narrowest points to travel to Sicily; the distance between Tunis and Mazara del Vallo in Sicily is only 120 km. The Muslim invasion brought an end to a period of Byzantine rule of Sicily, though Christians of the Greek rite remained a presence in its population. The Muslim conquest began in 827, when a North African emir was invited there by a Byzantine general in revolt; Muslims had taken control of Sicily completely by 965. The same process of invasion involved some incursions into the south of Italy as well, but these attacks consisted of raids rather than any attempt to establish permanent settlements. Other than a short-lived emirate in Bari between 841 and 871, Muslims only set up temporary camps on the mainland of Italy.<sup>1</sup> There was an attempt by the Aghlabids, governors of Tunisia nominally bound to the Abbasid caliph in Baghdad but independent in practice, to take Salerno, but into the tenth century their main concern on the mainland remained raiding, primarily to take slaves.<sup>2</sup> On Sicily, the new rulers of the

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<sup>1</sup> Barbara M. Kreutz, *Before the Normans: Southern Italy in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries*, Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), 38.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 53-56.

island quickly established their dominance both politically and culturally. By the time the island passed back to Christian control the traces of Greek rule were faint.<sup>3</sup>

In this period the main ties of Sicily with the rest of the Islamic World involved North Africa, the source of its conquerors, and Egypt. The dynasty that was in control in North Africa at the time of the conquest was the Aghlabid dynasty. Aghlabid forces carried out the initial conquest of Sicily in the ninth century. When the Fatimids took control of Egypt, they brought Sicily under more direct foreign control. These ties between Sicily and North Africa and Egypt would continue after Sicily was no longer under Muslim rule. The governors the Fatimids established in Sicily and North Africa did not always welcome their rule, however, given the doctrinal differences between their Sunni populations and the Shi'ia rulers of Egypt. In fact, the Shi'ia traveler Ibn Hawqal noted the hatred of the Sunni Sicilians for their nominal Fatimid rulers.<sup>4</sup> The Fatimid representatives in the Maghrib, including Tunisia, in the eleventh century were the Zirids. They rebelled against Fatimid rule, leading the Fatimids to send nomadic tribes against them in 1052.<sup>5</sup> There was unrest in Sicily as well. A local dynasty, the Kalbids, had emerged as the rulers there in the 950s.<sup>6</sup> Rule of the island had fragmented by the eleventh century, and emirs in the towns were competing with one another for dominance

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 157.

<sup>4</sup> Leonard Charles Chiarelli, "Sicily During the Fatimid Age" (University of Utah, 1986), 38.

<sup>5</sup> Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 84-85.

<sup>6</sup> Chiarelli, "Sicily During the Fatimid Age", 35.

after the deposition of the last Kalbite emir in 1052/3.<sup>7</sup> It was against this backdrop of political fragmentation in North Africa and Sicily that the Normans entered the scene.

While there are varying accounts of how the Normans originally came to Italy and Sicily, it is most likely that they came as mercenaries. The eldest son of Tancred de Hauteville of Normandy, William “the Iron Arm,” was elected as the leader of a group of Normans fighting in the service of local rulers in September 1048.<sup>8</sup> William and his brother Drogo quickly established themselves as rulers there, supplanting local Lombard dynasties, and the de Hautevilles developed a strong base of operations in the heel of Italy. But while these men set the stage for the Norman control of Southern Italy, it was the younger of the de Hautevilles, the children of Tancred’s second wife, who would conquer Sicily and consolidate all the Norman holdings in Italy.

Robert Guiscard and Roger, the youngest son of Tancred de Hauteville, were the ones who carried out this consolidation. Like their older siblings on the mainland, they were originally invited to Sicily to serve as mercenaries. Ibn al-Thumna, the emir of Catania and Syracuse, invited Roger to come and aid him from Calabria, which is separated from Sicily only by the narrow straits of Messina. He encouraged Roger to attack Ibn Hawwas, the emir of Castrogiovanni and Agrigento and one of Ibn al-Thumna’s rivals. He even guided Roger in Sicily.<sup>9</sup> Roger first sent forces to Sicily in March of 1061 and by May of the same year had taken the town of Messina. He continued to have a close alliance with Ibn al-Thumna, who went through Sicily seeking

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<sup>7</sup> Loud, *The Age of Robert Guiscard: Southern Italy and the Norman Conquest*, 148.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>9</sup> Montecassino, *Storia de' Normanni di Amato di Montecassino*, V.8.

further support for Roger.<sup>10</sup> The willingness of the various parties competing for power in Sicily to make alliances across religious boundaries was a constant in the next thirty years of fighting there. Despite occasional claims to religious motivations in the chronicles of the conquest, Robert and Roger always acted according to practical interests rather than spiritual warfare against the Muslims of Sicily. The cooperation of Christians and Muslims was present from the beginning of the Norman campaigns in Sicily. Not only did Ibn al-Thumna's invite them, the citizens of Reggio in Calabria, Christian and Muslim alike, armed themselves to aid Roger in Sicily.<sup>11</sup>

The potential for cooperation continued, but the inhabitants of the island did not always react positively to their new rulers. For example, the Greek Christians of Troina turned against Roger, crossing religious boundaries to ally themselves with Muslims fighting the Normans.<sup>12</sup> The conquest involved many such alliances based on practical concerns rather than a sense of religious identity or community. The fragmented nature of Sicily no doubt aided Robert and Roger's campaigns there, as they could play local rulers off of one another as they consolidated the island under their control. Even their own cooperation was not a foregone conclusion, however, and Robert and Roger were often at odds. Robert besieged and attacked Roger at Mileto in Calabria in the early years of the conquest.<sup>13</sup> The conquest was a piecemeal process, with Robert and Roger periodically going on campaign while remaining based on the mainland. By 1088,

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<sup>10</sup> Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, II.22.

<sup>11</sup> Montecassino, *Storia de' Normanni*, V.11

<sup>12</sup> Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, II.29.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, II.23.

however, all of Sicily had been conquered except for Butera and Noto. And in February of 1091, the ruler of Noto came to Roger at Mileto to offer the surrender of the town.<sup>14</sup> This marked the end of the period of the Muslim rule of Sicily. While the Normans had ruled the larger part of the island before this point, in 1091 they became the undisputed rulers of Sicily.

It was Roger who would take control of Sicily. Robert Guiscard became concerned with matters to the east, directing his campaigns against the Byzantine Empire, and Roger was made Count of Sicily. He added it to his holdings, as he was already count of Calabria. Roger, now Count Roger I of Sicily, made the Latin Church a presence in Sicily by creating a number of new foundations there and funding them. In addition, Roger I had a newly-minted relationship with the papacy, having been made a papal legate. The state of affairs had evolved considerably since the mid-eleventh century, when Norman forces had taken the pope prisoner after the Battle of Civitate in 1053. Roger had firm control over Calabria and Sicily, which was more than could be said of his influence over the Duchy of Apulia. After Robert Guiscard's death in 1085, his sons fought for control of Apulia, with his younger son, Roger Borsa, gaining the upper hand, thanks in part to the support of his uncle Roger I. His older brother, Bohemond, was forced to content himself with taking control of the Principality of Antioch during the course of the First Crusade.

Roger I died in 1101, and like the previous generation of de Hautevilles, it was a younger son who took control of Calabria and Sicily. This son Roger, now Roger II,

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., IV.12.

Count of Calabria and Sicily, was a vigorous ruler. He attempted to move beyond the borders of the island into North Africa, extending Norman control to the town of Mahdia for a time.<sup>15</sup> His efforts within Europe were more impressive. He added the Duchy of Apulia to his holdings after Duke William II died without heirs and claimed control over the Principality of Capua as well. This made him the dominant ruler in the south of Italy. And in 1130, he gained papal approval to make Sicily a kingdom. This was an unprecedented development at this point in the Middle Ages. The only other new kingdom established in this period was that of Jerusalem in the aftermath of the First Crusade. Roger II was king of only Sicily, remaining count of Calabria and duke of Apulia, but it was common for rulers in the twelfth century to bear multiple titles in such a fashion. Despite the fragmentation of titles, Roger II ruled Sicily, Calabria, and Apulia as a whole, and future use of the term the Kingdom of Sicily will refer to all the territories under the control of the king of Sicily.

Under Roger II, the Kingdom of Sicily became known for its wealth and cosmopolitan nature. This was particularly the case for Sicily itself, which remained culturally diverse to the end of Roger II's reign and beyond. The court of Roger II in Palermo gathered Muslim intellectuals from throughout the Mediterranean: poets, astronomers, and others. Many of these figures emigrated from North Africa to Sicily.<sup>16</sup> The geographer al-Idrisi, whose wrote his famous geography with the support of Roger II, named it *The Book of Roger* after his patron. The Kingdom of Sicily enjoyed this

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<sup>15</sup> See David Abulafia, "The Norman Kingdom of Africa," *Anglo-Norman Studies, VII: proceedings of the Battle Conference, 1984* 7 (1984).

<sup>16</sup> Johns, 82.

reputation among its contemporaries, although its perceived tolerance was not always viewed in a positive light by fellow Latin Christians. In general, Roger II ruled the County of Sicily and then the Kingdom of Sicily at its height, even extending its rule from North Africa to Capua. At the time of his death in 1154, the Kingdom of Sicily was one of the richest and most powerful states in the Mediterranean.

Roger II was succeeded by his son, William I, sometimes called William “the Bad.” He gained this reputation for his supposed weakness and closeness to Muslims, and this reputation is mostly due to his portrayal by the historian known as Hugo Falcandus. There was a revolt of the Sicilian barons under his reign in 1160, aimed largely at his advisor Maio of Bari, that William I put down harshly. The instigation was ostensibly William I’s inactivity in response to the loss of Sicilian holdings in North Africa. His sympathy for Muslims may be overstated, however, as he did attempt to quell the rebellion by having the son of its leader, the Zirid emir, crucified.<sup>17</sup> Despite internal dissent under William I, the kingdom remained prosperous under his rule and continued its dominance over southern Italy.

William I died in 1166 and his son William II took control of the kingdom despite being only eleven. Until William II gained his majority in 1171, the kingdom was run by advisors, especially his mother Margaret of Navarre. In contrast to his father William II has been called William “the Good,” mostly due to the lack of internal unrest that occurred under his rule. He did not attempt to reestablish a Sicilian presence in North Africa, although he was involved in campaigns against Egypt and the Byzantine Empire.

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<sup>17</sup> al-Athīr, *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athīr*, 77.

He continued to encourage the intellectual life of the court in Palermo, and may even have been able to read Arabic.<sup>18</sup> Despite this anecdote by Ibn Jubayr, William II does not seem to have used his command of Arabic, whatever its extent, in his rule over the Muslims of Sicily. At his death he was supposed mourned by all his subjects, even the Muslims, as shown in an illustration from Eboli's *Liber* (figure 2). In it, the residents of Palermo mourn while William II is attended by physicians in his palace, who appear to be Muslims themselves.

Unfortunately for the kingdom, when William II died in 1189 he was without heirs. In the absence of any clear and legitimate successor, there were two claimants for the throne of the Kingdom of Sicily. The first made his claim through William II's only surviving legitimate relative. His aunt Constance, the daughter of Roger II, had a direct claim to the throne. What is more, her husband was the Emperor Henry VI. In 1189, Henry VI was on crusade, he and Constance were unable assert their claim to Sicily immediately.<sup>19</sup> In the interim the other claimant consolidated his control of the Kingdom of Sicily. This was Tancred, Count of Lecce, who held a prominent administrative role on the mainland. Tancred could also claim a connection to the de Hauteville dynasty, as his father was the illegitimate son of Roger II. Despite his illegitimate heritage, Tancred was crowned king by Archbishop Walter of Palermo in January 1190, later gaining the support pope Celestine III as well.<sup>20</sup> He also enjoyed the support many of the people of

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<sup>18</sup> Jubayr, 341.

<sup>19</sup> Matthew, *The Norman Kingdom of Sicily*, 286.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 286-88.



**Figure 2: Mourning the death of William II<sup>21</sup>**

<sup>21</sup> Eboli, *Liber ad Honorem Augusti*.



**Figure 3: Tancred's triumphal entrance into Palermo<sup>22</sup>**

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., Plates, viii.

Sicily, Muslims and Christians, as shown in the image of his entry into Palermo from the manuscript of Peter of Eboli's *Liber* (figure 3). In the illustration, Tancred is preceded by Muslims blowing horns and beating drums. The military support of Sicilian Muslims is shown through the Muslim footmen and archers also preceding him. Tancred carried on the de Hauteville tradition of employing Muslims in his army.

Henry VI was campaigning in Italy as early as 1191, and with added motivation after the residents of Salerno gave his wife Constance over to Tancred, although Celestine III eventually convinced the latter to return her. Henry VI and Tancred fought on the mainland of Italy, trading territory in the northern parts of the kingdom, but Tancred managed to establish control over most of the kingdom during the short time of his reign. Unfortunately for the prospects of continued de Hauteville rule of Sicily, however, Tancred's son and heir Roger died in 1194, and his death was followed by that of his father soon after. Tancred's younger son was crowned as William III, but was still a young child, and his mother Sibylla took over as regent. This led Henry VI to renew his efforts to take control of the kingdom. At a disadvantage, Sibylla managed to negotiate the County of Lecce and the Principality of Taranto for her son and then ceded the kingdom to Henry.<sup>23</sup> He took Palermo and was crowned King of Sicily there on 24 December 1194.

This marked the beginning of Hohenstaufen rule in Sicily. Henry VI left Constance behind in Palermo to represent him and saw to his interests elsewhere. He returned to Sicily in November 1196 and put down a rebellion that involved a siege of

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<sup>23</sup> Matthew, *The Norman Kingdom of Sicily*, 291.

Castrogiovanni.<sup>24</sup> Henry VI died soon after of dysentery in September of 1197.

Constance ruled as a regent for her young son Frederick for two years until he was elected king in Germany and crowned king of Sicily in 1198.<sup>25</sup> Frederick had to deal with unrest during his early years; in Sicily he was forced to put down a rebellion led by Markwald of Anweiler, an official under Henry VI. Despite support from residents of the Kingdom of Sicily for Markwald's insurrection, Frederick, now Emperor Frederick II, was able to suppress it and take control of Sicily.

Frederick II was a ruler in the mode of Roger II and William II. Although he was ruler of both Germany and Sicily, his focus was on his Italian holdings, and he was much of the time in Palermo, where he had spent his childhood. Like his de Hauteville predecessors, Frederick II made Palermo a center for learning, although without the culturally mixed character it had had in the twelfth century. Still, he was more tied to the Islamic world than most European monarchs, for example, negotiating with the Ayyubid sultan of Egypt to return Jerusalem to Latin Christian control. The Kingdom of Sicily remained a unified territory bound to the world of the Mediterranean under Hohenstaufen rule until the death of Frederick II in 1250.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 293

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 294-95.

## **The Peoples of Norman Sicily:**

Like Spain in the Middle Ages, Sicily stands out among the other regions of Europe for the diversity of peoples living within its borders. In addition to the Muslims, Jews, and Latin Christians living in Spain, however, Sicily also had a significant population of indigenous Christians who followed the Greek rite. It was the combination of these different groups in Norman Sicily that gave it unique characteristics, with several languages and cultures at play in a single kingdom. The variety of peoples living in Norman Sicily also tied it to the world of the cosmopolitan medieval Mediterranean. Towns where Greek Christians were numerous, such as Syracuse, boasted connections with the Byzantine Empire, while the Jews and Muslims of Sicily continued the long-standing ties with the Islamic world, especially North Africa and Egypt. It is difficult at times, however, to ascribe accurately these religious and cultural identities to those living in Norman Sicily. There was no consistent use of ethnic terms, and there were often many layers of identity at play.<sup>26</sup> The groups in Sicily were also not homogenous, with considerable variation even among Christian and Muslim populations.<sup>27</sup> For the people of the time it could be difficult to make such distinctions, as language and styles of dress did not necessarily differentiate the groups. Nevertheless, it is possible to make rough estimations of religious identities when examining the peoples of Norman Sicily, as the writers in the period often used religious terms to describe themselves and others.

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<sup>26</sup> Metcalfe, 59.

<sup>27</sup> Vera von Falkenhuasen, "I gruppi etnici nel regno di Roger II e la loro partecipazione al potere," in *Società, potere e popolo nell'età di Ruggero II: atti delle terze Giornate normanno-sveve: Bari, 23-25 maggio 1977* (Bari: Dedalo libri, 1979), 135.

Despite there being a variety of identities at play, I would argue that one's religious identity was the most important to those of the time. While this was not necessarily an impediment to interacting with those of other backgrounds, it was the primary way that people in Norman Sicily categorized themselves and one another.

There had been a Jewish presence in Sicily dating back to the period of Muslim rule. Jews living in North Africa and Egypt were active in the commercial network linking the regions, and settled in those places as well. During times of trouble in the eleventh century in North Africa, Sicily was common site of immigration for Jews fleeing the unrest.<sup>28</sup> In the twelfth century, the traveler Benjamin of Tudela noted significant populations of Jews living in the coastal towns of Sicily. The Jews of Sicily were not spread throughout the island, however. They were limited to the coastal towns for the most part, and to certain towns in particular. Palermo and Mazara del Vallo, for example, both had significant Jewish populations.<sup>29</sup> Culturally, the Jews of Sicily were very much part of the Islamic world. Arabic was their primary language, and their families were spread throughout the Mediterranean and not Europe. In terms of the social and commercial life of Sicily, the Jews were much like the Muslims they had settled with when the island was under Muslim control.

Indigenous Christians, that is Christians who lived in Sicily under Muslim rule, made up another significant minority population in Norman Sicily. They have often been

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<sup>28</sup> Henri Bresc, "La Sicile médiévale, terre de refuge pour les juifs: migration et exil," *Al-Masāq* 17, no. 1 (2005): 33. For a detailed treatment of the Jews in Sicily, see Bresc, *Arabes de langue, Juifs de religion: l'évolution du judaïsme sicilien dans l'environnement latin, XIIIe-XVe siècles* (Paris: Editions Bouchene, 2001).

<sup>29</sup> Tudela, 282.

referred to as Greeks or Greek Christians. This is primarily in order to differentiate them from the Latin Christians immigrants who came to the island with the Normans. This was the practice in the period, as local Christians were described as *Greci* in the chronicles in contrast to the Latin Christian newcomers.<sup>30</sup> Despite the title used today and at the time, local Christians did not necessarily speak Greek, at least not primarily. Rather, it refers to the language of their liturgy. Greek was likely spoken on the eastern side of the island, for example in the Val Demone in the northeast and the Val di Noto in the southeast. These regions had a much higher Christian population under Muslim rule, along with their towns, such as Messina, Catania, and Syracuse. But for these Christians, years of Muslim rule led to a certain amount of assimilation. Most of these Christians spoke Arabic and dressed in the fashion of their Muslim neighbors. Even as late as 1184/5, Ibn Jubayr remarked on Christian ladies of Palermo who followed the fashion of Muslim women.<sup>31</sup> The assimilation was likely more distinct in the western part of the island, the Val di Mazara, which, despite being predominantly Muslim, had a minority Christian population throughout the eleventh and twelfth centuries. These indigenous Christians worked in a variety of professions, for example in Palermo as notaries and artisans.<sup>32</sup>

Because of that level of assimilation, it is often difficult to tell indigenous Christian and Muslims apart when one looks at the sources from Norman Sicily. Even a

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<sup>30</sup> Some modern historians refer to the indigenous Christians as the “Mozarabs” of Sicily. See Henri Bresc and Anneliese Nef, "Les Mozarabes de Sicile (1100-1300)," in *Cavalieri alla conquista del Sud: studi sull'Italia normanna in memoria di Léon Robert Ménéger* (Rome: Laterza, 1998).

<sup>31</sup> Jubayr, 349-50.

<sup>32</sup> Bresc and Nef, "Les Mozarabes de Sicile (1100-1300)." 148-9.

common indicator of religious identity, naming practices, does not present a clear picture. Cultural mixing and the use of Arabic led many Sicilian Christians to follow Islamic naming patterns. For example, among the villeins described as the “Christians of Corleone” in 1178 were men named Muhammad and ‘Ali.<sup>33</sup> In addition, families would continue Muslim naming practices after conversion to Christianity. But despite such confusion, one can still identify areas where indigenous Christians were more prevalent than Muslims. And even late in the twelfth century when Muslims were no longer quite as dominant in the west, they still made up the majority of the population there. So while the distinctions are not exact or absolute, one can still speak of the Val Demone as primarily Christian and the Val di Mazara as primarily Muslim, with an acknowledgement of the cultural mixing and coexistence of Christians and Muslims that took place in each.

Muslims were definitely a majority in Sicily when the Normans took control of it at the end of the eleventh century. This was the case even though many Muslims, especially those wealthy enough to do so, emigrated elsewhere to places such as North Africa. Because of the numbers of Muslims, the Norman rulers of the island were forced to formulate their policy towards them with their own minority status in mind. In the early years of their rule, the de Hautevilles depended on the Muslims of Sicily to perform all manner of tasks, the growing of food, the operation of markets, and so on. Because of this, they developed a policy towards them that allowed them to operate with autonomy in their own communities so long as they paid a special tax. In this they

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<sup>33</sup> Cusa, 147.

borrowed as well, as the tax was modeled on the *jizya* required for non-Muslims living under Muslim rule. Their communities had their own officials and were subject to their own law and judges. Even during the conquest, towns were allowed to surrender according to their own customs, swearing “oaths in the manner of their own law.”<sup>34</sup>

There developed a tradition early, particularly in the west of the island, of Muslims living in autonomous communities. This was not the case in the coastal towns, however, where the different groups were much more mixed.

The rulers of Norman Sicily made use of the Muslim population there in any way they could. They first borrowed many of the practices used by the Muslim rulers of the island, such as the practice of imposing a tax on the subject population, and imported practices of administration from elsewhere in the Islamic world, such as Fatimid Egypt. They also made use of Muslims in the operation of their administration.<sup>35</sup> Arabic documents produced by the Norman government appeared immediately after the conquest, along with documents in Latin and Greek. There was some lag in the beginning of the twelfth century, but Arabic remained one of the primary languages of the Norman chancery up to the end of William II’s reign.<sup>36</sup> This trilingual administration was depicted in the manuscript for Peter of Eboli’s *Liber* (see figure 4). In the image,

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<sup>34</sup> Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, IV.16.

<sup>35</sup> This has been the focus of a number of studies, such as Johns and Hiroshi Takayama, *The Administration of the Norman Kingdom of Sicily*, *The Medieval Mediterranean: Peoples, Economies, and Cultures*, 400-1453 (Leiden: Brill, 1993).

<sup>36</sup> Alex Metcalfe argues that Roger II reintroduced Arabic as a language of royal government after a twenty year absence, Alex Metcalfe, "Trusting the Text as Far as We Can Throw the Scribe: Further Notes on Reading a Bilingual *Jaridāt al-Hudūd* from the Royal *Dīwān* of Norman Sicily," in *From al-Andalus to Khurasan: Documents from the Medieval Muslim World*, ed. Petra M. Sijpesteijn, et al., *Islamic History and Civilization, Studies and Texts*, 66 (Boston: Brill, 2007), 81.



Figure 4: The trilingual scribes of the Norman Chancery<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Eboli, *Liber ad Honorem Augusti*, Plates, vii.

scribes described as Greek, Saracen, and Latin, labor away with pen and paper. These scribes made up Tancred's administration, and below them messengers deliver missives to Tancred. Some Muslims were required to convert in order to serve in government, but even at the time their conversion this was viewed with suspicion, and they remained culturally a part of the Muslim community.<sup>38</sup> But some remained Muslims openly, and they played an integral role in the administration of Norman Sicily.

The de Hautevilles also made much use of the Muslims of Sicily in their armies. Again, from the earliest years of the conquest the Normans treated Sicilian Muslims as they did their other subjects and looked to them for military service. When Roger I went to the aid of his nephew Roger Borsa, he summoned both knights and Muslims from Sicily.<sup>39</sup> Their use of Muslim troops was commented upon at the time. Eadmer, in a famous anecdote from his *Life of St. Anselm*, described Roger I bringing these Muslim troops to aid Roger Borsa and claimed that Roger I would not have allowed them to convert to Christianity, preferring to keep them under his direct control.<sup>40</sup> While this account may have been a pious fiction by Eadmer, Roger I did use Muslim troops.<sup>41</sup> This practice of using Muslim troops continued into the twelfth century. According to Alexander of Teleso, Roger II used Muslim engineers on the mainland, both to fortify the

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<sup>38</sup> See, for example, the clerk encountered by Ibn Jubayr who was nominally Christian but asked after affairs in the holy cities of Islam, Mecca and Medina.

<sup>39</sup> Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, IV.17.

<sup>40</sup> Eadmer, *The Life of St. Anselm Archbishop of Canterbury*, trans. R.W. Southern (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1962), 111-12.

<sup>41</sup> Jeremy Johns, "The Greek Church and the Conversion of Muslims in Norman Sicily," *Byzantinische Forschungen* 21, no. 133-157 (1995): 137.

town of Bari and to besiege Montepeloso.<sup>42</sup> The rulers of Sicily looked to their Muslim subjects to provide military service the same as their Christian subjects and at times went on campaign with forces that had more Muslims than Christians. Muslims were an important part of their military strength. In addition, using Muslim troops may have been partially to keep them occupied; as so long as the Normans used Muslim soldiers in their armies there were no revolts of the Muslims in Sicily.<sup>43</sup>

But while Muslims were a part of Norman society, and a part that was necessary for its functioning, their protected status was conditional. There was coexistence between the Muslims of the island and its Christian rulers, but it was based on the service they could offer the Regno, service that ranged from tilling the soil to working directly for the crown in an administrative or military capacity. It was the necessity of the Muslims and their majority status, which motivated the tolerance of the de Hautevilles; they were not valued in the same manner as their Christian subjects. While a law attributed to Roger I lamented the persecution of Jews and Muslims, it also only levied half the penalty for killing one as for killing a Christian.<sup>44</sup> Muslims and Jews were often placed under the authority of a religious official, such as an abbot or bishop, from the first years of Norman rule, but this does not appear to have been in order to convert them. There was no discernable effort to do so, and at the very least there was little success.<sup>45</sup> And despite

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<sup>42</sup> Telese, *Alexandri Telesini Abbatis Ystoria Rogerii*, II.34,II.42.

<sup>43</sup> Johns, "The Muslims of Norman Sicily, c. 1060-c. 1194", 111-12.

<sup>44</sup> Powell, ed., *The Liber Augustalis*, , I.32.

<sup>45</sup> Johns, "The Greek Church and the Conversion of Muslims in Norman Sicily," 133-34.

the tolerance shown during his life, according to Romuald of Salerno, at the end of his life, Roger II tried hard to convert Jews and Muslims and endowed converts with gifts.<sup>46</sup>

The usefulness of the Muslims of Sicily was diluted by the ever-increasing presence of the fourth major group of Norman Sicily, Latin Christian immigrants. Over the course of the twelfth century, the number of Latin Christians travelling from the mainland of Italy or elsewhere in Europe increased. This immigration was encouraged by the de Hautevilles and other Latin Christian lords in Sicily. A donation to the town of Patti in 1133 by Roger II set the condition that only “men of the Latin tongue” could settle there.<sup>47</sup> The immigration of Latin Christians fed a process of acculturation for indigenous Sicilian Christians.<sup>48</sup> As Latin Christians were in positions of authority, local Christians adopted the Latin rite, began following Latin naming practices, and other forms of acculturation. This made local Christians more and more distinct from Sicilian Muslims, while at the time Muslims were becoming a minority population in the island. Despite their dwindling numbers, Muslims did remain important to the de Hautevilles, and even into the 1180s they were a presence in the commercial and administrative worlds of Palermo and other towns.

But conflict developed between the Latin Christians coming to Sicily from the mainland and beyond the Alps and the Muslims there. These new immigrants often did not have the same vested interest in the tolerance of Muslims that the kings of Sicily did. The contrast that John Boswell draws for Spain, between an upper class with an interest

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<sup>46</sup> Salerno, *Romualdi Salernitani Chronicon*, 236.

<sup>47</sup> Brühl, ed., *Rogarii II. Regis Diplomata Latina*, 64-65.

<sup>48</sup> Graham A. Loud, "Byzantine Italy and the Normans," *Byzantinische Forschungen* 13 (1988): 232.

in peace and production and others trying to support themselves and competing for resources, would apply to Norman Sicily as well.<sup>49</sup> The new immigrants did not have an interest in protecting their Muslim neighbors, and this could lead to outbreaks of violence. In the 1160s, a revolt against William I by his Latin Christian nobles, led by Roger Sclavus, produced attacks on Muslims throughout Sicily. In Palermo, this violence was aimed at those working for the royal government. Palace eunuchs, who were often suspected of being false converts to Christianity, were killed. The Muslims of the town who were of particular use to the king, those selling goods and collecting taxes, were also killed.<sup>50</sup> The violence spread to William I's army, and the Christians and Muslims serving him began to fight one another.<sup>51</sup> William I managed to put down the revolt, but not before most Muslims had to flee Palermo.

But they did return to Palermo and continued to live alongside Christians there. This apparent contradiction marks the situation of Muslims in Sicily in the second half of the twelfth century. Although conditions worsened for them, they continued to be a part of Sicilian society. Like the Muslims of Spain, Muslim populations in Sicily were also gradually collected in isolated communities in the west of the island, except for the commercial elite and those involved in civil service.<sup>52</sup> The coastal towns where commerce and administration were centered were the site of Latin immigration, and the numbers of Latin Christians grew in comparison to the Muslims there as well. But they kept their roles in commerce and administration into the 1180s despite the tension that

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<sup>49</sup> Boswell, *The Royal Treasure*, 21.

<sup>50</sup> Falcandus, *The History of the Tyrants of Sicily by "Hugo Falcandus" 1154-69*, 109.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>52</sup> Boswell, *The Royal Treasure*, 30.

had developed between Muslims and Latin Christians in Sicily. Their roles diminished but remained a part of the economy and society of Norman Sicily.

However, with the death of William II, their position could no longer be maintained. They had been pushed into isolated communities inland, except for the few elites who remained in the coastal towns. When the last de Hauteville king of Sicily died, they lost the little protection they had left. Left to their own devices, the Muslims of the west revolted and set up their own state. They would remain a power in the island during the conflict between Tancred and Henry VI and allied themselves with Markwald of Anweiler against Frederick II. Some Muslims leaders even felt their position to be strong enough to mint their own coinage.<sup>53</sup> But they could not maintain their hold there and were eventually deported by Frederick II to Lucera on the mainland. Their abandoned inland settlements were then taken over by Latin Christians.<sup>54</sup> Once there, however, they were placed in a position familiar to them. Like their situation at the end of the twelfth century in Norman Sicily, they lived in a mountain town isolated from their Christian neighbors, giving military service in exchange for protection from a lord of another religion.

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<sup>53</sup> Julie Taylor, *Muslims in Medieval Italy: The Colony at Lucera* (New York: Lexington Books, 2003), 8.

<sup>54</sup> Henri Bresc, *Un monde méditerranéen : économie et société en Sicile, 1300-1450*, Bibliothèque des écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome; fasc. 262 (Rome: Ecole française de Rome 1986), 594-604.

### **Chapter Three: The Social and Economic Landscape of Norman Sicily**

During the course of the Norman conquest of Sicily, the new Latin rulers of the island were introduced to a rich landscape, one that would give them a reputation for wealth during their rule. As I will show in this chapter, Sicily in the twelfth century was very productive, in terms of both the agricultural production of its land and the industrial production of its people. Sicily is a large island, 25,460 square kilometers, and it is only three kilometers from Messina to Reggio on the mainland of Italy. Sicily is primarily mountainous, with mountains and hills over 300 meters covering 86% of the island.<sup>1</sup> There are plains along the coast, and a sloping upland plateau in the center and southeast, with the majority of the mountainous interior made up of hills, plateaus, and deep valleys. Sicily has traditionally been divided into three sections based on valleys, the Val di Mazara in the west, the Val Demone in the northeast, and the Val di Noto in the southeast. Michele Amari argues that this division was established by the path of the Muslim conquest. Each *valli*, or valley, had a different ethnic makeup at the time of the Norman conquest. The Val di Mazara had a large Muslim majority, the Val di Noto had roughly approximate Muslim and Christian populations, and the Val Demone had a Greek Christian majority.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the Latin Christian conquerors of the island went in the opposite direction, with the Val Demone providing the least resistance and the Val di Mazara the most.

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<sup>1</sup> My information about the geographical makeup of Sicily is drawn from Jeremy Johns, "The Muslims of Norman Sicily," 3-4.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 4.

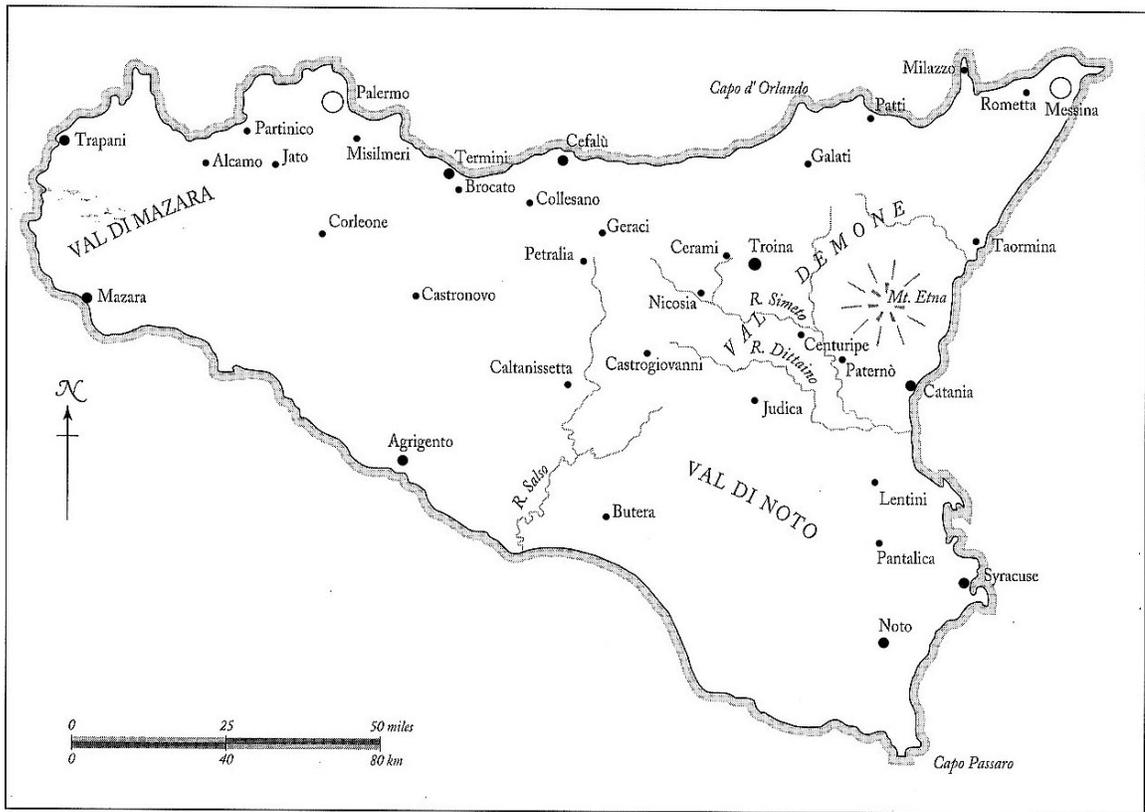


Figure 5: Map of the Valli<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Graham Loud, *The Age of Robert Guiscard*, 312.

The sources that discuss the landscape, the towns, crops, and population of the island are limited. The most valuable source by far is the geography of al-Idrisi, produced in the court of Roger II in the 1150s. It provides an incredibly detailed description of the towns of Sicily, their products and infrastructure. However, he does not discuss the people of Sicily at all. Despite the motivation al-Idrisi may have had to provide a positive representation of the island for his patron Roger II, the information he provides about the resources of the island appears to be genuine. While at times he resorts to platitudes about the beauty and fertility of various towns, the concrete details he provides indicate detailed knowledge of the island. For example, in his discussion of an inland river, he notes that it passes one settlement “on its right at about a stone’s throw” and later “traverses a salt bed whereupon its water becomes saline.”<sup>4</sup> In other sections al-Idrisi provides exact distances between settlements and even to other sites such as ports at a remove from towns. While it is important to take his positive approach to the island and its natural resources into account, the detail he provides indicates that he had access to a great deal of information, either through his own research or from the accounts of others, and did not simply mouth platitudes about the plenty of Sicily.

The main sources for first hand accounts of the island are two late twelfth-century travelers, Benjamin of Tudela and Ibn Jubayr. In the case of Ibn Jubayr, his antagonism towards the Christians of the island colors his account. But the account still should be taken as accurate, despite his castigation of the Christian rulers of the island and his declaration of the pitiable state of Muslims living under them; he still notes many admirable qualities of William II and Sicily. That mixed nature of account indicates that

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<sup>4</sup> Idrisi (Eng.), 151-2, Idrisi (Arab.), 44

Cities and Towns Mentioned by al-Idrisi

Sicily

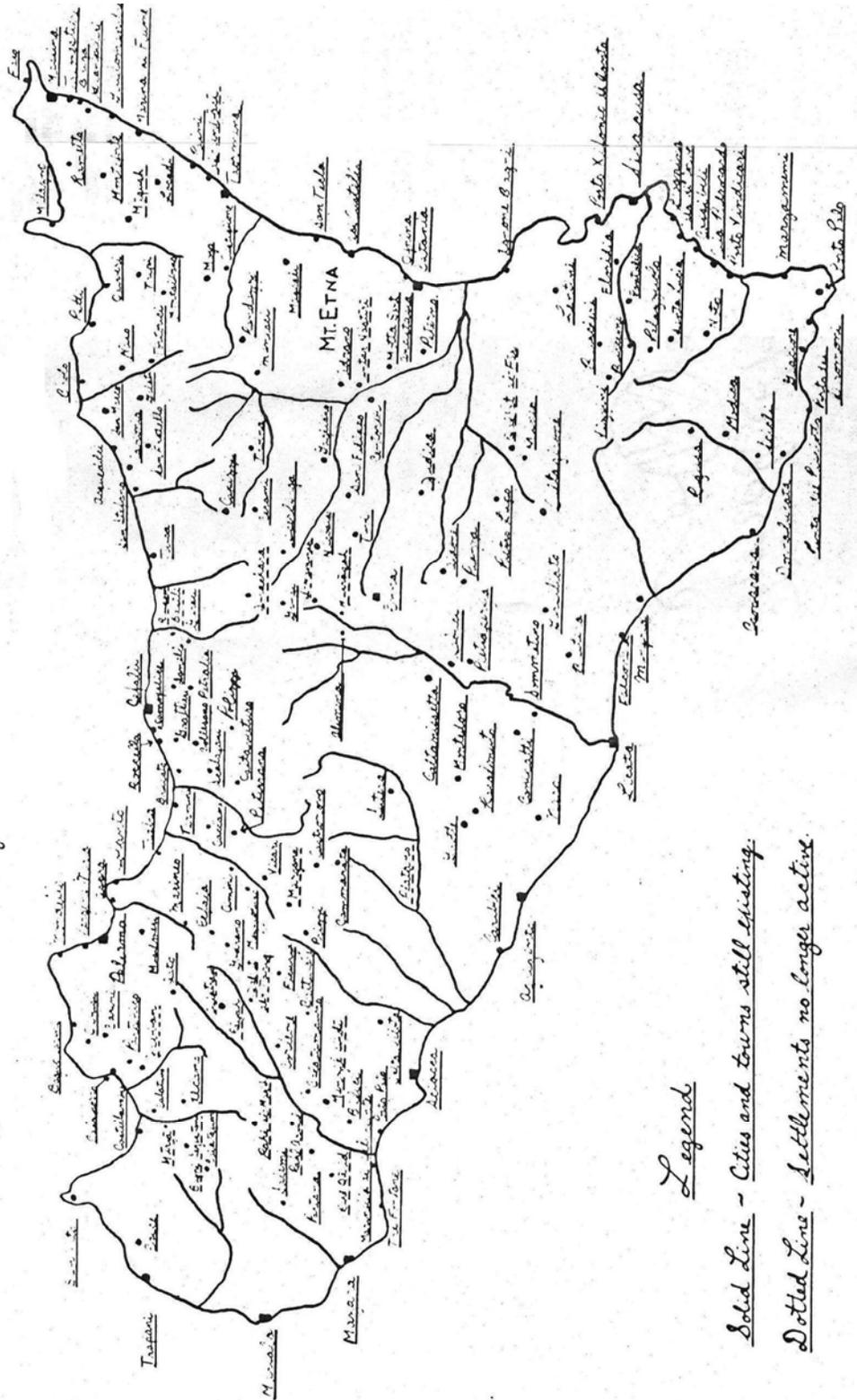


Figure 5: Map of al-Idrisi's Description of Sicily<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Idrisi (Eng.), 247.

he reacted to things as he encountered them and that while his attitude needs to be taken into account he described the situation he encountered in Norman Sicily accurately. Other evidence, such as Latin chronicles, merchants' letters, and the *jarā'id* serve to flesh out the picture of Sicily's landscape that the three main sources give us. In my description of the island's landscape, I will follow the example of al-Idrisi by beginning with Palermo, the main city of the island, and moving clockwise around the coast, using the available sources to describe each town.

The city of Palermo was the undisputed capital of the island, to the point that in Arabic sources it was often simply referred to as *al-Medina*, the city. The traveler Ibn Jubayr said that the "finest town in Sicily and the seat of its sovereign, is known to Muslims as *al-Medina*, and to the Christians as Palermo."<sup>6</sup> It was the main town of Islamic Sicily and remained so after the island was conquered by the Normans, becoming the capital of Sicily under Roger I's widow, the regent Adelaide.<sup>7</sup> According to Alexander of Telese, this was only fitting, as it was the chief city of Sicily and had been the capital in ancient times as well.<sup>8</sup> It was described by al-Idrisi in his geography, often referred to as the *Book of Roger*, as being well endowed with places of worship in addition to numerous *funduqs*, suqs, and mosques. Al-Idrisi commented particularly on the number of mosques in Palermo, including a great mosque that had once been a church.<sup>9</sup> Palermo was large, being divided into three sections, each with its own accommodations. The traveler Benjamin of Tudela, who visited Sicily in 1173, described Palermo as an awe-inspiring metropolis. He claimed it was bigger than Rome and as big

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<sup>6</sup> Jubayr, 340.

<sup>7</sup> Tudela, 282.

<sup>8</sup> Alexander of Telese, *Abbat's Ystoria Rogerii Regis*, II.1.

<sup>9</sup> Idrisi (Arab.), 22.

as Baghdad, with the countryside supporting it with wheat and barley.<sup>10</sup> Benjamin of Tudela also commented on the cosmopolitan nature of the court in Palermo, noting that under Roger II “[h]is equal treatment of all people led to Sicily’s holding courts in various languages, with professional judges under the surveillance of itinerant justices.”<sup>11</sup> In addition, he lauded the scholarly achievements of the Norman court, noting that he “benefited from King Roger’s patronage of Muslim scholars” because he used the work of al-Idrisi to learn about the countries he traveled to.<sup>12</sup> However, he also noted the tension between Christians and Muslims in Palermo, noting that conflict broke out after the death of Roger II that led to Muslims leaving the city.<sup>13</sup>

There is an image of Palermo around 1190 provided in a manuscript of Peter of Eboli’s *Liber ad Honorem Augusti* (figure 7). In it, one can see the varied population of Palermo, clean-shaven Latin Christians and Muslims with beards and turbans. It also shows some of the gardens of the city in the upper left-hand corner, and the port, full of fish, at the bottom of the image. The neighborhoods of Palermo are laid out, but only two landmarks are depicted. The royal chapel is shown, as is the sea castle guarding the port of Palermo.

Benjamin of Tudela also commented on the industries of Palermo, with a particular interest in those his fellow Jews were involved in. According to Benjamin of Tudela, “[f]ishing is one of Palermo’s great industries,” and ships regularly came there to

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<sup>10</sup> Tudela, 279.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 281.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.



Figure 7: Palermo in 1190.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Eboli, *Liber ad Honorem Augusti*, Plates, iv.

buy salted tuna fish.<sup>15</sup> This was worth noting for Benjamin of Tudela as “[m]any Jews work in the fishing industry and have a good reputation.”<sup>16</sup> The main industry that he commented on in Palermo, however, was that of textile dyeing, and in particular silk. Jews were an integral part of the silk industry in Palermo, according to Benjamin of Tudela, though he dismissed the idea that the silk industry in Palermo began when Roger II brought back Jewish textile workers captured while on campaign in Greece. Rather, “in truth silk making is an old craft in Sicily and a traditional craft of Sicilian Jews.”<sup>17</sup> Benjamin of Tudela notes that these Jewish silk workers have benefited Palermo with their production of high-quality silk textiles. The fishing and textile industries of Sicily will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Six.

Benjamin of Tudela noted that Palermo had a large Jewish community, bigger than any in Italy:

Palermo is inhabited by about fifteen hundred Jews, and many Christians and Muslims. Jews here are full citizens like any others. They can own any property except Christian slaves. They can work at any occupation. They can be appointed to official posts. They can worship freely, and can settle disputes within the Jewish community in their own courts in accord with Jewish law. Jews can live a very good life in Palermo.<sup>18</sup>

Benjamin of Tudela traced the protected status of the Jewish community in Norman Sicily back to the early days of the conquest, when Robert Guiscard “did nothing to abrogate Jew’s rights as citizens – Jews could still worship as they wished, could own buildings and lands, and could engage freely in the trades and professions.”<sup>19</sup> They were still subject to the *jizya*, the head tax paid in exchange for their toleration and protection,

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 282.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 279.

as they had been under Islamic rule, but they also retained the rights and privileges they had held under the *dhimmi* system. The *dhimmi* system under Muslim rule was the system through which non-Muslims, such as Jews and Christians, were granted protection and the right to practice their religion in exchange for placing themselves under certain obligations, such as paying the *jizya*. This system remained in place into the thirteenth century, as a grant of the Jews of Palermo in 1211 from Frederick II to Paris, the archbishop-elect of Palermo, included the *jizya* in addition to the other obligations that had previously been owed to the crown.<sup>20</sup>

Ibn Jubayr also provided a detailed picture of Palermo. He begins his description of the city by praising its natural and man-made beauty:

It is the metropolis of these islands, combining the benefits of wealth and splendor, and having all that you could wish of beauty, real or apparent, and all the need of subsistence, mature and fresh. It is an ancient and elegant city, magnificent and gracious, and seductive to look upon. Proudly set between its open spaces and plains filled with gardens, with broad roads and avenues, it dazzles the eyes with its perfection... A river splits the town, and four springs gush in its suburbs. The King, to whom it is his world, has embellished it to perfection and taken it as the capital of his Frankish Kingdom – may God destroy it.<sup>21</sup>

He sprinkled invective against the Christian rulers of Sicily throughout the account of his travels there. They seem almost obligatory additions, as he also praised the Christians of the island. Ibn Jubayr provided a very detailed layout of Palermo in poetic language, describing the palaces of the king being “disposed around the higher parts, like pearls encircling a woman’s full throat.”<sup>22</sup> He drew parallels between Palermo and Cordova, noting that Palermo also has an old city at the center of the new city. For Ibn Jubayr

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<sup>20</sup> Simonsohn, 444.

<sup>21</sup> Jubayr, 348.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

Palermo was a grand town of the Mediterranean, like his hometown of Islamic Cordoba, which emphasizes Palermo's continued Islamic flavor. Al-Idrisi also noted the different sections of the town, including the lower quarter that surrounded the palace. It was divided into the Qaşr al-Qadīm, the palace, and the Rabađ, or lower city. The Qaşr was the fortress of the town, and the area surrounding it was split into three quarters. The Rabađ encircled the upper quarters of the city.<sup>23</sup>

Ibn Jubayr also provides evidence that an infrastructure existed to accommodate Muslim visitors to the city, as he spent seven days "living in a hostel used by Muslims."<sup>24</sup> There must have been travelers to Palermo using that *funduq*, or hostel, which indicates travel and commerce between it and the Islamic world. There is other evidence of *funduqs* in Palermo. Among the various properties donated by George of Antioch to his foundation of St. Maria dell' Ammiraglio were a new *funduq* in Palermo and another he had recently purchased.<sup>25</sup> In the case of Palermo, *funduqs* appear to have been privately owned, and not run by the government as was the case in the Islamic world.<sup>26</sup> But they appear to have remained largely unchanged after the transition to Christian rule and continued to accommodate Muslim merchants traveling to the island.<sup>27</sup> In general, there were many such accommodations throughout the island, not just Palermo. Latin Christian merchants had their own settlements in coastal towns, and other towns had their own hostels to accommodate visiting merchants.

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<sup>23</sup> Idrisi (Arab.) 23.

<sup>24</sup> Jubayr, 350.

<sup>25</sup> Cusa, 68-70. Johns, 110.

<sup>26</sup> Olivia Remie Constable, *Housing the Stranger in the Mediterranean World: Lodging, Trade, and Travel in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 114-15.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 202-03.

He also noted the continued protected status that Muslims had in Palermo, and the size of the community. It held the largest population of Muslims on the island, as well as being the largest city, or *al-Medina al-Kabīra*.<sup>28</sup> As has been noted by many historians, many of the Muslims in Palermo were employed in the administration of the Norman court.<sup>29</sup> The king used Muslims in many aspects of his household, but some were forced to convert, at least publically, to Christianity to maintain their roles in the administration. This conversion was largely superficial, and tolerated as such by the king. When an earthquake struck in Messina and William II heard nothing but Muslim prayers from his household, he supposedly responded by saying, “Let each invoke the God he worships, and those that have faith shall be comforted.”<sup>30</sup> But despite the toleration shown, some positions were publically open only to Christians. The king ran his realm in a fashion that seemed to Ibn Jubayr to mirror that of Muslim rulers:

William is engrossed in the pleasures of his land, the arrangement of its laws, the laying down of procedure, the allocation of the functions of his chief officials, the enlargement of the splendor of the realm, and this display of his pomp, in a manner that resembles the Muslim Kings.<sup>31</sup>

In Palermo in the late twelfth century, despite growing tensions between Christians and Muslims, the Norman court remained a place of significant cultural mixing.

Ibn Jubayr had a generally negative view of the religious freedom that Muslims had in Palermo, commenting on the fact that they were denied the Friday service as the *khuṭba* was forbidden.<sup>32</sup> This practice was not forbidden for any reasons of faith, however. In the Middle Ages the *khuṭba*, the address given in a mosque on Fridays,

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<sup>28</sup> Jubayr, 340.

<sup>29</sup> See in particular Johns and Hiroshi Takayama, *The Administration of the Norman Kingdom of Sicily*.

<sup>30</sup> Jubayr, 341.

<sup>31</sup> Takayama, *The Administration of the Norman Kingdom of Sicily*, 341.

<sup>32</sup> Jubayr, 348.

usually involved the recitation of a ruler's name, which served as one of the main signs of sovereignty and authority in a region. Only on feast days were they allowed to "recite it with intercessions for the 'Abbasid Caliphs."<sup>33</sup> Therefore, it is not surprising that William II and his administration would deny Muslims in Palermo the opportunity to make a move toward rejecting Christian authority by declaring the sovereignty of a Muslim ruler over the island. Still, it does show that by the late twelfth century the possibility of such rejection was a concern for the king. In general, however, Ibn Jubayr describes a city in which Muslims generally had free practice of religion. He refers to the fact that they "preserve their faith" and keep their mosques repaired. He noted a "countless" number of mosques in Palermo, both ordinary ones, which were also largely used as schools by teachers of the Qu'ran, and a main mosque for Friday prayers and for Ramadan.<sup>34</sup> They maintained much of their independent legal status also, having "a qadi to whom they refer their law-suits."<sup>35</sup> But despite these privileges, Ibn Jubayr maintained a pessimistic tone about the status of Muslims living in Palermo, "[b]ut 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. May God, by His favor, amend their lot with His beneficence."<sup>36</sup>

Ibn Jubayr was likely correct in some of his attitudes. He did visit the island after the status of Muslims had begun to deteriorate. But even at the time of his visit, Palermo still retained elements of cultural mixing between Muslims and Christians:

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 348-49.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 348.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 349.

The Christian women of this city follow the fashion of Muslim women, are fluent of speech, wrap their cloaks about them, and are veiled. They go forth on this Feast Day dressed in robes of gold-embroidered silk, wrapped in elegant cloaks, concealed by colored veils, and shod with gilt slippers. Thus they parade to their churches, or their dens, bearing all the adornments of Muslim women, including jewelry, henna on the fingers, and perfumes.<sup>37</sup>

Ibn Jubayr does not mention the language used by these women, but it is possible that the speech they were fluent in was Arabic. If this was the case, they would have been the exception rather than the rule for Latin Christians at that point. The goods they displayed may very well have been produced on the island, given the textiles and other products made in Sicily and sold in Palermo. When contrasted with the account of Benjamin of Tudela, the image that Ibn Jubayr provides of Palermo in 1184 is one in which the status of Muslims has deteriorated since the first half of the twelfth century. But even in his account Muslims and Christians still lived in proximity to one another and interacted culturally in terms of artistic trends, particularly dress.

The religious communities of Palermo also did not necessarily live in isolation from one another. Within the town, Christians, Muslims, and Jews lived on the same streets and bought houses from one another. There was a tendency towards separating into distinct neighborhoods; Ibn Jubayr described the Muslims living on the outskirts of town doing just that, as in “their own suburbs they live apart from the Christians.”<sup>38</sup> And in many of the towns throughout the coastal regions, Muslims at times lived in their own communities, such as in Cefalù or Trapani. In the inland rural communities of the island, this tendency was even more pronounced. Within the city, however, some evidence survives in the form contracts detailing the sale of land and houses.

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 349-50.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 348.

First, eight contracts of sale surviving from the twelfth century detail sales by Muslims to Christian buyers.<sup>39</sup> The buyers were all connected with either the church or the Norman court, which likely explains why they are among the few documents of practice to survive from Norman Sicily.<sup>40</sup> One contract, dated to 1113, involved the sale of land planted with sugar cane near Palermo by a Muslim clerk, Arghīsa ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Qurashī and his mother, ‘Ayaka bint Aḥmad.<sup>41</sup> The buyer was a Christian, Zakarī ibn Suleymān al-‘Aṭṭār, whose Christian status is indicated by the title al-Naṣrānī, or the Nazarene. He was acting on behalf of the *qā'id* Ghafūr. In 1137, a Walter bought property on behalf of the archbishop Henry of Messina, acquiring an estate in the Qaṣr al-Qadīm, the central district of Palermo, from the three children of Abū al-Qasim al-‘Aṭṭār al-Barūqī.<sup>42</sup> This transaction was overseen by the qadi Abū al-Qasim ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Rajā. Another dated to the mid-twelfth century records the sale by ‘Umar ibn Husayn al-Tamīmī of a small plot of land near Palermo to Alghamon, Abbot of the monastery of Barḍālī.<sup>43</sup> In a contract from 1161 another estate in the Qaṣr al-Qadīm was sold by the four children of ‘Umar al-Azdī to Rao, a priest of the Church of Qaṣr al-Ma‘mūr, the cathedral of Palermo, and again overseen by a qadi, Abū al-Faḍl ibn. Abū Ḥasan ‘Ali ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Rajā.<sup>44</sup> In 1180 Basil, acting for the Holy Church of St. Mary on the instructions of Archbishop Walter of Palermo, purchased agricultural land south of

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<sup>39</sup> These contracts are discussed in detail in an article by Olivia Remie Constable, "Cross-Cultural Contracts: Sales of Land between Christians and Muslims in 12th -Century Palermo," *Studia Islamica* 85 (1997). They are all contained in the collection of Cusa.

<sup>40</sup> Constable, "Cross-Cultural Contracts," 69.

<sup>41</sup> Cusa, , 610-13.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 61-67.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 505-06. Constable translates Alghamon's name into either Ramano or Raymond, Constable, "Cross-Cultural Contracts: Sales of Land between Christians and Muslims in 12th -Century Palermo," 70. Johns is unable to identify the church, Johns, 315.

<sup>44</sup> Cusa, 101-06. Constable claims that this qadi appears to be the grandson of the one who presided over the contract of 1137, which seems very plausible. Constable, "Cross-Cultural Contracts," 72.

Palermo, in Favara. He bought the land, which included a spring and was planted with sugar cane, from Abū al-‘Abbās Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd al-Nūr al-Tamīmī and Abū al-Faḍl ibn Aḥmad al-Ḥadamī.<sup>45</sup> One contract details the sale of land in 1183 to a Christian woman, Lady Margaret, Dama Bargharīta al-Naṣrānī, who was living in a convent in Agrigento. She bought the property, which was located in a southern suburb of Palermo, for herself from Mas‘ūd ibn Tāmīr al-Qurashī and his son ‘Abd al-Salam.<sup>46</sup> The district of Qaṣr al-Qadīm again was the setting for the sale of an estate in 1190, when a Nicola Ashqar bought property from Zaynad bint ‘Abd Allah al-Anṣārī, who had been held prisoner by “the Rūm in the West” and sold the estate to pay for her ransom.<sup>47</sup> Women, Muslim and Christian, appear infrequently in the few documents of practice that survive, but they appear able to act on their own, perhaps when not legally obscured by a living male relative. Finally, in 1196 a small house in an area of Palermo called Darb al-Saḥṭārī, south of Qaṣr al-Qadīm, was bought by a priest named Peter on behalf of Lord Geoffrey of Normandy from ‘Uthmān ibn Yūsuf al-Hawwārī.<sup>48</sup>

These contracts cover nearly the entirety of the twelfth century, demonstrating a relatively consistent commercial exchange of houses and property between Christians and Muslims in and around Palermo. On the one hand, these contracts seem to demonstrate the larger process of the settlement of Latin Christians in Palermo and other towns of the coast of Sicily in the twelfth century, at times at the expense of Muslims. But they also show that there was no strict separation in the settlement of Christians and Muslims in Palermo. Whether in houses in the central district of Palermo, the Qaṣr al-Qadīm, or in

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<sup>45</sup> Cusa, 39-43.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 491-93.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 44-46.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 499-501.

agricultural estates located in the suburbs, Christians bought land and houses from Muslims, presumably in regions that had established Muslim communities. They do not seem to have been reluctant to live in proximity to one another, with either Muslims refusing to sell or Christians refusing to buy. It is possible that these homes were being bought to provide income through renting these homes and estates to Muslims, especially given the fact that they were often purchased either by ecclesiastical institutions or those living in them. But the description of the boundaries that defined the properties sold in these contracts show neighborhoods that mixed Christians and Muslims, so that regardless of who settled in the property it was already bounded by people of varying religious identities.<sup>49</sup> These contracts also demonstrate mixing between Christians of the Greek and Latin rites, as both Latin and Greek names appear in these contracts. For example, given that his father was a priest in the twelfth century, it would be likely that Raymond, the abbot of the monastery of Barḍālī and the son of the priest Abū Ghālib, was a Greek Christian. In general, these contracts show a pattern of settlement in Palermo over the course of the twelfth century that does not conform to Ibn Jubayr's contention that the Muslims "in their own suburbs live apart from the Christians."<sup>50</sup> There were areas in Palermo with more of a Muslim and Greek Christian presence, particularly in the southern portions of the city, but these contracts show the spread of Latin Christians into these neighborhoods.<sup>51</sup> Still, each would have been subject to the particular court and authority dictated by their religion. But there was no strict separation in the neighborhoods of Palermo along the lines of religious identity.

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<sup>49</sup> Constable, "Cross-Cultural Contracts," 80.

<sup>50</sup> Jubayr, 348

<sup>51</sup> Constable, "Cross-Cultural Contracts," 80-81.

The exchange of property also took place between Christians and Jews. In 1161 King William I sold to Jacob ibn Faḍlūn ibn Ṣalāḥ some agricultural land to the west of Palermo.<sup>52</sup> Like the other contracts, the descriptions of the boundaries of the property show a landscape of mixed religious identity. The eastern border touched on the vineyard of ‘Alī ibn Abī al-Najjā on one end and the vineyard of Daqī the Christian on the other. Likewise, on the southern end of the property the estate abutted the lands of Roger al-Bargisi, Ḥamūd al-Bakarāk the tinsmith, and the *qā'id* Maymūn. This property, owned previously by William I and the royal *diwān*, or administrative bureau, and sold to a Sicilian Jew, was bordered by Christians and Muslims and people of varying social status, ranging from a tinsmith to a *qā'id*, or leader in the Muslim community. It again shows people of varying religious identities living next to one another in Palermo and the surrounding area. The only deeds that survive document the sale of land between Christians and others, but that does not mean that other sales were not taking place between Muslims and Jews, either with one another or their co-religionists. The survival of such documents from Norman Sicily was based on the participation of either the royal *diwān* or ecclesiastical institutions, which preserved them in their archives. Other contracts which would have been drawn up under the authority of the qadis and rabbis who were in charge of their own communities have not survived. But it seems very likely that such interactions were taking place, and likely with greater frequency than with more recent Latin Christian settlers, as these communities, Muslim, Jewish, and Greek Christians, had been neighbors of one another for some time.

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<sup>52</sup> The original deed is in Greek and Arabic and is contained in Cusa, 622. It has also been translated into English in Simonsohn, , 420-21.

As has been demonstrated in some of the preceding contracts, the area around Palermo was known for its agricultural production. Upon leaving Palermo, Ibn Jubayr noted the lands along the coast between Palermo and Trapani to the west, “[t]hrough a line of continuous villages and farms we tended, observing land, both tilled and sown, such as we had never seen before for goodness, fertility, and amplitude. We compared it to the ‘*qanbaniyah*’ of Cordova, but this soil is choicer and more fertile.”<sup>53</sup> Broadhurst translates *qanbaniyah* as an Arabic version of the Latin *campania*, used to describe the countryside surrounding Cordova. In general, al-Idrisi also described the areas around Palermo as producing a variety of agricultural goods. Benjamin of Tudela also mentioned the productive agricultural land around Palermo, claiming that the “surrounding country is rich in wells and springs, grows wheat and barley, and is well-supplied with gardens and orchards; it is in fact the best in the whole island of Sicily.”<sup>54</sup> So in general, the lands around Palermo produced much of the grain and other foods that fed the city and provided the excess of grain that allowed Sicily to be one of the major grain exporters of the twelfth century.

To the east of Palermo along the coast was the town of Termini, which had the smaller community of Trabia just to the west of it. Al-Idrisi described Trabia as having mills operated by running water. It also produced a grain product that appears to be pasta, which he claims was exported to a number of regions, primarily Calabria but also to other Christian and Muslim countries.<sup>55</sup> Ibn Jubayr provided a detailed description of Termini, which he travelled through on his way to Palermo:

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<sup>53</sup> Jubayr, 350.

<sup>54</sup> Tudela, 279.

<sup>55</sup> Idrisi (Arab.), 24.

Better situated than the place we have just described (Cefalù), this town is strongly fortified, and surmounts and towers above the sea. The Muslims have a large suburb, in which are their mosques. The town has a high and impregnable fort, and in its lower part is a thermal spring which serves the citizens as baths. It enjoys an extreme fertility and abundance of victuals; indeed, the whole island in this regard is one of the most remarkable in God's creation.<sup>56</sup>

Though not a particularly large town, it seems to have followed many of the patterns of Palermo, such as a sizable Muslim population living in their own suburbs and a lush countryside surrounding it, which produced enough grain for export.

He described the landscape between Termini and Palermo with admiration, as “we travelled along a road like a market so populous it was, with men coming and going.”<sup>57</sup> There were numerous Muslim communities along this road as well; in Solunto there was a castle which “always was, and still is, by the grace of God, inhabited by the pious.”<sup>58</sup> Near it was a spring, the ‘Ayn al-Majnunah or Spring of the Mad Woman, which had a mosque he described as “one of the finest mosques in the world.”<sup>59</sup> It was filled with fine workmanship, “long arcades spread with spotless mats of a workmanship such as I have never seen better; and with it are hung forth lamps of brass and crystal.”<sup>60</sup> He spent the night at the mosque and was led in prayers there by the local imam.

East of Termini is the town of Cefalù, for which a surprising amount of documentation survives from this period. This was likely because it had been made a bishopric by Roger II, who built a cathedral there whose archives preserved a great deal of material. Between Termini and Cefalù al-Idrisi identified two villages. The first, San

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<sup>56</sup> Jubayr, 344-45.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 345.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 346.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

Leonardo, had a fishing industry which caught ray and tuna. Beyond it was Brucato, which al-Idrisi described as being relatively large, with a suq, industries, water and mills, and cultivated land, which included orchards and farms.<sup>61</sup> The suq, or market, was a common feature of the towns described by al-Idrisi. The town of Cefalù itself he described as a fort, likely because of the fortress built on the rock outcrop that overlooks the town.<sup>62</sup> It had markets, a bath, and a mill, in addition to a good port.<sup>63</sup> Ibn Jubayr made use of that port, as his ship stopped in Cefalù on his way to Palermo:

Cefalù is a coastal town, with an ample produce from its soil and with many commodities, beset with vine and other trees, and having well-ordered markets. A community of Muslims lives there. Set over the town is a mountain, on whose circular summit is a fortress, than which I have never seen any more formidable. They hold it in readiness for any sea attack that a fleet from the lands of the Muslims – may God render them victorious – might make upon them unawares.<sup>64</sup>

Again, like Palermo and Termini, Cefelù had a community of Muslims living among the Christians there, and served both as a producer of grain and other agricultural goods and a port for their trade and export.

The town of Caronia is roughly fifty-five kilometers further east along the coast from Cefalù, and again al-Idrisi described the agricultural lushness of the region. Caronia had gardens, rivers, vineyards, trees, and a seaport. Like Termini and Palermo, Caronia was home to the tuna fishing industry.<sup>65</sup> Beyond Caronia was the town of San Marco, which may have been near the modern town of San Marco d'Alunzio, which is slightly inland. San Marco had suqs, a bath, and again produced copious amounts of fruits and

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<sup>61</sup> Idrisi (Arab.), 24.

<sup>62</sup> The remains of this fortress survive today, and the outcrop is called *la rocca*.

<sup>63</sup> Idrisi (Arab.), 24.

<sup>64</sup> Jubayr, 344.

<sup>65</sup> Idrisi (Arab.), 25.

grains from a nearby plain watered by springs. San Marco produced less common products, including violets. It also was part of the Sicilian textile industry, producing “large quantities of silk.” Its commercial production was rounded out by ship-building industry fed by wood from the mountains in the town’s vicinity.<sup>66</sup> Further along the coast to the east was the town of Oliveri, which had a suq, a bath, and in addition was surrounded by productive land, farms, and mills.<sup>67</sup>

About twenty-five kilometers east from Oliveri was the town of Milazzo, on the base of a spit of land sticking out to the north into the Mediterranean. Al-Idrisi describes it as a place for tourists, and it was apparently a common destination for travelers. Some Jews travelling from Mazara to Messina in 1153 stopped there to drop off some passengers before moving on to Messina.<sup>68</sup> It had many suqs for visitors to conduct trade in. Al-Idrisi notes two industries the town was known for, first it had a textile industry, and “exports much linen of fine quality.”<sup>69</sup> In addition, Milazzo was another town that was known for its fishing, with fisheries dedicated to the production of tuna.

Just south of the north-eastern corner of Sicily was the city of Messina. It was the second city of Norman Sicily after Palermo, and it had a much more Christian character than Palermo, both after the conquest and before, as it was located in the primarily Christian Val Demone.<sup>70</sup> Al-Idrisi describes Messina as having many gardens and orchards, in addition to many streams with mills.<sup>71</sup> The mountains around Messina also

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>68</sup> Simonsohn, 406.

<sup>69</sup> Idrisi (Arab.), 26.

<sup>70</sup> Ibn Jubayr, when describing Palermo as the greatest city of Sicily, claims that “Messina is the next.” Jubayr, 340.

<sup>71</sup> Idrisi (Arab.), 26.

provided some iron, which was exported to other countries.<sup>72</sup> However, the primary importance of Messina in the twelfth century was as a port, and it had a harbor which was easily accessible in addition to an arsenal where ships were built and could anchor. People came to Messina for trade, as it was a “harbor for ships from all Christian maritime countries, large sea craft with travelers, and merchants from Christian and Islamic countries.”<sup>73</sup> It was filled with splendid suqs, displaying commodities in demand for which there were numerous buyers. Messina was primarily a port for Christian merchants, especially those of Genoa and Pisa, who set up colonies there over the course of the twelfth century and fought one another for commercial dominance over it.<sup>74</sup> However, the commercial visitors to Messina were not only from Christian territories; Jews and Muslims from the Islamic world came to trade there. As with the other ports of Sicily, Sicilian merchants of all religions came there as well to trade.

Visiting in 1173, Benjamin of Tudela provided an extensive description of Messina in addition to his recollections of Palermo. He first of all described it as a common port of call for Mediterranean travelers, a common stop on the way to and from the Levant, “where many pilgrims meet.”<sup>75</sup> While in Messina, “ships take on horses and supplies of food.”<sup>76</sup> He himself stopped there on his way back to the Iberian Peninsula after traveling in the Middle East, sailing there from the port of Damietta in Egypt. He echoed al-Idrisi’s comments on the quality of the harbor, claiming that it was “deep and,

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>74</sup> See in particular the work of David Abulafia on Northern merchants in Sicily, such as David Abulafia, “The Merchants of Messina: Levant Trade and Domestic Economy,” *Papers of the British School at Rome* 54 (1986). and David Abulafia, “Pisan Commercial Colonies and Consulates in Twelfth-Century Sicily,” *The English Historical Review* 93, no. 366 (1978).

<sup>75</sup> Tudela, 277.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 278.

being on the narrow strait, easy to defend in case of war.”<sup>77</sup> He also commented on the numerous merchants active in Messina, including those from Genoa and Pisa:

From here numerous ships sail to every port in Christendom and to Muslim lands as well; all, even the very biggest, are laden with merchants from every place and merchandise of every sort. Several towns in the north of Italy have in recent years established fondachi here, with wharves and with offices for their own merchants.<sup>78</sup>

Benjamin of Tudela also described some of the most prominent goods that drew merchants from all over the Mediterranean to Messina. He claimed that wheat was the main export of the island, and that most of it went to North African markets, to the point that during times of war “the consequent food shortages there swell Sicily’s coffers with the tax on grain exports.”<sup>79</sup> Durable Sicilian wheat was also the main source for the bread that fed Mediterranean sailors. Messina also exported salt and coral, and sulfur and iron from mines inland. As in his description of Palermo, he noted the textile industry of Sicily and the fine silks exported from Messina. And like the other coastal towns of Sicily, Messina was surrounded by fertile countryside “abounding with gardens and orchards and full of good things like lemons and oranges, almonds and melons.”<sup>80</sup>

In regards to culture, Benjamin of Tudela also commented on the mixing between various groups that he saw in Messina:

Messina still sounds and behaves as though it were a Muslim city. On the streets most people (including Jews) speak Arabic, and bands play Muslim music. Torchlight processions accompany weddings, and professional mourners accompany funerals in accord with Muslim custom. The Muslim women cover themselves completely and some of the older Christian women follow their example. On this island of many natural

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

riches and many peoples, Christians, Muslims, and Jews may freely celebrate their religion.<sup>81</sup>

As in Palermo, Benjamin of Tudela noted the custom of Christian women dressing in the Muslim style, although in 1173 it apparently was more common among older women who had presumably been living there for some time. Given the general trend of Latin Christian settlement, it makes sense that this practice would have become less common by this time. But Messina was still a culturally mixed place, and the Jewish and Muslim communities there continued to have a protected status. This mixing followed patterns familiar to Benjamin of Tudela from his home in Spain, where there too Jews referred to their synagogues as mosques.<sup>82</sup>

Ibn Jubayr also visited Messina during his journey through Sicily. Like Benjamin of Tudela, it was a port of call during a journey from the Levant to the Iberian Peninsula, and his first sight of the island was Mount Etna, or as he referred to it, “the Mountain of Fire, the famous volcano of Sicily, and rejoiced thereat.”<sup>83</sup> The ship he was aboard fell afoul of the narrow strait that led to Messina and ran aground, and small boats came out from Messina to rescue those still on the ship but were rebuffed until the storm abated. According to Ibn Jubayr, William II himself came out to see what was going on, and when he was told that Muslims were trapped on the ship because they could not pay to be brought ashore, ordered that they be given “one hundred *tari* of his coinage” in relief.<sup>84</sup> Ibn Jubayr attributes this mercy to the benevolence of a mysterious God, who saved them

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Jubayr, 335.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 337-38.

from robbery and possible enslavement but could also see the benevolence of a king who had a great number of Muslims subjects.

Once in Messina, Ibn Jubayr also noted its commercial importance, particularly for Christian merchants, describing it as “the mart of the merchant infidels, the focus of ships from the world over, and thronging always with companies of travelers by reason of the lowness of prices.”<sup>85</sup> He also commented on the quality of its harbor, his own experience notwithstanding:

To its south is the sea, and its harbor is the most remarkable of maritime ports, since large ships can come into it from the seas until they almost touch it. Between them and the shore is thrown a plank over which men come and go and porters take up the baggage; thus no boats are needed for loading and unloading save for ships anchored far out. You will observe ships ranged along the quay like horses lined at their pickets or in their stables. This is all because of the great depth here of the sea which forms the strait, some three miles wide, that separates the island from the continent.<sup>86</sup>

Such a remarkable harbor likely allowed ships access to Messina beyond that of the other ports of Sicily.

As for the commerce of Messina, he described it by claiming “[i]ts markets are animated and teeming, and it has ample commodities to ensure a luxurious life.”<sup>87</sup> He noted the cultivation of the mountains surrounding Messina, which were “covered with plantations bearing apples, chestnuts and hazel-nuts, pears, and other kinds of fruit.”<sup>88</sup> There is no mention of a ship-building industry, but he does note that the king had a

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 338.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 339.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 340.

shipyard there, like another in Palermo, “containing fleets of uncountable numbers of ships.”<sup>89</sup> Ibn Jubayr also described the palace of William II in Messina:

Their King, William, is admirable for his just conduct, and the use he makes of the industry, and for choosing eunuch pages who all, or nearly all, concealing their faith, yet hold firm to the Muslim divine law. He has much confidence in Muslims, relying on them for his affairs, and the most important matters, even the supervisor of his kitchen being a Muslim; and he keeps a band of black Muslim slaves commanded by a leader chosen from amongst them.<sup>90</sup>

In Messina as well as Palermo William II kept a palace staffed by Muslims, with his food cooked by a Muslim and Muslim slaves, possibly Sudanese, in charge of his defense. As well, the eunuchs of the palace, while nominally converts to Christianity, remained culturally tied to the Islamic world and in the opinion of Ibn Jubayr remained devoted to Islam. Even the strongly Christian town of Messina the Norman kings relied heavily on Muslims for their administration and household.

Despite the presence of the palace, according to Ibn Jubayr Messina was no place for a Muslim to live, lacking the community of Palermo. He claimed that in Messina there were “no Muslims save a small number of craftsmen, so the Muslim stranger there will feel lonely.”<sup>91</sup> He also describes it in general in terms of its predominantly Christian population, “[b]ut it is cheerless because of the unbelief, no Muslim being settled there. Teeming with worshippers of the Cross, it chokes its inhabitants, and constricts them almost to strangling. It is full of smells and filth; and churlish too, for the stranger will find there no company.”<sup>92</sup> His description of Messina is of a primarily Christian town, in which Muslims will find little that is familiar or friendly. This is a striking contrast with

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 343.

<sup>90</sup> Takayama, *The Administration of the Norman Kingdom of Sicily*, 340.

<sup>91</sup> Jubayr, 340.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 338-39.

the description of Benjamin of Tudela, only roughly ten years previous, of a city that seemed to belong to the Islamic world. On the one hand hand, it seems advisable to take Ibn Jubayr's gloomy descriptions with a grain of salt, as he also described Christians in the Levant in these terms, such as Acre where "[u]nbelief and unpiousness there burn fiercely, and pigs and crosses abound."<sup>93</sup> At times he seems driven to hyperbole when describing the status of Muslims living under Christian rule. But even so, he acknowledged the large Muslim community of Palermo, and even those communities living in smaller towns such as Termini, Cefalù, and Trapani. It seems likely that the immigration of Latin Christians to Messina had proceeded at such a pace as to change the character of the city in just ten years, replacing Arabic with Latin vernacular dialects as the language ringing through the markets. Given the importance of Messina as a place for commerce and settlement among Latin Christians in Sicily, particularly the Genoese, it makes sense that it would be a place to demonstrate the eventual result of the process of Latinization that took place in Sicily in the twelfth century. Still, while in Messina, Ibn Jubayr was accommodated; he stayed an inn for nine days before setting sail for Palermo.<sup>94</sup>

South of Messina along the coast is the town of Taormina, which also served as an important port and commercial center. Al-Idrisi identifies it as a place from which copious amounts of agricultural products were exported.<sup>95</sup> It had the infrastructure to support visiting merchants, with suqs and inns. It was also a departure point for regional trade to Messina, serving as a gathering point for caravans traveling there. As with other

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 318.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 343.

<sup>95</sup> Idrisi (Arab.), 27.

coastal towns, it had good farms and fertile land in the vicinity, in addition to producing gold, which was mined in a mountain near it.<sup>96</sup> The town of Aci Castello was south of Taormina, and al-Idrisi described it as one of the oldest inhabited communities in Sicily. It exported goods related to ship-building, such as pitch, tar, and wood, in addition to other products.<sup>97</sup> There is evidence of a community of Muslims at Aci Castello soon after the Norman conquest of the island. A *jarīda* putting the Muslims of Aci Castello under the authority of Ansgar, bishop of Catania and abbot of the Monastery of St. Agatha, was drawn up under the authority of Roger I in 1095.<sup>98</sup> This community retained its own leaders, the *qā'id* Yūsuf ibn al-Qāsim and the *qā'id* 'Uthmān ibn Halaq, whose names begin the register.<sup>99</sup> This community remained in Aci Castello until the mid-twelfth century, when the *jarīda* was reissued. The new version of 1145 was more or less an exact copy of that of 1095, but it demonstrates that the community was still there and under the authority of the monastery.

A similar *jarīda* also granted the Muslims of the city of Catania, just to the south, to Ansgar in 1093.<sup>100</sup> It shows a very large Muslim population in the city and the surrounding area, more than a thousand households, again with its leader, the *qā'id* Hamūd, listed at the head of the register.<sup>101</sup> Al-Idrisi describes it as a large city with institutions to support a large Muslim population, such as baths and mosques, in addition to other places of worship.<sup>102</sup> Like Messina, it was a thriving port, with inns and hostels to accommodate merchants and other travelers, who came from all ports for all kinds of

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>98</sup> This *jarīda* is collected in Cusa, 541-49.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 541.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 563-85. The original copy does not survive, but the 1145 copy, like the one for Aci Castello, does.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 564.

<sup>102</sup> Idrisi (Arab.), 28.

merchandise.<sup>103</sup> Based on the professions of those Muslims listed in its *jarīda*, the city and its surroundings produced a wide variety of agricultural products. They raised cows, goats, and sheep, and grew date palms. Many of the animals were likely used to produce leather goods, an export for which Sicily was known in the eleventh century.<sup>104</sup> No one is identified as such, but it seems safe to assume that a large number were involved in the growing of grain. They also produced textiles such as cotton and silk. So Catania served as a market to sell all these goods. The city also seems to have maintained its Muslim community. A quote by John, bishop of Catania and abbot of the monastery of St. Agatha, in 1168 suggests that: “Latins, Greeks, Jews, and Saracens are each to be judged according to their own laws.”<sup>105</sup> Just south of the city was the river Mūsālā which provided all kinds of fish.<sup>106</sup> Up the river was the fort of Lentini, which had many markets which ships would sail upstream to access.<sup>107</sup> There were further streams with fish to the west of Lentini, which likely fed the market there. There were active funduqs in Lentini as well to provide accommodations for the merchants who traveled there.

The next major port along the coast was Syracuse, which al-Idrisi described as being so famous that it does not need any description. Syracuse is located on the eastern side of the southern tip of the island, and like Palermo, Messina, and Catania was a major port. It had all the accommodations of a major city, like markets, hostels, and baths.<sup>108</sup> Also like other large cities in Sicily it commanded the fertile regions around it, which fed

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> S.D. Goitein, "Sicily and Southern Italy in the Cairo Geniza Documents," *Archivio storico per la Sicilia orientale* 67 (1971): 15.

<sup>105</sup> Giovanni Battista Grossi, ed., *Catana sacra, sive de episcopis catanensibus rebvsqve ab iis praeclare gestis a christiana religionis exordio ad nostram vsque aetatem* (Catania: V. Petronius, 1654), 89.

<sup>106</sup> Idrisi (Arab.), 28.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

their excess grain to Syracuse for export. It apparently had a significant Jewish population, who in 1187/1188 gained the right to extend their cemetery from their lord, Guido de Anaina, the bishop of Cefalù. In exchange for this privilege they were obligated to pay an amount of olive oil at the time of the collection of the *jizya*.<sup>109</sup> Of a community of Muslims in Syracuse, there is little information, but the city had a reputation for having a large Greek Christian population. It had a significant Muslim population in 1085 when it surrendered to Roger I, and a remnant of that likely remained into the twelfth century.<sup>110</sup>

There were numerous smaller towns along the southern coast of Sicily. Noto was a town built on high ground, with suqs and homes that al-Idrisi singled out for their beauty.<sup>111</sup> It had rivers with mills, and, as al-Idrisi described with frustrating generality, extensive industry and good farmland. Around the southern tip of Sicily and a bit up the coast was the fort of Scicli, located slightly inland. It is described as having good farms and mills, and abounding in produce and goods, including fruit from local gardens.<sup>112</sup> According to al-Idrisi, its markets drew merchants from all over the Mediterranean, attracting ships from Calabria, Ifriqiyya, and Malta, among other regions. Another inland town which drew merchants was Ragusa, again with fertile land and suqs to entice them to travel upriver.<sup>113</sup> Roughly seventy kilometers northwest along the coast is the town of Butera, which had an infrastructure to support Muslims and other visiting merchants,

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<sup>109</sup> Simonsohn, 190.

<sup>110</sup> Geoffrey Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, IV.2.

<sup>111</sup> Idrisi (Arab.), 29.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

such as mosques, suqs, baths, and hostels.<sup>114</sup> Butera too was an inland town accessible by a river, and also with surrounding orchards producing fruit. Further up the coast was Licata, with a harbor and suq where ships were filled with cargo, in addition to a fertile hinterland and a river that produced fish.<sup>115</sup>

Agrigento was northwest of Licata, and was another of the major port cities of Norman Sicily. Al-Idrisi described it as a populous city and an active port, with people who were always coming and going. These merchants and travelers came from all regions and included companies of merchants.<sup>116</sup> Again being vague, he described its suqs as being filled with all kinds of industries and merchandise, as well as agricultural products, mentioning specifically only its numerous gardens with fruit, which seem to have been quite prevalent in the coastal regions of Sicily.<sup>117</sup> Al-Idrisi claimed that its prosperity was such that in times of scarcity large ships could still arrive in its harbor and still have access to more cargo than they had the capacity for.<sup>118</sup>

Another harbor on the southern coast of Sicily was Sciacca, roughly sixty kilometers to the northwest. It seems to have been a prosperous port, with suqs and “many mansions,” although al-Idrisi does not elaborate about whose mansions they were, in addition to a crowded harbor that drew ships from Ifriqiyya and Tripoli.<sup>119</sup> And northwest of Sciacca, on the southern end of the western tip of Sicily, is the port city of Mazara del Vallo. According to al-Idrisi, Mazara had beautiful buildings, wide lanes, and suqs crowded with merchandise and industries. It had baths and hostels to

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 31-32.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

accommodate travelers and was frequented by people of all regions.<sup>120</sup> Mazara's role as a commercial center is confirmed by letters of Jewish merchants preserved in the Cairo Geniza. A number of letters from these merchants were sent from Mazara, and a number of others mention merchants who had traveled from it. For example, a letter dated to around 1065 mentions a Nissim ibn 'Atiyya who arrived from Mazara with lead, oil, and some textiles, and later discusses writing to his partner Ḥasūn in Mazara.<sup>121</sup> It remained a commercial center in the twelfth century, tied to communities of Jewish merchants in North Africa and Egypt. In the middle of the twelfth century, Abraham ibn Perahyā wrote to his brother Joseph in Mazara to suggest marrying their children, and sent along a "pouch...containing pepper, and ginger in partnership" to be sold in Sicily.<sup>122</sup> In addition, another letter dated to the middle of the twelfth century, describes a trip two brothers took to meet with their uncle in Messina written to their father in Mazara.<sup>123</sup> These letters also provide evidence about the Muslim community of Mazara, as one letter written around 1156 refers to a *qā'id*, "the Muslim governor of Mazara del Vallo."<sup>124</sup> Mazara was another major port of Norman Sicily, particularly for the trade between Sicily, North Africa, and Egypt that Jewish merchants were prominently involved in.

Marsala was another Sicilian port that figured prominently in the trade between Sicily and North Africa, and al-Idrisi noted that it drew frequent visitors from Ifriqiyya.<sup>125</sup> Like the other maritime ports, it could accommodate visiting merchants with baths, khans, and funduqs, in addition to its markets. He also described the islands to the

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Simonsohn, 355.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 402-03.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 404-07.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 411.

<sup>125</sup> Idrisi (Arab.), 33.

northwest of Marsala: Favignana, Levanzo, and Marettimo. They too were endowed with ports, and al-Idrisi notes the wells that provided them with water. In terms of industry they were apparently known for their firewood, indicating some level of forest cover there.<sup>126</sup> Ibn Jubayr mentions these islands briefly, claiming that Favignana was named for a monk who lived in a fortress on it “that serves as a place of ambush for the enemy.”<sup>127</sup> He also describes the other two islands as uninhabited, and Favignana inhabited only by the monk who was its namesake.

Along the coast to the north of Marsala, on the northern end of the western tip of Sicily, was another major maritime port, Trapani. Al-Idrisi again described the town in terms of its good harbor, noting that it was safe enough from storms that ships would often winter there.<sup>128</sup> Like other towns, it had suqs and fertile lands surrounding it, but like Palermo and Milazzo, it was also had a thriving fishing industry. Fishermen would catch tuna in giant nets, a practice that carries on today in the Mediterranean, and also caught a type of fish al-Idrisi refers to as *al-Murjān*.<sup>129</sup> This practice was common to the Mediterranean beyond the Middle Ages; for example, these practices continued in the eighteenth century in Spain under the duke of Medina Sidona.<sup>130</sup> There, as in Sicily, tuna fishing was of sufficient value to be a monopoly of the crown. Benjamin of Tudela made a passing reference to Trapani, noting that “[n]ear Trapani is found the stone called coral, in Arabic *al-Murgan*.”<sup>131</sup> He also mentions this coral being sold at Messina.<sup>132</sup> Sicilian

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>127</sup> Jubayr, 352.

<sup>128</sup> Idrisi (Arab.), 33.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Carla Rahn Phillips, "Hard Times for the Tuna King: The Fisheries of the Duke of Medina Sidonia in 1728," *Mediterranean Studies* 13 (2004): 121.

<sup>131</sup> Tudela, 277.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 278.

coral appeared frequently in the Geniza, often being distributed in the Red Sea.<sup>133</sup> In the Norman period, the only mention of the production of coral in Sicily is in the description of Trapani by al-Idrisi.<sup>134</sup> But given the distribution of Sicilian coral in the eleventh century, and again later in the fifteenth century,<sup>135</sup> it is likely that coral was produced in Sicily throughout the twelfth century and distributed elsewhere in the Mediterranean.

Ibn Jubayr spent a good amount of time in Trapani as well, traveling there on foot from Palermo before sailing on home to Cordova. He also noted the quality of its harbor in his description of the town:

Trapani is a small city enclosed by walls, and white as a dove. It possesses an excellent harbor, most suited for shipping, and is therefore much used by the Rum, particularly those who sail to the Barr al-‘Adwah (the coast of Africa). Between it and Tunis is only a day and a night’s journey, and the voyage is never stayed, winter or summer, save when the wind is unfavorable.<sup>136</sup>

Like Mazara, Marsala, and other port towns along the southwestern coast of Sicily, Trapani was frequented by merchants and travelers going between Sicily and North Africa. It was full of the typical accommodations of such a port town, “furnished with markets and baths and all the commodities needed in a town.”<sup>137</sup> The surrounding countryside provided Trapani with ample food, and the “low prices, resulting from the wide cultivation, make life easy and comfortable in this town.”<sup>138</sup> Part of the hinterland supplying Trapani was a large town, unnamed by Ibn Jubayr but “the women of which

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<sup>133</sup> Geneviève Bresc-Bautier, "Le corail sicilien dans la Méditerranée médiévale," in *L'homme Méditerranéen et la mer: Actes du Troisième Congrès International d'études des cultures de la Méditerranée Occidentale (Jerba, Avril 1981)*, ed. Micheline Galley and Ladjimi Sebai (Tunis: Les Editions Salammbô, 1985), 181.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 190.

<sup>136</sup> Jubayr, 351.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*

are said to be the fairest of all the island.”<sup>139</sup> The town was on the side of a nearby mountain, with vineyards, fields of grain, and almost 400 springs, and may have been near the present-day town of Erice. The mountain, Jabal Hamid or Mount St. Julian, also had at its summit a stronghold accessible only by a bridge, with “its people saying that through it Sicily may be conquered,” and because of that they would not allow Muslims to climb up to it.<sup>140</sup>

Like the other towns he visited, Ibn Jubayr made note of the religious communities of Trapani. He described the town as a place where “the Muslims and the Christians have each their mosques and their churches.”<sup>141</sup> He was forced to stay there for several months, from early January to late March 1185, on the order of William II while the king prepared a fleet. While waiting for a Genoese ship to take him and his companions to Andalusia he became acquainted with the Muslim community there. The Genoese appear to have been frequent visitors to Trapani, bringing news there of events in Constantinople. He celebrated the end of Ramadan at a mosque there with a small group of local inhabitants who chose not go to the *musalla*, or place of prayer, to see the recitation of the *khutba*, or formal sermon, while “[t]he remainder of the people, with timbal and horn, went to the *musalla* with their magistrate. We marveled at this, and at the Christians’ tolerance of it.”<sup>142</sup>

Despite this, the general impression he received of the state of Muslims in Sicily while in Trapani was darker in tone:

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 353.

During the time of our stay in this town, we learnt painful things about the grievous state of the Muslims in this island concerning their relations with the worshippers of the Cross – may God destroy them – their humiliation and abasement, their state of vassalage under the Christians, and the duress of the king, bringing the calamities and misfortunes of apostasy on those of their women and children for whom God had ordained such suffering.<sup>143</sup>

As in other cases, Ibn Jubayr is presenting as negative a view of Christian rule as possible. The inducement for apostasy was not through force but through pressure on those in the king's service, as he follows this statement with a story about a Muslim doctor who converted to Christianity "so pressed by the demands of the officials."<sup>144</sup>

This seems an exceptional case, one forced by political expediency on a prominent man, and later Ibn Jubayr suggests that his conversion to Christianity was not even genuine.<sup>145</sup>

While conversion did occur, it was not a particularly common occurrence. So his gloomy pronouncements about the state of Muslims in Sicily, which are similar to other regions he visited where Muslims lived under Christian rule, appear to be based on the subjugation of Muslims and their obligation to pay the *jizya* rather than any kind of active persecution. Likewise, he criticizes Sicily as a place where apostasy was common because Muslims could convert to advance further in the royal administration. Even the picture he provides is of a place where the religious practices of Muslims were free to a startling extent.

Likewise, one of his main concerns about conversion is that when "a man shows anger to his son or wife, or a woman to her daughter," they could get themselves baptized

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 357.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 358.

and convert to Christianity to spite him.<sup>146</sup> Again, this seems like a rather unlikely circumstance that Ibn Jubayr focuses on in his effort to present Christian rule as a negative thing. But his worries do not seem to have been his alone. Before leaving Trapani a local Muslim asked Ibn Jubayr and his companions to take his daughter to be married “and to live in the lands of Muslims.”<sup>147</sup> To the father, the threat of his daughter’s possible apostasy was enough to prompt him to put her well-being in the hands of strangers. But the majority of Muslims in Trapani do not seem to have shared his concerns, at least to so great an extent. While in Trapani Ibn Jubayr met with the *qā’id* Abū al-Qāsim, the nominal leader of all the Muslims of Sicily, whose commercial dealings will be discussed in the next chapter. Abū al-Qasim claimed that he was living in a pitiful state after having been confined to his house in Palermo by William II for supposedly corresponding with the Almohads. He had much of his wealth and property confiscated by the king. But despite all this, shortly before leaving for Trapani he had been reinstated by William II to his post in the royal government.<sup>148</sup> So again, the dismal picture that Ibn Jubayr paints still is not one where Muslims were kept from the administration of the island.

The Genoese ship Ibn Jubayr had hired eventually arrived, but the winds were not good, and he and his companions were ferried from the shore to the ship and back again twelve days in a row in the hope of sailing in the morning. He left Trapani on 25 March 1185, and stopped at the harbor on Favignana, where they encountered another Genoese ship. The ship, captained by “Marco the Genoese,” had come from Alexandria with more than

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 359.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 360.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 358.

200 other Maghribi pilgrims returning from Mecca.<sup>149</sup> Then the ships carrying Ibn Jubayr and his companions set sail past Sardinia toward Andalusia.

Al-Idrisi described some of the smaller towns along the coast between Trapani and Palermo. Erice is a town a short ways inland with a high summit for defense and a plain with good soil for cultivation.<sup>150</sup> On the other side of the northeastern tip of Sicily was Bagni Segestani, which had a fortress al-Idrisi described as invulnerable.<sup>151</sup> It was serviced by the port of Castellammare, which had a harbor frequented by ships.

Castellammare had the usual farms, orchards, gardens, and mills, and was also another center for the tuna fishing industry, using the same technique with nets that was the custom in Trapani.<sup>152</sup> Catalubo was a fortress to the east, with fields surrounding it to support the town and a harbor that al-Idrisi describes as frequented by ships that would load up with foodstuffs in large amounts, particularly cereals.<sup>153</sup> It also had stone quarries for water and used Persian mills, or windmills, rather than the watermills so prevalent in the rest of the island. Further east in these plains along the northwest coast was the town of Partinico, which was situated on a low plain with productive land. It produced cotton and henna for the textile industry, in addition to legumes.<sup>154</sup> Located on a peninsula just to the west of Palermo, Cinisi had plantations and pasturage and an abundance of fruit.<sup>155</sup> Carini, on the eastern side of the peninsula, just to the northwest of Palermo, was also known for the variety of fruits available there. It had a large suq from

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 361-62.

<sup>150</sup> Idrisi (Arab.), 34.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

which large amounts of almonds, figs and carobs were exported, and ships from many regions came to the port of Carini to buy them.<sup>156</sup>

We have some information about the products and towns of the inland of Sicily from the work of al-Idrisi. Again, he does not discuss the populations of these towns but rather focuses on their infrastructure and what they produce. The inland was apparently densely populated and cultivated as well. The town of Raḥl al-Mar‘an was described in exactly those terms, and known for its production of milk and purified butter, evidence of the cultivation of cattle in the interior.<sup>157</sup> Caltagirone, a town roughly a hundred kilometers northwest of Syracuse, was described as a “lofty fort” in the mountains with arable land that produced copious amounts of honey.<sup>158</sup> Other towns also produced cattle and honey. Montalbano, located roughly 20 miles southeast of Castellammare, amid lofty mountains according to al-Idrisi, apparently had no peer in cattle, honey, or other agricultural products.<sup>159</sup> Cerami, roughly forty kilometers south of Caronia, had numerous mills on the river below it.<sup>160</sup> There was viniculture on the inland as well; Capizzi was described as having vineyards by al-Idrisi.<sup>161</sup> A fort on a mountain, al-Qāruniyah, also had vineyards.<sup>162</sup>

There is evidence of fairly significant forest cover in the interior of Sicily in the twelfth century, and in the region around Termini forests remained until the fourteenth

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 39. It is unclear which Latin name this town is now known as.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 51. This may be present-day Prizzi, which is located almost exactly halfway between Palermo and Agrigento.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 53.

and fifteenth centuries.<sup>163</sup> At the fort of Calatafimi, al-Idrisi noted clumps of trees surrounding its populated lower city.<sup>164</sup> As well, the fort of Baljah was encircled by trees.<sup>165</sup> The settlement of Iblātanū, in addition to farms and orchards, also contained clumps of trees.<sup>166</sup> Al-Idrisi also noted that it was “heavily frequented by visitors.” The fortress of Qal’at al-Nisā’ was surrounded by what al-Idrisi described as an abundance of trees.<sup>167</sup> There are a number of general references to trees surrounding towns of the interior. In his description of the settlement of Bukīr, al-Idrisi even refers to a forest by name, “a pine forest known as al-Binīt.”<sup>168</sup> Apparently the forest cover was sufficient in place for export. The town of Randazzo, at the base of Mount Etna, had a suq “teeming with merchants and artisans” as well as “copious amounts of wood which is exported to many regions.”<sup>169</sup> While it is not possible to detail the forest cover of Sicily exactly, there appears to have been a significant amount of coverage, particularly in the interior of the island. And given the presence of Sicilian industries which consumed wood, such as shipbuilding or the processing of sugar, Sicilian timber likely was used on the island in addition to being exported, as was the case in Randazzo and the islands off the coast of Marsala. Sicilian timber was likely used for construction on the island.

Trade was not limited to the coast; there is some evidence of regional trade networks extending inland. Maniaci, described as a village on a plain twenty miles from Troina on the northern corner of Mount Etna, also had its suq, where merchants came to

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<sup>163</sup> Henri Bresc and Franco D'Angelo, "Structure et évolution de l'habitat dans la région de Termini Imerese," *Mélanges de l'École Française de Rome. Moyen Âge-Temps Modernes* 84, no. 2 (1972): 365.

<sup>164</sup> Idrisi (Arab.), 40

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, 41

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 41. Idrisi (Eng.), 147.

<sup>167</sup> Idrisi (Arab.), 42.

<sup>168</sup> Idrisi (Arab.), 47. Idrisi (Eng.), 157.

<sup>169</sup> Idrisi (Arab.), 52. Idrisi (Eng.), 166.

purchase produce.<sup>170</sup> Randazzo, located at the base of Mount Etna roughly eighty kilometers southwest of Messina, was a thriving commercial town. But like the coast, the interior of Sicily was also primarily about agriculture. The production of grain would like have been the focus, but some productions seem to have particularly prevalent in the interior, namely honey and cattle. Given that leather was one of the products that Sicily was known for, this was an important economic role played by the inland of Sicily.<sup>171</sup> And given the prevalence of Muslims in the interior of the island, they played a role in the production and distribution of the interior. In terms of the population of the interior, however, information is sparser.

A little inland from the coast, just eight kilometers, was the town of Alcamo. According to al-Idrisi it was a large settlement with farms, in addition to a suq with artisans and other manufacturers.<sup>172</sup> On the road from Palermo to Trapani, Ibn Jubayr spent a night in Alcamo, referring to it as “a large and spacious town with markets and mosques. Its inhabitants, and those of the farms we had passed on our way, were Muslims all.”<sup>173</sup> After leaving Alcamo he and his companions stopped at a nearby castle called *Hisn al-Hammah*, or the Castle of the Baths. Not surprisingly, it had a number of thermal springs they bathed in before continuing on to Trapani.<sup>174</sup> This was the only time that Ibn Jubayr ventured inland from the coast of Sicily, which would have been the usual practice for travelers sojourning on the island. But he encountered something new there, a Muslim community living on its own. He noted Muslims living in the towns and

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<sup>170</sup> Idrisi (Arab.), 52.

<sup>171</sup> Goitein, "Sicily and Southern Italy in the Cairo Geniza Documents," 15.

<sup>172</sup> Idrisi (Arab.), 39.

<sup>173</sup> Jubayr, 350.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 350-51.

countryside all along the coast, but always in close proximity to the Christians there. In Alcamo, Ibn Jubayr found a town whose inhabitants, and those of the surrounding countryside, “were Muslims all.”<sup>175</sup>

This was not unusual for the inland of Sicily, particularly in the more heavily Muslim Val di Mazara, the northwest third of the island. Throughout Sicily after the conquest, the local Muslim communities retained a kind of independence, able to live under the rule of their own qadis and qaidis so long as they recognized the authority of the king and paid the *jizya*. That was the situation all over the island, and one can see evidence of that situation surviving along the coast into the end of the twelfth century, with qadis and *qā'idis* still appearing in the documentation. But in the interior, not only would Muslim communities have been able to organize themselves, for the most part; it seems likely that they would rarely have even come into contact with their Latin Christian lords. This does not mean that the interior of the island was entirely Muslim, even the Val di Mazara.<sup>176</sup> A town like Corleone, in the heart of this traditionally Muslim region, may have still had almost 20% of its population as Christian.<sup>177</sup> But these were not the new arrivals to the island, but rather Christians of the Greek rite. They had been living on the island for a long time and had been culturally assimilated during the Muslim rule of the island. They spoke Arabic, likely dressed similarly, and are difficult to ascertain in the documentary evidence as they followed Arabic naming patterns.<sup>178</sup> So this region of the island remained relatively free from the influence of the new Latin

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 350

<sup>176</sup> Metcalfe, 179.

<sup>177</sup> Metcalfe, "The Muslims of Sicily under Christian Rule," in *The Society of Norman Italy*, ed. Graham A. Loud and Alex Metcalfe, *The Medieval Mediterranean: Peoples, Economies and Cultures, 400-1500*, 38 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 312.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 312-13.

Christian rulers. They did remain tied to the coast through commerce, as coastal towns were often the markets that their goods would be sold at. The roads of the interior were likely of high quality, as Sicilian roads in general were well-maintained enough that Venetian merchants commented on their safety.<sup>179</sup> The origin of these roads is unclear, but it is likely that they predated the Norman conquest and were maintained by the Normans.

When one looks at the regions of Norman Sicily certain common trends can be perceived. First is the centrality of agricultural production to the economy of coastal towns and of the island in general. Both al-Idrisi in his detailed descriptions of the towns and travelers such as Benjamin of Tudela and Ibn Jubayr discuss the lush and fertile countryside. And to a large extent, it was agriculture that was the source of Sicily's wealth, particularly in its production of hard wheat that was durable enough to be shipped throughout the Mediterranean. But Sicily also exported the other agricultural products discussed, such as nuts or fruit, in addition to others such as cheese.<sup>180</sup> There were industries in Sicily as well, although they were also based to a certain extent on agricultural production. Large fisheries caught and preserved fish, possibly by drying, for transport and sale, and the lumber of its forests were used to support ship-building industries in towns like San Marco. The textile industry, which will be discussed in detail in the sixth chapter of this dissertation, was the most prominent industry on the island, and while it involved the sale of finished and dyed cloth, it too was based on agriculture, the growing of cotton or the production of silk. Wealth in Sicily came from

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<sup>179</sup> David Abulafia, "The Crown and the Economy," 4.

<sup>180</sup> References to Sicilian cheese show up in some strange places, for example a letter in the Geniza archive from Alexandria on 9 October 1214 that declares it to be kosher. Simonsohn, 446-47.

the land, as it did in the other regions of Christendom, and the land in Sicily was put to work. Al-Idrisi referred constantly to the land under cultivation around coastal towns, their gardens and orchards. Mills abounded in the rivers of Sicily, and windmills had at least been introduced to the island. All the land of the coast of Sicily was turned to good use, with grain to be ground, textiles to be turned into cloth, and wood to be made into ships.

Because of this wealth, people came to Sicily to access its products. A common trend of these coastal towns was their commercial nature, their status as port cities. And such a vocation was not limited to major cities such as Palermo or Messina, although their commercial importance stands out in the sources. Even small towns were described by al-Idrisi with their harbors and their suqs and markets which drew merchants to these towns. The commercial infrastructure of Norman Sicily was very extensive, and ranged from the large port towns of the coast to market towns of the interior. Sciacca drew ships from Ifriqiyya and Tripoli, and ships from all over the Mediterranean came to Catalubo to fill up with Sicilian wheat. Al-Idrisi even describes the ports themselves, anywhere a ship might drop anchor along the coast, whether within a town or not.<sup>181</sup> Italy had many ports that did not necessarily correspond to a natural harbor or a maritime town; there were many such “places of redistribution.”<sup>182</sup> The larger cities drew even more people. Port cities like Mazara, Messina, and Palermo drew ships and merchants in great numbers from all over the Mediterranean. Some came to stay. Jewish merchants from North Africa and Egypt settled in Palermo and Mazara in the eleventh century. Merchants from

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<sup>181</sup> Idrisi (Arab.), 54.

<sup>182</sup> Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000). 392-395.

Latin Christendom began to come and stay in numbers once the Normans took over the island, likely in hostels like those discussed previously. In Messina, the Genoese and Pisans set up colonies and fought one another for commercial privileges. Genoese merchants were present in the largest towns like Palermo and smaller ones such as Cefalù. Muslim merchants were likely also a presence, given their connections to North Africa and the infrastructure in coastal towns such as hostels, suqs, baths, and mosques, which would have facilitated these visitors. Given the extent of this commercial infrastructure, Norman Sicily was a popular destination for merchants, from both the Christian and Muslim regions of the Mediterranean.

The conquest of Sicily by the Normans brought with it an influx of settlers from Latin Christendom, a process which only increased over the course of the twelfth century. These new settlers too focused on the coast. It was in commercial towns and the rich coastal countryside that the new ecclesiastical and secular lords of Sicily settled. Expanses of land and villeins living on them all over the island were granted to these new lords, but they limited themselves to the coast. The monastery of St. Maria Nuova in Monreale was granted extensive plots of land with Muslim villeins in the interior of the island; the monastery itself was located just eight kilometers from the coast. The new Latin settlement that occurred after the Norman conquest of the island was primarily a coastal phenomenon, and the towns filled with Muslims, Christian, Jews, and merchants from all over the Mediterranean were on the coast. These were the places where one could see the varied population that made Sicily so exceptional in Christendom in the twelfth century. The cultural mixing that took place in Sicily was for the most part limited to its coastal regions.

During the course of the twelfth century as the Latin presence along the coast of Sicily increased, the separation between it and the inland regions also became greater, despite their commercial connections. Those Muslims who chose to live in the rich regions of the coast were forced to assimilate, as conversion, both to Christianity and Latin cultural practices, became increasingly common. The Mozarab Christians were forced to assimilate culturally to Latin practices, particularly as conflict increased between Latin Christians and Muslims.<sup>183</sup> For all, assuming a Latin identity was the way to get ahead.<sup>184</sup> And Muslims living on the coast were forced to deal with a growing and increasingly aggressive Christian population. Those who stayed there were forced to take on a more subservient role. Consequently, those who feared the Christians, or found that situation unacceptable, fled to the predominantly Muslim interior. For example, religious leaders increasingly found the *jizya* system, which forced Muslims to recognize the sovereignty of the Norman rulers, unacceptable and fled inland to escape a Latin Christian rule that was present and close.<sup>185</sup> This process created more conflict between Christians and Muslims, as those of more fundamentalist religious character moved inland to be free of Christian rule.<sup>186</sup> While there were inland roads connecting Sicilian towns, travel by sea appears to have been the main method of transport along the coast. Therefore, inland roads would be isolated and unfamiliar to those not of the area, familiar to those that moved goods from there to the coast. One could see how rebellious peasants could cut themselves off from the coastal regions.

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<sup>183</sup> Metcalfe, 183-84.

<sup>184</sup> Metcalfe, "The Muslims of Sicily under Christian Rule," 315-16.

<sup>185</sup> Metcalfe, 181.

<sup>186</sup> Metcalfe, "The Muslims of Sicily under Christian Rule," 316.

The culturally mixed character of the coast of Sicily could not last. Beginning in the late eleventh century, the wealth of the island and a non-Latin majority forced a peaceful coexistence on its inhabitants. So long as it was economically valuable to allow Muslims to live according to their own law, the Norman rulers of the island did so. And they did take on cultural elements from the Islamic world, becoming patrons of Arabic science and literature and borrowing the trappings of rulership from the Fatimids in Egypt.<sup>187</sup> But the foundation for this was always their self-interest. When the Latin presence on the island increased, in the form of both new settlers and Latin merchants from Genoa and Pisa, the Muslims of Sicily lost their value to the crown. This was not a sudden or constant process, and one can see large populations of Muslims continuing to live in Palermo twenty years after a riot that forced many of them to flee the city. But the coast of Sicily by the end of the twelfth century had become a place unfriendly to Muslims, while the emigration inland had created a Muslim population in the Val di Mazara that was actively opposed to Christian rule. Once these mountainous Muslim communities revolted at the death of William II in 1189, the peaceful coexistence that had existed in Norman Sicily was doomed. The inland communities survived in revolt into the thirteenth century with some success, but their presence was not lasting, and Frederick II defeated them finally in 1246 and deported them. He settled them on the mainland of Italy, in the town of Lucera. There, they were put in a familiar situation, living in an inland community, isolated from their Christian neighbors.

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<sup>187</sup> For a discussion of the administration borrowing of the Norman court, see Johns, 257-83.

## **Chapter Four: Cross-Cultural Commercial Relationships**

Determining the nature and frequency of commercial interactions between various religious groups in Sicily is a challenging task. In the twelfth century, Sicily was a commercial hub for the Mediterranean, with ties to both Christendom and the Dar al-Islam. Under the control of the Norman counts and kings of Sicily, who took control of the island in the late eleventh century, Sicily had a reputation as a repository of great wealth. It was also notable during this period for its large Muslim population, which resided in towns and in the countryside. Despite the violent conflict that took place in the Mediterranean in the twelfth century between Christians and Muslims, exemplified by the Crusades, other forms of encounter occurred. Commerce was a powerful force that drew Christians and Muslims into interaction with one another, and the flow of goods continued even in times of war. Within Sicily, the situation was the similar. In spite of tension between religious groups, which was capable of flaring into violence, trade between Christians and Muslims in Sicily continued. Religious identity was an important factor in Norman Sicily, but it was not an impediment to commercial encounters. Even around 1160, when there were riots in Palermo that drove many Muslims to flee the city, Christians and Muslims, Sicilian and Genoese, could employ one another and enter into partnerships with one another. Although such interactions are very rare in the documentary record, they suggest that Sicily in the mid-twelfth century was a place open to cross-cultural commerce.

Some commercial documents survive, which will be discussed in this chapter, but they are very few. Because of the lack of documentation within Sicily, historians have been forced to look outside of the island for evidence regarding trade there. Collections such as the Cairo Geniza detail economic activity in Sicily, particularly during the eleventh century.<sup>1</sup> The majority of the Geniza letters that deal with Sicily predate the conquest of the island by the Normans, focusing on the eleventh century. There was a thriving shipping connection between Sicily, Egypt, and North Africa, and the merchants represented in the Cairo Geniza often frequented Sicilian ports such as Palermo or Mazara del Vallo. A number of these Jewish merchants even settled in Sicily. For example, in a letter from the Geniza that Simonsohn dates to 1059/1060, Salāma ibn. Mūsā al-Safāqusī discussed his desire to move to Sicily after unrest developed in Tunisia, where he was living. North Africa was dealing with the incursions of Arabian nomads, the Banu Hilal.<sup>2</sup> He arranged for his goods to be shipped to Palermo and offered to stay in Mahdia until the goods arrived if his partner asked him to pay their shipping costs.<sup>3</sup> These merchants were also well established enough in Sicily to report of the troubles that befell Palermo during the Norman conquests of the island. In a letter from Tyre, a member of a Jewish Sicilian merchant family put forth the events that led to his fleeing the island, claiming:

Let me describe to you the misfortunes that befell Palermo. We witnessed events which I should have gladly done without, namely bloodshed. We trod on corpses as if it were common ground. (There raged) a heavy epidemic. The price for a *thumb* (of bread) rose to over a dinar and there was none to be had. Our warehouse, containing over 1000 quarter dinars

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<sup>1</sup> The most prominent historian of this collection of sources is S.D. Goitein, particularly with regards to economic history in S.D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society, Vol. 1: Economic Foundations*.

<sup>2</sup> Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib*.

<sup>3</sup> Simonsohn, 274.

(worth of goods) was broken into...Subsequently, two months before the death of my father, may the Lord have mercy on him and bless his soul, he bought orchards and a house from a Christian for 100 dinars. But when the turmoil increased they became worthless.<sup>4</sup>

Another letter from the Geniza discusses the sufferings of the people of Sicily, and by extension those of North Africa, after the conquest. Labrāt ibn Moses ibn Sughmār, writing from Mahdia on 18 August 1061, discussed the recent events in Sicily:

The situation is deteriorating all the time, and people are much perplexed by Sicily and by what the enemy, who conquered most of it, wrought there. Also by high prices here, because this country is dependent on (Sicily) for food. Some twelve families of our people were taken prisoner there, and many Muslims. I pray to the Lord to defend the remnant of Israel there.<sup>5</sup>

Other letters complained of the Normans, in one that Simonsohn dates to 1065-1071, the author writes of how “the enemy” captured the island so that the Muslims retained only Palermo, Mazara del Vallo, and Castrogiovanni, forcing many to flee to North Africa.<sup>6</sup> But despite the troubles described in these letters, Jewish merchants remained in contact with Sicily. In addition, not all thought of the Latin Christians invading the island as the enemy. One letter celebrated the death of the Muslim emir of Palermo, Ibn al-Thumna.<sup>7</sup>

Even the during the conflict, these Jewish merchants continued to trade in Sicily. For example, on 7 September 1064 Salāma ibn Mūsā Safāqūsī, wrote to his partner regarding their commercial affairs on the island. Salāma had recently emigrated from Sfax in North Africa to Mazara del Vallo. His affairs were unsettled. After he passed through the blockade in the port of Palermo, he found that the flax he had left there had

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 279.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 304-05.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 158.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 319.

gone unsold, and the price for it was now a fraction of what it had been.<sup>8</sup> The price of oil had also dropped in price, resulting in what Salāma described as “a capital loss of 25%.”<sup>9</sup> What is more, he had no more money invested in oil in his private account, because “[i]t is all in partnership with Palermitan Muslims and Jews.”<sup>10</sup> He was apparently tied to a number of Muslim merchants by partnership, as later in the letter he complained of being slandered by some fellow Jews:

So when they heard that I was settling (on the island) they informed against me to the king. When that did not accomplish anything, they went to a Muslim, my partner, known as ‘Abdallāh, clerk to the market supervisor, and tried to have me fined 200 quarter dinars.<sup>11</sup>

Salāma described a number of partnerships that he took upon himself in Sicily, both in Palermo and Mazara del Vallo, and these interactions cut across religious divisions.

Other Jewish merchants continued trading in Sicily during the conflict, Farah ibn Joseph wrote from Alexandria on 12 May 1069 describing how he had sent half a sum of money to the recipient of the letter to Sicily with his father. Later in the same letter, he tells of how he had just received news of Sicily from couriers from the Maghrib of fighting going on back and forth between the Arabs and the *rumi*.<sup>12</sup>

The evidence of the Cairo Geniza is much less extensive for the twelfth century in general, and this applies to the letters that make reference to Sicily. A few letters survive, and they indicate that the Jewish merchants were still commercially active on the island, and also that were continuing to deal with Muslims and now Christians. Jewish merchants apparently used ships with Christian crews for both transport and travel. In a

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 334.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 342.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 383-84.

letter written around 1130 Abraham ibn Habib writes of a “Christian ship that arrived from Mahdia” with his brother-in-law and his goods on board.<sup>13</sup> These interactions, however, were not always pleasant. Abraham also writes of a group of Jewish merchants that had bad luck with a Christian ship:

Do not ask of what happened to our fellow merchants at the hand of the Christians which they hired together with them. They took the fare and sailed to the land of Sicily. Then they attacked the Jews in their company and took from R. Abraham ibn al-Batīti al-Itrābulusī 220 dinars and 103 letters; and from my brother-in-law, Abū'l-Hasan (they took) 40 dinars. They disembarked and capsized the boat.<sup>14</sup>

But despite occasional conflict, it appears that Jewish merchants were not averse to using Christian ships and Christian crews to move their goods between North Africa, Sicily, and Egypt. In 1153, two brothers, Perahyā and Moses Yijū wrote from Messina to their father in Mazara, describing their journey there:

We paid the Christian skipper of the boat a fare of 13 quarter dinars and stipulated that he should let us disembark at the lighthouse near Messina – the town is indeed visible from it. We embarked on Friday night, in the company of a Jew, a Cohen, from Salerno, and we were at sea until [ ] day, when we arrived in Baqtas (Patti). There, however, a rainstorm befell us, and we stayed until Friday. We boarded the boat in the cool hours (of the morning) and arrived at a place called Milās (Milazzo). There, the above-mentioned Jew, along with Isaac, the son-in-law of Giovanni’s son, disembarked and continued their travel by land. The Christian skipper told us that we would not reach the lighthouse – the place where we had agreed he would let us off – before Sabbath, and added that we could disembark there whenever we arrived, but that he could not take a shortcut. As I was afraid of desecrating the Sabbath, and of other things (as well), I took another boat for 2/3 of a quarter dinar, and we arrived in Messina on Saturday.<sup>15</sup>

The evidence from the Geniza for the twelfth century is not as extensive as for the eleventh, but it does provide information about the commercial activities of Jewish

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 393.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 405-06.

merchants in Sicily. There is more of an emphasis on trade within Sicily, particularly between Mazara del Vallo and Messina, but there were still dealings with Egypt and North Africa. There were also continued commercial interactions between different religious groups.

This situation continued to the end of the twelfth century. In a document dated roughly from 1194 to 1260, there is a record of a maritime loan made by a Sicilian Christian to a Jew.<sup>16</sup> Master Isaac, the son of Master Judah, borrowed from a “Ser Mishael of Trapani the Sicilian, ten ounces of gold ducats, Messinese weight.”<sup>17</sup> Whenever the goods arrived in Sicily, Isaac would repay the loan within a month. Isaac undertook the obligation “under the usual (terms of) loans among Jews” and the loan was witnessed by an R. Raphael, “who stood surety to Ser Mishael’s for this amount, and abound himself legally as guarantor for this sum.”<sup>18</sup> So even at the end of the twelfth century and into the thirteenth, a Jewish and Christian merchant were interacting commercially in Sicily.

Admittedly, the number of documents in the Cairo Geniza that make reference to commercial activities in Sicily decrease in the twelfth century after the wealth of evidence from the eleventh century, and this decrease corresponds with the beginnings of Norman incursions into the island in the 1060s. But what evidence does survive in the Cairo Geniza from the period of Norman control of Sicily indicates that these Jewish merchant families made their accommodations with the new rulers, and continued to participate in the commercial life of the island, interacting with Christians and Muslims

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<sup>16</sup> Simonsohn dates the document to that range because of a reference to Messinese gold ducats, which were in circulation from 1194 to 1260.

<sup>17</sup> Simonsohn, 428.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

in addition to their fellow Jews. Indeed, they demonstrate that even in times of conflict the lure of commerce still drew people together in Sicily. The records of the Geniza only represent the correspondence of one particular community of Jewish traders. While the Mediterranean emphasis of the Geniza shifts in the twelfth century as those merchants became increasingly involved in Indian Ocean trade, this does not indicate that there was a shift away from trade with Sicily in general. Likewise, those families particularly involved in Sicilian trade may have simply moved to a different section of Cairo, away from the old city of Fustat, so that their letters would no longer have been collected in the same synagogue. But the picture that we can paint of Sicily in the twelfth century is of an island which continued to be connected with North Africa, and which had active regional trade networks, for example between Mazara del Vallo on the western end of the island and Messina on the eastern end. So despite the paucity of evidence regarding commerce in Sicily in the Cairo Geniza, that is not necessarily evidence that Jewish commercial involvement in Sicily, and the partnerships and interactions that took place there between Christians, Muslims, and Jews, ceased. Rather, the little evidence that does survive indicates that commerce continued to be a force that drew Jewish merchants to trade and live in Sicily, and to continue dealing with Christians and Muslims.

In addition to the commercial connections between Sicily, North Africa, and Egypt, during the twelfth century there was a great deal of trade in Sicily done by the communes of the North of Italy, especially Genoa, Pisa, and Venice. Thankfully, sources survive from these cities which record trade done in Norman Sicily. The town which held the most prominent commercial role in Sicily in the twelfth century, at least until the

1160s, was Genoa.<sup>19</sup> Genoese merchants had extensive dealings in Sicily, having been granted numerous settlements throughout the island, both in coastal cities and even inland.<sup>20</sup> A few documents of practice survive that record commercial interactions between Genoese and Sicilian merchants.

First, a unique document survived in the archives of the church of Cefalù.<sup>21</sup> It is the notes of a professional scribe regarding three sea-loans given by a Ser William to a number of Muslim merchants, dating to the middle of the twelfth century, likely around 1160.<sup>22</sup> A sea loan was given for the transport of goods, with the condition that the borrower only had to return the loan if the ship carrying the goods reached its destination safely. While William's place of origin is not identified in the document, it is likely that he was Genoese.<sup>23</sup> In this document, William lends pounds, presumably of Genoese silver, to a number of merchants in Cefalù to be repaid within a set number of days upon their arrival in Messina. William made loans to a number of people, in the first contract he made a series of sea-loans to Maymūn, along with his sister Sadaqa and his son 'Ali, Abū 'Abd Allāh, Ḥasan, Salām, and Abū al-Futūḥ. In the second contract he lent £14 to

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<sup>19</sup> David Abulafia, *The Two Italies*, 5.

<sup>20</sup> Steven A. Epstein, *An Island for Itself: Economic Development and Social Change in Late Medieval Sicily*, ed. Paul Slack, Past and Present Publications (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 49. Abulafia, *The Two Italies*, 5.

<sup>21</sup> This document is currently contained by the Archivio di Stato in Palermo, Cefalù no. 37, and it has been edited and published in two places. First, Cusa, 502-04. Second, it has also been edited and published in a superior fashion, along with an English translation, in Jeremy Johns, "Arabic Contracts of Sea-Exchange from Norman Sicily," in *Karissime Gotifride: Historical essays presented to Godfrey Wettinger on his seventieth birthday*, ed. Paul Xuereb (Msida: Malta University Press, 1999).

<sup>22</sup> Jeremy Johns dates the document generally to 1130-c.1160, while David Abulafia places it closer to 1160 due to the similarities between the exchange rates within the loans and those current in Genoa in the 1160s, Johns, "Arabic Contracts of Sea-Exchange from Norman Sicily," 58-59. David Abulafia, "The Crown and the Economy: 10.

<sup>23</sup> Abulafia, "The Crown and the Economy," 10. Johns is more hesitant to identify William as Genoese, as he could theoretically be from any North Italian port. Although he cannot prove William's nationality, nonetheless he claim that William "smells Genoese," Johns, "Arabic Contracts of Sea-Exchange from Norman Sicily," 77 n.10.

a Muhammad ibn al-Ḥājj ibn Khālīd from Corleone, with the expectation of being repaid 240 *tari* in 20 days. The third contract was for a loan to al-Ḥājj ‘Uthmān. In these contracts, William loaned a sum of more than £100 of silver in a series of six sea-loans to Muslim merchants in Cefalù. The origins of these merchants are difficult to determine, but it seems likely that like Muhammad of Corleone they came from the area surrounding Cefalù. Commercial interactions between Genoese Christians and Sicilian Muslims were not impossible, despite their lack of representation in the collections of Genoese notaries. Cefalù was a promising commercial site for such interaction; in his geography of the 1150s al-Idrisi described it as well-populated and city-like with its markets, in addition to having a port “frequented by all inhabited regions.”<sup>24</sup> As well, ibn Jubayr traveled to Sicily in 1184 and 1185. He described Cefalù as a coastal town with a well-ordered market, in addition to a community of Muslims.<sup>25</sup>

The type of trade represented in this document was likely the most common type done in Norman Sicily. One of the problems in general in the study of medieval commerce is the overemphasis in the surviving documents on long-distance trade. With its high-profile luxury goods, such as silk and spices, and the greater risk involved in their transport, long-distance trade takes up an unrepresentative profile in commercial records from the period. The high costs and risks of these types of ventures meant that those involved were more likely to seek out some kind of written record. The bulk of commerce in the medieval Mediterranean was made up of small-scale trade, regional or

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<sup>24</sup> Idrisi (Arab.), 24. Idrisi (Eng.), 114

<sup>25</sup> Jubayr, 344.

local in scope.<sup>26</sup> These sea-loans are very rare evidence of this type of trade, worthy of note because of the number of loans involved. But the individual loans facilitated regional trade along the northern coast of Sicily between Cefalù and Messina. I would argue that they are representative of the regional trade that historians are often forced to reconstruct through conjecture. And in the context of twelfth-century Sicily, the loans facilitating this trade were between a Genoese Christian and a number of Muslims.

The commercial interactions recorded by Genoese notaries very often dealt with Sicilian trade, making up either the largest portion or a better part of the transactions.<sup>27</sup> However, the majority of these records make no reference to Sicilian merchants. Rather, the notarial collections record contracts and purchases between Genoese merchants who had conducted business within Sicily or were planning on doing so. They reveal a sophisticated network of exchange between Genoa and Sicily, with purchases in Palermo being recorded in Genoa and commercial interaction taking place between agents. For example, a contract from 24 October 1158 has a Genoese merchant named Gibertus accepting from Elia, the agent of Ammiratus, money for which he then owed a greater sum once in Palermo.<sup>28</sup> But in terms of commercial interactions between Christians and Muslims, there is little that was directly recorded by these notaries. This was not based on confessional differences, as Sicilian Christians also appear very infrequently in these notarial records. One of the few Sicilians to show up in the documents of Giovanni

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<sup>26</sup> The emphasis on this small-scale trade in the Mediterranean has been discussed in a general sense for the Mediterranean in Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea*.

<sup>27</sup> This was the case for the destination of those of Giovanni Scriba and the value of those of Guglielmo Cassinese. For Oberto, they were not the majority but still made up a significant portion in both destination and total value of the trips, Abulafia, *The Two Italies*, 99, 158-77, 82.

<sup>28</sup> Chiaudano and Moresco, eds., *Il cartolare di Giovanni Scriba*, II.310.

Scriba regarding Palermo was a Paganus of Messina, and he only served as a witness.<sup>29</sup> Likewise, a Iohannes of Messina served as a witness in a contract from the collection of Oberto in 1190.<sup>30</sup> The question has been raised of whether such toponyms in notarial records mean those described were of foreign origin.<sup>31</sup> In the case of Genoa in the twelfth century, however, foreign toponyms almost always indicated foreign origin.<sup>32</sup> In addition, a loan was given to Iane, “*magister de Sicilia de terra Regis Siculi*,” from Oberto di Quinto on 24 December 1186.<sup>33</sup> But Sicilian Christians are not well represented in these notarial collections. So while Sicilian Muslims appear very infrequently in these notarial records, this is a fate shared by all Sicilians. The lack of apparent commercial interaction may derive from the nature of these notarial collections. They were official records of transactions which took place in Genoa, and, consequently, are much more likely to have recorded deals between fellow Genoese. They were not a place where commercial interactions in Sicily were likely to have been recorded.

This does not mean that such interactions did not take place, however. If the Genoese were buying products produced in Sicily or selling anything to be disseminated in Sicily, it is likely that in Palermo they were dealing with Muslim merchants. Al-Idrisi referred in a general sense to the many *funduqs*, *suqs*, and shops in Palermo.<sup>34</sup> In his description of Palermo, Ibn Jubayr claimed:

The Muslims of this city preserve the remaining evidence of their faith.  
They keep in repair the greater number of their mosques, and come to

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., II.315. The same Paganus was involved in shipping goods for Venetian merchants in 1159, Abulafia, *The Two Italies*, 134.

<sup>30</sup> Chiaudano and Della Rocca, eds., *Oberto Scriba de Mercato (1190)*, 123.

<sup>31</sup> Particularly from the thirteenth century and after, Richard W. Emery, “Use of Surname in Study of Medieval Economic History,” *Medievalia et Humanistica* 7 (1952): 49.

<sup>32</sup> Robert S. Lopez, “Concerning Surnames and Places of Origin,” *Medievalia et Humanistica* 8 (1954): 11.

<sup>33</sup> Chiaudano, ed., *Oberto Scriba de Mercato (1186)*, 132.

<sup>34</sup> Idrisi (Arab.), 22-24.

prayers at the call of the muezzin. In their own suburbs they live apart from the Christians. The markets are full of them, and they are the merchants of the place.<sup>35</sup>

Likewise, the anonymous historian known as Hugo Falcandus, while discussing riots that took place in Palermo in 1161 in his *History of the Tyrants of Sicily*, refers to “[m]any of the Muslims who were involved in selling goods from their shops.”<sup>36</sup> So while there is little direct evidence of these interactions, any foreign merchants trading in Palermo would have come into contact with Muslim merchants there and would likely have exchanged goods with them. Given the extensive commercial infrastructure throughout the island, there was the possibility for all kinds of commercial interactions between Christians and Muslims.

While the documentation is very sparse, there do survive records of commercial interaction between Christians and Muslims in Norman Sicily.<sup>37</sup> Within the Genoese notarial records, there are two contracts recorded between a Genoese Christian and a Sicilian Muslim.<sup>38</sup> Two records of Giovanni Scriba document the dealings between Solomon of Salerno, Ismael, and Abū al-Qāsim ibn Ḥammūd of Palermo.<sup>39</sup> They detail commercial interactions that took place in Genoa between Solomon and Ismael and agents of Abū al-Qāsim on 18 September 1162. Solomon is described in the first contract

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<sup>35</sup> Jubayr, 348.

<sup>36</sup> Hugo Falcandus, *The History of the Tyrants of Sicily*, 109.

<sup>37</sup> Deeds of the sale of property, both land and houses, between Christians and Muslims also survive from the twelfth century in Sicily. Eight specific sales from Palermo have been discussed in detail in Olivia Remie Constable, "Cross-Cultural Contracts." In addition to those discussed earlier, there survives another inter-religious loan from the mid-twelfth century. However, it is a sea-loan between a Jew, Yiṣḥaq bar Yahūda, and a Sicilian Christian, Ser Mīshaʿil of Trapani, Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society, Vol. I: Economic Foundations*, 256. This document is translated and published in Simonsohn, 428.

<sup>38</sup> Muslims appear in other notarial records, but as commodities. Three contracts of the sale of Muslim slaves are recorded in the 1190 collection of Oberto, Chiaudano and Della Rocca, eds., *Oberto Scriba de Mercato (1190)*, 49-52.

<sup>39</sup> The entries for these records are 970 and 972 in Chiaudano and Moresco, eds., *Il cartolare di Giovanni Scriba*, II.80-81.

as both “Genoese” and a “*fidelis* of William, the king of Sicily.”<sup>40</sup> Despite his name, David Abulafia argues that it is likely that Solomon was Christian rather than Jewish, as he married his daughter into a Christian Genoese family.<sup>41</sup> Although his financial base in this period was Genoa, he was from the town of Salerno and thus a *fidelis* of King William I of Sicily.<sup>42</sup> He was a prosperous merchant who, although Genoese, was originally from the domains of the king of Sicily and presumably had more ties and commercial contacts there than the average Genoese merchant. It was likely these ties led him to be familiar enough with Abū al-Qāsim to enter into a commercial relationship with him. Ismael was another Christian merchant, likely Genoese, as Ismael was a common name among the Genoese and he owned a house in Genoa.<sup>43</sup>

Abū al-Qāsim was likewise an exceptional figure. His agents are identified by Giovanni Scriba as being agents of “Caiti Bulcaseme,” or a Latinized version of the *qā'id* Abū al-Qāsim.<sup>44</sup> He was prominent enough to be mentioned in contemporary accounts of Norman Sicily. Hugo Falcandus refers to “the most noble and powerful of the Sicilian Muslims, Bulcassis,” who was stirring up opposition to the chancellor Stephen among Muslims of the island in 1167.<sup>45</sup> He appears twice in documents as one of the directors of the royal *diwān*, the main administrative and financial bureau of the Norman monarchy, standing alongside Christian officials in the royal court.<sup>46</sup> Ibn Jubayr, writing twenty years later, described him as:

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., II.80.

<sup>41</sup> Abulafia, *The Two Italies*, 238.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 239-40.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 248.

<sup>44</sup> Chiaudano and Moresco, eds., *Il cartolare di Giovanni Scriba*, II.80-81.

<sup>45</sup> Falcandus, *The History of the Tyrants of Sicily by "Hugo Falcandus" 1154-69*, 170.

<sup>46</sup> Johns, 234-35.

[T]he leader and Lord of the Muslim community in this island, the *Qā'id* Abū al-Qāsim ibn Hammud, commonly known as Ibn al-Hajar. This man belongs to that noble house on the island of which the eldest son successively assumes the Lordship (of the Muslims).<sup>47</sup>

Abū al-Qāsim was a powerful and prominent figure, in 1162 the nominal leader of all the Muslims in Sicily and a very wealthy man. He would have been known to many and would have had the resources to be an appealing trading partner.

The contract between Solomon and Abū al-Qāsim was a loan of £55 which Simon, Abū Bakr, and Yūsuf, “*nuncii Caiti Bulcaseme*” used to purchase twelve *fardellis* or bundles, likely of cloth, from Ismael. In exchange, a repayment would be made to Solomon’s agents, “Matteo, or Manfredo de Portinico, or your chosen agent,” within a month of the arrival of Abū al-Qāsim’s agents in Palermo. Once in Palermo, Solomon’s agents would have had to produce a “Saracen document,” a tantalizing reference to documents of practice in Arabic that have subsequently been lost.<sup>48</sup> The other notarial record then detailed that Abū Bakr and Simon took the twelve bundles from Ismael, leaving him with two bundles, one of which belonged to an “Almussalis,” an Arabic-sounding name.<sup>49</sup> Despite Giovanni Scriba’s willingness to participate in commercial dealings involving Muslims, he does not appear to have had any understanding of Arabic, and the translation of Arabic names and titles into notarial Latin at times created some interesting results, such as turning the probable name Abū Bakr into Bombarchet.<sup>50</sup> These two notarial records show Genoese Christians interacting commercially with Sicilian Muslims, in Solomon’s case by extending Abū al-Qāsim a

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<sup>47</sup> Jubayr, 358.

<sup>48</sup> Chiaudano and Moresco, eds., *Il cartolare di Giovanni Scriba*, II.80.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, II.81.

<sup>50</sup> Jeremy Johns makes the suggestion the Bombarchet is a Latinization of Abu Bakr, Johns, 239.

loan and in Ismael's case by transporting goods for Muslim merchants, both Abū al-Qāsim and Almussalis.

These five contracts demonstrate that commercial interactions between a Christian and a Muslim beyond the purchasing and selling of goods were not impossible. Solomon felt comfortable giving money to Abū al-Qāsim's agents as a loan. It was a complicated transaction, and one that involved a significant amount of money, £55 of Genoese currency. Their respective religious identities do not seem to have been a hindrance to their entering into a commercial relationship. Likewise, Ser William felt comfortable loaning more than £100 to various Muslim merchants in Cefalù. What is more, this was a transaction that garnered very little profit for Solomon. In return for his loan of £55, his agents were to be given  $31\frac{1}{3}$  ounces of gold in Palermo, as all foreign currency brought into Sicily had to be turned in to be melted down and recast as Sicilian *tari*. With the exchange rate quoted in the notarial record, Solomon's agents would receive £56 and a few pence, a profit of just £1 and change. Given the lack of profit as a motivation, this loan strongly indicates a preexisting commercial relationship between Solomon and Abū al-Qāsim. The fact that all knew to gather in Genoa to execute complicated commercial dealing involving a wide variety of participants also implies previous relationships between all those in these notarial records.

While it is difficult to extrapolate too much out of the actions of a few individuals, these loans do seem significant. Avner Greif, in his study of the Maghribi traders of the eleventh century, a community of Jewish merchants operating out of North Africa, argues that although there were legal ramifications for dishonest commercial behavior, they

would not have served as an adequate check on such actions.<sup>51</sup> In Mediterranean trade in general, the reputation of a merchant was an important attribute, one that could have a serious impact on his ability to operate. News of one's breaking an agreement would filter through the merchant community, and would limit one's ability to make partnerships or procure loans in the future. Therefore, honesty was at a premium, and merchants would deal with those who had a reputation for it. In the case of the Maghribi traders, they did so by dealing within coalitions of fellow North African Jews.<sup>52</sup> But the importance of trust and reputation would have extended to commercial interactions between those who did not share a common religious or ethnic origin. These factors were important in twelfth-century Genoa as well. Steven Epstein argues that while notarial contracts and the legal system provided a "kind of guarantee of honesty" in Genoese commerce, to resort to the written records would be to admit failure. Rather, commerce rested on the trust between the parties involved.<sup>53</sup> If that was the case, then these contracts offer examples that some Genoese merchants trusted Sicilian Muslims, and were familiar enough with their reputations to do so. Although very few records of these interactions survive, they suggest that Genoese merchants were in contact with the community of Muslim merchants in Sicily.

These records also seem to tie into the regional trade shown in the sea loans from Cefalù. The relationships demonstrated in this record had their origins within the Kingdom of Sicily. Solomon was a *fidelis* of King William I, as was Abū al-Qāsim, and

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<sup>51</sup> Avner Greif, "Reputation and Coalitions in Medieval Trade: Evidence on the Maghrebi Traders," *The Journal of Economic History* 49, no. 4 (1989).

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*: 882.

<sup>53</sup> Steven A. Epstein, "Secrecy and Genoese Commercial Practices," *Journal of Medieval History* 20, no. 4 (1994): 325.

they likely began their commercial interactions in the context of trade within the *regno*, perhaps between Palermo in Sicily and Salerno on the mainland. Ismael also probably became acquainted with Muslim merchants such as Abū al-Qāsim and Almusallis through the trade within Sicily that Genoese merchants were so active in. The records discuss trade between Palermo and Genoa, but the relationships involved in that trade, particularly between Solomon and Abū al-Qāsim, had as their starting point commerce in the Kingdom of Sicily.

The nature of these contracts suggests a few conclusions. The notarial records from Genoa involved a large cast of witnesses. Bonus Iohannes Malfiaster, Donatus de Sancto Donato, Iohannes Christianus and W. de Papia witnessed the first contract between Solomon and Abū al-Qāsim's agents and Philippus de Lamberto, Oto iudex, Lambertus Filippi, Solomon, Bonus Iohannes Malfiaster again, Ogerius de Pallo, and "many others" witnessed the sale between these agents and Ismael.<sup>54</sup> These men show up as witnesses for other contracts in Giovanni Scriba's collection.<sup>55</sup> Certain merchants who had a close commercial relationship with Solomon, such as Bonogiovanni Malfigliastro and Donato di San Donato, were present to witness the deal of their colleague, but otherwise the witnesses were from the same revolving cast of characters that appear as witnesses in Giovanni Scriba's records. In that sense, these contracts conformed to Genoese practice. They are also similar to the other notarial records of Giovanni Scriba in structure, except for a note at the end of the loan between Solomon and Abū al-Qāsim that the Arabic document mentioned in it was dated to the month of September.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Chiaudano and Moresco, eds., *Il cartolare di Giovanni Scriba*, II.80-81.

<sup>55</sup> For example, Iohannes Malfiaster witnessed another contract involving Palermo, *Ibid.*, I.130.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, II.80.

Otherwise, however, they conform to standard form, beginning with the witnesses to the transaction, following with those involved and the agreement they made, continuing with the specifics of the deal, and ending with a statement of when and where it was recorded. In their structure and witnesses, these records do not stand out from the others in the notarial collection of Giovanni Scriba.

These notarial records also provide information about the reception of Muslim merchants, or their agents, in Genoa. Of the agents sent by Abū al-Qāsim, Simon was a Christian, as he swore to observe the contract “on the holy Gospels of God.”<sup>57</sup> His fellow travelers Abū Bakr and Yūsuf, however, were Muslims. Instead of swearing on the Gospels they swore on “our law, which we follow.”<sup>58</sup> This is significant in one sense in that it demonstrates that the Genoese were accommodating to Muslims who came to Genoa for commercial purposes, so much that they had a procedure for them to swear to things according to their own religious tradition. Moreover, these contracts were drawn up in the homes of the Genoese involved, the first in the home of Solomon and the second in the home of Ismael. For these two Genoese merchants, it was acceptable to receive these Muslims into their homes. Nor did the witnesses present object. The fact that these interactions took place in private homes might indicate that there was some attempt at secrecy. But the number of witnesses involved and the other business that took place in these homes detract from this argument. In general, commercial interactions in Genoa were public, even if done in a home.<sup>59</sup> And while some of the transactions in Scriba’s collection were recorded in public places, such as squares or in front of

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Epstein, "Secrecy and Genoese Commercial Practices."

churches, a significant minority was recorded in private homes. Despite the extremely rare nature of these records, they do not differ in structure from others in the notarial collection. They suggest that there were practices in place in Genoa to accommodate Muslim merchants, and that commercial interaction with Muslims was not something which was looked down upon or to be kept secret.

Secondly, there is the matter of the agents that Abū al-Qāsim sent to Genoa. They were described in the notarial record as “*Simon, Bombarchet et Iusuph nuncii Caiti Bulcasseme.*”<sup>60</sup> Simon was a Christian, and his fellow travelers, Bombarchet, which may be a Latinized version of Abū Bakr, and Yūsuf, were Muslims. As mentioned above, each swore to uphold the contract according to their religious practices. In the other notarial record involving Solomon and Abū al-Qāsim, only Bombarchet and Simon were involved, and there was no reference to swearing on their respective holy books.<sup>61</sup> This is interesting in one sense in that it demonstrates that the Genoese were accommodating to Muslims who came to Genoa for commercial purposes, so much that they had a procedure for them to swear to things according to their own religious tradition. For Muslims to have recourse to their own religious tradition to swear an oath in the home of a Christian was acceptable. This fits into the pattern that seems to be in play in this document of the practical approach these merchants had to their differences. As long as they could come together to make a profit, they could overlook the conflict between Christians and Muslims that was present in the Mediterranean at that time. Nor did Abū al-Qāsim feel it necessary to send only Christians as his agents to Genoa; he apparently thought that practices in the city would accommodate his agents in the manner that it did.

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<sup>60</sup> Chiaudano and Moresco, eds., *Il cartolare di Giovanni Scriba*, II.80.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, II.81.

And they accommodated them in other ways as well; there is no record of a community of Muslim merchants in Genoa or a hostel for their use, so most likely they stayed and ate in Solomon's home. Solomon must not only have been willing to have Muslims in his home, but could cater to their unique needs, for example by providing acceptable food. In many ways, it seems Genoa was willing to accommodate Muslims who traveled there for commerce. There may have been other Muslim merchants taken into Christian homes in Genoa in his period.

The religious identity of these agents is also interesting in that it offers a glimpse into the commercial practices of a prominent Muslim merchant from Palermo, and his organization utilized both Christian and Muslim agents, working with one another. The grouping of Christian and Muslim agents together on their trip to Genoa indicates that religious identity was not a strict barrier to their working together. Nor do they seem to have been sent on particular tasks based on their religious identity, as Abū al-Qāsim sent a Christian and two Muslims to do business in the Christian town of Genoa. Abū al-Qāsim was exceptional both for his wealth and his political influence, but that does not mean that others did not have similar commercial practices. The fact that he employed both Christians and Muslims as his agents in his commercial dealings and that they would work together, indicate that in Palermo merchants were not necessarily bound by religious identity in choosing their employees and partners.

Within Sicily, the situation was similar. The contracts from Sicily of loans given by Ser William also involved numerous witnesses. In addition to those involved in the loans, the second contract was witnessed by Yaḥyā of Trapani and 'Ali ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān of Sciacca and the third contract by Abū 'Abd Allāh of Termini Imerese. On the

back of this document a number of men also bore witness to the contracts, both Christian and Muslim, including a Christian, Ser Arnald of Messina.<sup>62</sup> The Christian and Muslim witnesses are separated into groups based on their religious identity, but that is the only distinction made between them. Both in the loans given in these contracts and in the witnesses to them there was a mixing of Christians and Muslims. We know of Christian and Muslims who were employed as agents in the service of a Muslim merchant in Palermo, Abū al-Qāsim, and who were sent on business together to Genoa. Again, the documentation is slight, but there is evidence in documents of practice of Christians and Muslims working and trading with one another in Sicily, and in a way that suggests that such interactions were not exceptional.

Later notarial collections from Genoa provide little further information about the commercial relations between Christians and Muslims in Sicily, or between Genoese and Sicilian merchants in general. In the notarial documents recorded by Oberto Mercato in 1186, there is a record of commercial interactions between “Iane magister de Sicilia de terra Regis Siculi” and Obertus de Quinto in which Iane admits to receiving a sum of money.<sup>63</sup> In the collection of Oberto Mercato from 1190, there are references to Muslims, but only as slaves being sold. For example, on 11 February 1190 Puncius Michael de Niça sold to Rubaldus de Molo “*saracenos tres*” with the names of Alium, Bocherium, and Balcase.<sup>64</sup> The very next day, 12 February 1190 the same Puncius Michael de Niça sold to Nicola Mallonus “*unum saracenum*,” also named Alium.<sup>65</sup> Michael was conducting a great deal of business selling of Muslim slaves in early

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<sup>62</sup> Johns, "Arabic Contracts of Sea-Exchange from Norman Sicily," 69-71.

<sup>63</sup> Chiaudano, ed., *Oberto Scriba de Mercato (1186)*, 132.

<sup>64</sup> Chiaudano and Della Rocca, eds., *Oberto Scriba de Mercato (1190)*, 49.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

February 1190; on 13 February 1190, the third day in a row, he sold to a Rubaldus de Molo a Muslim slave named Abderamen in the notarial record.<sup>66</sup> Again, Christian merchants who may have been Sicilian appear infrequently, for example, a Iohannes of Messina appears as a witness in a record from 30 March 1190. But given the extensive commercial settlements established in Messina by the Genoese, it is difficult to accurately determine his origin.<sup>67</sup>

In addition to these few documents of practice, there is other evidence of cordial commercial relations between Christians and Muslims, at least in a town such as Palermo that had a large Muslim population. Writing twenty years after these contracts, when relations in general between Christians and Muslims had deteriorated in Sicily, Ibn Jubayr found one of the most dangerous aspects of Muslim life in Sicily to be the friendliness of Christians there. When first entering Palermo, he encountered such dangerous courtesy:

One of the strangest examples of seducement into waywardness that we witnessed happened as we left the castle, when one of the Christians seated at the gate said to us: ‘Look to what you have with you pilgrims, lest the officials of the Customs descend on you.’ He thought, of course, that we carried merchandise liable to customs duty. But another Christian replied to him saying, ‘How strange you are. Can they enter into the King’s protection and yet fear? I should hope for them nothing but thousands of *rubayyat*. Go in peace, you have nothing to fear.’<sup>68</sup>

He noted this dangerous courtesy during his journey to Palermo as well, when he encountered some Christians in Termini, twenty miles to the east of Palermo:

Groups of Christians that met us themselves uttered the first greetings, and treated us with courtesy. We observed in their attitude and insinuating

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 123.

<sup>68</sup> Jubayr, 347.

address towards the Muslims that which would offer temptation to ignorant souls.<sup>69</sup>

Such interactions, despite their ominous implications to Ibn Jubayr, indicate an atmosphere in and around Palermo in which Christians and Muslims would freely interact. The advice given to him on his entry to Palermo by the Christians sitting by the gate does not seem to show any hesitation to, at the very least, discuss commerce with Muslims. While the evidence is admittedly very slight, the glimpses we have of Palermo in the twelfth century show a place where religious identity did not dictate commercial interaction.

Matters declined for Solomon of Salerno and Abū al-Qāsim after 1162. For Solomon, the change was slight. Although he lost some of his trading outlets in Sicily and Egypt in the 1160s, he never lost his status within Genoa and likely never suffered any major losses before his death.<sup>70</sup> The situation for Abū al-Qāsim was worse. When he met Ibn Jubayr in 1185 Abū al-Qāsim had fallen out of favor with the king of Sicily, William II, who had confiscated all his wealth, “a series of divestments which exacted from him more than thirty thousand mu’mini dinars,” in addition to “all the houses and property which he had inherited from his forebears,” so that he “at last was without wealth.”<sup>71</sup> He retained his position in the royal government, but was dependent on his position in the royal administration, as “he discharged his duties like a slave, his person and his property impounded.”<sup>72</sup> Ibn Jubayr may have been engaged in a bit of hyperbole regarding Abū al-Qāsim’s abject state, as soon after he claimed:

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 345.

<sup>70</sup> Abulafia, *The Two Italies*, 253-54.

<sup>71</sup> Jubayr, 358.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

When in Palermo we had seen houses belonging to him, his brothers, and members of his house, which were like lofty and superb castles. The condition of these men, in a word, was exalted, and his was so in particular.<sup>73</sup>

Even if Ibn Jubayr exaggerated his degradation, Abū al-Qāsim had suffered and he was dependent on royal largesse. When Muslims began to revolt against Christian rule four years later at the death of William II, setting up in the mountains of the western end of the island, he and his family seem to have assimilated and collaborated rather than rebelled. A house was once owned by him in Trapani was granted to the Genoese by Frederick II in 1200. There is no record of what had happened to him, and his descendents disappear until the late thirteenth century. A contract from 1289 referred to an earlier deed of the sale of land by a John, who was the son of the *qā'id* Phillip of Ibn Ḥammūd. For a time, it appears that his family remained the nominal ruler of the Sicilian Muslims, but that would have ended with their expulsion. Eventually his descendents took on Christian names, such as John, perhaps providing late affirmation of the fear Ibn Jubayr had of friendship with Christians.<sup>74</sup>

The story of Abū al-Qāsim illustrates the conditional nature of these commercial relationships and of the status of Muslims in general in Norman Sicily. So long as there was a profit to be made, merchants of differing religious backgrounds found a way to work together in a mutually beneficially fashion. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Jewish merchants in Sicily, Egypt, and North Africa were part of the commercial world of those Muslim territories. They continued to participate in the commerce of Sicily during the conflict of its conquest and after it passed under Norman Christian control.

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 359.

<sup>74</sup> Johns, 242.

This was the case for Christian and Muslim merchants in Norman Sicily as well. But during the twelfth century the immigration of Latin Christians to the island gradually diluted the role that Muslims could play in commerce. Although Muslims remained prominent in many towns of the coast, particularly those of the west of the island, such as Palermo, they were slowly being outnumbered by Latin Christians. This process took place in the administration of Sicily as well, as the Arab-speakers that the Norman kings depended on to run the complex finances of the *regno* were replaced by Greek and Latin Christians. This shift was represented in the language of the *diwān* as well, as documents began to be produced in Latin as opposed to Greek and Arabic. As Muslims ceased to have a prominent role in commerce and administration, the relationships they had with Christians, in particular the protections given to them by the king of Sicily, began to deteriorate.

The career of Abū al-Qāsim demonstrates both these processes. As the Muslim community lost its prominence, he lost many of the benefits of being its head. He remained a part of the royal government, but was dependent on royal largesse. And in time, even this role was incompatible with maintaining his Muslim identity. When the growing conflict between Christians and Muslims in Sicily broke into open insurrection, he and his family seem to have sided with the Normans rather than their coreligionists. The decline in his status is representative of a decline for the greater Muslim population of Sicily. As the kings no longer relied on Muslims to run their government, people their markets, or even to grow their crops, their protected status disappeared. By the end of the twelfth century, all Muslims in Sicily were faced with the decision that Abū al-Qāsim had to make: whether to assimilate, flee the island, or rise up in rebellion. Some followed his

lead and disappeared into the Christian population of Sicily, but many chose to move inland and fight. The relationships they had developed with their Christian neighbors, which had weathered earlier conflicts, could not survive.

The records discussed in this chapter are in no way comprehensive or representative of trade in Sicily, either for the eleventh or the twelfth century. Nor are the chronicles or travelers accounts comprehensive pictures of social life in Norman Sicily, and they too focus on the second half of the twelfth century. But given the dearth of documentation for Norman Sicily, especially in commercial documents of practice, one must use the sources available to paint as detailed a picture as possible. An examination of these documents reveals that cross-cultural commercial interactions in Sicily did occur. When these interactions took place, there was trust involved. Loans and partnerships were a risk, and one that was likely lessened by their familiarity with one another's reputation. And these merchants seem to have been part a mixed community drawn together by commerce, which would bring an Egyptian Jew into contact with a Tunisian Muslim, a Muslim from Palermo with a Christian from Genoa. In addition, the evidence of the commercial landscape of Sicily, such as the towns of Palermo and Cefalù, indicates that interactions between Christians and Muslims were not unheard of, and seem to have come quite easily to some. The frequency of these inter-religious relationships is unclear, but the general atmosphere of Sicily seems to have been open to cross-cultural commerce. They also hint at the regional trade that took place within the Kingdom of Sicily, and the relationships involved in that commerce. Commercial interaction in Norman Sicily in the twelfth century was not absolutely dictated by religious identity.

## **Chapter Five: The Professions of Sicilian Muslims**

The main source for the study of the broader Muslim population of Norman Sicily are the *jarā'id*, registers of the names of Muslims bound to certain estates. These registers were usually included with the grant of the land itself. While *jarā'id* were likely produced for a number of estates in Sicily under Norman rule, only a small number remain. But even the few that survive provide information about Muslims living in Sicily, over the course of the twelfth century and over the whole of the island. First, the documents they are contained in describe many of the conditions established for Muslims living in Sicily under Christian rule. They established the payments required from Muslim villeins to their lords, the restrictions on their rights of movement, and their legal status. For example, the *jarā'id* often required the payment, either personally or collectively, of the *jizya*, a head tax paid in coin, and the *qānūn*, a land tax usually paid in grain. The personal information provided about these villeins, however, is limited. All that is provided is the names of the heads of the households attached to the estate, and the majority of those listed have names that only establish their parentage, such as Yūsuf son of 'Uthmān and his brother Ahmad. Still, there are a number of names that provide more information about these individuals. Many of the heads of households in these registers are identified by names that indicate their ethnic background, such as Maimūn the Berber, or their place of origin from toponyms, such as 'Abd al-Raḥman the Catanian.<sup>1</sup>

The focus of this chapter will be the analysis of the names provided in the Sicilian *jarā'id*, particularly the analysis of those villeins who have a profession attributed to

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<sup>1</sup> All the preceding examples are drawn from the 1095 Aci Castello *jarā'ida*, Cusa, 541-549.

them. Through looking at the professional titles of these primarily Muslim villeins I can examine the economic roles they played in their communities and the broader society of Norman Sicily. While others have examined the *jarā'id*, no one has done so in the context of their economic or professional information. The only reference I have found to the professions of the *jarā'id* was a brief discussion of the silk workers in one *jarāida* by David Jacoby.<sup>2</sup> So while I will be drawing on the work of others, particularly Jeremy Johns, there are no other works which address the economic information in the registers.

Because the *jarā'id* are so central to this chapter, I will begin by setting forth the registers that have survived and to which I will refer. It is not clear what exactly the *jarā'id* were used for. In the earliest registers it appears they were used in part to define the lands being granted, so that the villeins would be described with the implication that the land involved was the land that these individuals worked.<sup>3</sup> After the middle of the twelfth century, with the renewals of 1144 and 1145, the clerks began to produce registers of land boundaries in addition to the registers of villeins.<sup>4</sup> There is a little evidence that some of the earliest *jarā'id* were updated to keep track of changes, but for the most part they seem to describe the communities at a particular point in time. This means there may have been updates of the surviving registers, or surveys of other estates, that do not survive. But for the most part, there does not seem to have been any comprehensive system for the production and use of the registers, and there is a great deal of variation in their content. The *jarā'id*, among other documents produced by royal

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<sup>2</sup> David Jacoby, "Silk and Silk Textiles in Arab and Norman Sicily: The Economic Context," in *Nobiles Officinae: Perle, filigrane, e trame di seta dal Palazzo Reale di Palermo*, vol. 2, ed. Maria Andaloro (Catania: Giuseppe Maimore Editore, 2006), 386.

<sup>3</sup> Johns, 43.

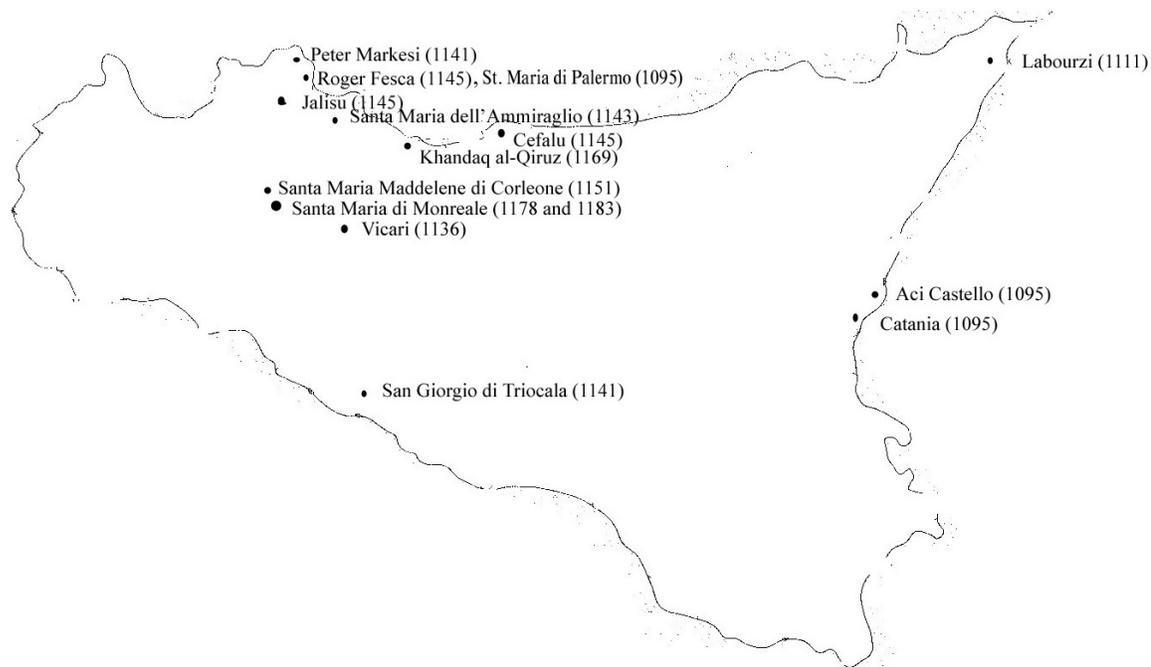
<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 145

clerks, were written in a combination of Arabic, Greek, and Latin. It is likely that the clerks were primarily Greek-speakers immediately after the conquest; they had knowledge of all these languages, and Arabic was gradually replaced by Greek in the early twelfth century because of their role in government. Beginning with the foundation of the Kingdom of Sicily under Roger II, however, Arabic was used increasingly in royal documents. Native Arabic-speakers, often Muslim, played an important role in the production of royal documents as well.

It is not clear whether these registers were used to keep track of the population, and were thus updated. Some of the earliest appear to have been changed to keep up with changes in the population, and others were renewed with updated information. For the most part, however, the *jarā'id* were likely used as deeds, preserving information about a certain landlord's possessions, both the land and the peasants who worked it. The limited survival of these registers makes it difficult to exactly ascertain what they were used for. It is possible that registers were kept by the royal chancery for the purposes of administration but have not survived. The *jarā'id* that do survive were held by those who owned the property, mostly ecclesiastical institutions. The administrative structure of Sicily was similar to regions in the Islamic world, indeed much of it was modeled on that of the Fatimid caliphate. In Fatimid Egypt registers were kept of the names of those holding land and the lands which had been granted to them, similar to the land deeds of Norman Sicily, the *dafātir al-ḥudūd*.<sup>5</sup> In Egypt there were registers of tax-payers,

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 16



**Figure 8: Map of the *Jarā'id***

*jarā'id*, that were used to collect the *jizya*.<sup>6</sup> In this sense, they seem a close parallel to the *jarā'id* of Norman Sicily, as we will see.

The earliest *jarā'id* were produced soon after the conquest of the island was completed with the surrender of Noto in 1091.<sup>7</sup> The earliest surviving *jarīda* is included with a donation in Greek to the cathedral church of St. Maria di Palermo in 1095. It grants the church a total of 95 households of Hagarenes along with their lands. Jeremy Johns assumes a multiplier of between four and five members per household, which would give the settlement a population of roughly 425.<sup>8</sup> The Muslims owed a duty to the church of a *jizya* of 750 *tarì* paid collectively twice a year and a *qānūn* of 150 *modia* of wheat also to be paid twice a year.<sup>9</sup> The register consists of two lists of names, a list written in Arabic of seventy-five households described as the men “whom the Sultan gave to the great church” and a list in Greek of twenty names described as the “newlyweds of the above-named villeins.” Johns argues that the term “newlywed,” not seen elsewhere in the *jarā'id*, refers to households recently split from the parental household after marriage.<sup>10</sup> These were the villeins that defined the land granted to the cathedral church.

Two particular *jarā'id* survive that list the villeins bound to lands owned by the monastery of St. Agatha, both in the town of Catania and in Aci Castello, a town roughly nine kilometers north of Catania along the coast. St. Agatha was a Benedictine

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>7</sup> Jeremy Johns has provided in depth analysis and background information on the the *jarā'id* produced in Norman Sicily in his *Arabic Administration in Norman Sicily*, and is the primary reference for any general examination of the registers.

<sup>8</sup> Johns, 163.

<sup>9</sup> Cusa, 1-3. Johns, 46-47, 301.

<sup>10</sup> Johns, 47-48.

foundation that had considerable control over the surrounding area.<sup>11</sup> The *jarīda* for Aci Castello was issued by Roger I on 20 February 1095, granting the bishop of Catania, who was also abbot of St. Agatha, control over the indigenous Muslim population. The register contains the names of 390 households, which would give the town of population of roughly 1800. It is divided into two sections, the men of Aci Castello, which includes 337 names of the heads of households, and the widows of Aci Castello, which includes fifty-three names.<sup>12</sup> Given the short time that had elapsed since the conquest of the island, and the subsequent revolt of the Muslims of the region, it is possible that death and flight from the conflict explains the number of widows. A copy was made of this document in 1145, as King Roger II ordered his vassals to present their privileges for renewal in 1144, likely as a fundraising venture.<sup>13</sup> The register was renewed but not updated; rather it was copied exactly and supposedly updated by adding the phrase “the sons of” in front of every name and having the names transcribed into Greek as well. The names in the 1145 renewal correspond exactly to those in the 1095 original. This is important in the consideration of the *jarīda* for Catania also produced soon after the conquest.

A *jarīda* was issued for Catania in 1095, like that for Aci Castello granting control over indigenous inhabitants of the town to Ansgar, the bishop of Catania and the abbot of St. Agatha. Unlike the register for Aci Castello, however, the original for Catania does not survive. But as in the case of the Aci Castello *jarīda* a renewal was

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<sup>11</sup> Lynn T. White, Jr., *Latin Monasticism in Norman Sicily*, 105-17.

<sup>12</sup> Cusa 541-549. Johns, 51-52, 301-302.

<sup>13</sup> Cusa, 586-595. Johns, 115.

made in 1145 under the orders of Roger II.<sup>14</sup> And in all ways the renewal of the Catania register appears to mirror the renewal of the Aci Castello register, with a list of households that all begin with “the sons of” and the insertion of Greek transcriptions of the Arabic names. The 1145 renewal preserves a document that has subsequently been lost. While there is no way to check its validity, it seems a safe assumption that it is an accurate copy, given the fact that a document presented for renewal at the same time, the 1095 *jarīda* of Aci Castello, was reproduced with absolutely no changes or innovations to the original. I would therefore argue that the names listed in the 1145 renewal, while having nothing to say about the situation for Muslims in Catania in 1145, do provide valuable information about the population of Catania soon after the conquest in 1095. The register is divided into a number of sections. The first, the listing of the people of Catania contains a total of 525 names. There is also a list of widows, totaling ninety-four names, a list of the slaves of the church, totaling twenty-three names, a list of the Jews, totaling twenty-five names, and a list of the blind, totaling eight names. Like Aci Castello, Catania had quite a few widows, though not quite as high a proportion, perhaps because it was not hit as hard by the conflict. The names listed for the Jews follow the pattern of beginning with “the children of.” While that pattern is not given for the widows, slaves, and blind, these lists were most likely copied word for word from the earlier copy as well, as otherwise the clerks would have had to seek them out in 1145 while interviewing no other villeins from Catania.

The next surviving *jarīda* was also produced for an estate in the east of the island. It is a register in Arabic and Greek of May 1111, which contains the names of only eight

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<sup>14</sup> Cusa, 563-585. Johns, 306.

Muslim villeins, for a population of roughly thirty-five.<sup>15</sup> They were granted along with lands by Roger I, and the grant was confirmed in this document by the regent Adelaide and Roger II. The men and land were given to a knight named Julian, at Labourzi, a town near Messina. It indicates that Adelaide and her administration were confirming land from the conquest as late as 1111.<sup>16</sup>

There is a gap of some years before another register of Muslim villeins survives. It was a grant by Roger II of lands near Vicari, roughly thirty kilometers to the southeast of Palermo, to Adelina, the wet-nurse of his son Henry.<sup>17</sup> There is no other information about her; it seems likely that she too was of Latin Christian origin, given her name, though it is possibly she was a convert. Her descendents do not appear in any further sources. The original register, which was produced in 1136, does not survive. However, a Latin translation was made in February 1290 that does survive. This copy contains the Latin versions of the names of the five Muslim heads of household attached to the land in Vicari, indicating a small population of approximately twenty in 1136.

Another short *jarīda* was attached to a Greek deed of sale of villeins. In the mid-twelfth century, possibly 1141, a Peter Markēsi sold four households of his villeins to Theodore of Antioch to serve the monastery of San Nicolò di Chùrchuro on the outskirts of Palermo, which Theodore had founded.<sup>18</sup> The villeins were purchased for 200 *tari* and one horse. Attached to the deed of sale was the register of the four heads of household, listed in both Greek and Arabic, representing a population of roughly fifteen.

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<sup>15</sup> André Guillou, ed., *Les actes grecs de S. Maria di Messina*, 51-55. Johns, 75-76, 302.

<sup>16</sup> Johns, 76.

<sup>17</sup> Cusa, 115-116. Johns, 101-102, 304.

<sup>18</sup> Cusa, 22-23. Johns, 317.

Also in 1141, Roger II ordered at Agrigento that the register of the villeins of the monastery of San Giorgio di Triocala be updated. The original was likely issued by Roger I at the end of the eleventh century, in 1097 or 1098. The monastery, which was located near Sciacca, was originally granted lands and the villeins attached to them in Triocala and Raḥl al-Baṣal. It was a Basilian monastery, founded by Roger I in 1098.<sup>19</sup> The original *jarīda* was updated, and was written in Arabic except for the signature of Roger II, which was in Greek. This register lists a total of 115 households.<sup>20</sup> The names of fifty heads of household were registered at Triocala, and another fifty names were registered for Raḥl al-Baṣal. There was also the addition of fifteen newly registered villeins added to the original grant, for a total population of about five hundred.

In 1143 George of Antioch endowed the Benedictine convent of Santa Maria dell' Ammiraglio in Palermo with the estate of Raḥl al-Sha' rānī, which was located near Misilmeri twelve kilometers southeast of Palermo. Attached to the grant of land was a Greek-Arabic *jarīda* of the ten villeins on the land, with a total population of about forty-five.<sup>21</sup> There were a number of other gifts granted to the convent. First, George granted two *funduqs* in Palermo, one newly built and the other purchased from Ḥasan ibn Nāsikh. He also gave an oven, a vineyard, and a garden bought from the qadi of Palermo. Finally, he granted a number of moveable objects, such as vases, lamps, oil, wax, and books, and an annual income of 30 *tarì* for the lifetime of the Abbess Marina.

The next surviving *jarīda* is also from the west of island near Palermo. In 1145 the *diwān* issued a renewal of a *jarīda* that had been issued twelve years earlier, in

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<sup>19</sup> White, *Latin Monasticism in Norman Sicily*, 41.

<sup>20</sup> M.E. Gálvez, "Noticia sobre los documentos árabes de Sicilia," 171-81. Johns, 107-108, 305.

<sup>21</sup> Cusa, 68-70. Johns, 109-111, 306.

1132.<sup>22</sup> The renewal contains the register of the villeins of the original grant of Mutata, located seventeen kilometers southwest of Cefalù, to the cathedral church of San Salvatore di Cefalù. It also added to the original grant new registers of villeins, first of the villeins of San Cosma near Cefalù and San Giovanni di Rocella, which was located twelve kilometers west of the town. Both were granted to San Salvatore di Cefalù by Abbot David of the monastery of Santissima Trinità di Mileto in January 1136. The new additions were translated into Arabic from the Latin of the original register, as this was a time when Arabic was reemerging as a common language of royal documents with the introduction of Fatimid administrative techniques under Roger II.

Another register survives from the many renewals ordered by Roger II in 1144 and 1145. This *jarīda* is a renewal of a grant originally made by Roger I in the late eleventh century. The original was a grant of the population of Jālišū, near Corleone, to Roger Forestal. In 1145 the control over that population was renewed for Walter Forestal, Roger's son.<sup>23</sup> The register lists a total of thirty names, with an additional five new households that had recently split from the parental household, representing a population of about one hundred thirty.

There is also a fragmentary *jarīda* in Greek and Arabic from 1145, which lists villeins granted by Roger II to Roger Fesca, the archbishop-elect of Palermo.<sup>24</sup> The renewal was mostly done some time between January and April of 1145. The parchment is torn, so only twenty-four names are legible, in Arabic with Greek interlinear transliteration of the names.

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<sup>22</sup> Cusa, 472-480. Johns, 91-93, 123, 127, 307. See Appendix

<sup>23</sup> Cusa, 127-129. Johns, 127-128, 307.

<sup>24</sup> Cusa, 614-615. Johns, 116-117, 307. See Appendix

In 1151 Adelicia, the abbess of Santa Maria Maddalene di Corleone, requested that Roger II provide her with a register of the villeins of two of her estates. This register is first evidence of this foundation, which was subordinate to the archbishop of Palermo.<sup>25</sup> The grant combined previous existing lists of the villeins. The grant, written in Greek and Arabic, includes the *jarīda* of the town of Fuṭṭāsina, with the names of twenty villeins, and the *jarīda* of the town of Ṭurrus, with the names of thirty villeins.<sup>26</sup> This would give the settlement a population of roughly two hundred twenty-five.

There is a gap for the space of roughly fifteen years in surviving *jarā'id*. William II and Margaret of Navarre made a grant in 1169 to the hospital in Khandaq al-Qirūz, a village located near Altavilla Milicia, 14 kilometers southwest of Termini.<sup>27</sup> The grant was for the *rahl* of ‘Ayn al-Liyān and the fourteen households of villeins living there. This was a small settlement of roughly sixty. The men of Termini were allowed to continue living on the estate with control of family lands, with payments now due to the hospital and not royal bailiffs. The exception, however, were the sailors living on the estate, who were still required to deal with the royal bailiffs for their dues.

The final two surviving *jarā'id* are also the longest. Both deal with grants made by William II of lands which were part of the royal estates. The lands were given to the monastery of Santa Maria di Monreale, located just eight and half kilometers to the southwest of Palermo. It was a recent foundation, established in 1174 by William II, but was large enough to be described by the historian Lynn White as the “greatest of all the

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<sup>25</sup> White, *Latin Monasticism in Norman Sicily*, 158-59.

<sup>26</sup> Cusa, 130-134. Johns, 309.

<sup>27</sup> Cusa, 37-39. Johns, 311-312.

Norman monasteries of Sicily.”<sup>28</sup> It enjoyed extraordinary privileges, such as freedom from all taxes and requisition other than hospitality for the king and his heirs.<sup>29</sup> The first *jarīda* was made in 1178 and granted villeins in the districts of Corleone and Calatrasi.<sup>30</sup> The 1178 Monreale *jarīda* is divided into a number of sections, and contains the names of more than 1600 heads of households. In the district of Corleone, the register lists the men living in the town of Corleone, which total 778 names. There are also villeins listed for a number of smaller settlements, such as Jālišū and Rāya, totaling ninety-two names. There are also listed Qaštana, with twenty names, Sūq al-Mir’āh, with sixty-five names, Abū Kināna, with eighty-eight names, and Qabiyāna, with seventy-eight names. There are another seventy names listed within the district of Corleone that are not identified as belonging to any particular town. For the district of Calatrasi there are a total of 424 households listed, fifty-two of which are listed as newly-formed households, for a total population on the estates of roughly 7200.

The other *jarīda* for the estates of Santa Maria di Monreale was produced in 1183. It was written in Arabic and Greek, and it list the villeins not included in the 1178 *jarīda*, in addition to the recent immigrants to the lands of the monastery.<sup>31</sup> The 1183 Monreale *jarīda* is divided into a total of fifty-three sections, each of which is of a particular estate owned by Santa Maria di Monreale. Each of the sections is then split into two parts, the inhabitants of the estate and then the recent immigrants, the *rijāl al-muls*, literally the men of the smooth things. This term and distinction among villeins was drawn from

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<sup>28</sup> White, *Latin Monasticism in Norman Sicily*, 132.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>30</sup> Cusa, 134-179. Johns, 153-65, 313.

<sup>31</sup> Cusa, 245-286. Johns, 165-9, 313.

Roman law and not from the Islamic world.<sup>32</sup> There is no overlap in the estates contained within the 1183 and the 1178 Monreale *jarīda*, as the 1178 register describes villeins primarily in the districts of Corleone and Calatrasi and the 1183 register describes villeins mostly in the district of Iato. The coordination between the two registers indicates that the *dīwān* likely produced them in conjunction with one another. The 1183 *jarīda* contains a total of 729 names, spread among fifty-two estates controlled by Santa Maria di Monreale, with a total population of roughly 3200.

While these *jarā'id* do not offer any kind of representative sample of the Muslims living in Norman Sicily, nevertheless they do provide a great deal of information. Only fifteen registers are being used as a sample in this study, but these fifteen sources contain within them the names of more than 3900 Muslims living in Sicily between 1095 and 1183, heads of household who would have represented a total population of roughly 18000.<sup>33</sup> In addition, they provide samples from over the entirety of the island. Catania and Aci Castello are in the east, in the Val Demone. Triocala is near Sciacca, on the southern coast of the island. The bulk of the estates described are, however, located in the western Val di Mazara, which had the highest proportion of Muslim inhabitants. Again, given the sparse sampling provided by these registers, it is difficult to get a comprehensive image of the Muslim population of Norman Sicily. But they do offer glimpses of those communities, glimpses that reveal a great deal about the Muslims living on these estates in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

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<sup>32</sup> Johns, 149-50.

<sup>33</sup> These fifteen registers are those for which some record, either the original or a renewal, survive.

What is more, the *jarā'id* offer an opportunity to examine communities of Muslims that are often absent in the other sources of Norman Sicily. The narrative sources and commercial records are focused on the towns of the coast, where the centers of power, both political and economic, were located. The Muslims who appear in these sources were those who lived in the towns, merchants of the marketplaces or scribes in royal employ. They were more likely to have closer connections to the Latin Christians in power, and be more influential themselves, such as Abū al-Qasim, who was discussed in Chapter Four. While the *jarā'id* do describe populations living in coastal regions, such as Catania, Aci Castello, and Cefalù, many of the Muslims lived in rural communities surrounding these towns. But the majority of those in the *jarā'id* were living on rural estates in the inland regions of the island. There is a wealth of names for Muslims living on estates in the inland south of Palermo, near the towns of Corleone, Calatrasi, and Iato. The *jarā'id* offer some of the only information about these Muslims, living as cultivators or tradesmen in isolated inland communities. But it is important to remember that the *jarā'id* only preserve information about the Muslims who were bound to estates in some fashion. There were other Muslims living in these communities who would not have been recorded because they did not have the same relationship with the lord. It is unclear what percentage of inhabitants would have been bound in some way, although it seems safe to assume that the majority were, particularly on rural estates such as those detailed by the *jarā'id*. It is not clear how these estates were structured; they do not appear to have had particularly close ties to their landlords. Many of them were placed under the control of ecclesiastical institutions on the coast, but beyond paying their taxes they do

not seem to have had much contact. They were bound to the land, or at least to the duties set out in the registers. But villeins could escape such penalties for some time simply by moving away, which indicates the lords of these estates were not present to keep track of their villeins. But the *jarā'id* themselves provide much of the detailed information that these lords had about their estates. Because of that, the picture of the economic roles they played sheds a light on the economic status of the inland of Sicily, which would not be described in the accounts of geographers or travelers who focused on the coast.

The Arabic names contained in the *jarā'id* followed a set structure. They usually began with a proper name, such as 'Ali. This would then often be followed by either another name such as a title, nickname, or profession. Or it could designate a family relation, usually through the word 'ibn,' or son. So 'Ali ibn Muhammad would be 'Ali son of Muhammad. At times, the names could have a number of names and family relations contained within them. It is because of these naming practices that the names contained in the *jarā'id* can provide so much information about the Muslims of Norman Sicily. Beyond their economic roles, the names and titles of the Muslims listed in the *jarā'id* also indicate that despite their isolation in Christian Sicily they maintained connections with the broader Islamic world. First of all, a number of Muslims bear the title *al-Hājj*, a title they would have earned after undergoing the pilgrimage to Mecca. Among the Muslims of Catania in 1095 there was an 'Abd al-Khāliq ibn al-Hājj, whose name indicates that his father undertook the pilgrimage.<sup>34</sup> Nearby in Aci Castello in 1095 there was also an al-Hājj Ja'far, who would have gone on the pilgrimage himself.<sup>35</sup> On

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<sup>34</sup> Cusa, 572.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 545.

the other side of the island, on the estates of St. Maria Maddalene di Corleone in 1151 there was an al-Ḥājj Aḥmad.<sup>36</sup> In 1178 on the estates of Calatrasi there was an ‘Umar al-Ḥājj.<sup>37</sup> There were two individuals bearing this title in the Monreale *jarīda* of 1183, first a Muhammad ibn al-Ḥājj living in al-Darja near Iato.<sup>38</sup> In addition, there was an ‘Abd al-Kāfiḍ ibn al-Ḥājj living in Mārtū, also on the estates of Iato.<sup>39</sup> So while there were not overwhelming numbers of Meccan pilgrims living in Norman Sicily, it does appear that some were able to travel in the Mediterranean, and chose to return to their Sicilian communities.

There is also evidence of immigration from other parts of the Islamic World, particularly North Africa, even into the second half of the twelfth century. In the *jarīda* of St. Giorgio di Triocula in 1141 there was a section of villeins described as new additions to its possessions. Almost all of these villeins have names that indicate they were from North Africa, such as Ḥasan al-Safāqsī, from Sfax in North Africa, ‘Ali al-Tūnisī, the Tunisian, and a number described as *al-Ifrīqī*, or the Ifriqiyyans.<sup>40</sup> Other North Africans appear through the *jarā'id*, and even as late as 1183 there appear an ‘Ali al-Ifrīqī and a Yaḥyā al-Ifrīqī<sup>41</sup> In addition to place names, many villeins also have ethnic titles that indicate a North African background. For example, at Jaḥna in 1183 there was a Maimūn al-Ṣanhājī, from the Sahaja berbers.<sup>42</sup> While North African toponyms are the

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 176.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 249.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 283.

<sup>40</sup> Gálvez, "Noticia sobre los documentos árabes de Sicilia," 171-78.

<sup>41</sup> Cusa, 262, 271.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 251.

most common, others appear, such as ‘Īsā al-Andalusī, or the Spaniard.<sup>43</sup> The names of the villeins of Norman Sicily demonstrate their connections to the broader Islamic world, and, in particular, the long-standing connection between Sicily and North Africa.

A number of the professions in the *jarā'id* show Muslims in economic roles that would have been part of a self-sufficient community. While it is not clear when exactly professional names ceased being professional titles and became hereditary names, in Norman Sicily they appear to still have been professional titles. There is no evidence of descendants taking on these titles; rather they would have been described as that man's son. For example, the son of ‘Ali al-Qaffāṣ, ‘Ali the maker of wicker baskets, would be described as Muhammad ibn al-Qaffāṣ rather than Muhammad al-Qaffāṣ. In a number of the communities there were Muslims who were active in the processing and selling of grain, which would have been sold on the island and throughout the Mediterranean, as will be discussed in Chapter Six. Early *jarā'id* contain two references to the profession *al-Daqqāq*, or the flour merchant. The 1095 register for Catania contains a Mūsā al-Daqqāq,<sup>44</sup> and the 1095 register for Aci Castello has a Ḥasan ibn al-Daqqāq.<sup>45</sup> In addition, there is a woman identified as the relative of a food seller in the 1178 Monreale register, Zawja al-Fawwāl, literally “the wife of the seller of beans.”<sup>46</sup> Not surprisingly, there were also a number of villeins who were involved in the production of bread. There are a total of five entries that involved the profession of baker. There are two terms meaning baker that appear in the *jarā'id*. The first, *al-Khabbāz* appears in 1095 Catania

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 252.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 574.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 546.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 140.

*jarīda* where there is a Mālik al-Khabbāz.<sup>47</sup> The other, term, *al-Farrān*, can also be translated as “baker,” but more likely referred to the person who did the baking rather than preparing the dough.<sup>48</sup> I would argue that this term refers to someone who owned or operated an oven, baking the bread for the community. All appearances of this profession are in the 1178 Monreale register, such as Ḥamūd al-Farrān and Muhammad al-Farrān at Corleone,<sup>49</sup> and Maimūn al-Farrān at Calatrasi.<sup>50</sup>

The profession of *al-Ṭaḥḥān*, or miller, also demonstrates the self-sufficiency of the larger communities represented in the *jarā'id*. These millers, seven in all, appear in largest of the registers, those for Cefalù, Catania, Aci Castello, and Monreale. The 1145 *jarīda* for San Salvatore di Cefalù has a single miller, ‘Uthmān al-Ṭaḥḥān.<sup>51</sup> The description of Cefalù by al-Idrisi roughly ten years later described the surrounding towns as having mills.<sup>52</sup> The community of Aci Castello in 1095 also had a single miller, Ibrahīm al-Ṭaḥḥān.<sup>53</sup> The Catania register of 1095 has three millers among its villeins,<sup>54</sup> and the Monreale *jarā'id* have one miller in the 1178 register<sup>55</sup> and another in the 1183 register.<sup>56</sup> Like the Muslims described as *al-Farrān*, the presence of millers among these communities demonstrates that they were large enough to function independently, with their own mills and ovens to process the grain they grew.

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 567.

<sup>48</sup> Werner Diem and Hans-Peter Radenberg, *Dictionary of the Arabic Material of S.D. Goitein's A Mediterranean Society* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1994), 239.

<sup>49</sup> Cusa, 136.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 178.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 475.

<sup>52</sup> Idrisi (Arab.), 24.

<sup>53</sup> Cusa, 546.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 566, 575, 576.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 168.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 265.

The processing and selling of food was not limited to grain, there were also butchers, with the title *al-Jazzāz*, in the *jarā'id*. There are a total of six butchers in the registers, and like the millers they appear in the larger communities. There were three butchers in Catania in 1095, Mafraj al-Jazzāz, Muhammad al-Jazzāz, and al-Šamšām al-Jazzāz.<sup>57</sup> There were two uses of the term in the Monreale register of 1178, an Abū Bakr al-Jazzāz on the estates of Corleone and an 'Alūsh ibn al-Jazzāz at Calatrasi.<sup>58</sup> There was only one butcher among the villeins of the estates in the 1183 Monreale register, a Yūsuf al-Jazzāz living on the estate of Ghar al-Š.r.fi.<sup>59</sup> So there were men in place in these communities to process meats as well as grain. They would most likely have been dealing primarily with sheep, goats, and cattle. Given the prevalence of cattle in the account of al-Idrisi in the interior of the island, they were probably the most common meat sold by Sicilian butchers.<sup>60</sup> In addition, there was one man in the 1178 Monreale register described as *al-Faḥḥām*, or the charcoal merchant.<sup>61</sup> So there was another product that was supplied from within the community at Corleone.

Two other professions indicate the productive capabilities of the Muslim communities represented in the *jarā'id*. The first is that of a carpenter or woodworker, whose title in Arabic is *al-Najjār*. Carpenters appear in a number of registers, seventeen in all. In the 1095 *jarīda* of St. Maria of Palermo there is an 'Abd Allah al-Najjār.<sup>62</sup> Two carpenters appear in the 1095 register of Catania, but through relatives, a son and a

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 567, 573.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 139, 176.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 247. It isn't clear what vowels went into the name of this settlement.

<sup>60</sup> In addition, the title *al-Baqārī* appears in the *jarā'id*, which could be translated as "cowherd."

<sup>61</sup> Cusa, 147.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 2.

mother.<sup>63</sup> Also in 1095, there is another carpenter among the villeins of Aci Castello.<sup>64</sup> Woodworkers were indicated among the estates of San Salvatore di Cefalù in 1145, with a brother and a son of a carpenter among the villeins there.<sup>65</sup> The other carpenters were on the estates of St. Maria di Monreale, with one at Sūq al-Mir'āh and another at Abū Kināna.<sup>66</sup> On the whole, there were a total of five carpenters among the villeins of the 1178 Monreale register, with one at Qabiyāna and two sons of carpenters at Calatrasi.<sup>67</sup> There were also three carpenters or relatives of carpenters on the estates of the 1183 Monreale register.<sup>68</sup> In addition, there were a few men described as sawyers, or *al-Nashār*, in the *jarā'id*. In the 1095 register of Aci Castello there is a man described as the brother of a sawyer.<sup>69</sup> Among the villeins of San Giorgio di Triocula in 1141 there was an 'Ali al-Nashār.<sup>70</sup> And on the estate of Qabiyāna in the 1178 Monreale register there is a Mālik al-Nashār.<sup>71</sup> The production of these carpenters and sawyers would have supplied their communities with woodworkers, supplied perhaps by the areas producing timber described in Chapter Three. Again, they demonstrate the self-sufficiency of Muslim communities beyond the production of agriculture.

The other productive profession that appears with frequency in the *jarā'id* is that of the blacksmith, or *al-Ḥaddād*. The professional designation appears more frequently than any other in the registers save one, a total of twenty times. Again, blacksmiths were

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 571, 582.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 547.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 474.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 153, 155.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. 160, 173, 178

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 250, 257, 270.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 544.

<sup>70</sup> Gálvez, "Noticia sobre los documentos árabes de Sicilia," 171-81.

<sup>71</sup> Cusa, 160.

present in numbers among the larger communities of the *jarā'id*. In the 1095 register for Catania, blacksmiths appears in a number of sections. In the *jarīda* for the men of Catania, there are a total of six blacksmiths<sup>72</sup> and Abū al-Qāsim ibn al-Ḥaddād, the son of a blacksmith.<sup>73</sup> There are references to blacksmiths among the groups in Catania granted to St. Agatha, for example 'Aqāb al-Ḥaddād among the Jews of Catania.<sup>74</sup> In addition, there is an Um Ḥamūd al-Ḥaddād, or the mother of Ḥamūd the blacksmith among the widows of the estate,<sup>75</sup> and a villein described as the orphan of the blacksmith among the blind attached to the estate.<sup>76</sup> The 1178 register for St. Maria di Monreale also includes a number of blacksmiths, a total of five at both Corleone and Calatrasi,<sup>77</sup> and three men described as the son of the blacksmith.<sup>78</sup> Finally, there is one blacksmith among the villeins of the 1183 Monreale register, Yaḥyā al-Ḥaddād on the estate of Dasīsa.<sup>79</sup> It not clear what metalwork these blacksmiths produced, but they likely provided the basic metal tools needed for agricultural production. There is no evidence of their producing weaponry, but given the common use of Muslim troops by Norman kings and the availability of weapons for Muslim rebels at the end of the twelfth century, it is likely they were capable of producing weapons, if not doing so, earlier in the twelfth century. Given the number of blacksmiths among these communities, this seems to be a possibility. Among larger communities of Muslims in Sicily, both in 1095 in the east of the island at Catania and in 1178 and 1183 in the inland estates of the Val di Mazara,

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 566, 567, 569, 572, 575, 576.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 576.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 584.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 582.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 585.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 142, 150, 152, 160,

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 153, 172, 178.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 259.

there were blacksmiths to provide metalwork necessary for the functioning of these communities.

On the whole, there were a number of professions among the Muslims of the *jarā'id* that indicate the self-sufficiency of the communities they were part of. They had their own mills to grind their grain and their own ovens to bake their bread. These professions appear most often among the larger communities of the registers, particularly those of the estates near Corleone, Calatrasi, and Iato in the 1178 and 1183 Monreale *jarā'id*. In addition to those millers and bakers shown in the registers, there is the possibility that there were Muslims of these professions in these estates who simply were not bound to the lord in the same fashion. The carpenters and blacksmiths of these communities also demonstrate that woodwork and metalwork were done by Muslims among them. They would have been dependent on trade for the iron they worked with, but they show that these Muslim communities had the ability to produce goods of their own, and were not based entirely on agricultural production. Indeed, they seem to resemble rural communities in other regions of Europe, villages with their own oven, mill, and smith.

Some of the titles contained in the *jarā'id* also offer evidence of that fact that these Muslim communities were allowed a fair amount of autonomy, with their own leaders and subject to their own law. First of all, some communities in the registers have men identified as the leader, of *qā'id*. The *qā'id* Abū al-Qāsim for example, discussed in Chapter Four, was described by ibn Jubayr as the hereditary leader of all the Muslims of the island. Bearers of this title do not appear in all the communities; as with the

professions discussed previously, it is only in the *jarā'id* of the larger estates. The 1095 register of Aci Castello begins with al-Qā'id Yūsuf ibn al-Qāsim and al-Qā'id 'Uthmān ibn Ḥalaq, presumably the heads of that community.<sup>80</sup> The register of Catania for the same year begins in the same manner, with the name of its leader, al-Qā'id Ḥamūd.<sup>81</sup> The Muslim community of Catania had another man identified as a leader, with the title *al-Ra's*, or head. This individual, Majād al-Ra's, appears in the middle of the register.<sup>82</sup> It would make sense that these communities would retain their leaders, so soon after the conquest, but the practice continued into the twelfth century. Among the villeins of San Salvatore di Cefalù in 1145 there is a al-Qā'id 'Umar, in addition to a man identified as the son of a *qā'id*, 'Ali ibn al-Qā'id Abū Bakr.<sup>83</sup> So there is evidence of self-rule there as well. Among the estates of the 1178 Monreale register, there are two men described as a *qā'id*. The first, al-Qā'id Majāhid, was the leader of the estate of Abū Kināna.<sup>84</sup> The second, al-Qā'id Abū Ghashīra, was the leader of the community of Calatrasi.<sup>85</sup> Finally, among the villeins of Abū Kināna in the 1183 Monreale *jarida* there is the son of the head of what may have been a neighboring community, Laba, Mas'ūd ibn Ra's al-Laba.<sup>86</sup> So in the *jarā'id* there is evidence of the continued self-sufficiency of these communities in terms of the governance. Muslim communities more or less retained the ability to govern themselves, subject to their own laws and leaders, provided they paid the taxes due to their lord or the crown.

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 541.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 564.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 571.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 477, 478.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 157.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 174.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 268.

There is also evidence in the *jarā'id* of the legal structures of the Muslim communities of Norman Sicily. There were a few men identified in the registers as holding professions that relate to the practice of law. The first are those identified as *al-Faqīh*, or experts in the *fiqh*, the science of religious law. These men appear in only two of the *jarā'id*. In the 1095 Catania register there are two men with the title *al-Faqīh*, the first, Shihāb al-Faqīh had his name placed at the beginning of the register.<sup>87</sup> The other, al-Faqīh 'Abd al-Raḥman, is located further into the register.<sup>88</sup> There is no other record until towards the end of the twelfth century, when there was an 'Umar al-Faqīh among the recently added inhabitants of Abū Kināna in 1183.<sup>89</sup> The evidence is sparse, but there were legal experts among the Muslim communities of Sicily in 1095 and in 1183. The actual office of the *Faqīh* is not clear, whether he worked as a legal expert to be consulted or a teacher of religious law, but in either case his presence would indicate the existence of a functioning Islamic legal system.<sup>90</sup> In addition there is one judge, or qadi, among the villeins of the *jarā'id*. In the 1145 register of San Salvatore di Cefalù there is an individual identified as Ḥasan al-Qadi.<sup>91</sup> He was apparently of some stature in the community, as three of his sons, 'Uthmān, Aḥmad, and Ni'ma, were identified as such, *ibn al-Qadi*.<sup>92</sup> But this is the only appearance in the *jarā'id* of a qadi. However, the scarcity of these figures is not surprising, as the religious elite would have been less likely to be a part of communities subject to Christian authority, particularly ones directly

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 564.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 568.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 268.

<sup>90</sup> John Boswell, *The Royal Treasure*, 91.

<sup>91</sup> Cusa, 476.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 475.

under a Christian lord in the *jarā'id*. Many of the religious elite emigrated with the Norman conquest, and those that stayed, such as the elite in Palermo, did not participate in the system that required the payment of the *jizya*.<sup>93</sup> Even given the unlikelihood of legal experts being part of this system, being men of the registers, they did appear occasionally, indicating further the existence of a legal system among these Muslim communities. Outside of the *jarā'id* others do appear, Jeremy Johns has identified a family of qadis in Sicily.<sup>94</sup> In addition, North African jurists ruled on the validity of judges appointed by Christian rulers in Sicily in the twelfth century, indicating that such appointments took place.<sup>95</sup>

Not surprisingly, a great deal of the professions in the *jarā'id* indicate some kind of agricultural production. While some villeins are marked out by specific agricultural professions, I would argue that the majority of the individuals in the *jarā'id* made their living through cultivation, either of wheat or other crops. Of all the names in the registers, only roughly seven percent contain a reference to a profession of some kind. For the rest, it seems most likely that they were farmers or laborers of some kind. So while I will discuss Muslims participating in particular agricultural professions, it is with the assumption that they represent only a fraction of all those Muslims practicing agriculture in Norman Sicily.

One profession that appears in the *jarā'id* is that of *al-Jannān*, or the gardener. The term is related to the noun *al-Jannāt*, meaning gardens, which appears quite often in

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<sup>93</sup> Metcalfe, 181.

<sup>94</sup> Johns, 295.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 294.

the description of Sicily by al-Idrisi, for example in his description of Messina.<sup>96</sup> The other term used by al-Idrisi to refer to a garden or orchard, *al-bustān*, does not have a corresponding professional term in the *jarā'id*, and I would argue that the title *al-Jannān* refers to someone who cultivates land that could be described as a garden or orchards, and thus a farmer of crops other than grain, such as date palms, citrus fruits, or others. The term appears in three of the larger *jarā'id*. In the 1095 register of Aci Castello there are three gardeners among the villeins, Ḥasan al-Jannān, al-Ṭarūsh al-Jannān, and ʿUthmān al-Jannān.<sup>97</sup> Among the villeins of Catania, also in 1095, there was a Muḥraz al-Jannān.<sup>98</sup> Finally, there were three gardeners among the villeins in the 1178 Monreale register, one at Corleone, one at Calatrasi, and one among the Christians of Corleone, Muhammad al-Jannān.<sup>99</sup> All these men participated in a more specialized type of agriculture, other than the cultivation of grain.

There is limited evidence in the *jarā'id* of the production and processing of sugar after the Norman conquest. The evidence comes from the presence of Muslims described as *al-Qandū*, or a processor of raw sugar. Both instances appear in the 1095 *jarā'ida* for Catania, with Muhammad al-Qandū and Ḥasan ibn al-Qandū among its villeins.<sup>100</sup> This is the only reference within the *jarā'id* to the continued cultivation of sugar, although there are other references to sugar production in the twelfth century. Sicilian sugar was

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<sup>96</sup> Idrisi (Arab.), 26.

<sup>97</sup> Cusa, 543, 544, 547.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 574.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 139, 145, 168.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 567, 571.

distributed in North Africa.<sup>101</sup> Sicily was one of the first regions of the western Mediterranean to raise sugar cane, likely introduced by immigrants after the Muslim conquest.<sup>102</sup> There is no evidence, however, other than the descriptions of al-Idrisi of sugar in Norman Sicily, which some have used to argue that its production did not continue in the twelfth century.<sup>103</sup> A land deed from 1161 may also contain a reference to sugar, as it refers to “Persian cane” on estates to the west of Palermo.<sup>104</sup> In terms of sweet agricultural products, there are also men in the registers described as *al-Naḥḥāl*, or the beekeeper. There are two references to beekeepers in the 1178 Monreale register as well, ‘Umar the son of the beekeeper and ‘Abd Allah al-Naḥḥāl, both at Calatrasi.<sup>105</sup> There is evidence of beekeeping in the account of al-Idrisi, in that he mentions towns of the interior known for their honey. However, he only describes honey as a product of the inland towns, and this would correspond to the evidence of the *jarā'id* as well, as the profession of beekeeper only appears among the villeins of Calatrasi, an inland estate.

Given the reputation that Sicily held for the production of leather in the eleventh century, it is fitting that there is also evidence of pastoral agriculture in the *jarā'id*. Among the villeins of Catania in 1095 there is a Ḥasan al-Ma‘‘āz, or the goatherd.<sup>106</sup> There was a shepherd living in Catania as well, Abū al-Dhikr al-Ghannām.<sup>107</sup> There is only one other reference of *al-Ghannām* in the registers, which comes from the son of a shepherd in 1178

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<sup>101</sup> Mohamed Ouerfelli, *Le sucre. Production, commercialisation et usages dans la Méditerranée médiévale*, *The Medieval Mediterranean: Peoples, Economies and Cultures, 400-1500* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 25.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>104</sup> Simonsohn, 420.

<sup>105</sup> Cusa, 172, 176.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 575.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 578.

Monreale register, ‘Abd al-Kāfiḍ ibn al-Ghannām, living at either Jālišū or Rāya.<sup>108</sup>

Among the Christians of Corleone in the 1178 Monreale register, there were two men identified as *al-Khanzariyya*, the swineherd.<sup>109</sup> Beyond those identified as pastoralists, there were men who held professions related to keeping of livestock. First, there were references to the profession of *al-Ḥallāb*, the milkman or seller of milk. Among the residents of Labourzi in 1111 there was a Maimūn ibn al-Ḥallāb.<sup>110</sup> There is another milkman in the 1178 Monreale register among the men of Corleone, identified only the professional title of *al-Ḥallāb*.<sup>111</sup> Second, there is one reference to a tanner, or *al-Dabbāgh*. Among the recent arrivals to the estate of Rāya was an ‘Abd al-Ghaniyy al-Dabbāgh, and his children.<sup>112</sup> Given the fact that Sicily exported a great deal of leather in the eleventh century, it is surprising that there are not more tanners in the *jarā'id*, but it is possible that the processing took place in coastal towns or in communities not described by the registers.

The final agricultural profession is one that understandably appears primarily in the registers of the coastal settlements of Aci Castello and Catania, that of a fisherman, or *al-Ṣayyād*. There are two fishermen in the register of Aci Castello, Abū Bakr al-Ṣayyād and Ḥamdūn al-Ṣayyād.<sup>113</sup> There are two fishermen in the 1095 register of Catania as well.<sup>114</sup> There is another reference to a fisherman in the Catania register, among the widows of the estate there was a woman identified only as *bint Ḥamūd al-Ṣayyād*, or the

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 149

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 345. Alex Metcalfe identifies this as a unique hybridized Sicilian Arabic term, Metcalfe, 169.

<sup>110</sup> Guillou, ed., *Les actes grecs de S. Maria di Messina*, 51-55.

<sup>111</sup> Cusa, 142.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 271.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 545-546

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 568.

daughter of Ḥamūd the fisherman.<sup>115</sup> So among coastal towns in 1095 there is evidence of fishing, which can be added to the other references to the fishing industry of Sicily mentioned by geographers and travelers, such as the tuna fishing the Norman rulers of Sicily had such a proprietary interest in. There is another *al-Ṣayyād*, Makkī al-Ṣayyād on the estates of Calatrasi in the 1178 Monreale register.<sup>116</sup> The term *al-Ṣayyād* can also be translated as “hunter,” but that definition does not appear as a professional term in the other Middle Arabic sources such as the Cairo Geniza.<sup>117</sup> Perhaps he was a recent arrival in Calatrasi from the coastal regions of Sicily. But at Aci Castello and Catania, the presence of fisherman makes more sense. As makes sense for a coastal town, there were also a few sailors among the Muslims of Catania. Abū al-Husayn al-Baḥrī and Muhammad al-Baḥrī appear in the 1095 register of the men of Catania.<sup>118</sup> These are the only appearances of the term *al-Baḥrī*, or the sailor, but it is unlikely they would appear in inland towns. It is possible they gained their title through serving in the royal fleet.<sup>119</sup>

There are a few professions in the *jarā'id* that indicate commercial practices in Norman Sicily. First, there are references to men described as *al-Ḥammār*, the donkey driver or muleteer. There is an ‘Ali al-Ḥammār among the villeins in the Catania register of 1095.<sup>120</sup> In addition, among the villeins of San Giorgio di Triocula in 1141 there was the son of a muleteer, al-Mu’dib ibn al-Ḥammār.<sup>121</sup> Finally, there were two muleteers

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 580.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 175.

<sup>117</sup> Diem and Radenberg, *Dictionary of the Arabic Material*, 237.

<sup>118</sup> Cusa, 575, 578.

<sup>119</sup> Muslim sailors served in the fleets during the war of the Sicilian Vespers in the thirteenth century, see Lawrence V. Mott, "Serving in the Fleet: Crews and Recruitment Issues in the Catalan-Aragonese Fleets During the War of Sicilian Vespers (1282-1302)," *Medieval Encounters* 13, no. 1 (2007).

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 577.

<sup>121</sup> Gálvez, "Noticia sobre los documentos árabes de Sicilia," 171-81.

referred to among the estates of St. Maria di Monreale. In the 1178 Monreale register there was an Abū al-Faḍl al-Ḥammār on the estate of Qaṣṭana.<sup>122</sup> There was also the son of a muleteer among the new villeins of Corleone in the 1183 Monreale register, Yaḥyā ibn al-Ḥammār.<sup>123</sup> These donkey drivers likely made their living moving goods within Sicily, which indicates their participation in regional trade networks. Perhaps they were part of the regional trade and caravans within Sicily described by al-Idrisi. In addition to muleteers, there were a few Muslims described as *al-Ḥammāl*, or the porter. All these individuals appear in *jarā'id* from 1095, first an 'Alī al-Ḥammāl among the villeins bound to the cathedral church of St. Maria in Palermo.<sup>124</sup> There are three further references to porters in the 1095 Catania register, two sons of porters and 'Umar al-Ḥammāl.<sup>125</sup> These men also likely made their living through the moving of goods. Given the need to move goods from the interior to coastal regions for sale, it is likely that these men were part of the regional trade network that tied these regions together. Finally, also in the 1095 Catania register, there is an Abū al-Faḍl al-Simsār.<sup>126</sup> His title, *al-Simsār*, means the agent or the broker. This profession appears only once in the *jarā'id*, and in the period soon after the Norman conquest, but it is evidence of broader commercial professions in the registers. Given the role that brokers played in the assistance of merchant activities,<sup>127</sup> this is further evidence of the extensive commercial infrastructure of Norman Sicily. It is difficult to determine how extensive such brokers

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<sup>122</sup> Cusa, 152.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 264.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 568, 574, 577.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 572.

<sup>127</sup> Kathryn Reyerson, *The Art of the Deal: Intermediaries of Trade in Medieval Montpellier*, *The Medieval Mediterranean: Peoples, Economies and Cultures, 400-1453* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 45.

were, but given they would have been more likely to live in coastal towns rather than the estates of the *jarā'id*, there is the possibility there were more Muslim brokers in Norman Sicily. Beyond those seller and moving goods, there were Muslims who acted as middlemen in commercial practices, like those discussed in Chapter Four.

A few professions in the *jarā'id* dealt with reading and writing. In Catania in 1095 there was a Muhammad al-Kutubī.<sup>128</sup> The term, *al-Kutubī*, could be interpreted in a number of ways, although primarily it would mean the seller of books. But in middle Arabic, it could also be read as the bearer of letters or a courier.<sup>129</sup> But in any way, he dealt with written materials in some fashion. There are only three references to scribes, designated by the title *al-Kātib*, in the *jarā'id*. The first, Abū al-Faraḥ al-Kātib is in the 1095 Aci Castello register.<sup>130</sup> There is the son of a scribe in the Catania register of 1095, Abū al-Futūḥ ibn al-Kātib.<sup>131</sup> As we have seen before, there is a lag between these registers and the next ones of similar size, the 1178 and 1183 registers of Monreale. In the 1178 Monreale register there is another scribe, al-Kātib ‘Abd Allah.<sup>132</sup> It is not surprising that there were so few scribes in the *jarā'id*, as those working as such would have been more likely to live in the more cosmopolitan coastal regions and to not have been bound to an estate.

There were also Muslims engaged in stonework in Norman Sicily. In 1095 in Catania there was a stone mason, or *al-Ḥajjār*, ‘Abd al-Salām al-Ḥajjār.<sup>133</sup> In the same

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<sup>128</sup> Cusa, 566.

<sup>129</sup> Diem and Radenberg, *Dictionary of the Arabic Material*, 239.

<sup>130</sup> Cusa, 543.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 572.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 577.

register there was also a man identified as *al-Qaṭā'*, which could be translated as the cutter of either stone or wood.<sup>134</sup> This evidence is limited to Catania in the late eleventh century, but at least in that place there appears to have been cutting and working of stone.

Beyond production, there were also Muslims who made their living through performance and entertainment. There were poets at the court of the Norman kings, such as al-Qalanisi, who gained the patronage of powerful figures in Norman Sicily. At Aci Castello in 1095 there was a resident named 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Shā'ir.<sup>135</sup> That title, *al-Shā'ir*, literally means "one with insight," but in common designation it refers to a poet or a popular storyteller. There was another such storyteller among the villeins of San Salvatore di Cefalù in 1145, 'Atūq al-Shā'ir.<sup>136</sup> So in 1095 and 1145, among the larger communities of Aci Castello and Cefalù there were men who made their living through storytelling, a popular diversion even today in the Arabic-speaking world. There was also a man identified as a flute player, or *al-Zāmir*, in the 1095 Catania *jarīda*, 'Abd al-Khāliq al-Zāmir.<sup>137</sup> So there was at least one musician among the villeins of the *jarā'id*, although it is not clear he would have made his living in that fashion. But there were at least a few Muslims who performed for crowds in Norman Sicily.

Other professions held by Sicilian Muslims produced goods for daily use. There were two references to saddle makers in the *jarā'id*, a son of saddle maker in Catania in 1095 and a Muhammad al-Sarrāj among the men of Corleone in the 1178 Monreale

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 568.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 542.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 476.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 577.

register.<sup>138</sup> Also among the men of Corleone was a ropemaker, or *al-Fattāl*, Muhammad al-Fattāl.<sup>139</sup> There were three references to cobblers among the villeins of St. Maria di Monreale as well. There as a son of a cobbler, *ibn al-Kharrāz* at Corleone and a Riḍwān al-Kharrāz also there.<sup>140</sup> Abū al-Said al-Kharrāz, another cobbler, appears as a resident of (Abd al-Raḥman?) al-Qumayt in the 1183 Monreale register.<sup>141</sup> There is also a reference to the son of a glazier, *al-Zajjāj*, in the same register in 1183 living at either al-Jurt or al-Khurāsānī.<sup>142</sup> There were also a few other scattered professions in the *jarā'id*. At Catania in 1095 there was a man who was described as *al-'Aṭṭār*, which means either the druggist or the seller of perfume.<sup>143</sup>

There is one metal smith, other than the blacksmiths mentioned earlier, who appears in the *jarā'id*. Among the Jews granted to the bishop of Catania in 1095 was an Ibrahīm al-Ṣaffār, or Ibrahīm the brass worker.<sup>144</sup> There are no other references to fine metal workers in the registers. In the records of the Cairo Geniza, however, there is the mention of a goldsmith, or *al-Ṣā'igh*, who lived in Palermo in 1063.<sup>145</sup> It is difficult to extrapolate too much from this information, but if there were fine metal working done in Norman Sicily, perhaps it was a profession dominated by the Jews.

The most common professional designations in the *jarā'id* deal in some way with the production of textiles, and make up roughly forty percent of all the professions referenced in the registers, showing the importance of textiles for economy and

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 137, 572.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 141, 145.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 253.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 261.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 573.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 584.

<sup>145</sup> Simonsohn, 322.

commerce of Sicily. A few professions deal peripherally with the textiles, for example an ‘Uthmān al-Jazzāz among the residents of Corleone in the 1178 Monreale register, *al-Jazzāz* being the term for a shearer of wool.<sup>146</sup> There was another villein who dealt with wool on the estates of San Salvatore di Cefalù in 1145. In Cefalù there was a man, Yūsuf, described as *al-Labbād*, or the maker of felt.<sup>147</sup> These are the only specific references, however, to the production of wool. There were also a number of Muslims described as *al-Ḥaṣṣār*, or the mat weaver, although it is unclear what textile these mats were made of. There a mat weaver scattered throughout the larger *jarā'id*, with two in the 1095 Catania register, a Mālik al-Ḥaṣṣār and the sister of a mat weaver in the register of widows.<sup>148</sup> There were also a number of mat weavers among the two registers for the estates for St. Maria di Monreale. There are two men titled *al-Ḥaṣṣār* in the 1178 Monreale register, one among the men of Corleone and one at Maghanūja.<sup>149</sup> In the 1183 Monreale register there are four mat weavers, one at Ghār al-S.r.fī, one at Jaḥīna, one at Qabiyāna, and one at Malbīt.<sup>150</sup> So there were a number of Muslims involved in these textile professions.

There were also a number of references in the *jarā'id* to the title *al-Khayyāt*, or the tailor. This profession again appears in the larger registers, with an ‘Abd al-Raḥman al-Khayyāt and an ‘Abd al-Allah al-Khayyāt in the 1095 Catania register.<sup>151</sup> There is also the relative of a tailor among the widows of Catania in 1095.<sup>152</sup> Tailors appear

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<sup>146</sup> Cusa, 137.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 475.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 576, 580.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 149, 162.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 247, 250, 265, 278.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 572, 573.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 582.

frequently in the *jarā'id* of Monreale, a total of thirteen times. In the 1178 Monreale register there are three tailors, one each at Sūq al-Mir'āh, Maghanūja, and Calatrasi.<sup>153</sup> In the 1183 Monreale register there are quite a few references to tailors, a total of ten throughout the *jarīda*.<sup>154</sup> It is not clear what role these tailors played, whether they were producing clothes for use within the island or for export. Given that the Mediterranean textile trade most often dealt with the transportation of cloth rather than clothes, it would be much more likely that they were producing for either local or regional sale. But it still shows that Muslim communities could be productive centers, and that there was a market for their products either in neighboring communities or elsewhere on the island. The number of tailors in the inland estates of St. Maria di Monreale in 1178 and 1183 indicates that even in the late twelfth century productive centers must have been producing finished cloth in some fashion. It is also possible that Sicilian tailors were working with finished cloth to produce garments to some extent, possibly for trade within Sicily. And as the next two textile professions in the *jarā'id* demonstrate, Sicily was probably the source of that cloth as well.

First, there are a total of nineteen references in the *jarā'id* to the profession of *al-Qaṭṭān*. The term *al-Qaṭṭān* can be translated two ways, as either a maker of cotton or a trader of cotton.<sup>155</sup> Either way, its presence in the registers indicates a cotton industry among the Muslim communities of Norman Sicily. There a number of men designated *al-Qaṭṭān* in the 1095 Catania register, a total of four.<sup>156</sup> In addition, there is a reference

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 155, 164, 178.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 247, 251, 254, 261, 263, 265, 276, 284, 285.

<sup>155</sup> Diem and Radenberg, *Dictionary of the Arabic Material*, 239.

<sup>156</sup> Cusa, 567, 572, 573.

to an *al-Qaṭṭān* among the widows of Catania.<sup>157</sup> As with tailors, cotton makers and merchants abound in the Monreale *jarā'id*. There are five in the 1178 Monreale register, spread among the estates of Corleone, Sūq al-Mir'āh, and Calatrasi.<sup>158</sup> In the 1183 Monreale register, there are nine references to the profession *al-Qaṭṭān*, in Ghār al-S.r.fī, Dasīsa, Zarqūn, Batallaro, Rāya, Rabanūsha, and Qurūbnish al-Sufī.<sup>159</sup> Muslims involved in the cotton industry appear in numbers in the larger and more diverse *jarā'id*, at the end of the eleventh century and in the late twelfth century and on the eastern coast of the island and in the mountainous Val di Mazara. Their presence indicates the existence of the production of cotton, either raw cotton or finished cotton cloth, by Muslims in Norman Sicily. This aspect of the Sicilian textile industry will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Six.

The most common professional designation by far, however, is that of a silk worker, *al-Ḥarīrī*. This profession appears fifty-seven times in the *jarā'id*, making up roughly twenty-two percent of all of the professions that appear in the registers. In the Cairo Geniza *al-Ḥarīrī* refers to the workers who handled cocoons and raw silk, but given the lack of other terms in the *jarā'id* it could be interpreted in that context as a general term for silk workers.<sup>160</sup> The term *al-Ḥarīrī* appears four times in the 1095 register of Aci Castello,<sup>161</sup> and ten times in the register for Catania in the same year.<sup>162</sup> There are also two relatives of silk workers among the widows of Catania, the mother of

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<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 580

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 137, 138, 155, 178.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 246, 253, 259, 260, 271, 277, 284.

<sup>160</sup> S.D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society, Vol. 1: Economic Foundations*, 104.

<sup>161</sup> Cusa, 542, 543, 544, 545.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 567, 572, 573, 575, 578.

Yūsuf al-Ḥarīrī and the mother of ‘Abd Allah al-Ḥarīrī,<sup>163</sup> and two further silk workers among the slaves of bishop of Catania.<sup>164</sup> There were three silk workers among the villeins of San Giorgio di Triocula in 1141,<sup>165</sup> and one, ‘Ali al-Ḥarīrī, on the estates of San Salvatore di Cefalù in 1145.<sup>166</sup> In the *jarā'id* for the estates of St. Maria di Monreale there were a total of thirty-five uses of the term *al-Ḥarīrī*, fourteen in the 1178 Monreale register<sup>167</sup> and twenty-one in the 1183 Monreale register.<sup>168</sup> Silk workers are scattered throughout the *jarā'id*, in estates in the east, south, and west of the island and appearing in registers throughout the twelfth century in 1095, 1141, 1145, 1178, and 1183. The participation of Muslims in the silk industry in Norman Sicily will also be discussed in more detail in Chapter Six, but the evidence of the *jarā'id* shows that it was likely the most common profession for Muslims, outside of agriculture.

There is little evidence of the economic activities for Muslim women in Norman Sicily. In the *jarā'id* and other documents of practice, they would have been legally obscured by a husband or other living male relatives. As was the case in the other regions of Europe, it seems safe to assume that women participated in the trade of their family, which was likely run out of the household. In the registers of the widows of Aci Castello and Catania made in 1095, there is limited evidence of the economic roles played by Muslim women. Two professions appear only in these register. The first, *al-Ghassāla*, or the washerwoman, is applied to two women in the 1095 Catania register of

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 582.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 583.

<sup>165</sup> Gálvez, "Noticia sobre los documentos árabes de Sicilia," 171-81.

<sup>166</sup> Cusa, 478.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 137, 145, 148, 152, 155, 156, 159, 160, 171, 174, 175, 178.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., 251, 254, 256, 258, 262, 266, 269, 271, 272, 273, 275, 277, 279, 282, 285.

widows.<sup>169</sup> The second, *al-Bayyā‘a*, is translated as a seller of food stuffs. There was a woman described only as *al-Bayyā‘a* in Catania in 1095,<sup>170</sup> and a widow named al-‘Ajūr al-Bayyā‘a in the 1095 register of the widows of Aci Castello.<sup>171</sup> This is by no means a comprehensive picture of the trades practiced by Muslim women in Sicily, as we only have evidence of the professions of women who had been widowed. As it is, it is not clear whether these were professions that women would practice while married or were picked up when no longer able to participate in what had been the business of the household. There does emerge a limited view of how Muslim women fit into the economy of Norman Sicily. They do appear to have stood in as the head of the household in the case of the *jarā‘id*, as they also appear intermittently in other registers. As they moved to that status while the death of their husband, it is possible the change to that legal status allowed them to participate more directly in Sicilian commerce, taking over the household business. There is no direct evidence of this phenomenon in Sicily, however. Evidence for the rest of the Islamic world is sparse, but this was often the case in other Christian regions of the Mediterranean.

One truncation the *jarā‘id* demonstrate is the geographical scope of Muslim settlement in Norman Sicily. While the survival of these registers owes as much to chance as anything, and it is not clear how many were produced that have subsequently been lost, the number of the *jarā‘id* that detail communities in the west of the island is telling. Soon after the conquest, in 1095, there were sizable Muslim communities on the east coast of the island in Aci Castello and Catania. While these registers were renewed

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 580.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 581.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 548.

in 1145, the renewals provide no information about those communities at that point, which likely still exist but may have shrunk in size. Likewise, after the 1111 *jarīda* for Labourzi, which was near Messina, there are no *jarā'id* for the eastern half of Sicily. The 1141 *jarīda* for San Giorgio di Triocula records the residents of estates near the southern coast of Sicily, but on the southwest coast near Agrigento. All other *jarā'id* record Muslim communities in the Val di Mazara. I would argue that the *jarā'id* offer further evidence of the concentration of the Muslim communities of the west over the course of the twelfth century. Muslims remained in the other regions of Sicily, as is demonstrated by the accounts of the late twelfth-century travelers Benjamin of Tudela and ibn Jubayr, but by the time of the Monreale *jarā'id* the Muslims of Sicily had become quite concentrated in the Val di Mazara, and in inland communities such as Corleone, Calatrasi, and Iato.

When taken as a whole, the *jarā'id* demonstrate a considerable diversity in the economic roles played by the Muslims of Norman Sicily, even within their limited sampling. Muslims were primarily engaged in agriculture and the textile industry, but with many roles within those fields. In addition, many were involved in trades necessary for their community, such as millers and blacksmiths, and in regional trade, such as donkey drivers. This diversity does not appear to have declined over the course of the twelfth century. In the two largest samplings, the 1095 registers of Aci Castello and Catania and the 1178 and 1183 registers of St. Maria di Monreale, contain a roughly equal variety of professions. There is a truncation in the variety of profession of the mid-twelfth century, but I would argue that has more to do with the size of the registers than

any economic shift that took place. When one is able to look at the sizable records of the Monreale *jarā'id*, the earlier economic diversity is still apparent. And it was not limited to sizable settlements, as the Monreale registers detail a number of small estates in addition to the larger communities of Corleone and Calatrasi. The surviving evidence indicates that although the Muslim communities were primarily agricultural, they still show considerable variation in the professions of their inhabitants. And while textile industries contain the greatest number of productive professions in the *jarā'id*, there were other kinds of production as well. Nor does there seem to have been too much of a difference between the communities of the inland and the coast. There were some professions, such as fishermen, which appear only in registers of coastal areas but the economic roles for those living on the estates appear to have been similar. On the whole, they paint a vibrant picture of the economic life of the Muslims of Norman Sicily.

What is more, the *jarā'id* demonstrate the valuable economic roles that Muslims played in Norman Sicily, from the period directly after the conquest up to the late twelfth century. They played important roles in the economy of the island, first of all in the commercial life of the island, transporting and selling goods. But the registers demonstrate that Sicilian Muslims also played a very important productive role. They were the primary cultivators in the west of the island until 1183, and were involved in agriculture all over the island. In addition, they were an important part of the textile industry of Sicily, working in the production of cotton and silk again up until at least 1183 and probably after. But at that point, it does appear that while they were economic actors, they had become limited to the traditionally Muslim Val di Mazara. Still, the

*jarā'id* also demonstrate the active part Muslims played in the economy of Norman Sicily, up to the late twelfth century.

## **Chapter Six: Muslims in Sicilian Industry and Commerce**

Sicily has had an important role in the commerce of the medieval Mediterranean. Given its location in the center of the sea, in close proximity to both Europe and North Africa, and near the shipping lanes that connected the east and west ends of the Mediterranean, that commercial importance makes sense. It was a logical stopping place for all kinds of movement across the Mediterranean, and acted in that role. Given its position, it would follow that the rulers of Sicily would use that strategic location to exert control over the shipping passing by the island. In the eleventh century, Sicily and Tunisia were the main point of contact, commercial and otherwise, between the Latin and Islamic worlds.<sup>1</sup> But given that Sicily was so often under the control of conquerors from outside, from the times of the Greeks and Romans on, it rarely had a controlling role in the ancient and medieval commercial worlds. This remained the case in Norman Sicily, despite it being a center of power for the Regno. The Norman kings exercised some controls, for example over the circulation of coinage and a few industries in particular, but for the most part the merchants, often of other places, were the driving force in the commerce of the island. But despite a lack of involvement in commercial enterprises, the Norman rulers of Sicily enjoyed a reputation in the twelfth century of intense wealth. The sources of that wealth, and the quality that attracted foreign merchants to Sicily in the first place, were the products of Sicily. This chapter will examine the products of Sicily, many of them agricultural, and how they were part of a Mediterranean network of

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<sup>1</sup> David Abulafia, "Trade and Crusade, 1050-1250," in *Cross Cultural Convergences in the Crusader Period, Essays Presented to Aryeh Grabois on his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Michael Goodrich, Sophia Menache, and Sylvia Schein (New York: Peter Long, 1995), 6.

exchange. As with previous chapters, the story will be one of Muslim participation in this production and exchange at the end of the eleventh century, and the gradual disappearance of Muslims over the course of the twelfth century as they emigrated or were replaced by Latin Christian immigrants. And as with other aspects of Muslim participation in Norman Sicilian society, this disappearance was not an orderly process. Muslims remained key participants in certain industries into the second half of the twelfth century.

A key source of Sicilian wealth, from the time of its role as a bread basket for the Roman Empire, was its copious agricultural production, of grain in particular. Even as its importance in supplying the empire with grain declined as the provinces of Spain, Egypt, and Africa were added, it remained a considerable producer as the site of the emperors', and later the popes', estates.<sup>2</sup> Into the twelfth century, the products of its soil remained the primary source of the island's wealth.<sup>3</sup> As we saw in Chapter Three, in the 1150s al-Idrisi described a multitude of sites of agricultural production throughout Sicily. Even given his possible interest in exaggerating the wealth of the land of his patron, Roger II, he paints a picture of a highly productive landscape that matches other references to Sicily in this period. What is more, he described a number of towns as having markets for agricultural goods. For example, the town of Taormina had good farms and fertile land in its vicinity and exported copious agricultural products. These goods seem to have travelled primarily by caravan to Messina, where they were either distributed within the

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<sup>2</sup> M.I. Finley, *Ancient Sicily*, Rev. ed. (Totowa: Rowman and Littlefield, 1979), 153-54.

<sup>3</sup> David Abulafia, "The Crown and the Economy": 4.

island or shipped elsewhere in the Mediterranean.<sup>4</sup> The town of Scicli also abounded with goods and produce, and had good farms and mills near it. Despite its location slightly inland, ships travelled to its port there for its goods from a number of regions, such as Calabria, Ifriqiyya and Malta.<sup>5</sup> Agrigento was another site for trade in agricultural products. Al-Idrisi described it as a place where merchants came from all regions, where ships could come when necessary and take on large cargos. He also noted that it was known for its gardens and agricultural products.<sup>6</sup> Finally, he described the fort of Catalubo, surrounded by fields, which was four miles from a port. This port was frequented by ships loaded with produce, including most cereals.<sup>7</sup> Sicily remained an important producer of agricultural products in the middle of the twelfth century.

The grain trade seems to have been especially prominent between Sicily and North Africa. The Maghrib was a destination for the export of wheat and other fruits for the merchants of the Cairo Geniza.<sup>8</sup> While no documents of practice survive that detail this trade, at least beyond the eleventh century, references are made to it in a number of sources that indicate it remained an important commercial network into the twelfth century. There was, in fact, a great deal of contact between Sicily and North Africa, contact that survived the transition from Muslim to Norman rule. Even in the eleventh century, the pope and North African emirs were in contact regarding the Christian community there. In early June 1076 Pope Gregory VII wrote to Servandus, his

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<sup>4</sup> Idrisi (Arab.), 27.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 31-32.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>8</sup> Moshe Gil, "Sicily 827-1072. In Light of the Geniza Documents and Parallel Sources," in *Italia Judaica, gli ebrei in Sicilia sino all'espulsione de 1492: Atti del convegno internazionale Palermo, 15-19 giugno 1992* (Rome: Ministero per i beni culturali e ambientali, Ufficio centrale per i beni archivistici : Vendita, Istituto poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato-Libreria dello Stato, 1995), 135.

appointment as Archbishop of Bougie, about how through example and good works the Muslims there might be led to Christianity.<sup>9</sup> Later that year, Gregory VII sent a letter to al-Nāṣir, the Hammadid emir, asking that he allow Servandus to be ordained as archbishop. Gregory VII adopted a conciliatory tone in the letter, acknowledging that both he and al-Nāṣir worshipped the same God.<sup>10</sup> This diplomatic contact occurred between the Norman rulers of Sicily and North African emirs as well, albeit in a more direct form as the counts and kings of Sicily often engaged in wars of conquest in North Africa, even establishing a toehold there in the mid-twelfth century in the town of Mahdiyya. But even despite the conflict that took place between Sicily and North Africa, all indications point to the survival of the grain trade between the two regions.

Writing around 1200, the Muslim historian ibn al-Athīr noted the importance of the grain trade between the two regions. He told a story of Count Roger I rejecting a request to join fellow Christians in a campaign against Muslims, probably around 1087, because if they were successful in conquering North Africa then the control over the trade in foodstuffs will belong to them rather than the rulers of Sicily.<sup>11</sup> In 1134, Roger II allowed the monastery of San Salvatore in Messina to export grain to North Africa.<sup>12</sup> He also noted the importance of the grain trade later in the twelfth century, when in 1141/2 King Roger II sent a fleet against Ifriqiyya, betraying a truce. The emir al-Ḥasan “later made contact with him and renewed the truce for the sake of transporting grain from

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<sup>9</sup> Gregory VII, *The register of Pope Gregory VII, 1073-1085 : an English translation*, trans. H.E.J. Cowdrey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 203-04.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 204-05.

<sup>11</sup> Amari, *Biblioteca Arabo-Sicula* (Arab.), 268. Abulafia argues the campaign referenced was a joint Pisan and Genoese assault against Mahdiyya in 1087, Abulafia, *Crown and Economy*, 5. .

<sup>12</sup> Erich Caspar, *Roger II (1101-1154) und die Gründung der Normannisch-Sicilischen Monarchie* (Innsbruck: Verlag der Wagner'schien Universitäts-Buchhandlung, 1904), 522-23. Noted in Abulafia, "The Crown and the Economy," 5.

Sicily to Ifriqiyya, because there was a serious famine there and high mortality.”<sup>13</sup> The grain trade with Sicily appears to have been quite important for North Africa, particularly in times of trouble. Roger II also jealously guarded the grain trade with North Africa. This led the biographer al-Maqrīzī to refer to him with the nickname Abū Tillīs, or “old grain sack,” because of his interest.<sup>14</sup> A letter from 10 August 1061, written by Labrāt ibn Moses ibn Sughmār, noted this connection. Ibn Moses claimed that the conflict in Sicily, and the actions of the Normans there, resulted in “high prices here, because this country is dependent on (Sicily) for food.”<sup>15</sup> Other sources from North Africa support this position. Muslim jurists in North Africa ruled on trade and travel between there and Sicily in the twelfth century. The Imam al-Māzarī prohibited this trade, which as Sarah David-Secord has rightly pointed out, indicates that such trade was taking place.<sup>16</sup> The grain trade between Sicily and North Africa appears to have remained active into the twelfth century. The Jewish traveler Benjamin of Tudela supported this claim. From his perspective, the main export of Sicily was wheat, which went to North Africa. He too noted the positive effect of conflict in North Africa on the Sicilian grain trade: “In times of commotion in North Africa, when Moslems fight among themselves or when Moslem lands are set upon by Berbers or by pagan tribes, the consequent food shortages there swell Sicily’s coffers with the tax on grain exports.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Ibn al-Athīr, *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athīr*, 365.

<sup>14</sup> Johns, 326-8.

<sup>15</sup> Simonsohn, 304.

<sup>16</sup> Sarah Davis-Secord, "Muslims in Norman Sicily: The Evidence of Imām al-Māzarī's Fatwās," *Mediterranean Studies* 16 (2007): 59.

<sup>17</sup> Tudela, 278.

The question then is who was involved in the sale and transport of this grain. The crown of Sicily could possibly have invoked control over this trade, for example imposing embargos during times of famine, but the first recorded instance of this occurred under Tancred in 1191.<sup>18</sup> For the most part the rulers of Sicily appear not to have been directly involved in the transport of grain from Sicily, rather taxing the grain that others took from the island. Sicilian Christians must have been involved with the sale of grain within Sicily, as it was produced on estates controlled by Christians, but there is no evidence that they were participants in the transport of it to North Africa. Christian merchants from other regions, such as the Genoese, who were so active in other arenas of Sicilian trade, were part of the grain trade with Ifriqiyya in the twelfth century. But Muslims and Jews were likely also the merchants involved in the transport of grain between Sicily and North Africa. From the evidence of the Cairo Geniza, it appears that Jewish merchants dealt with trade in grain, but not that it was of primary importance. Other products, such as flax and oil, appear much more frequently in the letters of these Jewish merchants.

What then of the Muslim participation in the grain trade? To begin with, Sicilian Muslims were active participants in the grain trade on a basic level, as they worked so many of the estates responsible for the wealth of Sicily. Some of this grain was likely consumed locally, but much of it must have been part of the Sicily's copious grain exports. One need only look at the *jarā'id* discussed in Chapter Five to see the vast number of Muslim households that were a part of this commercial network in that way. But it also seems likely that Muslim merchants were responsible for the transport of grain

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<sup>18</sup> Abulafia, "The Crown and the Economy," 5.

out of Sicily to North Africa. This will be discussed in more detail in the context of the textile trade, but the decline of Sicilian and North African trade in the Geniza records does not necessarily correspond to a decline of all trade in twelfth century, especially as trade was increasing in general in the Mediterranean. As for the participation of Muslim merchants, again no documents of practice survive that document this trade.

Nonetheless, there are indications that they were participants in this trade. Al-Idrisi discusses merchants from all regions travelling to Sicily for agricultural products, but specifically refers to ships coming from Ifriqiyya, in addition to Calabria and Malta, travelling to Scicli for its goods and produce.<sup>19</sup> They may have been traveling from Norman-controlled towns, but likely came from a variety of places in North Africa. In addition, the fatwas of al-Māzarī specifically oppose Muslim merchants travelling to Sicily to procure grain, thus providing Christians with money to fund war against Muslims.<sup>20</sup> Fatwas would have been unnecessary if such traffic were not on-going. This is also a strong indication that Muslim merchants were travelling from North Africa in order to purchase Sicilian grain. Muslims appear to have been strongly involved in this commercial network, providing the agricultural labor to produce the grain, merchants to transport it to North Africa, and the market for the purchase of grain once it arrived in Ifriqiyya. This is not to say that Muslims and Jews controlled the Ifriqiyyan grain trade, only that they remained active in it, as they had been in the eleventh century.

There were also a number of agricultural techniques, and crops, introduced during the Muslim rule of Sicily that had a number of lasting implications for the island. In

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<sup>19</sup> Idrisi (Arab.), 30.

<sup>20</sup> Davis-Secord, "Muslims in Norman Sicily," 59-60,64.

addition to grain, Sicily had a climate favorable to the cultivation of a number of crops common in the Islamic World, such as citrus fruits, date-palms, and sugar cane.<sup>21</sup> Benjamin of Tudela noted the production of lemons, oranges, almonds, and melons in 1173.<sup>22</sup> In addition, a deed for land sold by William I west of Palermo to Judah ibn Faḍlūn ibn Ṣalāh in 1161 described the property containing trees, vineyards, and Persian cane.<sup>23</sup> Workers skilled in sugar refining were also moved from Syria to Sicily under the Normans.<sup>24</sup> The production of these crops is represented, I would argue, in the gardens and orchards described in the geography of al-Idrisi. It seems likely that these would be the source of the citrus fruits, almonds, and other products. In addition, a peasant described as *al-Jannān*, or the gardener, in the *jarā'id* could have been a cultivator of these products. So Muslims appear to have been participants in these more specialized types of agricultural production. And in addition to fruit and grain, Norman Sicily produced other agricultural products, such as sugar.<sup>25</sup> Again, the presence of peasants described as sugar merchants in the *jarā'id* indicates the existence of a sugar industry of some kind into the twelfth century. There were also many agricultural products used in the textile industry, such as cotton, mulberry trees, indigo, and henna, which will be discussed later in the chapter.

There was a shift away from these patterns of agricultural production with the general shift in the demography of the island that took place during the twelfth century.

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<sup>21</sup> Jean-Marie Martin, "Settlement and the Agrarian Economy," in *The Society of Norman Italy*, ed. Graham Loud and Alex Metcalfe, *The Medieval Mediterranean, Peoples, Economies and Cultures 400-1500*, 38 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 19-20.

<sup>22</sup> Tudela, 278.

<sup>23</sup> Simonsohn, 420.

<sup>24</sup> Maureen Fennell Mazzaoui, *The Italian Cotton Industry in the Later Middle Ages, 1100-1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 66.

<sup>25</sup> David Abulafia, *The Two Italies*, 38.

As in other realms of Sicilian life, the influx of Latin Christian immigrants pushed Muslims out of the important roles they had previously held. Latin Christian peasants were able to take the place of Muslims for certain types of cultivation, particularly that of grain. But crops that required more specialized skills, such as date-palms and sugar, were abandoned after the disappearance of Muslims from Sicily.<sup>26</sup> The emphasis on the production of grain by Christian landlords led to the decline of other crops as well, such as those involved in the production of textiles.<sup>27</sup> The loss of this commercial role in cultivation affected the status of Muslims within Sicily. As for other roles that Muslims held, once they were no longer necessary for the functioning of the economy and society of Norman Sicily, their coexistence with their Christian neighbors began to deteriorate. With Latin Christian peasants available to work the land, the rural Muslim population of Sicily was less of a necessity. Again, this process likely contributed to the marginalization of Muslims in Sicily, their concentration of the highlands of the west of the island, and their eventual rebellion.

Muslims were also participants, often unwillingly, in another commercial network in the medieval Mediterranean, that of the slave trade. The campaigns of the Normans in the Mediterranean often ended in the taking of Muslim captives who were held or sold as slaves. While Muslim populations were often allowed to surrender and retain their freedom, the enslavement of captives took place during the first conquests of the Normans in Sicily. According to Amatus of Montecassino, when the forces of the de

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<sup>26</sup> Martin, "Settlement and the Agrarian Economy," 20.

<sup>27</sup> David Abulafia, "Industrial Products: the Middle Ages," in *Prodotti e tecniche d'oltremare nelle economie europee secc. XIII-XVIII: atti della ventinovesima settimana di studi, [Prato] 14-19 aprile 1997*, ed. Simonetta Cavaciocchi (Florence: Istituto internazionale di storia economica F. Datini, 1998), 340.

Hautevilles were besieging the city of Palermo, they lured the starving inhabitants out with loaves of bread they had baked. They continued to offer the bread, until “[o]n the third day they put it a little farther out, and when the pagans came outside, they were all captured and kept as slaves or sold to faraway places.”<sup>28</sup> Some of these slaves seem to have been kept as the property of the count of Sicily. Roger I later granted to the monastery of Montecassino, along with other goods such as mules, “Saracens, who were his slaves.”<sup>29</sup> Other landlords appear to have kept slaves within Sicily as well in the period after the conquest. In the 1095 *jarīda* for Catania one section refers to the slaves of the church. The practice of taking captives as slaves continued into the twelfth century with the Norman campaigns in Ifriqiyya. According to Ibn al-Athīr, when the city of Brashk was captured in 1144/5, women were enslaved, a process which also took place after the taking of the city of Kerkenna in 1145/6.<sup>30</sup> In the next year, when Roger II’s fleet captured the city of Tripoli, the Franks again took the women and property of the town.<sup>31</sup> Muslims were brought into Sicily as captives to be sold as slaves.

Some of these Muslims appear to have moved beyond Sicily, brought to Genoa by merchants to be sold into slavery. In the 1190 notarial collection of Oberto, there are three records of the sale of slaves in Genoa. On 11 February 1190 Puncius Michael de Niça sold Rubaldus de Molo “three Saracens, namely Alium, Bocherium, and Balcase.”<sup>32</sup> Puncius seems to have been in the Genoese traffic in slaves. On the next day, 12

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<sup>28</sup> Amatus of Montecassino, *Storia de' Normanni*, VI.17.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, VIII.36.

<sup>30</sup> al-Athīr, *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athīr*, 375-78.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 380.

<sup>32</sup> Chiaudano and Della Rocca, eds., *Oberto Scriba de Mercato*, 49.

February 1190, he sold to Nicola Mallono another Muslim slave named Alium.<sup>33</sup> And the day after that, 13 February 1190, he dealt with Rubaldus de Molo again, selling him a Muslim slave named “Abderamen.”<sup>34</sup> Given the accounts of Muslim captives being taken by the Norman rulers of Sicily, and the commercial connections between Sicily and Genoa, it seems likely that Sicily was the source of these slaves. Perhaps they were taken captive in the conflict that broke out after the death of William II. It is possible that Genoa served as a market for Muslim slaves before 1190 as well, and that the records of those sales simply have not survived, either because they took place in Sicily or did not happen to find their way into the surviving notarial registers. But Christian merchants seem to have been involved in the slave trade, and the Christian rulers of Sicily in enslaving Muslims.

The reference is only passing, but there is an indication that the Muslims of Sicily may have participated in this commercial network also. In his description of the Norman conquest of the town of Brashk in North Africa in 1144/5, Ibn al-Athīr claimed the following: “This year the Frankish fleet sailed from Sicily to the coast of Ifriqiyya and the West. They conquered the city of Brashk and killed its inhabitants. They enslaved the womenfolk and sold them to Muslims in Sicily.”<sup>35</sup> It is impossible to gauge the scale of their involvement in the slave trade, but it appears that Muslim merchants living in Sicily were also participants in the sale of their coreligionists. Given the general situation in Norman Sicily, this is less surprising than it may seem. In the glimpses we have of the commercial situation in Sicily Muslims and Christians appear to have been willing to

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>35</sup> al-Athīr, *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athīr*, 375.

deal with one another. Likewise, among the rulers of the period, both Christian and Muslim, there was a willingness to ally with one another against their coreligionists, so long as it was to their benefit. While for Muslims to have been active in the trafficking of fellow Muslims is an extreme manifestation of this general trend, nevertheless it seems plausible. So while Muslims were primarily involved in the slave trade as commodities, at times they appear to have been more active participants. But again, the conflict that developed between Christians and Muslims over the course of the twelfth century likely rendered this unsavory cooperation impossible. And the fact that it was a Genoese merchant who was trafficking in Muslim slaves at the end of the twelfth century fits into another general trend in the commercial history of Norman Sicily. In general, foreign merchants, particularly from Genoa, became increasingly prominent in the trade of Norman Sicily over the course of the twelfth century.

One aspect of the commercial history of Norman Sicily that was a constant in the eleventh and twelfth century was the heavy involvement of foreign merchants. In the eleventh century, the Jewish merchants of Fustat, whose participation in the commercial life of Sicily is detailed in the records of the Cairo Geniza, were prominent in the trade of the island. They were part of a commercial network that linked Sicily with the rest of Islamic world, particularly Egypt and North Africa. In the twelfth century, after the island had passed under Christian rule, it was the merchants of Italy that took a particularly prominent role in its commercial life. While merchants from Pisa and Venice were involved in Sicily to a certain extent, it was the Genoese who were most closely involved in Sicily during much of the twelfth century. Genoa was often in conflict with

her commercial rivals, particularly Pisa, in order to retain a dominant role in Sicilian trade. For example, the Genoese fought Pisans in the street of Messina in 1124.<sup>36</sup>

It is this dominance of Genoese merchants in the commercial life of Sicily that is the subject of David Abulafia's work *The Two Italies*. He details the many commercial privileges that Genoa enjoyed in Sicily, such as colonies along the coast and even inland.<sup>37</sup> It is his argument that during the course of the twelfth century these merchants controlled the foreign trade of the island. The crown was interested in some trades in particular, such as the fishing of tuna, but for the most part was little interested in commerce. Because of that, the ruler of Sicily allowed foreign merchants to take over much of the commerce of the island. This would fit with the pattern we have seen in other aspects of the commercial life of Norman Sicily. Over the course of the twelfth century, Latin Christians began to dominate in both numbers and influence. In the case of the industry and commerce of Norman Sicily, Abulafia argues that this led to Sicily focusing on the production of raw agricultural materials. This role has already been demonstrated for the production of grain and other foodstuffs in Sicily, but there was also a great deal of the production of agricultural goods for the textile industry. As for the Genoese, they were involved the export of raw textiles, particularly cotton, to the north to be processed.<sup>38</sup> This then was the beginning of the commercial decline of the *mezzogiorno*, as it became too tied up in the production of raw goods without having its own centers of production. Even though the Genoese lost their dominant role at the end

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<sup>36</sup> Steven A. Epstein, *Genoa and the Genoese, 958-1528* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 49.

<sup>37</sup> Abulafia, *The Two Italies*, 64-65.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 47-48.

of the twelfth century, as Venice became increasingly prominent in Sicily after the 1160s, the economic relationship between Sicily and the commercial towns of the north of Italy remained the same.<sup>39</sup> Sicily was a producer of raw materials that was dependant on the demand of others for these goods. In the twelfth century, these goods, grain and raw textiles, were in demand. But this emphasis on monoculture led to the later commercial decline of the *mezzogiorno* and its dependence on the north. But as we will see in regard to textiles, this eventual decline was not apparent in the twelfth century, when Sicily retained its reputation for great wealth and remained in many ways a productive center.

The picture of the commercial life of Norman Sicily, presented convincingly by Abulafia, is striking when contrasted with the picture of Sicily in the eleventh century drawn by S.D. Goitein, drawing on the evidence of the Cairo Geniza. Rather than being a producer of raw materials, Goitein saw Sicily in the eleventh century as an industrial center for the Mediterranean. He saw its role in manufacturing to be large enough that he described Sicily and Southern Italy as the “Manchester and Lancaster of the High Middle Ages.”<sup>40</sup> Goitein viewed a number of industries as prominent in Sicily, among them the production and export of leather goods and cheese, but in his opinion the main industry of Sicily was the production of textiles, silk in particular.<sup>41</sup> And for the historian Yedida Stillman, “[t]he manufacture of textiles was the most important single industry in the medieval Mediterranean world.”<sup>42</sup> Textiles, such as fine silk cloth, played a role in both

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>40</sup> S.D. Goitein, "Sicily and Southern Italy in the Cairo Geniza Documents," *Archivio storico per la Sicilia orientale* 67 (1971): 13.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.: 13-15.

<sup>42</sup> Yedida K. Stillman, "New Data on Islamic Textiles from the Geniza," in *Patterns of Everyday Life*, ed. David Waines, *The Formation of the Classical Islamic World, 10* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 198.

commerce and diplomacy.<sup>43</sup> In fact, Sicily was second only to Spain in silk production in the Islamic world.<sup>44</sup> And Sicilian cloth appears often in the letters of the Geniza. For example, a letter from Barhūn ibn Ṣāliḥ Tāhertī in Fustat in the 1050s instructs his agent in Alexandria: “When the ships from Sicily dock, please buy me two narrow lengths of cloth, of good quality...and two *ḥaffī* (bordered) coats.”<sup>45</sup> Given the contrast between these two images of the commercial life of Sicily, the question that follows is what happened to these industries after the Normans took control of the island? Even Goitein acknowledges that Sicily produced a wide variety of silks, but before the Norman conquest.<sup>46</sup> But did these industries simply disappear when the island changed hands?

Abulafia argues that, rather than disappearing, the industries of Sicily were of a smaller scale than that described by Goitein. Rather than having big centers of production the textile production in Sicily was the result of an accumulation of small-scale enterprises.<sup>47</sup> As there is no record of large textile factories in the cities of Sicily, other than the royal workshop, yet textiles were produced. Thus, this seems an accurate conclusion. Although the Geniza records demonstrate that textiles were being produced in Sicily and exported from it, there is little information about how the industry actually functioned. A number of smaller workshops could have been responsible for the textile production of Sicily in the eleventh century. But again, what happened to those workshops in the twelfth century after the island passed under Norman rule? It is my

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<sup>43</sup> David Jacoby, "Silk Economics and Cross-Cultural Artistic Interaction: Byzantium, the Muslim World, and the Christian West," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 58 (2004): 213.

<sup>44</sup> S.D. Goitein, "The Main Industries of the Mediterranean Area as Reflected in the Records of the Cairo Geniza," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 4, no. 2 (1961): 173.

<sup>45</sup> Simonsohn, 139.

<sup>46</sup> Goitein, "The Main Industries of the Mediterranean Area," 174.

<sup>47</sup> Abulafia, *The Two Italies*, 47.

argument, based on this evidence, that textile production continued after the conquest. This is not to argue against Abulafia's larger point. Latin Christian immigration led to an increased emphasis on the production of raw materials, which gradually led to the decline of the textile industry and the exclusion of Muslims. But as in other aspects of Sicilian life, during that period of decline, there was the opportunity for much active economic activity particularly for the Muslims of the island. In support of that point, there is evidence of textile production of various sorts in Sicily after the conquest. To find it, one needs to look elsewhere than the two main bodies of evidence for the commercial history of Sicily, the Cairo Geniza and the notarial records of northern Italian towns, particularly Genoa.

The apparent decline of the textile industry is partly the result of the impression given by these bodies of evidence. Participation in Sicilian trade in general, and evidence of the island's industrial production, was much rarer for the merchants of the Cairo Geniza in the twelfth century after the Norman conquest. But while the Geniza is an invaluable source for the social and economic history of the medieval Mediterranean, it is the record of only one community of Jewish traders in Fustat. While that community shifted its emphasis from Mediterranean trade to focus on the Indian Ocean after the eleventh century that does not mean that others from Egypt and North Africa also ended their involvement in the Mediterranean. So in this case, the disappearance of the textile industry at the beginning of the twelfth century is likely as much the result of a shift in the surviving documents as an actual shift in commercial practices. Likewise, the absence of Sicilian textiles in the notarial records of Genoa does not indicate that they

had ceased to be produced. The north of Italy, or anywhere else in Europe, had never been the market for Sicilian textiles. Because of that, it is not surprising that Genoa's contact with Sicilian textiles in the twelfth century was the purchase of raw materials. But it remains possible that Sicily continued to produce textiles for the same markets it had in the eleventh century, those of the Islamic World and North Africa and Egypt in particular. Because these commercial networks are not represented by any surviving body of evidence, however, it is difficult to gauge its extent. But as even Abulafia has pointed out there was likely more trade with and within the Regno than evidence, this conjecture is worth examination.<sup>48</sup>

The production of textiles in Sicily after the Norman conquest was, I would argue, largely based on the labor of Muslims. Other groups, particularly the Jews, were participants as well, but it appears as though Muslims made up the bulk of textile workers in Norman Sicily. And though no evidence survives that details this point, it seems reasonable to assume that Muslims were involved in the export of Sicilian textiles to North Africa and Egypt. We have evidence that Muslim merchants travelled to Sicily in the mid-twelfth century to bring grain to North Africa. In addition, there is evidence of Muslim merchants operating in the transportation of goods within Sicily in the mid-twelfth century from the sea-loan of Cefalù discussed in Chapter Four and the muleteers and porters in Chapter Five. Given the appearance of Muslim merchants in the commercial networks of Sicily and North Africa, if textiles continued to be produced in Sicily in the twelfth century and continued to be exported to the same markets as in the

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

eleventh century, it seems reasonable to assume that Muslim merchants played a role in this network of commercial exchange.

The textile industries of Norman Sicily can be divided into the production of three types of cloth: linen, made from flax, cotton, and silk. The evidence for the production of linen in Sicily is largely from the market Egyptian flax enjoyed there. As Goitein claims, “huge quantities of this raw material were imported.”<sup>49</sup> Flax was a common product appearing in the letters of the Cairo Geniza. For example, in a letter from Joseph ibn Farah al-Qābisī in Alexandria on 6 September 1056, Joseph wrote to Fustat of a ship that sailed from Mahdiyya in North Africa. On the ship were one hundred containers of oil and a bundle of goods, which included flax.<sup>50</sup> Unfortunately, near Agrigento the ship was attacked by soldiers of ibn al-Thumna and all the goods were confiscated. In addition, Abraham ibn Farah wrote from Alexandria to Judah ibn Moses ibn Sughmār in Fustat on 11 June 1066. Amidst discussion of other business, Abraham told Judah: “Your goods were transported this year to Sicily, on board Ben Iskandar’s boat: two small bales of spices; on board the big ship: six bales of flax; on board Mufaḍḍal’s boat: five bales of flax, two small bales of spices, and a package.”<sup>51</sup> So in the eleventh century, it appears that Sicily was a producer of linen cloth from imported flax.

What happened to this industry in the twelfth century is very difficult to ascertain. Flax disappears from the Geniza records in the twelfth century, as do most records dealing with commercial affairs in Sicily. Flax and linen cloth appear infrequently in the Genoese notarial records of the twelfth century as well. Interestingly, one of the few

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<sup>49</sup> Goitein, "Sicily and Southern Italy in the Cairo Geniza Documents," 14.

<sup>50</sup> Simonsohn, 231.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 369.

mentions of linen cloth is of five pieces of fustian held by Solomon of Salerno, the merchant discussed in Chapter Four who had strong connections to Sicily.<sup>52</sup> But direct evidence of the continued production of linen does not appear to have survived. There is a brief reference by al-Idrisi that near the fortification of Ghalāt “they grow here by irrigation plentiful amounts of flax.”<sup>53</sup> This flax may have been used to produce linen, but if so the industry was likely quite small. However, this does not mean that flax did not continue to be brought to Sicily or that all production of Sicilian linen based on imported linen ceased, only that we cannot gauge developments in this industry in the twelfth century.

There is more ample evidence of the growth and production of cotton in Norman Sicily. Unlike the production of linen, which depended on the importation of flax from Egypt, the raw materials for cotton cloth were grown within Sicily. Indeed, cotton was not produced in Egypt in the Middle Ages, as it interfered with the growth of foodstuffs in a manner that flax did not.<sup>54</sup> The cotton industry in Sicily was an early introduction to the island by its Muslim conquerors. According to Maureen Mazzaoui, in the tenth century Palermo had a *tirāz* cotton factory supplying the cloth markets of the city. The cotton produced in Sicily was of low quality but was produced in sufficient quantities to make its manufacture worthwhile.<sup>55</sup> In fact, Mazzaoui goes so far as to refer to Sicily as the “fulcrum of the cotton trade in the Western Mediterranean.”<sup>56</sup> This was not due solely to its manufacture of cotton, nor its closeness to North Africa, another exporter of

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<sup>52</sup> Scriba II.1106. Mentioned in Abulafia, *The Two Italies*, 252.

<sup>53</sup> Idrisi, 168/53

<sup>54</sup> Mazzaoui, *The Italian Cotton Industry in the Later Middle Ages, 1100-1600*, 24-25.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

cotton cloth, but also due to its extensive cultivation of raw cotton, which made it the largest and most reliable source of supply in the Mediterranean. The Normans took over the manufacturing of *tirāz* cotton for a time. In fact, the first use of the word “cuttonum” is in a diploma of Roger II.<sup>57</sup> But by the mid-twelfth century Sicily was primarily exporting raw cotton and importing finished cloth.<sup>58</sup>

This meshes with the picture of the development of Sicilian textiles in the twelfth century presented by Abulafia. In fact, his focus on the export of raw materials for textiles was primarily centered on raw cotton.<sup>59</sup> He claims the textile industry of Lombardy was dependent on cotton from Sicily, as well as from Malta and other parts of the Islamic world.<sup>60</sup> The Genoese were interested in exporting raw cotton to bring north for the textile industry there. So far as the native Sicilian cotton industry is concerned, it does appear to have transitioned to providing raw materials, something it was amply supplied with in the eleventh century. The same shift could not have taken place in the production of linen, as Sicily did not produce its own flax and was dependent on Egyptian imports. While it seems clear that the manufacturing of cotton cloth declined in favor of the export of raw materials, did it cease entirely in Sicily?

As was demonstrated in the previous chapter, however, Muslims on the estates of Sicily retained professional titles related to the cotton industry into the twelfth century. For example, cotton seems to have been an important crop in Catania in 1095. Several

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Abulafia, *The Two Italies*, 47-48.

<sup>60</sup> David Abulafia, "The Role of Trade in Muslim-Christian Contact during the Middle Ages," in *The Arab Influence in Medieval Europe*, ed. D. Aguis and R. Hitchcock (Reading: Folia Scolastica Mediterranea, 1994), 8.

men, such as Abū al-Husayn, Husayn, and Muhammad, have the title of *al-Qaṭṭān*, a term which can refer to either a producer or a merchant of cotton.<sup>61</sup> So Catania continued to deal in cotton, likely both growing it, preparing it for market, and then selling it. In the *jarīda* of the estates of Monreale composed in 1178, there lived in Corleone `Uthmān and Abū Bakr. These men were also described by the professional title *al-Qaṭṭān*.<sup>62</sup> The meaning of this title is ambiguous. It is possible that it refers to those growing and selling raw cotton, but it seems equally likely to refer to those producing and selling finished cloth. It does not appear to have been a large industry, by any means. It seems more to show the survival of some of the small textile workshops that were prevalent in the eleventh century. But even though they were not large, I would argue they demonstrate some continuity in the production of cotton cloth in Sicily into the twelfth century, the manufacture and sale of which was in these cases done by Muslims. Again, the survival was conditional and limited geographically the west of the island in the second half of the twelfth century. It also almost certainly ended after the west of the island rose up in rebellion and the Muslims living there were expelled. But during the transition Muslims continued to play a role in this aspect of Norman Sicily's economic life.

The main product of the Sicilian textile industry, however, was silk. The growth of silk and the manufacturing of silk cloth had a long history in Sicily in the Middle Ages. Sericulture was introduced to Sicily at some point after 827 but was not

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<sup>61</sup> Cusa, 563-85.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 137-38.

documented in the ninth and tenth centuries.<sup>63</sup> But silk production came to Sicily with its conquest by Muslims from North Africa, and had a strong association with the Muslims of the island afterwards. Silk was grown in the south of Italy as well, and moriculture, the growing of mulberry trees for silk worms, had a long history there as well. Indeed, it has been argued, based on moriculture in Calabria, that this region exported raw silk to Sicily when it was under Muslim rule.<sup>64</sup> This trade continued to a certain extent after the Norman conquest, as Messina still had a reputation as a source for silks made from Calabrian raw silk.<sup>65</sup> So both before and after the conquest, Calabria was a source for raw silk for the manufacture of silk cloth in Sicily. And in the eleventh century, there is ample evidence that Sicilian silk was a popular commodity in the commercial world of the Mediterranean.

Sicilian silk appeared frequently in the letters of the Jewish traders of the Cairo Geniza. As S.D. Goitein has pointed out, silk was the most common export from Sicily during the eleventh century. In a letter from Palermo written by Jacob ibn Isma‘īl al-Andalusī to a colleague who was likely in Fustat, around the year 1060, silk appears frequently in the discussion of trade between Sicily and Egypt. In his letter, Joseph said that:

I sent the non-Jew a boat carrying the waste and low-quality silk. The rate [ ] and last year it was left unsold. They passed a resolution in regard to you which I do not care to repeat. There were sold for you the piece of arsenic, the sugar, soap and low quality silk. I sold some of the myrobalan

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<sup>63</sup> Jacoby, "Silk Economics and Cross-Cultural Artistic Interaction," 200-01.

<sup>64</sup> Filippo Burgarella, "The Byzantine Background to the Silk Industry in Southern Italy," in *Nobiles Officinae: Perle, filigrane, e trame di seta dal Palazzo Reale di Palermo*, vol. 2, ed. Maria Andaloro (Catania: Giuseppe Maimore Editore, 2006), 375.

<sup>65</sup> David Abulafia, "The Merchants of Messina: Levant Trade and Domestic Economy," *Papers of the British School at Rome* 54 (1986): 197.

and some was left over. I bought you for all the proceeds 40 narrow lengths of silk, had them washed and bound them in the bundle which is sold for Abū Yaḥyā Nehorai b. Nissim<sup>66</sup>

Judah sent another letter regarding the export of Sicilian textiles, likely silk, to Egypt, from Sicily to Nehorai ibn Nissim in Fustat on 9 August 1062:

I am writing to say that I prayed for the Lord's mercy and dispatched to you on board the ship of Ben Shiblūn's deputy, with Maymūn b. Khalfa, a container of textiles holding the following: 52 lengths of shrunken fabric, including 8 narrow ones, and 13 lengths of raw fabric, in all 65 lengths; a cotton kerchief, a blue veil, five dresses and two mantles, all for your private account, from me, being the balance of your account. The container also holds 99 lengths (of cloth) from Maymūn to you. I paid for them as they are. There are also in the container 30 *Tustari* clothes for `Aṭā b Zikrī. Jacob b. Isaac al-Andalusī will take delivery of them. I also sent you in the container in partnership between me and my brother 47 lengths of the shrunken fabric, one of them a coverlet, belonging to the partnership.<sup>67</sup>

These were not the only mentions of Sicilian silk. For example, a letter from Alexandria written in the summer of 1062 mentions the variety of Sicilian textiles that were available for purchase there: "As to the merchandise of the Sicilians: *muṣallab* silk fetches 19 dinars for 10 ratls, and the woven 20 karats the ratl."<sup>68</sup> In all, Sicilian silk, in a number of varieties, appears frequently in the Geniza letters. This was the case for Sicily up until the Norman conquest, as it produced a wide variety of silks throughout eleventh century.<sup>69</sup>

There was a good reason for that. Sicilian silks were quite popular in the Mediterranean in the eleventh century. In particular, turbans made from Sicilian silk

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<sup>66</sup> Simonsohn, 290.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 317.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 314.

<sup>69</sup> Goitein, "The Main Industries of the Mediterranean Area," 174.

were especially popular in the eastern Mediterranean.<sup>70</sup> Despite its prevalence and popularity, however, Sicilian silk does not appear to have been of particularly high quality. The silk that appears of most often was of lower quality, a type appropriate for more common sorts of clothing, such as everyday robes and turbans. A type of silk called *lāsin*, which was at times listed as a separate fabric from other silk varieties, was a common product in the eleventh century. Its prices were regularly lower than the majority of other silk fabrics.<sup>71</sup> In the example given above, Jacob al-Andalusī referred to the “waste and low quality silk” being sent from Sicily to Egypt. The nature of the Sicilian silk industry in the eleventh century, in particular its focus on the production of low-quality silk, is something to keep in mind when examining the development of the industry after the Norman conquest and into the twelfth century.

As in the other textile industries of medieval Sicily, those of linen and cotton cloth, there is an apparent decline after the island passed under Norman control in the late eleventh century. Silk ceased to appear in the Cairo Geniza, for the most part. It also was not a prominent product in Italian notarial records. They may have continued to export raw silk, but they were less active in this regard by the mid-twelfth century.<sup>72</sup> But the same issues arise for the silk industry in how to interpret this evidence. The decline of Sicilians silks in the Geniza may have been the result of that particular group’s declining interest in Sicilian trade in general. And as for the notarial records, those selling Sicilian textiles, and Sicilian silk in particular, had never looked to Europe as a

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<sup>70</sup> Goitein, "Sicily and Southern Italy in the Cairo Geniza Documents," 14.

<sup>71</sup> S.D. Goitein, "Two Arabic Textiles," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 19, no. 2 (1976): 222.

<sup>72</sup> Abulafia, "The Crown and the Economy," 8.

market. Given that Sicilian silks are known to have been sent to the Islamic World, particularly North Africa and Egypt, their disappearance in these bodies of evidence does not mean that they were no longer being produced or exported, though as in the case of linen and cotton cloth it is likely that the industry experienced a decline.

The question then is what evidence does survive that documents the Sicilian silk industry in the twelfth century. The bulk of evidence for the silk industry in the twelfth century, and the bulk of scholarly interest on the subject, centers on the royal silk workshop established in Palermo by the kings of Sicily. The royal workshop was a peculiar institution that did not operate in a manner like most centers for textile production. But it does appear to have produced significant quantities of high-quality silk. These silks were not destined for market but rather were solely for royal use.<sup>73</sup> Nonetheless, they seem to have been quite productive in this limited aspect. Many sources commented on the wealth and extravagance of the Norman kings of Sicily and on their impressive dress in particular. In describing the coronation of Roger II in 1130, Alexander of Teleso focused on the impressive appearance of the king-to-be and his court:

When therefore the Duke had been led to the archiepiscopal church in a royal manner, there, through unction with holy oil, he assumed the royal dignity. It is not possible to be portrayed in letter, no, to be imagined how glorious he was then, how great in noble kingship, and indeed how splendid in affluent apparel... There was no servant there unless he was covered in silken clothes, the very waiters were clad in silk clothes. What more is there to say? The glory and wealth in the royal house were so spectacular that they caused great wonder and deep stupefaction; so great that there was also not a little fear in all those who had come from so far away.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Jacoby, "Silk Economics and Cross-Cultural Artistic Interaction," 214.

<sup>74</sup> Alexander of Teleso, *Abbatis Ystoria Rogerii Regis*, II.4-6. 25-6.

The textile wealth that Alexander observed was even produced before the royal silk workshop expanded in the second half of the twelfth century. This was not the case by 1130, but in the late eleventh century the Norman counts of Sicily were collecting hundreds of silks a year from the Byzantine Empire, which may have begun their interest in silk regalia.<sup>75</sup> Even then, the fine silks created a spectacle that rendered many observers, such as Alexander, awestruck or even fearful. Jeremy Johns has argued that such an effect was the point. The Norman kings imported many techniques of rule from Fatimid Egypt, such as the administrative techniques that were the focus of *Arabic Administration in Norman Sicily*. But they also borrowed other trappings of royal power, such as standards of dress. The robes of the Norman kings, such as a famous mantle of Roger II that has survived, show the heavy stylistic influence of the Islamic world. So in a sense, the Norman kings used the textiles produced in the royal workshop as one of their methods of rule.

As in the administration of Norman Sicily, the royal silk workshop was a place of employment for many Muslims in Palermo. Indeed, it has been argued that Muslims made up the majority of embroiders working there.<sup>76</sup> Even though no register survives of the employees of the royal workshop, given the association of Muslims with the silk industry since its introduction to Sicily, they likely made up a portion of the weavers and other workers there as well. In addition, Ibn Jubayr met with a Muslim embroiderer for

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<sup>75</sup> David Jacoby, "Silk in Western Byzantium before the Fourth Crusade," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 84 (1991): 489.

<sup>76</sup> Rotraud Bauer, "The Mantle of Roger II and the Siculo-Norman Vestments from the Royal Court Workshop in Palermo," in *Nobiles Officinae: Perle, filigrane, e trame di seta dal Palazzo Reale di Palermo*, vol. 2, ed. Maria Andaloro (Catania: Giuseppe Maimore Editore, 2006), 403.

the palace during his time in Palermo in 1184.<sup>77</sup> But another body of workers was used for the production of high-quality silk for royal consumption.

The Jewish community of Palermo appears to have been heavily involved in the production of silk there. Describing his sojourn there in 1172, Benjamin of Tudela claimed that “[t]he Jews in Sicily (as in the Greek lands) do almost all the work in textile dying and silk.”<sup>78</sup> Benjamin noted the connection between this industry in Palermo and the kings of Sicily too, saying that “Palermo, as a royal city, needs a great deal of silk.”<sup>79</sup> So Jews living in Palermo were involved in the production of silk cloth for royal use. The story of how they got there is an interesting one.

The story seems strange enough that it would not be unreasonable to doubt its veracity. But it appears in so many sources and is referred to as an anecdote later in time that it appears to have been the case. While on campaign in Greece against the Byzantine Empire, Roger II took captive and deported many Jewish manufacturers from the Peloponnesus and Ionian islands.<sup>80</sup> He then brought the workers back to Palermo to serve in the royal silk workshop. This event appears in a number of sources. Otto of Freising claimed that Roger II attacked Corinth, Thebes, and Athens and led away captives “who are accustomed to weave silken goods.” Roger then established them in Palermo to teach his craftsmen.<sup>81</sup> Otto also argued that this was the manner in which silk came to the West. The Byzantine historian John Kinnamos also recounted this occurrence. In his account, Roger II sacked Corinth, Euboea, and Thebes, while the

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<sup>77</sup> Jubayr, 341.

<sup>78</sup> Tudela, 282.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Robert S. Lopez, "Silk Industry in the Byzantine Empire," *Speculum* 20, no. 1 (1945): 24.

<sup>81</sup> Otto of Freising, *The Deeds of Frederick Barbarossa* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1953).

emperor was otherwise unoccupied, and took the textile workers.<sup>82</sup> Nicetas Choniates also made reference to the sack and the taking of textile workers from Corinth and Thebes.<sup>83</sup> That these workers were brought to Palermo is well established. But what impact did they have on the production of silk there?

First, it makes sense that Roger II would look to Jewish artisans for the production of silk, and to Jewish artisans from the Byzantine Empire. By the tenth century, Jews were prominent in the dying industry of the Byzantine Empire.<sup>84</sup> They were prominent in the textile industry elsewhere in the Mediterranean, again particularly in dyeing.<sup>85</sup> Thebes was a particularly good target as well, as it was the main silk center of the Peloponnesus at that time.<sup>86</sup> So there were a number of reasons why Roger II would look for silk workers among his captives there. But what did he gain by taking the captive and deporting them to Palermo? Well, despite what Otto of Freising may have claimed they most certainly did not introduce the production of silk to Sicily. There is ample evidence of the production of silk before the importation of the Jewish workers in 1147. This was clear even at the time, as Benjamin of Tudela felt the need to mention that: "People say that the silk industry here was begun when King Roger abducted skilled Jewish silk workers from the Greek lands, but in truth silk making is an old craft in Sicily and a traditional craft of Sicilian Jews."<sup>87</sup> Given that they did not introduce silk

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<sup>82</sup> John Kinnamos, *Deeds of John and Manuel Comnenus* Records of civilization, sources and studies; no. 95 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 76.

<sup>83</sup> Nicetas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium : Annals of Niketas Choniates*, Byzantine Texts in Translation (Detroit: Wayne State University Press 1984), 44-45.

<sup>84</sup> Lopez, "Silk Industry in the Byzantine Empire," 24.

<sup>85</sup> Goitein, "The Main Industries of the Mediterranean Area," 171.

<sup>86</sup> Jacoby, "Silk in Western Byzantium before the Fourth Crusade," 470-71.

<sup>87</sup> Tudela, 282.

manufacture and were not even the first Jewish silk workers in Palermo, the Theban Jews had to provide another service.

In short, the Byzantine silk workers appear to have provided Roger II and the royal silk workshop the ability to produce high-quality silks it had lacked previously.<sup>88</sup> So despite the textile wealth remarked upon by Alexander of Teleso in 1130, the royal workshop appears to have added to its capacity after 1147. Benjamin of Tudela recounted this transition as well. When he wrote of Roger II's campaigns in Greece, he wrote:

What King Roger did, when he invaded Greece twenty-five years ago was to bring back very skilled silk workers, most of them Jews, who used the particular methods of Thebes and worked with dedication in the Sicilian silk manufacture and thereby invigorated it. Now Sicily produces silk cloths of a very high quality, along with others of lesser grades.<sup>89</sup>

Roger II's successor kept his interest in these Byzantine artisans. In a peace treaty with the Byzantine Empire in 1158, William I made a point of not releasing the Theban workers who had been taken captive.<sup>90</sup> John Kinnamos noted this, claiming that William I refused to return what Roger II had taken from Greece.<sup>91</sup> In addition, Nicetas Choniates remarked that in the peace treaty William I made sure that he kept the weavers he took from Corinth and Thebes.<sup>92</sup> But while the importation of the Theban workers was important in improving the quality of the silks produced by the royal workshop, they were not the impetus for the royal production of silk. Given his focus on the Jewish community, Benjamin of Tudela also noted that their immigration and important role did

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<sup>88</sup> Bauer, "The Mantle of Roger II and the Siculo-Norman Vestments," 405.

<sup>89</sup> Tudela, 282.

<sup>90</sup> Jacoby, "Silk in Western Byzantium before the Fourth Crusade," 466.

<sup>91</sup> Kinnamos, *Deeds of John and Manuel Comnenus* 94.

<sup>92</sup> Choniates, *O City of Byzantium : Annals of Niketas Choniates*, 57.

much to increase the size of the Jewish community in Palermo. But they did not make up the entirety of the workforce in the silk factory, only those involved in high-quality weaving, dying, and embroidery. The others involved were the native Sicilian Jews mentioned by Tudela and the Muslims who had traditionally been involved in the manufacture of silk there.

The importation of the Byzantine silk workers in the mid-twelfth century only emphasizes the fact that this type of production was an innovation of the Norman period. Its focus was primarily on the production of high quality textiles for royal consumption. But was it the sole site of silk production in the twelfth century, and did it produce solely these types of silk cloth? There is some evidence that even the royal workshop produced some lower quality varieties of silk. A letter from Hugo Falcandus to Peter, treasurer of the church of Palermo, mentioned the goods produced in the palace. He described the silk workshops belonging to the palace as following:

Nor is it appropriate to pass over in silence the high-quality workshops which belong to the palace, where the 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>93</sup>

The types of cloth mentioned by Hugo, *amita*, *dimita*, and *triamita*, were economical silk textiles.<sup>94</sup> The royal workshop itself appears to have produced silk textiles of lower quality.<sup>95</sup> This is evidence of the survival of the more traditional silk manufacturing continuing on in the twelfth century.

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<sup>93</sup> Falcandus, *The History of the Tyrants of Sicily*, 253 .

<sup>94</sup> Burgarella, "The Byzantine Background to the Silk Industry in Southern Italy," 380-81.

<sup>95</sup> David Jacoby, "Silk and Silk Textiles in Arab and Norman Sicily: The Economic Context," 385.

In the account of Benjamin of Tudela, the production of low quality silk and even raw silk was not limited to the royal workshops. As he claimed in his description of Palermo, “[s]ericulture here has become important. Sicily exports raw silk as well as silk fabrics, from Palermo and Mazara in the west of Sicily and from Syracuse in the east.”<sup>96</sup> The ports noted by Benjamin as being used for the export of silk are important. As was discussed in Chapter Three, certain ports in Norman Sicily were known for contact with particular regions. Palermo and Mazara were known for their contacts with the Islamic world. Syracuse was known for its commercial contacts with the Byzantine Empire. Given that these places were the site of the silk trade in Sicily in the twelfth century, it is not surprising that it may have passed without notice in Italian notarial records. The Genoese did some business in Palermo, but the bulk of their interests were in the town of Messina, known for its commercial contacts with Latin Christendom. Were the silk industry to have remained active during the twelfth century, and if it were centered in these cities and involved merchants from the Islamic world, as would make sense, it likely would have not provided the documentation to make it visible to historians today. As was discussed earlier, the survival of commercial documents from the Islamic world or involving Muslim merchants in Sicily is particularly poor. This is particularly the case as it also likely involved bulk quantities of lower-quality cloth, which would again have been less likely to generate records. The bias in the focus on luxury goods, a bias of both medieval traders and modern historians, needs to be kept in mind in order to get at a more

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<sup>96</sup> Tudela, 282.

accurate view of medieval commerce. David Jacoby has suggested looking at less precious textiles to avoid having such a biased view.<sup>97</sup>

Again, however, the problem that arises is that such less precious textiles are often invisible in the documentary record. For Sicily, they appear in the everyday correspondence of the Cairo Geniza in the eleventh century. In the twelfth century, they are referred to only when in proximity to the wealth and extravagance of the royal silk workshops of Palermo. There are, however, a few indications of a broader silk industry in Sicily during the Norman period. A responsa of Maimonides surviving from roughly 1200 refers to an event that occurred sixteen years previously. The ruling resolved a dispute between merchants regarding a “kantar and a third of indigo” that one had brought to Sicily.<sup>98</sup> This indicates that as in the eleventh century, Sicily remained a market for indigo for dyeing in the later twelfth century. This is supported by a map of Sicily from the twelfth century that revealed a mill in Palermo for grinding leaves into henna.<sup>99</sup> So into the twelfth century, Sicily continued to import materials for the dyeing of cloth. It is possible they were intended for a royal workshop, but as they were not indicated as such, or even that Palermo was the destination of the indigo, it seems more likely that they were meant for other centers of textile production, most likely silk.

One other letter survives from the Cairo Geniza that refers to the silk industry in Norman Sicily. The date of the letter is in question, and has been dated as late as the first

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<sup>97</sup> Jacoby, "Silk in Western Byzantium before the Fourth Crusade," 499.

<sup>98</sup> Simonsohn, 437.

<sup>99</sup> Jeremy Johns, "The New "Map of Sicily" and the Topography of Palermo," in *Nobiles Officinae: Perle, filigrane, e trame di seta dal Palazzo Reale di Palermo*, vol. 2, ed. Maria Andaloro (Catania: Giuseppe Maimore Editore, 2006), 310.

half of the thirteenth century, but Goitein dates the letter to 1176.<sup>100</sup> In it, the anonymous author writes to his brother:

I asked you, oh brother, that you sell for me a small silver stone which I am sending to you, and that you buy for me with the proceeds a mantle or wide veil of Sicilian silk. But I have not been able to find a reliable individual among our fellow merchants known to me, with whom I could send merchandise with which to purchase what I need. But, oh brother, if you do find clothes such as a mantle or veil of Sicilian silk, or cloth such as *rāz*, or a dress of nice *tarah* fabric, do buy them for me anyway.<sup>101</sup>

He also mentions Jewish merchants who had traveled recently to Sicily. For example, he referred to an Abū al-Majd, who along with a child left Egypt and “went to the Maghreb; from the Maghreb they went to Sicily, and from there they turned back to Alexandria, after an absence of a year and two months.”<sup>102</sup> This letter indicates several things about Sicily at the time of its writing. If it was, in fact, written in 1176, it shows that Sicilian cloth continued to be produced for market. What is more, it indicates that this silk was transported in the commercial network as it was during the eleventh century. So at towards the end of Norman control in Sicily merchants from the Islamic world continued to look for Sicilian cloth. Jewish merchants continued to move in that commercial network that connected Sicily, North Africa, and Egypt. And while the merchants referred to in this letter were Jewish, it would follow that Muslim merchants would be part of this commercial network as well. We have seen evidence of Muslim merchants moving between North Africa and Sicily, and a letter from 1062 also refers to a Jewish merchant sending his goods to Egypt on a Muslim merchant’s ship, another indication of

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<sup>100</sup> S.D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza, Vol. 4: Daily Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 280.

<sup>101</sup> Simonsohn, 439-40.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 441.

their participation in this commercial network.<sup>103</sup> So there is evidence of the purchase of Sicilian silk and its transport to Egypt in the twelfth century. Ibn Jubayr noted the constant movement of ships between Trapani and Tunis during his visit there in 1185, as “[b]etween it and Tunis is only a day and a night’s journey, and the voyage is never stayed.”<sup>104</sup> He indicates that there were some Christians traveling to North Africa as well, noting that Trapani was “much used by the Rum (Christians), particularly those who sail to the coast of Africa.”<sup>105</sup> This indicates that some Christian merchants traveled to North Africa for trade, but Muslims still seem to have been more prevalent there. What evidence is there of the production, outside of the royal workshops, of silk cloth in the same period?

As with the production of cotton cloth in Norman Sicily, the *jarā'id* provide evidence of the production of silk in Sicily after the Norman conquest. This manufacturing was continuous from Muslim rule in the eleventh century into the twelfth, and likely took the form of small workshops. The fact that silk workers appeared scattered throughout these registers as opposed to being in any sort of grouping would support this interpretation. Soon after the Norman conquest, in 1095, the silk industry appears to have been the main industry in for both Aci Castello and Catania. In the registers for both towns the profession most commonly designated for male heads of households was that of being a silk worker, or *al-Ḥarīrī*. There were also silk workers among those directly owned by the cathedral church and abbey. In the section of the

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 317.

<sup>104</sup> E. Lévi-Provençal, "Une heroine de la résistance musulmane en Sicile au début du XIIIe siècle," *Oriente Moderno* 34 (1954): 206. Jubayr, 351.

<sup>105</sup> Jubayr, 351.

Catania *jarīda* described as “the slaves of the church,” two men of the twenty-three listed, ‘Ali and Muhammad, were described as *al-Ḥarīrī*.<sup>106</sup> There were silk workers among both the villeins and the slaves of the Church of St. Agatha, which was put in charge of Aci Castello and Catania by Roger I. Silk workers were present in the *jarā’id* in the late eleventh century.

Silk workers continued to appear the *jarā’id* produced over the course of the twelfth century. Among the men of the church of San Salvatore di Cefalù in 1132 there was a man named ‘Ali who was described as a silk worker.<sup>107</sup> The *jarīda* of the church of San Giorgio di Triocula, produced in 1141, had three silk workers on its rolls.<sup>108</sup> And the massive *jarā’id* of the estates of Monreale, produced in 1178 and 1183, also show numerous silk workers on their roles, such as Abū ‘Abd Allah, *al-Ḥarīrī*, of Corleone.<sup>109</sup> David Jacoby has also noted the prevalence of these silk workers in the *jarā’id*, such the weaver of *dibaj* and the *tirāz* worker among the other silk workers contained in the 1178 Monreale *jarīda*.<sup>110</sup> These silk workers appear over the course of the twelfth century in a variety of places. They do not appear in the eastern end of the island after 1095, but the renewals of the Aci Castello and Catania *jarā’id* in 1145, had they actually provided new information, may have contained further men titled *al-Ḥarīrī*. But these silk workers were present in the western half of the island, particularly in towns near Palermo such as Cefalù and Corleone. This indicates two things. First, in my opinion, it is evidence of the survival of small-scale silk workshops in Sicily as late as 1183. Second, it indicates

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<sup>106</sup> Cusa, 583.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 472-80.

<sup>108</sup> M.E. Gálvez, "Noticia sobre los documentos árabes de Sicilia," 171-81.

<sup>109</sup> Cusa, 137.

<sup>110</sup> Jacoby, "Silk and Silk Textiles in Arab and Norman Sicily: The Economic Context," 386.

that those who operated these workshops were primarily Muslims. While there are some identified as Christians who were also silk workers, such as Muhammad of Corleone, the majority were Muslims.<sup>111</sup> So the *jarā'id* provide evidence of this Muslim industry surviving into the twelfth century.

But again, the economic role played by Muslims did decline over the course of the twelfth century. Although the silk industry survived, outside of the royal workshops it does not seem to have been of particular interest to the rulers of Sicily. In addition, the general demographic shifts of Sicily must have affected it. While it is possible the silk industry survived in the east, it is more likely that it appears in the west of the island in the twelfth century because that was where the Muslims lived. Most likely the silk industry followed the same pattern of truncation as the Muslim population did. The silk industry of Islamic Spain, which Goitein argued was more prominent than that of Sicily, also declined after Christian conquest in the thirteenth century.<sup>112</sup> So as in other realms of the economic life of Norman Sicily, Muslims remained active and important participants after the Norman conquest, right to the end of the twelfth century. But their role did diminish by the end of the Norman period. The silk industry remained to a certain extent, but it was that of the royal workshops, which drew heavily on Jewish labor in addition to the work of Muslims. So in 1211, when Frederick II granted the Archbishop of Palermo the Jews of the town, the cathedral church was given the royal dye-works as part of the same grant.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Cusa, 147.

<sup>112</sup> Olivia Remie Constable, *Trade and Traders in Muslim Spain*, 223.

<sup>113</sup> Simonsohn, 444.

In general, when one looks at the participation of Muslims in the economic life of Norman Sicily, its industry and commerce, the picture is similar in various trades. In the grain trade, Muslims grew the crop and transported it to North Africa. Muslims were involved in the cultivation and processing of specialized crops such as sugar. For the textile industry, Muslims again grew the crops, such as raw cotton and silk, which fed the manufacturing of cloth. In some cases, they also continued to be involved themselves in manufacturing cloth, both in the royal textile workshops and in smaller operations throughout the island. But in all these cases, the influx of immigrants pushed them out of these roles. Given the emphasis in all these cases on agriculture, the replacement of Muslim villeins by Latin Christians, and the general encouragement of Latin Christian immigration, narrowed economic options. As for the textile industry, the influx of Byzantine Jews to the royal workshops, and the interest of the kings in that particular type of production, also limited options for Muslim participation. Muslims participated in the economic life of Norman Sicily right until the end of the twelfth century, but as in other aspects of Sicilian society their marginalization pointed the way to their exclusion and eventual revolt.

### **Conclusion:**

Under the Normans, Sicily had a reputation for great wealth, and deservedly so. The island of Sicily in the Middle Ages was a site of intense production, agricultural and otherwise. It had been one of the leading producers of grain in the Mediterranean since Antiquity, and continued to be so under the Normans. It produced grain enough for itself and to distribute, particularly to North Africa. Its agricultural production was not limited to wheat, however. A variety of fruits were grown in Sicily and distributed throughout the Mediterranean, dates, citrus fruits and others, fruits whose cultivation had been introduced during the Muslim rule of the island. There was considerable cultivation of animals, sheep, goats, and cattle, and Sicilian cheese and leather were also popular products in the rest of the Mediterranean. The fishing industry, particularly of tuna, was so profitable that its practice was a privilege jealously guarded by the crown. The productive wealth of the island was not limited to agricultural produce, however. Sicily distributed sundry other natural products, from coral to sugar. The forests of Sicily also were a valuable natural resource, whether through the sale of lumber or through its use, for example in the production of ships. Textiles were a major Sicilian industry, both the distribution of raw materials and of the products of Sicily's textile industry. Sicilian textiles, cotton and silk in particular, were popular trade goods in the medieval Mediterranean, especially in North Africa and the Islamic world. All the natural resources of the island contributed to its reputation for great wealth, and to the great

wealth of the rulers of the island, the Norman kings included. And the inhabitants and rulers of Sicily did their best to cultivate those natural resources.

Given that Sicily was such a source of trade goods, it is natural that it served as a commercial center for the Mediterranean, drawing merchants from all over. It was well-located geographically for this, in the center of the Mediterranean along trade routes to all its regions, eastern and western, Christian and Muslim. Commercial activity abounded in Sicily; its coastal towns had active markets, and even the more isolated settlements of the interior boasted their own suqs. Sicilian merchants bought and sold in these markets, and carried goods from one end of the island to the other and from the interior to the coast. Sicilian merchants were brought into contact with traders from other regions, as the markets of Sicily were a destination for the Jewish merchants of the Islamic world, Muslim merchants from North Africa and elsewhere, and Latin Christian merchants, particularly from the north of Italy. The wealth and commercial possibilities of Sicily drew these individuals together and tied them to one another through trade. At times, they would loan money to one another and enter into partnerships. The economic landscape of Norman Sicily, its natural resources and commercial infrastructure, were conducive to all types of cross-cultural commerce.

Sicily was also well-positioned for the coexistence of various religious groups within its borders. In the period leading up to the twelfth century it was conquered by the Byzantine Empire, Muslims from North Africa, and Latin Christian Normans. This left it with a uniquely mixed population in Europe, with Muslims, Jews, Latin Christians, and indigenous Christians of the Greek rite. Amongst all these groups under Christian rule,

the Muslims of Norman Sicily were protected by the Norman kings of the island. With that protection, they could live among and interact with their Christian neighbors. While some Muslims lived in isolated communities, such as in the settlements of the interior, their isolation was never total. In the more cosmopolitan coastal towns, there were neighborhoods and districts of Christians and Muslims, but they were not strictly separated, the groups could come together in the markets of the towns. Indeed, Christians and Muslims were close neighbors at times, living side-by-side in abutting houses and estates. Homes in Palermo traded hands from Muslim to Christian owners. The protected status of Muslims and such contact led to moments of close interaction and likely friendly relationships, and peaceful coexistence in general. This is not to say such coexistence was entirely harmonious; there was always division and the potential for conflict. As R.I. Burns described the situation in Christian Aragon, Christians and Muslims “lived symbiotically – recoiling constantly, impinging, each resigned to needing the other, each attracted to aspects of the other, but each repelled by that wholly Other.”<sup>1</sup> The two groups never totally assimilated to one or the other, but remained distinct communities. And at times violence broke out between the groups, with fighting between Christian and Muslim soldiers or riots in Palermo aimed at Muslims. But as long as the relationships between them remained mutually beneficially, so long as they needed one another, they could coexist peacefully.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert I. Burns, "Muslims in the Thirteenth-Century Realms of Aragon," 78.

That coexistence was fueled by the beneficial roles Muslims could play in Norman Sicily. They were an active part of the royal administration, and this brought the production of the Norman kings of Sicily. But the number of Muslims involved in the royal administration was by no means a majority of the population. A more common reason for their protection was the economic roles they played, which enhanced the wealth of the island, and thus the king as well. As the majority of the population at the time of the conquest, they were necessary to maintain the agricultural production that fed the island prosperity, and remained prevalent in the island's agriculture throughout the twelfth century. They grew its grain, raised its cows, and harvested its wood. They produced many of the manufactured goods of the island, as silk weavers in workshops or on a more humble level as the blacksmiths and carpenters of rural settlements. They also played important commercial roles, such as transporting goods throughout the island, by donkey from the inland to the coast and by ship along the coast. They sold goods at markets and some Muslim merchants were active in Mediterranean trade. These varied economic roles brought about coexistence not only because of the benefits they provided for the kingdom at large, and thus for the crown, but also because of the possibilities it created for individual Christians and Muslims to come together in mutually beneficial commercial relationships.

These mutually beneficial relationships could endure the broader religious conflicts of the Mediterranean in the twelfth century, in addition to conflict that broke out between Christians and Muslims within Sicily. The coexistence of Christians and Muslims, based on their usefulness to one another, continued to the end of the twelfth

century. Muslims continued to play important economic roles that gained them royal protection. This was in spite of their growing minority status as the result of extensive Latin Christian immigration. Though their numbers were proportionally diminished, and thus their relative importance for the economy of Sicily was diminished, they remained a vital part of Sicilian society. This situation could have continued further into the thirteenth century had it not been for political changes in Sicily. When the island passed from Norman to Hohenstaufen control, the status of the Muslim communities there changed. Whereas the Norman rulers of the island, even an illegitimate son such as Tancred, had recognized the important role that could be played by Muslims in Sicilian society, the new Hohenstaufen rulers did not provide them the same privileges and protections. They no longer had a role in government, and their numbers were further diminished after the civil conflict that took place at the end of the twelfth century led to immigration to the Islamic world. Their loss of numbers, and the loss of their relationship with the kings of Sicily, made it increasingly difficult for the Muslim populations of Sicily to remain there. It was not a foregone conclusion, as a few Muslims continued to emigrate from North Africa even in the late twelfth century, but the relatively peaceful coexistence that had existed under Norman rule was gone. Sicilian Muslims increasingly grouped themselves in isolated inland communities, and at times broke into open rebellion. Under the Hohenstaufens, recent Muslim immigrants were leaders of revolts rather than settling and becoming part of the economy and society of the island.

After such rebellion and suppression of Sicilian Muslims, some still remained on the island into the thirteenth century. But the relatively peaceful coexistence of the twelfth century was gone, and there was increasing antagonism between Christians and Muslims. Although Frederick II made use of the Muslims of Sicily, using them in his armies like the Norman kings, and despite his own relative tolerance of Muslims and contact with the Islamic world, he could not maintain peaceful relations with them. Too many Muslims had fled the island and relations with their Christian neighbors had become too strained to maintain coexistence, even with a sympathetic ruler. After their many rebellions he expelled them to the mainland of Italy. Without royal protection, based on their administrative and economic roles, and without mutually beneficially relationships with their Christian neighbors, the coexistence of Christians and Muslims in Sicily could not be maintained. They were settled in Lucera on the mainland, continued making a living through the cultivation of grain and pasturing of animals, serving as soldiers for the king.<sup>2</sup> Some of the commercial interactions that had existed in Norman Sicily were recreated, as Muslims traveled as merchants, and fairs drew others to Lucera for trade.<sup>3</sup> Some Muslims at Lucera were artisans, smiths, carpenters, and tailors.<sup>4</sup> On a limited basis, some served as notaries and officials, and Lucera maintained its own *qāḍī*.<sup>5</sup> There was some continuity in the lives of Sicilian Muslims after their transportation to Lucera, but it was on a much smaller scale, a single isolated community surrounded by

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<sup>2</sup> Julie Taylor, *Muslims in Medieval Italy*, 99-102.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 115-7.

Latin Christians. There was interaction between Christians and Muslims, but none of the living side-by-side that had been possible in Norman Sicily. The possibility for the broad coexistence and cross-cultural interaction with the Muslims of Norman Sicily had ended.

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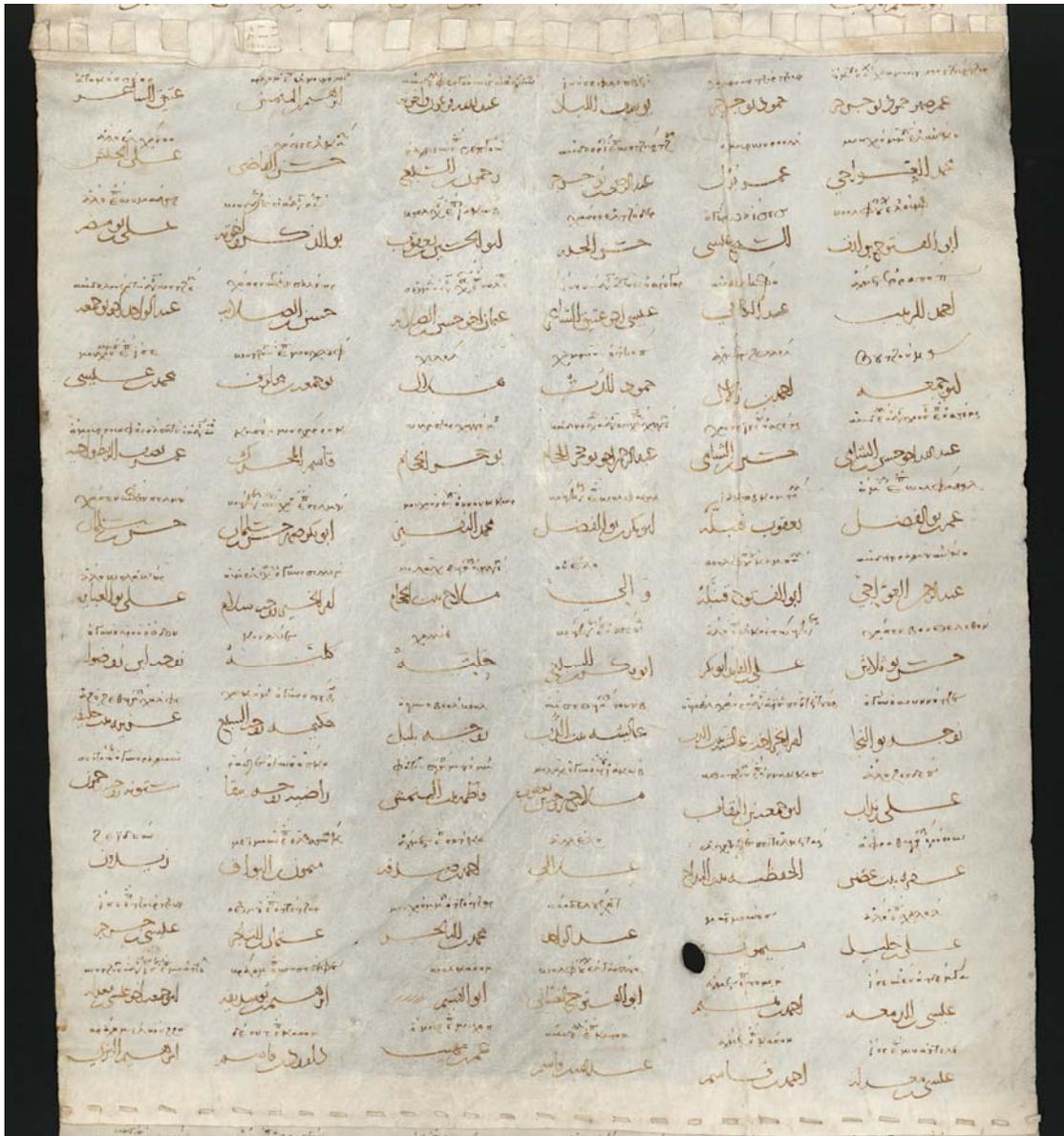


Figure 2: *Jarīda* for San Salvatore di Cefalù, 1145 cont. (Palermo, Archivio di Stato, Cefalù no. 2)

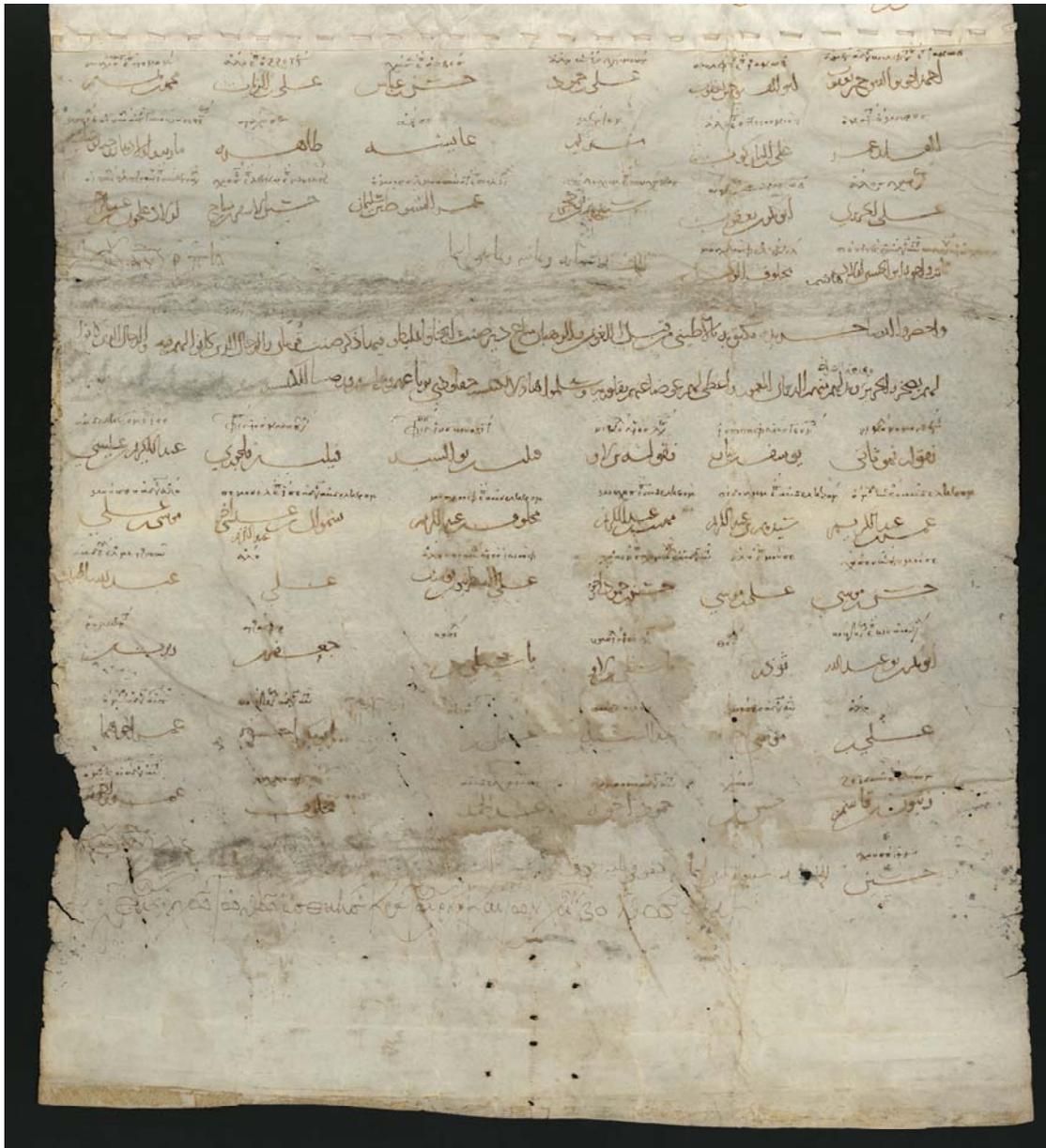


Figure 3: *Jarīda* for San Salvatore di Cefalù, 1145 cont. (Palermo, Archivio di Stato, Cefalù no. 2)



Figure 4: *Jarīda* for Roger Fesca, 1145 (Palermo, Archivio di Stato, Pergamene varie no. 65)