

Sicily

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SICILY

There is generally little known on the history of Sicily, with respect to its Muslim phase. Little is known about the impact of Islamic civilisation on the island, in particular with respect to the important role of Muslims under Norman rule of the island and also little and hardly anything known at all about the whereabouts or fate of the Muslims who once lived on the island. A proof of the general blackout of these crucial points of the history of the island is the fact that the best work on the history of Muslim Sicily was written by Michelle Amari in the 19th century, and reedited decades later by another Italian Nallino.¹ This book in Italian has remained hardly if at all accessible, all the unique information it contains has been thereby effectively totally obscured. Thus, it is necessary for any outline on Sicily to try at least to bring out some of the main aspects of this history until, maybe, Amari's work is revived, or a work as good as it can be delivered to the public.

The following extended outline will first look at Sicily under the Muslims; then at the relationship and impact of Muslim civilisation under Norman rule. Then, finally, it will look at how, due to the pressures exerted by the papacy, the Muslim presence was ended on the Island.

Sicily under Islamic Rule

Control of Sicily implied a major role in the affairs of the Mediterranean world, and it is thus no wonder that during the Middle Ages possession of the island was a prize contested among the major Mediterranean powers.² At the time of the Islamic conquests in the mid seventh century, Sicily (together with the southern and eastern portions of the Italian Peninsula) was a province of the Byzantine Empire. In 827 Ziyadat Allah I (817-838), the semi-independent Aghlabid ruler of Ifriqiya (comprising eastern Algeria, Tunisia, and Tripolitania), mounted an expedition that succeeded in establishing a long term foothold on the island.³ From their base in Mazara, on the west coast, taken in 827, the Muslim force of ten thousand men moved forward.⁴ Palermo fell in 831, Messina in 843, Enna in 859, and the island was thereafter under effective Muslim control.⁵ The Muslim expeditionary force is a remarkable expression of the whole character of Islam, faith and civilisation. It was 'an infinitely mixed lot of Arabs, Berbers, Spaniards, Sudanese.'⁶ Such was the island itself under Muslim rule, where ethnic and religious diversity characterized the population of the island during the 250 years of Muslim rule. The monk Theodosius, brought to it from Syracuse with Archbishop Sophronius in 883, acknowledged the grandeur of the new capital, Palermo, describing it as

"full of citizens and strangers, so that there seems to be collected there all the Saracen folk from East to West and from North to South . . . Blended with the Sicilians, the Greeks, the Lombards and the Jews, there are Arabs, Berbers, Persians, Tartars, Negroes, some wrapped in long robes and

¹ M. Amari: *La Storia dei Musulmani di Sicilia*, 3 vols, (1933-9) Revised 2nd edition by C.A. Nallino, Rome.

² A.L. Udovitch: *Islamic Sicily*; in *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, J.R. Strayer Editor in Chief; Charles Scribner's Sons, N. York; 1980 fwd; Vol 11; pp. 261-3; p.261.

³ A.L. Udovitch: *Islamic Sicily*; op cit; p.261.

⁴ J. D. Breckenridge: *The two Sicilies*; in *Islam and the Medieval West*, S. Feber Editor; A Loan Exhibition at the University Art Gallery; State University of New York; April 6 - May 4, 1975; p. 43.

⁵ J. D. Breckenridge: *The two Sicilies*; p. 43.

⁶ J. D. Breckenridge: *The two Sicilies*; p. 43.

*turbans, some clad in skins and some half naked; faces oval, square, or round, of every complexion and profile, beards and hair of every variety of colour or cut."*⁷

A majority of the inhabitants retained their Christian religious allegiance and were, in line with Islamic practice, accorded the status of protected minorities (dhimmis); which means, that in return for the payment of a poll tax (jizya) and adherence to certain regulations, they were guaranteed the safety of their persons and property, and the freedom to follow the laws of their own religion and maintain the institutions of their religious community.⁸ The same status was accorded to the small Jewish community of the island, which seems to have been concentrated mainly in the coastal towns.⁹

The cultural Islamic impact on the island is caught by the traveller/geographer Ibn Hawqal: in 972-973. He described the quarters of Palermo, their palaces and above all their hundreds of mosques: "The mosques of the city and of the quarters round it outside the walls exceed the number of three hundred."¹⁰ He had never seen an equal number of mosques, even in cities twice as large. These buildings, even more than as places of worship, served as schools each with its own schoolmaster.¹¹ There was also the University of Balerm (Palermo), which though it scarcely rivalled that of Cordoba, nevertheless had its share of capable scholars, such as Ibn Hamdis, the noble Syracusan who left the court of Count Roger at Palermo for Muslim Spain, where he wrote and reminisced of his youth on the Island.¹² The schools of Muslim Sicily, just as those of Muslim Spain, had long been the resort of students, ambitious of literary attainments and distinction, from every country in Europe.¹³

Aspects of such cultural brilliance will be caught later by another Muslim traveller, the Valencian born, Ibn Jubayr, who describes Palermo as follows:

*'It is the metropolis of the islands, combining the benefits of wealth and splendour, and having all that you could wish of beauty, real or apparent, and all the needs 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. It is a wonderful place, built in the Cordova style, entirely from cut stone known as kadhan [a soft limestone]. A river splits the town, and four springs gush in its suburbs.... The king roams through the gardens and courts for amusement and pleasure..... The Christian women of this city follow the fashion of Muslim women, are fluent of speech, wrap their cloaks about them, and are veiled.'*¹⁴

Although the textile factories of Palermo were famous under the Muslims, and carried on under the Normans, little survives other than the regalia of Roger II, preserved in the Treasury of the Holy Roman

⁷ J. D. Breckenridge: The two Sicilies;; p. 43.

⁸ A.L. Udovitch: Islamic Sicily; op cit; p.262.

⁹ A.L. Udovitch: Islamic Sicily; p.262.

¹⁰ Ibn Hawqal in J. D. Breckenridge: The two Sicilies; op cit; pp. 43-4.

¹¹ In J. D. Breckenridge: The two Sicilies; p. 44.

¹² J. D. Breckenridge: The two Sicilies; p. 44.

¹³ S. P. Scott: *History of the Moorish Empire*; In three Volumes; J.B. Lippincott Company; Philadelphia; 1904; vol 3; p. 2.

¹⁴ *The travels of Ibn Jubayr*; trsltd from the original Arabic with introduction and notes, by R.J. C. Broadhurst; Jonathan cape, London, 1952; pp 348.

Empire in Vienna.¹⁵ The Islamic source of many industries and crafts is obvious in many of the words used to this day, most particularly the appellation of mill with its Arabic name: Ma'assara. The Muslim presence also affected agriculture considerably. The introduction of new techniques and crops by the Muslims allowed the local economies to thrive, and some of such products, citrus fruit in particular, constitute up till now the foundations of the Sicilian economy.¹⁶ Again the Muslim impact is obvious through many technical terms. Philology, Bresc holds, has allowed stressing the Arabic etymology of Sicilian vocabulary related to irrigation.¹⁷ Bresc shows through a careful analysis found in the notary acts of Sicily between the 14th and 15th century, related to sugar cane and horticulture, the similarities of Arabic and Sicilian technical terms; terms such as catusu: Qadus (pipe of cooked clay); Chaya: taya (hedge, or garden wall); Fidenum: fideni (sugar cane field); Fiskia: fiskiya (Reservoir); Margum: marja (inundated field); Noharia: nuara (irrigated cottage garden); Sulfa: sulfa (advance of credit granted to farmers); etc.¹⁸

The period of Muslim rule in Sicily also coincided with the early phases of the commercial revolution of the Middle Ages and was an era of brilliant economic prosperity for the island. During the late tenth and early eleventh centuries, Udovitch explains, Sicily was at the very hub of the expanding commercial activity in the Mediterranean world.¹⁹ Together with Tunisia, Sicily during this period was at the intersection of a number of major trade routes. Caravans from Sijilmasa in southern Morocco, carrying African and Moroccan commodities, made their way to Tunisia, and from there these goods found their way to the markets of Palermo and Mazara. Sicily served as a commercial intermediary between Muslim Spain and the Muslim East, and ships travelling between the two ends of the Mediterranean regularly called at its ports.²⁰ For European (mostly Italian) merchants in search of Eastern goods (flax, sugar, textiles of Egyptian provenance, pepper, spices, medical herbs, and so forth), the markets of Palermo and Mazara (as well as those of the Tunisian coastal towns) were closer and more accessible than those of the eastern Mediterranean.²¹ From at least the late tenth century, Sicily was a major producer of both raw and woven silk, which was actively traded in Mediterranean commerce. Its gold coin, the ruba'ya, or quarter dinar, was highly esteemed and much in demand in Egypt and in the trading towns of Syria and Palestine.²²

The Fall of Muslim Sicily, and Muslims Under Norman Rule

To understand the fall of Sicily in the late 11th century, it is necessary, however briefly, to explain the Muslim context at the time. In the 11th century, the Muslim world was locked in intense warfare between Sunnis and Shias; between various taifas in Spain; and between different princes in the east. Profiting from such divisions, Western Christendom launched a wide offensive on all fronts. In Spain, an alliance of French and other European forces descended on Spain, and began tearing away the Muslim control. Barbastro was taken in 1063, followed by mass slaughter and mass rape of Muslim women.²³ Toledo was to fall in 1085.²⁴

¹⁵ J. D. Breckenridge: *The two Sicilies*; p. 54.

¹⁶ Francesco Gabrieli: *Islam in the Mediterranean World in The Legacy of Islam*, edited by J.Schacht with C.E. Bosworth, 2nd edition. Oxford Clarendon Press, 1974. pp 63-104, at p. 75.

¹⁷ H. Bresc: *Les Jardins de Palerme*; in *Politique et Societe en Sicile; XII-Xv em siecle*, Varorium; Aldershot; 1990; pp. 55-127; p. 67.

¹⁸ H. Bresc: *Les Jardins de Palerme*; in *Politique et Societe en Sicile; XII-Xv em siecle*, Varorium; Aldershot; 1990; pp. 55-127. p. 81.

¹⁹ A.L. Udovitch: *Islamic Sicily*; op cit; p.262.

²⁰ A.L. Udovitch: *Islamic Sicily*; p.262.

²¹ A.L. Udovitch: *Islamic Sicily*; p.262.

²² A.L. Udovitch: *Islamic Sicily*; p.262.

²³ For a succinct and vivid account on the early Christian conquest, and mass extermination of Muslims in Spain and

Frightened by this onslaught, the Muluk of Tawaifs (reyes de taifas) called the Berber Almoravids of Morocco, who landed in Spain, crushed the Christian forces,²⁵ and followed later by the Almohads, kept Spain under Muslim control until the mid 13th century, when all of Muslim Spain (Cordova, Seville, Valencia, Murcia, etc..) was lost (except Grenada, which will be lost in 1492.) In the East, the infighting between Muslims invited the crusades (1095-1291), a two century Christian onslaught which threatened the whole of Islam with extinction had it not been for the Seljuks and Mamluks, principally, who fought most of the wars against the crusaders and their Mongol allies.²⁶ Sicily presented the same symptoms, and unlike Spain and the East, it had no Muslim force to fight back. Two centuries after the island was taken by the Normans, the Muslims were exterminated on the island.

The beginning of the end of the Muslims in Sicily began early in the 11th century with open warfare between the Kalbid Emir of Palermo and the Zirid of Tunisia. Fully aware of such internal quarrels among the Sicilian Muslims, it became a priority policy for Christian forces to take the island.²⁷ Soon there arrived the Normans to wrest the island from the Muslims. The Normans who swept across South Italy in the next few decades were a small band,²⁸ and had the Muslims not been divided, the Normans would have found no foothold; as it was, in the course of a generation, the small band of adventurers created for themselves a kingdom.²⁹ The incessant internal warfare among local warlords was certainly a factor in the comparatively easy and rapid Norman conquest in the 1070's.³⁰ In fact the initial Norman invasion followed a local Muslim invitation.³¹ One of the Muslim emirs built links of intelligence with Roger the youngest of the Norman Hauteville brothers, who did not refuse the offer.³² Under these auspices the Normans landed in Sicily in 1061 and began to advance at the expense of the Muslims.³³ This hardly seemed to bother the Muslims, as even when the Normans were half masters of the island, the Muslim chiefs continued to fight one another.³⁴ In fact, the Sicilian Christians were less supportive of the Norman invasion than the Muslim factions.³⁵ In 1061 Roger I succeeded in capturing Messina, in 1072 Palermo fell, and in the course of the next twenty years the entire island came under secure Norman control.³⁶

Arabic-speaking Muslim communities survived in Sicily for more than two centuries after the Norman conquest.³⁷ This survival accounts for a wide Islamic influence on all forms and manners of learning and civilisation as seen in the following account.

Portugal, see J. Read: *The Moors in Spain and Portugal*; Faber and Faber, London, 1974.

²⁴ J.J. Saunders: *Aspects of the Crusades*, University of Canterbury, 1962. p.19.

²⁵ J. Read: *The Moors in Spain and Portugal*; p.133.

²⁶ See: W.B. Stevenson: *The Crusades in The East*; Cambridge University Press; 1907.

²⁷ A.A. Vasiliev: *The Struggle with the Saracens (867-1057)*: in *The Cambridge Medieval History*, Vol IV: Edited by J. R. Tanner, C. W. Previte; Z.N. Brooke, 1923. p.150.

²⁸ J. D. Breckenridge: *The two Sicilies*; op cit; 46-7.

²⁹ N. Daniel: *The Arabs*; op cit; p.145.

³⁰ A.L. Udovitch: *Islamic Sicily*; op cit; p.262.

³¹ N. Daniel: *The Arabs*; op cit; p.144.

³² M.L. de Mas Latrie: *Traites de paix et de Commerce, et Documents Divers, Concernant les Relations des Chretiens avec les Arabes de l'Afrique Septentrionale au Moyen Age*, Burt Franklin, New York, Originally Published in Paris, 1866.p.42.

³³ John Glubb: *A Short History of the Arab Peoples*; Hodder and Stoughton, 1969. p.148.

³⁴ G. Le Bon: *La Civilisation des Arabes*, IMAG; Syracuse; Italie; 1884.; p.230.

³⁵ J. D. Breckenridge: *The two Sicilies*; op cit; pp 46-7.

³⁶ A.L. Udovitch: *Islamic Sicily*; p.263.

³⁷ A.L. Udovitch: *Islamic Sicily*; p.263.

Scott contrasts quite well the nature of the cultural relationship, which existed at first between the conquered Muslims and the conquering Normans; and in such a contrast he captures the thoroughness of Islamic impact on civilisation which will radiate from Sicily to the rest of Europe, and Scott does not refrain, once more from blaming Muslim decadent morality for the Muslim downfall. He goes on:

*'No more striking antagonism of national customs, religious prejudices, habits, and traditions could be conceived than that existing between the victor and the vanquished. One came from the borders of the Arctic Circle; the original home of the other was in the Torrid Zone. Both traced their lineage to tribes steeped in barbarism and idolatry; but the Norman, though he had changed his system of worship, still retained many of its objectionable and degrading features, while the Arab professed a creed that regarded with undisguised abhorrence the adoration of images and the invocation of saints. In the arts of civilization, there was no corresponding advance which could suggest resemblance or justify comparison. Poverty, ignorance, ferocity, still remained the characteristics of the Norman, as when, with a handful of resolute companions, he scattered to the winds the armies of the Sicilian Mussulman. The latter, however, inferior in endurance and martial energy to his conqueror, was possessed of accomplishments which justly entitled him to a prominent rank in the community of nations. No circumstance of honour, of distinction, of inventive genius, was wanting to exalt his character or magnify his reputation. The fame of his military achievements had filled the world. His commercial relations had made his name familiar to and respected by remote and jealous races, to whom the Christian kingdoms of Europe were unknown. His civil polity was admirably adapted to the character and necessities of the people its laws were intended to govern. Under those laws, administered by a succession of great princes, Moslem society had become opulent, polished, and dissolute beyond all example, but eventually and inevitably enervated and decadent. Political and social disorganization had not, however, entirely destroyed the prestige earned by ages of military glory and intellectual pre-eminence.'*³⁸

Indeed, the end of Muslim Sicily hardly meant an end of Muslim influence on the island. On the contrary, for Hitti, under the Normans occurred 'the efflorescence of an interesting Christian-Islamic culture';³⁹ and whilst hitherto, the Muslims were too much involved in warfare and squabbles amongst each other to develop finer things, under the Normans, 'their genius attained full fruition in a rich outburst of Arab-Norman art and culture.'⁴⁰ The lustre of Muslim civilization was rather heightened than tarnished by the Norman conquest, and under the same Normans, 'tribal animosity, which had been the curse of Moslem society, was suppressed, if not entirely eradicated.'⁴¹ And as Miranda explains, once Sicily was freed from the devastation of war, its people devoted themselves 'to the cultivation of their literature, poetry, legislation and the scientific knowledge they had received from the East.'⁴² Subsequently, the kingdom of Sicily, according to Haskins, rose to occupy a position of 'peculiar importance in the history of medieval culture.'⁴³ Sicily, Briffaut reckons, down to the last Eohenstaufen rulers remained a centre of Muslim culture and the focus of awakening civilization.⁴⁴

³⁸ S. P. Scott: *History of the Moorish Empire*; pp. 16-7.

³⁹ P.K.Hitti: *History of the Arabs*, MacMillan, London, 1970 ed. p. 606.

⁴⁰ P. K. Hitti: *History*, op cit, p. 606.

⁴¹ S. P. Scott: *History of the Moorish Empire*; op cit; p. 24.

⁴² A. H. Miranda: *The Iberian Peninsula and Sicily*, in *The Cambridge History of Islam*, vol 2, ed: P. M. Holt. A.K.S. Lambton, and B. Lewis, Cambridge University Press, 1970, pp 406-439; p. 437.

⁴³ C.H. Haskins: *Studies in the history of Mediaeval Science*. Frederick Ungar Publishing Co. New York. 1967 ed. p.

Muslim cultural and scientific pre-eminence was well understood by the Normans, and they acknowledged this in every single respect.

*'The experience of the conquerors, obtained in many lands,' Scott explains, 'enabled them to appreciate the value of the monuments of a highly developed civilization, whose promoters were soon to pass under their sceptre. For this reason there was no ruthless spoliation of cities, no indiscriminate devastation of a fertile country which had been reclaimed by infinite toil and perseverance from an unpromising prospect of marsh, ravine, and precipice. The tangible results of three hundred years of national progress and culture were transmitted, with but little impairment, to the victorious foreigner. These advantages were at once grasped and appropriated with an avidity absolutely phenomenal in a people whose career had been dictated by the predatory instincts of the bandit, and whose manners had been formed amidst the license of the camp, the superstition of the cloister, and the carnage of the field.'*⁴⁵



Roger I's Coronation Mantel showing kufic script around the edging
(Source <http://home.earthlink.net/~lilinah/Textiles/roger.html>)

Roger I, who was the first to rule the island after the Muslims in 1091, and taking the risk of being considered a Muslim, 'encouraged them to cultivate their gifts.'⁴⁶ His successors, too, did the same, and so much so, they were, not without good ground, accused of being more Muslim than Christian.⁴⁷ The nature of Roger II's (1111-1154) kingdom, and of Roger himself, was unlike anything in Christian Europe.⁴⁸ His palace was almost Muslim in style and dreamy splendour, crowded with Muslim eunuchs, Arab poets,

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⁴⁴ R. Briffault: *The Making of Humanity*; George Allen; London; 1928; p. 212.

⁴⁵ S. P. Scott: *History of the Moorish Empire*; op cit; pp. 18-9.

⁴⁶ A. H. Miranda: *The Iberian Peninsula and Sicily*, in *The Cambridge History of Islam*, vol 2, op cit; p. 438.

⁴⁷ R. Briffault: *The Making*; p. 212.

⁴⁸ J. D. Breckenridge: *The two Sicilies*; op cit; p 53.

geographers.⁴⁹ The prevailing language of court and city alike was Arabic; and for a long time, a number of documents continued to be issued in Arabic, with dates from the Hijra - as were certain issues of coins.⁵⁰ The king himself knew not only Latin, but Greek and Arabic, the impression given by his court was of a fusion of the most splendid aspects of Byzantine and Islamic monarchic display.⁵¹ At his court were a host of officials with Arabic titles, the king's cook being one; a significant circumstance which should not be overlooked.⁵² Eunuchs, in flowing robes and snowy turbans, swarmed in the palaces; the kadi, retaining the insignia and authority of his original official employment, was an important member of the Sicilian judiciary, not just determining the cases of Muslims, but was frequently the trusted adviser of the monarch.⁵³



Detail from Roger I's Coronation Mantel showing octagonal patterned Islamic artwork
(Source http://medieval.webcon.net.au/extant_roger_ii.html)

Another Sicilian ruler, William II (1166-1189), according to Ibn Jubayr `resembles the Muslim kings in the habit of living sunk in the pleasures of kingship, also in the ordering of the administration, in manners and customs, in the gradation of his optimates, the magnificence of his court, and the display of pomp. Great is his realm.... He can read and write Arabic. One of his trusted men has told us that his alamah (the royal

⁴⁹ C. Waern: *Medieval Sicily*; Duckworth and Co; London; 1910; p. 43.

⁵⁰ J. D. Breckenridge: *The two Sicilies*; op cit; p. 53.

⁵¹ J. D. Breckenridge: *The two Sicilies*; op cit; p. 53.

⁵² C. Waern: *Medieval Sicily*; pp. 43.

⁵³ S. P. Scott: *History of the Moorish Empire*; op cit; p. 28.

motto used according to the Arab custom as a superscription to deeds in Arabic) is 'praised be the Lord as is His due,' and that the *alamah* of his father was 'Praised be the Lord for all His benefits.'⁵⁴

The Muslim system of administration was particularly appreciated by the Normans, who retained it; the kingdom presenting the 'unique spectacle' of a Christian kingdom in which Muslims held some of the highest positions.⁵⁵ Briffault insists that the posts of honour and command remained in Muslim hands.⁵⁶ The chief minister of the kingdom held the interesting double title of Emir of Emirs (or Admiral of the Admirals) and Archonte of Archontes, a kind of grand vizier and commander in chief.⁵⁷ By 1125 this was George of Antioch, a Christian native of Muslim Syria who had served the Zirids at Mehdiya (Tunisia).⁵⁸ The Muslim, though, stood high in the confidence and favour of the Norman princes.⁵⁹ Quick to appreciate and meet the exigencies of every occasion, his prowess was invaluable in the suppression of anarchy and the establishment of order; Muslim councillors stood in the shadow of the throne.⁶⁰ 'Norman Sicily exhibited,' Scott tells, 'to all intents and purposes, a prolongation, under happier auspices, of that dominion to which the island owed its prosperity and its fame; 'the influence of Muslim thrift, capacity, and skill was everywhere manifest and acknowledged. Its silent operation facilitated its progress and increased its power. The maritime interests of the island were in the hands of the Moslems; they controlled the finances; they negotiated treaties; to them was largely confided the administration of justice and the education of youth. Their integrity was acknowledged even by those whose practices appeared most unfavourable by contrast; their versatile talents not infrequently raised them to the highest and most responsible posts of the Norman court. That court is declared by contemporary historians to have equalled in splendour and culture those of Cairo and Baghdad.'⁶¹ And most certainly, in the running of government, in finance, in legislation, in the regulations of commerce, in the protection and encouragement of agriculture, in the maintenance of order—the Norman domination in Sicily presented an example of advanced civilization to be seen nowhere else in Europe.⁶²

Many of these Islamic administrative management and leadership skills seem to have radiated all over the West. Thus Briffault tells how the *amyr al-bahr* passed from the Latinised form *ammirali*, to *admiral*.⁶³ From Sicily, the *diwans*, or government offices, became *dakanas* or *douanes*, administrative offices, or customs.⁶⁴ The Sicilian administration system with its Islamic antecedents, Briffault insists, served as a model to Europe.⁶⁵ Between the Norman court of England under Henry II, there was continuous intercourse through which many elements of Muslim culture came directly to distant Britain.⁶⁶ And one such arrived in the person of Qaid Brun (master Thomas Brown) in the Exchequer, whose life and role in England has been most particularly explored by Haskins.⁶⁷ Thomas Brown (Qaid Brun) was a Muslim refugee from Sicily, who had to leave

⁵⁴ C. Waern: *Medieval Sicily*; pp. 59.

⁵⁵ P.K. Hitti: *History*, op cit, p. 607.

⁵⁶ R. Briffault: *The Making*; p. 212.

⁵⁷ C. Waern: *Medieval Sicily*; pp. 43.

⁵⁸ J. D. Breckenridge: *The two Sicilies*; op cit; p. 53.

⁵⁹ S. P. Scott: *History of the Moorish Empire*; p. 28.

⁶⁰ S. P. Scott: *History of the Moorish Empire*; p. 28.

⁶¹ S. P. Scott: *History of the Moorish Empire*; p. 19-20.

⁶² S. P. Scott: *History of the Moorish Empire*; p. 22.

⁶³ R. Briffault: *The Making*; p. 212.

⁶⁴ R. Briffault: *The Making*; p. 212.

⁶⁵ R. Briffault: *The Making*; p. 212.

⁶⁶ R. Briffault: *The Making*; p. 212.

⁶⁷ C.H. Haskins: *England and Sicily in the 12th century*; *The English Historical Review*: Vol XXVI (1911) pp 433-447 and 641-665.

Sicily on the accession of William the Bad. He probably reached England by 1158, when he is mentioned in the Pipe Roll.⁶⁸ As an official of both King Roger and Henry II, Thomas Brown has a special interest for the student of international relations in the twelfth century, and the influence which has been ascribed to him as a connecting link between the fiscal systems of the two kingdoms.⁶⁹ Thomas Brown sat at the exchequer table, and with the assistance of two clerks kept a watch on all proceedings in the upper and lower exchequers. A third roll is kept by him as a check on the rolls of the treasurer and chancellor, and this roll, doubtless intended for the private information of the king, Thomas carries about him wherever he goes.⁷⁰

The Muslim impact was obvious in the system of justice of Sicily, too. Scott contrasts at length the Muslim impact on the formerly crude Norman system, which is worth reproducing to large measure:

*'The barbarian prejudices of the Norman conqueror survived in many institutions inherited from ages of gross superstition and ignorance. Among these were the absurd and iniquitous trials by fire, water, and judicial combat, prevalent in societies dominated partly by priestcraft and partly by the sword.... People familiar with the Byzantine and Islamic code eventually mitigated the evils produced by such irrational procedure; and, while not entirely abandoned, its most offensive features were gradually suffered to become obsolete. In other respects, the administration of justice—for the excellence of its system, for the rapidity with which trials were conducted, for the opportunity afforded the litigant for appeal and reversal of judgment—was remarkable. Invested with a sacred character, the judge, in the honour of his official position, was inferior to the king alone. His person was inviolable. No one might question his motives or dispute his authority under penalty of sacrilege. The head of the supreme court of the kingdom, by which all questions taken on appeal from the inferior tribunals were finally adjudicated, was called the Grand Justiciary. His powers and dignity claimed and received the highest consideration. None but men conspicuously eminent for learning and integrity were raised to this exalted office. The Grand Justiciary, although frequently of plebeian extraction, took precedence of the proud nobility, whose titles, centuries old and gained in Egypt and Palestine, had already become historic. A silken banner, the emblem of his office, was carried before him. In public assemblies and royal audiences he sat at the left hand of the sovereign. Only the constable, of all the officials of the crown, approached him in rank. These unusual honours paid to a dignitary whose title to respect was due, not to personal prowess or to hereditary distinction, but to the reverence attaching to his employment, indicate a great advance in the character of a people which, but a few years before, acknowledged no law but that of physical superiority, no tribunal but that of arms.'*⁷¹

The Islamic legacy was also in the architectural and decorative style of early Norman churches, as well as in the minor decorative arts of the Norman period.⁷² In the church of the Martorana, built by George of Antioch for a convent of Greek nuns in Palermo, the Arabic inscription runs round the base of the tiny dome, which actually translates a Greek hymn.⁷³ The doors of the Martorana were carved by local craftsmen, recalling the skills of the Muslims who wrought the fantastic ceiling of Roger's own Palace

⁶⁸C.H. Haskins: England and Sicily in the 12th century.

⁶⁹ Stubb: Constitutional History, i. 408 in Haskins.

⁷⁰C.H. Haskins: England and Sicily in the 12th century.

⁷¹ S. P. Scott: History of the Moorish Empire; op cit; p. 21-2.

⁷²A.L. Udovitch: Islamic Sicily; p.263.

⁷³ J. D. Breckenridge: The two Sicilies; op cit; p. 53.

Chapel.⁷⁴ The roof structure and ceiling of the nave of the Chapel are the work of Muslims, decorated with paintings of oriental style illustrating Eastern legends and fables.⁷⁵



The Zisa in Palermo

The suburbs of Palermo, like the Zisa, whose name derives from the Arabic al-Aziz, "the Splendid",⁷⁶ highlight the Islamic influence. Islamic influence which persisted even under William I (The Bad) (ruled 1154-1166), the heir to Roger II.⁷⁷ He built a number of retreats in the outskirts of Palermo, of which none were more splendid than the "Zisa," the geometric structuring of the design suggesting a relation to woven textile patterns, a frequent means of transmission of ornamental motives during the middle ages.⁷⁸ The Christian cathedral of Palermo combined skill of the Muslims and the Byzantine artists; the walls were incrustated with gold, whose dazzling brilliancy was relieved by panels of precious marble of various colours bordered with foliage of green mosaic; the columns were sculptured with floral ornaments, interspersed with inscriptions in Kufic characters.⁷⁹

In the field of scholarship, the Normans also acknowledge the superior Islamic system of learning. Hence, when these Normans took Sicily and the southern portion of Italy from the Muslims, they granted the medical school founded by the latter a thorough protection, which they also granted to all Muslim institutions.⁸⁰ Roger I's son, Roger II, count of Sicily, duke of Calabria, from 1101, was the most enlightened monarch of his time, and patron of science and art.⁸¹ He delighted in the company of learned Muslims and in the last fourteen years of his life spent much of the time in scientific speculation in the true Muslim tradition.⁸² It is Roger II who will be the patron of al-Idrisi, the famed geographer, and whose overall contribution to this science will be seen abundantly under the following heading. Roger II was also responsible, courtesy of Islamic influence, for one of the most decisive breakthroughs in science and

⁷⁴ J. D. Breckenridge: *The two Sicilies*; op cit; p. 53.

⁷⁵ J. D. Breckenridge: *The two Sicilies*; op cit; p. 53.

⁷⁶ Breckenbridge: p. 55.

⁷⁷ Breckenbridge: p. 55.

⁷⁸ Breckenbridge: p. 55.

⁷⁹ S. P. Scott: *History of the Moorish Empire*; op cit; p. 26.

⁸⁰ G. Le Bon: *La Civilisation des Arabes*, IMAG, Syracuse, 1884.p.391.

⁸¹ G. Sarton: *Introduction to the History of Science*, 3 vols; The Carnegie Institute of Washington; 1927-48. p. 191.

⁸² G. Sarton; p. 191.

civilisation: the establishment of system of examination for all medical practice. Scott explains how in Christendom, the clergy were the general depositaries of knowledge,—an advantage which they thoroughly understood, and were by no means willing to voluntarily relinquish. However, in one respect alone their power was seriously curtailed:

*'The spurious medicine of the time, as practised under the sanction of the Holy See,' Scott tells 'had raised up a herd of ignorant and mercenary ecclesiastical charlatans. These operated by means of chants, relics, and incense; and their enormous gains were one of the chief sources of revenue to the parish and the monastery, and a corresponding burden on the people.'*⁸³

King Roger abolished this abuse, and required an examination, by experienced physicians, of all candidates for the profession of medicine and surgery. It is under him that the foundation and establishment of medical faculties and the granting of medical degrees were laid.⁸⁴ In 1140, he enacted that everyone who desired to practice medicine must, under pain of imprisonment and confiscation of goods, present himself before a magistrate and obtain authorization.⁸⁵ This measure restricted those whose learning was deficient to 'the clandestine ministrations of the shrine and the confessional.'⁸⁶

In the following century, Roger II was emulated in many respects by his grandson Frederick II. Frederick became king of Sicily in 1198 (and of age in 1208), then the head of the Holy Empire in 1220, and king of Jerusalem in 1229.⁸⁷ It was under his rule, Briffault explains, that Muslim culture on the island reached its height and had 'a great and far reaching civilising influence over barbaric Europe.'⁸⁸ Like his grandfather before him, under Frederick, the Muslim influence grew very strong, and even stronger after his visit to the East, and was maintained by the political and commercial relations with Muslim lands.⁸⁹ In his preference to be surrounded by Muslim rather than Christian influence, he was half Muslim in his own ways, states Sarton.⁹⁰ So much so, in fact, he forced awe and respect, tempered with a certain suspicion that his great culture and learning had fundamentally tainted his Christianity.⁹¹ Just like al-Andalus itself, 'he was viewed with astonishment, admiration, and envy combined with fear and suspicion.'⁹² Frederick also kept intellectual exchanges with Muslim rulers to answer some of his queries. In the time of al Malik al-Kamil, sultan of Egypt (1218-38), the emperor sent seven hard problems in order to test Muslim scholars, and during these exchanges, he was sent a variety of gifts that included in 1232, a gift by Al-Ashraf, sultan of Damascus, a magnificent 'planetarium,' which bore figures of the sun and moon marking the hours on their appointed rounds.⁹³ On the whole, it is held that it was under Frederick 'The first modern man upon a throne,' rather than in the days of Petrarch, that the real beginning of the Italian Renaissance is to be sought.⁹⁴ And according to Briffault 'if the name of any European sovereign deserves to be specially

⁸³ S. P. Scott: History of the Moorish Empire; op cit; p. 27.

⁸⁴ D. Campbell: *Arabian medicine, and its influence on the Middle Ages*; Philo Press; Amsterdam; 1926; reprinted 1974. p.119.

⁸⁵ D. Campbell: *Arabian medicine*; op cit; p.119.

⁸⁶ S.P. Scott: *History*; op cit; vol 3; p. 26.

⁸⁷ G. Sarton: *Introduction*, op cit, p. 575.

⁸⁸ R. Briffault: *The Making*, op cit, p. 212.

⁸⁹ C.H. Haskins: *Studies*, op cit, p. 244.

⁹⁰ G. Sarton: *Introduction*, op cit, P. 575.

⁹¹ Maria Rosa Menocal: *The Arabic Role in Medieval Literary History*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1987; p.63.

⁹² Maria Rosa Menocal: *The Arabic Role*, p.63.

⁹³ C.H. Haskins: *Studies*, op cit, p. 253 and p. 265.

⁹⁴ J. Burckhardt, *Die Cultur der Renaissance in Italien*; ed. Geige, Leipzig, 1899, i.4. in C.H Haskins: *Studies*, op cit,

associated with the redemption of Christendom from barbarism and ignorance, it is not that of Charlemagne, the travesty of whom in the character of a civiliser is a fulsome patriotic and ecclesiastical fiction, but that of the enlightened and enthusiastic ruler (Frederick) who adopted `Saracenic' civilisation and did more than any sovereign to stimulate its diffusion.¹⁹⁵

Although Frederick, under Papal pressure, was forced to remove the Muslim Sicilian population to Lucera, in the Italian hinterland, where decades later the Sicilian Angevin rulers will extinguish such Muslim presence, Frederick himself, seems to have shown much respect and even penchant for the manifestations of the Islamic faith. From the summits of a hundred minarets which seemed to pierce the skies, the muezzin shrilly intoned the prescribed verses of the Koran and summoned the followers of Islam to prayer, in Palermo, and also other Sicilian cities: Messina, Syracuse, Enna, Agrigentum.⁹⁶ And when he travelled to the Holy land, on the least bloody of all crusades, in 1228-9, in Jerusalem, when night falls and the evening call to prayer is not heard, he (Frederick II) was greatly disappointed, and, turning to the Qaid asked for an explanation.⁹⁷ The Qaid replies that he had given orders to suppress it for that night only out of regard for him - the emperor. Whereupon, `this precursor of the intelligent modern tourist' Frederick answers. After gently observing that in his countries the Qaid would hear it, Frederick observed-that the Qaid made a mistake by Allah! The main reason why, he, the emperor had arranged to spend a night at Jerusalem was in order to hear the call to prayer and the laudations recited by the Muslims during the night.⁹⁸

Al-Idrisi - a Scholar at the Court of Palermo

During Roger II's reign and the first few years of the reign of William I, there was what may be called a Board of Geography, superintended by Al-Idrisi, a Moroccan from the city of Ceuta (b. 1099-1100- d. 1166), on lines laid down by King Roger himself.⁹⁹ The King's keen mind, Waern informs us, found `a special delight in all pertaining to this delightful branch of knowledge, in which, as we know, the Arabs excelled.'¹⁰⁰ The king, moreover, was disgusted with the existing compendii-as learned men have been since his day.¹⁰¹ Indeed, as Scott notes, the incomplete work of the Greek Ptolemy had for centuries been the only recognized authority; the configuration of the earth's surface, its climates, the locations of continents and seas, of cities and empires, were facts little known, even to persons of the best education; and in Christian lands the Church assiduously discouraged all such studies as inimical to Scriptural revelation.¹⁰² Thus, Roger, says Al-Idrisi, became determined to compile a Universal geography based on the account of practical men.¹⁰³ Based in Palermo, Al-Idrisi was obviously in a very advantageous position for carrying out all this work, as Sicily was the rendez vous of navigators from the Mediterranean, Atlantic and Northern waters.¹⁰⁴ The work was to take al-Idrisi fifteen years to complete as he says in his preface.¹⁰⁵ To do this,

p. 299.

⁹⁵ R. Briffault: *The Making*, op cit, p. 212.

⁹⁶ S. P. Scott: *History of the Moorish Empire*; In three Volumes; J.B. Lippincott Company; Philadelphia; 1904; p. 28-9.

⁹⁷ C. Waern: *Medieval Sicily*; pp. 233-4.

⁹⁸ C. Waern: *Medieval Sicily*; pp. 233-4.

⁹⁹ C. Waern: *Medieval Sicily*; 47-8.

¹⁰⁰ C. Waern: *Medieval Sicily*; 47-8.

¹⁰¹ C. Waern: *Medieval Sicily*; 47-8.

¹⁰² S.P. Scott: *History of the Moorish Empire*; op cit; pp 461-2.

¹⁰³ C. Waern: *Medieval Sicily*; 47-8.

¹⁰⁴ G.H. T. Kimble: *Geography in the Middle Ages*; Methuen &Co Ltd; London; 1938; p. 56.

¹⁰⁵ M. Dunlop: *Arab Civilisation, to AD 1500*, Longman, Librarie du Liban, 1971. p. 171.

men experienced in travel were called in or made welcome from all parts, their accounts were compared, those that agreed were accepted and the others were rejected; while older written accounts were also evidently made use of.¹⁰⁶ After fifteen years of this sifting of evidence, 'during which time there did not pass a day,' says Idrisi in his preface, 'When the king did not take active part in the work,'¹⁰⁷ al-Idrisi completed the work. It included all available knowledge transcribed upon a large silver map and in a volume of descriptive text in Arabic, a project which was completed in 1154,¹⁰⁸ called *Nuz'hat al-Mushtaq* or Roger's Book. Roger's book is the most elaborate description of the world of medieval times. 'Judging by the level of knowledge and the concept of critical research of his time,' Ronart writes, 'Idrisi's Rogerian Book must have ranked among the most prominent achievements in the history of geographical science.'¹⁰⁹ After a brief description of the earth as a globe, which he computed to be 22,900 miles in circumference and judged to remain 'stable in space like the yolk of an egg,' and of the hemispheres, climates, seas and gulfs, Al-Idrisi launches out on a lengthy account of the regions of the earth surface.¹¹⁰

He divides the seven main climata, each in ten longitudinal sections. These seventy sections he describes in detail, illustrating each description with a map. When put together these maps constitute a rectangular world map.¹¹¹ His description of each of his divisions is of exceptional merit when compared with the Christian, which is due, amongst others to the vast amount of detail and his scientific method.¹¹² The compilation of Al-Idrisi marks an era in the history of science, in vividness of description, in accuracy of detail, in correct estimation of distance, it is one of the most remarkable literary productions of mediaeval times.¹¹³ Not only is its historical information most interesting and valuable, but its descriptions of many parts of the earth are still authoritative. For three centuries geographers copied his maps without alteration. The relative position of the lakes which form the Nile, as delineated in his work, does not differ greatly from that established by Baker and Stanley more than seven hundred years afterwards, and their number is the same.¹¹⁴ A map was prepared and finally transported on to a huge planisphere of silver (divided up into segments, according to Amari).¹¹⁵ This map makes a representation of the known world in the form of a disk, "weighing 400 rumi pounds, each pound worth 112 dirhams."¹¹⁶ The celestial planisphere was nearly six feet in diameter, upon the one side the zodiac and the constellations, upon the other-divided for convenience into segments-the bodies of land and water, with the respective situations of the various countries, were engraved.¹¹⁷ This included the world seas, rivers, gulfs, mountains, deserts, roads, and numerous other features.¹¹⁸ A description was also written of the countries figured on the planisphere, their physical features, their products, various kinds of buildings, monuments and the arts that flourished; their exports and imports; the climate and characteristics of the inhabitants, their nature, religion, ornaments, dress, and language.¹¹⁹ This planisphere, Dunlop notes, surely has been lost, melted down, but the book still stood

¹⁰⁶ C. Waern: *Medieval Sicily*; 47-8.

¹⁰⁷ C. Waern: *Medieval Sicily*; 47-8.

¹⁰⁸ M. Dunlop: *Arab Civilisation, to AD 1500*, op cit; p. 171.

¹⁰⁹ S and N Ronart: *Concise Encyclopaedia of Arabic Civilisation*, Djambatan, Amsterdam, 1966, p. 174.

¹¹⁰ G.H. T. Kimble: *Geography in the Middle Ages*; op cit; p. 57.

¹¹¹ G.H. T. Kimble: *Geography in the Middle Ages*; p. 57.

¹¹² G.H. T. Kimble: *Geography in the Middle Ages*; p. 57.

¹¹³ S.P. Scott: *History of the Moorish Empire*; op cit; pp 461-2.

¹¹⁴ S.P. Scott: *History of the Moorish Empire*; op cit; pp 461-2.

¹¹⁵ C. Waern: *Medieval Sicily*; op cit; 47-8.

¹¹⁶ A. L. Udovitch: *Al-Idrisi; Dictionary of the Middle Ages*; Charles Scribner's Son; New York; vol 6; p. 412.

¹¹⁷ S.P. Scott: *History of the Moorish Empire*; op cit; pp 461-2.

¹¹⁸ A. L. Udovitch: *Al-Idrisi*; op cit; p. 412.

¹¹⁹ C. Waern: *Medieval Sicily*; op cit; 47-8.

as 'a great monument of Arabic and Muslim geography.¹²⁰ Al-Idrisi later wrote an even larger geographical encyclopaedia entitled *Nuzhat al-Mushtaq fi Ikhtiraq al-Afaq* (Pleasures of Men and Delights of Souls) (the integral text of it is lost).¹²¹

As a recompense for his skill, Scott tells,

*'Edrisi received from King Roger the remainder of the precious material, amounting to two-thirds, a hundred thousand pieces of silver, and a ship laden with valuable merchandise. Such was the munificence with which the son of a Norman freebooter, bred to arms and rapine and ignorant of letters, rewarded the genius of a scholar whose race was stigmatised by every Christian power in Europe as barbarian and infidel.'*¹²²

This leads to the last point of this work: the perception of the Muslims elsewhere than Sicily and the consequences of it.

The End of the Muslim Presence in Sicily

Daniel tells that

*'When William of Apulia is describing the capture of Palermo in his De Rebus Gestis Normannorum in Sicilia, he describes Roger's offer of safety and favour to the Muslim inhabitants. At the same time he destroys all the mosques, and turns the principal mosque into a church of the Virgin, so that where demons had sat should now be the seat of God and a fitting doorway to heaven.'*¹²³
'This is not a bad summary of the mercy that Europe would always offer the Arabs: conditional on the destruction of their religion, and, ultimately of their separate identity,' tells Daniel.¹²⁴

Daniel, indeed, catches, and with perfection, the extent and form of what tolerance of Muslims precisely means.

Some have estimated that at its height the Muslim population of Sicily reached as much as half a million.¹²⁵ Early in the fourteenth century, the whole Muslim presence was wiped out from the island. The elimination of the Muslims from Sicily was due to a slow, but relentless pressure put upon the different rulers to remove the Muslims from amidst the Christians. Pope Clement V declared the Muslim presence amidst Christian 'an insult to the Creator.'¹²⁶ Other popes, Lomax tells, from Gregory IX to Boniface VIII hounded the successive lords of Lucera (the last colony of Muslims in Sicily) about their Muslim subjects.¹²⁷ Frequently the popes

¹²⁰ D.M. Dunlop: Arab Civilisation, op cit, p. 171.

¹²¹ D.M. Dunlop: Arab Civilisation, op cit, p. 171.

¹²² S.P. Scott: History of the Moorish Empire; op cit; pp 461-2.

¹²³ In N. Daniel: *The Arabs and medieval Europe*, Longman Librarie du Liban; 1975; p. 148.

¹²⁴ N. Daniel: *The Arabs*; op cit; p. 148.

¹²⁵ A.L. Udovitch: *Islamic Sicily*; in Dictionary of the Middle Ages; Vol 11; pp. 261-3; p.262.

¹²⁶ V. Green: *A New History of Christianity*, Sutton Publishing; Stroud; 1996; pp.90-1.

¹²⁷ Housley: *The Italian crusades*; 40; 62; 64-5 In J.P. Lomax: *Frederick II, His Saracens, and the Papacy*, in *Medieval Christian Perceptions of Islam*, Edited by J.V. Tolan; Routledge; London; pp. 175-97; p. 189.

listed the mere existence of the colony among the *casus belli* for the series of crusades that Pope Innocent IV and his successors launched against the Hohenstaufen rulers of Sicily and subsequent enemies of the papacy in southern Italy.¹²⁸ Scott comments on this:

*'The centre of the Papal power and of the various states subject to its immediate jurisdiction— a jurisdiction already important, but not as yet exercised with undisputed authority—could not fail to be profoundly impressed by the proximity of this anomalous empire; where Christian symbols and Koranic legends were blended in the embellishment of cathedrals; where the crucifixion and the mottoes of 'Mohammedan' rulers were impressed together upon the coinage of the realm; where eminent prelates owed investiture, rendered homage, and paid tribute to the secular power; where Moslem dignitaries not infrequently took precedence of Papal envoys; and the hereditary enemies of Christendom fought valiantly under the standard of the Cross. Nor was the effect of this ominous example confined to localities where daily familiarity had caused it to lose its novelty.'*¹²⁹

Scott has just touched on the point of Muslim patriotic dedication to their new rulers, not just in serving them as already seen amply above, even going as far as fighting alongside them, even against their own co-religionists. North African sages could hardly believe the presence of Muslims in the armies and navies of the Norman kings during the attack on Alexandria in 1174, or, later, with Frederick II during his crusade in the east.¹³⁰ The Muslims were some of the most faithful and loyal servants any Christian Sicilian lord or ruler could hope for.¹³¹ It was just their refusal to set aside their faith which was their eventual downfall.

Even under the seemingly Islamic minded rulers, pressures on Muslims mounted. In 1146, Roger II's eunuch Philip, first his confidential agent and later successful commander of a sea raid (against Muslim Tunisia), was denounced as a hidden Muslim:

*'Under the cloak of the Christian name, he preserved a hidden soldier of the devil; while as far as outward appearance was concerned he showed himself to be a Christian, he was wholly Muslim in mind and deed; he hated Christians and greatly loved pagans (Muslims); he went into the churches of God reluctantly, and visited the synagogues of the malignants (mosques) more often. He supplied them with oil for arranging the lights and other things necessary. Not respecting Christian tradition at all, he did not stop eating meat on Fridays or in Lent; he sent messengers with offerings to the tomb of Muhammad, and commended himself greatly to the prayers of the priests of that place.'*¹³²

Roger was very upset that Philip, whom he had brought up as a Catholic since he was a boy, should so betray him.¹³³ Philip was handed over to the barons to condemn. Philip was dragged violently at the heels of a horse to the square before the palace and thrown into the fire to die.¹³⁴ His accomplices were also executed. The King did not interfere to show that he was 'a most Christian prince and a Catholic.'¹³⁵

¹²⁸ Housley: *The Italian crusades*; 40; 62; 64-5 In J.P. Lomax: *Frederick II*, p. 189.

¹²⁹ S. P. Scott: *History of the Moorish Empire*; op cit; p. 29.

¹³⁰ D. Abulafia: *Commerce and Conquest in the Mediterranean, 1100-1500*, Varorium, 1993; p.112.

¹³¹ A. Lowe: *The Barrier and the Bridge*, G. Bles; London; 1972.p. 92.

¹³² In N. Daniel: *The Arabs and medieval Europe*, Longman Librarie du Liban; 1975. p. 149.

¹³³ In N. Daniel: *The Arabs*; p. 149.

¹³⁴ In N. Daniel: *The Arabs*; p. 149.

¹³⁵ In N. Daniel: *The Arabs*; p. 149.

The condition of Muslims worsened sharply under William I (the bad) (ruled 1154-1166). Muslim merchants were massacred en masse in Palermo in 1160. In 1161, the Lombards invaded the royal domain and slaughtered the Muslims wherever they found them.¹³⁶ The Muslims fled en masse, westward to safer areas, where the population was still predominantly Muslim.¹³⁷ The Lombards destroyed Muslim communities both those who lived mixed up with Christians in different towns, and those, who, living apart, possessed their own villages, with no distinction for sex or age.¹³⁸ A few Muslims escaped disguised in Christian dress to the temporary safety of Muslim towns in the south, but felt such a horror of the Lombard areas that for generations they would only unwillingly pass through them.¹³⁹

Under William II (1166-1189), the situation of the Muslims improved a little, but was far from ideal. Travelling then to Sicily, the Valencian Muslim traveller, Ibn Jubayr, seemed to perceive the end was approaching for them. He met a prominent Muslim, the head of all the Muslims of the island, who came to Trapani while our traveller was there. This was Qaid Abu Kassim ibn Hammud, surnamed Ibn al-Hagar, 'one of the nobles of this island who have inherited the quality of lordship from father to son... greatly praised for his virtues and charity towards the Muslims, ransoming prisoners and giving largess to poor wayfarers and pilgrims so that the whole town rejoiced at his coming. This man had lost the favour of the tyrants through intrigues, had been imprisoned in his house, and had all his palaces confiscated and also the possessions inherited from his ancestors....'¹⁴⁰

He expressed a wish to meet Ibn Jubayr and they had a talk, and the great man said that he and all his relatives only desired to sell all they had and thus be liberated from their woes and be free to live in Muslim lands. When our pilgrim parted from Ibn Hammud, he wept and made them weep.¹⁴¹

*'The nobility of his lineage, the singular gifts of his character, the fine earnestness of his life, his charity towards relatives, his liberality, the beauty of his person and his soul, moved us deeply,' said Ibn Jubayr.*¹⁴²

Nor are further instances lacking of the persecutions to which the Muslims were subjected by this time, as Ibn Jubayr notes:

*'Thus it is told that when a man loses his temper with his wife or his son, or a woman with her daughter, and they in a fit of anger throw themselves into a church, they are made Christians and baptised, nor can a man see his son again nor a woman her daughter in any other guise, so that those with insight fear that it then happen to the Muslims of Sicily as it happened to those of the island of Crete (when all the inhabitants, what with one thing, and what with another, were all forced to become Christians.) May the world of damnation fall over the infidel!'*¹⁴³

Another piteous case recounted was the following: one of the leading men in the city sent his own son to one of Ibn Jubayr's party asking him to accept his young daughter for his wife if she pleased him, or to give

¹³⁶ N. Daniel: The Arabs; op cit; p. 151.

¹³⁷ D. Abulafia: *Commerce and Conquest*; op cit, p. 108.

¹³⁸ N. Daniel: The Arabs; op cit; p.151.

¹³⁹ N. Daniel: The Arabs; op cit; p.151.

¹⁴⁰ C. Waern: Medieval Sicily; op cit; 74-5.

¹⁴¹ C. Waern: Medieval Sicily; 74-5.

¹⁴² C. Waern: Medieval Sicily; 74-5.

¹⁴³ In C. Waern: Medieval Sicily; 74..

her in marriage to one of his countrymen, but in any case to take her away with him, she being gladly willing to leave father and brothers if she could only remain in the faith.¹⁴⁴

Gradually the Muslims were deprived of whatever wealth and land they had, and the remnant of the Muslim population was forced into western Sicily by aggressive Latin settlement at the eastern end of the island.¹⁴⁵ Continued Latin pressure on these Muslims brought on a full scale rebellion in the mountains and hills south and west of Palermo and Monreale in 1220, a rebellion, which Frederick subdued after two years of bitter fighting (1222-4).¹⁴⁶ Now the total removal of the Muslims was a matter of time.

Frederick, first, deported them to the Italian hinterland, to Lucera, where they were supposed to offer no danger of any sort. Papal pressure, however, mounted for their complete removal. According to Lomax, 'The bitter and inflammatory rhetoric with which the popes consistently assailed the Muslims of Lucera, and often their royal masters, reveals the depth and character of papal animosity.'¹⁴⁷

Pope Gregory IX urged Frederick to 'shatter' the 'presumptions' of these Muslims so that they would dare not disturb the hearts of God's faithful even a little, 'especially since particular injury will seem to be done to our Redeemer if the sons of Belial, who are bound by the shackle of perpetual servitude, assail the sons of light within our borders or damnably imagine themselves to be equal to them in privileges.'¹⁴⁸

The pope sought to evangelise the Muslims in Lucera, and to that end, he announced he was directing Dominican friars to evangelise them. Gregory urged Frederick to support the Dominicans 'with the material sword, without which their mission might fail; indeed, to 'drag this people, who are openly deceived by the error of perdition, to the font of regeneration and renewal by means of terror, because then their servitude will be more fruitful, since the one God shall have come to you and to them.'¹⁴⁹

Frederick professed to welcome and even assist in their conversion. At the same time he neatly avoided committing himself to the conversion by the use of terror that the pope had urged on him, and, at no point did he acknowledge that the Muslims of Lucera represented any kind of threat to the Church or to their Christian neighbours.¹⁵⁰

Unhappy with Frederick's response, in February 1236, Gregory Charged Frederick with numerous *crimina manifesta* (manifest crimes) in a letter entitled *Dum preteritorum consideratione*, which includes:

'Buildings in which the divine name is honoured are forced to become places where the damnable Muhammad is adored....'

then he added about the Muslims who are:

¹⁴⁴ C. Waern: *Medieval Sicily*; 75..

¹⁴⁵ J.P. Lomax: *Frederick II, His Saracens, and the Papacy*, in *Medieval Christian Perceptions of Islam*, Edited by J.V. Tolan; Routledge; London; pp. 175-97; p. 177.

¹⁴⁶ J.P. Lomax: *Frederick II*, p. 177.

¹⁴⁷ J.P. Lomax: *Frederick II*; p. 179.

¹⁴⁸ MGH (Monumenta Germaniae Historica) Epist. Saec. XIII 1:398-9; No 494 in J.P. Lomax: *Frederick II*, p. 180.

¹⁴⁹ M.GH Epist. Saec. XIII 1:447-8; No 553 in J.P. Lomax: *Frederick II*; p. 182-3.

¹⁵⁰ Frederick would later maintain that the proximity of Muslims to Christians had produced more Muslim converts to Christianity; in J.P. Lomax: *Frederick II*, p. 183.

*'placed almost in the middle of the kingdom, can more easily corrupt the Catholic faith by the venom of their infidelity. Thence greater dangers take hold, for Christians are mixed in with them. Through companionship with pagans the flocks of the faithful depart from the Lord's fold.'*¹⁵¹

Gregory used the threat of excommunication to force Frederick to back down, but Frederick defended the reverse view, that he had moved the Saracens at great expense, and placed them in the midst of Christians who daily served as an example to them.¹⁵²

In October 1238, Gregory sent the third and final excommunication warning; followed by other threats. All in all Papal ire over the existence of the Muslim enclave at Lucera, and the legal arguments with which Gregory IX supported his attacks on it and its imperial patron, persisted long after Gregory's death in 1241 and that of Frederick in 1250.¹⁵³

Then, finally, in 1300, the Muslims were totally wiped out on the island,¹⁵⁴ many sold into slavery, the rest simply disappearing into the obscurity of history. Pope Boniface VIII was delighted on hearing the news of the destruction of the last Muslim colony in Sicily, as Housley tells us.¹⁵⁵

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¹⁵¹ MGH (Monumenta Germaniae Historica) Epist. Saec. XIII 1:574-5; No 676 in J.P. Lomax: Frederick II, p. 185-6.

¹⁵² In J.P. Lomax: Frederick II, p. 186.

¹⁵³ J.P. Lomax: Frederick II, p. 188.

¹⁵⁴ D. Abulafia: *Commerce and Conquest in the Mediterranean, 1100-1500*, Varorium, 1993; p. 4.

¹⁵⁵ Housley: The Italian crusades; p. 65. In J.P. Lomax: Frederick II; p. 189.

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