Library of Arabic Linguistics

Siculo Arabic

Dionisius A. Agius

Monograph No. 12

Routledge
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Library of Arabic Linguistics

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First: Arabic linguistics is developing into an increasingly interesting and important subject within the broad field of modern linguistic studies. The subject is now fully recognised in the Universities of the Arabic speaking world and in international linguistic circles, as a subject of great theoretical and descriptive interest and importance.

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Editor's Introduction

This book is a historical and sociolinguistic study of the use of Arabic in Sicily during the Islamic and Norman periods and at the same time an exercise in the use of documents to study a non standard variety of language. The author examines the development of Arabic within the social history of the island and thus sees Siculo Arabic as an aspect of the amalgamation of the Christian and Muslim cultures. The term Siculo-Arabic as used in the book covers both a particular variety of Arabic and the population which speaks it.

Agius describes this as an "amalgamation" of Arabic and Romance being a manifestation of a geographic and ethnic identity "at the crossroads of Byzantine, Roman, Carthaginian, Arab and Norman influences" (p.2). The author draws a parallel between the language and other features of the culture such as the interiors and painted ceilings of Sicilian buildings which combine "Byzantine linear features and Arab arabesque decor and polygonal interlacing" (p.2). He notes that in contrast to what happened in Spain, the Norman rule did not consciously sweep away the Arab past and that "the Hauteville Kings drew on a mixed cultural heritage based on Greek, Latin and Arab ideas of rulership.... The racial and ethnic backgrounds of both the Christians and the Muslims were absorbed into a remarkably heterogenous society" (p.427).

The book covers the history of Sicily up to the Norman occupation, examines ethnic and social factors contributing to the composition of the Sicilian population during Arab and Norman times, the sociolingiuistic scene of Islamic and post Islamic Sicily and in chapters 5, 6 and 7 covers the nature of Siculo Arabic and comparison with other western dialects. Chapter 4 reviews the Tathqīf al-Lisān of Ibn Makki written during the Norman period and aimed at correcting the *laḥn* or 'errors' appearing in everyday speech.

The work is based on three sources (a) Ibn Makkī's Tathqīf al-Lisān, (b) Siculo Arabic documents referring to technical and material culture and (c) Siculo Middle Arabic found in the Norman *garā'id* which tends towards the Classical form. The author admits (p.428) that these sources are defective in not showing syntactic features and not being a particularly reliable source for showing vowel features because of the nature of the Arabic script. Neither do we have any idea of the position of stress in the dialect, it not being apparent from the script. However we are able to form a reasonably reliable idea of the dialect consonantal system and of the extensive suffixing of Latin and sometimes Greek elements to words of Arabic origin. This latter feature remains in the modern Sicilian dialect and also in Maltese.

The author distinguishes between two terms 'Arabization' and 'Arabicization'. The first indicates cultural and ethnic assimilation, the second linguistic. He points out that it is likely that many people in Sicily may have learnt Arabic as the language of the ruling group, but still attended church and as such remained Sicilian rather than becoming Siculo Muslim. He sees the linguistic situation of Sicily during the Islamic and Norman periods as consisting of three linguistic communities which where of varying importance at different stages. These were (i) a monolinguistic community speaking a Romance di-

alect or Greek dotted along the western side of the island, (ii) a diglossic community composed of Arabs, Berbers and Siculo Arabs speaking Classical Arab and an Arabic *laḥn* as witnessed by ibn Makkī's Tathqīf al-Lisān and (iii) Siculo Christians who were acculturated to the Islamic way of life, but still held on to the church. These spoke a pidginized form of Arabic, alongside their original language. This pidgin later creolized into a fully fledged language. Within (ii) the diglossic community, each sub group spoke its own particular *laḥn*, although all were maghribi in type. The form of the Siculo Muslims was "unique to Sicily in all its features" although it is admitted that "Unfortunately no written documents of this type are found" (p.431).

The final somewhat controversial conclusion reached by Agius is that this postulated creolized form of Arabic has a direct link with Maltese originating in the move of Siculo Christians from Sicily to Malta in the 12th century. These people, speaking a hybridized form of Arabic and Romance would have populated the Maltese islands as part of Norman expansionist policy. Although the prevalent belief has been that Maltese had a North African origin, Agius argues convincingly for his alternative theory.

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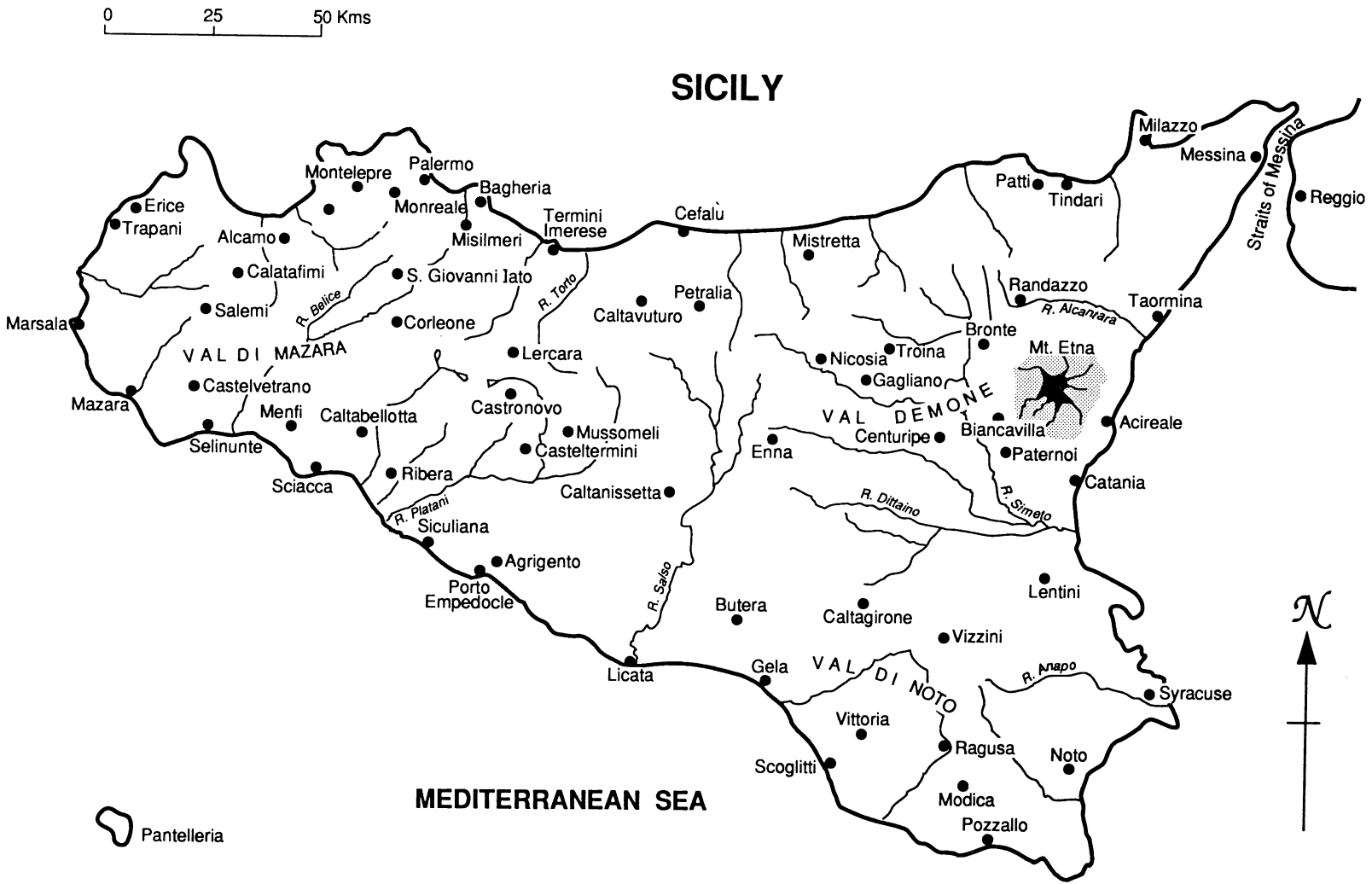
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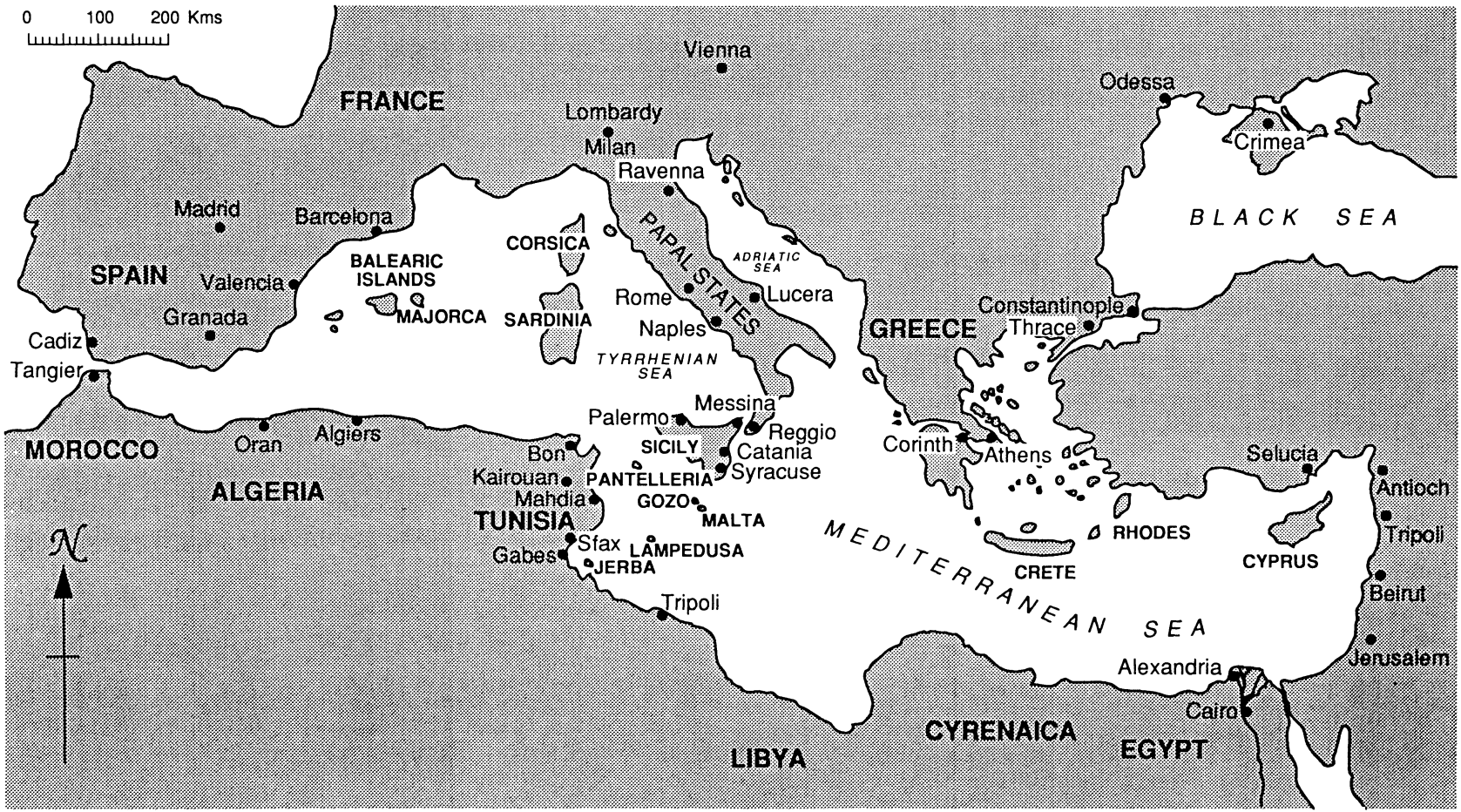
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ABBREVIATIONS

(a) List of abbreviated languages, dialects, registers and varieties.

AA	Andalusi Arabic	Nab	Nabatean
Akk	Akkadian	Neo Per	Neo Persian
AM	Arabic Maltese	Pant	Pantellerian
Aram	Aramaic	Pal	Palestinian
Ber	Berber	Per	Persian (Fārsī)
Byz Gr	Byzantine Greek	Kur	Kurdish
CA	Classical Arabic	Rab	Rabat (Morocco)
Cal	Calabrian	RM	Romance Maltese
Chald	Chaldean	Rom	Romance
DM	Dialectal Maltese	SA	Siculo-Arabic
Egy	Egyptian	SA Gr	Siculo-Arabic Greek
Etrus	Etruscan	SA Lat	Siculo-Arabic Latin
Fr	French	Sic	Sicilian
Gr	Greek	Sin	Sindī
Hin	Hindi	Skt	Sanskrit
Ir	ᶜIrāqī	SLA	Siculo-Laḥn Arabic
It	Italian	SMA	Siculo-Middle Arabic
Ǧi	Ǧiǧellī	Sp	Spanish
Lat	Latin	Sum	Sumerian
Maġ	Maġribī	Syc	Syriac
Mal	Maltese	Syr	Syrian
Med Gr	Medieval Greek	Tan	Tangier
Med Lat	Medieval Latin	Tun	Tunisian
Med Mal	Medieval Maltese	Tur	Turkish
Mid Per	Middle Persian	UB	Ulād Brāhīm
Mor	Moroccan		

(b) List of general abbreviations

a	*annus* (year)	m	masculine
AD	*Anno Domini* (Christian era)	nd	no date
BC	before the Christian era	neg	negative
bot	botany	Nr	number
c	*circa* (about)	part	particle
cf	*confer* (compare)	pl	plural
col	collective	pp	passive participle
d	died	s	singular
eg	*exempli gratia* (for example)	sl	*sine loco* (no place of publication)
et al	*et alii* (and others)		
f	feminine	so	some one
fl	*floruit* (flourished)	syn	synonymous
ibid	*ibidem* (in the same place)	[A]	*ʿāmma*
ie	*id est* (that is)	v̄	long vowel
IM	Ibn Makkī	[X]	*xāṣṣa*
lit	literally		

(c) Symbols

' '	single quotation; word cited from text which may/may not contain Latin or Greek case-endings.
" "	direct quotation of meanings of words.
<	derives from
>	becomes
(?)	uncertain
:	corresponding with
=	consisting of
ˈ	stress
*	hypothetic origin
#	terminal juncture (complete utterance)
//	phonemic transcription
/	variant, alternate
+	post (date)
-	pre (date)
C_1 C_2 C_3	consonants of the Arabic root morpheme (in sequential arrangement)

(d) Classical Arabic vowel symbols

a	low intermediate unround vowel
ā	long vowel
i	high front unround vowel
ī	long vowel
u	high back round vowel
ū	long vowel

Other vowel classifications are found in Charts Two, Four, Five, and Eight (see pages 160, 162, 247, 357, 406-8).

(e) Phonetic symbols not included in the charts (illustrated in various works as cited in text)

ą̄	pharyngealized /a/	r̥	alveolar trill voiced
ƀ	spirant bilabial voiced	ʧ	affricate dental voiced
β	bilabial fricative	ụ̄	pharyngealized/u/
ę̄	pharyngealized /e/	ǯ	alveolar affricate voiced
ę̆	non-stressed open /e/	3	laryngeal spirant voiced
ę	open/e/	ε	pharyngeal fricative voiced
ɧ	spirant velar voiced	˂	(superscript on /ą̆/, /ī̆/, /ū̆/) pharyngeal fricative voiced
ị̄	pharyngealized /i/		
x̲	velar fricative unvoiced		
ǭ	pharyngealized /o/		
ʾ	half-open rounded back		

Note[1]: /ā / also represents the graphemic transcription of *alif maqṣūra.*

Note[2]: Initial *hamzat al-qaṭ^{c}* /?/ is included in all terms except those of socio-economic or religious context (eg. ahl, awlād, amān, iqlīm); in other instances where *hamza* becomes part of the phonetic elicitation it is inserted (eg. ?amīr, ?amīn etc.).

Note[3]: With the definite article /al-/ an assimilated /-l-/ with the initial sun letter of the noun or adjective is only noted if it is of phonetic significance in the elicitation of the term concerned; otherwise /al-/ is prefixed to initial moon and sun lettered nouns and adjectives.

Note[4]: The *tā' marbūṭa* has no graphemic representation unless, for illustration purposes, it is considered phonetically important in which case it is transcribed /-a[t]/.

CHART

	Arabic		SA Latin		SA Greek		Maltese	
	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	+
Bilabial								
occlusive		b	p	b	π		p(p)	b(b)
nasal		m		m		μ		m(m)
semivowel		w						w(w)
Labiodental								
fricative	f		f	v	φ	β	f(f)	v(v)
Apical-interdental								
fricative	ṯ	ḏ			δ	θ		
Apical-alveolar								
occlusive	t	d	t	d	τ		t(t)	d(d)
affricate			z/ç		τζ		tʃ(ċ)	dʒ(ġ)
							ts(z)	dz(ż)
spirant	s	z	s		σ/ς	ζ	s(s)	z(ż)
nasal		n		n		ν		n(n)
vibrant	l	r	l	r	λ	ρ	l(l)	r(r)
Apical-emphatic								
occlusive	ṭ	ḍ						
fricative		ẓ						
spirant	ṣ							
Palatal								
affricate		ǧ	c	g				
fricative				j				
spirant	š		x/sc				ʃ(x)	
			sh					
semivowel		y		j/y				y(j)
Velar occlusive	k		c/k		κ		k(k)	g(g)
fricative			h/ch		χ	γ		ɣ(għ)
			xh/hy					
Uvular occlusive	q							
fricative	x	ġ						
Pharyngeal								
fricative	ḥ	ċ					ḥ(ħ)	*ᶜ(għ / ʾ)
Laryngeal								
occlusive	ʔ							ʔ(q)
fricative	h							h(h)

Classical Arabic consonantal phonemes corresponding graphemically with Siculo Arabic (Latin and Greek) and the Maltese phonetic representation with the graphemic equivalent in brackets

INTRODUCTION

Within a span of three hundred years Sicily underwent two processes of ethnic, cultural and linguistic transformation. Under the Arab rule it witnessed a period of change from Hellenization and Christianization to Arabization and Islamization. In the struggle for Christianity over Islam the Normans defended Latinity though this did not affect eastern Sicily for it remained Hellenic. Linguistically, the transformation was not entirely due to Latinization. The Arabic elements in place-names and material cultural terminology are still alive in the Sicilian language today. In this sense the process of assimilation and transformation was never completed during the Norman period; it continued to operate for a long time afterwards.

It is necessary to distinguish between two terms used in this book, Arabization and Arabicization. I would like to propose that Arabization means the process of conforming to a culture and an ethnic community, in this case Arab, while Arabicization a process of adopting Arabic as a language or dialect which was socially and economically advantageous at the time. When we speak

of an ethnic Arab community we mean not a nationality as such, but a group with a common cultural affiliation into which people of a particular community are brought up with a common language. For example a Sicilian who spoke Arabic was still a Sicilian if he held to the church; while a Sicilian who abandoned her/his church for Islam became a full member of an Islamic community and completely accultured to it. She/he is therefore called Muslim or Siculo Muslim.

Arabicization was a slow process and took different forms. It constituted a type with its own characteristics which I termed Siculo Arabic. The word "Siculo" is a geographical and ethnic identity. Sicily was the crossroads of Byzantine, Roman, Carthaginian, Arab and Norman influences. This meeting comes to light in the unique work of Greek and Arab artists who, influenced by earlier cultures, beautified the interiors and painted the ceilings of buildings. The Byzantine linear features and the Arab arabesque décor and polygonal interlacing demonstrate a richness and harmony of colours which are typically Sicilian. This I call "Siculo". It is an identity formed from a pot-pourri that distinguished itself socially, culturally and linguistically.

Recent scholarship has re-assessed the history of Islamic and post-Islamic Sicily. In his thesis *Sicily during the Fatimid Age* (1986), Leonard Chiarelli explores the political, social, economic and cultural life of Fāṭimid Sicily (297-432/909-1040). He fills the gap left by scholars seeking

to elucidate the impact of Arab rule in Sicily by using primary sources which have come to light since Michele Amari's *Storia dei Musulmani di Sicilia* (1854-1872) and revised by the erudite scholar Carlo Alfonso Nallino (1933-1939). An attempt to re-evaluate the socio-cultural status of the Muslims in Norman Sicily was made by Jeremy Johns in his thesis *The Muslims of Norman Sicily, c. 1060-c. 1194* (1983). This again is a development beyond the work of Amari as it reviews his theories, according to which Sicilians resisted the Normans whereas Johns clarifies the point that the Hauteville kings, though they encouraged acculturation in some areas, did impose segregation in others throughout the twelfth century. Johns (1993, 133-59) has also recently examined the Arabic facet of the Norman kingship, some components of which were fashioned after the Sicilian Kalbite amirs (336-432/948-1040) and others imported from the Egyptian Fāṭimid caliphs (358-567/969-1171). It is evident from his study that a radical reform of the components of the Arabic facet took place after c. 1130. The practices and structure of the Norman *dīwān* or Arabic fiscal administration is discussed in his forthcoming book, *Duana Regis: Arabic Administration and Royal Authority in Norman Sicily.*

On a lexical level, etymological investigation was considered essential in this present work in order to establish the history and culture of the target words in question. The question of which medieval linguistic tools

are available for a serious inquiry was discussed at length in my book *Arabic Literary Works as a Source of Documentation for Technical Terms of the Material Culture* (1984, 60-87). The argument focused on the fact that the researcher encounters numerous problems because of the lack of basic tools. There is no adequate dictionary for classical and post-classical Arabic, and no historical dictionary at all, let alone one dealing, for example, with material cultural terms as such. Medieval philologists regarded most of these terms as being foreign, obscure, commonplace or dialectal so considered unimportant and therefore were excluded from lexica. The traditional approach of medieval Arabic lexica was purely descriptive, their purpose being to deal with pronunciation, quotations from the Qur'ān, *ḥadīṯ* and pre-Islamic poetry, and to arrange the meanings according to frequency or other descriptive criteria. The modern researcher is not interested merely in what the root or form may mean, but in how the word is used in the context given for the speaker or writer of the time. Medieval lexica are monumental yet incomplete works, containing errors that have slipped through in the copying of manuscripts, or may be attributed to carelessness or relative ignorance on the part of the Muslim compilers.

European dictionaries of classical and post-classical Arabic compiled by orientalists did not at first contribute anything new to lexicographical technique. They followed

old Arabic models very closely in respect of their contents. E. W. Lane's *An Arabic-English Lexicon* (1984) is perhaps an exception. It is an excellent dictionary in the accuracy of its definitions and the fullness of its examples. It encompasses several classical lexica, most important of which are, Ibn Manẓūr's (d. 711/1311-2) *Lisān al-ᶜArab* (1955-1956) and al-Zabīdī's (d. 1205/1790-1) *Tāj al-ᶜArūs* (1888). Yet, like all such works, Lane's lexicon is not infallible. It includes obscure meanings and forms that do not assist the researcher and may often be misleading. R. Dozy's *Supplément aux dictionnaries arabes* (1967) on the other hand, is a far more important work because it includes a number of medieval technical and material cultural terms as well as dialectal and, in particular, Maġribī usages. Nonetheless, even though western lexicographers of the nineteenth century attempted to investigate classical Arabic words by reconstructing the history of the word in the light of the culture or cultures wherein they flourished, such scholars sometimes failed to see into the intellectual processes of speakers who used them and to view the words against the whole background of the language they pertained to, not only in their actual use, but also in their literary and social value and in their innumerable relations with other words.

The pioneering works of Pellegrini's *Gli arabismi nelle lingue neolatine* (1972) in two volumes and Caracausi's *Arabismi medievali di Sicilia* (1983) look at lexicographical investigation from the viewpoint of the

afore-mentioned criteria. They set out to compile data from several medieval and modern sources. Pellegrini includes in his work some 250 authors who dealt with general linguistic and lexicographical issues in the Italian and Sicilian languages in particular and Romance languages in general; most of these works are studies concerning etymological discussions on toponymic and onomastic references which Pellegrini revised and annotated. He classified his word entries thematically under several headings. Caracausi went a step further. His work which refers to some 280 authors (most of whom were cited by Pellegrini) used a number of notarial documents from the State Archives of Agrigento, Enna, Palermo and Trapani which were transcribed by several research students in the seventies. Apart from these documents Caracausi studies carefully the *ǧarā?id*, which are deeds including names of individuals listed for tax purposes that go back to the Norman-Swabian period (1060-1266). They maintain several traces of Arabo-Islamic culture and a linguistic survival. These documents had originally attracted the attention of Cusa who studied the texts of the parchments and published them in one volume, *I diplomi greci ed arabi di Sicilia* (1868-1882). Cusa intended to publish a second volume to his work which would have included translations with annotations but it never appeared. The importance of these documents is topographic, onomastic, historic and linguistic. A useful development in Caracausi's work is

his attempt to discuss some comparative phonological features in the inventory of words he compiled. Pellegrini's and Caracausi's method of synchronic and diachronic investigation has been successful. Most interesting of all in their works is the inclusion of lexemes from the islands of Pantelleria and Lampedusa. Both have opened the way for linguistic inquiry and their works are indeed a monument to the science of lexicography.

The investigation of material cultural terms in this book has suggested that a structural-semantic attempt is possible. There is no unique starting-point for analysing the selected technical terms, nor is there any definite stopping-point. Most of the terms were selected as examples to illustrate phonologically correspondences between Classical Arabic and each of the Siculo Arabic varieties. The semantic investigation was only a peripheral exercise, but essential to understanding the socio-economic and cultural background of such material cultural terminology at the time of its usage.

The question of language use during these periods is complex. The Arabic spoken by Arabs and non-Arabs at different layers or registers was a different type to the highly archaized form of Classical Arabic. Our medieval Muslim grammarians failed to accept the fact that Classical Arabic is a separate language. Their narrow-minded view that this was the only spoken language was sheer fallacy. *Laḥn* authors were no exception because they set out to correct common errors in the dialect in question

and prescribed in their stead what they believed to be "good" Arabic. Peter Molan has examined *laḥn* data of medieval Maġribī Arabic in his thesis *Medieval Western Arabic: Reconstructing Elements of the Dialects of Al-Andalus, Sicily and North Africa from the Lahn al-ᶜAmmah Literature* (1978) in which he demonstrated that it was possible to reconstruct the vocalic and stress systems from the consonant inventory. This approach encouraged the present researcher to analyse, on a phonological level, the data found in Siculo Arabic comparing them, where necessary, with Andalusi Arabic and contemporary Maltese and contrasting them with Classical Arabic.

Andalusi Arabic, a generic term, is used here to include Spanish Arabic dialects, registers, loan words, place names and names. It sums up the linguistic complexities of medieval Islamic Spain as much as Siculo Arabic, also a general term, does for Islamic and post-Islamic Sicily (up to 1266). Corriente's *A Grammatical Sketch of the Spanish Arabic Dialect Bundle* (1977) and his revised edition *Árabe andalusí y lenguas romances* (1992) have been indispensable to the present researcher. His data come from a number of medieval sources covering various regional differences over different periods of time and the reader/researcher may wish to consult his works for further detailed reference.

In my phonological and lexical investigation I have included contemporary Maltese because of close affinities with the Siculo Arabic group of varieties. For this

particular exercise, Aquilina's *Maltese-English Dictionary* (1987-1990) was invaluable. His work is descriptive as well as historical; it is both diachronic, including entries by earlier lexicographers and synchronic with a breadth and depth of coverage comprising entries not only of standard Maltese but dialectal words.

Maltese consists of Arabic and Romance features. It shares phonological and morphological characteristics with the Maġribī dialects, but it has been affected by Sicilian and Italian, probably during the Norman period in Malta (1091-1283). The subsequent Romance speaking occupiers (1283-1800) began to exert considerable phonetic and lexical influence on Maltese [eg. AM / ʤībya / (ġibja) "cistern" > RM / ʤibyūn / (ġibjun) "huge cistern" = CA ǧābiya + (augmentative) Sicilian suffix / -uni /; AM / inkeyya / (nkejja) "vexation" > RM / inkeyyūz / (nkejjuż) "spiteful" = CA nikāya + (adjectival) Sicilian suffix / -usu /; AM / sakrān / (sakran) "drunk" > RM / sakrānatsts / (sakranazz) "drunkard" = CA sakrān + (pejorative) Italian suffix / -atstso / (Agius 1990b, 171 and see Chart One, Chapter Five)]. A major part of the Arabic lexical input came from Sicily during the Arab occupation but a very small number of words can be traced back to Levantine origin (Agius 1980b, 14). The Arabic inventory loaned from Sicily does not exclude of course the Berber element. Syntactically Maltese has an Arabic base but sharing at times Romance features.

Our study includes little reference to Medieval Maltese because, it was felt that due to the paucity of documents in this area it seemed safer to concentrate on the many examples found in contemporary Maltese. And only when more examples in Medieval Maltese are available can a serious study be undertaken. Even then, this book does not venture to explore in any real depth the Maltese element but uses it for general comparative purposes. The intention is at this stage to show potential links with Siculo Arabic varieties. For a detailed phonological analysis of Maltese the reader/researcher is referred to Aquilina's *The Structure of Maltese* (1959).

The phonological representation of the symbols in this present work is broad and I must confess that I have applied a linguistic approach which is unconventional and perhaps not the ideal way to look at dialects on a comparative basis. Some dialectologists may object to my terminology but I have tried to keep as close as possible to the current research in linguistics. The Arabic lexemes, including grammatical, historical and cultural concepts, as well as names of countries, cities/towns (with the exception of some modern established names) *nisbas* and tribal names are represented by the International Phonetic Alphabet system; however, names of Muslim rulers, scholars, dynasties, religious and political movements and Arabic titles of books, articles and monographs in the text and bibliography are cited in the Library of Congress system. Christian dates are normally preceded by Islamic

dates if the subject concerns the Islamic period; in other instances only the date of the Christian era is inserted.

The areas which this book covers are as follows: Chapter One "The Land of the Siculans" is an outline of the history of Sicily up to the Norman occupation. Chapter Two "The Siculo Arabic: Ethnic and Social Features " discusses some important factors that have contributed to the make-up of Sicily during the Arab and Norman rules. I will then attempt to assess "The Socio-linguistic Scene of Islamic and post-Islamic Sicily" which is the subject of Chapter Three. Ibn Makkī l-Ṣiqillī (d. 501/1107) is the only *laḥn* author that Islamic Sicily had witnessed in its time; Chapter Four will therefore examine "The Role of Ibn Makkī in the Siculo Arabic". Both Chapter Five "Siculo-Laḥn Arabic: Phonological Correspondences" and Chapter Six "Siculo Arabic: Phonological Correspondences" will concentrate on the Siculo Arabic varieties comparing data with other western dialects while Chapter Seven "Romance and Greek Interferences in Siculo-Arabic" looks into the hybridized features of this variety. The final Chapter is a general description of "Siculo-Middle Arabic" based on the *ǧarā?id* of Norman Sicily.

The book is by no means exhaustive. It is hoped that it will contribute to the understanding of Siculo Arabic in that: (i) it re-evaluates some traditionally accepted theories on the socio-ethnic and cultural status of native Sicilians and settlers of Islamic and post-Islamic rules (until 1266),

(ii) it re-examines the linguistic situation in Sicily and it reveals that the Arabic of Sicily was not confined to one variety but several and, in spite of the dearth of documents, we are able to reconstruct phonologically (and in some instances morphologically) these varieties. The book focuses on the Siculo Arabic group of varieties. Scant attention has been given by dialectologists to the dialects of Arabic in Sicily and my intention is to explore these varieties in the light of our Sicilian medieval documents. This study is therefore, an attempt to draw together the linguistic data covering the Arab and post-Arab periods. It further illuminates the diversity and complexity of the Arabic varieties in Sicily with the hope that further research in comparative dialectology will establish historical-linguistic links with contemporary Maġribī dialects and Maltese in particular.

CHAPTER ONE

THE LAND OF THE SICULANS

1.1:0
Introduction

Sicily has witnessed many changes over the centuries but in all its chequered history, one period over all others marks the high point of Sicilian civilization, that is the Arabo-Norman period in its broadest sense. Traces of this civilization feature in the architecture of several monuments in Sicilian towns and cities, not to mention the transformation of agricultural lands during the period with place-names of Arabic origin. The same can be said of many of the customs and traditions of the country most of which owe their origins to this great civilization. The remnants of a language, the Siculo-Arabic that was once spoken by Sicilian Muslims, Christians and Jews still survives in the Sicilian dialect. This chapter will attempt to show how the strategic importance of Sicily has led to its turbulent history and changing economic fortunes, giving rise to the achievements of the Arabo-Norman period.

1.1:1

The island of Sicily, lying south west of Italy, is triangular in shape and has an area of 25,738 square kilometres. It is divided into three geographical *valli* (regions), the Val di Mazara in the west, the Val Demone in the north east and the Val di Noto in the south east. The great volcano of Etna rises 3617 metres high in the east and the Nebrodici and Madonie mountains along the north rise 2084 metres. The river Simeto flows east, the Salso and the Platani, both flow south. The Straits of Messina at the north east corner separate Sicily from Italy. The shortest distance from North Africa is about 144 kilometres. The coastal towns were susceptible to the influences of cultures that once dominated these seas: on the east the Ionian Sea, on the south the Sea of Sicily bordering North Africa and on the north the Tyrrhenian Sea bordering Italy.

Geographically, Sicily falls in the middle of the Mediterranean, dividing it into two main sections: the western and the eastern basins. Its climate has generally a cold wet winter season and a long hot summer with practically no rain. The western basin, which covers Sicily and the Maltese islands (93 kilometres south), is separated from the eastern basin by a submerged ridge. A shallow bank where the depth is not more than 365 metres exists from Sicily to the coast near Tunis. Between Malta and Sicily however, the depth is less than some 182 metres, from which evidence J. D. Evans (1963, 34-5) thinks that it was quite possible both countries were once joined

together by a land bridge. This has been proved by the bones in caves which were discovered in Malta, at Għar Dalam (The Cave of Darkness) that are of European rather than North African origin. On the other hand, the flora of Malta bears a resemblance to that of North Africa (Haslam, Sell and Wolseley 1977, x-xi, xlvii-xlix) which, according to Evans (*ibid*, 35), suggests that Malta was also joined to North Africa but was cut off from it at an earlier period than from Sicily.

1.2:0

The island was colonized by several peoples coming from all directions. The upper Palaeolithic, whose diet was largely sea-food, left incised drawings and paintings on the walls of Grotta della Cava dei Genovesi on Isola di Lévanzo and in the Grotta dell'Addaura on the north side of Monte Pellegrino. The Neolithic culture introduced farming and trading and its techniques spread from Syria to the Iberian coast. Along with farming, these colonists of the Neolithic culture, made pottery and used polished and chipped stone implements. Around 3000 BC we see impressed pottery with elaborate decoration made by one of the earliest agricultural communities in Sicily, known as the Stentinello culture (*ibid*, 45). Several centres in Sicily by this time were using copper and bronze. Near Syracuse basins and footed bowls were found in Bronze Age rock-tombs. The early Bronze Age people cremated their dead at the Tarxien temples in Malta, while the Castelluccio culture of Sicily preferred burial (Lewis 1977,

23-48, 50). The basic techniques of the Neolithic period were consequently followed by a much more progressive culture of which painted ware and copper smelting were the most important features.

The inhabitants of Sicily were, it appears, divided into two groups; the Sicans in the east and the Sicels in the west of the island. The general term used for both groups is the Siculans. When the Greeks occupied the island the Siculans assimilated their culture and by the beginning of the eighth century BC the Aegean Greeks founded the city of Catania on the east coast. It was the colonists who introduced the olive and the vine, so characteristic of Sicily. The Greeks were at war with one another in the mainland and in Sicily and only when the Carthaginians posed a threat to the island did they unite for a counter attack. Sicily was in the middle of a conflict between Greeks, Etruscans and Carthaginians, not over religion or ideology but rather a struggle over trade routes and land. This was also true of the ensuing colonists who saw Sicily as a geographically strategic position between the east and west of the Mediterranean.

The Phoenicians came from the west coast and occupied the cities of Marsala and Palermo. The presence of the Greek colonists and the Etruscans from Tuscany who traded with the Siculans worried the Phoenicians. The latter were more traders than colonists. These three powers, rivals though they often were, have in many ways contributed in the subsequent centuries a "material"

culture that gradually became Siculan. It was Gelon (d. 478 BC), tyrant of Gela in Greece, who made himself master of Syracuse to which he transferred a large number of the inhabitants of Gela. His influence spread over half of the island. At this time Sicily was rich in corn and forests, metals and minerals, products of which were greatly sought by neighbouring countries; this continued to be so up to the Middle Ages. At one point the Greek cities of Sicily grew richer than those of Greece. By the third century BC Syracuse, considered the greatest city of the world, defeated the Athenians. But not for very long; the mountain peoples of Italy and Carthaginians (originally from Tunisia) settling in western Sicily became politically and economically strong. Jealousy and hatred accelerated wars among the Greeks, Carthaginians and the Romans. Sicily was deforested. Vast amounts of wood was cut to build great fleets leaving the country almost barren and causing a climatic upheaval.

1.2:1

The five hundred years of Greek occupation and the ensuing five hundred years of Roman rule in Sicily left traces of monuments, buildings and artefacts all around the island. Greek settlements were established as early as 734 BC. Syracuse was governed by a number of dictators and kings, one of whom Dionysius I (c. 430-367 BC) gained complete ascendancy over Syracuse and the east coast. He distinguished himself with several wars against the Carthaginians, the net result of which was to isolate them

on the western coast of Sicily. An end to the Greeks came with Syracuse surrendering to Marcus Claudius Marcellus (c. 268-208 BC) in 212 BC. The Romans proved to be the dominating people and Sicily was in the hands of the Latins with Syracuse remaining independent. Roman wars led them to use the wealth of the subjugated people to feed the army and supply them with fighting equipment. Sicily's greater harvests of wheat also went to feed the coastal towns of Italy and the city of Rome. But Rome was faced by a fierce enemy, the Carthaginians. Gaius Duilius, consul at Rome, won the first crushing Roman victory in 260 BC off Milazzo in north eastern Sicily. It was a demoralizing defeat for the Carthaginians.

Hamilcar Barca (d. 228 BC), the father of Hannibal (247-183 BC), became commander of the Carthaginian forces in Sicily during the First Punic War (264-241 BC) and held on to his position near Panormus, ie. Palermo, despite efforts by the Romans to expel him. Tensions between Romans and Carthaginians became fierce, and Hannibal won a sweeping victory in 241 BC. The Second Punic War (218-203 BC) led Hannibal to several victories but failed ultimately to break the confederacy of Rome. It was in 201 BC that Rome's triumph over the Carthaginians brought back honour and glory to Rome. Paradoxically, Rome, the victor was entangled in conflict whereas Carthage the vanquished enjoyed a relative peace. What the Romans were debating now was the destruction of Carthage, thus putting an end to all

ambitions and hopes for the Carthaginians and their neighbours, the Numidians who could have become masters of the city. The Third Punic War was inevitable and in 150 BC the Roman army and fleet was mobilized to Sicily to invade Africa. The crushing victory over the Carthaginians made the Romans claim the Mediterranean and call it *Mare Nostrum* (Our Sea). One significant point made by Ludwig (1943, 106) was that Greeks, Carthaginians and Romans were a mixture of peoples as many are today and "what counted was not race but soil". The Mediterranean people have been conditioned by the elements which are eternal, ie. the wind, sun, soil, the desert etc. and it is from these that the character of the people is forged (*ibid*).

1.2:2

In the following centuries Sicily fell to the Germanic Vandals after the break-up of North Africa. Under their exceptionally able chieftain Geiseric (d. 477 AD), they sacked Palermo in 455 AD and added the island to their rule thirteen years later. The presence of the Vandals in Sicily (468 AD) and North Africa (429 AD) had brought about political and economic changes both in the east and west Mediterranean as well as Europe in general. Wallace-Hadrill (1962, 38) attributed the Vandals' importance to three factors: (a) they controlled the trade of corn and oil, (b) they were fanatically anti-Catholic as they had embraced Arianism which maintained that Jesus Christ was not co-equal or co-eternal with the Father but a finite

being (similar to that which Islam believes), while the Africans and the Sicilians became fiercely staunch Catholics, (c) they claimed to be considered the intellectuals of the Roman World. For ninety-five years the Vandal kingdom established by Geiseric shook the political and commercial stability of the Mediterranean until 533 AD when the Byzantine general Belisarius (c. 500-565 AD), who was sent by the Emperor Justinianus (483-565 AD), overthrew the Vandals in Africa and the Ostrogoths in Italy (Durant 1950, 109). The Sicilians were well treated under the Ostrogoths, but this did not soften them, for in effect they welcomed the Byzantine invasion. Belisarius tried to restore estates to the Romans and stolen properties of the African church were given back. Not only was this resettlement of Africa successful but Justinianus managed to give the African church a chance to put an end to the Arian heresy (*ibid*, 41). It seems, however, that the merchants were not keen to return to the old trade-routes that were disrupted during the Vandals' rule. Seeds of anti-Greek feeling started to emerge on the surface. Writing on Byzantium, Pirenne (1974, 10-11) said: "It is true, weakened by the immense effort she had just put forth, could never finish nor even preserve intact the astonishing work which she had accomplished". Justinianus failed to maintain imperial unity as Theodoric (493-526 AD) managed to foster a hegemony over all the Germanic kingdoms. Sicily's fertility had suffered a set-back from when the Romans

were conquered by the Vandals and things did not improve when the Byzantines occupied the island. Aqueducts fell into ruin and agricultural lands became unproductive. Sicily became a citadel with garrison towns to guard the Mediterranean.

Italy had passed through a long period of bitter fighting between Greeks and Ostrogoths and their mercenaries. This left the country in famine and plague. The Lombards came on the scene in 568 AD. They were not a unified people and the people they feared most were the Byzantines. Had they a clear military objective the Lombards would have probably conquered Italy. The Franks were at their door-step and they could have been called upon to enter Italy from the north-west; though, in spite of their mistrust, Byzantine help would have always been preferred. Although not a unified people, the Lombards had a strong material culture much admired by the rival communities and they flourished artistically. It was at this time that tensions were developing between Rome and Byzantium. Meanwhile, Sicily remained Greek in culture.

Charlemagne (742-814 AD) was summoned to Italy by Pope Adrian I (772-795 AD) to put down a revolt by the Lombards. His success was but another example of the well organized military and political genius that he exhibited against every race that seemed to threaten his empire. Much may be attributed to Charlemagne in the forming of the political system of the Middle Ages. On a

socio-economic level, he encouraged agriculture, commerce and industry, but as Wallace-Hadrill (1962, 121) commented: "(His) achievement was one thing, his legacy another". He left an empire that could not hold together; many regions were stricken by famine and plague and vendetta. Because trade between France and the eastern Mediterranean was not active, the Carolingian period (714-987 AD) lost interest in the Mediterranean and the Italian cities grabbed the opportunity and thrived (Hodgett 1972, 49). The followers of Charlemagne seemed to have lost sight of his unitary rule and became much enamoured of an ideal, that of an *Imperium Christianum*. It never happened. The results of their efforts led to military disasters, economic decay and social change. The social fragmentation of the medieval states of Europe accelerated when their peoples tended increasingly to go their own ways, speak their own languages and manage their own affairs; contracts based on tenure of land that may be renewed were signed, and churches and monasteries ran their own estates. In the east Byzantium continued to follow the political ideals of the late Roman Empire yet the resources were weak and its culture lost its impetus with the influx of many Barbarians who were admitted temporarily to Byzantium after they lost their territories. Nonetheless, we see that as a result of the mixture of peoples in Byzantium "valuable novelties" in shipbuilding, silk and glass industry and above all, trade practices were gradually introduced. In general, it may be

said that orthodox Byzantium was further ahead than the Catholic west (Lopez 1976, 23). The Emperor Constans II (641-668 AD) moved his court to the city of Syracuse thus securing his dream of reconstituting the Empire of Rome. However, the abandonment of Constantinople was a wrong move which was criticized by his officials as weakening the Byzantine empire. Had not a courtier in 668 AD assassinated the emperor and consequently the headquarters returned to Constantinople, the eastern Mediterranean world would have been open to Islam.

1.3:0

The rise and diffusion of Islam was regarded by the Byzantines and the European tribes as a wound in the heart of the Christian Church. It was a religious catastrophe for those who conceived the religious conflict in dogmatic terms. What was the historic significance of the event ? Islam propagated universalism by assimilating people of diverse ethnic origins under one ideology. Byzantium was squashed by a new ideology while the roots of the Latinization of North Africa were uprooted. But such rapid movement would have not taken place if the socio-economic situation in Europe and the Mediterranean were stable (Gabrieli 1974, 66-71). Christianity was split into two halves - Rome and Constantinople. Moreover, with the Islamic expansion the patriarchates of Alexandria, Jerusalem and Antioch had been cut off from Rome, Constantinople and the Christian world. Even without this, the relations between

the five patriarchates had never been particularly cordial (Southern 1972, 53-6).

Politically and militarily the second/eighth century was a period of developments and crises. The Lombards, the Germanic tribes and the Byzantines invaded the Italian peninsula. The Frankish monarchs were constantly interfering in Italy while the German tribes, the enemies of the Slavs were controlling most of the economic power in the north east of Europe. A victim of dissensions, economic strain and religious conflicts, Europe became torn into pieces and only Islam, it appeared, could become an alternative to the Rome-Byzantine tradition. The question remains as to how far Islam was the cause of the political instability in the west and the rupture between the west and the east and whether the imbalance of economy and trade between the Byzantine world and the Latin west was as a result of the expansion of Islam.

1.3:1

The rapidity with which Arabs entered Syria and Iraq in the first/seventh century and defeated the great armies of both Byzantium and Sassānid Persia remains an enigma in the history of the world. Forming a centralized government in Medina the Arabs marched into Egypt and North Africa eventually extending their empire as far as the Pyrenees in the western Mediterranean and almost as far as Rome in the central Mediterranean. Within a few decades, however, Medina proved unsuitable as a centre

of government for this extended Islamic empire and therefore the seat of the caliphate was transferred to Damascus under the Umayyad family (41-132/661-750). As Arabs were not skilled in running administration they employed Byzantine and Sassānid experts who had worked under their former governments. Arabs relied on Greeks, Copts and Berbers to continue trade with the Mediterranean and employed southern Arabs, as well as Greeks and Copts to build ships and carry maritime traffic. In creating a triangular trade that went from east to west through the North African coast and the mid-Mediterranean, Arabs spread the universalism of Islam. This notion is an established factor when historians deal with Islam in the east coast of Africa, the southern tip of India and the Far East.

The establishing of the Umayyad dynasty in Syria proved an important step in consolidating the Islamic expansion in the Mediterranean. Muᶜāwiya I (41-60/661-680) dismembered the military system based on tribal warfare. His model was the Byzantine framework for both military organization and administration; although not all techniques were applied for the model itself was Arabized, using Arabic as the administrative language. Even when the Islamic empire in the ensuing centuries disintegrated and was succeeded by minor Islamic states and dynasties, the Byzantine model continued to exercise its fascination on Muslims, as was the case with the

Fāṭimid caliphate in North Africa, Sicily, Egypt and Syria (297-567/909-1171).

Though the Muslims' admiration of Byzantines continued, hostilities between Byzantium and the Umayyad empire brought about the cessation of the circulation of Byzantine gold coinage in the Mediterranean territory. The interruption of gold coinage did not paralyse the economy of the east-west trade. There was no rigid dichotomy. Contacts between Christianity and Islam appear to have been frequent and fruitful.

1.3:2

Sicily played an important role in the east-west trade but the Byzantine hold of the island in the west particularly started to show signs of weakness. A first Arab naval incursion took place in 32/652 (Al-Balādhurī 1866, 235). It is possible that a second Arab incursion occurred after the assassination of Constans II at Syracuse in 48/668 (Amari 1933-1939, I, 195-219). In the meantime the Byzantines were using Sicily as a base for their attack against the Arabs in North Africa. Byzantine and Berber refugees fled Tripoli and Carthage (Tunis) to Sicily (*ibid*, I, 232). Throughout the second/eighth century there were several Arab raids on Sicily, not always successful (Vasiliev 1935, 64). They finally took Mazara in 212/827 under the order of Ziyādat Allāh I (210-223/817-838), the Aghlabid amir and then moved to lay siege to the capital Syracuse which lasted almost a year. In 216/831 the city of Palermo surrendered to the Arabs. From 216-227/831-841 the Arab

conquerors consolidated their power in the region of Mazara. The conquest of Sicily was completed by 289/902 when the towns of Noto, Catania and Syracuse fell to the Muslims (Amari 1933-1939, I, 535). The Aghlabid control was not very strong and some weaknesses started to show all over the island until Ibrāhīm II (261-289/875-902) undertook a virtual reconquest of the island. His authority was reasserted on the island and retook the last Greek possession in Sicily-Taormina in 289/902 (Talbi 1966, 519-20). The Aghlabids (184-296/800-909) became supreme commanders of the central Mediterranean enabling them to seize Corsica in 194/809, Sardinia 195/810, and the Maltese islands in 255-256/869-870. An unsuccessful attempt was made by the Byzantines to recover Malta when reinforcements from Sicily were sent by Muḥammad b. Khafāja (255-257/869-871) to defend the Byzantines (Ibn al-Athīr 1867-1874, VII, 70).

Muslims from North Africa were attracted to settle in Sicily from the moment Mazara was captured by the Muslims in 289/902 (Al-Dāwudī 1962, II, 428-30). They settled in Val di Mazara and later the emigration spread to Val di Noto but hardly any to Val Demone. A further influx of immigrants into Sicily accelerated under the Fāṭimid dynasty (297-326/909-938). The Fāṭimids consolidated the entire island under Muslim authority and encouraged at the same time the settlement of Muslim colonists throughout the three regions. The density of the Muslim population was, however, still

concentrated in the Val di Mazara and the Christian population was well entrenched in Val Demone (Amari 1933-1939, II, 248, 252). Many Muslim immigrants flocked to the city of Palermo (SA *Balerm* < Lat *Panormus*) where the Sicilians mixed with Greeks, Lombards, Jews, Arabs and Berbers. The city became a centre of trade; goods were exchanged between Christian Europe and Muslim Africa. It would not be an exaggeration to claim that Palermo was one of the richest cities in the Islamic territories and perhaps even Europe.

The geographer Ibn Ḥawqal (fl. c. 367/977-978) presents us with an interesting description of Sicily. Originally, his manuscript *Kitāb al-Masālik wa l-Mamālik* did not include Sicily's section; it contained rather a description of other Islamic countries known to him at that time. Suspicions about the authenticity of his work arose when a final version, including Sicily's section, appeared in c. 378/988. The first doubt concerns the plagiarizing of al-Iṣṭakhrī (fl. c. 340/951-952)'s work, bearing the same title *Kitāb al-Masālik wa l-Mamālik* which Ibn Ḥawqal apparently used as the foundation of his description; the second is the imperspicuities found in the description of Sicily (Miquel 1971, 787). Our main concern is his pessimistic claim that Sicily shifted from "fertility to sterility" in the fourth/tenth century (Ibn Ḥawqal 1938-1939, I, 129-30). His comment does not bear any truth. Islamic Sicily witnessed a different direction, right from the beginning of the Aghlabid rule.

The agricultural economy flourished because of the number of slaves transplanted to the fields under the direction of able masters. During the Arabo-Islamic occupation of Sicily (213-485/827-1091) the Arabo-Berbers first followed the indigenous Sicilians using still the methods of the Roman engineering work in irrigation and cultivation; it was not for a long time that the Arabo-Berber farmers introduced certain hydraulic techniques which improved the early Roman systems (Mack Smith 1968, 7). Windmills and watermills were built to grind corn. A well-managed economy reaped its fruits and this can be testified to by the many toponymical references containing water sources, springs, rivulets, hedges and boundaries, wells etc. (Agius 1981, 8) and an inventory of Siculo-Arabic terminology of agricultural terms still used in the Sicilian dialect (Agius 1990c, 167-76). Ways were sought to conserve and distribute water throughout the plains, hills and inland plateaus of the island. The produce from fields and gardens was in abundance according to al-Bakrī (d. 487/1094), and according to Yāqūt b. ᶜAbd Allāh al-Rūmī (d. 626/1228-9), a Greek of extraction but brought up as a Muslim, reported about the abundance of water from springs and rivers and the excellent irrigation system. As a result of this all kinds of fruits were to be found throughout summer and winter (Yāqūt 1866-1870, III, 407). The number of cattle and goats increased and as irrigational techniques improved, the crop yielded citrus fruits, grapes, melons, mulberries, dates, pistachio nuts,

root and green vegetables (Amari 1933-1939, I, 508). The cultivation of rice and olive, silk-worms, papyrus and the sumac tree for tanning and dying all testify a growth in the agrarian and industrial economy. The harvests covered a large part of the island and saffron sprouted almost everywhere. Lemon and bitter orange trees were planted and the cultivation of sugar-cane and cotton became the staple part of the Sicilian agricultural economy. We are also told that the rivers Lentini, Ragusa and Mazara were navigable.

It was only during the Norman period that the island's forests and woods were, according to Amari (*ibid*), destroyed by fires in the fifth/eleventh and sixth/twelfth centuries; but, Mack Smith (1968, 8) thinks that apart from natural fires, Arabo-Berbers may have deliberately set fire to crops and woodland in order to clear areas for habitation. Whatever modern historians may postulate about the causes of deforestation, we have direct evidence from Yāqūt (1866-1870, II, 93) that wood was cut for ship-building and branches of cedars, cypress and pine were chopped to be used for torches. And this would seem likely particularly as the island had already once been deforested for ship-building during the bitter wars among Greeks, Carthaginians and Romans.

The Arabs learnt the art of making sugar from the cane from the Persians who, in their turn, had borrowed from India. Flax and other plants were beaten into a pulp producing thin sheets which were a substitute for

parchment and leather. The craft was well established in Baghdad in 178/794 and reached Sicily two hundred years later. The linguistic impact on Sicilian with words of Arabic origin was immense; loan words pertain largely to institutions, urban industry, rural objects, clothing, diet and nautical terms (Agius 1986, 37-51). The island was also a haven for scholars fleeing from persecution in North Africa. Mosques grew as centres for their intellectual activities. By the fifth/eleventh century Islamic science and philosophy began to show signs of influence on western thought and art. The medical art was in the hands of Jewish practitioners and it was via Arabic that medical treatises entered Salerno, Italy. Poetry with troubadour motifs which took one form of the *adab* literature in the ethic and etiquette of love became a tradition quickly learned by Sicilian Muslims and then passed on to Italy in late medieval times (Borruso 1991, 17-34).

The Kalbite (Fāṭimid) dynasty (326-445/938-1053) that followed was the beginning of the end to the Muslim rule in Sicily, for the country lived under a loose decentralized system. Except for the regions of Palermo and Agrigento, Arabic sources hardly mention any other regions (Chiarelli 1986, 66). Towards the end of the Kalbite dynasty the country was plunged into civil chaos (Gabrieli 1953, 5). The reign of Ṣamṣām b. Yūsuf (431-445/1040-1053) is a period of confusion and anarchy dividing the country into several petty principalities. When at last the Muslim amir of Sicily was deposed in 445/1053 the military leader Ibn

al-Thumna (445-453/1053-1060) invited the Normans occupying southern Italy to assist him in conquering all of the island (Ibn al-Athīr 1867-1874, X, 131-2). Robert Guiscard de Hauteville (d. 1085) and his youngest brother, Count Roger or Roger I (1085-1101) invaded Sicily and captured Messina in 453/1061 (Malaterra 1927, II, 8-13). They consolidated their victories by an efficient administration and by 484/1091, all Sicily was in Norman hands.

1.4:0

The advent of the Normans in southern Italy sealed the schism of 1054 between the patriarch of Rome and the four patriarchs in the east; the latter rejected the idea of submission to the patriarch of Rome, ie. the pope. This meant that if they recognized such headship, it would have undermined the authority of the general council of the Christian church, the "guarantor of unity" (Angold 1984, 31). The schism was political rather than a doctrinal or liturgical difference. Following the aftermath of this schism, the pope's move was to strengthen southern Italy and Sicily with the intention of weakening the Byzantine presence, a policy that was, in general, never successful. An alliance with the Normans was inevitable and the pope invested all power to the Normans, even though religiously and morally they were not the best choice, politically they were his best agents.

The Norman conquest of Sicily was accomplished in thirty years (1061-1091). Soon after the completion of the conquest Roger I set about dividing his possessions in

Sicily into fiefs and distributed them amongst barons, counts and ecclesiastic functionaries. A vast number of villeins listed in the fiefs assigned to them were Muslims (Cusa 1982, 695-747). Tolerance seemed to have been Roger's policy and he opposed ecclesiastical pressure to exercise any influence on Muslims to convert to Christianity (Amari 1933-1939, III/i, 190-1); Amari's comment may have some truth though behind this tolerance there was another truth. Roger I was actually keen to collect taxes from Muslims who did not convert. Some were liable to pay much heavier taxes.

Muslim officials were highly considered in Norman courts. Among high-ranking merchants in towns the Muslims continued to trade with the west and the east. Muslim artisans were sought after for their specialized work in the decoration of ivory, woodwork and brick laying. Their expertise in architecture found its way into the building of churches such as the construction of cupolas, decorative intersecting arcades and polychrome brick patterning. Throughout the history of the Middle Ages, Christians, Muslims and Jews hated each other but quite often learnt to live near each other; jealousy, competition and ambition produced a lively community which often led to scholarly achievements in writings and discoveries, and technically contributed to works of art, be it architecture or engineering.

When Roger I died in 1101, his third wife Adelaide became regent until Roger II (1111-1154), her second son

came into power. During her regency she favoured the immigration of Lombards in the east of Sicily (Abulafia 1988, 25). Roger II's kingdom was the most illustrious of the Norman dynasty. He was surrounded by teachers who taught him Greek and Arabic and his court personnel was Muslim. Moreover, he reserved a section of his palace for his women and eunuchs. One can find elements of Arabic (mainly if not exclusively Fāṭimid) (Amari 1933-1939, III, 450-60), Byzantine and even Anglo-Norman traditions in Roger's administration (Mack Smith 1968, 25-6) as well as in the architecture and decoration, ceremonial and regalia; for example, ceremonial robes in courts represented in mosaic works followed the Byzantine style, though according to Kitzinger, this may be a stereotyped form to portray the king as an image of authority, a symbol of power rather than a style of fashion (Johns 1993, 156). But after c. 1130, there is evidence of increasing adoption and adaptation of the components of the Arabic facet, ie. the fiscal administration and chancery, palace architecture and decoration; some were inherited from the Sicilian Arab amirs and others borrowed from the Muslim world, the most likely sources of which indicate that such components came from the Fāṭimid court of Cairo (*ibid*, 135, 149). Throughout his reign, except perhaps towards the end, Roger II was praised for his protection and liking for the Muslims (Ibn al-Athīr 1867-1874, X, 133). One of his achievements, though not at his first attempt, was the occupation of coastal towns in North Africa. The Norman

navy managed to take Jerba, Sousse, Sfax, Gabes, Bône and Tripoli between 1135 and 1153. To this achievement he added the title of King of Ifrīqiyya (G. Marçais 1946, 224-5). The Norman victories played an important role in securing the west and central Mediterranean from increasing threats by the Banū Hilāl (second to seventh/eighth to thirteenth) whose grip on North Africa was greatly strengthened (Ibn al-Athīr 1867-1874, X, 431). In the meantime, the Zīrids (361-547/972-1152), sought help from the Banū Hilāl and the Normans to fight the Ḥammādids (405-547/1015-1152) who were becoming increasingly aggressive in North Africa and the Mediterranean (G. Marçais 1946, 223). Much of the organization of the Norman fleet is owed to two Greek-born admirals, George of Antioch and Christodulus, the latter known also as ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān al-Naṣrānī in Arabic chronicles. George of Antioch had the advantage of knowing North Africa because he was engaged in the naval service of the Zīrid Tamīm (454-501/1062-1108) (Ahmad 1975, 55-6).

1.4:1

William I (1154-1166), son of Roger II inherited the throne but left much of his state business in the hands of his ministers, Maio being the chief one. Again Muslim functionaries in the palace played an important part in the financial administration (Falcandus 1904, 27, 42, 47-8); Maio's ambitions led him to a plot to kill the king in order to usurp the throne (Matthew 1992, 64). He was

unsuccessful and was assassinated by his own enemies. William I was unpopular. Citizens of large towns were deprived of their municipal liberties and heavy taxes were imposed. But like his father he enjoyed literary discussion and philosophical debates with learned Greeks and Muslims (Curtis 1912, 426-27). His son, William II (1166-1189) was popular and a shrewd politician. His reign enjoyed relative peace and tranquillity. During his reign, however, there were several raids by the Normans on the Egyptian coast, one of which was at Alexandria but here the Norman fleet encountered difficulties against the military force headed by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (564-589/1169-1193) (Ehrenkreutz 1972, 124-5). William II never participated personally on the battlefield; he indulged himself in the pleasures of his harem. Like his father and grandfather he knew Arabic and surrounded himself with scholars.

The last of the Norman kings was Tancred of Lecce (1190-1194). When William II died he left no child and though he wished that Constance a daughter of Roger II would succeed to the throne, some Sicilian nobles favoured Tancred who was an illegitimate son of Duke Roger of Apulia. During the early part of his reign Sicilian Muslims revolted; many ended up massacred in Palermo, but most of them managed to escape to the mountains. They were joined by Muslim villeins who escaped from their Norman lords (Amari 1933-1939, III/ii, 545-7). Tancred's son William III (1194) succeeded the throne but not for long because the German Swabian emperor Henry

VI (1194-1197) conquered Sicily and brought the Norman kingdom to an end. It was not the end for the Sicilian Muslims. Riots started on Henry's death in 1197; anarchy spread over the south-west of Sicily. While tens of thousands may have left the island for North Africa others stayed, roaming around in bands capturing villages and castles (Mack Smith 1968, 51). When Henry VI died, his wife Constance became Queen in 1198 but died soon after leaving her son Frederick II (1198-1250) too young to govern the country which by now was stricken by chaos and civil war. After being crowned emperor in 1211, Frederick II sought to establish order and tranquillity for some time but a Muslim revolt soon followed and in 1219 Muslims sacked the Spedale di San Giovanni de' Leprosi. By 1221 their numbers increased up to 30,000 under the leadership of Ibn ᶜAbbād of Banū ᶜAbs, known as "Morabit" (CA *murābiṭ* "a hermit") (Amari 1933-1939, III/ii, 604-8). Moreover in the west Muslims took Entella and Giato but Frederick II's army managed to put an end to hostilities by starving the Muslims. Ibn ᶜAbbād was executed. More trouble was to come for the Muslim uprising continued between 1222 and 1224. A policy of liquidating the Muslims was adopted and an estimated 16,000 inhabitants were transported in 1223-1225 to Lucera in Italy, forming a colony which lasted up to 1300.

1.4:3
Conclusion

The "land of the Siculans" has passed through centuries of leaders, kings and emperors whose objectives, most of the time, were to command the trade routes across the Mediterranean at a cost to its inhabitants. Never was Sicily more wealthy than during the Islamic and Norman occupations; the island attracted immigrants from North Africa as well as Andalusians and Italians particularly Lombards, some of whom, of course, were brought as slaves captured during raids. During the Fāṭimid rule Arab and Berber tribesmen were relocated in Val di Noto and Val Demone to secure the policy of Islamization; while during the Norman and Swabian occupations the reverse took place. Lombards were brought in to Sicily in order to Christianize and Latinize the country. In both instances there existed an element of "religious and ethnic cleansing" whether it was to purify Sicily from Christianity or Islam.

The Norman monarchy was the quintessence of a mixed cultural heritage drawing on Greek, Latin and Arab ideas of rulership controlled by the central government with an elaborate bureaucracy. Apart from the kings and barons being landlords of their kingdom, Sicily was owned by ecclesiastical lords, such as the abbey of San Salvatore, the Basilian Greek monastery of Messina and the famous abbey of Monreale whose farm labourers were mainly Muslims as our registers record in 1182 (Cusa 1982, 243-86). The monarchy controlled the production and sale

of commodities drawing much benefit from sales and taxes. Against this, one has to weigh the loss to the country's economy caused by the several uprisings, financial burdens to pay for the wars inside and outside the country and the extravagance of a life of luxury and debauchery by the kings and lords which weakened the treasury. It must be said, however, that Sicily witnessed a great civilization where Latin, Greek and Arab ideas mixed in the people that spoke these languages in a way perhaps never achieved elsewhere. One also has to account for the ordinary inhabitants who laboured for the benefit of the crown, and the serfs who were bonded to the land, paying all sorts of taxes. Although there were times of tolerance and peace, most of the time the poor survived in fairly wretched conditions. Culturally, these people borrowed from Islam customs and traditions that became uniquely "Siculo" in nature and linguistically they inherited a rich and varied material-cultural terminology from the Arabs which it is appropriate to call Siculo-Arabic.