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Migrant Society to Island Nation: Sicily

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ABSTRACT

The Norman conquest of Muslim Sicily resulted in the establishment of a new Latin Christian polity at the strategic crossroads of the Mediterranean world. From a province of Dar al-Islam, the island was gradually transformed into a Latin Christian society. Despite the lack of any reliable statistical data, enough evidence survives which points to the central role played by Latin Christian immigration from different parts of the Italian peninsula as well as lands beyond the Alps, in this transformation of the largest Mediterranean island. In particular, the Lombard communities mentioned by the chroniclers of 12th-century Sicily seem to have played a leading role in the inter-ethnic and religious strife which characterized the breakdown of coexistence at the end of the Norman period. The deportation of the last Muslims of the island to Lucera was completed by the mid-13th century. Less than two hundred years from the Norman conquest, the process of change was fundamentally completed: the Arabic-speaking, Muslim population taken by the Norman conquerors in the late 11th century had given way to a new population which was integrated into Roman Christianity, speaking varieties of the same romance tongue, and identifying themselves as Sicilians.

Il-holqien ta' saltna nisranija ġdida mar-rebħa Normanna fi tmiem is-seklu h̄dax bidlet għal kollox il-gejġieni ta' l-ikbar gżira Mediterranja. Sqallija minn dejjem kienet f'salib it-toroq fid-dinja Mediterranja, u ma setax jonqos li l-mixja miż-żmien twil ta' hakma Għarbija meta l-gżira kienet fi h̄dan Dar l-Islam, għall-hakma Normanna, ġabet magħha taqlib kbir u bidla shiba fil-binja soċjali tal-pajjiż. F'dan il-kwadru ta' bidla kbira u mgħaġġla tidhol l-immigrazzjoni ta' għadd kbir ta' nies mill-Italja kollha kif ukoll minn artijiet imxerrdin mal-Mediterran matul is-seklu tnax u tlettax. Taħt in-Normanni il-ġlied bejn saffi soċjali u reliġjużi rivali maż-żmien ħareġ fil-beraħ u xtered mal-gżira kollha. Minn Lucera, l-aħħar Musulmani ta' Sqallija raw lil arthom mibdula għal kollox.

The Norman conquest of Muslim Sicily, a protracted and costly military effort spanning three decades (1060-1090), resulted in the establishment of a new Latin Christian polity at the strategic crossroads of the Mediterranean world. The process involved in constructing a new Latin Christian society on the island would take much longer, claiming collective efforts and energies, promoting the lives of some, whilst frustrating the existence of others, all told at an incalculable price.

An island province of Dar al-Islam for more than two hundred years, Sicily's annexation, which followed Norman territorial acquisitions in southern Italy, formed part of a wider sequence of western Christian conquests in the Mediterranean world in the High Middle Ages¹. In a pattern of conquest and colonization which recurred in the histories of major Mediterranean islands such as Majorca, Corsica, Sardinia, Sicily, Crete and Cyprus, western Christian forces extended their control across Mediterranean lands, annexing territories which were generally wrested from

Muslim or Byzantine possession². Victorious military, mercantile and ecclesiastical elites collaborated to set up new polities, or expand existing ones, at the margins of Latin Christendom, and opened up the newly acquired territories for settlement and colonization. Migrants from a wide social spectrum responded to the opportunities which were created, or were perceived to exist, in the newly taken territories, extending across the Mediterranean from the Iberian peninsula to crusader Syria and Palestine and beyond. A different set of choices faced members of subjected communities, for whom migration might be the only viable alternative to a pattern of systematic coercion and social control.

The lands forming the Mediterranean crossroads have frequently been characterized by migratory flows, colonization, settlement and resettlement. By adopting a broad definition of migration as the movement of people, it becomes possible to study different examples of the flow of people into, out of, and across a region. Examples of what might be called programmatic migration may be compared and contrasted with unprogrammatic case studies. The scale and causes of migration varied widely from one epoch to another, as did its character, scope and consequences. Political, religious as well as economic factors have been indicated amongst the main forces behind the movement of people, sometimes operating separately, but occasionally coming together to create extraordinary conditions for large-scale transfer and mobility. When this takes place, migration becomes a defining feature of a society, making it what is being termed here a 'migrant society'.

The task of studying migratory patterns in pre-modern times is challenging for a number of reasons, not least the lack of any reliable statistical data and the limited availability of qualitative information. This is certainly a common lament amongst historians of high medieval Sicily. Admittedly, the information to be gleaned from chronicles, charters and related textual materials cannot be stretched beyond a certain limit, while different forms of material evidence pose their own set of problems. The present contribution looks at the role of migration in the making of Sicilian history between the 11th and the 15th centuries. A decisive military achievement, the Norman conquest of southern Italy and Sicily, in the long run unleashed a large scale transformation which was to change forever the human map of Sicily. By 1500 Sicily had developed into an 'island nation'³.

The Aghlabid conquest of Byzantine Sicily in the 9th century (827-902) had paved the way for a large-scale Muslim colonization of the island, reflected especially in the growth and development of Palermo, taken in 831, into the new capital city (a prosperous city of 'three hundred mosques' and bustling markets described so vividly by Ibn Hawqal in 973). The immediate achievements of military victory and political subjection were consolidated with a vast process of settlement and colonization, as waves of thousands of Muslim immigrants from different parts of North Africa, some from as far away as the Middle East and al-Andalus, settled down in Sicily, peopling its towns, building networks of villages and cultivating its countryside⁴. Different waves reached the island associated with its political vicissitudes – including its incorporation into the Fatimid empire in the early 10th century, and the development of the autonomous Kalbid emirate there from the mid-10th century onwards. A substantial population of Greek Christian inhabitants survived especially in the north-eastern Val Demone, which was closest to the Byzantine theme of Calabria (which, together with the theme of Langobardia and Lucania, territories corresponding more or less to modern-day Apulia and Basilicata, formed the Catepanate of Italy)⁵.

The Norman advance across southern Italy was itself the fruit of long-distance migration⁶. The Norman chroniclers themselves made this amply clear. William of Apulia called the Normans *homines boreales*, or men of the northern wind, while Geoffrey Malaterra initiated his narrative of the deeds of Count Roger of Hauteville, the conqueror of Sicily, with a detailed account of the Norwegian origins of Normandy, the ancestral homeland of the Hauteville brothers and their followers⁷. Kinship was a leading feature of Norman migration in southern Italy, and a recent study

has underlined the political uses of family strategies by the Norman ruling class in strengthening their state⁸. In view of Robert Guiscard's political achievements in southern Italy, his investiture by Pope Nicholas II in 1059 with his southern Italian lands as well as with Arab-held Sicily paved the way for the Norman conquest of the island. The task befell Robert's younger brother Roger, who spent more than thirty years fighting the Muslims of Sicily. Despite the early taking of Messina (1061), with few men and very limited resources at his disposal, Roger might have proved unequal to the task, but for Norman persistence and the material restrictions which constrained North African reprisals. Following the fall of Palermo in 1072, Roger's resources increased; but Syracuse held out until 1086. Castrogiovanni and Agrigento were taken soon afterwards, and the conquest was completed with the surrender of Butera and Noto in 1090/91⁹.

A central consideration for any (would-be) conqueror, "the procurement of military manpower"¹⁰ affected Roger's strategy both during the decades of conquest, as well as after its completion. The bands of Norman mercenaries drawn into the conflicts between the various Lombard and Byzantine leaders in southern Italy had certainly been a good example of this procurement. Nevertheless, it was not a prime mover in terms of the migratory flow of men to the fighting fields of Sicily. The Norman campaign in Sicily had been characterized throughout by material limitations, which in turn perhaps acted to limit the numbers of Christian fighters attracted to serve under Count Roger's command. Technically his brother's vassal, Roger was also portrayed by Malaterra as the prototypical Norman warrior driven against all odds by an overwhelming "avidity for domination"¹¹. The terms of capitulation of Muslim towns involved the surrender of weapons, horses, slaves and the payment of tribute money to the Count. The Muslims were also bound, it would seem, with the clause of military service. As the new ruler of Sicily, Roger could only count on limited (Latin) Christian military support, and he seems to have made full use of Muslim armies against Christian targets. In fact, he recruited Muslim soldiers from amongst his Sicilian subjects for his southern Italian campaigns, as he did at Cosenza (1091), at Castrovillari (1094), and against the city of Capua (1098) where, according to Malaterra, Saracens "constituted the largest part of his army"¹².

Following the capitulation of the island's capital city and major population centre, Palermo (in 1072, a year after the important Norman conquest of Bari), the Norman project in Sicily must have started to seem more plausible. The annexation of Sicily would also extend Roman jurisdiction to lands which had been hitherto inaccessible to the Latin Church. The completion of the conquest, together with control over Calabria, placed the substantial resources of the new comital demesnes in Roger's possession. The Norman conquerors found only one Christian bishop, Nicodemus at Palermo, *timidus et natione graecus*¹³. By 1090, Roger was already at work building a network of Latin Christian dioceses across the island, creating a vital framework for ecclesiastical development. The Count embarked on a large-scale programme of church building (often, Malaterra informs us, "at his own expense"). He installed Latin clergymen in the new bishoprics, like Gerland from Savoy as Bishop of Agrigento, Roger from Provence as Bishop of Troina, and the Breton Angerius as Bishop of Catania¹⁴. The high proportion of Benedictine monks who moved to take ecclesiastical posts under the Normans has been underlined¹⁵. A considerable number of clergymen from different countries would serve the Norman regime, including the Englishmen Richard Palmer (first as bishop of Syracuse, then Archbishop of Messina) and Walter Offamil (archdeacon of Cefalù, later Archbishop of Palermo).

Roger's role as church builder culminated in the claimed power of apostolic legacy, which Malaterra proudly appended at the end of his chronicle; the decree, dated 5 July 1098, gave the Count and his successors the pretense of full legatine powers over the Church of Sicily¹⁶.

The Norman conquest of the island created the conditions for a 'migrant society' under the aegis of Latin Christian rule. Nevertheless, the early decades of Norman rule were characterized by a

Latin Christian ruling class which presided over a society largely composed of Muslim and Greek Christian subjects, together with a network of sizeable Jewish communities¹⁷. The population of Muslim and Greek subjects provided an essential reservoir of servile manpower especially for the cultivation of the vast landholdings acquired by the Latin barons and the leading ecclesiastical establishments. In particular, the Aleramici, relatives of Roger I's third wife, countess Adelaide del Vasto, from Savona, established a network of strategic lordships at Paternò, Butera and Cerami, and through dynastic marriages with the Hauteville clan became the leading baronial family of early 12th-century Sicily. Roger I's illegitimate son Jordan was given the lordship of Syracuse, while his other son Geoffrey received Ragusa.

An upper social stratum composed of leading landholding families was formed thanks to the distribution of estates, normally comprising several village communities, in return for the feudal pledge of military service eventually to be recorded in the *Catalogus Baronum*¹⁸. Families like the Aleramici, the Graffeo at Messina, the Bonello at Mistretta, the Garessio at Naso, the Malcovenant at Calatrasi and Racalmuto, the Montescaglioso at Noto, Caltanissetta and Sclafani, were some of the representatives of the new ruling class ushered in thanks to the Norman conquest¹⁹.

The Hauteville showed considerable acumen in holding on to their hard won dominions. They exploited fully the benefits which stemmed from their role as conquerors of Sicily, by distributing some of the principal resources of their realm to faithful *milites* and *familiares* according to the principles of feudal vassalage, whilst developing a relatively centralized system of government run by Muslim palace eunuchs apparently recruited from other lands. At the same time, they opened their lands for 'Lombard' immigrants. The steady influx of these 'Latin Christian' settlers was reflected in the creation of a string of new towns referred to by the chronicler 'Hugo Falcandus' as *oppida Lombardorum*, such as Randazzo, Nicosia, Caltagirone, Aidone, Santa Lucia. In contrast to the forms of servitude which marked the condition of most Muslim, as well as Greek Christian, villagers, the *oppidani* of these 'Lombard' communities were not burdened with servile exactions (termed *molestia*, *angaria*) though they were liable to provide manpower for the transport of timber and fleet-related services²⁰.

Roger I's son and successor, Roger II, united Sicily and southern Italy into a new kingdom, proclaiming himself King of Sicily, despite initial Roman opposition. With the consolidation of the Norman territories in southern Italy and Sicily into a unitary kingdom, the project initiated a hundred years earlier with the establishment of the first Norman footholds in the south (at Ariano and Aversa), seemed to reach its fulfilment²¹. Roger II revived Robert Guiscard's expansionist ambitions, creating in the 1140s-50s a short-lived Norman protectorate in North Africa extending from eastern Algeria to Tripoli²². Attracted by the prospects of trading in the Norman-held seaports, a number of subjects of the Norman Crown made their way to Malta, Djerba and the North African enclaves, settling in mercantile colonies or serving in the Norman garrisons.

Remarkable institutional innovations were introduced to safeguard the Norman project in the south. The rulers ordered their cosmopolitan society by means of royal laws which were decreed in the form of *Assizes* or edicts. The Crown was sensitive to the cultural divergence between the respective communities; "Latins, Greeks, Jews, and Saracens" could expect to be given justice according to their own laws. A balance was struck between the development of a centralized bureaucratic state and the reality of a Latin feudal hierarchy. The formula varied considerably from one province to another – southern Italian feudal lords enjoyed vast powers, in comparison to the more centrally controlled lordships of Sicily – but the fundamental equation remained the same. The Crown kept close control of Sicily's main towns, and controlled all the major seaports. Defence against external threats, internal stability and the maintenance of public order were also to be numbered among the conditions created by the Norman *Regno* facilitating Christian settlement and colonization. The Crown must have been behind the creation of a strategic network

of 'Lombard' towns which extended from north-eastern to central and western Sicily. Leading churchmen also seem to have collaborated in the effort to populate the Sicilian countryside with new Christian settlers.

The migratory flows into Norman Sicily of people from different parts of the Italian peninsula, as well as lands beyond the Alps, should not be imagined as a large-scale mass migration. "Periodic mass migrations provide the tip of the iceberg in migration studies. The large-scale movements... consisted in practice of an accumulation of smaller movements that fit into larger patterns with time"²³. Norman Sicily arguably fits this definition. As in the case of Spanish migration to the New World, the flow of settlers into Sicily was "a collective undertaking" based on "networks of kinship and association"²⁴. But for the lack of documentation, it would be interesting to test this assertion also with regard to the counter-migration of thousands of Muslims who chose to cross the central Mediterranean waters and seek refuge in the Maghrib, as it was advisable for good Muslims to do, rather than live on in a country which was now governed by a non-Muslim ruler.

The establishment of new Christian settlements is already recorded around 1090/91 by Malaterra, in an offer made by Count Roger I to numerous Christian captives, coming from various 'homelands', released from Malta. Having transported them to Sicily, he liberated them from their captivity, making them 'free men', and offering them the option of staying in Sicily where he would build them a *villa franca*, or free village, at his expense. The settlement, specifies Malaterra, was to be free of any feudal imposition or servitude²⁵. The urban 'freedoms' of Messina (1160), which developed into a major urban centre under the Normans, and the episcopal city of Catania (1168) acted, so to speak, as models for urban political actions and expectations.

Latin Christian domination tended to reinforce social segregation with reference to the linguistic and/or religious identity of individual subjects. Roger II strove to populate Cefalù with 'Latin' immigrants, enticing them with the promise of freedom from servile burdens. And in a well-known example, the Abbot-Bishop of Patti and Lipari in the 1090s pledged full liberties and property rights to Latin immigrants – *homines quicumque sint latine lingue* – who chose to reside in the castle of Patti and render military service there as free men. This right was successfully defended by the people of Lipari in 1133 (but the Latin text had to be explained to them in the vernacular). The Church of St Bartholomew of Patti, the major landholder in the area having been endowed lavishly by Count Roger I with Greek and Muslim serfs, actively encouraged Latin settlement on the island of Lipari.

Under Roger II a sophisticated apparatus of state administration, the royal *dīwān*, was developed, mainly staffed by Greek and Muslim civil servants²⁶. The prestigious trilingual activities of the *dīwān* reflected the wider cultural realities of the island *populo dotata trilingui*. Roger I had established a Latin ecclesiastical network, erecting bishoprics and endowing religious houses, thus establishing a model for extensive patronage of the Christian rite from which Greek Christianity was also able to benefit in some respects²⁷. The chief military position of the realm, the *amiratus*, was entrusted to a series of distinguished Greek viziers. Several of them were "not only viziers of the pen but also of the sword"²⁸. The emir Christodoulos, also known as 'Abd al-Rahmān, who served Roger II as his chief minister, was succeeded by his *protégé* George of Antioch. As chief minister, George controlled the royal *dīwān*, and commanded the Norman expeditions against North Africa. George's son Nicholas and his nephew Eugenius also distinguished themselves in royal service. Later chief servants of the state included the chancellor Henry Aristippus, and the admirals Maio of Bari, and Margaritus of Brindisi.

A number of educated Muslims were lured to serve the Norman Crown, some like the scholar of princely descent, al-Idrīsī, the author of the famous *Book of Roger*, while others, to become *qā'id*s in the royal administration. These included Peter, a royal eunuch and 'palace Saracen', who com-

manded the Norman fleet and served as chief minister until his defection to the Almohads. Others converted to Christianity; one major example was Hamud or 'Chamut', the ruler of Agrigento and Castrogiovanni, who secretly agreed to hand over his domains to Count Roger, converted to Christianity and received estates in Calabria in exchange²⁹. Roger-Ahmad, godson of King Roger II, was another prominent convert. The Muslim background of Roger Hamutus, who served as justiciar under King William II, is undocumented³⁰. Latin Christian rulers did not normally compel their Muslim subjects, a reliable source of manpower viewed as 'royal treasure', to convert to Christianity³¹. Nonetheless, under William II (1166-89) there may have been a departure from this rule where Muslim community leaders were concerned³².

The Norman regime strengthened the reality succinctly termed by Henri Bresc *féodalité coloniale en terre d'Islam*, by introducing a Latin Christian ruling class to preside over the Sicily of the *latifondi* or large estates, and the villages (*rabi*) of serfs linked to them³³. The Monreale registers provide a major example of the use of Muslim servile manpower in extensive cultivation, even if the leading landholder in this case was a prominent religious establishment rather than a baronial family. The vast estates (extending to some 1,200 square kilometres across western Sicily) which were donated to newly-established Monreale Abbey by King William II in 1174, were cultivated by thousands of serfs distributed in a large number of villages³⁴.

The Sicilian case bears comparison with the Latin east. A long standing debate on the character of Latin Christian settlement and 'Frankish society' in the Crusader states has been characterized by diametrically opposed viewpoints: the predominant view since the 1950s underlined the almost complete social segregation between town-based Frankish communities and the Muslim rural population, replacing a previous model centred on Christian-Muslim *convivencia*. The circle of the new Christian society created under 'Frankish hegemony' was recently widened a little to include local Christian communities³⁵. Nonetheless, the model of Frankish social segregation remains predominant. By contrast, recent research on Sicily has tended to bring the communities inhabiting the various Norman lands together into one complex 'society'³⁶. The migratory patterns unfolding in Sicily evidently formed part of wider currents affecting the whole kingdom, comprising both the insular and mainland territories. At the same time, important questions have been asked about the ethnic characterizations of the various groupings in 'Norman Society'. The 'Norman' identity of Sicily's new ruling class itself – the *gens Normannica* of William of Apulia – has not gone unchallenged³⁷. In a multicultural environment where groups as well as individual families devised their own strategies of survival, the situation on the ground was normally much more complex than models of ethnic and/or religious categorization would suggest. The seemingly clear boundaries between Muslims and Christians are quickly blurred when the evidence pointing to an Arabic-speaking Christian community is examined³⁸. Moreover, the fluid interaction between 'Greek' and 'Arab' Christians was facilitated by the predominance of the two respective tongues as mainstream tongues throughout the island. The individual communities could not be barred or insulated completely from social interaction at various levels – including family life, the marketplace and the farmstead.

The origin of the 'Latin Christians' moving into Sicily under the Normans was (at least) as varied as had been that of the 'Saracen', and the 'Greek Christian'³⁹. The *Normanitas* or Norman identity of the ruling class was just one element among a number of components of the new Latin Christian society which had evolved⁴⁰. Falcandus was careful to differentiate between the *Lombardi* (that is, the people coming from northern Italy) and the *Langobardi* (those coming from Langobardia in southern Italy). Moreover, he distinguished these 'Italian' immigrants from other settlers who had migrated from north of the Alps – the *transalpini* and *transmontani*⁴¹. (Re-)constructed identities could take on new meaning in particular contexts, such as the 'colonial juxtaposition' of rival 'Lombard' and Greek townsmen, and Muslim villagers. In the wider context of high me-

dieval Italy, Greeks, Muslims, and Jews have been termed ‘the Italian Other’⁴². As is invariably the case, self-perception was intimately related to concepts and images of ‘otherness’. Rather than reporting the ethnic origin of the communities, ‘Falcandus’ may well be registering their emerging self-consciousness, expressed in radical political actions. 20th-century linguists were still reporting north Italian influences in the local dialects spoken in the areas of ‘Lombard’ settlement⁴³.

The ‘Lombard’ colonization was especially intense along a north-east to south-west diagonal away from the coast in the island’s interior. Wholly or predominantly populated by the new settlers, the ‘Lombard’ towns were mainly located within the feudal territorial belt of the Aleramici clan (descended from the countess Adelaide), including the vast County of Paternò and the lordships of Butera and Policastro held by the descendants of Henry del Vasto (Adelaide’s brother who also became Roger I’s son-in-law) which extended from Mount Etna to Butera. The ‘Lombard’ settlements split what was left of Muslim Sicily in two halves, separating the Val di Mazara and the Val di Noto⁴⁴.

The centres – including Randazzo, Nicosia, Piazza, Caltagirone, Castrogiovanni, Aidone, Vicari, Butera, Capizzi, Maniace, Sperlinga, San Fratello, Agira, Pietraperzia, Mazzarino – grew rapidly into flourishing communities as a result of the ‘Lombard’ immigration. Echoing, to an extent, earlier processes of *incastellamento*, which had created networks of fortified villages, Piazza and Nicosia were described by Idrīsī as “fortified towns” The chief source on the ‘Lombard’ towns comes from the pen of an author whose identity has eluded generations of scholars; in the *Liber de Regno Sicilie*, ‘Hugo Falcandus’ laid great stress on the role of the ‘Lombards’ in the troubles of 1160-61. Following the loss of the Norman protectorates in North Africa, the *Regno* was engulfed in a deep crisis. The Crown’s chief minister, the ‘great admiral’ Maio of Bari was killed and a baronial revolt broke out in Palermo. William’s eunuchs, the “palace Saracens”, were massacred, and the King himself was detained. Numerous Muslims were slain along the streets of the capital. Royal forces suppressed the feudal rebels, but they could not choke the resentment and the racial hatreds which had come out in the open.

A large-scale anti-Muslim pogrom followed, in which the ‘Lombard’ townsmen were protagonists. Led by Tancred of Lecce (future King of Sicily, 1189-94) and Roger Sclavo (an illegitimate great-grandson of Henry del Vasto), the men from the ‘Lombard’ strongholds attacked the Muslim communities in eastern Sicily, reaching all the way to Catania and Syracuse, massacring hundreds of villagers and expelling the rest. Many Muslims fled across the island to well-defended, mountain top safe havens in western Sicily, especially Corleone, Jato, Cinisi, Platani and Calatrasi. In reprisal, William I ordered the destruction of Piazza, Butera and nearby Lombard settlements. Nevertheless, these settlements were re-established soon afterwards. A vague idea of the size of the ‘Lombard’ communities may be gleaned from the report that in 1168 twenty thousand men were sent from the *oppida Lombardorum* of Maniace, Vicari, Capizzi, Nicosia, and Randazzo to join the forces of the chancellor Stephen of Perche against the Greek citizens of Messina who had slain the Frenchmen there. In the Aragonese conquest of Valencia, the majority of the settlers were Catalans, constituting “the active element in the reorganization”⁴⁵. A similar role was played by Catalans in settling the island of Majorca after 1229⁴⁶. Despite the many differences between these examples, a case may be made for the ‘Lombard’ settlers in Sicily as being (or becoming) ‘the active element in the reorganization’ of society.

Beyond the scholarly discussions on the ethnic and religious labels used by 12th-century writers and modern historians alike to distinguish the various communities, there were enough real differences on the ground to lead to the large scale eruption of ethnic strife and the ensuing social breakdown. The network of new Christian communities were associated with the privileged world of the ruling class. They took shape under the protection of the Norman regime, alongside (or rather, on top of) what remained of the ‘vanquished’ society of Muslims and Greek Christians.

Despite the romantic image of Sicily *populo dotata trilingui*, it was really a matter of time before the unbridgeable differences exploded into open conflict. This destructive process laid out the foundations for a different Sicily, as the transformation wrought in the social fabric of the island from the onset of Norman rule became enduring. The ‘cultural barrier’ between the Muslim and Latin Christian communities grew increasingly impermeable, despite (and also, perhaps, because of) the intermediary role played by the Greek Christian elements⁴⁷.

With the consolidation of Latin Christian society in late 12th-century Sicily, the way was already being paved for another major migratory movement. Again, major political upheavals lay behind the phenomenon, not least the demise of the Norman regime and the establishment of Hohenstaufen rule in the Regno (1194). For more than a decade, Sicily lacked a stable, central government. Following a widespread anti-Muslim campaign by Latin Christian subjects, in 1189-90 the Muslim population rose in revolt. From their strongholds in the mountains of western Sicily, they adopted a defiant stance. Under the leadership of Muhammad Ibn ‘Abbād, self-styled “prince of believers”, a rebel polity was formed. The Muslims of Sicily minted their own token coinage and actively sought assistance from abroad⁴⁸. Frederick II’s response was severe. Starting in 1221, the Muslims strongholds at Jato, Entella, Platani and Celso were besieged. Despite the deployment of the Regno’s military force, it took another twenty-five years before resistance at Entella and Jato was finally crushed, in 1246⁴⁹. This was followed up, in 1223, with the first programmatic deportations of Muslims to Lucera. Further Muslims were deported to Lucera following expeditions against Malta and Djerba.

The systematic deportation of Muslims from Sicily and the other islands to the garrison town of Lucera (in what is today the province of Foggia) created an extraordinary Muslim colony in 13th-century Italy⁵⁰. ‘Lucera of the Saracens’ with a population exceeding twenty thousand Muslims⁵¹, provided Frederick and his sons and successors, Conrad and Manfred, with loyal warriors who could be reliably deployed against recalcitrant barons in southern Italy. Following Charles of Anjou’s victory, and Manfred’s death, at the battle of Benevento (1266), Lucera was one of the last bastions of resistance against the Angevin invasion. Despite the fact that the Church campaigned for the destruction of Lucera in 1269 – and a ‘crusade’ was even preached by Cardinal Eudes of Chateauroux⁵² – the community survived until the end of the century, witnessing meanwhile the restoration of Manfred’s lineage on the throne of Sicily with the Sicilian Vespers. The descendants of the Luceran deportees were finally forced to convert to Christianity in 1300 (those who refused being disposed of as slaves).

Angevin government in Sicily was brought to an abrupt and violent end with the revolt of the Vespers⁵³. Termed a ‘national revolution’ by Henri Bresc⁵⁴, the Vespers cut off Sicily from the mainland half of the Kingdom of Sicily, which continued to be held by the Angevin successors of Charles of Anjou until the Aragonese conquest of Naples in 1442. The two halves of the Regno were drawn into decades of debilitating warfare. Sicily was drawn into the Catalan-Aragonese sphere of influence, and between 1296-1410 the island was governed by a cadet line of Aragonese kings who were closely related to the rulers of Catalonia-Aragon. A series of weak rulers (1337-77) was followed by more than a decade of government by a quadrumvirate of magnates (1377-92). A Catalan-Aragonese military intervention (1392-8) restored Aragonese rule on the island. Following the demise of the House of Aragon in 1410, the island was administered by viceroys.

Later medieval Sicily continued to experience migratory patterns. Research by Bresc in the notarial deeds of Palermo has revealed a constant trickle of immigrants into the capital from all over Sicily and southern Italy, as well as from western and eastern Mediterranean countries, Flanders and Germany; in all, several hundred migrants settled in the Sicilian capital in the 14th and 15th centuries⁵⁵. Economic recovery in the 15th century was reflected in a series of resettlement licences, called *licentia populandi*, granting noblemen the facility to establish new towns. This

phenomenon, which developed well into the early modern period, resulted in new patterns of internal migration as well as immigration⁵⁶.

Members of the Catalan-Aragonese nobility, as well as traders, soldiers, churchmen and administrators, found their way to Sicily in the wake of the Vespers. The feudal strife of the mid-14th century witnessed the rivalry of a 'Catalan' and a 'Latin' faction. The scale of Catalan immigration into Sicily was not comparable with the Latinization process experienced in the 12th century, and did not lead to a 'Catalanization' of the island. Nevertheless, Catalan noblemen, churchmen, merchants and administrators played key roles in the island's economy and social hierarchy. In the commercial sphere, though, they continued to face stiff competition from rival mercantile groups, especially Genoese and Tuscan ones⁵⁷. An interesting case study of 15th century Tuscan immigration is provided by the numerous Pisans who left their home town in the wake of Florentine occupation and settled in Sicily⁵⁸.

Outside the vast sphere of Latin Christianity, late medieval Sicily was also linked to migratory flows from the non-Latin Mediterranean. Present-day Arbëreshë communities in Sicily trace their origin to 15th-century 'Greek' and Albanian refugees fleeing the Ottoman advance. The influx totalled several thousand immigrants, who were established at Contessa Entellina, Palazzo Adriano, Mezzojuso, Biancavilla, San Michele di Ganzeria, and Piana dei Greci (nowadays Piana degli Albanesi, where the local variety of *shqip*, the Albanian language, is still spoken)⁵⁹. The new communities succeeded in obtaining important concessions from the authorities of the island in order to pursue their economic interests, as well as to safeguard their distinct religious and cultural identity⁶⁰. Nevertheless, these enclaves would hardly affect the dominant society, which was firmly Latin Christian, and are in a sense 'cultural islands' comparable to the geographical islands of Malta and Gozo, with their Arabic-speaking Christian population, and Pantelleria, where a Muslim community survived until the 15th century.

The survival of a sizeable Jewish population in later medieval Sicily which is amply documented and attested, presents a different situation⁶¹. The Arabic-speaking Jews of Sicily from the 12th century to 1492 have been meticulously researched by Henri Bresc⁶². The substantial trading contacts and activities of members of the Jewish communities in Muslim Sicily are recorded in numerous documents of the Cairo Geniza. In the later Middle Ages, Sicily was a 'place of refuge' for Jewish immigrants from North Africa, Catalonia and Provence⁶³. As *servi Camere Regie*, the Jews of Sicily were subjected to the special protection and control of the Crown. They enjoyed their own cultural life and identity, and operated their autonomous municipal and social structures. This did not render them immune from periodic attacks, in particular the pogrom in the county of Modica (1474). The expulsion of the Jewish population from the Kingdom of Sicily, ordered by the Catholic monarchs throughout their realms on 31 March 1492, was carried out efficiently and systematically by the end of that year. A number of converts stayed on, several of whom were subjected to persecution by the Inquisition⁶⁴. A Sicilian Jewish population of ca.30 – 35,000 individuals distributed into fifty-two communities represented around five per cent of the total island population which around 1500 was slightly less than 600,000.

Later medieval developments served to consolidate the Latinization which had taken place between the 11th and 13th centuries. What, in the high Middle Ages, was an 'Other' to the Italian – the Greek, the Muslim, and the Jew – by 1500 had also become the 'Other' to the Sicilian. With hindsight, the Norman conquest had constituted the fundamental rupture with the past, setting in train an irreversible process of change. Roger I and his successors created the conditions for revolutionary change by allowing and even encouraging the evolution of a 'migrant society' whose component parts, unlike the merging of cultures in their palatine art, would never fuse together to produce something larger than the individual parts. The Latinization of Sicily could only take place at the expense of its other cultural elements – an island nation by elimination.

NOTES

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- ¹⁵ N. Kamp, *The Bishops of Southern Italy in the Norman and Staufen Periods*, in Loud, Metcalfe, *The Society of Norman Italy* cit., p.193.
- ¹⁶ Wolf, *The Deeds of Count Roger of Calabria and Sicily and of his brother Duke Robert Guiscard by Geoffrey Malaterra* cit., p. 213.
- ¹⁷ C. Dallì, *From Islam to Christianity: The Case of Sicily*, in J. Carvalho (ed.), *Religion, Ritual and Mythology. Aspects of Identity Formation in Europe*, Pisa 2006.
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