1185: Ibn Ǧubayr and a Local Muslim Leader Assess the Situation of Muslims in Sicily

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Abstract: Between 578/1182–1183 and 581/1185, Ibn Ǧubayr al-Kinānī, a functionary of the Almohad governor of Granada, went on the pilgrimage to Mecca. On his journey home via the Mediterranean Sea, shipwreck forced him to spend the winter 580/1184–1185 in Sicily. During his stay, he travelled through the island and recorded the living conditions of the local Muslim population, already living under Christian rule since 120 years. This article focusses on Ibn Ǧubayr's meeting with Abū l-Qāsim Muḥammad b. Ḥammūd b. al-Ḥaǧar, a leading figure among the Sicilian Muslims. Balancing the traveller's account with information from parallel sources, the article shows that both Ibn Ǧubayr and his interlocutor took great care to present Muslim life under Norman rule in way that would enlist the support of a transmediterranean Muslim audience for the Muslim community of Sicily.

Source

Ibn Ǧubayr, *Riḥla* / *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr*, ed. William Wright, rev. Michael Jan de Goeje: Leiden and London: Brill, 1907, pp. 341–342. English version adapted from: Ibn Ǧubayr, The *Travels of Ibn Jubayr*, trans. Ronald J. C. Broadhurst, London: Jonathan Cape, 1952, pp. 358–360.

(...) ووصل هذه الأيّام إلى هذه البلدة زعيم أهل هذه الجزيرة من المسلمين وسيّدهم القائد أبو القٰسم ابن حَمُّود المعروف بابن الحَاجَر وهذا الرجل من أهل بيت بهذه الجزيرة توارثوا السيادة كابرا عن كابر وقُرّر لدينا مع ذلك إنه من أهل العمل الصالح مريد للخير محب في أهله كثير الصنائع الأحراويّة من افتكاك الأسارى وبثّ الصدقات في الغرباء المنقطعين من الحجّاج إلى مآثر جمّة ومناقب كريمة

During the last few days there has come to this town [Tràpani] the leader (*zaʿīm*) and Lord (*sayyid*) of the Muslim community in this island, the Qāʾid Abū l-Qāsim b. Ḥammūd, commonly known as Ibn al-Haǧar. This man belongs to that noble house on the island of which the eldest son successively assumes the Lordship (of the Muslims). We were further told that he is an upright man, liking good, loving his kind, full of acts of charity such as ransoming prisoners and distributing alms to travellers and stranded pilgrims, together with many noble deeds and generous acts.

فارتجّت هذه المدينة لوصوله وكان في هذه المدّة تحت هجران من هذا الطاغية ألْزَمَه داره بمطالبة توجّهت عليه من أعدائه افترَوْا عليه فيها أحاديث مزوَّرة نسبوه فيها إلى مخاطبة الموحّدين أيّدهم الله فكادت تقضى عليه لولا حارس المدة وتوالت عليه مصادرات أغرمتْه

The town became greatly disturbed on his arrival. He had recently been out of favour with this tyrant [William II of Sicily], who had confined him to his house on charges preferred against him by his enemies, who slandered him with untrue stories, including that of corresponding with the Almohads, may God support them. He would have been destroyed but for the Guardian Angel, and

نيّفا على الثلاثين ألف دينار مؤمنيّة ولم يزل يتخلّى عن جميع دياره وأملاكه الموروثة عن سلفه حتى بقي دون مال فاتّفق في هذه الأيام رضي الطاغية عنه وأمره بالنفوذ لمهمّ من أشغاله السلطانيّة فنفذ لها نفوذَ المملوك المغلوب على نفسه وماله

even then suffered a series of divestments which exacted from him more than thirty thousand Muʾminī dinars. He was deprived of all the houses and properties which he had inherited from his forebears until he was left without wealth. In these days, then, the tyrant had taken him back in his favour, and had granted him a post in his government. But he carried out his duties like a slave, whose person and property have been impounded.

وصدرت عنه عند وصوله إلى هذه البلدة رغبة في الاجتماع بنا فاجتمعنا به فأظهر لنا من باطن حاله وبواطن أحوال هذه الجزيرة مع أعدائهم ما يبكي العيون دما، ويذيب القلوب أَلَما فمن ذلك إنه قال كنت أودّ لو أُباع أنا وأهل بيتي فلعلّ البيع كان يتخلَّصنا مما نحن فيه ويؤدّي بنا إلى الحصول في بلاد المسلمين فتأَمَّلْ حالا يؤدّي بهذا الرجل مع جلالة قدرة وعظم منصبه إلى أن يتمنَّى مثل هذا التمنّي مع كونه مثقلا عيالا وبنين وبنات فسألنا له من الله عز وجل حسن التخلُّص مما هو فيه ولسائر المسلمين من أهل هذه الجزيرة وواجب على كلّ مسلم الدعاء لهم في كلّ موقف يقفه بين يدبي الله عز وجل وفارقناه باكيا مبكيان واستمال نفوسنا بشرف منزعة وخصوصيّة شمائله ورزانة حَصَاتِه وشمول مبرّته وتكرمته وحسن خلقه وخليقته

When he arrived at this town, he expressed a wish to meet us. We met and he revealed to us such matters concerning his and his people's relations with their enemies as to draw tears of blood from the eyes and melt the heart in suffering. For instance, he said to me, "I have wished to be sold [as a slave], I and my family, that perhaps the sale would free us from the state we are in and lead to our dwelling in Muslim lands." Reflect on a state of affairs which could lead this man, notwithstanding his great authority and exalted rank, his large household, his sons and his daughters, to make such a choice. For him and for all the Muslims of this island, we begged of God, Almighty and Glorious, a happy deliverance; and upon every Muslim standing in worship before the Great and Glorious God lies the duty of offering prayers on their behalf. In tears ourselves, we left him crying. But our sprits had been enriched by the nobleness of his actions, his rare qualities, the soundness of his judgement, his limitless beneficence and generosity, and the goodness of his character and nature.

وكُنّا قد أبصرنا له ولإخْوته ولأهل بيته بالمدينة ديارا كأنها القصور المشيَّدة الأنيقة وشأنهم بالجملة كبير لا سيّما هذا الرجل منهم. وكانت له أيّامَ مقامة هنا أفعال جميلة مع الفقراء الحجّاج وصعاليكهم أصلحت أحوالهم ويسّرت لهم الكراءَ والزاد والله ينفعه بها، ويجازيه الجزاءَ الأوفى عليها بمنّه، (...)

When in Palermo we had seen houses belonging to him, his brothers, and members of his house, which were like lofty and superb castles. The condition of these men, in a word, was exalted, and his was so in particular. During his time here he has performed many good deeds towards those pilgrims who are poor or distressed, mending their affairs, and giving them the money for the cost of their journey, as well as provisions. May God grant him prosperity because of this and provide him, by His grace, with his just reward. (…)

(...) ومن عظم هذا الحمّوديّ المذكور في نفوس النصارى أبادهم الله أنهم يزعمون أنه لو تنصّر لما بقي في الجزيرة مسلم ألّا وفعل فعله إتّباعا له واقتداءً به

So great is the standing of this al-Ḥamūdī amongst the Christians—may God destroy them—that they declare that if he turned Christian, not a Muslim in the island but would follow him and imitate his

تكفَّل الله بعصمته جميعهم ونجّاهم مما هم فيه بفضله وكرمه، (...).

act. May God protect them all, and deliver them, through His grace and favour, from their plight.

Authorship & Work

[§1] Abū l-Ḥusayn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Ǧubayr al-Kinānī was born into an Andalusī Arab family in Xàtiva in 540/1145. Following in his father's footsteps, he studied the traditional religious disciplines while receiving a training in literary culture (*adab*). His education paved the way for a career in the Almohad chancery. At first, he worked as the secretary (Arab. *kātib*) to Abū Saʿīd ʿUṯmān, a son of the caliph ʿAbd al-Muʾmin (r. 524–558/1130–1163) and governor of Ceuta. Later, Ibn Ǧubayr also served other members of ʿUṯmān's family who officiated as governors of Granada. Renowned for his poetic talent, he dedicated many panegyrics to his patrons.[1]

[§2] In Šawwāl 578 / February 1183, Ibn Ǧubayr went on the pilgrimage to Mecca (*ḥaǧǧ*). Together with Abū Ǧaʿfar Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan b. Aḥmad al-Quḍāʾī, a physician from Onda, he boarded a Genoese ship and, via Tarifa, Ceuta, Sardinia, Sicily, and Crete, sailed to Alexandria. From there, he followed the main pilgrim route along the Nile to Qūṣ, via ʿAyḏāb over the Red Sea, and from Jedda (*Ǧidda*) to Mecca. Having performed the pilgrimage in spring 580/1184, Ibn Ǧubayr visited Baghdad, Mosul, Aleppo, Damascus and the Frankish port cities of Acre and Tyre. On his return journey to al-Andalus, he suffered shipwreck in the Strait of Messina and was forced to winter in Sicily between Ramaḍān 580 / December 1184 and Ḏū l-Ḥiǧǧa 580 / March 1185. He only returned to Granada in Muḥarram 581 / April 1185.[2]

[§3] It is not entirely clear what had motivated Ibn Ǧubayr to go on his journey. He himself gives the impression that he was driven solely by the desire to fulfil his religious duty. However, a later tradition recorded by al-Maqqarī (d. 1041/1632) has the governor of Granada forcing Ibn Ǧubayr to drink wine, whereupon he left his service and embarked on the *ḥaǧǧ* to expiate his sins. He thus hoped to begin a new stage in his life that would be pleasing to God.[3] While this story cannot be verified, a traditional inventory (Arab. *fahrasa*) of teachers from the Islamic East appended to Ibn Ǧubayr's travelogue suggests that he also travelled in search of knowledge (*riḥla fī ṭalab al-ʿilm*).[4] His journey might have had a political dimension as well, as he describes the Frankish realms in the Levant and the Norman Kingdom of Sicily in quite some detail, recording accurate information on the respective political system, the situation of the Muslim population under Christian rule, and military conflicts with Muslim powers. Since he chose to travel through the main metropolises of the Near East, he might have been commissioned to collect first-hand information about the situation in the region, which had been transformed considerably by the Ayyūbid expansion under Saladin (r. 567–589/1171–1193).[5]

[§4] Ibn Ǧubayr recorded the experiences of his journey in a travelogue (*riḥla*).[6] This young genre of Arabic literature had been invented by Abū Bakr b. al-ʿArabī (d. 542/1147–1148)[7] in his quest to reunite the Muslim community (*umma*), torn apart by rivalling factions (*fitna*)[8]

[1] Frenkel, Ibn Jubayr; Morray, Ibn Jubayr; Dejugnat, Ibn Jubayr; Davis-Secord, Ibn Jubayr; ʿAbbās, *Dirāsa*.
[2] Ibn Ǧubayr, *Riḥla*/*Travels*, ed. Wright and de Goeje; *Travels*, trans. Broadhurst; Kahanov and Jabour, Westbound Passage.
[3] Al-Maqqarī, *Nafḥ al-ṭīb*, ed. ʿAbbās, vol. 2, pp. 385–386.
[4] Netton, Riḥla; Netton, *Seek Knowledge*.
[5] Dejugnat, Ibn Jubayr; Starkey, Ibn Jubayr's Riḥla; Phillips, Travels.
[6] Netton, Riḥla; Netton, Basic Structures.
[7] Robson, Ibn al-ʿArabī; Garden, The riḥla and Self-Reinvention.
[8] Gardet, Fitna.

since the collapse of the first Muslim caliphate. A staunch supporter of the Almohad caliphs, Ibn Ǧubayr composed his *riḥla* as a means to propagate their claims to unite Islam under their political and religious authority.[9]

[§5] After his return to Granada, Ibn Ǧubayr did not reassume his previous position but began to teach the Prophetic tradition (*ḥadīṯ*, Pl. *aḥādīṯ*) as well as Ṣūfism (*taṣawwuf*). At a later point, he also worked as a judge (*ḥakam*)[10] in Granada and Ceuta. As some of his poems about Ibn Rušd (d. 594/1198) suggest, he maintained contact to the court of Caliph Abū Yūsuf Yaʿqūb al-Manṣūr (r. 580–595/1184–1199) and participated in the doctrinal disputes discussed among the Almohad elite. In 585–587/1184–1199, he went on a second, undocumented pilgrimage to Mecca, allegedly to thank God for the Muslim reconquest of Jerusalem in 583/1187. After a third pilgrimage following the death of his wife in 602/1205–1206, he settled in Alexandria, teaching *ḥadīṯ* until his death in 614/1217.[11]

Content & Context

[§6] The excerpt above forms part of Ibn Ǧubayr's account on Sicily, whose regions and towns he described roughly in the order he visited them. The Genoese ship he had embarked on suffered shipwreck just before Messina (*Massīna*) where he and the other passengers were taken ashore at the command of King William II (r. 1166–1189).[12] While he despised Messina because it featured no Muslim community, he praised Sicily in general as the "daughter (*ibnat*) of al-Andalus" because of its fertile soil.[13] He also portrayed William II in a positive light as a ruler known for his tolerance towards other faiths who surrounded himself with a household of self-confident crypto-Muslim eunuchs whose belief in Islam was an open secret.[14]

[§7] After nine days in Messina, Ibn Ǧubayr boarded a ship to Palermo (*Balarma*/*al-Madīna*), via Cefalù (*Šaflūdī*) and Tèrmini (Imerese, *Ṯirma*) on the island's northern coast.[15] Continuing his journey by land, he passed through Qaṣr Saʿd (possibly modern Castello Sólanto) where he visited a richly endowed mosque and participated in a Ramaḍān prayer, heralded by the muezzin's public call to prayer (*aḏān*).[16] Upon entering Palermo, he was detained by the Norman governor but released after having been interrogated about potential news from Constantinople.[17] In the city's Muslim quarter, he visited the main mosque, mentioning countless smaller ones, most of which were used as schools for Qurʾān teachers. Some Palermitan Muslims were so pious that they rejected "the *ḏimma* of the infidels" (*ḏimmat al-kuffār*). These families probably refused to pay the poll tax and thus forfeited Crown protection of their lives and property.[18] Here, too, the muezzin publicly called to prayer, but the Friday sermon (*ḫuṭba*) in the name of ʿAbbāsid caliph was banned except on feast-days. Apparently, the imāms hailed from within the community and were appointed not by the Norman authorities

[9] Dejugnat, Ibn Jubayr; Dejugnat, Méditerranée; Dejugnat, Voyage.
[10] Goichon and Fleisch, Ḥukm.
[11] Dejugnat, Ibn Jubayr.
[12] Ibn Ǧubayr, *Riḥla*/*Travels*, ed. Wright and de Goeje, pp. 323–328; *Travels*, trans. Broadhurst, pp. 336–344.
[13] Ibn Ǧubayr, *Riḥla*/*Travels*, ed. Wright and de Goeje, pp. 323–324; *Travels*, trans. Broadhurst, pp. 339–340.
[14] Ibn Ǧubayr, *Riḥla*/*Travels*, ed. Wright and de Goeje, pp. 324–327; *Travels*, trans. Broadhurst, pp. 340–343.
[15] Ibn Ǧubayr, *Riḥla*/*Travels*, ed. Wright and de Goeje, p. 328; *Travels*, trans. Broadhurst, pp. 344–345.
[16] Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*/*Travels*, ed. Wright and De Goeje, p. 329; *Travels*, trans. Broadhurst, pp. 345–346.
[17] Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*/*Travels*, ed. Wright and De Goeje, pp. 330–331; *Travels*, trans. Broadhurst, pp. 346–347.
[18] Ibn Ǧubayr, *Riḥla*/*Travels*, ed. Wright and de Goeje, p. 332; *Travels*, trans. Broadhurst, p. 349.

but by the Muslim themselves. In consequence, the authorities regarded them as potential agitators against Christian rule.[19] As usual, a *qāḍī* judged legal affairs within the community.[20]

[§8] After seven days in Palermo, Ibn Ǧubayr continued his journey on the island's west coast on 22 Ramaḍān / 28 December, planning to board a ship home at Tràpani (*Aṭrābaniš*). On 1 Šawwāl / 5 January, he attended local celebrations ending the fasting month, during which a leading Muslim functionary (*ṣāḥib al-aḥkām*) headed a procession to the main mosque to attend the *ḫuṭba*. To the traveller's amazement, the Christian authorities tolerated the noisy spectacle.[21] However, Ibn Ǧubayr's travel plans were frustrated when the king imposed a ban on maritime traffic because he prepared for a naval campaign against Byzantium.[22]

[§9] Before Ibn Ǧubayr could eventually leave for al-Andalus on 21 Ḏū l-Ḥiǧǧa / 26 March,[23] he had the chance to meet Abū l-Qāsim Muḥammad b. Ḥammūd b. al-Ḥaǧar, who made a public visit to the town in Ḏū l-Qaʿda / February 1185 and invited him and his travel companions for a talk. As shown in the excerpt above, our traveller describes his host as a prominent leading figure amongst Sicily's Muslim community—a hereditary position handed down from father to son. Abū l-Qāsim was held in high esteem by the Muslims and was particularly renowned for his charity. However, his position was not uncontested, as his enemies had accused him of corresponding with the Almohads and thus brought him into disrepute with the Crown. Whereas William II had spared him execution, he had imposed a heavy fine on him, confiscated his property, and placed him under house arrest. Although he had recently won back the king's favour and been assigned a post at his court, Abū l-Qāsim felt like he had been reduced to slavery. Even worse, the Christian authorities speculated that, if they could persuade a prominent leading figure like him to convert to Christianity, the majority of Muslims would follow his example.

[§10] Ibn Ǧubayr provides a subjective yet detailed eyewitness account of Muslim life under Norman rule in the mid-1180s. The majority of surviving sources on Sicily in this period emanate from the royal chancery (*dīwān*)[24] or the pen of Latin-Christian chroniclers[25] and almost exclusively reflect their perspectives. The Muslim communities, in turn, only left a handful of deeds of sale.[26] Therefore, the Andalusī traveller's external perspective proffers one of the very few windows through which we can observe the situation of the Muslim communities.[27]

[§11] Many of his observations are corroborated by other sources. Ever since a part of the Latin-Christian population had participated in short but violent anti-Muslim pogroms in 1161,[28] coexistence between the island's religious groups was precarious. It was held in balance by a ruling dynasty whose kings traditionally drew on the island's Byzantine and Islamic heritage to assert their claim to rule as manifest in chancery practice, court culture, art, and architecture.[29]

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[19] Ibn Ǧubayr, *Riḥla*/*Travels*, ed. Wright and de Goeje, p. 332; *Travels*, trans. Broadhurst, p. 348; Wensinck, Khuṭba.
[20] Ibn Ǧubayr, *Riḥla*/*Travels*, ed. Wright and de Goeje, p. 332; *Travels*, trans. Broadhurst, p. 348; Tyan and Káldy Nagy, Ḳāḍī.
[21] Ibn Ǧubayr, *Riḥla*/*Travels*, ed. Wright and de Goeje, p. 336; *Travels*, trans. Broadhurst, p. 353.
[22] Ibn Ǧubayr, *Riḥla*/*Travels*, ed. Wright and de Goeje, pp. 336–340; *Travels*, trans. Broadhurst, pp. 353–356.
[23] Ibn Ǧubayr, *Riḥla*/*Travels*, ed. Wright and de Goeje, pp. 343–348; *Travels*, trans. Broadhurst, pp. 361–366.
[24] Willelmi II Diplomata, ed. *Enzensberger*; Johns, *Arabic Administration*, App. 1, pp. 301–314.
[25] [Hugo Falcandus], *De rebus circa regni Siciliae curiam gestis*, ed. D'Angelo.
[26] Johns, *Arabic Administration*, App. 2, pp. 315–325; Constable, Cross-Cultural Contracts.
[27] Metcalfe, *Muslims*, pp. 214–224; Birk, *Norman Kings*, pp. 243–250; Davis-Secord, Bearers; Kochani Frizzo and Vieira Pinto, Conceitos.
[28] Fernández-Aceves, *County and Nobility*, pp. 79–104; Metcalfe, *Muslims*, pp. 181–192; Birk, *Norman Kings*, pp. 210–221.
[29] Johns, *Arabic Administration*; Nef, *Conquérir*, pp. 67–269; Dolezalek, *Arabic Script*; Vagnoni, *Dei gratia rex Sicilie*; Winkler, Fitzgerald, and Small (eds), *Designing*.

In their realm, the Muslim population majority had been able to largely maintain intra-communal autonomy and Crown protection in return for paying a poll tax (*ǧizya*) modelled on the Islamic *ḏimma* system.[30] By the time Ibn Ǧubayr visited the island, however, the Muslims had been pushed to the margins of a society increasingly dominated by Latin-Christian culture for several decades.[31]

[§12] King William II (r. 1166–1189) continued the ruling traditions of his predecessors: he surrounded himself with an entourage of "Christian" eunuchs who practiced Islam in private while assuming assumed a wide range of tasks as court functionaries.[32] These "Palace Saracens" and the island's Muslim communities at large depended completely on the king's goodwill. In the late 1170s and early 1180s, for example, he had not hesitated to transfer a large number of Muslim communities from the Crown domain to the jurisdiction of the Benedictine abbey of S. Maria Nuova in Monreale. Since the Western Sicilian Crown lands with the metropolis Palermo[33] had become a major refuge for the Muslim population since the pogroms of 1161, this transfer resembled a break with a decades-old tradition.[34] On the level of foreign affairs, William II revived the active Mediterranean policy of his grandfather Roger II (r. 1105–1154). His powerful navy served to assert Sicilian maritime dominance vis-à-vis the Almohads in the western Mediterranean, and the Ayyūbids and Byzantines in the eastern Mediterranean.[35]

Contextualization, Analysis & Interpretation

[§13] Having contextualised Ibn Ǧubayr's description of Sicily within what we know about the situation of the Sicilian Muslims in the mid-1180s, we will now focus on his recollections of the meeting with Abū l-Qāsim and see how they fit into this general picture. As already done above, the traveller's impressions will be juxtaposed with information from other sources. This will enable us to reconstruct a more comprehensive picture of the Muslim leader. Finally, the meeting of the two men will be situated in the wider context of transmediterranean politics.

[§14] Abū l-Qāsim's position amongst Sicily's Muslim population is difficult to define and remains as enigmatic as the course of his career.[36] Building on the information he received from the local population and Abū l-Qāsim himself, Ibn Ǧubayr calls him the "leader" (*zaʿīm*) and "lord" (*sayyid*) of the Sicilian Muslims, and also adds the title *al-qāʾid* ("leader," "commander")—a honorific title in Norman Sicily for Muslims and Christians alike.[37] The Latin-Christian chronicler known as Hugo Falcandus, well acquainted with the personal constellations at the royal court in the 1150s and 1160s, remains equally vague when he calls Abū l-Qāsim "the most noble and powerful amongst the Muslims of Sicily."[38] Ibn Ǧubayr's

[30] Cahen, Ḏjizya (i); Johns, *Arabic Administration*, pp. 34–39; Metcalfe, *Muslims*, pp. 106–108; Birk, *Norman Kings*, pp. 91–92.
[31] Metcalfe, *Muslims and Christians*; Metcalfe, *Muslims*; Nef, *Conquérir*; Birk, *Norman Kings*; Engl, *Verdrängte Kultur*; Böhme, *Handlungsmacht*, pp. 49–164.
[32] Johns, *Arabic Administration*, pp. 212–256; Metcalfe, *Muslims*, pp. 193–198; Nef, *Conquérir*, pp. 307–328; Birk, *Norman Kings*, pp. 173–194; Böhme, *Handlungsmacht*, pp. 103–109, 138–150; Strothmann and Djebli, Taḳiyya; Stewart, Dissimulation.
[33] Nef (ed.), *Palermo*; Jäckh, *Raumgeschichte*, pp. 141–276.
[34] Schlichte, *König*, pp. 186–196; Loud, *Latin Church*, pp. 329–339; Imperia, *I Vescovati*, pp. 137–170; Johns, *Arabic Administration*, pp. 151–152; Metcalfe, *Muslims*, pp. 210–214; Birk, *Norman Kings*, pp. 239–243.
[35] Schlichte, *König*, pp. 273–310; Hailstone, *Recalcitrant Crusaders*, pp. 134–148; King, *Dynasties*, pp. 188–189.
[36] Cf. also Johns, *Arabic Administration*, pp. 35, 133, 206, 234–242, 252–254, 289–290, 292; Metcalfe, *Muslims*, pp. 205, 209, 215–221; Nef, *Conquérir*, pp. 324–326, 344–346; Birk, *Norman Kings*, pp. 248–249; Jäckh, *Raumgeschichte*, pp. 265–266, 271–275.
[37] Ibn Ǧubayr, *Riḥla*/*Travels*, ed. Wright and de Goeje, p. 341: "zaʿīm ahl hāḏihi l-ǧazīra min al-muslimīn wa-sayyiduhum al-qāʾid (…);" *Travels*, trans. Broadhurst, p. 358; see also Colin, Ḳāʾid.
[38] [Hugo Falcandus,] *De rebus circa regni Siciliae curiam gestis*, ed. D'Angelo, pp. 244–245: "inter Saracenos Siciliae nobilissimus ac prepotens."

assertion that Abū l-Qāsim had a dynastic claim on his position seems to be correct,[39] as his father Abū ʿAbdallāh Ḥammūd had been praised as "chief of chiefs" (*sāʾid al-sāda*) and "commander of commanders" (*qāʾid al-qāda*) by Ibn Ẓafar (d. 565/1170 or 567/1172), a poet he had patronised. While Abū ʿAbdallāh's leadership (*riʾāsa*) had been characterised by generosity, he had refused to listen to his "defamatory" critics (*al-wušā*)—an indication that not all Sicilian Muslims accepted the dynasty's claim to leadership unconditionally.[40]

[§15] It is clear, in any case, that Abū l-Qāsim's family both radiated and coveted prestige. Not only was Abū l-Qāsim's brother a renowned savant and legal scholar (*faqīh*).[41] According to the Egyptian poet Ibn Qalāqis (d. 567/1172), whom Abū l-Qāsim had hosted in Sicily between May 1168 and April 1169, the Banū l-Ḥaǧar traced their lineage from the Andalusī ruling dynasty of the Banū l-Ḥammūd and the Šīʿīte Idrīsids of North Africa back to Fāṭima, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, and thus to the prophet Muḥammad himself.[42] At the same time, the Ibn Qalāqis also noted that Abū l-Qāsim had named his sons after the first three caliphs Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, and ʿUṯmān—a decision incompatible with Šīʿīte belief.[43] The Persian traveller ʿAlī al-Harawī (d. 611/1215), who likewise enjoyed Abū l-Qāsim's hospitality in 1175, claims that his host had introduced himself as a descendant of the Sunnī Umayyad caliph ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (r. 99–101/717–720).[44] Obviously, Abū l-Qāsim used this flexible form of dynastic self-presentation to buttress his inherited claims to leadership, taking care that his affiliation to one or another of Islam's main branches kept in line with political realities, in this case probably the abolition of the Šīʿīte Fatimid caliphate in Egypt in 1171 and the subsequent rise of the Sunnī Ayyūbids.[45]

[§16] Modern scholarship has tried to link Abū l-Qāsim's family to Ḥammūd (*Chamutus*) of Agrigento and Castrogiovanni, a Muslim warlord who had abdicated and turned Christian in 1087.[46] However, the existing hypotheses lack reliable evidence.[47] Abū l-Qāsim's activities are first documented in September 1162, when a Christian and two Muslim agents brokered commercial deals between Sicily and Genoa on his behalf.[48] Abū l-Qāsim himself seems to have been more interested in higher political levels, where he could draw on an extensive network of influential figures. Among these were the Sicilian poet and *faqīh* al-Umāwī, the Palermitan *qāḍī* Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad b. Raǧāʾ, as well as important court functionaries (*ḫāṣṣa*) such as the military leader (*al-qāʾid*) Ġārāt b. Ǧawšan, the jurist Ibn Fātiḥ, the *ḥakīm* Abū ʿAmr ʿUṯmān b. al-Muhaḏḏib al-Ǧuḏamī, and the powerful palace eunuch Richard.[49]

[§17] In 1168, Abū l-Qāsim joined Richard and several Latin-Christian dignitaries in spearheading armed resistance against Stephen of Perche, a French cousin to Queen Margaret (r. 1154–1166) who made a stellar but ultimately short-lived career as archbishop of Palermo

[39] Ibn Ǧubayr, *Riḥla*/*Travels*, ed. Wright and de Goeje, p. 341: "wa-hāḏā l-raǧul min ahl bayt bi-hāḏihi l-ǧazīra tawāraṯū al-siyāda kābiran ʿan kābir (…);" *Travels*, trans. Broadhurst, p. 358.
[40] Ibn Ẓafar, *Sulwān al-muṭāʿ*, p. 2; Ibn Qalāqis, *Zahr al-bāsim*, ed. al-Mānīʿ, p. 45; Johns, *Arabic Administration*, p. 235; Metcalfe, *Muslims*, p. 216; Nef, *Conquérir*, pp. 207–210.
[41] Ibn Qalāqis, *Zahr al-bāsim*, ed. al-Mānīʿ, pp. 41–45; Macdonald, Faḳīh.
[42] Ibn Qalāqis, *Zahr al-bāsim*, ed. al-Mānīʿ, pp. 3, 34, 41–42, 49–52, 58.
[43] Ibn Qalāqis, *Zahr al-bāsim*, ed. al-Mānīʿ, pp. 12–13, 15, 22.
[44] Al-Harawī, *Kitāb al-Išārāt*, ed. Meri, cap. 55, pp. 144–145.
[45] Lev, *Saladin*, pp. 50–52, 84–86, 124–140, 194–195.
[46] Geoffrey Malaterra, De Rebus gestis, ed. Pontieri (Rerum Italicarum Scriptores. Nuova edizione 5,1), lib. IV, cap. V–VI, pp. 87–88.
[47] Amari, *Storia*, vol. 3/1, pp. 175–179; Amara and Nef, al-Idrīsī; questioned e.g. by Johns, *Arabic Administration*, pp. 236–239; Metcalfe, *Muslims*, pp. 217–218; Metcalfe, *I musulmani*, pp. 217–218.
[48] *Il Cartolare di Giovanni Scriba*, ed. Chiaudano and Moresco (Regesta Chartarum Italiae 19–20 / Documenti e studi per la storia del commercio e del diritto commerciale italiano 1–2), vol. 2, nos 970, 972, p. 80. Abulafia, *Two Italies*, pp. 246–250; Johns, Arabic Contracts, p. 56; Johns, *Arabic Administration*, p. 239.
[49] Ibn Qalāqis, *Zahr al-bāsim*, ed. al-Mānīʿ, pp. 22–24, 38; Ibn Qalāqis, *Tarassul*, ed. al-Mānīʿ, pp. 53, 69.

and royal chancellor in 1167–1168. Although Stephen's hostile policy towards the Palace Saracens and the Muslim populace seems to have been one of the main reasons for his downfall, Abū l-Qāsim seems to have pursued his own political interests as well. According to Hugo Falcandus, he held a personal grudge against Stephen because he favoured the advice of a certain *qāʾid* Sedictus, allegedly the island's richest Muslim and a fierce opponent of Abū l-Qāsim. For this reason, the latter had stirred up Sicily's Muslims against the chancellor, although they "had initially liked him very much."[50] Sedictus indeed possessed considerable estates in Palermo, as one of his houses served as a popular geographical point of reference by 1190,[51] and a garden he once had cultivated became an imperial gift some years later.[52] He is possibly to be identified with the *šayḫ* al-Sadīd al-Ḥuṣrī, another patron of Ibn Qalāqis.[53] Although both rivals moved in the highest advisory circles at the royal court, we barely know anything about their concrete administrative or political competences, neither at court nor within the Muslim community of Palermo.

[§18] Judging from two documents dating 1168 and 1172, Abū l-Qāsim held a leading position as one of the archons and secretaries (ἀρχόντων τῆς κόρτης καὶ σεκρετικῶν) or "masters" (*magistri*) within the financial administration of the royal *dīwān*.[54] Ibn Qalāqis even praises him as being on par with the legendary Umayyad scribe ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd b. Yaḥyā (d. 132/749–750) and the powerful chancellors of the Būyid dynasty.[55] Abū l-Qāsim might have been responsible for matters related to the poll tax (*ǧizya*) the Muslim communities were obliged to pay. When Ibn Qalāqis visited Syracuse during the winter of 1169/1169, the Muslim inhabitants of Syracuse asked him to act as their advocate (*šafīʿ*) vis-à-vis Abū l-Qāsim and to persuade the latter to reduce the amount they had to pay. However, Abū l-Qāsim informed the poet that he had to delay the matter due to more pressing obligations.[56] Although the further course of the affair is unknown, the final decision probably would have fallen to the royal familiar Richard Palmer, bishop-elect of Syracuse (sed. 1169–1195), who certainly would have dismissed the request.[57]

[§19] Ibn Ǧubayr's assertion that Abū l-Qāsim used to support travellers and pilgrims and invited him and his travel party for a talk[58] can be corroborated by the travelogues of other authors. As mentioned above, Abū l-Qāsim had invited the Egyptian poet Ibn Qalāqis to Sicily

[50] [Hugo Falcandus,] *De rebus circa regni Siciliae curiam gestis*, ed. D'Angelo, pp. 244–245: "Nec minus Bulcassem, inter Saracenos Siciliae nobilissimus ac prepotens, multam illi Saracenorum conflarat inuidiam, cum eum ab initio plurimum dilexissent. Indignabatur enim, quod qaytum Sedictum, ditissimum Saracenum, cum quo priuatas habebat inimicitias, cancellarius nimis familiariter admitteret et eius consilio multa facere uiderentur, et inde se, cum ei dona plurima contulisset, putabat contempni, nec eius posse gratiam promereri."; Tramontana, Stefano di Perche; Türk, Chute; Metcalfe, *Muslims*, pp. 203–205; Nef, *Conquérir*, pp. 611–616; Birk, *Norman Kings*, pp. 226–234.

[51] [Hugo Falcandus,] *Epistola*, ed. D'Angelo, pp. 344–345.

[52] *Die Urkunden der Kaiserin Konstanze (Constantiae Imperatricis diplomata)*, ed. Kölzer (MGH DD. Die Urkunden der deutschen Könige und Kaiser 11,3), Deperditum 60, pp. 268–269.

[53] Ibn Qalāqis, *Tarassul*, ed. al-Mānīʿ, p. 77; Ibn Qalāqis, *Dīwān*, ed. Furayḫ, nos 35, 266, 298, 385, pp. 143–145, 383–385, 420–421, 498–500.

[54] *I diplomi greci ed arabi di Sicilia*, ed. Cusa, pp. 484–486 no. 5 (June 6676/1168); *Willelmi II Diplomata*, ed. Enzensberger, no. 66 (November 1172).

[55] Ibn Qalāqis, *Zahr al-bāsim*, ed. al-Mānīʿ, p. 5.

[56] Ibn Qalāqis, *Zahr al-bāsim*, ed. al-Mānīʿ, pp. 33–38, esp. p. 33: "wa-fī aṯnāʾi ḏālika saʾalanī ahl al-balad an ašfaʿalahum ilā ǧilālihi, wa-ahuzza Maḥmūd ḫiṣālihi fī rafʿ al-ǧizya ʿan inḫifāḍ amwālihim, wa-ntiṣāb āmālihim fa-katabtu ilayhi: (…) wa-ahl Saraqūsa qawm lahum fī l-ḥaqq al-ḥaḍra tawaffur wa-qad ǧaʿalūnī šafīʿan yuḥalluhum min ʿināyatihi maḥallan rafīʿan, wa-hiya ūlā ġārim iḏā aṯqala al-aʿnāq al-maġārim (…)."

[57] De Simone, *Splendori*, pp. 26, 88 FN 155.

[58] Ibn Ǧubayr, *Riḥla*/*Travels*, ed. Wright and de Goeje, p. 341–342: "wa-baṯṯa al-ṣadaqāt fī l-ġurabāʾ al-munqaṭiʿīn min al-ḥuǧǧāǧ (…) wa-ṣadarat ʿanhu ʿind wuṣūlihi ilā hāḏihi al-balda raġba fī l-iǧtimāʿ bi-nā (…) wa-kānat lahu ayyām maqāma hunā af ʿāl ǧamīla maʿa al-fuqarāʾ al-ḥuǧǧāǧ wa-ṣaʿālīkihim aṣlaḥat aḥwālahum wa-sayyarat lahum al-kirāʾa wa-l-zād (…)"; *Travels*, trans. Broadhurst, p. 358–359.

and hosted him between May 1168 and April 1169.[59] Around 1175, the Persian traveller ʿAlī al-Harawī had enjoyed his hospitality as well.[60] Abū l-Qāsim's interest in meeting and befriending Muslim travellers did not merely spring from a pious desire to perform "good deeds," but also allowed him to gather and spread information, extend his transmediterranean network, and sometimes also to initiate diplomatic contacts. Al-Harawī relates how Abū l-Qāsim asked him to deliver a letter to Saladin shortly before his departure for Egypt in 1175. In this letter, the Muslim leader pleaded the sultan to consider conquering Sicily. However, since the traveller soon suffered shipwreck, he probably lost the letter before he could convey it to the sultan.[61]

[§20] Despite this setback, Abū l-Qāsim seems to have continued his efforts. He himself probably told Ibn Ǧubayr that he had been accused of "corresponding with the Almohads" (*muḫāṭabat al-Muwaḥḥidīn*). Although the traveller discounts these charges as one of many "untrue stories" (*aḥādīṯ muzawwara*) spread by Abū l-Qāsim's "enemies" (*min aʿdāʾihi*), modern scholarship has speculated that the latter could indeed have been in conspirative contact with the Almohad fleet commander Aḥmad al-Ṣiqillī, once a high-ranking palace eunuch called Peter/Barrūn who had abandoned his old life in 1166.[62] As he and Abū l-Qāsim were likely acquainted with each other, they might have worked towards undermining the diplomatic rapprochement between William II of Sicily and Caliph Abū Yaʿqūb Yūsuf (r. 558–580/1163–1184), initiated with a truce in 1181.[63] As Ibn Ǧubayr was not only a staunch supporter of the Almohad cause but a high-ranking functionary of the Almohad governors of Granada and thus acquainted with members of the caliphal family, he certainly was a promising interlocutor for Abū l-Qāsim if the latter wanted to extend his contacts with the Almohad caliphate.

[§21] Whether the accusations against Abū l-Qāsim were true or not, his political enemies succeeded in turning William II against him but failed to bring about his definite downfall. While undermining or even sabotaging royal diplomacy would have equalled high treason and been punished with execution,[64] Ibn Ǧubayr learned that the king had contented himself with imposing a heavy fine on Abū l-Qāsim, confiscating his properties and placing him under house arrest.[65] Moreover, William had recently "taken him back in his favour, and ordered him to carry out important tasks as part of the royal [financial] activities."[66] While it is unknown which duties and competences he had been assigned, he might have resumed his work in the financial administration of the royal dīwān, and had potentially participated in the production of two documents for the royal prestige project S. Maria Nuova di Monreale in 1182/1183.[67]

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[59] Ibn Qalāqis, *Dīwān*, ed. Furayḥ; *Tarassul*, ed. al-Mānīʿ; *Zahr al-bāsim*, ed. al-Mānīʿ; De Simone, Ibn Qalāqis; De Simone, Ricostruzione; De Simone, Al-Zahr al-bāsim; De Simone, *Splendori*, pp. 9–34.

[60] Al-Harawī, *Kitāb al-Išārāt*, ed. Meri; Roldán Castro, Kitāb al-Išārāt.

[61] Al-Harawī, *Kitāb al-Išārāt*, ed. Meri, cap. 55; pp. 144–145: "wa-aḥsana hāḏā l-qāʾid ilayya wa-kataba maʿī kutuban ilā l-sulṭān taḥuṯṯuhu ʿalā aḫḏ hāḏihi al-ǧazīra wa-ġariqa al-markab ʿinda ḫurūǧī min hāḏihi al-ǧazīra (…)."

[62] Johns, *Arabic Administration*, pp. 222–228; Metcalfe, *Muslims*, pp. 174–175, 197–198, 200–203; Nef, *Conquérir*, pp. 330, 335–336, 341, 611–613, 616–618; Birk, *Norman Kings*, pp. 182–184, 211–112, 223–226.

[63] Metcalfe, *Muslims*, p. 220; Metcalfe, *I musulmani*, p. 220.

[64] Ibn Ǧubayr, *Riḥla*/*Travels*, ed. Wright and de Goeje, p. 341: "fa-kādat taqaḍḍā ʿalayhi lawlā ḥāris al-mudda (…)"; *Travels*, trans. Broadhurst, p. 358.

[65] Ibn Ǧubayr, *Riḥla*/*Travels*, ed. Wright and de Goeje, p. 341: "wa-kāna fī hāḏihi al-mudda taḥta hiǧrān min hāḏā l-ṭāġiya alzamahu dārahu (…) wa-tawālat ʿalayhi muṣādarāt aġramathu nayyifan ʿalā l-ṯalāṯīn alf dīnār muʾminiyya wa-lam yazal yataḫallā ʿan ǧamīʿ diyārihi wa-amlākihi l-mawrūṯa ʿan salafihi ḥattā baqiya dūna māl (…)"; *Travels*, trans. Broadhurst, p. 358.

[66] Ibn Ǧubayr, *Riḥla*/*Travels*, ed. Wright and de Goeje, p. 341: "fa-ttafaqa fī hāḏihi al-ayyām raḍiyā l-ṭāġiya ʿanhu wa-amarahu bi-l-nufūḏ li-muhimm min ašġālihi al-sulṭāniyya (…)"; *Travels*, trans. Broadhurst, p. 358.

[67] *I diplomi greci ed arabi di Sicilia*, ed. Cusa, pp. 179–286 nos 4–5 = Johns, *Arabic Administration*, nos 44–45 (May 6690/1182, April 6691/1183), pp. 313–314. See Metcalfe, *Muslims*, pp. 220–221; Metcalfe, *I musulmani*, p. 221.

[§22] Despite having regained his former position at court at least in part, Abū l-Qāsim stressed that he felt like having been reduced to slavery, neither possessing his own properties nor having any other choice than fulfilling whatever the Christian king demanded.[68] Obviously, he took great care of framing his still influential position as a mediator between the Muslim population and the Christian king as a hard lot he desired to escape at any cost. In this way, he could be sure to meet the expectations and sympathy of a Mecca pilgrim from Almohad al-Andalus who had hitherto been completely unfamiliar with Sicilian realities.[69] Accordingly, Ibn Ǧubayr channelled his impressions into the picture of a Muslim leading figure who had been disempowered politically and economically, and psychologically broken over his own fate and that of Sicily's Muslims in general.

[§23] Even worse, he implies that Abū l-Qāsim faced pressure to convert to Christianity: the Christians were sure that, if a leader as great as him would renounce Islam, all Muslims on the island would follow sooner or later.[70] The steadily lurking temptation (*fitna*)[71] for the Sicilian Muslims to convert to Christianity as the dominant religion obviously was an important topic for Ibn Ǧubayr. He relates how Muslim women and adolescents went as far as threatening to convert in order to assert themselves in family conflicts.[72] Allegedly, one of Tràpani's notables (*aʿyān*) even married his daughter to a member of the Andalusī travel party to help her escape a bleak future on the island.[73] The travellers also learned about the fate a certain Ibn Zurʿa had suffered a few years ago. Having carved out a career as one of Palermo's most renowned jurists, he had been coerced into converting to Christianity by some royal functionaries (*ʿummāl*). He then dedicated so much effort to internalise the principles and customs of his new faith that he eventually became accepted among the "priests" (*al-qissīsīn*) and was allowed to pass judgement in lawsuits between Christians. Still, his knowledge of Islamic law secured him authority in inner-Muslim affairs as well. Although he went as far as converting a mosque he owned opposite his house into a church, he was said to have covertly remained faithful to Islam.[74] However, even if we take Ibn Zurʿa's story at face value, it should be considered the exception rather than the rule. While the palace eunuchs were indeed forced to maintain a Christian identity at least outwardly, there is no evidence that members of the local Muslim elite were systematically pushed into conversion. The Banū Raǧāʾ, a family clan that provided many judges of Palermo, i.e. the highest Muslim juridical authorities on the island, were in a comparable position to Ibn Zurʿa. Although they served as functionaries at the Norman court for at least three generations between the 1120s and 1180s, none of their members is known to have converted to Christianity.[75]

[§24] Whether Abū l-Qāsim eventually renounced Islam is unknown, as his life after the meeting with Ibn Ǧubayr remains unknown. In December 1200, the house of a *gaiti Bulcasimi* in Tràpani was given to the commune of Genoa in the name of the young Frederick II (r. 1198–

[68] Ibn Ǧubayr, *Riḥla*/*Travels*, ed. Wright and de Goeje, p. 341: "fa-nafaḏa lahā nufūḏa l-mamlūk al-maġlūb ʿalā nafsihi wa-mālihi (…)"; *Travels*, trans. Broadhurst, p. 358.
[69] Ibn Ǧubayr, *Riḥla*/*Travels*, ed. Wright and de Goeje, p. 341: "innahu qāla kunt awadd law ubāʿanā wa-ahl baytī fa-laʿalla al-bayʿ kāna yataḫallaṣanā mimmā naḥnu fīhi wa-yuʾaddī bi-nā ilā l-ḥuṣūl fī bilād al-muslimīn (…)"; *Travels*, trans. Broadhurst, p. 358.
[70] Ibn Ǧubayr, *Riḥla*/*Travels*, ed. Wright and de Goeje, p. 342: "wa-min ʿiẓam hāḏā l-raǧul al-ḥammūdī l-maḏkūr fī nufūs al-naṣārā abādahum Allāh annahum yazʿumūna annahu law tanaṣṣara li-mā baqiya fī l-ǧazīra muslim illā wa-faʿala fiʿlahu ittibāʿan lahu wa-qtidāʾan bi-hi (…)"; *Travels*, trans. Broadhurst, p. 360.
[71] On Ibn Ǧubayr's use of the concept, see *Birk*, Crucible of Faith.
[72] Ibn Ǧubayr, *Riḥla*/*Travels*, ed. Wright and de Goeje, p. 342; *Travels*, trans. Broadhurst, p. 359.
[73] Ibn Ǧubayr, *Riḥla*/*Travels*, ed. Wright and de Goeje, pp. 342–343; *Travels*, trans. Broadhurst, p. 360.
[74] Ibn Ǧubayr, *Riḥla*/*Travels*, ed. Wright and de Goeje, pp. 340–341; *Travels*, trans. Broadhurst, pp. 357–358.
[75] Johns, *Arabic Administration*, pp. 86, 88–90, 240, 295; Metcalfe, *Muslims*, pp. 129–130, 177–178; Nef, *Conquérir*, pp. 322–323; Johns and Jamil, Way.

1250).[76] While it is very likely that it had once belonged to Abū l-Qāsim, it is unknown whether he was still alive. Remarkably enough, a document from 1289 mentions a late individual called John, whose father had been a certain Philip *de Ibn Hammud*. This Philip seems to have served as notary and *qāʾid* of Palermo in around 1240—a vague clue that later generations of Abū l-Qāsim's family might have indeed converted to Christianity and, in turn, remained in the favour and service of later Sicilian rulers.[77]

[§25] Less than five years after Ibn Ǧubayr had visited Sicily and met Abū l-Qāsim, the fragile coexistence between the island's religious groups collapsed again. When William II died in November 1189, the Norman kingdom fell into a succession crisis in which Tancred of Lecce (r. 1189–1194), one of the ringleaders of the pogroms of 1161, usurped the throne. Once again, Christians and Muslims violently clashed which each other. This prompted five Muslim "kinglets" (*regulos*),[78] to be identified as members of the communal elite of Palermo or the surrounding rural communities, to call for a retreat to the easier defendable mountains around Palermo.[79] From here, they allegedly attacked Christian towns and possibly also maintained contact to the outside world, as the correspondence between Almohad al-Mahdiyya and Ayyūbid Alexandria implies.[80]

[§26] If Abū l-Qāsim participated in the uprising, he most likely would have been one of its leaders, but there is no evidence to prove his involvement. We barely know anything about the further course of events, the participants, and their motivations. Given the context of the Third Crusade, it seems quite conceivable that agitators on the Latin-Christian side had stirred up religious animosities again. For the Muslim leaders, the need to protect their communities in the absence of a friendly and assertive royal patron must have been of paramount importance. By spring 1191, at the latest, Tancred managed to end the Muslim uprising. As he found himself in a precarious situation, too, he seems to have preferred a diplomatic over a military solution, and eventually persuaded the Muslims to return to their previous living conditions.[81] At the turn of the century, however, they would rise against the Crown again.[82]

[§27] Ibn Ǧubayr's account of his journey from al-Andalus to Mecca and back in 578–581/1183–1185 is a unique source which provides us with selective and subjective, but detailed insights into the social realities of the places he visited. For the study of Christian–Muslim relations, his reports on the Frankish realms in the levant and Norman Sicily are of great value since they allow us to catch a glimpse of Muslim life under Christian rule. While the traveller deliberately passed through Frankish Outremer quickly, his stay in Sicily during the winter 580/1184–1185 was an involuntary layover. Ibn Ǧubayr seems to have been deeply impressed by the things he learned on the island. He visited Muslim communities which, almost a century after the Norman conquest, still held on to their traditional lifestyle shaped by the norms of Islam. They persisted under the rule and protection of monarchs who adapted many elements

[76] *Die Urkunden Friedrichs II.*, ed. Walter Koch et al. (MGH DD. Die Urkunden der deutschen Könige und Kaiser 14,1–6), no. 26, pp. 54–56.
[77] Sciascia, Cammelli, pp. 1179, 1218 no. 5; *Registro*, ed. Carbonetti Vendittelli (Fonti per la storia dell'Italia medievale. Antiquitates 19), vol. 1, no. 98, p. 79; vol. 2, nos 743–745, 901, pp. 660–665, 795–796. See Johns, *Arabic Administration*, p. 242.
[78] Ryccardus de Sancto Germano, *Chronicon*, ed. Garufi (Rerum Italicarum scriptores. Nuova edizione 7,2), p. 9.
[79] [Hugo Falcandus], Epistola, ed. D'Angelo, pp. 334–335; *Annales Casinenses*, ed. Pertz (MGH SS 19), p. 314; Ryccardus de Sancto Germano, *Chronicon*, ed. Garufi (Rerum Italicarum scriptores. Nuova edizione 7,2), pp. 8–9; Rogerius de Houedene, Gesta Regis Ricardi, ed. Stubbs, p. 141; Rogerius de Houedene, *Chronica*, ed. Stubbs, vol. 3, p. 69.
[80] Abū Šāma, *Kitāb al-Rawḍatayn*, ed. Šams al-Dīn, vol. 4, p. 127.
[81] Böhme, 1190: Letter.
[82] Metcalfe, *Muslims*, pp. 277–287; Birk, *Norman Kings*, pp. 279–290; Engl, *Verdrängte Kultur*, pp. 78–195.

of contemporary Islamic rule but did not prevent their Muslim subjects from being pushed to the margins of a society dominated by the Latin-Christian majority.

[§28] Ibn Ǧubayr's prime example to illustrate the precarious situation of Sicilian Islam was Abū l-Qāsim Muḥammad b. Ḥammūd b. al-Ḥağar, a high-ranking dignitary who enjoyed both inherited authority over the Muslim communities and fluctuating influence at the royal court. Based on their short meeting in Tràpani in Ḏū l-Qaʿda / February 1185, the Andalusī traveller described his interlocutor's position and situation as precarious. Although he retained his authority over the Muslims, he had been deprived of his influence at court and his economic power, and had been psychologically broken over his fate and that of his coreligionists. According to Ibn Ǧubayr, Abū l-Qāsim and every Muslim on the island lived under the constant pressure to convert to Christianity and thus to enjoy the benefits of joining the politically dominant religion—a temptation (*fitna*) they still resisted bravely but might not withstand much longer. In painting such a bleak picture, Ibn Ǧubayr not only expressed his personal opinion as a pious pilgrim returning from a long stay in Islam's holiest places. As a staunch supporter of the Almohad caliphs and their claims to unite and lead the Muslim world in the *ǧihād* against the Christian powers, he took care to present Norman Sicily as a fragile society whose oppressed Muslim masses faced grim prospects under the Christian yoke, but were ready to shake it off, if a suitable opportunity arose.[83]

[§29] His interlocutor Abū l-Qāsim certainly shared these views and favoured such a depiction. He himself had tried to persuade external Muslim powers—the Ayyūbids, possibly also the Fāṭimids and Almohads—to conquer Sicily for Islam. In inviting the well-travelled Andalusī Mecca pilgrim for a talk, he not only offered pious hospitality, but sought to make the Almohad functionary part of his extended network. For such transmediterranean channels of communication not only enabled him to receive news about political developments on other Mediterranean shores, but also allowed him to spread information about the situation in Sicily. As has been shown, Abū l-Qāsim took great care to curate the impression his foreign guests gained during their stay and ultimately conveyed to their audience back home. Thus, Ibn Ǧubayr's account of Norman Sicily and its Muslims headed by Abū l-Qāsim Muḥammad b. Ḥammūd b. al-Ḥağar offers a perspective that is shaped by the political motives of both the traveller and his interlocutor. Only five years after their meeting, the Muslim uprising took place that both men had probably hoped for and possibly worked towards. However, due to lack of support from other parts of the Islamicate Mediterranean, it ultimately failed.[84]

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[83] Dejugnat, Ibn Jubayr; Kochani Frizzo and Vieira Pinto, Conceitos.
[84] Böhme, 1190: Letter.

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