

Historical Geography of Sicily Island between X —XIVth Centuries

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Abstract—In the period when the Mediterranean was significant in terms of trade routes, in respect to the location of the Island of Sicily, it was much more important also for these routes. After conquest of North Africa by the Muslim Arabs, they conquered also the Island of Sicily which was at the very close distance to the North Africa. They made progress in respect to the cultural, scientific, architectural and economical aspects. The Island of Sicily remained under the rule of Arab for about 250 years. Both in the Arab Sicily reign and in the reign of Norman Sicily thereafter, a lot of Arab Geographers and travelers visited the Island. In this study we have tried to investigate and examine the Geography of Sicily available about 600-1000 years ago. When masterpieces in Arabic are examined, in that era Sicily was the agricultural and trade center, possessing rich underground resources, located at the crossroads of major trade routes in the Mediterranean. As it is realized from handwritten manuscripts the majority of the population in that era was North African or Muslim Arab. However, people in different religions and cultures were living together.

Index Terms—Sicily, historical geography, Arab travelers, geography.

I. INTRODUCTION

Actions of conquest by Muslims to the island of Sicily located at the key position in the Mediterranean were performed by Arab Muslim Aghlabids over the North Africa [1]. Muslim Arabs tried to conquer this island which is located in the middle of the Mediterranean in a very important position and at the crossroads of the maritime trade routes at much earlier dates. In AD 652 they organized campaigns and attacks at Umayyad era. But, due to availability of powerful Byzantine fleet they were unsuccessful. In AD 827 Arab armies conquered the island of Sicily and progressed rapidly the movements of conquest [2]. Dominance of the Muslim Arabs continued until defeat of Aghlabid Empire by Normans in AD 1060 (Sauvaget, 1963). But, presence and culture of Muslim Arabs in the island however continued for a long time. After the end of the Arabian dominance however in the reign of Normans Christians and Muslims lived together by the end of the 13th [3].

Sicily is located at south of the Italian Peninsula. It is the largest island (25.078 km²) in the Mediterranean Sea. Northern parts of the island are mountainous, southern parts however are plane. The highest (3323 meters) active volcano in Europe is Mount Etna located at east of Sicily [4].

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A typical Mediterranean Climate prevails in the island which is located in the central Mediterranean Sea.

At present day Sicily is an Autonomous Region attached to Italy. Population of Sicily is a little bit more than 5 million people. The most important province of Sicily is Palermo [5]. Additionally other provinces are Messina, Catania, Agrigento, Siracusa, Trapani, Ragusa, Enna, and Caltanissetta.

II. METHOD

The purpose of this study is to exhibit the historical geography of Sicily through the eyes of Arab travelers and geography books by examining their travel books written in Arabic between the 10th and the 14th centuries. For this purpose, the travel books of Arab travelers covering from the 10th to the 14th centuries were examined and parts related to Sicily were quoted. A view of Sicily as it was approximately a thousand years ago was tried to be revealed by using various resources.

Since this study was aimed to depict and describe the conditions in the past as it was occurred, the research model was determined as a descriptive survey model. The document study method of qualitative research methods was used in this study. According to Yildirim and Simsek [6]; the document study includes the analysis of written materials about the target case or cases. In the qualitative research, when it is impossible to conduct direct observation or interview or when it is aimed to increase the validity of the research, written or visual materials can be included to the study besides the direct observation and interview.

In order to conduct this study, the facsimile or photographs of the handwritten travel and geography books written in Arabic between the 10th and 14th centuries were reached and the sections about Sicily were selected among them in order to gather information about Sicily of at those times. Some of this information was transferred directly.

III. FINDINGS

Movements of conquest of Sicily by Muslim Arabs were commenced by the Commander Muawiyah bin Hadid al-Kindi at the reign of Muawiyah Ibn-i Sufian, according to Qudamah bin Jafar [7]. But the conquest of Sicily was accomplished later by Agleb bin Salem. At that era the province of Sicily was captured by Muslims. Because of its location, Sicily has a significant place. Muslim geographers and travelers have also provided information about the island of Sicily in their works. One of them however is Ibn Hawqal. In the period that Ibn Hawqal [8] lived Sicily was ruled by Muslims. Therefore, however, in the work of Ibn

Hawqal the island of Sicily has been referred to as a Muslim State. Ibn Hawqal saying *"length of Sicily located at east of Andalusia takes seven days and width takes however four days to travel"* gives information about position and width of the island of Sicily. Ibn Hawqal tells that Sicily is generally mountainous. He stated that there were a lot of castles and city walls, and that field was used as agricultural area. Likewise, Yaqut al-Hamawi also pointed out that the island of Sicily has had cultivated and planted lands, and that it was rather rich with fruit and vegetable. Fruits and vegetables are always available in summer and winter seasons [9]. Furthermore, both Hamawi [9] and Qazwini [10] emphasize that *"Saffron has been produced in the island of Sicily"*.

According to Al- Idrisi, water is abundant and fruits are also diverse in the island of Sicily [11]. Al-Idrisi, while telling about the beauty of buildings therein, made following statement: *"they have breathtaking beauty"*. According to him words are not enough to describe and express beauty of the island of Sicily. It is a unique place that *"it has an eye catching beauty"*. Its castle which is rather high and difficult to capture however was built with stones attached to one another at the time of Great Richard.

Qazwini defines the island of Sicily as a very big island and its people however as the North Africans. He states that a great number of fortified castles and villages are present in the island [10]. Besides, he also points out that Sicily has very high mountains and numerous rivers. Qazwini mentions about a mountain named Qasr Yana, which is one of the most interesting mountains of the World in the island of Sicily. At the peak of this mountain however at the highest point there was a city within vineyards and orchards. Even more interestingly, he states that there is only a single road to that city and that the entrance gate to the city is located at the end of this road at a highest point. He tells that there is no other gate for entering the city. While telling about the height of the gate Qazwini states as follows: *"it is so high that as if it were suspended in the air"*

Ibn Jubayr who visits and stays for a while in this island of Sicily during his long journey made further cultural observations in relation with this island. He admired this island and could not help talking about its fascinating beauty. What's more, he so much likes this island that he summed up beauties, civilization and culture of the island by using such phrase as *"the mother of civilizations"* [12].

Abd al mu'min al Baghdadi, pointing out availability of numerous castles and cities in Sicily, states that there are 23 cities and 13 castles [13], Ibn Hurdazbih and Ibn al Wardi however drew attention to the importance of the location of the island of Sicily and defined it as a good destination with unprecedented beauty for travelers [14].

Qazwini and Hamawi provided information about animal species in the island of Sicily. Based on the information referred in their works there are too many animals in the island [11, 9]. These are namely, horse, donkey, cow and sheep. Even if there are various wild animals, it was noted that there were not a lion, snake and scorpion in the island.

A. Palermo

When handwritten Arabic manuscripts are studied, it seems that the city of Palermo is explained under a separate

headline. Today, however, Palermo, which is the most important city of the island of Sicily, was also a great province in "the Period of Islam" in field of trade, culture and education. From the studied geography books and travel books the following information has been obtained about Palermo: Palermo is located just at the seaside and composed of five boroughs around it. The city of Palermo surrounded with huge stone castles. At the city center that surrounded with these castles however are settled merchants. There is however a mosque at the city center. Before the conquest of this city there was a giant Aristotle's statue. Muslims built a mosque at the place where this statue was present. In the works written at that period under the heading of Palermo interesting information has been provided on the province and features of the period have been conveyed. Geographers such as Al Maqdisi, Ibn al Wardi, Al-Idrisi, Yaqut el Hamawi, Al Baghdadi and Ibn Hawqal are the geographers and travelers who state that the city of Palermo is the most important province of the island of Sicily. Ibn Hawqal, other than these information, in detail, mentions about a section called "Al Khalisa" surrounded with castles [8]. Behind the castle walls surrounding the city however there are more than three hundred of mosques safe and sound with their roofs, walls, etc. Around the city, combined with the city, located among vineyards, gardens and towers, Al Aqrab is present. Beside this, an area known as "Al Muaskar" extending along a valley called "Wadi Abbas" is present. In connection with the location called "Al Muaskar" information is given by Al-Idrisi to us [11]. Al-Idrisi additionally makes the following statement in relation with that area: *"it is a very large residential place, there are great rivers and various fruits"*.

Information about the city of Palermo is found in detail in Al-Idrisi's book [11]. According to Al-Idrisi Palermo is very big and so beautiful city and has got the highest and mighty mimbar among all countries in the World. This city which is rather beautiful and powerful is the sultan's province. This city is also the center of army and navy. It is surrounded with very beautiful walls. The city is located by the seaside, and it is surrounded from the east with rather highest mountains. The City composed of two sections, "Qasr" and quarter where ordinary houses are located. This "Qasr" (Citadel) located in the City Center is rather ancient, remarkable, and is renown well by all countries. "Qasr" has been lined in the form of three lines. The section in the middle has been surrounded with higher walls which are difficult to pass over. A lot of mosques, inns, baths and business concerns (business places) owned by great merchants are present at the place remained between the said higher walls. At the range of line remained outside it however there are also beautiful villas; at both lines similar baths, inns for accommodation and great mosques are present. According to Al-Idrisi this Grand Mosque has been carrying burden of the ancient periods and fatigue of the passing time, but it has been reflecting as-is the elegant workmanship of the period in which it was built. Beauty of construction of this mosque, amazing ornaments and tablets used are unbelievable and incredible. Beside the Citadel however the palace in which the Sultan domiciled, particularly in the era of Muslims, sea gate and production location called El Halisa (old section of the city) are present.

Yaqut Al-Hamawi talks about Palermo as follows [9]: Palermo means City in Latin and it is the largest city in the Island of Sicily. It has rather higher stone castle. In its mosque which is an old temple there are a lot of great statues. Al-Hamawi in relation with identity of this statue says: *"inasmuch as I heard it is Aristotle's statue. This statue stands on a log."*

Upon pointing out that eighteen cities are present in Sicily, he emphasized that the most important city among them was Palermo. Palermo, as is also stated by other geographers, made up of two sections, one is Al- Khalisa and the other is quarter. In the period when Yaqut Al-Hamawi visited Sicily, great number of mosques caught his attention. He points out that there were more than 320 mosques around Palermo. He has expressed that there were more than three hundred mosques and masjids behind the castle walls. Yet, there are additionally a hundred mosque more in the village of Teshref which is 200 leagues far to Palermo and around Palermo. According to Al-Hamawi, one of the very interesting information related with Palermo however is that at an area which is far from Palermo at a distance of arrow range along the street at both sides, opposite to each other and side by side tens of mosques are lined up. The reason why so many mosques were present has been explained by him as follows: "at times when tension and conflict prevailed people are hostile to each other, therefore nobody enters someone else's mosque, eventually that person built a mosque for his own use and consequently many mosques were constructed side by side."

Al-Hamawi, who made rather interesting determinations and definitions in connection with Palermo, describes the city with the following sentences;

"Palermo is located at the mountain slope and this mountain called "Qasr Mountain". This mountain is very strange and there is not any mountain that is not much more strange than this mountain. On the slope of this interesting mountain there is a great and beautiful city surrounded with vintages and gardens. The gate opening to the city is located at a very high level. Great number of spas and spring come surface from the mountain."

The city of Palermo is in rectangular form, and its Bazaar extends from east to the west. Shops made of stone at its Bazaar are lined up side by side. This City does not have a running water source (spring), therefore fresh water has been supplied from wells, reported by Al-Hamawi.

Al-Hamawi told "The city of Palermo consisted of five regions and these are concentric and separated from one another with definite borders" and he also explained these neighborhoods of the city. Al-Khalisa is located in the heart of the City of Palermo. The other one is the neighborhood of Saqaliba. The city of Marsi is separated from Palermo by a river and there is not any castle wall surrounding this city. The fourth neighborhood however is the neighborhood of Mosque and it is known as the neighborhood of "Ibn Saqaleb"; however in this city there are not any water sources, people use well water for their needs. On the road of this neighborhood there is a valley known as "Wadi al Abbas". This valley wherein too many mills are present is very magnificent and is a cultivated agricultural land. The fifth neighborhood however is known as "New Neighborhood". This is a peninsula which is not also

surrounded with castle walls. As a matter of fact, majority of shopping places are present between "New Neighborhood" and neighborhood of Ibn Saqalab.

Al-Himyari, however, expressed and told for the city of Palermo that it was the capital of the island of Sicily and added that it was a significant coastal town and fleets sailed from this seaport [15]. It is just located by the seaside and it is surrounded with mountains and castle walls. The castle walls that enclose the city however start immediately by the seaside. Al-Himyari made and used the following statement and definitions for the city of Palermo:

"Quite beautiful buildings, numerous mosques, inns for accommodation and trade houses are present in the city. A very big historic and ancient mosque and buildings are present here."

The mosque of Al Khalisa which is a part of Palermo is another section of the city located at the other direction of the mosque. While this city was held by Muslims, sultan was residing here.

B. Saraqusa (Siracusa)

Another city of Sicily, referred in Arabic Manuscripts of travel book and geography books, is Saraqusa. Al-Maqdisi states in relation with the city of Saraqusa that it is a city united with two different cities [16]. But according to Al-Maqdisi seaport of the city of Saraqusa is rather interesting. He makes following statement in this respect;

"The city of Sarakusa has a very interesting seaport and the city has been enclosed with a ditch filled with seawater."

Al-Idrisi also gives information about the city of Saraqusa. According to Al-Idrisi the city of Saraqusa was visited by merchants from different and far and near countries and state that this city was a significant trade center [11]. Both entrances and exits from this city are made through only one single gate. This city has bazaars with great number of shops, inns and a lot of baths with much and very nice water.

Yaqut al-Hamawi, Abd al mu'min al Baghdadi also point out that Saraqusa was one of the great cities of Sicily [9, 13]. Hamawi thinks that throne of the ancient Roman Emperor is present here.

Information in detail about Saraqusa is included in the work of Al Himyari [15]. Al Himyari points out that Saraqusa was a significant route and the place in which it is located was a splendid location. However, he also states that the city was enclosed with three rows of castle walls. According to Al Himyari, the city of Saraqusa is one of the leading and rather well-known cities of the World and people come here from every corner of the World. Sea surrounded also the city from all side; it has connection with the land only from one side. Therefore, entry into and exit from the city of Saraqusa is ensured only through a single gate. This gate is located at the north of the city. As was the case for other travelers, Al Himyari also pointed out that there were great number of shops and inns in the city. Buildings of baths and their widths drew their attention. Vicinity of the city is quite fertile and productive. Vessels come here and they make food aid and support.

C. Atrabnush (Trapani)

One of the leading cities of the island of Sicily however is Atrabnush (Trapani). Yaqut el Hamawi, Al- Maqdisi, Abd al mu'min al Baghdadi and Ibn Jubayr specified that the city of

Atrabnush (Trapani) is a city of seaport, and that particularly transportation to Africa is ensured from this city [9, 13, 11].

During his travel Ibn Jubayr arrived in the city of Atrabnush (Trapani) and stayed here for a while and recorded information in detail about this city. According to Ibn Jubayr it is a small city of the island of Sicily. It was surrounded with white castle walls and therefore he likened it to “*white pigeon*”. It is frequently visited by vessels and is a safe haven for vessels. Vessels regularly call on the port in winter and summer seasons uninterrupted. Its bazaar, baths and all kinds of facility that may be needed by people are available. Ibn Jubayr stated that this city was surrounded from three sides with sea and connection to the land was ensured only through a rather narrow passage. Some of people living in the city are Christian and some of them however are Muslim, and both groups of people have their own Churches and Mosques. Ibn Jubayr said that when he visited this island it was Ramadan month and that he performed his Ramadan Bairam Prayer in one of mosques present in the city.

There is a pretty high mountain to the Northeast of the city. This mountain however is covered with vineyards and gardens. Ibn Jubayr indicated that name of this mountain was “Hamed” Mountain. One can reach to this mountain only from one side. Ibn Jubayr however stated that he was surprised and amazed about waters of the city of Atrabnush (Trapani). This situation was described by him as follows:

“Despite presence of numerous water sources around the city of Atrabnush (Trapani) water demand of the city has been supplied by water-wells which were far from the city. What’s more it is not easy to drink waters of such wells.”

Nearby the city of Atrabnush (Trapani) there are three small islands, said Ibn Jubayr. Names of these islands are Malitama, Yabisama and Rahip. Al-Idrisi and Ibn Jubayr do not give information about other islands, but he provides information briefly about the island of Rahip which was defined as the third island by stating “*there was not settlers and there was only a very high monastery like a castle in which only priests lived*”.

D. Messina

One of the other cities of the island of Sicily for which information provided by Arab Geographers however Messina is. The city of Messina is located to the east of the island and surrounded with mountains from the west. Al-Idrisi told about the city of Messina that its territory and landscape was very beautiful and fertile and covered with various fruit and vegetable gardens [11]. Based on the information conveyed by Al-Idrisi Messina has a lot of great rivers with much water. On these rivers however there are numerous water mills. The city is visited by numerous passengers from every corner of the World by huge cruise ships and this activity attached an additional importance to this city.

Al-Idrisi, while defining Bazaars of Messina, used the following phrase: “*full of unique and unprecedented products*”. Because vessels and ships carrying goods and merchants from every point of the World definitely visit and call on this city. Mountains of Messina however are rich for mines and minerals. According to the information provided by Al-Idrisi particularly “*iron ore*” is found on these

mountains. Iron extracted from this mountain however has been transported to different countries by vessels after being processed.

According to Ibn Jubayr, this region, Messina, is a city where two beauties are present together; they are abundance and beauty [12]. He saw here always beauty. He stated that there were large agricultural lands as far as the eye can see, and skillfully arranged roads for transportation. He indicated that buildings in the city of Messina were built with limestone and that in appearance however it resembles to the extent possible to Qordoba. Yet, he expressed this similarity with the following sentences:

“There is nothing else in the World that is so much similar to each other.”

E. The White Palace

Ibn Jubayr mentioned in his work a Palace built by the King Gulliam (Guiglielma) in the island of Sicily. At that time the King built elegant Palaces within fruit gardens. One of these palaces however is located in the city of Messina. It is a rather well protected and fortified structure located within vineyards and gardens, built with white stones. Ibn Jubayr described this building as follows:

“There are a lot of villas built by the King Gulliam (Guiglielma). But, the one in Messina is different. In Messina there is a beautiful palace whose garden extends up to the seaside, like a white pigeon. This palace has been protected by numerous guards. The King is rich and is the owner of a great property; but his most important features is that he maintains numerous physicians and astrologers in the palace. The King gives a particular importance to them.”

F. Antioch Church

In the work of Ibn Jubayr in his work mentions about a church called “Antioch Church”. While making reference to this church he says “this is the most interesting event that I have witnessed in this island”. Because the date on which he visited the church is Christmas day of the Christians. Ibn Jubayr has told features of the church and his experiences in detail;

In the Christmas holiday which is a quite important day for Christians we went to a church called “Antioch Church. Christians, men and women jointly have attended the Church to celebrate this Christmas day. When we arrived in the church the building that appeared before us was so beautiful that words were inadequate to describe its magnificence. The Church building has got the most interesting characteristics in the world. Its inner walls were covered with all golden engravings and embroideries. Unique paintings in colorful frames were present in the Church. All paintings were ornamented with golden carnations, green trees. At the upper top there was a venetian blind (sun visor) ornamented with glasses. It was dazzling by its brightness

G. Sicilian Women

When the works of Arab Travelers are examined, at the era when they visited Sicily they observed Sicilian women and conveyed information about this matter. Ibn Jubayr in relation with women reported that Christian women dressed just like Muslim women. He has provided the following information about women:

“Christian Sicilian women have been dressing just like Muslim women. Language of women living here is very fluent. Women use headscarf/veil and wear colorful peshtemal (waistcloth). Especially they dressed very fancy silk clothes in the festival that I attended.”

Our traveler talked also as follows for women living in Atrabnish (Trapani): *“the most beautiful woman among those living in this island stays in this city.”*

H. Etna Volcano

One of the volcanoes that is the highest in Europe and the biggest in the World is the Mount Etna in the isle of Sicily. Today it is still an active volcano. Sicilians today call this volcanic mountain located 29 km North to Catania as “Mongibello”. It is 3308 m high from sea level. This mountain drew attention of Arab geographers who came to the isle of Sicily and they specifically indicated their observations and impressions in their works. One of these geographers however is Ibn Jubayr. Ibn Jubayr stated that “I have seen with my own eyes that smoke and flame erupted from this mountain. Ibn Jubayr used following statements in relation with the mountain Etna:

“There is the world’s biggest, fearful and strange volcano in the isle of Sicily. When this place is shaken there heard a huge, terrifying and earth-shaking sound like a thunder. Flame continuously erupts from this highest mountain (Mount Etna) in Sicily. We have seen flames coming out of its peak with our own eyes. When looked at this mountain at night however, it can be seen that its redness and flames rise higher up to the sky. This is the famous Mount Habra”

Al-Qazvini and Yaqut al-Hamawi however provided some information about the Mount Etna [10, 9]. As other travelers have stated they defined Etna Volcano Mountain as the most fearful and extraordinary mountain of the World. They state: “On this mountain there are so many water springs and it has a very good and fresh air.” As Ibn Jubayr, Al-Hamawi also mentions about this mountain as the Mountain of Fire. Yaqut al-Hamawi make following statements in relation with the Mount Etna; “Lava erupting from this mountain burned everything on its way and nothing grows including tree on the way it passes, and when I came to the island even beasts of burden cannot walk on these lava.” He also states that snow not melting in winter and in summer is present at the cone (peak) of the Mount Etna. As Yaqut al-Hamawi indicated in his work, numerous scholars and philosophers from Byzantine Empire were dispatched here to examine and monitor this volcano mountain. Because this Mount Etna was rich in terms of goldmine Romans called it as the “Gold Mountain”. Hamawi gives information about fauna of the Mount Etna. These trees are mostly oak tree, hazelnut tree, pine nuts and bitter almond.

I. Mines of Sicily

The island of Sicily is rich for mines. According to Ibn Jubayr the most remarkable thing is the finding of the gold mine. Additionally, silver, copper, lead and mercury are found. Furthermore, he tells about existence of the yellow sulfur.

In respect to the mines extracted in the Island Al-Qazvini and Yaqut al-Hamawi also state that gold mine is present at every place of the Island. Besides, he states that

oil of vitriol (sulfuric acid), alum and smear, silver, iron and lead are widespread. But most importantly, specifically on the Mount Etna (mentioned as the Fire Mountain) great number of Ammoniac is extracted, said al-Hamawi. It is explained that ammoniac which was extracted from this place was shipped to Andalusia.

J. Water Resources of Sicily

Even if geographers who came to the island stated in their works that rivers were present in the island of Sicily people of the island of Sicily obtained their drinking water from wells. Therefore they told that their water was somewhat bitter or salty. This situation must have been specified by every traveler in their works, visiting this island.

Yaqut al-Hamawi has made a different statement in relation with bitterness of waters:

“People moreover supplied their needs for water from water well; these however are somewhat bitter or salty. People in the island have been consuming generally onion.”

Ibn Jubayr however expounded that there were rivers in the island of Sicily, supplied by four big sources. But these rivers, as understood from the traveler, have not been used as drinking water, needs of drinking water by settlers of the island of Sicily are supplied from wells. He specified that well water was somewhat bitter (bitterish) and salty.

Al-Qazvini indicates that a highest mountain called “Qasr Yana” was the source of the great number of rivers, and at the same time numerous water sources were present on the mountain near Palermo.

IV. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research is to examine manuscripts in Arabic language and to study their history and geography. Characteristics of the period when the island of Sicily was ruled by Arabs or the period when the island of Sicily was just being liberated from the sovereignty of Muslim Arabs in the island of Sicily which was under the ruling and sovereignty of Muslim Arabs for a certain time have been tried to be displayed.

Almost in all of the works examined in the present research, it was revealed that there were affirmative thoughts in relation with the island of Sicily. It has been understood that travelers or writers who visited the island or provided information about the island appreciated and liked the island of Sicily. Primarily travelers and/or writers tried to provide information about the location and position of the island of Sicily in their works. In the works so examined and studied it was stated that the island of Sicily was at that time a popular hangout place and a trade center on the marine trade route and eventually attention was drawn its importance in respect to its location.

While some of the works were written at the period when the island of Sicily had been ruled by Arabs, some others however covered the period when Arabs were not dominance. Accordingly and in this respect we have accessed and reach characteristics of the island of Sicily prevailing both at the time of Arab sovereignty and at the time of the post Arab sovereignty.

We have accessed and arrived in information on both physical and human geography of the island of Sicily.

Information in detail about topography and rivers of the island of Sicily has been obtained. It has been determined that specifically the Mount Etna was remarkable for travellers visited the island at that time. Based on information provided by travellers the Mount Etna was not only known by the people of the island of Sicily, but well known also by all other people from other countries. Yet, when we consider that scholars, philosophers and researchers came to this mountain even from Byzantine to examine and survey this mount Etna, it is clear that it was how much important and famous and well known all people.

Besides, we have also arrived in information about the cities and economic structure of Sicily. As we have realised and concluded from the works examined for this study, trade has taken a significant place and played rather important role in the economy of the island of Sicily. Inasmuch as the fact that in respect to its location it is at the crossroads of the marine routes, numerous small and large cargo vessels and passenger cruises from different places of the World call on and visit the island of Sicily. Thus, the island stands as a centre where various fruits and vegetables as well as different kinds of products are bought and sold in winter and in summer.

It has been understood that, along with trading activities in the island of Sicily, farming was also taken a significant place. The principal agricultural activities that have been carried out are viniculture, saffron and vegetable, fruit production. It has been concluded that saffron that was produced in the Island was exported to other countries.

In the present research information has been also obtained about the cities of the Island of Sicily. Its most important city and capital of the island at that time is the city of Palermo. The city of Palermo is rather great and is a trade center. Christian Muslim people live together in the city of Palermo. It has been determined that there were numerous mosques open to pray in the island of Sicily even after the Arab Muslims left the island of Sicily.

Besides, another city that highlighted however is Atrabnish (Trapani). Likewise it is realized that Christian and Muslim population lived together in Atrabnish (Trapani) which is a seaport city. The basic means of subsistence of the city is trade. In the manuscripts so examined information about Messina has been also attained. The city of Messina to the east of Sicily and too close to the peninsula of Italy is well known with its bazaar complete with assorted variety of products, reputable White Palace and legendary Antakya Church. Additionally, water mills built on the rivers are another highlighted characteristic in the city.

Another matter that was stated by Arab travelers is the dress of women in Sicily. Because of the fact that it remained under the sovereignty of Arabs for a long time travelers stated that Sicilian women worn like Muslim women peshtemal (waistcloth), veil and headscarf. As per books (manuscripts) so examined Sicilians have been influenced by Arabic language in their daily language.

Sicily is rich in respect to mines. In all works it is

emphasized that the Mount Etna is rich particularly in terms of "Gold Mine". In addition to it, it understood that sulfuric acid, silver, iron and ammoniac are also available and they have been exported to other countries.

According to travelers and geographers arriving in Sicily drinking water has been supplied from water wells in Sicily. Taste of these waters however is bitterish or salty. Therefore they were got into trouble and felt uncomfortable in respect to drinking water issue of the island.

Under the light of all foregoing matters the island of Sicily is rather active and central place with bazaars of rich and various products, mosques and churches, inns and bathes. The Island of Sicily and its cities have been dealt with complimentary and highly praised words in all works that were examined and studied by us.

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