



# Presence of Muslim Slaves in the Court of Palermo During the 6th Century AH/12th Century AD In Light of Andalusian Travel Literature: "Al-Tadhkira bi'l-Akhbar 'an Ittifaqat al-Asfar" by Ibn Jubayr as a Model

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## Abstract

As a result of economic ties and military operations between both shores of the Mediterranean during the medieval period, many peoples and ethnic groups moved-either voluntarily or forcibly-to regions beyond their original homelands. Among the most significant of these regions were Al-Andalus and Sicily. The latter witnessed significant political settlement and the widespread influence of Islam and its civilization from the 2nd century AH/8th century AD. Although Islamic rule in Sicily came to an end in the 5th century AH/11th century AD due to the Reconquista and the shifting balance of power between the East and West in the Mediterranean world, Muslim communities continued to exist there.

Despite being at the lowest ranks of the social hierarchy, these Muslim groups played a crucial role in the political and social life of Sicily, particularly in the courts of its rulers and its great capital, Palermo. Among these groups was the class of "slaves and servants", whose presence and contributions are partially documented in Ibn Jubayr's travelogue Al-Tadhkira bi'l-Akhbar 'an Ittifaqat al-Asfar. This study explores the role and contributions of this Muslim community and social class in Sicily, with a particular focus on Palermo.

**Keywords:** Muslim Slaves, Palermo, Andalusian Travel Literature, Islamic Civilization, Ibn Jubayr's Journey

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## 1. Introduction

Muslim Sicily was one of the most significant gateways through which Arab-Islamic civilization spread to the world in general and to Western Europe in particular. Muslims settled in the region for four centuries, leaving behind a rich and distinctive civilizational legacy that encompassed a diverse and flourishing body of knowledge and arts, an advanced and sophisticated architectural landscape, a vibrant cultural sphere, and a dynamic environment of social and religious coexistence.

Despite the fall of Sicily and the end of formal Islamic rule, its new Norman rulers did not seek to eradicate the traces of Islam and its people. Instead, they placed great trust in Muslims, recognizing them as a source of civilization and progress. As a result, the rulers of Palermo were keen to employ Muslims and benefit from their heritage. This unique and exceptional dynamic was widely acknowledged in medieval sources, both Western and Arab, which praised the distinctive status of Muslims in Norman Sicily.

## 2. Ibn Jubayr: Between Travel and Knowledge

### 2.1. The Personality of Ibn Jubayr

He is Abū al-Ḥusayn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Jubayr ibn Muḥammad ibn Jubayr ibn Saʿīd ibn Jubayr ibn Saʿīd ibn Jubayr ibn Saʿīd ibn Jubayr ibn Muḥammad ibn Marwān ibn ʿAbd al-Salām ibn Marwān ibn ʿAbd al-Salām ibn Jubayr al-Kinānī (Ibn al-Khaṭīb, 2009, p. 906), nicknamed "Al-Shāṭibī" (He was given the title "Al-Shāṭibī" because he received his early education in the city of Shāṭiba (Játiva). Al-Daffa, 1993, p.172).

He belonged to an Arab family that settled in Al-Andalus when his earliest ancestor arrived in 132AH / 740AD, accompanying Balj ibn Bishr ibn Iyāḍ al-Qushayrī. The family established itself in Kūrat Shadūna (modern-day Sidonia), where its descendants multiplied and flourished.

The traveler Ibn Jubayr was born in the Andalusian city of Valencia on the night of Saturday, the 10th of Rabi' al-Awwal in the year 540AH / 1145AD (al-Muqarrī, 2012, p. 382), and he spent his life there. He was raised under the care of his father, Abu Ja'far Ahmad ibn Jubayr, who was one of the great scholars of the Almohad state. This privileged upbringing enabled him to receive an extensive education and cultural refinement. Ibn Jubayr later traveled between various cities in al-ʿAdwatayn (the two shores, referring to al-Andalus and North Africa), studying under prominent scholars of the Maghreb and al-Andalus and obtaining their authorization (ijazah). He was devoted to listening to hadith transmission. His literary talent emerged early, as he composed poetry and gained recognition, which led to his invitation by the ruler of Granada, Abu Sa'id ʿUthman ibn ʿAbd al-Mu'min ibn ʿAli. Accompanying him on travels between Ceuta and Granada, Ibn Jubayr was appointed as a scribe in his court, serving as part of the chancery of the Almohad caliphate.

## 2.2. Praise of Scholars for Ibn Jubayr

Andalusian, Maghrebi, and even Eastern scholarly works celebrated Ibn Jubayr as a distinguished intellectual and literary figure. Lisan al-Din Ibn al-Khatib (d. 767AH / 1374 AD) wrote about him, stating: "He was an outstanding literary figure, an accomplished poet, and a virtuous Sunni scholar...". (Ibn al-Khatīb, 2009, p. 610).

Al-Muqarrī al-Tilimsānī (d. 1041AH / 1631AD) also praised him, referring to him as "the author of the travelogue." Regarding his literary prowess, he said: "He devoted himself to literature and mastered it, excelling in poetry and prose writing". (al-Muqarrī, 2012, p.382).

Similarly, Ibn al-Abbār al-Qudaī (d. 658AH / 1260AD) noted in his Takmila that "he devoted himself to literature, attaining the highest level in it, excelling in poetry and prose writing. He gained great worldly success through it but later renounced it and embraced asceticism." (Ibn al-Abbār, 2012, p. 303).

Abu al-Barakat al-Mawsili (d. 654AH / 1256AD) mentioned him in his work Al-Qala'id, describing him as "an accomplished poet, an eloquent scholar, highly refined, and widely esteemed. He composed muwashshahat (Andalusian poetic forms), elegant writings, refined poetry, and eloquent prose". (al-Mawsili, 2012, p. 92).

Abd al-'Azim al-Mundhiri (d. 656AH / 1258AD) included him in his obituary records, stating: "The esteemed, righteous, and virtuous Sheikh Abu al-Husayn Muhammad... was a man of knowledge, piety, and integrity. He held a prominent position in his homeland but abandoned it in pursuit of goodness and devotion". (al-Mundhirī, 1984, p. 407).

Ibn Jubayr's literary talent granted him significant influence in his intellectual circles, forging connections with the scholarly elite of al-Andalus. Ibn 'Abd al-Malik al-Marrakushi (d. 703AH/1303AD) summarized his impact, stating: "Ibn Jubayr was an exceptional literary figure, a masterful writer, and a distinguished poet. He exchanged correspondences with many scholars of his time, in which his eloquence and brilliance were evident". (al-Marrākushī, 2012, p. 514).

## 2.3. His Journeys

Historians and biographers have documented three journeys undertaken by the scholar and literary figure Ibn Jubayr to the East. During each of these travels, he visited the sacred sites and performed the pilgrimage (Hajj), with the most significant journey being the one he recorded in his famous travelogue.

Ibn Jubayr's motivation for traveling, particularly to Islamic holy sites, was primarily religious. This was influenced by an incident that occurred while he was in the service of the ruler of Granada. During a gathering where the ruler was drinking wine, he offered Ibn Jubayr a cup. Ibn Jubayr, showing his disapproval, responded: "My lord, I have never drunk it." However, the ruler insisted and forced him to drink, presenting him afterward with seven cups filled with gold dinars.

Feeling remorseful for what had happened, Ibn Jubayr resolved to perform the Hajj as an act of atonement. He sold one of his properties to fund his journey and spent the gold dinars in acts of charity along the way. (al-Muqarrī, 2012, p.382)

### **The First Journey (578 AH/1182AD-581 AH/1185 AD)**

Ibn Jubayr embarked on his first journey from Granada “in the first hour of Thursday, on the eighth of Shawwal in the year 578 AH” in the company of Abu Ja‘far ibn Hassan . (al-Muqarrī, 2012, p. 382).

He traveled by sea until he reached Alexandria, then toured various regions of Egypt before proceeding to ‘Aydhab and from there to the Hijaz He stayed in the Hijaz for six months, performing the Hajj. ( For more details about Mecca through Ibn Jubayr’s journey, see: (Ibn Jubayr, 2001, p. 59-133). (Hallaq, 1996, p. 17-114).

His return to al-Andalus was by sea, departing from the port of Acre, and he completed this journey in 581AH / 1185AD.

### **The Second Journey (585 AH/1189 AD - 587 AH/1191 AD)**

The main reason for his second journey was the joyous news of the liberation of Palestine at the hands of the great military leader Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi. This momentous event was among the strongest motivations for Ibn Jubayr’s second journey. He set out again from Granada, “on Thursday, the ninth of Rabi‘ al-Awwal in the year 585 AH”. (al-Marrākushī, 2012, p. 512).

During this journey, he was blessed with the opportunity to visit and pray in the three great mosques of Islam: Al-Masjid al-Haram (in Mecca), Al-Masjid al-Nabawi (in Medina), and Al-Masjid al-Aqsa (in Palestine)

### **The Third Journey (601AH / 1204AD)**

Ibn Jubayr embarked on his third journey from Ceuta in 601 AH / 1204 AD, following the death of his wife. He arrived in Mecca in 602AH / 1205AD, where he remained for an extended period near the sacred mosque. He then traveled to the Levant, where he stayed near Al-Aqsa Mosque in Palestine. Afterward, he moved to Alexandria, where he settled and dedicated himself to teaching until his passing in 614AH / 1217AD.

## **2.4. His Works**

Regarding Ibn Jubayr’s travel writings, two works have sparked significant debate concerning the authenticity of their titles, their attribution to Ibn Jubayr, and whether one is merely a part of the other. These works are: Consideration of the Pilgrim in Mentioning the Noble Monuments and Rituals and The Memoir of Reports on the Events of Journeys, commonly known as The Travels of Ibn Jubayr.

It is noteworthy that both works revolve around the same subject: travel. However, the first is limited to details of the Hajj journey and descriptions of sacred sites, while the

second provides a full account of his first journey-from its departure in Al-Andalus to his return. It is believed to have been recorded in 582AH / 1186CE. (Humaida, 1994, p.410 ). This latter travel account is the subject of our present study.

Setting aside the debate about the two travel works, it is important to emphasize that the information and observations in this journey were documented by Ibn Jubayr with great accuracy and sincerity, presented in the form of daily journals. His journey was entirely devoid of personal or materialistic motives; instead, it was undertaken as an act of penance for sins, the fulfillment of the fifth pillar of Islam, and the pursuit of knowledge. His travelogue received considerable attention and praise from scholars and intellectuals of his time, among them Ibn Abd al-Malik al-Marrakushi, who described the work as "an engaging and delightful book that stirs the soul to visit those honored landmarks and revered sights".

The Orientalist Ángel Palencia also praised this work, noting that "it closely resembles a travel diary, skillfully composed by Ibn Jubayr. In a simple and fluent style, he vividly conveys the emotions that surged within him upon visiting various places and witnessing their landmarks. His writing is eloquent and refined, reflecting an innate literary talent and a dignified, resolute character".

## 2.5. His Death

Ibn Jubayr passed away in Alexandria (Shawqi Dayf suggests that the Sidi Gaber Mosque in Alexandria is, in fact, the tomb of Ibn Jubayr and that over time, the public gradually altered his name until it became what it is today. See: (Dayf, p. 71). on the night of Wednesday, the 29th of Sha'ban in the year 614AH/1217CE. (Ibn Taghri Birdi, 1963, p. 221). (Ibn al-Khatib, p. 658). (al- Marrakushi, p. 525).

He was buried there, having lived beyond the age of seventy-two.

## 3. Ibn Jubayr's Journey and the Landmarks of Sicily and Palermo

Sicily was neither a foreign nor a distant land to Islam and Muslims during the medieval period. It had been conquered and inhabited by Muslims since the 2nd century AH, and the influence of Arab-Islamic civilization had spread across the island. Even after its fall, Islamic presence persisted to some extent due to the existence of Muslim minorities and the adoption of Islamic culture and civilization by some of its rulers. Moreover, Sicily served as a crucial transit point for movement between Al-Andalus, the Maghreb, and the eastern Islamic lands.

Ibn Jubayr and his companions arrived in Sicily in 580AH / 1185CE while returning from the East under dire circumstances. They had narrowly escaped death at sea, and the waves carried them to Messina, which at the time was one of the most dangerous cities in Sicily for the Muslims of the Islamic Maghreb. Ibn Jubayr described it as "a land darkened



by disbelief, where no Muslim finds peace, filled with worshippers of the cross...".(Ibn Jubayr, p. 253).

He and his companions were on the verge of being enslaved, but by divine will, they were saved due to the presence of the King of Sicily in the city that day. Upon learning of their plight, he ordered his soldiers to rescue them.

### 3.1. Entering Palermo

The Andalusian Muslim traveler Ibn Jubayr arrived on the island of Sicily and stayed in the city of Palermo. This city held a significant place in his journey, as it was the finest city in Sicily, the great metropolis of southern Italy, and the seat of the king.

Ibn Jubayr noted that Muslims referred to the city simply as Al-Madina (the city), while Christians called it Balārma (Palermo). (Ibn Jubayr, p. 253).

Politically, at the time of his journey, both the city and the island of Sicily were under the rule of King William II (William II), whom Arabic sources referred to as Ghuliyalm (Ibn Jubayr, p. 253). or Bughliyam II(). He was known among his subjects as William the Good (Amari, 2003, p. 480), and his reign lasted from 567-585AH / 1171-1189 CE. He was the fourth ruler in the line of Norman kings who governed Sicily, and their succession was as follows:

King's Name:	Start of Reign:	End of Reign:
Roger I	1070 CE 462AH	1101 CE 495 AH
Roger II	1101 CE 504 AH	1154 CE 549 AH
William I	1154 CE 549 AH	1166 CE 561 AH
William II	1171 CE 576 AH	1189 CE 585 AH

William II assumed power after the death of his father, William I, in 560AH / 1166CE. At the time, he was a minor, only 13 years old, thus the regency was held by his mother, who ruled until he reached adulthood. He officially took charge of his authority in 567AH / 1171CE, and his reign was a period of security, prosperity, and peace. It was even said that the forests of Sicily during his time were safer than the cities of other lands. (Abbas, 1975, p. 150).

As for his education, he was influenced by Arab-Islamic culture, having studied the Arabic language, which he and his father spoke fluently. (Ahmad, 1980, p. 74).

He imitated Muslims in their food and clothing and brought them close to his court, which led Arabic sources to praise him. He also had a deep interest in Islamic architecture and took pleasure in listening to Arabic poetry and songs).Moreno, 1968, p. 23).

Many poets from the Maghreb and Egypt visited his court and praised him, along with his Muslim ministers and officials. Among them was the Alexandrian poet Ibn Qalaqas, who arrived at his court in 565AH / 1170CE and praised him with a poem that begins:

Ghuliyalm the king, son of Ghuliyalm, is acknowledged,  
As Solomon in sovereignty and David in judgment.  
The celestial spheres serve him with fortune against foes,

So he strikes with the sword of lightning or the spear of a star.  
Which crescent is not like a bending bow,  
And which shooting star does not pierce like an arrow?  
King William II honored his guest and rewarded him generously.

He was given the title "**the Good King**" (Ahmad, 1980, p. 70). because he was beloved by his Christian subjects.

However, this does not negate the Crusader mindset of William II, which aligned him with the kings and princes of Europe in his era. He was enthusiastic and active in fighting Muslims both in the Maghreb and the East. During his reign, he launched several military campaigns across the Mediterranean, driven by both religious and economic motives, aiming to secure communication lines between Europe and Palestine. Moreover, William II of Normandy was one of the key architects of the Third Crusade and among the first to take the cross when it began (585-588AH / 1189-1192CE). However, he did not personally participate in the campaign but instead sent forces to take part in the expedition.

#### 4. Indicators of the Presence of Muslim Slaves in the Palermo Court

The testimonies and observations of the traveler Ibn Jubayr, documented in his travelogue, represent a highly significant Islamic source on the relationship between the Norman rulers of Sicily and the Muslim minority residing there. Through his account, Ibn Jubayr was able to capture aspects of the religious tolerance that prevailed at the royal court in Palermo. This atmosphere of tolerance was largely attributed to King William II, who showed great interest in the Muslim population of his realm. He recognized their cultural sophistication and their mastery of the era's manifestations of civilization. For this reason, he brought many "Mujib youth" into his court, most or all of whom, according to Ibn Jubayr's description, were devout Muslims adhering to Islamic Law. (Ibn Jubayr, p. 254).

##### 4.1. Political Roles

After the fall of Sicily in 484AH / 1091AD, the Normans did not expel its Muslim population as the Christian kings of Spain had done. Instead, they sought to benefit from the legacy of Arab-Islamic civilization and integrate its elements into southern Italy. This policy was adopted by the first three Norman kings and was later continued by King William II, who placed great trust in the Muslims of his kingdom, drawing them close and assigning many of them to important state affairs. He entrusted them with high-ranking positions in his administration and appointed them to oversee various government Offices. (Ahmed, p. 82).

At his court, there were distinguished individuals who could be considered the elite of the Palermo court, sharing prestigious roles such as vizier, counselor, and chamberlain. Although Ibn Jubayr's travelogue does not provide extensive details on this, the fragments he recorded confirm the high status of Muslims at the Norman court, particularly among

the ranks of the royal slaves, or *fityān al-qasr* (young courtiers). This group was uniquely loyal to the king and was divided into white and black courtiers, each with its own leader. According to Ibn Jubayr's description, they had distinctive customs and traditions that reflected their prestige, as seen in their luxurious attire, lavish mounts, and fine horses. (Ibn Jubayr, p. 254). Additionally, the Muslim leaders of these courtiers commanded a significant entourage .

The roles of Muslim slaves were not limited to political positions; most of them were also enlisted in royal guard and military service. The Norman kings, wary of threats from barons and feudal lords, relied heavily on these loyal Muslim troops. William II distinguished his Muslim guards by dressing them in uniforms distinct from those of the Norman guard and entrusted them with his personal security. These elite security roles were particularly assigned to slaves from West Africa) .Ibn Jubayr, p. 254). (Ahmad, p. 82). (benarba- boussalem, 2021, p.94)

A defining feature of William II and his predecessors was their practice of appointing Arab Muslims as military commanders (Toumi, 1987-1988, p. 64). In addition to military service, some of these Muslims were also employed in diplomatic roles due to their proficiency in Latin, Arabic, and Berber languages. The king recruited and cultivated many of them(), even selecting Arabs as his personal guardsIbn ( Ibn Jubayr, p. 254) and granting them special privileges.

#### 4.2. Social and Other Roles

On the other hand, a free Muslim community resided in the cities of southern Italy, though their numbers were relatively small. This community engaged in various crafts and trades, but the majority of the Muslim presence was concentrated in the capital, Palermo. The Muslim population in the city was divided between those living in the urban center and those who settled in its many suburbs and surrounding villages. Muslims in Palermo also had numerous markets. (Ibn Jubayr, p. 254).

#### 4.3. Embroidery

Ibn Jubayr's travelogue is an important source that offers a unique depiction of Muslim life in Sicily (Kratchkovsky, 1963, p. 300), particularly regarding the key roles within medieval royal courts. Embroidery was one of the most significant crafts associated with ruling courts during this period. It was highly valued by Muslim rulers, especially the Umayyad caliphs in al-Andalus and the Taifa kings who succeeded them.

William II, the ruler of Palermo, showed great interest in embroidery and was known for his luxurious lifestyle. Ibn Jubayr describes him as follows: "Among the Christian kings, there is none more indulgent in royal opulence, more refined, or more immersed in the pleasures of kingship, the establishment of its customs, the organization of its ranks, and the glorification of its majesty and splendor, than him. In this regard, he resembles Muslim rulers. ( Ibn Jubayr, p. 254).



The official in charge of this craft at the royal court was the steward Yahya ibn Fityan al-Tiraz, who specialized in gold embroidery for the king's garments. (Ibn Jubayr, p. 254).

The textile workshop in Palermo, designed in the Islamic style, appears to have been one of the largest and finest in the world at the time. Its high-quality production left a lasting legacy, with some of its pieces surviving to this day. According to scholar Dimand, the State Treasury Museum in Vienna houses some of the most exquisite examples of this craftsmanship. Among these is the coronation mantle, made in Palermo in 528AH / 1134 AD), which is embroidered with gold and pearls on a red background, featuring a repeated motif of a lion attacking a camel.

Another notable piece is the church cope, commissioned during the reign of William II of the Normans in 1181. It has a beautifully woven border featuring eagles and palm trees, embroidered in gold on a purple background. Palermo's textile workshops are also credited with producing a piece of silk brocade, a fragment of which remains in Palermo. This fabric was part of the burial robe of Emperor Henry VI, who died in 1198. Several other similar pieces are preserved in various collections. (Dimand, p. 274). (Ibn Jubayr, p. 254).

#### 4.4. Cooking

Islamic cuisine dominated the Mediterranean region during the medieval period, with its culinary arts and traditions spreading from the East to the Maghreb and from there to al-Andalus and Sicily in Italy. The royal cook held a prestigious position in the courts of kings and rulers, not only due to their expertise and training but also because of the trust placed in them. As they were responsible for the rulers' food and health, they were considered part of an elite class.

Ibn Jubayr, in his account of Muslim life at the Palermo court, noted that the overseer of the royal kitchen under King William II was a Muslim. This individual supervised a team of cooks and servants, most of whom were slaves(). The king's choice of a Muslim to manage the palace kitchen was a testament to Islamic culture and civilization, as well as a sign of his trust in the Muslim community.

#### 4.5. The Religious Life of Muslim Slaves

Ibn Jubayr's travelogue provides valuable insights into the religious status of Muslims in Sicily, particularly enslaved Muslims. Their situation, as he described it, was relatively favorable (Fahmi, 2019, p. 186) due to the religious tolerance exercised by the ruler of Palermo. King William II allowed Muslims the freedom to practice their faith, seeking to secure their loyalty and benefit from their skills and services.

According to Ibn Jubayr, religious institutions, particularly mosques, were still present in Norman Sicily despite occasional confiscations and demolitions. Palermo had the largest number of these institutions (Ibn Jubayr, p. 254), where Muslims openly performed their prayers with the call to prayer (adhan) being heard (Ibn Jubayr, p. 261). They also held Eid prayers, in which they invoked the Abbasid Caliph, but they did not observe the

Friday congregational prayer. Moreover, these mosques were not only places of worship but also centers for Quranic education.(Ibn Jubayr, p. 261).

Inside the royal palace in Palermo, the majority of the enslaved population was Muslim. The female courtiers and concubines of the palace were known for their deep religiosity (Ibn Jubayr, p. 261). Even newly arrived Christian women often converted to Islam under the influence of the Muslim women around them, reflecting both their numbers and their strong presence within the palace.

During natural disasters such as earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, which were frequent in Sicily, enslaved Muslims openly engaged in supplications and remembrance of Allah. Even King William II, witnessing their devotion, did not prohibit their prayers. Instead, he reassured them by saying: "Let each of you invoke his own god and worship as he believes. "(Ibn Jubayr, p. 255).

The young men of the palace and officials serving in William II's administration were also deeply religious. Many of them voluntarily fasted for extended periods. Their economic situation appears to have been stable, enabling them to participate in ransoming Muslim captives, caring for orphaned children, and even arranging their marriages. (Ibn Jubayr, p. 255).

Ibn Jubayr mentions several Muslim figures who played a role in William II's court. Among them was Abd al-Masih, a high-ranking slave in the city of Messina. Although his name suggested Christian affiliation, Ibn Jubayr discovered after speaking with him that he was a devout Muslim. Abd al-Masih asked the traveler about the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, as well as the Islamic sanctuaries in the Levant. He expressed a strong desire to perform Hajj, the fifth pillar of Islam. Before parting, he even requested Ibn Jubayr to gift him some sacred earth from Mecca for blessings and as a shroud relic for his future burial. (Ibn Jubayr, p. 256).

Within the broader context of William II's religious tolerance, religious institutions.

#### 4.6. Conclusion

Muslim Sicily represented one of the most significant gateways through which Arab and Islamic civilization spread into Europe during the medieval period.

Despite the crucial cultural and intellectual roles played by Muslims in Sicily, this did not prevent conflicts from arising or deter emerging powers from confronting them. The last of these were the Normans, who ultimately ended official Islamic rule in southern Italy.

Recognizing the value of Arab-Islamic civilization and its contributions to Sicily's prosperity, the Normans sought to preserve its cultural heritage and exploit its benefits to the fullest extent.

The travelogue of the scholar Ibn Jubayr, *Tadhkirah bi'l-Akhbar 'an Ittifaqat al-Asfar*, serves as a vital and primary historical source documenting the state of Islam and Muslims in the 6th century AH. His observations provide a detailed description of King William II's relationship with his Muslim subjects. Ibn Jubayr's account holds particular significance due to his firsthand experiences in Sicily, where he resided in the capital, interacted with its Muslim inhabitants, and recorded their testimonies.

The Norman court in Palermo witnessed a notable presence of Muslim slaves, as the ruling authorities were keen to employ them and benefit from their skills. Among them were royal guards, advisors, cooks, and translators, while many Muslim artisans and craftsmen also settled in southern Italian cities.

The religious conditions of Muslim slaves in Palermo and the royal palace were relatively favorable due to the policy of religious tolerance maintained by King William II. Ibn Jubayr documented his observations on Muslim religious institutions, particularly mosques, which remained present in various parts of southern Italy.

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