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CLASSIFICATION OF VILLEINS IN MEDIEVAL SICILY^[*]

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[1] Guy Fourquin, "Serfs and serfdom: Western European," Joseph R. Strayer, ed., *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, 13 vols. (New York, 1982-89), 11: 199-208. Marc Bloch, *Les caractères originaux de l'histoire rurale française* (Oslo, 1931), pp. 87-95; Georges Duby, *La société aux XIe et XIIe siècles dans la région mâconnaise* (Paris, 1953), pp. 173-286; Idem, *Rural Economy and Country Life in the Medieval West*, trans. by Cynthia Postan (Columbia, South Carolina, 1968; originally published in Paris, 1962), pp. 188-192; Idem, *Guerriers et paysans, VIIIe-XIIIe siècles. Premier essor de l'économie européenne* (Paris, 1973), pp. 179-300, esp. pp. 256-257; Robert Boutruche, *Seigneurie et féodalité. I. Le premier âge des liens d'homme à homme*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1968; 1st ed. 1959), pp. 124-234; Theodore Evergates, *Feudal Society in the Bailliage of Troyes under the Counts of Champagne, 1152-1284* (Baltimore/London, 1975), pp. 137-144; Setsuo Watanabe, "Ryoushu to Nomin (Lords and Peasants)," Atsushi Egawa & Yoshihisa Hattori, eds., *Seiyo Chuseishii*, 3 vols (Tokyo, 1995), 2: 194-199.

[2] Marc Bloch, *La société féodale* (Paris, 1939), pp. 366-367; Agnès Gerhards, *La société médiévale* (Paris, 1986), pp. 247-248, "Servage"; Werner Rösener, *Die Bauern in der europäischen Geschichte* (Munich, 1993), pp. 64-87.

[3] Hans Kurt Schulze, *Grundstrukturen der Verfassung im Mittelalter*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Stuttgart/ Berlin/ Cologne, 1990-92), pp. 72-73.

ABSTRACT

According to a traditional view, villeins in Norman Sicily consisted of two basic classes, those who owed their lords hereditary service in person and those who owed service with respect to the terms of their tenure of land. Scholars who recently examined relevant terms in Arabic documents seem to share this view. For example, Jeremy Johns showed us a list of Latin, Greek and Arabic words categorized into two groups, a class of "registered" villeins (*hursh*) and a class of "unregistered" villeins (*mul*s), while Alex Metcalfe explains that Arabic and Greek terms to refer to villeins can be resolved into two basic categories, "registered" and "unregistered" families. In this paper, I will make it clear that *mul*s and *hursh* were not a pair of opposite Arabic terms indicating two different classes of villeins, but that *mul*s simply signify those who were not listed in the previous documents.

It has been generally understood, mainly based on studies of France, that a social class of unfree peasants subject to lords through land tenure was formed in Western Europe during the eleventh and twelfth centuries.^[1] Marc Block, a well-known French medievalist, considered that most peasants in the Middle Ages had been unfree and in the status of serfdom due to the following three points. First, they had to pay *chevage*, a kind of poll-money and a symbol of servitude. Second, they could not marry women living outside their lords' domains unless they got their lords' permission by making a large payment. Third, they had to pay *mainmorte* (death duty) to their lords when they bequeathed their property.^[2] Hans Kurt Schulze, a German scholar, defines *Bauern* (sing. *Bauer*, peasants) in medieval Europe as those who belonged to rural population (as opposed to urban population), and explains that they constituted a quite uniform class as a whole in terms of social function, management style, and lifestyle, although they consisted of various people in free, semi-free, and unfree conditions, and varied greatly in terms of land tenure.^[3]

Scholars seem to have divided medieval peasants into slaves, unfree peasants, and free peasants in terms of degree of freedom, and sub-divided unfree peasants into serfs and villeins in terms of degree of dependence on their lords, although these divisions and definitions are quite artificial. As a matter of fact, there were various words supposed to indicate peasants in medieval Europe, and some of them were sometimes ambiguous and polysemous.

It is important for us to clarify here the usage of some frequently used words, modern and medieval, for peasants of Medieval Europe. The English word "serf" ("serf" in French, "servo" in Italian) derives from the Latin word "*servus*", while the English word "villein" ("vilain" in French, "villano" in Italian) comes from the Latin

[4] Du Cange, et al., *Glossarium mediae et infimae Latinitatis*, 10 vols. (Niort, 1883–1887), 7: 454–455, “Servus”; Bloch, *La société féodale*, p. 363.

[5] Wolfgang Stürner, ed., *Die Konstitutionen Friedrichs II. für das Königreich Sizilien* (Hanover, 1996, MGH Const., 2, Suppl.), II 32., p. 338: “seu quicumque villanus qui in villis et casalibus habitat.” Du Cange, et al., *Glossarium mediae et infimae Latinitatis*, 8: 331: “Villani dicti sunt a villa, eo quod in villis commorentur, qui et rustici, a ruribus, quae excolunt, et Pagenses, etc. ...” Cf. Adalgisa de Simone, “Ancora sui «villani» di Sicilia,” *Mélanges de l’École française de Rome*, 116 (2004): 481; Bloch, *La société féodale*, pp. 369–370.

[6] J. F. Niermeyer, *Mediae latinitatis lexicon minus* (Leiden, 1976), pp. 1103–1104, “villanus”.

[7] Cf. Ferdinand Chalandon, *Histoire de la domination normande en Italie et en Sicile*, 2 vols. (Paris 1907), 2: 528.

[8] Robert Fossier, *Paysans d’Occident* (Paris, 1984); Paul Freedman, *The Origins of Peasant Servitude in Medieval Catalonia* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 1–18. For studies on peasants in Medieval Sicily, see note 9 below. For recent studies and trends, see especially the works of Pietro Corrao, Giuseppe Petralia, and Sandro Carocci.

[9] Rosario Gregorio, *Considerazioni sopra la storia di Sicilia*, 4th ed. (Reprint of 3rd edition, Palermo, 1845; 1st ed., Palermo, 1810–1816); Michele Amari, *Storia dei Musulmani di Sicilia*, 1st ed., 3 vols (Florence, 1854–1872), 3: 233–250; 2nd ed., a cura di Carlo Alfonso Nallino, 3 vols. in 5 parts (Catania, 1933–39), 3: 245–257; Chalandon, *Histoire de la domination normande*, 2: 528–530; Ernst Mayer, *Italienisch Verfassungsgeschichte von der Gothenzeit bis zur Zunft Herrschaft*, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1909), 1: 185; Carlo Alberto Garufi, “Censimento e catasto della popolazione servile. Nuovi studi e ricerche sull’ordinamento amministrativo dei Normanni in Sicilia nei secoli XI e XII,” *Archivio Storico Siciliano*, 49 (1928): 73–75; Illuminato Peri, *Il villanaggio in Sicilia* (Palermo, 1965), pp. 35–49; Idem, *Villani e cavalieri nella Sicilia medievale* (Rome, 1993), pp. 26–37; Vincenzo d’Alessandro, “Servi e liberi,” *Uomo e ambiente nel Mezzogiorno normanno-svevo* (Bari, 1987), pp. 293–317; Pietro Corrao, “Il servo,” *Condizione umana e ruoli sociali nel Mezzogiorno normanno-svevo* (Bari, 1991), pp. 61–78; Idem, “Gerarchie sociali e di potere nella Sicilia normanna (XI–XII secolo). Questioni storiografiche e interpretative,” *Señores, siervos y vasallos en la Alta Edad Media. XXVIII Semana de Estudios Medievales, Estella 16–20 julio 2001* (Pamplona, 2002), pp. 459–481; Donald Matthew, *The Norman Kingdom of Sicily* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 150–160; Jean-Marie Martin, *Italiens normandes (XIe–XIIIe siècles)* (Paris, 1994),

word “villanus”.

Figure 1. Some words of Latin origin for peasants

<i>servus</i> (L) serf (E, F), servo (I)
<i>villanus</i> (L) villein (E), vilain (F), villano (I)
<i>rusticus</i> (← <i>rus</i>) (L) rustic, rural (E), rustique, rural (F), rustico, rurale (I)

L: Latin, E: English, F: French, I: Italian

The Latin word “*servus*”, originally meaning a slave, does not appear very frequently in medieval Latin sources,^[4] but “serf” in English or French, and “servo” in Italian, are quite often used by modern scholars to indicate a medieval peasant subject to lords. On the other hand, the Latin word “*villanus*” originally meant a person in a *villa* (a village),^[5] and “villein” in English (“vilain” in French, “villano” in Italian) is also used to indicate an unfree peasant in medieval Europe. “Villein” is sometimes used almost interchangeably with “serf”. However, some historians think a villein was freer than a serf,^[6] while others regard a serf as belonging to one of the two classes of villeins, a more unfree one.^[7]

Meanwhile, recent studies seem to suggest that status and condition of peasants in Medieval Europe varied from place to place and from time to time more largely than scholars had previously thought. It is getting more and more difficult for us to consider peasants in medieval Europe as a uniform class of unfree status under lordship.^[8]

1. HISTORIOGRAPHY

The villeins in Norman Sicily have long been investigated by a number of historians, including Rosario Gregorio, Noël des Vergers, Michele Amari, Ferdinand Chalandon, Ernst Mayer, Carlo Alberto Garufi, Illuminato Peri, and Giuseppe Petralia.^[9] Scholars mentioned various words in Latin, Greek and Arabic supposed to indicate a villein, and interrelationships between them has been an issue subject to debate. For example, Chalandon, a French historian of the early twentieth century, found various words indicating a villein in the documents of Norman Sicily.^[10]

Figure 2. Words for villeins in three languages (Chalandon)

Latin <i>servi glebae, rustici, adscriptitii, inscriptitii, homines, coloni, aldi, metochii, cortisani, angararii, homines censiles</i>
Greek παροικοι (<i>paroikoi</i>), ἄνθρωποι (<i>anthrōpoi</i>), ἐναπόγραφοι (<i>enapographoi</i>), ἐξώγραφοι (<i>exōgraphoi</i>)
Arabic <i>Riǧāl el Geraīd</i> (= <i>rijāl al-jarā'id</i>), <i>maks</i> , <i>Mehallet</i> (= <i>maḥallāt</i>), <i>Ghorebā</i> (= <i>ghurabā'</i>)

pp.177-214; Emanuele Conte, *Servi medievali. Dinamiche del diritto comune* (Rome, 1996), pp. 219-223; Francesco Panero, *Schiavi servi e villani nell'Italia medievale* (Turin, 1999), pp. 295-304, 324-330; Idem, "Le nouveau servage et l'attache à la glèbe aux XIIe et XIIIe siècle: l'interprétation de Marc Bloch et la documentation italienne," *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Moyen Âge*, 112 (2000): 551-561; Idem, "Signori e servi: una conflittualità permanente," *Rivolte urbane e rivolte contadine nell'Europa del Trecento. Un confronto*, ed. by M. Bourin, G. Cherubini, and G. Pinto (Florence, 2008), pp. 305-321; Giuseppe Petralia, "La «signoria» nella Sicilia," G. Rossetti, ed., *La signoria rurale in Italia nel medioevo* (Pisa, 2006), pp. 233-270; Sandro Carocci, "Le libertà dei servi. Reinterpretare il villanaggio meridionale," *Storica*, 37 (2007): 51-94; Idem, "Angararii e franci. Il villanaggio meridionale," *Studi in margine all'edizione della platea di Luca arcivescovo di Cosenza (1203-1227)*, eds. by E. Cuozzo and J.-M. Martin (Avellino, 2009), pp. 205-241.

[10] Chalandon, *Histoire de la domination normande*, 2: 528.

[11] Stürner, ed., *Die Konstitutionen Friedrichs II.*, III 3., p. 366: "Errores eorum, qui villanos quoslibet sine licentia dominorum ad ordinem clericatus accedere regia constitutione dicunt esse prohibitum, interpretatione benivola corrigentes, decernimus eos tantum villanos predicta constitutione intelligi fore prohibitos clericari, qui personaliter, intuitu persone sue scilicet, servire tenentur, sicut sunt ascriptitii et servi glebe et huiusmodi alii. Qui vero respectu tenimenti vel alicuius beneficii servire debent, si voluerint ad ordinem clericatus accedere, liceat eis sine voluntate etiam dominorum, prius tamen hiis, que tenent a dominis suis, in eorum manibus resignatis." Cf. James M. Powell, ed., *The Liber Augustalis, or Constitutions of Melfi promulgated by the Emperor Frederick II for the Kingdom of Sicily in 1231* (Syracuse University Press, 1971), p. 106; Chalandon, *Histoire de la domination normande*, 2: 528-530; Johns, *Arabic Administration*, p. 149.

[12] Michele Amari, *Storia dei Musulmani di Sicilia*, 2nd ed., ed. by C. A. Nallino, 3 vols. in 5 parts (Catania, 1933-39), 3: 245-250; Ernst Mayer, *Italienische Verfassungsgeschichte von der Gothenzeit bis zur Zunfttherrschaft*, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1909), 1: 185; Carlo Alberto Garufi, "Censimento e catasto della popolazione servile. Nuovi studi e ricerche sull'ordinamento amministrativo dei Normanni in Sicilia nei secoli XI e XII," *Archivio Storico Siciliano*, 49 (1928): 73-75.

[13] Chalandon follows Amari, who read *mul*s as *maks*. Amari, *Storia dei Musulmani*, 1st ed., 3: 243; 2nd ed., 3: 250.

[14] Chalandon, *Histoire de la domination normande*, 2: 529-30. Chalandon, following the edition of Salvatore Cusa (*I diplomi greci ed*

There is no agreement of opinions on which word in Arabic, Greek, or Latin documents corresponds to which word, and there has been controversy over what these words precisely meant. But many scholars seem to have concluded that the villeins consisted of two basic different groups, those who owed hereditary service in person (*intuitu personae*) and those who owed service with respect to the terms of their tenure of land (*respectu tenimenti*), based on the following law of William II.

Correcting by a benevolent interpretation the errors of those who say that without their lords' permission all villeins have been forbidden by royal constitution to enter the clergy, we decree that the villeins forbidden to become clerics by the above-mentioned constitution should be those who are held to serve personally, i.e., with respect to their own persons, like *ascriptitii*, *servi glebe*, and others of that kind. However, those who must serve by reason of a holding or other benefice, if they desire to enter clergy, they may do so even without the accord of their lords, after they previously give back what they hold from their lords into the lords' hands.^[11]

In this law, the villeins are divided into two categories: "those who are held to personal service, i.e., with respect to their own person, like *ascriptitii*, *servi glebe*, and other of that kind," and those "who owe service by reason of a holding or a benefice." The law makes clear that the villeins of the first category are forbidden to become clerics while those of the second category may do so even without the permission from their lords.

Based on these descriptions, historians have tried to arrange various words in Latin, Greek and Arabic documents into the two categories. For example, Chalandon, relying on the work of Amari,^[12] put them in the following order. In the upper group are the villeins who owe service to their landlords by reason of a holding (*respectu tenimenti*), that is, *homines censiles* in Latin, ἐξώγραφοι (*exōgraphoi*) and ἄνθρωποι (*anthrōpoi*) in Greek, *maks* (Amari reads *mul*s as *maks*)^[13] and *maḥallāt* in Arabic. In the lower group are the villeins who owe service to their landlords with respect to their own persons (*intuitu personae*), that is, *servi* and *ascriptitii* in Latin, ἐναπόγραφοι (*enapographoi*) and πάροικοι (*paroikoi*) in Greek, and *rijāl al-jarā'id* in Arabic.^[14]

Figure 3. Classification of villeins by Chalandon

	villeins who owe service to their lords by reason of a holding	villeins who owe service to their lords with respect to their own persons
Latin	<i>homines censiles</i>	<i>servi</i> <i>ascriptitii</i>
Greek	ἐξώγραφοι (<i>exōgraphoi</i>) ἄνθρωποι (<i>anthrōpoi</i>)	ἐναπόγραφοι (<i>enapographoi</i>) πάροικοι (<i>paroikoi</i>),
Arabic	<i>maks</i> <i>maḥallāt</i>	<i>rijāl al-jarā'id</i>

Meanwhile, Carlo A. Garufi, an Italian scholar, explains as follows. *Jarīda* (pl. *jarā'id*) included only names of villeins of large estates who owed labor service

arabi di Sicilia pubblicati nel testo originale, vol. 1 [2 parts][Palermo 1868-1882], p. 247) uses the Greek word ἐξώγραφοι (*ezōgraphoi*), but the word in the original manuscript (cf. Figure 7 below) is ἐξώγραφοι (*exōgraphoi*).

[15] Carlo Alberto Garufi, "Censimento e catasto," *Archivio storico siciliano*, n.s. 49 (1928): 74-75.

[16] Cusa, pp. 134, 245-246.

[17] Petralia, "La «signoria» nella Sicilia," pp. 261-262; Carocci, "Angararii e franci," p. 24.

[18] Annliese Nef, "Conquêtes et reconquêtes médiévales," *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome*, 112/2 (2000): 579-607; Idem, *Conquérir et gouverner la Sicile islamique aux XIe et XIIe siècles* (Rome, 2011); Jeremy Johns, *Arabic Administration in Norman Sicily* (Cambridge, 2002); Alex Metcalfe, *Muslims and Christians* (London, 2003), p. 37; Idem, *The Muslims of Medieval Italy* (Edinburgh, 2009), pp. 268-72; Adalgisa de Simone, "Ancora sui «villani» di Sicilia," *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome*, 116 (2004): 471-500.

[19] Johns, *Arabic Administration*, p. 151, Table 6.1. On the other hand, Nef arranges various words written in *jarā'id* of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. She lists as Latin words, *villanus*, *homo*, *rusticus*, as Greek words βελλάνος (*bellanos*), ἄνθρωπος (*anthrōpos*), ἀνέρ (*aner*), πάροικος (*paroikos*), ἐξώγραφος (*exōgraphos*), ἀγαρήνος (*agarēnos*), and Arabic words *al-rijāl* («les hommes»), *rijāl al-jarā'id* («les hommes de documents»), *al-rijāl al-muls* («les hommes doux, lisses»), *rijāl al-mahallāt* («les hommes des campements», «les hommes des villages»), *al-rijāl al-ghurabā* [= *ghurabā*] / *al-rijāl al-ghurabā* («les hommes étrangers»), *al-rijāl al-hursh* [= *khurshī*] / *rijāl al-hursh* («les hommes rudes»). Nef, "Conquêtes et reconquêtes," pp. 586-588; Idem, *Conquérir et gouverner*, pp. 489-490.

personally with his family and sons because of their persons, while in the *platea* (Lat. pl. *plateae*; Gr. πλατεῖα, pl. πλατεῖαι) included all villeins, more precisely, both those who owed labor service because of their persons and those who owed labor service for the lands and other benefices granted to them.^[15]

Although this classification is similar to that of Chalandon, Garufi thinks that *jarīda* included only those who owed labor service personally but *platea* included both this kind of villeins and the more free villeins who owed labor service by reason of a land holding. This understanding of Garufi based on the difference between *jarīda* and *platea* cannot be accepted, however, because the Arabic word *jarīda* is written as *plateia* in Greek in Arabic-Greek bilingual documents, which suggests both are identical.^[16]

Although there is no agreement of opinion on which word in Arabic, Greek, and Latin documents relates to which category of villeins, the idea of the classification of villeins into two groups seems to have been accepted by generations of historians.^[17] Those scholars who have recently published studies relating villeins in Arabic documents, including Annliese Nef, Jeremy Johns, Alex Metcalfe, and Adalgisa de Simone, also seem to share this idea.^[18] For example, Jeremy Johns, who has examined words used for Muslim villeins in Arabic documents in detail, shows us a list of words categorized into two groups.^[19]

Figure 4. Classification of villeins by Jeremy Johns

Registered	Unregistered
• <i>ahl</i> or <i>rijāl</i> (<i>idāfa</i> or preposition) <i>al-rahīl al-fulānī</i> , 'the people' or 'the men of such-and-such an estate'	
• <i>rijāl al-mahallāt</i> , 'the men of the settlements'	• <i>al-ghurabā</i> , 'the strangers'
• οἱ ἐντόποι (<i>oi entopoi</i>), 'the indigenes'	• οἱ ξένοι (<i>oi xenoi</i>), 'the strangers'
• <i>nativi</i> , 'indigenes'; <i>servi glebae</i> , 'serfs of the land'	• <i>advenae</i> , 'newcomers'; <i>hospites</i> , 'guests'
• <i>rijāl al-jarā'id</i> , 'the men of the registers'	
• οἱ ἐναπόγραφοι (<i>oi enapografoi</i>) 'the registered'	• οἱ ἐξώγραφοι (<i>oi exōgrafoi</i>), 'the unregistered'
• <i>adscriptitii</i> , 'the registered'	• <i>inscriptitii</i> , 'the unregistered'
• <i>al-hursh</i> , <i>al-rijāl al-hursh</i> , 'the rough', 'the rough men'	• <i>al-muls</i> , <i>al-rijāl al-muls</i> , 'the smooth', 'the smooth men'
• <i>rustici</i> , 'rough'	• [<i>glabri</i> , 'smooth']
• <i>qui personaliter, intuitu personae suae scilicet, servire tenentur</i> , 'those who are held to personal service, i.e. with respect to their own persons'	• <i>qui ... respectu tenimenti vel alicuius beneficii servire tenentur</i> , 'those who ... owe service by reason of a holding or other benefice'

(Johns, *Arabic Administration*, p. 151, Table 6.1)

According to him one group is a class of "registered" villeins expressed as *hursh* (the rough men) as well as *rijāl (ahl) al-jarā'id* (the men of the registers) in Arabic documents, and the other is a class of "unregistered" villeins expressed as *muls* (the smooth men) in Arabic documents. This summary, a result of Johns' extensive examination of Arabic parchments in Norman Sicily, shows us his new interpretation and detailed information about Muslim peasants, but he preserves the tradi-

[20] Johns' book is a good scholarly work which examines Arabic documents of Norman Sicily in detail. Although I do not agree with the traditional view reinforced by Johns, it would not have been possible for me to complete this article without his work.

[21] Metcalfe, *Muslims and Christians*, p. 37; Idem, *The Muslims of Medieval Italy*, pp. 268-72. Brian Catlos accepted their idea in his latest book. Brian Catlos, *Muslims of Medieval Latin Christendom, c.1050–1614* (Cambridge, 2014), p. 116.

[22] Amari, *Storia dei Musulmani di Sicilia*, 1st ed., 3: 243; 2nd ed., 3: 250. This interpretation of Amari was accepted by Nef. See Nef, "Conquêtes et reconquêtes médiévales," p. 600; Idem, *Conquérir et gouverner*, p. 501.

[23] De Simone, "Ancora sui «villani» di Sicilia," p. 489.

tional idea of the classification of the villeins into two groups.^[20]

Johns' understanding of Muslim villeins has been accepted overall by Alex Metcalfe. According to Metcalfe, many terms were used synonymously across three languages to refer to villeins, and those in Arabic and Greek can be resolved into two basic categories: families who were "registered" and those who were "unregistered". Following Johns' idea, he explains that those who were "registered" were called *hursh* ("rough men"), or *rijāl (ahl) al-jarā'id* in Arabic, and *enapographoi* (ἐναπόγραφοι) in Greek, while those who were "unregistered" were called *muls* ("smooth men") in Arabic, and *exōgraphoi* (ἐξώγραφοι) in Greek.^[21]

This categorization of the words of three languages is highly elaborative. However, it should be noted that many of the listed words have been categorized into the two groups, not based on the usage in the documents of Norman Sicily, but on analogy of the meanings of words, or by analogy with East Roman law and usages outside Norman Sicily. In addition, there is a possibility that such words do not correspond one-to-one contrary to the presupposition that words (concepts) indicating peasants correspond one-to-one between Arabic, Greek, and Latin.

Furthermore, the interpretation of Amari and Nef that *exōgraphoi*, a Greek word correspondent to the Arabic word *muls*, originally meant "those written outside (the lists) (*que' fuori scritto/ écrites à l'extérieur (des listes)*),"^[22] and the opinion of De Simone that *exōgraphoi* means "those added (to the lists),"^[23] call the understandings of Johns and Metcalfe into question.

In this article, I will focus on *muls* and *hursh* which Johns and Metcalfe have regarded as a pair of opposite words indicating "unregistered" and "registered" villeins, and have given "the smooth men" and "the rough men" as their English translations. I think a new interpretation of *muls* and *hursh*, as well as *rijāl (ahl) al-jarā'id*, in Arabic documents will reveal to us a different aspect of the reality of Norman Sicily.

2. MULS AND HURSH: A PAIR OF OPPOSITE TERMS?

What is Arabic word *muls*, then? "Another group of villeins, *al-muls*," explains Jeremy Johns, "first appear in contraposition to the *rijāl al-jarā'id* in the *jarīda* renewed for San Giorgio di Triocala in November 1141. After the lists of the *rijāl al-jarā'id* of Triocala and Raḥl al-Baṣal comes a third list of the names of the *muls*. *Muls* is the plural of *amlas*, meaning 'smooth', 'soft', 'sleek', et cetera. ... In the Sicilian documents, however, the word is always used in the plural."^[24]

According to Johns, *muls* is antithesis to *hursh*. "The *muls* appear in antithesis to the *hursh*," continues his explanation, "in the two Chùrchuro documents of 1149 and 1154. Of the five households of Muslim *rijāl* granted to Chùrchuro, two are *hursh*, and three are *muls*. The word *hursh* is the plural of the adjectival form *aḥrash*, meaning 'rough', 'harsh', or 'coarse'... As with *muls*, only the plural form *hursh* is used for the Muslim villeins of Norman Sicily."^[25]

"The two terms," concludes Johns, "clearly form a pair of contrasted opposites, the *hursh* and the *muls*, the 'rough' and the 'smooth'. Neither term, to the best of my knowledge, is employed in this sense anywhere in the Arabic-speaking world, except Sicily."^[26] This understanding of Johns has been accepted by Metcalfe^[27] and Nef.^[28]

The idea of contraposition of *muls* and *hursh* had already been shown in the nineteenth century by Reinhart Dozy, who had explained "The *muls* formed in Sicily a certain class of serfs, while another class had the name of *al-hursh*" without

[24] Johns, *Arabic Administration*, p. 147.

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 147.

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 147.

[27] Metcalfe, *Muslims and Christians*, p. 37; Idem, *The Muslims of Medieval Italy*, pp. 268-72.

[28] Nef seems to have accepted Johns' opinion in her book published in 2011, although she showed an interpretation different from Johns' about *muls* in her article of 2000. Nef, "Conquêtes et reconquêtes médiévales," pp. 588-589, 600-606; Idem, *Conquérir et gouverner*, pp. 506: "Que le terme *hursh* «rude» s'oppose à celui de *muls* («doux», «lisse») paraît peu contestable. Il est donc probable que le premier désigne le *rijāl al-jarā'id*."

[29] Reinhart Dozy, *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes*, 2 vols. (Leiden, 1877–1881), 2: 620, ملس (*muls*), املس (*amlasu*): “Les ملس (*muls*) formaient en Sicile une certaine classe de serfs, tandis qu’une autre portait le nom de الحرش (*al-hursh*).” Already in the eighteenth century, Rosario Gregorio edited an Arabic document of 1134 (see Figure 5 below), which includes *muls* and *hursh*, and discussed what these two words meant. See Rosario Gregorio, *De supputandis apud Arabes Siculos temporibus* (Palermo, 1786), pp. 36–37. Noël des Vergers also stated that the word *muls* was written always as ἐξὼγραφοί (*exōgraphoi*) in Greek, and that this Greek word corresponded to *ascriptitii* in Latin documents. See Noël des Vergers, “Lettre à M. Caussin de Perceval sur les diplômes arabes conservés dans les archives de la Sicile,” *Journal Asiatique*, ser.4, 6 (1845): 20–24.

[30] Amari, *Storia dei Musulmani*, 2nd ed., p. 246, note 1.

[31] Palermo, Arch. Dioc. (Archivio Diocesano), Fondo Primo, no. 14 (Edition: Cusa, pp. 28–30; Jeremy Johns and Alex Metcalfe, “The Mystery of Chùrchuro: Conspiracy or Incompetence in Twelfth-Century Sicily,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 62 (1999): 242–248).

[32] Palermo, Arch. Dioc., Fondo Primo, no. 16 (Edition: Cusa, pp. 34–36; Johns and Metcalfe, “The Mystery of Chùrchuro,” pp. 248–253).

[33] De Simone, “Ancora sui «villani» di Sicilia,” p. 488. Cf. Ibn Manẓūr (630–711 A.H.), *Lisān al-‘arab*, 18 vols. (Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, 2004), 14: 121–122 ملس (*m/l/s*).

[34] Gregorio, *De supputandis*, p. 37; Amari, *Storia dei Musulmani*, 1st ed., 3: 244; Idem, *Storia dei Musulmani*, 2nd ed., 3: 252; Nef, “Conquêtes et reconquêtes médiévales,” pp. 588, 604; Idem, *Conquérir et gouverner*, pp. 490, 506–507; Johns, *Arabic Administration*, pp. 148–150; Metcalfe, *Muslims and Christians*, p. 37; Idem, *The Muslims of Medieval Italy*, pp. 269–72; De Simone, “Ancora sui «villani» di Sicilia,” pp. 486–489, 499.

[35] Gregorio, *De supputandis*, p. 36; des Vergers, “Lettre à M. Caussin de Perceval,” pp. 20–23; Dozy, *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes*, 2: 620; Amari, *Storia dei Musulmani*, 2nd ed., 3: 246, note 1; Nef, “Conquêtes et reconquêtes médiévales,” pp. 588–589, 600–606; Idem, *Conquérir et gouverner*, pp. 506; Johns, *Arabic Administration*, p. 147; Metcalfe, *Muslims and Christians*, p. 37; Idem, *The Muslims of Medieval Italy*, pp. 268–72; De Simone, “Ancora sui «villani» di Sicilia,” pp. 485–499.

giving any French translation in his *Supplement to the Arabic Dictionaries* published in 1877–1881.^[29]

Dozy’s idea was thereafter accepted by Carlo Alfonso Nallino, an editor and annotator of the second edition of Michele Amari’s *Storia dei Musulmani di Sicilia* published in 1933–39. In a footnote of this book, Nallino states that “*hursh* (plural of *aḥrash*), which means rough (*ruvidi*), is the contrary of the class of the aforesaid *muls* (smooth [*lisci*]). Examination of the diplomas leads us to the equivalence of *hursh* to *rijāl* (*ahl*) *al-jarā’id* (people [inscribed] in the *platea*), that is, *villani*, *ascripticii*, and *rustici*.”^[30]

Johns’ understanding of *hursh* and *muls* is basically based on these scholars’ ideas. The supporting sources of their ideas are the two Arabic documents of 1149^[31] and 1154^[32], which are two copies of a lost document of 1149. These copies have the same content except the part describing the granted land and the sentence added to the document of 1154 to explain why the copy was made again. The word *muls* appears only once in these documents. “The total is five men (*rijāl*) from the district of Iato, among whom two are *hursh* and three *muls*.”

Figure 5. Sentence referring to *hursh* and *muls*
(Palermo, Arch. Dioc., Fondo Primo, nos. 14, 16)

no. 14 (1149), line 6; no. 16 (1154), lines 5–6

“The total is five men (*rijāl*) from the district of Iato, among whom two are *hursh* and three *muls*.”

الجملة خمسة رجال من إقليم جاتو منهم / اثنين حرش وثلاثة ملس

Based on this information, Dozy, Nallino, Johns, and Metcalfe assumed that *hursh* and *muls* were a pair of opposites. If *hursh* and *muls* were in fact a pair of opposites, I might have been led to the same conclusion. But, this sentence does not include any detailed information about *hursh* and *muls*, although they were written side by side. There are no solid grounds to regard these words as a pair of opposites. We should set aside the contraposition of *hursh* and *muls*, and reexamine what these words really indicated.

3. WHAT IS MULS?

If *hursh* and *muls* are not a pair of opposites, how should we understand *muls*? *Muls* (sing. *amlas*) is certainly a word meaning “smoothed (*laevis*)”, “smooth (*glaber*)”, “soft (*mollis*)”, etc., but it is a very ambiguous and polysemous word signifying “mixed (*mixtus fuit*)”, “escaped (*evasit*)”, “freed (*liberatus fuit*)”, “robbed (*ereptus fuit*)”, etc.^[33] Thus, scholars have speculated about its meaning from its apposition with *ghurabā’* (*ghurbā’*)^[34] or its contrast to *hursh* (*hurash*).^[35] We have only five sources referring to *muls*.

Figure 6. Sources including *muls*

1141: Toledo, ADM, Mesina, no. 1119

• *muls*

[36] Toledo, ADM (Archivo General de la Fundación Casa Ducal de Medinaceli), Mesina, no. 1119. Facsimile: *Messina il ritorno della memoria* (Palermo, 1994), p. 162. Edition: M. Eugenia Gálvez, "Noticia sobre los documentos árabes de Sicilia del Archivo Ducal de Medinaceli," Biancamaria Scarcia Amoretti, ed., *Del nuovo sulla Sicilia musulmana* (Roma, 3 maggio 1993) (Rome, 1995), pp. 171-181.

[37] Palermo, Arch. Dioc., Fondo Primo, nos. 14, 16.

[38] Palermo, Arch. Dioc., Fondo Primo, no. 25. Edition: Cusa, pp. 37-39. This document includes not only *muls* but also *hursh* and *ghurabā*.

[39] Palermo, BCRS (Biblioteca Centrale della Regione Siciliana), Fondo Monreale, no. 45. Edition: Cusa, pp. 245-286. In this document *muls* and ἐξώγραφοι (*exōgraphoi*) appear repeatedly.

[40] Amari states that the Greek word *exōgraphoi* would mean "what was written outside", which becomes clear by comparison with *enapographoi* (ἐναπόγραφοι, registered [transcritti]), *adscriptitii*, that is, *villani*, true serfs of the glebe (veri servi della gleba). See Amari, *Storia dei Musulmani*, 1st ed., vol. 3, p. 243; 2nd ed., vol. 3, pp. 250-251.

In her article of 2000, Nef, following Amari's view, explains that ἐξώγραφοι originally meant "written out of [the lists]" or "out of the *al-jarā'id*" (Nef, "Conquêtes et reconquêtes médiévales," p. 600), and "was invented as an antonym of *rijāl al-jarā'id* and as a synonym of *muls*" (*Ibid.*, 606). In her book published in 2011 too, she states "the original meaning of this Greek word is 'written outside of [the lists]'" (Nef, *Conquérir et gouverner*, p. 51).

On the other hand, De Simone ("Ancora sui «villani» di Sicilia," pp. 489-490) explains that ἐξώγραφοι meant "registered from the outside", that is, "those added [to the lists]". According to her, *muls*/ ἐξώγραφοι added to the lists were distinguished from those already registered in the lists at the beginning at least, but gradually came to be much the same thing as ἔντοποι (*hoi entopoi*, "born in the land"). She also states that the word *adscripticius* possibly corresponded to ἐξώγραφος, and both meant "added to the list" or "registered lately".

1149: Palermo, Arch. Dioc., Fondo Primo, no. 14
(1st copy of a document of 1149)

• *muls* & *hursh*

1154: Palermo, Arch. Dioc., Fondo Primo, no. 16
(2nd copy of a document of 1149)

• *muls* & *hursh*

1169: Palermo, Arch. Dioc., Fondo Primo, no. 25

• *hursh*

• *ghurabā* & *muls*

1183: Palermo, BCRS, no. 45

• *muls* = ἐξώγραφοι (*exōgraphoi*)

The earliest of them is an Arabic document issued in 1141 and now preserved in an archive in Toledo.^[36] The word *muls* appears twice in this document. The second and third earliest are the Arabic documents of 1149 and 1154, which are the two copies of a lost document of 1149 I have already mentioned. Both are now preserved in an archive in Palermo. The words *muls* and *hursh* appear once in each of these documents.^[37] The fourth earliest is an Arabic-Greek document issued in 1169, now preserved in the same archive in Palermo.^[38] This document includes the words *hursh*, *ghurabā*, and *muls*.

The last of the five sources is a long Arabic-Greek bilingual document issued in 1183, and now preserved in another archive in Palermo.^[39] It is this Arabic-Greek bilingual document of 1183 that gives us a hint to figure out what the word *muls* meant. In this document, the Arabic word *muls* is written as ἐξώγραφοι (*exōgraphoi*) in Greek. The words *muls* and ἐξώγραφοι (*exōgraphoi*) appear repeatedly in this document.

Both *muls* and ἐξώγραφοι (*exōgraphoi*) are quite ambiguous words, and it would be difficult to know what a writer intends to indicate by these words in a monolingual document. However, if we can find an overlapping meanings of the Arabic word *muls* and the Greek word ἐξώγραφοι (*exōgraphoi*), it would be possible to figure out what the writer intended to mean. The Greek word ἐξώγραφοι (*exōgraphoi*) has such meanings as "the written outside", "outside the written", and "the unwritten" as Amari, Nef, and De Simone suggest,^[40] while the Arabic *muls* has meanings like "smooth", "slippery", and "slipped".

It would be plausible to assume that by these words, the writer of the document intended to indicate "slipped", that is, "slipped from the former document or name-list", "those slipped from the former document or name-list", or "those newly added" as De Simone suggests. This hypothesis seems to be supported by the composition of the document of 1183.

Figure 7. Structure of the Document of 1183
(Palermo, BCRS, Fondo Monreale, no. 45; Cusa, pp. 245-253)

lines 1-13: Introduction in Arabic

[1-a]

line 14: "Names of the people of the *maḥallāt* at Ghār al-Širfī"
(اسماء أهل المحلات بغار الصرفي)

lines 15-18: 14 names in Greek and Arabic

line 17: "These out of the *challet*, in all, 14 names" (οὗτοι [Cusa, οὔτοι] εκ τῶν χαλλέτ ὁμοῦ ὀνόματα ιδ')

line 18: "The total from the *maḥallāt* is 14 names" (الجملة من المحلات اربع عشر اسما)

[1-b]

line 19: "The *exōgraphoi* of the estate Siriphē" (οἱ ἐξώγραφοι [Cusa, ἐζώγραφοι] τοῦ χωρίου σίριψη)

line 20: "And from the *mul*s at Ghār al-Ṣirfi" (ومن الملس بغار الصرفي)

lines 21-30: **40 names** in Greek and Arabic

line 31: "In all 40 names" (ὁμοῦ ὀνόματα μ')

line 32: "The total is 40 names" (الجملة عربعين اسما)

[2-a]

line 31: "And from the *machallet* Dartze" (καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν μαχαλλέτ δάρτζε)

line 32: "And from the *maḥallāt* at Darja" (ومن المحلات بالدرجة)

lines 32-34: **10 names** in Greek and Arabic

line 33: "In all 10 names" (ὁμοῦ ὀνόματα ι')

line 34: "The total is 10 names" (الجملة عشرة اسما)

[2-b]

line 35: "The *exōgraphoi* of Dartze" (οἱ ἐξώγραφοι τῆς δάρτζε)

line 36: "And from the *mul*s at Darja" (ومن الملس بالدرجة)

lines 37-38: **3 names** in Greek and Arabic

line 37: "In all 3 names" (ὁμοῦ ὀνόματα τρία)

line 38: "The total is 3 names" (الجملة ثلاثة اسما)

[3-a]

line 39: "And from the *machallet* Tzatine" (καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν μαχαλλέτ τζατίνε)

line 40: "And from the *maḥallāt* at Jaṭīna" (ومن المحلات بجطينة)

lines 41-46: **24 names** in Greek and Arabic

line 45: "In all 24 names" (ὁμοῦ ὀνόματα κδ')

line 46: "The total is 24 names" (الجملة اربعة وعشرين اسما)

[3-b]

line 47: "The *exōgraphoi* of Tzatine" (οἱ ἐξώγραφοι τζατίνε)

line 48: "And from the *mul*s at Jaṭīna" (ومن الملس بجطينة)

lines 49-56: **30 names** in Greek and Arabic

line 55: "In all 30 names" (ὁμοῦ ὀνόματα τριάκοντα)

line 56: "The total is 30 names" (الجملة ثلاثون اسما)

[4-a]

line 57: "And from the *machallet* Minzēl Abderrhachmen and Koumait" (καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν μαχαλλέτ μίνζηλ ἄβδερχαχμέν καὶ κουμάιτ)

line 58: "And from the *maḥallāt* in the estate (*manzil*) of 'Abd al-Raḥmān and al-Qumayṭ" (ومن المحلات بمنزل عبد الرحمن والقبيط)

lines 59-60: **3 names** in Greek and Arabic

line 59: "In all 3 names" (ὁμοῦ ὀνόματα τρία)

line 60: "The total is 3 names" (الجملة ثلاثة اسما)

[4-b]

line 61: "And the *exōgraphoi* of the same" (καὶ οἱ ἐξώγραφοι ἀπ' αὐτῆς)

line 62: "And out of the *mul*s there" (ومن الملس بها)

lines 63-68: **25 names** in Greek and Arabic

line 67: "In all 25 names" (ὁμοῦ ὀνόματα κε')

line 68: "The total is 25 names" (الجملة خمسة وعشرون اسما)

~~~~~

[52-b]

In this document, as a matter of principle, the same contents are usually written in Arabic and Greek alternately line by line, and a subhead, a list of names, and a total number of the names constitute one unit. In many cases a unit of people of *maḥallāt* of a certain place (for example, Ghār al-Širfī, lines 14-18) and a unit of *mul*s of the same place (for example, Ghār al-Širfī, lines 19-32) make a pair, although for some places there is only one of the two kinds of unit. The Arabic word *maḥallāt*, which appears repeatedly in the subheads of the former units of the pairs, is a general word to indicate a settlement, and the people of the *maḥallāt* at Ghār al-Širfī simply indicate the people of the settlement of Ghār al-Širfī.

The Greek word corresponding to *maḥallāt* is usually μαχαλλέτ (*machallet*), a transliteration of *maḥallāt*, and it is also expressed as οἱ ἄνθρωποι μαχαλλέτ (*hoi anthrōpoi machallet*, people of *maḥallāt*).<sup>[41]</sup> In some cases, the word οἱ ἐντοποι (*hoi entopoi*),<sup>[42]</sup> which means "born in the land", or the word οἱ ἐντώπειοι (*hoi entōpeioi*), which means "people of the land", are added.<sup>[43]</sup> There is no word to suggest a class of villeins in the subheads. If *mul*s means a class of villeins, why do none of the subheads of the other units of the pairs have words indicating a class of villeins?

If *mul*s and ἐξώγραφοι (*exōgraphoi*) simply indicate those who were not written in former documents/name-lists, or those who were newly added, however, it is understandable that the subheads of the pairs of units are asymmetric, and that very general expressions like "men" and "people" are used. The document of 1141, the earliest source including *mul*s, also seems to support this hypothesis.

#### Figure 8. Structure of the document of 1141

(Toledo, ADM, Mesina, no. 1119; Gálvez, pp. 173-176)

lines 1-2: "A *jarīda* attesting to names of men (*rijāl*) of Triocala /written on the date of Month November of the year 536 [=1141 A.D.]."

(جريدة تشهد على أسماء رجال طرقلش /كتبت بتاريخ شهر نومبره من سنة ست وثلاثين وخمسماية)

lines 3-11: **50 names**

line 11: "The names of men (*rijāl*) of Raḥl al-Baṣal" (أسماء رجال رحل البصل)

lines 12-20: **50 names**

line 20: "The total is one hundred men (*rijāl*). (الجملة مائة رجال)"

line 21-22: "Then, when it was the date of Month July and Indiction IV [1141 A.D.], you asked us, — we were in Agrigento, may God protect it —, concerning these names which are written (Johns, p. 107: "registered") in this document (*sijill*; *sigillum* in Latin; σιγίλλιον in Greek)/ who were found in your possession but *mul*s (slipped from or out of the former list; Johns, p. 107: "as newly commended villeins"). And so we granted them to you on the condition that if any of them is in our *jarā'id* or in the *jarā'id* of our landholders, he shall be taken from you."

ثم لما كان بتاريخ شهر اسطريون (أسطربير Gálvez) بالانديقتس الرابع (الرابع Gálvez)

سالتنا ونحن بكركنت حماها الله في ها ولا الاسما الذين يثبتوا في هذا السجل/

الذين وجدوا عندك (عندك Gálvez) ملسا فسلمناهم لك على شريطة انه متى ما ظهر

منهم في جرايدنا وجرايد تراريتنا (قراييننا Gálvez) احدا يوخذ (يوخذ Johns, Duana, p.107 n 51) منك

line 23: "These are their names." (وهذه اسماءهم)

line 24-25: **15 names**.

line 26: "The total is fifteen *mul*s men." (الجملة خمسة عشر رجلا ملس)

line 27: Roger II's signature in Greek "Ῥογέρτιος ἐν Χριστῷ Θεῷ εὐσεβῆς κραταῖος  
Ῥῆξ καὶ τῶν χριστιανῶν βοηθός."

[41] Palermo, BCRS, Fondo Monreale, no. 45, lines 2 and 16 from the last; Cusa, pp. 284, 286.

[42] Palermo, BCRS, Fondo Monreale, no. 45, lines 836; Cusa, p. 255.

[43] Palermo, BCRS, Fondo Monreale, no. 45, lines 250, 256; Cusa, pp. 276, 277. Cf. Johns, *Arabic Administration*, pp. 148-149; Nef, "Conquêtes et reconquêtes médiévales," pp. 602; De Simone, "Ancora sui «villani» di Sicilia," p. 489.

This document includes three name-lists. The first one is the “names of men (*rijāl*) of Triocala”, the second one the “names of men (*rijāl*) of Raḥl al-Baṣāl”, and the third one the “names written in this document who were found in your possession and *muls*”. There is no word suggesting a class of villeins in this document either. The word *muls* appears twice in this document, and could be interpreted as “those slipped from the former lists/documents” as in the case of the document of 1183. The name-lists include names of inhabitants, usually, heads of households.

Already in the eleventh century, Count Roger I of Sicily made use of these name-lists when he granted lands to vassals, churches or monasteries. For example, his Greek-Arabic bilingual document issued in 1095 to grant land to St. Mary Church of Palermo includes name-lists in Greek and name-lists in Arabic<sup>[44]</sup>, and his Greek-Arabic bilingual document issued in the same year to grant land to the bishop of Catania includes a name-list of the people (*ahl*) of Aci (Aci, *Liyāj*, Ἰάκην) and a name-list of widows (*arāmil*) in Arabic.<sup>[45]</sup> Thus, the Norman rulers’ privileges of donation of land often included name-lists of inhabitants (heads of households) living there to confirm that the listed inhabitants should belong to a new lord.

Some of these documents have additional lists of inhabitants, who were not included in the preceding older name-lists, as shown in the documents of 1141 (Figure 8)<sup>[46]</sup> and 1145 (King Roger II’s approval and renewal of Roger I’s grant of land to his vassal Roger for Walter son of Roger).<sup>[47]</sup>

This shows that a revision of *jarīda* was made, not using a method that a completely new name-list was made by rearranging all names based on new information, but by simply putting a new name-list below the old ones. This method of revision seems to support the idea that the words *muls* and ἐξώγραφοι (*exōgraphoi*) in the subheads of the name-lists in the document of 1183 were used to indicate the following name-lists were additional. It does not mean that there were different classes of villeins expressed by different words, which were written in different columns. Various words were employed to indicate inhabitants, but most words are generally ones meaning “people” or “inhabitants”. *Muls* and ἐξώγραφοι (*exōgraphoi*) are not words indicating different classes of villeins, but documental words meaning “slipped away from” (or “not written”) in former *jarīda*. This word indicates that they refer to newly added information.

In Arabic documents of Norman Sicily we also see the phrase *rijāl al-jarā’id*, namely, “men of *jarā’id*”. Some scholars have regarded it as another antithesis to the *muls*. For example, Johns explains as follows: “Another group of villeins, *al-muls*, first appear in contraposition to the *rijāl al-jarā’id* in the *jarīda* renewed for San Giorgio di Triocala in November 1141. After the lists of the *rijāl al-jarā’id* of Triocala and Raḥl al-Baṣāl comes a third list of the names of the *muls*.”<sup>[48]</sup>

However, *al-muls* is not in contraposition to the *rijāl al-jarā’id* in this document. As we have examined before, there is no phrase of *rijāl al-jarā’id* here. We find only “*rijāl* of Triocala” and “*rijāl* of Raḥl al-Baṣāl”,<sup>[49]</sup> which Johns probably interpreted as *rijāl al-jarā’id*.

Johns and other scholars have regarded *rijāl al-jarā’id* as a lower class of villeins, and *rijāl al-muls* as an upper class of villeins. I do not agree to this, because there are no sources showing that the phrase *rijāl al-jarā’id* indicated a class of villeins. The word *muls* appears repeatedly in the subheads of the name-lists in the document of 1183, but neither *hursh* nor *rijāl al-jarā’id* appears in subheads of the name-lists in the documents of Norman Sicily. The phrase *rijāl al-jarā’id* did not indicate a particular class of villeins, but meant literally “men of documents”, that

[44] Palermo, Arch. Dioc., Fondo Primo, no. 5. Edition: Cusa, pp. 1-3.

[45] Catania, Archivio Capitolare della Cattedrale di Catania, Pergmene greco-arabe e greche, no. 1; Edition: Cusa, pp. 541-549. Cf. Hiroshi Takayama, *The Administration of the Norman Kingdom of Sicily* (Leiden/ New York/ Köln, 1993), pp. 39-40.

[46] Toledo, ADM, Mesina, no. 1119. Facsimile: *Messina il ritorno*, p. 162. Edition: Gálvez, “Noticia sobre los documentos árabes de Sicilia,” pp. 171-181.

[47] Palermo, BCRS, Fondo Monreale, no. 4. Edition: Cusa, pp. 127-129. Cf. Johns, *Arabic Administration*, p. 307, doc. no. 25.

[48] Johns, *Arabic Administration*, p.147.

[49] Toledo, ADM, Mesina, no. 1119, lines 1-2, 11. Facsimile: *Messina il ritorno*, p. 162. Edition: Gálvez, “Noticia sobre los documentos árabes de Sicilia,” pp. 171-181. See Figure 8.

is, “men written in documents”.

Documents of grant in Norman Sicily often include a conditional clause that if a person whose name is listed in the present document was already listed in another privilege or document, he should be excluded from this donation. For example, a Greek document issued in 1095 has the following sentence: “If someone of the Hagarenes written in this *plateia* donated to the bishop of Catania is found in my *plateiai* or the *plateiai* of my vassals, he should be returned without exception,”<sup>[50]</sup> and the document of 1141 we have already examined includes the following clause: “If someone of them is included in our *jarā'id* or the *jarā'id* of our vassals, he should be taken from you.”<sup>[51]</sup>

What most matters here is in whose *jarīda* a peasant is written and to whom he belongs. Classes of villeins do not matter. Making clear and sure to which land-lord a peasant belonged was the main purpose of including a name-list of peasants in these documents.<sup>[52]</sup>

Meanwhile, based on the existence of the two classes of villeins, scholars have posed two interesting questions. The first question is “Who were *muls*?” For example, Johns assumed that *muls* were new immigrants. According to his research, fourteen names out of fifteen *muls* written in a document of Triocala issued in 1141 have *nisbas* indicating their origin of North Africa. Thus, he infers that “they were new immigrants to the lands upon which they were registered.” And this supposition is, he thinks, supported by the document of 1169 in which *muls* are paired with *ghurabā'* (foreigners).<sup>[53]</sup> Metcalfe made a slight modification to this view, insisting that we should not regard *muls* as the first generation of immigrants to Sicily. According to Metcalfe, most of them came from other towns and villages, and received tolerant conditions to hold land, such as reduction of taxes and extension of its payment.<sup>[54]</sup>

The second question is “Does the legal status of *muls* change to that of *rijāl al-jarā'id* in due course of time?” According to Nef, *muls* were not members of the community in charge of paying tax, but changed to registered *rijāl al-jarā'id* after they joined the community.<sup>[55]</sup> On the other hand, Johns assumes that *muls* were unregistered “strangers” at the beginning, but changed to registered *rijāl al-jarā'id* after they settled in the land.<sup>[56]</sup> Metcalfe explains that after the next census, *muls* ceased to be “unregistered” and were written in a name-list as “men of registers”. Thus, he thinks the class of villeins changed by a census.<sup>[57]</sup> Needless to say, however, *muls*, which these scholars regarded as an upper class of villeins, were not a class of villeins, but simply those not written in former documents/ name-lists.

Johns, Metcalfe, and Nef were obliged to explain the change of class from “un-registered men” to “men of registers” based on the existence of the two classes of villeins, but in fact this simply indicates that names omitted or unwritten in former documents/name-lists were added in new documents.

#### 4. WHAT IS *HURSH*?

If the Arabic word *muls* is not in contraposition to *hursh*, but simply means omission or those who were not written in former lists, then, what does the Arabic word *hursh* indicate? As of now, no Greek word is known to correspond to the Arabic word *hursh*, and there has been controversy concerning the meaning of *hursh*. Some scholars believed that *hursh* has a relationship with a Latin word *rusticus*.<sup>[58]</sup> However, as Amari already pointed out, the conventional idea that *hursh* was an Arabic translation of Latin *rusticus* is not based on reliable grounds.<sup>[59]</sup>

[50] Cusa, pp. 548-549: “καὶ διὰ τούτω προστάττομεν ὅτι ἐάν τις εὕρεθῃ ἐν τὰς ἐμὰς πλατείας ἢ τε ἐν τὰς πλατείας τῶν τερρερίων μου ἐκ τούδ ἀγαρινούδ τούδ ὄνταδ γεγραμμένουσ ἐν τὴν τοιαύτην πλατεῖαν ἵνα ἀντιστρέφῃ αὐτούδ ὁ ἐπίσκοπος ἀνευ πάσης προφάσεωδ.” Cf. Takayama, *The Administration*, p. 39.

[51] Toledo, ADM, Messina, no. 1119, lines 21-22. Facsimile: *Messina il ritorno*, p. 162. Edition: Gálvez, “Noticia sobre los documentos árabes de Sicilia,” pp. 171-181. See Figure 8.

[52] Takayama, *The Administration*, pp. 38-40, 86-87; Idem, “The Financial and Administrative Organization of the Norman Kingdom of Sicily,” *Viator*, 16 (1985): 145-149.

[53] Johns, *Arabic Administration*, pp. 147-148.

[54] Metcalfe, *The Muslims of Medieval Italy*, p. 270.

[55] Nef, “Conquêtes et reconquêtes médiévales,” p. 600; Nef, *Conquérir et gouverner*, p. 501.

[56] Johns, *Arabic Administration*, p. 149.

[57] Metcalfe, *The Muslims of Medieval Italy*, p. 269.

[58] De Simone, “Ancora sui «villani» di Sicilia,” p. 487.

[59] Amari, *Storia dei Musulmani*, 1st ed., 3: 239, note 1; 2nd ed., 3: 246, note 1. However, Amari’s reading of this Arabic word as *h/r/s* [=kh/r/sh], not as *h/r/ś* [=h/r/sh], is not acceptable. This word is always written as *h/r/sh* in the manuscripts.



[60] Amari, *Storia dei Musulmani*, 2nd ed., 3: 246, note 1.

[61] Johns, *Arabic Administration*, p. 147.

[62] De Simone, "Ancora sui «villani» di Sicilia," p. 487.

Nallino explains that *hursh*, meaning rough (*ruvidi*), is an antithesis to *muls*, and that examination of sources leads us to the conclusion that it is the same as *rijāl* (*ahl al-jarā'id* (men written in *plateiai*), that is, *villani*, *adscripticii*, and *rustici*).<sup>[60]</sup> Based on this understanding of Nallino, Johns explains that the "word *hursh* is the plural of the adjectival form *ahrash*, meaning "rough", "harsh", or "coarse". ... As with *muls*, only the plural form *hursh* is used for the Muslim villeins in Norman Sicily."<sup>[61]</sup>

De Simone reads this word *h/r/sh*, not as *hursh*, plural form of *ahrash*, but as *hurash*, which she thinks the Arabic scribe writing the Arabic documents used as an Arabic translation of the Greek phrase *ho/hoi ek tēs khōras* (ὁ/οἱ ἐκ τῆς χώρας) meaning natives, former inhabitants, or old inhabitants. Thus, De Simone proposed a new interpretation that *hurash* and *muls* indicate old settlers (*indigeni*) and new settlers (*sopraggiunti*).<sup>[62]</sup>

There are only three sources that include *hursh*, all of which I have already mentioned as the documents including *muls*.

### Figure 9. Sources including *hursh*

- 1149: Palermo, Arch. Dioc., Fondo Primo, no. 14.  
(1st copy of a document of 1149)  
• *muls* & *hursh*
- 1154: Palermo, Arch. Dioc., Fondo Primo, no. 16.  
(2nd copy of a document of 1149)  
• *muls* & *hursh*
- 1169: Palermo, Arch. Dioc., Fondo Primo, no. 25.  
• *hursh*  
• *ghurabā'* & *muls*

The earliest two documents of 1149 and 1154 are the copies of a lost document of 1149, and have almost the same content. Both have the following sentence as I have already shown in Figure 5: "The total is five men (*rijāl*) from the district of Iato, among whom two are *hursh* and three *muls*." The third source is the Arabic-Greek document of 1169 which includes the words, *hursh*, *ghurabā'* and *muls*, and gives us more detailed information.<sup>[63]</sup>

[63] Palermo, Arch. Dioc., Fondo Primo, no. 25. Edition: Cusa, pp. 37-39.

The introductory Arabic text of this document informs us that an order of King William II was issued to write this document which includes what he grants to a hospital at Khandaq al-Qayruz, that is, a village (*rahl*) known as 'Ayn al-Liyān in the district of Termini with all its rights, and ends with the phrase "and in it from *al-rijāl al-hursh*".

### Figure 10. Structure of the document of 1169 (Palermo, Arch. Dioc., Fondo Primo, no. 25; Cusa, pp. 37-39)

- line 1: hoc est privilegium ...  
line 2: † Τὸ κατόνομα τῶν ἀνθρώπων τοῦ χωρίου ἁν λιαν τῶν δοθέντων εἰς τὸ σπιταλον τοῦ Κάμπο Γράσσου.  
line 3: بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

lines 4-10: "When it was the date of Month July and Indiction II ....." (a royal order of William II was issued to write this document which includes what he grants to a hospital at Khandaq al-Qayruz, that is, a village (*rahl*) known as 'Ayn al-Liyān in the district of Termini with all its rights.)

line 10: "and in it from *al-rijāl al-ḥursh*" (وفيه من الرجال الحرش)

line 9-12: **6 names**

line 13: "In all 6 names" (ὅμου ὀνόματα ζ')

line 14: "The total is 6 names" (الجملة ستة اسما)

line 14: "And from the foreign (*ghurabā'*) and *muls* men dwelling on the above-mentioned estate (*rahl*)" (ومن الرجال الغربا والملس الساكنين بالرحل المذكور)

lines 16-18: **8 names**

line 17: "In all 8 names" (ὅμου ὀνόματα η')

line 18: "The total is 8 names" (الجملة ثمانية اسما)

line 17: "In all, the two combined, 14 names" (ὅμου αἱ β' ὀμάδες ὀνόματα ιδ')

line 18: "The total of the two totals is 14 names" (جملة الجملتين اربعة عشر اسما)

line 18-22: "He has bestowed all things that are written here upon the above-mentioned hospital (*isbtāl*, "*hospitale*" in Latin), on condition that the people of Termini who live in 'Ayn al-Liyān Village, have their fields in it, and have reclaimed them for themselves or through their fathers, would keep their fields but go on paying to the hospital what they have been requested to pay to the 'ummāl (official) hitherto. So, this village, which was under the jurisdiction (*hukm*) of the *dīwān al-ma'mūr*, shall never burden them with any increase, and the sailors (*al-baḥrīyūn*) and other inhabitants of this village shall follow their practice (*āda*) with the 'ummāl (officials) in all affairs as before. And he put the well-known seal confirming it and proving it at the date written at the head. God is enough for us, and what an excellent *wakīl* He is!"

انعم على الاسبital المذكور بجميع ما ذكر على ان اهل ثرمة السكان بها وعندهم رباعا في عين اللين فتحوها هم او ابائهم او اجدادهم تبقى بايديهم على حالها يودون عنها من الاعطية الى الاسبital ما كانوا يودونهم الى العمال فالرحل المذكور في حكم الديوان المعمور من غير زيادة عليهم وباقى سكان الرحل من البحريين وغيرهم من ... يجرون في جميع امورهم على عادتهم مع العمال و ختم بالطابع المسهور تاكيذا له ودليلا عليه بالتاريخ المتقدم وحسبنا الله ونعم الوكيل.

This Arabic text is followed by a list of six names in Greek and Arabic, a phrase "In all six names" in Greek, and an almost same phrase "The total is six names" in Arabic. Then, comes a subhead in Arabic "And from the foreign (*ghurabā'*) and *muls* men dwelling on the above-mentioned village (*rahl*)", which is followed by a list of eight names in Greek and Arabic. The Arabic *ghurabā'* is a plural form of *gharīb* meaning "foreign". In the last sentence lines 18-22 of the document, the king's order that he shall give all these people to the above-mentioned hospital is described in detail.<sup>[64]</sup>

As I have already stated, many scholars have regarded *hursh* as a class of vills in contrast to *muls*. Johns and Metcalfe gave it an English translation "rough men", while others think it was used as a translation of the Latin word *rusticus*. On the other hand, it is possible that *hursh* meant "forest" in the documents.<sup>[65]</sup> In any case, our information on *hursh* is too limited to get a plausible answer. Further conjecture should not be made.

[64] For the content of the ending clause of this document, see Takayama, *The Administration*, pp. 86-87.

[65] Johns, *Arabic Administration*, p.170, note 1. For various meanings of the word, see Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, 4: 85-86, حرش (*h/r/sh*).

## CONCLUSION

My conclusion drawn from the examination of sources about the Arabic words *mul*s and *ḥursh* is that they were not a pair of opposite terms indicating two different classes of villeins. Thus, it would not be proper to translate them as “smooth men” and “rough men” in English. *Muls* is a word employed to indicate those who were omitted or not written in former documents/name-lists, and a term necessitated in document creation.

This conclusion is rather different from previous scholars’ understandings. At first glance, my view of *mul*s might appear to be similar to the concept of “unregistered” villeins opposite to “registered” villeins, but, in fact, they are based on totally different perceptions. *Muls* as a word to indicate those who were omitted or not written in older name-lists reflects the reality of document creation, as well as the Norman governance of land and inhabitants by means of written documents made based on Arabic name-lists, but it is not relevant to classes of villeins at all.

On the other hand, the idea of “registered and unregistered” as two classes of villeins is derived from the analogy to the Roman or East Roman laws. It is certainly possible that terms and concepts of a certain society’s legal system are transmitted to another society, but the existence of such terms and concepts does not mean that the legal system of the original society functioned in the recipient society. Without examining the difference of the controlling power and method of governance by Norman rulers and territorial lords who make the legal system function, we would not be able to discuss a uniform system covering various territories.

As a matter of fact, it is difficult to assume the existence of two classes of villeins with legal status applied uniformly in Norman Sicily. Even if the Norman rulers restored order to a certain degree in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, their power was not strong enough to enforce legal status of villeins uniformly across the boundaries of seignorial domains. Despite the law of William II, actual conditions of villeins seem to have varied according to the relationship with their landlords.

The reason why listing names of inhabitants in documents was so important for landlords is because it offered them assurance that these inhabitants belonged to them. It seems to suggest a reality contrary to existence of a uniform legal system and a large-scale census which some scholars have presumed. Landlords’ control of inhabitants in their domains probably continued to function as a basic framework of Norman governance, although Norman rulers tried to centralize their administration.

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