A Changing Mosaic: Multicultural Exchange in the Norman Palaces of
Twelfth-Century Sicily

by

Dana Katz

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
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Graduate Department of Art
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Abstract

This dissertation examines the twelfth-century residences associated with the Norman Hautevilles in the parklands that surrounded their capital at Palermo. One of the best-preserved ensembles of medieval secular architecture, the principal monuments are the palaces of La Zisa and La Cuba, the complexes of La Favara and Lo Scibene, the hunting lodge at Parco, and the palace at Monreale. The Norman conquest of Sicily in the previous century dramatically altered the local population’s religious and cultural identity. Nevertheless, an Islamic legacy persisted in the park architecture, arranged on axial plans with waterworks and ornamented with *muqarnas* vaults. By this time, the last Norman king, William II, and his court became aligned with contemporaries in the Latin West, and Muslims became marginalized in Sicily.

Part One examines the modern “discovery” and reception of the twelfth-century palaces. As secular examples built in an Islamic mode, they did not fit preconceived paradigms of medieval Western architecture in the scholarly literature, greatly endangering their preservation. My examination reconstructs the vast landscape created by the Norman kings, who modified their surroundings on a monumental scale. Water in the parklands was harnessed to provide for
artificial lakes and other waterscapes onto which the built environment was sited. Part Two presents in-depth studies of lesser known sites associated with Roger II, including the likely pre-Norman Lo Scibene, perhaps a prototype for the later La Zisa built by his successors. In the second half of the century, monumental epigraphy in Arabic crowned the pavilions of the Genoard Park. These texts were significant visual constructs, delimiting a newly formed space of power, whose content referenced paradise at these palaces that were also sites of song. The last royal residence at William II’s fortified monastic complex of Monreale was built as a miniaturized version of the Benedictine cenobium. Largely self-sufficient, the construction of Monreale, where the secular and ecclesiastical spheres were joined together, also denotes deteriorating Christian-Muslim relations. The dissertation participates in an emerging discourse on the medieval Mediterranean through an examination of royal parkland architecture that undermines prevailing notions of Norman Sicily as a syncretic kingdom throughout the entire century.
Acknowledgments

I owe great thanks to my supervisor, Prof. Jill Caskey, who provided tireless support throughout this long period and whose thoughtful comments and revisions helped clarify many ideas, pushing my work forward tremendously. In Toronto, I am indebted to Prof. Linda Safran, who served on my committee and carefully read several drafts. I am also grateful to my committee member, Prof. Suzanne Conklin Akbari, and to Prof. Adam S. Cohen, for their helpful comments and suggestions. My external reader, Prof. Renata Holod, advanced my thinking and work in new directions.

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# Table of Contents

Abstract ............................................................................................................................................. ii  
Acknowledgements ............................................................................................................................. iv  
Table of Contents ............................................................................................................................. vi  
List of Abbreviations ....................................................................................................................... x  
List of Plate and Figures ..................................................................................................................... xi  
List of Appendices .......................................................................................................................... xxxiii

## Introduction to the Dissertation:

Introduction ............................................................................................................................... 1  
I. Historical Background of the Hauteville Conquest of Sicily .................................................... 3  
II. Structure of the Dissertation ................................................................................................... 11  
III. Methodology and Primary Source Material ........................................................................... 13  
IV. Medieval and Early Modern Primary Sources on the Norman Palaces and Parks in Palermo’s Hinterland .................................................................................................................. 17  
V. Nineteenth-Century Sicilian Scholars and Restorers ............................................................. 22  
VI. Modern Secondary Literature on the Medieval Suburban Palaces and Parks of Palermo ......................................................................................................................................................... 25

## PART ONE

**Chapter One: The Early Literature on the Palatial Architecture of Norman Sicily in Northern Europe**

Introduction ............................................................................................................................... 31  
I. The “Discovery” of Medieval Sicily on the Grand Tour ............................................................ 33  
II. Travelogues and Architectural Handbooks: La Zisa Makes the Grade ..................................... 39  
III. From Paris to Palermo: Viollet-le-Duc, La Zisa, and The Habitations of Man in All Ages (Histoire de l’habitation humaine) .................................................................................................................... 50  
IV. The Forgotten Orientalist: Viollet-le-Duc, Exoticism, and the Ethnographic Gaze ............... 59  
V. La Zisa and the Islamic West ..................................................................................................... 65  
Conclusion .................................................................................................................................... 68

**Chapter Two: Topography and Water in the Norman Parks: Reconstructing a Changed Landscape**

Introduction .................................................................................................................................... 71  
I. Topography of the Medieval City of Palermo ........................................................................... 75  
II. The Aula viridis in the Norman Palace: The Courtyard Garden as a Ruling Hall .................. 87  
III. Water in the Norman Parklands ............................................................................................... 92  
IV. The Early Norman Parks: “Favariam, Minenium aliaque delectabila loca” .......................... 95
V. The Second Phase of Royal Parkland Foundation: William I and William II’s Park of the Genoard .................................................................104
VI. The Genoard Park: Royal Viridarium and Menagerie.................................109
VII. The Main Norman Palace and Satellite Residences in the Royal Parkland..............113
Conclusion .................................................................................................118

PART TWO

Chapter Three: Norman Palatial Precedents: The Palace of La Favara and the Lake of Maredolce

Introduction ..................................................................................................122
I. Structures that Composed the Palatial Complex of La Favara........................124
   a. Description of the Courtyard Structure.................................................125
   b. Principal Façade of the Palace...............................................................129
   c. Palatine Chapel of La Favara.................................................................132
   d. Ruling Halls or majālis of La Favara.....................................................136
   e. Thermal Complex of La Favara............................................................138
II. The Lake of Maredolce
   a. Medieval Descriptions of the Fawwarāh and the Arches of San Ciro........144
   b. Early Modern Descriptions of the Lake...............................................145
   c. Present Extent of the Lake of Maredolce.............................................147
   d. Arches of San Ciro: A Norman Lakefront Pavilion?.........................149
III. Fishponds and Artificial Lakes: From Roman naumachiae to Ornamental Pools in Islamic Palatial Architecture
   a. Basins for Fish Cultivation.................................................................151
   b. Roman naumachiae and Later Islamic Examples of Artificial Basins for Nautical Displays.........................................................158
Conclusion ....................................................................................................163

Chapter Four: Early Norman Palatial Architecture in the Royal Parks: Lo Scibene and Elite Domestic Architecture in the Medieval Mediterranean

Introduction ..................................................................................................166
I. Documentary Material Pertaining to the Area Surrounding Lo Scibene, and Literary Descriptions of al-Mannānī............................................169
   a. Early Documentary Material Pertaining to al-Mannānī and Casale Bayda...170
II. Description of the Complex of Lo Scibene................................................173
   a. Lower Level of Lo Scibene.................................................................174
   b. “Camera dello Scirocco” at Lo Scibene..............................................178
   c. Natural Cave or Grotto at the Site.......................................................180
d. Artificial Water Basin in Front of the Principal Structure ...........................................181

e. Structures on the Upper Level ........................................................................................183

III. Elite Reception Halls in Islamic Palatial Architecture ..............................................186
    a. Cruciform-Shaped Halls ..............................................................................................187
    b. Īvān, qā‘a, and durqā‘a ...............................................................................................188
    c. Inverted T-Shaped Ground Plan (the Ḥīrī plan) ..........................................................192

Conclusion ............................................................................................................................195

Chapter Five: The Hunting Park and Palace of Roger II at Parco (Altofonte)

Introduction ..........................................................................................................................198

I. Roger II’s Palace at Parco .................................................................................................199
    a. Chapel of the Palace at Parco ......................................................................................201
    b. Biverium or Fishpond at Parco ..................................................................................203

II. Pavilions in the Pre-Islamic and Islamic World ................................................................209

Conclusion ............................................................................................................................215

Chapter Six: Pavilions in the Genoard Park: William I’s and William II’s La Zisa, La Cuba, La Cubula, and La Cuba Soprana

Introduction ..........................................................................................................................217

I. The Palace of La Zisa ........................................................................................................219
    a. General Description and Exterior Dimensions of La Zisa ...........................................220
    b. Arrangement of the Ground Floor of La Zisa and the Reception Hall of the “Fountain Room” ........................................................................................................221
    c. Fountain, Mosaic Band, and the Ornamental Elements of the Principal Hall of La Zisa ......................................................................................................................222
    d. Reception Hall on the Upper Floor of La Zisa ...............................................................226
    e. The Small Pavilion Facing the Façade of La Zisa According to Leandro Alberti’s Descrittione ................................................................................................................228
    f. Fountains, Šhadirwān, and Salsabīl ..............................................................................230
    g. Passive Air Cooling at La Zisa and other Norman Residential Buildings .................232
    h. Palatine Chapel of La Zisa ..........................................................................................234
    i. Late Antique Thermal Complex at La Zisa .................................................................237

II. William II’s Palace Pavilion of La Cuba in the Genoard Park ....................................238
    a. Structure of La Cuba ....................................................................................................241
    b. Interior of La Cuba and Reconstruction of its Original Spatial Configuration ..........242
    c. Fountain in the Central Space and the Question of the Central Dome ......................243
    d. Artificial Pool surrounding the Structure of La Cuba and Question of Ways
III. La Cubula and La Cuba Soprana in the Seventeenth-Century Villa Napoli………247

IV. Epigraphy at the Norman Suburban Palaces ........................................252
   a. Monumental Inscriptions at La Zisa..............................................253
   b. La Cuba’s Epigraphic Frieze ..........................................................257
   c. Additional Examples of Monumental Text in the Norman Sphere...........260
   d. References to Paradise in Norman Epigraphy..................................263
   e. Questions regarding the Creators and the Audiences of the Norman
      Inscriptions in the Genoard Park..................................................265

Conclusion..................................................................................................272

Chapter Seven: The Royal Palace of William II at Monreale

Introduction...............................................................................................275
I. Political Background of the Foundation of Monreale...............................278
II. Description of the Monastic Complex.....................................................280
III. Early Literature referencing the Royal Palace at Monreale.......................283
IV. An Architectural Reconstruction of William II’s Palace at the Site of the Later
    Archiepiscopal Seminary.................................................................286

Conclusion..................................................................................................289

Conclusions...............................................................................................291

Appendices.................................................................................................299

Bibliography..............................................................................................305

Plate and Figures..........................................................................................404
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACS</td>
<td>Archivio Centrale dello Stato, EUR, Rome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASDPa</td>
<td>Archivio Storico Diocesano di Palermo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASP</td>
<td>Archivio di Stato Palermo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCP</td>
<td>Biblioteca Comunale di Palermo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCRS</td>
<td>Biblioteca Centrale della Regione Siciliana, Palermo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Plate and Figures

***All photographs are by the author unless otherwise noted.

**Plate 1:** Overview of the residences of the Norman court and others closely associated superimposed over a satellite map of Palermo (the royal residence at Parco, modern-day Altofonte, is not represented on the map) [source: Google Earth].

**Chapter One**

Figure 1.1: Henry Swinburne, “La Torre della Zizza,” in *Travels in the Two Sicilies, in the Years 1777, 1778, 1779, and 1780* (London: Printed for P. Elmsly, 1783–85), vol. 3.

Figure 1.2: Detail of La Zisa’s cornice in Swinburne’s engraving.

Figure 1.3: Exterior of La Zisa, 1898 [source: Fondo Valenti, BCP, ms. segn. 5 Qq E 187 (8)].

Figure 1.4: Present-day view of La Zisa.

Figure 1.5: Exterior view of La Cuba, north face.

Figure 1.6: Detail of La Cuba’s inscription.

Figure 1.7: Picturesque view of the interior of the Fountain Room at La Zisa [Jean Houël, *Voyage pittoresque des isles de Sicile, de Lipari et de Malte* (Paris: Imprimerie de Clousier, 1782–87), vol. 4].

Figure 1.8: La Zisa, view of the interior, “The Fountain Room.”

Figure 1.9: Plate from Séroux d’Agincourt compendium, La Zisa in the center of the folio [Jean-Baptiste-Louis-George Séroux d’Agincourt, “État de l’architecture Arabe, en Europe, depuis le VIIIe jusqu’au XVe siècle,” in *Histoire de l’art par les monumens depuis sa décadence au IVe siècle jusqu’à son renouvellement au XVle siècle* (Paris: Treuttel et Würtz, 1823), vol. 4, pl. XLIV.

Figure 1.10: Ibid., “Règne du système d’architecture, dite gothique, depuis les IXe, Xe, et XI siècles, jusqu’au milieu du XVe,” vol. 4, pl. XXVI:

Figure 1.11: Detail of La Zisa, pl. XLIV.

Figure 1.12: Detail of the Cathedral of Monreale, pl. XXVI.

Figure 1.14: Ibid., “Plans, coupe et élévations de la Zisa. Plan et élévations de la Cuba châteaux sarasins près Palerme,” pl. 64.


Figure 1.16: Interior of La Zisa [Henry Gally Knight, *The Normans in Sicily: Being a Sequel to “An Architectural Tour in Normandy”* (London: J. Murray, 1838)].

Figure 1.17: Ibid., exterior view of La Cuba.

Figure 1.18: Joseph-Philibert Girault de Prangey, “Several views of the interior of the La Zisa’s Fountain Room,” in *Essai sur l’architecture des Arabes et des Mores, en Espagne, en Sicile, et en Barbarie* (Paris: A. Hauser, 1841).

Figure 1.19: Elevation of La Zisa [Ibid.].

Figure 1.20: Elevation of La Cuba [Ibid.].

Figure 1.21: Illustration of the *muqarnas* vault in the interior of La Cuba [Ibid.].


Figure 1.23: Idem, “Exterior of La Zisa,” in *Histoire de l’habitation humaine: depuis les temps préhistoriques jusqu’à nos jours* (Paris: Bibliothèque d'éducation et de récréation, 1875), 94.

Figure 1.24: Ibid., interior of the Fountain Room, 95.

Figure 1.25: “Primitive Hut,” frontispiece of the second edition of Abbé Marc-Antoine Laugier’s *Essai sur l’architecture* 2nd edition (Paris: Duchesne, 1755).

Figure 1.26: “Maison arabe,” exhibited in the 1889 *Exposition Universelle* [Charles Garnier and Auguste Ammann, *Exposition Universelle*, in *L’habitation humaine* (Paris: Hachette, 1892), 724].
Figure 1.27: Palace of al-Manâr, also known as the Palace of the Fanal, elevation and ground plan [Georges Marçais, *L’architecture musulmane d’Occident: Tunisie, Algérie, Maroc, Espagne et Sicile* (Paris: Arts et métiers graphiques, 1955), fig. 41].

Figure 1.28: Ground plan of the Dâr al-Baḥr at the Qal’a of the Bani Hammad [source: D. Fairchild Ruggles, *Islamic Gardens and Landscapes* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 165].

Figure 1.29: Ground plan of the Zîrid Palace at Ashir [source: http://www.discoverislamicart.org/database_item.php?id=monument;ISL;dz;Mon01;16;en].

Figure 1.30: Plan of the southeast palace at Šabra al-Manṣūrīyya [source: Patrice Cressier and Mourad Rammah, “Sabra al-Mansûriya: Une autre ville califale,” *Cuadernos de Madinat al-Zahrâ* 4 (2004), fig. 3].

**Chapter Two**

Figure 2.1: Satellite view of Palermo [source: Google Earth].

Figure 2.2: Morphology of Palermo’s historical center [Gioacchino Cusimano, *Le alluvioni palermitane: cronologia e cause, dal 934 al 1988* (Palermo: Dipartimento di geologia e geodesia, 1989), fig. 1].

Figure 2.3: Palermo in the Late Islamic Period (with Norman additions) [Alex Metcalfe, *Muslims of Medieval Italy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), fig. 2].

Figure 2.4: Map of the sources of water of the Plain of Palermo [source: Giuseppe Bellafiore, *Parchi e giardini della Palermo normanna* (Palermo: Flaccovio, 1996), fig. 4].

Figure 2.5: Map of Sicily from the *Kitâb Gharâ’ib al-funûn wa-muḥâ al-’uyûn* (Book of Curiosities of the Sciences and Marvels for the Eyes), Bodleian Library, ms. 90, fol. 32b–33a: Book 2–Chapter 12: “Brief Description of the Largest Islands in these Seas” [http://cosmos.bodley.ox.ac.uk/hms/mss_browse.php?expand=732,803&state=main&act=chfolio&folio=58].

Figure 2.6: Detail of al-Khâliṣa, the Fatimid citadel of Palermo, with accompanying inscription, “Qaṣr al-Sulṭān | wa-saknihi wa-‘abīdihi”[قصر السلطان | وسكنه وعبيدهي].”

Figure 2.7: Map of Sicily, from Hammâdîd Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Îdâšî’s *Nuzhat al-mushtâq fi’ikhṭirâq al-āfâq*, Oxford Pococke Manuscript, Bodleian Library, Oxford (MS. Pococke 375, fols. 3v–4r).
Figure 2.8: Ground plan of the Norman Palace, in medieval period, with various hypotheses regarding the location of structures based on recent archaeological work [source: Maria Andaloro, ed., *Il Palazzo Reale di Palermo* (Modena: Panini, 2011), fig. 8].

Figure 2.9: Present-day view of façade of the Norman Palace, facing south.

Figure 2.10: View towards apse, Cappella Palatina.

Figure 2.11: Tower of the Joharia, lower level, Norman Palace.

Figure 2.12: Torre Pisana, Norman Palace.

Figure 2.13: Reconstruction of the Aula Verde in the Norman Palace by Francesco Valenti [source: Francesco Valenti, Fondo Valenti, BCP, 5 Qq E 188 n 17, 27].

Figure 2.14: Location of *qanāts* in Palermo [Pietro Todaro, “*Qanāt e sistemi d’acqua tradizionali in Sicilia*,” in *Atti del Convegno “Sicilia Sotterranea”* (9–10–11 Maggio 2008), fig. 6].

Figure 2.15: Gian Filippo Ingrassia, “grande torre della Cuba.” [Gian Filippo Ingrassia, *Informazione del pestifero, et contagioso morbo* (Palermo: Giovan Mattheo Mayda, 1576)].

Figure 2.16: Peter of Eboli’s *Liber ad honorem Augusti sive de rebus Siculis*, “Mourning in the neighborhoods of Palermo for the death of William II,” Burgerbibliothek Bern, cod. 120. II, f. 98r [source: Peter of Eboli, *Liber ad honorem Augusti sive de rebus Siculis: Codex 120 II der Burgerbibliothek Bern: eine Bilderchronik der Stauferzeit*, edited by Theo Kölzer and Marlis Stähli, text revision and translation by Gereon Becht-Jördens (Sigmaringen: J. Thorbecke, 1994), 47].

**Chapter Three**

Figure 3.1: Satellite view of Palermo of the expanse of the park of La Favara [source: Google Earth].

Figure 3.2: View of the courtyard of the Palace of La Favara, the remains of the Lake of Maredolce, and triangular island to the right, photo taken from Monte Grifone.

Figure 3.3: Present-day façade of La Favara (Maredolce).

Figure 3.4: Adolf Goldschmidt’s elevations of La Favara, northwest, southwest, and southeast [source: Hans-Rudolf Meier, *Die normannischen Königspaläste in Palermo: Studien zur hochmittelalterlichen Residenzbaukunst* (Worms: Wernersche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1994), fig. 38].
Figure 3.5: Elevations of La Favara, northwest and southeast sides by the restorer Silvana Braida [source: idem, “Il castello di Favara. Studi di restauro,” Architetti di Sicilia 5, 6 (1965), fig. 8, fig. 11].

Figure 3.6: View to the interior of the courtyard.


Figure 3.8: Goldschmidt’s ground plan of the Palace of Maredolce, with location of the purported fountain [source: Adolf Goldschmidt, “Die Favara des Könige Roger von Sizilien,” Jahrbuch der königlich preussischen Kunstsammlungen 16 (1895), fig. 6].

Figure 3.9: Entrance into courtyard on northwest façade [source: Vassallo, “Il complesso monumentale di Maredolce,” fig. 3].

Figure 3.10: Western corner of the courtyard.

Figure 3.11: Sketch of the courtyard of Maredolce executed by Benedetto Cotardi under the direction of Carlo Chenchi [source: Gabinetto dei Disegni e Stampe of the Galleria Regionale della Sicilia, Palazzo Abatellis, inv. 1362].

Figure 3.12: Sketch of the courtyard of Maredolce executed by Benedetto Cotardi under the direction of Carlo Chenchi [source: Ibid., inv. 1363].

Figure 3.13: Courtyard window of one of the auxiliary rooms on southeast side of courtyard.

Figure 3.14: Cross-section of southwest segment of palace [source: Silvana Braida, “Il castello di Fawara. Studi di restauro,” Incontri ed iniziative. Memorie del centro di cultura di Cefalù 2 (1987), fig. 18].

Figure 3.15: Area behind the chapel uncovered as part of the archaeological excavations conducted from the 1990s–2011.

Figure 3.16: Fourteenth-century furnaces used for the treatment and production of sugar, found during the 2010s excavations of the interior of the courtyard on southwest flank.

Figure 3.17: Southwest side of courtyard.

Figure 3.18: Interior of room off the courtyard, southwest wing.

Figures 3.19–3.20: Courtyard windows of auxiliary rooms on the southwest side of courtyard.

Figure 3.21: Exterior of northeast flank of the courtyard palace.

Figure 3.25: The so-called “Sala dell’Imbarcadero” on southeast corner.

Figure 3.26: Interior of the “Sala dell’Imbarcadero.”

Figure 3.27: Façade post-1940s restoration by Mario Guiotto, with abusive housing on northwest façade of the structure [source: Bellafiore, Parchi e giardini della Palermo normanna, fig. 16].

Figure 3.28: Principal northwest façade following the most recent restoration completed in 2011.

Figure 3.29: Ground plan of the chapel by Arch. Mario Guiotto [source: idem, “La chiesa di S. Filippo nel castello di Favara,” Palladio 4 (1940), 213].

Figure 3.30: Cross-section of the chapel and adjacent aula regia by Arch. Silvana Braida [source: idem, “Il castello di Fawara,” fig. 17].

Figure 3.31: Chapel vaulting.

Figure 3.32: Interior of the chapel, view toward apse.

Figure 3.33: View of dome.

Figure 3.34: Shell-like serrated concave vault in northwest corner of one of the palace’s “ruling halls.”

Figure 3.35: Close-up of vault in northwest corner of hall south of the chapel.

Figure 3.36: Outline of rib-vault apse at the Castle of Caronia.

Figure 3.37: Muqarnas-like semi-conch space, Castle of Caronia.

Figure 3.38: Cross-section of hall [Wolfgang Krönig, Il castello di Caronia in Sicilia: un complesso normanno del XII secolo (Rome: Edizioni dell’elefante, 1977), fig. 34].

Figure 3.39: Outline of muqarnas vault in second aula regia space, southwest wing of palace.

Figure 3.40: Southwest aula regia’s portal leading to exterior and to lake.

Figure 3.41: Remnants of bifore window of southwest aula regia.

Figure 3.42: Sketch of the baths of the complex of Maredolce executed by Benedetto Cotardi under the direction of Carlo Chenchi [source: Gabinetto dei Disegni e Stampe of the Galleria Regionale della Sicilia, Palazzo Abatellis, inv. 1361].
Figure 3.43: Sketch by Raffaello Aloja of the exterior of the complex of La Favara, second half of the eighteenth century, remains of the bath in right foreground [source: Gabinetto dei Disegni e Stampe of the Galleria Regionale della Sicilia, Palazzo Abatellis, inv. 9811].

Figure 3.44: View of the Palace of La Favara’s northwest façade, remains of the bath on the left [source: Oskar Mothes, *Die Baukunst des Mittelalters in Italien von der ersten Entwicklung bis zu ihrer höchsten Blüthe* (Jena: H. Costenoble, 1883), vol. 2, fig. 134].

Figure 3.45: Sketch of the topography of the area adjacent of the Palace of La Favara, the baths, and surrounding structures by Vincenzo Auria [source: idem, *Varia istoria di Palermo appartenente alle cose della città*, BCP, Ms. Qq C 83, fols. 191v–192r].

Figure 3.46: Detail of the bath complex at La Favara.

Figure 3.47: The Royal Bourbon engineer Andrea Pigonati’s sketch of the ground plan of the baths of Maredolce [source: idem, *Stato presente degli antichi monumenti siciliani* (Palermo: 1767), fig. 61].

Figure 3.48: Sketch of the baths of La Favara, ground level [source: Palazzo Abatellis, Galleria Regionale della Sicilia, Gabinetto dei Disegni e Stampe, inv. A 1254].

Figure 3.49: Sketch of the Baths of La Favara, lower level [source: Ibid., inv. A 1255].

Figure 3.50: Baths at Cefalà Diana, interior.


Figure 3.52: Lake of Maredolce and remnants of the retaining wall of the lake, towards the southwest and Monte Grifone.

Figure 3.53: Palace of La Favara, southeast corner.

Figure 3.54: Closer view of the retaining walls of the lake, with palace to the right.

Figure 3.55: Church of San Ciro, Brancaccio.

Figure 3.56: Basement level of the Church of San Ciro.

Figure 3.57: Present-day view of Arches of San Ciro.

Figure 3.58: Sketch of the Arches of San Ciro in 1890s [Goldschmidt, “Die Favara,” fig. 3].
Figure 3.59: The Royal Bourbon engineer Andrea Pigonati’s sketch of the extent of the lake and grounds of the Palace of Maredolce [source: Pigonati, Stato presente degli antichi monumenti siciliani, fig. 60].

Figure 3.60: Lake of Maredolce, sluice gate (in center), palace in the foreground to the left.

Figure 3.61: Sluice gate on northeast retaining wall of the Lake of Maredolce.

Figure 3.62: Interior of the qanāt at the Lake of Maredolce, view of the interior of the sluice gate.

Figure 3.63: Topographical map of the surroundings of the palace of La Favara (on the upper right), the lake or so-called “naumachia,” and artificial island in the center among other marked structures and confines of the complex. Third quarter of eighteenth century [source: Palazzo Abatellis, Galleria Regionale della Sicilia, Gabinetto dei Disegni e Stampe].

Figure 3.64: Topographical map of the surroundings of the palace of La Favara [source: ibid., inv. 1253].

Figure 3.65: Goldschmidt’s plan of the complex of the palace of Maredolce and the outline of the lake [Goldschmidt, “Die Favara,” fig. 2].

Figure 3.66: Elevation of the dam of the Lake of Maredolce by Carlo Chenchi [source: Gabinetto dei Disegni e Stampe of the Galleria Regionale della Sicilia, Palazzo Abatellis, inv. 1068].

Figure 3.67: Dam of Maredolce.

Figure 3.68: Close-up of the dam of Maredolce.

Figure 3.69: Section of the dam by Amedeo Tullio [source: idem, “Palermo, complesso di Maredolce. L’indagine archeologica (2000–2001),” Kokalos XLVII–XLVIII, 2 (2009)].

Figure 3.70: Remains of tower base (?) on slope of Monte Grifone and above the Arches of San Ciro.

Figure 3.71: Second sketch by Vincenzo Auria of the area surrounding the palace, with elevations of its principal structure [source: Auria, Varia istoria di Palermo, BCP, Ms. Qq C 83, fol. 192v–193r].

Chapter Four

Figure 4.1: Giovan Battista Cascione’s painted map on canvas, course of the source of water of “L’Uscibene,” 1722, presently in the Archivio Comunale di Palermo.

Figure 4.1.5: Detail of the source of the L’Uscibene on Cascione’s map.

Figure 4.2: La Vignicella dei Gesuiti.

Figure 4.3: The qanāt of Gesuitico Alto (Lo Scibene).

Figure 4.4: Adolph Goldschmidt’s sketch of elevation of the principal façade of the Palace of Lo Scibene [source: idem, “Die normannischen Königspaläste in Palermo,” Zeitschrift für Bauwesen 48 (1898)].

Figure 4.5: Cross-section of Lo Scibene by Goldschmidt [source: ibid.].

Figure 4.6: Goldschmidt’s ground plan of Lo Scibene [source: ibid.].

Figure 4.7: Goldschmidt’s ground plan of the upper level of Lo Scibene, chapel and destroyed tower [source: ibid.].

Figure 4.8: Ground plan of Lo Scibene, elevation of principal nucleus, lower floor to the south. Elevation of upper level of the palace to the east, Arch. Francesco Saverio Cavallari [source: Palazzo Abatellis, Galleria Regionale della Sicilia, Gabinetto dei Disegni e Stampe, inv. 166 n. 1314].

Figure 4.9: Ground plan of the lower level of Lo Scibene, as well as grotto below, entitled “pianta mon. arabo” by F. Cavallari [source: Palazzo Abatellis, Galleria Regionale della Sicilia, Gabinetto dei Disegni e Stampe, inv. 10196].
Figure 4.10: Cross section of the central space, depicting the fountain niche by F. Cavallari [source: Palazzo Abatellis, Galleria Regionale della Sicilia, Gabinetto dei Disegni e Stampe, list of 1966, n. 1251].

Figure 4.11: Sketches of Lo Scibene by F. Cavallari [source: Palazzo Abatellis, Galleria Regionale della Sicilia, Gabinetto dei Disegni e Stampe, inv. 66 n. 1315].

Figure 4.12: Present view of the principal entrance to Lo Scibene from road.

Figure 4.13: Principal façade of Lo Scibene, lower level facing to the east.

Figure 4.14: Principal façade of Lo Scibene, lower level facing to the east.

Figure 4.15: Principal façade of Lo Scibene, lower level facing to the south.

Figure 4.16: View toward “chapel” on the upper level and remnants of the wall of the fishpond on lower level.

Figure 4.17: Central hall of the nucleus of the lower level of the structure, view toward the remains of the fountain set into the west wall.

Figure 4.18: View toward exterior, central archway of entrance.

Figure 4.19: Western wall of central hall, remains of the fountain.

Figure 4.20: View toward remnants of the muqarnas vault in central hall set above fountain.

Figure 4.21: Close-up of the remains of the muqarnas on southern wall in niche above the central fountain.

Figure 4.22: Close-up of the remains of the muqarnas on the northern wall in niche above the central fountain.

Figure 4.23: Goldschmidt’s illustration of the central hall of Lo Scibene [source: Goldschmidt, “Die normannischen Königspaläste”].

Figure 4.24: Columns in Altarello di Baida, known as Maria Santissima del Perpetuo Soccorso.

Figure 4.25: Close up of column.

Figure 4.26: Close up of capital.

Figure 4.27: Close up of capital.

Figure 4.28: Central hall of the nucleus of the structure, view toward the south īwān.
Figure 4.29: Central hall of the nucleus of the structure, north īwān.

Figure 4.30: Detail of ray-like serrated ribs of the south īwān.

Figure 4.31: Closer detail of ray-like serrated ribs of the south īwān.

Figure 4.32: North Room, present entrance on upper level to the north space of tripartite lower level.

Figure 4.33: North room, view of window on east wall.

Figure 4.34: North room, south wall.

Figure 4.35: North room, view into passage into the southern room and the rear of the muqarnas.

Figure 4.36: Exterior of the south room (seventeenth-century masonry shell on outermost level).

Figure 4.37: South room, view onto mezzanine floor.

Figure 4.38: South hall, vault.

Figure 4.39: South hall, remains of window and possible entrance.

Figure 4.40: Reconstruction by Goldschmidt [source: Idem, “Die normannischen Königspaläste”].

Figure 4.40: Reconstruction by Goldschmidt [source: Idem, “Die normannischen Königspaläste”].

Figure 4.42: ‘Bath hall,’ west wall.

Figure 4.43: ‘Bath hall,’ view to east.

Figure 4.44: ‘Bath hall,’ remains of fountain.

Figure 4.45: ‘Bath hall,’ detail of stucco decoration on west wall, south corner.

Figure 4.46: Close-up of southern wall of fountain niche.

Figure 4.47: Entrance to cave from the ‘bath hall.’

Figure 4.48: Interior of the cave.

Figure 4.49: South perimeter of the fishpond (to the left).

Figure 4.50: Remains of the eastern wall of the fishpond.
Figure 4.51: Remains of hydraulic stucco of eastern wall of fishpond.

Figure 4.52: Remains of the facing on the wall of fishpond, below the ‘bath hall,’ with fragment of opus reticulatum.

Figure 4.53: Detail of the opus reticulatum.

Figure 4.54: “Chapel” on the upper level of the complex of Lo Scibene.

Figure 4.55: Principal façade of the “chapel” on the upper level.

Figure 4.56: View to the north of the “chapel” on the upper level, as well as base of tower on the eastern end.

Figure 4.57: Interior of the “chapel.”

Figure 4.58: Eastern wall of “chapel,” as rebuilt by Francesco Valenti.

Figure 4.59: Upper level, remains of northern halls present in Goldschmidt’s sketch, since destroyed.

Figure 4.60: Archway located on upper level nearby of an unknown date.

Figure 4.61: Ground plan of the Castle of Caronia [source: Krönig, Castello di Caronia, fig. 22].

Figure 4.62: Dār al-Imara (Governor Palace) at Kufa, Iraq, c. 670 [source: http://web.mit.edu/4.611/www/L2.html].

Figure 4.63: Jawsaq al-Khāqānī (Dār al-Khilāfa), c. 836, Sāmarrā’ [source: Alastair Northedge, “An Interpretation of the Palace of the Caliph at Samarra (Dar al-Khilafa or Jawsaq al-Khaqani),” Ars Orientalis 23 (1993), fig. 1].

Figures 4.64–4.65: Ground plans of House II (above), and House VI (below), Al-Fusṭāṭ [source: Ali Bahgat Bey and Albert Gabriel, Les fouilles d’al-Foustat (Paris: E. De Bocard, 1921), figs. 14, 22.]


Figures 4.68–4.69: Detail of fountains and opus sectile inlaid basins [source: ibid.].

Figure 4.70: Palace in the Citadel of Aleppo rebuilt from 1193 by his son and successor, al-Zāhir Ghāzi (r. 1186–1216) [source: http://archnet.org/sites/6414/media_contents/76374].
Figure 4.71: Central courtyard of the Ayyūbid palatial complex of Qal’at Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (formerly the Crusader Saône Castle) [source: http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1229].

Figure 4.72: Plan of the qā’ā and hammām of Qal’at Nağm [source: Jean-Claude David, “Ayyubid Palace Architecture in Syria,” in Syria: Medieval Citadels Between East and West, edited by Stefano Bianca [Turin: Aga Khan Trust for Culture, 2007], fig. 48].

Figure 4.73: The Ayyūbid residential complex at Shawbak [source: Martina Rugiadi, “Il complesso di ricevimento del palazzo ayyubide a Shawbak,” Vicino Oriente 16 (2012), fig. 2].

Figure 4.74: Reception hall of the Citadel on Rawḍa Island near Cairo, built by the last Ayyūbid sultan, Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb (r. 1240–49) as reproduced in the early-nineteenth century Description de l’Égypte [source: Jean-Claude Garcin, Bernard Maury, Jacques Revault, and Mona Zakariya, Palais et maisons du Caire, vol. 1: Époque mamelouke, XIIIe–XVIe siècle (Paris: Editions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1982), pl. G].

Figure 4.75: Tower of the Joharia, upper level, Norman Palace.

Figure 4.76: The donjon at Paternò, Province of Catania.

Figure 4.77: The donjon at Adranò, Province of Catania.

Figure 4.78: The donjon keep of Motta Sant’Anastasia, Province of Catania.

Chapter Five

Figure 5.1: Altofonte and surrounding area, peaks of Moharda, the area of fishpond [source: Google Earth].

Figure 5.2: Expanse of fishpond and pavilion at Parco (Altofonte).

Figure 5.3: Altofonte and surrounding area.

Figure 5.4: Outline of extent of palace.

Figure 5.5: Ideal ground plan of the palace at Parco by Letizia Anastasi [source: Anastasi, “Parco,” in L’arte nel parco reale normanno, fig. 1].

Figure 5.6: Ground plan of the palace at Parco by Silvana Braida [source: idem, Il palazzo ruggieriano di Altofonte,” in Altofonte—“Parco” dei Normanni: ovvero la costruzione del futuro attraverso il recupero dei valori della legalità e delle radici storiche (Altofonte: Comune di Altofonte, 1995)].
Figure 5.7: Ground plan of the palace [In Altofonte: le radici di una comunità, Atti dei convegni Un’abbazia alle origini di una comunità cittadina (Altofonte, 8–9, aprile 2005) e Pietro II d’Aragona, nascita di un re e di un’abbazia (Altofonte, 3 dicembre 2005), Palermo: 2007).

Figure 5.8: Reconstruction of the elevation of the palace, north face and south face respectively [source: Silvana Braida, “Il palazzo ruggeriano di Altofonte,” in Altofonte–“Parco” dei Normanni: ovvero la costruzione del futuro attraverso il recupero dei valori della legalità e delle radici storiche (Altofonte: Comune di Altofonte, 1995), 20].

Figure 5.9: Former interior courtyard of the palace, facing west.

Figures 5.10–5.12: Detail of remains of polychrome roundels on portico.

Figure 5.13: North face of the chapel at Altofonte.

Figure 5.14: Exterior of the chapel from the interior courtyard looking to the south wall.

Figures 5.15–5.16: Elevation of the present state of the north face of the chapel and isometric reconstruction of the interior of the chapel [source: Braida, “Il palazzo ruggeriano di Altofonte,” 21].

Figure 5.17: Ground plan of the chapel [source: ibid., 22].

Figure 5.18: Detail of the exterior of the cupola of the chapel.

Figure 5.19: Detail of the cupola and the apse of the chapel, during the restoration carried out by Francesco Valenti in the 1920s [source: Fondo Valenti, BCP, ms. segn. 5 Qq E 187 n 2, 11].

Figure 5.20: The roof of the nave and cupola post-restoration, entirely remade by Valenti during the restoration [source: Fondo Valenti, BCP, ms. segn. 5 Qq E 187 n 2, 17].

Figure 5.21: Chapel interior, looking ward sanctuary.

Figure 5.22: Interior view of the dome of the sanctuary.

Figure 5.23: South wall of chapel.

Figure 5.24: View toward the nave, taken during Valenti’s restoration [source: Fondo Valenti, BCP, ms. segn. 5 Qq E 187 n 2, 11]

Figure 5.25: View to west end of chapel [source: Fondo Valenti, BCP, ms. segn. 5 Qq E 187 n 2, 14].

Figure 5.26: View to narthex and balcony.

Figure 5.27: Balcony overlooking the nave, view toward north wall.
Figure 5.28: Topographical elevation of the area of the biverium, with the city of Altofonte on right [source: Google Earth].

Figure 5.29: Representation of actual state of topographical features of the area of the biverium, water course from Valle dei Ficchi, and other extant structures (‘pavilion’ structure in yellow, remaining walls of the biverium in red).

Figure 5.30: Remains of the structure overlooking the biverium.

Figure 5.31: Façade of biverium “pavilion.”

Figure 5.32: View onto the biverium, with the containment walls in the foreground.

Figure 5.33: Walls of the fishpond, northeast corner.

Figure 5.34: Walls of fishpond, northeast corner.

Figure 5.35: Walls of fishpond, view to northwest.

Figure 5.36: Wall to the north of the biverium.

Figure 5.37: Mounds of debris on north side of the area of the biverium (remains of terracing).

Figure 5.38: Remnants found opposite the “pavilion.”

Figure 5.39: Hypothetical reconstruction of the pavilion overlooking the biverium [rendering by Ing. Salvatore Avara].

Figure 5.40: Detail of the pavilion, hypothetical reconstruction [rendering by Ing. Salvatore Avara].

Figure 5.41: The upper-floor of the structure, looking toward the northwest.

Figure 5.42: Reconstruction of the pavilion structure facing onto the biverium by Vittorio Noto [source: Vittorio Noto, “Il Palazzo reale di Altofonte nella tipologia degli edifici ruggeriani,” in Altofonte—“Parco” dei Normanni: ovvero la costruzione del futuro attraverso il recupero dei valori della legalità e delle radici storiche, Altofonte: Comune di Altofonte, 1995), 38].

Figure 5.43: Upper level of the structure, central space, view to the exterior or modern-day road.

Figure 5.44: Upper level of the structure, central space.

Figure 5.45: Upper level of the structure, room to the right.

Figure 5.46: Upper level of the structure, room to the right, north wall.
Figure 5.47: Room to the left of the central space, lower level.

Figure 5.48: Interior of lower level, central space.

Figure 5.49: View into water conduit (?) of the biverium, central space of lower level.

Figure 5.50: Detail of the pavilion, hypothetical reconstruction.

Figure 5.50: Pavilion, fishpond, and retaining walls using Google Sketchup [rendering by Ing. Salvatore Avara].

Figure 5.51: Hypothetical reconstruction of the pavilion overlooking the biverium using Google Sketchup [rendering by Ing. Salvatore Avara].

Figure 5.52: Public fountain at Altofonte (the source of Roger II’s fonte lucidissimo cited by Romuald of Salerno?).

Figure 5.53: Aqueduct leading from the public fountain of Altofonte.

Chapter Six

Figure 6.1: View of exterior of La Zisa with Monte Cuccio in background, looking towards southwest.

Figure 6.2: Exterior of La Zisa.

Figure 6.3: Ground plan of La Zisa, ground floor (source: Ursula Staacke, Un Palazzo normanno a Palermo “La Zisa”: la cultura musulmana negli edifici dei Re (Palermo: Ricerche et documenti, 1991)].

Figure 6.4: Ground plan of La Zisa, first floor/mezzanine [ibid.].

Figure 6.5: Ground plan of La Zisa, second floor/upper level [ibid.].

Figure 6.6: Isometric elevation of La Zisa [ibid.].

Figure 6.7: East face of La Zisa, detail of windtower on east side of structure.

Figures 6.8–6.9: Remains of the Kūfic inscription cut into a merlon that once crowned the structure of La Zisa.

Figure 6.10: Fountain Room, interior.

Figure 6.11: Vestibule leading to the Fountain Room.
Figure 6.12: Fountain Room, detail of fountain or *shadirwân*.

Figure 6.13: Octagonal basins with polychrome *opus sectile*.

Figure 6.14: Example of sculpted capital that flanks the central niche of the Fountain Room.

Figure 6.15: Paired capitals at entrance to the Fountain Room.

Figure 6.16: *Muqarnas* vault made out of brick above central niche of the Fountain Room.

Figure 6.17: Fountain Room, detail of mosaic band.

Figure 6.18: Vault of the Norman Stanza or Stanza di Ruggero), Joharia Tower of the Palazzo dei Normanni.

Figure 6.19: Norman Stanza, Palazzo dei Normanni.

Figure 6.20: Norman Stanza, Palazzo dei Normanni.

Figure 6.21: Hall on the second floor, the so-called “Sala Belvedere,” rebuilt in the seventeenth-century by the Sandoval family.

Figure 6.22: Site of the supposed *impluvium* on the third floor of La Zisa, restored.

Figure 6.23: Restored outline of the pool situated in front of La Zisa, with artificial lake that contained a diminutive pavilion.

Figure 6.24: Pavilion on the artificial island set within the pool, hypothetical reconstruction by the Superintendent of Monuments and restorer Francesco Valenti [source: Fondo Valenti, BCP, ms. segn. 5 Qq E 180 n. 4 (11)].

Figure 6.25: Cappella Palatina, ceiling, representation of two figures with a *shadirwân* [source: Ernst Grube and Jeremy Johns, *The Painted Ceilings of the Cappella Palatina* (New York: East-West Foundation, 2005), pl. 15].


Figure 6.29: Second floor, room located on southeast side of palace, on the left the wind tower opening.
Figure 6.30: Close-up of īwān-like space, situated in front of the windtower vent.

Figure 6.31: Close-up of the muqarnas in front of wind vent.

Figure 6.32: Close-up of wind vent.

Figure 6.33: Close-up of an interior window on the second-storey of La Zisa.

Figure 6.34: Illustration of the circulation of air within a windtower during the daytime and the nighttime [Mario Grosso, *Il raffrescamento passivo degli edifici in zone a clima temperato: principi e archetipi bioclimatici, criteri progettuali, metodi di calcolo, esempi progettuali*, foreword by Matheos Santamouris, preface by Federico Butera, contributions by Luca Raimondo (Santarcangelo di Romagna: Maggioli, 2008), fig. 4.23].

Figure 6.35: Exterior view of the palace chapel.

Figure 6.36: Detail of the cupola of the palatine chapel of La Zisa.

Figure 6.37: Ground plan of the chapel of La Zisa [source: Lucio Trizzino, *SS. Trinità alla Zisa: progetto di restauro* (Palermo: D. Flaccovio, 1979), fig. 17].

Figure 6.38: Isometric reconstruction of the chapel of La Zisa [source: Ibid., fig. 66].

Figure 6.39: View of the nave of the chapel and west wall.

Figure 6.40: Interior of the royal balcony that overlooked the nave.

Figure 6.41: Room adjacent to the chapel, on the southeast flank.

Figure 6.42: View of the sanctuary of the chapel.

Figure 6.43: Dome of the sanctuary with remains of stucco decoration.

Figure 6.44: Dome of the sanctuary with remains of muqarnas executed in stucco.

Figure 6.45: Aqueduct, located southwest of the palace, behind the chapel.

Figure 6.46: Aqueduct, closer view.

Figure 6.47: Natale Bonifacio’s map of 1580 [source: http://www.siciliaterradelsole.com/2010/11/le-vie-di-palermo-via-maqueda.html].

Figure 6.48: Detail of the area surrounding La Zisa on Bonifacio’s map [source: Trizzano, *SS. Trinità alla Zisa*, fig. 33].
Figure 6.49: View of the bath excavated in the 1970s by Vincenzo Tusa.

Figure 6.50: Close-up of the suspensura of the balneal structure on the grounds of La Zisa.

Figure 6.51: Exterior of La Cuba, looking toward the southeast.

Figure 6.52: Exterior of La Cuba, prior to its restoration [source: Fondo Valenti, BCP, 5 Qq E 143 n. 4 (a) 2].

Figure 6.53: Exterior of La Cuba, during its restoration by Francesco Valenti, undated photo [source: Fondo Valenti, BCP, 5 Qq E 187 n.17, 4].

Figure 6.54: Ground plan of La Cuba [source: Pietro Lojacono, “L’organismo costruttivo della Cuba alla luce degli ultimi scavi,” Palladio 3 (1953), fig. 1].

Figure 6.55: Plan of the central space of La Cuba, central water basin and two lateral fountains by Pietro Lojacono [source: ibid, fig. 4].

Figure 6.56: Remains of a muqarnas vault, center of western wall of structure.

Figure 6.57: Central space of La Cuba, remains of impluvium.

Figure 6.58: Detail of remains of marble facing of central fountain or impluvium basin.

Figure 6.59: Interior of La Cuba, view to the south.

Figure 6.60: Interior of La Cuba, view to the north.

Figure 6.61: Ideal reconstruction of La Cuba by Francesco Valenti [source: Fondo Valenti, BCP, 5 Qq E 143 n. 4 (a) 2]].

Figure 6.62: Ideal reconstruction of La Cuba by Francesco Valenti [source: Fondo Valenti, BCP, 5 Qq E 143 n. 4 (a) 4].

Figure 6.63: North façade of the Cuba Soprana.

Figure 6.64: Remains of La Cuba Soprana incorporated into the northern wing of the seventeenth-century Villa Napoli.

Figure 6.65: The façade of La Cuba Soprana based on the drawing of Nino Basile [source: Di Stefano, Monumenti, fig. 277].

Figure 6.66: Entrance into the Norman pavilion of La Cuba Soprana.

Figure 6.67: La Cubula.
Figure 6.68: S. Giovanni degli Eremiti, profile of domes.

Figure 6.69: The so-called La Cuba Araba at Vicari.

Figure 6.70: Almoravid Qubbat al-Barūdiyyīn, Marrakesh, 1117.

Figure 6.71: Qubbat al-Barūdiyyīn, inscription in interior in stucco on the cornice framing the dome.

Figure 6.72: Remains of the naskhī inscription executed in stucco at the entrance to the Fountain Room, south side of vestibule.

Figure 6.73: Naskhī inscription, north side of vestibule.

Figure 6.74: Reconstruction in plaster of the naskhī inscription on the cornice of La Cuba exhibited on the wall. Fragments of stone inscription on the ground below found during the restoration on the structure in the 1930s.

Figure 6.75: The inscription at La Cuba [source: BCP, Fondo Valenti, 5 Qq E 187 n 18, 17].

Figures 6.76–6.77: Fragments of Roger II’s inscription from the Cappella Palatina, presently in the Galleria Regionale della Sicilia at Palazzo Abatellis.

Figure 6.78: Some examples of Roger II’s inscriptions from his palace at Messina [source: Annliese Nef, “Venti blocchi frammentari con iscrizioni arabe in lode di Ruggero II dal palazzo di Messina,” in Nobiles Officinae: perle, filigrane e trame di seta dal Palazzo Reale di Palermo, edited by Maria Andaloro (Catania: Giuseppe Maimone, 2006), vol. 1].

Figure 6.79: Floral Kūfic band above doorway, Baths of Cefalà Diana.

Figure 6.80: Detail of floral Kūfic frieze, Baths of Cefalà Diana.

Figure 6.81: Detail of floral Kūfic frieze, Baths of Cefalà Diana.

**Chapter Seven**

Figure 7.1: View toward the east [source: Michele Del Giudice, Descrizione del real tempio, e monasterio di Santa Maria Nuova, di Morreale (Palermo: 1702), pl. 2].

Figure 7.2: View toward the west, with the Seminary of the Archdiocese and the apse of the Cathedral [source: ibid., pl. 3].

Figure 7.3: Detail of the Seminary of the Archdiocese.
Figure 7.4: Plan of the monastic complex of Monreale, William II’s palace at upper left corner. Unknown engraver, drawing post-1590, pen and pastel on parchment, 562 x 835 mm, ASL 2560, Fondo Mascarino, the Accademia Nazionale di San Luca, Rome [source: http://lineamenta.biblhertz.it/Lineamenta/1033478408.39/1035196181.35/Kx-lSMRqI/Sh-mNtATB/view].

Figure 7.5: Ground plan of the Cathedral of Monreale [source: Wolfgang Krönig, The Cathedral of Monreale and Norman Architecture in Sicily (Palermo: S. F. Flaccovio, 1965), fig. 15].

Figure 7.6: Cloister of the Benedictine Monastery of Monreale.

Figure 7.7: Dedication capital depicting William II offering a model of the Cathedral to the Virgin Mary, west side of cloister.

Figure 7.8: Enclosed fountain in the southwest corner of the cloister.

Figure 7.9: Detail of fountain head.

Figure 7.10: Apse of the Cathedral of Monreale.

Figure 7.11: Apse of the Cathedral of Palermo.

Figure 7.12: Interior of the Cathedral of Monreale.

Figure 7.13: William II presenting the Cathedral to the Virgin, south pier of the sanctuary.

Figure 7.14: Coronation of William II by Christ, north pier of sanctuary.

Figure 7.15: Façade of the Archiepiscopal Seminary with the apse of the Cathedral in the background.

Figure 7.16: Seminary, east façade.

Figure 7.17: First floor of the Seminary.

Figure 7.18: Lower level of the Seminary.

Figure 7.19: View of the central courtyard of William II’s palace from circa the 1930s [source: Di Giovanni, Monumenti, fig. 283].

Figure 7.20: View towards the interior courtyard of the Seminary of the Archdiocese.

Figure 7.21: View toward the ground floor and courtyard of the Seminary and north transept of the cathedral. Domed structure is the seventeenth-century domed structure of the Cappella del Crocifisso.

Figure 7.22: Present-day road between the basilica and the Seminary.
Figure 7.23: Blocked passageway that connected the palace directly with the basilica.

Figure 7.24: Mosaic of Roger II crowned by Christ, S. Maria dell’Ammiraglio, Palermo, ca. 1130.

Figure 7.25: Royal throne at Monreale, north pier of sanctuary.

Figure 7.26: Ground plan of the first floor of William II’s Palace at Monreale, according to Wolfgang Krönig’s construction [source: Krönig, Monreale, fig. 45].

Figure 7.27: Ground plan of William II’s Palace at Monreale [source: Ibid. 46].

Figure 7.28: Present state of the principal hall off the courtyard.

Figure 7.29: Sketch by Wolfgang Krönig of the principal hall off the courtyard, the central room on ground floor, with a view of the southern and western walls [source: Krönig, Monreale, fig. 30].

Figure 7.30: Ground floor of Seminary, view towards north wall of principal room.

Figure 7.31: Central room on ground floor [source: Krönig, Monreale, fig. 31].

Figure 7.32: Exterior of the cenobium of the Benedictine Abbey.

Figure 7.33: Detail of the exterior of the cenobium.
List of Appendices

Appendix A: Medieval Source Material

a. Abd ar-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammed ibn ‘Umar from Butera (also known as al-Buṭrī ‘aṣ Ṣiqillī), in Biblioteca arabo-sicula, ossia raccolta di testi arabi che toccano la geografia, la storia, le biografie e la bibliografia della Sicilia, Traduzione italiana, translated by Michele Amari (Turin-Rome: Ermanno Loescher, 1880–81), vol. 2, 438.


Appendix B: Early Modern Source Material


b. Vincenzo Auria, Capitoli supra lu passagiu di li acqui di la piana di Palermo, ann. 1400, die 12 julii, BCP, ms. segn. Qq C 83, fol. 192r.

c. Anonymous, list attached to the “Topographical Plan of the Lake and Palace of Maredolce,” third quarter of the eighteenth century, ink drawing, Gabinetto dei Disegni e Stampe, Galleria Regionale della Sicilia, Palazzo Abatellis.

—Introduction—

This dissertation is a study of cross-cultural interactions in the medieval Mediterranean, focusing on twelfth-century palaces built by or associated with the Norman kings of Sicily in the hinterland of their capital, Palermo. Concentrating on these monuments, the work explores their secular architecture located in several circuits around the capital. Despite their inclusion in medieval and in later accounts, these residences have not been examined as a group in relation to their surroundings and their overall impact on the landscape. As an inseparable aspect of this built environment, I attempt to elucidate the choices made by the kings about the siting of their suburban architecture near sources of water and other topographical features to create their carefully curated parks. These were elite enclosed spaces, and, without a doubt, their foundation was a major undertaking by these kings. Yet the landscape on the periphery of twelfth-century Palermo was hardly a tabula rasa, devoid of symbolic meaning, and royal parklands inscribed further significance onto it.

By the twelfth century, the Norman Hauteville family ruled Sicily after they had overthrown the local Muslim governors who controlled key cities. These rulers initiated profound cultural and religious changes on the island. Yet despite this momentous shift, this Islamic legacy remained evident in the numerous palaces built in the greenbelt around Palermo by Roger II (count 1105–30 and king 1130–54) and his successors, William I (r. 1154–66) and William II (r. 1166–89). The Norman suburban palaces constitute a unique corpus, one of the best-preserved ensembles of secular architecture in the Latin West. As such, they are a particularly important focus of study. The royal residences commissioned by the kings include the monumental La Zisa and La Cuba, the garden pavilions of La Cubula
and La Cuba Soprana, the hunting lodge of Parco (Altofonte), and William II’s residence at Monreale. Two additional examples of domestic architecture that likely date to Muslim rule but were altered by the Normans are Lo Scibene (perhaps Minenium, reported to be one of Roger’s favorite palaces) and the complex of La Favara with its immense artificial lake (pl. 1). According to the Andalusian poet and traveler Ibn Jubayr, who visited Palermo in 1184–85, the lavishly decorated residences, attendant pavilions, and hunting lodges occupied the higher parts of the city and William II roamed among them. Encircling the capital to the west and southeast, these buildings and their constructed environments ostentatiously displayed the vast accumulated wealth of the Norman regno.

The present study delineates two periods in the formation of royal parks and the construction of suburban palaces; each reflects a marked difference in the relationship between the built environment and its surroundings, more specifically with the natural topography and sources of water. The first is around the 1140s, anchored to the decade following Roger II’s coronation, at which time he also constructed the Cappella Palatina in the principal Norman palace. The second corresponds to the reign of his son and grandson, William I and William II, when La Zisa and La Cuba were built at great expense in the newly founded Genoard Park adjoining the main palace and the city walls (ca. 1165–1180). Together, these two timeframes describe differing sets of concerns and attention to the landscape: from structures integrated into their environment to monumental, vertically articulated examples with symmetrical ground plans regularized in their outward appearance.
I. Historical Background of the Hauteville Conquest of Sicily

As the largest island of the Mediterranean Sea and situated in a central position, Sicily has always been a crossroads. It has seen numerous conquerors throughout its history, who have repeatedly and extensively altered the ethnic makeup of its population, its language, and its dominant religion. From the eighth century BCE, the island was colonized by Phoenicians and Greeks and was part of the larger region of Magna Graecia. The settlements on the eastern coast remained wealthy even after the annexation of most of Sicily by Rome following the First Punic War with Carthage in 241 BCE, and it was an important province for the next several centuries. Vandal raids occurred in 476 CE, and along with the rest of the Italian peninsula, Sicily was under Ostrogothic rule from 493 until its conquest in 535 by Byzantine forces led by Justinian’s general Belisarius. Subsequently, the island became a theme or military province and Syracuse was its capital.¹ Its overall prominence did not diminish after the collapse of the Rome Empire because it still provided grain to the Italian mainland and contained large estates belonging to wealthy members of patrician society. The Vandal incursions followed by the Ostrogothic occupation did not decimate its agricultural production. In addition to privately owned latifundia, the Church owned vast tracts of land in Sicily by the sixth century.² Most notably, Pope Gregory I

² From the Augustan period onward, there were large senatorial estates in Sicily. Roman ownership of land continued uninterrupted into the sixth century. There are remains of several large sprawling villas on the island and in southern Italy, featuring various amenities that include bath complexes. The most well known is the villa at Piazza Armerina (or the villa at Casale), famous for its mosaics. Another example is located close by at Contrada Sofiana was inhabited into the Middle Ages. Other major sites are a fourth-century coastal villa at Patti Marina and the Villa Tellaro near Noto. Elsewhere in southern Italy, late antique villas on a large scale may be found at Quote San Francesco in Basilicata, and San Giovanni di Ruoti in Puglia. See Carla Sfameni, *Ville residenziali nell’Italia tardoantica* (Bari: Edipuglia, 2006): for Patti Marina, 46–49; Villa Tellaro, 46–49; Quote San Francesco in Basilicata, 220–22; and San Giovanni di Ruoti in Puglia, 215–19.
(540–604) owned several landholdings on the island that he later transformed into monasteries.³

As a wealthy former province of the Roman Empire, the island was the target of frequent raids by the Aghlabids, a North African dynasty who ruled Ifrīqiya on behalf of the ʿAbbāsids from the mid-seventh century. According to the historian Alex Metcalfe, as a means of controlling his army Ziyādat Allāh I (r. 817–38) turned his attention toward Sicily for booty and slaves.⁴ In 827, forces led by the jurist Asad ibn al-Furat landed on the southwest coast at the city of Mazara, spurred on by the Byzantine admiral Euphemius, who proclaimed himself emperor of Syracuse in 826 after rebelling against Emperor Michael II (r. 820–29). Advancing slowly, the Aghlabid troops took Palermo in 831 and managed to capture the provincial capital of Syracuse in 878. Their conquest in 902 of Taormina, the last significant stronghold on the eastern coast, marked the end of Byzantine rule of the island. Following the overthrow of the Aghlabids by ‘Abdallāh al-Mahdī Billah (r. 909–34), the founder of the Fāṭimid dynasty, a corresponding transition of power took place in Palermo with the appointment of a new governor in 910. Situated on the north coast, the Fāṭimids made the city the center of their rule, and it became its cultural and artistic capital as well.⁵

What followed was a period of insurrection in Sicily. After their accession to power in Ifrīqiya, the Fāṭimids brought in the North African dynasty of the Kalbids as client rulers, and they governed from 948 to 1052/53.⁶ The end of the tenth century marked the height of

³ Gregory intervened on several occasions with matters relating to the local ecclesiastical administration, such as the election of bishops. Robert Austin Markus, Gregory the Great and His World (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 8–9; see also the introduction by John R. C. Martyn to The Letters of Gregory the Great, Mediaeval Sources in Translation, 40 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2004), 27–29.
⁴ Alex Metcalfe, Muslims of Medieval Italy (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 7–47.
their power, under Abū l-Futūḥ Yūsuf al-Kalbī (r. 989/90–98). Yūsuf al-Kalbī had a close rapport with the Fāṭimid caliph al-ʿAzīz (r. 975–96), and he was received with great pomp in Cairo and awarded an honorary title.⁷ In striking contrast, the rule of his son Jaʿfar (r. 998–1019) signaled the beginning of a sharp decline.⁸ By the turn of the eleventh century, the Kalbid amīrs faced growing local opposition due to heavy taxation and rumors about spending in their profligate court.⁹

The internal rebellions that destabilized the Kalbids were exacerbated by external threats in the form of repeated Byzantine attacks led by the general George Maniakes (d. 1043). Maniakes employed Norman mercenaries to assist him in what proved to be an incomplete conquest in 1038. Among his troops were three of the first Hautevilles in southern Italy, William, Drogo, and Humphrey. Byzantine success in keeping hold of the island was limited. Maniakes was called back to Constantinople in 1040, at which time the eastern coastal cities along with Syracuse reverted to Muslim control.¹⁰

The political structure of Sicily became progressively weaker due to years of civil strife, leading to the overthrow of the last amīr of the Kalbid dynasty, Ḥasan Ṣamṣān al-Dawla in 1044.¹¹ As a result, the island was several parts. Ibn Maklatī ruled from Catania on the east coast, while ‘Ali ibn Niʿma Ibn al-Ḥawwās controlled the center at Castrogiovanni (Enna). At this time, Palermo was seemingly mostly autonomous, governed

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⁷ Metcalfe, *Muslims of Medieval Italy*, 72–73.
⁸ Michele Amari was the first to associate the site of Maredolce/La Favara with Jaʿfar’s country palace where he took refuge from his detractors. Idem, *Storia dei musulmani*, originally published in 1858–1872, 2nd ed. published with the notes and edited by Carlo Alfonso Nallino (Catania: R. Prampolini, 1933), vol. 3, part 3, 872–73.
⁹ Metcalfe, *Muslims of Medieval Italy*, 72–73.
by the local mercantile elite. A third pole of power was the qāʿid of Syracuse, Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm Ibn al-Thumna.¹²

The Norman conquest of Sicily began in 1061, when there had not been a stable government for more than a decade. In May of that year the two youngest Hauteville brothers, Robert Guiscard (d. 1085) and Roger I (d. 1101), crossed over the Straits of Messina.¹³ Some accounts report that the Greek Orthodox Christians in Val Demone in the northeast called for the Normans to intervene, others that Count Roger was called by Ibn al-Thumna after he killed the qāʿid of Catania, who required assistance in his feud with his brother-in-law Ibn al-Ḥāwwās.¹⁴ In any case, the qāʿid met with Roger Hauteville in February of 1061 at Mileto. The ambitious brothers presumably saw an opportunity to gain a foothold on the island under the guise of assisting him. Robert Guiscard and Roger carried out the first siege of Palermo in 1064, but they failed to take the city.¹⁵ A Zīrid army headed by two sons of the amīr Tamīm ibn al-Muʿizz (r. 1062–1108) mounted an expeditionary force to counter the Normans. However, Robert Guiscard and Roger managed to defeat the

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¹² Ibid., 93–95.
¹³ For a summary of these early contacts, see ibid, 93–99. The three Latin chroniclers who narrated the Norman conquest, Amatus of Montecassino, Geoffrey Malaterra, and William of Apulia, made no mention of Ibn al-Thumna. Amatus of Montecassino wrote L’ystoire de li Normant between 1078 and 1086. In the late 1090s, William completed the Gesta Roberti Wiscardi, probably in the court of Roger Borsa in southern Italy. Geoffrey Malaterra composed the De rebus gestis Rogerii Calabriae et Siciliae comitis et Roberti Guiscardi ducis fratris eius in Catania in ca. 1098. These figures were most likely writing independently from one another since they do not reference each other in their work. See Giuseppe Scellini, I normanni nel Meridione: le analisi storiche di Amato, Guglielmo e Malaterra (Rome: Nova Millennium Romae, 2003); Kenneth Baxter Wolf, Making History: The Normans and Their Historians in Eleventh-Century Italy (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995); Emily Albu, The Normans in Their History: Propaganda, Myth, and Subversion (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2001); and Timothy Smit, “Pagans and Infidels, Saracens and Sicilians: Identifying Muslims in the Eleventh-Century Chronicles of Norman Italy,” Haskins Society Journal 32 (2009), 67–86.
¹⁵ Metcalfe, Muslims of Medieval Italy, 97–98. The period leading up to the Norman conquest is also described succinctly by Annliese Nef in Conquérir et gouverner la Sicile islamique aux Xle et Xlle siècles, Bibliothèque des Écoles françaises d’Athènes et de Rome, 346 (Rome: École française de Rome, 2011), 23–54.
North African armies in a decisive battle in 1168 outside of Misilmeri, situated less than 10 kilometers southeast of Palermo.\textsuperscript{16}

In January 1072, the combined forces of the two brothers managed to overcome the defenses of Palermo. Robert Guiscard and Count Roger hired mercenaries, who were mostly Muslim, which came with them from Calabria.\textsuperscript{17} By this time, it is likely that Palermo and its surrounding countryside had already been devastated by more than a generation of civil war. The conquest of Sicily proceeded piecemeal and was completed only in 1091, when Noto, the last holdout of Muslim Sicily in the southeast, was conquered. Count Roger became the de facto ruler, since Robert Guiscard had returned to the mainland.

In the first period of Hauteville rule of the island, Count Roger maintained a steady co-existence with the local population, not least due to the fact that the Normans were outnumbered by far.\textsuperscript{18} His son and successor Roger II integrated the diverse population of Muslims, Latins, Orthodox Christians, and Jews, into his realm. Modern scholars have singled out his reign for its religious tolerance and for the remarkable presence of Islamic scholars in his court, of whom the most well known was the Ḥammūdid geographer Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Idrīsī.\textsuperscript{19} Roger himself is said to have been heavily involved in the process of compiling al-Idrīsī’s geographical compendium, \textit{Nuzhat al-mushtāq fī ikhtirāq al-āfāq} (\textit{Diversion for One Wishing to Travel to Far-Off Places}), also commonly

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{16} Metcalfe, \textit{Muslims of Medieval Italy}, 95–98.
  \item \textsuperscript{17} Georgios Theotokis, “The Norman Invasion of Sicily, 1061–1072: Numbers and Military Tactics,” \textit{War in History} 17, 4 (2010), 381–402.
  \item \textsuperscript{18} Catlos, \textit{Muslims of Medieval Latin Christendom}, 97–101; and Stanton, “Roger de Hauteville,” 113–32.
\end{itemize}
known as the *Kitāb Rujār* or *Book of Roger*), and in the creation of the world map that accompanied it.\(^{20}\)

Another key figure in Roger’s court was George of Antioch (d. 1151/52), who first became a *familiaris regis*, eventually *amīr* (chief minister), and *ammiratus ammiratorum* (corresponding to the Arabic title of *amīr-of-amīrs*), or commander-in-chief, of the fleet by the early 1130s. Born in Antioch, George, and his father before him, had headed the administration of the treasury of the Zīrid caliph Tamīm’s court in Mahdīya.\(^{21}\) The recently discovered biography of George by the Mamlūk historian al-Maqrīzī has only accentuated his role in the formation of Norman court ceremony.\(^{22}\) He had adopted from the Fāṭimid sphere the increasing seclusion of the king and his veiling during processions, in addition to the use of the ceremonial parasol on such occasions.\(^{23}\) As commander of the navy, George led several attacks on cities in North Africa in these years. The coastal strip that faced onto Sicily became part of the kingdom. Beginning with the conquest of Tripoli in 1146, by mid-


\(^{21}\) Following Tamīm’s death and his son Yahya’s accession, George and his family fled to Norman Sicily due to a falling out with the new Zīrid ruler. George, who spoke both Arabic and Greek, quickly attained the title of *familiaris*. He succeeded both positions from the Greek or perhaps Muslim convert Christodoulos (d. 1131). See the reappraisal of George and his legacy in the essays that appeared in the recent edited volume, *Byzantino-Sicula V: Giorgio di Antiochia; l’arte della politica in Sicilia nel XII secolo tra Bisanzio e l’Islam: atti del convegno internazionale, Palermo, 19–20 aprile 2007*, edited by Mario Re and Cristina Rognoni (Palermo: Istituto siciliano di studi bizantini e neoellenici Bruno Lavagnini, 2009).


\(^{23}\) Ibid., 82: “He veiled Roger from [his] subjects, and arranged for him to dress in clothes like the Muslims’, and not to ride out, nor to show himself in public, except on holidays, when he would process, preceded by horses adorned with saddles of gold and silver, and with caparisons studded with gemstones, and by domed litters and gilded banners, with the parasol (al-mızalla) above him and the crown upon his head.”
century most of the coastal cities, which included Gabes, Mahdīya, Sousse, and Sfax, were made into tax-paying fealties ruled by local governors.24

The kingdom from this decade onward experienced unprecedented internal stability in southern Italy, expanding its control into Abruzzo. Roger II, however, did not receive full recognition from the papacy until the Treaty of Mignano of 1139, signed only a year after his excommunication.25 By this time, he had accumulated a great deal of wealth through numerous plundering campaigns. In the same decade as the Norman takeover of the Ifrīqiyan coast, Roger attempted to extend his rule toward the eastern Mediterranean and into Byzantine territory. George commanded the fleet’s excursions to Thebes, Corinth, and Corfu, among other places, in 1147. Continuing to look eastward to the Balkans and, most of all, Constantinople; a ship reached the Byzantine capital two years later but did not disembark.26

A few months before Roger’s death in 1154, the Muslim convert and court eunuch Philip of Mahdīya, George of Antioch’s successor as the amīr-of-amīrs, was tried for treason.

The execution of Philip was a bellwether of cultural change in the Norman court. Despite the

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25 Roger II was crowned King of Sicily on Christmas day of 1130 by a stand-in for antipope Anacletus II (r. 1130–38). Anacletus’ election was highly contested, with Bernard of Clairvaux, Emperor Lothair III, and additional prominent figures in the north supporting the other papal candidate, Innocent II (r. 1130–43). His death in 1138 ended the schism. Innocent announced Roger’s ex-communication at the Second Lateran Council in the following year. In July of 1139, Roger’s son, Roger III took the pope captive at San Germano. As a result, he had to recognize the Norman king with the Treaty of Mignano that took place in the same month. Innocent II invested Roger and acknowledged his rule and that of his two sons, Roger and Alfonso, respectively over Apulia and Capua. Houben, *Roger II of Sicily*, 50–73.
fact that the Muslim eunuchs of the court held an inordinate amount of power, their position was precarious.27 In marked contrast to Roger’s reign, his successors implemented policies that intensified the persecution of the local Muslims and caused the gradual loss of their land to Lombard immigrants from the Italian mainland.28

A significant and often overlooked rupture in the already fractured relationship between the Christian rulers and the Muslim population were the massacres that took place in the streets of Palermo in 1161. Following the sack of the principal palace led by a relative of William I in which his heir Roger IV was killed, a number of Norman lords incited what became a slaughter of the Muslims of the city by the local Latins. The unrest spilled into other parts of the island, and most of this population fled inland to fortified outposts in western Sicily. This unsettled relationship continued under the reign of William II, when Northern Europeans and mainland Italians replaced those in key positions at the courts of his father and grandfather. By the time of his death in 1189, any notion of pluralism in the kingdom had long since been eroded, and Muslim riots broke out soon after in Palermo.

It is against this backdrop of violence in the second half of the twelfth century that the majority of the secular residences were constructed in an Islamic mode.29 This issue has not been probed in a scholarly manner before now, particularly in relation to the monuments that

27 Johns, Arabic Administration in Norman Sicily, 212–56.
28 For assessments of the reigns of William I and William II, see Annkristin Schlichte, Der “gute” König: Wilhelm II. von Sizilien (1166–1189), Bibliothek des Deutschen Historischen Instituts in Rom, Bd. 110 (Tübingen: M. Niemeyer, 2005); and most recently, Pasquale Hammel, La fine del regno: dalla morte di Ruggero II alla conquista sveva (1154–1194) (Palermo: Nuova IPSA, 2012). Isidoro La Lumia’s notion of William II as “il Buono,” is a comparison driven in relation to his father, “il Malo”; an association ultimately derived from Pseudo-Hugh Falcandus. Isidoro La Lumia, Storia della Sicilia sotto Guglielmo il Buono (Florence: Le Monnier, 1867); Ferdinand Chalandon’s classic work remains important due to the scope of his examination of the Norman Kingdom. Ferdinand Chalandon, Histoire de la domination normande en Italie et en Sicile (Paris: Picard, 1907), 2 vols.
form the subject of this dissertation. By considering these structures as embedded in the cultural, political, and physical landscape of Palermo, the present thesis paints an image of Norman Sicily vividly different from the many that portray it as a syncretic kingdom or a golden age of multiculturalism. When William I founded the Genoard Park enclosed by its own circuit of walls, he created much more than a luxury retreat with its own menagerie in close proximity to the principal palace. The park would provide Roger II’s successors a crucial fortified refuge against the threats that emerged in a rapidly changing internal political landscape.

II. Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation follows two schematic arrangements. The first part is largely thematic in order to set the historiographical background and establish the topographical setting of the parks. The second part is monographic in scope, since a number of the monuments discussed remain unknown outside of Sicily and have never been the subject of comprehensive examination. The first chapter takes La Zisa as a case study for historiographical analysis. Due to its perception as an Islamic structure, the palace pavilion does not fit easily into the canon of medieval Western architecture and it is excluded from contemporary surveys despite its Christian patronage. The second chapter looks at the topography of medieval Palermo. In addition to the intramural area, I examine the periurban or hinterland of the city corresponding to the twelfth-century parks. A key overlooked aspect are the water sources of the plain of Palermo and the ways in which these were exploited to provide a plentiful and steady supply for the numerous artificial lakes, basins, and fountains on the grounds of the royal residences.
The second part of the dissertation, Chapters Three to Seven, is composed of focused studies of the residential palaces themselves. Chapter Three looks at Roger II’s foundation of La Favara, which is the site known as Maredolce from the late medieval period until today, named after the large lake on its grounds. The fourth and fifth chapters examine two examples of secular architecture: the first, Lo Scibene (also L’Uscibene), is often attributed to Roger II’s patronage and was identified by Pseudo-Hugh Falcandus as one of the king’s favorite palaces, Minenium. This monument has been all but ignored in the scholarly literature, largely due to its poor state of preservation. A close study of Lo Scibene is particularly rewarding since it predates the well-studied La Zisa and is likely to have been the prototype for the Norman palace pavilion. The second, lesser-known site examined in Chapter Five is that of Parco (renamed Altofonte in the 1930s), which was Roger’s hunting park, residence, and chapel. This chapter highlights an abandoned building of uncertain date that overlooked what I contend to be a large artificial basin, whose placement and structural characteristics indicate that it is medieval. Its outward form resembles a tripartite ogival arched structure that faced onto the lake of Maredolce. Both were probably pavilions or belvederes, a new identification proposed in this dissertation, which points to the construction of royal vistas over the landscape in twelfth-century Sicily.30

Moving toward the second half of the twelfth century and the reign of the two Williams (1156–86), Chapter Six examines the palace pavilions of the Genoard Park. Situated within its confines, these structures include the larger La Zisa and La Cuba, as well as the smaller La Cuba Soprana and La Cubula. In this chapter, I study the monumental epigraphy at the first two residences and attempt to contextualize the use of texts in Kūfic and

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naskhī scripts by Roger II’s successors, comparing these with other examples in the Norman sphere. The final chapter of the dissertation looks at William II’s palace at his magnificent foundation of the Benedictine abbey of Monreale, the last royal residence of the twelfth century, which utilized architectural forms that would reappear in the secular architecture of Frederick II.

III. Methodology and Primary Source Material

Repeated visits over several years to the remains of the earliest examples of secular architecture associated with the Norman kings enabled this study. Fortuitous timing also played an important part, since these structures could be accessed and measurements made of their interiors. This is particularly the case for the lesser known and scantily documented sites of Lo Scibene and Maredolce (La Favara). Lo Scibene is still in private hands and has not yet been acquired by Palermo’s Soprintendenza BB. CC. AA. due to financial disagreements.31 The monument of Lo Scibene has been the subject of much polemic between local architects and the Soprintendenza thanks to the construction of an underpass for the new metropolitan tram system at a distance of only 60 meters from the palatial complex. As a result, the structures nearby are in an extremely precarious condition and in danger of collapse.

As seemingly with most things in the Italian Mezzogiorno, the “Cosa Nostra” is never far away, and is in fact closely tied to the access and hence the study of many of these sites. The courtyard palace of La Favara, situated in the modern semi-industrial suburb of Brancaccio, was the heart of an area tightly controlled by the local mafia, making site

31 The Soprintendenza BB. CC. AA. is an abbreviation of Soprintendenza per i Beni Culturali ed Ambientali (Superintendency of Cultural and Environmental Heritage).
surveys and restoration by the Soprintendenza difficult until the mid-1990s and even later.\textsuperscript{32} In addition, the interior of the courtyard contain illegal housing, or \textit{case abusive}. Into 2016, the eastern part is still inhabited. The principal structure of Maredolce underwent numerous changes from my first visits in 2010 when it was a \textit{cantiere chiuso} or undergoing an active restoration and hence a building site with limited access. Since then, it has become progressively more open to the public. In contrast, La Zisa, already transferred from private hands to the Soprintendenza, was the recipient of funds from the Cassa del Mezzogiorno.\textsuperscript{33}

Another site associated with the Norman royal residences is at Altofonte, located ten kilometers southeast of Palermo, which was Roger II’s hunting reserve of Parco. Superintendent Francesco Valenti restored its chapel in the 1920s. However, most of the complex, namely the rooms that looked out to the palace’s two courtyards, has been reappropriated over time and subsumed into the urban fabric. The first significant transformation occurred when Frederick III of Sicily (r. 1296–1337, also known as Frederick II) granted it to the Cistercian Order in the first years of the fourteenth century.\textsuperscript{34} In the sixteenth century, a large basilica was inserted into one of the twelfth-century courtyards, which, along with the increasing urbanization of Altofonte, led to its absorption into the fabric of the modern town.

\textsuperscript{32} For instance, members of the Soprintendenza and the Facoltà di Architettura at the Università degli Studi di Palermo have recorded their trepidation in visiting Maredolce/La Favara during these years. Moreover, participants of the early “expeditions” noted the impossibility of photographing or studying closely many of these monuments due to restrictions placed by the local mafia. As noted by Amedeo Tullio in his talk “Prima fase della ricerca: 1992–2001,” and by Vladimir Zorić, “Storia del complesso del Palazzo di Maredolce,” in the conference “Scavi al Castello di Maredolce: dal Ribat islamico al “sollazzo” normanno” on December 6, 2012, which were part of the series \textit{Aggiornamenti archeologici per la conoscenza della città di Palermo e del territorio} organized by the Soprintendenza BB.CC.AA of Palermo and the publishing house Edizioni d’Arte Kalós in Palazzo Chiaramonte-Steri in Palermo.


\textsuperscript{34} On the palace at Parco see Silvana Braida, “Il palazzo ruggeriano di Altofonte,” \textit{Palladio} 23 (1973), 185–97,
Of the monuments that date to the second half of the twelfth century, the Sicilian Region owns both La Zisa and La Cuba, and these sites are open to the public. La Zisa has a collection of Islamic artifacts on permanent display. La Cuba Soprana is incorporated into the seventeenth-century Villa Napoli and is partially accessible, as is the small domed structure of La Cubula on its grounds. Finally, William II’s residence at Monreale was converted into the archiepiscopal seminary and was extensively remodeled in the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. The southern half of the twelfth-century palace presently houses the modern town’s Palazzo Comunale, while its western wing contains a branch of the Banco di Sicilia. Remnants are visible only on the first floor, which faces onto an interior courtyard with four splendid ogival arches. Some fragments of the eastern façade of the building may be seen as well.

The dissertation required extensive research in archives in Palermo and Rome as well as many site visits. In addition to the published medieval documents in Arabic, Latin, and Hebrew, sources range from contemporary chronicles to court poetry. Early modern and eighteenth- and nineteenth-century restoration history is fundamental to the project at hand. Many of these authors describe the sites and, most importantly, structures that have either been lost or substantially altered. The Biblioteca Comunale of Palermo (BCP) has a large collection of early modern manuscripts with accounts of the city and its medieval monuments. Notable among these is the unpublished seventeenth-century work of Vincenzo Auria (1625–1710), which contains several sketches of the water sources of Palermo, including the site of Roger II’s palace of La Favara.35 The works of an authority on ecclesiastical sites, the Sicilian clergyman and canon of the cathedral of Palermo, Antonino

35 Vincenzo Auria created two sketches of the palace of La Favara that can be found in the undated manuscript, *Varia istoria di Palermo*, BCP, ms. segn. Qq C 83, fols. 191v–193r.
Mongitore (1663–1743), provide further topographical information on Palermo and its environs.36

Among the holdings of the BCP is the archive of Francesco Valenti (1868–1953). As Superintendent of Monuments, Valenti restored La Cuba, the Cappella Palatina, and the Palazzo dei Normanni in the 1920s and 1930s, among many other medieval buildings. The documents of Giuseppe Patricolo (1834–1905), the first Superintendent of Palermo following Italy’s unification, are kept in the same Fondo. Patricolo’s papers include reports pertaining to his various restorations in the city and photos recording works in progress. Another archive consulted was that of the Museo Archeologico Regionale “Antonino Salinas” which preserves the papers of the Sicilian orientalist Michele Amari.37 The drawings kept in the Gabinetto dei Disegni e Stampe at the Galleria Regionale della Sicilia at Palazzo Abatellis are an important source for medieval Palermo.38 The collection contains late eighteenth-century topographical maps of the site of the lake of Maredolce. Other documents consulted for the present dissertation are those regarding Jesuit properties in the area surrounding Lo Scibene in the Archivio di Stato at the ex-monastery of La Gancia in Palermo.39 The Archivio Centrale dello Stato in EUR, Rome, holds records of the post-unification restoration

36 A major figure in the historiographical landscape of the island, a study devoted to Mongitore’s contribution to its artistic and architectural heritage and his influence on later humanists in Sicily is sorely missing. Antonino Mongitore, Monumenta historica sacrae domus mansionis SS. Trinitatis militaris ordinis Theutonicorum urbis Panormi, et magni ejus praeceptoris (Palermo: Aiccardo, 1721); idem, Chiese fuori della Città nella campagna [Chiese distrutte], BCP, ms. segn. Qq E 11, fols. 91r–92v. Additional valuable works include the clergyman Rocco Pirri’s (1577–1651) collection of ecclesiastical documents that formed the basis of his four-volume work. Idem, Sicilia sacra: disquisitionibus et notis illustrata, reprint of 1733 edition with an essay by F. Giunta on Pirri, in the series Italia sacra (Sala Bolognese: A. Forni, 1987).

37 In the museum’s archive are preserved papers of the Sicilian orientalist Michele Amari that pertain to his study of the Arabic inscriptions of Sicily, published in Le epigrafi arabiche (1875–83) in 3 vols. Among other noteworthy documents in the archive of the museum are the photographs from which Amari worked to decipher the inscription on the cornice of La Cuba.

38 In this collection are invaluable sketches of the courtyard of the palace of La Favara and its baths, the latter of which are no longer extant. The Gabinetto also preserves several ground plans and elevations of the structures that pertain to the compound of Lo Scibene dating to the second half of the nineteenth century.

39 The medieval secular compound of Lo Scibene was part of the Jesuit holdings until their expulsion from Sicily in 1767. Several schematic representations of the water resources of the site are kept in the ASP.
campaigns; these complement the material in the Archivio of the Soprintendenza BB. CC. AA. in Palermo and the Fondo Valenti (BCP). This archive contains original ground plans made after the rediscovery of the medieval complex of Lo Scibene. Additional holdings include a host of Patricolo’s and Valenti’s documents and their correspondence with the Interior Ministry in Rome on the restoration of the island’s medieval monuments.

IV. Medieval and Early Modern Primary Sources on the Norman Palaces and Parks in Palermo’s Hinterland

Before discussing the early modern manuscripts preserved in various archives in Palermo, a brief overview of primary source material from the medieval period will set the stage for an examination of the twelfth-century suburban residences and parklands. The Baghdadi merchant Muḥammad Abū’l-Qāsim Ibn Ḥawqal, who visited Palermo in 973, provided the first written account of the area surrounding Roger II’s later palace of La Favara.40 Another key source is the Norman chronicler Romuald of Salerno, who described the construction of La Favara and Parco.41 The anonymous chronicler Pseudo-Hugh Falcandus in the Historia or Liber de regno Siciliae of ca. 1190 named the various Rogerian palaces as “Favariam, Minenium aliaque delectabilia loca.” These two were singled out as among the most delightful places created during his rule.42

The palaces themselves were sites of song, an aspect that hitherto has not been sufficiently discussed in the secondary literature on Norman Sicily. Several extant poems praise these extramural residences and their Christian patrons. The administrator ‘Abd ‘ar-Raḥmān of Trapani wrote a panegyric poem (qaṣīda) dedicated to Roger II celebrating the lake at La Favara and the palace. The Alexandrian poet Naṣr ibn ‘Abd Allāh Ibn Qalāqīs (d. 1172) mentioned Roger II’s residence of al-Mannānī that he presumably saw in 1168/69 in his poem “Al-Zahr al-bāsim wa’ l-‘arf al-nāsim fī madīḥ al-ajall Abū l-Qāsim” (“The Laughing Flower and the Fragrant Zephyr in Praise of the Most Illustrious Abū l-Qāsim”).

Other poets who eulogized the royal Norman palaces are ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammed ibn ‘Umar of Butera and ‘Uthman ibn ‘Abd al-Rahim ibn ‘Abd al-Razzaq ibn Ja’far Ibn Bashrūn of Mahdiya, both writing in the first half of the twelfth century.

From the reign of William II, there are two accounts that can be associated with his grandfather’s foundation of La Favara, known as Maredolce from the thirteenth century onward due to the large artificial lake on its grounds. In 1173, the Jewish traveler Benjamin of Tudela visited the palace called Al-Hacina that had a large lake on its grounds of Al-Beḥira. He described the residence as decorated with painted walls and figural mosaic floors.

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43 Ibn Qalāqīs came to Sicily during the period of transition following the death of William I in 1168–69. He was introduced to the queen regent, Margaret of Navarre, and her son, the later William II, by Abū l-Sayyid, a Muslim official and courtier. During his visit, Ibn Qalāqīs was received by the qā‘id Abū l-Qāsim ibn Ḥammūd, an official in a high position in the Norman court and the hereditary leader of the Muslim community of Sicily, who became his patron. Adalgisa De Simone, Splendori e misteri di Sicilia in un’opera di Ibn Qalāqīs, preface by Francesco Gabrieli (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 1996), 9–19. Annliese Nef, “Un poème d’Ibn Qalāqīs à la gloire de Guillaume II,” in Chrétiens, juifs et musulmans dans la Méditerranée médiévale. Études en hommage à Henri Bresc, edited by Annliese Nef, Benoît Grévin, and Emmanuelle Tixier (Paris: De Boccard, 2008), 33–43; and Johns, Arabic Administration, 233–36.

executed in gold and silver. A decade later, the traveler Abū l-Husayn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Kinānī Ibn Jubayr noted that the Qaṣr Ja’far in the outskirts of Palermo had a pool of sweet water. After Amari, Sicilian scholars have continually associated La Favara with Qaṣr Ja’far. In the post-Norman period, Peter of Eboli recorded Henry VI’s stay at La Favara before his entry into Palermo to make a claim on the throne through his marriage to Roger II’s daughter, Constance. During the thirteenth century, most of the extramural residences were in the hands of the court. In 1282, Peter III of Aragon (as King of Sicily, r. 1282–85) nominated Niccolò Ioppulo as the custodian of the three residences of “cubbe azize et favarie.”

The vicissitudes that each of these monuments underwent due to changed ownership, in most cases from royal to private hands, led to their severe neglect. Yet their imposing remains cast a long shadow on the landscape outside the walls of Palermo. The association of the majority of these residences with the Norman Kingdom was not entirely lost and was

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46 Ibn Jubayr also noted the suburban palaces in the high points of the city, likening these residences to a necklace around a woman’s throat. Abū l-Ḥusayn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Kinānī Ibn Jubayr, Biblioteca arabo-sicula, vol. 1, 101; English translation, in The Travels of Ibn Jubayr, Being the Chronicle of a Mediaeval Spanish Moor Concerning His Journey to the Egypt of Saladin, the Holy Cities of Arabia, Baghdad the City of the Caliphs, the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, and the Norman Kingdom of Sicily, translated from the original Arabic by R. J. C. Broadhurst, with an introduction and note (London: J. Cape, 1952), 347–48.

47 Peter of Eboli’s manuscript, Liber ad honorem Augusti, sive de rebus Siculis, is preserved in a single manuscript in the Burgerbibliothek Bern as Ms. 120 and is divided into three books composed in honor of the Hohenstaufen Henry VI’s marriage to Constance of Sicily, Roger II’s daughter and the mother of Frederick II. The Liber was essentially a propaganda tool to strengthen the Hohenstaufen claim to the Norman regno. The poem spans from William II’s death in 1189 and its aftermath in which Tancred of Lecce, a cousin of William I, was crowned Tancred I of Sicily (1189–94). Henry VI eventually ousted Tancred and executed him. Peter of Eboli, Liber ad honorem Augusti sive de rebus Siculis: Codex 120 II der Burgerbibliothek Bern: eine Bilderchronik der Stauferzeit, edited by T. Köbler and M. Stähli, text revision and translation by Gereon Becht-Jördens (Sigmaringen: J. Thorbecke, 1994).

well known to local humanists, churchmen, and scholars. The most frequently cited work of these is by the celebrated *De rebus Siculis decades duae* (first published in 1558, with much enlarged editions published in 1560 and 1568) by the Sicilian Dominican monk Tommaso Fazello (1498–1570). Fazello is widely considered the “father” of Sicilian history by humanists as well as by modern historians. His topographical account of the island is an indispensable source on sixteenth-century Palermo and its increasing urbanization and the changing character of its immediate countryside. At around the same time, the Bolognese Dominican monk Leandro Alberti (1479–1552) included an account of his visit to Sicily in an updated edition of his *Descrittione di tutta l’Italia et Isole pertinenti ad essa* of 1561, which was published posthumously. Alberti borrowed a model of history writing for his *Descrittione* from the Palermitan Dominican monk Pietro Ranzano (1428–1492), who completed a history of the city. For the suburban Norman residences, Alberti provided an invaluable description of La Zisa prior to the significant renovations that it underwent in the seventeenth century.

49 The choices made by these authors are critical, since they pinpointed sites of interest not only for themselves, but also for their contemporaries. To this day, there has not been a serious study of the majority of these figures, even though in the last few decades new editions of their works have appeared. Already in the mid-nineteenth century the art historian Gioacchino Di Marzo published excerpts and even entire works by many of these authors in a multi-volume compendium entitled *Biblioteca storica e letteraria di Sicilia* (1869–86) in 28 vols. There is particular significance to sixteenth-century authors enlarging their scope of inquiry beyond Rome, and looking toward southern Italy. See Giovanna Ceserani, *Italy’s Lost Greece: Magna Graecia and the Making of Modern Archaeology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 24–32.


53 Leandro Alberti, *Descrittione di tutta l’Italia et isole pertinenti ad essa* (Venice: A. Salicato, 1561). Alberti was influenced by the descriptive history writing of the Neapolitan historian Flavio Biondo (1392–1463) in his *Italia illustrata* (1474), and by the unpublished history of the city of Palermo by the local historian Pietro Ranzano (1428–1492) entitled *De primordiis et progressu felicis Urbis Panormi* (1470). See Giancarlo Petrella, *L’officina del geografo: la “descrittione di tutta Italia” di Leandro Alberti e gli studi geografico-antiquari tra Quattro e Cinquecento: con un saggio di edizione* (Lombardia-Toscana), Bibliotheca erudita:
Despite the appreciation of local humanists and antiquarians and their study of classical and medieval antiquities, the official protection of sites came only in 1739, directed by the viceroy Bartolomeo Corsini (r. 1737–1747) under order of the Bourbon King Charles III (r. 1734–1759). In 1778, his successor, Ferdinand I (r. 1759–1825), appointed the prince of Torremuzza, Gabriele Lancillotto Castello (1727–1794) and the prince of Biscari, Ignazio Paternò Castello (1719–1786), as joint Royal Custodians of Antiquities of the island. The site of Maredolce (the courtyard palace of La Favara was certainly secondary) drew Paternò Castello due to the imposing size of the lake that he “discovered” in 1785. He believed that Maredolce was a Roman *naumachia*, an artificial basin used for mock naval battles.

In addition to humanists’ attentiveness to the classical monuments of Sicily, a strong interest in the medieval past continued unabated into the nineteenth century. The Palermitan priest Salvatore Morso (1766–1828) compiled a description of medieval architecture in his

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54 Spurred by the increasing interest and study of antiquities by his contemporaries, Charles III wished to protect the cultural heritage of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. Legislation came rather late, especially if we take into consideration that the sites of Herculaneum and Pompeii were discovered more than a century earlier. See Alexander Echlin, “Dynasty, Archaeology and Conservation: The Bourbon Rediscovery of Pompeii and Herculaneum in Eighteenth-Century Naples,” *Journal of the History of Collections* 26 (2014), 145–59.

55 The two noblemen divided among them the three valleys of Sicily: the prince of Torremuzza was charged with the classical antiquities of the valley of Mazara, while the prince of Biscari’s responsibility lay in the valleys of Noto and Demone. Their initial goal was to identify monuments in need of urgent restoration and to place these under protection. Consequently, their first undertaking was to compile a catalogue. Paternò Castello surveyed and studied carefully the ancient monuments of the western part of the island with the help of a team composed of engineers, architects and engravers that included the engineer Carlo Chenchi and the artist Benedetto Cotardi. See Giovanni Pagnano, *Le antichità del Regno di Sicilia: i plani di Biscari e Torremuzza per la Regia Custodia, 1779* (Syracuse: A. Lombardi, 2001).

Descrizione di Palermo antico published in 1825.\textsuperscript{57} He was particularly fascinated by the palace pavilions of La Zisa and La Cuba since he believed that these were unquestionably of Muslim facture due to their masterfully cut square blocks and their overall design and form. Morso also noted the Kūfic inscriptions that crowned the buildings, pointing out that their very names indicated that these were the pleasure palaces of the Muslim amīrs of Palermo.\textsuperscript{58} His association of these two sites with the Islamic period of rule is typical of his and his contemporaries’ mindset, which gave rise to Orientalist associations that La Zisa and La Cuba did not shake off until well into the next century.

V. Nineteenth-Century Sicilian Scholars and Restorers

Over all the humanists and early scholars on the Islamic past of Sicily towers the figure of the Sicilian Orientalist and patriot, Michele Amari (1806–1886).\textsuperscript{59} Amari’s place and importance as the first serious scholar in the field of Siculo-Arabic studies is indisputable and has not shifted in the past 150 years. Since then, there has hardly been any attempt to

\textsuperscript{57} Morso worked on Arabic epigraphy and numismatics and held a chair at the Royal Academy, having studied Arabic in the years that followed the fraud committed by the Maltese monk Giuseppe Vella (1749–1814). Vella fabricated primary source material on the Kalbid administration supposedly found in a manuscript kept in the monastery of S. Martino delle Scale where he was chaplain, published as Il Consiglio di Sicilia in 1789–92. He was conferred the first chair of Arabic in 1785 before being exposed and arrested in 1796. On Abbot Vella’s forgeries, see Karla Mallette, “I nostri Saracini: Writing the History of the Arabs of Sicily,” California Italian Studies 1 (2009–10), 1–26.

\textsuperscript{58} Morso noted the continued use of these structures into the Norman period. Salvatore Morso, Descrizione di Palermo antico (Palermo: Dato, 1827), 164: “...sono sicuramente due nobilissime fabbriche saraceniche: Le Pietre quadre così maestrevolmente connesse, che non apparisce ombra di calcina, il disegno, la forma, le cufiche iscrizioni nelle loro cime scolpite, i nomi stessi che portano di Cuba e di Zisa evidentemente ce lo annunziano, e sembra pure chiaro essere stati essi destinati a’ luoghi di delizie degli Emiri per la grandiosità delle fabbriche e per le aggiunte magnificenze, che componevano un tutto speciosissimo; lo stesso destino sembra ancora aver essi avuto all’ingresso de’ Normanni.”

revise his work substantially or to complete it on the same scale.\textsuperscript{60} Making his name by writing a history of the War of the Sicilian Vespers, Amari in effect wrote a thinly veiled critique of the Bourbon government. As a result, he was exiled in Paris where he became the caretaker of manuscripts at the Bibliothèque nationale.\textsuperscript{61}

Learning Arabic while in Paris from the renowned Orientalist Joseph Toussaint Reinaud (1795–1867) allowed Amari to amass material for his history of Muslim Sicily published as the \textit{Storia dei musulmani di Sicilia} (1854–72), and a compilation of primary sources, \textit{Biblioteca arabo-sicula} (1857–87). Another essential study is \textit{Le epigrafi arabe di Sicilia}, published in three parts from 1875 to 1885. Interrupted by his death, the work included all of the known epigraphic patrimony of the island in Arabic as well as examples from the Italian mainland. In the first part, dedicated to “Iscrizioni edile” (“Building Inscriptions”), Amari examined the monumental text at La Cuba, La Zisa, the Palazzo dei Normanni, and fragments likely to have come from the royal palace in Messina no longer extant.\textsuperscript{62}


\textsuperscript{61} Returning to Sicily in 1859, Amari held the chair in Arabic at the Istituto di Studi Superiori in Florence from 1860 until 1873. In 1872, he founded the Società Italiana per gli Studi Orientali. Amari was a senator of the new government in 1861 and Minister of Public Information from 1862 to 1864. Even though he spent much of the post-unification period on the mainland, Amari kept in close contact with scholars in Sicily, attested to in his extensive correspondence that has been partially published. Mallette, “\textit{I nostri Saracini},” 1–26.

A younger contemporary of Amari’s, Gioacchino Di Marzo (1839–1916), published a seminal three-volume work on Sicilian art and architecture entitled *Delle belle arti in Sicilia* in 1858–64. His study is significant due to its regional focus that did not seek to construct a comparative framework with Rome or elsewhere on the Italian peninsula. In the *Delle belle arti*, Di Marzo noted that William I and William II had constructed La Zisa and La Cuba, since by this time Amari had established their Norman facture. His work, published after mid-century, clearly signals the local scholarly reception of these monuments. A figure contemporary with Di Marzo and Amari was the archaeologist Antonino Salinas (1841–1914), director of Palermo’s Museo Nazionale from 1874. Salinas created the first permanent collection of Islamic objects in the museum, known as the Sala Araba. Despite the fact that he published little on the medieval period, Salinas conceived of the arrangement of artifacts in the museum in order to represent all of Sicilian history. For him, the Muslim rule of the island was very much part of its heritage.

A collaborator of Salinas’, Giuseppe Patricolo, was the first figure to be involved in the restoration of medieval monuments in Palermo. Throughout his lengthy tenure as

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65 One of the first rooms that Salinas established in the museum was what he termed the “Sala Araba.” In addition to metal objects, inscriptions, and other artifacts of Islamic workmanship, here were displayed works of the Norman period as well. Antonino Salinas, *Guida popolare del museo nazionale di Palermo* (Palermo: “il tempo,” 1882); see also Elena Pezzini, “Salinas e il Medioevo,” in ‘*Del museo di Palermo e del suo avvenire:* Salinas ricorda Salinas 1914–2014: *Museo Archeologico Regionale Antonino Salinas*, Palermo 8 luglio–4 novembre 2014, edited by Francesca Spatafora and Lucina Gandolfo (Palermo: Regione Siciliana, Assessorato dei beni culturali e dell’identità siciliana, Dipartimento dei beni culturali e dell’identità siciliana, 2014), 66–70.

66 Trained as an architect at the University of Palermo, Patricolo spent a good deal of time in Rome at the Academy of Fine Arts in Rome and in Florence. Patricolo restored the Norman churches of S. Cataldo, S. Spirito, and S. Giovanni degli Eremiti. He “discovered” SS. Trinità di Delia near Castelvetrano, recorded in a series of articles published in the *Archivio Storico Siciliano* (1880). Patricolo’s renovation of S. Maria dell’Ammiraglio was the subject of controversy in the local and the international press. For a chronology of
Superintendent, Patricolo was the leading restorer in Sicily, answering directly to the Ministry of Public Instruction in Rome. Patricolo worked on numerous buildings in Palermo between 1870 and 1898, among which were the Cappella Palatina, the Norman Palace, and La Cuba. Other relevant sites restored by him were the cathedral of Cefalù, the cloister of the Benedictine monastery of Monreale, and the so-called Ponte dell’Ammiraglio.

VI. Modern Secondary Literature on the Medieval Suburban Palaces and Parks of Palermo

Only in the final years of the nineteenth century did the German Jewish art historian Adolph Goldschmidt (1863–1944) conduct the first systematic examination of the Norman palaces as a group. In a pioneering article published in 1898, he provided elevations and reconstructions of the more fragmentary remains of the extramural architecture that are still reproduced in the scholarly literature. He also published an article on La Favara in 1895.
For the study of the twelfth-century secular structures, his work is of fundamental importance.\(^{70}\)

Patricolo’s successor at the Soprintendenza, Francesco Valenti, is a key figure who had an impact on the reception and perception of these monuments.\(^{71}\) Superintendent from 1920 to 1935, he restored La Cuba and the basin in front of La Zisa, and he conducted a disastrous intervention on the upper level of Lo Scibene. In response, the journalist Nino Basile wrote a number of articles for local newspapers on Lo Scibene and La Favara, among other sites (later collected in *Palermo felicissima*), in which he harshly criticized Valenti’s restoration practices.\(^{72}\) In the 1930s, Letizia Anastasi published a series of pamphlets, one on each extramural residence, that are still invaluable.\(^{73}\) The architect Silvana Braida provided a significant contribution, publishing on La Favara, Lo Scibene, and the remains of Roger II’s palace at Altolfoante.\(^{74}\)

\(^{70}\) Goldschmidt was inspired by his professor in Vienna, Anton Springer (1825–1891), who had written a short monograph on the Norman monuments of Palermo. Anton Springer, *Die mittelalterliche Kunst in Palermo* (Bonn: Druck von Carl Georgi, 1869).


Among Sicilian scholars, Giuseppe Bellafiore, who has written extensively on these suburban monuments, is perhaps the most influential.\(^7^5\) He is one of a handful who have attempted to construct a continuum between Muslim and Norman Sicily.\(^7^6\) With reference to the twelfth-century parks and gardens, Bellafiore adapted from Amari the influential categories (mostly for the Italian secondary literature) of the àgdal and riyàd, that he argued corresponded respectively to the extramural parkland of La Favara and the green spaces or gardens of the urban palace.\(^7^7\) Henri Bresc is another scholar who has made important contributions on the surroundings of the suburban palaces and the topography of medieval Palermo.\(^7^8\) The 1990s saw a resurgence of new work, this time by Swiss scholars, on


\(^{7^8}\) Bresc, who has written extensively on economic history, and more specifically on hunting and fishing in the Norman sphere, has contributed greatly to the study of the environmental history of the Norman period. Henri Brece, “La chasse en Sicile (XIIe–XVe siècles),” in *La chasse au moyen âge: actes* (Nice: Centre d’études médiévales de Nice, 1980), 201–21. Bresc has published two important articles on the Palermitan parks. Idem,
twelfth-century secular architecture. Ursula Staacke examined La Zisa in her monograph with great care.79 Hans-Rudolf Meier has published a detailed survey of all known palaces and fortified castles on the island.80 In an article, Christine Ungruh contextualizes the extramural residences in terms of what she calls a koiné of building in the Mediterranean appropriated by the Normans in Sicily.81

This dissertation examines the importance of the landscape and sources of water in the choices made by the Norman kings as they built or renovated their palaces in the area that surrounds Palermo. Despite the spate of recent literature on Norman Sicily, a comprehensive study examining all of the known suburban architecture in terms of their surrounding landscapes and waterscapes has not been carried out yet. A re-examination of these structures as a group within this context is timely. While scholars have paid a great deal of attention to the monuments attributed to William I and William II, La Zisa and La Cuba; the earlier residential examples, however, have not been addressed cohesively. Most notably, there has not been a monograph dedicated to the courtyard complex of La Favara and its attendant lake of Maredolce. In addition, Lo Scibene, whether or not it was Roger II’s favorite palace Minenium, has been sidelined in most surveys even though it is an architectural precursor to La Zisa.

79 Staacke’s conceptual work provides an interesting framework for understanding the twelfth-century secular architecture that is the subject of this dissertation, yet she pays scant attention to the Norman kings’ policies toward their multi-faith subjects or their court culture. Ursula Staacke, Un Palazzo normanno a Palermo “La Zisa”: la cultura musulmana negli edifici dei Re (Palermo: Ricerche et documenti, 1991).
New developments in the study of Islamic buildings comparable to the material examined in this dissertation, notably from the Iberian Peninsula, have been imperative in suggesting questions that have shaped my research. Giuseppe Bellafiore explored to some degree the relationship between the suburban palaces and presence of water; yet a reassessment in light of recent restorations and archaeological excavations carried out at La Favara in the past decade and a half introduces new contexts. One thinks, in particular, of the possibility of continued habitation at the site of Roger II’s residence and at La Zisa built by his successors. The Soprintendenza excavated a late antique bath at the latter in the 1970s. Studies by such scholars as Karla Mallette and D. Fairchild Ruggles signal the timeliness of the project and the necessity of engaging in interdisciplinary work.

The dissertation probes fundamental questions that relate to the study of the medieval Mediterranean. Most notably, what is it that makes a building Islamic? The structures that form the subject of the present examination were most likely made by Muslim master builders and workmen under the patronage of the Christian kings of Palermo. Notably, the art historians Henri Saladin and Georges Marçais included them in their early surveys of Islamic art and architecture published at the beginning of the twentieth century. Another key question is what can a close reading of secular architecture tell us about a reign? Roger...

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II’s rule has often been heralded as an almost unparalleled age of tolerance, whose syncretic court culture reflected the *urbs felix dotata populo trilingui*, borrowing the Hohenstaufen panegyrist Peter of Eboli’s phrase. Yet, what eludes most scholars’ interpretation is that the Norman reign was by no means monolithic and unchanging over the century and a half of their rule; for a long time the Latins were a minority among the local population of Muslims, Greek Orthodox Christians, and Jews. Thereafter, the seemingly modern lens of syncretism or multiculturalism, takes a more sinister turn during the reign of Roger’s successors, William I and William II. The suburban palaces built in the Islamic mode frame these two periods. Moreover, in addition to La Zisa and La Cuba, a closer consideration of the earlier sites associated with the Normans brings to the fore questions concerning the continued use of many of the structures surviving from not only Kalbid rule but perhaps also from antiquity.

By surveying the lesser known Lo Scibene and La Favara, this dissertation contributes to the corpus of secular architecture of the medieval Mediterranean. The study of these two sites is especially essential given their scant remains, not merely for recovering “lost material” but, more importantly, for reconstructing the larger meaning and architectural iconography of these two sites. The early modern sources that document the monumental palatial complex of La Favara are particularly vital, and my work looks at these carefully. Throughout this work, I continually consider the extramural locations and possible reasons for the choice of these sites and seek to recreate lost landscapes. My examination of the twelfth-century secular residences associated with the Norman kings highlights questions regarding visuality and power and, most originally, presents the transformation of the terrain that came about with the foundation of the royal parks.
PART ONE

—Chapter One—

The Early Literature on the Palatial Architecture of Norman Sicily
in Northern Europe

“. . . la Zisa, palais sarrasin, frère de l’Alhambra:
Nouvel Éden, fleur naissante,
délices des sens. La Zisa seule vaut le voyage.”

Marie-Louis-Jean-André-Charles DeMartin du Tyrac, Vingt jours en Sicile

“But in a purely domestic building, in a pleasurehouse in a king’s garden, taste and fancy had a much wider scope. In the Sicily of the twelfth century the princes of the great Norman line were free to build after any fashion that liked them best. . . It needs an act of faith to believe that these are truly the works of Roger the first King, of William the Bad and William the Good.”


“And if, as it seems to the outsider, these pleasure palaces or the exquisite little town houses built by Arabian architects for Franco-Norman princes and wealthy nobles are really, like the ceiling of the Royal Chapel, earlier in date than anything of the same importance preserved in the East itself, surely they are worthy of attention?”


The palace pavilions outside the city walls of Palermo commissioned by the twelfth-century Norman kings of Sicily constitute a unique corpus: the monumental La Zisa and La Cuba are among the best preserved and documented of residential buildings in the medieval
Yet these remarkable testaments of secular architecture are rarely included in synthetic overviews of the West. Instead, the palaces commissioned by the Christian dynasty are more frequently discussed in examinations of Islamic architecture as an offshoot of palatial examples built by the North African dynasties of the Zîrids and Ḥammâdids. The marginalization of the secular, or in this case, domestic, is not unique to twelfth-century Sicily, but is prevalent in the field of study of Western medieval architecture as a whole. Ecclesiastical monuments are clearly favored and form the canon. Most notably, the Cappella Palatina is the perennial favorite, often chosen to represent the “eclectic style” of Norman Sicily. Since the second half of the nineteenth century, the chapel has been extensively examined, inspiring the recent rigorous studies directed by Beat Brenk and Thomas Dittelbach.

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Secular architecture has been relegated to the fringes of scholarship for a complex set of reasons. In this chapter, I examine closely one causal thread in this composite tapestry that, I contend, signifies changing attitudes over the course of the nineteenth century toward non-ecclesiastical structures in a part of Europe that was perceived as separate and, arguably, less European. Near the end of the century, the monumental La Zisa as a residential or domestic structure came to be excluded from architectural narratives, in part due to the rise of new disciplines such as ethnology and anthropology. Within this framework, domestic architecture was mobilized to represent different races, and La Zisa, designated as a “Saracen” palace, did not easily shake off this association. The Norman suburban residences do not match many of the criteria that were established in the nineteenth century concerning the classification of architecture as will be demonstrated in the chapter: La Zisa and La Cuba are elite residences commissioned by the rulers of twelfth-century Sicily.

I. The “Discovery” of Medieval Sicily on the Grand Tour

The modern literature on the Norman palaces of La Zisa and La Cuba effectively began with the addition of Sicily to the itineraries of Grand Tour travelers. Rome was the usual terminus of a Continental tour, yet, by the final decades of the eighteenth century, travelers were increasingly drawn southwards to Paestum or to the archaeological sites of


89 Other major studies of secular architecture in the Middle Ages include Jill Caskey, Art and Patronage in the Medieval Mediterranean: Merchant Culture in the Region of Amalfi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); and Maureen C. Miller, The Bishop’s Palace: Architecture and Authority in Medieval Italy (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000).

90 Earlier accounts by Italian humanists that cited La Zisa and La Cuba are discussed in the dissertation’s introduction. Fazello, De rebus Siculis, vol. 1, 460–61; Alberti, Descrittione di tutta l’Italia et isole pertinenti, fols. 49r–55v.
Pompeii and Herculaneum uncovered mid-century. The Greek temples of Selinunte, Segesta, Agrigento, and the sites of ancient Syracuse attracted travelers to Sicily. Those who wished to carry on their journey south of Rome could easily arrange passage at Naples on a boat to Palermo or Messina, the points of disembarkation on the island.

Toward the end of the eighteenth century, the two genres of writing that described Sicily to its early visitors were travelogues and “picturesque” handbooks, whose chief focus was the Hellenic legacy of the island. The German archaeologist and art historian Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–1768) gave the initial impetus for northern European travelers’ fascination for classical antiquity. Even though Winckelmann only went as far south as Paestum, a close friend of his, Joseph Hermann von Riedesel (1740–1785), published a travelogue recording his visit to Sicily and Greece in 1771, composed as a series of letters addressed to his mentor. Riedesel’s *Reise durch Sicilien und Grossgriechenland* quickly became a bestseller and was translated into French and English. Yet his focus was the

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classical sites of the island, and Palermo hardly received a mention. An equally popular
guide for Anglophone readers was Patrick Brydone’s *A Tour through Sicily and Malta*
(1773), which, like Riedesel’s travelogue, did not include a great deal of information on
contemporary Palermo. According to Nelson Moe, the accounts of Brydone and Riedesel
played a significant role in placing the island on the Grand Tour map as a Hellenic
destination.96 Besides, a journey to Sicily was more easily accomplished. Greece was still a
province of the Ottoman Empire.97 Nevertheless, the island had another exoticizing element,
and these travelogues accentuated differences between the Bourbon Kingdom of the Two
Sicilies and the Italian north, both of which were far more familiar to their audience through
either secondary reports or personal experience by this time.98

An additional travelogue by the English traveler Henry Swinburne (1743–1803), who
published the bestselling *Travels in the Two Sicilies* (1783–88), was popular among
contemporary readers.99 Unlike Riedesel and Brydone, Swinburne described Palermo in
some detail and recorded his visits to the city’s medieval sites.100 On his way to the cathedral
of Monreale eight kilometers southwest of Palermo, Swinburne recounted a structure that he
saw that he called “La Torre Zizza.” He referred to it as “built by the Saracens during their
abode in Sicily, which places the epocha of its building as far back as the ninth or tenth

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96 Nelson Moe, *The View from Vesuvius: Italian Culture and the Southern Question* (Berkeley: University of
97 Robert Eisner, *Travelers to an Antique Land: The History and Literature of Travel to Greece* (Ann Arbor:
98 For a general summary, see H. H. H. Remak, “Exoticism in Romanticism,” *Comparative Literature Studies*
15, 1 (1978), 53–65. For a classic study of exoticism, see Paul van Tieghem’s study on Spain in the accounts of
British and French travelers, which in many ways parallels representations of Bourbon Sicily in contemporary
1948).
99 Selections from the accounts of Swinburne and Brydone were frequently published together. Henry
Swinburne and Patrick Brydone, *The Present State of Sicily and Malta: Extracted from Mr. Brydone, Mr.
Swinburne, and other Modern Travellers* (London: G. Kearsley, 1788).
100 Henry Swinburne, *Travels in the Two Sicilies, in the Years 1777, 1778, 1779, and 1780* (London: P. Elmsly,
Swinburne narrated a legend, presumably of local origin, in which an unnamed sultan constructed the residence for his beautiful daughter called “Zizza.” He revealed the etymology of the word as meaning “gay, flowery, decked out,” which he noted could also refer to the gardens that still surrounded the palace.

Swinburne included an engraving to accompany his description of La Zisa as a “square stone tower, three stories high, of regular courses of masonry, not at all decayed by age” (figs. 1.1–1.2). His illustration, however, strangely elongates the rectangular north face, distorting it by eliminating a full third of the structure on either side of the principal archway. In this way, he transformed the façade of La Zisa into a tower-like structure (figs. 1.3–1.4). The sketch that Swinburne provided was in all likelihood more harmonious with his contemporaries’ sensibilities. He paid particular attention to the windows on the façade, which he described thus: “the windows of la Zizza are long, and almost round at the top, in the old Saxon manner, instead of being pointed or arched in the form of a horseshoe.” He likely introduced the horseshoe arch in this context since he suggested in his work that La Zisa was built in the same period as the Mosque of Córdoba. Swinburne’s mention of Córdoba and the inclusion of La Zisa in his Sicilian travelogue is not surprising; he was one of the first of his generation to have had a keen interest in Islamic architecture. A few years earlier, he went on a journey to Spain and published an account as Travels through Spain

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101 Ibid.
104 In all likelihood, Swinburne sketched La Zisa’s exterior, as we can see on the lower left “H.SW.de,” while the engraving was executed by an I. Taylor according to the “I.Taylor.Scul” on the lower right (see fig. 1.1).
105 Ibid.
(1779). During that time, he reportedly spent a week sketching the Alhambra and several
days at the Mosque of Córdoba.\textsuperscript{106}

In the preface to his Spanish travelogue, Swinburne noted that he took great pains to
record the monuments he encountered on his travels.\textsuperscript{107} Despite his earlier claim to accuracy
with regard to visual reproductions, Swinburne’s tower-like illustration of La Zisa contains
further details indicative of his interests. If we look more closely at the structure’s
crenellated parapet, we can see that Swinburne placed on every merlon a single letter in a
pseudo-Arabic script (fig. 1.2).According to him: “On each stone of the battlement is a
letter hitherto unexplained, but it is probable it belongs to some alphabet used by the
Saracens.”\textsuperscript{108} Swinburne stated that the lettering on La Zisa’s cornice is in a cursive script
that he called “Nikki” (presumably \textit{naskhī} script) and differentiated it from “Cufick” or \textit{Kūfic}
script.\textsuperscript{109} He was remarkably attentive to the text crowning the building, but he did not
mention the inscriptions in the vestibule (figs. 6.72–6.73).\textsuperscript{110} Notwithstanding the
idiosyncrasies of his engraving as well as other orientalizing aspects, such as the structure
named after a sultan’s daughter called “Zizza,” Swinburne’s description is remarkably

\textsuperscript{106} Henry Swinburne, \textit{Travels through Spain, in the years 1775 and 1776. In which several monuments of
Roman and Moorish architecture are illustrated by accurate drawings taken on the spot} (London: Elmsly,
1779). In fact, Swinburne’s account was the main source of information for England on Spain up until the end
of the Napoleonic Peninsular War (1814). On Swinburne and Spain, see Kathryn Moore Heleniak, “An 18th-
Century English Gentleman’s Encounter with Islamic Architecture: Henry Swinburne’s \textit{Travels through Spain}

\textsuperscript{107} Swinburne, \textit{Travels through Spain}, vol. 1, vi: “I can answer for the exactness of the drawings: I never took
the liberty of adding or retrenching a single object.” Also quoted in Heleniak, “An 18th Century English
Gentleman,” 186.

\textsuperscript{108} Swinburne, \textit{Travels in the Two Sicilies}, vol. 3, 337.

\textsuperscript{109} Yasser Tabbaa, \textit{The Transformation of Islamic Art during the Sunni Revival} (Seattle: University of
Washington Press, 2001), 34–44; Sheila S. Blair, \textit{Islamic Calligraphy} (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press,
2006), 143–94.

\textsuperscript{110} Yet Swinburne did note that the building’s principal room: “...is decorated with thin arches, and frosted
cielings [sic] hanging down in drops. A fountain plays in the hall.” Idem, \textit{Travels in the Two Sicilies}, vol. 3,
338.
informative and remained the principal source on the palace for Anglophone travelers until the early decades of the next century.  

Concurrent with these travelogues, there was an additional genre of writing intended for the potential visitor but perhaps better suited for the armchair traveler, known as the “picturesque.” Among the most popular picturesque accounts of the Bourbon Kingdom of Sicily and Naples was that by the painter Jean-Claude Richard de Saint-Non (1727–1791), whose multi-volume compendium was entitled *Description des Royaumes de Naples et de Sicile* (1781–86).  

Another key work was by the engraver Jean-Pierre-Laurent Houël (1735–1810), who published the *Voyage pittoresque des Isles de Sicile, de Malte et de Lipari* (1782–87).  

Saint-Non’s work was composed primarily of travelers’ accounts that he commissioned; it did not contain any illustration of the extramural Norman palace pavilion. Houël, on the other hand, included little more than captions to accompany the monuments in his study. Thus, it is not surprising that the sketch he provided of La Zisa’s main hall is puzzling since a group of soldiers is depicted in its interior (fig. 1.7).  

Saint-Non’s work consisted of lengthy descriptions that were essentially travelogues in several volumes. He commissioned the report on Sicily from Jean Dominique Vivant Denon, who at the time of his 1778 stay was secretary to the French embassy in Naples. In his travelogue, Denon mentioned visiting both La Cuba and La Zisa, which he noted were the

111 Swinburne does not mention La Cuba in his travelogue. This is not surprising, however, since the structure was used at the time as the Bourbon army’s cavalry barracks. See Amari, “Lettre à M. Ad. de Longpérie,” 677–79; Caronia, Noto, and Minnella, *La Cuba di Palermo*, 14–16.  


favorite pleasure palaces of the tenth- and eleventh-century Muslim amīrs of Palermo. Unlike Henry Swinburne, he had never been to Spain. Nonetheless, these extramural structures evoked for Denon an exoticized splendor that he recognized also in the ecclesiastical monuments of the Normans. This led him to believe that perhaps the Christian kings chose an Islamic decorative mode for their palatial architecture and, therefore, La Zisa and La Cuba might in fact date to the twelfth century.

II. Travelogues and Architectural Handbooks: La Zisa Makes the Grade

On the heels of these travelers’ accounts came the first attempts at the systematic examination and categorization of art and architecture at the beginning of the nineteenth century. A seminal figure in this development was the French antiquarian Jean-Baptiste Séroux d’Agincourt (1730–1814). Séroux d’Agincourt set about the ambitious task of studying all of the architecture, painting, and sculpture of the Middle Ages, published largely posthumously as the *Histoire de l’art par les monumens* (1810–23). In the same manner as Saint-Non’s picturesque anthology, Séroux d’Agincourt commissioned sketches and

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117 Séroux d’Agincourt’s aspiration was to produce a work on par with Winckelmann’s study of classical art and architecture, focusing on what he termed after the German classicist, the “period of decadence until its revival,” or the Middle Ages. Jean-Baptiste-Louis-George Séroux d’Agincourt, *Histoire de l’art par les monumens depuis sa décadence au IVe siècle jusqu’à son renouvellement au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Treuttel and Würtz, 1810–23), vol. 1, 6–7.
engravings from local artists and architects to create one of the earliest illustrated architectural books. Organized chronologically, and, as its title suggests, “by the monuments,” Séroux d’Agincourt provided a historical narrative and exposition of the accompanying illustrations, which in the volume on architecture consisted of ground plans and elevations.119

In his examination of medieval architecture, Séroux d’Agincourt was concerned with uncovering the possible sources of Gothic architecture, and a key goal was detecting the origin of the characteristic “arc aigu” or pointed arch.120 Within the confines of this debate, he examined Islamic architecture for examples of this arch typology. Séroux d’Agincourt argued for its introduction into Northern Europe following the Norman conquest of Sicily. In his discussion, he incorporated La Zisa as a residence built during the Muslim rule of the island. In the supplementary volume of folio-sized plates that elucidated the chronological development of Islamic architecture, Séroux d’Agincourt placed four images of La Zisa in the center of the page. In this arrangement, the Sicilian palace was book-ended by the Mosque of Córdoba and the Alhambra, so that it effectively became the representative Islamic monument between the eighth and the fifteenth century (figs. 1.9, 1.11).121

La Zisa was included in the Histoire de l’art par les monumens due to Séroux d’Agincourt’s reliance on the French architect Léon Dufourny (1754–1818) for sketches of the medieval buildings of Palermo (figs. 1.10–1.12).122 In a series of letters exchanged

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121 Ibid., vol. 4, pl. XLIV.
122 Léon Dufourny was the commissary of the French Republic in Naples and a relatively long-term resident of Palermo, having lived in the city from 1787 to 1794. Dufourny was later appointed Séroux d’Agincourt’s agent.
between Rome and Palermo, Dufourny alerted the elderly scholar to the architectural
importance of the palace of La Zisa, which he believed a Muslim amīr had built. Dufourny
hereby signaled to Séroux d’Agincourt that the residence was a conceivable “missing link” in
the transmission of the pointed arch from Sicily to Northern Europe.\textsuperscript{123} As a result, Séroux
d’Agincourt commissioned from his colleague in Palermo the sketch and several engravings
of the structure.\textsuperscript{124} Dufourny reproduced the ground plan of La Zisa’s first two floors and a
remarkably accurate depiction of the façade. In addition, he provided for the first time a
cross-section of the Fountain Room’s interior that included its \textit{mugarnas} vaults (fig. 1.11).
Also visible in the engraved plate are the system of corridors and seventeenth-century
staircases. Surprisingly, the fountain from which the modern nomenclature of the residence’s
principal room is derived does not appear in the otherwise precise rendering. Dufourny’s
attentiveness to detail was undoubtedly due to his architectural training; his engravings are
precise, in stark contrast to Henry Swinburne’s distorted elevation of La Zisa (fig. 1.1). Most
importantly for subsequent treatments of the Sicilian palace, Séroux d’Agincourt’s inclusion
of La Zisa marked it as worthy of study for antiquarians and architectural connoisseurs.\textsuperscript{125}

\textsuperscript{123} Letter from Léon Dufourny addressed to Séroux d’Agincourt, February 13, 1812, Paris: “J’ai beaucoup
étudié le château de la Zisa et l’ai dessiné, à votre intention dans le plus grand détail. . . Vous dites. . . que ce
château a été bâti par les Émirs arabes dans les dernières années qu’ils ont occupé la Sicile au XI Siècle.
Cependant les observ. que j’ai faites sur le lieu m’ont fait conclure que cette fabrique était du IXe, dans cet
embarras je l’ai provisoirement daté, du IX au XI, afin de n’être pas en opposition avec votre dire que j’estime
cependant devoir être modifié et sur lequel je vous prie de m’envoyer la correction à faire – j’ai cru bien faire
aussi d’avertir le lecteur des diverses additions modernes et lui indiquer les divers auteurs. . .” Quoted from
Mondini, \textit{Mittelalter im Bild}, 225.

\textsuperscript{124} The cathedral of Monreale was also included in the discussion of what Séroux d’Agincourt termed the
“Gothic System.” As was the case for La Zisa, Dufourny provided illustrations of its ground plan as well as an
interior elevation, in order to demonstrate what he believed to be a later example of the pointed arch in medieval
Sicilian architecture (figs. 1.10, 1.12).

l’extérieur de cet édifice, sont légèrement aigus, et s’éloignent peu du plein cintre; cependant la tendance vers
la forme ogive devient assez sensible sur la face extérieure.”
Regrettably for the French antiquarian, the publication of the *Histoire de l’art par les monumens* was delayed by the onset of the French Revolution. Séroux d’Agincourt’s compendium was rendered old-fashioned when it was finally published two decades later in its entirety. Despite its frosty reception by contemporary critics, Séroux d’Agincourt did achieve his goal in producing an encyclopedic work on medieval monuments arranged chronologically. In the following years and, indeed, still today, antiquarians and architects perused the six volumes but certainly paid more attention to the illustrations than to the text. Yet Séroux d’Agincourt’s work was timely insofar as he believed that the pointed arch of northern European Gothic architecture originated in medieval Sicily, a hotly disputed topic among architectural theorists and antiquarians into the 1830s and 40s. The debate drew some of the brightest of contemporary minds, such as the neoclassical architect Jakob Ignaz Hittorff and his assistant, Ludwig Wilhelm von Zanth, who toured the island’s classical sites in 1823–24, published as the *Architecture antique de la Sicile* (1827).

Several years later, Hittorff and Zanth published their *Architecture moderne de la Sicile* (1835) in which they examined the medieval architecture of Sicily. The importance of their monograph has not been adequately acknowledged in the scholarly literature. Hittorff, the work’s main author, stressed the continuity between the Greek and the Arab-Norman

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architecture of the island (figs. 1.13–1.15). In the preface, he stated that one of the primary intentions of the monograph was to prove that the pointed arch first appeared in tenth-century Sicily. Hittorff employed the two palaces of La Zisa and La Cuba as ideal case studies in order to advance his claim:

En effet, ces deux édifices sont les exemples les plus authentiques de la première adoption d’un système dont l’application progressive caractérise particulièrement l’architecture dite gothique. Ce système fut employé à la Zisa et à la Cuba vers le milieu ou la fin du Xe siècle, c’est-à-dire, plusieurs siècles avant que l’arc aigu et la voûte en ogive aient paru dans aucun bâtiment élève après cette époque.

Hittorff took issue with Séroux d’Agincourt’s overly cautious assessment regarding the origin of the Sicilian pointed arch that “a bien pu en quelque sorte naître entre les mains des Arabes.” He attacked the French antiquarian’s conviction that the pointed arches were the product of later Norman restorations of the Saracen palaces. Hittorff believed that the Muslim workmen who built La Zisa introduced this arch typology in the tenth century, which the twelfth-century kings subsequently chose to adopt in their ecclesiastical building projects.

Hittorff drew attention to an additional architectural element, the *muqarnas* vaults that adorned the palace pavilion’s interior and its adjacent chapel, which he referred to as the

130 Ibid., 1: “Pour l’architecture moderne, la certitude de pouvoir fixer en Sicile, pendant la domination des Sarrasins, le point de départ de l’emploi systématique de l’arc aigu, c’est-à-dire, l’origine de l’architecture ogivale.”
131 Ibid., 54.
132 Séroux d’Agincourt, *Histoire de l’art par les monumens*, vol. 1, 77: “. . . ce genre d’arc naissait en quelque sorte entre les mains des Arabes; ou parce que, déjà pratiqué à cette époque dans le nord de l’Europe, il s’était introduit chez les Arabes par leur contact avec les Normands, qui ne parvinrent à les chasser de la Sicile que vers la fin du XIe siècle?”
“l’ancienne mosquée de la Zisa.” Most notably, he described it as modeled on a “demeure orientale,” while noting that La Cuba’s underlying architectural form was an Islamic kiosk. Hittorff thus concluded that both structures were of Muslim origin due to the fact that they had “toutes les particularités qui caractérisent l’architecture moresque.” He strongly refuted the assertion made by Séroux d’Agincourt and other writers that La Zisa was begun by William I and completed by William II. Hittorff could not reconcile the widely divergent styles of the pleasure palaces with the Norman Romanesque basilica of Monreale begun in ca. 1172 by William II. Therefore, he decided, as did many later writers, that the Muslim amīrs of the island must have built La Zisa and La Cuba in the period of the highest prosperity of their rule, in the tenth century.

In conjunction with Hittorff and Zanth’s study, the English antiquarian Henry Gally Knight (1786–1846) published an influential historical account. Entitled The Normans in Sicily (1838), his handbook on medieval Sicily was the first available to the English reader since Henry Swinburne’s travelogue of the 1780s. Gally Knight described at some length what he called the “Saracen” palaces at the outskirts of Palermo. His popular work departed from earlier travelogues in the quantity and the quality of its illustrations (figs.

134 On the Norman chapel presumably built in the same period as the palace, see Lucio Trizzano, SS. Trinità alla Zisa: progetto di restauro (Palermo: D. Flaccovio, 1979).
135 Hittorff and Zanth, Architecture moderne de la Sicile, 6–7: “La Zisa, qui est en tout le modèle d’une demeure orientale complète distribuée et ornée comme le sont la plupart des châteaux arabes des autres contrées, et la Cuba, espèce de kiosque dont l’origine et la destination orientale sont également incontestables.”
137 Idem, The Normans in Sicily, 269–70: “The Saracenic remains in the neighbourhood of Palermo are the villas of Moorish princes. Of these three exist in a good state of preservation, as well they may, from the substantial and scientific manner in which they were built. The names of these three villas are La Ziza, La Cuba, and Favara, or Mar Dolce. The first two are each about a mile distant from the Palazzo Reale, the one to the south, the other to the west. The third is in quite another direction, about two miles to the east of Palermo, at the foot of the hills.”
Gally Knight’s attention to detail in terms of both the textual description and the visual record that he presented to his readers was superseded only by Joseph-Philibert Girault de Prangey’s *Essai sur l’architecture des Arabes et des Mores, en Espagne, en Sicile, et en Barbarie* (1841). The Frenchman provided extremely precise lithographs, based on sketches he made during his visit to Sicily (figs. 1.18–1.21). He reproduced a host of Palermo’s medieval monuments, which, in addition to the principal suburban palaces, included the smaller pavilion of La Cubula and the Ponte dell’Ammiraglio.

What signaled Girault de Prangey’s groundbreaking approach in relation to earlier travelogues and handbooks was his use of a comparative methodology for the study of Islamic architecture. He juxtaposed an assortment of architectural elements from Sicily’s medieval monuments with examples he drew from Egypt, North Africa, and Spain. By

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138 Gally Knight carefully illustrated the medieval components of these buildings in an accompanying volume published two years later. Idem, *Saracenic and Norman Remains, to Illustrate the Normans in Sicily* (London: J. Murray, 1840).


141 Girault de Prangey’s work included elevations and ground plans and an illustration of the interior of La Zisa’s Fountain Room. In the *Essai sur l’architecture des Arabes et des Mores*, he paid close attention to the mosaics and inscriptions of La Zisa’s principal hall on the ground floor and reproduced the interiors of other levels of the palace. Overall, the precision of Girault de Prangey’s illustrations far superseded those previously available, such as those by Gally Knight and Hiittorff and Zanth’s, in addition to those completed by Léon Dufourny for Séroux d’Agincourt’s *Histoire de l’art par les monumens.

142 Girault de Prangey, *Essai sur l’architecture des Arabes et des Mores*, ix: “Il existe en Sicile quelques édifices généralement attribués aux Arabes, et dont la construction, bien que manquant de date précise, ne peut guère être supposée antérieure au dixième siècle, ni postérieure à la première moitié du douzième, époque de la plus haute prospérité de Palerme sous la domination Musulmane. Nous chercherons à discuter la date et à caractériser la construction de ces édifices, qui nous semblent constituer une phase de l’Art Arabe avec plusieurs caractères particuliers, différant surtout de ceux que présentent les monuments Arabes d’Espagne. En Sicile, dans les palais de la Zisa et de la Cuba, le grandiose de l’ensemble, l’appareil si régulier de la construction, le système ogival qui prédomine et qui remplace l’arc à plein cintre outre-passé dont on retrouve à
closely examining La Cuba and La Zisa, he came to question Séroux d’Agincourt’s and Hittorff’s assessments that these structures were built by the Muslim amīrs of the island. Girault de Prangey hypothesized that the suburban residences could in fact be Norman, as primary sources contemporary with the conquest record the widespread destruction of the cities, castles, and palaces of Muslim Sicily. Yet he still assigned a relatively early date to these buildings. Girault de Prangey noted that if these were built in the twelfth century, then they were likely to have been constructed during Roger II’s reign, from 1130 to 1154.143

Generally, Girault de Prangey’s employment of a careful methodology for the dating of architecture across different cultures marked a changing attitude among scholars and antiquarians, who wished to systemize their findings. One result was the creation and popularization of art and architectural survey books that aimed to be comprehensive.144 A key figure in this regard is the Berlin art historian Franz Kugler (1800–1858), who authored one of the earliest survey books, entitled Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte (1842), which claimed to be “universal” in scope.145 In his chapter on Islamic architecture, Kugler made

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143 Ibid., 95: “D’autre part, si l’on contestait à ces édifices leur origines et leur construction complète au temps des Arabes, on ne pourrait leur assigner une date plus moderne que le premier siècle de l’occupation Normande, puisqu’ils offrent à la fois des analogues frappantes de plan et d’ensemble avec les nombreux monuments dont le roi Roger fut le fondateur, et des imitations positives des procédés de construction et d’ornementation alors constamment employés.”


mention of what he believed to be the surviving structures dating to this period in Sicily. He
singled out the austerity of La Zisa’s exterior and the sumptuous decoration of its principal
hall, which he associated most closely with some recently discovered Umayyad palaces.146
An additional survey published a short time after Kugler’s work that included the extramural
Sicilian structures was Karl Schnaase’s Die Geschichte der bildenden Künste (1843).147
Writing on the architecture of Islam, Schnaase noted the physical destruction brought about
by the Norman invasion of Sicily, similar to Girault de Prangey’s observation. He singled
out “die Lustschlösser Zisa und Cuba,” which due to their monumentality and splendour,
were preserved and renovated by the Christian conquerors. Schnaase saw the Islamic palaces
of Spain as the closest point of reference to the Sicilian examples, unlike Kugler, who saw
Syria as a possible link, and Girault de Prangey, who had favored Egypt.148
The inclusion of La Zisa and La Cuba in the first art and architectural survey books
would make it seem that these monuments held a secure place within the narrative of
medieval Islamic architecture. Yet, interestingly, in Kugler’s later survey, Geschichte der
Baukunst (1856), La Cuba and La Zisa were discussed in the same subsection as Kairouan,
despite the fact that their non-Islamic patronage had already been established.149 Kugler

so-called “Berlin School” of art history, see Gabriele Bickendorf, “Die “Berliner Schule:” Carl Friedrich von
Rumohr (1785–1843), Gustav Friedrich Waagen (1794–1868), Karl Schnaase (1798–1875) und Franz Kugler
Pfisterer (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2007), 46–61; another relevant overview that discusses both Kugler’s and
Schnaase’s contribution includes Hubert Locher, Kunstgeschichte als historische Theorie der Kunst 1750–1950
(Munich: W. Fink, 2001).
148 Ibid., 379–80: “Diese Gebäude, die einzigen, welche uns über die Kunst der Araber in Sicilien Auskunft
gaben, stehen (wie wir weiterhin uns überzeugen werden) den maurischen Bauten von Spanien nicht so nahe,
wie denen von Kairo. . . Eine Einwirkung christlicher Meister ist keinesweges anzunehmen, die Italiener dieser
Zeit standen ohne Zweifel hinter den Arabern zurück, und den Byzantinern ist der Spitzbogen immer fremd
gleibten. Dagegen scheint es, dass diese Ähnlichkeit des architektonischen Styls mit einem abendländischen
Charakterzuge zusammenhanging, der sich auch hier wie in Spanien bei diesen westlichen Saracen ausbildete.”
149 Franz Kugler, “X: Der Islam. 4. Kairwan und Sicilien,” in Geschichte der Baukunst (Stuttgart: Ebnert &
Seubert, 1856), vol. 1, 510–11: “Es haben sich in Sicilien einige bauliche Monumente arabischen Gepräges
knew of the conclusion reached by Amari in his article in the *Revue archéologique* of 1849.\(^{150}\) In his work, he noted that La Zisa was built concurrently with La Cuba and, therefore, was also of Norman construction, thus echoing Amari’s work.\(^{151}\) Consequently, Kugler’s placement of the palace pavilions was due to their outward form and ornamentation, which he categorized as Islamic, and patronage did not play a part in determining the inclusion of these works with examples from the medieval Latin West.

In addition to Kugler’s and Schnaase’s popular publications, there was the Scotsman James Fergusson’s *The Illustrated Handbook of Architecture* (1855), a best-seller among its Anglophone audience.\(^{152}\) Independently wealthy, Fergusson traveled widely, to Palestine and India, among other places.\(^{153}\) He included La Zisa and La Cuba as important monuments that he believed could decide the architectural debate regarding the origin of the pointed arch. Yet strong nationalist overtones dominated this discourse. Fergusson concluded that this

Arch typology in medieval Sicily was not related to that of French Gothic architecture. In the face of Kugler’s clear recognition of the newly discovered Norman patronage of the suburban examples, Fergusson was somewhat unconvinced. In The Illustrated Handbook of Architecture (republished in its entirety as A History of Architecture in All Countries in 1867), Fergusson betrayed a sentiment common among his peers. The Norman palaces’ “Saracenic” appearance logically denoted them as an “Other.” Despite evidence to the contrary from the respected Arabist Michele Amari that these were commissioned by Christian kings, La Zisa and La Cuba remained missing from narratives of Western architecture.

For the Francophone world, a counterpart to Fergusson’s survey was Louis Batissier’s Histoire de l’art monumental dans l’antiquité et au moyen âge (1845). In his work, Batissier noted the heated debate among European antiquarians as to the origins of the pointed arch divided along national lines:

Les antiquaires de la France, de l’Angleterre et de l’Allemagne, qui, chacun de leur côté, revendiquent pour leur pays la gloire d’avoir inventé l’arc brisé, ont nié ou l’origine arabe de la façade de la Ziza, ou l’âge des vieilles mosquées du Caire, sans s’inquiéter des faits mentionnés par l’histoire, des déductions tirées

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154 Fergusson, The Illustrated Handbook of Architecture, vol. 2, 810–11: “In like manner in Syracuse and the southern angle of the island the Greek feeling prevails almost to the exclusion of the other two. In Palermo on the other hand, and the western parts, the architecture is so remarkably Saracen that hardly any antiquarian has yet been able to make up his mind to admit the possibility of such buildings as the Cuba and Ziza having been erected by the Norman kings. There is, however, little or no doubt that the latter was erected by William I (1151–69), and the other about the same time, though by whom is not quite so clear. Both these buildings were erected after a century of Norman dominion in the island: still the Moorish influence, here so predominant, is not a subject of wonder when we consider the immeasurable superiority of that people in art and civilization, not only to their new rulers, but to all the other inhabitants. It was therefore only natural that they should be employed to provide for the Norman Counts such buildings as they only had the art to erect or adorn.” Most tellingly, Fergusson did not change his conclusion in the revised edition A History of Architecture, vol. 2, 271–72. For an assessment of the orientalizing aspects of Fergusson’s survey books, see Crinson, Empire Building, 42–48.
de l’étude comparative des monuments et des preuves incontestables fournies par les inscriptions.\textsuperscript{155}

Batissier drew from Girault de Prangey’s *Essai sur l’architecture des Arabes et des Mores*, insofar as he saw a correspondence between architectural components in Sicilian monuments and the mosques of Ibn Tulun and al-Azhar in Cairo.\textsuperscript{156}

### III. From Paris to Palermo: Viollet-le-Duc, La Zisa, and *The Habitations of Man in All Ages* (Histoire de l’habitation humaine)

Louis Batissier’s *Histoire de l’art monumental* was intended as a handbook for architects and other practitioners. His work was a forerunner and a model for the didactic publications of the French architect and restorer Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc (1814–1879).\textsuperscript{157} Viollet-le-Duc visited Sicily in 1836 as part of his privileged upper-middle-class Parisian education.\textsuperscript{158} His father, Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, was a high-ranking civil

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\textsuperscript{156} Ibid., 436–37. In this passage Batissier continued: “Le petit palais de la Cuba est bâti dans le même système que la Ziza, et nous devons lui appliquer les mêmes observations. Ces deux monuments, dit avec beaucoup de raison M. Girault de Prangey, reproduisent assez fidèlement les constructions arabes du Caire. Les grandes arcades de la Cuba surtout, leur forme ogivale incontestable, ces niches terminées au sommet en forme de coquille, les frises avec leurs inscriptions koufiques, rapprochent en général les châteaux arabes de la Sicile des mosquées de Touloun et d’Al-Ahzar, où l’on remarque la forme particulière de l’ogive orientale.”


\textsuperscript{158} To medievalists, Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc is perhaps best known for his restoration of the medieval monuments of France as well as for his enormous impact on his contemporaries as an architectural theorist. His career began after his appointment by the inspector-general Prosper Mérimée to restore the Romanesque church of the Madeleine at Vézelay for the *Commission des monuments historiques* in 1840. During his time at the *Commission*, Viollet-le-Duc restored St-Germain-l’Auxerrois, the Abbey Church of St.-Denis, the Sainte-Chapelle, and the Cathedrals of Paris, Amiens, Rheims, Sens, and Clermont-Ferrand, among other monuments. Viollet-le-Duc’s principal architectural theory and didactic works include the ten-volume *Dictionnaire raisonné de l’architecture française du XIe au XVIe siècle* (1854–68), and the *Entretiens sur l’architecture* (1858–72, 2 vols.) The latter contains his considerable pedagogic efforts after a failed attempt to establish a school of architecture followed by a brief stint as a professor at the École des Beaux-Arts. For a recent analysis of Viollet-le-Duc’s restorations see Kevin D. Murphy, *Memory and Modernity: Viollet-le-Duc at Vézelay* (University Park: Published by Penn State Press, 2000); Jean-Paul Midant, *Au Moyen-Age avec Viollet-le-Duc* (Paris: Paragon, 2001); for a general biography, see Pierre-Marie Auzas, *Eugène Viollet-Le-Duc, 1814–1879* (Paris: Caisse nationale des monuments historiques et des sites, 1979); for a discussion of his theoretical works,
servant, and being thus very well connected, he trained early on with several architects and traveled extensively all over France and in Italy.\textsuperscript{159} His visit to Palermo was facilitated by letters of introduction to members of Palermo’s upper class. Among the acquaintances that Viollet-le-Duc made was the Sicilian antiquarian Duke Domenico lo Faso Pietrasanta of Serradifalco.\textsuperscript{160} His villa in the lush suburbs of the city provided a suitable setting for Viollet-le-Duc’s interests, frequently functioning as a meeting point or salon for local antiquarians and other affluent travelers who pursued a less-traveled route of the Grand Tour popular due to Goethe.\textsuperscript{161}

During his six-week stay in Palermo, the twenty-two-year-old Viollet-le-Duc was drawn to the medieval monuments of the city. He completed numerous sketches of the nearby cloister of the Cathedral of Monreale, the Cappella Palatina, and S. Giovanni degli Eremiti.\textsuperscript{162} Viollet-le-Duc was profoundly struck by what his contemporaries believed to be the residence of a Muslim \textit{amīr} located in the same suburb of Palermo as Serradifalco’s villa. The palace of La Zisa was privately owned by the Counts of Notarbartolo di Sciara at the time and had been substantially altered.\textsuperscript{163} The building and its grounds were transferred into

\textsuperscript{159} Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc held the high-ranking position of Sous-Contrôleur des Services for the Tuileries. Murphy, \textit{Memory and Modernity}, 31; Auzas, \textit{Eugène Viollet-Le-Duc, 1814–1879}, 18–22.

\textsuperscript{160} Serradifalco wrote extensively on the antiquities of Sicily and its medieval monuments, and published soon afterwards a monograph on the cathedral of Monreale and the ecclesiastical architecture of Palermo (1838), and a short essay on La Zisa (1846). Domenico lo Faso Pietrasanta, duke of Serradifalco, \textit{Del Duomo di Monreale e di altre chiese siculo normanne} (Palermo: Tipografia Roberti, 1838); idem, “Il Castello della Zisa,” in \textit{L’Olivuzza: ricordo del soggiorno della Corte imperiale russa in Palermo nell’inverno 1845–1846} (Palermo: 1846).


\textsuperscript{163} Carolina Notarbartolo Maurigi, \textit{Castello e tenimento della Zisa: storia documentata riguardante la proprietà, i censimenti e i passaggi in rapporto alla lite contro il capitolo della Cattedrale di capitolo della Cattedrale di Catania} (Palermo: C. Sciarrinogia Puccio, 1903).
private hands in the seventeenth century and underwent a series of alterations. The changes included the blocking up of windows, the addition of a balcony, and the closing of the open-air atrium on the upper floor. By the early nineteenth century, La Zisa was in an advanced state of disrepair. Only the richly decorated hall on the ground floor, the so-called Fountain Room, was readily accessible to visitors such as Viollet-le-Duc and other travelers.\footnote{Caronia, \textit{La Zisa di Palermo}, 101–30.}

Writing to his father, Viollet-le-Duc recorded his impressions of the stately structure:

\begin{quote}
Mais une des choses les plus curieuses que nous ayons trouvées ici, c’est le château arabe de la Zisa; ce château est extrêmement remarquable; à l’extérieur, ce ne sont presque que 4 murs seulement ornés par des créneaux et de grandes ogives dont la saillie sur le mur est à peine sensible, leur proportion est grande et gracieuse en même temps; le vestibule, quoiqu’il ait été rococotifié comme tout le reste, est cependant assez bien conservé pour que l’on puisse juger de son effet.\footnote{Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, \textit{“Letter to M. Viollet-le-Duc, May 9, 1836,”} in \textit{Lettres d’Italie, 1836–1837, adressées à sa famille}, annotated by Geneviève Viollet-le-Duc (Paris: L. Laget, 1971), 57. He wrote in an additional letter dated to May 3, 1836: “… nous avons été ce matin dessiner un monument arabe, la Cuba, qui est fort curieux; nous en avons deux de cette époque ici, dont les dessins paraîtront intéressants à Paris je l’espère. Mais toute cette architecture, inventée je crois pour donner du mal à ceux qui veulent la dessiner, ne se fait pas vite; quoique nous travaillions toute la journée, nos dessins n’avancent pas beaucoup. Il faut plusieurs jours et quelquefois plusieurs semaines pour terminer un monument, et je m’explique maintenant pourquoi la plupart des artistes qui viennent ici parlent beaucoup de la Sicile, et ne montrent que peu de choses.” Ibid., 55.}
\end{quote}

Viollet-le-Duc noted that “le château arabe de la Zisa” was a magnificent box-like structure unadorned on its exterior save for the crenellated moldings crowning the building. He continued with an account of the ground-floor hall and its mosaics, marble wainscoting, and centralized fountain (fig. 1.22).\footnote{Ibid., 57–58: “Je crois qu’en Europe il n’y a guère que l’Alhambra dont l’intérieur soit plus curieux et plus beau que ce vestibule; au fond, une fontaine qui coule toujours, entretient la fraîcheur en s’écoulant par des conduits et de petits bassins entourés de mosaïques, ce qui fait un très joli effet; des colonnettes terminées par de charmants chapiteaux en marbre blanc sont placées à chaque angle, et à l’entrée 8 colonnes en granit et un marbre blanc veiné ont aussi de beaux chapiteaux, ainsi qu’une belle frise en caractères arabes.”}

Viollet-le-Duc also noted the \textit{muqarnas} vaults that he sketched in detail and described as:

\begin{quote}
Noting the vaults’ intricate geometry, Viollet-le-Duc gave away his later conclusion in the *Entretiens sur l’architecture* (1858–72), in which he argued that Islamic architecture was a precursor to Gothic architecture.\(^{168}\) In a letter to his father, he betrayed his profound admiration for La Zisa by stating that: “Je crois qu’en Europe il n’y a guère que l’Alhambra dont l’intérieur soit plus curieux et plus beau que ce vestibule.” Viollet-le-Duc suggested that due to its ornate interior, La Zisa was an important example of Islamic architecture and second only to the Alhambra.

La Zisa remained so prominent in his mind that Viollet-le-Duc included it in a lesser known and much later survey of secular architecture entitled *Histoire de l’habitation humaine* (1875).\(^{169}\) Completed almost forty years after his visit to Palermo, he chose the Norman palace as the archetypical “Saracen” domestic house (figs. 1.23–1.24). Viollet-le-

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\(^{167}\) Ibid., 58. Viollet-le-Duc continued in his letter to his father stating that: “Dans ce que nous avons déjà vu de l’architecture arabe, ce qui frappe c’est ce raffinement de construction, cette connaissance de l’effet qu’ils vont produire, cette science enfin qui a dirigé leur travaux; ce n’est pas de l’inspiration ni l’effet du génie, c’est le calcul de l’homme civilisé qui sait avant de produire, et qui arrive juste à produire l’impression qu’il veut produire.”


Duc reworked the numerous sketches and watercolors made during his Sicilian stay into engravings for his publication.170 Intended from its inception for a young-adult audience as part of the Bibliothèque d’éducation et de récréation series, Viollet-le-Duc’s architectural compendium was commissioned by the publisher P. J. Hetzel.171 Similar to earlier “universal” surveys of architecture, such as those by Kugler, Schnaase, and Fergusson, he attempted to address the architecture of “all ages and all peoples.” The Histoire de l’habitation humaine is arranged chronologically from the prehistoric to the early modern period, with each chapter addressing what Viollet-le-Duc perceived to be a different culture or race.172 The dialogue and observations of two fictional travelers named Épergos and Doxi, representing, respectively, tradition and the notion of human progress. As Martin Bressani has pointed out, the two narrators freely transcended the boundaries of time and space, moving between cultures and periods in the compendium.173 By examining the domestic architecture by culture, these figures discover the supposed inherent characteristics of each society and its people.174 Viollet-le-Duc’s compiled the Histoire de l’habitation humaine for

171 P. J. Hetzel is also known as Jules Verne’s publisher. For the series commissioned by Hetzel, Viollet-le-Duc completed several volumes that include Histoire d’une maison (1873), Histoire d’une forteresse (1874), Histoire d’un hôtel de ville et d’une cathédrale (1878), and Histoire d’un dessinateur (1879). For more on these didactic works see Auzas, Eugène Viollet-Le-Duc, 35–48; and Elizabeth Emery and Laura Morowitz, Consuming the Past: The Medieval Revival in fin-de-siècle France (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), 91–92.
174 Philippe Hamon has discussed the ways in which architecture was thought to reveal the habits and practices of a people or a society in the mid- and late nineteenth century. Philippe Hamon, Expositions: Literature and
what was a new audience of young adults, yet most of his theories were derived from earlier writers. In the introduction, he described the first example of domestic architecture, essentially a primitive hut. The accompanying engraving was captioned “Sont-ce des hommes?” and depicted primordial people taking refuge under gathered branches. The illustration was clearly derived from the Jesuit priest and architectural theorist the abbé Marc-Antoine Laugier’s concept of the primitive hut that appeared in the second edition of his treatise Essai sur l’architecture (1755) (fig. 1.25).175

The palace of La Zisa, which Viollet-le-Duc chose as the exemplary monument of domestic Islamic architecture, is hemmed in between chapters on the dwellings of Merovingian Gaul and the feudalism in the Carolingian period.176 Viollet-le-Duc chose to set the scene in mid-eleventh-century Sicily, which he defined as the height of cultural and religious tolerance and overall prosperity on the island and a time of peace between the ruling Muslim and the subordinate Christian population of Sicily. The guiding principle of the Histoire de l’habitation humaine is the gradual expansion of Christianity as a teleological triumph.177 In the chapter, this idea manifests itself by having Épergos and Doxi discuss the growing threat to Sicily of Norman mercenaries in southern Italy. Once in Palermo, the two find themselves in a large residence belonging to a wealthy inhabitant, described as situated near the city walls. The fictive owner of the palace, Moafa, is introduced and their debate focuses first on the multicultural and tolerant society created by the Muslim rulers, while deriding the Normans who had their sights set on Sicily. The conversation then shifts to the

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177 Bressani, “Notes on Viollet-le-Duc’s Philosophy of History,” 328.
structure itself and its construction by Sicilian workmen following the instructions of Egyptian-trained builders.178

Viollet-le-Duc provided numerous illustrations to help guide the reader through the building to accompany his detailed textual description (figs. 1.23–1.24). These include its exterior and the principal hall on the ground floor. Épergos and Doxi enter first, guiding the reader:

. . . introduits dans la grande salle centrale.

Au-dessus de la fontaine, sur un fond d’or, une mosaïque délicate décore la grande niche.

Celle-ci, comme les deux autres, se termine par des encorbellements de petites arcades qui rappellent les stalactites de certaines grottes ou les cellules de la Grenade. L’or, l’azur, le vert, le blanc et le noir, sont répartis de la manière la plus harmonieuse dans ces myriades d’alvéoles. Des arabesques peintes bordent la voûte, entourent les sommets des niches et se marient à de grandes inscriptions qui surmontent le bandeau supérieur.

Quant au bandeau inférieur, il est orné de cordons de mosaïques qui entourent de fines colonnes de marbre blanc placées aux angles et se retournent sur la plinthe. Les parties restées lisses des murs sont peintes en blanc. Le pavé est composé de carreaux de marbre entremêlés de mosaïques. L’eau, qui circule dans le petit canal et les bassins, entretient la fraîcheur dans ce lieu tranquille, éclairé seulement par la grande ouverture de l’entrée.179

178 Viollet-le-Duc drew attention here to La Zisa’s master builders’ attentiveness to geometric formulae in creating its plan and the harmonious façade of the structure. Idem, Histoire de l’habitation humaine, 319–21: “Il leur expliqua comment ces demeures étaient élevées par des ouvriers siciliens, sur les indications d’architectes instruits en Égypte; que la pierre était abondante dans le pays, et que ces ouvriers ayant l’habitude de l’employer, ces demeures étaient construites avec cette matière à l’extérieur, tandis qu’on réservait le mode de bâtir des Orientaux, c’est-à-dire le blocage et les enduits, pour ces intérieurs revêtus de peintures, de mosaïques et de marbre.

L’architecte du palais, qu’Épergos eut l’occasion de voir, lui démontra que ses procédés de tracés dérivaient tous de formules géométriques très-simples, et que ces voûtes, si compliquées en apparence, des réduits de la grande salle, étaient tracées à l’aide de méthodes faciles à saisir et à appliquer.”

179 Ibid., 318–19.
Viollet-le-Duc singled out for his readers this hall, the so-called Fountain Room, of great interest to him and on which he remarked in a letter to his father in 1836. In the survey, he described in detail the mosaic band below the muqarnas vaults. He also noted water emanating from the fountain flowing from the center of the wall onto a slab of marble with a chevron design that led onto a canal and a set of basins. The accompanying engraving in the *Histoire de l’habitation humaine* demonstrates the dominant central axis of the room (fig. 1.24).

The illustration of the Fountain Room was most likely based on mid-nineteenth century travelogues and architectural handbooks, such as those by Gally Knight and Girault de Prangey. In Viollet-le-Duc’s engraving, he placed a servant standing in attendance to a figure reclining on a divan within reach of the cascading water in the left recess of the hall, a popular motif in contemporary Orientalist paintings. At this point in the narrative, the two protagonists meet Moafa, the wealthy owner of La Zisa. He is accorded respect, in clear contrast to other cross-cultural encounters devised by Viollet-le-Duc, such as with a Chinese builder and owner. Throughout the *Histoire de l’habitation humaine*, Viollet-le-Duc unmistakably emphasized the superiority of Northern Europeans, whom he termed “Aryans,” and Christianity is always the supreme civilizing force. Yet in this chapter, he paid tribute to Islamic culture as well as its architecture.

In Viollet-le-Duc’s earlier theoretical writings, Islamic art and architecture did not play a significant role. Nor did it serve as a backdrop to his study of Western architecture.

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culminating with the French Gothic cathedrals of the thirteenth century.\textsuperscript{184} In the ninth lecture of his \textit{Entretiens}, Viollet-le-Duc only mentioned in passing that Islamic architecture was an offshoot of Persian architecture, noting that: “Les races sémitiques, les Arabes, n’ont aucune aptitude pour les arts.” In this essay, he stated that Islamic architecture’s foremost importance was as a conduit for ideas from the ancient Near East and Greco-Roman antiquity to medieval Europe.\textsuperscript{185}

Later in the essay, he broached the subject again:

. . . les artistes que nous appelons \textit{arabes} surent encore faire des merveilles. Mais on conçoit qu’alors l’étude des proportions devint un des moyens les plus efficaces pour donner aux constructions un aspect agréable. En effet, dans cette architecture des califes, la proportion est tout, parce que rien ne dissimule ses défauts; l’ornementation lui vient en aide pour en faire ressortir l’harmonie, mais elle ne compte que dans la masse, elle n’attire l’attention que comme une broderie sur une étoffe, elle charme sans occuper.\textsuperscript{186}

What we can gather from the earlier \textit{Entretiens} is that even though Viollet-le-Duc did not regard Islamic architecture as highly as that of Western Europe, he drew out various components that he considered valuable for his intended audience of architects in training. Notably, he pointed out the need for the careful application of proportion, but warned his


\textsuperscript{185} Viollet-le-Duc, \textit{Entretiens sur l’architecture}, vol. 1, 431: “Les races sémitiques, les Arabes, n’ont aucune aptitude pour les arts, et ce qu’on est convenu d’appeler l’architecture arabe n’est qu’un dérivé de l’architecture des Perses modifiée par les Grecs, c’est-à-dire par les nestoriens.”

\textsuperscript{186} Ibid., 432.
IV. The Forgotten Orientalist: Viollet-le-Duc, Exoticism, and the Ethnographic Gaze

Viollet-le-Duc’s choice of William I and William II’s palace as the archetypical Islamic monument for his survey is particularly telling. He was well-read, maintained contacts with other leading theorists and historians in Europe, and owned a considerable collection of books on the subject. Moreover, by the time Viollet-le-Duc published his survey for young adults, the Sicilian Orientalist Michele Amari had firmly established that La Zisa was built in the Norman period. In the Histoire de l’habitation humaine, however, Viollet-le-Duc was steadfast in upholding its Muslim patronage, stating that the palace pavilion predated the mid-eleventh century.

Nonetheless, even if we take into consideration that the projected audience was never scholarly, Viollet-le-Duc’s erroneous attribution of the patronage and dating of La Zisa in his survey betrays more than ambivalence to historical accuracy; it also reveals his own cultural biases. In addition to the didactic works completed in the decade prior to his 1875 survey,

\[\text{187} \text{ Viollet-le-Duc reiterated in the *Entretiens sur l’architecture* prevailing ideas among contemporary scholars and antiquarians. For an in-depth discussion on nineteenth-century theorists’ focus on ornament in Islamic art following the publication of Owen Jones’s popular *Grammar of Ornament* (1856), see Gülru Necipoğlu, *The Topkapi Scroll: Geometry and Ornament in Islamic Architecture: Topkapi Palace Museum Library MS H. 1956* (Santa Monica: Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1995), 64–69. For more on Viollet-le-Duc and his assessment of Islamic architecture, see Zeynep Çelik, “‘Islamic’ Art and Architecture in French Colonial Discourse: Algeria, 1930,” in *The Experience of Islamic Art on the Margins of Islam*, edited by Irene Bierman and Gustave E. von Grunebaum (Reading: Ithaca, 2005), 91.}


\[\text{189} \text{ Amari, “Lettre à M. Ad. de Longpérier,” 491–92.}\]
Viollet-le-Duc penned the preface to two influential books on Islamic art and architecture. The first, Jules Bourgoin’s *Les Arts arabes* (1867), was intended as a survey for architects in training. Bourgoin catalogued ornament in a way that aimed to be comprehensive, dealing with different media that included wood, stained glass, marble, and architecture. The second author was his former student Léon Parvillée, who examined Ottoman architecture and ornament in his *Architecture et décoration turques au XVe siècle* (1874). Comparable to Viollet-le-Duc’s contributions to the Hetzel series for young adults, the works of these two authors were intended from the outset for a specific audience, that of architects and designers. As a result, in the preface that he wrote for Bourgoin, he highlighted the importance of finding the underlying rules of geometric decoration in Islamic art following rationalist principles that he developed in his *Entretiens*. He noted that its variety was due to the myriad influences of a people drawn from a wide geographic swath from southern Spain to the Asian steppes.

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191 As Gülru Necipoğlu points out, Bourgoin was not concerned with their relative chronology, but rather, he used this organization to present the notion that Islamic art was stagnant and did not demonstrate the same “progress” over time that he suggested was inherent to Western art. Bourgoin also did not have access to all of the monuments he included, relying heavily on earlier works, most notably Coste’s *Architecture arabe*. Necipoğlu, *The Topkapi Scroll*, 66–67.


Viollet-le-Duc expressed a similar sentiment in the *Histoire de l’habitation humaine*, whose principal guiding framework was the widespread nineteenth-century view that architecture and the decorative arts were determined by climate and race. According to Charles-Louis de Secondat, baron de La Brède et de Montesquieu, which was the source of many of these ideas, climate influenced not only the style of building but also the physiognomy of the peoples inhabiting each region. At the end of every section of his compendium, Viollet-le-Duc included an illustration of the physiognomy of three races that he called “Les Aryas,” “Les Jaunes,” and “Les Émigrants.” The domestic architecture of medieval Europe occupied the final part of his survey.

Even more than Montesquieu, Viollet-le-Duc’s ideas on race stemmed from the French writer and statesman Joseph-Arthur, Comte de Gobineau (1816–1882), whose *Essai sur l’inégalité des races humaines* (1853–55) would become first famous and then notorious. The two writers kept up an active correspondence throughout their lifetimes. In this highly géométriques. C’est surtout chez les peuples sémitiques que ces tendances se manifestent avec énergie, du moins à dater du mahométisme. Là où les mélanges de races existent, l’ornementation participe de diverses influences et les représentations empruntées à la nature organique se mêlent aux combinaisons purement géométriques. C’est ce qui apparaît dans les arts de la Perse, de la Sicile et de l’Espagne arabe.”


197 In the expository section of nearly every chapter, Viollet-le-Duc delved into the climate of each region drawn primarily from Montesquieu. For a relevant discussion of Montesquieu’s climatology with relation to the Italian South, see Dainotto, “Montesquieu’s North and South,” 52–86.


199 Later chapters in the *Histoire de l’habitation humaine* are organized according to civilization such as Egyptian, Assyrian, Hellenic, Roman, etc. See Baridon, *L’imaginaire scientifique de Viollet-le-Duc*, 128–32.

influential treatise that essentially formed the basis of late nineteenth-century and twentieth-century racial theory, Gobineau divided humankind into what he termed the three races: Asians, Aryans, and Africans. While Viollet-le-Duc followed a tripartite organization when it came to race in his survey, he firmly believed in the possibility of advancement on the part of non-Aryan races and thus substantially departed from Gobineau’s theories. In the *Histoire de l’habitation humaine* this concept is embodied in the figure of Épergos. Like many writers before him, Viollet-le-Duc saw Islamic architecture as the source of Gothic architecture and as a conduit between the East and the West. In his earlier works, such as the *Dictionnaire raisonné*, Viollet-le-Duc had expressed strong nationalist sentiments, since he believed that the thirteenth-century cathedrals of France were the apex of architectural creation. Yet his immense admiration of Islamic art and architecture is plainly apparent in the prefaces he wrote to Bourgoin’s and Parvillé’s books, most relevant to the discussion here as these were written in the same years as *Histoire de l’habitation humaine*.

Unlike Bourgoin, who had lived in Egypt, and Parvillé, who held an official position in Istanbul, Viollet-le-Duc had not been to Egypt or to any other part of the Ottoman Empire. His direct contact with Islamic architecture was limited to southern Spain and Sicily. In the mid-1860s, however, Viollet-le-Duc was involved with a project secured by a former student, the architect Édmond Duthoit (1837–1889), to design a triumphal
monument commemorating Napoleon III’s first voyage to the French colony of Algiers.206 Viollet-le-Duc’s participation was eventually scrapped, and the monument was never built. Yet a close examination of his involvement in the French colonial enterprise provides further insight into the ways in which Viollet-le-Duc conceptualized architecture in the *Histoire de l’habitation humaine*.207

By discussing the architecture of assorted peoples and cultures, Viollet-le-Duc took it upon himself to write an ethnography. He consistently placed on display for his readers various non-Western peoples and their domestic architecture. He endowed the two protagonists with the qualities and abilities of secular archangels, mediating between the readers and the authoritative author of the text. Throughout, Épergos and Doxi examine different cultures while rarely interacting with the inhabitants with whom Viollet-le-Duc populated the survey, and in any case was limited to members of cultures that the author deemed “non-primitive.” Moreover, what is constantly upheld in the work is a distance between the Christian protagonists and what, in most cases, was the non-Christian “other.”

The notion of time is also inconsequential in his compendium; only the “progression” of these cultures from the “primitive” to the “civilized,” and ultimately to Christianity, is of any importance. By means of the breaking down of the temporal and spatial boundaries,

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57–76. Duthoit was also involved in the restructuring of two manor houses led by Viollet-le-Duc: the château d’Abbadia (built for the French explorer and astronomer Antoine d’Abbadie), and the château de Roquetaillade. Baridon, *L’imaginaire scientifique de Viollet-le-Duc*, 32–35.

206 As Zeynep Çelik points out, Viollet-le-Duc’s changing designs for the imperial commission betrayed contemporary ideas on Islamic culture and architecture. An early design placed a pavilion that represented a mosque on top of a column. A second included the national emblem of Marianne atop a column and at its base were three oxen that represented the provinces of the colony of Algiers, Oran, and Constantine, signifying Algeria’s subjugation to France. Çelik, “Commemorating the Empire,” 22–24.

207 Relevant here is the policy of the so-called “civilizing mission” in North Africa and other parts of the world subject to French colonial expansion. A work such as Viollet-le-Duc’s could was essentially a catalogue of the “uncivilized” peoples, culture, and architecture, in addition to functioning as a means of gathering support on the home front. Mathew Burrows, “*Mission civilisatrice*”: French Cultural Policy in the Middle East, 1860–1914,” *Historical Journal* 29, 1(1986), 109–35; and Henri Brunschwig’s classic study, *Mythes et réalités de l’impérialisme colonial français, 1871–1914* (Paris: A. Colin, 1960).
Viollet-le-Duc presented to his readers the architecture of “all mankind,” creating a wide-ranging ethnographic study. In each chapter, he pointed out examples of either regression or advancement of every civilization, often explained along racial lines. The buildings he brought forth varied from the purely representational types, such as a Chinese pagoda or a Hindu temple, to historical structures, such as La Zisa and the twelfth-century house at Cluny, deemed worthy of additional historical context and a precise chronology.

Influenced by contemporary ideas on race and climate such as those espoused by Gobineau and Montesquieu, the architect of the Paris Opera Charles Garnier continued Viollet-le-Duc’s work in the exhibition “Histoire de l’habitation humaine,” which was part of the Exposition universelle of 1889. With Auguste Ammann, Garnier later published a history of domestic habitations entitled L’habitation humaine in 1892 (fig. 1.26). In subsequent treatments, studies of secular architecture were separated from the examination of religious monuments. This is most noticeably the case for medieval architecture in the publications of Viollet-le-Duc and Garnier and Ammann. In both treatments, Islamic architecture occupies an uneasy position; with Garnier it developed separately from the European West and did not exercise any influence on it. Viollet-le-Duc reserved more praise for Islamic architecture in the survey, and, throughout his life, he expressed a great variety of views on the subject. Due to the close connection forged between domestic architecture and ethnography at this time, La Zisa and La Cuba were consigned to the margins. As a result, the Sicilian twelfth-century palace pavilions remained relatively understudied by scholars outside of Sicily even after Amari’s pioneering scholarship.

Most notably, La Zisa did not appear in the architectural historian Sir Banister Fletcher’s (1866–1953) immensely influential and popular *A History of Architecture on the Comparative Method for the Student, Craftsman and Amateur*, published in more than twenty editions from 1896 onward.\(^{210}\) As Gülsüm Baydar Nalbantoğlu has argued, Fletcher’s frontispiece for this survey, entitled the “Tree of Architecture,” symbolically relegated Islamic examples to a side branch or an offshoot from the principal trunk of Western architecture.\(^{211}\) This representation was not lost on his readers: Islamic architecture was from here on separated from that of the West. Arguably, the frontispiece of Fletcher’s publication followed an evolutionary schema whose conceptual fountainhead was Viollet-le-Duc.

V. La Zisa and the Islamic West

La Zisa (and La Cuba to some extent) was incorporated into a newly established narrative by archaeologists and architectural historians working in institutions associated with the French colonial enterprise in North Africa. Most notably, La Zisa appeared in the first handbook or manual of Islamic art, the French architect Henri Saladin’s *Manuel d’art musulman* (1907).\(^{212}\) The category of the “Maghreb” introduced by Saladin and his contemporaries, the brothers William Marçais (1876–1962) and Georges Marçais (1872–1956), joined in their work the artistic production of areas that contained Berber tribes,


which, in addition to North Africa, included Sicily. Thereafter, the secular monuments of Norman Sicily became subsumed into the study of the Islamic West.

Georges Marçais established that the structures at the Qal’a of the Benū Ḥammād and the Zirid Palace at Ashir, both in Algeria, offer the clearest antecedents to the palatial examples in Sicily, due not only to their geographical proximity but also for similarities in ground plans and ornamentation. In particular, the site of the Qal’a of the Benū Ḥammād looms large, the short-lived capital of the Ḥammādīd dynasty built in 1007 by Ḥammād ibn Buluggin (d. 1028), the son of the founder of the Zirid dynasty, Zīrī ibn Manad (d. 971). The settlement reached its height under the later rulers al-Nāṣīr (r. 1062–88) and al-Manṣūr (r. 1088–1105). The Qal’a contained within its walls four main palaces and a mosque. The Qaṣr al-Manār (also known as the Palace of the Fanal) is of a donjon type with a square tower measuring 20 meters on each side of which just the base remains (fig. 1.27). At the Qal’a, an additional monumental palatial complex is the Dār al-Bahr, or the Palace of the

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213 In the 14th Congress of Orientalists held in Algiers in 1905 a new term, the “Occident musulman,” was applied to encompass the three countries of the Maghreb and, by extension, Muslim Sicily and Spain. The key protagonists of this new nomenclature were the brothers Georges and William Marçais. Oulebsir, Les usages du patrimoine, 237–38. Their work was espoused by the former’s student, Lucien Golvin. In the introduction to his much later study, Golvin openly stated that: “L’Algérie n’a pas d’histoire propre, dit on couramment . . . on en peut dire autant, à moindre degré sans doute, du Maroc et de la Tunisie. L’histoire de l’Espagne musulmane elle-même ne pourra se comprendre que s’il est fait appel fréquemment aux événements qui se déroulent au Mağrib. En fait, c’est l’histoire de l’Occident musulman qu’il faudrait écrire pour concevoir un tout cohérent encore serait-il nécessaire de faire de fréquentes allusions aux événements qui ont leur répercussion, parfois profondes, sur l’histoire de l’Occident.” Idem, Le Magrib central à l’époque des Zirides: recherches d’archéologie et d’histoire (Paris: Arts et métiers graphiques, 1957), 7.


215 The site was abandoned in 1090 due to the threat of the Banū Hilāl tribe, and the Ḥammādīd capital was transferred to Bougie. In 1152, the Almohad armies partially destroyed the fortified settlement.

Lake, so-called since it overlooked a massive rectangular basin measuring 47 x 67 meters (fig. 1.28).\footnote{The pool at the Dār al-Bāhr was surrounded by a portico. In addition, the main structure had a monumental entrance way, which might suggest that the site was intended for nautical spectacles. Ibid., 188–89.}

The Zīrid palace at Ashir is frequently referenced in relation to the Sicilian palace pavilions of La Cuba and La Zisa, and more specifically for the axial configuration of its ground plan (fig. 1.29).\footnote{The Palace of ‘Achīr, however, was conceived on an entirely different scale than the aforementioned examples. Founded by Zīrī ibn Manad (d. 971) in 926 at the foot of the large mountain Djebel Lakhdar, the palace is rectangular in form, measuring 72 x 40 meters and was preceded by a grand entranceway on its longer flank on its south side. The complex had a monumental central courtyard flanked with a colonnade. The west and east wings of the palace contained a series of rooms organized around a central space. At the center of the northern flank was a cruciform hall that had a vestibule with three openings. Interpreted as the throne room, significant remains of stucco and reliefs were found here as well. The overall spatial arrangement is reminiscent of La Zisa’s Fountain Room. Lucien Golvin, “Le palais de Zīrī à Achīr (Dixième siècle J. C.),” \textit{Ars Orientalis} 6 (1966), 47–76.} Also relevant is the oblong residence of the Zīrid ruler al-Mansūr built in the late tenth century at Şabra al-Manşūrīya in present-day Tunisia (fig. 1.30). The lavish palace contained figural stucco decoration, similar in term of its motifs to the ornamentation of the ceiling of the Cappella Palatina.\footnote{The new city of Şabra al-Manşūrīya was built by the third Fātimid caliph al-Manşūr ibn al-Qa’im (r. 946–53). Patrice Cressier and Mourad Rammah, “Şabra al-Manşūrīya: Une autre ville califale,” \textit{Cuadernos de Madīnat al-Zahrā’} 4 (2004), 241–55; Marianne Barrucand and Mourad Rammah (edited by Avinoam Shalem and Jean-Pierre Van Staëval), “Şabra Al-Mansuriyya and her Neighbors during the First Half of the Eleventh Century: Investigations into Stucco Decoration,” \textit{Muqarnas} 26 (2009), 349–76.

For Southern Italian examples, see the discussion of residential architecture in reference to thirteenth-century Ravello, by Jill Caskey in \textit{Art and Patronage in the Medieval Mediterranean}, 75–86.} The relationship between Norman Sicily and the former territories of the Zīrids was exceptionally close. The coastal strip that faced Sicily became part of the kingdom in the mid-twelfth century. Therefore, we must consider that the workmen and the master masons who created the parkland palaces originated from this area. This is the case in particular for La Cuba and La Zisa, which, due to their regularity, suggests that they were the product of a single building campaign unlike the earlier courtyard structures of La Favara and Lo Scibene. La Zisa and La Cuba were first incorporated into the study of architecture of the Islamic West by archaeologists and
architectural historians who were part of institutions in French colonial Algeria. Marçais’ work in this regard is particularly significant since it has helped shape views of these monuments for later generations and has determined their subsequent exclusion from surveys of Western medieval architecture.

**Conclusion**

The twelfth-century palace pavilion of La Zisa built by the Norman kings of Sicily was cast in various roles throughout the long nineteenth century. At first Northern European travelers were fascinated with La Zisa and, to a lesser extent, La Cuba and Maredolce/La Favara due to their *muqarnas* vaults, mosaics, and remnants of hydraulic elements such as fountains and artificial lakes. Continually featured in travelogues, La Zisa became a key monument in the debate about the origins of the pointed arch of Gothic architecture and was included in the early handbooks of Séroux d’Agincourt and Hittorff and Zanth. By mid-century, the suburban residences were acknowledged as worthy of study with their inclusion in the “universal” surveys of Kugler, Schnaase, and Fergusson. Amari’s findings, and the much earlier suspicions regarding date and patronage raised by Girault de Prangey and others, did not change the fact that they perceived the suburban residences to be overtly “Saracenic.” Even though La Zisa’s appearance in these handbooks denotes the structure’s relative importance, toward the turn of the century it vanished from accounts of Western architecture.

The presentation of domestic examples from a variety of cultures and time periods at the *Expositions universelles* shaped a history of architecture guided by climate and race, which we see in the survey of Viollet-le-Duc and that of Garnier and Ammann. Although Islamic architecture is included in both works in the “historical” category, these authors held
similar opinions about the degree of its influence on the development of architecture in the West. In their estimation, Islamic architecture belonged to the artistic and cultural production of what they defined as an “Isolated Civilization,” largely unconnected to the evolution of Western architecture. Thus, it is not surprising that within this typological hierarchy, the grand pavilion of La Zisa, constructed in an Islamic mode, remained separate from other medieval monuments. Moreover, as a “domestic” building it was excluded from architectural studies of the medieval West that toward the end of the nineteenth century concentrated almost exclusively on ecclesiastical examples. By creating an alternative “universal” narrative of architecture whose concern was “The Habitations of Man in All Ages,” new disciplines such as ethnology introduced domestic architecture as a subject worthy of study.

Due to the difficulty of establishing the patronage of the Sicilian palaces and their chronology, La Zisa and La Cuba never joined the ranks of the Cappella Palatina and the cathedral of Monreale in architectural surveys. Viollet-le-Duc’s choice of La Zisa is revealing, foreshadowing its later placement on the periphery of more recent scholarship of the “West,” since it is both “non-Western” and a secular domestic building. Georges Marçais compared La Zisa and La Cuba to Maghrebi monuments based on stylistic criteria rather than patronage, which subsequently contributed to their exclusion from narratives of medieval Western architecture. His discussion of the Norman suburban palace pavilions

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221 Arguably, this was due also to the development of modern archaeology that brought about a closer study of Islamic monuments. Stephen Vernoit, “The Rise of Islamic Archaeology,” *Muqarnas* 14 (1997), 3; on the foundation and organization of archaeological institutions in French colonial Algeria, see Margarita Diaz-Andreu, *A World History of Nineteenth-Century Archaeology: Nationalism, Colonialism, and the Past* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 268–77.

222 At this time, La Zisa was included in studies of Islamic art and architecture, most notably Saladin’s *Manuel d’art musulman*, vol. 1, 239–43.
inadvertently set up the framework for later treatments and, therefore, Marçais’ works are just as significant as Amari’s for contextualizing these secular monuments within a broader narrative of medieval architectural history.
Chapter Two

Topography and Water in the Norman Parks: Reconstructing a Changed Landscape

“Dobbiamo far menzione ancora della vasta bandita che. . . avea creata re Ruggiero in alcuni boschi e monti presso Palermo, circondatili a quest’effetto d’un muro di pietra, piantatovi nuovi alberi, e messavi gran copia di daini, caprioli e cinghiali; il qual parco della reggia stendeasi per parecchie miglia a libeccio oltre i gioghi de’ monti. . .”

Michele Amari, Storia dei musulmani di Sicilia (1872), vol. 3, part 2, 849.

The identification of the palace pavilions of La Zisa and La Cuba as examples of Islamic architecture despite their patronage not only led to the effective exclusion of these monuments from the scholarly discourse but also obscured their significance for the study of secular architecture in the Middle Ages. Michele Amari, the first to establish La Cuba as a Norman work, drew attention in his seminal Storia dei musulmani di Sicilia to the creation of the twelfth-century park, which he described as encircling the city and enclosed within a “wall of stone.”

The suburban residences built (or perhaps only renovated) by the Norman kings were situated in the vast parklands in close proximity to water sources. While a long historiographical tradition has focused on Palermo’s intramural area, the hinterland of the

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223 Amari, Storia dei musulmani, vol. 3, part 2, 849: “We must make mention of the vast preserve that. . . King Roger created in a few woodlands and mountains near Palermo, surrounding them in this way with a wall of stone, planting in them new trees, and placing within a great number of fallow deer, roe deer, and wild boar; this royal park extended for many miles to the southwest beyond the summit of the mountains.”

224 Amari referenced in this passage what he believed to be the park of al-Mannānī (spelled here as el-Menānī); but, we may conclude that a stone wall also enclosed the later parkland of the Genoard in the second half of the century. Ibid.
city, the site of the later royal parklands, remains understudied. This chapter seeks to rectify this state of affairs. The examination of the surroundings, or, to be more precise, of the landscape, is of fundamental importance for any interpretation of the twelfth-century suburban architecture. An overview of the medieval parklands provided here will set the stage for a discussion of the extramural residences in the following chapters.

The chapter looks first at Palermo as Robert Guiscard and Roger I found it when they took the city. I trace here the formation of the parklands in the first half of the twelfth century, examining their natural boundaries. The courtyard palace of La Favara, one of Roger II’s favored residences, was the nucleus of the earliest known royal park. I then examine the second phase of park building, the Genoard Park created under the two Williams. This parkland shared characteristics with contemporary examples in the Mediterranean, namely the Philopation Park of the Comnenian emperors situated immediately outside their principal residence, the Blachernae Palace in Constantinople. To reconstruct this lost landscape, I draw on medieval travelogues and chroniclers, while also considering early modern material stemming from Sicily’s rich chorographic tradition.

Even though sovereigns are frequently cited as active agents in the creation of works that are representative of their reigns, the involvement of the twelfth-century Sicilian kings appears to be extraordinary in terms of the manipulation of their surroundings. The Norman chronicler Romuald of Salerno unequivocally stated that Roger II ordered the transformation of the environs of one of his favorite pleasure palaces and the construction of a large artificial lake. The king called for the introduction of flora and fauna to his hunting park in the mountains just outside Palermo. In addition, the residential complexes were enhanced with waterscapes in the form of ponds, lakes, and ornamental fountains. A complementary
discussion of Roger’s participation in the shaping of his environment can be found in the geographer al-Idrīṣī’s treatise Nuzhat al-mushtaqa fi ikhtirāq al-āfaq (completed in ca. 1154).

In the preface, al-Idrīṣī noted that the king’s role went far beyond that of a traditional patron: first, Roger recognized the need for such a work; second, he compiled a great amount of the material himself; and third, he actively contributed in its completion. Toward the end of his reign, Roger clearly demonstrated an interest in creating a map of the known world, tightly bound to his proto-imperial aspirations in the same decade that saw recurrent Norman naval incursions into Ifrīqiya and Byzantine-held territories in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Reconstructing the landscape of medieval Palermo is of great importance since the twelfth-century kings radically transformed their surroundings, tangibly expressing their supremacy around their capital. Establishing the original topography and waterscapes of the medieval parks of Norman Sicily is vital for understanding this facet of medieval culture. During the hostile takeover by the Hohenstaufens of the Kingdom of Sicily following the

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225 In the foreword to his work, al-Idrīṣī noted that Roger had a sound knowledge of the copper instruments that were used by contemporary cartographers. Al-Idrīṣī, Nuzhat al-mushtaqa fi ikhtirāq al-āfaq, 3–4.
226 Another way to regard this monumental undertaking from that previously presented in the scholarship is that the description and the depiction of space was a means by which to control it. The creation of an empire is closely tied to its mapping, since this effectively forms a mental landscape as well. These themes have been explored extensively in the British geographer John Brian Harley’s influential work; see idem, “Maps, Knowledge, and Power,” in The Iconography of the Landscape, edited by Denis E. Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1988), 277–312; idem, “Deconstructing the Map,” in Writing Worlds: Discourse, Text and Metaphor in the Representation of Landscape (London: Routledge, 1992), 231–47, republished in Cartographica 26, 2 (2009), 1–20. Also relevant is W. J. T. Mitchell’s essay “Imperial Landscapes,” in Landscape and Power, edited by W. J. T. Mitchell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 5–34.
227 Already in the period following the unification of Italy, there was recognition of the area of the medieval parks that manifested itself in the first Piano Regolatore of Palermo (PRG), known more commonly as the Piano Giarrusso, created in 1885 and named after the engineer in charge. The plan was drawn up in consideration of the area around La Zisa and La Cuba, as a provision for safeguarding the palaces whose importance was clearly recognized. The site of Maredolce in the Brancaccio quarter was not considered, while Parco (Altofonte) was in a different municipal zone. Conversely, the regulatory plan of 1962 had devastating consequences for the area of the former medieval parklands to the west and southwest of Palermo’s historic center. See Jane C. Schneider and Peter T. Schneider, Reversible Destiny: Mafia, Antimafia, and the Struggle for Palermo (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 251–58.
death of William II, a good deal of this suburban environment was purposely effaced.228 The
parkland constituted a humanized landscape that despite being irrevocably changed can still
be partially reconstituted. Therefore, we may consider the hinterland of the city as a
“cultural landscape,” a term I borrow from the American geographer Carl O. Sauer
introduced in a highly influential article entitled “The Morphology of Landscape,” published
in 1925. Sauer was the first to give currency to the notion that a culture’s agency was the
driving force in shaping the external features of its environment.229

In works on medieval parks and other man-made landscapes, too little scholarly
attention is given to a material property that had significant cultural import.230 As is

228 Remnants of the monumental greenbelt persisted until the sixteenth and into the seventeenth century. Early
writers, namely Fazello, Alberti, and others, in addition to the marquis of Villabianca and Auria, described the
city and its hinterland in detail, and in particular, the sources of water of the Palermitan plain that were of great
interest to them. Since then, the area that comprised the medieval city has seen many vicissitudes. Until the
Second World War, the hinterland was mostly made up of small plots for farming. However, the population
influx following the Second World War, and the unregulated housing speculation and Mafia-controlled
construction commonly known as the “Sacco di Palermo,” expanded the city’s borders into what constituted the
medieval parkland. See Teresa Cannarozzo, “La governance mafiosa e l’assalto al territorio,” in Il paesaggio
agricolo nella Conca d’Oro di Palermo, edited by Manfredi Leone, Francesco Lo Piccolo, and Filippo Schilleci
(Florence: Alinea, 2009), 39–51; Schneider and Schneider, Reversible Destiny, 14–19.
229 Carl O. Sauer, “The Morphology of Landscape,” University of California Publications in Geography 2, 2
(1925), 46: “... the cultural landscape is fashioned from a natural landscape by a cultural group. Culture is the
agent, the natural area is the medium, and the cultural landscape is the result. Under the influence of a given
culture, itself changing over time, the landscape undergoes the influence of a given culture, itself changing
through time, the landscape undergoes development, passing through phases, and probably reaching ultimately
the end of its cycle of development. With the introduction of a different—that is, an alien—culture, a rejuvenation
of the cultural landscape sets in, or a new landscape is superimposed on the remnants of an older one. The
natural landscape is of course of fundamental importance, for it supplies the materials out of which the cultural
landscape is formed. The shaping force, however, lies in the culture itself.” The landscape surrounding
Palermo had already been substantially transformed following the Muslim conquest of the island, in whose
aftermath a variety of horticultural species were introduced into Sicily. See Andrew Watson, Agricultural
Innovation in the Early Islamic World: The Diffusion of Crops and Farming Techniques, 700–1100 (New York:
Cambridge University Press, 1983).
230 The significance of water has long been overtaken by landscape, insofar that the conceptualization of the
latter by theorists is far more developed and in particular with regards to the study of medieval cities and their
hinterland. In this regard, Adam Rogers’ research on the lost waterfronts of Roman Britain is important. See
idem, Water and Roman Urbanism: Towns, Waterscapes, Land Transformation and Experience in Roman
Waterscapes in the Roman Period in Britain,” in The International Journal of Nautical Archaeology 41, 2
(2012), 327–39; see the conceptual work of Veronica Strang, who has focused on its materiality and social
David and J. Thomas (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2008), 123–130; idem, The Meaning of Water
(Oxford: Berg, 2004); for a definition of materiality, see David Miller, “Materiality: Introduction,” in
suggested by Sauer’s idea of a “cultural landscape,” waterscapes should loom large in our discussion of the topography of medieval Palermo.\textsuperscript{231} Notably, the masterful deployment of resources, principally water, is a key characteristic of the royal residential architecture. Accounts of the water sources of the city and contiguous plain proliferated in the early modern period, as noted in the introduction to the dissertation. Water constituted an important element of the urban fabric, which, in addition to natural formations such as the coastline and rivers, included man-made conduits such as aqueducts, canals, and harbors.\textsuperscript{232} Creating “nodes” in the landscape, water affected the choice of settlement location and connected disparate sites. The chapter examines varied primary material to arrive at a more complete picture of the city and its hinterland on the eve of the Hauteville conquest in order to contextualize the significance of the Norman parklands of the following century.

I. Topography of the Medieval City of Palermo

To reconstruct the twelfth-century parklands of Palermo, we first need to provide a framework for the medieval city and its surroundings. In particular, a history of its settlement and a description of its geographical features, both natural and man-made, illuminate the later sites of the Norman palaces and parklands. The vast plain of Palermo, known by the sixteenth century as the Conca d’Oro, encompasses 130 square kilometers and a coastline of 30 kilometers on the Tyrrhenian Sea.\textsuperscript{233} The area that constituted medieval

\textsuperscript{231} Sauer, “The Morphology of Landscape,” 46.
\textsuperscript{232} The choice of site depended on sources of water not only for household or agricultural purposes, but also for transportation purposes in terms of proximity to rivers or coastlines. Rogers, \textit{Water and Roman Urbanism}, 2–3.
\textsuperscript{233} On the topography of the territory that makes up Conca d’Oro, a nomenclature that is derived from the large quantity of citrus trees, see Giuseppe Barbera, Tommaso La Mantia, and Juliane Rühl, “La Conca d’Oro: trasformazione di un paesaggio agrario e riflessi sulla sostenibilità,” in \textit{Il paesaggio agricolo nella Conca d’Oro...
Palermo, its adjoining suburbs, and parklands extends on a northwest–southeast axis from the coast and is encircled by an undulating low-lying mountain range (figs. 2.1–2.2). The peak of Monte Grifone overlooks Palermo from the southeast, while the mountains of Monreale, Boccadifalco, and Monte Cuccio, among others, continue in a chain to the northwest, forming an arc. The large promontory of Monte Pellegrino juts out on the northeast end of the modern city and is the site of the renowned seventeenth-century pilgrimage church dedicated to Santa Rosalia.  

The plain of Palermo is primarily made up of calcarenite, a type of limestone that is a highly permeable sedimentary rock largely made up of carbonate grains and marine debris. In many parts of the historic center, the water table reaches as high as two or three meters below the surface. An additional topographical feature, important for the distribution of water, is the continual sloping of the plain from the hills of Boccadifalco and Monreale toward the Tyrrhenian Sea to the east. The terrain drops 26 meters from the western limit of the medieval city, the Palazzo dei Normanni, to the modern-day harbor of the city, La Cala, to the east.

Palermo was founded as a Phoenician trading post in about 734 BCE and was possibly known as Zyz and later to the Greeks as Panormos (Πάνορμος or “all port”). The settlement

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237 The location of the present-day marina of La Cala is 250 meters further out to sea than the medieval harbor of the city. Formed between 1300 and 1445, this extension was due to the gradual filling in of the medieval port with refuse. Cusimano, *Le alluvioni palermitane*, 15–18.
was composed of two sections. The first, Paleopolis, was the lower area near the harbor.\textsuperscript{238} The second and newer part, Neapolis, corresponded to the later La Galca and incorporated the acropolis of the ancient city that later became the Norman palatial enclosure under Roger II and the center of his rule.\textsuperscript{239} The chief thoroughfare of the Phoenician settlement, as well as the later Byzantine and Muslim city, was the Cassaro, extending on a straight axis from the fortified citadel of Neapoli to the sea (fig. 2.3). The ancient city was bounded on its north and south sides by two navigable rivers, the Papireto and the Kemonia. Named for the abundance of papyrus on its banks, the Papireto collected water from the streams of ‘Ayn Abī Sa‘īd (Danisinni) and ‘Ayn Rutah (Averinga) to the north and northwest of Neapoli (fig. 2.4).\textsuperscript{240} The Kemonia River (Cannizzaro) formed the southern boundary of the Phoenician settlement, known in the modern period as the Fiume del Maltempo due to its propensity to flood.\textsuperscript{241}

The principal period of the city’s topographical transformation was under the Spanish viceroy in the mid-sixteenth century. The Papireto and the Kemonia were covered and partially filled in at this time, but the virtually mirroring quadrants fashioned by these rivers can still be discerned in the urban morphology. The once abundant water that flowed through the city may be seen in the lower parts of Palermo’s historic center. This created a


\textsuperscript{239} The toponym of the “Galca” is derived from the Arabic for circle (\textit{galcah}, حلقة). According to Amari, La Galca comprised the westernmost part of medieval Palermo and had its own walls. Amari, \textit{Storia dei musulmani}, vol. 3, 138–39; Girolamo Caracausi has noted that La Galca could also signify an enclosed garden. Girolamo Caracausi, \textit{Arabismi medievali di Sicilia} (Palermo: Centro di studi filologici e linguistici siciliani, 1983), 234–35.

\textsuperscript{240} The Papireto River corresponds to what was the later Norman foundation of the Genoard Park. The river formed a small lake or marshy zone to the northwest of La Galca and the Palazzo dei Normanni, just outside the city walls. Maria Di Piazza, \textit{Palermo, città d’acqua: aspetti storici e naturalistici dell’acquedotto} (Palermo: AMAP S.p.A, 2009).

multitude of natural water basins and swamp-like areas. The vestiges of the medieval watercourses include the now much diminished and highly polluted Oreto River (or Wādī ‘Abbās) to the south of the medieval city. Various sections along the expanse of the long green valley carved out by the Oreto before it empties into the Tyrrhenian Sea bear witness to the significant boundary that it once formed.

For the Roman and Byzantine city of Palermo, there is little remaining documentation.242 We do, however, have a more ample picture for the topography of Muslim Palermo, or Balârm (بَلَرْم), which was seized by the third Aghlabid amīr Ziyādat Allah I (r. 817–38) in 831.243 Ibn Ḥawqal provided an invaluable account of the late tenth-century city, surrounding suburbs, and sources of water in his travelogue.244 Balârm consisted of five quarters, of which the principal, the Cassaro (derived from qaṣr; also from the Latin castrum), corresponded with the Phoenician settlement of Neapoli. The historian Henri Bresc has described the confines of Muslim Palermo as an egg-shaped hill, 400 to 450 meters wide from north to south, situated between the Kemonia and Papireto rivers (fig. 2.3). These shaped the boundaries of Balârm, extending approximately 900 meters on a west–east axis.245 Ibn Ḥawqal enumerated several quarters (ḥārāt) outside the city walls that made up the sizable suburbs (rabāḍ). The periurban area was a few times larger than the old city, located on either side of the banks of the two rivers. The Quarter of the Mosque of Ibn Ṣiqlâb (Ḥārāt al-Masġid) was situated to the south, roughly equivalent to the modern-day quarter of Ballarò. On the southeast was the so-called New Quarter (Ḥārāt al-Jadīdah), while

the Quarter of the Slaves (Ḥārāt aṣ-Ṣaqāliba, known under Norman rule as the suburb Seralcadi) was located to the north.  

The center of Aghlabid and later Fāṭimid rule was the citadel of al-Khāliṣa (from the Arabic, al-Ḥāliṣah, or “chosen one,” La Kalsa in Italian), built by the Fāṭimid general Khalīl ibn Isḥāq in 937–38. On the southeast spur and opposite the sea fort of Castello a Mare, al-Khāliṣa was the palatial quarter of Muslim Palermo. According to Ibn Ḥawqal, the citadel enclosed the caliph’s residence and administration. Other amenities included a mosque, a number of baths, and an arsenal. The citadel was also home to several army garrisons. He noted that the fortified district was similar to the Cassaro since it was surrounded by a stone wall, and in fact it was a separate city for all intents and purposes.

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248 The sea fort of Castello a Mare was a fortified nucleus located on the northern side of the present-day tourist harbor of La Cala. Rosario La Duca, *Il castello a mare di Palermo* (Palermo: EPOS, 1980); and most recently, Carmela Angela Di Stefano and Giuseppe Lo Iacono, *Castello a Mare di Palermo: Cronistoria della demolizione di un monumento* (Enna: EditOpera, 2012).

249 A closer examination of the remnants of other medieval urban citadels such as Aleppo could shed light on the possible configuration of the citadel of al-Khāliṣa. Even though the remains at Aleppo are later in date than the tenth-century Fāṭimid citadel of Palermo, largely rebuilt by the Ayyūbid al-Malik az-Zāhir Ghāzī (r. 1172–1216) on the Greek, Roman, and Byzantine fortifications. Presently there is no evidence for the pre-medieval occupation of the Palermitan al-Khāliṣa. The Citadel of Aleppo, which has been settled continuously since 3000 BCE, corresponds more closely with the multi-phase occupation at the site of the present-day Palazzo dei Normanni chosen by Roger II as the governmental core of Norman rule in the first quarter of the twelfth century to the west of al-Khāliṣa. On the citadel of Aleppo, see Yasser Tabbaa, *Constructions of Power and Piety in Medieval Aleppo* (Pennsylvania State University: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997); also useful is Julia Gonnella, “Introduction to the Citadel of Aleppo,” in *Medieval Citadels Between East and West*, edited by Stefano Bianca (Turin: Umberto Allemani for The Aga Khan Trust for Culture, 2007), 103–37; and Julia Gonnella, Wahid Khayyata, and Kay Kohlmeyer, *Die Zitadelle von Aleppo und der Tempel des Wettergottes* (Münster: Rhema-Verlag, 2005).

Corroborating the veracity of Ibn Ḥawqal’s account, the tenth-century Palestinian geographer al-Muqaddasī in 985 described al-Khāliṣa as having four gates and its own walls.251

In addition to Ibn Ḥawqal and al-Muqaddasī, a recently discovered cosmographical treatise acquired by the Bodleian Library entitled Kitāb Gharāʾib al-funūn wa-mulah al-ʿuyūn (Book of Curiosities of the Sciences and Marvels for the Eyes) provides an illuminating view of the topography of medieval Palermo.252 The anonymous author of the text dedicated an entire chapter to Sicily, closely following Ibn Ḥawqal’s earlier, well-known account of Balārm. The Book of Curiosities includes a map of the island spread across two pages (fig. 2.5).253 The author of the text is likely to have been an Egyptian who visited the island in ca.


1120, and he described a much enlarged city in comparison with Ibn Ḥawqal’s Palermo of the 970s.  

In the map attached to the *Book of Curiosities*, Islamic Palermo or Balārm is depicted as a circular walled city with nine gates, suggesting that the once rectangular city as noted by Ibn Ḥawqal had become circular in shape over time. On the top center of the map and outside the walls is a semi-circular indentation representing the significant inlet of Palermo’s harbor of La Cala, with a small square marked as the arsenal. On either side of La Cala are the towers that stored the chain that protected the port. Beside the portrayal of Balārm, to the upper right of the city is a domed structure with exposed masonry, accompanied by the inscription: “The palace of the government, and its residence, and his servants” (”*Qaṣr al-Sulṭān* | *wa-saknihi wa-‘abīdihi*,”) (fig. 2.6). This fortified edifice stood in for the Fāṭimid palatial city, al-Khāliṣa, and is a *unicum* in the topographical map of Sicily in the *Book of Curiosities*.


255 The representation of Palermo in the map in the *Book of Curiosities* is not the only anomaly. Johns points out that the island of Sicily is not reproduced in a triangular shape, but instead as what he describes as a flattened sphere. The triangular shape of the *Trinacria* used since antiquity for the island can also be seen in later reproductions of al-Idrīsī’s map. In addition, the upper part of the *Book of Curiosities*’ map corresponds with the north and is not reversed as in the aforementioned example. Most remarkably, Palermo is the only city illustrated as circular in the *Book of Curiosities*. Palermo was possibly shown as a round city to associate it with Baghdad, founded as a circular city by the ‘Abbāsid caliph al-Mansur in 762. Jacob Lassner, *The Topography of Baghdad in the Middle Age* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1970), 52–53, 130–36. Although other possibilities remain, namely that of Jerusalem, which was frequently depicted as a round city in medieval maps, representing the heavenly cosmos. See Keith D. Lilley, *City and Cosmos: The Medieval World in Urban Form* (London: Reaktion Books, 2009), 15–55.


257 Most notably, the various strongholds and fortresses depicted on the map, for instance Rometta (on the map as “Qalʿat Rimgah” [= Rimţah, 49] near Messina, is only provided with a caption, on fols. 32B–33A. Ibid., 463. During the Arab conquest of Sicily, Rometta was the last Byzantine defense against the Arab invasion, attacked in 965 and was, therefore, a significant site. Alex Metcalfe, *Muslims of Medieval Italy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 55.
According to Jeremy Johns, the author of the *Book of Curiosities* was probably working from a textual account. Palermo and the surrounding plain, later known as the Conca d’Oro, take up a disproportionate part of Sicily’s interior, since the map shows the series of mountains and water sources described in a schematic fashion by Ibn Ḥawqal in the *Ṣūrat al-ʿarād*. In addition, the extramural suburbs of Palermo enumerated by him are pictured in the *Book of Curiosities* map. The New Quarter (Ḥārāt al-Jadīdah), and the Quarter of the Mosque of Ibn Siqlab (Ḥārāt al-Maṣḡid) are shown enclosed by a wall, whereas the Quarter of the Slaves (Ḥārāt aṣ-Ṣaqqāliba) is unwalled. Most notably, the three walled quarters outside the city in Ibn Ḥawqal’s time increased to ten. Johns has pointed out that because the author of the text was writing at least forty years after Ibn Ḥawqal, the city grew substantially in the interim. The new suburbs mentioned in the text include al-Jaʿfarīya to the southwest, which, as the author of the *Book of Curiosities* noted, contained 10,000 houses.

A detailed account of a topographical nature appeared almost two centuries later, in the *Epistola ad Petram Panormitane* (Letter to the Treasurer of the Cathedral, Peter) attributed to Pseudo-Hugh Falcandus. Written in ca. 1190, shortly after the death of William II, the letter includes a description of Palermo. The author noted that the Cassaro was the main

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258 Otherwise, the map of Sicily is not accurate in terms of distances, despite the detailed report of the amount of days it took to sail between different places identifiable in several examples throughout the *Book of Curiosities*. Johns, “Una nuova fonte per la geografia,” 414–16.

259 Johns postulates that the quarter was named after the fifth Kalbid amīr, Jaʿfar ibn Muḥammad, or the eighth Kalbid amīr, Jaʿfar ibn Yusuf. A district mentioned by Ibn Ḥawqal that does not appear on the map of Sicily in the *Book of Curiosities* is al-Gharbiya, fed by a spring called ‘Ayn al-Ḥadid, presumably named after an iron mine, which irrigated many gardens and orchards. The map in the *Book of Curiosities* also displays the unknown locality of “Ḥārāt al-Tājī with its walls” adjacent to “Ḥārāt al-Maṣḡid Ibn Siqlab.” Other walled suburbs are the Quarter of the Banū Laḥm and the Quarter of Religious Duty. The unwalled areas include “A Quarter called the Church of Rejoicing–populous [and] thriving”, as well as Abū Sālim [?]. See Johns, “La nuova “Carta della Sicilia” e la topografia di Palermo,” vol. 2, 20–22.

thoroughfare, intersected by three cross streets and running on a straight axis to the sea. Ibn Jubayr in 1183 called the street “Samāt al-balāt” (Arabic for “straight-paved line”), while Pseudo Hugh-Falcandus referred to it as “vicus Marmoreus.” A thoroughfare that led directly from the Torre Pisana in the main palace to the episcopal palace was the “viam coopertam,” in all probability a covered passageway. From the *Epistola*, we may also glean many place names in the city that reveal its Muslim population and their influence to the end of the Norman period, from the “palatium arabum” to the “forum saracenorum,” as well as houses owned by individuals or families, such as the “domum dicti saraceni.” Another foundation, the monastery of S. Giovanni degli Eremiti just south of the Norman Palace in La

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262 On the arrangement of the streets of Palermo, see Brese, “In ruga que arabice dicitur zucaec,” 158–59.

263 Pezzini, “Palermo’s *Forma Urbis* in the 12th Century,” 213. An additional area attested to in twelfth-century documents is a square known as *Rabba* (also *Rachaba* and *Rakhaba*), generally thought to have been a public gathering place and later part of the Jewish quarter of the city. Brese and other scholars believe that it corresponds to the modern-day Lattarini market area in Palermo’s historic center. Brese, “In ruga que arabice dicitur zucaec,” 160.
Galca, is believed to have been previously a mosque due to the medieval finds in its cloister; it was situated on the banks of the Kemonia River.264

For the Norman period, a key authority on the island’s topography, and indeed a seminal figure in the field of medieval geography, was al-Idrīsī, who worked in Roger II’s court. He began his treatise entitled Nuzhat al-mushtāq fī ikhtīrāq al-āfāq, also known as the Book of Roger (Kitāb Rudjār or al-Kitāb al-Rudjārī in Arabic, and Tabula Rogeriana in Latin), in about 1138.265 Al-Idrīsī followed a Ptolemaic system of delineating all of the regions of the earth (fig. 2.7). To supplement his work, he created a large world map engraved on silver, commissioned by Roger, which has not survived.266 Al-Idrīsī compiled information that he had acquired from travelers and scholars who visited Sicily. In the foreword, he noted that the king himself was very involved in the compilation of extensive material. According to him, Roger had a sound knowledge of the copper instruments that were used by contemporary cartographers.267

Al-Idrīsī described Palermo as magnificent and adorned with delightful buildings. He noted that the city was composed of five quarters, also mentioned by al-Muqaddasī, but he

264 These were the conclusions that the Superintendent at the time, Giuseppe Patricolo, had reached, even though his restoration in the fourth quarter of the nineteenth century effaced any remains. Idem, “Il monumento arabo scoverto in febbraio 1882 e la contigua chiesa di S. Giovanni degli Eremiti,” Archivio Storico Siciliano n.s. 3, 1 (1883), 170–92.
265 See the recent multi-lingual comparative translation, Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Idrīsī, La Sicilia di al-Idrisi nel Il libro di Ruggero: estratto relativo alla sola Sicilia, Italian translation by Michele Amari, annotated and compared with the Italian translation by Umberto Rizzitano, and with a French translation by Pierre Amédée Jaubert, revised by Anniese Nef and annotated by Henri Santagati, with an introduction by Ferdinando Maurici (Rome: S. Sciascia, 2010).
added that it was divided into two primary parts. The first is what he termed the *qaṣr* (from which the Italian “Cassaro” is derived), surrounded by tall towers and strong walls; in other words, the seat of Roger’s rule was a citadel. The second intramural area was the *rabad* or suburb which al-Idrīsī pronounced a separate city. Suburbs outside the old Cassaro were replete with inns, houses, baths, and markets, and were enclosed by walls of stone. In addition, al-Idrīsī noted the many sources of water and the gardens in the city. Palermo’s urban fabric does not seem to have been substantially altered by its new rulers. The most significant change was the establishment of their center of rule inland, away from the port and arsenal, the Fāṭimid-founded citadel of al-Khālīṣa, and the sea fort of Castel a Mare. Similar to the city’s description in the earlier *Book of Curiosities*, Norman Palermo contained numerous suburbs. The collapse of the Kalbid government in the eleventh century led to a great exodus from Sicily to Ifrīqiya. At this time, it is not possible to estimate the size of the population or if the conquest affected its growth.

Following the long period of instability on the island, we do not know in what state the Normans found Palermo. Robert Guiscard and Roger I carried out the first siege in 1061, but they failed to take the city. The two brothers claimed Palermo in a second successful attempt that began in 1071. In a letter sent by Count Roger to the bishop of Agrigento,

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268 Maqbul Ahmad, “Cartography of al-Sharif al-Idrīṣī,” 156–76.
Girlandus, dated 1093, he described the devastation encountered by him and his troops.\(^{273}\)

The letter mentioned the ruinous state of many cities and the debris of so many magnificent buildings. The civil wars of the 1040s and 1050s likely caused the destruction only exacerbated by the Norman conquest and which effectively left little of the Fāṭimid and Kalbid citadel of al-Khāliṣa.

After completing the conquest of Palermo in 1072, Count Roger secured his control over other parts of Sicily. His son, Roger, chose this same city as the capital of the *regno* in 1127 and began construction on his ruling palace.\(^{274}\) Instead of selecting the site of the Fāṭimid palatial city, he looked to the area of the ancient acropolis.\(^{275}\) This already fortified section of the city known as La Galca had its own set of walls.\(^{276}\) Here, Roger ordered the building of his palace and, later, the Cappella Palatina, the crowning glory of his new residence, following his coronation by the antipope Anacletus II in 1130.\(^{277}\) He established here the administrative center of his rule and the royal workshops. Even though the Palazzo dei Normanni has been transformed considerably since the mid-sixteenth century, several structures that comprised its twelfth-century fabric may be discerned (figs. 2.8–2.9). The Cappella Palatina stood at its center, between the sixteenth-century Maqueda and Fontana

\(^{273}\) Unfortunately, it is not clear to what region Count Roger is referring to in the diploma. Transcribed by Pirro in *Sicilia Sacra*, vol. 1, 695: “Quis enim visa castellorum et civitatum eorum ampla et diffusa ruina, et palatorum suorum studio mirabili compositorum ingenti destructione percognita, Saracenorum, quorum usibus superfluis deserviebant, incommoditates non attendat esse multiplices, miserias magnas, et detrimenta innumerabilia?”

\(^{274}\) On the transition between the Islamic and Norman city, see Franco D’Angelo, “La città di Palermo tra la fine dell’età araba e la fine dell’età normanna,” in *La città di Palermo nel Medioevo* (Palermo: Officini di studi medievali, 2002), 35–57.


\(^{276}\) La Galca was a protected space (also containing the remains of the Roman Villa Bonanno today) that constituted the outer enclosure of the twelfth-century palace. Even though it is not possible to identify the extent of this royal space, Henri Bresc believes that each side measured no more than 300 meters. Bresc, *In ruga que arabice dicitur zucac,* 163.

\(^{277}\) Tronzo, *Cultures of His Kingdom*, 9–11.
courtyards (fig. 2.10). Immediately adjacent to the city walls, the Torre Greca rose over the complex to the north. To the east is the Joharia Tower, which is likely to have contained the treasury (fig. 2.11). La Torre Pisana faced the city to the north. Once lavishly decorated, the interior of the tower still has some fragmentary remains of mosaics (fig. 2.12). Built by Robert Guiscard, an additional tower known as La Torre Rossa made up the palatial complex. The Norman palace was a ruling fortress, corresponding to the early fortified residences constructed under Count Roger and Robert Guiscard. With the increasing stabilization of his rule, Roger II converted the castrum into a sumptuous residence.

II. The Aula viridis in the Norman Palace: The Courtyard Garden as a Ruling Hall

The mid-sixteenth century renovations also claimed the so-called Aula Verde, or Aula viridis, one of the principal secular halls of the main palace that in terms of its plan was an open-air courtyard (fig. 2.13). This ruling courtyard is not prominent in scholarly accounts, but I contend that this structure is of critical importance for understanding spaces in the royal sphere that bridge the interior and exterior. The courtyard was where official court business was conducted and the king presided, situated near the edge of the palatial enclosure of La Galca, presently occupied by the unseemly parking lot of the Sicilian Regional

Facing onto the city, the Aula Verde was connected to other courtyards and towers of the palatial complex via covered walkways (fig. 2.8, no. 14).  

Pseudo-Hugh Falcandus, narrating events that took place in the years between 1154 and 1169, described William I descending into a large hall adjoining the palace where a great crowd had assembled.  According to the Andalusian traveler Ibn Jubayr, who saw it during the reign of William II, in 1184:

> Amongst the things we observed was a hall set in a large court enclosed by a garden and flanked by colonnades: The hall occupied the whole length of that court, and we marvelled at its length and the height of its belvederes. We understood that it was the dining-hall of the King and his companions, and that the colonnades and the ante-chambers are where his magistrates, his officials, and his stewards sit in presence.

From Pseudo-Hugh Falcandus, we know that the hall’s size allowed for large audiences. In terms of its building type, Ibn Jubayr stated that the Aula Verde was a courtyard on a grand scale. Surrounding what was presumably the central area were gardens and porticoes; the latter contained spaces for court functionaries as well. Therefore, besides the courtyard’s use as a banquet hall, the so-called Aula Verde was a de facto ruling hall or aula regia. The portico of the courtyard was also built to a height that allowed for several belvederes.

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282 The courtyard hall could have also corresponded, albeit to a lesser extent, to Piazza Vittoria in front of the Palazzo dei Normanni. The remains of the Roman Villa Bonanno can be found here, but presumably this structure was no longer standing by the medieval period. See Longo, “Il Palazzo Reale di Palermo,” 62–63.

283 Ibid.

284 Pseudo-Hugh Falcandus, History of the Tyrants of Sicily, 114: “... he went down to the great hall which adjoined the palace, and gave orders for the people to be called together there, since the place was big enough to take a great crowd.” In Latin, Epistola ad Petrum Panormitanae ecclesiae thesaurarium, vol. 22, 62: “des[cendit in aulam que pa]latio coniuncta erat, [iussit]que populum convocari, eo quod amplitudo loci capiende multitutin vulgi sufficeret.”


286 Another possibility is that the Aula Verde was a pre-Norman structure. Amari has suggested that it dated to antiquity. He argued that it might have been a Roman amphitheater or a civil basilica. Raffaele Starrabba later supported this view. Idem, “Notizie e documenti intorno alla Sala Verde,” 423; an opinion supported by Di Giovanni, La topografia antica, vol. 1, 384.
Ibn Qalāqīs mentioned in his poem “Al-Zahr al-bāsim” a fountain that he saw in the Norman Palace during his visit in 1168–69 that is quite likely to have been located in the Aula Verde. It was situated below what he termed a mal’ab or majlis. Additional sources for the hall and its fountain include the poets Abd ar-Raḥmān of Butera and Ibn Bashrūn from Mahdīya. In terms of extant twelfth-century Norman architecture, the cloister of the Benedictine abbey of Monreale comes to mind, although the Aula Verde predated William II’s foundation, and this type of secular space would not appear to be directly modeled on local monastic examples. Pseudo-Hugh Falcandus mentioned the courtyard-ruling hall in the Epistola ad Petram Panormitanum, which helps to situate the Aula Verde in relation to the city. In his description of the city, he noted the three principal streets of Palermo of which “tertia sane ab aula regia quae palatio subest,” thereby placing the Aula Verde at one of the three roads that began at the royal palace.

More than a century later, the Catalan Ramón Muntaner in his chronicle of 1327 detailed a meeting: “And when the appointed day came they all were in Palermo, and on the day they assembled in Palermo in the Salavert, at the ringing of the bell, and the seats of my Lady the Queen[?] and of the Infantes and, afterwards, of the rich homens [sic] and knights were erected there, and all others, indiscriminately, sat down on the floor, on which carpets

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287 De Simone, Splendori e misteri di Sicilia, 9–19.
288 Ibid., 20.
289 For Abd ar-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar of Butera, see Amari, Biblioteca arabo-sicula, vol. 2, 438; for Ibn Bashrūn from Mahdīya, see ibid., vol. 2, 438.
had been spread." Just over twenty years later, a fire destroyed a good part of the hall, and there is no indication that it was rebuilt. Writing in the mid-sixteenth century, the Sicilian Dominican friar and historian Tommaso Fazello noted that the courtyard was located in front of the Norman citadel within the palatial compound of La Galca. The surrounding wall to the north was still intact several years prior to his writing. He reported that the pavement was made of marble and inside the enclosure a great quantity of stones could be seen. Fazello recorded that it was completely leveled in 1554 and that the Spanish viceroy, Don García of Toledo, reused the stone or marble for the construction of a new loggia. Accordingly, there is no trace of the Aula Verde in Hogenberg and Braun’s city view published in 1572, nor in Matteo Florimi’s map of Palermo of 1580.

Courtyards that functioned as official gathering spaces in regal settings were not unheard of in the Middle Ages, even in northern climes. Most notably, Henry II of England’s (r. 1154–89) palace at Saumur (Maine-et-Loire) contained a similar arrangement. In his Life of Saint Louis, Jean de Joinville described an open-air banquet held there in 1241.

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294 Fazello, De rebus Siculis, Dec. 1, Book 8, 173: “Innanzi alla rocca era già un cortile detto a quel tempo Sala, ma oggi chiamato Salaverde, il quale è largo, spazioso, e tanto grande, che vi si potevan far dentro spettacoli, e giochi, e già i Re facevan quivi le concioni al popolo. Tutto il pavimento era fatto di marmo, e ’l[sic] muro che lo circondava verso mezzogiorno era al mio tempo tutto intero, e vi si vedeva dentro una maravigliosa grandezza di sassi, ed una bellissima antichità di Palermo, ma la poca considerazione e la ignorantaggine de’ ministri de’ Re sono state cagione della sua rovina, perochè l’hanno rovinato per servirsi di quei sassi nella fabbrica delle nuove muraglie, il che fu l’anno 1549, come se la città di Palermo non avesse dentro, e fuori le cave delle pietre da potersene servire in così fatti bisogni. La piazza del detto teatro al mio tempo s’arava, e si zappava, e i contadini spesso spesso si imbattevano in qualche bella lastra di marmo. Ma l’anno 1554 fu tutta quanta insabbionata, e col cilindro fatto eguale e spianata. Tra questo cortile e le private case della città era un altro spazio molto grande cinto di muraglia assai ben larga, il qual da’ Saracini con voce cartaginese era chiamata Jalca, il che in nostra lingua vuol dir luogo serrato, e questo vano aveva una porta sola, la quale risguardava a dirittra verso il borgo della città. . .”
295 Cesare De Seta and Leonardo Di Mauro, Palermo, 5th edition, in the Le città nella storia d’Italia series (Bari: Laterza, 1998), Hogenberg and Braun’s city view of Palermo, figs. 18, 35; Matteo Florimi, fig. 33.
He was told that it had been constructed specifically for the hosting of great feasts.296 The structure appeared to conform in its overall architectural form to a monastic cloister.297 From Joinville’s account, the seating at the banquet was situated in the covered wings and in the center open to the sky. Joinville noted that it was built by Henry II, making it at least fifty years old by the time he attended a feast in honor of Louis VII. Demonstrated in an article by Jeremy Ashbee, the twelfth-century building at Saumur can be placed within a wider tradition of elite domestic buildings that utilized cloisters as a principal design feature.298 Cloistered palaces in England include the Sherborne Old Castle in Dorset and Old Sarum in Wiltshire, both attributed to Roger, bishop of Salisbury (d. 1139) and chief minister during the reign of Henry I (1100–35).299

In Sicily, there is a later example in Palermo of a *viridarium* or garden courtyard structure in a domestic setting. Located in the complex of the fourteenth-century Palazzo Chiaramonte (Steri), the hall has been dubbed a “hypogeum,” or underground chamber. This terminology employed by scholars would suggest an ancient date, despite the fact that most

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297 Jean de Joinville used the term ‘les hales’ rather than ‘great hall’, ‘palace’, or ‘castle.’ Idem, *Vie de Saint Louis*, edited by Jacques Monfrin (Paris: Dunod, 1995), 48: “Le Roy tint cele feste es hales de Saumur, et disoit l’en que le grant roy Henri d’Angleterre les avoit faites pour ses grans festes tenir; et les hales sont faites à la guise des clositres de ces moines blans, mes je croi que de trop in n’en soit nul si grant. Et vous dirai pour quoy il me semble, car à la paroy du cloistre ou le roy mangoit, qui estoyt environné de chevaliers et de serjans qui tenoient grant espace, mangoient a une table xx que évesques que arcevesques; et encore apres les évesques et les arcevesques mangoit encose cele table la royne Blanche, sa mere, au chief du cloistre, de celle part la ou le roy ne mangoit pas. … Et en toutes les autres elez et au prael d’en milieu mangoient de chevaliers si grant foison que je ne scé le nombre. . . et dient que il y ot bien trois mille chevaliers.”
299 There were close ties between England and Sicily even before William II’s marriage to Joanna, daughter of Henry II. The Englishman Robert of Selby (d. 1152) was King Roger II’s chancellor from the 1130s, and Thomas Brown was the *magister capellanus* until William I’s accession to the throne in 1154. Houben, *Roger II of Sicily*, 152–53.
of the literature dates it to the same period as the palace. At this site, a similar concept was at play, which is that of regulating the surrounding temperature or providing climate control. Uncovered in excavations in the mid-2000s, the hall is below the east face of the later Inquisition prison. Based on ceramic finds, the structure dates to the first quarter of the fourteenth century and was connected to the main palace of the Chiaramonte via a set of stairs. Recent excavations have also revealed a system of pipes that regulated the input and output of water for its interior. A stone bench spans its length on one side. The sunken hall is referred to in documents dating to the fourteenth and fifteenth century as a *viridarium*. Like the Aula Verde, it was associated on the one hand with leisure, since it had running water, and on the other, it was an elite space utilized by members of the Chiaramonte family.

**III. Water in the Norman Parklands**

For medieval Palermo and its territory, Ibn Hawqal provided the first historical information about its water resources. In his travelogue, he noted the rivers, springs, and shallow water table of the city. The latter allowed a good deal of the city to drink from wells in houses within the confines of al-Khāliṣa. The later *Book of Curiosities* described the abundance of water available to the urban population, ranging from the Papireto Lake near the Bāb ar-Riyāḍ (Gate of the Gardens) to the ‘Ayn Shīfā’ (Spring of Healing). Additional sources of water in the Palermitan plain enumerated by Ibn Ḥawqal, include al-Qādūs to the south, al-Fawwārah al-Ṣaghīrah (the smaller Fawwārah, but also literally the Little Spring), and

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300 The early fourteenth-century palazzo was built on the former Fātimid citadel of al-Khāliṣa. The most recent restoration campaigns on the site have found additional underground spaces. See Antonietta Iolanda Lima and Matteo Scognamiglio, “Anomalie e preesistenze nella genesi,” in *Lo Steri dei Chiaromonte a Palermo*, vol. 1: *Significato e valore di una presenza di lunga durata*, edited by Antonietta Iolanda Lima (Bagheria: Plumelia, 2015), 73–81.

al-Bayḍā’ (the White), ‘Ayn Abī Mālik (Spring of Abū Mālik), and al-Ghirbāl (the Gabriele).

In his slightly later work, al-Muqaddasī noted the existence of watermills in the city.\(^{302}\) The author of the *Book of Curiosities* mentioned these installations along the Wādī ‘Abbās or the Oreto River to the south of al-Khāliṣa.\(^{303}\)

Unquestionably, water played an important role in establishing the sites of the Norman parks that encircled the city to the south and west. The extramural area of Palermo, which included the twelfth-century Genoard Park, had four sources of water: Gabriele, Cuba (which fed a large artificial basin at the palace of the same name), Campofranco, and Nixio (also known as Nixo or Nischio) (fig. 2.4).\(^{304}\) These were open to the air and, in all likelihood, were surrounded by wetlands. Within this domain, water was marshaled for use in the suburban residences. In addition to day-to-day purposes such as the irrigation of gardens and orchards, this resource was harnessed for the elaborate waterworks created that included lakes, ponds, and fountains. Another primary function of these waterscapes was to provide entertainment for the Norman kings and their visitors by facilitating boating expeditions, as recorded by Benjamin of Tudela.

The city and its hinterland contained a network of *qanāts*, a system of collecting water from an aquifer transported by means of a gently sloping tunnel, excavated by creating a series of vertical shafts set at a regular distance (fig. 2.14).\(^{305}\) The plain of Palermo has the

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\(^{305}\) The classic study on *qanāts* remains that by Henri Goblot, *Les Qanats: une technique d’acquisition de l’eau* (New York: Mouton, 1979), also useful is the older essay by George B. Cressey, “Qanats, Karez, and Foggaras,” *Geographical Review* 48, 1 (1958), 27–44. In Tunisia and Algeria, the equivalent of the *qanāt* system is known as the *foggara*. In Morocco, the term *khettara* is used. See Stefano De Angeli and Stefano Finocchi, “Origine e diffusione dei canali idrici drenanti (*qanāt/foggara*) in Africa settentrionale in età antica,” *Bollettino di Archeologia* Special Issue (2010), 39–52.
ideal natural prerequisites for the construction of qanāts, since it slopes at a two- to three-degree angle and was easy to excavate. One of the three areas in Palermo in which qanāts may be found is at Mezzomonreale to the west of the city walls, below the slopes of Boccadifalco on the road to Monreale. It is also situated west of the Genoard Park and the palaces and pavilions of La Zisa, La Cuba, La Cubula Sopranà, and La Cubula. Supplementary means for conducting water include subterranean channels, one of which ran adjacent to or below the complex of Lo Scibene in Baida in the general expanse of Mezzomonreale. Its main reception room was designed atop a cave connected to a qanāt, discussed in more detail below.

Further studies are required to establish the correspondence between the Norman extramural residences and these underground watercourses. According to Pietro Todaro and Daniela Gueli, who have examined these in the city and its hinterland, water transported via the qanāts was intended primarily for agricultural purposes. Moreover, the period or, more likely, the different times in which this subterranean system was created is still unclear. Qanāts are thought to predate the Arab conquest of the city and could date as early as the Phoenician period. In greater Palermo, areas with underground viaducts for the conveyance of water also include Brancaccio-Ciaculli to the south, near the site of the palace of La

For examples from Malta, see Keith Buhagiar, “Water Management Strategies and the Cave-Dwelling Phenomenon in Late-Medieval Malta,” Medieval Archaeology 51 (2007), 103–130.

307 The site of the palace of Lo Scibene was built on a natural cave, later enlarged to create an artificial grotto. The earliest mention is in a document dating to 1132 that notes the water source of al-Mannānī. Salvatore Cusa, I diplomi greci e arabi di Sicilia (Palermo: Lao, 1868), vol. 1, 6.
308 The qanāts system provided water for household consumption and for crop irrigation until the beginning of the last century. Qanāts, however, were just one method of providing water in the city, which included wells, reservoirs (gebbia), built channels (saje), water wheels (senia), and natural springs.
Favara, the lake of Maredolce, and its surrounding parkland. The presence and access to water determined the location of these residences around Palermo. Compared with other topographical markers, whether natural, such as hills or mountains, or man-made, such as city walls, water as a reference point in both the city and its hinterland is more problematic to trace over time. Nonetheless, it constituted an important element of the urban fabric and the suburban parklands and, water needs to be studied as a material property alongside landscape for a broader understanding of medieval cities and their immediate countryside.

IV. The Early Norman Parks: “Favariam, Minenium aliaque delectabila loca”

The earliest of the three parks founded by the Norman dynasty had as its nucleus the palace of La Favara, situated four kilometers southeast of the city in the modern suburb of Brancaccio. The site lies to the southeast of Monte Grifone, a craggy foothill and the southernmost peak of the ring of mountains surrounding Palermo, which is 832 meters in height. The park’s natural boundary was formed by the steep valley carved out by the Oreto.

310 The entire area around the palace came to be known as La Favara from the thirteenth century onward. In addition, medieval documents refer to the area closest to the palace as contrada Dattileto due to the large date palm plantation in this part of the countryside. Cesare Pasca, Ricerche intorno le coltivazioni delle campagne di Palermo dagli arabi sino ai nostri tempi (Palermo: G. Lorsnaider, 1868), 13–15. Yet there is some ambiguity as to the precise confines of the contrada Cassarorum. The area east of the Norman palace has been referred to in documents as the Cassaro and in Arabic as “al-qaṣr al-qadīm.” Otherwise, one of the main throughways that led from the Norman palace down to the harbor was called Via Cassaro. In this case, however, the contrata Cassarorum corresponds to a vast area outside the city walls that encompassed the area south of the city of La Favara that could have extended to the later Norman foundation of La Zisa. See Caracausi, Arabismi medievali, 164–65. From the seventeenth century onward, this area of the plain south of Palermo was favored by the Sicilian nobility for their country estates that stretched in a southeast direction toward Bagheria. See Erik Henry Neil, “Architecture in Context: The Villas of Bagheria, Sicily” (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1995); Margherita De Simone, Ville palermitane del 17. e 18. secolo: profilo storico e rilievi (Genova: Vitali e Ghianda, 1968); Gioacchino Lanza Tomasi, Le ville di Palermo, introduction by Cesare Brandi, historical and topographical consultation by Rosario La Duca (Palermo: Il punto, 1966); and Stefano Piazza, Le ville di Palermo: le dimore extraurbane dei baroni del Regno di Sicilia (1412–1812) (Rome: Istituto poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, Libreria dello Stato, 2011).
River (Wādī ‘Abbās), a kilometer southeast of the central core of Palermo. The Tyrrhenian Sea is at a distance of 2 kilometers today and did not at any time border the residence. As is the case with Palermo’s historic center, the sea was a few hundred meters closer in the medieval period (pl. 1, fig. 3.1).

The precise extent of the Norman park of La Favara is not known, yet topographical clues may be gleaned from several primary sources. The very name of the palace was adapted from fawwāra, or fountain jet in Arabic. The plain to the east and southeast of Palermo has always been rich in terms of its available water. Ibn Ḥawqal noted that:

>. . . around Palermo other renowned springs flow, which are beneficial to the countryside; for instance the Qādūs, and, in the southern countryside, the small and large Fawwarāh; that flows from the nose of the mountain, and it is the largest source of [the countryside of Palermo]. All of these waters serve [to irrigate] gardens.312

In addition to the al-Qādūs spring south of the city, Ibn Ḥawqal referred to the two sources of water named Fawwarāh as one smaller and the other larger.313 The latter descends from what he termed the “nose” of the mountain, or the rugged face of Monte Grifone. According to him, the large Fawwarāh was the greatest source of water that fed Palermo’s countryside and provided water to surrounding gardens. It was certainly the larger Fawwarāh that fed the

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311 On the historical transformation of the topography of the Oreto Valley, which was navigable in the Phoenician period, see Giuseppe Barbera, “L’arboricoltura periurbana della Conca d’Oro,” http://spazioinwind.libero.it/ambientepalermo/L%20arboricoltura%20periurbana%20della%20Conca%20d%20Oro.PDF (accessed: June 3, 2014).
312 Ibn Ḥawqal, Biblioteca arabo-sicula, vol. 1, 23: . . . scaturiscono intorno a Palermo altre fontane rinomate, le quali recano utilità al paese; come sarebbe il Qādūs, e, nella campagna meridionale, la Fawwārah piccola e la grande; la quale sgorga dal naso della Montagna, ed è la più grossa sorgente dell’[agro palermitano]. Servon tutte queste acque a [innaffiare] i giardini.”
313 The toponym of La Favara (Maredolce is a late medieval place name) is derived from the Arabic fawwarāh (فوارة), from the root فور, signifying a source of water that rises impetuously, almost boiling in its intensity, but which can also mean a fountain and a geyser. Henri Bresc has calculated from a document dating to 1419 that the flow of water from the source of Maredolce was 8 zappos or 103 liters/second (a zappa is equivalent to 12.88 liters/second). Idem, “Les jardins de Palerme,” 60.
lake on the grounds built by Roger II in the 1130s. The location of the smaller of the two springs of the same name is unknown.314

The plain to the southeast of the city was strategically important, and La Favara was positioned close to the coastal land route dating from antiquity that led into Palermo. It was here that the troops of Count Roger first reached the city, a year before the final completion of the conquest in 1071.315 The Benedictine monk Amatus of Montecassino recounted that on Count Roger’s approach he encountered a palace. The chronicler described that adjoining it was a “jardin delectoz, pleins de frutte et de eaue.”316 As a reward for their service, Roger gave over the residence for the accommodation of his knights, so that “li chevalier avoient li choses royals et paradis terrestre.”317 Amatus noted again its lush verdant surroundings from where the count and his knights continued in their push toward the city. The next site mentioned by him used as an encampment during the siege of Palermo was that of chastel Jehan in 1071. Here Count Roger and Robert Guiscard established one of the earliest

Norman ecclesiastical foundations, the church of S. Giovanni dei Lebbrosi, located 1.5 kilometers from La Favara.318

A contemporary of William II, Romuald Guarna, the archbishop of Salerno, described in some detail the topographical features of the site of the magnificent extramural palace of La Favara and the lake of Maredolce.319 According to him, “in loco, qui Fabara dicitur,” where the terrain was filled with many ditches and hollowed-out areas (“terra multa fossa pariter et effossa”), Roger II ordered the construction of a vivarium (“pulcrum fecit bivarium”), or a fishpond.320 Here, the king contracted for many species of fish from different regions (“in quo pisces diversorum generum de variis regionibus adductos iussit inmitti”).321 Thanks to the copious water supply issued by the spring at the foot of the mountain, the lake could have been stocked with a quantity of fish. The importance of this passage for the present discussion is that it would appear that the extramural palace was built in the same period as the Cappella Palatina in the decade following Roger II’s coronation in 1130 (“Interea rex Rogerius. . . Panormi palatium satis pulcrum iussit edificari, in quo fecit

318 Amatus, L’ystoire de li Normant, 252: “Et de là lo conte s’en ala a lo chastel Jehan, mès maintenan se clave lo chasté Saint-Jehan.” Robert Guiscard supposedly founded the church of S. Giovanni dei Lebbrosi during the siege of Palermo in 1071. See Di Stefano, Monumenti della Sicilia Normanna, 33–34; Alex Metcalfe has suggested recently that S. Giovanni dei Lebbrosi and the sea fort of Castello a Mare at the present-day Cala or harbor of Palermo were perhaps seaside ribāts during Kalbid rule. Metcalfe, Muslims of Medieval Italy, 62. The church was heavily restored in the 1880s by Palermo’s Superintendent of Monuments at the time, Giuseppe Patricolo. Patricolo saw on the site the remains of what he believed to be a mosque. Unfortunately, S. Giovanni dei Lebbrosi underwent a lengthy restoration by Patricolo’s successor to the position, Francesco Valenti. As a result, any new observations on earlier structures on the site remain difficult. See an analysis of Valenti’s restoration principles by Genovese, Francesco Valenti, 16–22.


321 Ibid.
capella’m”). The latter was a pivotal time in which the visual culture of his kingship was defined.

In a panegyric poem or qaṣīda by Roger II’s contemporary, the Trapanese administrator ‘Abd ‘ar-Raḥmān, the site of La Favara, is described as between “al-baḥayni” (البحرین). In the collection Biblioteca arabo-sicula, Michele Amari translated the term as “between two seas” (due mare). A “baḥr” (بَحْر), however, could also denote a body of water such as a stream or river. Therefore, Ibn Ḥawqal’s account of the large and small rivers of the Fawwarāḥ might correspond to what became under Norman rule a royal park confined between the natural boundaries of the two rivers.

Two sources that date to the reign of William II reference a luxury estate that most scholars have associated with La Favara following Amari’s work. First, Benjamin of Tudela in his Book of Travels (Sefer Massa’ot) of 1173 described the palace of Al-Hacina. According to his account, the lake on its ground was originally used for boating expeditions with women from the ruler’s harem. Benjamin reported that here was an abundant spring surrounded by a wall that fed a reservoir known as “Al-Beḥira” (البحيرة in Benjamin’s text is derived from the Arabic بُحْيَة, denoting a lake). An abundance of fish was preserved there. Benjamin noted the king’s ships as ornamented with gold for his own amusement and that of his women. The interior of the grand palace was painted and covered with gold and silver.

322 Ibid.
323 In this decade, the sanctuary mosaics of the Cappella Palatina were completed as well as those in George of Antioch’s church of S. Maria dell’Ammiraglio. In the latter is a pair of mosaic panels depicting Roger II in full Byzantine regalia crowned by Christ and George of Antioch prostrating before the Virgin Mary. See Beat Brenk, “Rhetoric, Aspiration and Function of the Cappella Palatina in Palermo,” in Die Cappella Palatina in Palermo: Geschichte, Kunst, Funktionen: Forschungsergebnisse der Restaurierungen, edited by Thomas Dittelbach (Künzelsau: Swiridoff, 2010), 592–602.
325 An additional interpretation suggested by Karla Mallette is that the twin plural does not indicate that there were actually two seas. She argues instead that the poet ‘Abd ‘ar- Raḥmān is making a Qur’ānic allusion, referencing specifically to Surah 55 in which the Garden of Paradise is represented in pairs: i.e. two gardens, two fruits, and two springs. See Karla Mallette, “Medieval Sicilian Lyric Poetry: Poets at the Courts of Roger II and Frederick II” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Toronto, 1998), 30.
He described a large palace called “Al-Hacina” (a corruption of ḥisn, or castle from حصن) that had a variety of fruit trees on its grounds. Its floors were decorated with mosaics executed in gold and silver tesserae representing different scenes of which there was no equal in the Norman realm.\(^{326}\) It is likely that Benjamin was describing the fishpond that Romuald mentioned as being constructed by Roger II.\(^{327}\) Apart from Benjamin of Tudela, we have no other contemporary account regarding the palace’s ornamentation.\(^{328}\)

The second source that dates to William II reign is from 1183, when the Andalusian traveler Ibn Jubayr noted a freshwater lake and what he called Qaṣr Ja’far that he saw on the outskirts of the city. Because both descriptions mention the large lake, Amari associated La Favara with Al-Hacina as well as Qaṣr Ja’far. The latter site he attributed more specifically to the eighth Kalbid amīr, Ja’far ibn Yusuf (r. 998–1019).\(^{329}\) However, as Alex Metcalfe has recently pointed out, assigning patronage is a tricky issue since there were three amīrs named Ja’far who ruled less than a century before the conquest.\(^{330}\)

In terms of primary material that does not include chroniclers or documents produced by the administrative offices closely associated with the court, the first known mention of La

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\(^{326}\) Benjamin of Tudela, Sefer masa’ot, 316; Itinerary, 108–9: “Here is the domain and garden of the king, which is called al-Harbina (al-Hacina), containing all sorts of fruit-trees. And in it is a large fountain. The garden is encompassed by a wall. And a reservoir has been made there which is called al-Buheira, and in it are many sorts of fish. Ships overlaid with silver and gold are there, belonging to the king, who takes pleasure-trips in them with his women. In the park there is also a great palace, the walls of which are painted, and overlaid with gold and silver; the paving of the floors is of marble, picked out in gold and silver in all manner of designs. There is no building like this anywhere.”

\(^{327}\) Even though there has been some debate in the literature whether Benjamin was referring to the lake at La Favara since La Cuba also had a sizable lake on its grounds.


\(^{329}\) Ja’far was an immensely unpopular ruler, infamous due to his profligate lifestyle financed by a new system of taxation on the local population. In May 14/15 of 1019, Ja’far fled to a luxurious suburban palace where rioting locals besieged him. He subsequently managed to escape to Egypt, and his brother Ahmad took his place. Their father, Yusuf, who had abdicated several years previously, secured Ja’far’s passage by paying ransom to the Fāṭimid caliph Abu ‘Ali Mansur al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh. Ja’far died in Egypt in 1035. Despite Amari’s conviction that Qaṣr Ja’far corresponded with the later Norman complex, we do not have any further clues regarding the original patronage of La Favara. Amari, Storia dei musulmani, vol. 3, part 3, 872–73.

\(^{330}\) Namely, Ja’far I (d. 985), Ja’far II (r. 990–1019), and Ja’far III (d. 1035). Metcalfe, Muslims of Medieval Italy, 76–78.
Favara in Latin is on the *dorso* of a diploma in Arabic dated to 1162, which states: “Haec est carta canneti quod est iuxta magnam Favariam.”\(^{331}\) In 1194, Count Richard, the son of the former chancellor Matthew of Ajello, donated to the Cistercian monastery of SS. Trinità a portion of his sugarcane holdings, “partem nostram canneti quod est prope cassarum.”\(^{332}\)

Other documentation of the post-Norman period that refers to La Favara and its surroundings is a record of the sale of land in its vicinity dating to December 10, 1255 (and another place name, “Susa”), describing the area as full of orchards, fruit trees, and sugarcane. In addition, it mentions that the plot of land was situated on the public road to the east of the palace that runs along the sea from Termini to Palermo.\(^{333}\) A deed of 1258 notes the concession of land in the proximity of La Favara in the contrada of Dattileto. One of its confines is described as, “via publica qua itur ad cassarum et thermas,” indicating both the castle and the thermal complex.\(^{334}\) In 1300, the contrada of Dattileto suffered tremendously from the ransacking and burning of sugarcane and other crops by the admiral of Robert of Anjou (r. 1309–43), Count Thomas Marchianus of Squillaci, during the lengthy and tumultuous War of the Vespers.\(^{335}\)

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335 The vivid description of the destruction wrought by the Count of Squillaci appears in a notary document of November 1300, transcribed by the Sicilian historian Antonino Mongitore. See Mongitore, *Monimenta historica*, 35: “Comes ipse de Squillaci, ait, cum terrestri exercitu classem repetit, inde longo cursa navigans, in Panormitana liittora declinavit, ubi segetibus ignem imposuit, frugiferas vites, arbores, et plurima praetiosa virgulta succedit, omnenque Panormitanae substance, qua ex parte, qua declinavit extra Urbem invenerat, convertit in praedam, tunc quidem ingentes Palmae, quae juxta Pontem Admiratus erant longo inoffensis
At this time, it is quite possible that the Angevin troops caused a good deal of damage to the palace and its attendant baths. In any case, Frederick III transferred the property in 1328 along with several vineyards and sugarcane plantations to Giovanni Chiaramonte, the great seneschal, from the increasingly powerful feudal family, who had helped to build the new walls of the city. What is more, the site of La Favara is adjacent to the overland coastal route to Palermo from the eastern part of the island, which would have contributed to its status as a desirable location. The prestige of the Teutonic Knights and the rising power of Chiaramonte would have made the royal estate an appropriate award. In the fourteenth century, the courtyard itself was utilized as a site for the industrial production of sugar.

In summary, from the final quarter of the twelfth century until the period immediately preceding the Sicilian Vespers, Roger’s La Favara was considered to be of the same rank as the two palaces built by his successors. This favorite residence of Roger II was still in use by William I and William II, and Henry VI Hohenstaufen chose it as his base during his siege of the city. After the decades of deep unrest that followed the War of the Vespers, whatever remained of La Favara was given to the Teutonic Knights by the first half of the fourteenth century. Yet, it is possible that the lengthy stay of Henry VI and his troops in 1194 and the turbulent period that led to the capture and execution of King Tancred, caused damage to the


337 Toomaspoeg, Les Teutoniques, 83–86.

palatial complex. We do not have a record of Frederick II staying here; but he did spend a good deal of time away from Palermo, and indeed Sicily, in his adulthood.\footnote{Yet, Frederick constructed and renovated numerous residences and castles elsewhere in Sicily. Agnello, \textit{L’architettura sveva in Sicilia}; Bellafiore, \textit{Architettura in Sicilia dell’età sveva}; Liliane Dufour, \textit{Augusta da città imperiale a città militare} (Palermo: Sellerio, 1989).} In 1239, Frederick allowed the land adjacent to La Favara to be leased to Jews from Djerba for the cultivation of date palms, henna, and indigo.\footnote{Jean-Louis-Alphonse Huillard-Bréholles, \textit{Historia diplomatica Friderici Secundi, sive constitutiones, privilegia, mandata, instrumenta quae supersunt istius Imperatoris et filiorum ejus. Accedunt epistolae Paparum et documenta varia} (Paris: Plon, 1854), vol. 5, 572–73, Regest. imper. Freder. II, fol. 36r, December 15, 1239: “Concedas eis etiam palmeretum seu dactiletum curie nostre Panormi quod est prope Favariam ad excolendum dactilos juxta morem eorum. . . Significasti etiam nobis per capitula ipsa te concessisse pluribus de judaeis ipsis multas terras, ad excolendum in contrata Favarie, in quibus procuratur et augmentatur utilitas curie nostre et debent in eis seminare alchanam et indicum et alia diversa semina que crescunt in Garbo nec sunt in partibus Sicilie adhuc visa crescere. . .” Giuseppe Mandalà has most recently suggested that the aforementioned group of Jews came from the Maghreb, since the place name “Garbum” did not refer to Djerba, but to North Africa in general. Idem, “La migration des juifs du Garbum en Sicile (1239),” in \textit{Maghreb-Italie. Des passeurs médiévaux à l’orientalisme moderne (XIIIe–milieu XXe siècle)}, edited by Benoît Grévin, Collection de l’École française de Rome, 439 (Rome: École française de Rome, 2010), 19–48.} The second royal park created by Roger II, according to Romuald of Salerno, is that of Parco in the locality of Altofonte, nine kilometers southwest of Palermo in an elevated area across the valley from Monreale.\footnote{Bresc, “La chasse en Sicile,” 201–11; Pietro Corrao, “Boschi e legno,” in \textit{Uomo e ambiente nel Mezzogiorno normanno-svevo: atti delle ottave Giornate normanno-sveve: Bari, 20–23 ottobre 1987}, edited by Giosuè Musca (Bari: Dedalo, 1989), 135–63; for the hunting lodge, see Braida, “Il palazzo ruggeriano di Altofonte,” 185–97.} Roger II enclosed a section of the mountainous and wooded terrain above the city with a stone wall (“muro fecit lapideo circumcludi”). Here, Roger had roe deer, fallow deer, and wild boar—all animals appropriate for the hunt, which were imparked within the boundaries of the delightful park (“damas capreeolos porcos silvestres iussit includi”).\footnote{Immediately following the account of the lake and palace at La Favara, Romuald in his chronicle described the creation of a hunting preserve by Roger II in the mountains and woods that once surrounded Palermo. Idem, \textit{Chronicon}, 157: “Quosdam autem montes et nemora, quae sunt circa Panormum, muro fecit lapideo circumcludi et parcum deliciosum satis et amoenum, diversis arboribus insitum et plantatum construi iussit, et in eo damas capreeolos porcos silvestres iussit includi. Fecit et in hoc parco palatum ad quod aquam de fonte lucidissimo per conductus subterraneos iussit adduci.”} In addition, specific trees were planted (“et amenum diversis arboribus insitum et plantatum construi iussit”) or the introduction of non-indigenous fauna
and flora.\textsuperscript{343} Romuald recorded that Roger ordered for water to be brought from a most clear source to his palace via underground conduits from, in his words, a “very clear source” (“fecit et in hoc parco palatium ad quod aquam de fonte lucidissimo per conductus subterraneos iussit adduci”).\textsuperscript{344}

Roger II would spend his summers in residence at Parco. Located 300 meters above sea level in the mountains southwest of Palermo, its natural situation offered respite from the heat of the city and it was where the king would hunt. According to Romuald, Roger enjoyed La Favara and its grounds in the winter (“nam in hyeme”). The king also spent time here during the period of Lent due the quantity of fish available from the lake, known later as Maredolce (“et quadragesimali tempore pro copia piscium in Fabare palatio morabatur”). Therefore, from Romuald’s account we know that Roger utilized his residence of La Favara and the hunting palace at Parco on a seasonal basis and according to the liturgical calendar.

\textbf{V. The Second Phase of Royal Parkland Foundation: William I and William II’s Park of the Genoard}

The park of the Genoard (from the Arabic \textit{jannat al- ’ard}, “Paradise on Earth”), was also known as the “New Park” (\textit{parcum novum}) to distinguish it from the older parks established by Roger II. In this section, I provide a new interpretation of this material by analyzing it in conjunction with contemporary examples from the Mediterranean. Pseudo-Hugh Falcandus noted that, inspired by the construction of palaces and delightful spaces by

\textsuperscript{343} Ibid. Other nearby hunting retreats for the use of Norman lords include the castle of Caronia, on the coast half-way to Messina from Palermo, in all likelihood, the residence or the hunting retreat of a Norman lord. See Wolfgang Krönig, \textit{Il castello di Caronia in Sicilia: un complesso normanno del XII secolo} (Rome: Edizioni dell’elefante, 1977).

\textsuperscript{344} Romuald of Salerno, \textit{“Chronicon,”} 157.
his father, Roger, William decided to build his own residence. Consequently, William I, whose work was continued by his son and successor William II, parceled a significant tract of the plain of the Conca d’Oro to the west and southwest of the city. Among the string of buildings were the monumental La Zisa and La Cuba, as well as the garden pavilions of La Cubula and La Cuba Soprana. In effect, the Genoard Park linked the various royal palaces around the city to the southwest and just outside its walls. If we take Pseudo-Hugh Falcandus’s claim that William I built La Zisa so that he would have a residence on equal footing with that of his father, arguably he and his successor founded the parkland of the Genoard for similar reasons, thereby creating a new circuit of power in the capital’s hinterland.

Located just southwest of the Norman palace, the park formed a greenbelt by joining together the pre-existing park of La Favara and possibly also the hunting park of Parco, situated farther up the ring of mountains that surrounded the plain of Palermo. The area northwest of the city was mostly a marshy environment at this time (later the Bourbon park of La Favorita). The Genoard Park, according to Amari, might have encapsulated the complex of Lo Scibene close to the slopes of Boccadifalco. In addition to the natural boundary of the mountains, the park was likely delimited by the rivers of the Kemonia to the north and the Papireto to the south.

Under Kalbid rule, a part of the area that later constituted the Genoard Park corresponded in all likelihood to what Ibn Ḥawqal called al-Mu’askar, an Arabic toponym

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that signifies the “Room of the Soldiers,” or an army encampment. In Palermo, this extramural zone could have been a garden that often functioned as camping grounds for soldiers, perhaps also used for ceremonies and festivals. Ibn Ḥawqal described al-Mu’askar as beyond the gates of Bāb al-Rūṭah (Gate of the Wheel) and Bāb ar-Riyāḍ (Gate of the Gardens), both of which were located southwest of the later Norman palace. Bāb al-Rūṭah opened onto the Papireto, which was a lake on this side. The very name of Bāb ar-Riyāḍ points once again to the abundance of vegetation in the Palermitan plain and to its active cultivation. Based on topographical clues provided by Ibn Ḥawqal, Amari suggested that al-Mu’askar was immediately adjacent to the later La Cuba, west of the medieval city.

The Tabularium of S. Maria Nuova includes a document of 1182 that delineates the borders of the territories in the possession of the abbey of Monreale and mentions the walls of the park. The enclosure is cited as “et pervenit usque ad murum parci, et vadit per murum murum usque ad portam Putei.” However, unlike Parco, designated for hunting

349 Amari, *Storia dei musulmani*, vol. 3, part 2, 120. The use of gardens as sites for the stationing of troops was habitual in antiquity and in the Islamic world. The Byzantine troops encamped most of the year in the Philopation Park outside the walls of Constantinople. The Ghaznavids entertained their military retinue in their royal gardens. Large armies required large spaces when not on campaign, and the most practical form of stationing them was in tents or other temporary structures. The area to the west of the city, situated between the small village of Baida and outside La Galca, is likely to have stationed the Kalbid army. See Lisa Golombek, “The Gardens of Timur: New Perspectives,” *Muqarnas* 12 (1995), 141–42.

350 It was of great importance to have garrisons stationed directly outside the walls, but not in the city proper, not least for keeping the public peace. See ibid.

351 Ibn Ḥawqal, *Description de Palerme*, 98.


354 The Tabularium of S. Maria Nuova of Monreale, BCRS, Palermo, perg. n. 163, also published in Cusa, *I diplomi greci e arabi*, vol. 1, 180.
from the onset, there is no indication that the Genoard Park was created for this purpose.\footnote{Nancy P. Ševčenko in “Wild Animals in the Byzantine Park,” in Byzantine Garden Culture, edited by Andrew R. Littlewood, Henry Maguire, and Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2002), 74–75.}

As was presumably the case of La Favara and its lake, the Genoard was an enclosed and artificial landscape.\footnote{Hans-Rudolf Meier, ‘...’das ird’sche Paradies, das sich den Blicken öffnet’: Die Gartenpaläste der Normannenköänge in Palermo,” Die Gartekunsk 5, 1 (1994), 1–18.} The residential structures built here by William I and William II contained complicated hydraulic systems, channeling water to the different pavilions and to interior fountains and other waterworks.\footnote{Amari was the first to define the Genoard Park as a riyāḍ, or an extended garden of the palatial complex within the city walls. Amari, Storia dei Musulmani in Sicilia (1933), vol. 3, part 2, 565–67. Bellafiore has further refined the concept of the riyāḍ in the Norman context. Idem, Parchi e giardini, 5–9, 13–15. Marco Masseti has pointed out that the Genoard was a multi-functional space, utilized also for subsidiary agricultural purposes and as a botanical storehouse. See Marco Masseti, “In the Gardens of Norman Palermo, Sicily (Twelfth Century A.D.),” Anthropozoologica 44, 2 (2009), 7–34, and most recently, William Tronzo, Petrarch’s Two Gardens: Landscape and the Image of Movement (New York: Italica Press, 2014), 25–67.} In his De rebus Siculis (1558), Fazello described the circumference of the extramural Norman parks. He noted that the park of La Cuba was located outside the city walls and immediately adjacent to the principal royal palace.\footnote{Fazello, De rebus Siculis, Deca uno, Book 8, 200–2: “Al palazzo di verso ponente fuor delle mura era vicino un giardino, il qual era di giro quasi due miglia, ed era chiamato il Parco. Erano in questo Parco molti orti, dove erano assai siorti di frutti bellissimi, e da ogni banda erano lauri, e mirti, che gittavano gratissimi odori, e d’intorno si vedevano alcune cappellette in volta fatte per ricreamento de’ Re, la maggior parte delle quali eran poste in una strada diritta e lunga, che dal principio, e dal fine mostrava il mezzo, delle quali se ne vede oggi una intera. Nel mezzo era un vivaio grande, dove si serbavano i pesci, ed era fabbricato di gradissime e grossissime pietre lavorate in quadro, le quali mostrano in loro una grandissima antichità, e questo vivaio è oggi ancora intero, e non gli manca altro che l’acque e pesci. Soprastanno a questo vivaio bellissime abitazioni fatte con bellissima architettura, per diporto de’ Re, sopra le quali sono alcune lettere saracine intagliate, che per ancora non sono state intese da persona. In una parte di questo parco si tenevan d’ogni sorte d’animali salvatici, perché i Re in caccia avessero spasso, ma per esservi oggi quasi rovinata ogni cosa, non vi si vedono se non certe vigne e certi orti di persone private. Il giro solamente di detto Parco si può vedere, perché la maggior parte delle mura è restata quasi incorrotta ed interna. Questo luogo è da’ Palermitani chiamato Cuba, siccome lo chiamavano già ancora i Saracini in lingua loro.”} Fazello stated that it encompassed about 2,000 feet (a foot corresponds to 1.80 meters), thereby suggesting that the entire park enclosed 3,600 meters.\footnote{The units of measurement in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies as established in a 1840 edict are as follows: there were two definitions of a “passo.” The first is a “passo itinerario” made up of another unit of measurement, of seven “palme” (a measurement which varied widely according to location, but in Sicily corresponded to 25.8 cm), thereby corresponding to 1.8 meter for a Sicilian “passo.” See Carlo Afan de Rivera, Tavole di riduzione dei pesi e delle misure delle Due Sicilie in quelli statuiti dalla legge de’ 6 aprile del 1840.} According to him, the park had many orchards and several
pavilions for the king’s enjoyment, arranged on an axis from the main access road. He described the large vivarium or pool, filled with numerous species of fish, in front of La Cuba. In a separate section of the park, already in a ruinous state by the mid-sixteenth century, the Norman kings hunted regularly and kept all kinds of “savage animals.” From the Dominican friar’s account, it is clear that the wall that encircled the park was still visible. He noted that there was an additional royal garden close to La Cuba only half a mile away toward the north. Known as La Zisa after the palace on its grounds, it also contained various flora and fauna.\(^{360}\)

The subsequent visual document of the area corresponding to the Genoard Park appeared in a treatise by the physician and public health official Gian Filippo Ingrassia (1510–1580). Ingrassia established hospitals at La Cuba and the monastery of S. Giovanni degli Lebbrosi to treat those sick with the plague. Ingrassia published his detailed observations in *Informatione del pestifero, et contagioso morbo* (1576), in which he included a drawing of La Cuba (fig. 2.15). This important document provides a panoramic vista of the expanse to the west of the city that constituted the former Genoard Park. William II’s palace pavilion, marked on the topographical drawing as the “grande torre della Cuba,” shows its eastern face, which looked toward the city.\(^{361}\) As befitting his description, the building is

\(^{360}\) Fazello, *De rebus Siculis*, Deca uno, Book 8, 200–2: “Vicino a questo Parco, un mezzo miglio verso settentrione, era un altro giardino regio, il qual si chiamava e si chiama ancor oggi con voce saracina Zisa il quale è pieno di frutti domestici, e di fontane indeficienti, e vi si vedono ancora le abitazioni reali adornate di marmi bianchi, di porfidi, di mischi, e di muraici superbissimi, che son tutti di mano di Saracini per quanto si può giudicare per l’architettura, e congietturar per quelle parole saracine, di cui abbiamo ragionato di sopra, e questo luogo si può paragonar a qual si voglia altra abitazion regia che sia in Italia. Alcuni Saracini curiosi delle cose antiche, dicono, che Cubba e Zisa erano i nomi di due figliuole d’un re Saracino, e che da loro fu dato il nome a questi due giardini, ma disai loro tanta fede, quanta l’uomo vuole. Molti scrittori di quei tempi fanno menzione nei loro scritti della magnificenza e delle bellezze di questo palazzo, l’uno dei quali mi venne alle mani l’anno 1551 il quale è antichissimo, ed il suo titolo era Guiscarda. Ma basti fin qui aver detto della rocca.”

tower-like in form. A monumental protruding arch on the eastern façade is clearly articulated. Also illustrated is a schematic representation of the Kūfic inscription on the cornice of La Cuba. The extramural area surrounding the Norman Palace from the newly constructed Spanish Porta Nuova is shown as a bucolic space with gardens and animals. In the sixteenth-century depiction, the courtyard of La Cuba would presumably have corresponded to the outline of the twelfth-century artificial lake, while the perimeter walls could perhaps be those that once enclosed the medieval park mentioned by Fazello.

VI. The Genoard Park: Royal Viridarium and Menagerie

Into the Genoard Park in which La Cuba was situated, Romuald of Salerno describes the introduction of animals into what can be best termed a viridarium. In the illustrated epic, Liber ad honorem Augusti sive de rebus Siculis, composed in 1196 by Peter of Eboli, the city of Palermo is depicted on fol. 98r as divided into several sectors (fig. 2.16). The Norman palace underneath the heading “civitas Panormus lugens super occasu speciosi” takes up the entire right-hand side of the page. In this section, a cluster of persons is

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362 In addition to various rooms and smaller structures, which presumably date to Inggrassia’s time or slightly earlier. Figure 22 on the map is labeled as: “altre stanze: le quali anticamente eran del medesimo padron della Cubba…” Ibid., 141.
363 Ibid., 139: “Il qual Lazareto della Cubba con tutti suoi i edifici nuovi e vecchi, e tutto anco il circuito della piana di Palermo infino alle montagne, e Monreale, ho voluti qui far dipingere.”
364 Other topographical markers of interest in Inggrassia’s drawing include the road that led to Monreale. Located on the further left and following the curve of the Kemonia River (not illustrated), the road to the Cuba ran from the gate of the main palace. Monreale is shown on the top left as is the fortified structure of Castellaccio, already in the possession of the monastery of San Martino delle Scale. On the plain further below and leading down from the slopes of Monreale and Boccadifalco, several extramural residences may be seen. In Inggrassia’s sketch, the monastery of the Cappuccini founded in 1553 is on the furthest right.
365 The road that led to Mezzomonreale (present-day Via Calatafimi) was constructed in 1580–84 and bounded La Cuba to the north instead of the south as shown in Inggrassia’s drawing. For the extent of the park, see Fazello, De rebus Siculis, Deca uno, Book 8, 200–2. See also Di Stefano, Monumenti, 111–12
366 Maureen Miller notes that private baths, triclinia, and vivaria, were typical in late antique elite houses. See Miller, The Bishop’s Palace, 33.
367 Peter of Eboli, Liber ad honorem Augusti, 47; also Hammel, La fine del regno, 57–59.
368 In a similar fashion to Ibn Hawqal’s earlier description of Palermo as a city composed of five sections, we see this spatial demarcation illustrated in the Liber ad honorem Augusti. On the lower left of the page and
shown outside the palatial enclosure. Adjacent to the city and the main palace, in the upper left quadrant of Peter of Eboli’s schematic representation, the “viridarium genoard” is illustrated, depicted as filled with greenery in the form of shrubs, trees, palm trees, and exotic birds and animals. The park clearly occupied a significant area immediately beyond the densely populated city. Moreover, it would appear to correspond to the other districts of Palermo in terms of its importance. Its depiction with a walled section on the top left of the miniature would seem to imply that the Genoard was a continuation of the fortified palatine complex of La Galca and an enclosed space as well. Yet, by this time, Henry VI had effectively dismantled the park and its menagerie, since we know that he ordered the killing of the exotic animals collected by the Sicilian kings to feed his troops.

Whatever the precise reasons for the creation of the Genoard Park, by the mid-twelfth century, a royal viridarium would have been a common sight in the Christian West, Byzantium, and Islamic lands. Roman and early Byzantine emperors had farms with animals that were raised for the games in the hippodrome that still took place in Constantinople into the late twelfth century, according to Benjamin of Tudela’s travelogue. The chronicler under the heading “Calza” a group of weeping women may be seen, depicting the quarter of the city that corresponded with the former Fāṭimid and Kalbid citadel. A group of men appears on the other side of the harbor that was semi-circular in form and protected from enemy incursions by means of a chain drawn across it. On the other side of the port is the Castello a Mare, the fortified seaside citadel. Also on this side of the page, under the heading “Scerarchadium,” is represented the Norman suburb of Seralcadio (derived from the Arabic, Sarīh al-Qādi,” or “Road of the Judge”). Immediately above is the Cassaro (“Cassarum” or al-Qaṣr), the fortified section of the city located to the north of the palatial complex of La Galca. To the left on the page (or what would have been to the south of this quarter) and situated across from the Cassaro, is the quarter of “Ideisini” a corruption of Danisinni (al-Dayyāsin or ‘Ayn Abī Saʿīd in Ibn Hawqal’s account), enclosed within the city walls. Kölzer and Stähli, Liber ad honorem Augusti sive de rebus Siculis, 46.

369 On fol. 98r of the Liber ad honorem Augusti, several avian species are depicted and a possible hare within the Genoard. See Masseti, “In the Gardens of Norman Palermo,” 7–34.
370 Notably, a division along ethnic lines can be discerned in Peter of Eboli’s manuscript: Latins are shown in the Cassarum, Greeks in the Calza, while Arabs and possibly Jews may be seen in the Ideisini and Scerarchadium quarters. Kölzer and Stähli, Liber ad honorem Augusti sive de rebus Siculis, 46.
371 Bellafiore, Parchi e giardini della Palermo normanna, 8–9.
372 For ancient and medieval menageries, see the classic work by Gustave Loisel, Histoire des ménageries de l’antiquité à nos jours (Paris: O. Doin et fils, 1912), vol. 1; Louis Keimer, “Jardins zoologiques d’Égypte,” Cahiers d’histoire égyptienne 6, 2 (1954), 81–159. For the stocking of wild beasts, see Michael MacKinnon,
Yāḳūt recounted that the caliph’s palace in the suburbs of Baghdad was surrounded by vast parkland, including a menagerie that enclosed animals intended for the chase and an aviary in the ninth century. At this time, the Ṭūlūnid capital of al-Qatta’i, just north of al-Fusṭāṭ, already had a compound containing elephants, giraffes, leopards, and panthers. In Fāṭimid Cairo, a large menagerie was mentioned with admiration by Western travelers in numerous accounts dating to the late twelfth and thirteenth century.

Exotic species of animals in the medieval West were typically received as gifts and were important components of medieval culture. Charlemagne famously had an elephant nicknamed Abul-Abbas given to him by the ‘Abbāsid caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd, which he kept at his palace at Aachen. The English king Henry I had a sizable menagerie at his residence at Woodstock (Oxfordshire) in ca. 1130, which included lions, leopards, camels, and lynxes, among other animals. The Tower of London held another collection established by King John (1199–1216), to which Henry III transferred his animals in 1252. Frederick II, who grew up in the residences around Palermo, had menageries there as well as at Lucera and Melfi. Presumably, the Norman assemblage of animals was depleted during the invasion of his father Henry VI, and was restocked from gifts such as those given to him in 1228 by the caliph of Egypt, according to Matthew Paris. In addition, Frederick maintained an

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373 Lassner, *The Topography of Baghdad*, 158.
ambulatory menagerie that traveled with him to Ravenna and Cremona, crossing the Alps
with him en route to Worms where his marriage to Isabella of England took place in 1235.377

The foundation of the Genoard Park parallels contemporary examples in the
Mediterranean, such as the Philopation Park located just outside the walls of
Constantinople.378 The earliest testimony of the park is from the ninth century, when the
future emperor Basil I hunted there. The next reference dates to the twelfth century, when it
is recorded that the Blachernae Palace in the north corner of the city overlooked the large
hunting park. The Blachernae, which became the principal residence of the court during the
reign of Manuel Comnenus, was incorporated into the northern land walls.379

In the immediate vicinity of the Blachernae, the Byzantine historian Niketas
Choniátēs noted a tower, known as the Tower of Isaac Angelos, which was essentially a
belvedere that faced onto the Philopation Park. The French clergyman Odo of Deuil, who
accompanied Louis VII on the Second Crusade in 1147, described pavilions in the park. The
Comnenian emperors used these structures for imperial receptions and for hosting foreign
dignitaries. The French king and his wife Eleanor of Aquitaine stayed in a pavilion there,
since the parkland was also used as a stationing ground for their troops.380 From Odo of

378 Earlier hunting parks are attested by Liudprand of Cremona, ambassador of Otto I, who was told of the park
Park,” 74–75; also Anthony R. Littlewood, “Gardens of the Palaces,” in Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to
31–32.
379 Raymond Janin, Constantinople byzantine: développement urbain et répertoire topographique, 2nd ed.
(Paris: Institut Français d’Etudes Byzantines, 1964), 144–45, plan I; and most recently, Ruth Macrides, “The
“Other” Palace in Constantinople: The Blachernai,” in The Emperor’s House: Palaces from Augustus to the Age
of Absolutism, eds. M. Featherstone, J.-M. Spieser, Gülru Tanman, and Ulrike Wulf-Rheidt (Boston: De
Gruyter, 2015), 159–68.
380 The King of Germany Conrad III Hohenstaufen apparently leveled the lodge at Philopation. Odo of Deuil,
De profectione Ludovici VII in orientem [The Journey of Louis VII to the East], edited with an English
translation by Virginia Gingerick Berry (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948), 48: “As he approached
the beautiful hunting-lodge of the Philopation, he burst in and destroyed most of it, under the eyes of Manuel I,
Deuil’s account, the landscape of the Philopation Park was artfully manipulated and was surrounded by an imposing circuit of walls to contain the different animals hunted there.\(^{381}\)

The sparse natural vegetation might have led to the hollowing out of caverns in order to create a challenging environment for hunting. Other man-made elements in the imperial park included canals and ponds, which were likely to have been irrigated by the Lycos River nearby.\(^{382}\) When considering the Norman parklands, artificial features such as the lake at La Favora and the planting of trees and stocking with animals for the hunt can be seen elsewhere in the Mediterranean and, particularly in the preeminent royal and imperial spheres that Roger II and his successors were keen to emulate.

### VII. The Main Norman Palace and Satellite Residences in the Royal Parkland

The main palace in Palermo was the center of rule and administration of the kingdom, while the sumptuous satellite residences were intended for celebrations, hunting retreats, or the reception of dignitaries. In royal use for extended periods or for a season, these remained secondary to the main seat of rule of these kings as discussed below. Even though such complexes were common among rulers in the Mediterranean, the arrangement and scale of the Norman suburban residences was by no means as sophisticated or sumptuous as those of

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382 Similar to the Philopation, an earlier suburban imperial park was created in the tenth century known as the Aretai, which had a small palace or pavilion on its grounds. From Anna Komnena’s description, it was located on higher ground and was supplied with water. One side bordered on the sea, and it likely to have been situated to the southwest of the city proper. Henry Maguire, “Description of the Aretai Palace and its Garden,” *Journal of Garden History* 10 (1990), 209–13; Anna Comnena, *The Alexiad of Anna Comnena*, translated from the Greek by E. R. A. Sewter (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1969), 77.
the earlier palatial compounds of ‘Abbāsid Samārā‘ and Umayyad Córdoba. By the twelfth century, such estates were conceived on a more modest scale, and it is probable that the model for their construction came from the Islamic West or, more precisely, Ifrīqiya.

In the Latin West, rulers habitually moved between residences. For instance, Charlemagne and Louis the Pious favored the palaces of Ingelheim and Nijmegen, where, in addition to Aachen, they stayed for lengthy periods.383 The building of a secondary or suburban palace at some distance from the main palace could be seen throughout the Islamic world long before the Normans. The third Fāṭimid caliph Abu Tahir Ismail al-Mansur Billah (r. 946–53) decided to leave Mahdīya following an insurrection, and created a new center of his reign in ca. 946 a kilometer and a half from Kairouan. The site was known as Ṣabra al-Manṣūriya (šabra or Fortitude, and al-Manṣūriya after its founder), was completed by his successor, Al-Mu’izz li-Din Allah (r. 953–75) (fig. 1.30).384 The use of several residences was also commonplace among the rulers of northern Europe, in particular, before the establishment of a fixed capital with a centralized court and administration, as was the case of Aachen for the Carolingians.385

We know from Romuald of Salerno that Roger spent the period of Lent at La Favara and the summer hunting at Parco.386 His successors William I and William II both had

386 Scott Redford, “Thirteenth-Century Rum Seljuq Palaces and Palace Imagery,” Ars Orientalis 23 (1993), 220–36; and idem, Landscape and the State in Medieval Anatolia: Seljuk Gardens and Pavilions of Alanya,
residences near the city walls in the Genoard Park presumably used on a seasonal basis as well. In thirteenth-century Anatolia, the Seljuk caliphs moved between estates similar to what we see with Roger II and his use of the royal extramural residences. For the Seljuks, their citadel at Konya was the governmental heart of their realm. Alaeddin Keykubad I (1219–37) and his entourage relocated according to the time of year to different pleasure pavilions set in their expansive outlying parks. The Seljuk rulers passed their summers at the palace at Kubadabad built on the lake of Beyşehir and their winters at their residence on the coast of Alanya, returning to Konya in the spring. The aforementioned examples drawn from the Seljuk sphere illustrate another widespread type of kingship, that of the itinerant court. In the Latin West, this was exemplified in Charlemagne’s court before the establishment of Aachen as capital (and closer to the Sicilian context, that of Frederick II throughout most of his rule).

During the heyday of Umayyad al-Andalus in the eighth-century, the caliphs and elite court members maintained numerous suburban garden estates or munyas outside of Córdoba. According to Ibn Ḥayyān and other sources, celebrations, hunting expeditions, and various court functions took place at munyas. ‘Abd al-Rahmān I built an estate known as Al-
Munyat al-Ruṣāfa in 756–88, thereby evoking a palace of the same name constructed by his grandfather in Syria. Additional sites included Al-Munyat al-Nāʿūra (also al-ʿAmiriyya) in the vicinity of Córdoba, while the only one excavated is Al-Munyat al-Rummāniyya. Built on a series of terraces, Al-Munyat al-Rummāniyya contained a large reservoir used for agricultural purposes on its upper level, northwest of the principal pavilion and its receptions halls (fig. 3.76).

These periurban areas and estates and their interconnectivity with urban centers must be considered due the important ties between them. In their work, Nicholas Purcell and Penelope Goodman highlight the network of relationships between cities and the peripheries of urban conglomerations, which included villas, in antiquity. While Rome and its hinterland remain the key sites of examination, Goodman has looked to other geographic regions, such as Gaul. Periurban sites were vital due to the economic enterprises that took place on their grounds. Villas situated near urban centers were frequently centers of agricultural production and aquatic cultivation that could generate substantial revenue for their owners. The luxuriousness of these antique extraurban residential sites proclaimed the status and wealth of their owner, and provided them respite from business and political activities carried out in the city.

392 Mantha Zarmakoupi, who has worked extensively on villas in the Bay of Naples, has explored these issues. Mantha Zarmakoupi, Designing for Luxury on the Bay of Naples: Villas and Landscapes (c. 100 BCE–79 CE) (Corby: Oxford University Press, 2013); also relevant is Geoff W. Adams’ The Suburban Villas of Campania and their Social Function (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2006).
Hunting parks and menageries were prevalent in the Latin West by the twelfth century. In the case of Sicily, we have no record of pre-Norman examples, yet it is possible that these parks dated to the Islamic period of rule. Recent studies in zooarchaeology have established that the Normans brought fallow deer to England after 1066. The introduction of fauna had significant consequences for the landscape and required enclosures as well as a penal system to protect game from poachers. Even though similar work has not been undertaken yet for the parklands around Palermo, it is clear that the twelfth-century hunting parks and menageries formed barriers and altered the landscape, which needed to be adapted to these new activities. The Normans might have inherited *viridaria* structures in the immediate surroundings of La Favara and Lo Scibene from the Kalbid rulers of Palermo. Nonetheless, the creation of the hunting park in the mountains above Palermo at Parco and, most of all, the Genoard Park, were monumental undertakings carried out by Roger II’s heirs, William I and William II.

By the early 1160s, the king and his court likely desired and, moreover, required a secure space in close proximity to the city. Roger II’s illegitimate son Simon, once prince of Taranto, and Tancred of Lecce, the eldest son of Roger, Duke of Apulia (d. 1149), and briefly king following William II’s death, sacked the principal palace in March 1161. Its

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394 Imparkment required the construction of physical barriers such as walls that had legal implications. For instance, the legislation created to protect royal parks in medieval Scotland may possibly date to as early as the twelfth century (even though the remaining documentary material is of the fourteenth century). See John M. Gilbert, *Hunting and Hunting Reserves in Medieval Scotland* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1979), 243–44.
396 Romuald of Salerno, “*Chronicon*,” 229–30: “Before prime, on the fifth day of Lent, as the king was intending to go to hear Mass, the dungeons were opened with the collusion of the castellan and his sergeants. Count William of the Principate, Richard of Mandra, Alexander the monk and many other prisoners rushed out of the dungeons, seized weapons, and started to storm the palace. Many of the mercenary troops and the people
prisons were opened through collusion with members of the court. During the attack, the king and his family were imprisoned in the dungeons. After William I regained control of the palatial complex, among the suspects rounded up were the castellan. He suspected the court eunuchs of conspiracy as well.\textsuperscript{397} It is around this time that William I is said by Pseudo-Hugh Falcandus to have wished to create a residence equal to or surpassing that of his father, Roger II.\textsuperscript{398} In this chapter, I present another not inconsequential motivation, which the chronicler did not state, was to ensure the safety of the king and the court should the need arise. Hence, the ring of walls of the Genoard Park constituted a protected and self-sufficient area thanks to its water resources and extensive gardens. The adjacent parkland irrigated by the waters of the Gabriele could prove to be vital in the case of a prolonged siege. Located in a secondary, protective band, the Genoard was also farther away from the sea, with the city itself forming a protective barrier.

\section*{Conclusion}

Founded in the century following the conquest of Sicily, the royal parks radically altered the Palermitan landscape, embedding it with dense political symbolism. The greenbelt around the capital contained within its bounds lavish residences encircled by walls, signifying ownership and dominion over the land. At this time, the Norman kings’ non-

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{397} The taking of the main palace in 1161 was preceded by the murder of the influential and charismatic Maio of Bari, \textit{magnus ammiratus}, by his son-in-law, Matthew Bonnellus, in November of the previous year. Bonnellus also orchestrated the attack on the palace. Before his capture and execution, he was the acting representative of several Norman lords, some of whom were from the mainland, who had vested interests in overthrowing William and replacing him with his young son Roger. Pseudo-Hugh Falcandus, \textit{La Historia o Liber de regno Siciliae}, 87. Also, Johns, \textit{Arabic Administration}, 219–20.

\textsuperscript{398} Pseudo-Hugh Falcandus, \textit{La Historia o Liber de regno Siciliae}, 87.
\end{flushleft}
Christian subjects composed the majority of the population. In addition to a new system of land tenure, the kings enclosed land for their parks in the hinterland of their capital. Even though currently there is no evidence for pre-existing parklands under Aghlabid (827–909), Fāṭimid (909–965), and Kalbid rule (965–1072), the landscape surrounding Palermo had been profoundly modified prior to the conquest. During the siege of the summer of 1071, Count Roger found irrigated gardens and agricultural fields, including the cultivation of sugarcane and vineyards. Most probably, the suburban Norman parks and residences were built on the grounds of the former local elites, sites richly watered from natural springs that, in all likelihood, utilized a pre-existing hydraulic infrastructure made up of qanāts.

The remaining estates or villas on the outskirts of Palermo built or rebuilt in the Norman period are quite likely Lo Scibene (perhaps Roger II’s Minenium) to the west of the historic center and most certainly La Favara (possibly the Kalbid ruler Jaf’ar’s palace) to the south of Balārm. At La Favara, Roger II constructed a reservoir and chapel so that he had all of the amenities for a long stay. Another key extramural site for Roger was Parco (Altofonte), to which he ordered the transport of water from a “clear source” not only for his residence but presumably also for the artificial basin in the hunting park.

The suburban residences and lodges developed by Roger II in the parkland differ from the consolidation of a greenbelt around Palermo initiated by his successors, William I and William II. Their park known as the Genoard linked together La Zisa, La Cuba, La Cuba Soprana, and La Cubula. In this way, the string of palaces and smaller pavilions surrounding the city became an ostentatious sign of power and wealth that recalled Byzantine imperial parks like the Philopation. In contrast, during Roger II’s reign, La Favara and Parco (in
addition to Lo Scibene, if the residence was indeed in the royal sphere) were suburban seats in use for extended periods of the year.

In this chapter, I demonstrated the appeal and effectiveness of this model of “landscaping” in a variety of topographical, environmental, and political settings. By the twelfth century in Palermo, hunting reserves, pavilions inside parkland, and menageries were emblems of prestige that placed Roger II, William I, and William II on par with their contemporaries in the Mediterranean. The collection of animals symbolized the power of the Norman kings and the extent of their domain. They obtained the exotic beasts of the Genoard’s menagerie through diplomatic gifts or took these in raids and the conquest of territories. The ideological importance of menageries is emphasized by the fact that they were often one of the first materializations of power to be destroyed in an uprising or occupation. In the 1161 tumult and slaughter of Muslims by the Latin population, beasts escaped from their enclosures in the parks. In addition, the annihilation of the animals of the Genoard Park was among the first acts of sabotage carried out by the imperial troops of the Hohenstaufen Henry VI during his siege of the city.

The Norman parklands constituted a landscape that has mostly been lost. Accordingly, this chapter has carefully delineated the three known parks in order to establish for the first time their location and boundaries with as much certainty as possible. Primary source material indicates that the modern city of Palermo and its suburbs have not entirely effaced the medieval parks whose boundaries were frequently natural. The urban surroundings offers many clues in its morphology, most notably the course of the Kemonia and the Papireto rivers that once ran through the Muslim and Norman city as well as the twelfth-century parkland. In the royal sphere, another lost space that incorporated greenery and fountains
was the Aula Verde in the urban palace. In the chapter, I also argued that al-Idrīsī’s exceptional treatise, *Nuzhat al-mushtāq fī ikhtirāq al-āfāq*, created at Roger II’s behest and with his close collaboration, reveals an understanding of the importance of land mapping. Most significantly, the composition of this geographical compendium clearly reveals Roger’s greater territorial ambitions and that the new organization of land on behalf of these kings was a tangible demonstration of power. In the following chapter, we shall see that Roger II ordered the large-scale transformation of terrain for his favorite residence of La Favara.
PART TWO

—Chapter Three—

Norman Palatial Precedents: The Palace of La Favara and the Lake of Maredolce

“O Favara of the two seas
you collect what one may covet: majestic appearance.
Your waters are distributed into nine streams
oh how they flow splendidly divided into two!
Where the two seas come together,
there is a crowding of pleasures:
an encampment on the two banks
What shall I say of the sea of two palms,
surrounding the most splendid palace?
The clear water of both pools resembles
liquid pearls and extends itself
so that it seems to be an ocean.
The fish swim in the clear water
and the birds modulate in their singing.”


‘Abd ‘ar-Raḥmān of Trapani’s panegyric poem composed during the reign of Roger II conjures up the splendor of the Norman palace of the two lakes of La Favara (from fawwāra, or fountain jet in Arabic), but contrasts sharply with the subsequent centuries of neglect of the site. Colloquially known from the thirteenth century as Maredolce, the area was named after an expansive artificial lake on its grounds filled with fresh water. Currently located in the unassuming modern suburb of Brancaccio, four kilometers south of Palermo’s historic center, La Favara once occupied an exceptionally panoramic site on the plain below Monte

Grifone (figs. 3.1–3.2). According to Romuald of Salerno, Roger II ordered the building of a palace, yet it is likely to have integrated a pre-existing princely residence dating to the Muslim rule of the island. The most noteworthy landscape modification that took place at the site was the creation of the aforementioned lake of which a monumental dam and retaining walls remain.

Most significantly, the palace’s construction or restoration came about at a particularly auspicious period of royal building, namely, the completion of the Cappella Palatina following Roger II’s coronation by a representative of the antipope Anacletus II on Christmas day of 1130. La Favara became a site celebrated in song, signaling its importance for the king, and more generally, within the secular sphere of the twelfth-century kingdom. Panegyric poetry composed by Roger’s contemporaries lauded his suburban residences; and in the case of La Favara, ‘Abd ‘ar-Raḥmān’s poem about the lake at the site highlighted the handling of water, part of a larger manipulation of the landscape for the enjoyment of the Norman king. In addition to the organizing concept of the entire complex and its choice of location, the sophisticated water technologies were derived from the contemporary Islamic world. Likewise, the stocking of the lake with a variety of fish, like the rich viridarium in the Genoard Park founded by Roger’s successors to the west of the city, realized actions expected of a sovereign. La Favara’s strategic position to the south of

400 Since Amari’s work, the palace of La Favara has been associated with Qaṣr Ja’far and therefore attributed to Muslim rule. As discussed in Chapter Two, this association cannot be substantiated, yet it is likely that the courtyard structure predates the twelfth century. Amari, *Storia dei musulmani*, vol. 3, part 3, 872–73.
401 Several dates can be directly associated with the Cappella Palatina. The first is its foundation charter dated to April 28, 1140. Another important date is in a Greek inscription on the base of the sanctuary dome with the year 1143. Lastly, the theologian Philagathos Kerameōs delivered a sermon in the chapel for the Feast of St. Peter and St. Paul on June 29, likely to have taken place in the same year as that recorded in the dome. For a summary of the dating of the chapel in the principal Norman palace that is consequential for the building or renovation of La Favara, see Jeremy Johns, “The Date of the Ceiling of the Cappella Palatina,” in *The Painted Ceilings of the Cappella Palatina*, edited by Ernst J. Grube and Jeremy Johns (New York: East-West Foundation, 2005), 1–15; Beat Brenk, “L’importanza e la funzione della Cappella Palatina di Palermo nella storia dell’arte,” in *La Cappella Palatina a Palermo [The Cappella Palatina in Palermo]*, edited by Beat Brenk, Mirabilia Italiae 17 (Modena: F.C. Panini, 2010), part 3, 30–35.
Palermo attracted the Hohenstaufen ruler Henry VI to stay there with several of his counts in 1194 in preparation for his entry into the capital to claim the throne.\textsuperscript{402}

The courtyard structure of La Favara is one of the best-preserved examples of a large country estate that remains from the medieval period in the Latin West, yet it is known primarily only to specialists of medieval Sicily. This chapter first describes the buildings that made up the complex, some no longer standing. These included the baths and possibly a fortification on an overlooking hill, attested to in mostly unpublished early modern accounts. A significant subsection of this chapter is devoted to the Fawwarāh, which, according to Ibn Ḥawqal, was the greatest source of water in the Palermo plain. It was here that Roger II created the magnificent lake praised by the poet ʿAbd ʿar-Raḥmān. This grand undertaking mirrored that at the eleventh-century Ḥammādid palace of Dār al-Ḥaṣr at the Qalʿa of the Benū Ḥammād, which utilized its grandiose aquatic setting for entertainment and the staging of spectacles. Thus, at La Favara and its adjoining lake, nature and artifice joined together on a monumental scale befitting the first Norman king’s grand aspirations in the immediate aftermath of his coronation.

I. Structures that Composed the Palatial Complex of La Favara

The courtyard building of La Favara and the lake of Maredolce have undergone a series of definitive restorations completed in the spring of 2013. Today, the area that corresponds to its grounds has maintained much of its agricultural character in the fruit

\textsuperscript{402} Peter of Eboli, \textit{Liber ad honorem Augusti}, Book 7, 61, vers. 176–78: “Obprobrium patris natus uterque tegit / Fabariae cum prole comes descendit avite / Illinc a multis plurima doctus abit.” Laura Sciascia has argued that La Favara could have been a royal or imperial staging ground at the southern entrance to the city. See idem, “Palermo as a Stage for, and a Mirror of Political Events from the 12th to the 15th Century, in A Companion to Medieval Palermo: The History of a Mediterranean City from 600 to 1500, edited by Annliese Nef, Brill’s Companions to European History 5 (Boston: E. J. Brill, 2013), 304–6.
orchards to the south of the Lake of Maredolce. To the north is a mixed-use, working-class residential neighbourhood with some industrial zones extending farther to the east and south. To the west, the site of the vast lake fed by the source of water from Monte Grifone is unfortunately now bisected by the European route E 90 freeway (fig. 3.1).

a. Description of the Courtyard Structure

The principal core of the palace of La Favara presents a rather fortified appearance, facing onto the city located to its northeast (figs. 3.3–3.5). The L-shaped structure encloses a courtyard, measuring 55 meters on its northwest by southeast axis and 46.50 meters on its northeast–southwest axis. Composed of two internal spaces, the larger once contained a portico that is nearly square in its dimensions (figs. 3.6–3.8). The second, on the northern corner of the northwest flank, functioned as an access corridor, and provided circuitous admission into the central courtyard through a monumental portal on the northwest corner of the main façade (fig. 3.9). The interior portico was spanned with groin vaults, of which there are remnants on the west and the south corner at their springing points (fig. 3.10). These can be clearly seen in the sketches executed by Benedetto Cotardi under the direction of the engineer Carlo Chenchi in ca. 1780 (figs. 3.11–3.12).

At the north corner of the portico, Adolf Goldschmidt noted the remains of a diminutive quadrangular structure that he saw during his visit in the early 1890s (fig. 3.8). He described it as decorated on its interior with terracotta tiles and on the exterior with a red

403 Schneider and Schneider, *Reversible Destiny*, 7–8.
404 On the longer northwest–southeast axis there was once eleven vaults and nine on the shorter northeast–southwest flank.
406 The fountain is marked as number 38 on Goldschmidt’s ground plan (fig. 3.8).
hydraulic plaster. Goldschmidt believed that this was originally a fountain despite the fact that very little remained by the time of his visit. Currently there is no trace, and we can only rely on his account. In addition, recent archaeological excavations carried in this area have not concluded with any certainty that such a “fountain” existed. Yet its putative placement at the corner of the portico echoes later Norman foundations, most notably the fountain in the cloister of the Benedictine abbey of Monreale (fig. 7.8).

Several rooms faced directly onto the courtyard on its southeast, southwest, and northeast side. The northeast wing is presently occupied by illegal housing and has not been studied since Goldschmidt’s day. The southeast side was rebuilt at some later time, and the outlines of rooms may be seen on this flank (fig. 3.13). The southwest rooms are remarkably intact and will be discussed below in detail (fig. 3.14). These were presumably primarily residential in function and were arranged around the courtyard on a single story. The northwest side of the courtyard is dominated by the chapel in the middle (fig. 3.15). One of the principal secular or ruling halls of the complex is situated immediately to the west of the chapel on the northwest flank of the palace. Both hall and chapel rise above their surroundings and can be clearly distinguished from the other courtyard spaces due to their height.

The second story does not remain, although there are remnants of two sets of stairs. The first was located on the northwest side of the courtyard in the area in front of the chapel.

Another was situated on the southwest flank of the structure. Goldschmidt proposed that the second level dated from the mid-fourteenth century onward based on its different masonry. Excavations in the courtyard have uncovered furnaces used for the cooking or processing of sugarcane (fig. 3.16). These date to the fourteenth century as well, when the building became a *trappeto* or a site for the industrial extraction of sugar.410

The function of many of the spaces in the interior of the courtyard is not entirely clear. It has been posited by one of the restorers, Mario Guiotto, that the stables were located adjacent to the grand entrance at the northern corner of the courtyard. The use of other areas that faced onto the courtyard, most notably behind the chapel opposite the supposed stables, is unknown (fig. 3.15). Goldschmidt hypothesized that it was a prestigious space due to its position immediately behind the apse. Because of the multitude of interventions over the centuries, later restorers have not been able to discern its original layout. Excavations led by Amedeo Tullio in the 1990s revealed a stratum of floor tiling that corresponds with twelfth-century facture, reminiscent of the ceramic tiles in the southwest side.411

The rooms formed nodes around the large courtyard, and during the most recent restoration, several in the southwest wing were partially reconstructed (fig. 3.17).412 Arranged along this flank are four spaces identical in size, measuring 2 meters in width and 5 meters in length, with some remnants of their original ceramic floor tiles (fig. 3.18). Facing onto the interior courtyard and set above the door frames are openings slanted at

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412 The grouping of rooms or apartments around a central space is similar in terms of its typology to the traditional layout of Umayyad desert palaces, of which a common configuration was that of a large central room opening onto four or five smaller ones. On this spatial organization, see Antonio Almagro, “Building Patterns in Umayyad Architecture in Jordan,” in *Studies on the History and Archaeology of Jordan*, IV, *Actas de la 4th International Conference on the History and Archaeology of Jordan, Lyon 1989* (Amman: Dept. of Antiquities, 1992), 351–56.
approximately 40-degree angles (figs. 3.19–3.20). The exterior wall of the southwest side of contains remnants of square windows below small semi-circular ones (fig. 3.21). However, it is not possible to determine whether these date to the earliest phase of building or were later additions. The circulation of air in the courtyard would have been aided by the windows above the doors and those located on the perimeter wall. The latter would have overlooked the lake of Maredolce. The water of the lake might have reached its very side, since the remains of hydraulic cement can still be discerned along the lower part as on the other faces of the structure (figs. 3.22–3.24).

On the southern end of the courtyard structure, there is a larger space that measures 7 meters in length and 4.5 meters in width, with the ceiling at a height of 2.7 meters (figs. 3.25–3.26). Known in the literature as the “Sala dell’Imbarcadero,” the room opened directly onto the lake. The three-centered archway on its exterior is 3.15 meters wide and thus could have accommodated a boat launched from this space. On the southeast corner of the


414 The Norman kings presumably had boats such as those cited by Ibn Jubayr for leisurely outings on the lake. The only remains of boating houses in Sicily were for the fishing of tuna widely known as tonnare. The oldest example was at Milazzo and dated to 1290; however, many were rebuilt, such as that at Scopello. In addition to warehouses and various other spaces in which tuna were processed, the principal structure that housed the boats had a low wide arched opening. Al-Idrīsī mentioned several tunneries in the region of Trapani near modern-day Castellammare del Golfo. Idem, Nuzhat al-mushtāq fi ikhtirāq al-āfāq; on Sicilian tuna fishing in general, see Elio Manzi, Franco Micale, et al., eds, Tonnare di Sicilia: indagine storico-geografica (Palermo: Università di Palermo, 1986); also useful is the now dated work by Vito La Mantia, Le tonnare in Sicilia (Palermo: A. Giannitrapani, 1901); see Illuminato Peri’s discussion of fishing in the twelfth-century kingdom in Città e campagna in Sicilia (Palermo: l’Accademia, 1953); and by Henri Bresc in “La pêche dans l’espace économique normand,” in Terra e uomini nel Mezzogiorno normanno-svevo: atti delle settimane Giornate normanno-sveve: Bari, 15–17 ottobre 1985 (Bari: Dedalo, 1987), 271–91.
room remnants of a double lancet window may be seen. This articulation on the exterior wall is similar to that on the southwest corner of the same wing and corresponds to one of La Favara’s supposed *aulae regiae* discussed below, thereby indicating a well-appointed space intended for royal use.

b. **Principal Façade of the Palace**

On the northwest side, the main façade of La Favara presented a solid and fortified exterior facing the medieval center of Palermo (figs. 3.27–3.28). Unmistakably the primary entrance into the palace, the northwest face contained four portals leading into the chapel, a secular hall, with the remaining two providing access to the interior courtyard (figs. 3.3–3.5, 3.9). The height of the façade varies today; however, the restorations of the palace completed in 2011 have created a more unified appearance. The chapel formed the central element of this wing. The highest point on this face is the cylindrical dome at the crossing of the chapel that rises to 12.5 meters (fig. 3.15).415

Breaking up the perceived mass of the structure’s principal face are several blind pointed arches, windows, and four portals. In the central part of the façade that contains the chapel, the windows of the nave alternate playfully in their placement within blind arches (fig. 3.3). The large entranceway to the chapel measures 4.10 meters in height and 1.85 meters in width. To its right is a grand doorway (4.65 meters tall and 2 meters wide) that provides access to one of the most prestigious halls of the complex. This entryway is the tallest in the façade, designating the importance of the space. An additional monumental entranceway, which is broader than the two aforementioned examples, is located in the north

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415 The measurements of the northwest façade of the palace are taken from Guiotto, “La chiesa di S. Filippo,” 214–15. Those that follow are my own.
corner of the palace (4 meters high and 2.90 meters wide). Leading into the courtyard, its width and height presumably allowed for the carriage of horses (fig. 3.9). Immediately adjacent is a smaller doorway (3.2 x 1.34 meters), now blocked, which likely served an auxiliary purpose by communicating with an adjacent service area.

The façade is composed of two different types of masonry more easily discernible before recent restorations carried out from the 1990s (figs. 3.4–3.5). Its base consists of large blocks of tufa arranged horizontally in eight courses that measure from 1 to 1.20 meters in length and 0.50 meter in height. Above the basement level, up to a height of 4 meters, the wall is made up of smaller tufa stones ranging from 20 centimeters in height to 30–35 centimeters in length. Between the stones are regular wide bands of mortar.

The three other faces of the structure, on the northeast, southwest, and the L-shaped space formed by the recess on the eastern corner of the complex, share the same base level made up of large blocks. Unlike the northwest face that contained eight rows of rectangular blocks, on these sides they are arranged in three horizontal rows. Substantial remains of hydraulic cement are still in place on all of sides the palace apart from the northwest, which we have identified as its principal face (figs. 3.22–3.24).416 The finding of the former has compelled earlier scholars and restorers to argue that these exterior walls must have been situated directly on the lake.417 Yet the most recent excavations indicate that the bank of the lake was a meter or so away from the façade.418 Presumably, the plaster was in place for extraordinary occasions when the structure was partially submerged in water or perhaps for

416 Goldschmidt first made this observation during his visits in the 1890s. Goldschmidt, “Die Favara,” 200.
protection from seasonal flooding. Similar to the main façade, there are smaller and more irregular blocks above the monumental masonry of the lower level.

Silvana Braida, who spearheaded the restoration team in the 1960s, considered the lower level composed of large tufa blocks to date to the initial period of the palace, or during Muslim rule of the island. She believed that the twelfth-century construction is represented in the upper layer made up of smaller and more uneven masonry. As has been pointed out by other scholars, large blocks were used for the monumental dam of the lake of Maredolce, presumed to have been assembled during the Norman phase of the complex. Therefore, the different typologies of masonry extant do not necessarily indicate two separate periods in the lifespan of the building.

Further issues raised by the recent restoration are the varying height of the diverse spaces that would seem to create a visual hierarchy. The northern section of the façade that led into the courtyard is reduced in height compared to that of the palatine chapel and the supposed aula regia, both of which are of greater importance since they were designated for royal use. Another possible reason for the height disparity is that these were Norman additions to an Islamic palace built sometime in the late tenth to early eleventh century.

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421 Another difficulty of dating according to masonry is that large blocks of stone were used for the base of La Cuba, which dates to ca. 1180. See ibid.
which might explain their uneven appearance due to the insertion of these spaces into a pre-existing building.422

c. Palatine Chapel of La Favara

According to a diploma dated 1274 in the Tabularium of the Cappella Palatina, by the thirteenth century the chapel was known as “Ecclesia Sancti Philippi et Iacobi.”423 Yet this dedication to the two saints cannot be unequivocally dated to the Norman period. The second direct reference to the chapel is in the Book of Excises of the City of Palermo of 1312, in which the church of SS. Filippo and Giacomo was granted the right to one tuna fish per year from the tunneries of S. Giorgio in Palermo and that in Solunto (15 kilometers to the southeast of La Favara).424

The aisleless chapel is stark in its interior, and the most recent restoration completed in 2012 has stuccoed and whitewashed its walls up to the vault. The nave measures 8.13 meters in length and 5 meters in width (figs. 3.29–3.30), and is spanned by two groin vaults of unequal size (fig. 3.31). A triumphal arch that is slightly pointed separates the sanctuary from the nave of the chapel (fig. 3.32). The apse measures 2.32 meters in diameter. On the north and south sides of the bema are two contiguous spaces with tall

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422 Silvana Braida carried out the restoration that evened out the differences in height of the structure, also due to the extensive period in which the palace hosted numerous vernacular residences. Braida, “Il castello di Favara,” 24.

423 In the Tabularium of the Cappella Palatina, the chapel is cited as a suffragan of the Cappella Palatina along with the chapel of La Zisa dedicated to SS. Trinità. Noted by Di Giovanni, “Il castello e la chiesa della Favara,” 304. Luigi Garofalo, Tabularium regiae ac imperialis Capellae collegiatae divi Petri in regio Panormitano Palatio Ferdinandi 2. regni utriusque Siciliae regis (Palermo: Ex Regia typographia, 1835), 82.

rectangular niches that have wooden architraves or niches. The bema is topped by a hemispherical dome superimposed on a square plan whose transition is effected by semi-conches or squinches (fig. 3.33), similar to those found in other twelfth-century churches in Palermo. In the chapel at La Favara, four small lancet windows in the octagonal base of the dome let light into the structure as did the larger windows of the sanctuary.

The nave walls retained into the nineteenth century visible traces of frescoes dating to the thirteenth century, but these have since been lost. Off the southern side of the sanctuary was a small room uncovered by Guiotto in the 1930s. According to him, the space could have been the chapel’s vestry or treasury, or it might have housed a bell. The main entrance to the church was on the north wall, and opened up to what is generally thought to be the principal face of the courtyard palace through a monumental doorway 4.30 meters in height that preserves a wooden architrave similar to that of the niches in the sanctuary. The two tiers of windows on this side provide most of the natural light in the church. Just below the two groin vaults of the nave ceiling on the south wall are two smaller openings that looked into the interior of the palace. A doorway on the west side, smaller than the principal entrance to the chapel, led into what is likely to have been a ruling hall (fig. 3.29).

The chapel at La Favara would appear to have been inserted into a pre-existing wing of the courtyard building. Fueling this hypothesis raised first by Anastasi in the 1930s is that

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426 Antonino Mongitore, Della Sicilia ricercata nelle cose più memorabili (Palermo: Francesco Valenza, 1742–43), vol. 2, 265. The dating of these lost frescoes was according to style and relies on Di Giovanni’s late nineteenth-century account, idem, “Il castello e la chiesa della Favara,” 249.
428 The placement of the windows on the upper tier of the chapel of La Favara echoes those in the palatine chapel at Parco (Altofonte) discussed in Chapter Five.
the central axis of the chapel is at a skewed angle from this part of the palace (fig. 3.29). According to Romuald of Salerno’s chronicle, the chapel ordered by Roger II was built in the same period as the example in the main Norman palace, suggesting a terminus post quem for its construction in the decade following his coronation or ca. 1140. The combination of a Latin basilica and the domed sanctuary of the chapel at La Favara is reminiscent of the Cappella Palatina. Most notably during the initial period of its use, during Roger II’s reign, the two parts of the latter chapel had separate, independent functions. The east end was used for ecclesiastical purposes, while the basilica hall and its muqarnas ceiling above the central nave, is generally conceded by scholars to have been intended for secular use. Yet the chapel of La Favara is on a smaller scale than the Cappella Palatina, and the suburban example had adjoining rooms intended for secular functions as well.

We should also examine the royal chapel at Parco in relation to the example at La Favara, since Romuald mentioned both in his chronicle. Roger II presumably built or rebuilt these structures at around the same time. In particular, he cited the creation of the park and the residence at Parco (Altofonte) following his description of the Cappella Palatina and the palace of La Favara and its chapel and lake. Located in the north wing of that palace, the...

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431 Moreover, there is no indication that there were chancel screens in any of the suburban royal chapels as in several twelfth-century single-nave basilicas elsewhere such as S. Maria di Terreti in Calabria. Fragments of stucco panels that formed part of a chancel screen or transenna from S. Maria di Terreti are kept in the Museo Archeologico of Reggio Calabria. See Jill Caskey, “Stuccoes from the Early Norman Period in Sicily: Figuration, Fabrication and Integration,” Medieval Encounters 17 (2011), 80–119.
chapel at Roger’s hunting lodge shares an aisleless plan (fig. 5.17).\footnote{Braida, “Il palazzo ruggeriano di Altofonte,” 185–97.} Unlike La Favara, the church at Parco contains a narthex that opens up directly onto an interior courtyard. In terms of its plan, it has a single nave that we see at the chapel of La Favara. A pointed archway separates the sanctuary from the nave, a configuration that is similar to that of the lakeside palatine church. A high dome covers the bema and the sanctuary has two flanking spaces that both have apsidioles and side niches on the north and south walls. The most noteworthy difference between the two sites, however, is that the chapel at Parco boasted a royal balcony or gallery above the narthex.\footnote{Ibid.; see also Anastasi, “Parco,” in L’arte nel parco reale normanno, 19–22.}

The profile of the dome at La Favara is quite similar to other early Norman monuments. Additional shared characteristics are the aisleless nave and a sanctuary with side niches.\footnote{Guiotto, “La chiesa di S. Filippo,” 209–22.} Thus, we can compare the chapel with earlier churches in Sicily and Calabria dating to the rule of Count Roger.\footnote{See Charles E. Nicklies, “Builders, Patrons, and Identity: The Domed Basilicas of Sicily and Calabria,” Gesta 43, 2 (2004), 99–114; also Gianluigi Ciotta, “Aspetti della cultura architettonica normanna in Valdemone durante il periodo della Conquista e della Contea (1061–1130),” Quaderni dell’Istituto di Storia dell’Architettura della Facoltà di Architettura dell’Università di Roma 22, 127–132 (1977), 3–26.} Its simple plan of a single nave and a tall cylindrical dome over a Greek sanctuary can be seen in several extant examples in the province of Messina.\footnote{Nicklies termed these “domed basilicas.” He points to the influence of Ifrīqīyan architecture that he argues was endorsed by the Norman patrons. Idem, “Builders, Patrons, and Identity,” 108–110.} These include SS. Alfio, Cirino, and Filadelfio near San Fratello dating from the late eleventh or early twelfth century, and S. Maria in Mili San Pietro, founded in 1091. A configuration similar to the single-nave basilica of La Favara is present at S. Maria dell’Alto in Mazara del Vallo in the province of Trapani, which dates to the late eleventh century.\footnote{On SS. Alfio, Cirino, and Filadelfio near San Fratello, see Filangeri, Monasteri basiliani, 63–65, 115; Di Stefano, Monumenti, 18–19. On S. Maria of Mili San Pietro, see Francesco Basile, L’architettura della Sicilia normanna (Catania: V. Cavallotto, 1975), 41–46; Giuseppe Bellafiore, Architettura in Sicilia nelle età islamica e normanna (827–1194) (Palermo: Lombardi, 1990), 100; Filangeri, Monasteri basiliani, 78–81; Ciotta,
Remaining churches in Calabria that bear a strong resemblance to Roger’s chapel at La Favara are S. Giovanni Theristis at Bivongi (late eleventh to early twelfth century, also known as S. Giovanni Vecchio), and S. Filomena at Santa Severina (after the mid-eleventh century).

The closest comparison to the chapel at La Favara in terms of its spatial arrangement (and in terms of geographic proximity) is S. Giovanni dei Lebbrosi, located southeast of the medieval city and only a kilometer from Roger’s palace. The ground plan of this structure combines a Greek sanctuary and a Latin nave with two flanking aisles. Possibly part of an earlier complex dating to the Islamic period, S. Giovanni dei Lebbrosi could perhaps be interpreted as a site rebuilt to commemorate the entry of the Norman troops into the city. La Favara was likely to have been important for a similar reason, as one of the favorite residences of the former amīrs of Palermo where the knights of Robert Guiscard stayed during the prolonged siege of the city.

d. Ruling Halls or majālis of La Favara

Two grand entrances mark the northwest face or main façade of the courtyard (fig. 3.3). The central door leads into the chapel while the second to its right brings one into a rectangular hall. This is generally conceded to be one of the foremost secular spaces of the

“Aspetti della cultura architettonica normanna,” 10–11; Di Stefano, Monumenti, 16–17. On S. Maria dell’Alto, also known as S. Maria delle Giummare, near Mazara, see ibid., 30–31.


439 On S. Filomena at Santa Severina, see Venditti, Architettura bizantina, vol. 2, 830–35.

440 Laura Sciascia suggested these theories for both sites in “Palermo as a Stage for, and a Mirror of Political Events,” 304–6. The church of S. Giovanni dei Lebbrosi is important for its early date, perhaps the first built after the conquest of Palermo, and for the possibility that the Cappella Palatina was modeled on this church. Di Stefano, Monumenti, 24–25.
palace or one of its *aulae regiae* that also communicates with the adjoining chapel to its north. This entryway is the most monumental of this face, opening up to the center of this room (10 x 4.94 meters). In an alcove above the internal doorway in the secular hall is a shell-like serrated concave vault in stucco measuring 3.54 x 1.77 meters (figs. 3.34–3.35). The embellished semi-circular recess creating a pointed arch would seem to be mimicking the apse of the chapel and these are placed on the same axis. There are no remaining windows to illuminate the room. The exterior wall of the façade, which corresponds with this hall, is adorned with three blind arches. Another window on the south side of the room looks out to an additional, interior hall of the palace.441

The segmented shell-like motif in the recess above the doorway appears in secular examples dated to the first half of the twelfth century as well. For instance, we can see these forms in the central space of the secular complex of Lo Scibene in Altarello di Baida (figs. 4.28–4.31), and at the Norman castle at Caronia (fig. 3.36).442 Like the niches on the lower level of Lo Scibene, the vaulting is made of brick at Caronia and not in the malleable material of stucco as at La Favara. Moreover, the overall arrangement of the semi-circular concave niches at Caronia and at Lo Scibene is quite different, and is similar to that of an īwān (figs. 3.37–3.38).443 At La Favara, this particular type of shell-like vaulting articulated

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441 The ceilings of the hall immediately to the west of the chapel and the adjoining room to the south were both reconstructed during the restorations of the 1980s and early 1990s. Scognamiglio and Corselli D’Ondes, “Il castello di Maredolce,” 609–16.
442 The castle of an unknown date and patronage was built on a rocky spur overlooking the coast of north-central Sicily, 130 kilometers to the east of Palermo. Krönig, *Il castello di Caronia*; for a similar example in the Torre Pisana in the Palazzo dei Normanni, see Longo, “Il Palazzo Reale di Palermo,” 68–69.
443 The īwān is a rather generic term for a space generally composed of three vaulted alcoves with the fourth side opening up to the exterior, as discussed in Chapter Four.
the passageway from a secular royal hall into the palatine chapel, which is a new reading of the placement of this decorative element at La Favara presented in this chapter.444

This secular hall communicated not only with the chapel, but also with another room located on the southwest flank of nearly equal size (11.54 x 4.80 meters), which corresponds to the western corner of the palace.445 At the southeast end of this hall, there is an outline of a muqarnas, of which this is the only extant example at La Favara (fig. 3.39). The vault was situated in a rectangular alcove (4.46 x 2.53 meters), which was marked off by a pair of columns, of which only niches remain. The monumental setting of the muqarnas vault at one side of the room makes it intriguing to consider that it was a space reserved for the king and his retinue due to the richness of its original ornamentation. According to Goldschmidt’s elevation of the southwest face, one could access the exterior of the palace from this hall. Quite possibly, this doorway (2.74 meters tall and 1.35 meters wide) would have opened directly onto the lake as well (figs. 3.2, 3.40). Above the door was a double lancet window whose central column is now missing (fig. 3.41).446

e. Thermal Structure at La Favara

The medieval complex of La Favara included a bath or hammâm noted by many early humanists and travelers to the site who observed its ruinous state. The baths were a significant topographical feature in the plain to the south of the city as can clearly be seen in

445 Idem, “Il castello e la chiesa della Favara,” 305.
446 It is also possible that this room was intended for worship if it did indeed predate the Norman period. At this time, the function of the different spaces at La Favara is not entirely clear without further archaeological investigation. Goldschmidt, “Die Favara,” 200. Vassallo, “Il complesso monumentale di Maredolce,” 25.
many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century picturesque views (figs. 3.42–3.44). However, unlike the palace, chapel, and the lake on the site, travelers or chroniclers contemporary with the Norman kings did not mention the bath structure at Maredolce. It was demolished in 1880 to make way for a residential building, yet pictorial and textual records facilitate its reconstruction. The Soprintendenza has not yet conducted any systematic exploration of the site of the baths. The bath was located at an angle 12 meters away from the northwest face. Even though this structure at La Favara contained a number of spaces, at the same time it pertained to the palace and therefore was of a private nature. This balneum or private bath was connected to the palace proper by a covered walkway, the remains of which can be seen in some of the aforementioned views (fig. 3.43).

What we can surmise regarding the layout of the palatine baths may be drawn from several sources. The earliest known visual testimony of the baths is Vincenzo Auria’s sketch of the late seventeenth century (fig. 3.45). In his pictorial overview of the lake of Maredolce

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447 Among the illustrations of the courtyard structure of La Favara and the lake of Maredolce were those by the Neapolitan engraver Raffaele Aloja (1758–1815) in the second half of the eighteenth century. Aloja created a view of the palace and the remains of the baths. Raffaele Aloja in *Catalogo degli antichi monumenti disotterrati dalla discoperta città di Ercolano per ordine della maestà di Carlo re delle due Sicilie*, edited by Ottavio Antonio Baiardi (Naples: Regia Stamperia di S.M., 1755). Other pictorial representations include that of the English traveler Henry Gally Knight who also depicted the principal northwest face of the complex. By the time of his visit in the 1830s, only some vestiges remained, as can be seen on the left corner of his drawing. *An Architectural Tour in Normandy*. See also the illustration in the German art historian and architect Oskar Mothes’ popular, *Die Baukunst des Mittelalters in Italien von der ersten Entwicklung bis zu ihrer höchsten Blüthe* (Jena: H. Costenoble, 1883), vol. 2, 532, fig. 134.

448 A possible explanation could be the ubiquity of bathing complexes adjacent to secular residences. Therefore, the remains of the structure at La Favara would not have been an anomaly in the eyes of twelfth-century travelers and authors, unlike their eighteenth- and nineteenth-century counterparts.

449 Inge Nielsen, *Thermae et Balnea: The Architecture and Cultural History of Roman Public Baths* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1990), vol. 1, 6–9, 100–1; Fikret K. Yegül, *Baths and Bathing in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge: MIT, 1992), 43. Moreover, the size of the baths indicates that this was a prestige building. Other medieval bath complexes in Palermo and its environs may be seen at Cefalà Diana and the remains adjacent to palace of La Zisa as discussed in Chapter Six.

and the different structures in situ, Auria noted the topographical markers near the two water sources of “marj dulci” and “favara.” He called the thermal complex “Bagni della Regina” (designated “H” on his map) and depicted them as made up of three structural elements.\(^{451}\)

In his sketch, the most prominent part of the bath is the central space, shown as the tallest in stature with three windows and surmounted by what appears to be a dome or perhaps spanned by a barrel vault. Of the two smaller flanking components, there is a similar representation of the same form on the right. To its left, a smaller brick structural element seems to have been the entrance (fig. 3.46).

In the following century, local humanists paid the most attention to the baths (as well as the lake discussed below), primarily due to their purported association with classical antiquity. The Bourbon military engineer Andrea Pigonati (1734–1790) was commissioned to survey the area and, more specifically, its water sources. Pigonati created a detailed ground plan of the baths. Unlike Auria’s earlier sketches, the engineer did not produce an elevation of the thermal structure in his compendium of antique monuments in the territory of the Kingdom of Sicily. What interested Pigonati most was the hydraulic configuration of the entire site of Maredolce of which the balneum, labeled as an “Ipocausto,” was a component. According to his plan, the building measured 18 x 9 meters and was made up of four chambers with an auxiliary space (fig. 3.47).\(^{452}\) A hallway ran along its length and provided access to these rooms. The entrance to the baths was at the southeast and would have faced onto the main face of the palace.

\(^{451}\) Auria, Varia istoria di Palermo, BCP, ms. Qq C 83, fols. 191v–192r.

\(^{452}\) These are respectively marked on Pigonati’s plan as 9 canne and 4.5 canne Siciliane (a Sicilian canne=2.064 meters). Andrea Pigonati, Stato presente degli antichi monumenti siciliani, originally printed in Palermo, 1767, reprinted as Storia della Sicilia artistica nelle immagini del passato (Palermo: Edizioni librarie siciliane, 1989), fig. 61. For these measurements, see “Sistema Metrico Siculo,” <http://www.trapanisiannu.it/anticosistemametricosiculo.pdf> (accessed: 20.7.2013).
For the mid-eighteenth century, we can turn to another engineer for more information, the Neapolitan Carlo Chenchi (1740–1815), appointed by the Royal Custodian of Antiquities, Gabriele Lancillotto Castello, prince of Torremuzza. Lancillotto Castello “discovered” the site of Maredolce and undertook a restoration of sorts by clearing away rubble. Working on the same team, Chenchi produced an elevation of the bath, numbering its components in a sketch (fig. 3.42). He also included ground plans, showing the first level of the complex and the basement, which had terracotta flues. In Chenchi’s plan, the former contained three spaces (figs. 3.48–3.49). The central room had stone seats on its western wall. Heating was provided via flues that transported hot air between the rooms. Water was delivered to the baths from the Fawwarāḥ spring, conveyed by an underground conduit.

Of all of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century descriptions and pictorial representations of the baths at Maredolce, Goldschmidt gave the most detailed textual testimony in an article published in 1895. He based his reconstruction on interviews with the new occupants of the house built on the site of the bath structure, demolished only a decade earlier. Goldschmidt noted that the building was rectangular, with a corridor measuring 2 meters in width that ran along its interior length, similar to Pigonati’s plan. The passageway opened onto three rectangular chambers through low set ogival arched doors. These rooms were parallel to one another and were 5.80 meters in length and 2 to 3 meters wide. A larger

453 Campisi, Cultura del restauro, 32–35; Pagnano, Le antichità del Regno di Sicilia, 25.
454 Gally Knight described the thermal complex as composed of a series of rooms built with large blocks of masonry. Each had a corresponding chimney that released steam. Gally Knight also noted the vestiges of water conduits. Idem, Normans in Sicily, 270–71: “At one extremity of the palace are the ruins of such steam baths as the Mahommedans habitually employ; consisting of vaulted rooms with chambers underneath, in which the water was heated, and from whence the steam was suffered to rise. The chambers were vaulted with unusually large bricks. The three chimneys, which let out the smoke and the steam, still remain, as well as the channels that brought the water.”
space was also accessible from the corridor. Goldschmidt suggested that the latter was an artificial grotto.\textsuperscript{457} Air circulated between the chambers by means of a series of pipes in the wall above. Channels were set in the floor, which drained water from the different rooms. The level below could be reached via a staircase to the hypocaust, which can be seen in Chenchi’s plan as well.

We can glean from Pigonati’s ground plans and Goldschmidt’s description that the interior space of the baths at La Favara followed an axial arrangement. Such an organization would have allowed for a progression of heat in the separate rooms.\textsuperscript{458} The ordering according to cold, tepid, and hot (respectively the \textit{frigidarium}, \textit{tepidarium}, and \textit{caldarium}), corresponded to the change in temperature, since the heat from the furnace employed for the hottest room (the \textit{caldarium}) would naturally diminish throughout the structure.\textsuperscript{459} Goldschmidt described stairs that led down to the hypocaust level, presumably to the furnace and boiler that heated the water of the bath.

The interior arrangement of the thermal complex is on a vertical axis that is similar to a number of Andalusian examples of the twelfth century, namely the baths of Elche (Alicante), S. Nicolás (Murcia), and Segura (Jaén).\textsuperscript{460} The layout of the structure at La Favara was more elaborate. A corridor provided access to each chamber. The baths at La Favara had an additional larger hall measuring 6 x 4 meters that was also vaulted according

\textsuperscript{457} The description of the grotto located at the lower level of the baths at La Favara recalls that at Lo Scibene at Baida. As discussed in Chapter Four, the large barrel-vaulted hall on the lower level was perhaps a bath. Adjacent to it was a grotto hewn into the hillside, which was likely an artificially enlarged cave.


to Pignonati’s elevation (fig. 3.42).\textsuperscript{461} An adjoining oblong narrow space was likely to have been a vestibule or perhaps a changing room. As mentioned above, a covered walkway from the palace proper led to the thermal structure, functioning as a private passageway.

The spatial organization of the lost baths of La Favara does not resemble other examples on the Italian peninsula either. The thirteenth-century baths at Ravello had a single space, and only some contained a hypocaust heating system.\textsuperscript{462} Among thermal structures that are still extant in medieval Sicily, the closest parallel with the baths at La Favara are the so-called Islamic baths at Cefalà Diana (figs. 3.50–3.51).\textsuperscript{463} The baths have been dated anywhere from the tenth to the mid-eleventh century and were possibly renovated in the twelfth and into the thirteenth century.\textsuperscript{464} The structure at Cefalà Diana has a somewhat similar configuration to La Favara, namely, a series of three barrel vaults. Yet, the interior is a single space with an adjacent room.\textsuperscript{465} The baths presently stand alone in the landscape.

The thermal building is composed of thin bands of masonry. On three faces of its exterior is

\textsuperscript{461} The larger space could have had a variety of functions. Aside from Goldschmidt’s supposition that it was an artificial grotto, it could perhaps have functioned as a small reception hall may be seen in numerous Umayyad desert palaces, such as at Khirbat al-Maʃjar, Quşayr ‘Amra, and Hammām As-Ṣaʃārāk. See Tohme, “Between Balneum and Hammams,” 66–68.

\textsuperscript{462} For examples from the Latin West and in particular on the practice of bathing in southern Italy, see Jill Caskey, “Steam and “Sanitas” in the Domestic Realm: Baths and Bathing in Southern Italy in the Middle Ages,” \textit{Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians} 58, 2 (1999), 170–95; and idem, \textit{Art and Patronage in the Medieval Mediterranean}, 97–103.


\textsuperscript{465} The \textit{hammān} was widespread from the beginning of Islam because it was considered a place of purification of the body for ritual ablutions. On bathing in the Islamic world and for Andalusian examples, see Patrice Cressier, “Prendre les eaux en al-Andalus. Pratique et fréquentation de la \textit{hamma},” \textit{Médiévales} Special Issue, \textit{Le bain: espaces et pratiques} 43 (2002), 41–54; idem, “Le bain thermal (al-hamma) en al-Andalus. L’exemple de la province d’Almería,” in \textit{La maitrise de l’eau en al-Andalus. Paysages, pratiques et techniques}, edited by Patrice Cressier, Collection de la Casa de Velazquez (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2006), 149–208.
a heavily damaged Kūfic frieze in a band above the level of the doorway presently illegible (figs. 6.79–6.81).

Another compelling comparison to the baths at La Favara is a small thermal structure located immediately adjacent to the northwest corner of the later La Zisa discovered during an archaeological campaign in 1973. The baths predate the Norman palace pavilion, built in all likelihood in late antiquity or the early Byzantine period (figs. 6.49–6.50). An aqueduct of unknown date, spanning a distance of 100 meters, delivered water from the Gabriele stream, which might have provided water for the fountains of La Zisa and perhaps also to the baths (figs. 6.45–6.46). The archaeologist Vincenzo Tusa, who excavated the finds, has suggested that the site was inhabited already in antiquity due to the richness of its natural water resources. Perhaps an extra-urban villa survived into the medieval period at the site of La Zisa. Unfortunately, Tusa’s excavation did not resolve any questions regarding when the thermal structure was likely in use. Overall, the destroyed bath complex at La Favara cannot be dated based on typology alone; we must rely on textual accounts and visual records for our reconstruction. Due to its relatively diminutive size, the structure may be classified as a private bath or balneum, yet, at the same time, it was a prestige amenity in a suburban palace connected to the palace proper via, what can only be termed, a royal passageway.

II. The Lake of Maredolce

a. Medieval Descriptions of the Fawwarāh and the Arches of San Ciro

The great outpouring of water from the Fawwarāh down the natural slope of the plain towards the sea presented an ideal location for capturing runoff into an artificial basin (fig.

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466 For the excavation report, see Vincenzo Tusa, “Scavi medievali a Palermo,” *Sicilia Archeologica* 23 (1973), 57–77; also Staacke, *Un Palazzo normanno a Palermo “La Zisa”*, 85–86.
3.52). The lake was planned as an integral part of the palatial complex, encircling the courtyard structure on three sides (not the northwest, which faced the city) (fig. 3.53). The water sources near the palace had multiple place names, ranging from Ibn Ḥawqal’s Fawwarāḥ, Mare Dolce as it was known from the thirteenth century, and San Ciro named after the church built in 1756, most likely on the western retaining walls of the lake (figs. 3.55–3.56).\(^{467}\) The larger Fawwarāḥ corresponds with the modern toponym of San Ciro.\(^{468}\) At the base of the foothill Monte Grifone is a brick structure composed of three ogival arches known colloquially as the Arches of San Ciro (figs. 3.57–3.58). To date it has not been studied but it was presumably built at the same time as the lake. There are formal parallels with other Norman monuments, most notably the pavilion close to the royal hunting lodge at Parco (Altofonte) discussed in Chapter Five, which had triple wide-set arched openings on both faces, with one side looking onto an artificial fishpond (figs. 5.28–5.29).

### b. Early Modern Descriptions of the Lake

As in the case of the thermal complex at La Favara, Vincenzo Auria’s topographical sketches are invaluable for reconstructing the waterworks of the Norman palace (fig. 3.45).\(^{469}\) Auria marked on his map what he called various grottoes from which water issued.\(^{470}\) Just below the Arches of San Ciro, he depicted a dam or containment wall captioned “alla sorgente d’acqua” that appears to have been composed of large blocks of masonry. In the more accurate drawing by the hydraulic engineer Pigonati, one can see that water emerged


\(^{468}\) The water source of San Ciro still provides a good deal of water to the city of Palermo. Di Piazza, *Palermo, città d’acqua*, 18.

\(^{469}\) Auria, *Varia istoria di Palermo*, BCP, ms. Qq C 83, fols. 191v–192r.

\(^{470}\) Marked as “D” on his map, and accompanied by the description: “Varie grotte, per le quali sgorga l’acqua di Mare dolce.”
from the three aforementioned arches (fig. 3.59). In front of the Arches of San Ciro, Pigonati depicted a dam (no longer extant), which controlled the flow of water from the greater Fawwarāh. According to Pigonati’s plan, this retaining wall measured almost 100 meters on a northwest–southeast axis. The engineer also delineated the general perimeters of the lake, sketching the massive retaining walls remaining on the eastern and southern bank.

The aforementioned plan reveals how water was channeled for the palace and baths: roughly 40 meters from the courtyard structure there was a fork in the stream (fig. 3.59). The northern branch headed in the direction of the sea, and possibly to the thermal building. The southern stream bifurcated again near the palace, with one branch leading to its southwest wing. The other branch led toward the dam of the lake of Maredolce. Excess water was released through a sluice gate northeast section of the lake that still exists today (figs. 3.60–3.62). Pigonati’s drawing also shows the massive retaining walls on the eastern and southern edges of the lake. Paternò Castello noted that their extent was close to 400 meters (200 canne). Additional topographical maps, in all likelihood executed by Carlo Chenchi, depict the extent of the lake of Maredolce, the water channels, and dam, which may be seen in a sketch by Goldschmidt as well (figs. 3.63–3.65).

471 In addition to this barrier, another shorter wall can be seen to the south, which was 30 meters long. These two walls together formed an L-shape.
472 Paternò Castello reported that what remained of the perimeter of the lake measured 170 canne or 340 meters in span. By the eighteenth century, the lake was reduced to a swamp, although travelers and local humanists could easily discern its boundaries. Ignazio Paternò Castello, prince of Biscari, Viaggio per tutte le antichità della Sicilia (Naples: Simoniana, 1781), 177. In 1792, the water basin was drained according to the instructions of a committee made up of the French architect Léon Dufourny and the Bourbon appointed engineer Carlo Chenchi. See Campisi, Cultura del restauro e cultura del revival, 32–35.
473 These maps are presently preserved in the Gabinetto dei Disegni e Stampe in the Galleria Regionale della Sicilia in Palazzo Abatellis.
c. Present Extent of the Lake of Maredolce

What remains today of the freshwater reservoir is the monumental dam that still stands on the eastern perimeter of the lake (figs. 3.66–3.67). Brought again to light in an excavation conducted in the mid-1990s, the dam is composed of large blocks of tufa. Its surface was covered with hydraulic plaster of which there are significant remnants (fig. 3.68). During a visit in February 2013 following the draining of the lake by the Soprintendenza, a thick stratum of yellowish-white carbonate could be discerned on the interior face since the dam was brought to light in its entirety. Its height is 5 meters and its width ranges from 5.50 meters at the bottom to 4.80 meters toward the top (figs. 3.68–3.69). The containment walls of the lake were built of blocks of tufa similar in size to those used for the base of the courtyard building, which, according to Braida, is the strongest indication that the pool and the palace date to the same period. The sluice gate is located in the northeast section of the lake near the monumental dam, the latter of which was uncovered in the excavations of the 1990s (figs.3.60–3.61). The second is hidden under vegetation on the opposite side. To transport water from the spring of San Ciro to the basin there was a subterranean canal similar in its typology to a *qanāt*. Remnants of the canal were found at a distance of 20 meters from the sluice gate. Several canals were excavated in the rocky banks of the lake near the outlet that regulated the water level.

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The south end of the palace toward Monte Grifone was at least a meter higher than the side that looked onto the lake.\textsuperscript{479} In addition, the sloping of the entire plateau of Palermo, from the mountains to the west to the coast to the east, assisted in the natural drainage of the water that flowed from the source of the Fawwarāh in the direction of the eastern wall of the lake that contains a sluice gate. A pool of standing water runs the risk of stagnation, thus, the holding chamber would have maintained the varying level of oxygen in the pool appropriate for the cultivation of fish. Even though the depth of the artificial lake of Maredolce is unknown, it would have been sufficient for the navigation of boats if it had a depth of 2 meters at the very least. The mooring for the boats used by the king on the lake, as described in Benjamin of Tudela’s account of the lake of Al-Beḥira, is supported by the later observations made by Mongitore and the marquis of Villabianca on the site. They noted the existence of iron rings that anchored the vessels to the wall. In the late nineteenth century, Vincenzo Di Giovanni noted that fragments of boats were found within the perimeter of the lake of Maredolce.\textsuperscript{480}

The masonry type of the perimeter wall of the lake changes drastically on the southern end. In place of the large blocks present on the eastern face of the dam, this side is mostly composed of rubble covered by hydraulic stucco. Unfortunately, the entire southern part of the lake appears to have been filled with jumbled fragments of stone, perhaps originating from the illegal quarry located below Monte Grifone, or what was the western perimeter of the lake immediately adjacent to the Arches of San Ciro. In all likelihood, the southern section was at a lower level than the central zone with a massive wall that contained the incoming water from the Fawwarāh. Another possible reason for this difference in depth

\textsuperscript{479} Goldschmidt, “Die normannischen Königspaläste,” 563.
\textsuperscript{480} Di Giovanni, “Il castello e la chiesa della Favara,” 240: “ma i frantumi di pezzi di barche, che ancora si scoprono sotto il terreno coltivato a cedri ed aranci. . .”
could be that this area was intended for the cultivation of fish that required separate enclosures according to species.

d. Arches of San Ciro: A Norman Lakefront Pavilion?

Pigonati’s drawing contains an unmarked building 10 meters to the north of the lake (fig. 3.59), which likewise can be seen in other topographical maps of the area that date to the second half of the eighteenth century (figs. 3.63–3.64). Known locally as the Arches of San Ciro was most likely a belvedere. The structure also appeared in Vincenzo Auria’s mid-seventeenth century sketch (as “C” in fig. 3.45), but which did not exist by the time of Goldschmidt’s visits in the early 1890s. Auria’s sketch reproduced the Arches of San Ciro above the retaining wall of the lake, which he captioned: “per comodità della vista,” and where he observed “sopra de’ quali vi fu quale edifizio.” Therefore, it is possible that the structure in the upper left corner in Pigonati’s drawing (fig. 3.59), or the space above the arches themselves, was occupied by a belvedere of which some vestiges remained in the mid-to late seventeenth century. The Arches of San Ciro would have provided a wide enough ledge in an optimal position for creating a vista over the lake (figs. 3.57–3.58).481 On its southeast side, remnants of masonry measuring 75 centimeters wide could have been a wall. Today there is no direct access to the lower level of the grotto and arched spaces.

Below the southern arch is a natural grotto. The man-made elements were covered in a layer of hydraulic stucco, as was the interior of the central arch. The presence of stucco indicates that water from the spring of the Fawwarāh was meant to flow here. Overall, the

481 Terraces over pools functioning as observation points were present in various suburban villas outside Córdoba, such as al-Rummānīyya, inspired by Madīnāt al-Zahrā. At al-Rummānīyya, an example of such a construction was on a ramp built on buttresses that supported the retaining walls of the pool on the uppermost level. See Glaire Anderson, “Villa (munya) Architecture,” 70.
physical structure of the Arches of San Ciro with three ogival arches is reminiscent of the pavilion of the fishing preserve at Roger’s park near Altofonte whose lower level opened onto an artificial basin, as discussed in Chapter Five. Presumably, boats could enter the interior of the Arches of San Ciro. The ledge above could have accommodated a pavilion or belvedere for observation of the surroundings.

The Arches of San Ciro is made up of three unequal wide-set ogival arches whose exterior is framed by bricks measuring 60 centimeters in length. The southern arch is the largest spanning 5.65 meters and with a height of 3.40 meters (figs. 3.57–3.58). The two smaller archways are 3.20 meters high, the center spans 2.60 meters, while the northern arch is 2.50 meters wide and is set at a skewed angle from the central arch. The space of the southern arch opens up into a cavern measuring 15 meters at its greatest depth, which appears to be a natural grotto or cave manually excavated in part. At a depth of 6.50 meters into the mountain, there is a masonry arch and a barrel vault but it is unclear when these were constructed. The northern wall of the southern cavern contains a blocked-off door, also of unknown date. From the central and northern arches, are smaller spaces when compared to the southern grotto. At present, these are not contiguous to the face of the mountain. The central cavern measures 2.60 meters in width and 5.72 meters in depth. The space below the north archway is 4.26 x 2.50 meters on its southern side and 4.10 meters on its north flank.

There are no remnants of the containment wall or dam that appears in Auria’s drawing, which was built of large masonry blocks according to his accompanying description. However, there are substantial mounds extending from the Arches of San Ciro to the eighteenth-century church on a north–south axis. Part of the debris originated from the
quarry immediately adjacent to the north, but presumably from the embankment itself. Numerous large blocks can be made out in the heap of rubble.

At a height of about 10 meters above the Arches of San Ciro there are remnants of a square base (fig. 3.70), which could be what appears in Vincenzo Auria’s sketch as a “Muraglia antichissima con parte di una Torretta.” In another topographical sketch in his manuscript, we can see above the Arches of San Ciro what Auria labelled as “Castello della Naumachia” in the center of the double folio (fig. 3.71). In any case, whatever remains Auria saw have undergone a modern restoration at an unknown time. What is still in situ consists of a wall, which is 2 meters tall, opening on its southern side into a space that measures 2.70 x 1.93 meters. On its west side, the structure is integrated into the mountain itself. Of an unknown date, the tower presumably protected the water source of the Fawwarāh, crucial later on for the processing of sugarcane that took place in the palace courtyard from the fourteenth century onward (fig. 3.16).482

III. Fishponds and Artificial Lakes: From Roman naumachiae to Ornamental Pools in Islamic Palatial Architecture

a. Basins for Fish Cultivation

As discussed earlier, in the early literature there was a good deal of confusion regarding the location of the two water sources known as the Fawwarāh.483 In part, this seems to stem from ‘Abd ar-Rahmān’s qaṣīda and Ibn Ḥawqal’s earlier description of the larger and the smaller Fawwarāh. For the palace of La Favara and its lake, a spring of fresh water cascaded from Monte Grifone and was transported via underground conduits. In his travelogue,

482 Tullio, “Strumenti per la lavorazione dello zucchero a Maredolce (Palermo),” 471–79.
483 See in particular, Basile, “L’abituro a monte Calvario,” 137–76.
Benjamin of Tudela mentioned the body of water that he called Al-Beḥira, which was used for courtly entertainment, notably boating.\textsuperscript{484} La Cuba also had an artificial pond on its grounds as discussed in Chapter Six. According to Fazello’s mid-sixteenth account, the basin of William II’s palace pavilion was lined with large blocks of masonry of an “antique” origin and was constructed in order to contain fish.\textsuperscript{485} In addition, in the nearby village of Altarello of Baida, the residential complex of Lo Scibene had a pool of water in front of the façade, examined in detail in Chapter Four.

At La Favara, the channeling of water to fill the massive basin (not to mention the thermal baths) was an amenity fit for a choice royal residence that in terms of its sheer scale far outpaced its recorded function as a fishpond to provide for the king’s table during Lent.\textsuperscript{486} The delivery of water to the extramural palaces was made through conduits situated both above and below ground that controlled the flow of water from natural springs originating in the mountains that surround the plain of Palermo. Corresponding to the area of the park, \textit{qanāts} have also been uncovered in modern-day Brancaccio. Yet, it is unknown if these underground systems were connected to the palace complex at La Favara.\textsuperscript{487} Their dating has not been established, and it cannot be determined without further archaeological work. As a result, it is not clear if the hydraulic expertise required for the waterworks at the site dates to the pre-Norman period, or whether engineers were brought in from Ifrīqiya or al-Andalus (among other possible places) to construct the lake and the dam.

\textsuperscript{484} Benjamin of Tudela was referencing here the Norman king William II since he traveled to Sicily in 1173. Idem, \textit{Itinerary}, 108–9.
\textsuperscript{485} Fazello, \textit{De rebus Siculis}, Deca uno, Book 8, 200.
\textsuperscript{486} A viable comparison can be made with the Umayyad desert palaces in which sophisticated hydraulic systems were used to bring in water for irrigation purposes and for luxurious amenities such as the lavishly decorated baths at Quṣayr ‘Amra and Hammām As-Ṣarākh. Robert Hillenbrand, “‘La Dolce Vita’ in Early Islamic Syria: The Evidence of Later Umayyad Palaces,” \textit{Art History} 5, 1 (1982), 1–35.
\textsuperscript{487} Todaro, “\textit{Qanāt e sistemi d’acqua tradizionali in Sicilia},” 23–43.
The construction of ponds for fish cultivation required specific hydro-engineering knowledge, since they had to be designed to allow, on the one hand, for the movement of fish and, on the other hand, for a stable flow of water and oxygen. Both fresh water and salt water brought in from the sea were required for these ponds. This brackish mixture delivered a new source of oxygen often used in ancient Roman fishponds, according to Marcus Terentius Varro, writing in around 37 BCE.  

In coastal villas in areas such as Campania, piscinae salsae (saltwater ponds) were deemed more desirable than their freshwater counterparts, piscinae dulces. The large pool at La Favara and at its pendant, Parco, which had a large artificial lake as discussed in Chapter Five, provided fish for the king and his retinue. Both aquatic features would have necessitated a good deal of funds for upkeep as well as expertise and continual attention. Yet unlike these earlier examples situated in close vicinity of the sea, salt water was not present in the basins at the two landlocked sites of La Favara and Parco.

Even though from late antiquity onward, the ecclesiastical and secular elite favored saltwater fish, they also consumed quantities of freshwater fish. In the Latin West, the apparent impetus to construct fishponds came from monastic foundations where scholars have long noted their presence since fish from freshwater sources was a prerequisite for Lent. Roger II spent the period of Lent at Maredolce, a site chosen largely because it

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488 An important source on Roman fishponds is Lucius Junius Columella’s (4 CE–ca. 70) handbook De Res Rustica. Salt water in piscinae had to be closely controlled since it determined not only the health of the fish but also the species that could be cultivated. In addition to providing a food staple, fishponds ensured a ready cash crop. Maritime villas were also profitable as fish breeding farms. See Annalisa Marzano, Roman Villas in Central Italy: A Social and Economic History (Boston: Brill, 2007), 47–63.

489 In terms of Roman imperial examples, the Domus Augustana on the Palatine Hill contained a monumental fishpond. Measuring 32 x 24 meters, the pool had separated areas, and a series of grates controlled the movement of fish. There was also an island in the center of the pool, on which there was a temple or another diminutive structure connected by a bridge to the edge of the basin. Ibid., 120–22.

could supply fish for his table. Cassiodorus gave one of the earliest descriptions of a similar pond that he had created for his monastery of Vivarium in Calabria.491 The idealized plan of the monastery of St. Gall from ca. 816 includes several fishponds.492 The construction of pools also took place outside of the Benedictine sphere. The Cistercian Order was especially renowned for its fishponds and waterworks. Cluny had a sophisticated system in place by the mid-eleventh century if not earlier.493 A renowned example of hydraulic sophistication is illustrated in the two so-called “waterworks drawings” appended to the Eadwine Psalter (ca. 1155–60/ca. 1170) that depict the system installed at Canterbury in the 1160s.494 A large lake surrounded the palace of the bishops of Salisbury at Sherborne (Dorset), built by Roger, Bishop of Salisbury, in the decade of 1120–30, which had ornamental qualities as well as a

491 Cassiodorus’ monastery had been identified with San Martino di Copanello in Calabria, the Roman town of Scolacium. Its excavator, Ermanno Arslan, has noted the remnants of seven basins nearby that are possibly the fishponds described in the Institutiones, 1. 29. 1. The pools are carved into the rocky terrain of the coast close to the mouth of the Alessi River. Cassiodorus Senator, An Introduction to Divine and Human Readings, edited by Leslie W. Jones (New York: Pantheon Books, 1953), 193; cited also by James J. O’Donnell in Cassiodorus (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 153: “The site of the monastery of Vivarium. . . since you have irrigated gardens and the nearby river Pellena full of fish. . . It flows into your precincts, channelled artificially where it is wanted, adequate to water your gardens and turn your mills. It is there when you want it and flows on when no longer needed; it exists to serve you, never too roisterous and bothersome nor yet again ever deficient. The sea lies all about you as well, accessible for fishing with fishponds [vivaria] to keep the caught fish alive. We have constructed them as pleasant receptacles, with the Lord’s help, where a multitude of fish swim close by the cloister, in circumstances so like mountain caves that the fish never sense themselves constrained in any way, since they are free to seek their food and hide away in dark recesses. We have also had baths built to refresh weary bodies, where sparkling water for drinking and washing flows by. . . ”


defensive function. There was also a lead-pipe system at Wolvesey Palace, most likely ordered by Henry of Blois, Bishop of Winchester (r. 1129–71), who had been a monk at Cluny.

Royal dominance manifested itself not only in the transformation of the landscape, but correspondingly in mastery over other elements of the natural world, specifically fauna. According to Romuald of Salerno, Roger filled the ponds with many species of fish from different regions (“in quo pisces diversorum generum de variis regionibus adductos iussit inmitti”). In a similar fashion, Cassiodorus noted that for Emperor Theodoric’s (r. 493–526) fishponds: “from the Danube came carp and from the Rhine herring. To provide a variety of flavors, it is necessary to have many fish from many countries. A king’s reign should be such as to indicate that he possesses everything.” There is also a mention of fishponds or vivaria in the Carolingian capitulary De Villis of 794–95, issued by Charlemagne for his son Louis the Pious in the context of the creation of an ideal suburban estate. In England, in the period immediately following the conquest and into the twelfth century, there was a significant rise in the number of fishponds constructed by the Norman secular aristocracy

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498 Carolingian capitulary De Villis is a manual for the management of an ideal estate that is believed to have been sent by Charlemagne to his son Louis, later Louis the Pious, in the late eighth century. In the De Villis, there is mention of animals kept in a viridarium setting. The document highlights the importance of maintaining the boundaries of these properties. In stipulation number sixty-five mention is made of fishponds with instructions for the estate stewards that when these were not consumed by the king and his retinue, the fish were to be sold and then replaced so that the stock would not be diminished: “Ut pisces de wiwariis nostris venundentur et alii mittantur in locum, ita ut pisces semper habeant; tamen quando nos in villas non venimus, tunc fiant venundati et ipsos ad nostrum prefectum iudices nostri conlucrare faciant.” Text available online at University of Lancaster, School of Historical Studies, “Carolingian Polyptyques: The Capitulare de Villis,” http://www.le.ac.uk/hi/polytyques/capitulare/latin.html (accessed: July 27, 2013).
that became an acknowledged sign of prestige.\textsuperscript{499} For instance, in Gerald of Wales’ idealized account of his childhood home of Manorbier in Wales, he described a fishpond positioned below the castle walls.\textsuperscript{500} Gerald’s portrayal highlighted its aesthetically pleasing properties, which provided its owner with a self-sufficient source of sustenance. Therefore, from Romuald’s account, we can assume that La Favara had a similar function and importance in the royal secular sphere.

Sophisticated waterworks, among which we can enumerate fishponds, were clearly a widespread phenomenon in the Latin West by the twelfth century. There would appear to be a synergy in place between necessity and luxury, whether these are monastic fishponds or defensive moats, both of which could have had ornamental qualities as well. Consequently, one cannot argue for a trickle-down effect from the uppermost level. In twelfth-century England, there were numerous royal fishponds, most notably at Woodstock (Oxfordshire) and Clarendon (Wiltshire).\textsuperscript{501} A favorite residence of Henry II, the grounds of Clarendon Palace contained several fishponds by the fourteenth century but which could date to the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item [500] Gerald of Wales, \textit{The Journey through Wales; and The Description of Wales}, translated with an introduction by Lewis Thorpe (New York: Penguin, 1978), 150: “There the house stands, visible from afar because of its turrets and crenelations, on the top of a hill which is quite near the sea and which on the western side reaches as far as the harbour. To the north and north-west, just beneath the walls, there is an excellent fishpond, well-constructed and remarkable for its deep waters.” See also Teresa McLean, \textit{Medieval English Gardens} (London: Collins, 1981), 92.
\item [501] The close ties between England and Sicily date to the reign of Roger II. Robert of Selby was Roger II’s chancellor throughout the greater part of his rule, a position that was later held by the Englishman Thomas Brown who was also \textit{magister capellanus}. Another important figure was Richard Palmer, a \textit{familiaris regis}, who was later appointed bishop of Syracuse in 1169 and archbishop of Messina in 1182. These relations only strengthened when William II married Joanna, daughter of Henry II of England, in 1177. During the reign of Roger’s successors, English bishops held numerous Sicilian sees. Houben, \textit{Roger II of Sicily}, 108; Evelyn Jamison, “Alliance of England and Sicily in the Second Half of the 12th Century,” \textit{Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes}, 6 (1943), 20–32; and J. M. Steane, “The Royal Fishponds of Medieval England,” in \textit{Medieval Fish, Fisheries and Fishponds in England}, British Archaeological Reports, British Series 182, edited by Mick Ashton (Oxford: B.A.R., 1988), vol.1, 39–68.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
The menagerie at Woodstock most likely dates to the rule of his grandfather, Henry I (r. 1068–1135). Kenilworth Castle in Warwickshire had a sophisticated water management system in place for ponds used for the cultivation of fish. The castle itself was situated so as to be reflected in the aquatic setting. At Kenilworth a series of dams in a valley nearby diverted water for the ponds, among which the most significant man-made creation was the Great Mere covering 40 hectares that in addition to its purported defensive function was also aesthetically pleasing. Even though the date of the Great Mere cannot be substantiated, it is quite possible that it was constructed during the reign of King John (r. 1199–1216). From the examples presented here, monumental waterscapes were integral to buildings and landscapes designed for elite users and signaled the transformation of the landscape on a monumental scale.

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504 On access strategies to these sites, see Matthew Johnson, *Behind the Castle Gate: From Medieval to Renaissance* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 24–26.


506 Additional studies by Oliver Creighton, Christopher C. Taylor, and Oliver Rackham, among others, have examined the creation of ornamental landscapes in medieval England. Different elements were man-made and, therefore, are referred to as “designed landscapes” by these scholars, principally gardens, orchards, and deer parks. In terms of waterscapes, there were fishponds and other large bodies of water that were not created solely for defensive purposes. An ornamental setting gave not only recreational and aesthetic benefits, but also proclaimed the status of its royal and, later, aristocratic occupants. These designed landscapes formed the backdrop of elite activities, namely hunting. Such buildings, which included royal palaces, castles, ecclesiastical, and manorial residences, had curated surroundings. Previously, scholars believed that the earliest dated to the turn of the fourteenth century, however, it is presently generally accepted that some may date as early as the twelfth century. Overall, the study of castle and landscape are bound together in British scholarship, yet less attention is given to comparative examples from elsewhere in the medieval West. Following the important work of Howard Colvin on royal residences in medieval England, many scholars have looked to Norman Sicily as a precursor. Oliver H. Creighton, *Designs Upon the Land: Elite Landscapes of the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2009); Christopher C. Taylor, “Medieval Ornamental Landscapes,” *Landscapes* 1 (2000), 38–55; Christopher C. Taylor and Paul Everson, “Delightfully Surrounded with Woods and Ponds’: Field Evidence for Medieval Gardens in Britain,” in *There by Design: Field Archaeology in Parks*
the chapter and in Chapter Five, the principal sites in which this took place were at Parco and Altofonte, both associated with Roger II’s patronage.

b. Roman *naumachiae* and Later Islamic Examples of Artificial Basins for Nautical Displays

The lake of Maredolce was a site of interest for Sicilian antiquarians from the mid-eighteenth century onward due to its early identification as a Roman *naumachia*. The Bourbon caretaker of monuments, the prince of Torremuzza, not only rediscovered the baths at La Favara but also brought the lake to the attention of his antiquarian peers. Of course, a direct lineage cannot be traced from Roman *naumachiae* to the lake of Maredolce. Yet descriptions of antique imperial examples are illuminating both in terms of elucidating their patronage and for the integration of these vast basins into their surroundings. These include the Stagnum Agrippae in the Campus Martius completed in 19 BCE, the Naumachia Augusti of 2 BCE on the right bank of the Tiber River, and the Stagnum Neronis near the Domus Aurea (first century CE).\(^{507}\) Aqueducts supplied water to the *naumachiae* and to their adjoining parks and gardens, which in some cases contained pavilions that overlooked the large bodies of water. Such was the arrangement of structures around Augustus’ basin, while those of Agrippa and Nero had porticoes that encircled the large rectangular basins. The

Stagnum Agrippae, on the Campus Martius, was used for naval exercises as well. The immense pool of the Stagnum Neronis was the centerpiece of the vast complex of the Golden House set in a valley between the Palatine, Velian, and Oppian hills.

Similar to Roman *naumachiae* and the examples presented from the Islamic world, the lake of Maredolce was used for spectacle and entertainment on a grand scale that endorsed the exclusive character of the site and proclaimed the status of the king, constituting a recognizable sign of his participation in an international elite culture. The creation of the lake of Maredolce at La Favara was most likely derived from examples in Ifrīqiya or al-Andalus, based in turn on Roman practices and hydraulic engineering. From the Islamic world, a monumental lake used for boating display may be seen at the large pool in the Qal’a of the Benū Hammād in present-day Algeria. The palace complex of Dār al-Baḥr (also known as Qaṣr al-Mulk) contained a rectangular pool that measured 67 meters on its east by west axis and 47 meters on its shorter north to south length, which was surrounded by a portico (fig. 1.29). The pool had an access ramp for boats on its eastern end where the main


510 On the site of an additional unexcavated Umayyad palace at Qudaym is a large reservoir that had seating on its borders and decorative semi-circular buttresses, which, according to Denis Genequand, is reminiscent of contemporary palatial examples. Genequand has proposed that the reservoir was used for nautical displays due to the seating arranged around the rectangular basin. Idem, *Les établissements des élites omeyyades*, 174–80.
residential unit was located. Contemporary travel accounts confirm that boating spectacles
and theatrical events took place at the Dār al-Baḥr, as does the anonymous Kitāb al-Istibṣār compiled in 1191.\footnote{On the palatial complex of Dār al-Bahr and the basin, see Marçais, L'architecture musulmane, 81–88; Golvin, Recherches archéologiques, 54–66. At Tlemcen, during the reign of Aboū Tāchfine (r. 1318–36), there was an additional basin measuring approximately 200 x 100 meters and 3 meters deep where nautical games were presumably held. See Marçais, L'architecture musulmane, 327.}

A later example of a similar basin is at Qaṣr al-Sayyid (Alcázar Genil) in Granada, constructed by the district governor, Ishaq bin Yusuf, during the reign of the Almohad caliph al-Muntaṣir in ca. 1218 and remodeled in the Nasrid period.\footnote{Antonio Almagro and Antonio Orihuela, “El Cuarto Real de Santo Domingo de Granada,” in Casas y palacios de al-Andalus: siglos XII y XIII: sala de exposiciones, Iglesia de Verónicas, Murcia, 1 abril–15 julio 1995, edited by Julio Navarro Palazón (Barcelona: Lunwerg, 1995), 241–53; Maria Isabel Calero Secall and Virgilio Martínez Enamorado, “La arquitectura residencial de la Málaga almohade,” in Casas y palacios de al-Andalus: siglos XII y XIII: sala de exposiciones, Iglesia de Verónicas, Murcia, 1 abril–15 julio 1995, edited by Julio Navarro Palazón (Barcelona: Lunwerg, 1995), 162.} Situated on the left bank of the Genil River, the Qaṣr al-Sayyid had a monumental water basin in front of its principal structure. Measuring 121 meters in length and 28 meters in width, the pool was used for nautical spectacles and, more specifically, to celebrate victories over Christian fleets. Closeby was a substantial orchard irrigated from the runoff of the ornamental basin.\footnote{Calero Secall and Martínez Enamorado, “La arquitectura residencial de la Málaga almohade,” 164–65.}

Other built elements complemented these basins, most notably artificial islands, since spectacles could be held in conjunction at both. The triangle-shaped island of Maredolce was situated near the south corner of the courtyard core of La Favara. The reasons for its location in close proximity to the palace structure are manifold. A wooden bridge might have joined the south corner of the palace to the island (fig. 3.25).\footnote{Alberti, Descrittione di tutta l’Italia, fols. 50r–51v.} From the sixteenth-century description of Leandro Alberti, the later La Zisa also had a diminutive pavilion in front of its façade placed in the center of a pond presumably connected to dry land by a timber bridge.

Looking to Roman precedents, the Naumachia Augusti, according to Cassius Dio, had an
island in its center connected to dry land via a wooden bridge incorporated during naval battle reenactments.\(^{515}\)

Large artificial basins had supplementary purposes such as the transportation and containment of water, which was crucial for settlement in the desert. For instance, the Umayyad desert palaces required reliable amounts of water for the residence’s consumption, attendant balneal structures, and crop irrigation. The most notable examples of complex hydraulic systems following the Islamic conquest are the two dams located in the vicinity of Qaṣr al-Ḥayr al-Gharbī, built in 724–27 by the Umayyad caliph Hishâm ibn ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 691–743) southwest of Palmyra (fig. 3.72).\(^{516}\) The larger dam measures 345 meters long and 20.50 meters in height and 18 meters wide at its base (figs. 3.73–3.74).\(^{517}\) Its walls are made up of a rubble and mortar core faced with limestone cladding.\(^{518}\) Near the palace is an additional smaller semi-circular dam, less than 1.50 meters high and 2.75 meters wide, decorated with reliefs of hunting scenes executed in stucco. The latter is referred to in the

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scholarship as that of the “garden,” and water from this source was diverted to irrigate a sizable tract of agricultural land.\(^{519}\)

Other significant large-scale hydraulic projects that were intended primarily for agricultural needs, but also to provide water to the city and its gardens, include the mid-ninth century basins outside Kairouan.\(^{520}\) According to the eleventh-century historian al-Bakrī, the Aghlabid prince Abū Ibrāhīm Aḥmad built fifteen basins near the city in 860–862. Of the two that remain, the smaller pool measures 37.4 meters in diameter, while the larger, in the form of a polygon of 48 sides, measures 128 meters.\(^{521}\) Al-Bakrī noted that the larger basin had an octagonal tower with a diminutive pavilion on top open to all directions, used by the ruler, indicating the dual function that such a project could possess for its patron.\(^{522}\) These Aghlabid pools are similar to what in Sicily are known as *gebbia*, utilized for water containment, of which there are still several in metropolitan Palermo. Although none of

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\(^{519}\) Schlumberger et al, *Qasr el-Heir el Gharbi*, 54–57.

\(^{520}\) The basins were used not only for crop irrigation and to provide water for houses, but also for religious purposes in terms for ablution fountains in mosques. Lamia Hadda, *Nella Tunisia medievale. Architettura e decorazione islamica (IX–XVI secolo)* (Naples: Liguori, 2008), 58–61; Marcel Solignac, “Recherches sur les installations hydrauliques de Kairouan et des steppes tunisiennes du VIIe au XIe siècle,” *Annales de l’Institut d’Études Orientales* 10–11 (1952–53), 5–273; also Marçais, *L’architecture musulmane*, 64–65; and Ruggles, *Islamic Gardens and Landscapes*, 166.

\(^{521}\) Other examples of man-made basins and ponds in rural or suburban estates include an ‘Abbāsid villa at ‘Alwiyyah located 40 kilometers east of Mecca that had a substantial reservoir. Terry Allen has described the principal structure as arranged around a courtyard on two levels, measuring 85 x 40 meters. The basin is trapezoidal in shape, 28 meters on its east to west flank and 24 meters on its shorter length. There were numerous buttresses on the interior of the basin. At the lake’s center was a double octagonal structure and a causeway, reminiscent of the pavilion placed in the shallow pool in front of Khirbat al-Mafjar, the epitome of a lavish caliphal complex. Terry Allen, *An ‘Abbāsid Fishpond Villa Near Makkah* (Occidental, CA: Solipsist Press, 2009), [http://sonic.net/~tallen/palmtree/fishpond/fishpond.htm](http://sonic.net/~tallen/palmtree/fishpond/fishpond.htm) (accessed: July 18, 2013); and Robert Hamilton, *Khirbat Al Mafjar: An Arabian Mansion in the Jordan Valley* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), 110–21.

\(^{522}\) On site are the remains of a square base measuring 2.85 meters on each side that Marçais noted could have sustained such a structure with the assistance of corbelled supports. See Marçais, *L’architecture musulmane*, 36–38.
these examples may be dated to the medieval period, this technology is almost certainly derived from the Islamic world.523

In relation to estates in the hinterland of a capital, another place that had monumental waterworks akin to the suburban Palermitan La Favara and Lo Scibene (examined in Chapter Four), was the munya of al-Rummāniyya located on the slope of Sierra Morena and at the outskirts of the palatial city of Madīnat al-Zahrā’ near Córdoba (fig. 3.75). Al-Rummāniyya was not technically a caliphal villa, yet it was an elite site, since al-Hakam II’s finance minister Durrī al-Saghīr built it in 966. Made up of four levels, the uppermost was a garden and below could be found residential buildings and structures for agricultural use. On the upper terrace was a large pool of water, measuring 30 x 50 meters and 4 meters in depth. Surrounding the basin were walkways and a pavilion that looked directly onto it (figs. 3.76).524 Water for the pool was conducted via rainwater delivered through a creek bed and canals irrigating the garden.525 The presentation of sophisticated waterworks of the medieval period in this chapter clarifies the extent of the innovative conception and immense undertaking required for the creation of Roger II’s lake at La Favara.

Conclusion

Situated in the verdant landscape south of Palermo, the palace of La Favara was supplied with abundant water from the spring of the Fawwarāh. The largest source on the Palermitan plain, the Fawwarāh allowed for the making of a huge artificial lake used for the

523 Todaro, Guida di Palermo sotterranea, 88–91; also spelled “gebia” as it appears in Caracausi’s lexicon, Arabismi medievali di Sicilia, 240–41.
cultivation of fish and for leisurely pursuits such as boating. The sophisticated waterworks included a dam and a system of water conduits, some underground, required considerable material resources and clearly signaled a prestigious site. The hydraulic engineering in situ incorporated the natural slope of the plain to transport water to the lake, indicating extensive knowledge of water management. For centuries after its construction, runoff from the lake irrigated numerous sugarcane and date palm plantations. Equipped for lengthy stays throughout the winter and the period of Lent, La Favara boasted many amenities for the enjoyment of Roger II and his retinue. The chapel and the lake are the salient elements of the complex that date to Norman rule.526

Despite the site’s vast dimensions and what I argue is its significance for the history of both Western and Islamic architecture, this palatial complex is almost entirely unacknowledged outside of Sicily. Even more than La Zisa and La Cuba, La Favara has a marginal place in the scholarly literature as a complex built by a Christian king in an Islamic mode.527 The new research presented here reveals that not only have the courtyard palace and chapel are still standing but also substantial remnants of the monumental dam of a lake, the containment walls of an island, and the structure known as the Arches of San Ciro (likely a belvedere overlooking the lake). As explained elsewhere in the dissertation, many

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526 Despite the fact that boating was not an activity one would associate with the winter season. Moreover, the palace’s lake would lend itself to entertainment as noted by Benjamin of Tudela in his travelogue. This, however, would lead us to question Romuald’s assertion that the primary function of the basin was to provide the king and his retinue for fish for Lent.

527 For instance, D. Fairchild Ruggles’ Islamic Gardens and Landscapes (2008) includes the palace in the text’s gazetteer, yet she notes that La Favara was once made up of several structures of which “only one wall of the palace survives today.” Idem, Islamic Gardens and Landscapes (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 159.
monuments in the Norman parkland remain relatively unknown, not least because Sicilian scholars and restorers published intermittently on La Favara in local journals.  

Altogether, the preceding discussion highlights the timeliness of the research presented here. The recent archaeological and restoration campaigns have brought new evidence to light that is fundamental to any analysis of the site. Many questions remain regarding La Favara, most notably the extent of the pre-Norman occupation and building. At the moment, the best conclusion that we may draw is that a complex in the Muslim period of rule was built on an earlier structure dating to antiquity, possibly a suburban villa of an agricultural estate. The twelfth-century phase corresponded to the transformation of the surrounding landscape by means of the massive hydraulic project of the lake, undertaken sometime before mid-century. The palace of La Favara and the lake of Maredolce was thus an important node on the Palermitan plain. The torrential spring of the Fawwarāh continued to be a substantial source of water in the post-medieval period because it is described in numerous chorographic works penned by Sicilian humanists and appears in later traveler accounts. La Favara constitutes a significant link between architectural antecedents in North Africa and the later, better known suburban palaces of La Zisa and La Cuba in Sicily.

528 The latter raises very pertinent questions, since it is rare for archaeological finds to support textual sources (or at least this appears to be the case for Sicily). Scholars have tentatively accepted that some sites may have been in continued use, although there is a break in the archaeological record in the eighth century that would correspond with the Islamic conquest of the island. These include villas or luxurious estates transformed into estates that focused on agricultural production. Continuous settlement can be confirmed in Sicily for only a few cases, at the vicus of Sofiana near Piazza Armerina, the Villa of Patti, Casale Nuovo close to Mazara del Vallo, Casale of Caliata in Belice, and Contrada Saraceno of Agrigento. See the articles in La fine delle ville romane: trasformazioni nelle campagne tra tarda antichità e alto Medioevo: 1. Convegno archeologico del Garda: Gardone Riviera (Brescia), 14 ottobre 1995, edited by Gian Pietro Brogiolo, (Mantua: Editrice S.A.P., 1997); and Paul Arthur, “From vicus to Village: Italian Landscapes, AD 400–1000,” in Landscapes of Change: Rural Evolutions in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, edited by Neil Christie (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 103–133. See also the essays collected in the edited volume by Patrizio Pensabene, Piazza Armerina: Villa del Casale e la Sicilia tra tardoantico e medioevo (Rome: L’Erma di Bretschneider, 2010); and Alessandra Molinari, “Sicily between the 5th and the 10th Century: villae, Villages, Towns and Beyond. Stability, Expansion or Recession?” in The Insular System of the Early Byzantine Mediterranean: Archaeology and History, edited by Dēmētrēs Michαēlēdēs, Philippe Pergola, and Enrico Zanini, BAR International Series 2523 (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2013), 97–114.
Chapter Four

Early Norman Palatial Architecture in the Royal Parks: Lo Scibene and Elite Domestic Architecture in the Medieval Mediterranean

“For every kind of ‘being together’ of people has a corresponding arrangement of space. . . the precipitate of a social unit in terms of space and indeed, more narrowly, in terms of rooms, is a tangible and–in a literal sense–visible representation of its special nature. In this sense the kind of accommodation of court people gives sure and graphic access to an understanding of certain social relationships characteristic of court society.”


In his masterly work, the German sociologist Norbert Elias highlighted the fundamental role played by court ceremony in structuring the arrangement of space in elite architecture according to hierarchical divisions and gender lines. At first glance, the dilapidated remains of Lo Scibene on the outskirts of Palermo would appear to be a far cry from the palace of Louis XIV at Versailles as discussed by Elias in *The Court Society.* However, even after a cursory consideration of the central nucleus of the lower level of the Palermitan complex, one cannot deny that it had a formal or ceremonial function and thus was an elite site. Located in the modern-day Palermo suburb of Altarello di Baida, Lo

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529 Norbert Elias utilized Max Weber’s definition of a patrimonial society, which appeared in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (1922). In Elias’ work, the ruler’s control over his own family-household serves as a model of governance. Idem, “The Structure of Dwellings as an Indicator of Social Structure,” in *Court Society [Die höfische Gesellschaft]*, originally published in 1969, translated by Edmund Jephcott and edited by Stephen Mennell (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2006), 45–72. Elias was by no means a specialist on Louis XIV’s court, and the chapter cited from his book was taken mostly unchanged from his 1933 habilitation thesis. His work, however, is conceptually rich and is useful for elucidating a court society that had an indisputable center of political power and a strong hierarchical organization. See also Marie-France Auzépy and Joël Cornette, “Lieux de pouvoir, pouvoir des lieux,” in *Palais et Pouvoir. De Constantinople à Versailles* (Saint-Denis: Presses Universitaires de Vincennes, 2003), 5–31.
Scibene is at a distance of two kilometers as the crow flies from the Palazzo dei Normanni (pl. 1). Looking out to the sea from an elevated position on a natural promontory, its central nucleus was integrated into a cave. Named after a spring nearby, Lo Scibene probably also contained a large bath on its premises. Following Amari’s association of the remains with “Minenium aliaque delectabilia loca,” which Pseudo-Hugh Falcandus noted was one of Roger II’s most beloved palaces, Lo Scibene has been ascribed to his patronage.

Nonetheless, the absence of an irrefutable association with the royal sphere has severely undermined the long-term preservation of Lo Scibene; like La Favara, in the post-war period its upper level became honeycombed with illegal houses. The complex was “discovered” only in the late nineteenth century by the architect Giovan Battista Filippo Basile (although it is unlikely ever to have been forgotten by the local inhabitants), after which time it was documented by the architect and archaeologist Francesco Saverio Cavallari (1809–1896). The upper level of the site underwent a lackluster restoration by Francesco Valenti, the Superintendent of Monuments, in the 1920s. He focused his efforts on what he believed to be the palatine chapel. Almost a century later, the original Fondo Di Cara, so named after its current proprietor, is subdivided among his descendants and other co-owners, who, as of early 2016, are locked in an ownership dispute with Palermo’s Soprintendenza. Despite the fact that it is in danger of imminent collapse (the fate that befell most of the northern wing of La Zisa in 1971), the monument is for all intents and purposes abandoned and there are no provisions in place to safeguard it.

531 The first study of the palace was by Giovan Battista Filippo Basile, “I resti di un palagio vetusto in Altarello di Baida,” La Ricerca 1–2 (1856).
Even though the first phase of the site is unknown to us, or if indeed Lo Scibene was Roger II’s beloved Minenium, what is imperative to keep at the forefront of our discussion is that the central core of La Zisa is essentially modeled on Lo Scibene (or on contemporary buildings with the same plan). Similar to the Fountain Room at the later palace pavilion, Lo Scibene’s central hall was luxuriously ornamented with *muqarnas* vaults and a fountain set into a niche framed by columns in the center of the wall. In addition, its principal face had three openings or portals and overlooked the longer side of a magnificent rectangular-shaped artificial basin. Returning to Elias’ formulation in *The Court Society*, the archetypal royal space of the realm of the Palace of Versailles was mirrored in the residences or *hôtel* of courtiers and other elite members of society on a reduced scale. As such, the configuration of the tripartite core of Lo Scibene is replicated at La Zisa, the chief suburban monument in the Norman secular realm.

Most importantly, the complex at Baida predates La Zisa by at least half a century (and possibly a century and a half). Lo Scibene provided a critical model for the well-known and extensively examined palace pavilion, and it is, then, a “missing piece.” More than any other medieval monument in Palermo, a relatively early date may be assigned to its core on the lower level. Consequently, Lo Scibene is likely to be the only remaining elite residence dating to the Islamic period of rule in Sicily. In this chapter, I will endeavor to reconstruct the configuration of this composite, multi-phase site. As the monument has not been the

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532 Giuseppe Spatrisano has discussed these monuments together, and has regarded Lo Scibene as a precursor to La Zisa. Spatrisano, *La Zisa e lo Scibene di Palermo*.

533 Elias, *Court Society*, 47: “The Château of Versailles, the outer receptacle of the French court as the dwelling place of both of the court nobility and the king, cannot be understood in isolation. It forms the tip of a society articulated hierarchically in all its manifestations. One must see how the court nobility live at home to understand how the king lives and how the nobility live with him. Town residences of the nobility, the *hôtels*, show in fairly clear and simple form the sociologically relevant needs of this society with respect to accommodation, which, multiplied, telescoped together and complicated by the special governmental and representative functions of the kings, also determine the structure of the royal palace which is to house the society as a whole.”
subject of sustained study since the first half of the twentieth century, I have used my own
measurements. My measurements underscore the tripartite plan at Lo Scibene’s lower level
of a qā’a and two flanking īwāns, a spatial arrangement analogous to examples located
elsewhere in the Islamic world.

I. Documentory Material Pertaining to the Area Surrounding Lo Scibene,
and Literary Descriptions of al-Mannānī

As described in the second chapter on Palermo’s hinterland and the Norman parkland,
water had always been a crucial element to the suburban site. In fact, it is the origin of the
area’s toponym, known throughout the early modern period as “contrada Sipene.” In
primary sources as well as in the secondary literature, Scibene is often transcribed as
“Uscibene” (also “Xipene,” “Xhibene,” and “Sirbene,” among other variations). There
was an abundance of water from the spring, corresponding today with the qanāt of the
Gesuitico Basso, named after the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century ecclesiastical owners.
The outlet to the stream was already dry at the end of the eighteenth century according to the
marquis of Villabianca, who claimed that the palace complex was constructed on uneven
land. A representation of the surroundings of the complex appears in a canvas by Giovan
Battista Cascione made for the Senate of Palermo in 1722, and presently conserved in
Palermo’s Archivio Comunale (figs. 4.1–4.2). A major water resource for the plain of

534 The first mention of the source of water as Lo Scibene is in 1415, when the Archbishop of Palermo collected
taxes on it and referred to it as “lu Xibene.” Anastasi, “Scibene,” in L’arte nel parco reale normanno, 7–9.
535 Villabianca noted that a good deal of the city’s water source came from the Scibene, purchased by Bernardo
Bataglio, while the rest belonged to the Duke of Terranova. Villabianca, “Scibene o Xibene,” in Fontanagrafia
oretea, 143–45.
536 In Cascione’s map, the water source of the Scibene first crossed the garden of Lo Scibene and supplied the
five fountains on the fifteenth-century road that led from Palermo to Monreale (in the area of Mezzomonreale)
further down the slope of the plain. In the area behind the Norman Palace or the present-day Piazza
Indipendenza (labeled as Piano di S. Teresa on Cascione’s map), water gushed from a fountain of what was the
Palermo, Lo Scibene is personified as a reclining male figure. Further topographical details can be gleaned from Cascione’s map. For instance, one can see a number of mills in the vicinity of the site, in addition to a calculation of its hydraulic output, stated in an accompanying caption. The latter indicates that the area was suitable for an elite residence with significant waterworks that could supply runoff water for agricultural purposes. In sum, water and the site of Lo Scibene go hand in hand.

a. Early Documentary Material Pertaining to al-Mannānī and Casale Bayda (Baida)

Following Amari, most scholars have believed that the Palace of Minenium (or al-Mannānī) mentioned by Pseudo-Falcandus corresponded with the ruined complex in Altarello di Baida on the outskirts of Palermo.537 Even so, Amari’s assertion that Lo Scibene was Roger II’s beloved palace of Minenium is problematic. The earliest mention of al-Mannānī is in a document in Arabic dating to 1132, in which reference is also made to a source of water.538 Another important citation is by the Alexandrian poet Ibn Qalāqis, who visited Sicily during the reign of William II, who refers to al-Mannānī in his panegyric poem “al-Zahr al-bāsim.”539 The next known allusion to the site, this time referred to as “Sipene,” dates to 1154 in which “via misit de Sipene” is said to be located outside the gates of the palatial enclosure of La Galca.540


539 De Simone, Splendori e misteri, 64: “E io chiesi, oltre ogni aspettativa, ed esso mi portò il miracolo di al-Mannānī.” In English: “And I had asked, beyond all expectations, and it took me to the miracle of Mannānī.”

540 Antonino Mongitore, Bullae, privilegia (Palermo: Felicella, 1737), 37: “...in via misit de Sipene in parte exteriori porte Galcae prope murum ad meridiem.”
Both Guido Di Stefano and Silvana Braida have proposed that Lo Scibene was a pre-Norman suburban estate with surrounding agricultural lands.541 “Baida” or “Bayda” appears in a concession privilege issued by William II dated to March 1177.542 The king granted the “casale, quod Bayda dicitur,” to the Church of Palermo, and more specifically to the Archbishop of Palermo, Gualtiero Offamilio, in perpetual concession. However, because the diploma does not directly refer to Lo Scibene, Minenium, or al-Mannānī, we cannot be certain that the palace and its grounds were in royal hands. Yet, Bayda in the concession corresponds to the present-day Palermo suburb of Baida, and the residential complex would have fallen in the area of the “casale.” Thus, we may conclude that for a few centuries Lo Scibene was the property of the Church of Palermo.543

Another conceivable reason for William II’s transfer of royal property into ecclesiastical hands is that by early 1177 construction on the palace pavilion of La Zisa was well underway or had just been completed.544 The building of the cathedral of Monreale was moving steadily forward, since it was consecrated less than a decade later. By this time, there were considerable political motivations for this handover of property due to the intense

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541 Both scholars have used the term mahall from Arabic as they believed the complex predated the Norman period. Braida, “Il ‘Sollazzo’ dell’Uscibene,” 31–42; Di Stefano, Monumenti, 112–13. On feudalism in Sicily, see Illuminato Peri, Il villanaggio in Sicilia (Palermo: Manfredi, 1965); idem, Uomini, città e campagne, 61–62; Lucia Sorrenti, Il patrimonio fondiario in Sicilia. Gestione delle terre e contratti agrari nei secoli XII–XV (Milan: Giuffrè, 1984), 4–5. A village was located nearby in the tenth century, which was mentioned by Ibn Ḥawqal in his travelogue. The place-name signifies “White” in Arabic, quite likely because it was situated on a raised plateau made up of exposed calcarenite stone. Ibn Ḥawqal, Biblioteca arabo-sicula, vol. 1, 22. Also Lo Piccolo, Altarello di Baida, 3–5.

542 ASDP, Curia Arcivescovile, Tabularium of the Cathedral, perg. n. 24. Pirri, Sicilia Sacra (Palermo: 1773), vol. 1, 134: “...tuam damus de demanio nostro et perpetuo concedimus Panormitane ecclesie ac tibi et omnibus successoribus tuis canonice intrantibus casale, quod Bayda dicitur, quod est prope Panormum a parte occidentis, cum omnibus iustis divisis et tenimentis ac villanis ipsius casalis; nomina quorum villanorum continetur in platea facta inde... ita ut casale ipsum Bayda cum omnibus iustis divisis et tenimentis ac possessionibus suis et cum omnibus villanis suis, sicut predictum est, a nostra munificentia Panormitane.”

543 Frederick II confirmed the privilege in 1211. As pointed out by Francesco Lo Piccolo in Altarello di Baida, 115.

544 Nino Basile first suggested that Lo Scibene could have been the summer residence of the Palermitan archbishopric. Idem, “L’Uscibene,” ser. 2, 91–158.
rivalry between the two archbishops of Palermo and Monreale. William quite possibly conceded to the archbishop of Palermo the casale of Bayda, to compensate for the generous donations of the casale of Corleone and the church of S. Silvestro made to Monreale in that year. In any case, the former royal palace could have been designated as a residence, perhaps for the summer months, for the archbishops of Palermo, in whose hands the property remained until the fourteenth century.546

The site became the property of the Jesuit Order in the mid-sixteenth century. In addition to the land that contains the complex of Lo Scibene, Jesuit holdings in the area included the Vignicella dei Gesuiti. Located merely 500 meters away to the east, the principal building of the Vignicella was a structure with a multi-storied façade that is strikingly similar to La Zisa (fig. 4.2). The first story contains three large round arches

546 The next specific mention of the toponym of Lo Scibene is in an act of sale recorded by the notary Bartolomeo Citella dated to January 15, 1334, in which Luigi de Cesarea sold to Matteo Pardo half of the river of the Gabriele and an allotment of land in the “contrada Scibene.” An additional document that references the area of Lo Scibene dates to February 13, 1377, where the “Casale Bayda” was fractioned. The Archbishop Matteo Orsino promised it to Manfredi Chiaromonte, who founded a Benedictine monastery nearby of S. Maria degli Angeli. From Nino Basile’s record, the coat of arms of Archbishop Ludovico II Bonito (d. 1413) could be seen on the wall of the supposed chapel on the upper level of the complex of Lo Scibene. Another inscription from this time was still visible in the first half of the eighteenth century, recorded by Antonino Mongitore. In the sixteenth century, Lo Scibene was transferred into permanent rent to the family of Paruta, barons of the Sala. Their coat of arms can be seen in a fresco that decorated a mural fountain previously located within the boundary walls of Lo Scibene that borders on the present-day Via Nave (or Via Gaetano La Loggia), reproduced in Nino Basile’s seminal article on Lo Scibene. Later in the fifteenth century, the structure and surrounding land was acquired by the Paruta family, Barons of the Sala, and in the mid-sixteenth century by Don Giuseppe Alliata, baron of Villafranca. Subsequently, Lo Scibene became part of the holdings of the Jesuits who arrived in Palermo in 1549. Basile, “L’Uscibene,” in *Palermo felicissima*, ser. II, 91–158.
548 In 1789, Giuseppe Di Cara acquired the property Lo Scibene following the dissolution of the Jesuit Order in Sicily. From this time onward, the area has been known as Fondo di Cara. Basile, “L’Uscibene,” in *Palermo felicissima*, ser. II, 91–158.
549 Even though the pavilion at La Vignicella is only documented from the fifteenth century, it could date to the medieval period or perhaps was built on an earlier structure. Without further archaeological work at the site, it is not possible to determine its date. In the nineteenth century, it became the psychiatric asylum of Palermo. Giusy Lofrano, Maurizio Carotenuto, Roberta Maffettone, Pietro Todaro, Silvia Sammataro, and Ioannis K.
with a transversal corridor behind it. The grounds of the Jesuit compound also had a large basin, fed in all likelihood from the water source of the Scibene to the east, from which water was provided by means of a qanāt (fig. 4.3). Such a pool was commonly known as a *gebbia* in the Sicilian vernacular (from the Arabic *gabiya*), which collected runoff for irrigation purposes. Currently bisected by the Palermo ring road, the *gebbia* of the Jesuit foundation was square in plan and measured 28 meters on each side with a depth of 2 meters.\(^{549}\)

**II. Description of the Complex of Lo Scibene**

The complex of Lo Scibene is situated on several levels, likely due not only to the nature of the terrain, but also to its different phases of construction. The lower level is integrated into the side of a hill on the Palermo plain, on which was located the Arab village of Bayda. The upper part is built on a ledge above the lower tripartite core and barrel-vaulted hall. As Adolf Goldschmidt first pointed out in 1898, the west wall of the lower level is not linear and uniform since it took into account the contours of the rocky site (figs. 4.4–4.7).\(^{550}\) Interior staircases, remnants of which were recorded by Goldschmidt, connected the different floors. Cavallari also documented the site in a series of drawings preserved in the Gabinetto at Palazzo Abatellis (figs. 4.8–4.11)

At present, Lo Scibene is almost wholly obscured by wild shrubbery and citrus trees that render it completely camouflaged from the road (fig. 4.12). The entire façade is covered by a massive wall composed of two separate layers of masonry (figs. 4.13–4.15). The first belonged to the structure’s medieval phase and contained a monumental ogival portal. The

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\(^{550}\) Ibid., 1673.
second, later accretion spans the principal and mezzanine levels. Essentially functioning as a buttress, this layer of masonry forms a protective shell and most likely dates to the seventeenth century or later.\footnote{The supplementary course of stonework ranges in thickness from 60 centimeters from the base of the western face, becoming progressively thinner as the structure ascends, and is covered with stucco.} Directly in front of the façade was a large rectangular basin (fig. 4.8). The main portal faces to the east, and since Lo Scibene is on a small hill, this opening would have provided a vista of the plain of Palermo and the Tyrrhenian Sea.

### a. Lower Level of Lo Scibene

The nucleus of the structure has a tripartite layout, composed of a central space measuring 4.60 x 3.70 meters (figs. 4.8–4.9).\footnote{Due to the natural topography of the site and since this hall was integrated into the hillside; the sides of the central space that face each other are not equal. The west side is slightly shorter (4.48 meters in length) as is the south (3.66 meters).} The cruciform-shape of the room is completed by the two significant niches on its north and south sides in addition to the recess in the west wall that contained a fountain, which will be discussed in detail below. Francesco Saverio Cavallari’s nineteenth-century drawings indicate that the height from the floor to the central groin vault was 7 meters (fig. 4.10). A monumental portal granted access to the main hall. The entryway measures 3.60 meters at its widest point, but which currently is at a height of approximately 6 meters due to the debris accumulated in the room. The later, supplementary layer of masonry mostly covers the central doorway (fig. 4.13).

Opposite the portal on a central axis is a niche-like space in the west wall measuring 3.28 meters in width and 1.70 meters in depth with the remains of what would have been a fountain set into its center (figs. 4.17, 4.19).\footnote{Pietro Todaro, who has studied carefully the sources of the water of Lo Scibene, believes that the qanāt of the Gesuïtico Basso provided water to the central fountain and the fishpond in front of the principal façade. The qanāt was also connected to the Camera dello Scirocco of Villa Savagnone. However, there is no indication} Water came in from a niche in its center, and
to its right are two additional pipe openings. It is impossible to discern how these pipes of an unknown date were incorporated into the fountain. Some remnants of polychromy may be found in this niche. Goldschmidt noted a certain depression on the ground in front of the fountain, which can be seen in his sketch of the hall (fig. 4.23). Cavallari’s drawing reproduces a similar configuration (fig. 4.10). Reminiscent of the Fountain Room at La Zisa (fig. 6.10), a basin (or a series of these) is likely to have been in the interior of this hall at Lo Scibene. According to these illustrations, a canal ran along its center of the hall, but due to the debris in the room, these elements are concealed (fig. 4.8).

Above the fountain in this hall was a large muqarnas vault made out of stucco, of which there are also remnants on the north and south sides of the niche set into the west wall of the central hall. On top of the muqarnas are the remains of a cornice that once ran along the entire room (figs. 4.20–4.22). Until the end of the nineteenth century, this decorative vault was preserved to some extent, since the muqarnas can be seen in Goldschmidt’s drawing (fig. 4.23) and in an earlier sketch by Cavallari (fig. 4.11).

On either side of the niche that contained the fountain are smaller elongated niches measuring 1.72 meters in height in which columns were originally set, with other smaller spaces next to these that would have had another pair. Goldschmidt identified the columns that once framed the central fountain as those in a modern church in Altarello di Baida, known as Maria Santissima del Perpetuo Soccorso (figs. 4.24–4.27). Indeed, these columns would fit perfectly into the recesses flanking the principal fountain in the central room. I have measured these to be 1.70 meters in height and 20 centimeters in diameter.

today of the link between the underground water channel and the cave below Lo Scibene, presently blocked off from the source of water. Todaro, Palermo sotterranea, 43–54, 80.
A fine groin vault can be seen in Lo Scibene’s main hall. An additional large arch spans the interior space and bisects both semi-circular apses on either side of the room. This later structural interpolation greatly mars the symmetry of the hall. Valenti is likely to have carried out this intervention at the time of his restoration of the “chapel” on the upper level of the complex. On the north and south sides of the hall, the two lateral niches or ḫwān measure 3 meters in length and 1.40 meters in depth (figs. 4.28–4.29). The effect of projecting ray vaulting was created by rotating the small blocks of masonry at a 45-degree angle (figs. 4.30–4.31). At present, a green layer covers the exposed masonry due to the oxidation of the stratum of stucco below. Above the door to the right are significant remains of polychromy on the ray-like serrated ribs of the apse in the south ḫwān. At its center (partially obscured by the modern sustaining arch), the blocks are raised by circa 10 centimeters to make way for the door. A similar motif appears at the Norman castle of Caronia in a niche-like space on the structure’s upper level (fig. 3.36), and above the doorway connecting the chapel and a secular hall at La Favara, as discussed in Chapter Three (figs. 3.34–3.35).

The central hall is flanked by two side chambers once accessed via portals measuring 0.80 meters in width and approximately 2 meters in height (although the latter cannot be ascertained without excavation). These entranceways were clearly a later addition since their original arched form was reconfigured into a rectangular shape doorway later (fig. 4.28). Of the two rooms, one can enter only the southern room. The northern room is filled with earth to a height of approximately 3 meters and the entrance is blocked entirely. This part of the central nucleus may only be entered today through an opening on the upper level. The
present-day inhabitants who have constructed their house directly above Lo Scibene’s lower level have appropriated the space as a storeroom (figs. 4.32–4.35).

The southern room is rectangular and measures 3.33 x 3.74 meters (figs. 4.36–4.37), covered by two groin vaults at 5.20 meters above the sloping debris-filled interior (fig. 4.38). Spanning its width is an arch similar to that in the central room, presumably added by Superintendent Valenti for support. Because the west wall is set into the hillside, the only source of light is from the east side that faced onto the large basin in front of the structure. In the south room, there are remains of an ogival window on the upper tier of the east wall, which is currently closed off (figs. 4.39–4.40). Below is an opening that is later in date, so it is unclear whether this was another window or a portal. As the entire façade is coated with a layer of masonry, any remnant of the original configuration of the eastern wall that looked out to the city has been effaced.

An elevated level, 2.20 meters above the present floor, is located flush against the hillside in the southern chamber of the tripartite nucleus (fig. 4.37). This space measures 2.40 x 3.74 meters and is covered with a groin vault (fig. 4.38). According to Goldschmidt, a staircase allowed for access between the ground and the “mezzanine” floor in this room. The upper level in the south hall led to an oblong space that perhaps functioned as a transversal hallway or passageway, linking the south and north rooms that flanked the central hall (fig. 4.35). However, it would appear to be too narrow to have been a proper service corridor. Dictated by the rocky topography, this passage measures only 70 centimeters in width at its narrowest point when running behind the muqarnas vault and fountain wall of the central hall. Therefore, another possibility is that it was created to facilitate the circulation of air.
Since the lower level of Lo Scibene is set into a hill, adequate ventilation would have been a priority.

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, and as will be discussed more closely in Chapter Six, the central nucleus of the lower floor of Lo Scibene is remarkably similar to La Zisa. In addition to the arrangement of the central cross-shaped room with the fountain, we can also consider the transversal corridor at Lo Scibene as a reverse of that at La Zisa, which is a new interpretation of this architectural element. There, the grand passageway is found just behind the façade of the later palace pavilion. At Lo Scibene there would appear to be a contrary use of space. The lower part was favored for official or formal purposes. The upper or mezzanine level was secondary, perhaps intended as a service area (albeit on a drastically reduced scale, given its narrow dimensions due to the topography of the site).

b. “Camera dello Scirocco” at Lo Scibene

The southern chamber of the central nucleus led into a larger barrel-vaulted space set lower than the central tripartite nucleus of the palace (figs. 4.42–4.43). The hall presently measures 8 x 4.60 meters. The eastern side of the room has collapsed but once extended at least 9.50 meters in length (and possibly 11 meters, according to Cavallari’s drawing) (fig. 4.9). In Goldschmidt’s sketch of the elevation of the façade, the east end originally had two oblong windows that looked out to the pool in front of the structure (fig. 4.6). In his description, he noted that access to the hall from the southern chamber of the central nucleus of the lower level was provided via nine stairs.\(^{554}\) Due to the accumulated debris, the staircase, or what remains of it, is completely obscured. At the corner of the room near the entranceway was a fountain set apart from the room with a parapet wall still visible in the

previous century (fig. 4.44). Above was an opening through which water could presumably have been conducted between the upper and the lower levels of the complex. Goldschmidt and Braida have posited that this barrel-vaulted space was a later Norman addition to the central reception nucleus with its two flanking rooms. Moreover, the transversal passageway behind the central room, which connected the northern and southern chambers, does not appear to have communicated with the aforementioned hall set at a lower level.

Out of the entire complex, this hall has the best-preserved decoration, displaying ample traces of polychrome stucco. The lateral walls contain some traces of a yellow-orange color. On the western wall there is a fragment of a tooth motif in stucco, indicating some of the original ornamentation in the hall, also illustrated by Goldschmidt in his article (fig. 4.45). The masonry and the vault of this hall is distinctly different from the other rooms of the complex, featuring thinner and longer blocks with wider courses of mortar. A possible reason for this was that the entire surface of the room was intended to be covered in stucco (fig. 4.46).

Goldschmidt was the first to identify it as a bath hall. Later writers have followed suit and refer to it as the “Camera dello Scirocco.” This term can be associated with a group of structures dispersed in the plain of Palermo, the earliest of which dates to the sixteenth century. These include the Villa Savagnone in Altarello of Baida, only a few hundred meters away from Lo Scibene to the south, and an extant subterranean space in Brancaccio. Despite the fact that Lo Scibene is clearly of an earlier date, what is

559 Ibid.
560 Todaro, Guida di Palermo sotterranea, 68.
remarkable is that these later examples share characteristics that would place them in a similar category: namely, spaces created to escape the heat of Palermo. The term “Camera dello Scirocco” is particularly evocative when applied to the barrel-vaulted room at Lo Scibene. The latter is slightly below ground level and is connected to a grotto and most likely, a qanāt, both of which had cooling attributes. Goldschmidt and other writers noted windows that overlooked the basin. Therefore, the hall might have provided an observation point over the pond in front of the principal façade of the complex.

c. Natural Cave or Grotto at the Site

The multilevel complex of Lo Scibene was built into a cave or grotto, nestled into the outcropping of rock of the natural elevation of the terrain (figs. 4.47–4.48). On the southern wall of the hall is a small opening delimited with cement. At this time, we do not know whether the cave could have been accessed from the barrel-vaulted hall above. Throughout the subterranean space, there are support pillars that date to the post-war period.561 Goldschmidt noted that the cave was 30 meters in length and 1.60–1.70 in height (marked A on his plan, fig. 4.6).562 However, measurements taken in 2013 record that it is only 11 meters long on a west to east axis and, at its widest point, 8.50 meters from north to south. In the interior of the hypogeum, there are numerous niches demonstrating conclusively that it was manually excavated in areas, most notably in its eastern part.563 A similar site associated

561 According to the owner of the plot of land that corresponds with the pool in front of Lo Scibene, this intervention occurred in the post-WW II period, and, in all probability, it was carried out by the Soprintendenza.
563 Another possibility that hitherto has not be considered in the literature on Lo Scibene was that the hypogeum was a Punic or an early Christian burial site. Similar examples in Palermo include that of the necropolis at Porta Ossuna. Rosa Maria Bonacasa Carra, N. Cavallaro, P. Marescalchi, and Amedeo Tullio, La Catacomba di Porta d’Ossuna a Palermo (Vatican City: Pontificia commissione di archeologia sacra, 2001).
with the twelfth-century royal suburban residences is the natural grotto on which were constructed the Arches of San Ciro on the grounds of La Favara (figs. 3.57–3.58).

The cave had water in its interior that came, in all likelihood, from the spring of Lo Scibene nearby. Sadly, at present, there is only sewage leaking through from the illegal housing that has encroached upon the upper level of the medieval complex. The spring would have also supplied the fountain in the central nucleus as well as the bath itself. Presumably, any overflow provided fresh water to the basin in front of the façade.\footnote{Todaro, \textit{Guida di Palermo sotterranea}, 69.} The water flow was such that it necessitated a large containment wall or dam of which there are several remnants discussed below. Currently, the western side of the cave is blocked with modern brickwork, covering the entry and exit points of the water source (fig. 4.48).

d. Artificial Water Basin in Front of the Principal Structure

One of the most spectacular elements of the complex of Lo Scibene was the large basin in front (figs. 4.49–4.51). The pool’s placement mirrors that at the later La Zisa (as well as La Cuba). Most probably, water from the central fountain on the lower level would have drained into it, but we do not know yet how this system would have worked. The southern wall of the basin is surprisingly intact (fig. 4.49).\footnote{Above was constructed a modern wall in cement of the same width and, thus, the older or medieval wall was not dismantled.} Measuring 15.70 meters in length and at its highest point 1.10 meters, this wall slopes gently along with the ground that corresponds to the area of the pool. Its width of 0.45 meters is substantial, and when examining its surface closely, one can see significant traces of hydraulic stucco. At a distance of circa 18 meters from the palace, the ground drops suddenly by 2 to 2.50 meters and another wall can be discerned, which is placed parallel to the east façade, on a north–
south axis (figs. 4.50–4.51). The latter was the retaining dam of the eastern side of the basin, measuring 65 centimeters wide, with substantial remains of hydraulic stucco on what would have been the interior of this water feature. 566

The south end of the pool measured over 15 meters in length, yet we do not know how close it came to the principal façade and the grand portal of the tripartite structure or the protruding barrel-vaulted room immediately to the south. At the exterior of the south corner of this hall, corresponding to the grotto (and the base of the tower on the upper level no longer extant), we can see what likely constituted the original facing of the pool (figs. 4.52–4.53). Here are remnants of diamond-shaped stones arranged at an approximately 45-degree angle creating a net-like appearance, known as *opus reticulatum*. Measuring 10 cm on each face and placed in mortar, these blocks are extremely regularized. 567

Introduced at the beginning of the first century CE, *opus reticulatum* was commonly used as a facing for concrete walls in aquatic settings. In the remains of fishponds at various sites in southern Italy there are numerous examples (e.g., at Herculaneum and Pompeii), in addition to Roman imperial maritime villas dating predominantly between 25 BCE and 25 CE. 568 In terms of medieval comparanda, the castles of Frederick II contain *opus reticulatum*, most notably as Castel del Monte and the Capua Gate. 569 At the ruined mid-thirteenth century Church of Sant’Eustachio at Pontone near Amalfi, a diamond pattern is incorporated on the exterior of the apse as a decorative motif. 570 At this time, we cannot date

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566 Goldschmidt also noted the existence of this wall and reports similar measurements. Goldschmidt, “Die normannischen Königspaläste,” 568.
567 In addition to the *opus reticulatum* facing, ornamental features of the pool include what are possibly sculpted rocks below the remains of the tower (fig. 4.49). However, at this time, it is not possible to draw any conclusions regarding the dating of these elements.
570 Venditti, *Architettura bizantina*, 660–61; Caskey, *Art and Patronage*, 128–33. A pattern reminiscent of *opus reticulatum* can be seen on the façade of the thirteenth-century palace of Tekfur Sarayı (the so-called Palace of
the *opus reticulatum* at Lo Scibene with any degree of certainty. This is due to the fact that we know that alterations took place at the site in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, but presumably also earlier, if it came into the possession of the Palermitan Church in the second half of the twelfth century.

e. **Structures on the Upper Level**

On the upper level of Lo Scibene there stands at present an oblong structure in a poor state of preservation that is generally interpreted as a chapel (figs. 4.16, 4.54–4.58). On this ledge directly above the principal tripartite lower level and the bath, the complex contained other spaces that may be seen in both Cavallari’s and Goldschmidt’s nineteenth-century sketches (figs. 4.7, 4.8, 4.11). There were two additional rooms located to the north of the “chapel,” of which there are only remnants of a wall integrated into a modern building (fig. 4.59). At a distance of 20 meters to the north, there is an archway of unknown date perhaps part of another structure (fig. 4.60).

Following the discovery of Lo Scibene in the mid-nineteenth century, Valenti’s predecessor Giuseppe Patricolo compiled a report on the site in 1870. Of particular interest to him was the upper hall that he identified as a chapel due to its form and the fact that its back wall faced to the east. He noted, however, that the building was missing characteristics

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the Porphyrogenitus, associated with the third son of Michael VIII Palaiologos (r. 1259–82), the Porphyrogenitus Constantine. Neslihan Asutay-Effenberger, *Landmauer von Konstantinopel-Istanbul: historisch-topographische und baugeschichtliche Untersuchungen* (New York: Walter De Gruyter, 2007), 135–42; see also Alexander Van Millingen, *Byzantine Constantinople, the Walls of the City and Adjoining Historical Sites* (London: J. Murray, 1899), 109–12. The key difference between the *opus reticulatum* of these examples and that at Lo Scibene (similar to those dating to antiquity in this regard) is whether these were employed for the facing of pools or were purely decorative, the latter of which we see on the façade of the Tekfur Sarayı or on the apse of Sant’Eustachio at Pontone.
of what he and his contemporaries associated with Norman ecclesiastical architecture.\textsuperscript{571}

Namely, the hall did not have a rounded apse or the niches present in the extramural palatine chapels of La Favara and Parco that date to the first half of the twelfth century. The structure measures 6.80 meters wide, and is currently divided into two spaces. The larger, the “nave,” is 9.80 meters long (fig. 4.57). A wall delimits its eastern part, forming a small room that is 4.05 meters in length. The interior is devoid of ornament. Patricolo noted its poor state of preservation and its use as a storeroom by locals.

Like the lower level of the complex, the entirety of the remaining hall on the upper level is difficult to grasp. Its north side is completely obscured by modern buildings. The west façade, presumably also the principal entrance, is articulated with three pointed arched recesses and a window above the arched doorway. The left side of the doorway is framed by a post-medieval marble jamb of an unknown date (fig. 4.55). The south flank, which is the most intact, is dominated by two buttresses (fig. 4.54).\textsuperscript{572} Seven arched recesses articulate this side, which contain several windows that would have illuminated the interior (only four of these are unblocked). The placement of these openings does not correspond with the recessed masonry elements, suggesting that these are not of the same period. Such arches are common in the extramural residences, most notably at the royal chapels of La Favara and Parco, but presumably the hall on the upper level of Lo Scibene underwent numerous later

\textsuperscript{571} Francesco Valenti, BCP, \textit{Fondo Valenti}, ms. segn. 5 Qq E 141 n.6, July 9, 1870, Palermo: “Verso il lato di mezzogiorno delle rovine del Castello si vedessi un’altra fabbrica che dicono essere una chiesa ma mancate delle sue caratteristiche come per esempio, priva di abside ed altri compartimenti che costituiscono un edificio religioso. Al presente questo luogo serve ai proprietari da magazzino.”

\textsuperscript{572} The date of these additions is unclear and these appear in Cavallari’s drawing of the mid-nineteenth century as well (fig. 4.10).
alterations and therefore the date of its construction cannot be established with any certainty.  

The restoration of the upper part of Lo Scibene occurred throughout the 1920s–30s, with Superintendent Francesco Valenti acting as chief restorer. The division of the interior was completed by him at this time, which ultimately proved to be disastrous to the fabric of the structure and was widely criticized by his contemporaries. Valenti essentially destroyed the eastern wall that separated the “chapel” and the tower, which had collapsed since Goldschmidt saw it in the final years of the nineteenth century. He reassembled the eastern part, or the “apse,” of ashlar blocks, where the tower was originally situated (figs. 4.56, 4.58). To shelter this newly formed room, Valenti created a barrel vault. For the remainder of the structure, or for the “nave,” he had initially planned to replace the timber truss roof with a stone barrel vault. However, the walls that were 70 centimeters wide could not support the weight of such a construction.

Only the base of the tower remains encased in cement on the exterior of the eastern end of the hall. The tower may be seen in Cavallari’s earlier sketches (figs. 4.8, 4.11). According to Goldschmidt’s drawings (figs. 4.4–4.5), substantial vestiges were located immediately above the bath hall. A small door on the north flank connected the structure on

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573 Overall, the closest stylistic comparison can be made to a church, the Santuario della Madonna di Rifesi in Burgio in the province of Agrigento. Built in 1170 by the Norman lord Ansaldo, blind arches extend along the length of the building similar to the structure on the upper level of the complex of Lo Scibene. See Annemarie Schmidt, “La chiesa normanna di S. Maria di Rifesi presso Burgio,” Bollettino d’Arte 5, 60 (1975), 106–13; also Di Stefano, Monumenti della Sicilia normanna, 63–64.

574 Genovese, Francesco Valenti, 35–38.

575 For the reconstruction, Valenti used stone quarried from Carini. He also liberally applied concrete to strengthen different parts of the building. Francesco Valenti, Verbale di constatazione delle pericolose condizioni statiche della Chiesa normanna del Castello di Re Ruggero “detto di Menâni” in contrada Altarello di Baida presso Palermo, December 21, 1924, Palermo, ACS, Div. II, 1925–28, n. 126.6: “Ricostruzione del muro di fondo della chiesa adoperando il materiale antico, rafforzandolo mediante correnti internati di cemento armato.”

576 There was absolutely no indication that the structure, believed by Valenti to be a chapel, was spanned by this type of vault. The latter formed a key point in the criticism brought forward against the superintendent by the local journalist Nino Basile. Basile, “L’Uscibene,” 101–24.
the upper floor and the tower. Nevertheless, it is unclear whether there was any direct communication between this level and the central nucleus below.

To the north side of the “chapel” and tower on the upper level, Goldschmidt recorded a structure with two rooms of equal size. Today there is no trace of these spaces aside from some traces of what presumably was a wall of the medieval structure on the outside of a modern house on the upper level (fig. 4.59). In his sketch, the two rooms each measured approximately 5 x 5 meters. Both faced onto the pool on the level below and had ogival window with decorative cornices (figs. 4.4, 4.9). Different in terms of their ornamental details from the rest of the complex, it is possible that this was a later bi-level addition (from Cavallari’s and Goldschmidt’s drawings this was a two-story building).

III. Elite Reception Halls in Islamic Architecture

The arrangement of the nucleus on the lower level of Lo Scibene with a fountain set into a central space framed by marble columns and crowned by a muqarnas vault (not to mention its bath hall and “chapel”) signals that it was an elite complex. The tripartite central room on the lower level shared features with other residential sites in the Norman and, in all likelihood, the Kalbid realm. Since so little remains of medieval secular architecture in the Islamic world and the Latin West, it is perhaps more profitable to dissect specific elements of a structure than to describe the whole. Three ground plans form the basis of the following discussion: cruciform-shaped halls, the qā’ā with two flanking īwāns, and, finally, the inverted T-shape. All of these aforementioned spatial configurations appear at Lo Scibene in addition to the later La Zisa and La Cuba, forming the basic “building blocks” of these monuments.
a. Cruciform-Shaped Halls

The main ceremonial or reception halls at La Favara, La Zisa, and La Cuba, are striking in their dissimilarity to the best-known monument in the Norman sphere, the Cappella Palatina, the western part of which most likely functioned as an audience hall during Roger II’s reign.\(^{577}\) The three suburban plans do not feature a basilica for the aula regia and instead have cruciform-shaped spaces. La Zisa, Lo Scibene, and La Cuba contain halls, which, according to their arrangement, had an official capacity from the onset. The castle at Caronia, probably owned by a Norman lord, has a similar spatial configuration of a central room with flanking chambers (fig. 4.61).

Generally, reception halls with a cruciform ground plan have an elite connotations and an illustrious pedigree that predates Islam and whose first recorded appearance is in Sasanian architecture. The palace of Shapur I (r. 242–72) at Bishapur had a monumental cruciform hall that faced onto a larger rectangular court to the north and was flanked by three rooms on the remaining sides.\(^{578}\) Later examples from the Islamic world comprise the Umayyad caliphal residence of the Dār al-Imara at Kufa (670) (fig. 4.62) and the palatial complex in the citadel of Amman (constructed after 720).\(^{579}\) The palaces of ‘Abbāsid Sāmarrā’ contained numerous cruciform halls. In fact, the plans of several of these ensembles were generated around what would have been the official core. These include the main palatial complex of Jawsaq al-Khāqāni (Dār al-Khilāfa) built in 833–42 (fig. 4.63).\(^{580}\)


\(^{579}\) Tabbaa, Constructions of Power, 84–86.

\(^{580}\) The ground plan can be seen in the complexes of Qaṣr al-Jiṣṣ, Qaṣr al-Hārūnī, Qaṣr Balkuwāra, and Qaṣr al-‘Āshiq at Sāmarrā’. This quadripartite plan became associated with the ‘Abbāsid caliphate as a recognized sign of power, and thus a standard type for palatial architecture. Later on, this architectural configuration was
At times these halls had domes in their interior, thereby marking the focal point of the space. Derived from the Sasanians, the quadripartite plan at Sāmarrā’ became associated with the ‘Abbāsid caliphate and was mobilized to establish the legitimacy of their rule. By the eighth century, the cruciform hall was a recognized symbol of power in the Islamic world and was in standard use in palatial architecture.\textsuperscript{581}

\textbf{b. Īwān, qā’a, and durqā’a}

The cruciform shape of the examples presented earlier was articulated by four vertical structural elements situated on an axis and facing each other known as an īwān (also līwān in Arabic, derived from the Persian ayvān). Generally described as a niche-like space, an īwān could likewise signify a single vaulted hall walled on three sides that opened directly to the outside on the fourth.\textsuperscript{582} The term may be used synecdochically, meaning not only a hall, but an entire palace or complex as well.\textsuperscript{583}

An important variation or configuration of the īwāns set up on an axis appeared from the tenth century onward in elite secular architecture.\textsuperscript{584} Centered on a square area (at times rectangular), a niche or īwān faced axially onto it, so that there were four in total. Īwāns are frequently found in both middle-class and elite residences, for instance, in numerous houses of tenth-century Fusṭāṭ (figs 4.64–4.65). An early example of the so-called four-īwān plan

adapted for religious architecture as a common plan for mosques and madrasas. See Tabbaa, \textit{Constructions of Power}, 84–86.


\textsuperscript{583} Nasser Rabbat, “Mamluk Throne Halls: Qubba or Īwān?” \textit{Ars orientalis} 23 (1993), 201–2.

\textsuperscript{584} Tabbaa, \textit{Constructions of Power}, 88–89.
may be seen in the palace of Sitt al-Mulk, the sister of the Caliph al-Ḥākim (r. 996–1021), which formed part of the Fāṭimid Western Palace. In 1284–85, on the site of the former caliphal complex, the Mamlūk sultan Qalāwūn (r. 1279–1290) built a hospital or bîmāristān. The remains of the Fāṭimid palace are in its courtyard (figs. 4.66–4.69). The arrangement of four īwāns situated on a courtyard is also prevalent in the residential sections of earlier Ayyūbid military architecture, constructed by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (r. 1174–93) and members of his family and close associates. A notable example is present in the palace in the citadel of Aleppo rebuilt from 1193 by his son and successor, al-Ẓāhir Ghāzī (r. 1186–1216) (fig. 4.70). In addition, the same plan can be seen in the palatial core of the citadel of Qal’at Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (formerly the Crusader Saône Castle) which dates to 1200–15 (fig. 4.71). The residential complex was made up of two levels with an accompanying hammām, bearing the most resemblance to the Ayyūbid palace in the citadel of Aleppo in terms of its interior configuration. The courtyard of the compound is nearly square (6.65 x 6.73 meters) and is enclosed by four īwāns of unequal size. At its center, a pool was dug directly into the bedrock, featuring an octagonal pattern in brick with polychrome mosaics (fig. 4.71). Water

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for the basin was brought in from the north īwān and subsequently drained via a channel from the area of the south niche. The entire floor of the courtyard is likely to have been covered with marble slabs. This plan may be seen also at the palace-bath complex at Qal’at Naḡm conquered by al-Ẓāhir Ghāzī and located on the bank of the Euphrates in Syria, consisting of four īwāns facing onto a central square courtyard with an ornate octagonal basin at its center (fig. 4.72). Another similar configuration is at the Ayyūbid complex at Shawbak (fig. 4.73). In Sicily, William II’s pavilion of La Cuba had a similar basin at its center (figs. 6.54–6.55), mentioned above in relation to the pool in front of Lo Scibene and discussed in detail in Chapter Six.

An additional common and related type of hall design in elite secular architecture from the ninth to the twelfth century was the qā’a. In its simplest and most common form, the plan is composed of two īwāns looking onto each other across a central courtyard. The qā’a was its functional core, the main hall around which all spaces were organized in such a residence. This was usually the largest and most prestigious part of the house, belonging to the master or ruler, and was a reception hall as well. At times the qā’a encompassed two

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592 Otherwise, it would appear that the top floor of La Zisa was arranged in the form of a four-īwān plan if we follow closely Leandro Alberti’s description as discussed in Chapter Six. Alberti, Descrittione di tutta l’Italia, fols. 55r.–55v.
stories. The two facing īwāns could also have been raised, thereby creating a hierarchy of space. The central square (or, at times, rectangular) of the qā’ā plan came to be known as the dūrqā’a, which is a term that is frequently used with reference to later examples. Among the Norman extramural structures, this arrangement can most clearly be seen at La Cuba.

The building plan that shared the most attributes with La Cuba was the citadel on Rawḍa Island opposite Fusṭāṭ. Built by the last Ayyūbid sultan, al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb (r. 1240–49), in the first year of his rule, the principal reception hall of the citadel was in the form of a qā’ā (fig. 4.74). The entire length of this structure on Rawḍa Island was about 27 meters. The two niches or īwāns on either end were 5 meters wide but of unequal depth (5 meters on one side and 6.50 on the three remaining ones). It is unclear whether these were vaulted or not. The central space is quite likely to have been covered by a dome due to the columns at the four corners of this part of the building. Since the central area is in the form of a rectangle, the dome would have to have been elliptical. Even though the Ayyūbid hall was built at least half a century later than La Cuba, this comparison highlights the fact that the Norman palace pavilion closely resembled examples in Egypt and, most likely,

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594 With the increasing urbanisation of Cairo in the Mamlūk period, the central part of these structures became covered with a wooden dome or lantern that allowed for light and ventilation from the exterior. Alexandre Lézine, “Les salles nobles des palais mamelouks,” Annales islamologiques 10 (1972), 63–148.

595 The basin or impluvium at the center of the courtyard was the focal point at La Cuba as it was in many of these examples in the Islamic world. The monumental archways on the four sides of the Palermitan pavilion faced axially onto the basin at its center. Due to its present state, it is difficult to say to what degree the interior would have resembled these aforementioned examples that contain four-īwān plans. For a detailed discussion of this configuration, see Bellafiore, La Cuba di Palermo, 10–18.

596 Intended from the onset as a retreat for the caliph and his loyal troops, the site was chosen since it was situated away from the citadel in Cairo begun by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn. Built at the southern extremity of the island in the middle of the Nile, the citadel was near the Nilometer and required the clearing away of earlier buildings. No longer extant, and only delineated in the early nineteenth-century Description de l’Égypte, Alexandre Lézine pointed out that the grand scale of the qā’ā of the Rawḍa Citadel was a transitional structure. This arrangement of space is present in the earlier residential buildings in Fusṭāṭ and in the ostentatious fourteenth-century Mamlūk reception halls, most notably the so-called “Diwan of Joseph” in the citadel of Cairo. Lézine, “Les salles nobles,” 64–66; see also the discussion in Pauty, Les palais et les maisons, 40.

The aforementioned discussion, which began with Lo Scibene and continued with La Cuba, demonstrates the variety of plans in the elite secular architecture of twelfth-century Sicily, frequently predating the remaining examples in the Islamic world.

c. **Inverted T-Shaped Ground Plan (the Ḥīrī plan)**

The inverted T-shape was an additional plan with elite connotations that spanned two stories at Lo Scibene and the later La Zisa (figs. 4.9, 6.3). The plan consists of a transverse hall that comprises its horizontal element; behind this passageway is a hall, the vertical component of the plan, and these two together form the design unit of an inverted T. Often referred to as an īwān in the scholarly literature, such a hall is often separated from a courtyard by a tripartite portico. The T-plan is present in numerous residences, most notably in the houses of the tenth-century city of Fustāṭ, albeit on a more modest scale (figs. 4.64–4.65).

The inverted T-shaped plan was also known as the Ḥīrī plan. According to the tenth-century historian al-Masʿūdī, the ‘Abbāsid caliph al-Mutawakkil (r. 847–61) introduced the ground plan named after the site in Iraq where it originated.

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600 Translation by Annie-Christine Daskalakis-Mathews from al-Masʿūdī, *Murāj al-dhahab wa maʿādīn al-jawhar*, Publications de l’Université Libanaise, Section des études historiques; 5 vols. (Beirut: Université Libanaise, 1965–1974), vol. 5, 6, in Thomas F. Mathews and Annie-Christine Daskalakis-Mathews, “Islamic-Style Mansions in Byzantine Cappadocia and the Development of the Inverted T-Plan,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 56, 3 (1997), 307: “And in his days al-Mutawakkil created a building that the people had not known, and it was the one known as "the ḥīrī and two sleeves and porticoes" [al-ḥīrī wa kummayn wa arwīqa]; and that is to say, one of his companions in nightly entertainment related to him one night that a king of al-Ḥīrā of the Nu’maniyya [line] of the Bani Nasr created a building in his permanent residence, which is to
reception hall or majlis was in the form of a rectangular sitting area. On either side were smaller adjoining chambers. Here, servants took their places, with the flanking rooms functioning both as a wardrobe and temporary storerooms for items such as foodstuffs. If we take into account al-Mas’ūdi’s description, these spaces did not communicate with each other, but rather these were connected by a transversal corridor often referred to as a riwāk.

Turning elsewhere in the medieval Mediterranean, we only have textual accounts for Middle Byzantine domestic architecture in Constantinople. For comparanda in Byzantium relevant to the twelfth-century Norman extramural residences, we can look to a number of well-preserved rock-hewn complexes in Cappadocia. At one such site, Hallaç, there are significant remains of what are likely to have been elite residential compounds due to their scale and ornately carved multi-storied façades. Set around central courtyards, at least

say al-Ḥirā, in the image of war and its form, because of his fascination with war and his leaning towards it, so that it would not slip from his memory all his years. And the portico had in it the seat [majlis] of the king, which is the chest [sadr], and the two sleeves [kummayn] to the right and left. And in the two bays, which two are the pair of sleeves, were those that were close to him of his attendants. And in the right of the two of them was the wardrobe store [khazānat al-kiswa] and in the left what he needed of drink. And the portico’s enclosure encompassed the chest [sadr], the two sleeves, and the three doors to the portico. And this construction has been called to this day "the ḥirī and the two sleeves," referring to al-Hira. And the people followed al-Mutawakkil’s lead in this example in his action, and it became famous thereafter.”

Yasser Tabbaa has pointed out the military associations with the ḥirī plan, echoing formations in which the ruler in the center was flanked by trusted guards on four sides. Tabbaa, Construction of Power, 86–88.


Daskalakis-Mathews and Mathews identify these sites as elite residences since they have no refectory and therefore were not monasteries. Mathews and Daskalakis-Mathews, “Islamic Style Mansions,” 294–315; see also Veronica Kalas, “Cappadocia’s Rock-Cut Courtyard Complexes: A Case Study for Domestic Architecture in Byzantium,” in Housing in Late Antiquity: From Palaces to Shops, edited by Luke Lavan, Lale Özgenel, and Alexander Constantine Sarantis (Boston: Brill, 2007), 393–414; on the other hand, Robert Ousterhout has
nine of these have highly decorated basilical halls with a corridor that ran in front of them thereby creating an inverted T-plan. Thomas Mathews and Annie-Christine Daskalakis-Mathews have seen a strong connection with Islamic architecture in these Cappadocian examples. We may conclude that it was a common spatial arrangement in elite domestic architecture by the twelfth century. In Palermo, the inverted T-plan found on two stories at La Zisa was possibly based on Lo Scibene or, alternatively, on other nearby structures that predated the Norman period.

As discussed in the chapter, Lo Scibene is a composite monument, with several interrelating spaces with diverse plans. For the royal sphere in Sicily, the main urban palace contained a variety of architectural plans and configurations. The tower of the Joharia (fig. 4.75), for instance, might have been open to the sky (and vaulted later) in its original twelfth-century configuration in such a way that it resembled a qā‘a. Another key structure of the complex, the Torre Pisana, most likely functioned as an administrative or ruling court space (fig. 2.12). The tower was probably built by Roger II and in place by 1161, since it was mentioned by Romuald of Salerno. The vaulted hall is oriented on an east–west axis, constructed on a square plan of 7 x 7 meters, and its walls rise to 15 meters in the interior.

In terms of comparable structures elsewhere in the Mediterranean, Lucien Golvin had assigned the same role to the square hall of the principal tower structure of the eleventh-century Qaṣr al-Manār in the Qal’a of the Benū Ḥammād (fig. 1.27). Byzantine imperial examples include the so-called Tower of Isaac Angelos, which looked out to the Philopation pointed out that the T-plan is not necessary Islamic because it was common all over the Mediterranean from late antiquity onward. Idem, *A Byzantine Settlement in Cappadocia* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2005), 147–49.

Park and was essentially a belvedere.\textsuperscript{608} Otherwise, in Sicily, structures of a “donjon” type or a fortified keep comprise the towers at Paternò and Adranò as well as the Motta Sant’Anastasia (figs. 4.76–4.78), all of which are located near Catania and are of an unknown date, but generally believed to be Norman.\textsuperscript{609} For architecture that can be securely dated to the twelfth century, the typology of the donjon is exemplified in Palermo in the Torre Pisana in the main palace. In sum, the ground plans presented in this chapter have outlined the numerous means of articulating key formal or ceremonial spaces in elite architecture, which may be seen in the residential architecture of the twelfth-century kings of Sicily.

\textbf{Conclusion}

Even though the complex is in a ruinous state and faces imminent collapse, the past grandeur of Lo Scibene is not lost thanks to the scale of the complex, traces of its original decorative program, and the vestiges of its extensive waterworks. Lo Scibene cannot be unequivocally attributed to Roger II or his successors, and the absence of an established patronage (and its general state of disrepair) has ensured that the monument remains severely understudied. The measurements of the spaces that make up of Lo Scibene presented here are particularly important, since it has not been the subject of sustained examination from the time of Goldschmidt’s pioneering article in the closing years of the nineteenth century. Subsequently, Lo Scibene has only appeared in a lesser-known work by Letizia Anastasi and in articles in local journals by the architect and restorer Silvana Braida.

\textsuperscript{608} Maguire, “Gardens and Parks in Constantinople,” 253–54.
\textsuperscript{609} There have been attempts in the past to link examples from Norman Sicily, in particular the fortified keeps of Paternò and Adranò near Catania, to castles and keeps in England and Normandy. For instance, see the article by Françoise Chiesa, “Les donjons normands d’Italie. Une comparaison,” \textit{Mélanges de l’École française de Rome. Moyen-Age, Temps modernes} 110, 1 (1998), 317–39.
This chapter reconstructs the connection between all of the Norman suburban palaces in terms of their shared ground plans and spatial relationships, which I have related to elite examples in the Islamic world. Most notably, the builders of La Zisa seemed to adopt elements from the older Lo Scibene (or from structures related to it), namely the principal tripartite core, the fountain set into the wall of the central room, and the basin or series of basins with a canal that transported water to a larger pool. The later palace pavilion was adapted on a grander scale. Several changes also occurred in the plan, which I have noted in the chapter. For instance, the vestibule corridor at La Zisa is at the front of the structure and not on an upper mezzanine level as at the earlier Lo Scibene. La Cuba, in terms of its spatial arrangement, is the closest to the qā’a seen in a number of Ayyūbid examples. Returning to Norbert Elias, the residence of a nobleman was a version in miniature of the foremost representational space of the realm, that of the king. Therefore, we must consider the unqualified importance of this particular site of Lo Scibene, which contains a qā’a plan, for understanding secular architecture in Palermo.

At this time, the question of whether Lo Scibene was built in the Muslim or Norman period of rule cannot be answered with any certainty without additional archaeological work. Numerous difficulties remain for surveying and studying the site, due not least to its almost complete abandonment. Because of its current state, the secondary literature has often treated Lo Scibene as redundant, focusing instead on La Zisa and La Cuba as representative of the secular architecture of the twelfth-century kingdom. Yet, the structures that make up the medieval complex at Altarello di Baida are mostly intact in their larger form and defy traditional or existing categorization. Although its patronage may not be attributed with any certainty to the royal sphere, the arrangement of the lower core of Lo Scibene of a central
qā'ā and flanking īwāns denoted that it was an elite hall intended for formal or ceremonial use. The exclusion of what I have demonstrated to be an important monument for understanding the development of secular architecture in Sicily (in addition to the Mediterranean as a whole) points to larger issues. This chapter provides a much needed overview of Lo Scibene that has been passed over in terms of a systematic restoration and is on the brink of collapse a century and a half after its modern discovery.
The palatial complex at Parco in modern-day Altofonte (the town’s name was changed in 1930) is located 350 meters above sea level in the mountainous area 7 kilometers to the southwest of Palermo. Roger II chose a panoramic site famous for the waters cascading past it from the mountains, down to the deep valley through which passes the now much diminished Oreto River (figs. 5.1–5.4). His residence was established on a plateau on the slopes of Monte Pizzo, nearly opposite William II’s later foundation of the Benedictine abbey of Monreale situated across the valley to the north. According to Romuald of Salerno, Roger II ordered the building of the palace at Parco in the same period as La Favara. Romuald noted that the king and his retinue spent the summer months at this hunting lodge, ostensibly due to the coolness of the mountains. Thus, like La Favara, Parco was a seasonal seat for the king and his court.

In this present examination, I posit that together with the palace at Altofonte, a pavilion and fishpond were constructed at the mouth of the Valle dei Fichi nearby. The existence of these two luxurious park amenities is new to the scholarly literature, and brings to the fore critical questions regarding the creation of viewpoints over the landscape intended for the royal gaze. To bolster my argument, contemporary examples from Fāṭimid Cairo are considered in the chapter. The fifteenth-century historian al-Maqrīzī described such structures as overlooking irrigated gardens and the Nile and other waterscapes. These

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buildings played a major role in Fatimid court ceremony and processions. To further understand the construction of the royal or elite view, I look to relevant examples in Umayyad Córdoba, which, in addition to Madināt al-Zahra’, include the terraced estate of Al-Munyat al-Rummāniyya arranged on several levels. The study of these sites offers a broader context in which to consider how terrain was altered for the building of the pavilion and the large artificial basin at Altofonte, pointing to a wider manipulation of landscape that was part of the formation of the royal hunting park in the mountains above Palermo.

I. Roger II’s Palace at Parco

Of Roger’s park, discussed in detail in Chapter Two, there are only some remnants of walls on the slopes overlooking what I contend to be the remains of the royal biverium (fig. 5.2).611 Despite the fact that Romuald did not mention an artificial fishpond at Parco, this large-scale transformation of the terrain most likely took place in the same period as the the lake of Maredolce at La Favara.612 The full extent of Roger’s palace at Parco is still unknown since the site is almost completely obscured by later structures (figs. 5.5–5.7).613 The first changes to the fabric of the building were likely made when Frederick III conceded it to the Cistercian Order in 1307.614 The upper floor is believed to be a later or post-twelfth-

611 The term used in relation to these sites is “biverium,” also seen in medieval documents referencing La Favara and La Cuba, from where the term “biviere” has entered into modern Italian. The “b” is presumably a corruption of the “v” in vivarium.
613 The earliest study of the palace and chapel at Parco was carried out by the journalist Antonino Cutrera and was published in the Giornale di Sicilia in 1929.
614 Peter II (r. 1321–42), the son of Frederick III and Eleanor of Anjou, was born at Parco in 1305. Frederick gave the site to the Cistercian Order after the Peace of Caltabellotta of 1302. In a diploma dated to June 28, 1307, Frederick III conceded to the Cistercian monks the “utrumque parcum, vetus et novum,” or the old park and the new, among other holdings. The royal chapel at Parco was dedicated to the Virgin Mary in the following year. Another document dating to January 20, 1309, reaffirmed this concession. The document in kept in the Tabulario della Commenda della Magione di Palermo in the ASP. For a transcript of the diploma, see Pirri, Sicilia sacra, vol. 2, 1322–24. Fazello, De rebus Siculis, dec. I, Book 8, 330–31; see also Michelle Granà, “Corona, ufficiali regi e fondazioni monastiche nella Sicilia aragonese: il caso di S. Maria di Altofonte,”

199
century addition. In a second period of building, in 1568, the resident abbot of Parco, Cardinal Scipione Rebiba, undertook substantial alterations. In 1633, the principal church of the nascent town of Parco was constructed under the supervision of Cardinal Scipione Borghese. The abbey was suppressed in 1764, and five years later the structure became part of the Commandery of the Magione of Palermo by order of the Bourbon King of Sicily, Ferdinand III (r. 1759–1816, also Ferdinand IV, King of Naples, r. 1759–99).615

The north wing is the best preserved of the twelfth-century residence (figs. 5.5–5.8, 5.13). The precipitous nature of the terrain creates a ledge on this side, and the complex had a panoramic view of the city of Palermo below. The chapel’s north wall is aligned on this side, as is a large archway farther down providing passage to the south side. This wing still has a series of groin-vaulted spaces, which extended on a west–east axis, and situated on either side of the aforementioned entryway. Unfortunately, most of the twelfth-century palace has been absorbed by later buildings. Judging from the topography of the site, the entrance to the park could have been at the northeast corner, which leads down a winding road to the biverium or fishpond that is discussed in detail below.

The southern extent of the palace is unknown. This side of Roger’s chapel faced onto an interior courtyard entered from the nave. Restoration work in the previous century has

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615 Silvana Braida, “Il palazzo ruggeriano di Alotofonte,” 19.

in Mediterraneo medievale. Scritti in onore di Francesco Giunta (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 1989), vol. 2, 561–83. Presumably, the royal residence at Parco was still very much in use since we know that Peter II was born there only two years before. Frederick III’s gift echoes Frederick II’s transferral of La Favara to the Teutonic Knights in the previous century. By the early fourteenth century, the Cistercians had a significant presence in Sicily. For the rise of the Cistercian Order in the Norman Kingdom in the second half of the twelfth century and onward, see G. A. Loud, The Latin Church in Norman Italy (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 486–88; also Salvatore Fodale, “I cistercensi nella Sicilia medievale,” in I cistercensi nel Mezzogiorno medioevale: atti del Convegno internazionale di studio in occasione del IX centenario della nascita di Bernardo di Clairvaux (Martano-Latiano-Lecce, 25–27 febbraio 1991), edited by Hubert Houben and Benedetto Vetere, Pubblicazioni del Dipartimento di studi storici dal Medioevo all’Età contemporanea, Saggi e ricerche, 28 (Galatina: Congedore, 1994), 353–72.

615 Silvana Braida, “Il palazzo ruggeriano di Alotofonte,” 19.
uncovered traces of terracotta tubes indicating that there was a fountain in this space.\textsuperscript{616} At present, the south side of the courtyard abuts the apse of the large seventeenth-century church. To the east, and behind the apse of the chapel, is a wall that dates to the first foundation likely part of another courtyard that pertained to the twelfth-century building. Remnants of rooms and a portico are incorporated into modern buildings on this side as well.

The best-preserved exterior of the Norman palace is on the west side, where the remains of a portico may be seen, which was once in the interior of the complex (fig. 5.9). Between the spandrels of each round archway are roundels with geometric patterns of \textit{intarsia}, of which three are still in place (figs. 5.10–5.12).\textsuperscript{617} The roundels contain motifs that are reminiscent of monuments dating to the second half of the twelfth century, namely the cathedrals of Palermo and Monreale (figs. 7.10–7.11). Behind the portico are a narrow hallway and a staircase that leads up to a balcony that overlooked the interior of the chapel, which was most probably reserved for the king. Smaller auxiliary spaces are located here and on the lower level as well. A colonnade flanked the north wing of the palace to the south side, suggesting that here was an additional courtyard.

\section*{a. Chapel of the Palace at Parco}

The chapel known as “Ecclesia S. Michaelis de Parco” is first mentioned in a 1274 document as a suffragan to the Cappella Palatina in Palermo.\textsuperscript{618} The chapel of Parco recalls

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[Ibid., 23.]
\item[617] There are similarities with the inlaid tufa decoration on the exterior of S. Maria del Patire at Rossano (1101–31). Stefano Bottari, “I rapporti tra l’architettura siciliana e quella campana del Medioevo,” \textit{Palladio} n. s. 5 (1955), 11.
\item[618] This dedication is particularly significant since the archangel Michael has been associated with sanctuaries in caves and elevated locations. At Parco, this would seem to be fitting due to the elevation of the site in the mountains above Palermo. Garofalo, \textit{Tabularium regiae ac imperialis Cappellae}, 82.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
that of La Favara and shares its aisleless rectangular plan (figs. 5.16–5.17). 619 At Parco, the sanctuary is raised by a step, providing a spatial demarcation that is missing at the chapel of La Favara but is present in the palatine chapel of La Zisa. The apse is separated from the nave by a monumental archway that spans the entire height of the building. In the chapel at Parco, side niches flank the apse. In these are two small alcoves in the interior north and south wall of the sanctuary, a configuration that can also be seen in the chapel at La Favara. The double-height columns that flank the length of the apse wall create a framing effect (fig. 5.21). Placed there during the chapel’s restoration by Francesco Valenti in the late 1920s, these were presumably based on remains found and reused material from the site.620 The high profile of the dome (figs. 5.18–5.20), which Valenti emphasized in his restoration by removing later accretions, is similar to that of the chapel at La Favara (fig. 3.15).

Valenti constructed *ex novo* the two groin vaults of the nave ceiling (figs. 5.16, 5.20). Mirroring the separation between the nave and sanctuary, a round arch demarcates the narthex from the nave, also made by Valenti. The narthex is spanned by a low groin vault over which is situated what has been identified as a “royal box.” Presumably, the balcony was originally covered by a wooden ceiling (figs. 5.25–5.27). This loge echoes that at La Zisa (fig. 6.41).621 In addition, there was an analogous space in the north transept of the

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621 A royal viewing platform might have existed in the Cappella Palatina built in the same period. Following Ernst Kitzinger’s earlier suggestion, Tronzo has posited the existence of a balcony in the nave, in addition to a smaller balcony reserved for the king in the transept. See Tronzo, *Cultures of His Kingdom*, on the supposed nave balcony, 49–54; on the ‘royal balcony’ in the transept, 55–56, 97–98; Tronzo’s theory has been most recently contested by Vladimir Zorić in “Die Cappella Palatina Rogers II. und ihre späteren Umbauten,” in *Die Cappella Palatina in Palermo. Geschichte, Kunst, Funktionen*, edited by Thomas Dittelbach (Künzelsau: Swiridoff, 2011), 111–29.

As was the case at La Favara, the chapel at Parco is not in a particularly favored position in the complex, and it appears to have been inserted into a wing of the palace. Outside the structure and behind the apse is a parallel wall. It is unclear what function this could have had in relation to the ecclesiastical building. The entrance to the chapel is via two doors that faced each other, on the north and south walls of the narthex. The north door leads to the exterior of the courtyard complex, while the south portal connects the chapel with the core of the palace. This doorway has a jack or straight arch, flat in profile and made up of alternating red and yellow masonry.

b. \textit{Biverium or Fishpond at Parco}

Below the provincial road (SP. 5), 1.5 kilometers to the east of the royal palace that leads into modern Altofonte, there are substantial vestiges of a monumental wall covered with hydraulic stucco. The site in question is located in a valley formed by the outlet of water emanating from the mountain range of Moharda and the higher plain of Piana degli Albanesi (figs. 5.28–5.29). In addition to the remains on the valley floor, above and facing onto the road is an unassuming abandoned building, positioned at the apex of the naturally formed parabolic curve at the entrance to Valle dei Fichi (figs. 5.30–5.31). Close examination of the site reveals that the structure is situated at an exceedingly panoramic
point, overlooking the same wide valley as Monreale to the west, created by the once mighty Oreto River. Water from the mountains flows underneath the road adjacent to it, cascading down to the valley below.

When comparing the surroundings of Roger II’s extramural complex of La Favara with Parco, it is not difficult to hypothesize an analogous configuration. Both sites have abundant natural resources: the former from the Fawwarāh, while Roger chose Parco due to its most clear source of water (“fonte lucidissimo”). On the grounds of the palace of La Favara, as discussed in Chapter Three, atop the Arches of San Ciro there was quite likely to have been a belvedere that faced over the large artificial lake (figs. 3.57–3.58). Therefore, I argue that the structure in a bad state of repair facing onto the road that leads into Altofonte once had a similar function in Roger’s royal park.

Most studies have almost entirely ignored or cited briefly, if at all, the remnants of the monumental dam, the substantial basin, and tripartite pavilion on two levels, and have focused instead on the chapel at Altofonte. This is perhaps due to the fact that there is no mention of the pavilion in the park or fishpond in any medieval or early modern source material. In his chronicle, Romuald noted the hunting park, the aqueduct, and the new palace at Parco. His description does not include the fishpond, contrasting with his remarkably attentive account of the excavation and substantial shaping of the terrain undertaken to create the lake of Maredolce at Roger’s La Favara.623

A closer look from the pavilion to the area below at the entrance to Valle dei Fichi reveals massive walls that once held a sizable volume of water, but which now contain a

623 Modern works on Altofonte focus on the chapel and palace but gloss over the remains of the pavilion and basin. This omission is surprising because the site is well known to local residents of the area. Vittorio Noto has conducted the only survey. Domenico Sciortino, Storia di Parco (Lucca: Cooperativa Poligrafica Lucchese, 1937), 5–7; Noto, “Il Palazzo Reale di Altofonte,” 36–39.
delightful citrus grove (fig. 5.32). Favorable orographic conditions—a narrow oblong valley and a perennial stream, one of the offshoots of the Oreto River—helped to provide water for the large artificial basin. Constructed with calcarenite stone, the wall of the dam was rendered impermeable with rubble mixed with mortar or *opus signinum* (*cocciopesto* in Italian). This use of hydraulic stucco echoes other large-scale waterworks in the royal parks, namely the lake of Maredolce, the pond in front of La Zisa, and the basin of La Cuba.

The transversal dam of the fishing preserve at Parco is relatively well-preserved (figs. 5.32–5.36). Monumental in size, the wall measures 4 meters in height and 3.30 meters in width, and its remains extend over 30 meters on a north–south axis. At a right angle to the south of the bank is a much smaller wall, 2.5 meters in height and only 65 centimeters in width. Also near the southern boundary of the basin there are numerous mounds, possibly terracing (fig. 5.37). Due to the alluvial nature of the terrain, however, it cannot be ascertained whether there are any additional remnants of the fishpond. Facing the western front of the pavilion, on the opposite side of the modern road, are some large blocks 10 meters below that appear to have formed a platform (fig. 5.38).

As mentioned earlier, the second story of the pavilion with the three wide-set arches is situated on the side of the modern road (figs. 5.30–5.31). It is a small rectangular structure on two levels that measures 15 meters in length and just over 6.50 meters in width. The building seemingly had two faces: the first looked onto the road that leads to the modern town of Altofonte and consequently to Roger’s palace at Parco, located to the east (fig. 5.39). The second faced onto the basin in front of it to the west and beyond it to the large valley formed by the Oreto River (figs. 5.40–5.41). Now in a dismal state and entirely abandoned, it can easily be mistaken for a deserted warehouse. On the eastern façade several later

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624 Ibid.
interventions may be seen, and it is covered with a layer of stucco that is flaking off.\textsuperscript{625} The ogival arches of the upper story measure 3 meters wide and 1.90 meters high, opening up to three spaces. The elevation of the structure is 7.70 meters, while the upper level is 5.30 meters in height. The three spaces within vary in width, from 3.85 to 3.90 meters. Due to the debris in its interior, the original height is difficult to estimate. The roof was altered at some point since it contains slanted architraves that indicate a sloped ceiling in at least one phase of its existence. The wall opposite the lake may be a later addition that has since collapsed.

Of the two-level pavilion, only the southern and center spaces on the upper floor are accessible from the road. A modern metal door placed in cement closes off the room to the north. According to Vittorio Noto’s sketch published in 1995, the room is made up of two cruciform-shaped spaces (fig. 5.42).\textsuperscript{626} In general, such a plan is noteworthy as a marker of elite or royal status, as discussed in relation to the principal hall at Lo Scibene in Chapter Four. At Parco, however, it is located to the side and not in the center of the structure as at Lo Scibene and the Fountain Room at La Zisa. At La Cuba, the cross-shaped room was in its northern part that faced directly onto the lake. For the example at Altofonte, the most plausible explanation for this arrangement is that this was the first space that one encountered on the road from Palermo, possibly the park’s entrance. Due to its inaccessibility, we cannot reach any conclusion at present regarding the function of the northern room on the upper floor, whose exterior has been significantly altered as well.

\textsuperscript{625} Perhaps because the upper level faces directly onto the principal access road to Altofonte, the most alterations throughout the centuries occurred here. In addition to the stucco on the façade, above the south and the central room there is a later layer of cement incorporated on top of the structure to add more height. The central door has also been delimited with cement. Likewise, the arch of the northern room encloses a modern metal door that has rendered the space inaccessible.

\textsuperscript{626} Noto, “Il Palazzo Reale di Altofonte,” 38.
The two remaining rooms of the upper level bear some traces of polychromy on the lower walls or wainscoting (figs. 5.43–5.45). There is an outline of a door that connected the two rooms. Attached to the southern room is an adjacent structure that could be of a later date (figs. 5.46), and appears to have contained a cistern carved into the bedrock (3.40 x 2 meters). From this room a small set of stairs led down to the lake.

The lower floor of the pavilion-like structure was carved into the living rock of the valley. This tripartite plan is mirrored on the lower floor (figs. 5.47–5.48). Here three arches open up to separate spaces each approximately 3 meters in width. Again, the original height cannot be easily estimated due to the accumulation of earth and debris. Only the northern room on the lower level is accessible, while the central space can be entered with great difficulty. The entrance to the southern room has collapsed entirely. The interior surface of the rooms on the lower level was covered with hydraulic stucco of which there are significant remains. The central room has a niche 1.50 meters deep and 53 centimeters wide (fig. 5.49). From here, water could have fed the artificial basin, perhaps also providing for a fountain inside the space. As a result, we can conclude that water from the spring and the fishpond was meant to enter into the structure. In addition, the impressive width of the arches could have allowed boats to access the ground level directly.

The lower storey of the pavilion appears to have been used for lacustrine activities, while the space above was reserved for formal functions that perhaps took place in the dual cruciform-shaped north room. Nevertheless, Noto has questioned whether the structure indeed dates to the twelfth century.\textsuperscript{627} The pavilion was not constructed with the large and orderly blocks of masonry that can be seen at the base of the courtyard palace of La Favara, the containment wall or dam of the Maredolce, or those forming the base level of La Cuba.

\textsuperscript{627} Ibid., 38–39.
Even so, these monumental barriers with hydraulic cement at Parco recall the ambitious waterworks of La Favara (and, to a lesser extent, Lo Scibene and La Cuba). Furthermore, the masonry of the pavilion does not match that of the neighbouring royal palace and chapel. Noto has suggested that this could be due to the fact there was a “progression” of sorts from the early park architecture of Roger’s reign to what could be interpreted as the creation of more formal buildings by his successors.628 Another possibility, not addressed before, is that the tripartite pavilion predates the Norman period since it is set apart from the palace nucleus and is not mentioned by Romuald (nor by any other medieval source for that matter). In general, Roger II was drawn to the site not only for the hilly landscape that proved to be an excellent hunting ground, but also for its accessibility to water that he had transported to his residence.

The relationship between the pavilion and its surrounding environment that is reminiscent of La Favara and the lake of Maredolce (figs. 5.50–5.51). Moreover, the palaces at Parco and La Favara were built in the same period, the reign of Roger II. In addition, the small abandoned structure near Parco shares characteristics with the Arches of San Ciro, since it has three wide arches facing onto an aquatic setting. We also see large ogival arches in the courtyard of William II’s residence at Monreale built sometime in the 1170s–80s (fig. 7.19), as discussed in the final chapter.629

The fact that the masonry of the pavilion at Parco differs from many examples dating to Roger II’s reign may point to a structure intended for supplementary purposes. This does not necessarily indicate a diverse date but a dissimilar function. In other words, the building was intended to be a “rustic” retreat that is reflected in its architectonic language, namely in the

628 Ibid.
use of rubble masonry instead of the squared blocks of La Zisa, La Cuba, and La Favara.\textsuperscript{630}

The Genoardo Park contained numerous pavilions that included La Cubula, La Cuba Soprana, and, not least, William II’s La Cuba, built of large blocks in the case of the larger palace pavilions and in ashlar masonry for La Cuba Soprana and La Cubula. The tripartite structure on two levels at Parco, by contrast, was similar to the construction atop the Arches of San Ciro of Maredolce, the latter of which contained brick—both are likely to have been belvederes overlooking artificial bodies of water. In the royal parkland of twelfth-century Sicily, the building typology of the pavilion took on assorted forms, yet it would appear that these were an intrinsic feature of these landscapes.

\section*{II. Pavilions in the Pre-Islamic and Islamic World}

Looking out to a large basin, the pavilion at Parco presumably would have had water brimming over its edge, particularly during the winter rainy season. Pavilions can be defined as man-made structures in gardens that mediate interior and exterior spaces. These are referred to in historical sources as well as by later scholars as “kiosks” (stemming from the Turkish köşk, in Persian kūshk).\textsuperscript{631} The \textit{Grove Encyclopedia of Islamic Art and Architecture} has most recently defined a “kiosk” as a “light, usually freestanding, roofed building, either with open sides or partially enclosed.”\textsuperscript{632} Variations in the terms used for pavilions also indicate the diverse forms that these may take, ranging from temporary structures to veritable

\textsuperscript{630} Vittorio Noto raised this point regarding masonry in “Il Palazzo Reale di Altofonte,” 38.


palaces and other permanent buildings. Nevertheless, what appears to be constant is the
close relationship of the pavilion or kiosk with its surroundings, frequently a verdant
enclosure such as a park or garden.

Freestanding structures in elite settings predate the Islamic period. The first recorded
examples originated in Achaemenid Persia (ca. 550–330 BCE), the empire founded by Cyrus
the Great (r. 559–530 BCE). Cyrus built pavilions in numerous extensive hunting grounds or
paradeisos throughout his realm. In the reconstruction by the archaeologist David Stronach,
the pleasure garden at the capital, Pasargadae, was ordered according to an axial alignment
and square stone basins, containing the first known chahār bāgh or “fourfold garden.”633
Much later, the Sasanian rulers emulated their precursors, and they created enclosed hunting
gardens in their territory at Ṭāq-i Bustān in addition to other sites from the third to the
seventh century CE.634

Following the Sasanians, the Umayyads incorporated planned gardens into their
palatial estates.635 A representation of a freestanding kiosk in such a setting is famously
depicted in a mosaic on the exterior of the Great Mosque of Damascus (706–15). A further
eighth-century example is the pleasure palace of Khirbat al-Mafjar (Qaṣr Hishām) near
Jericho associated with Hishām ibn Abd al-Malik (r. 724–43), which comprised a two-story
square pavilion standing on columns in a shallow basin in the forecourt of the complex.636
His residence at Ruṣāfa in Syria had a pavilion raised above its surroundings, situated on a
platform reached by three steps and an elevated walkway. The structure was designed to be

633 References to pavilions appear in Zoroastrian texts, the Book of Genesis, and in numerous pre-Islamic
634 Briant, From Cyrus to Alexander, 442–43.
636 R. W. Hamilton, Khirbat al-Mafjar: An Arabian Mansion in the Jordan Valley, with a contribution by Oleg
open on all four sides. His grandson, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān I (r. 756–88), spent his youth at Ruṣāfa and following the Umayyad expulsion from Syria, he recreated its layout for his palace in al-Andalus. Well before the building of the tenth-century palatial city of Madīnat al-Zahrā’, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān I’s new estate outside Córdoba named Al-Munyat al-Ruṣāfa became from 784/785 his primary seat of rule and contained a quadripartite garden, central pavilion, and extensive waterworks. In a poem that he supposedly authored, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān exalted a palm tree on its grounds. The latter is particularly reminiscent of ‘Abd ‘ar-Raḥmān of Trapani’s poem on the lake at La Favara and its two palms, discussed in Chapter Three.

The ‘Abbāsid court adopted many architectural features from the Umayyads, and among these were pavilions in park settings. In the ninth-century caliphal city of Sāmarrā’, these were set in the center of gardens. These were freestanding and referred to as a jawsaq (derived from Turkish, and semantically related to kőşk/kūshk) in addition to qaṣr (palace). The term itself has different meanings that also shifted over time, from a temporary and simple structure that provides shelter to a lavish dwelling that would most closely coincide with a qaṣr. A pavilion, for instance, could comprise a single-room construction established on top of a building, thereby constituting a belvedere or a projecting gallery. At Sāmarrā’, one monumental example had a ground plan that spanned 18 square meters.

638 López Cuevas, “Almunia Cordobesa,” 246; most recently, archaeological excavations have placed it to the north of city, see J. F. Murillo Redondo, “La almunia de al-Rusafa en Córdoba,” *Madrider Mitteilungen* 50 (2009), 449–82.
639 In her work, Ruggles has suggested that Al-Munyat al-Ruṣāfa was a key site due to its status as the first Umayyad munya in Córdoba and was a model for the transmission of the cross-axial garden into Spain. Ruggles, *Gardens, Landscape, and Vision*, 42–45.
overlooking a racecourse. Another viewing pavilion stood in the center of an enormous
clover-leaf shaped course used for horse racing as well. In the capital Baghdad, the caliph
al-Muqtadir bi-Allah (r. 908–932) had four pavilions built for his sprawling palace on the
Tigris River, situated on two gardens. According to a description by Byzantine ambassadors
during a visit in 917, a pond and an artificial river of white lead, which appeared to
contemporary onlookers to be polished silver, was conducted in a stream between the
pavilions.

We may also look to Fāṭimid Cairo for examples contemporary with the Norman
Kingdom. In Cairo, belvederes were commonly termed manzara (pl. manaẓir, derived from
the root naẓara [نظر], meaning “to see” or “to look”). A manzara was a structure that was
intended to be set above ground level, possessing a belvedere that could have multiple
viewpoints. From here, one could observe the surrounding environment, hence the origin of
the word. Due to the size of several of these manaẓir, many functioned as de facto palaces
and could be classified as quṣūr (plural of qaṣr). The manzara, etymologically equivalent to
a belvedere, would have signified its highest part.

641 Alastair Northedge, “The Racecourses at Sāmarrā’,” Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies,
University of London 53, 1 (1990), 31–56
642 See the account translated by Guy LeStrange, “A Greek Embassy to Baghdad in 917 A.D.,” Journal of the
Royal Asiatic Society (1895), 41–42: “Then the Envoys passed to what was called the New Kiosk (Al-Jawsak-
al-Mudith), which is a palace in the midst of gardens. In the centre thereof is a tank made of tin (RaṣḥaKal’T),
round which flows a stream in a conduit also of tin, that is more lustrous than polished silver. This tank is thirty
ells in the length by twenty across, and round it are set four magnificent pavilions with gilt seats adorned with
embroidery of Dabīḳ, and the pavilions are covered over with the gold work of Dabīḳ. All round this tank
extends a garden with lawns wherein grow palm-trees, and it is said that their number is four hundred, and the
height of each is five ells. . . . The Ambassadors passed out of this palace, and next came to the Palace of the
Tree (Dār-ash-Shajara), where (as has already been said) is a tree, and this is standing in the midst of a great
circular tank filled with clear water. The tree has eighteen branches, every branch having numerous twigs, on
which sit all sorts of gold and silver birds, both large and small. Most of the branches of this tree are of silver,
but some are of gold, and they spread into the air carrying leaves of divers colours. The leaves of the tree move
as the wind blows, while the birds pipe and sing. . . . Next the Greek Envoys entered the Palace of Paradise
(Kaṣr-al-Firdūs). . . .”
[=Architectural Terms in Mamluk Documents] (648–923 H/1250–1517) (Cairo: American University in Cairo,
1990), 117; see also work by Jehan Ismail Reda, “The Manzara: Its Form and Function in Fatimid Egypt,” M.A
The Fāṭimid caliphs used these structures on specific occasions, such as feasts and weddings, during processions through the city, and for other ceremonial occasions.\footnote{Paula Sanders, *Ritual, Politics and the City in Fatimid Cairo* (Albany, NY: State Univ. of New York Press, 1994), 193, n. 96.} The Mamlūk historian al-Maqrīzī devoted an entire section of his work *Khiṭat* to the numerous pavilions and palaces established by the Fāṭimid caliphs.\footnote{Taqi al-Din Abu al-Abbas Ahmad ibn ‘Ali ibn ‘Abd al-Qadir ibn Muhammad al-Maqrīzī (1364–1442), *Al-Mawā‘iz wa-l-i’tibār bi-dhikr al-khiṭat wa-l-āthār* (Cairo: Bulaq, 1854), vol. 1, 467–71.} One example that he cited is the Manzārat al-Lū‘lū’a (the Pearl Pavilion, also called the Qaṣr al-Lū‘lū’a), which was part of the complex of the Western Palace and according to him was considered one of the most beautiful of the caliphal residences.\footnote{Ibid., 468.} Situated on the canal of Cairo, or the *khālij*, in the vicinity of Bāb al-Qanṭara, the structure had a view to the Kāfūrī Garden from the east and onto the canal to the west. During the ceremonies of the cutting of the canal of the Nile, the caliphs and their families utilized the pleasure pavilion known as Manzārat al-Sukkara on the west bank of the canal. Another pavilion overlooked the Mosque of al-Azhar near the favorite caliphal pleasure palace of the Golden Palace.\footnote{Neil D. MacKenzie, *Ayyubid Cairo: A Topographical Study* (Cairo: American University of Cairo Press, 1992), 83.} In the cemetery of Cairo, Qarafa al-Kubra, were many kiosks with belvederes from which relatives could view tombs.\footnote{Jonathan Bloom, “The Mosque of the Qarafa in Cairo,” *Muqarnas* 4 (1987), 7–20.} The environment into which the pavilions were placed was just as important as the structures themselves. The *manazir* situated on and around the ponds of Cairo, along the shores of the Nile, and on the *khalīj*, were intended for temporary use and at times for longer occupation.\footnote{The Qubbat al-Ḥawā‘a (Dome of the Winds/Fresh Air) was built in 809–11 by the ‘Abbāsid governor of Egypt, Ḥātim ibn Hurthuma, on a spur of the Muḥṭṭam hills, which would be the site of the Ayyūbid citadel of Cairo. The ‘Abbāsid caliph Al-Mā‘mūn stayed in this pavilion in 832. The structure was later incorporated into Ibn Tūlūn’s palatial complex, since its placement on a slope guaranteed a view of the gardens, menagerie, and *maydan* (polo grounds), all destroyed by an invading ‘Abbāsid army in 905. During the Fāṭimid period, the...
such as along the eastern bank of Birkat al-Fīl, formed after water from the annual flood receded in the lowland west of the city. In addition to Birkat al-Fīl, there were a number of other lakes, like Birkat al-Farayyyin, which were all highly prized for their gardens and access to water. Some of these lakes and ponds were constructed at the initiative of members of the ruling class, such as Baṭn al-Baqara in the north of the city under the Fāṭimid caliph al-ʿĀmir (r. 1101–30), who created the pool for his aesthetic pleasure, and had a choice view of the aquatic setting from his belvedere. On the northern end of Rawḍa Island in the Nile was a pavilion known as the Hawdaj built by al-ʿĀmir as well. In the early Mamlūk period, many of these structures were built on the ruins of the former Ayyūbid citadel, facing onto Fustāṭ and to the south of Cairo’s city walls. In sources, these are described as towers providing lofty views over their surroundings and onto the basins themselves, and ownership of such a building was a sign of wealth and prestige.

There would appear to be a direct association between belvederes in the Norman sphere, which I argue were present at both Parco and at La Favara, and the multiple manaẓir of Fāṭimid Cairo as noted by al-Maqrīzī. These range from simple freestanding structures to sumptuous palaces associated with the caliphs and the upper echelons of the court. Therefore, the existence of a bi-level pavilion at Parco may also be postulated based on the evidence that these were commonplace by the twelfth century in elite settings elsewhere in site became a cemetery. Nasser Rabbat, *The Citadel of Cairo: A New Interpretation of Royal Mamluk Architecture* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1995), 52.


During the building of the citadel by Ṣaḥḥ al-Dīn in 1176, the area of Birkat al-Fīl first began to be populated by the military elite, civil servants, and later by wealthy merchants. Over time, many pavilions were built on various alluvial ponds throughout the city, often including large porticos and walled living quarters. See MacKenzie, *Ayyūbid Cairo*, 88–90.

Furthermore, as the alluvial lands extended farther to the west, additional ponds were formed and gardens. Younes, “The Evolution of Birkat al-Fīl,” 2–3.


Ibid.
the Mediterranean and in particular in park settings. The walls measuring up to the 4 meters in height at the outlet to the Valle dei Fichi and perpendicular to the great Oreto valley that it looked onto are those of an artificial basin, reminiscent of the dam of the lake of Maredolce at the palace of La Favara south of the city. I contend that the pavilion and basin at Parco were part of the momentous transformation of the landscape that took place in the twelfth century according to the instructions of Roger II.

**Conclusion**

The location of Roger II’s palace at Parco at a high point overlooking the same valley as Monreale was chosen due to its readily available sources of water. Here, the first Norman king ordered a wall to enclose a park where different trees were planted and which he had stocked with animal species appropriate for the hunt. Romuald of Salerno noted the construction of an underground hydraulic system for the transportation of water from the mountains above the chosen site. The creation of Roger’s park in the hilltops that surround Palermo called for a significant modification of the terrain. This land transformation is likely to have included a large fishpond within the parabolic curve fashioned by the Valle dei Fichi, similar to the lake at La Favara used for fishing and boating. Facing onto the artificial basin was a tri-arched building on two levels. The latter was in all likelihood a belvedere that complemented the royally commissioned hunting palace. Recalling in its overall form the tripartite Arches of San Ciro that looked onto the lake of Maredolce, a corresponding relationship may be seen at Parco between architecture and water in the royal secular sphere.

The construction of pavilions overlooking gardens and bodies of water can be traced back to the earliest traditions of designed landscapes. The examples I presented from the
Umayyad and ‘Abbāsid realms bridged interior and exterior spaces. Set into carefully curated garden estates, pavilions could range from simple freestanding structures to well-appointed palaces. Al-Maqrīzī described Fātimid pavilions that were essentially *quṣūr*, occupying valuable real estate and situated on the varied waterscapes of medieval Cairo. These served a variety of functions: ranging from halting places during processions, spaces to host state ceremonies, and pleasure palaces. Therefore, the remains of the building above the *biverium* at Parco, in addition to the Arches of San Ciro, is likely to have been a *manzara* or belvedere that looked onto a man-made waterscape created primarily for the pleasure of the ruler. This was a key feature of a larger, man-made environment of the royal park.

The chapel at Parco, the best-preserved element of the twelfth-century palatial ensemble (not least due to its restoration by Valenti in the 1920s), is remarkably similar to other Norman ecclesiastical examples. Its most outstanding structural component is the large balcony looking onto the nave, analogous in its configuration to that at the later La Zisa. In the suburban residences, these loges are in choice positions, occupying the entire width of the naves of the chapels at Parco and La Zisa. All in all, at Roger II’s courtyard complex of Parco, the importance of the royal view comes to the forefront in both the balcony in the chapel and the pavilion that faced onto the monumental basin on the grounds of the park. Likely contemporary with La Favara, the arrangement of the palace at Parco and its chapel set a precedent for the extramural residences built by the two Williams in the second half of the twelfth century.
Pavilions in the Park: William I and William II’s La Zisa, La Cuba, La Cubula, and La Cuba Soprana

“. . . of the most beautiful realms of the world: of the seas and the mountains [that dominates] them whose peaks are tinged with narcissus. . . [You will] see the [grand] King of the century . . . This is the paradise on earth that opens to the gaze; this is al-Musta’izz, and this [the palace] of the ‘Aziz. 655

The palace pavilions of La Zisa (derived from the Arabic aziz, powerful/noble) and La Cuba (from the Arabic qubba, dome) are the most well-known twelfth-century suburban residences of the Norman kings. According to Pseudo-Hugh Falcandus, William I established the “New Park” of the Genoard and built La Zisa in ca. 1165 specifically to supersede Roger II’s favorite palaces of “Favariam, Minenium.” 656 Following his father’s early death in 1166, William II completed La Zisa and commissioned La Cuba in around 1180. In close proximity to each other (and the principal residence within the city walls), these two structures share rectangular ground plans and a towering fortified exterior articulated by blind arches and various decorative motifs. La Zisa was built as a residence for lengthy stays, while La Cuba was intended from the outset to function as a resplendent

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655 Excerpt from the Arabic inscription in naskhi script in the vestibule of the ground floor of La Zisa that surrounded the archway at the entrance to the so-called Fountain Room. Amari, Le epigrafi arabe, 78–79.
656 Pseudo-Hugh Falcandus, “La Historia o Liber de regno Siciliae,” vol. 22, 87–88: “Cum ergo regnum ab extrinsecis tumultibus aliquando quiescit, rex autem interim oitum quietique vacaret, timens ne quevis occasio voluptuosum otium impediret, familiares suos premonerat ut quidam ei quod aestimabat aut sollicitudinem posset ingerere nunciaret, ac se ex totum deinceps voluptati devovit, cepit animo latius evagari, cogitans quia quia pater eius Favariam, Minenium aliaque delectabilia loca fecerat, ipse quoque palatium construeret, quod commodius ac diligentius compositum, videretur universis patris operibus preminere. Cuius parte maxima, mira celeritate, non sine magnis sumptibus expedita, antequam supremam operi manum imponeret, dissenteriam incursus cepit diuturno morbo dissolvi.”
reception hall. As was the case for Roger II’s La Favara and Parco, the palace pavilions constructed in the second half of the twelfth century also contained extensive waterworks. Fountains and pools existed at both La Zisa and La Cuba, the latter of which was situated on a large artificial lake. To the substantial body of literature of these two well-examined monuments, I present in this chapter a new interpretation regarding their inscriptions in Arabic.

The circumference of the medieval parkland measured almost two miles according to Tommaso Fazello, writing in the mid-sixteenth century. Fazello described the gardens located close to the city walls, in which numerous pavilions were created for the king as well as a large enclosure for the keeping of wild animals, a viridarium, that he called La Cuba. In the very name of its foundation, Genoard (from the Arabic jannat al-‘ard or “Paradise on Earth”), there are resounding connotations of paradise. These tropes play out in the multitude of grandiose inscriptions carved in bold Kūfic and naskhī scripts that crowned the cornices of La Zisa and La Cuba. In the vestibule of La Zisa, another text executed in stucco that referenced paradise adorned the entrance to the main hall. Proclaiming the authority of their rulers, these examples of monumental epigraphy did not employ Qur’ānic verses, but in its place, showcased the Arabic titles or alqāb (sing. laqab) of the Christian kings.

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657 Fazello, De rebus Siculis, Deca uno, Book 8, 200.
The creation of the gardens at La Zisa was a significant undertaking begun by William I. His luxurious pavilion was likely in a separate part of the park, bisected by the Papireto Lake and located just outside the city walls to the southwest of the main Norman palace. The Genoard Park, associated with William II’s patronage, was situated farther to the south and corresponded to the area around La Cuba, as well as a number of smaller pavilions of which remain the belvedere of La Cuba Sopranà and the diminutive La Cubula. The principal metamorphosis of what constituted the former royal parks occurred in the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries, and was part of the urban transformation of the entire plain that surrounded the city of Palermo. La Zisa was already in private hands in the sixteenth century, by which time La Cuba functioned as a plague hospital, signaling the diverse reuse and changing appreciation for these structures by their contemporaries.

I. The Palace of La Zisa

La Zisa (also transliterated into Latin as “Lisam” by Pseudo-Hugh Falcandus), was begun by William I in ca. 1165. Due to his premature death in 1166, it was completed by his son, William II. La Zisa is the most complete extant example of secular architecture in Norman Sicily and is perhaps the best-preserved building of its kind that dates to the twelfth century in the Latin West. This palace pavilion held a particular fascination for visitors to Sicily from the sixteenth century onward, as demonstrated in the Bolognese Leandro Alberti’s detailed description.\footnote{Alberti, Descrittione di tutta l’Italia, fols 53v–56r.} The structure was in the royal domain after the end of Norman rule, as seen in the diploma dated to September 12, 1282, in which King Peter III of
Aragon nominated Niccolò Ioppulo as the custodian of the residences of “cubbe azize et favarie”—La Cuba, La Zisa, and La Favara.  

### a. General Description and Exterior Dimensions of La Zisa

The exterior of La Zisa presents itself as a rectangular mass towering over its surroundings at a height of 16 meters (figs. 6.1–6.2). The structure measures 36.40 meters in length and 19.60 meters in width, and is composed of three stories. If we examine a cross-section, it is clear that the central spaces of the ground level and the second floor dominate the building (figs. 6.3–6.6). The lower story contains the main hall that dictates the inner spatial arrangement and is the guiding design component of the façade as well. The groin vault of the central hall rises up two stories. Its eastern face demarcates that this is the most important space of the building, since at its center is a monumental double-tiered ogival archway flanked by two smaller portals. All three openings were framed by double columns that can be discerned from the niches reserved for them. The only example that remains in place is in the central portal.

The building is flanked along its shorter sides by twin rectangular oblong elements. They run vertically along its entire height and rise above it, measuring 4.35 meters on their longer side and 2.10 meters wide (fig. 6.7). Known by the Arabic term *malqaf* (or the Persian *badjir*), these windtowers regulated the internal temperature of the palace. A cornice

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with an Arabic inscription in Kūfic script carved in low relief crowned the façade; it was transformed in the fourteenth century into merlons (figs. 6.8–6.9). In the seventeenth century, the Sandoval family significantly altered the upper floor by covering the roof in order to support two pavilions in the style of the time. The doorways were also widened to provide more spacious entrances to the rooms on this floor. The open-air atrium on the second floor, as will be discussed below, was converted into a grand hall with a groin vault. The interior staircases were relocated to the north and south sides of the structure.

b. **Arrangement of the Ground Floor of La Zisa and the Reception Hall of “Fountain Room”**

On the ground floor of La Zisa, the central room opened up to a large rectangular basin or pool. It is usually referred to in the literature as the “Fountain Room” or “La Sala della Fontana” since it is dominated by the fountain in its center. Its monumental proportions and sumptuous ornament would have generated awe in the visitor. Due to its axial placement (overlooking a central pond and pavilion), rich decoration, and internal organization of a qā’a with two flanking īwāns, the Fountain Room was clearly planned to be the center point and the primary reception hall or formal space of the palace. The hall is cruciform in shape, measuring 7.50 meters on each side and 12.60 meters in height. Its vault rises to the first two stories as mentioned earlier (figs. 6.10). This room is the most highly decorated of the palace, containing an ornate mosaic band, *muqarnas* vaults, and a centralized fountain.

Flanking this hall at La Zisa is a set of smaller rooms for auxiliary uses, serving this central area. The entrance to the spaces on either side of the fountain room is presently

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661 For contemporary examples of elite domestic architecture on the Italian mainland with a focus on Venice, see Juergen Schulz’s *The New Palaces of Medieval Venice* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004).
through two large symmetrical portals with intricate muqarnas vaults placed above them, although it is likely that these were the product of later modifications to the building. A spacious vestibule runs along the entire front, measuring 32.50 x 3.70 meters, and its height corresponds to the first two stories (fig. 6.11). Most notably, the width of the passageway is almost half the depth of the Fountain Hall onto which it opens. The monumental height and the width of the vestibule both point to its ceremonial function, and it was perhaps a processional or a waiting area. The passageway and the hall itself form an inverted T-shape (a spatial arrangement discussed in detail in Chapter Four). The mezzanine level or second floor had rooms that were probably service spaces that contain niches with muqarnas vaults.662

c. Fountain, Mosaic Band, and the Ornamental Elements of the Principal Hall of La Zisa

Funneled through a series of pipes, water came out of a spout or salsalbīl set into the center of the west wall of La Zisa’s main hall (fig. 6.12). In the niche is an eagle in mosaic tesserae that most scholars attribute to the Hohenstaufen period based on style and the heraldic symbol of the eagle.663 The water flowed onto a marble trough or shadirwān marked with grooved chevrons, as discussed below, that had a stepped element on either side decorated with opus sectile. Continuing along a central canal in the center of the space, water moved through two small rectangular basins composed of a pair of octagonals rotated at an angle, and lined by bands of polychrome opus sectile (fig. 6.13). Creating a pleasing

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663 Even though this attribution to the Hohenstaufen is not supported by any contemporary or later source and would seem to be rather arbitrary. See Bellafiore, La Zisa, 52.
aesthetic effect, the inlaid stone form the same design as those framing the central mosaic panel and the marble wainscoting. The channel of water continues past the monumental portal. During his visit in 1526, Leandro Alberti described the interior of the palace. He noted that the water basins in the hall had mosaics representing small fish. The room also contains marble columns with sculpted capitals in which birds can be seen feeding on acanthus leaves. These date to the second half of the twelfth century and demonstrate the quality and variety of carving in the Kingdom of Sicily at that time (with some modern restorations) (figs. 6.14–6.15).

Below the central muqarnas vault and above the fountain on the ground floor of La Zisa is a sumptuous mosaic band whose basic design motif is three medallions (figs. 6.16–6.17). In the central circular frame, a pair of archers is set on either side of a tree. Both figures are holding the bows in their left arms and aiming up with their right toward three birds perched in the branches of the central tree. The mirroring effect is completed by the drapery of the figures, billowing behind them, which signals their dynamic movement. Flanking this central scene are two identical medallions depicting confronted peacocks placed below palm trees. The latter are static in comparison to the twinned figures.

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664 Alberti, Descrizione di tutta l’Italia, fols. 54v–55r: “Il cui fondo è condotto a sei cantoni, fra li quali per le chiarissime e trasparenti acque veggionsi pesci finti di diverse maniere alla mosaica molto sottilmente composti, li quali secondo il movimento delle chiare acque anche egli pare muoversi.” A similar motif was found in the Qal’a of the Benū Ḥammād in the remains of a shadîrwân discussed below. Golvin, Recherches archéologiques, 122–27; pls. 43–44.

665 Bellafiore, La Zisa, 50–51.

666 Otto Demus briefly discussed the iconography of this mosaic in his authoritative study of Norman Sicilian mosaics published in 1950. He integrates this into a short chapter dedicated to secular works, noting its derivation from Islamic as well as Sasanian models. In his chapter on the decorative program of Monreale, Demus noted that the medallion motif on the upper tier of the nave appears in the mosaic band in La Zisa’s Fountain Room. Idem, Mosaics of Norman Sicily (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950), 136, 178–83. The pendant archers flanking a central element in the Fountain Room mosaic recalls Sasanian decorative designs. Even though there is no direct correlation, the obvious connotation is that of power. The closest parallels are motifs on textiles and on several Siculo-Arabic ivory boxes. See the essays in Siculo-Arabic Ivories and Islamic Painting 1100–1300: Proceedings of the International Conference, Berlin, 6–8 July 2007, edited by David Knipp, Römische Forschungen der Bibliotheca Hertziana, 36 (Berlin: Hirmer, 2011).
Surrounding the medallions are vines with tendrils that fill in the rectangular space of the mosaic band.

Above the figural panel is a palmette motif also executed in mosaic that runs along three sides of the room (fig. 6.10). The band essentially frames the decorative elements of the hall, which in addition to the mosaic panel include the sculpted capitals and columns at the corners of the īwān. The palmette frieze is above a band of an eight-star motif in *opus sectile*, which outlines the mosaic panel and the socle level of marble paneling below and demarcates the large mosaic panel of the mirrored archers. Similar motifs outline the water basins on the floor below and flank the *shadīrwān* of the fountain in *opus sectile*.

Another space in the Norman secular or courtly sphere with comparable subject matter and arrangement of decorative elements is a reception room in the Joharia Tower of the main palace, referred to frequently in the literature by the misnomer “Sala di Ruggero” (also known as “Sala Normanna,” or the Norman Stanza) (figs. 6.18–6.20). Otto Demus has dated its mosaics to the reign of William II on stylistic grounds due to their resemblance to those at La Zisa and the mosaics in the uppermost tier of the nave of the cathedral of Monreale. In the Norman Stanza, mosaics adorn the room from the wainscoting to the arches that frame the four walls of the room, including the vaults above. At La Zisa and the examples cited from Monreale, the shared design of these bands is an interlaced medallion. In keeping with the secular function and decoration of the Fountain Room at La Zisa, the Norman Stanza contains motifs that would appear to be heraldic, in addition to the naturalistic representation of flora and fauna. The vault of the ceiling has an eagle in the

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668 Heraldry began to emerge in the mid-twelfth century in the Latin West even though most examples date from the thirteenth century onward. The eagle was a rather common symbol of power similar to the rampant lion. Robert Ousterhout has suggested a Palaeologan origin for heraldry. See idem, “Byzantium between East
center, surrounded by lions and griffins and the medallion element found at La Zisa, woven together into intricate geometric patterns.

On the four sides of the stanza, the spandrels of the arches that support the vault contain mosaics with the mirrored placement of animals and human figures and these are the defining decorative leitmotif of this area below the vault. Archers are also shown here, kneeling on one knee with their bows drawn on a pair of stags (fig. 6.19). Behind them are animals of the hunt that include cheetahs. Interspersed between the paired figures are palms and other trees. On the opposite side of the room are two centaurs facing one another with bows drawn beneath a central palm tree, echoing the paired archers at La Zisa (fig. 6.20). Additional animals represented in the Norman Stanza are peacocks, lions, and cheetahs. Therefore, it would appear that animals of the hunt, comprising highly stylized exotic varieties as well, were deemed fitting subject matter for the decoration of secular spaces. The viridarium in the Gecoard Park is likely to have had many of the aforementioned species within its bounds. In many cases, the animal in these mosaics would seem to be an amplified version of what the Norman kings actually hunted in their parks. We can recall Roger II’s stocking of Parco with roe and fallow deer as well as wild boar, according to Romuald of Salerno.

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669 Demus has argued that this was a principal space or throne room in the royal palace due to its ornate mosaics. He posited that the entrance to the room and the throne itself was situated in order that it would face the eagle with a hare underneath its claws in the vault above. The entrance today is due to Valenti’s restoration in the 1930s. Demus, Mosaics of Norman Sicily, 180–81. See also the discussion by David Knipp in “Some Aspects of Style and Heritage in the Norman Stanza,” Römisches Jahrbuch der Bibliotheca Hertziana 35 (2003), 173–208.

670 Masseti, “In the Gardens of Norman Palermo, Sicily,” 7–34.
d. Reception Hall on the Upper Floor of La Zisa

On the second floor is a central hall, referred to at times in the scholarly literature as the Sala Belvedere, located directly over the reception hall or Fountain Room (fig. 6.21). This space looks out toward Palermo’s harbor situated to the northeast. Another line of sight is the conspicuous pyramidal peak of Monte Cuccio to the southwest, perfectly framed in the central window of the opposite wall. Alberti described the central room on this level as an atrium open to the sky flanked by contiguous spaces on every side. He noted that the central court measured 20 feet on each flank and thus was square in form. On three sides were rooms that measured 5 feet deep. In the ceiling, he noted muqarnas vaults (“volte alla moresca fatte”) supported by four columns of fine marble that were 10 feet tall. Adjoining the atrium, on its fourth side, he saw an additional hall that measured 30 x 13 feet and 23 feet in height. The windows on this level had columns in their center worked in the “moresque” manner, according to Alberti.672 Spiral staircases that led to the top of the building were

671 Alberti’s work predates by more than a century the renovations of the structure when it came into the ownership of the Sandoval family in the seventeenth century. Therefore, the Descrittione is the only surviving testament of the upper floor interior’s arrangement prior to these drastic changes and is of immense importance for understanding the original architectural configuration of the palace pavilion. Idem, Descrittione di tutta l’Italia, fols. 55r–55v: “E di quindi si passa nel mezzo di tutto l’edificio sopra della fontana, ove è un chiostro o sia corte parimente longo e large venti piedi. In cui da tre lati veggionsi tre sacelletti, cioè un per lato, di larghezza per ciascuno piedi cinque, e di dieci in longhezza; sopra de’ quali sono le volte alla moresca fatte, come inanzi dimostrassimo. Sono sostentate le volte d’intorno di questo chiostro da quattro belle colonne di finissimo marmo di altezza di piedi dieci per ciascuna. Spira nel mezzo di detto chiostro l’aria; penso fussero posti in quei sacelletti li Dei di detti pagani. Appresso di ciascuno di questi chiostretti vi è una sala di piedi trenta in longhezza e tredici in larghezza, e ventitré in altezza. Alla quale corrispondono parte delle finestre, che dicessimo essere sopra del fregio della facciata, e parte di quelle che sono dalli lati dell’edificio. Sono tutte dette finestre colle colonnelle lavorata alla moresca. E ciascuna di queste sale ha una cameretta congiunta, a cui corrisponde una di dette finestre. Si può passare d’una nell’altra stantia. Appresso dellì doi chiostretti, dallì lati veggionsi le scale da salire sopra la sommità del palazzo, la quale è tutta coperta di bitume. Sono anche dette scale a lumaca, di gradi trent’otto per ciascuna. Fu fatto molto arteficiosamente detto astricato, con il quale è coperto tutto questo edificio, fuori dalla chiostri. Con tanto magisterio fu fatto questo edificio, che si vede esser tutto di grosse mura fabricato, che sono nella sommità di grossezza di piedi cinque, concatenato di grossissime travi di quercia fra le mura poste, si come in più luoghi mezzi rovinati si vede. Egli è l’astrico di cui è coperto l’edificio, come è detto, fatto con tanto arteficio, che non si può comprendere ove siano li meati per li quali scendeno l’acque che quivi dall’aria cascano.”

672 Ibid. The spatial arrangement of this level would seem to correspond to the four-īwān plan on a central courtyard, as discussed in Chapter Four.
placed on either side of the two smaller halls that he called “cloisters” (presumably also open-air spaces).

Describing the roof as covered in cement, Alberti noted the means by which water was conducted into the interior then presumably collected at the center of the open-air courtyard.673 From his account, we may conclude that this space essentially recreated the *impluvium* in a Roman *domus* on the top floor of the Norman palace pavilion (fig. 6.22). The center of the atrium contained a basin whose principal function was to collect rainwater that came in through a central opening, or *compluvium*, in the roof. At La Zisa, water was transported via stoneware pipes, fragments of which were found in the floor leading from the central basin to an adjacent service room that channeled water below.674 Thus, the upper story echoes the Fountain Room below by incorporating water that has cooling properties in the central atrium.

One of the more noteworthy questions regarding La Zisa is the use of internal space. The consensus in the scholarly literature is of a dichotomy between public and private, to which we can add gender in the division among floors. The Fountain Room on the ground level was reserved for the king and his court and was intended for ceremonial purposes such as the reception of foreign dignitaries. This function was clearly indicated by the choice of a cruciform hall (examined in Chapter Four). The vestibule that runs in front formed the overall design of an inverted T-shape (fig. 6.11). Conversely, the upper story was reserved for the inner circle, composed of servants, attendants, courtiers, and family members. The

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673 Ibid.
674 Staacke, *Un Palazzo normanno a Palermo*, 50–64, 75–76.
atrium on the top floor was mostly likely intended for private receptions. The royal family and the women of the palace probably occupied the smaller, adjoining rooms on this level.675

e. The Small Pavilion Facing the Façade of La Zisa According to Leandro Alberti’s Descrittione

Water was conducted from the fountain in the main hall of the ground floor via an underground canal to an exterior pool. The basin is on a direct axis to the Fountain Room, measuring 15 x 22.5 meters, with the shorter side opposite La Zisa’s façade (figs. 6.23–6.24).676 The pool was made of large blocks of stone coated with hydraulic stucco up to 10 centimeters below ground. Yet its overall depth remains unknown despite numerous interventions in the twentieth century.677 The middle of the basin featured a rectangular island with a diminutive structure placed at its center. Alberti thus described the pool and pavilion:

Descending next from the palace, one can see opposite the principal portal and at a short distance a roughly square fishpond created from the water that came from the aforementioned fountain and stream. In this way the fishpond was formed. Measuring 200 feet in total, and 50 feet on each side thus being square, with an artificially made reticulated wall [opus reticulatum] of square blocks, in the middle of which a beautiful and elegant pavilion may be seen, also square in form that may be entered via a stone bridge, at the head of which there is a door, from which one passes through a small room 12 feet wide and 6 long, with a groin vault with two windows one on each side from where one can see the live fish swimming in the water. One may then move into a

675 The concept of privacy and in particular with reference to gender is compelling from the viewpoint of a structure built in an Islamic mode, although, it is difficult to arrive at any conclusive conclusion with regard to La Zisa. See the older essay by Guy T. Petherbridge, “Vernacular Architecture: The House and Society,” in Architecture of the Islamic World: Its History and Social Meaning, with a Complete Survey of Key Monuments, edited by G. Michell (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978), 193–204.
676 Meier, normannischen Königspaläste, 78–79.
677 Francesco Valenti attempted unsuccessfully to finance the renovations of the pool in the 1920s. The size of the pool was reconfirmed during the excavations carried out by Vincenzo Tusa in the 1970s in the area facing the principal façade of the structure. Tusa, “Scavi medievali a Palermo,” 83.
measured, and artificially [constructed] room that is 8 feet wide, and 12 feet long. Here one can find three beautiful and measured windows, which it is to say one on each side, and in front of the third one can see the palace. The middle of each [window] is supported by two small arches with straight columns of very fine marble. Covering this room is a superb and excellent vault worked in the Moresque. The pavement of the floor is composed of very finely worked marble as we can see, although, presently a great part of it is ruined. . . One can descend into the fishpond via several marble stairs."678

According to Alberti, a stone bridge granted access to the square pavilion that had a doorway.679 The room inside measured approximately 12 x 6 feet, and its ceiling contained a muqarnas vault. The space opened up to a smaller room that had three windows. Like the Fountain Room, it was ornamented with intricately carved capitals and marble columns, and its floor was made of marble. The central pavilion in the small pool looked on to the façade in addition to the splendid gardens that surrounded La Zisa. Alberti’s description of the fish in the basin that could be seen from windows of the pavilion heightens the sense of artifice involved in the creation of such a structure for the king’s pleasure.680

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678 Alberti, Descrittione di tutta l’Italia, fols. 50r–51v: “Scendendo poi dal detto palazzo, vedesi avanti la maggior porta per poco spazio una vaga quadrata peschiera, creata dall’acque, che dalla fontana soprannominata da questo ruscelletto scendono. Così è formata questa peschiera. Gira intorno 200. piedi, che danno 50. per ogni lato, essendo quadrata, intorniata di artificiose reticolate mura, nel cui mezzo vedesi un bello e vago edificio, anche egli di quadrata figura, a cui entrasi per un picciolo ponte di pietra, nel capo del quale vi è una porta, per la quale si passa in una saletta di dodeci piedi larga, e sei longa, voltata in croce con due fenestre cioè una per ciascun lato, dalle quali si possono vedere li vivi pesci per l’acque notare. Poi di quindi si passa in una misurata, ed artificiosa stanza di larghezza di otto piedi, e larga dodeci. E quivi ritrovensi tre belle, e misurate finestre cioè una per ogni lato, e nella fronte la terza che mira al palazzo. Nel mezzo di ciascuna di essa sostenta doi piccoli archi una striata colonella di finissimo marmo. Cuopre questa stanza una superba ed eccellente volta alla moresca lavorata. Il pavimento di lavorate pietre di marmo molto diligentemente composto si vede, benchè, hora gran parte di esso è rovinato. . . Nella peschiera si poteva scendere per alcuni scaloni di marmo.”

679 Alberti’s attentive description inspired a marvelous graphic reconstruction by the Superintendent Francesco Valenti (fig. 6.24).

680 In the Great Palace in Constantinople, there was a Persian-style pavilion called the Mouchroutas (from mahruta, Arabic, Persian, and Turkish for cone or dome). From a description by Nikolaos Mesarites, scholars have surmised that it probably had a muqarnas dome set with gold mosaic. The structure itself was reached by a stairway with multi-colored tiles. Its interior was decorated with figures that Mesarites described as Persian that included a depiction of an emperor seated on the floor in the manner of a Seljuk monarch. Most likely built by Manuel I (r. 1143–80), since Mesarites references the protostrator and governor of Cilicia under this
f. Fountains, Shadirwān, and Salsabīl

At both Lo Scibene and La Zisa, the wall facing the entrance to the central cruciform hall is dominated by a fountain (or salsabīl in Arabic).681 As discussed in Chapter Four, at Lo Scibene this element was placed against the back wall of the central room on the ground floor. A fountain is also depicted on the painted ceiling of the Cappella Palatina, in which it is situated between two figures with a representation of a decorative palm tree in a basin (fig. 6.25).682 At La Zisa, water flows onto a marble slab known as a shadirwān (derived from the Persian, signifying drapery or curtain) carved with chevrons (fig. 6.12).683 Water continued down a channel, which bisects the center of the principal hall, passing through three small basins and beneath the corridor in front of the room.684

The excavation of the Qal’a of the Benū Ḥammād in Algeria uncovered the earliest surviving shadirwān, dating to the second half of the eleventh century. The oblong marble slab measures 130 x 37 centimeters and 14 centimeters thick. In addition to the chevron pattern at La Zisa, we can see three fish carved in low relief on one end of the panel (figs.

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681 Salsabīl is the name of a spring in the Qu’rān, one of the four rivers of Paradise, and the source of the rivers of ar-Raḥmān (signifying “mercy,” also the title of Surah 55 of the Qu’rān). See the older essay by Georges Marçais, “Salsabil et Shadirwan,” in Études d’orientalisme dédiées à la mémoire de Lévi-Provençal (Paris: G.-P. Maisonneuve et Larose, 1962), vol. 2, 639–46.

682 In the literature, the prevailing explanation is that such imagery would have made up the so-called “princely cycle” of the ceiling. See Ernst Grube, The Painted Ceilings of the Cappella Palatina, 22.

683 Shadirwān is a Persian word that has entered into Arabic and signified a kind of cloth or drapery that was suspended in tents, and later on in palaces and mansions. Therefore, the term had architectural associations before it came to signify fountains set into walls or the carved marble slab onto which water from these fixtures flowed. See Yasser Tabbaa, “The “Salsabil” and “Shadirwan” in Medieval Islamic Courtyards,” Environmental Design: Journal of the Islamic Environmental Design Research Centre 1 (1986), 34–37; and Nasser Rabbat, “Shadirwān,” in Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition, Brill Online, http://referenceworks.brillonline.com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/theses/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/shadirwan-SIM_6737 (accessed: May 23, 2013); Marçais, “Salsabil et Shadirwan,” 639–46.

6.26–6.27). The **salsabīl** coupled with a **shadirwān** was a common feature in numerous houses in Fusṭāṭ, which contained a similar axial configuration of a fountain set into a wall with a channel leading to a smaller basin (figs. 4. 64–4.65). In the Norman sphere, Lo Scibene’s main hall on its lower level had a comparable spatial arrangement. The surviving example at La Zisa would suggest that the **salsabīl** was habitually present in elite architecture in twelfth-century Palermo. Another fountain placed on an axis with a central courtyard was found during the excavations at the southern palatial complex of the eleventh-century Ghaznavid dynasty at Lashkar-i Bazār in Afghanistan (fig. 6.28). Here a long channel on an axis led to an octagonal basin in the center of a courtyard, from where water came in from one side and was drained at the opposite end.

The configuration of a **salsabīl** set into a wall and a **shadirwān** remains at the **bīmāristān** or hospital and mausoleum of the Mamlūk caliph Qalāwūn of 1284–85 in Cairo (figs. 4.66–4.69). Built on the site of the former Fāṭimid Western Palace, the inlaid stone or mosaics of the basins greatly resemble those at La Zisa. Unlike the Palermitan building, the **opus sectile** patterns of the **bīmāristān** are square with inset round circles or discs decorated with inlaid stone in a variety of patterns. The south and north īwān are raised above their surroundings on a platform. Below these structural elements, there are square basins. From the canal on the level below, water flowed to a pool in the center of the courtyard. In sum, the four-īwān configuration in Qalāwūn’s **bīmāristān** has features in common with the reception halls or qā’a spaces of La Zisa and Lo Scibene. As discussed in Chapter Four, this

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arrangement was widespread in elite residences and palaces in the Islamic world, in which fountains and water basins were important components.

g. Passive Air Cooling at La Zisa and other Norman Residential Buildings

Within these elite environments, water plays a critical role while working together with other architectural elements to create a cooling effect. The Palermitan residential suburban palaces were clearly intended for seasonal use. We know from Romuald that Roger II escaped the heat of the summer by going to his hunting lodge in the mountains. At La Zisa, it is patently apparent that it was intended to be inhabited predominantly in the hottest months of the year due to its elaborate passive air cooling system. The upper floor was also once open to the sky according to Alberti. In sum, several disparate components at La Zisa worked together as part of a thermal comfort system (figs. 6.29–6.33). Its thick walls played an important role in this regard, as did the windows located above the internal doorways throughout the pavilion that allowed for the circulation of air even when the entranceways were blocked with drapery.688

The windtowers that flank the palace are another key constituent of the passive air cooling system in place (fig. 6.7).689 These two rectangular towers are 26.50 meters high. They utilize an ancient technology that was developed in the arid regions of Iran roughly two millennia ago. Functioning in an opposite manner to chimneys, these towers funneled air from above and distributed it to different floors through a series of vents (fig. 6.34).

688 All of these elements were mainstays in residential architecture in warm or hot climates. Badawy, “Architectural Provision,” 125; also Petruccioli, “The Courtyard House,” 3–20.
689 A passive air cooling system is the employment of technological or design features to cool buildings without consuming power. Fathy, Natural Energy and Vernacular Architecture; Mario Grosso, Il raffrescamento passivo degli edifici in zone a clima temperato: principi e archetipi bioclimatici, criteri progettuali, metodi di calcolo, esempi progettuali, foreword by Matheos Santamouris, preface by Federico Butera, contributions by Luca Raimondo (Santarcangelo di Romagna: Maggioli, 2008), 146–59; see also Olivier Jaubert, “Capteurs de vents d’Égypte. Essai de typologie,” Annales Islamique 29 (1995), 169–231.
incoming air then came into contact with the flowing water of the fountain on the ground floor and the indoor basin on the upper floor. Cooling considerably in this process, the air coming in from the towers enacted what is known as the Bernoulli effect. The incoming air became heavier and was subsequently drawn into the living spaces adjacent to the water sources, circulating thanks to the double-stacked interior windows placed at an angle to each other. The cool air would eventually be released from the open atrium at the top and, depending on the direction of the wind, the windtower on the opposite side.

A crucial component overlooked in most studies of La Zisa is the siting of the palace pavilion at an angle that optimized wind directionality, allowing for the maximum circulation of air into the structure. On a southeast–northwest axis, this position would seem to be the most efficient for “catching” the air in the windtowers. Further elements that worked with the towers for climate control include the thick exterior walls and small windows that trap the air, thereby preserving the cool nighttime temperatures. This functional rationale might explain the fortified appearance that could be associated with, say, a defensive keep, that would seem out of place for a summer house.

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691 The fountain on the ground floor and the combination of the compluvium and impluvium on the top level formed an ingenious and effective manner of collecting, filtering, and cooling water. Ibid.
693 During excavations carried out in the early 1970s by the archaeologist Vincenzo Tusa to stabilize the building, a tract was opened up close to the southwest corner. Here Tusa found a semi-subterranean corridor partially excavated into the rock that was probably originally covered by a vault and an underground chamber. The basement could have worked in conjunction with the windtowers, insofar that it cooled the air circulating in the structure. Tusa, “Scavi medievali a Palermo,” 60–61. Known as a serdab in Persian, or “cold water”, this structural element in the form of a subterranean space was often used in conjunction with a windtower to create a cooler atmosphere. Adapted from Ancient Egyptian and Babylonian examples, the serdab was an underground space used to provide relief from unbearably hot weather. In his classic essay, Alexander Badawy has noted the presence of a serdab in the eighth-century ‘Abbāsid palace of Ukhaidir. In the palace Jawsaq al-Khāqānī at Sāmarrā’ built by the caliph al-Mu’tasim in ca. 836, two underground chambers were excavated into the rock below, creating grottos and a large water basin or fountain that was 70 meters in diameter. Idem, "Architectural Provision against Heat in the Orient," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 17, 2 (1958), 127. See also Alexandre Lézine, “Persistance des traditions pré-islamiques dans l’architecture domestique de l’Égypte.”
Another way to conceptualize the significance of La Zisa is that it was an experimental structure built on the basis of scientific knowledge gathered by the Norman court. It is possible that other buildings on the Palermitan plain implemented air cooling before arriving at the system perfected at La Zisa. An important example is the residence at the castle of Caronia dating to Roger II’s reign (fig. 4.61). The central hall on its upper level contained wind vents that conducted air from the lower floor. The square apertures measure 50 centimeters on each side and are positioned on the floor flanking the principal archway of the central room.

h. Palatine Chapel of La Zisa

The chapel of La Zisa is 40 meters from the north flank of the palace pavilion, and it is situated on the same axis or orientation in relation to the city (figs. 6.35–6.38). In the seventeenth century, an additional wing built by the Spanish Sandoval family connected the palace with the chapel (fig. 1.3). At the end of the nineteenth century, the residential wing was still standing, as can be seen in Adolf Goldschmidt’s plan of the complex.

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*musulmane,* *Annales islamologiques* 11 (1972), 1–22. In the Norman sphere, the underground grotto at Lo Scibene comes to mind in terms of incorporating such a component into an elite residential setting.

694 Krönig, *Castello di Caronia*, 46, 52, 60. Similar ventilation systems can be found in later Ayyūbid military castles and their residences, for instance at Shawbak (the Crusader castle of Krak de Montreal/Mons Regalis), first built by Baldwin I of Jerusalem and conquered by Salāḥ al-Dīn. Ventilation shafts have been recently identified by a team of Italian archaeologists in the fortification’s residential complex dating to the Ayyūbid period. See Rugiadi, “Il complesso di ricevimento,” 212–14; another example is present in the Ayyūbid citadel in Damascus, located to the sides of the northern and western īwān of the principal courtyard and in other spaces in the northeastern and eastern parts of the citadel. See Tabbaa, *Constructions of Power*, 90; at Qal‘at Nağm there was also a ventilation system. Yovitchitch, “Qal‘at Najm,” 124.

695 The floor below is likely to have been a storeroom. Krönig, *Castello di Caronia*, 52.

696 On the ground level there were a series of rooms while only a balustrade remains of the upper floor. Krönig, “Die Rettung der ‘Zisa’,” 150.

697 Goldschmidt, “normannischen Königspaläste,” 578.
chapel’s northern flank a church dedicated to Gesù, Maria, and S. Stefano was built in 1803. At this time, the Norman church became its vestry.\textsuperscript{698}

The earliest reference to the chapel is in a privilege that dates to 1274, which cites the Cappella Palatina’s suffragan churches as the “Sancte Trinitatis de Azisa,” “Sancti Philippi” of La Favara, and the “Sancti Michaelis de Parco” at Altofonte.\textsuperscript{699} There is no record that securely establishes a twelfth-century date, and Romuald of Salerno and Pseudo-Hugh Falcandus do not mention the chapel in their works. While some scholars have questioned whether the chapel is Norman, most have attributed it to the same period in which the palace was being constructed, between ca. 1165 and 1180.\textsuperscript{700}

Due to the seventeenth-century wing attached to the south flank of the medieval chapel and the church of Gesù, Maria and S. Stefano on its north wall, only the apse of the palatine chapel can be readily discerned from the exterior. The entire length of the church in addition to the narthex measures 17.20 meters.\textsuperscript{701} The nave measures 4.80 meters wide and is spanned by a single groin vault (figs. 6.38–6.39).\textsuperscript{702} On the ground floor, a room to the south flanks the length of the nave that was possibly the Norman chapel’s vestry (fig. 6.40). The structure of the church extends to the west, where there is a presently a large portal leading to other spaces covered with groin vaults. Above is a grand royal box that shares the

\textsuperscript{698} Trizzano, \textit{SS. Trinità alla Zisa}, 3–5.
\textsuperscript{701} Trizzano, \textit{SS. Trinità alla Zisa}, 5–7.
\textsuperscript{702} In terms of its interior spatial arrangement, the chapel at La Zisa is most reminiscent of that at Parco, which has a single nave and a narthex. Analogous plans can be seen at the ruined church of S. Michele at Altavilla Milicia on the coast 30 kilometers to the southeast of Palermo. Di Stefano, \textit{Monumenti}, 29; Mario Guiotto, “La chiesa di S. Michele in territorio di Altavilla Milicia,” in \textit{Congresso nazionale di Storia dell’architettura, Palermo, 24–30 settembre 1950} (Palermo: De Magistris & C., 1956), 267–73.
width of the nave and overlooks the interior of the chapel, similar to the example at Parco (figs. 6.41, 5.25–5.26).\textsuperscript{703}

The nave is separated from the sanctuary by a large rounded arch elevated by a step (fig. 6.42).\textsuperscript{704} On the apse are two small niches reminiscent of those at La Favara and Parco. Most notably, in the sanctuary are the only remains of the chapel’s decoration are the \textit{muqarnas} vaults made of stucco just below the north and south sides of the dome (figs. 6.43–6.44).\textsuperscript{705} Aside from the painted wooden ceiling of the Cappella Palatina, which dates to ca. 1140, there are no \textit{muqarnas} vaults in ecclesiastical buildings in Sicily, with one exception; the cathedral of Palermo contains such a vault that would have been located in the south apse of the twelfth-century basilica.\textsuperscript{706} The chapels of the suburban residences are rather simple structures in terms of their architectonic configuration, consisting of a single nave. Since the interior of La Favara has been entirely stripped and what we see at Parco is largely due to Valenti’s 1920s restoration, we only have the stucco \textit{muqarnas} in the dome of La Zisa’s chapel as an indication of the original ornamentation of the chapels in the extramural royal palaces.

\textsuperscript{704} However, unlike the chapels of La Favara and Parco, the arch does not obscure part of the sanctuary.
\textsuperscript{706} The ceiling of the Cappella Palatina date to the earliest period of construction and, thus, to its initial function as an \textit{aula regia} and not as a chapel. Tronzo, \textit{Cultures of His Kingdom}, 16–19. The pendentives of several small churches in their transition zone resemble somewhat the construction of \textit{muqarnas} vaults. These aforementioned examples were mostly part of Basilian monasteries in the Val Demone in northeastern Sicily dating to the rule of Count Roger I, on the most part, and at the latest to Roger II. See Nicklies, “Builders, Patrons, and Identity,” 99–114. On the cathedral of Palermo, see Di Stefano, \textit{Monumenti}, 53–58.
i. Late Antique Thermal Complex at La Zisa

An aqueduct of an unknown date is situated only meters behind the chapel to the southwest (figs. 6.45–6.46). The water supply system of the complex has not been studied in any detail (apart from the interior configuration of the fountain and the remains of pipes found in the 1980s excavations discussed earlier). In all likelihood, the aqueduct brought in water from the Gabriele River to the south. Clearly, the area around the Norman palace had always been a fecund site due to its abundant water resources, making the land highly suitable for agricultural cultivation. Despite this fact, the earliest description of La Zisa’s surroundings is Fazello’s mid-sixteenth century account.

In later cartographic representations of Palermo and its hinterland, most notably the engraver Natale Bonifacio’s map of 1580, La Zisa and its chapel can be easily identified (figs. 6.47–6.48). The palace pavilion is shown at an oblique view. According to Bonifacio’s map, encircling the building are three distinct circuits of walls. The first delimits the rectangular courtyard on the eastern side. The second begins at the western end of the chapel and concludes at the third ring, on the southern side. The third encompasses what could have comprised the entire royal park. The map also depicts what are presumably two branches of the Gabriele River, one of which would seem to correspond with the chapel or perhaps with the aqueduct behind it. Overall, the chapel appears to have been located within the second and third walled circuits, shown with a courtyard in front of it so that it seems to be separate from the palace pavilion.

Excavations at La Zisa in the 1970s uncovered the remains of a thermal structure below a seventeenth-century marble fountain at its northeastern corner. The archaeologist

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708 Ibid.
Vincenzo Tusa found here *suspensura*, or piers of round bricks that supported a suspended floor over a hypocaust cavity through which hot air was conducted (figs. 6.49–6.50). From Tusa’s preliminary report of 1973 (a final report was never published), the bath was rectangular in plan and its walls were a meter thick. Even though he could not identify where the heating oven or water boiler (*praefurnium*, also *propigneum*) was located on the lower level, hot air came from an opening on its west side. Whether the space was a *caldarium* or a *tepidarium* is unknown. The date of the bath at La Zisa could not be established either, since stratigraphic data was lacking. All of the ceramic finds originated from subsequent levels and no relevant numismatic material was found.

The conclusion drawn from the site’s excavator is that the thermal structure could date to late antiquity or the Byzantine period. The finding of such a significant building, in addition to the aqueduct, suggests that both were part of a larger compound since it is unlikely that they would have stood on their own in the countryside. The baths could have belonged to an agricultural estate or a rustic villa. The presence of this sort of complex in close vicinity to Palermo or its periurban area is a distinct possibility if we recall Amatus of Montecassino’s account of the paradise-like dwellings seen by the Norman troops on their way into the city, as discussed in Chapter Two.

II. William II’s Palace Pavilion of La Cuba in the Genoard Park

While the lavish La Zisa was certainly William I’s prized summer residence, the large rectangular box of La Cuba, 850 meters to the southwest, was arguably the showpiece of the Genoard Park (fig. 6.51). The etymology of the structure itself, La Cuba, is derived from

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710 Ibid.
qubba (قبة), a generic term for dome in Arabic. Therefore, the possible existence of a central dome has long presented a tantalizing puzzle for scholars. The monumental inscription in naskhī script on the cornice of the building proclaims that it was built by William II in the year 1180.712 The palace pavilion was situated directly on a large artificial lake in a prominent position on the road from Palermo to the Benedictine abbey of Monreale, the first grand foundation of William’s reign.

La Cuba remained in royal hands until it passed in the third quarter of the thirteenth century to the Angevins, as recorded in two diplomas of 1278. In these documents, Charles I of Anjou gave La Cuba, in addition to La Favara and the royal residences of Parco and La Zisa, to one Giordano Mazono.713 The structure and its gardens and vineyards suffered significant damage by the French troops in 1325.714 Despite its varying fortunes, the palace pavilion was never forgotten. Most notably, La Cuba formed the setting for the sixth tale on the fifth day of Boccaccio’s Decameron (1352).715 Part of the royal demesne until 1516, the already dilapidated building was transferred into private hands and numerous modifications were made. The Bourbon-appointed physician Gian Filippo Ingrassia transformed the site into a hospital for the plague in 1575. As discussed in Chapter Two, he included an illustration of La Cuba and its surroundings in his treatise Informatione del pestifero (fig.

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712 Translated from Amari. Idem, Le epigrafi arabeiche, 82–84: “Fix here your attention, stop and look! You will see a beautiful room [hall] belonging to the most magnificent of the kings of the earth, William the Second. . . [in the year of] our Lord the Messiah, eleven hundred, eighty years are added to it that passed in a pleasing manner.” This inscription will be discussed in further detail below.
By the eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth century, it was the cavalry barracks of the Bourbon army, accounting for its poor state of preservation (figs. 6.52–6.53). The court engineer Domenico Marvuglia was the first to restore the structure in 1850. Amari’s translation of La Cuba’s inscription marks a pivotal point in the historiography of medieval architecture of Norman Sicily. Since then, La Cuba, and subsequently La Zisa, have been securely dated to the second half of the twelfth century and to the reign of the two Williams.

As a result of Amari’s findings, Palermo’s Superintendency of Monuments made the restoration of La Cuba a priority by the interwar period. In two separate campaigns, between 1919 and 1925, and again in 1936, Superintendent Francesco Valenti restored the structure to the extent that he essentially rebuilt its southern and eastern sides. Pietro Lojacono, later superintendent, uncovered a central fountain during restorations of the internal water system (figs. 6.54–6.55). What remains of the twelfth-century building is its outward form or exterior shell, since the interior has been entirely stripped of its ornamentation. Only part of a muqarnas vault incised with arabesques executed in stucco is extant in the center of its

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716 Ingrassia, *Informazione del pestifero*, 304.
718 In reference to La Cuba, from here on I will refer to the faces of the building using the four cardinal directions for the sake of clarity, despite the fact that south corresponds to northwest–southeast and east to northeast–southwest axis and so on.
720 La Cuba in particular was stripped of its interior ornamentation over the centuries, which, from what we can conclude from the remains at La Zisa (also heavily restored in both the more distant and recent past), would have included marble wainscoting and fountains. With the assistance of Vittorio Noto, the architect Giuseppe Caronia completed some limited interventions on La Cuba in the 1970s. Most recently, in the 1990s, Franco Tomaselli restored the structure. Caronia, Noto, and Minnella, *La Cuba di Palermo*, 32–35.
western wall (fig. 6.56), as well as some of the original design of the central fountain or *impluvium* (figs. 6.57–6.58). Due to La Cuba’s poor state of preservation and Valenti’s lackluster restoration, there are still major difficulties with reconstructing its spatial configuration and the location of its entrance (figs. 6.59–6.60).

**a. Structure of La Cuba**

The palace pavilion of La Cuba measures 31.15 meters in length and 16.80 meters in width; its walls rise to a height of 16 meters.\(^{721}\) At the center of each side of the building are four tower-like elements of equal height, but different in their base dimensions. The lateral sides measure 5.35 meters in length and jut outwards at 1.25 meters (fig. 6.51). In their placement on each face of La Cuba, there is a similar spatial relationship to the two towers on the shorter sides of La Zisa, which operated as a passive air cooling system. However, due to La Cuba’s degraded state, the purpose of these structural components remains unclear and could have had a purely aesthetic rather than a utilitarian function. Excavations at the site in the 1930s uncovered fountains that were situated in the center niches on the longer sides, or on the western and the eastern walls (fig. 6.54). The interior of the eastern niche contains the remnants of an ornamental *muqarnas* vault executed in stucco discussed earlier in the chapter (fig. 6.56).

La Cuba has a solid base measuring 3.5 meters in height, made up of horizontal bands of masonry. This level is slightly flared toward the base of the building. Remnants of red hydraulic cement are visible on its northern side, indicating that the lower section was intended to be or was completely immersed in water. In nineteenth-century photos of La

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\(^{721}\) Ibid., 178–79.
Cuba, this part appears to have been whitewashed. Above this smooth basement level, there are blind arches of varying sizes (fig. 6.53).⁷²² On the exterior of the rectangular box-like structure, there is a playful alternation between wider and narrower arched elements, resembling openings at times. Unlike other monuments in the Norman sphere, these are not framed by a single stringcourse.⁷²³ There are also conch-like decorative devices placed in niches on the façade. On the cornice is an epigraphic frieze, which measures 40 centimeters high and is delimited by two smooth parallel rows of stone, discussed below in detail.

b. Interior of La Cuba and Reconstruction of its Original Spatial Configuration

From the ground plan, we can distinguish that La Cuba had three principal spaces nearly equal in size (fig. 6.54), which is analogous to the arrangement of La Zisa (figs. 6.3–6.6). The main focus of the structure was not on the longer flank as at the earlier palace pavilion or seemingly on one face of the building in particular. From what we can discern from the remains of La Cuba, there appears to have been an internal vertical spatial alignment. Nonetheless, the question of what was the primary entrance to the palace is unsolved. Unlike La Zisa, it is likely to have been on one of the shorter sides because the center of the longer flanks contained fountains.⁷²⁴

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⁷²² Eugenio Galdieri has raised several important points regarding this basement level, since in various archival photos a double lancet window can be seen on the lower part of the north side. Other photos show that this level has been whitewashed. See idem, “A proposito della Cuba di Palermo,” Oriente Moderno n.s. 90, 2 (2010), 333–35.

⁷²³ Even though we still do not know how much of what we see of the present façade is the product of Francesco Valenti’s restorations.

⁷²⁴ The spatial arrangement of La Cuba’s interior is closest to the qā’ā seen in Egyptian examples, as discussed in Chapter Four. The palace of Caronia had a similar configuration on its principal floor. Bellafiore, La Cuba di Palermo, 9–11; for comparanda from Cairo, see Garcin, Maury, Revault, and Zakariya, Palais et maisons du Caire, vol. 1, 49–98.
The northern section of La Cuba faced directly onto the man-made lake and is cruciform in shape and is, therefore, reminiscent of La Zisa’s so-called Fountain Room and the center hall at Lo Scibene (figs. 6.61–6.62). Scholars have interpreted this space as the principal formal hall at La Cuba, flanked by two oblong rooms of equal dimensions for auxiliary uses. Although, one possibility is that the latter spaces were airshafts; these were incorporated for ventilation purposes functioning in a similar manner to the windtowers at La Zisa (fig. 6.7). However, the building’s poor state of preservation does not permit any further conclusions.725

c. Fountain in the Central Space and the Question of the Central Dome

The cruciform hall and its twin adjoining auxiliary spaces at La Cuba looked onto the central part of the structure through three openings (figs. 6.54, 6.60). The center of the building formed a perfect square, each side measuring 14 meters and framed by four monumental arches in its interior. The two examples on the shorter axis of the width of the palace pavilion framed the entrances on either end of the inside of the structure. Spanning the entire height of building, these were supported by columns whose bases leaned on plinths (fig. 6.59). Even though these have long since been removed, the niches in which these were placed can still be seen.726

The arches on the longer side of La Cuba’s central area frame two niches measuring 4.20 x 2.16 meters wide that once contained fountains. These side spaces set into the center

726 At the request of King Martin of Aragon (r. 1398–1410), four porphyry columns including their bases and capitals were removed from La Cuba and taken to Barcelona in 1405. Marco Rosario Nobile, “The Residences of the Kings of Sicily, from Martin of Aragon to Ferdinand the Catholic,” in *A Renaissance Architecture of Power: Princely Palaces in the Italian Quattrocento*, edited by Silvia Beltramo, Flavia Cantatore, and Marco Folin (Boston: Brill, 2015), 357. See also Salvatore Fodale, “Martino l’Umano e i ‘beni culturali’ siciliani: restauri e spoliazioni,” “La Memoria”. *Annali della facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia* 7 (1993), 45.
of the wall complemented the focal point of the palace pavilion, which had an additional fountain or *impluvium* for the collection of rainwater. The 1936 excavation by Pietro Lojacono found here a substratum of pavement made up of a mixture of a lime and earthenware. He reconstructed the decorative motif of an eight-pointed star in the middle of the basin, and hence at the center of the building (figs. 6.55, 6.58).\(^{727}\) The only other evidence of its original ornamentation is situated above a window on the first level and a fountain (no longer extant), corresponding to the interior of the tower-like element on the center of the eastern longer flank of La Cuba. Here is a remnant of a *muqarnas* vault in stucco, likely to have been polychromed, carved with floral designs (fig. 6.56).\(^{728}\)

The 1930s excavation also uncovered remnants of four columns measuring 1.5 meters in width and 2 meters in length situated at the perimeter of the pavilion’s central basin (fig. 6.57). One popular hypothesis in the earlier scholarship was that the large central room was sheltered by a cupola. A calculation of the distance between these column posts has suggested that the diameter of such a dome would measure approximately 8 meters.\(^{729}\) Yet, this interpretation is problematic since Fazello’s sixteenth-century work does not mention La Cuba (and neither does Alberti). Therefore, we do not have any description that would indicate the pre-modern configuration of La Cuba as we do for La Zisa. In the engraving accompanying Ingrassia’s treatise there is no trace either (fig. 2.15). Most crucially, there are structural difficulties involved with supporting a dome of this span. Susanna Bellafiore, who


\(^{729}\) Bellafiore, *La Cuba di Palermo*, 18.
maintains the central cupola hypothesis, has proposed that it was made of timber thereby bypassing the load-bearing limitations of stone.730

d. Artificial Pool Surrounding the Structure of La Cuba and Question of Ways of Access

Unlike the central dome (or, rather, lack thereof), the palace pavilion is rarely mentioned without its “biverium” in post-medieval sources. Other structures in the Norman sphere had significant waterscapes, yet the relationship between La Cuba and its large pool was much stronger: the building itself was projected to be situated within it, and water surrounded it on at least three sides. The artificial basin was fed by the Gabriele River, and like the lake of Maredolce at La Favara, this waterscape was planned on a monumental scale. Facing onto the sea, the shorter side of the pool is on a northwest–southeast axis. Vittorio Noto has reconstructed the basin of the Cuba as measuring 80 meters on its shorter side and approximately 320 meters in length.731

There has long been a debate in the scholarly literature about what constituted the principal façade and entrance to the palace pavilion, a task made more difficult when considering the relationship of both to the lake.732 A preliminary consideration would

730 Ibid., 18–19.
731 Caronia, Noto, and Minnella, La Cuba di Palermo, 176. Henri Bresc has calculated that it held 96,000 square meters. Bresc argues that the pavilion of La Cuba was the centerpiece of the Genoard Park and that based on Fazello’s description it had a menagerie on its grounds. See Bresc, “Les jardins royaux de Palerme,” 249. The distance from the east front of the building to the border of the pool cannot be established with any certainty due to the various demolitions that have taken place over the centuries. In addition, the abandoned barracks of the Bourbon cavalry still occupy this area. It is likely that the lake originally had a utilitarian function as well; insofar, that runoff water could have used to irrigate the parkland and for agricultural purposes. The use of water basins to this end in the plain of Palermo was relatively widespread, commonly known in the later medieval period as gebbias, such as that on the former property of the Jesuits that also included Lo Seibene.
732 Girault de Prangey believed that the entrance was on the north side of the palace that faces onto Palermo. Bellafiore, Cuba di Palermo, 15–16. Francesco Valenti, who conducted the most significant restorations in the 1920–30s, believed that the principal entrance was on the south end. Therefore, he focused his restoration
indicate that La Cuba had an orientation similar to La Zisa and the earlier Lo Scibene, both of whose main faces looked toward the medieval city. A functional analysis of the space indicates, however, that the north façade was not reachable by foot since it was situated directly on the pool of water. Since this feature was quite clearly planned with the palace, this face of the structure was presumably not intended as the entryway. Yet, we cannot know if the basin was maintained to full capacity at all times. Moreover, it is entirely possible that the primary way of access to the palace was by boat.

In any case, the entrance to La Cuba was conceived differently from that of Lo Scibene and La Zisa. Even though we do not know the principal entryway to La Zisa or its interior circulation, the fountain and series of basins in the center room on the ground floor create a central axis. Despite the fact that we know significantly less regarding La Cuba’s internal configuration, the north side that faced directly onto the water basin is architecturally the most complex—it is a cruciform hall with two longitudinal auxiliary rooms. In particular, when we consider other monuments in the secular realm in Sicily, namely La Zisa and Lo Scibene, the north end of La Cuba was likely a formal space intended for official or state functions. Thus, the entrance was probably elsewhere and not on the back wall of this hall. Another possibility is that the main entryway was on the opposite end, on the south side. The inscription that wraps around the structure could provide a further framework of interpretation when considering probable ways of access as discussed below.733

The relationship between La Cuba and its water basin is reminiscent of that of La Favara and its attendant lake of Maredolce. Nevertheless, La Cuba would seem to have efforts on this part of the structure, going as far as adding a tympanum above what he believed to be the doorway. Galdieri, “A proposito della Cuba,” 336.

functioned principally as a reception hall due to its lack of auxiliary rooms. From what remains, it appears that the entire building was conceived to have only a single or primary story (although an internal gallery level is certainly a possibility). La Zisa, in addition to the Fountain Room on the ground floor and more intimate space on the top levels, contained numerous rooms that could have housed the royal family as well as the court. At La Cuba, however, there is no evidence of private apartments and thus it was not a fixed place of habitation. William II’s palace pavilion, in close proximity to the urban palace, would seem to have been utilized for ceremonial purposes and never intended for lengthy stays. La Cuba was where the king spent the day, participated in special events, and presumably received prominent visitors.

III. La Cubula and La Cuba Soprana in the Seventeenth-Century Villa Napoli

Only a few hundred meters to the south of La Cuba stand two pavilions that were once located in the royal Genoard Park. Both structures are presently on the grounds of the seventeenth-century Villa Napoli, just off the mid-sixteenth century road that leads to Monreale. The so-called La Cuba Soprana is presently incorporated into the east side of the villa (figs. 6.63–6.66). The smaller example, known colloquially as La Cubula, is 220 meters from the larger pavilion (fig. 6.67). Because they are on the same axis, it is likely that these were part of a single building campaign: all of the constituent parts work together as an ensemble in the Genoard Park. Their siting corresponds with the course of the Gabriele River, so that water held at La Cuba Soprana at a higher point on the plain likely also fed the pool of La Cuba situated farther below.

734 Di Stefano, Monumenti, 111–12.
Unlike La Zisa and La Cuba, we have no direct textual reference from the twelfth century regarding the smaller pavilions in the Gnoard Park. Likewise, there is no mention in Fazello or in Alberti of La Cubula and La Cuba Soprana, nor in Ingrassia’s treatise that discusses La Cuba. Alberti does note, however, the numerous pavilions in the park, as does the sixteenth-century Palermitan historian Pietro Cannizzaro in his unpublished treatise. La Cuba Soprana is referred to in later documents as “Alfaina,” appearing thus in a privilege dated to 1505 in which Ferdinand II of Aragon (King of Sicily, 1468–1516) awarded the building to Giovanni Ventimiglia. Only in the early eighteenth century is there another mention, this time by Mongitore, who noted a tower in almost complete ruin as “Alfaina,” while also calling the site the “Cuba Suprana.”

The structure, perhaps a residence or a small pavilion, is incorporated into a wing of the seventeenth-century Villa Napoli (fig. 6.64). One face can be best detected at the east end of the baroque structure, yet the extent of its dimensions are difficult to determine. Although this side is partially obscured by later accretions, notably a balcony, several arched openings may still be seen. The most prominent example was at the center and is a double-tiered ogival arch flanked on either side by two smaller round-arched outlines. Due to their size, the latter were possibly windows flanking the larger central opening currently blocked up, but whose form can be made out. Immediately below the archway are three pointed arches

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736 Pietro Cannizzaro’s topographical treatise Religionis Christianae Panormi (1638) is incomplete and in a state of great disarray. His work clearly would have been an indispensable source on Palermo and its immediate hinterland had he finished it before his death. Antonino Mongitore abridged Cannizzaro’s manuscript and provided an index that is indispensable (also at the BCP, ms. segn. Qq C 76). The reference to the pavilions in the area that corresponded to the Norman parkland appears in the copied text by Mongitore of Cannizzaro’s Religionis Christianae Panormi, BCP, ms. segn. Qq E 56, fols. 419r–421v.


738 Antonino Mongitore, Notizie varie, BCP, ms. segn. Qq C 3 fol. 122v: “... intus clausuram et territorium di la Cuba... sunt tres lenciae terrarum cum quadam turri dirupta, quae ruinam in totum minabatur vocata Alfaina seu Cuba Suprana...”
of the same width. The pavilion’s full height is not known, but its base was lower than the present level of terrain. On either side are two doors that postdate the medieval building. Rusticated elements remain on the eastern face. The structure was most likely nearly square in dimension, deduced from the exposed sides that were not fully integrated into the later Villa Napoli.739

The original relationship between the larger pavilion of La Cuba Soprana and the smaller La Cubula is unknown. It is possible that the entire area was incorporated into or looked onto an artificial basin of water. La Cuba Soprana could have been a holding tank for the distribution of water from the Gabriele.740 Excavations conducted by Palermo’s Soprintendenza from 1995 to 1998 revealed a thick stratum of hydraulic stucco in its interior.741 Therefore, the ground floor of La Cuba Soprana could have had this function, since a channeling system was discovered with terracotta tubes that brought water into an interior cistern measuring 1.50 x 2 meters and 5 meters deep.742 The level above, corresponding with the larger opening flanked by two smaller windows, might have been a viewing platform. One conclusion is that La Cuba Soprana was merely wrapped with the exterior appearance of a pavilion. Altogether, the constructed ensemble of La Cuba, La Cubula, and the holding water basin at La Cuba Soprana, were integrated into the water-rich landscape maintained thanks to the Gabriele River.

739 Meier, normannischen Königspaläste, 86–87.
Also part of the complex of the Villa Napoli is a small domed structure known as La Cubula or La Cuba Piccola (fig. 6.67). Fazello noted that “in this park . . . around you may see several small chapels created for recreation of the kings, most of which were placed along a straight road . . . in the middle of which one remains intact today.” La Cubula is a square structure measuring 6 meters on each side opening up to the exterior with triple-tiered ogival arches. Cushion-shaped blocks frame these arches. The profile of the dome is similar to other Norman monuments in Palermo, namely S. Giovanni degli Eremiti (fig. 6.68). There are no traces of stucco or polychromy in its interior. The restorer Francesco Valenti applied the only remnant to the dome’s exterior. Just below the level of the dome is a cornice, but unlike La Cuba, there is no indication that there was ever any text.

Elsewhere in Sicily, a structure that strongly resembles La Cubula is known as La Cuba Ciprigna at Vicari in the mountains 30 kilometers southeast of Palermo at a height of 650 meters above sea level (fig. 6.69). Located on a slope, unassuming modern buildings of a small inland town encircle it. Measuring just over 6 meters on each side, large ogival arches open on all sides. La Cuba Ciprigna is generally assigned a pre-Norman date. The structure perhaps covered a fountain within a larger complex of gardens. Yet no other remains were found, and there has not been any investigation into its surroundings. There is

743 Di Stefano, monumenti, 110.
744 Fazello, De rebus Siculis, Deche due, Book 2, 205: “. . . in questo parco . . . d’intorno si vedono alcune cappellette in volta fatte per ricreamento de’ Re, la maggior parte delle quali eran poste in una strada diritta e lunga, che . . . il mezzo, delle quali se ne vede oggi una intera.” Two nineteenth-century travelers gave similar accounts: the Frenchman Girault de Prangey believed that there was a fountain in the center of the pavilion as did the Englishman Gally Knight. Girault de Prangey, Essai sur l’architecture, 91; Gally Knight, Normans in Sicily, 278.
a group of buildings on the island colloquially called “Cuba,” usually churches or small
chapels, such as an extant example at Castiglione di Sicilia in the province of Catania.746

In addition to palatial connotations and pavilions within horticultural spaces, the
diminutive La Cubula in the precinct of Villa Napoli in Palermo shares characteristics with
monuments that had mostly commemorative or funerary functions. Small domed structures
were abundant in the cemeteries of Fāṭimid Cairo as mausoleums, and Ursula Staacke has
associated La Cubula with these structures.747 In Marrakech, there is a pavilion known as
Qubbat al-Barūdiyyīn (also Qubbat al-Baʿdiyyīn), measuring only 12 meters high from base
to apex, with intricate stucco ornamentation on both its interior and exterior (figs. 6.70–6.71).
A cornice below the dome in the interior contains a lengthy inscription that measures 15
meters long in a cursive naskhī script. Although the text was defaced by the rival Almohad
dynasty upon their takeover of the city in 1147, the name of its patron, the Almoravid caliph
ʿAlī ibn Yūsuf (r. 1106–43), and the date of 1117 can still be made out.748

Archaeological excavations have uncovered that the Qubbat al-Barūdiyyīn was once
connected to a water supply system known as a khettara designed by the Almoravid caliph’s
chief engineer, ʿUbaydullah. Clay pipes were found in its vicinity, indicating that there was a
cistern as well. Moreover, the entire area, which is near the later Kutubiyya Mosque built by
the Almohads, was the site of the former Almoravid caliphal palace known as Dār al-Ḥajar
(also Qaṣr al-Ḥajar, or the Stone House). Of the original complex, three courtyards have
been excavated. In all likelihood, the diminutive Qubbat al-Barūdiyyīn was a fountain within
the palace grounds and possibly had a commemorative purpose, as suggested most recently

748 See Yasser Tabbaa, “Andalusian Roots and Abbasid Homage in the Qubbat al-Barudiyyin in Marrakech,”
by Yasser Tabbaa. The latter is indicated by the inscription dedicated to the patron, ‘Alī ibn Yūsuf, who completed an ambitious water supply project that delivered water to most parts of the city with a surplus given to gardens and for agricultural uses. As a result, we may surmise that La Cubula, along with the diminutive pavilion in front of La Zisa, and the other pavilion-like structures described by Fazello, were markers in the elite waterscape of the twelfth-century Genoard Park that demonstrated the dominion of the Norman kings over the landscape of Palermo’s hinterland.

IV. Epigraphy at the Norman Suburban Palaces

As discussed in the Chapter One, early travelers and scholars were drawn to La Zisa and La Cuba because of their perceived “otherness.” From the Frenchman Girault de Prangey to local humanists such as Salvatore Morso, virtually all of these figures noted the extant inscriptions in Arabic that for them proclaimed the status of these works as palaces built by the Muslim rulers of Palermo, antecedents of the Normans. Michele Amari first examined La Cuba due to its Arabic inscription prominently displayed on its upper cornice. Therefore, epigraphy was a defining feature of the park architecture, both at the time of their building in the twelfth century and during their “discovery” as monuments of historical value in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. These texts, once crowning La Zisa and wrapping around the entire perimeter of La Cuba, exalt the Christian kings and refer to them with their Arabic titulature. Measuring up to 30 centimeters in height, they are significant visual constructs in the public secular sphere of twelfth-century Sicily.

749 Ibid.
a. Monumental Inscriptions at La Zisa

At La Zisa there were two inscriptions in Arabic. The first, in Kūfic lettering, ran along the façade on the cornice of the structure. Giuseppe Caronia’s restorations in the 1970s removed the very few fragments that remained.\(^{751}\) Since the building had been in a terrible state until the last quarter of the twentieth century, we only have Amari’s testimony for our reconstruction. From his measurements taken in the second half of the nineteenth century, we know that the text band was 37 meters long. Many losses in its fabric took place in the fourteenth century, when 19 merlons of various sizes were cut out of the epigraphic face (figs. 6.8–6.9). Measuring 37 centimeters in height, the lettering is in a robust and severe style of Kūfic script without embellishments or floral elements. The traces of polychromy found in situ, as noted by Amari and later by Caronia, indicated that the letters were colored red while that of the background is unknown.\(^{752}\)

Amari transcribed La Zisa’s cornice inscription as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{لل alm} & \text{ سم} \text{ت} \\
\text{حسم} & \text{الأيا} \text{ال} \\
\text{النصر} & \text{ال} \\
\text{الع} & \text{ك} \\
\text{ومن} & \text{ت} \\
\text{أمر} & \text{ال} \\
\text{من} & \text{سلم عليك} \\
\text{مشيدة} & \text{و} \\
\text{؟} & \text{ع} \\
\text{دام} & \text{هذوا} \\
\text{؟} & \text{امبدا و} \\
\text{عز} & \text{ف الصائب} \\
\text{؟} & \text{وا} \\
\text{البنا كافو} \\
\text{؟} & \text{هم} \text{إنصرني س} \\
\text{هيتى} & \text{؟} \text{ها} \\
\text{ب كذلك} & \text{الك السمتين} \\
\text{؟} & \text{هم} \text{؟ النجم} \\
\text{ناصر} & \text{؟} \\
\end{align*}
\]

Amari’s translation:

[Nel no]me del Di[...]
dioso? O tu che?.....
lavittoria glo....?
....e di? [e chi?]
....Comandò l il.....
Chi ti salute
nobil palagio....
perenne. Affrettans?i?
....per? lode e possessaz?[a]? 
...la fama? e....
edifizio, bastano?
Essi | cristiano?....
Il mio aspetto?....
....similmente.
...Dei due azimuti?
...la stella |...
...difensore
[ti avvic[n]? alle stanze di

In English:

[in the na]me of Go[d]|... *
grandiose? O you who?....
the glo[rious] victory....?
....and of? [and who?]
....He commanded | the....
Whom do you salute
noble palace....
perennial. Hastening?
....for? praise and pow[er]?
...the fame? And ...
Building, [are these] enough?
They | Christian?
My outward semblance?
....likewise.
...Of the two azimuths?
...the star |
...defender

753 Ibid.
754 Ibid., 75–76.
The second inscription at La Zisa is located on both sides of the entrance to the central hall on the ground floor, in the vestibule to the Fountain Room (figs. 6.72–6.73). Situated above eye level, the epigraphic band is made of stucco, running at a height of 2.5 meters. The text continued around the archway, as can be seen in eighteenth-century engravings and prints, but of which there is currently no trace. The frieze had already been whitewashed by Amari’s time. In the 1980s, the palace’s restorer Giuseppe Caronia found traces of polychromy as well as gold on the epigraphic band.

At present, the inscription in the cursive *naskhī* is in an extremely deteriorated condition. Most of the text is missing and what remains is mostly illegible. According to Amari, the text in Arabic is as follows:

Amari translated this text as:

In English:

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755 Ibid., 77–82.
Although at times you will wish, you’ll see the most beautiful possession
Of the most beautiful among the realms of the world: of the seas,
And the mountain [that dominates] them whose peaks are tinged with narcissus and

[You will] see the [grand] King of the Century in the beautiful residence
[that] to him is befitting the magnificence and joy.
This is the paradise on earth that opens to the gaze;
This is al-Musta’izz and this [the palace] the Aziz.757

One of the most notable aspects of the monumental texts at La Zisa is that they do not
contain Qur’ānic verses. Moreover, the patron is not referred to by name. Instead the
inscriptions use the alqāb, or honorary titles of the Norman kings in Arabic. These were self-
styled that appeared on coins and officially issued documents of the court.758 In this case, the
text at the entrance to the Fountain Room employs William II’s honorary title of al-
Musta’izz, a play on the very name of the pavilion palace of La Zisa, derived from aziz,
meaning noble or grand. The presence of his laqab indicates that the inscription is
contemporary with La Cuba, and that he completed the palace begun by his father. In
addition, reference is made here to the royal gaze that looks upon the “paradise on earth.”
The text alludes to stars as well as to the measurement of the azimuth, used in navigation and
mapping to plot distances. Despite their fragmentary state and the many lacunae in their
texts, both the cornice inscription and that at the entrance to the Fountain Room demonstrate
the high quality of their composition. The text is heavily laden with allusions to the Norman
king, the grandeur of his palace personified in its very name, and references to the “Paradise
on Earth” of the surrounding gardens, discussed in detail below.

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758 Alqāb were used by their Fāṭimid counterparts, and the Norman kings adopted the same vocabulary of power
to assert their rule. See Johns, Arabic Administration, 269–74.
b. La Cuba’s Epigraphic Frieze

Similar to La Zisa, La Cuba contained a cornice running along the top of the structure with an epigraphic band measuring 40 centimeters tall. The inscription is articulated on parallelepiped blocks of sandstone that are 50 x 25 centimeters, with an average width of 18 centimeters and bearing some traces of polychromy.\footnote{Amari, \textit{Le epigrafi arabeiche}, 82–84.} The epigraphic face is highly adorned, and bordered at its top and bottom by a narrow and slightly projecting strip (figs. 6.51, 6.74–6.75). The letters are not accompanied by diacritical marks. The inscription begins on the north corner of the northeast side and continues to the southeast and southwest. The text concludes close to its starting point. The northeast side of La Cuba looked not only onto the lake, but also the royal palace within the walls and the city, and, therefore, would arguably have been the building’s face visible to the most viewers.\footnote{Maria Amalia De Luca has suggested that this inscription at La Cuba should be seen in light of contemporary external politics. Norman ambassadors signed a diplomatic treaty with the Almohad caliph Abu Ya’qub Yusuf (r. 1163–84) in Mahdiyya in June 1180. Yet, relations cooled between these rulers with William II’s court aligning with contemporary concerns of rulers of the Latin West. Most notably, before his death in 1189, William was preparing to participate in the Third Crusade. De Luca, “Una proposta di rilettura,” 70–73; see also Abulafia, “The Norman Kingdom of Africa,” 42–43.} Of the original inscription, two sections remain largely intact; the first and the final segments. The most significant omission is on the southwest where it was destroyed in later structural alterations.\footnote{According to Maria Amalia De Luca’s study, the inscription is missing more than 50 percent of its text. Idem, “Una proposta di rilettura dell’iscrizione araba della Cuba,” \textit{Rassegna Siciliana di storia e cultura} 4, 9 (2000), 59–74.}

Amari managed to translate the inscription despite its damaged state. In the text, he found a laudatory phrase celebrating the palace with the date of 1180 and, most importantly, citing the name of its builder as William II. He transcribed the north to northeast side as follows:
For the west-northwest face:

[In the name of God the com]passionate, the merciful.
Fix here your attention, stop and look! You will see a beautiful hall belonging to the most magnificent of the kings of the earth, William the Second.
There is not a castle worthy of him; nor enough

762 Amari, *Le epigrafi arabe*, 82–84.
763 Ibid.
[his] ruling halls . .
[in truth?] he reflected the Musta’izz in a critical light [,]
He would return to it, if he should not. . .

For the west-northwest face:

. . . [that which] he noted
The most exhilarating moments and the most prosperous times;
And [in the year of] our Lord the Messiah, eleven hundred,
eighty years are added to it that passed in a pleasing manner.
Thus God, who is praised constantly, maintains it, filled to the brim
with all the many properties that he [William] has only enlarged upon.
Oh glorious God! That the long life, the mightiness and the. . .

The great importance of these inscriptions is because they establish the respective
chronology and patronage of the monument. The Norman king is referred to as “William the
Second,” and his laqab or title in Arabic does not appear in the inscription at La Cuba unlike
the example in the vestibule at La Zisa. At the later palace pavilion, reference is made to the
gaze again, phrased as an exhortation for the viewers to cast their eyes upon it. At the earlier
palace of William I it is “the paradise on earth that opens to the gaze.” Arguably, there is a
shift here in, requesting the viewer to turn their gaze from outward to inward, or from the
verdant surroundings to the architecture itself. Due to La Cuba’s inscription, scholars have
rejected the possibility that the structure predated the Norman period. The regularity of
masonry throughout supports the assessment that it was the product of single campaign.764

Moreover, the reference to the “gaze” in these inscriptions recalls the careful construction of

764 The inscription on La Cuba does not contain the same phrases and textual composition of coeval monuments
in Ifrīqiya, and it is also formulated in verse. On this aspect, see De Luca, “Una proposta di rilettura
dell’iscrizione araba della Cuba,” 65–66. Amari identified the verse meter as tawīl. Idem, Epigrafi arabiache,
82–99; the tawīl (meaning “long” in Arabic) is a frequently used meter in Classical Arabic poetry, made up of
two hemistich or half-line of verse of four feet each, which can be either catalectic or catalectic; in the latter
case, the final syllable of the penultimate foot would be short. See W. Stoetzer, “Tawīl,” Encyclopaedia of
Brill Online, http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-
viewpoints at Madīnat al-Zahrā’, as delineated by D. Fairchild Ruggles. She has pointed to the building of lookouts for the ruler over a man-made landscape that corresponds more generally to control over his realm.765

c. Additional Examples of Monumental Text in the Norman Sphere

The inscriptions on the Norman suburban residences were not the first instance of royally commissioned epigraphy.766 Earlier examples in a palatial setting include the inscriptions found in the Cappella Palatina that are kept in the Galleria Regionale della Sicilia at Palazzo Abatellis (figs. 6.76–6.77).767 The fragments of the inscription measure 25 x 1.30 meters, and 14 centimeters in depth. These date to the first half of the twelfth century, and more precisely, to the period of the Cappella Palatina’s construction in ca. 1130–40. Jeremy Johns has posited that the inscription originally framed the entrance to the chapel.768

765 On the significance of artificially constructed landscapes created for the gaze of the ruler in the Islamic sphere, see the articles by D. Fairchild Ruggles, “The Mirador in Abbasid and Hispano-Umayyad Garden Typology,” and idem, “Vision and Power at the Qala Bani Hammad.”


768 The letters inlaid with porphyry and serpentine are not derived from contemporary monumental epigraphy in the Islamic world, but from Byzantine ecclesiastical examples instead. Jeremy Johns has attributed to the text a ceremonial function. Johns has translated the text as follows in “The Norman Kings of Sicily,” 149–51: “. . . graciously [?]. And he will hurry to the kiss and to the greeting. Roger vied with . . . / . . . kiss its corner after clinging [to it], and contemplate the beauty that it contains, and . . . .” The original text in Arabic:

دار ا/منة ويعابس التقبل واليسليما ساما رجار / . . . التم ركنا بعد الزما وتأمل ما حواه من جمال و . . .

260
Another early epigraphic example most likely came from Roger II’s palace at Messina, built around 1140 and now at the Regional Museum in the same city. The royal residence is no longer extant, yet the traveler Ibn Jubayr described the palace that he saw in 1183 as “white as a dove.” Roger’s residence was virtually forgotten until Amari published the inscription in 1868. The text is in an elegant cursive naskhī script identified as Maghrebi in character (fig. 6.78). Like the Cappella Palatina inscriptions, the lettering is in red and green porphyry as well as serpentine set into white marble, lending a particularly opulent appearance. The text is without diacritics and is missing vowels and other orthographic symbols. The inscriptions contained complete verses, but at present we only have fragments of blocks in various states of preservation. What remains are eight large slabs and seven smaller pieces that together make up 13.5 meters, each 25 centimeters tall and 15 centimeters deep.

The inscription in Arabic is as follows:

واللطاع السعد السعيد،
أفق ذا القصص [آ] المشيد،
ه فانه دار الخلود،
ن رجار الملك العيند،
بالعز والجد الجديد،
يزغت شمس الحسن من،
يا ماعشر الملك ادخلو،
[؟] يثوي ريس المالكي،
مولى،
النؤد،
السعد في خيبة،
واليمن يشرق واس [عو؟]،
ساما الكواكب بي رجار الملك ...

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771 Two slabs were incorporated beneath the apse window in the cathedral of Messina. Another six panels were located in fragments framing the principal portal of the church of SS. Annunziata dei Catalani. Additional slabs were found in the storeroom of the Regional Museum of Messina in the 1990s. See M. Mazzanti, “Paradiso arabo e paradiso cristiano nella reggia di Ruggero II,” Numismatica, archeologia e storia dell’arte medievale. Quaderni dell’attività didattica del Museo Regionale di Messina 6 (1997), 121–35; and M. A. Mastelloni, “Aspetti fatimiti del potere normanno a Messina,” Numismatica, archeologia e storia dell’arte medievale. Quaderni dell’attività didattica del Museo Regionale di Messina 6 (1997), 443–71.
Amari’s translation of the inscriptions:

Cum gloria e novella fortuna, | sotto l’oroscopo di piena felicità,
Spuntano i Soli della bellezza dagli orizzonti di questo palazzo sontuoso.
O grandi dello Stato, entratevi, ch’esso è il soggiorno della beatitudine.
Esso accoglie il maggiore dei principi, Ruggiero, il re pertinace, Signore . . .
[. . . è data a lui l’immunità dal?] la sventura;
La buona sorte nelle imprese fallite; la fortuna sfogorante e la prosperità?
Per me rivaleggia con le stelle, Ruggiero, il re . . .
. . . stanza. Il covile delle gazzelle non dà ricetto al solitario?
[Mutevoli parvenze. Sprigionatisi impetuosi venti dominano?]
. . . eccelso. Nè al-Khawarnaq . . .
. . pensieri . .
. . cose lecete. Schiatta d .
palagio de’ Sultani . .
[. . delle cose] belle, Ruggiero, re . . 773

The English translation is thus:

With glory, new fortune and the ascent of the stars, the felicitous happiness . . .
The suns of beauty rise from the horizons of this palace
O great ones of the kingdom, enter because it is Paradise [lit. abode of Eternity]
The abode of the greatest of sovereigns, Roger, the persevering lord . . .
The submission to [his] orders [?] and the happiness within [the palace], and the happiness radiates . . .
Contemplate the achievements made through the beauty of the building . . .
[? the thoughts, a castle]
The beauty, Roger lord of . . .
elevated and ?
the castle of sultans
the splendor, descendants of
[the beauty] if not al-Khawarnaq . . .
Thanks to me, Roger [ . . .] views with the stars
A stone; none of the church of Paradise is worthier than ?
The palaces have become smaller

772 Order of the text presented is that of Amari. Amari, Epigrafi arabiche, 132–33.
773 Ibid., 133.
and it is a Paradise
royal ? ? the great
From ? beginning from ?
[ . . . ]
[the letter alif] 774

Unlike the epigraphic examples from La Zisa and La Cuba, we do not know the original placement of the inscriptions from Messina, although these were probably set around a portal. Viewed against the text found in the Cappella Palatina in terms of the techniques employed and overall dimensions, the Messina inscriptions are likely to date to the same decade, to the 1130–40s. The inscription, as interpreted by Amari, is particularly compelling since Roger is mentioned by name, similar to the direct reference made to his grandson William II on the cornice of La Cuba.775

d. References to Paradise in Norman Epigraphy

Despite the fact that there are no Qur’ānic verses in the inscriptions, a very specific, Islamic paradise is evoked in these texts commissioned by the Norman kings. Therefore, the “message” in the twelfth-century monumental epigraphy is arguably more ambiguous than has been acknowledged in scholarly discussions.776 In particular, the inscription at Messina mentions dāru al-khulūdi, or literally, the “Abode of Eternity.” The word khulūd is another appellation for paradise in the Qu’rān. The naskhī inscription that frames the entrance to the Fountain Room at La Zisa refers to the “paradise on earth” (jannat al-duniah). The term “jannat al-duniah” is a direct Qur’ānic reference. The myriad fountains and other

774 The last five lines are translated from blocks executed in the same technique found in the storeroom in the Museo Regionale of Messina two decades ago and thus were unknown to Amari. Annliese Nef’s translation of the text and the order presented in her study, “Venti blocchi frammentari,” vol. 1, 502–509.
775 Johns, Arabic Administration, 268–74.
776 For instance in Nef’s Conquérir et gouverner la Sicile islamique, 177–79.
waterworks present in all of the Norman suburban residences gave concrete form to these ideas of paradise.777 References to water are numerous in the Qu’rān.778 The Rivers of Paradise are four in number and include the Salsābil River, from which the term for “fountain” in Arabic and Persian is taken.779

In the Latin West, there are varying connotations to the term “paradise.”780 We need only recall Amatus of Montecassino’s description of the suburban estates that belonged to the local Kalbid elite to the south of the city as paradise.781 However, within the context of the paradis terrestre as dubbed by Amatus with regard to the grounds of these parkland assets, it is more difficult to draw conclusions as to potential meanings. Further concepts of such a garden in the medieval West comprise the hortus conclusus. Therefore, with reference to his account, we should perhaps take into consideration the Islamic Qur’ānic garden, in addition to Christian ideas, indicating a blurring of “boundaries,” so to speak, in particular in relation to the early period of the Norman presence in Sicily. Furthermore, there are direct paradisiacal references in very name of the Genoard Park. Despite the fact there are no direct quotes from the Qu’rān, the twelfth-century parkland epigraphy borrows terminology

780 The concept of the Islamic Paradise has frequently been alluring subject matter in the Latin West, since by the twelfth century it took on sensuous connotations. The mi’rāj account of the Prophet Muhammad’s ascension to the heavens in the Qu’rān was commented upon by many medieval Christian writers. See Suzanne Conklin Akbari, Idols in the East: European Representations of Islam and the Orient, 1100–1450 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 248–62; also relevant is the discussion by Thomas E. Burman in Reading the Qur’ān in Latin Christendom, 1140–1560 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 26–27.
781 Amatus of Montecassino, L’ystoire de li Normant, 251.
employed for an Islamic heavenly paradise and other well-known tropes that refer to beauty and splendour. Thus, possible associations and, moreover, motivations for their use are not as clear as they had initially seemed. The Norman kings of Palermo would appear to be harnessing references to paradise in their state-commissioned writing in their newly created parkland. These inscriptions were used in part as a tool to legitimize their rule over a mixed-faith population, but also, in part to participate in a well-established visual culture common all over the Mediterranean and, more specifically, in the Islamic world by this time.

e. Questions regarding the Creators and the Audiences of the Norman Inscriptions in the Genoard Park

In the fragmentary inscriptions at Messina, there is a reference to al-Khawarnaḳ, a legendary palace built by the fifth-century CE pre-Islamic Lakhmid dynasty near Najaf in Iraq. The inscriptions at La Cuba utilize the multifaceted and highly sophisticated ṯawīl verse. In the first text there seems to be an overly literary allusion, while the second would also have required a well-educated person to compose it. Consequently, we can posit that an erudite planner for these inscriptions would have been necessary, such as a poet or a group of poets, working within the confines of panegyric verse. Undoubtedly, there is a close association between poets and the suburban residences or retreats, as evidenced by the

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783 In terms of a twelfth-century figure operating in a similar, top-ranking sphere, the Abbot Suger comes to mind. On this issue, see Jill Caskey, “Whodunnit? Patronage, the Canon and the Problematics of Agency in Romanesque and Gothic Art,” in *A Companion to Medieval Art: Romanesque and Gothic in Northern Europe*, edited by Conrad Rudolph, Blackwell Companions to Art History, 2. (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006), 193–212. The latter is relevant, of course, if we accept Panofsky’s formulation of Suger as an astonishingly forward-thinker who mastered Neo-Platonic ideas, which has been questioned by Peter Kidson. See idem, “Panofsky, Suger and St Denis,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 50 (1987), 1–17.
creation of ‘Abd ‘ar-Raḥmān of Trapani’s poem of ca. 1130 dedicated to Roger II that celebrated the lake of La Favara. In a later poem, the Alexandrian Ibn Qalāqīṣ mentioned Roger’s palace of al-Mannānī in “al-Zahr al-bāsim,” which he presumably visited in 1168 or 1169. Many such figures were invited or received in the Norman court, which in addition to ‘Abd ‘ar-Raḥmān and Ibn Qalāqīṣ, included Ibn ‘Umar of Butera and Ibn Bashrūn of Mahdiya in the first half of the twelfth century. Employing panegyric poetry or madīḥ to describe the sites of rule or majlis was common throughout the Islamic world. The tenth-and eleventh-century Kalbid rulers had several court poets, the most famous of whom was the Sicilian ‘Abd al-Jabbār ibn Abī Bakr Ibn Ḥamdīs (ca. 1056–ca. 1133) who spent most of his life in exile in al-Andalus and North Africa.

Oleg Grabar has offered the most incisive description of such a courtly space where poetry was recited, using the term majlis al-lahwah, which was different from the formal majlis of state receptions. The former was semi-official space whose primary function was

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784 De Simone, Splendori e misteri, 64: “E io chiesi, oltre ogni aspettativa, ed esso mi portò il miracolo di al-Mannānī.” For bibliographic information on Ibn Qalāqīṣ, see Johns, Arabic Administration, 33, 212.

785 Ibn Qalāqīṣ presents a particularly interesting case as a Muslim poet who worked within the confines of a laudatory genre, in this case addressed to a Christian king, but whose poem was part of a larger compilation whose editor did not share the same sympathies. Overall, panegyric poetry developed in a myriad of forms, among which the most prominent is the Arabic qaṣīda. See Julie Scott Meisami, Medieval Persian Court Poetry (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987), 40–48.


787 The term majlis (pl. majālīs) signifies an assembly or meeting, which ranged from that of a caliph or king to a high official, but could also denote a venue for debating questions of jurisprudence or religion. In addition to formal or official gatherings, majālis can mean a less formal or convivial gathering in which poetry was recited.
for entertainment and pleasure. Grabar derived the term of majlis al-lahwah from the tenth-century collection of poems Kitāb al-aghānī (Book of Songs) by the literary scholar and poet Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī compiled for the ‘Abbāsid caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 786–809).788 The main activities carried out in the majlis were drinking, singing, poetry recitals, observing of dancers, and the occasional consumption of meals. In the Norman sphere, the recurrent references to palaces would indicate without a doubt that poets frequented these elite sites, as they did the estates that were common in the hinterland of Umayyad Córdoba, which served as stages for banquets and the performance of poetry. The palace of Minenium was one of Roger II’s favorites according to Pseudo-Hugh Falcandus and, therefore, likely continued to be a site celebrated during the reign of his grandson, William II.

While the question of who might have composed these intricate texts has not received much attention in the scholarly literature, there has been an ongoing debate about whether these inscriptions were ever intended to be read. Jeremy Johns, who has worked a great deal on the muqarnas ceiling of the Cappella Palatina, has recently examined this issue, noting several types of audience for such texts. Among them he included scholars and men of letters, elite visitors to the Norman court, and the leaders of the Muslim community of the island.789 For Johns, meaning is not entirely restricted to the text, but rather is part of a larger

789 Jeremy Johns, “Arabic Inscriptions in the Cappella Palatina: Performativity, Audience, Legibility and Illegibility,” in Viewing Texts: Inscriptions as Image and Ornament in the Late Antique and Medieval
network of associations that pertained to the public sphere. Following this line of reasoning, the text itself could be the message; for some of these examples what was more important was their mode of representation rather than their content. In the Norman sphere, this would perhaps be most relevant to the Kufic inscriptions painted on the muqarnas ceiling of the Cappella Palatina due to the problems inherent to their viewing.

There would appear, however, to be a fundamental difference between monumental epigraphy in stone, as at La Zisa and La Cuba, and say, those painted on the Cappella Palatina ceiling. The very size of the inscriptions atop these palace pavilions, measuring circa 30 centimeters in height, would seem to be the guiding criterion for those intended to be legible from the onset and at some distance away. In addition, the polychromy of the background band of the texts at La Zisa and La Cuba heightened their legibility. At the Cappella Palatina, the muqarnas inscriptions were supplicatory and thus had a chiefly symbolic function. The large inlaid serpentine and porphyry tablets dedicated to Roger II originally in the chapel could have been read by visitors, officials, and other dignitaries. As such, these inscriptions were planned on a scale appropriate to this end (figs. 6.76–6.77).


Ibid.

791 In an older essay by Richard Ettinghausen, he pointed to a further ambiguity in inscriptions since many were simply not legible, signifying that these texts had other meanings attached to them. Richard Ettinghausen, “Arabic Epigraphy: Communication or Symbolic Affirmation,” in Near Eastern Numismatics, Iconography, Epigraphy and History: Studies in Honor of George C. Miles, edited by Dickran Kouymjian (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1974), 297–311.


793 The use of texts on these two residential buildings would seem to resemble most closely inscriptions in public spaces in contemporary Cairo. Irene A. Bierman, Writing Signs: The Fatimid Public Text (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).


795 Perhaps these texts were also meant to be repeated aloud as is posited for the eleventh-century Bayeux Tapestry, which, as Richard Brilliant has argued, was created for a secular setting, namely a lord’s hall.
The same holds true for the Messina inscriptions, likely to have been made for Roger’s palace in the city (fig. 6.78). Therefore, the two inlaid marble slabs placed (or planned to be placed) around the entrance to both palatine chapels are more complex in terms of their textual composition than those painted on the ceiling of the Cappella Palatina.

Prior to the conquest of Sicily by the Hauteville brothers, only Kūfic lettering was employed in monumental examples, while most of the Norman epigraphy in Arabic utilizes a cursive or naskhī script that came into widespread use at around this time. Moreover, they do not contain Qur’ānic formulae. Nor do these texts employ the protocols of the Kalbid amīrs; instead, we see here the alqāb or royal titulature in Arabic utilized by the Norman kings. Another relevant question is the degree of continuity in the use of epigraphy from Muslim rule into the Norman period. Johns argues that there is no direct connection between the Kalbids and the Normans in the numismatic examples that he has studied, such as the tari issued by Robert Guiscard and Count Roger in the decade following the conquest. Instead, he notes a progressive change in formulae in Arabic of which the most dramatic transformation followed the coronation of Roger II in 1130.

Richard Brilliant, “The Bayeux Tapestry: A Stripped Narrative for their Eyes and Ears,” Word and Image 7 (1991), 98–126. The inclusion of the palace of al-Khawarnaq takes on another meaning if it was part of a recitation of a poet in a majlis setting. One connotation is that the poet was alluding to the fact that the royal residence in Messina could be compared to this legendary palace. An additional reference to al-Khawarnaq appears in a poem by Ibn Qalāqīs in which it was paired with a palace at al-Sadīr, which was also in Iraq. See the translation by De Simone, Splendori e misteri, 71. Cited by Nef in Conquérir et gouverner la Sicile islamique, 181–82.

The cursive naskhī script, as well as thuluth scripts, only became popular in the second half of the twelfth century, when these were first employed on a monumental scale by the Nūr al-Dīn for his madrasa built in Damascus in 1172. Yasser Tabbaa has considered this use of script as a calculated break by Nūr al-Dīn with the Fāṭimid past. Idem, The Transformation of Islamic Art during the Sunni Revival (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002), 60–63; and idem, “Transformation of Arabic Writing: Part 2, the Public Text,” Ars Orientalis 24 (1994), 119–147.

Monumental texts in public spaces were a common sight in eleventh- and twelfth-century Palermo. Pre-conquest inscriptions remained visible and are likely to have persuaded Roger II and his ministers that the new monarchy needed to display its own public texts in Arabic. Within the palatial enclosure of La Galca stood the campanile of the church of S. Giacomo la Màzara, adjacent to the church of S. Maria Maddalena. Even though the church was demolished in the seventeenth century, its campanile survived until the 1830s, as did an inscription in a static and hefty Kūfic that wrapped around it. We have no precise record of its content and its dating is still an open question. According to Amari, the inscription mentioned the year 1100 simply due to the limited space available on the campanile, thus corresponding to the rule of Count Roger I (altogether not a convincing argument on his part). Basing his work on an incomplete transcription by Gregorio, Amari noted that most of the text consisted of supplications and invocations ('ad’iyah), similar to those found on King Roger’s mantle and on the ceiling of the Cappella Palatina. Therefore, Amari argued that the inscription dated to the reign of King Roger II, or from ca. 1130 to 1154.

Another example of monumental epigraphy in Arabic survived on the so-called Torre di Baych until its demolition in 1564, one of a pair of towers of the Bāb al-Bahr (Sea Gates)

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798 Destroyed in the mid-nineteenth century, S. Giacomo la Màzara was located within what is now the Caserma della Legione dei Carabinieri (previously the military quarter di San Giacomo), just inside the sixteenth-century Porta Nuova. See the discussion regarding the lost inscription by Amari in Epigrafi arabe, 58–63; also Grassi, “A Survey of the Arabic Monumental and Funerary Inscriptions,” 59–70.
799 The text began on the face that looked to the east with its terminus on the north side of the tower, and measured approximately 12 meters in length. See Amari, Epigrafi arabe, 58–63.
800 Altogether, Amari did not present a particularly compelling argument for the dating. Ibid.
802 Amari, Epigrafi arabe, 58–63.
of Palermo, dating from the second half of the tenth century. An inscription in Kūfic was located on the walls of the Fāṭimid citadel of Palermo of al-Khāliṣa. In the coastal city of Termini Imerese, 40 kilometers southeast of Palermo, an additional inscription transcribed by Amari commemorated a secular structure built by the Kalbid amīr Abū l-Ḥusayn Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥasan (r. 953–70). Elsewhere in Sicily, at the baths of Cefalà Diana 30 kilometers to the southwest in the interior of the island, an epigraphic frieze in a floral Kūfic runs along three sides of the thermal building (figs. 6.79–6.81). The inscription is delimited by cornices ornamented with a palm leaf motif and vegetal interlacing. The text has never been the subject of systematic study and is now indecipherable due to its fragmentary state.

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803 We have no record of the text of the inscription on the Bāb al-Bahr. Overall, inscriptions on city walls were common in the Islamic world and usually proclaimed the patronage of the ruler, frequently including also a profession of faith or adherence to a particular sect of Islam. A monumental text remains on the gate of Bāb al-Futūḥ (Gate of Conquest) of Cairo, a 59-meter long band of marble blocks held in place by gilded bronze nails. See Sheila S. Blair, “Decoration of City Walls in the Medieval Islamic World: The Epigraphic Message,” in City Walls: The Urban Enceinte in Global Perspective, edited by James D. Tracy (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 488–529. In terms of inscriptions, Qur’ānic verses and dedications to caliphal patrons are present in the mosques of al-Hakim (1002–1003) and al-Aqmar (1125). In addition, there were numerous examples in Aghlabid Mahdīya. See Jonathan Bloom, “Erasure and Memory: Aghlabid and Fatimid Inscriptions in North Africa,” in Viewing Texts: Inscriptions as Image and Ornament in the Late Antique and Medieval Mediterranean, edited by Antony Eastmond and Elisabeth James (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 61–75; in the palatial sphere, in the courtyard of the palace of Mas’ud III (1099–1115) at Ghazna, an inscription estimated to have been 250 meter long in Persian verse in an elaborate floriated Kūfic ran along its interior dado. According to Alessio Bombaci, the inscription was an epic poem exalting the Ghaznavid dynasty. The phrase “khuld-i barīn,” which signifies “superior paradise,” appears twice on the remaining fragments (on slabs 76 and 114). Bombaci has suggested that this could also have been the name of the Mas’ud III’s palace. Alessio Bombaci, The Kūfic Inscription in Persian Verses in the Court of the Royal Palace of Mas’ud III at Ghazni (Rome: Is. M.E.O., 1966), 14–15.


805 Amari, Epigrafi arabiche, 21–29.

806 Despite the fact that the time of the construction of the bath is unknown, a twelfth century date is a distinct possibility, and therefore these inscriptions could be of the Norman period. Bagnera and Nef, “Les bains de Cefalà,” 263–308.

807 There are extant inscriptions in Greek and in Latin, respectively, on the cornices of the adjacent churches of S. Maria dell’Ammiraglio and S. Cataldo. The only examination of the exterior inscription at George of Antioch’s church is by F. Matranga, Monografia sulla grande iscrizione greca testé scoperta nella chiesa di S. Maria dell’Ammiraglio (Palermo: 1872). For a description of the church itself, see Di Stefano, Monumenti, 41–44; and see Ćurčić in Kitzinger, Mosaics of St. Mary’s of the Admiral, 37, 39. So far there have been no studies on the Latin inscription at S. Cataldo. On the latter, founded by the powerful Maio of Bari (d. 1160), William I’s amīr-of-amīrs, see Di Stefano, Monumenti, 59–61.
The inscriptions situated on the upper cornice of La Zisa and La Cuba frame the monuments themselves, welding together the common tropes of paradise and the gaze from Islamic panegyric poetry for the Norman suburban residences. Enclosed in the hunting park, access to the palace pavilions of La Zisa and La Cuba was in all probability out of bounds to most of the population, yet their texts on their cornices were not restricted to elite viewers and could be seen from afar. William II’s contemporaneous construction of La Cuba and the cathedral of Monreale, examined in the next chapter, raises several interesting points: principally, the increasing Latinization of the kingdom clearly marks his reign; yet, at the same time, an Islamic mode of building was preserved for the royal residences.

**Conclusion**

The palace pavilions in the Genoard Park built by William I and William II share numerous structural characteristics and were placed within artificially manipulated waterscapes. La Zisa and La Cuba are both tripartite, symmetrical structures, evidently designed and executed in a single campaign. Unlike Roger’s courtyard palaces at La Favara and Parco, the two examples in the Genoard Park were not additive in terms of their planning and construction. Located in the new royal park, La Zisa and La Cuba were intended to tower over their surroundings. The tall pavilions of the second half of the twelfth century demonstrated a different relationship to the landscape than the suburban architecture of Roger II, which consisted of the sprawling courtyard palaces of La Favara and Parco, or indeed Lo Scibene, of unknown date, which was built into a hillside and incorporated a grotto.

All of the known park architecture of the Genoard was established in proximity to water sources, as were the examples that date to Roger II’s rule. La Zisa, like La Favara, was
intended for habitation for significant periods of time. Both had chapels on their grounds. In addition, the later residence had a bath structure in a configuration similar to that at La Favara, even though we do not have any indication as to its state of repair in the second half of the twelfth century. La Cuba was situated on a monumental basin, while La Cuba Soprana in the same park might have had a holding tank integrated into its lower level and its upper floor was essentially a belvedere. The diminutive La Cubula is likely to have been surrounded by water and perhaps resembled in its arrangement the pavilion in the pond at La Zisa as described by Alberti. Open on all four sides, it could have contained a fountain, analogous to the proposed original configuration of the twelfth-century Almoravid Qubbat al-Barūdiyyīn in Marrakech.

Another way to conceptualize La Zisa is that it was an experimental structure, based on scientific knowledge gathered by the court, which in terms of its constructive elements is ultimately a rectangular box. It is likely that other buildings in the Norman sphere worked with air cooling before perfecting that at La Zisa. Otherwise, the palace pavilion used cutting-edge technology, which undoubtedly was brought from North Africa. Unfortunately, we cannot determine whether there were comparable systems in place at La Cuba since it is preserved in a much more fragmentary state. The latter is remarkably similar to the Egyptian ḍurqā`a, and later ḍurqā`a, whose structural design was generated by its central space. La Cuba contained a large pool or fountain possibly open to the sky at its center, an arrangement that recalled the atrium on the top floor of La Zisa as described by Alberti. Unlike La Zisa, which was probably intended for seasonal stay during the summer months, La Cuba functioned as a ceremonial pavilion in use for one day at a time. The structure was perhaps conceived from its inception to receive ambassadors or visiting dignitaries, and therefore the hall was built in
what became a pan-Mediterranean elite style that could also be seen in contemporary Ifrīqiya.

The inscriptions in naskhī and Kūfic scripts that crowned La Zisa and La Cuba were proclamatory in nature. The texts on these buildings exalted their patrons while signaling a trope commonly associated with gardens in elite domestic settings in the Islamic world, namely paradise, in addition to praising the aesthetic beauty of the foundation. Moreover, the inscription at Messina, likely from Roger II’s palace in the city, made reference to the mythical palace of al-Khawarnaḳ. Even though their intended audience is not entirely clear, the inscriptions would have been visible on these structures located just outside the city walls. The monumental texts of the palace pavilions helped delimit and define a space of power in the newly established parkland of the Genoard by referencing the royal honorary titles and proclaiming the creation of an earthly paradise for the twelfth-century kings of Norman Sicily.
Chapter Seven

Royal Palace of William II at the Benedictine Abbey of Monreale

“... in tantum aedificiis et rebus aliis extulit locum istum ut simile opus per aliquem regem factum non fuerit a diebus antiquis. . .”

Pope Lucius III, “Licet Dominus” (1183).808

The last extramural Norman palace was built by William II under extraordinary circumstances: it was conceived as an integral part of one of the most splendid monastic foundations of the Middle Ages. The magnificent cathedral and Benedictine monastery of Monreale was dedicated to the Virgin and consecrated by William II on August 15, 1176, the Feast of the Assumption. Located just outside the Genoardo Park and on the other side of the valley from the hunting park and palace of Parco, the complex is situated on a plateau at the foot of Mount Caputo at 310 meters above sea level.809 The cathedral and surrounding structures were mostly isolated on the highland overlooking Palermo to its northeast, with only a small Arab settlement nearby at the time of its construction.810 Like Roger II’s Cefalù,

808 Papal bull of Lucius III, dated to February 9, 1182, reproduced in Codice ecclesiastico Sicolo, contenente le costituzioni, i capitoli del regno, le sanzioni, le prammatiche, i reali dispacci, le leggi, i decreti, i reali rescritti ed altri documenti relativi alle materie del diritto ecclesiastico sicolo, dalla fondazione della monarchia siciliani sino a' nostri giorni, edited by Andrea Gallo (Palermo: Carini, 1846), vol. 1, Book. 2, 59.
810 Situated at the summit of Monte Caputo, 766 meters above sea level is Castellaccio (also the castle of San Benedetto), a heavily fortified stronghold of an unknown date. Castellaccio has a rectangular plan, measuring 80 x 30 meters. In its interior, there is a structure with a tripartite apse believed to have been a church. In the literature, Castellaccio is usually thought to date to the same period as William’s foundation below, perhaps built specifically to protect it. Another possibility is that the complex is pre-Norman. Some scholars have suggested that it was a Benedictine monastery, yet the oldest document that mentions it is a papal bull issued in 1370 in which the archbishop of Monreale accused Giovanni Chiaramonte of destroying part of it. See
Monreale was built as a fortified monastery.\textsuperscript{811} In its first years, the monastic complex did not have a name of its own. Contemporary documents mentioned that it was situated at some height over the Byzantine church of S. Kiriacam, from the Greek for the Lord’s Day of Sunday.\textsuperscript{812} In the foundation charter of 1176, the site was referred to as “Sancta Maria Nova in Monte Regali.”\textsuperscript{813}

After its dedication, Monreale was the recipient of numerous gifts and immense territorial possessions on which Muslims worked as agricultural tenants, generating enormous wealth. The monastery was promoted to archiepiscopal status in 1183. By this time, it was the foremost ecclesiastical foundation in Sicily. Monreale was made independent from the neighboring archbishopric of Palermo, and its abbot answered only to the pope. The abbey concentrated vast powers and privileges bestowed by William II, who was also apostolic legate.\textsuperscript{814} The building of Monreale signifies shifting priorities by the king, who chose shortly after his ascension to the throne to designate the monastic cathedral as the Norman dynastic mausoleum.


\textsuperscript{811} Lima, Monreale, 9. According to popular legend first transcribed by Michele Del Giudice in 1702, King William II had a dream that the Virgin Mary revealed the place where his father William I had hidden a huge treasure of his spoils of war. As thanks, William was to build a temple dedicated to her. Michele Del Giudice, Descrizione del real tempio, e monasterio di Santa Maria Nuova, di Morreale (Palermo: A. Epiro, 1702).

\textsuperscript{812} Built during the Muslim period of rule, the Greek church was located just below the hill on which the monastic complex is situated. Nothing else is known regarding this foundation. The reference appears in the record of the deed of William II’s gift to Monreale: “monisterium… non longe a moenibus felicis urbis nostre Panormi supra Sanctam Kuriaciam…” Garufi, Catalogo illustrato del Tabulario di S. Maria Nuova, n. 9, n. 10. Lima, Monreale, 7–8; also Thomas Dittelbach, “Der Dom in Monreale als Krönungskirche. Kunst und Zeremoniell des 12. Jahrhunderts in Sizilien,” Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte 62, 4 (1999), 469–70.

\textsuperscript{813} Krönig, Cathedral of Monreale, 15–17.

\textsuperscript{814} The signing of the Treaty at Benevento in July of 1156 between William I and Pope Adrian IV marked papal recognition of the Norman kings of Sicily. At that time, the pope renewed the promise of Urban II to Count Roger I in which he made him and his successors papal legates, recorded in a bull dating to July 5, 1098. Consequently, the Normans could elect their own bishops. See Houben, Roger II of Sicily, 34–35.
Adjacent or attached to the grand basilica, William II established a palace, in all likelihood, constructed concurrently with the monastic complex. Situated on the north side, the structure mirrors the Benedictine monastery and cloister located to the south of the church. In the fifteenth century, the building’s fabric was substantially altered and essentially rebuilt when it was transformed into the seminary of the archdiocese. Refurbished again in the eighteenth century, there are only fragmentary remains of what constituted the eastern and northern wings of the original palace. The eastern face of the residence can still be discerned, and it is situated on the same alignment as the apse of the basilica. The modern restorations of the structure conducted in the 1920s and 1950s uncovered the outline of the twelfth-century windows. Further remnants may be seen in the portico of the interior courtyard and in two rooms on the ground floor of the east wing.

This chapter cannot summarize or probe all aspects of the large corpus of scholarship on Monreale, such as the most recent examinations by Sulamith Brodbeck and Thomas Dittelbach. Instead, my focus will be on the adjacent palace, which, like other works in the Norman secular sphere, has been greatly overshadowed by the grand decorative programs of the monastic complex. To contextualize the residence properly, I will first present some pertinent comments regarding the political background of William II’s foundation and the careful planning of the royal area inside the basilica.

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815 Although scholars disagree as to whether this site was also part of Roger II’s hunting park and that William II chose to establish his monastery here for this reason. The text to back up this claim is Romuald of Salerno’s description of the park and palace founded in the mountains above Palermo. As discussed at length in Chapter Five, this site would seem to correspond with modern-day Altofonte and its sources of water. Lima, Monreale, 4; Schirò, Monreale, 7–8.

816 Brodbeck, Les saints de la cathédrale de Monreale en Sicile; and idem, “Monreale from its Origin to the End of the Middle Ages.” Dittelbach, Rex imago Christi.
I. Political Background of the Foundation of Monreale

The building of the ecclesiastical complex is likely to have begun already in 1172, after William II claimed his independence at the age of nineteen and freed himself from the lengthy regency of his mother, Margaret of Navarre (ca. 1128–83, regent 1166–71).\textsuperscript{817} William set about the construction of the church, the archbishop’s palace, the cloister, and a substantial residence for himself in the early 1170s. The first known document relating to Monreale is a bull issued by Pope Alexander III (r. 1159–81) on December 29, 1174, in which he placed the monastery directly under the papacy.\textsuperscript{818} In so doing, Monreale became judicially independent from the archbishop of Palermo.\textsuperscript{819} On March 20, 1176, William ordered one hundred monks from the Cluniac abbey of SS. Trinità in Cava dei Tirreni, located north of Salerno and headed by the Abbot Theobald, to move to Monreale in time to dedicate the site. The culmination of the events in that year was on August 15, the feast day of the Assumption of the Virgin, when William II signed the foundation charter of the church and monastery.\textsuperscript{820} At William’s request, Pope Lucius III (r. 1181–85) elevated the church of Monreale to the status of a metropolitan cathedral on February 5, 1182.\textsuperscript{821}

In the aforementioned document, William II granted the monastic cathedral vast landholdings. He specified that, in addition to the churches of S. Kiriacam and S. Silvester, the monastery would gain numerous villages and hamlets, vineyards, sugarcane plantations, and tuna fisheries. In Sicily, these extended to the coast near Partinico and until the modern

\textsuperscript{817} Margaret of Navarre is likely to have played a significant role as well in the early years of the abbey. Krönig, Cathedral of Monreale, 15–17.
\textsuperscript{819} The subsequent mention of the site is in a royal privilege of 1176, recording the concession of the Bulchar hamlet nearby (whose location remains unknown). Lima, Monreale, 7.
\textsuperscript{820} Del Giudice, Descrizione del real tempio, part 3, 2–6.
\textsuperscript{821} Krönig, Cathedral of Monreale, 16.
town of Alcamo to the west. In the interior of the island, the area that William granted to Monreale included the surrounding territory of Corleone and Prizzi. Comprising almost 1,200 square kilometers in total in western Sicily, this land was settled with a Muslim population, both indigenous and recent arrivals who had escaped from North Africa following Roger II’s incursions in the last decade of his reign.

The abbey of Monreale held unprecedented powers in the Norman realm due to its vast landholdings and immense privileges. Moreover, the siting of the new ecclesiastical center is noteworthy since it was in close proximity to the capital, located only four kilometers away. In the scholarship, the king’s foundation of Monreale has been depicted as a way to curtail the significant political influence of Gualtiero Offamilio, Archbishop of Palermo from 1168 until his death in 1191. The construction of the cathedral of Palermo overlapped that of William II’s favored monastery. Monreale served to temper Gualtiero’s influence, and at the same time to strengthen William politically and as a means of demonstrating his piety and devotion to the Virgin Mary.

822 Original document kept in the BCRS, Tabulario di Santa Maria Nuova di Monreale, perg. nr. Balsamo 163: seven numbered scrolls bound together. See also the discussion in Schirò, Monreale, 14–17.
824 Matthew, The Norman Kingdom of Sicily, 203; and Brodbeck, “Monreale during the Middle Ages,” 388–89. Externally, the king embarked on increasingly ambitious attempts to establish the kingdom’s status in the Mediterranean. In July 1174, William sent ships to Egypt as a preemptive measure to protect the Latin kingdom of Jerusalem from attack. In this year and in the following, he signed treaties with the two trading powers of Genoa and Venice. In 1177, in Venice, a peace treaty was signed between Alexander III, Frederick Barbarossa, and the north Italian city-states that were part of the Lombard League. William II played an active role in the formation of the pact that followed the defeat of Frederick Barbarossa by papal troops at the Battle of Legnano in the previous year. The Treaty of Venice also ensured the peace between William II and Frederick I and stability on the mainland. William II was one of the first Western monarchs to respond to the call for the Third...
Apart from the charter of 1176, the only precise date relating to the structure itself is 1186, the year in which Bonanus of Pisa created the north doors of the cathedral. Therefore, in the literature this is traditionally considered the *terminus ante quem* for the building. Seemingly, the cathedral and monastery were speedily constructed, including the extensive mosaic cycles of its interior and the ornately carved capitals of its cloister (figs. 7.6–7.9). Intended by William II as a dynastic mausoleum, he clearly wished to eclipse Roger II’s foundation of Cefalù. In 1174, William I’s body was transported here from where it lay in the cathedral of Palermo, and it was laid to rest in a porphyry sarcophagus in the south transept. His mother, Margaret of Navarre, was buried here in 1183. William II’s death on November 18, 1189, just before the age of thirty-six, had an adverse effect on his foundation, where he was eventually entombed near his father.826

## II. Description of the Monastic Complex

Facing onto Palermo to the northeast and bounded by a mountain range from the southwest to northeast, the entire complex was enclosed by walls inset with twelve square towers, presumably garrisoned for the service and protection of the king and the Benedictine monks.827 Several of these are preserved today, and are also illustrated in the abbot Michele Del Giudice’s *Descrizione del real tempio, e monasterio di Santa Maria Nuova, di Morreale*

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826 Dittelbach, *Rex imago Christi*.


828 Krönig, *Cathedral of Monreale*, 41–47.
Monreale was constructed only a decade after the sacking of the principal palace of Palermo by Roger II’s illegitimate son Simon and Tancred of Lecce (briefly king, r. 1189–94) in 1161. The attack triggered an uprising that targeted the Muslim population of the capital and spread to other parts of the island, becoming a veritable massacre carried out by Latin settlers. The result was a mass migration of Muslims to western Sicily. Around Monreale, the local population was largely Muslims who worked the surrounding estates. These tensions and anxieties about security still prevailed at the time of Monreale’s foundation in 1176.

The grand monastic complex included not only the church but also the royal palace, at present the archiepiscopal seminary. According to Del Giudice, in front of the basilica was a large portico and atrium that do not survive (figs. 7.3–7.4). The cloister is located to the south, along with a chapter house and refectory, yet just the exterior of the two-story dormitory still stands. The palace was situated to the north of the church, most likely attached to the transept of the basilica. The eastern flank of the residence corresponded with the exterior boundary wall of the monastery. On the same axis as the apse, the wall’s great thickness and the narrow lancet windows provided security and defense.

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828 Del Giudice, *Descrizione del real tempio*; for a discussion of additional ground plans of the complex that date to a century earlier, to 1590, see Fulvia Scaduto, “Un disegno del complesso monumentale di Monreale,” *Lexicon* 5, 6 (2007–8), 118–20.

829 Del Giudice, *Descrizione del real tempio*, 52: “No. 39: La prima delle dodici Torri, fabricate dal Re Guglielmo II attorno al Monasterio attaccate una con l’altra con recinto continuo di mura, che sono oggi in parte andate a terra. Furono le Torri riempite di Guardie e per il servigio, e custodia de’ Monaci e della Chiesa contro de’ Saracini, che ancora restavano numerosi in Sicilia. . . no. 44: “Quinta Torre, dove era la Porta principale, per la quale s’entrava nel recinto del Monasterio… entrando per questa Porta si trovavano Portici con colonne, ed archi, de’ quali si vedono i vestigi…”

830 Ibid.

831 The influential Cardinal Ludovico II de Torres, the new archbishop, published a history of the monastic complex under the name of his secretary Giovanni Luigi Lello in Rome in the year 1588. The *Historia della Chiesa di Monreale* contains a detailed description of the cathedral, its ornamentation and iconography of its mosaics, in addition to biographies of all of its archbishops. According to Lello’s account, the town of Monreale was made up of several different quarters. He noted the Ciambre, which was “the Lower Court,” or where the royal family resided. Lello’s work also referenced the oldest part of the city, Pozzello, which had
William II built one of the largest Romanesque basilicas in the Latin West at the time.

The church measures just over 100 meters until the area of the transept and 43 meters wide, reaching up to 43 meters at its highest point (figs. 7.5–7.9).

The exterior of the apse contains a variety of motifs articulated in a tufa polychrome intarsia, similar in its execution to the apse of the contemporary cathedral of Palermo but far more elaborate (figs. 7.10–7.11).

The interior of the cathedral is clad with mosaics that cover most of its expanse (fig. 7.12).

Critical for my analysis are the two mosaic panels located on the south and north piers of the sanctuary. These depict, respectively, William II presenting a model of the houses made of tapia or adobe brick. He identified this as the oldest part of Monreale built by Muslims. Idem, Historia della Chiesa di Monreale (Rome: Luigi Zannetti, 1596), 41: “...e divisa la Città in quattro parti. La prima, e più antica delle quali è il Pozzello, così detto da certa acqua, che vi corre in una fonte si bassa, che pare un mezzo pozzo. Si vedono in questo quartiero hoggi case di tapia, onde pare apertamente esser state fatte da Saracini. La seconda le Ciambre, che è la parte più vicina alla Chiesa, così detta con questo nome Francese, perché fosse la corte bassa, dove alloggiava la Famiglia del Re. La terza il Giardino della corte, perché v‘era anticamente il giardino degli Arcivescovi. La quarta la Turbe.” For more on Lello, see Maarten Delbeke, “Architecture and the Genres of History Writing in Ecclesiastical Historiography,” in Collections électroniques de l’INHA [En ligne], Repenser les limites: l’architecture à travers l’espace, le temps et les disciplines, http://inha.revues.org/1800 (accessed: March 18, 2013).

The ground plan of the cathedral of Monreale is reminiscent of the grand basilicas of Messina and Cefalù. Other examples elsewhere in the kingdom include S. Giovanni Vecchio in Stilo and Santa Maria della Roccelletta in Squillace. In the literature, it is believed that this Cluniac plan was first brought to the SS. Trinità at Mileto by Robert Guiscard due to the influence of Robert de Grandmesnil, the former abbot of Saint-Evroult d’Ouche in lower Normandy. See Mario D’Onofrio, “Il panorama dell’architettura religiosa,” in J Normanni: popolo d’Europa, 1030–1200, edited by Mario D’Onofrio (Venice: Marsilio, 1994), 199–208.

At Monreale, there are two extensive pictorial cycles. As in the chapel in the main Norman palace in Palermo, Old Testament scenes from Genesis until Jacob’s Dream adorn the spandrels and the two tiers of the nave. At Monreale, scenes from the New Testament are located in the side aisles as well and include the Christological cycles of the Passion of Christ and Miracles of Healing. The Pantokrator dominates the apse while Peter and Paul are depicted in the apses of the aisles. Overall, the mosaics of Monreale resemble most closely those in the Cappella Palatina in terms of their arrangement, composition, and choice of scenes. These were executed in two separate periods, the first under Roger II and in a second phase by his successors, while the decorative program at Monreale is thought to have been completed in a single campaign. See Demus’ discussion in the Mosaics of Norman Sicily, 91–177; and the numerous works by Ernst Kitzinger, The Mosaics of Monreale (Palermo: S. F. Flaccovio, 1960), idem, “The Mosaics of the Cappella Palatina: An Essay on the Choice and Arrangement of Subjects,” Art Bulletin 31, 4 (1949), 269–92; also Eve Borsook, Messages in Mosaics: The Royal Programmes of Norman Sicily, 1130–1187 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 51–79. In addition to the narrative pictorial cycles, a plethora of saints are depicted in the church, namely in the apse and on the interior arches of the nave arcades and on the spandrels of the sanctuary arch. Most notable are the numerous local saints represented in the mosaics of Monreale. See Brodbeck, Les saints de la cathédrale de Monreale.
church to the seated Virgin Mary and the king crowned by Christ (figs. 7.13–7.14).\textsuperscript{835} Both images will be discussed in detail below.

### III. Early Literature referencing the Royal Palace at Monreale

As is the case with the Benedictine monastery, we have no documentation relating to the construction of William II’s palace; it is not mentioned in any royal privileges or bulls. The palace, along with that at Parco on the other side of the Oreto valley, was also possibly a resting place for the king during hunting expeditions. However, it would seem that its primary function was for William II’s projected lengthy stays at Monreale. The residence was located within the fortified enclosure of the monastic complex, most likely attached to the north transept. This flank of the basilica currently houses on its west side the Palazzo Comunale of the modern town of Monreale. The northern half of the structure is occupied by the archiepiscopal seminary founded by Archbishop Ludovico II de Torres (1551–1609), in 1589 (figs. 7.15–7.18). Remains of the royal palace can be found in the eastern and northern wings of the seminary. In the course of Torres’ renovation, a fountain was added to the center of the courtyard (figs. 7.19–7.20). The building was refurbished again in the second half of the eighteenth century. Consequently, the original ground plan and the external appearance of the old Norman palace have been largely effaced.\textsuperscript{836}

When the transformation of the palace into the seminary took place in the mid-sixteenth century, the building was already in a deplorable state. The humanist Raffaele

\textsuperscript{835} The recently deceased archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Becket, is famously shown in the apse of the basilica. Becket appears in an exalted position, below the Virgin Mary and in the same row as the church fathers. His murder in 1170 had newly occurred, so that his inclusion in the cycle of major Church figures indicates the strong impact of William II’s recent marriage to Joanna, the daughter of Henry II of England, in 1177. Ibid., 35, 95–98, 738–43.

\textsuperscript{836} Archbishop Francesco Testa carried out significant restorations on the seminary in 1772, most notably on the courtyard and the principal portal of the east façade. See Krönig, \textit{Cathedral of Monreale}, 92–94.
Maffei of Volterra (1451–1522) referred to it as a “refugium pauperibus,” and thus it was already a charitable foundation. When Leandro Alberti visited Monreale in 1526, he noted that “Hora questo luogo è molto male abitato.” The next account of the royal palace was in Lello’s *Descrittione del real tempio, et monasterio di Santa Maria Nuova di Monreale* (1558):

Leaning against the church on the other side was a house, which is presently divided by the road where the king lived when he came to Monreale, and through a window he could look into the church, hear the Divine Offices, and enter by a door that is now locked. . . Monsignor the archbishop has adapted this house into the residence for the seminary as well as into three storerooms for the church created at his own expense.

By the time of Lello’s writing in the mid-sixteenth century, the edifice where William II stayed was divided from the cathedral by a road (figs. 7.21–7.22). Furthermore, he describes a blocked portal that was the royal passageway that connected the palace directly with the basilica (fig. 7.23).

From his apartments, the king could gaze down from a window in such a way that he could see and hear church services. This arrangement most closely recalls the loges at the chapels of Parco and La Zisa. This part of the church, of the north transept and the north side

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838 Alberti, *Descrittione di tutta l’Italia*, fol. 56r: “Salendo a mediterrani, sopra Palermo quattro miglia vedesi su quelli ameni et dilettevoli colli il piccolo castello di Monreale, da’ Latini Mons Regalis nominato, edificato già da Guglielmo II buono Re di Sicilia, del lignaggio de’ Normanni, per ristorare i danni dati dal suo padre a’ popoli volendo che questo luogo fosse ricetto de’ poveri. Et non contento di ciò, v’aggiunse una molto superba chiesa con un Monastero consegnandoli di buone entrate per sostentare alquanti monachi liquali continuamente avessero quivi a lodar Dio et pregarlo per la salute sua et de’ suoi.”
839 Lello, *Historia della Chiesa di Monreale*, 38: “Appoggiata alla Chiesa dall’altro canto era una casa, che hora n’è divisa dalla strada, dove habitava il Re, quando veniva a Monreale, et per una finestra poteva guardare in Chiesa, udire gli uffici divini, et entrarvi per la porta hora serrata. . . Questa casa ha applicator Monsignor arcivescovo alle habitazioni del Seminario insieme con tre magazzini della Chiesa che ha fabricato a spese sue.”
840 According to Gravina, the window openings to the royal palace were closed up when Cardinal Giovanni Borgia constructed the Cappella del Sacramento in 1492. Domenico Benedetto Gravina, *Il duomo di Monreale, illustrato e riportato in tavole cromo-litografiche* (Palermo: F. Lao, 1859–70), vol. 1, 5.
of the sanctuary, is also the location of the mosaic panel depicting an almost life-size William II crowned by a seated Christ below two angels (fig. 7.14). Its iconography exemplifies a well-known trope in Norman royal iconography that originated during the reign of Roger II. The crowning at Monreale is reminiscent of the mosaic presently in the portico of S. Maria dell’Ammiraglio that shows Roger II in full Byzantine regalia crowned by Christ (fig. 7.24). At Monreale, the royal throne was located on the north side of the sanctuary as well, on a platform below the aforementioned panel representing the king (fig. 7.25).

On the opposite side, on the southern pier of the sanctuary, William is depicted in a supplicatory position, bending his knees and offering a model of the church to the Virgin Mary (fig. 7.13). At Roger II’s foundation at Cefalù, there was a similar configuration of thrones facing each other in the sanctuary, as suggested by archaeological finds. In sum, at William II’s Monreale, the crowning mosaic panel, sanctuary throne, royal passageway, and window in the north transept created a royal area inside the church.

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841 Above is the Hand of God and two angels holding an orb and scepter, symbols of power par excellence. William is shown with the loros, clavi, and other imperial insignia. The king is also depicted frontally in a similar fashion to Christ who holds an open book inscribed with “Ego sum lux mundi.” Borsook, Messages in Mosaic, 67–68.

842 Kitzinger, Mosaics of St. Mary’s of the Admiral, 189–97. See Ernst H. Kantorowicz’s classic discussion of the Christomimesis in this mosaic, since Roger’s pose and even his facial features were made to mirror Christ. Idem, The King’s Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957), 65; see also Demus, Mosaics of Norman Sicily, 100–5.

843 Borsook has noted the Solomonic association in the placement of the throne below the Coronation mosaic, also situated under a sequence of Old Testament kings on the presbytery arch, thereby suggesting that the Normans were their rightful successors. This association was strengthened by means of an inscription in the panel containing an excerpt from the Vulgate Psalm 88:22 alluding to the Old Testament David. Borsook, Messages in Mosaic, 67–68; on a comparison between the arrangement of the throne at Monreale and that at the Cappella Palatina (even though the latter is likely to be a post-Norman addition), see Tronzo, Cultures of His Kingdom, 74–77; and Dittelbach, Rex Imago Christi, 143–46; and idem, Dittelbach, “The Ruler’s Throne.”

844 Demus, Mosaics of Norman Sicily, 115–16.


846 See the discussion by Rosa Bacile in “Stimulating Perceptions of Kingship: Royal Imagery in the Cathedral of Monreale and in the Church of Santa Maria dell’Ammiraglio in Palermo,” Al-Masāq 16, 1 (2004), 17–52.
Another important element of this arrangement that is not acknowledged in the scholarly literature is that William II’s gaze from the elevated position of his window (again, perhaps a balcony) would have allowed him not only to look down into the sanctuary, but also across, to an opening on the opposite side. Here was an additional window that connected to the monastery and, more specifically, to the private rooms of the abbot.\(^{847}\) As can be most clearly seen in the 1550 drawing, the entire courtyard complex of the palace mirrored the plan of the Benedictine abbey. One conclusion we may reach is that the king essentially built a version in miniature of the latter for his private residence (fig. 7.4). In sum, at Monreale, William II’s ambitious decorative program in the church intended as his mausoleum far superseded the foundation of his grandfather Roger II. He went so far as to strip the porphyry sarcophagi from the first Norman king’s planned burial place at Cefalù to establish a dynastic sepulchre in his new foundation, located not far from the capital.

IV. **An Architectural Reconstruction of William II’s Palace at the Site of the Later Archiepiscopal Seminary**

William II’s palace at Monreale is likely to have been constructed at the same time as the church and the monastery since its eastern side corresponds with the general alignment of the apse. Moreover, the thick wall of the sixteenth-century seminary’s principal façade indicates that it was the exterior face of the twelfth-century fortified monastery (fig. 7.16). Significant parts of the residence that can be dated to the final quarter of the twelfth century are still preserved today, partially revealed by Valenti in his restoration in 1923. The Soprintendenza’s second campaign took place in 1952, when the twelfth-century façade was

\(^{847}\) The structure is in the form of a tower, and was known colloquially as Torre dell’Abate (also Torre del Prelato). See Krönig, *Cathedral of Monreale*, 24–25.
uncovered and the later eighteenth-century windows were removed (fig. 7.17). The third floor is a post-medieval addition.848

The twelfth-century arrangement of the building is much debated in the scholarly literature and at present remains largely unknown (figs. 7.26–7.27). A space of several meters separates the shorter side of the palace from the basilica. In the 1930s, Letizia Anastasi suggested that the twelfth-century residence was as wide as the transept of the church on which it perhaps once leaned or to which it was connected. The extent to which the royal residence continued to the west requires further examination. This part of the structure is occupied by the Palazzo Comunale of the present-day town.

In the older views published by Del Giudice in the Descrizione del real tempio (1702) the royal residence has two floors (fig. 7.3).849 The ground level did not have any external decoration. What can still be seen is a series of lancet windows (fig. 7.18). The original entrance to the palace is unknown and the doorway is post-medieval. The first floor of the seminary contains remnants of eight large double lancet windows high up the surface of the wall. These are missing the marble column that would have been placed in their center (fig. 7.17). In the spandrels of the arches are bichromatic roundels whose pattern is exceedingly reminiscent of those on the apse of the cathedral.

In his work on Monreale, Wolfgang Krönig suggested an ideal reconstruction of the entire façade, and he deduced some of its internal configuration. The ground plans published by him omit the west wing. The portico of the interior courtyard of the royal palace is its

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848 A description of the restoration undertaken in 1923 appears in Francesco Valenti’s report entitled “Progetti dei lavori occorrenti per rinsaldare i muri Normanni del Seminario Arcivescovile di Monreale,” Fondo Valenti, BCP, ms. segn. 5 Qq E 141 n.9.
849 Del Giudice, Descrizione del real tempio; for a discussion of Del Giudice’s work and other drawings executed by him that date to 1590, see Scaduto, “Un disegno del complesso monumentale di Monreale,” 118–20.
best-preserved part (figs. 7.19–7.20). On its eastern side four broad ogival arches can be seen, each measuring 3.10 meters in width. Behind the atrium, a passageway (14.10 x 2.75 meters) is paved with clay bricks that date to the Norman period. On the eastern side and looking into the structure from the vestibule is an ogival door 1.80 meters wide. On either side of the entryway are double lancet windows with white marble columns placed during the restoration in the previous century (figs. 7.28–7.29). The courtyard is delimited by later buildings to the north and west.\textsuperscript{850}

Behind the loggia is a large rectangular hall with two smaller rooms occupying the corners of the east wing of the palace. The arched portals leading to these angular spaces are well preserved (figs. 7.30–7.31). According to Krönig’s reconstruction, this wing contains architectural elements dating to the twelfth century, most notably its original windows and doorways. The principal hall (12.10 x 5.20 meters) of the palace is located on the ground level, and its floor is made up of terracotta brick tiles matching those in the exterior hallway. In this oblong space are two doors (1.80 meters tall) that led into the northern part of the palace. An additional door on the south wall that is 1.30 meters wide provided access to a corridor that connected the residence with the basilica. This was the royal passageway closed off in the late seventeenth century and repurposed as the burial place of bishops.

Although the current condition of the palace creates many problems of interpretation, this chapter has sought to illuminate the possible configuration of William II’s palace and an attempt to contextualize the reasons behind its building. I have also noted its physical position in relation to the grand cathedral and the monastic cenobium that it greatly resembles in its outward form and arrangement. Apart from Krönig, virtually no attention

\textsuperscript{850} Archbishop Torres completed the enlargement of the northern wing after 1589. Krönig, Duomo di Monreale, 92–100.
has been given to the palace that was probably completed in the same campaign as the church and monastery and was conceived as part of the royal ecclesiastical foundation (figs. 7.32–7.33).

Conclusion

The Benedictine abbey of Monreale was granted exceptional territorial possessions and privileges at a time of improved stability for the Norman Kingdom, which had fewer external threats than ever before. Throughout his rule, however, William II faced growing internal pressure from various factions in his court, which had become progressively more aligned with the Latin West. Increasing tensions between the local elite and the Muslim population, many of whom tilled the lands of the monastery, likely compelled William to create a place where he could retreat in safety. Monreale’s imposing circuit wall punctuated with towers demonstrates a growing anxiety about imminent conflict. The royal monastery endowed with extensive surrounding agricultural lands meant that the complex was largely self-sufficient and could provide for the king, his retinue, and the religious community in the walls.

Contemporary with the foundation of the Benedictine abbey, the palace is a fortified residence, which can be seen in the hall remaining in the east wing. In comparison to the earlier suburban architecture associated with Roger II, namely Parco and La Favara, William II’s palace at Monreale differs greatly, both conceptually and visually. Most notably, the portico of the central courtyard was built on a grander scale than Roger’s compound at Parco. In addition to Del Giudice’s eighteenth-century drawing providing the only known pictorial representation with an elevation of the structure, there is a mid-sixteenth century ground plan
that includes William’s residence. By subtracting the top floor added in the seventeenth century, we may deduce to some extent its original scale. Due to its strong vertical articulation, the building resembles in its larger form the park pavilions of La Zisa and La Cuba.

The palace at Monreale communicated directly with the church, an arrangement that is found in a number of the suburban residences in the Norman parklands. At Monreale, however, these proportions are dramatically inverted. The small, subsidiary size of the chapel at Parco, for instance, was here transformed into a monumental basilical hall, and the royal palace in turn was greatly reduced in its dimensions relative to the monastic church. The bichromatic decorative elements that adorned the façade of the structure echo those of the apse of the church as well as the cathedral of Palermo. The remains of the palace at Monreale, such as its east face and the archiepiscopal seminary’s interior courtyard, can only suggest what must have been a lavish residence constructed around the last quarter of the twelfth century. William II’s newly established monastic foundation was rapidly awarded extraordinary ecclesiastical powers. Monreale was where he proclaimed his secular authority to the extent that his residence purposely mirrored the Benedictine cenobium, all located in close geographic proximity to the official capital of Palermo.
—Conclusions—

A group of extramural structures built by or closely associated with the twelfth-century Norman kings in Palermo constitutes the principal focus of this dissertation. While their royal residences include the main palace with its opulent chapel, the Cappella Palatina, my study focuses on the satellite residences, located within the greenbelt and in the mountains that surrounded the city. These palaces served a variety of functions, offering a place of refuge from the summer heat, a sojourn during hunting expeditions, a gathering point at specific times of the year according to the liturgical calendar, or for occasional ceremonies or audiences. When studied together, the buildings and the royal parks make possible a meaningful discussion of secular architecture and its role in the monumental transformation of the topography around the capital.

In previous works on medieval Sicily, scholars have concentrated overwhelmingly on ecclesiastical examples, especially the Cappella Palatina and the grand cathedrals of Monreale and Cefalù, and more specifically on their programs of decoration. To understand the neglect of the suburban residences associated with the Norman kings in contemporary surveys of Western medieval art, in the first chapter I discussed their eighteenth- and nineteenth-century reception. As a case study, I chose La Zisa because of the attention lavished upon it by Northern Europeans on the Grand Tour. The German art historians Franz Kugler and Karl Schnaase included the palace pavilion in the first handbooks of architecture that appeared in the mid-nineteenth century. Yet Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc’s manual of more than twenty years later is emblematic of the difficulty of reconciling comparanda that would seem to be of Islamic fabric. By this time, Michele Amari had
already demonstrated the Norman patronage of both La Zisa and La Cuba. Another
important moment for understanding the historiography of these monuments occurred just
after the turn of the nineteenth century when Georges Marçais, who was deeply involved in
the French colonial mission in Algeria, incorporated these two extramural buildings into his
systematic study of the art and architecture of what he termed the “Islamic West.”

Tracing the lineage of the changing patronage assigned to La Zisa highlights the
uneasy place that it occupies in contemporary surveys of the art of the medieval West. The
continued reliance on disciplinary taxonomies formed in the nineteenth century has
prejudiced views of this palace pavilion and, by extension, the other extramural residences of
the Norman kings around Palermo. In turn, these views are largely responsible for their
subsequent placement in scholarly studies that have long determined their cultural
significance. The residences examined here (and this is especially the case for Lo Scibene
and the Arches of San Ciro) have been marginalized to the extent that their very existence is
threatened. These secular monuments are poorly maintained and stand in notable contrast to
the attention lavished on the Cappella Palatina, whose physical structure and mosaics have
undergone numerous restorations in the recent past.

The study of Palermo’s urban topography is by now well established, as is best seen
in the recent Brill Companion to Medieval Palermo (2013). Scholars have, however,
directed less attention to the extramural area of the city that is the focus of the second
chapter. For Palermo, in particular, there has long been a tradition of the description of water
sources and the surrounding countryside. These range from the tenth-century traveler Ibn
Ḥawqal to the many works by early modern Sicilian humanists whose observations and
invaluable pictorial testimonies are incorporated in the second half of the dissertation
(Chapters Three to Seven). Even though there is no direct evidence for Fāṭimid and Kalbid parklands, the landscape had already been profoundly modified by artificial means before the Hautevilles’ arrival. During the siege in the summer of 1071, Count Roger found irrigated gardens, agricultural fields, and sugarcane plantations. After stabilizing his reign in the first quarter of the twelfth century, the first Norman king, Roger II, established at least two parks near his capital. His successors continued to signal their possession of the territory by modifying the landscape, expanding their parks on a monumental scale by the second half of the century. In discussions of medieval cities and the countryside, the overall significance of water is habitually superseded by landscape. I have shown that the choice of site for the suburban palaces was mostly dependent on the presence of this resource. The former is clearly demonstrated in the nomenclature of several of these residences as well as in the evidence I have presented regarding the extensive man-made waterscapes that comprised monumental lakes, islands, water basins, ponds, and fountains.

One example of the prominence of water as a factor in the choice of site is La Favara, named after the torrential source that fed its enormous lake. Examined in the third chapter, the complex is generally thought to have been merely refurbished by Roger II, since an earlier residence built during the Muslim period of rule was likely already in situ. Recent excavations uncovered remnants from the Hellenistic era, suggesting that the grounds were inhabited in antiquity (although it is unknown if this was continuous). Without further archaeological work, much of what we know concerning the medieval La Favara/Maredolce is derived from the early modern accounts analyzed extensively here. This is the case for the lost baths, a substantial and significant monument that is largely unknown and, moreover, unacknowledged in the scholarly literature.
The fourth chapter of the dissertation focused on the remains of Lo Scibene, possibly Roger II’s beloved palace of Minenium or al-Mannānī. Now in ruins, the nucleus of the residential structure contained a fountain on a central axis below a muqarnas vault that faced onto a large pool. We see the same configuration at the later La Zisa in its iconic Fountain Room. Lo Scibene thus epitomizes the issues surrounding medieval secular architecture, sidelined in part due to the fact that precise patronage cannot be assigned, and in part because of the analytic preconceptions that have misled earlier scholars.

Another lesser-known extramural residence is Roger II’s foundation of Parco (Altofonte). The fifth chapter examined the complex integrated into the fabric of the modern town and what I contend was a monumental basin on its grounds. Pavilions and waterworks, such as those at Parco and La Favara, were by this time a common sight all over the Mediterranean. The aforementioned structures were significant antecedents to the royal residential examples of the Genoard Park because, as I argue, on the grounds of both there were belvederes that overlooked artificial pools designed for the enjoyment of the king. Other ensembles in the suburban realm created specifically for the “royal view” include the balconies in the palatine chapels at Parco and La Zisa built later in the century.

The pavilions in the Genoard Park that surrounded the medieval city, begun by William I and completed by William II, are at the core of the sixth chapter. The close association of these elite parkland residences with paradise is a pervasive theme of my analysis. Amatus of Montecassino made the first recorded mention to this effect, describing an extramural estate on the occasion of the Norman advance toward Muslim Palermo. The very name of the park, derived from jannat al-‘ard or “paradise on earth,” invokes the large-scale texts commissioned for La Zisa and La Cuba. These connotations appear to be part of a
well-established topos associated with royal parkland and palaces. Yet the inscriptions suggest a particular paradise, one shared with contemporary elite commissions in the Islamic world. Notably, both of these monumental texts also reference the Christian kings of Palermo, employing their royal titles in Arabic.

I contend that the 1161 attack on the principal palace in Palermo was of fundamental importance and likely brought about the creation of the Genoard Park. Several Latin noblemen orchestrated a failed coup in whose aftermath William I’s heir, Roger IV, was killed. After William gained control of the palatial enclosure, the Latin population carried out what was essentially a culling of the local Muslim residents of the capital. The survivors fled to the inland of western Sicily, many settling in the area that in the next decade would become part of the agricultural estates of the Benedictine abbey of Monreale founded by his son, William II. Closer attention to these periods of tumult destabilizes the prevailing scholarly view of a syncretic realm. The rule of these kings has heretofore been considered without much differentiation between the two halves of the century, Roger in the first and the two Williams in the second. Therefore, the dissertation has further implications for the study of the medieval Mediterranean, challenging previous discussions of Norman Sicily as an extraordinarily tolerant reign of a minority over a multi-faith majority.

By the mid-twelfth century, however, the changing political climate required a more protected environment for the kings adjacent to their capital. They were not alone in constructing a “safety belt” behind which they could retreat. In Byzantium, by this time, the Comnenian rulers had decamped to the well-fortified Blachernae Palace in the north corner of Constantinople overlooking the Philopation hunting park. The Genoard and its sumptuous palace pavilions positioned the twelfth-century kings on an international playing field. Peter
of Eboli’s illustration in the Liber ad honorem Augusti demonstrates the degree to which the parkland was considered an entity separate from the city proper, with all of the accoutrements of an elite compound, including a menagerie. By creating the Genoard Park, the kings signaled their aspiration to participate in a pan-Mediterranean court culture.

I have looked for other, lost spaces in the Norman secular sphere, most notably the Aula Verde, which was a ruling hall in the main urban palace. The key space that represented royal power in the complex, however, would appear to have been the Cappella Palatina, which, during the reign of Roger II, had both royal and ecclesiastical roles. Yet these divisions do not seem to have been stable throughout the entire century. The Cappella Palatina likely fulfilled a dual role when it was first built, yet its function as an aula regia might have been phased out by William II’s rule, when the mosaics of the nave were completed. The monastic complex of Monreale was designed to contain both domains, since William’s lavish residence connected directly to the basilica. The contemporaneous construction of Monreale and La Cuba raises several interesting points, indicating the increasing Latinization of the kingdom under Roger’s successors, while also preserving an Islamic mode of building for the royal residences with monumental inscriptions exalting the Christian kings in Arabic.

By the early 1180s, William II essentially created an independent state within the kingdom through his generous donations of agricultural lands to be worked by Muslims for the benefit of his new foundation. At Monreale, he united secular and religious powers on an unprecedented scale. The royal palace was built facing onto a courtyard on the north flank of the cathedral, mimicking the layout of the Benedictine cenobium to the south of the church. For the first time in the Norman realm, this site demonstrated a well-defined
relationship between a royal palace and a large ecclesiastical foundation. Furthermore, the king himself was placed within the sacred space of the sanctuary with the pictorial representations that would have mirrored his actual physical body. In what are pendant mosaic panels, William is depicted as crowned by Christ on the north presbytery wall and, on the south, as a donor presenting the church to the Virgin Mary. William II could attend services in the sanctuary or observe them from a window above while in his private residence. Finally, the king initiated the dynastic mausoleum at Monreale, arranging for his father’s entombment in a porphyry sarcophagus. The royal palace in this foundation encapsulated his vision, transformed by the last Norman king into a version in miniature of the Benedictine cenobium. The constructed sacred and secular spheres of Palermo, which hitherto had been mostly separated and, moreover, articulated in entirely different architectonic languages in the suburban royal residences, were united at William II’s complex at Monreale.

My dissertation explored the secular architecture of the Normans located around the medieval city of Palermo, elucidating the choices made by these kings in siting their palaces near sources of water and other topographical features to create carefully curated and landscaped parks. I have underlined methodological problems in the study of medieval secular architecture that range from their poor state of preservation, in part due to lengthy periods in which these were in private ownership, and in part to the lack of funds assigned to them by administrative bodies charged with their restoration. Both issues have greatly endangered these works. Remarkably, a good deal of the bias toward secular architecture is recent and does not date to the origins of the disciplines of art and architectural history. As Chapter One demonstrated, many of these structures did appear in mid-nineteenth century
universal handbooks. Their exclusion from twentieth-century surveys is most likely a by-product of scholarly specialization. Monuments that do not fit into existing paradigms are relegated to subfields in the scholarship and thus are marginalized even further. In addition, the changing and, indeed, deteriorating Christian-Muslim relations over the course of the twelfth century effectively dismantles the all too often monolithic label of multiculturalism applied to Norman Sicily. In sum, one of the best surviving ensembles of secular monuments in the Latin West came about in a significantly transformed environment. I have attempted to reconstruct, to the degree that it is possible, this forgotten landscape of the medieval Mediterranean.
Appendices: Primary Sources

Appendix A: Medieval Source Material

a. Abd ar-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammed ibn ‘Umar from Butera (also known as al-Butīrī ‘aṣ Ṣiqillī), in Biblioteca arabo-sicula, ossia raccolta di testi arabici che toccano la geografia, la storia, le biografie e la bibliografia della Sicilia, Traduzione italiana, translated by Michele Amari (Turin-Rome: Ermanno Loescher, 1880–81), vol. 2, 438:

1. [Ve’] i palagi trionfanti [della reggia], dove la gioia smonta dal suo ronzino [per albergarvi]!
2. Ammira il soggiorno, al quale ha data Iddio perfetta bellezza:
3. Il teatro che rifugle sopra tutte le opere d’architettura!
4. [Guarda] i giardini inviolati, ne’ quali accolgonsi tutte le umane delizie;
5. I lioni della fontana capricciosa, che buttan [della bocca] acque di paradiso!
6. La bella primavera ammanta i [regii] parchi di pallii smaglianti;
7. Corona la fronta della [reggia] con gemme variopinte;
8. E profuma il soffio del venticello mattutino e del vespertino.

b. Uthman ibn ‘Abd al-Rahim ibn ‘Abd al-Razzaq ibn Ja’far Ibn Bashrūn of Mahdīya, as translated in Biblioteca arabo-sicula, vol. 2, 439:

1. Evviva la trionfante [reggia], che splende d’incantevole bellezza,
2. Col suo castello egregiamente edificato, dalle forme eleganti, dalle eccelse logge;
3. Con le sue belve e le copiose acque e le sorgenti [degne] del paradiso!
4. Ecco i giardini, cui la vegetazione riveste di vaghissimi pallii,
5. Ricoprendo il suolo olezzante con drappi di seta del Sind!
6. [Senti] l’auretta che li [lambisce] e ti reca la fragranza dell’ambra;
7. [Vedi] gli alberi carichi della frutta più squisite;
8. Ascolta gli augelli che a lor costume cianciano a gara dall’alba al tramonto!
9. Che qui Ruggiero intenda [sempre] alle grandi cose, egli re dei Cesari,
10. Tra le dolcezze d’una vita che [il Ciel] prolunghi, e le [dotte?] brigate che son suo diletto.


Particula VII.: Spuriosa unctio regni, vers. 176–78:
Obprobrium patris natus uterque tegit
Fabarie cum prole comes descendit avite;
Illinė a multis plurima doctus abit.

Particula XXXIX.: Legatio Panormi, vers. 112–17:
Classibus expositis, furiosas transfretat undas,
Post hac Messanae paulo moratus abit.
Fabariam veniens socerum miratus, et illam
Delectans animos nobile laudat opus.
Legati quem preveniunt ex urbe Panormi,
Debita commisse verba salutis agunt.


[King Peter of Aragon nominating Niccolò Ioppulo as custodian of La Zisa, La Cuba, and La Favara]:

12 September 1282, Palermo:

Petrus dei gracia Aragonum et Sicilie Rex etc. Nicolao ioppulo civi panormi fideli suo etc. De tua fide [et] legalitate nostra curia confidente te Castellanum custodie palacii nostri panormi cum
solaciis nostris videlicet cubbe azize et favarie usque ad nostre voluntatis beneplacitum admotis
inde quibuscumque castellanis seu custodibus hactenus in ipsorum palacii et solaciorum custodia
deputatis duximus fiducialitur statuendum. Fidelitati tue firmiter et expresse mandantes
quantenus visis presentibus palacium idem cum predictis solaciis nec non cum omnibus
municionibus armis guarnimentis captivis et Rebus singulis sistentibis in eisdem pro parte curie
nostre a castellanis eisdem recipiens. Illud cum eisdem solaciis ad honorem et fidelitatem
nostram diligenter et fideliter die noctuque debeas custodire prout exinde curie nostre
iuramentum debitum prestitisti quod in diligenti et debita custodia ipsorum nullus per te defectus
vel negligentia committatur. . .
Appendix B: Early Modern Source Material

a. Gian Giacomo Adria (c. 1485–1560), “De Mare Dulci,” in De Laudibus Siciliae, BCP, ms. segn. Qq C 85, fol. 186r:

De Mare Dulci:
Est tanta exuberantia aquae quae fluit ex montibus panormi quod fontem facit Miselmirj et amplum Mare dulcis aquae; quod siculi reges Imperatoriis muris circumdatum fecerunt, visu detectabile et omni genre piscium. Ibi piscatores scapheis piscatoriisque piscantur. Mare simile mari Thiberiadiis. Tantoque erat levamen laborum quod hic Reges siculi et Imperatores venire properabant.


b. Vincenzo Auria, Capitoli supra lu passaggiu di li acqui di la piana di Palermo, ann. 1400, die 12 julii, BCP, ms. segn. Qq C 83, fol. 192r:

Et per tutto lo fiumi dilo marj dulci meza quartu zappata a lu modu pp. Dila Sabuxa et parcu. Et per tutto lo fiumi dila favara mezu et quartu et zappata a lu modo Infra.tta p.ti dila Sabuxa, parcu et mari dolci.

Ibid., fol. 192r [see fig. 3.45]:

[Monuments appertaining to the palatial complex of La Favara and surrounding area]:

A. Muraglia antichissima con parte di una Torretta.
C. Tre archi per commodità della vista, sopra de’ quali vi fu qualche edifizio.
D. Varie grotte, per le quali sgorga l’acqua di Mare dolce.
E. Chiesetta piccola con l’Imagine della Madonna.
F. Palazzo reale, detto volgarmente Castellazzo di Mare dolce, di fabbrica Normanna.
G. Chiesa di San Filippo, alla Porta di fuori vi sono due Croci insegne de’ Cavalieri.
H. Edificij per li bagni.
I. Reliquie de’ Ricettacoli d’acqua per li Bagni.
L. Grotta dei Giganti, ove si trovarono l’ossa loro, ed altre grotte vicine.

**Anonymous, list attached to the “Topographical Plan of the Lake and Palace of Maredolce,” third quarter of the eighteenth century, ink drawing, Gabinetto dei Disegni e Stampe Galleria Regionale della Sicilia, Palazzo Abatellis [see fig. 3.63]:**

1. Locale da dove attualmente scaturiscono le acque al piè di Monte Grifone.
3. Spazio che occupavano le acque della Naumachia.
4. Isola.
5. Castello o fabbricato per oggetto di delizia.
6. Diga di fabbrica di grossa pietra squadrata costrutta a doppi muri con riempimento nel mezzo per arrestare le acque dalla parte che prima . . al mare. Nel di sopra di essa Diga appresta un sufficiente spazio al trattenimento del Popolo.
7. Scalaletta per salire dalle barche sulla Diga ricavate nella stessa pietra del muro disposta a gradi.
8. Emissario ossia canale coperto a volta per il quale si scaricavano le acque del lago facendole scorrere al mare.
10. Moderna chiesa dedicata a S. Ciro.
11. Casette rustiche per abitazione.
Fiumi, fonti, e laghi fecondi di pesci, e peschiere in Sicilia

Maredolce è un luogo circa un miglio, e mezzo distante dalla città di Palermo: scaturisce da un largo e limpido fonte di acque fresche e cristalline, che vien chiamato Mar Dolce, e pigliò tal nome, poichè alcuni passi sotto il luogo, da cui sgorgano l’acque, i Re di Sicilia fabbricarono un sontuoso palazzo, che serviva per luogo di delizia, e divertimento: anzi vicino all’edificio regio fecero una peschiera, introducendovi l’acque di detto fonte; onde per l’ampiezza del lago, ed acque dolci in esso racchiuse pigliò nome di Mare Dolce. In questo luogo si portavan i Re, e si divertivano nella pesca de’ pesci, che producea questo vivajo. Intorno all’anno 1173 venne in Palermo Beniamino Tudolense di nazione. . .

Oggi non vi è più questo lago, perché senz’acqua, ma si vede chiaramente il suo sito, e le mura in alcune parti colorite di rosso, de’ quali era circondata, e ristretta l’acqua. Si vedono tuttavia ne’ suoi angoli alcuni scalini di pietra, per li quali in esso scendevasi, e alcuni anelli di ferro, a’ quali s’attraccavano le gondole reali: il che ho più volte osservato. Ora ove eran l’acque sono alberi fruttiferi. L’Abbate Maja scrive di questo lago, e nota che girava intorno un miglio, e fa fede avere osservato, che il fondo di esso era mattonato, e lastricato di tavole di pietra di varj colori; e così mi vien confermato da persone di campagne, che applicati alla cultura del terreno nell’andar colla zappa a fondo hanno veduto quanto riferisce il Maja. Nulladimeno nell’acqua, che scorre a beneficio di più molini, a forma d’un fiume vi si pesca al presente gran copia di ben grosse anguille.
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