

The Impact of Arabs on the Evolution of Sicilian Language and Culture

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ABSTRACT

The Arab presence in Sicily, though shorter than in Spain, left an indelible mark on the island's language, culture, architecture, and scientific advancement. From the Arab conquest in 827 AD to their rule until 1091 AD, Sicily became a center for the transmission of knowledge between the Islamic world and Europe. This paper examines the enduring legacy of Arab influence on Sicilian language, architecture, agriculture, and science. Linguistically, over 300 words from the Siculo-Arabic dialect persist in modern Sicilian, demonstrating the profound integration of Arab culture into the island's identity. Architecturally, the emergence of the Norman-Arab style, blending Arab, Byzantine, and Romanesque influences, produced a unique Sicilian aesthetic, with notable examples such as the Palatine Chapel and the Zisa Palace. The paper also highlights agricultural innovations, including the introduction of new crops like citrus fruits and innovative irrigation techniques. Furthermore, the role of Arab scholars in preserving and transmitting classical knowledge to Europe is explored, emphasizing the circular nature of cultural and intellectual exchanges. By delving into these shared histories, the research argues for the importance of cross-cultural understanding in combating modern-day populism, xenophobia, and racism. This historical examination serves as a reminder of the deep interconnection between Arab and European civilizations, fostering dialogue and mutual respect. The paper concludes by reflecting on the contemporary relevance of these influences, as exemplified by the opening of the first Arabic Cultural Institute in Italy and stresses the importance of nurturing human creativity and adaptability in an age of artificial intelligence.