

III, 44 *Note from Ḥajjāj to Joseph Yijū, Mazara, about a Consignment Sent to him by his Sons*

Messina, October–November 1154

TS Arabic 7, f. 18

Ed. Simonsohn and Gil, "Sicily," 40. Described in Ben-Sasson, *Sicily*, 647; Baker and Polliack, *TS Arabic Catalogue*, 36; English translation by Simonsohn, *Jews in Sicily*, 1:404–5. In all of these it is mistakenly identified as addressed to Abraham Ben Yijū. The correct identification appears in Shaked, *Bibliography*, 144.

The brothers Peraḥyā and Moses had sent merchandise to their father Joseph that they had received, of course, from their uncle Abraham Ben Yijū. The carrier Ḥajjāj asks Joseph how he wishes to receive it.

This is the *siḥāya*, or slip of paper, referred to in III, 48, line 31, where also the date is given.<sup>1</sup> Obviously, it was sent from Messina, the main port for the traffic to the East in those days.

For a first notification, such a small piece of paper would suffice. However, since we learn from III, 48 and III, 49 that the writer Ḥajjāj remained silent for another year and only after pressure from another merchant finally sent the sums involved, altogether 179 *rubā'īs* (Sicilian quarter dinars, according to III, 48, lines 34 ff, a sum sufficient to keep the family for two years), this announcement, in its very general terms, is somewhat suspect. It states that Peraḥyā had expressly advised Ḥajjāj to send the money in three installments, obviously, because he did not rely on his old father for using it economically. The suspicions of the Yijū family were, perhaps, exaggerated.<sup>2</sup>

Joseph Yijū is addressed here as 'Mevassēr's brother,' just as in III, 57, line 3 {where Joseph refers to himself this way}, obviously because the writer was acquainted with Mevassēr.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> {The date there is for receiving the note, which may have been written somewhat earlier.

<sup>2</sup> On Joseph's mishandling a gift of pepper that his brother Abraham Ben Yijū had sent him, see III, 41, lines 29–31 and III, 57, line 13. But large amounts of money were frequently sent in installments because of the precariousness of travel. See 375, n. 30. The figure of 179 *rubā'īs* is not mentioned in III, 44, and is obviously derived from III, 48, lines 33–34, 40 (cf. III, 49, line 44). In his Summaries of the documents, Goitein mentioned a sum of 270 *rubā'īs*.

<sup>3</sup> This designation led to the incorrect identification of the recipient as Abraham Ben Yijū, the third brother, in the studies cited in the bibliographical data. For several reasons the circumstances concerned apply well to Joseph but could not possibly fit Abraham. Among other things, the writer of the note refers to the recipient's sons. Joseph's two older

The name Ḥajjāj is found several times in the Geniza papers and also in Hebrew literary sources of that time. It is still very frequent among the Jews of North Africa.<sup>4</sup> Al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf was the viceroy in Iraq of the Umayyad Caliph 'Abd al-Malik (685–705). How did his name become popular among Jews? Since his father's name was Yūsuf (Joseph), the honorific byname (*kunya*) of a man called Joseph became Abu 'l-Ḥajjāj, father of al-Ḥajjāj, e.g., Abu 'l-Ḥajjāj Joseph b. Nathan (TS 18 J 1, f. 29) {also Abu 'l-Ḥajjāj Joseph b. Peraḥyā, one of the investors in I, 41}. This led to the use of Ḥajjāj as an independent name used by Jews.

As the Maghrebi form *naqsimū* in line 3 indicates, Ḥajjāj was a 'local' merchant.<sup>5</sup>

#### Translation

(1) My lord, the most illustrious Sheikh—may God prolong your life!—this is to inform you (2) that your sons are well and in good health. They sent (3) for you with me something<sup>6</sup> and instructed me<sup>7</sup> to divide it for you into three (4) installments. Now, I beg you to inform me with whom

sons, Peraḥyā and Moses, had left him to travel to Egypt; they met the writer on the way. Abraham had had two sons, both of whom had died years before this note was written.}

<sup>4</sup> See Eisenbeth, *Juifs*, 132, where, however, an incorrect explanation of the name is given.

<sup>5</sup> {Ḥajjāj uses the *nqtl* form for 1st pers. sg. imperf. in three (other) words: *nūhibb*, *nunfidh* and *nu'limuka*. I assume that Goitein cited *nqsmw*, since it is the first example, rather than as a *nqtlū* form for first pers. pl. imperf. In any case, some comment is called for here. While the *nqtlū* forms are best known in Maghrebi Arabic, they have recently been identified in Muslim Egyptian dialects from the Mamluk period onwards; see Blau, *Emergence*, 250 and 264 and the literature cited there. For a recent discussion see Owens, "Dialect." The *nqtl* form for first pers. sg. imperf. also appears elsewhere, but in Judeo-Arabic texts, *nqtlū* is known only from those texts emanating from North Africa (Blau, *ib.*, 58, n. 3; for *nqtlū*, cf. other references, *ib.*, 283). Nevertheless, the letter *w* in *nqsmw*, is the pronominal third person singular suffix, i.e., *naqsimulnaqsimo* = *naqsimuhu*, 'I shall divide it' (as indeed translated by Goitein); see Blau, *Grammar*, 59. On the use of Maghrebi Arabic by the Jews of Sicily, see Kraemer, "Messina," 368. For examples of *nqtlū*, we cite III, 43v, line 6, written by the North African Peraḥyā Yijū in Sicily: *natawassatū*, 'we shall make a compromise,' or in his brother Samuel's letter III, 48, line 42, *natazarra'ū*, 'we shall make humble supplication,' verso, line 19: *nashtariyū*, 'we shall purchase.'

<sup>6</sup> Arabic *shay* can be translated '(some) merchandise.' See 262, n. 22.}

<sup>7</sup> Arabic *wa-awṣānī*, which is in the singular. Obviously, the instructions had been given by the elder son, Peraḥyā, alone. {It could be a pseudo-literary form for the dual; see Blau, *Grammar*, 303.}

I should send it to you, (5) and you need no instructions.<sup>8</sup> For your information: the unpacking<sup>9</sup> cost (6) one dirhem.<sup>10</sup>

Profuse greetings to you.

[Address]

[Verso] (1) To the Sheikh, the *cantor*, (2) Mevassēr's brother, (3) known as Ibn Yijū.<sup>11</sup>

(1) From Hajjāj.

<sup>8</sup> A warning that Joseph Yijū should choose only a very trustworthy man, cf. {II, 55v, line 7} III, 10, line 71; {IV, 3v, lines 12–13} V, 1, margin, line 15, etc. {Arabic *wa-mā tahtāju waṣāyā*. Often the singular is used for the last word, *waṣīyya*, 'instruction.' From the use of the plural here and other parallel expressions, it is clear that in the phrase *mā tahtāju waṣīyā*, in the thirteenth century documents from Quṣayr, the last word is also to be vocalized *waṣīyya* and the phrase is to be translated, 'you do not require instruction,' rather than as rendered by Guo, *Commerce*, 50, *waṣīhi* (!), 'whatever you need, order it.'

<sup>9</sup> Arabic *inḥallat*, with which *nanḥall* in III, 48, line 33, which refers to our note, is to be compared. While charges for packing (*ta'biya*) are common, I have not yet seen a charge for unpacking, especially a sum as negligible as that mentioned here. Therefore, the interpretation must remain tentative, until parallels are found. {See Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 1:338, 487, n. 35, where it is translated 'untying' and other examples are adduced.

<sup>10</sup> 'Cost one dirhem' translates *fi dirham wāḥid*. Note that the expression *dirham wāḥid* (without *fi*) also appears with the meaning '(as) one sum': I, 34b, line 6, *wa-jumil dirham wāḥid*; VI, 27, line 22, *wa-taḥaqqaq dirham wāḥid*; VII, 11, line 11: *al-jami' kbūṭa dirham wāḥid*.

<sup>11</sup> See the introduction to the document on the way the writer referred to Joseph.}

III, 45 *Short Letter from Perahyā b. Joseph Yijū to His Father in Mazara*

Sicily or southern Italy, most probably June 1154

TS 8 J 36, f. 3

The letter most probably was written in 1154, as it contains a reference to the proposed move to Egypt of the Yijū family. Perahyā is on a journey along the coast, certainly in Sicily or southern Italy, because he speaks here of his brother being sent back to Mazara via Palermo, while he himself had not yet set out on his passage to Egypt. This letter, as III, 43, shows that there still remained assets to be realized for Joseph Yijū, most probably from the time he was a merchant.<sup>1</sup>

#### Translation

[A. Reference to a letter from Egypt expressing doubts as to travel to that country]

(1) I am sending you these few lines<sup>2</sup> in well-being and health. [We arrived] on Sunday night (2) of the week *Wayiqqaḥ Qōrah*<sup>3</sup> and stayed overnight on board. On Monday [...], I disembarked [to take care of] sundry business and was met (3) by a man from Egypt, called Ibn Jāfi,<sup>4</sup> who gave me a letter from Sheikh Abu 'l-Fakhr (4) Ibn al-Amshāfi,<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> {Goitein surmises here and elsewhere (e.g., in the introduction to III, 49) that Joseph had previously been a trader. While this assumption is attractive, I have not seen any specific support for it in our texts. Debts owed Joseph are alluded to in III, 43v, lines 4–6. On Joseph's mishandling of pepper sent by Ben Yijū to his brother, see III, 41, lines 30–31, III, 57, line 13.}

<sup>2</sup> Lit., 'two.' See 694, n. 3. {For 'sending' the original has *'allaqtu*, lit., 'attaching,' because Perahyā attached his letter to the one mentioned in the continuation; see lines 13–14. His brother writes the same in his letter, III, 47a, line 14. *Allaqa* also means 'jot down'; see IV, 4, line 1.}

<sup>3</sup> The weeks are called according to the words beginning the Torah reading of the following Sabbath. The section referred to (Num., chaps. 16–18) is normally read in the month of June. {Perahyā was in the habit of dating his letters by the weekly Torah reading; cf. III, 55, line 2; introduction to III, 55a. This dating is not very common in the Geniza letters.

<sup>4</sup> For this rare name, see Ibn al-Zubayr, *Asmā'*, 1390.}

<sup>5</sup> Abu 'l-Fakhr Ibn al-Amshāfi was the friend and helper of the Yijū family in Fustat. {See pages 95–101.}