

66 ACCOUNT FOR A BROTHER-IN-LAW

Ca. 1066

Abū Sahl, the man for whom this account was written, was a money changer, who specialized in high value silver dirhems and old and exotic gold currencies. No other Geniza account contains so many references to *nuqra* silver, called here also by the strange name "golden silver," as this one (see n. 3). Money-lending must have been another line of Abū Sahl, and one of considerable dimensions, as is proved by the valuable securities deposited with him. He had sold them either because the persons concerned had renounced them or perhaps had left the city altogether. Their price was paid during his absence. A bucket worth 74 dinars deserves particular attention (col. II, ll. 1-2). This must have been a bronze vessel inlaid with figures or other decorations in silver of the type we still admire in our museums. Orders of payment coming in for Abū Sahl or issued by him are also noted. In addition, he traded in a great variety of goods.

Commodities as different as wool, tin, and hazelnut—the first exported from Egypt, the second coming from Spain, and the third imported from Syria—were traded by him in considerable quantities.

The account was written by Abū Sahl's brother-in-law, Nahray b. Nissim, whom we have repeatedly met in nos. 29-35, above, and also as author of account no. 64. Nahray took care of his brother-in-law's accounts during a short absence (cf. col. I, l. 2: "The purses he left" and col. IV, l. 10: "Debited after his arrival"). From col. III, ll. 2-3, where Nahray pays rent to his brother-in-law for two and a half years, one might derive the erroneous conclusion that our account was concerned with such a long period. Fortunately, we are informed about this detail from another source. After his marriage, Nahray, who was a native of Tunisia, took up residence in the family mansion of his brothers-in-law in Fustat. After some years the young couple needed more space than that provided by the share of the house left to his wife by her father (it was one-sixth of the house). Therefore, Nahray agreed to pay to his brothers-in-law, on whose premises he encroached, a monthly

rent of 1 dinar.¹ The payment listed here is from the time of that agreement and to be understood as retroactive.

The period for which our account was made must have been short, four to five months, for people used to travel during summertime and there is only one item for the purchase of wheat and none for that of grapes (for the preparation of wine), an item appearing regularly in letters and accounts around August, and, above all, the account contains no date. Had it concerned more than one year, references to preceding years could not have been absent.

The account is written on a sheet forming four pages of small book size (5 1/2 x 4"), as Nahray used in his commercial papers.

University Library, Cambridge, Taylor-Schechter
Collection, TS Arabic Box 30, f. 215.

A. CREDIT

(COL. I)

[1]	To my lord, the elder Abū Sahl, "the son of the Kohen" ² —may God make his honored position permanent.	
[2]	Price of all he left in 6 purses	68 1/3, 1/4 din.
[3]	Price of 94 1/2 golden silver pieces ³	5 2/3 din.
[4]	Price of 103 given to Abū 'Alī ⁴ (5) of which I have received the price of 65 dir., namely	4 din.
[6]	Balance to the debit of Abū 'Alī	38 dir.
[7]	To his debit also	20 dir.
[8]	Same, first payment through his paternal uncle	200 dir.
[9]	Same, balance of	272 dir.

Total 710 dir.⁵

¹ TS 8 J 11, f. 18, dated 1066. The information was conveyed to Abū 'Alī, Nahray's other brother-in-law (see below). The house was *mushā'*, "undivided," i.e., the various shares were numerical, not physical units.

² This was the family name, "Mr. Cohen."

³ Text: *fiḍḍat dhahab*. This "golden silver" must be identical with *nuqra*, or full, silver, as the identical exchange of 1:17 proves. It cannot correspond to *electron*, since this coin alloy contains far more gold than warranted by the price indicated here. See below, col. I, l. 15, and col. II, ll. 6-7.

⁴ Nahray's other brother-in-law. See n. 1, above.

⁵ Total of the last four lines.

[10] Total weight	869 1/2 dir. ⁶
[11] Debit on Abū 'Alī through Ibn al-Sukkari ⁷	17 dir. for 1 din., 1 din. (one line left free)
[12] Price of the collaterals deposited by the Preacher ⁸	18 1/3 din.
[13] Balance of payment for two pots of 'Alī	7 1/3 din.
[14] Price of 438 silver dir., after the loss of two dir., which had	
[15] fallen off. ⁹ Price 17 dir. per din.	25 1/2, 1/4 din.
[16] (Torn away)	. . . 2/3 din., 3 qīr.

(COL. II)

[1] Price of the bucket	67 din., [2/3, 1 qīr.]
[2] Balance from the sale of the bucket	7 din.
[3] From my master Abū 'Imrān	17 din., 1/2 qīr.
[4] [Balance of an account] ¹⁰	
[5] A pair of anklets	20 din., less 1/4
[6] Sale of 94 dir. nuqra	
[7] from the rest of the silver Price	17 1/2 dir. for 1 din., 5 din., 11 qīr. A t?rsymh ¹¹ remained from it.
[8] For 208 din., 5 qīr. Nizāriyya ¹²	219 1/8 din.

⁶ Total of ll. 3-9.⁷ "Sugar merchant." Here and in the following line about four partly effaced words were added, it seems in another pen.⁸ This Muslim preacher, *wā'iḡ*, gives real sermons and is different from the *khaṭīb*, who reads the more formal *khuṭba*, or address, during the public Friday prayer. A *khaṭīb* was among Nahray's customers.⁹ The sum concerned had been 440 dirhems, but there had been a *naḡd*, a kind of small loss not yet identified, amounting to 2 dirhems.¹⁰ Crossed out probably because this balance had been settled elsewhere.¹¹ *Tarsim* is a fine to be paid for delay in the payment of a bill of exchange. But none is mentioned here and the suffix *h* does not refer to any preceding word. One can hardly assume that Nahray intended to write *tarmisa*, the old *tremissis* (or one-third of a gold piece), whose Greek-Latin loan word is normally found only in Hebrew texts.¹² Coins minted under the caliph al-'Azīz (975-996), i.e., about eighty years before our account. See above, *passim*.

[9] There remained a bag of them to be exchanged with the elder Abū Sa'd ¹³	
[10] Received from Ibn al-Sukkari for the wool ¹⁴	131 1/4 din.
[11] From Sulaymān, the Spanish goldsmith	1 din. less 2 ḡabba
[12] Total	619 din., 5 qīr.
[13] In number ¹⁵ 9 din., 1 qīr., and 4 fragments. Remaining.	
[14] [Price of hazelnuts	37 din.] ¹⁶
[15] Purse of Ibn Nājiya for the sale of the purses with (16) the exotic ¹⁷ din. and those with intricate script	28 din., 1 qīr.
[17] For a note from Ibn Bahlūl ¹⁸	22 din.

(COL. III)

[1] Profit from the tin	5 din.
[2] Two-and-a-half years' rent in the house	30 din.
[3] Total	713 din., 7 qīr.
[4] Debit, as summed up ¹⁹	133 2/3 din., 1 qīr.
[5] Balance in his favor	579 1/3, 1/4 din.

¹³ Text *kis*, which is not normally used in the Geniza documents of this period for "purse" (called *surra* in the Mediterranean area).¹⁴ As the specification below, col. III, ll. 12-16 shows, the money for this very large sale of wool did not come in at once, but arrived through different channels, presumably from a number of customers. If we assume that the price of wool here was approximately the same as in TS Arabic 30, f. 255, l. 10 (which was slightly later), namely, 6 dinars per qintār, over 20 qintārs were sold by Abū Sahl.¹⁵ All the entries in this account are according to weight. This payment, which contained fragments of dinars, was only counted. Since there were no coins of 1 qīrāt (or, at least, we do not know of any), we must assume that certain fragmentary dinars were traded as such.¹⁶ See col. IV, ll. 5, 18. Abū Sahl first had given an order to pay for this item and then withdrew the order.¹⁷ Text: *al-jānn*, it seems, a term for "exotic." The coins of this period, both Fatimid and Murābiṭ, bore legends in monumental Kūfī characters. There were, however, Sijilmāsa quarters, minted under the Murābiṭ ruler Yūsuf b. Tashfīn (1087-1106), which were half in Naskhī and might have looked rather intricate (cf. Hazard, *Numismatic History of North Africa*, p. 103, no. 91, and Plate 1). Perhaps coins with such script were minted also by Yūsuf's predecessor.¹⁸ The bottom of the page and with it the lower parts of the name and the number are torn away. But the restoration is safe.¹⁹ In a previous account.

B. DEBIT

[6] For the house behind the synagogue ²⁰	1 din.
[7] For the poll tax ²¹	1 din.
[8] Price of half a mann of spikenard ²²	10 qīr.
[9] His promissory note to Abū 'Alī	20 din. less 2 qīr.
[10] [Note handed to Isma'īl for a purse of the Treasury Loose gold	30 1/3, 1/4 din. 20 din.]
	(one line left blank)
[12] Specification of the sale of the din. received from Ibn al-Sukkarī ²³	
[13] Through Abū 'Imrān 17 less 1/2 qīr.	18 din.
[14] Through myself 12 less 1 1/2 qīr.	12 2/3
[15] Through Abū 'Alī 96 1/2, 1/8	95 din., 2 qīr.
[16] Through (torn away)	5 din.
[17] (Torn away) half a din.	Total 131 1/4

(COL. IV)

[1] For the poor for the poll tax	1 din.
[2] [Price of two cloaks for Umm Abī . . .	1 1/2 din.]
[3] [For the rent of a store room	1 din.]
[4] For two sacks ²⁴ of wheat and their transport	2 din. less 1/3
[5] For 3 loads of hazelnuts in the house of al-Anṣārī ²⁵	34 din.
[6] and for the "boys" (officials)	6 dir.
[7] Commission and weigher [included in] in addition to the price	1/2, 1/8 din.

²⁰ Alms given to people living there and promised by Abū Sahl before his departure.

²¹ Poll tax of a poor person, given to him as an act of charity.

²² This drug, which comes from the mountains of Nepal, was used against fits of hysteria and epilepsy. Ducros, *Droguier*, p. 74.

²³ This refers to col. II, l. 10 (see n. 14, above). The first two items (ll. 13, 14) refer to dinars which had a slightly higher value than the standard dinar in which this account is made, the third one (l. 15) concerns an opposite case.

²⁴ *Tillīsayn*. This is a sack made of palm leaves and containing 150 pounds of wheat (see Hinz, *Masse*, p. 51) which were needed for the household.

²⁵ This Muslim, who appears repeatedly in Nahray's accounts kept a place for the sale of fruit imports.

[8] Rose-water and Chinese rhubarb ²⁶	1/4, 1/8
[9]	5 1/2 qīr.
[10] After his arrival through my master Abū 'Imrān:	
[11] Purse of the House of Blessing	50 din.
[12] Purse of Ibn Muhadhdhib al-Dawla ²⁷	38 less 1 1/2 qīr.
[13] Purse of the Treasury	15 1/3, 1/4
[14]	Total 103 1/2 din., 1 1/2 qīr.
[15] Purse of Hiba al-Khashaba ("Mr. Gift Wood")	51 1/2
[16]	Total 155 din., 1 1/2 qīr.
[17] Handed over to him purse of . . . (torn away)	
[18] Balance from the price of the hazelnut . . . ²⁸	

67 A BANKER'S ACCOUNT

Ca. 1075

This account, like nos. 64 and 66, is in the hand of Nahray b. Nissīm, who acts here merely as a banker, as he did in the later years of his life. Abū Zikrī al-Ṭabīb ("The Physician," a family name), for whom the account was made, was one of the most prominent merchants in Fustat, always spoken of in the highest terms of reverence and closely connected with the Ṭustarīs (see nos. 2 and 11, above), as the passage about him in no. 20, sec. E, above, clearly indicates. One Geniza source shows him in contact with the government, probably as a representative of merchants.

The structure of the account is highly interesting. It starts out with the big items, the *suftajās*, or bills of exchange of the customer,¹ deposited by him with Nahray (sec. A). This is followed by two self-contained units, each showing approximately balanced credits

²⁶ Chinese rhubarb, a drug coming from Northwest China or Tibet, served as a popular tonic and purgative and frequently appears in the Geniza, as it does here, in small quantities, i.e., used for the household, not for commercial purposes (see Ducros, n. 22, above, p. 61). Rose-water was added to many medicines.

²⁷ An honorary title given by the government to Muslims and others.

²⁸ Published first in *JESHO* 9 (1966), 57-62, but thoroughly revised here.

¹ About this important instrument of commercial operations see *Med. Soc.*, I, 242-245, and no. 70, n. 18, below.