

O God, in your mercy grant safety for Joseph, son of Khalfa,¹ (*whose*) *s(oul may) r(est in peace)*, to a bundle containing:

32 Tripolitanian cloaks

2 red cloaks

2 hides serving as covers

40 Sicilian cloths wrapped in a washed mantle

4 boxes of saffron

5 Sicilian cloths, a turban made of cotton. All are wrapped in underpants.² May God decree safety for it. Amen. O Lord of the Worlds! *And Peace.*³

78 PROVISIONS FOR A JOURNEY

A stranger writes to a travel companion, who was accompanied by his wife or a servant. Script of early thirteenth century.

Mosseri Collection (Private) L 101.1.

In (Your) n(ame), o Mer(ciful).

It so happens that your servant must go on travel today. I am sending to you some chickens and quails as provisions on my way, for I have no one who could prepare them. Please excuse this impertinence and treat me in this matter in accordance with your kind character and noble disposition, for [as the proverb has it] "strangers are kinsmen to one another."

*May the welfare of your excellency increase steadily and forever. Selah.*¹

¹ Known from other Geniza papers with the family name *al-Qarawī*, from Qayrawān, Tunisia. He lived in the second half of the eleventh century. See ch. iv, introduction, n. 1.

² Men did not wear trousers but their underpants were very wide. When no longer in use, they served as wrapping material.

³ This greeting is addressed to both the bearer and the recipient of the bill.

¹ This enigmatic word, which concludes many Psalms (e.g., Psalms 3, 9, 24) appears often at the end of letters or their introductions.

79 THE ABANDONED CONCUBINE

In the Sudanese port 'Aydhāb

Probably December 19, 1144

Muslim law entitled a master to use his slave as a concubine. The Church and the Synagogue emphatically denied this license. They permitted sexual relations solely in marriage, and marriage was possible only between free persons. Therefore, a master who fell in love with a pretty slave, had first to free her. But this was not an easy matter, since Christians by statute and Jews by custom were monogamous. Still a considerable number of such cases is attested to by the Geniza papers.

It is natural that social concepts and practices of a majority should influence minorities living within it. Cases of a bachelor living with a slave girl or of a husband absconding with one are reported in the Geniza, although such cases were far rarer in the East than in thirteenth century Spain. See *Med. Soc.*, 1, 134-135.

As to travel, I have found only one case of a man suspected of visiting prostitutes (in Aden, South Arabia) and one, the document translated here, of a traveler accused of having kept a slave as a concubine. An attentive reading of the text shows that the core of the accusation was not the fact of the concubinage, but the mean way in which the girl had been treated. After having borne a son to her master, she was abandoned by him in Berbera, Somaliland, at that time a wild part of Africa. The girl most probably was Indian and a complete stranger in those parts. The matter was aggravated by its religious aspect. The proper thing would have been for her master to free and then marry her. Later, since he was certainly married, he should have divorced her, before or at coming home, and given her means enough for being a good match for a Jewish man of a lower social class. The Geniza contains several marriage contracts of freedwomen marrying men other than their former masters, and bringing in a substantial dowry. See *Med. Soc.*, 1, 145.

By one of those ridiculous coincidences in which the Geniza is so rich, a marriage contract between a freedwoman and a freedman has been found in which it is stipulated that the bride receive as domicile a house connected with the house of Abū Sa'īd Ibn Jamāhir,