

Note by one Ḥajjāj to Joseph Yijū, Mazara, informing him about a consignment

sent to him by his sons

October/November 1154

University Library Cambridge, Arabic Boxes 7, fragm. 18

7 cm high, 13,2
broad

Very thin and smooth paper.

This is the siḥāya or slip of paper referred to in No. 79, l. 31, where also the date is given. It is given here in full, because it is illustrative in various ways. Obviously, it was sent from Messina, the main port for the traffic to the East in those days.

As a first intimation, this little piece of paper would do. However, as we learn from Nos. 76 and 79 that Ḥajjāj remained silent for another year and did send the sums involved - altogether 179 rubā^cīs, according to No. 79, a sum sufficient to keep the family for two years - only after pressure from another merchant, this announcement, in its very general terms, is somewhat suspect. On the other hand, it states that Peraḥya had expressly advised Ḥajjāj to send the money in three instalments, obviously, because he did not rely on his old father for using it economically. Thus, after all, the suspicions of the Yijū family were, perhaps, exaggerated.

Joseph Yijū is addressed here as a respectable merchant and with his honorific name Abū Muba^{xy}ṣir, just as in the ms. University Library Cambridge 13 J 6, fol. 15, quoted above p. (Introd. to IIIF, p. 2).

The name Ḥajjāj is found several times in the Geniza papers and also in Hebrew literary sources of that time. It is very frequent among the Jews of North Africa up till the present day, see M. Eisenbeth, *Les Juifs de l'Afrique du Nord*, Alger

1936, p. 132, where, however, an incorrect explanation of the name is given. Ḥajjāj was the viceroy in Iraq of the Umayyad Caliph ^oAbd al-Malik (685-705). How did his name become popular among Jews? The name of his father was Yūsuf (Joseph). Therefore, the honorific title (Kunya) of a man called Joseph became Abu 'l-Ḥajjāj, father of Ḥ., e.g. Abu 'l-Ḥ. Joseph b. Nathan in ms. University Library Cambridge 18 J 1, fol. 29. This led to the use of Ḥ. as an independent name used by Jews.

As the Magribī form naqsimū in l. 3 indicates, Ḥ. was a "local" merchant.

T r a n s l a t i o n

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) you with me something and instructed me to divide it for you into three (4) install-
ments. Now, I beg you to inform me with whom I shall send it to you, (5) and you need no instructions. For your information; the unpacking (6) cost one dirhem.

Many respectful greetings to you.

Address, right side:

(1) To the Sheikh, the precentor (2) Abī Kubāṣṣir, (3) known as Ibn Yijū.

Left side:

From Ḥajjāj.

C o m m e n t a r y

3 instructed me - Ar. wa'auṣānī, which is in the singular. Obviously, the instructions had been given by the elder son, Perahya, alone.

5 you need no instructions - A warning that Yijū should choose only a very trust-

worthy man, cf. No. 56, l. 71; No. 85 margin, l. 15, etc.

the unpacking - Ar. inhallat, with which nanball in No. 79, l. 33, which refers to our note, is to be compared. While charges for packing (ta^cbiya) 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 sub judice, until parallels are found.

Address

2 Abī - See the Commentary to No. 75, l. 3.