

See my remarks
31 6/11 1967 n.s.l. from 1918 12/18

A Lake

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A "Sea Loan," According to Jewish Law, Granted by a
Sicilian Merchant

6 J 3, f. 33

(This contract bears great similarity to the sea loan known from European sources. It even contains the clause stipulating repayment a month after the arrival of the ship in the country of destination, as a sea loan granted in Constantinople December 1158.²) On the other hand, it was made according to Jewish law, which means that no interest nor premium was allowed. Most likely, the Sicilian merchant got a similar loan on his way back from Sicily to Egypt or had already received one on a previous journey.

The document is not signed, nor does it bear a date or even the name of the place where it was written. Cf. Note e.)

The elder Ishāq M. Isaac, son of the ^(our) h(onored), g(reat and) h(oly) M. and R. Judah declared in court that he owed to Ser^b) Michael of Trapani,³) the Sicilian, ten ounces of Dūqī^d) gold, according to the standard weight of Messina, for "profit at sea."¹ He will pay back this sum a full month after their arrival in the island of Sicily--in any place in Sicily--without ~~any~~ procrastination, where the goods will be unloaded from the ship.

The elder Ishāq assumed responsibility for this debt, as is done with any debt according to Jewish law.³

Sea Loan 6 J 3, f. 33/p. 2

The h., g. and h. M. and R. Raphael,⁸ the honored, wise, and prudent notable son of the h., g. and h. M. and R. Daniel, the highly respected notable - may he rest in E(den) - was present during that deposition and stood security to Ser Michael for that sum. Consequently, the symbolic purchase was made from him that he would act as guarantor from now on, of his own free will, without any constraint.

Notes

- a) Translated in Lopez-Raymond, Medieval Trade in the Mediterranean World, London 1965, p. 169.
- b) The original has here sr, probably pronounced Ser. In the Hebrew documents (in Arabic language) from the Datini archives, the names of Italian merchants are preceded by mar, Messer.
- c) An important town on the northwestern tip of the island of Sicily. The name is spelt as in Arabic literary sources, e.g. Yāqūt, Geographical Dictionary III, p. 523: ṭr'bnsh.
- d) The rubā'is, the Sicilian quarters of gold dinars, were occasionally called Dūqī by the Arabs, because the Norman dukes so styled themselves (in Arabic script) on their coins, as from 1072 (cf. M. Amari, Storia dei Musulmani di Sicilia, Catania 1937, III, 134, Note). Great quantities of these "quarters" were coined in Messina (see Amari, ibid., III, 334, Note 3).
- e) This name was not in use among Egyptian Jews during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. From this it may perhaps be deduced either that this man also came from Europe or that our document was of a later date.

Comments

1. Text: (bi) riṣq al-ḥāḥr, which seems to be the Arabic technical term for "sea loan."

See Loan 6 of 3, f. 33/p. 4

2. Text: *kasā'ir hōvet yisrael*, meaning literally "as all Jewish debts."

3. The Photostats of the Judaeo-Arabic documents from the Datini archives were sent to me for examination by Dr. Sobhy Y. Labib of Hamburg.