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WADAD KADI
AND
ROTRAUD WIELANDT

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PETRA M. SIJPESTEIJN AND LENNART SUNDELIN



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TWO UNPUBLISHED PAPER DOCUMENTS AND A PAPYRUS

Alia Hanafi

1. Amulet or Part of an Instructional Text for Prayers

Manus. ACPSI s. r. 3 (= Manus. Ragab 3) Provenance unknown
20.5 × 7.8 cm 4th/10th
Plates 1-2

The paper is fine and of light-brown color. It has been folded eight times horizontally. The only damage is on the left edge where a piece of paper was torn off along the whole side.

The handwriting is similar to that used in the fourth century A.H.¹ Diacritical points and vowels² are written on both the front and the back side of the paper.

The text on the front is bordered by a decorative rectangular frame adorned with geometric triangle and diamond patterns. The left-hand side of the frame is lost. The small diamonds are filled with dots while some of the triangles are colored in with ink, and others are left blank. The writer is possibly imitating the decorations appearing in many Qur'āns, but using his own style. Similar geometrical designs are quite common on amulets as well.³

The front of the paper contains the text of a Qur'ānic verse, written in ten lines with reddish-brown ink. Although not complete, the text on the front can be reconstructed in its entirety as *āyat al-kursī*, the 'verse of the throne' (Q 2:255), which is part of *Sūrat al-Baqara*.

¹ Cf. W. Ahlwardt, *Zwölf arabische Schrifttafeln*, Berlin 1888, pl. I, no. 1 (dated 364/974).

² Initially Arabs did not make use of signs for the short vowels. The long vowels and diphthongs are indicated by three consonants that are nearest to them in sound. See W. Wright, *A Grammar of the Arabic Language*, Cambridge, 1967, vol. 1, 7 ff. Cf. A. Hanafi and I. Ebeid, "A Part of a Sermon," *Bulletin of the Center of Papyrological Studies* 3 (1986), 126-50, here 128-9.

³ E. A. Wallis Budge, *Amulets and Magic*, London 2001, 67.

shall soon [come to] know it"). For unknown reasons, the scribe did not complete the rest of this verse.

3. Sale of a Mule

P. ACPSI s. r. no. 34 (= P. Ragab 34) Provenance unknown
11.8 x 9.4 cm 144/761-2?
Plate 4

The papyrus is of light-brown color, fine and well preserved. The only original cutting edge to have been preserved is at the top. It was folded horizontally three times. There is a margin of 2 cm at the top, and of 3.6 cm at the bottom.

The text was written perpendicular to the fibers in reddish-brown ink. Six lines of writing have been preserved, but the text may have had a total of seven lines since the lacuna at the beginning of line 6 may have contained one word. The text shows no orthographic or grammatical mistakes. No diacritical points appear in the text. The place of discovery is unknown, and the recto is blank.

The document can be dated to A.H. 144 (A.D. 761-2) if the words "one hundred and forty-four" on the first line can be interpreted as its date. In any case, the handwriting is similar to that of *P.Cair.Arab.* VI 391 (pl. VII) (dating from the second-third/eighth-ninth centuries), further supporting a second/eighth-century date for this document.

The subject of the text is the sale of a mule belonging to a Jewish family and the proposed sale of the mule's mother (see ll. 2-3 and the notes). Although prohibited from breeding mules themselves (see Lev. 19:19, "You shall keep my statutes. You shall not let your animals breed with a different kind; you shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed; nor shall you put on a garment made of two different materials"), Jews nevertheless sometimes acquired them (see Ez. 27:14, "From Bethogarmah they bartered horses, horsemen, and mules for your wares").

That Jews, Christians and Muslims maintained commercial, social and administrative contacts during the first centuries of Islamic rule in Egypt is clear from documentary and narrative sources.²⁶ Our text

²⁶ S. R. K. Glanville, *The Legacy of Egypt*, Oxford 1953, 349.

confirms such commercial contacts, here between a Jewish family selling a mule and the Muslim involved in this transaction.

The apparent absence of the *basmala* at the head of this text might indicate that it was produced in a Jewish context.

Text

1. كُتِبَ فِي يَوْمٍ كَذَا شَهْرٍ كَذَا سَنَةً [أَرْبَعٌ وَأَرْبَعِينَ وَمِائَةٌ
2. هَذَا كِتَابٌ مِّنْ يَعْقُوبَ الْيَهُودِيِّ وَيُوسُفَ بْنِ يَعْقُوبَ الْيَهُودِيِّ]
3. ... فَلَانٌ [بْنُ يُوسُفَ الْيَهُودِيِّ وَمَعَهُ بَغْلَةٌ لَهُ
4. ...] كَرَمٌ فَخَلَفَهَا مَعَ غُلَامٍ لَهُ [.. .]
5. ...] وَخَرَجَ كَمَا أَخْبَرَهُمْ فَبَاعَهَا بِعَشْرِ [دِينَارٍ]
6. دِنَانِيرٍ [(vac.)]
7. ...] بِنِ امِّهِ صَلِحٌ أَنْ يَبِيعَهَا

Translation

1. It was written on such and such a day of such and such a month of the year] one hundred and forty-four
2. This is a document from] the Jew Jacob and Joseph son of Jacob the Je[w
3. ... so and so] son of Joseph the Jew [went?] and with him there was a mule he owned.
4. in order that] Karam [might sell it] so he left it with his servant [[. . .]]
5. ...] and went out, as he told them, and then he sold it for te[n
6. *dīnārs*] (vac.)
7. ...] its mother (i.e. the she-ass) [becomes well] he can sell it.

Commentary

1. كُتِبَ فِي يَوْمٍ - شَهْرٍ - سَنَةً [أَرْبَعٌ وَأَرْبَعِينَ وَمِائَةٌ]. This is clearly the first line and may bear the date of the document. Adding a weekday and Islamic month in the lacuna before the number is therefore a possible restoration of the line. For the appearance of the date at the beginning of a document, see *P.Cair.Arab.* IV 280 r. 1.
- 2-3. هَذَا كِتَابٌ مِّنْ [.. .] may be restored (see *P.Cair.Arab.* I 145.2), although the reading of the letter ن of مِّنْ is uncertain. It seems that we are dealing with a Jewish family in these two lines, consisting

of Jacob and his son Joseph and a grandson whose name has been lost in the lacuna. The grandson has apparently been sent to sell the mule through an agent whose name is perhaps Karam (ل. 4 كرم).

3. *بغلة* mule. Another word used for mule is *هجين*.²⁷ The mule is the offspring of a horse and an ass, a hybrid animal combining the power of the horse and the patience of the ass. Smaller than the horse, the mule is a remarkably sturdy, patient, obstinate, sure-footed animal, living ordinarily twice as long as a horse.²⁸ Nevertheless, in a sixth/twelfth century Arabic letter, a soldier writes to his family that his mules and horses were so tired that they forced him to stop during a campaign in the Fayyūm.²⁹ Legal contracts often contain adjectives describing some feature of the mule, such as “of red-haired mane and forelock” (*اشقر*),³⁰ “grey” (*الشيب*),³¹ “with rounded legs or rapid” (*مخزرف*),³² “coal-black” (*محل الرجل اليسرى*),³³ “with a white left leg” (*محل الرجل اليسرى*).³⁴

Mules had a great value in Egypt and other countries; in the Old Testament they are ridden only by kings and great men (cf. 2Sa 13:29; 18:9; 1Ki 1:33). In the New Testament, by contrast, we do not encounter them at all, perhaps suggesting that they had ceased to be imported, though we also have evidence of mules being presented as gifts to Indian princes at this time.³⁵ In the Graeco-Roman period, too, taxes were levied on donkeys and horses, but not on mules.³⁶ From Islamic Egypt, however, we

²⁷ Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, vol. 6, s.v. *هجين*; vol. 1, s.v. *بغلة*; Y. Rāghib, *Actes de vente d'esclaves et d'animaux d'Égypte médiévale 1*, (*Cahier des annals islamologiques* 23), Cairo 2002, 16.4; 17.5.

²⁸ Ch. Pellat, “Baghl,” *EI2*, 17.5, 909.

²⁹ *P.Vindob.Arab.* II, 11, 3.

³⁰ Rāghib, *Ventes*, 16.4.

³¹ Rāghib, *Ventes*, 18.5.

³² Rāghib, *Ventes*, 18.5.

³³ Rāghib, *Ventes*, 16.4.

³⁴ Rāghib, *Ventes*, 16.5. For the meaning of *حجل* see Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, vol. 2 s.v.

التجليل بياض في قوائم الفرس او في ثلاث منها او في رجله قل او كثر بعد ان يجاوز الركبتين والعرقوبين لانها مواضع الاحجل... ويقال فرس محجل... وان كان بلحدي رجله وجاوز الارساغ فهو محجل للرجل اليمنى او اليسرى.

³⁵ A. C. Johnson, *An Economic Survey of Ancient Rome*, Baltimore 1936, 229.

³⁶ Sh. Wallace, *Taxation in Egypt from Augustus to Diocletian*. New York 1969, 91 ff.; M. A. I. Aly, “An Edition of Unpublished Greek Papyrus Documents from Dionysias and Some Papyri of Cairo Museum, with Commentary,” *Bulletin of the Center of Papyrological Studies and Inscriptions* 18 (2001), 51–64, pap. no. VII, note 4.

again have evidence for the presence of mules.³⁷ From Fāṭimid Egypt (r. 358–567/969–1171) we have the anecdote about the caliph al-Ḥākīm (r. 386–411/996–1021) riding his favorite mule into the Muqāṭṭam hills, never to return.³⁸ In the year 403/1012–3, this same caliph al-Ḥākīm had issued a decree that *ahl al-dhimma* were not allowed to ride horses, only mules and asses.³⁹ The Geniza documents inform us that middle-class Jewish physicians or merchants owned modest riding beasts, or at least “possessed saddles and harness for both mule and donkey to be used when one bought or hired a mount for travel.”⁴⁰

4. Karam. This may be the agent who sold the mule. The name can also be read as [Ibn] Karāma, with *scriptio defectiva* of the long ā, and the final *tā'* *marbūṭa* effaced (Hopkins, *Studies*, § 10.b). For the name Ibn Karāma, see Ḥamad b. Ibrāhīm b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Ḥaqīl, *Kanz al-ansāb wa-majmū‘ al-ādāb*, Riyadh 1993, 408.

Ghulām is used in the sense of “slave” or “purchased slave.” The word is synonymous with *mamlūk* (M. F. Wajdī, *Dā‘irat ma‘ārif*, vol. 7, Beirut n.d.). Ibn Manẓūr writes: *والغلام معروف. ابن سيدة: الغلام. الطار الشارب وقيل: هو من حين يولد إلى أن يشيب* (*Lisān*, vol. 5, 3288–9). The sense of this phrase seems to be that the Jewish grandson did not find the agent Karam, and thus left the mule with the agent’s slave, whose name seems to have been effaced at the end of the line.

5. *wa-kharaja*. The reading is uncertain.

The last letter of *kharaja*, *jīm*, is connected to the first letter *kāf* of the following word in an unconventional ligature. Apparently, the grandson told his Jewish family that he had left the mule with the agent’s slave who then sold the mule for ten or twenty *dīnārs*.

³⁷ There are, for example, references to caliphal stables in Cairo, which also housed mules (Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442), *Khiṭaṭ*, Cairo 1987, vol. 1, 444). For mules in Islamic Egypt, see also: D. Müller-Wodarg, “Die Landwirtschaft Ägyptens in der früheren ‘Abbāsidenzeit 750–969 n. chr. (132–358 d. H.),” *Der Islam* 32 (1957), 141–67, here 151–2.

³⁸ A. Shalabī, *Mawsū‘at al-ta’rīkh al-islāmī wa-l-ḥadāra al-islāmīyya*, 6th ed., Cairo 1983, vol. 5, 129.

³⁹ F. ‘Amīr, *Ta’rīkh ahl al-dhimma min al-futūḥ al-‘arabī ilā nihāyat al-‘aṣr fāṭimī*, Cairo 2000, vol. 1, 205.

⁴⁰ S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, vol. 4, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London 1983, 264.

- 5–6. The letter *shīn* is written without the three dots over it. These two lines may be restored as بعشرة دينار or بعشرين دينار because the first three letters of the word that have been preserved fit both بعشرة and بعشرين. There are various prices given for a mule in contemporary documents from Egypt. In a sale contract for a mule dating from the first–second/seventh–eighth centuries a mule is sold for five *dīnārs*.⁴¹ In third/ninth century sale contracts mules were sold for 8½,⁴² 9,⁴³ 9½,⁴⁴ 12½⁴⁵ and 13 *dīnārs*.⁴⁶ Since we find the prices of mules varying between 5 and 13 *dīnārs* I suggest to restore the lacuna: بعشرة دينار. Goitein's remark that a gift of a two-hundred *dīnār* mule and its saddle was a "frightening sum" only confirms this suggestion.⁴⁷ Even the twenty *dīnārs* paid for a mule in another Geniza document Goitein considers to be "considerable."⁴⁸
6. See the commentary to lines 5–6 for the preferred restoration *danānīr* in the lacuna at the beginning of line 6 where a piece of the papyrus has been torn off.
7. ويقول عندما تطيب أمه. A sentence similar to this one may be restored here, where mention is made of selling the mule's mother. Perhaps the sale of the mother (the she-ass) might have been delayed because she was ill, either through disease or as a result of giving birth.

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⁴¹ *Chrest. Khoury* II 17.3.

⁴² Raghīb, *Ventes*, 16.6–7.

⁴³ Raghīb, *Ventes*, 18.6 and 20.5.

⁴⁴ Raghīb, *Ventes*, 17.6–7.

⁴⁵ Raghīb, *Ventes*, 19.5–6.

⁴⁶ Raghīb, *Ventes*, 21.7.

⁴⁷ Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, vol. 4, 262.

⁴⁸ Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, vol. 4, 262–3.

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Plate 4. P. Ragab 34.

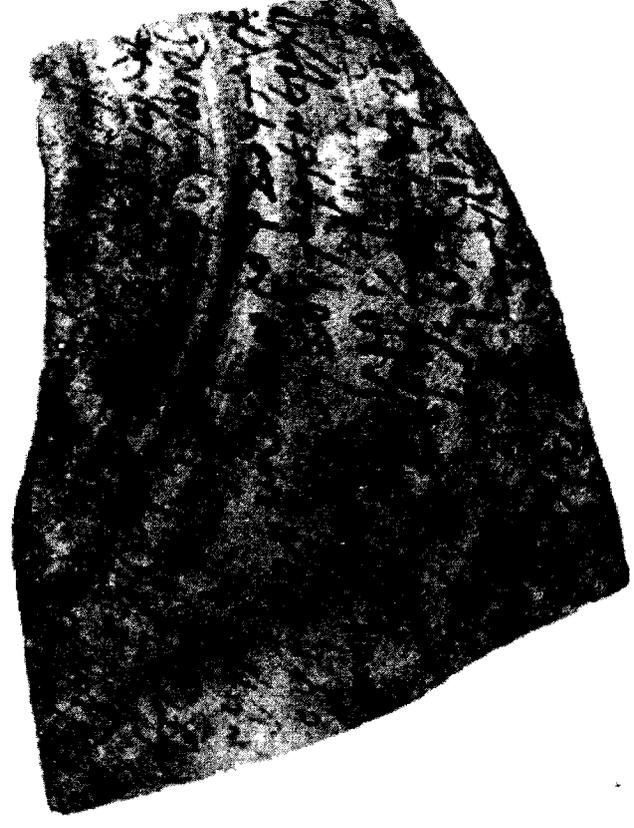


Plate 5. O. Crum Ad. 15.