CHAPTER 1

The Cairo Genizah

1 Historical Background

Egypt, like Babylonia, formed a part of the Jewish Diaspora well before the rise of Islam. According to the early sources of Ibn Abd al-Hakam, there were about 40,000 Jews in Alexandria alone in 642, though Stillman believes this to be a great overestimation and suggests the much lower figure of 4,000 Jews.\(^1\)

Whatever the case before Islam, however, the two first centuries of the Islamic era formed a period of social, economic and political change for the whole of the Middle East and its inhabitants, including Jews.

The new empire ruled over a vast territory with common communication routes and a unified set of relationships, and this produced a rich environment for the development of local communities. The local population, after the Muslim conquest, was divided into three: Muslims, monotheistic non-Muslims and polytheistic non-Muslims. Monotheistic non-Muslims were given the status of dhimmi, or 'protected person'.\(^2\) This status was primarily reserved for Christians and Jews, but sometimes extended to other groups, as Islam included Zoroastrians and Hindus in this category.\(^3\) While the origin of the status of dhimmi is based on Qur’anic verses, the legal forms and conditions attached to the status are based on the covenant of Umar.\(^4\) The origins of this pact are slightly unclear, since they are based on the records of probably

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apocryphal events in the 7th century during the rule of the Umayyad Caliph Umar b. al Khattab. However, research at the end of the 20th century has suggested that there was some truth in the legend, but that the relevant events should be dated to the rule of Caliph Umar b. Abd al-Aziz, at the end of the 8th century.

The pact takes the form of a letter from non-Muslims to the caliph and contains a list of duties and conditions that dhimmis agreed to respect as a guarantee for their protection. Dhimmis were allowed to regulate their own communal life and were requested to pay taxes that were different from those paid by Muslims, including a poll tax, the jizya, in exchange for their protection. The enforcement of the taxes and the rights and obligations of dhimmis, as well as a dress code, were not constant but depended on the rulers. However, despite various limitations, dhimmis were rather well integrated into general society and could conduct negotiations with the authorities and institutions to define their status. The judiciary system of dhimmis was supported and authorised by the Muslim government. Though a member of a minority group was free to seek a Muslim judge instead of the courts of their own denomination, issues were more commonly settled inside their own communities. The Jewish community could even impose punishments for seeking help outside of it. Indeed, turning to a Muslim court instead of the Jewish one could even be punished by excommunication.

Following the Muslim conquest, Jews in the Middle East not only spoke Arabic but also used it for nearly every type of writing, even religious works that had in the past been written in either Hebrew or Aramaic. This whole period is marked both by a relative religious tolerance and by a multilingual cosmopolitan society of Muslims, Jews, Christians and other travellers from all around the Mediterranean Sea.

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8 Rustow, ‘The Legal Status of Ḍimmī-s in the Islamic West’.
10 Gil, para. 738.
In 969, General Jawhar al-Siqili conquered Egypt for the fourth Fatimid caliph, Caliph al-Mu'izz; this event established the rule of the Fatimid dynasty in Egypt, which lasted for nearly two centuries, until 1171.\(^{11}\) By that time, Jews had been already playing an important role in trade and commerce in the Muslim world,\(^{12}\) and in the Fatimid caliphate, Jews were able to rise as high as being appointed by the Fatimid government to occupy official posts in the Fatimid bureaucracy.\(^{13}\)

However, one period during Fatimid times shows that there were government persecutions of the dhimmis. During the summer of 1007, Caliph al-Hakim, the sixth Fatimid caliph, began to destroy the prayer houses of Christians and Jews,\(^{14}\) with the destruction of synagogues apparently following the destruction of churches. Persecutions and acts of destruction lasted until around 1020. These events are mentioned in several letters, such as the letter written by Elhanan b. Shemarya around 1013 (e.g., Oxford MS Heb. a.3/21) or in several other private documents (e.g., T-S 13J26.16), but more information about them can be found in the “Egyptian scroll”, preserved in several versions (e.g., T-S Misc. 35.5 and T-S 8K10), that describes the beginning of these events.

The life of the Jewish community relied on three academic centres: a Palestinian one in the Land of Israel, and two Babylonian ones, in Sura and Pumbedita; both Babylonian centres moved to Baghdad at the end of the 10th century, although they retained their names after moving. These academic centres or yeshivot (sg. yeshiva) represented the highest spiritual authority in


\(^{13}\) Stillman, ‘The Non-Muslim Communities’.

Judaism. Each was led by a Ga’on (pl. Ge’onim) and was in constant contact with the local leaders of its respective community. The yeshivot were considered to be a direct continuation of the Sanhedrin – the word yeshiva (from the Hebrew for “sitting”) is itself a translation of Sanhedrin (the Greek word synedrion meaning “sitting together”).

Before the Islamic conquest, these academic centres had been under different rules: the Palestine centre was under Byzantine control, while the Babylonian ones were under Persian rule. As a result, some rites and traditions had drifted from each other in the Babylonian and Palestinian communities; these differences mostly concerned halakhot (laws, sg. halakha) and the recitation of the Torah in the synagogue. The four first centuries following the Islamic conquest were marked by several fights between the Babylonian and the Palestinian centres for pre-eminence. The Babylonian centres claimed to be more important as the Torah had been continuously studied there since the destruction of the First Temple in 587 BCE, making their knowledge of the Talmud and the halakha much deeper than anywhere else. Therefore, the leaders of the Babylonian yeshivot believed that the Palestinian leaders should give up their traditions, arguing that the practices of the latter had been developed under persecution and, thus, resulted from compromises.

The position as the leader of the yeshiva, the position of Ga’on, was often hereditary, passing to a member of the Ga’on’s family – usually his son – who would be trained for the position from a very early age. The Ga’on himself stood at the centre of a complicated power structure. On one hand, he was responsible for filling all available positions within the yeshiva. On the other hand, he also had the power to appoint a person of his choice to be the leader in every community that recognised his supremacy. These community leaders were responsible for organising community life on a local level; for example, they appointed specific people to perform religious and legal acts and they collected fees. From these revenues, a fraction was sent to the Ga’on to support him and his yeshiva.

In the first centuries following the conquest, the Jewish Diaspora in Islamic lands was led by the yeshivot of both the Land of Israel and Babylonia, and was organised in smaller territorial units within which the yeshivot were fighting for pre-eminence. Fustat, the city with the largest Jewish community in Egypt,

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16 The Talmud is the central text of Rabbinic Judaism and the primary source of the halakha, Jewish religious law. It is separated into two traditions: one collection of writing called the Babylonian Talmud or Talmud Bavli and another called the Jerusalem Talmud or Talmud Yerushalmi.
presented an example of such a struggle, as the members of the congregation
could choose between two different communities. Each community in the city
had its own synagogue and its own rites and the community leader of each was
in constant contact with the Ga’on recognised by his community. The syna-
gogue was the principal place of gathering for the Jewish inhabitants of the
city, for religious, communal, and legal life: it served not only as a place of
prayer but also as the seat of the Jewish court and the centre of communal
activities. It is important to note that only in the larger cities were there two
congregations; smaller towns rarely had more than one.

1.1 History of the Cairo Genizah and Its Discovery by Scholars

Since at least talmudic times, and continuing through the Middle Ages, Judaism
had the institution of the genizah (pl. genizoth): a storage place, often a room
in a synagogue, for manuscripts that had gone out of use. This tradition devel-
oped because it was forbidden to destroy writings (mainly Sifrei Torah, tefillin
and ketubot) liable to contain the divine name. These documents are stored
instead in a genizah, awaiting burial to prevent their desecration, following
the prescription found in Mishnah Shabbat 16:1.

Such a genizah was attached to one of the synagogues in Fusṭāṭ, which is
today a district in Old Cairo, located south of the centre of modern Cairo. By
the 19th century, when travellers came to Cairo and to this synagogue, it was
known as the Ben Ezra Synagogue, although it had a variety of other names
during its history, including al-Fusṭāṭ, Fusṭāṭ-Misr and kanīsat al-shāmiyyīn
“the synagogue of the Palestinians”. It was the synagogue used by the Rabbanite
community using the Palestinian rite. For many years, the Ben Ezra Synagogue
was described as being a former Coptic church called St Michael’s, which had
been converted to a synagogue at the beginning of the Muslim conquest of

17 For more details on this story, see especially Stefan C. Reif, A Jewish Archive from Old Cairo:
The History of Cambridge University’s Genizah Collection (London: Routledge, 2000); Simon Anthony
Hopkins, The Discovery of the Cairo Geniza, in Bibliophila Africana IV: Being the Proceedings of
the Fourth South African Conference of Bibliophiles Held at the South African Library, Cape
Town, 7-10 September 1988 (Fourth South African Conference of Bibliophiles Held at the South
Jefferson, ‘Deconstructing “the Cairo Genizah”: A Fresh Look at Genizah Manuscript Discoveries
cited in those works.
18 Habermann, Skolnik, and Berenbaum, ‘Genizah’.
Egypt. However, scholars now agree that it was probably not this Palestinian synagogue, but rather the Babylonian synagogue, which was built over that church. The Ben Ezra Synagogue – then known as the Elijah Synagogue – was destroyed in 1014–1015 by order of the Caliph al-Hakim, in the period of destruction mentioned earlier, and was rebuilt about ten years later. During the whole Fatimid period (969 to 1171), Fustat remained the principal city of Egypt and the Ben Ezra Synagogue never went out of use.

The story of “discovery” of the genizah of the Ben Ezra Synagogue and how it was emptied of its contents has been told several times. About this “discovery”, Glickman writes in his book: One of the most puzzling aspects of the “discovery” of the Cairo Genizah is that it wasn’t a discovery at all. By the time Western scholars became aware of its documents, the existence of Ben Ezra’s Genizah was a widely known – if largely ignored – fact. Indeed, over the years, a few Western visitors had even glimpsed the Genizah and written of its massive heap of crumbling paper and parchment. But no one much cared.

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22 Reif, A Jewish Archive from Old Cairo, 10.
26 Glickman, Sacred Treasure, 19.
However in 1864 (after an earlier unsuccessful attempt to access the chamber in 1858), Jacob Saphir, passing through Cairo, entered the genizah and delivered a valuable description of it. The same year, Abraham Firkovitch, a Russian Karaite scholar, visited the genizah of Ben Ezra and returned home with a large number of manuscripts. Firkovitch never officially revealed the source of his manuscripts, and today it is believed that he bought them from the Karaite synagogue in Cairo, rather than from the genizah attached to the Ben Ezra Synagogue. Those manuscripts, the second Firkovitch collection, are today preserved in the National Library of Russia in St Petersburg. It is important to understand, then, that in Fusṭāṭ, other genizoth probably existed as well: one attached to the Karaite synagogue – the Dar Simha Synagogue – and, in all probability, one attached to the synagogue of the Babylonian community, the Kanisat al-Īrāqīyin. But, it is the genizah from the Ben Ezra Synagogue that is known today under the name of the Cairo Genizah, or often just “the Genizah”.

In 1888, Elkan Nathan Adler went to Cairo and visited the Ben Ezra Synagogue. He acquired a large amount of material from it (about 30,000 fragments), which he brought with him to the United States, and today, these manuscripts constitute the ENA collection at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America in New York. In 1896 he returned to Cairo, and that time he was able to enter the Genizah itself, which had meanwhile undergone renovation.

Between 1889 and 1892, the synagogue and the Genizah chamber were restored. Unfortunately, it is not entirely clear what happened during and after
the renovation.\textsuperscript{32} Some documents seem to have been piled in the courtyard\textsuperscript{33} and returned to the new Genizah room after the renovations. On the other hand, a number of manuscripts were buried in the cemetery near al-Bāṣāṭin\textsuperscript{34} or in the ground around the synagogue, or were thrown out with the rubbish from the construction site. It is impossible to even estimate what proportion of the documents went back to the new Genizah at the end of the construction work.\textsuperscript{35}

During and after the renovation of the Ben Ezra Synagogue, some of the fragments from the Genizah were sold to different European collectors, among them Rabbi Solomon Wertheimer, a resident of Cairo and a seller of rare books. The famous “Sinai sisters”, Agnes Smith Lewis and Margaret Dunlop Gibson, purchased several fragments in March 1896 during a visit to Cairo. Upon their return to Cambridge, they turned to a scholar of Hebrew scholar and asked for his expert advice on the fragments they had acquired.\textsuperscript{36} This scholar was Solomon Schechter, and initially, he was not very interested in these fragments. However, after studying the Ben Sira fragments that were among them,\textsuperscript{37} he felt so enthusiastic that he persuaded the Master of St John's College, Charles Taylor, to finance an immediate trip to Cairo. Between December 1896 and 1897,
he purchased all the remaining manuscript fragments in the Genizah, leaving behind only printed books. In fact, it is not clear if he acquired the contents of a number of different genizoth, or only of the Ben Ezra Synagogue. In any case, he sent eight large boxes containing his purchases to Cambridge, estimating his shipment at the time to over 140,000 fragments — today it is estimated at 193,000 manuscripts. These fragments constitute the Taylor-Schechter collection (T-S) of the Cambridge University Library, the most substantial part of the whole Genizah collection.

Between 1910 and 1912, there were additionally some excavations in the al-Bāsātin cemetery, outside of Fustāṭ, where some material had been buried during the earlier renovations. The initial excavations were carried out by Count d’Hulst for the benefit of the Bodleian Library. Other excavations in the same cemetery, carried out by Chapira and Israël Lévi in the name of the French Société des Études Juives, later found over 5,000 leaves, which now constitute the Mosseri collection.

Today, the material from the Cairo Genizah is scattered throughout the world, though the greater part has found its way to England. According to Stefan Reif’s evaluation, some 70% of the material is located now at the University of Cambridge. The 75,000 fragments outside of the collections of the CUL are estimated to be spread among more than 72 collections. Among them are four other locations in England: the Bodleian Library and other locations at

40 Ben-Shammar, ‘Is “The Cairo Genizah” A Proper Name Or A Generic Noun?’.
41 Jefferson, ‘Deconstructing “the Cairo Genizah”’, 423.
44 Reif et al., ‘Cairo Geniza’.
the University of Oxford, the John Rylands University Library at the University of Manchester and the British Library in London. Some can also be found in Russia (at the National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg), in France (at the Alliance Israélite Universelle in Paris) and in the United States (at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, and the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia).45

1.2 Contents of the Cairo Genizah

The Cairo Genizah is the most impressive collection of Jewish manuscripts, with more than 300,000 fragments. At this stage, the Friedberg Genizah Project,46 attempting to gather digitized versions of all the fragments, has 254,405 shelfmarks in its inventory, but since one shelfmark might correspond to more than a single fragment, the project lists 326,967 fragments. Generally speaking, one would expect to find religious writings in a genizah, because those works are more likely to contain the divine name. The Cairo Genizah, however, includes both sacred and secular texts (literary and documentary). It is difficult to know why so many non-religious documents are present in this genizah: perhaps the vision of sacredness at the time was vast and any texts written by or about Jews were considered intrinsically sacred,47 or perhaps Jews in Fusṭāṭ simply did not take the trouble to systematically sort their writings into those to be put in a genizah and those that could just be disposed of.48

The Cairo Genizah contains manuscripts with a broad chronological range from the late 9th through to the 19th century, and these originate from different places, mainly Egypt, north Africa, Sicily and Palestine. A particularly large number of documents date to the period from the end of the 10th century to 1265, called the “classical” Genizah period by Goitein. This period of the Cairo Genizah corresponds to the time between just before the destruction and reconstruction of the synagogue to a period when great fires devasted the city. These fires led to the dhimmis being fined heavily, and thus probably caused a drop in the number of documentary records in the Genizah.49

The content of the Genizah is mostly written in Hebrew, though other languages such as Arabic, Judeo-Arabic and Aramaic are also well attested. The

47 Reif, ‘The Cairo Genizah’.
48 Reif et al, ‘Cairo Geniza’.
manuscripts and documents are written on a variety of writing substrates such as paper, leather, parchment, papyrus and even textile.

The great diversity of geographical and historical data makes the Cairo Genizah an attractive subject of study. The vast majority of Genizah fragments are literary texts, with only 5% to 10% of the whole collection being represented by documentary texts. The former can be found in the form of single leaves from codices, such as medieval Hebrew poetry, halakhic literature, midrashic texts, philosophical works, magical texts, and, finally, liturgical compositions usually attested by single pages from prayer books. In addition, the Genizah also contains material concerning everyday life, which will be referred to as “private” material: letters, accounts, pen trials, lists, calendars and notes. These documents give a broad overview of day-to-day life in Muslim countries during the classical Genizah period. Moreover, they provide us with an enormous amount of information on the Jewish legal system and the practices and names of people. Many legal documents – such as marriage contracts (ketubot), deeds of divorce (get), deed of sales, powers of attorney, acknowledgements of debt, court records or leases – preserved in the Genizah present a unique opportunity to obtain insights into the legal system of that time. For example, court records of the Palestinian community from the 11th century that belonged to the archive of the court or the community have been recently reconstructed.

As mentioned above, the presence of all these documents in the Genizah is unexpected in a genizah, which is supposedly for religious purposes; these legal documents should be in an archive. Thus, one question often raised in studying the Genizah is: What are legal documents doing in a genizah? Goitein considered the Cairo Genizah as “the very opposite of an archive”. He suggests that the documents that were stored, or rather carelessly disposed of, were never meant to be read again or even found: they had basically become “trash” after having been used, and sometimes reused, extensively. In addition, the Genizah has been in use for almost a thousand years: its contents were turned over continuously – ruling out any possibility of using stratigraphy – and therefore not ordered. It was not possible to track back a specific document and access it. Therefore, the Genizah is not a proper archive as such, although it contains many documents of the type that might be expected in an archive.

1.3 Conservation and Current Storage of the Fragments at the CUL

The work presented here is based on an instrumental analysis of manuscripts and this project thus required direct access to the relevant manuscripts. For technical reasons, then, the corpus of interest had to be limited to the collection preserved in the CUL.

A complete inventory of the Cambridge Genizah manuscript collections – as a part of a larger project of registering and drawing up an inventory of all the Genizah fragments, undertaken by the Friedberg Genizah Project – was compiled between the years 2004 and 2006. That project aimed to prepare for the digitisation of all the manuscripts (not only of Cambridge’s collection but of all the fragments found in the Cairo Genizah), a task that has been underway since the beginning of 2009. At the end of the inventory, a total of 193,654 manuscripts (and 225,141 folios) were recorded in the CUL. The Genizah manuscripts in Cambridge are divided into a number of different

56 Hoffman and Cole, Sacred Trash.
58 Olszowy-Schlanger.
collections, depending on different criteria, such as the person who purchased the manuscripts or donated them to the library, or how or when the manuscripts were catalogued.\textsuperscript{62}

Considering their age and the quality of storage, the manuscripts found in the Cairo Genizah were in a relatively good condition. Nevertheless, they needed a conservation treatment to keep the fragments stable, on one hand, and accessible to scholars, on the other. Many conservation solutions have been explored. After many years of use (from 1895 to 1973),\textsuperscript{63} glass has been rejected due to such characteristics as its weight, the risk of it breaking and possibly damaging the fragments, and difficulties connected with re-mounting the pieces. The CUL found that a better solution was to use Melinex – a PET (polyethene terephthalate) material that is light, flexible, unbreakable and free of chemicals that could interfere with the fragments. In addition, it has the non-negligible advantage of saving room compared with glass. Manuscript can be encapsulated – or rather sewn – into transparent Melinex envelopes allowing researchers to study and manipulate them without having to touch the manuscripts directly.

Three different types of Melinex with different thickness have been used:
- Melinex 516\textsuperscript{64} (referred to as Melinex A in this study) produced by Dupont Teijin Films.
- Melinex 401\textsuperscript{65} (Melinex B), of 75 microns, also produced by Dupont Teijin Films.
- P1A5Y75\textsuperscript{66} (Melinex C), also of 75 microns thickness, produced by Secol Archival products (UK).\textsuperscript{67}


\textsuperscript{66} https://www.secol.co.uk/products/pockets_covers_folders_and_sleeves/polyester_pockets/standard_pockets/75_micron_polyester_pockets/168/p1a5y75/standard_pockets_50 (accessed 17 May 2019).

\textsuperscript{67} Jefferson, ‘The Historical Significance of the Cambridge Genizah Inventory Project’, 34.
Information about the existence of a protection leave was found especially useful for the establishment of the measurement protocol (see section 3.1.3.1).

2 Presentation of the Corpus

To study possible connections between the types of document and writing materials, on the one hand, and possible preferences within different communities, on the other, we sought to obtain a statistically relevant number of documents from a reasonably short and well-defined period of time with clear authorship. A corpus of documents authored by known personalities from different Jewish communities living in Fustat in the first half of the 11th century answers these requirements.

By the 11th century, there were two distinct groups of Jews in Cairo: the Rabbanites, who acknowledged the authority of the Talmud, and the Karaites, who rejected the authority of the Talmud and that of the rabbis. As mentioned in section 1.1, the Rabbanites were themselves divided into two subgroups: the “Babylonians” (also called “Iraqis”), who were allied with the rabbinic Ge’onim of Babylonia; and the “Palestinians” (sometimes called “Jerusalemites”) connected with the rabbinic Ge’onim of the Land of Israel. Each community had its own synagogue, with its own rites – and probably each had its own genizah, using the one of the Palestinians only in exceptional cases, but only the Ben Ezra Synagogue has survived until today.

Two synagogues, that of the Babylonian community and that of the Palestinian community, were very close to each other, both in the Qasr al-Sham, as can be seen on the map in Figure 1.1. The synagogues are highlighted in blue: the Palestinian synagogue, the Kanîsat al-Shâmiyîn, is to the north of the Babylonian one, the Kanîsat al-Írâqiyyîn. They are separated only by a small number of houses along a single street, often called the Zuqaq al-Yahud “the street of the Jews” because of the proximity of the two synagogues.

Before the persecutions by Caliph al-Hakim, it seems that the Babylonian community was more important in Cairo than the Palestinian one. During the 10th and 11th centuries, Egypt was an attractive place for immigration, welcoming many Jews from Iraq, which resulted in a powerful Babylonian community. Until 1011, there was only a Babylonian court in Fustat. Its importance, how-

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Kanîsat al-Shâmîyîn
1 Synagogue ben Ezra
Kanîsat al-Īrâqiyyîn
2 Babylonian Synagogue

**Figure 1.1** Map of medieval Fusṭāṭ with the synagogues of the Palestinian and the Babylonian communities, based on the survey plan of the fortifications of Qasr al-Sham after a drawing by Kate Spence, Peter Sheehan and Charles le Quesne, 1993

ever, is difficult to estimate, because not many Babylonian legal documents have been found so far in the Genizah. Babylonian community leaders received the title of *aluf* as a symbol of their allegiance to the Babylonian *Ga’on* and the Babylonian *yeshiva*.

The Palestinian community was initially subordinate to the *yeshiva* in Jerusalem. The leaders of the community in Fusṭāṭ, like other Palestinian leaders in the rest of Egypt, were granted the title of *ḥaver* and were in contact with their *Ga’on* in Palestine for guidance and advice. The letter exchange between these two parties has been preserved in the Genizah and shows the trajectory of this relationship. By the 12th century, the situation changed direction, and Fusṭāṭ became the centre of religious power for the whole region of Egypt, Syria and Palestine.

We find many indications of the ambivalent nature and the quality of the relationship between the two Rabbanite communities. On one hand, there is evidence of mutual assistance: in the letter T-S 24.43, the *Ga’on* Solomon b. Joseph, of the Palestinian *yeshiva* in Jerusalem, writes to the leaders of both communities asking for their help. The Genizah contains several letters that mention fundraising, either to help the poor or to release captives. In T-S 13J34.3, both Rabbanite communities in Alexandria ask for help in raising money to pay a ransom for Jewish boys who were taken prisoners by pirates. On the other hand, the relationship between the different leaders of the Rabbanite communities in Fusṭāṭ was strained. It is sufficient to mention here that the Palestinian *Ga’on* Solomon b. Judah was writing to the leaders of both communities in Fusṭāṭ in attempt to improve their relationship. An example can be seen in the letter T-S 13J23.11, where he is asking Ephraim b. Shemarya, the leader of the Palestinian community, to calm down with respect to Sahlān b. Abraham, the leader of the Babylonian community.

Another example of the complex relationship can be seen in T-S 10J29.13, where Solomon b. Shemah, the Palestinian community leader in Ramla, writes an angry letter to Ephraim b. Shemarya, complaining about his bad manners which had for effect to convince people to “switch over to the other synagogue and to the Karaite congregations”. This is not the only example in the Genizah which shows the fluidity of the affiliation of individuals to a particular congregation. Another example is offered by the change of allegiance from the Babylonian to the Palestinian one made by no lesser personality than Shemarya b. Elhanan, the leader of the Babylonian community, who ended his connections with the

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Pumbedita yeshiva and proclaimed his loyalty to the Palestinian yeshiva as a result of a conflict he had with the Ga’on of the Pumbedita yeshiva in 1006.71 Yefet b. Tobiah al-Baghdadi, who was connected to the Palestinian yeshiva and community despite a Babylonian origin, offers yet another example.72 Though the move from one Rabbanite congregation to another is perhaps understandable, the fluidity of affiliation with respect to the Karaite congregation seems rather more surprising.

The Karaites formed the third major Jewish community in Fusṭāt. Karaites73 constitute a sect founded by Rabbi Anan b. David around the middle of the 8th century. Their doctrine is based on a strict reading of the Torah and a more rigorous application of Jewish law.74 They deny any interpretation of the biblical text, do not respect talmudic rabbinic law and do not recognise the authority of the Ge’onim. The relationship of this sect with Judaism is complicated since, on one hand, they were considered heretics by the Jews and, on the other, they did not consider themselves to be Jews. However, based on the social interactions between the Karaite and Rabbanite Jewish communities reported by the Genizah documents, this was not precisely the case in medieval Fusṭāt. In addition to the example of the letter mentioned above (T-S 10J29.13) showing a possible fluidity between Rabbanite and Karaite communities, ketubot of intermarriages attest to close contacts between the two parties. In the Genizah, only a small number of Karaites documents exist; among them, there is a large predominance of ketubot.75 Over 58 Karaite ketubot have been found so far, and four of them attest to mixed weddings, between Rabbanites and Karaites,76 however these intermarriages seem to have stopped around the 12th century – Maimonides was against these intermarriages, not in principle, but due to the problems of the get (divorce act) in cases where the couple wanted to separate, as he considered that the Karaite get would not be sufficient for Rabbanite standards. The somewhat puzzling presence of 54 ketubot relating only to marriage between Karaite parties in a Rabbanite Palestinian genizah could be explained by the reuse of the support for other purposes, or as a sign of a later marriage, in the generations to follow.77

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72 Bareket, 180–84.
73 Baalei ha mikra (בעֲלֵי מִִקְָרא ,בְנֵי مִִקְָרא ,קָרָאִים), meaning “the people of the scriptures”.
76 Rustow, Heresy and the Politics of Community.
77 Olszowy-Schlanger, Karaite Marriage Documents from the Cairo Geniza.
The question of Rabbanite–Karaite contact is also related to the question of the existence (or non-existence) of Karaites courts: a matter highly debated by scholars but not yet unequivocally solved. It is worth noting that most of the Karaites legal documents found in the Genizah happen to be ketubot, which do not require a court. It is true that most of the documents – if not all – came from the Ben Ezra Synagogue, thus from a Palestine genizah, and Karaites documents were, of course, less likely to be thrown in a Rabbanite genizah than in their own; however, this does not explain the imbalance in the proportion of legal documents. There is evidence that Karaites appeared in Rabbanite courts, as witnesses (see e.g. T-S 13j30.3) or as a main party (as shown in T-S 16.171 and T-S 12.150, written for Karaites by a scribe working for the Babylonian court of Shemarya b. Elishan 78). Other documents show that the custom of Karaites using Rabbanite courts was not limited to Fustat but is also attested in other cities. Two documents, Document A79 and Document B, 80 associated with an inheritance, 81 and T-S 20.187, which is a power of attorney, 82 present further evidence of the existence of joint Rabbanite–Karaite courts. In contrast, the question of a dedicated Karaite court is discussed explicitly in several documents (e.g. Mosseri Ia1 and Mosseri Ia2 83), indicating that if Karaites were not maintaining functioning courts everywhere in Egypt, they seem to have been able to gather for a court when needed, especially in large cities like Fustat.

This study focuses on the first half of the 11th century, and more precisely, the period between 996 and 1057 – a crucial period in the history of the Jewish communities in Egypt. During this period, the leaders of the communities had hostile relationships because they were fighting for a dominant role for their respective communities – by the 12th century, the Babylonian rite had been accepted almost everywhere, leading to the merging of the Palestinian and Babylonian communities. However, at this earlier time, the differences between the Rabbanite communities are particularly noticeable, raising our expectation that the marked differences between the scribal practices might be reflected in the scribal materials. We have also made use of the fact that the period under investigation is well studied.

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79 Mosseri VII.43 + T-S Ar.53,53.
81 Zinger, ‘A Karaite-Rabbanite Court Session in Mid-Eleventh Century Egypt.’
82 Hary et Rustow, « Karaites at the rabbinical court: a legal deed from Mahdiyya dated 1073 (T-S 20.187) ».
83 Olszowy-Schlanger, ‘Manuscrits hébreux et judéo-arabes’.
Three of the scribes chosen for this study (see Table 1.1) – Elḥanan b. Shemarya, Abraham b. Sahlān and Sahlān b. Abraham – were leaders of the Babylonian community in Fusṭāṭ, while two others – Ephraim b. Shemarya and Yefet b. David – were respectively the leader and the secretary of the Palestinian community. We have also included Solomon b. Judah, the Ga’on of the Palestinian yeshiva, due to his extensive communications with the leaders of both Rabbanite communities. In addition, several Karaites documents written in the same period are used in this corpus as a point of comparison. Following Goitein’s common-sense argument that “the common people adopt the ways of their rulers”,84 we can assume that these very well-known people were likely setting the trends followed by the members of their respective communities. Therefore, concentrating on their texts should allow us to make detailed comparisons between Palestinians, Babylonians and Karaites.

In addition to the relationship between different Jewish communities in Fusṭāṭ, there is also the question of the relationship between Jewish and non-Jewish communities. When looking at a map of the religious buildings in Fusṭāṭ during the Middle Ages, as can be seen in Figure 1.2, one sees that communities were not confined to definite quarters. As Goitein stresses, “since [...] the Genizah people were not hemmed in by occupational, geographic, or cultural ghettos, they had many things in common with other, contemporary societies, Muslim and Christian”.85 On this map, Jewish religious buildings are

### Table 1.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Palestinians</th>
<th>Babylonians</th>
<th>Karaites</th>
<th>Additional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yefet b. David (1014–1057)</td>
<td>Abraham b. Sahlān (1017–1030)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sahlān b. Abraham (1024–1050)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

84 Goitein, ‘Changes in the Middle East (950-1150) as Illustrated by the Documents of the Cairo Geniza’, 18.
Figure 1.2 Map of the southern end of Qasr al-Sham in Fustat, around the Ben Ezra Synagogue and major religious buildings, based on the survey plans of the fortifications of Qasr al-Sham, after a drawing by Kate Spence, Peter Sheehan and Charles le Quesne, 1993

Note: Ben-Sasson, 'The Medieval Period'.
represented in blue, the Muslim one in orange and Christian ones in green. As can be seen, the two Rabbanites synagogues are located amid several Christian religious buildings and at least one Muslim building.

It would of course be interesting to know whether the things in common shared by Jews and non-Jews included writing materials. When it comes to these, a connection has been already shown between Hebrew documents and documents written at the same place and time by non-Jews, with the link having been shown, in scholarly work (see the discussion in section 2.2.4) and also analytically.86 We have added a number of documents written by non-Jews to explore this point. We also analysed a further 56 documents written outside of Cairo, with the intention of checking whether a specific scribal practice could be associated with a type of a religious community.

Since one of the objectives of the study is to produce a database of writing materials, the question of the definition of an individual document took a central position. Current cataloguing system made this task especially challenging. On one hand, many documents could be entered under the same classmark, while on the other, a single document could be spread over different classmarks. Ink designation presented an even more difficult question: several inks could be used to write the same document, and the same ink could be used for several different documents. Some of the manuscripts were written on different folios but need to be considered as a whole, while others were written on the same folio but at different times and could be considered as different documents. Examples of different cases of later additions within the same folios can be found in T-S 16.124 (addition), T-S 8J29.12 (corrections), T-S NS J51 (several cases written one after the other), T-S 10J27.7 (reuse of the back side) and T-S 12.182 (palimpsests). We consider additions and corrections as belonging to the original document; but we consider the rest of the cases as new documents, since the primary text has no connection with the secondary text.

This raises the question of reuse: when several documents are written on the same writing surface, how should we count them? In this corpus, we had to face three main types of reuse of the support. In the first scenario, additions

are made on an original document, related to the primary one. This may be a short addition in the margin, as in manuscript T-S 16.124, where there is an update on the status of the document, or a longer case, like with manuscript T-S 13[J]37.12. The second case involves additional text on a different subject but from the same original type of document: this is the situation with a legal notebook, for example, such as T-S 8[J]4.1 where different legal cases are presented. Finally, the third scenario is where unrelated texts, such as pen trials, are found, like in T-S 18[J]1.3 or T-S 16.49, or where there is a completely new document, as with T-S 18[J]2.16. The question of palimpsests was not considered since previous studies have shown that the characterisation of removed ink is unreliable.87

Taking these remarks into account, a document has been defined as a coherent entity, such as a legal case, or a letter. The analysis of the text written on a certain surface can establish if this was conceived as part of one or more documents. If the lines of a text show any discrepancy in their content then they are labelled as different documents. Therefore, an address on the verso of a letter would be considered still in relation to the main text, while a second legal case, separated or not from the first one by a physical mark, would be considered as a new document. I define a single manuscript here as being something that corresponds to a single classmark, making navigation into the CUL catalogue easier.

Consequently, the corpus was constituted by 391 manuscripts, comprising 498 documents. Due to reuse and the complicated story of several of the manuscripts from the Cairo Genizah, the corpus, although focusing on the first half of the 11th century, stretches from the 6th century to the first half of the 13th century.

The chronological distribution of the type of support used to pen the documents is presented in Figure 1.3. Leather is represented by blue dots, parchment by green dots and paper by pink dots. The original intent was to present this same distribution for the entire corpus of documents from the Genizah, unfortunately, the difficulty of assessing what is a document and how to count them made this impossible, at least for this study. All the documents written on leather are part of the subcorpus of scrolls.

2.1 Types of Document

As mentioned in section 1.1.2, both religious and non-religious documents have been found in the Genizah. Similarly, the corpus for this study contains documents of a religious and a non-religious nature, both private and legal, so

that the study connects to different aspects of life in the first half of the 11th century. The documents studied have been divided into four main categories:

- Private documents
- Legal documents
- Official documents
- Religious documents

The distribution of manuscripts and documents, as a function of their type, is presented in Table 1.2. Admittedly, this typology is arbitrary, as the borders between them are rather fluid. It is, for example, important to remember the

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**FIGURE 1.3** Chronological distribution of the corpus, showing the number of documents with each type of writing surface

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of documents</th>
<th>Number of manuscripts</th>
<th>Number of documents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private documents</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal documents</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official documents</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious documents</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclassified</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum</td>
<td>476&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>498</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> This number does not match the number of 391 manuscripts given so far (and afterwards) as the same manuscript could be reused for a different purpose than the original one (with a legal document on the recto and on the verso some notes, for example).
fact that the synagogue was central not only for the community’s religious life but also for its legal, social, economic and political life as well, as the synagogue was a meeting point, a place of study and a courthouse (bet din).

2.1.1 Private Documents
We selected a large group of documents, that we have called “private”, comprising letters, accounts, calendars and jottings.

Letters are written on a single sheet of paper, often very long, sometimes glued with another one if the letter was longer than expected (e.g. T-S 16.283, T-S 16.284). The text of letters is written only on one side and justified. The verso usually contains only the address, which is written sometimes with both Arabic and Hebrew letters. In some documents, however, the verso was reused for either drafts (e.g. T-S 18J4.5) or personal documents (e.g. T-S 13J11.7 and T-S 13J16.11).

2.1.2 Legal Documents
The legal documents of the Genizah – and this corpus – are divided into three subcategories:
- Courts records (archives of the bet din)\(^88\)
- Deeds
- Marriage documents: betrothal, ketubah, get\(^89\)


The Genizah is an extraordinary source of medieval legal and archive documents. These form the largest group among the Genizah documents, and comprise the most exciting part of this corpus for several reasons. They are usually dated, and even sometimes located. These documents often allow us to distinguish the use of different inks from one point to another (betraying, perhaps, the use of different inks within the same document). It should also be noted that sometimes these documents have been intentionally written at different points in time (e.g. T-S 16.124, where an update on the reimbursement of the debt is added in the margin) or marked with different signatures.

All these documents offer a unique opportunity to witness how the court (bet din) was producing, filing and conserving legal documents and enlighten the relationship of the Jewish court with other legal systems (mainly Muslims, but also Christians). As a general rule, the court records here bear at least two signatures since, according to Jewish law, two persons were sufficient as witnesses according to the treaty Baba Metzia 75b (e.g. T-S 8J6.18 f.1, T-S 16.45). In practice, though, more witnesses would frequently be present. Five of them, for example, would often sign a ketubah (e.g. T-S 24.12) – no fixed procedures seem to have prevailed in this matter. In most cases, there is no indication of who acted as the president of the court. Blanks are avoided as much as possible in legal documents (to prevent fraudulent additions from being made a posteriori). The page is usually regular, justified, mostly written on one side, and updates are then added either in the margin (e.g. T-S 16.124) or on the verso (e.g. T-S 18J1.17).

Concerning non-Jewish bureaucracy, Ackerman-Lieberman stresses that documents produced by non-Jewish courts were accepted in Jewish courts,
whether signed by Jews or non-Jews.\textsuperscript{94} Furthermore, he points out that the Jewish court seems to have produced documents which might have been used in Islamic courts. The use of ink or of writing surfaces offers an interesting way to assess how cultural exchanges, and in particular technical exchanges, worked. The idea was to draw a comparison between Jewish and non-Jewish documents to see if material differences could be found. For this purpose, we selected several Arabic legal documents, written in Arabic, that did not seem to have been written by, or to concern Jews, as well as documents attesting relationships between Jews and non-Jews. All of them were found in the Genizah, are stored in the Cambridge collection and were censed by Khan.\textsuperscript{95} In addition to those, two legal documents found outside of the Genizah were also analysed. These two documents are currently stored in the Michaelides collection (charta) and are written on paper.

2.1.3 Official Documents

The category “official documents” comprises documents produced by or for the central power and its representatives, meaning:

– Petitions
– Tax

However, our interest mainly lies in their later reuse by the scribes of the corpus, who wrote letters (e.g. T-S 13|26.24) or biblical verses (T-S Ar.7:38) on the other side.

2.1.4 Religious Documents

Finally, this corpus contains some religious – usually undated – documents: some palimpsests, and some scrolls, mainly Talmud and biblical ones, both Palestinian and Babylonian. These documents are part of a parallel project\textsuperscript{96} and were used here to see if a difference was visible between the inks used in religious and non-religious manuscripts.

In addition, some religious poems (\textit{piyyutim}) and religious responsa (\textit{teshuvot}), written by the scribes studied here, have been added, permitting the study of both sacred and non-sacred religious documents.

\textsuperscript{94} Ackerman-Lieberman, ‘Legal Pluralism among the Court Records of Medieval Egypt’, 81

\textsuperscript{95} Khan, Arabic Legal and Administrative Documents in the Cambridge Genizah Collections.

2.2 **Presentation of the Scribes**

2.2.1 **Salomon b. Judah, Ga‘on of the Palestinian yeshiva**

The Genizah contains information about the Jewish community in Fusṭāṭ, but also information about those from outside the city, or indeed outside the country, because they were communicating with the inhabitants of Fusṭāṭ or visiting the city. Due to the high number of documents in this corpus that contain his name, and his importance within the world of the Genizah, we begin by presenting Salomon b. Judah, a major figure in the Jewish world during the 11th century.\(^\text{97}\) He was the head of the Jerusalem yeshiva and the official head of the Jews of the Fatimid empire. He died in 1051 CE.

Salomon b. Judah was in extensive correspondence with the heads of both communities in Fusṭāṭ, although he was indisputably on the side of Ephraim b. Shemarya, the leader of the Palestinian community at the time. The Genizah preserved many of his letters, and in the present corpus, 22 letters are written by him; he also signed one deed of quittance (T-S 16.191).

Some other documents in the corpus are written by the hand of his son, Abraham b. Salomon b. Judah. It was common among Ge‘onim (from both the Palestinian and the Babylonian yeshivot) to entrust their sons with writing their correspondence, thus training them to the responsibilities inherent in their position.\(^\text{98}\)

2.2.2 **The Representatives of the Palestinian Community**

2.2.2.1 **Ephraim b. Shemarya**

Ephraim b. Shemarya, like the other scribes of this corpus, was well known in the world of the Cairo Genizah, and much research has been conducted on him.\(^\text{99}\) He was born around 975 and died in 1055. His full name was Abū Kathīr

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98 Gil, *Jews in Islamic Countries in the Middle Ages*, 133.

Ephraim ben Shemarya [Maḥfūz] ha-Melammed ha-'Azzati (or al-Mu'allim al-Gazī) – the final part indicating “of Gaza”. Ephraim crafted perfumes and scents and traded medicines (his epithet, al-'Aṭṭār in Arabic and ha-Bosman in Hebrew, means “the perfumer”). He lived in the Qasr al-Sham, the central quarter of Fustat and the district of the synagogues where the majority of the Jewish inhabitants dwelt.

Ephraim b. Shemarya was the spiritual leader of the Palestinian congregation in Fustat and of the entire Jewish community of Fustat for nearly 50 years, from around 1007 until his death in 1055. His status of rabbinical chief judge (av bet din) and leader of the Jewish community of Fustat was approved by five successive Palestinian Ge'onim. The title of judge (dayan) was given to him in 1007 by Shemaiah Ga'on. By 1025, Josiah ben Aaron Ga'on, Shemaiah's successor, had given him the title of fellow (ḥaver), the highest title regularly granted by the Palestinian academy, making Ephraim b. Shemarya the highest leader in Fustat and in the whole of Egypt.

His extensive correspondence found in the Genizah includes not only exchanges of letters with successive Palestinian Ge'onim but also with the leaders of other communities in Fustat and abroad. The Genizah kept many traces of his correspondence with the leaders of the Babylonian community in Fustat, and of his communication with members and leaders of the Palestinian communities in various other places, but especially in Palestine; he corresponded with haver in Jerusalem, Ramla, Acre and Gaza. The diverse topics of the letters

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101 Gil, A History of Palestine, 634-1099, 582–90.
touched on community life and more personal things, such as his relationship with his Babylonian opponents, Sahlān b. Abraham and his partisans. He authored 33 documents from this corpus over a total of 30 classmarks, including 17 legal documents and eight letters. Nine documents are signed by him: two documents that he authored, two documents authored by Yefet b. David, one document written by Elḥanan b. Shemarya, one written by Abraham b. Solomon (the son of Solomon b. Judah) and three documents where authorship has not yet been attributed.

2.2.2.2 Yefet b. David

Ephraim b. Shemarya’s right-hand man was Yefet b. David. More formally known as Abū’l Ali Yefet (Husayn) b. David b. Šekanya, he held the positions of cantor (ḥazan) and of ritual slaughterer (shohet), and was concurrently appointed scribe at the Palestinian court from 1014 to 1057, continuing this role for two years after the death of Ephraim b. Shemarya. Yefet b. David’s career in the service of the Palestinian community was very long, like that of Ephraim b. Shemarya, lasting for nearly 40 years. During the rebuilding of the Palestinian synagogue in the 1030s, he was in charge of supervising the construction by recording expenditure, purchasing materials and paying the workers. He penned approximately 40 documents in this corpus and his signature is found 22 times (on 20 different manuscripts).

Yefet b. David’s family seem to have hailed from Tyre. He stayed in that city for some time after his father moved to Fustāṭ with a large part of their family. He finally joined them in 1013 and quickly obtained the posts of cantor and of scribe of the court, and in 1025 he succeeded his father as shohet. This latter office was his main source of income but also made his position precarious with the Ge’onim, who was responsible for the payment of his wages; Yefet b. David considered that the part that the Ga’on was keeping for the yeshiva was excessive. The conflict with the Ga’on grew in 1051 when a new Ga’on, Daniel b. Azariah, followed Salomon b. Judah in his position as the head of the yeshiva. This feud reached culmination point when, in 1055, the Ga’on Daniel b. Azariah requested a herem (ban) on Yefet b. David and all of his “helpers and supporters, the partakers of his slaughtering, whomever he employs to write a deed or a marriage contract and whoever befriended him” (see e.g. T-S 12.484r, T-S Misc. 25.132). The new head of the Palestinian community, Eli b. Amram, who took over the position after Ephraim b. Shemarya’s death, sided with

102 Gil, 589.
103 Gil, 572.
104 Bareket, Fustat on the Nile, 175; Gil, A History of Palestine, 634-1099, 589.
the Ga’on. The conflict affected Yefet’s health to such an extent that he had to leave Fusṭāṭ.

2.2.3 The Representatives of the Babylonian Community

2.2.3.1 Elḥanan b. Shemarya

From an early age Abū Zakariyya/Yahya Elḥanan b. Shemarya b. Elḥanan had been prepared by his father to become a leader of the community, and he was sent to study in the Pumbedita yeshiva. His father, Shemarya b. Elḥanan, was the leader of the Babylonian community in Fusṭāṭ from 966 until his death in Fusṭāṭ in 1011, and as mentioned above, had created close relationships with the Palestinian yeshiva, eventually leading him to change his allegiance to them in 1006. When his father died, Elḥanan b. Shemarya was in Damascus, and he tried to return to Fusṭāṭ to take over his responsibilities as leader of the community. However, his journey took almost two years, and he arrived only in 1013–1014, during the time of the decrees of al-Hakim that lead to the destruction of the synagogue. Elḥanan b. Shemarya was the leader of the Babylonian community and of the entire Rabbanite community in Fusṭāṭ as well, maintaining a relationship with both the Palestinian and the Babylonian yeshivot. He died in 1026 and was succeeded as head of the Fusṭāṭ community by Ephraim b. Shemarya.

Elḥanan b. Shemarya wrote ten documents in this corpus and signed one of them.

2.2.3.2 Abraham b. Sahlān

Abraham b. Sahlān (Abū Ishaq Abraham/Barhun), sometimes called b. Sunbāt, was a leader of the Babylonian community from 1017 to 1030 – although it is hard to determine precisely the date of his death, which seems to be between 1028 and 1030. He was a merchant and was therefore in contact with many notable and influential families. He married the daughter of an influential family who died young and left him two sons: Sahlān and Nehemiah. This wedding allowed him to gain respectability and power within the community.

By 1021, he was the right-hand man of Elḥanan b. Shemarya. His many titles underlined his high power and his place in both communities. In the Babylonian community, he was aluf, behir ha-yeshiva (the yeshiva’s chosen one) and rosh ha-seder, while from the Palestinian yeshiva he received the titles mumhe (the skilled one) and ḥaver. However, this does not seem to have been sufficient to gain him the support of Salomon b. Judah: after the death of Elḥanan b. Shemarya, Abraham b. Sahlān wanted to succeed him both as

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leader of the Babylonian community and leader of the Fusṭāṭ community, but Solomon b. Judah’s support for the latter post was entirely in favour of Ephraim b. Shemarya. Some time after his first wife died, he married again, but seems to have divorced in 1028 – traces of a divorce concerning an Abraham b. Sahlān living at this time in Fusṭāṭ can be found in the Genizah (see T-S 8J4.3, written by Ephraim b. Shemarya, and T-S 13J5.1, written by Yefet b. David), but there is no certainty that these refer to the same person (and in particular, Bodl. MS Heb. c28/29 does not quote any titles for him, suggesting that they could be two different people).

2.2.3.3 Sahlān b. Abraham
Abū ʿAmr Sahlān b. Abraham led the Babylonian community in Fusṭāṭ from the death of his father Abraham b. Sahlān until 1049–1050, a period of approximately 20 years. He should not be confused with his grandfather, who has the same name and who witnessed document T-S 16.49. Before his appointment, Sahlān b. Abraham was already active in the leadership of the community and also in the family business, trading scents and perfumes. He was a liturgical poet (payṭan), and a cantor (ḥazan).

He wrote 18 of the documents in this corpus.

2.2.4 Comparative Documents
We have expanded the corpus to include other documents for comparison. This additional set contains documents written by people from other places (e.g. Solomon b. Shemah from the Palestinian community of Ramla with T-S 18J3.9, T-S 13J13.28, T-S 10J29.13 and T-S 13J34.11), written for the Karaite community and written by non-Jews. The last ones include legal documents from the court of the Qadi (e.g. T-S 18J1.10), litigations involving Christians and Jews (e.g. T-S Ar.38.99, T-S Ar.42.174, T-S Misc.29.21, T-S 8J5.8, T-S Ar.38.114) or Muslims and Jews (e.g. Or.1080 J117). Lastly, we also studied a series of official Fatimid documents (presented above in section 1.2.1.3), and included them simplistically in the group of Muslim documents.

Albeit very limited in number, these manuscripts allowed us to glimpse at the use of writing materials outside of the main Jewish communities. Moreover, it offers some evidence of the interactions between different communities.