Trade and Institutions in the Medieval Mediterranean

The Geniza merchants of the eleventh-century Mediterranean – sometimes called the "Maghribi traders" – are central to controversies about the origins of long-term economic growth and the institutional bases of trade. In this book, Jessica Goldberg reconstructs the business world of the Geniza merchants, maps the shifting geographic relationships of the medieval Islamic economy, and sheds new light on debates about the institutional framework for later European dominance. Commercial letters, business accounts, and courtroom testimony bring to life how these medieval traders used personal gossip and legal mechanisms to manage far-flung agents, switched business strategies to manage political risks, and asserted different parts of their fluid identities to gain advantage in the multicultural medieval trading world. This book paints a vivid picture of the everyday life of Jewish merchants in Islamic societies and adds new depth to debates about medieval trading institutions with unique quantitative analyses and innovative approaches.

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The Geniza Merchants and their Business World

Jessica L. Goldberg

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town,
Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Mexico City

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by
Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107005471

First published 2012

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Goldberg, Jessica L., 1969–
Trade and institutions in the medieval Mediterranean : The Geniza merchants and their business world / Jessica L. Goldberg.
p. cm. – (Cambridge studies in economic history)
Includes bibliographical references.
ISBN 978-1-107-00547-1 (Hardback)
1. Mediterranean Region–Commerce–History. 2. Jewish merchants–Mediterranean Region–History–To 1500. 3. Commerce–History–Medieval, 500–1500. I. Title.
HF3750.7.G65 2012
382.09182′2–dc23

2011042771

ISBN 978-1-107-00547-1 Hardback

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Acknowledgments

Writing this book, I have incurred debts that are too numerous to count and impossible to ever repay. With deepest gratitude, I can at best acknowledge some of my chief creditors.

The book in your hands would not exist without three mentors who guided or pushed me at different points in the process. Mark Cohen lured me into the world of the Geniza with his unanswerable insistence that medieval historians must make more use of these sources and a promise to help with the "minor" difficulties. He has made good on his offer with more generosity than I would have ever expected. Over the years he has not only taught me a gamut of skills and helped solve dozens of Geniza puzzles, but he also continues to share his work and ideas and is ever saving me from errors great and small. The questions that this book tries to answer arise out of a decade's worth of conversations with Adam Kosto about Mediterranean history, medieval legal and institutional history, and the history of the writing and use of documents. In his role first as dissertation director, and now as close colleague, he continues to awe and honor me with the care and comprehensiveness with which he has read and expertly edited far too many drafts of this work. He always leaps upon and points out to me what is most interesting in my work and demands that I do justice to the ideas he finds. Sheilagh Ogilvie has been a champion and critic without peer. I am profoundly grateful for her editorial insistence that I think more broadly about the implications of my arguments while ruthlessly subjecting them to question; and I am particularly grateful for her help in exploring and explicating the differences in our interpretations of some material. Every page of this book has been improved by her intellectual and linguistic rigor.

I am grateful to the University Research Fund at the University of Pennsylvania for providing financial support for some of the research for this project, and to the deans of the university for helping assure, in some difficult circumstances, that I was given sufficient leave to complete it. Different parts of this book were re-thought or re-written while I was a postdoctoral fellow at the Stanford Humanities Fellows Program of

Stanford University (2005–2006), a fellow at the Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies at the University of Pennsylvania (2006–2007, 2008–2009), and a Mellon Foundation member of the School of Historical Studies at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton (2009–2010). I am not only grateful for the financial support these programs provided for my research, but also for the opportunity to discuss pieces of my work with groups of scholars in each setting. The members of the postdoctoral seminar at Stanford, both the "Medieval" and "Empires" seminars at the Institute, and the Ruth M. Meltzer seminar at the Katz Center all generously read parts of my work in progress, discussed key theoretical issues, or willingly engaged in long debates over meals or in endless walks. I thank Seth Lehrer, Caroline Bynum, and Patricia Crone for overseeing and mentoring these groups at Stanford and the Institute respectively, and David Ruderman for making the Katz Center a continuing source of ideas, debate, and inspiration. I presented drafts of some material at the Economic History Forum at the University of Pennsylvania; I continue to be grateful to the members and particularly to Daniel Raff and Walter Licht, who have done so much to make a place for me and my interests in planning the Forum's series since I arrived at Penn.

I am grateful to Cambridge University and its scholarly community in many guises: to Michael Watson, Chloe Howell, and Joanna Breeze at the Cambridge University Press for deftly guiding me and this book through the publication process; to the Syndics of the Cambridge University Library for permission to publish reproductions and to the staff in the Manuscripts Reading Room for generously sharing treasures both requested and unrequested; and finally, to colleagues in both economic history and Geniza studies for their intellectual and material hospitality while I worked at Cambridge. I especially thank Jeremy Edwards, Sheilagh Ogilvie, Ben Outhwaite and the Taylor–Schechter Genizah Research Unit of Cambridge University Library, Rebecca Jefferson, Geoffrey Khan, and Gideon Bohak, all of whom traded enough ideas and insights for a dozen new projects in addition to their invaluable thoughts on the particular documents and ideas found in this one. I thank Mary Starkey for her copy-editing and Cynthia Col for her work on the index. And I thank the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, for permission to publish reproductions.

Trying to glean economic data and develop maps from eleventh-century Geniza materials sometimes seemed like a fool's errand; a number of knowledgeable, patient, and optimistic experts and fellow travelers helped me develop some solutions to technical hurdles. Mark Cohen has for years led the Princeton Geniza Project – a pioneering

effort to digitize transcriptions of Geniza documents that not only allowed me access to hundreds of unpublished editions of documents by several generations of scholars, but helped spur my own efforts at collecting and digitizing the corpus of both published and unpublished mercantile materials. I am grateful to all those who have worked on the Project, but especially Phillip Ackerman-Lieberman for sharing work in progress, problems, and possible solutions. Robert Scott at Columbia University helped me locate several pieces of obscure software that could digitize and index materials in Judeo-Arabic and make them searchable as Semitic language texts; I am grateful to David McKnight, Arthur Kiron, Chris Lippa, and Dennis Mullen at the University of Pennsylvania Library for continuing to explore these problems and new solutions, and to my research assistant, Brendan Goldman, for doing the last part of the hands-on digitization work. Likewise, I must thank John Marcotte and Joslin Ham for helping me find and manage social science software packages and direct me to experts, and to Sarah Cordivano for figuring out how to get GIS to produce the kinds of maps I wanted.

A number of colleagues have generously read parts, large and small, of this manuscript in various guises. Adam Kosto, Caroline Bynum, Mark Cohen, Richard Bulliet, William Harris, and Ellen Wurtzel read the dissertation upon which the book is based and helped me think about how to re-make it. I thank Phillip Ackerman-Lieberman, Roger Bagnall, Mark Cohen, Avinash Dixit, Jeremy Edwards, Miriam Frenkel, Adam Kosto, Marina Rustow, Francesca Trivellato, and the anonymous referees at the Cambridge University Press for their indispensable help and suggestions on the manuscript in parts or as a whole. I cannot do justice to the number of colleagues whose conversations about the subjects of this book have shaped my work. In addition to those already mentioned in other guises, I particularly thank Peter Brown, Richard Bulliet, Paul Cobb, Nicola di Cosmo, Mary Doyno, Jeremy Edwards, David Freidenreich, Emily Erickson, Marie Favereau-Doumenjou, Talya Fishman, Paul Freedman, Sharon Gerstel, Avner Greif, Cambell Grey, Molly Greene, Richard Hodges, David Jacoby, Hossein Kamaly, Joel Kaye, Gideon Libson, Joe Lowry, Roxani Margariti, Jeffrey Miner, Robert Morrison, Nicholas Paul, Edward Peters, Himanshu Ray, Youval Rotman, Ramzi Rouighi, Thomas Safley, Daniel Smail, Robert Somerville, Lluís To-Figueras, Margo Todd, Michael Toch, Abraham Udovitch, Quentin Van Doosselaere, and Ellen Wurtzel for sharing their varied expertise, for engaging in spirited debates, and for opening my eyes to new perspectives.

Other intellectual debts are less personal. Many readers will recognize how much this book has been enriched by the blossoming economic

study of late antiquity and the early Middle Ages, and the way it depends in particular on some of the methods used and questions raised in Michael McCormick's *Origins of the European Economy* (2001) and Chris Wickham's *Framing the Early Middle Ages* (2005). My scholarly debt to A. L. Udovitch goes deeper than citations can show: a great deal of my understanding of Geniza merchants begins from his unpublished work on individual letters – his transcriptions, interpretative translations, and annotations have been a essential guide and trove of ideas.

In the end, there would be no book of any kind without Caroline Bynum. It is to her I owe not only my essential understanding of the structure of medieval history, but my sense of how to be a historian and an academic. Through the example of her work and her teaching, she modeled an ethical stance towards reading and using medieval sources that guides me every time I approach a source – whether as scholar, teacher, or colleague. Her generosity as an advisor, reader, and mentor throughout my career is beyond my ability to describe.

I thank my mother, my stepfather, my sister and her family for their support and their patience with the absences and absences of mind the writing process has involved. Jason Bandlow helped me see that sometimes the best way to make progress, whether in writing a good book or leading a good life, is to walk off into the woods for a while with a beloved companion: the rewards of the unknown are sometimes worth the risks of being lost. I dedicate this book to the memory of my grandparents – ever-patient subjects of my first historical interrogations, conspirators in making sure I could sit in the rooms where "men talk business," and wise elders who knew I would be an academic long before I did. Without their loving nudging and generosity, none of this would have been possible.

Technical notes

Personal names

Members of the merchant community mostly followed the conventions of the contemporary Islamic world in their naming practice. Most individuals had a personal name (*ism*), patronymic (*nasab*), a *kunya* ("father of _____"), and a personal or familial *nisba* (specifier), indicating either place of origin, profession, or descent. Some individuals had more than one *nisba*, and some individuals or families also bore a *laqab*, or nickname.[1] Writers often chose to vary the combination of names used to identify an individual even within a single letter. They refer to close associates and intimates with minimal forms (bare *ism*, *kunya*, or *kunya ism*), while using long forms with strangers.

For clarity, I refer to most merchants in "*ism* b. *nasab*" form, but vary this usage where another form more easily identifies the individual. Before *nasab*s 'b.' indicates *ibn* in Arabic, *ben* in Hebrew, or *bar* in Aramaic, all of them frequently used. I often include *nisba*s or *laqab*s for members of important family clans, particularly if fellow merchants often used the *nisba*. Where a patronymic form, such as Ibn 'Awkal, is a family *laqab*, I use "ibn" rather than "b." to distinguish between the two. Thus, "Yūsuf b. Ya'qūb Ibn 'Awkal" denotes Yūsuf whose father was Ya'qūb, and whose family *nisba* was Ibn 'Awkal. He is commonly referred to as Yūsuf Ibn 'Awkal.

Most Jews in the medieval Near East were known interchangeably by Hebrew and Arabic names, and merchants were no exception. Since they usually used the Arabic forms of their fellows' names in letters, I have followed the conventions of historians of Islam and used transliterated Arabic names even where there is a common English equivalent

[1] Special features of naming practice among Geniza people include *nasab*s generally of one generation (at most, and, rather infrequently, two), infrequent use of *laqab*s, and *nisba*s that are both familial and personal (often meaning that an individual bore two of them). For further detail on naming in Geniza documents see Goitein, 1967–1993: I, 357–358; for more general discussion see Beeston, 1971.

(thus Yūsuf rather than Joseph, Ya'qūb rather than Jacob). For those merchants who are universally referred to by the Hebrew form of their name, as is the case with Maṣliaḥ b. Eliah, the Jewish judge (*dayyan*) of Palermo, I use Hebrew transliteration for consistency. Merchants used al-Kohen and ha-Kohen almost interchangeably; I use al-Kohen throughout.

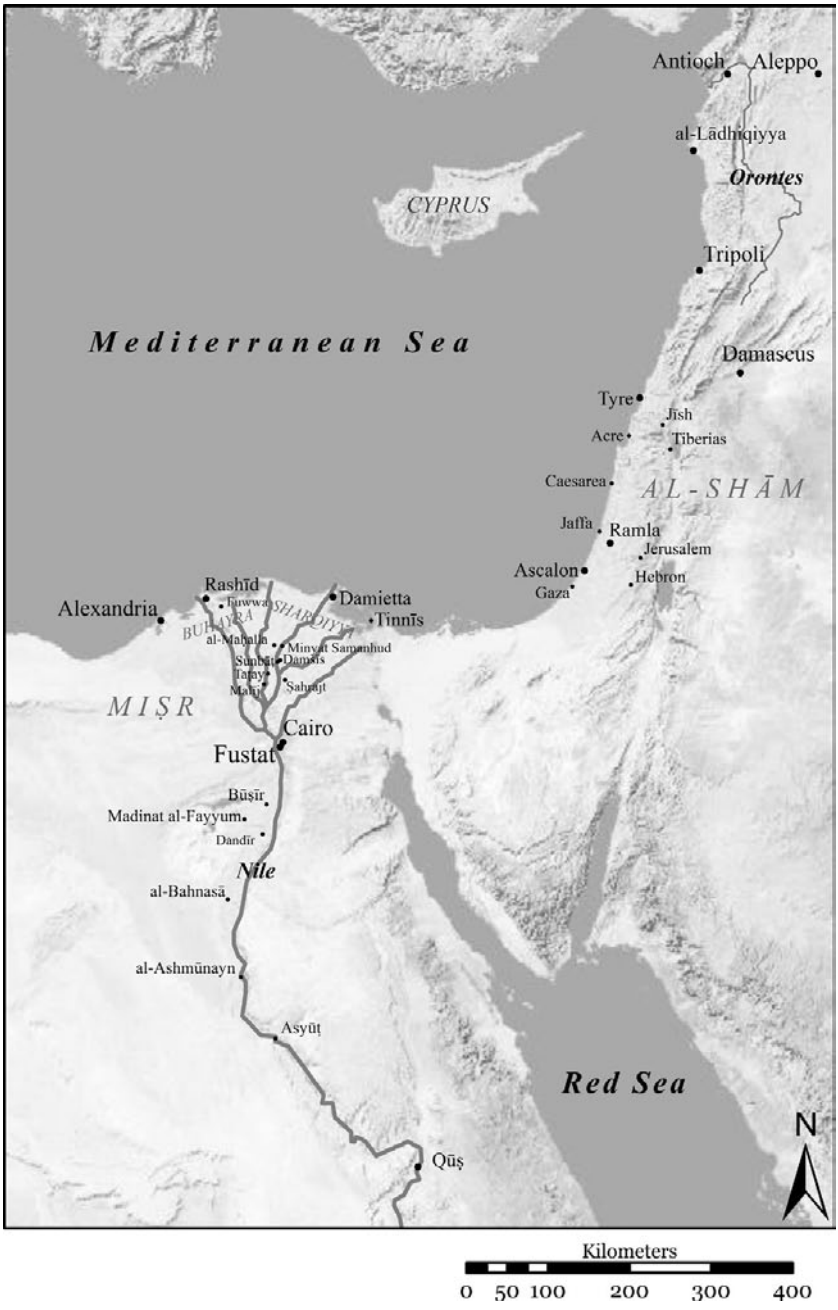
Place names and regional names

For those cities most familiar to English readers I have used English versions of place-names (e.g. Palermo, Tyre, Alexandria). Less familiar places are given in transliteration, using the definite article where this is most common among medieval users. Thus I refer to al-Lādhiqiyya (ancient Laodicea in northern present-day Syria) but to Qayrawān (not al-Qayrawān). An exception is made for Fustat, which I keep as a familiar place name. In this period Fustat and Cairo were sister cities located about two miles from each other. Cairo was a royal enclosure growing into a city, but Fustat was the great city and commercial hub of Egypt. Merchants generally refer to Fustat as *Miṣr*, also the word for Egypt, but when writing addresses on letters, they write *al-Fusṭāṭ*. Merchants frequented both Tripolis: modern-day Tripoli, Lebanon; and Tripoli, Libya. Following their use I refer to the former as Tripoli al-Shām (Syrian Tripoli), and the latter simply as Tripoli.

Since this book is concerned with the economic nature of regions, naming regions can presuppose a unity that did not actually exist. Merchants themselves used certain regional names quite commonly: al-Andalus (sometimes given with the article and sometimes without, although I use al-Andalus throughout), Ṣiqilliyya (Sicily), and al-Shām (greater Syria). But they used Ifrīqiyya (roughly the areas of Roman Africa: Tunisia and eastern Algeria) or Miṣr (Egypt) quite rarely. For convenience I use the names used by the geographers or their common English equivalents. Part II discusses the geographic meaning of these areas.

"Egypt" refers to the entire Nile Valley, the Delta, the Mediterranean ports of the Nile, and the area of the Fayyūm. "Sicily" refers to the island and "al-Andalus" to Islamic Spain, although commercial activity did not encompass the entirety of either region. "Ifrīqiyya" refers to modern Tunisia, northeast Algeria, and northwestern Libya. "Maghrib" means the westerly part of the North African coast, comprising most of modern Algeria and Morocco. "The West" is used for the area of the central Mediterranean encompassing both Ifrīqiyya and Sicily, following the rather loose but consistent usage of Geniza merchants and their view of the world from Fustat. The "far west" refers to the Maghrib and

Map 1.1: The commercial Mediterranean in the eleventh century



Map 1.2: Egypt and al-Shām

al-Andalus together. Finally, "al-Shām" was used by geographers and Geniza people universally to refer to the area roughly analogous to modern Syria, Lebanon, Israel, and the Palestinian territories.

Money, prices, and weights

This book is not particularly concerned with monetary history. When it mentions prices, it does so chiefly to provide scale and comparison. Hence all prices are converted into round figures in dinars. Direct quotes from letters contain the units and currencies used by Geniza merchants; the footnotes or text include a conversion to decimal dinars.[2] As a rough standard of comparison, Goitein estimated that a family of middling artisans could get by on 2 dinars a month.[3] This estimate is accepted by Geniza scholars, and provides the reader with a measure against which to judge units, tens, hundreds, and thousands of dinars.

In the case of the weights in which goods were priced and traded, rather than exact values the reader should note the close equivalence of many of these terms to avoirdupois standards. Given approximate weights, *wuqiyya* can be read as ounces, *raṭl*s as pounds, and *mann*s as two pounds (or one kilogram).[4] A *qinṭār* is a hundred *raṭl*s, or a hundredweight (50 kilograms), an *ʿidl* or bale weighed roughly 500 *raṭl* (although since these were also the physical objects of shipping, their weight varied from around 160 to over 350 kilograms).[5]

Language: transliteration, transcription, and translation

I have tried to make sparing use of transliteration. Specific terms transliterated in the text are indicated by italics; a glossary is provided in the end-matter. Arabic transliteration follows the rules of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. Hebrew transcription follows those of the *Association for Jewish Studies Review* with the following changes: צ is transliterated as ṣ, ט as ṭ, final ה without *mappiq* is omitted. Exceptions

[2] Geniza merchants quote prices in moneys of account. Chiefly these are dinars: halves, thirds, quarters, sixths, eighths, *qīrāṭ*s (twenty-fourths) and *ḥabba*s (seventy-seconds). I follow Goitein in using a standard accounting conversion of 1:40 between dinars and dirhems; real rates were widely variable. Goitein, 1967–1993: I, 368–392. See the brief discussion and bibliography in 4.2 at n. 12.

[3] Goitein, 1967–1993: I, 359.

[4] More exactly, a *wuqiyya* was made up of 12 dirhems weighing 3.125 grams each, and a *raṭl* was 12 *wuqiyya*. Goitein, 1967–1993: I, 360–361.

[5] Dinars, dirhems, and *qīrāṭ*s were measures of weight as well as types of money; moneys of account are in standard weight dinars and weighed bags of money were labeled by dinar weight. On these particular weights see *EI*^{2}, "Wazn."

are made for terms found in English dictionaries, such as qadi, caliph, sultan, or yeshiva. These are treated as part of Standard English. Given that the irregularity of Arabic plurals can cause confusion, I append an 's' to most transliterated terms rather than provide the morphologically appropriate plural. When published works in Hebrew or Arabic include an English title page I have given that title and indicated the original language. Where they do not I provide a transliteration.

Where questions of original language are important in my quotation of manuscript sources I have used the original Judeo-Arabic of the letters in the footnotes rather than a transliteration. An editor's attempt to transliterate Judeo-Arabic often involves choosing to correct usage to normative Arabic, or deciding about voweling in a case where our knowledge of the Middle Arabic used is still tentative.[6]

In both translations and transcriptions of manuscript sources the following conventions are used: roman type indicates original in Judeo-Arabic, underline is Hebrew; ellipses indicate editorial omission, while ellipses enclosed by brackets indicate lacunae in the text; words enclosed in brackets indicate editorial filling of a textual lacuna; words enclosed in parentheses indicate an editorial comment or clarification, or editorial completion of the writer's abbreviation. Emphases, given in italics, are my own. Except in the model letter of chapter 3 I have not indicated corrections made by the writer: words or letters added above or below the line are included without comment; words that the writer later crossed out are omitted. Where non-Geniza sources are quoted I have relied upon previous editors and not made my own editorial comments.

Scholars have prepared English translations of many of these documents, and I have consulted many of these translations in writing this work. The table of manuscript sources in the bibliography lists both available editions and English translations. I have either re-translated or edited prepared translations in order to illuminate the consistent vocabulary of letter writers. Unless I specifically cite a translation in the footnotes all translations, and all errors that they contain, are my own.

I mostly use a literal translation style, but occasionally choose a looser, more idiomatic translation to give the flavor of the exchange. I sometimes use the second person in place of the author's third person where comprehension is at stake. The reader will therefore find a mix of numerals and numbers, contractions, slang, and informal expressions; these are my attempts to accurately reflect registers and styles.

[6] See Blau, 1999, Versteegh, 1997. See also Diem and Radenberg, 1994: *passim*, which disagrees with Goitein on voweling of individual terms.

Abbreviations

Add.	Additional
AIU	Alliance Israélite Universelle (Paris)
Antonin	Antonin Collection (St. Petersburg)
Ar.	Arabic
AS	Additional Series
BL	British Library
Bodl	Bodleian Library (Oxford)
Chapira	Chapira Collection
DK	David Kauffman Collection (Budapest)
EI^2	*Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edn., ed. P. Bearman, T. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W. P. Heinrichs (Leiden, 2006)
EJ^2	*Encyclopedia Judaica*, 2nd edn., ed. Brichael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik (Detroit, 2007)
ENA	Elkan Nathan Adler Collection (New York)
Gottheil-Worrell	Freer Gallery of Art (Washington)
Halper	Halper Collection, University of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia)
Heb	Hebrew
INA	Institute of Oriental Studies (St. Petersburg)
JNUL	Jewish National and University Library (Jerusalem)
JTS	Jewish Theological Seminary
Meunier	Meunier Collection
Misc.	Miscellaneous
Mosseri	Jacques Mosseri Collection (Cambridge)
MS	Manuscript
NS	New Series
Or	Oriental
P. Heid.	Papyrus Collection of the University of Heidelberg
PER	Erzherzog Rainer Papyrus Collection (Vienna)
TS	Taylor–Schechter Collection (Cambridge)