the first century. Makḥul (ob. 112 A.H.) is thus quoted by Tirmidhi (ob. A.H. 279; Jāmiʿ, Lucknow ed., p. 12) as saying *nadānam* for 'I do not know'. Jāḥiẓ, or a not much later writer confused with him, quotes from Anushirwan (ob. 577 A.D.) a Persian sentence (*Maḥāsin*, ed. Vloten, 169) occurring in a work bearing the Arabic name *Tawḳīʿāt*. Some early verses in which Persian is mixed with Arabic are given by Jāḥiẓ in his *Bayān* (i. 61). There is therefore nothing surprising about one Jew corresponding with another in Persian about the year 718 A.D.; we should indeed expect the Persian of that period to be practically free from Arabic words, and this expectation is justified, since in the fragments of thirty-two lines which we can read, besides the proper name Yazid there are only two words which are Arabic, viz. רקיבא, which in the context where it occurs certainly means *stirrups*, and is therefore the Arabic ركاب, which in Persian is written رکیب; and the double misspelling is probably evidence of early borrowing—perhaps through Aramaic; and مسما (line 23) 'named', if that word be correctly read. Since these thirty-two lines are all fragmentary, we cannot indeed be sure that no other Arabic words occurred in the document when it was intact; but the chances are greatly against their occurrence, since in documents dating from the time when Persian was commonly written, when the authors do not purposely avoid them, Arabic words occur too frequently to admit the possibility of their exclusion to the extent which this document displays. The treatise of about 990 A.D. which Schefer puts at the commencement of his *Chrestomathie* gives evidence of this statement; and the Jewish-Persian of all periods is no less full of Arabic than the Mohammedan. Hence their absence from this document seems both to agree with the above identification and to confirm it. Bacher has with justice called attention to the further absence of *Hebrew* words, a sprinkling of which we should expect in a communication from one Jew to another; but there appears to be no such sprinkling: and most surprising is the designation of the Deity by the Persian names *Ized Khudā*, instead of by one of the familiar abbreviations or periphrases to be found in ordinary books. Perhaps the writer of the letter was a sectarian, or a non-Israelite, who for some reason employed the Hebrew script.

Too much is lost for the editor to endeavour to make out a continuous sense. In lines 25 and 26 some one seems to be describing a prescription (magical or otherwise) which a handmaiden is to be taught: perhaps the writer had been employed as physician or magician by the Ispahbad, and explains how easily the charm can be wrought. The greater part of the letter is occupied with some details about the sale of sheep, in which the writer appears to be complaining of unfair treatment. He is evidently writing to some one who is superior to himself, and who in the writer's opinion is able to do him some commercial or pecuniary service. His correspondent was probably purveyor to the Ispahbad, or at any rate administrator of some branch of business at his court. The writer of the document was a merchant of sheep, and complains that worthless animals had been bought, in consequence of which a number of sheep had been left on his hands: these he requests the government purveyor to buy.

Apparently he had also been compelled to sell some other property, but the nature of his complaint can scarcely be guessed. The name of a city was mentioned, but the part of the leaf bearing it has been lost.

Further evidence for the antiquity of the document is furnished by Dr. Stein's account of its discovery and by Professor Wiesner's report on the paper, which both give the *end of the eighth century* as a *terminus ad quem* for the document.

Mr. A. E. Cowley, Sub-librarian of the Bodleian Library and Fellow of Magdalen College, has made the following observations on the palaeography, which give the same kind of date:—

'Some of the characters are ordinary and give no indication of age.

The most interesting are: א, ג, ה, ז, ל, נ, פ, צ, ק.

Of these א, ה, and to some extent ל, פ, ק bear a slight resemblance to characters used (according to Lidzbarski) in Babylonia and Persia in the twelfth century.

The date of the document cannot be so late as that. The writing is throughout more archaic than that of the Persian deed of 1021. Some letters approach more nearly to forms in pre-Christian papyri and inscriptions, as א, ג, ה (inscription form), ק, and less closely פ, צ.

The א seems to be half-way between the Egyptian-Aramaic (papyrus) form (𐤀 𐡀) and the later N. It is sometimes less developed than the א on the Nash papyrus.