

II, 75 *Letter from Yemen to Egypt re Consignment of Pearls*

Aden, after 1205

TS 8 Ja 1, f. 3

A brief description is found in Goitein, *Letters*, 216, where the document is cited as TS 8 Ja.

Letter from Aden to Cairo dealing with a package of pearls, which had been the object of litigation before the (Nagid) Abraham Maimuni in the capital of Egypt and before Maḍmūn b. David in Aden.

{The beginning and end of the letter are missing, so that we do not know who the writer and addressee were. The letter deals exclusively with the package of pearls, which belonged to the writer.¹ Someone had arranged for their salvage/release² and deposited them in Fustat, in the presence of Abraham Maimuni, with Sheikh Muwaffaq ('Successful').³ The writer's business partner later encountered some difficulties in getting Muwaffaq to deliver the bundle, and he made a public report on these difficulties in Aden in Maḍmūn b. David's presence. Muwaffaq had claimed that he had been instructed to deliver the pearls to another merchant. The writer now appeals to the latter to take delivery of the pearls for him. He suspects that there may be further difficulties in getting 'Successful' to relinquish the valuable deposit, however. The Tripolitan merchant 'Alī the Maghrebi was instructed to bring the merchandise with him when he came to Aden or have an oath imposed on Muwaffaq for breach of trust. The blessing for the dead, added to Moses Maimonides' name, 'may he find mercy!' suggests that he had passed away recently; the same is suggested (as noted by Goitein) by the informal reference to Abraham Maimuni: 'the *Rayyis* Abu 'l-Munā, the offspring of our master Moses.'}

¹ {As indicated in this document (esp. lines 10–12), the pearls were exported from Aden to Egypt, where with their proceeds other merchandise was to be purchased for sale or use in Aden. Cf. 171, n. 18.

² The text in line 2 is fragmentary and breaks off after *khallaṣa al-lu'lu'*. Goitein may have understood this as salvaging the pearls from a shipwreck, as he placed II, 75 in chap. 2, sec. J, which deals with such cases. Margariti, "Aden," 336, assumes in fact that this was intended by the text. It could, however, refer, for example, to releasing the pearls from customs (releasing pearls, that had been shipped from Aden, from customs at Fustat is mentioned in III, 42, list a, line 1).

³ Muwaffaq is here a personal name (cf. Ibn al-Zubayr, *Asmā'*, 2472), not to be confused with the title *al-muwaffaq*, with the definite article; see 513, n. 2.

CHAPTER THREE

ABRAHAM BEN YIJŪ AND HIS FAMILY

III, A. *Letters Sent to Ben Yijū by Maḍmūn b. Hasan*

(See II, 13–31)

III, B. *Letters Sent to Ben Yijū by Joseph b. Abraham*III, 1 *Letter from Joseph b. Abraham to Abraham Ben Yijū, Malabar Coast, India*

Aden, ca. 1137–40

TS 12.320

The text is translated in Goitein, *Letters*, 192–97. The following is based both on that publication and Goitein's fuller original edition.

Light-grayish, thick paper, the same as that used in III, 4, III, 7 and III, 9.

This document is in the same hand as in II, 43; III, 3–6, 9; IV, 15–II, 42; V, 11 and VI, 36, also letters sent by Joseph b. Abraham. Two other of his communications to Ben Yijū, III, 2 and 7, are in two other different scripts. Evidently, the seven letters with identical script, from different years, were written by Joseph himself, while the two others were written by clerks. Joseph's handwriting, with its long, straight vertical strokes, is symmetrical and decorative and has several distinctive features, e.g., the division of the upper strokes into two, the left part of which is a serif.

On the first page, the writer left a margin about 4 cm wide, which he filled afterwards with four straight lines, written along the whole length of the paper. In Spain and North Africa, and sometimes also in Egypt (cf. the letters of Ḥalfon ha-Levi b. Nethanel, IV, 4, or Abū Zikrī Kohen, IV, 3; V, 1, 2) the distribution of the writing over the page was characterized by the progressively increasing indentation of the beginnings of the lines, so that the main body of writing, as well as the margins, formed trapezoids and sometimes even triangles. In this piece of calligraphy from Yemen a strict rectangular shape is preserved.

Nothing is written in the margin of verso, and only little space is left between the end of the text and the address, which is, as usual, written upside down.