

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.

The recipient of the letter, Ben Yijū, used that space for writing the main dates of the Jewish calendar for the year 1461 of the Seleucid era, corresponding to 1149/50 C.E. {III, 26}.

The recipient of this letter, Abraham b. Yijū, is the most important single figure in the India papers preserved in the Geniza. At least seventy items were addressed to him or emanated from his hands, including a poem (III, 29a) in honor of the Jewish judge of that city, Labraṭ II b. Moses II, which he might have written in his youth, while still in his native city, al-Mahdiyya, Tunisia. The preservation of so much material related to one merchant finds its explanation in his life story. After a sojourn of at least seventeen years in India and an additional three in Yemen, he returned to Egypt and married off his daughter and only surviving child to his nephew, who later became a judge. We can assume that he showed little interest for the mercantile and industrial exploits of his father-in-law (and even perhaps his poetical creations). Thus these carefully kept writings, which had been spared by the termites of India for so many years, then traveled by sea all the way from India to Aden, from there to a Sudanese port, then through the desert, and finally on the Nile down to Fustat, were heedlessly thrown away one day into the Geniza chamber.¹ Nor did they remain there undisturbed. Most of the larger pieces are fragmentary, and the total of the material preserved clearly makes the impression of being only a small remnant of the original collection. Ben Yijū was a calligrapher,² as were several of his prominent correspondents. Merchants with a poor hand, such as Maḍmūn, usually had their letters copied by professional clerks. The synagogue compound, where the Geniza was located, also contained a school, and the schoolmasters, always eager to provide their more advanced pupils with examples of well-styled and beautifully written business letters, certainly plundered Yijū's files for generations. Yet what has survived is truly priceless.³

The letter was penned in Aden, the permanent residence of the writer, Joseph b. Abraham. This is stated expressly in line 14, and is implied by the context of the whole letter. All seven other letters written by him to Ben Yijū (III, 2-8), as well as those addressed to the same by

¹ [See page 61, n. 31.]

² See page 632, for documents written in his hand.

³ This paragraph is based on Goitein, *Letters*, 186; see further pages 52-89.

Maḍmūn (II, 13-20, 23-25, 27) and Khalaf b. Isaac (III, 10-16), were sent to the Malabar coast of southwest India.⁴

Joseph b. Abraham must have been one of the prominent merchants of Aden, since the distinguished gathering described in IV, 5 (lines 15, 28, 51) took place in his home.⁵ The style of his letters to Ben Yijū, to Abu Zikrī Kohen, the representative of the Cairene merchants (V, 9-12), and to Ḥalfon ha-Levi b. Nethanel, another Cairene notable (IV, 15-II, 42) was common in correspondence between equals. He traveled to Cairo (V, 2, line 19) and most probably also to Dahbattan in southern India (cf. III, 10, line 17) where reference is made to him as a *nākhudā*, a shipowner.⁶ Since he speaks repeatedly about measures to be taken against defaulting merchants (the *kārdār* or manager, who is threatened with excommunication, see below lines 13-17; the Baghdādī, III, 4, ll. 18 ff.; Fawfalī, III, 9v, line 1), he may have held some position of authority in the community. {Chap. 2, sec. F is devoted to Joseph, who was the cousin of Maḍmūn, Nagid of Yemen.}

In most of his letters, Joseph b. Abraham ordered copper (or bronze) vessels from India; he sent old ones or bars of copper and tin (III, 1, lines 11-13, 22-verso, line 3.; ib., lines 7-9, 19-20; III, 2, lines 1-21; III, 3, line 2. 5-10; III, 4, lines 2-8; cf. also III, 12, lines 38-39; III, 23 margin, lines 6-7). He also dealt in iron (III, 9, lines 12-21; margin, lines 11-18; III, 25, line 15) as well as such Indian spices as pepper (II, 16, lines 29-30; III, 7, line 8; III, 9, margin, lines 1-6; III, 22, line 6; III, 25, line 5), cardamom (III, 1v, line 6; III, 3, line 4), betel nuts (III, 1, lines 17-20) and ginger (III, 22, line 6). There is also one reference to textiles (IV, 15-II, 42, lines 9-11, 29, margin, lines 12-14).

The quantities of vessels ordered are small. Their frequent mention (also in the letters of Maḍmūn and Khalaf of Aden), the fact that some copper is sent for sale in India (III, 4, line 7) as well as the urgency attached to these orders (III, 3, lines 6-10) suggest that they were destined not only for private needs, but were also for local customers. The detailed description of many vessels (cf. especially the lamp mentioned below, margin, lines 2 ff.) reflects a civilization of high aesthetic standards. (Cf. also III, 4, line 7.)

⁴ No. III, 8, seems to have been sent by Joseph, from Mangalore, India, to Ben Yijū, inland Yemen. Also see III, 9.

⁵ Joseph b. Abraham hosted members of the Jewish community in Aden, in which affairs of interest to the entire community were discussed.

⁶ This could refer to someone else; see pages 151 and 598, n. 14.

The approximate date of our letter can be fixed with some certainty. The addressee, Ben Yijū, traveled to India in 1131/2 (II, 20, line 9). Rāmish, whose ships are referred to (lines 7–8), died in April 1140 (cf. pages 145–46). Consequently, our letter must have been sent sometime between 1132–40. To be more precise, it was preceded by III, 4, for there (line 13) Abū 'Alī b. Ṭayyib is recommended to Ben Yijū as a newcomer to India, while here (line 11), he brings merchandise back from there. It is later than III, 2: there (lines 7–9) Joseph explains at length what a *zirkhuwān* is; here (lines 11–13), he assumes that Ben Yijū is familiar with it. Furthermore, III, 3 seems to contain a reminder of orders placed in III, 2, which were carried out in III, 4. The sequence of these letters thus is as follows: III, 2, 3, 4–6, 1. No. III, 2, shows Ben Yijū already well established in the copper industry in India. Since the letters are separated from each other by approximately one year, III, 1, must have been written between 1137–40.⁷

The calendar for the Jewish year corresponding to 1149/50 jotted down by Ben Yijū in the blank space of the verso does not prove that the letter arrived in India at that time. In 1149, Ben Yijū had already left India for Aden (see III, 29). Similar notations for the years 1146–49 were made by Ben Yijū on the back of II, 16 {cf. III, 10a; III, 51}. Paper was scarce, and when, around 1145, the Tunisian India merchant wanted to copy a calendar for the four next years, he used free space he found on old letters that he no longer needed.

Translation

[A. Losses and arrivals]

(1) *In Your name, O Merciful.*

(2) The letter of your excellency, the illustrious elder, my master, has arrived. It was the most pleasant letter that came (3) and the most delightful message that reached me. I read and understood it and was pleased to learn that you were well (4) and your affairs successful, for

⁷ Ben Yijū was established already in India some time before October 17, 1132; see III, 17. For the sake of clarity, I note that the dating of III, 1 and the documents associated with it are dependent on the logical assumption that the ships of Rāmish—who owned a fleet in partnership with his son and son-in-law—would not be referred to as such after his death.

which I praised the Lord very much. Now, I ask God to (5) reunite us {lit., 'facilitate our reunion'} under the most pleasant circumstances and in the best of spirits, through His favor and mercy, (6) God willing.

You, my master—may God make your honored position permanent!—wrote that you kindly sold (7) the silk⁸ and sent goods for {alt. tr.: purchased with} its proceeds and that you sent them in the ships of Rāshmit (!).⁹ (8) I {alt. tr.: we} learned (however) that Rāshmit's two ships were total losses. May *the Holy one blessed be He* (9) compensate me {alt. tr.: us} and you! Do not ask (me), my master, how much I was distressed by the loss of the cargo belonging to you. (10) But the Creator will {alt. tr.: may the Creator} compensate you soon. In any case, there is no counsel {lit., 'stratagem'} against (11) the decree of God.¹⁰

All the copper (vessels)¹¹ that you sent with Abū Alī¹² (12) arrived, and the 'table-bowl' {alt. tr.: 'table jug'}¹³ also arrived. It was exactly as

⁸ Silk was sent from the West to India, almost like gold, as a means of payment, see below verso, line 3; III, 4, line 12; III, 10, line 48; III, 11, lines 32 and 51; III, 12, line 18. {See also II, 55, line 42, III, 6, line 5; above, page 20; the entry 'silk' in Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 6:107; Goitein, *Letters*, 357.}

⁹ The writer, a native of Aden, had difficulties pronouncing Persian names; thus he writes Rāshmit for Rāmish and *kārdāl* (line 13) for *kārdār*. Details about Rāmish, whose ships are frequently mentioned in our papers, are found in pages 145–46.

¹⁰ An Arabic version of Prov. 21:30. {It is also found, e.g., in II, 45a, line 23; II, 61, margin, line 2; II, 71, line 35.}

¹¹ Arabic *naḥās*. The writer seems to use this word (cf. margin, line 3, verso, lines 5, 13, 19, 20) and *ṣufī* indiscriminately. *Naḥās* in verso, lines 19–20, clearly refers to *ṣufī* in recto, lines 24–26. Therefore, when he wants to say 'yellow copper,' i.e., with a greater alloy of tin, he uses the tautology *ṣufī asfar*, line 26. Brass is hardly ever traded in bars, at least when coming from the West. The Arabic terms cover copper and brass or bronze. The vessels were made of an alloy of copper and tin (lines 26–28), i.e., they were made of bronze. We use 'copper' in order to reflect the usage of the original. Richard Ettinghausen drew my attention to Aga-Oglu, "Islamic Terminology," 218 ff., who arrives at similar conclusions while discussing Islamic literary sources. {Arabic *ṣufī* is defined as bronze in Baer, "Ma'din," 983a, and as brass in Dietrich, "Maghnāṣ," 1167a and id., "Nuḥās," 111b.}


¹² No doubt identical with Abū 'Alī b. Ṭayyib al-Miṣrī, a Jewish India trader, whom we find as a novice on his way from Aden to India with presents and a recommendation by our writer to Ben Yijū in III, 4, lines 13; verso, 23. In III, 10v, line 5, he transports silk on the same route. In III, 22, line 4, he travels back from India to Aden {also mentioned in III, 6, line 4}. To be sure, a Jew bearing exactly the same name lived in Egypt a hundred years before the time of our letter (see Mann, *Jews*, 1:111; 2:122).

¹³ Arabic *zirkwān*, otherwise (line 29 and margin, line 1 {III, 2, lines 8, 10}) written *zirkwān* and in III, 19, line 26 and III, 23, margin, line 6 (twice) {and III, 24, lines 12, 36} *zirkwān*. It is certainly composed of Persian *zīr* 'jug' and *khawān* 'table,' although I was not able to find it in any dictionary. In III, 2, lines 8 and 10, which must be earlier, Joseph b. Abraham explains it, while ordering some bronze vessels from Ben Yijū: 'a *marfa'* {or *mirfa'*} decorated with wickerwork, which we call z.' The word *marfa'* is still commonly used in Yemen for a drum made of copper, as well as for a big bowl for

I wished¹⁴—may God give you (13) a good reward and undertake your compensation (for only He is able to do it adequately)!¹⁵

[B. Excommunication of a tardy debtor]

You, my master, mentioned that you approached the *kārdāl*¹⁶ gently, (14) in order to get something for us back from him. Perhaps you should threaten him that here in Aden we excommunicate¹⁷ (15) anyone that

keeping water, formed approximately like this ; see III, 2, line 8. Thus the *zirkhuwān* was a bowl in which water was kept on the table. {In III, 19, 23, 24, all penned by Ben Yijū, it is written as two words, *zyr kw'n*. This is particularly clear in III, 19, line 26, but also discernable in the other two texts. Perhaps Ben Yijū took the second word, *'kw'n* to be the Arabic *ikhwān* and understood the expression literally as 'jug for brothers.' In his various writings Goitein translated alternatively 'table-bowl' or 'table jug.' The latter appears in his last discussion of the term in Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 4:147 (see ib., 393, 463; the definition in the Index, *Med. Soc.*, 6:68, is erroneous). Accordingly I have supplied here 'table jug' in brackets and in subsequent translations without brackets. For *marfa* in Yemenite Arabic, cf. Piamenta, *Dictionary*, 185.}

¹⁴ This may be a reference to III, 2, lines 8–10. {For *ṣarif* 'exactly,' cf. 731, n. 30.

¹⁵ The last words 'and undertake,' etc. render *wa-tawallā kifā'ahu*. *Kifā'* means both compensation and sufficiency. As variations of the phrase in other documents prove, the first meaning was clearly intended. The words that Goitein added in parenthesis here may have been intended to reflect the second meaning.}

¹⁶ The *kārdār*, a Persian word (see above, the note to line 7, on the misspelling), meaning literally, 'one who has work.' Steingass-Johnson, *Dictionary*, 1002: 'a money-maker.' Haim, *Dictionary*, 592: 'a manager.' {A *kārdār* ('the *kārdār*') is mentioned in India in VII, 70 (TS AS 156, f. 238, line 13); see Goitein, "Portrait," 460, where he translates 'the manager.'}

¹⁷ This fraudulent 'manager' is threatened here with the religious ban or the exclusion from the Jewish community. The merchants of Aden included several scholars, who were qualified to pronounce the ban. Already in Talmudic times, the ban was used as a means of coercion against defaulting debtors, cf. BT Mo'ed Qaṭan 17a. This affair is treated in greater detail in III, 9, line 20; verso, lines 3–6 (see there); III, 12, lines 26–34; III, 18 sec. a, lines 2–5; sec. e, line 1. *Nshmt* is an Arabic form of Aram. *shamattā* (= *shamadā*), 'ban,' as proven by *shamāt* in lines 15–16. Arabic *shamāt* denotes 'malicious joy at the misfortune of others, Schadenfruede' (used in this sense in II, 20v, line 6) [there *shamāta*, which means the same; in III, 32, line 24, *shamāt*] and has nothing to do with the meaning intended here. {In Judeo-Arabic the word for the ban is often Arabicized and spelled *samāt*; see Blau, *Emergence*, 163. For the verbal form *smt*, see Ratzaby, "Geniza Words," 228. Ghosh (*Antique*, 276, 383; id., "The Slave," 207) cites a suggestion by Prof. G. Khan that here *shmt* represents a metathesis of Arabic *shmt*, which should be translated 'insult,' 'defame' and refers to some form of public defamation or 'rogues gallery.' From the linguistic and historical points of view, this seems rather unlikely, in my opinion. Ghosh assumed that the *kārdār* was not Jewish and subsequently concluded that formal excommunication would hardly be appropriate. Margariti, "Aden," 340–41, also concludes that the *kārdār* was not Jewish and cites as evidence the curses showered on him by Khalaf b. Isaac (III, 12, line 27 [this proves nothing; see 617, n. 17]) and the fact that his name is not mentioned. She suggests that the use of the word 'excommunication' may have been intentional but in a metaphorical sense, namely to exclude him from the community of

owes us something and does not fulfill his commitments. Maybe, he will be afraid of the excommunication. (16) If he does not pay, we shall issue an official letter of excommunication (17) and send it to him, so that he will become aware of his crime.¹⁸

{Alt. tr.: You, my master, mentioned the affair of the *kārdāl*. You approach him, my master, with wily graciousness¹⁹ (14) and ask him to pay us. My master, were you to threaten him that we excommunicate in Aden (15) whoever does not pay a debt to us, perhaps he would fear the excommunication. (16) If he does not deliver anything/merchandise to us, we shall write²⁰ a real letter of excommunication (17) and send it to him, until he attends to his disgraceful behavior.}

[C. Various orders, especially for bronze vessels]

The red betel nuts arrived, (18) as well as the two washbasins²¹—may God give you a good reward! Please do not send me any more red (19) betel nuts, for they are not good. If there are to be had white fresh betel nuts, it will be (20) all right.²²

reputable merchants and fair play. On the likelihood that the *kārdār* was Jewish, see 635, n. 17. I doubt whether the expression *kitāb shamāt ḥaqīq*, 'a real letter of excommunication,' would have been used unless it had been intended as such.}

¹⁸ A person under the ban is religiously bound to refrain from any social intercourse with the community. Therefore, formal notification must be sent to him. {Cf. Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 2:331 (mistakenly referring to the affair of the Baghdādī merchant, dealt with in III, 4, lines 19 ff.; see there 579, n. 38), 599, n. 17, where it is suggested that a conditional letter of excommunication had been sent; perhaps this was derived from the threat mentioned in line 14. On the contacts between the Jewish court of Aden and India, see 196, n. 1; cf. 633–34.

¹⁹ Arabic *yatalattaf*. *Talattuf* is an important concept in Maimonides' *Guide* 3:32, and is translated by S. Pines, 'wily graciousness' or 'gracious ruse.' See *Guide* (Pines), lxxii–lxxiv; *Guide* (Schwarz), 532, n. 2.

²⁰ Arabic *wa-in lam... wa-illā*, literally, 'and if (he does) not..., and if not.' The word *wa-illā* in the apodosis is pleonastic. The same occurs in II, 75v, lines 10–11: *wa-in lam yaf'al yusallim 'alaykim shay wa-illā yuhlifuhu yamin*, 'if he does not agree to pay you anything, he [PN] will impose an oath on him.' For the pleonastic *wa-illā* in the apodosis, see Blau, *Grammar*, 259, who also cites an oath. In my opinion, these examples point to the use of this pleonasm as an emphatic, regularly associated with oaths.}

²¹ Arabic *jafna*; also in verso, line 8. From the diminutive of this word, Spanish *jofaina* is derived, which means the same. {See Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 4:142, 391, n. 23, where *jifān lil-'ajin*, wooden kneading troughs, are mentioned. Maimonides in his commentary to M. Shabbat 17:5 (Shailat, *Shabbat*, 152) defines kneading trough ('*arēvā*): *jafna*. According to al-Qaddūmi, *Gifts*, 424, a *jafna* is 'the largest kind of *qaṣ'ah* (...), a large bowl from which wine is ladled'; cf. ib., 349. For *qaṣ'a*, see 629, n. 10.

²² Arabic *lā ba's*, lit., 'that's not bad,' is used by the writer as an understatement to express his approval. Cf. verso, line 1, where it is translated 'let it be so.' See Blau, *Dictionary*, 30: 'excellent.'}

Please do not send me anything {add: else}, whether betel nuts (21) or any other goods you acquire for me, in partnership with anyone, but specify what belongs to each person and (for) every (22) item purchased.²³ {Add: This is the greatest favor you can do for me.}

I am sending you (23) a broken ewer and a dipper²⁴ that together weigh seven pounds less a quarter. Please (24) make me a ewer of the same measure from its copper;²⁵ for its copper is good copper. The (25) weight of the ewer should be five pounds exactly.²⁶

I am sending also eighteen and a quarter pounds (26) of good yellow copper in bars and five pounds of Qal'i 'lead'²⁷ in a big mold²⁸ (27) and

²³ Evidence of the extent to which the writer opposed partnerships can be found in III, 2, lines 17–18, III, 3, lines 11–12, where he asked Ben Yijū to keep his son's business dealings separate from his own. This could have been a unique request, intended to train the young man in independent dealings. The Yemenites in general, however, seem to be similarly minded. Thus their proverb has it: "If partnership were any good, one would have partnership in women" (Goitein, *Jemenica*, 39, no. 201). However, big business was done in Aden as elsewhere, through partnerships, see II, 32, lines 23, 32, 37.

²⁴ Arabic *karnīb*, or *kirnīb*, from Greek *chernips* 'water for washing the hands and the vessel containing it.' {According to Diem, *Dictionary*, 188, n. 199, the word is derived from the Greek *khernibeōn/khērnibon*, which means 'vessel for water to wash the hands, basin.'} In Arabic it denotes a gourd and also a somewhat round vessel. The same transition is found in *madā'ah*, which in Yemen is a gourd and then the brass or glass receptacle of the water of the hookah, or water pipe {cf. Piamenta, *Dictionary*, 462}. Dozy, *Supplément*, 2:461a, explains *karnīb* as 'courage vide servant de bouteille.' This word often occurs in lists of household utensils brought in by a bride, and there it is always connected with other copper utensils used in the bathroom, especially the *saṭl* or *ṣaṭl*, a pail (from Latin *situla*, a bucket, see Dozy, *Supplément*, 1:653). {Details in Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 4:140. For the ewer, Arabic *ibriq*, see 410, n. 16.

²⁵ Arabic *ṣufr* (also in continuation here and in line 26, margin, line 1). For the meaning of this term, see the note to line 11.

²⁶ Arabic *khālīs*, lit., 'clean.' The same term for an exact weight appears in III, 4, lines 4, 6.

²⁷ Arabic *raṣās qal'i*. In Streck "Qal'i," the word is derived from Kalah on the peninsula of Malacca, which was famed for its tin mines. This derivation, which is orthographically difficult, has become even more doubtful now that we learn from the Geniza papers published here that tin was sent from the West to India. In addition to Qal'i we have here Egyptian tin, see II, 16v, line 11; II, 24, line 2. It therefore stands to reason that the derivation from Qal'a in the district of Cabra in Spain (Yāqūt, *Geographical Dictionary*, 4:162, lines 15 ff.) is verified. In III, 19, lines 15 and 22, *Qal'i* alone (without the determinant *raṣās*) means tin. For a similar usage see Streck, "Qal'i." I put 'lead' in quotation marks, for 'Qal'i lead' was a regular term for tin in the Muslim East. {Qal'i 'lead' is a commodity exported from India to Aden in III, 28a, line 5. Accordingly, the eastern option for the toponym remains viable. While it is curious that here it was sent from the West to India, it is feasible that a Malaccan export item was available at this time in Aden but not on the Malabar coast of India. For *qal'i*, 'tin,' see also Shy, "Terms," 210.}

²⁸ Tin obviously was traded in molds of different size, *qālab*; see below verso, line 13, where the same word is used with regard to cheese.

a piece of Egyptian 'lead' (in the form of) a shell.²⁹ Please put the bars, (28) the 'lead', and what remains from the manufacture of the ewer together and have made for me, your servant, (29) {add: [[a lamp]]} two table jugs for two platters, each table jug being of [Margin] (1) seventeen *fills*,³⁰ of the same form {alt. tr.: make}³¹ as the table jug you sent me; they should be of good workmanship.

[D. Detailed description of a lamp ordered]

From the rest of all the copper (*ṣufr*) make me (2) {add: a lamp, it should be;} an attractive lamp. Its column should be octagonal and stout; its base should be in the form³² of a lampstand with strong (3) feet. On its head there should be a copper (*naḥās*) lamp with two ends for two wicks, which should be set on the end of the column so that it could move up and down. (4) All the three, the column, the stand and the lamp, should be separate parts. If they could [Verso] (1) make the feet in spirals, let it be so, for this is more beautiful.³³ The *late*³⁴ (2) Abu 'l-Faraj

²⁹ Arabic *maḥāra*. Egyptian tin obviously was sold in a shape similar to a shell. These shells certainly had a fixed volume; however, Dozy (*Supplément*, 1:334b) defines only the plural of the word, *maḥā'ir*, as a weight.

³⁰ From III, 18, sec. b, line 3, sec. e, line 6, III, 19, lines 4–5, it is evident that a *fill* was $\frac{1}{100}$ of a *farāsila*. The *farāsila* had different values according to the merchandise being weighed. Hinz, *Islamische Masse*, 9, cites (for Hormuz on the Persian Gulf during the 16th century) weights varying from 10.395–12.5 kg. Löfgren, "Glossary," 49, notes, mostly according to modern South Arabian sources, 10–17 kg. Thus, a *fill* would be at least 10 gr. I have not found mention of this weight in literary sources. However, Yemenites told me that silversmiths of the older generation kept in their boxes oval metal pieces on which there were inscriptions and which they called *fill*. The word might be derived from the Persian *pul*, a small coin, see Steingass-Johnson, *Dictionary*, 260. {For the Indian weight *pala*, see Maqbul Ahmad, *India*, 153; Basham, *India*, 503 (approximately 37.75 gr). Piamenta, *Dictionary*, 370, describes the *farāsila* as a South Arabian weight, 5 kg. or 10–70 (!) kg. See further 616, n. 13.

³¹ Arabic *amal*, as distinguished from *shaghl* ('workmanship'), used in the continuation.

³² Arabic *shakhṣ*. See Piamenta, *Dictionary*, 248: 'vessel of brass', 'figure'.

³³ The lamp described here in such detail is very similar to the 'lamp d'usage domestique' No. 39.85.2, which was kindly shown to me by Mlle. LeScour in the Musée de l'Homme, Paris, sec. Asie. It was acquired in Dindigul, north of Madura in Southern India, not very far from the Malabar Coast, where the recipient of this letter lived. The famous bronze lamps of Southern India, mostly representing a female figure holding in her outstretched arms receptacles for oil, were objectionable to Jews and Muslims for religious reasons. Perhaps the simple form described in this letter and represented by the 18th century lamp from Dindigul was introduced to India by coppersmiths brought to India from the West, from a Muslim country.

³⁴ {Hebrew *ḥay*; see page 394, n. 31.}

al-Jubayl³⁵ made a lamp of such a description. Perhaps this will be {alt. tr.: can be made} (3) like it.³⁶

[E. Additional orders]

This year, I did not succeed in sending gold³⁷ or silk.³⁸ (4) Instead, I am sending currency,³⁹ 20 Maliki dinars, old dinars of good (5) gold.⁴⁰ Please pay with it {alt. tr.: them} the fee for the labor of the coppersmith⁴¹ and with the rest buy me (6) a {add: small} quantity of 'eggs'⁴² and cardamom, and if this is not available,⁴³ anything else, which God—may He be praised!—makes available. (7) And, please, send everything with the first ship sailing.

Please buy me (8) two washbasins, of average size, somewhat larger than those you sent me, and a large washbasin, which holds (9) two water skins⁴⁴ of water, measuring two *siqāyas*.⁴⁵

³⁵ This man {from Jubayl, Lebanon} figures in VII, 10.

³⁶ {This passage is quoted in Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 4:134–35. Attention is called to the different terms used here, for which Goitein's discussion *ibid.*, 133–36 and accompanying notes should be consulted: *manāra* (recto, line 29, margin, lines 2 [x 2], verso, line 2), translated 'lamp,' which is the entire light fixture or candelabrum; *amūd* (margin, lines 2–4), 'column'; *qā'* (margin, line 2), 'base,' to be fashioned like a *ḥasakat al-sham'a* (margin, line 2), 'lampstand' (Goitein, *ibid.*, 133, 'candlestick'), and in the continuation (margin, line 4) simply called *ḥasaka*; on the head, the *sināj* (margin, lines 3–4), also translated here 'lamp,' which held the wicks and oil. For the *'sināj* with two ends for two wicks' (margin, line 3), cf. the fragmentary illustration of a candelabrum on TS 12.659v, a facsimile of which appears at the end of Friedman, *JMP*, 2, no. 6; also see references to an illustration in cf. Sadan, "*Manāra*."

³⁷ Meaning Egyptian dinars.

³⁸ {See recto, line 7.}

³⁹ Arabic *sabīb*; the same word appear in the writer's letters III, 4v, line 17 and VI, 36, line 16. I take it as a derivative of *tasabbaba*, 'to do business.'

⁴⁰ The Maliki dinar was introduced in 479/1086, about 60 {50} years before this letter was written.

⁴¹ Arabic *nahhās*; see III, 19.

⁴² A kind of cardamom; see II, 16v, line 20. {See pages 369–70, where it is explained that it designates a form of iron.}

⁴³ Arabic *in lam yattafiq*. The same phrase is in III, 3, line 13, where cardamom was ordered. {The phrase is also used in III, 2, line 15; III, 11, line 33.}

⁴⁴ Arabic *jahlā*, a big bag made of a skin and used for keeping water, as here and in III, 2, line 9; III, 15, line 35; or melted butter, III, 21b, lines 3–4, 12; or fruits, III, 3, line 4. {It is also used for various pickled foods and oil, e.g., III, 8, lines 4 ff. According to Piamenta, *Dictionary*, 61, *jahlā* is also a glass bowl of a hookah, a large water vessel or a terra cotta jug or jar in the shape of a bottle with a narrow neck.}

⁴⁵ 'A measure, particularly for water or wine': Steingass-Johnson, *Dictionary*, 705a, *Wahrmund*, *Wörterbuch*, 908b; but I was unable to find an exact definition.

[F. Presents sent]

I am sending you what has no importance or value, (10) namely two *rubā'iyas*⁴⁶ of white sugar; a bottle, in a tight basket {alt. tr.: firmly set in a basket/in a basket—of *muhkam* glass},⁴⁷ filled with raisins;⁴⁸ and in (11) a *mazza*⁴⁹ a pound of Maghrebi kohl,⁵⁰ a pound of costus,⁵¹ a pound of vitriol,⁵² half a pound of litharge,⁵³ (12) three ounces of 'ilk gum,⁵⁴ and

⁴⁶ For this measure, see the note to II, 14, line 21. {For the sake of consistency I transcribe *rubā'iyas*, but Joseph b. Abraham always writes *rubā'iyas*, with a short *a*.}

⁴⁷ See 345, n. 52.

⁴⁸ Sometimes raisins were mixed with sugar (see II, 14, line 21; II, 20v, line 9; II, 24, line 9; II, 26, line 11). Raisins were not always available in Aden (see III, 4, line 17). These were presents for the children.

⁴⁹ Cf. III, 3, line 18, where five similar presents are forwarded in such a receptacle and III, 4, lines 2 and 12, where copper is sent in it. This is obviously a Yemenite word, probably an earthen vessel. In contemporary southern Yemen *mazzah*, pl. *mazā'iz*, denotes the clay receptacle for the water of the water-pipe used by the poor. {Cf. Piamenta, *Dictionary*, 464.}

⁵⁰ Khalaf b. Isaac sent the same quantity of this eye powder to Ben Yijū (see III, 11, line 24). In III, 4, line 10, Joseph b. Abraham dispatched half a pound of 'Isfahan antimony' and in III, 3, line 18 the same quantity, not defined by place of origin.

⁵¹ In III, 15, line 49, Khalaf b. Isaac presents Ben Yijū with the same quantity. In III, 4, line 17, Joseph b. Abraham sends 5 pounds of costus. This Indian plant was shipped to Egypt in large quantities via Aden. See 256, n. 10; V, 1, lines 21–22; VI, 37, line 15 (a small quantity, but destined to be sold, not as a present); VII, 36, line 20. It was shipped to Egypt through such ports as Nahrwāra in the Gujarat. When we find costus sent as a present from Aden to the Malabar Coast, we conclude that the traffic between these two regions, separated by an ocean, was at least as lively as between northern and southern India.

⁵² Arabic *zāj*. Half pounds of vitriol were sent by Joseph b. Abraham (III, 3, line 18) and by Khalaf b. Isaac (III, 12, line 43, and III, 15, line 48). It served as an eye-salve (see Maimonides-Meyerhof, 68–69, no. 140). {For other medicinal uses, see Lev, *Medicinal Substances*, 55–56.}

⁵³ Arabic *marīak*, which via Syriac, comes from the Persian *mudra(r)-sang* 'the impure stone.' It denotes the litharge (Greek 'the stone of the silver') and is a by-product of the extraction of silver from native sulfide of lead (galena). It too served as an eye powder (see Maimonides-Meyerhof, 119, no. 239).

⁵⁴ In III, 4, line 10, Joseph b. Abraham sends Ben Yijū half a pound of 'ilk gum, twice as much as here (1 *ratl* = 12 *ūqia*). In III, 3, line 19, he sends half a pound of *samgh* (spelled thus) gum; the same quantity is sent by Khalaf b. Isaac both in III, 12, line 43 and III, 15, line 48 (spelled by him, as usual, *ṣamgh*). The 'ilk is most probably identical with 'ilk al-anbāt 'the gum of the Nabateans,' which is extracted from the pistachio tree (*Pistachio vera* L.), while the *ṣamgh* is the gum of the lentisk, the mastic tree (*Pistachio Lentiscus* L.). Both trees are indigenous to the Mediterranean area. Chewing gum made the breath fresh and fragrant (Maimonides-Meyerhof, 148, no. 301 and 115, no. 232; Loew, *Flora*, 1:195–200). {Cf. Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 4:248, 442, n. 164; Dietrich, "Samgh"; Lev & Amar, *Medicinal Substances*, 78. In III, 2v, line 2, Joseph b. Abraham sends Ben Yijū a half a pound of *maṣṭakā* gum. In his commentary to M. Shabbat 8:4 (Shailat, *Shabbat*, 99), Maimonides defines *deveq* ('glue'): 'ilk.}

five *dasts*⁵⁵ of Egyptian paper;⁵⁶ furthermore, in a little basket⁵⁷ seven (13) molds of 'kosher'⁵⁸ cheese; five packages⁵⁹ altogether. Furthermore, all the copper (*nahās*) sent by me is (14) in a canvas. This makes six packages. I wrote on each: 'Abraham Yijū, (15) shipment of Joseph,' and sent the whole together with the 20 dinars with Sheikh (16) Aḥmad, the captain, b. Abu 'l-Faraj.

Furthermore, in a satchel there are two linen *fūṭas*⁶⁰ (17) for the children and two network veils⁶¹ dyed with carthamus.⁶² Please {add: [[forward them]]} accept delivery and forward them (18) to Sheikh Abu 'l-Surūr b. Khallūf al-Ṭalḥī,⁶³ as well as the letter destined for him. His name is (19) on the satchel.

⁵⁵ A *dast* was a certain quantity that made up a set of a particular item; cf. 304, n. 9.

⁵⁶ A commodity often sent to traders in India; see page 61. Joseph b. Abraham sent paper to Ben Yijū also in III, 3, line 15; III, 4, line 10; III, 9, line 24.

⁵⁷ Arabic *zunaybīl*, diminutive of *zanbīl*. This Persian word, although not noted by the dictionaries of Hava and Dozy, is commonplace in Yemen (cf. Stace, *Vocabulary*, 17 'round and open basket') and Egypt (cf. Spiro, *Dictionary*, 208: 'large native basket'). Cf. III, 2, line 16: 'Indian basket' for carrying copper; III, 3, line 3 (for carrying pepper); III, 24, lines 1 ff.; VII, 55, line 1 for pepper. {Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 1:486, n. 9 (who spells *zinbīl*): "containing 300–400 pounds"; Pimenta, *Dictionary*, 205: "small filigree basket-like ornaments suspended from the chains of woman's *qarqūsh*"; "bundle including aromatic herbs, perfumes and decorations for the bride"; Hinds & Badawi, *Egyptian Arabic*, 381: 'large basket made of green palm leaves'; Wehr, *Dictionary*, 382: 'basket made of palm leaves.'}

⁵⁸ Arabic *halāl*, 'religiously permitted.' In VII, 41, line 24, where the same commodity is sent from Alexandria to Aden, the Hebrew Equivalent *tāhōr*, 'pure' appears. The term 'kosher' was used in Europe, not in the East. Cheese was one of the main food items of the India traders. Then, as today, it was traded in molds and came in this form from Sicily and other places to Alexandria, from where it was exported to Aden, and from there to India. {Goitein later identified TS AS 147 f. 24, which attests the sale of Sycilian 'kosher' cheese in Alexandria in 1214. The document is translated in Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 4:251, where the year 4975 A.M. is misprinted 4971. 'Molds' translates Arabic *qawālīb*, sing. *qālab*; see recto, line 26. Wehr, *Dictionary*, 785, translates *qālab jubn*: 'a chunk or loaf of cheese.' Gil & Fleischer, *Yehuda ha-Levi*, 392, n. 5, according to which this is not found in dictionaries is to be corrected.) See also Zeldes and Frenkel, "The Sicilian Trade," 132, n. 4. For the supervision of kosher imported cheese, also see the note to III, 52, margin.

⁵⁹ Arabic, *shakhṣ*, pl. *shukhṣ*, denotes one piece of a consignment. This is a common usage in the documents dealing with the India trade; see Goitein, *Med. Soc.* 1:487, n. 8. Additional examples in lines 14, 20, III, 2, line 5, III, 3, lines 8, 10.

⁶⁰ On the *fūṭa*, see 175–80.} *Fūṭas* for children: II, 44, lines 23 and 25; III, 49v margin, line 58.

⁶¹ Arabic *shabka*. Cf. Dozy, *Supplément*, 1:723a; Steingass-Johnson, *Dictionary*, 738b, s.v. *shabaka*. {Pimenta, *Dictionary*, 245, *shabka*: net-like red cover for bride.}

⁶² Arabic *ʿuṣfur*. (carthamus tinctorius L.), a yellow dye. {Cf. Pimenta, *Dictionary*, 330.}

⁶³ Most probably called thus, because he traded in a type of paper known by that name. See II, 16v, line 31; III, 6v, line 5; III, 9, line 24.

My lord mentioned that there remained {add: in my credit}, from last year, copper (*nahās*) to manufacture two bowls for drinking (20) water. Kindly send them with the other copper.

Altogether there are seven packages with the satchel of (21) Abu 'l-Surūr al-Ṭalḥī.

May my master receive for his esteemed self the best greetings! *And upon you be peace!*⁶⁴

[G. Address]

(1) *To his honor my lord, the light of my eyes, and the ornament of my neck,*⁶⁵ *my master and lord* (2) *Abraham, the wise and discerning, son of his honor, great and holy master* {add: *our Rabbi*}⁶⁶ *Perahyā—may he rest in Eden!—Yijū.*

(1) (From) *He that loves you and is proud of your good* (2) *name,*⁶⁷ *Joseph b. Abraham.*

⁶⁴ Because of lack of space the greetings are unusually short. *We-shālōm* is common at the end of letters; *we-shālōm lākh*, found here, is extremely rare. {It is also found in the following letters, all from Yemen: III, 6v, line 1; III, 31, line 27; III, 32, margin, line 4; III, 38, margin, line 9; III, 41v, line 11; IV, 10v, line 33; VI, 3v, line 6.}

⁶⁵ The same elaborate Hebrew phrases appear in III, 7, lines 7–8.

⁶⁶ {See page 54, n. 14.}

⁶⁷ An unusual expression meaning that the writer felt honored to be the addressee's friend. {The same expression, *mitpā'ēr be-zikhrākh ha-tōv*, occurs—with slight variations—in other letters: III, 33, line 10, III, 38, line 9, IV, 10, line 8, verso, address, IV, 11, line 12, VII, 64, line 6; cf. II, 35, line 6.}