

About the Estate of a Drowned Silkmerchant, Handed Over by the
Government to the Jewish Court
(Alexandria, January 1143)

T.-S. 13 J 3, f. 4

(The fate of the property of merchants who died in a foreign country was one of the main problems of international trade in the Middle Ages (cf.). In our document we find quite an orderly procedure: The Fatimid Government in Cairo instructs its "Officer of Inheritances" in Alexandria, who had first taken charge of the belongings of the drowned merchant, to hand it over to the Jewish court in that town. The court settles the liabilities of the deceased foreigner and draws up an estimate of his remaining assets in cash and kind. This document - as we know from many other similar instances - was then forwarded to the Jewish court in the hometown of the deceased for further action.

To be sure, the Government did not act automatically. Someone had to take the matter into his hands, and securing the rescript ordering the release of the foreign merchant's estate involved expenditure. However, the sum required was comparatively moderate and stood in favorable contrast to what was usual in more rapacious periods and states. Our document is valuable also for its details about the silk trade.)

A. ...A rescript was received from the sovereign - may God enhance his glory and exaltedness - with regard to the estate of Joseph b. Samuel Ben Sabāh, who was drowned in the sea near Alexandria. The estate was to be handed over by the Muslim officer of inheritances to the (Jewish) court of justice in Alexandria, which derives its authority from our lord and Nagid Samuel... (titles and epithets)... The rescript was brought by M. and R. Solomon ha-Levi, son of the

late R. Samuel.^{a)}

B. Following this, we assembled in the new (government) house, in the presence of the Kadi al-Makin,^{b)} two trustworthy Muslim witnesses^{c)} and government scribes. A bundled up cover^l of silk was produced, bearing a plate on which there was engraved in Arabic and Hebrew letters: Joseph b. Samuel Ben Sabāh, and this sign² was on the outside of the cover. Then its contents were weighed and found to be as follows:^{d)}

Khazz-silk of medium quality, 84 packages,³ weighing 41 3/4 pounds.

Khazzāsh-silk, "peeled" and "unpeeled," 198 packages, weighing 102½ pounds.

C. Of the Khazzāsh, we sold 12½ pounds for 14 1/4 dinars, while the rest was deposited with the court of justice. These fourteen dinars^{e)} were put together with the proceeds from the sale of the deceased's belongings, which were 236 dirhams, converted into 6 dinars and 15 qīrāts.^{f)} These two sums together make 21 dinars less 1/8.^{g)}

D. From this, the following expenditure was made:

Customs	7 dinars	1½ qīrāts
Freight for the ship ^{h)}	3½ d.	

Payment for the man who brought the rescript, his expenses and what had to be paid in this matterⁱ⁾ 6½ d.

Fees, ⁴ storage, cords, sundry expenditure ⁵	1 d.	1 q.
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Total Expenditure	18 d. less	1½ q.
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Balance in cash ^{k)}	2½ and 1/4 d. and	½ q.
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E. We then estimated the value of the silk:

Khazz, after deduction of 1 1/4 d. for threads 78 d.

Khazzāsh, "peeled"	112 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.
<u>Total value of the silk</u>	190 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.
Balance in cash from the other <u>belongings</u>	2 $\frac{2}{3}$ and 1/4 d. and $\frac{1}{2}$ q.

F. We completed⁶ this and set it down in a document, in two copies, in the last decade of Teveth, in the year 490/3 of the creation in No
Anōn, which is situated on the coast of the great sea, under the jurisdiction of our lord Samuel, the great Nagid...(titles, etc.)
(Three signatures, the first being that of Aaron b. Yeshū'a, the physician, who is none else than the famous Ibn al-^cAmmāni, who was for many chief justice of the Jewish community of Alexandria, and at the same time a poet and a public figure (cf. p.).)

Notes

- a) The signature of this man appears in three documents, dated Fustat 1156 and 1158, and Cairo 1170. Therefore, he must have been a person of some public standing. In addition, his hand is that of a trained scribe.
- b) About this famous Muslim judge of Alexandria, see p. .
- c) These witnesses - cadl in Arabic - were permanent adjuncts of the Muslim courts, and are almost comparable to modern notaries (see p.).
- d) In the original, all the numbers are given in words, and there is no tabulation as made here. For the various types of silk mentioned and the prices usually obtained for them in that period, see p. . The estimates made here are fair and in accordance with the prices normally attested.
- e) The quarter listed before is not mentioned again, but is, of course, included in the following account (see Note g).
- f) The dirhams referred to here are the so-called black dirhams, which had the value of only one-third of the full silver coin. For these dirhams, the ratio dinar:dirham = 1:36 approximately, as here, was normal (see p.).
- g) A dinar has 24 qirāts. Thus, the two sums add up to 20 din. and 21 q., which is indeed 21 din. less 3 q. or 1/8 din.
- h) For freight and passage, a small sum was paid in advance, but the main payment was made after safe arrival (^{cf.} see p.).
- i) It is easy to understand why even a court could not be too specific concerning this item.
- k) 17 d. and $22\frac{1}{2}$ q. plus 2 d. and $22\frac{1}{2}$ q. make 20 d. and 21 q., which is indeed 21 d. less 1/8 d.

Comments

1. Literally: pillow, makhadda; used in the same sense in T.-S. 13 J 27, f. 22.
2. Ar. rasm. The usual word for the merchants' plates bearing their names was calāma.
3. Ar. luhma, an expression reserved for the silktrade. Such a luhma, as we see here, weighed about one half pound.
4. Small fees to customs officers, scribes, etc., Ar. rusūm.
5. Ar. nawā'ib.
6. Text: anhaing, which word is normally used in the Geniza papers in the meaning "to inform." Something seems to be written here above the line, but it is not clear whether it belongs to the original text.

• 0.67 7.86 0.06
• 0.67 8.28 0.06
• 0.67 8.61 0.06
• 0.67 8.94 0.06

• 0.67 9.27 0.06

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Economic Life

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Khass-silk of medium quality, 84 packages,^{g)} weighing 41 3/4 pounds.

Khassāsh-silk, "peeled" and "unpeeled," 196 packages, weighing 102 $\frac{1}{2}$ pounds.

C. Of the Khassāsh, we sold 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ pounds for 14 1/4 dinars, while the rest was deposited with the court of justice. These fourteen dinars^{h)} were put together with the proceeds from the sale of the deceased's belongings, which were 236 dirhams, converted into 6 dinars and 15 qirāṭas.ⁱ⁾ These two sums together make 21 dinars less 1/8.^{j)}

D. From this, the following expenditure was made:

Customs	7 dinars	$1\frac{1}{2}$ qirāṭas
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Freight for the ship ^{k)}	3 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.
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Payment for the man who brought the rescript, his expenses and what had to be paid in this matter^{l)} 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.

Fees, ^{m)} storage, cords, sundry expenditure ⁿ⁾	1 d.	1 q.
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<u>Total Expenditure</u>	18 d. less	$1\frac{1}{2}$ q.
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Balance in cash ^{o)}	2 $\frac{1}{2}$ and 1/4 d. and	$\frac{1}{2}$ q.
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<u>Total value of the silk</u>	190 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.
Balance in cash from the other <u>belongings</u>	2 $\frac{3}{4}$ and 1/4 d. and $\frac{1}{2}$ q.

F. We completed⁶ this and set it down in a document, in two copies, in the last decade of Teveth, in the year 490/3 of the creation in Nō Anōn, which is situated on the coast of the great sea, under the jurisdiction of our lord Samuel, the great Nasid...(titles, etc.)
(Three signatures, the first being that of Aaron b. Yeschil⁶a, the physician, who is none else than the famous Ibn al-⁶Ammānī, who was for many years chief justice of the Jewish community of Alexandria, and at the same time a poet and a public figure (cf. p. 1.).)

Notes

- a) The signature of this man appears in three documents, dated Fustat 1156 and 1158, and Cairo 1170. Therefore, he must have been a person of some public standing. In addition, his hand is that of a trained scribe.
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- g) A qinar has 24 qirāṭs. Thus, the two sums add up to 20 din. and 21 q., which is indeed 21 din. less 3 q. or 1/8 din.
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Comments

1. Literally: pillow, pakhadde; used in the same sense in T.-S. 13 J 27, f. 22.
2. Ar. gazz. The usual word for the merchant's plates bearing their names was qallima.
3. Ar. lubna, an expression reserved for the silktrade. Such a lubna, as we see here, weighed about one half pound.
4. Small fees to customs officers, scribes, etc., Ar. khafila.
5. Ar. daw'iib.
6. Text: gabaini, which word is normally used in the Geniza papers in the meaning "to inform." Something seems to be written here above the line, but it is not clear whether it belongs to the original text.

6.8.1958

The Register is now in the possession of the
British Museum (List and value of goods carried by
a merchant known as Alessandria from the
Red Sea to the Levant Coast
and delivered by the master refer to the
Jahay 1143 (March 1325)

Item	Description	Value
1	13 J 3 f 4	17,5 x 24,3
2	13 J 3 f 4	17,5 x 24,3
3	13 J 3 f 4	17,5 x 24,3
4	13 J 3 f 4	17,5 x 24,3
5	13 J 3 f 4	17,5 x 24,3
6	13 J 3 f 4	17,5 x 24,3
7	13 J 3 f 4	17,5 x 24,3
8	13 J 3 f 4	17,5 x 24,3
9	13 J 3 f 4	17,5 x 24,3
10	13 J 3 f 4	17,5 x 24,3
11	13 J 3 f 4	17,5 x 24,3
12	13 J 3 f 4	17,5 x 24,3
13	13 J 3 f 4	17,5 x 24,3
14	13 J 3 f 4	17,5 x 24,3
15	13 J 3 f 4	17,5 x 24,3
16	13 J 3 f 4	17,5 x 24,3
17	13 J 3 f 4	17,5 x 24,3
18	13 J 3 f 4	17,5 x 24,3
19	13 J 3 f 4	17,5 x 24,3
20	13 J 3 f 4	17,5 x 24,3
21	13 J 3 f 4	17,5 x 24,3
22	13 J 3 f 4	17,5 x 24,3
23	13 J 3 f 4	17,5 x 24,3
24	13 J 3 f 4	17,5 x 24,3

13 } 3, f. 4

Alex.

בז' אַלְפִּין לְיָמֵן וְנֶהֱרָה וְקָרְבָּן גְּדוֹלָה לְמִזְרָחָה 23.5

אַלְפִּין כְּסֵף וְכְלֵדָה וְכְלֵדָה וְכְלֵדָה וְכְלֵדָה 26

אַלְפִּין כְּסֵף וְכְלֵדָה וְכְלֵדָה וְכְלֵדָה וְכְלֵדָה 27

אַלְפִּין כְּסֵף וְכְלֵדָה

28

אַלְפִּין כְּסֵף וְכְלֵדָה

אַלְפִּין כְּסֵף וְכְלֵדָה

אַלְפִּין כְּסֵף וְכְלֵדָה

(אַלְפִּין כְּסֵף וְכְלֵדָה)

12

כהורות וחפצים של סוחר יהודי שבע בימה של אלכסנדריה נמסרים

לביה דין ע' הказץ המוסלמי (ינואר 1143)

כ"ש 4. 3, { 13 }

1 [פָּנְזַׁוְתְּבָא דְּחַחִימִין] . [קְבָּא לְמַחְתָּא בְּכַחְבָּא דְּגַן כֵּן הַזָּהָב]

2 למך וצל אלתוקייע אלעאל זאה אללה שרפה וועלוא פי מא יכחץ בהרכה יוסף בר שמואל דיד[יע]

3 בן צבא אלדי גרא פי אלבחר קרייב מן סכנדרייה (!) קמאה אללה תעהלי ונקלה אלהרכה [מן]

4 תחת יד צאחב מואריך אלגוים אלי תחת יד בית דין דבאקסנדريا (!) דמננא מפי

5 אדונינו נגידינו שמואל הנגיד הגדל נגיד עם י' צבאות שר השרים ונגיד הנגידים

6 קוֹז כָּל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל גָּבֵיר הַגְּבִירִים יְמִין הַמְלוֹכָה גָּזֶר הנשיאות ירומ הַדוֹן וַיַּבְדֵּל כְּבוֹתָן

7 וכאן אלואzel בהדא אלתוקייע מ"ר ור' שלמה הלווי ביר' שמואל נ"ע חזרנה פי אלדראר

8 אלגדייה בחזרה אלקazzi אלמכין וחזרה שאחדין עדליין ובמחרן מן כתאב אלדייאן

9 אלמעמור וachinery מבדה חריר מחזומה ופיהא לות מנוקש עליה ערבי ועראנאי

10 יוסף בר שמואל בן צבא ודלך אלרסס עלי טאהרא פוזן מא פיהא מן אלחריר אלכץ

11 אלוסט פכאן וזגה חד וארבעין רטלא וגצף ורבע רטל عدد אליהם ארבעה וثمانין

12 לחמה ואלבזש אלמקשור וביר אנטקשור מאיה רטלא ורטליין וגצף عدد אליהם

13 מאיה וואהדה ותמניה וחספין לחמה פבענה מן אלבזש באביבה עשר דינארא

14 ורבע אהני עשר רטל ונצף בזאש ואלבאקי מודע פי פודע בית דין ואנטקסט

15 הדה אלארבעה עשר דינארא ורבע אליו מהן חזאיו מטלטליין נא מבלו חטנה נאה יפה

16 דרham וסתה ותלאתין ~~טְהִמָּה~~ צרפה סתה דנאנייר וכמזה עשר קיראט צארה אלגמלחין

17 ואחד ועשרין דינאר אלא חתן כרכז מן דלן מכם שבעה דנאנייר וקירות ונצף כרי מרכיב

ט"ש 4. ⌂ 3, ⌂ 13

- 2 -

18. חלאחה דנאנייה ותלה אלדי אחזר אלתוקייע ומונתה ומما ילייהם סחה דנאניר
ונצף رسום
19. וברי מצען ו诙זם ונואיב דינאר ואחד וקיראט אלגמלה חמניה עשר דינארה
אלא
20. קיראט ונצף אלבאקי דינארין וחלתי ורבע ונצף קיראט וקומנה אלבז
פכאנ קימתה
21. חמניה וסבעון דינארה بعد שרת דינאר ורבע עז בית וקימה אלבזאש אלקשרור
22. מאיה דינאר ואחדה ואחתני עשר דינאר //ונצף// יכון קימה גמייע אלהיר
מאיה דינארה
23. ואחדה וחסעון דינארה ונצף וען באקי אלמטלטליין עינא דינארין וחלתי
ורבע ונצף קימא
24. [אנחינה] // ^ // דלו ואותבנתה נסתהין פי אלעשרה לאכיר מן שהר טבת
דשנת להתקבג
25. ליצירה בנו אמון דעל כי' ימָא רְבָא מותבה רשותה דאדונינו שמואל הגדיד
הגדל
26. נגיד עם יי' צבאות ירושה הוודו ויגדל כבודו נצח לנצח ולראיה שריר וקיים
27. אהרון ביר ישועה הרופא זצ"ל
ישחק ביר יוסף נבנֶה
למה ח
יפח הלוי ביר עולה נז