

Part 2

A letter from India to Madmun, the Trustee of the Merchants

The sheet is 28.5 cm. long and 21 cm. wide - ^{dimensions} features more fitting for a book or court use rather than a letter. The script is (also) that of a cultured person, and resembles that of a Scribe of the Court. After the writer ~~completed~~ filled the page, he continued on the margin on the right hand side (about 3 cm. wide), and then on the margin at the top of the page (a little wider). On the reverse of the sheet we ~~can~~ find only one line, written in orderly fashion. At the end of this line the writer stopped, probably because of the many erasures, cf. ll. 17-18.

Another line was added, not as a continuation, but rather to elucidate the correct form of something written in the body of the letter, no doubt to guide the copyist.

This letter was never sent - and for this reason it has been preserved and has come down to us. The writer kept it and took it with him homeward, from India to Egypt. Later on, it was deposited in the Geniza. In the meantime, someone - it is impossible to know who - had added calculations in Arabic-Coptic numerals and a note on the price of medicinal herbs and *dye producing plants*, which is also in Arabic.

The following ~~excerpt~~ is the evidence which demonstrates that the letter at hand was sent to Madmun, the Trustee of the Merchants and the Nagid of Yemen, in Aden, from India, or, more exactly, from a *port* on its northwestern coast:

- 1) The letter addresses a Nagid - (l. 1, cf. notes).
- 2) This Nagid is involved in the division of merchandise among ~~partners~~ partners (ll. 20-25), supervises the receipt of shipments of ~~its~~ pepper and ~~their~~ sale or trans-shipment (l. 28 - end), business ~~transactions~~ dealings were carried on in his house (margin 10), merchandise is brought to his warehouse (l. 27), ~~and~~ consequently, he must have been the ^{Representative} ~~Trustee~~ of the Merchants.
- 3) The writer ~~asks~~ asks the receiver of the letter to help Sheikh Khalaf b. Ishaq, the splendor of the pupils (l. 30, margin l. 30). This man was a well-known businessman in Aden in Madmun's time, cf. below, Chapter 5, Part 3.
- 4) The writer has business connections with Halfon Halevi b. Shemaryah (l. 14). This India merchant drowned in the sea off Aden and Madmun handled his estate, cf. below no. 35, ll. 2, 5. is involved in joint enterprises with a
- 5) The writer ~~is in partnership with~~ ~~with~~ merchant by the name of Barakat b. Musa (l. 13). A legal document covering the conclusion of ^{another} the partnership between this ~~man~~ man and ~~a~~/merchant by the name of Ishaq b. Makhluf al-Nufusi was written in Aden, based on the ledgers of Madmun, in the year 1133, cf. below, no. 82.
- 6) The writer requests that his goods be sold in "the prosperous house" (ll. 20-21), i.e. "the house of prosperity", the exchange which stood opposite the customs house of Aden, cf. above, no. 29, l. 31.
- 7) The writer lives in India, because he announces that he must stay where he is and is unable to "go out" that year (l. 7), an expression usually used to indicate inability to travel ^{westward} /from India to Aden, cf. notes.

8) The writer send mahabis, ^{coverlets} "~~pillow slips~~", which we have already met above in no. 14, l. 14, 20, when they were sent from in western India, to Aden. All the goods mentioned here: "the unbleached" "the bleached," the ^{coverlets} "pillow slips" and the pepper appear together in a statement of merchandise assets from Aden, below, no. 81, ll. 2 ff.

9) We must surmise that the writer did not live in the central or southern parts of India which are the pepper regions, but rather on the northern coast, and perhaps in itself, since he does not arrange for the shipments of pepper himself, but ~~refers~~ the first is organized by Madmun (l. 29) and the second by Halfon HaLevi b. Shemaryah (margin, ll. ~~22~~ 5-22)

The document is the only letter to Madmun ~~which~~ which has come down to us, and this is natural since the moist climate of Aden ~~was~~ is not conducive to the preservation of letters for hundreds of years as ~~was~~ is the dry earth of Egypt. As noted above, the letter was preserved only because it was never sent, finally finding its resting place in the Cairo Geniza.

The letter is noteworthy for it shows us with what respect ^{Representative} the ~~Trustee~~ of the Merchants, and honor the Nagid/was approached, and we also learn several characteristic points about the India trade from it, especially the trade in linens, cf. notes.

It is very probable, although by no means definite, that the writer of this letter is Ishaq b. Mahluf Nafusi - i.e., from Tunisia —

Tripoli, whom we find in partnership with the merchant Barakat b. Musa 'l-Halabi both here and in no. 82, cf. below. The handwriting greatly resembles that of b. Yiju, a Tunisian merchant who was both educated and a scribe, cf. no. 82, l. 18, note. This is ^{supported} strengthened by that fact that Barakat b. Labdi, whom we also suppose to have traded in ^{this}, brought goods from there for/Ishaq Nafusi, cf. above, no. 20, verso, 5, and in the introduction ~~in~~ ^{at} ad loc.

The followiⁿg is the content of the letter:

- A Expression of adulation for the illustrious addressee (ll. 1-6).
- B Detailed ~~description~~ description of a large shipment of linen goods from India to Aden (ll. 6-19).
- C Request to divide the shipment between him and his partner, ~~M~~ Barakat b. Musa, to sell the lot, or only his share, as his partner directed.
- D A note regarding a shipment of pepper which Sheikh Khalaf b. Ishaq, the splendor of the pupils, had ~~requested~~ asked to be sold on the spot or sent on to the west. (ll. 28 - margin, l. 4).
- E A request to help the aforementioned Sheikh ~~M~~ Halaf in the arrangements for a shipment of pepper, for which the writer of the letter, when he had been in Aden, had paid Halfon HaLevi b. Shemaryah 200 dinars ~~requested~~ at the "residence" of the addressee.

TRANSLATION

In T(hy name, O) M(erciful one) !

A (1) ^{of the} ~~the~~ Holy One - may praise of ^{him} ~~him~~ be great - /^{you} ~~know~~^s how the
 your O, , ~~exalted~~ lofty
 slave of ~~his~~ sublime self, ~~his~~ illustrious/"Rayyisiya" (2) - may God
 lengthen your days and make permanent your exaltedness, and your honor,
 and your high station, and your eminence, and your grandeur, and your
 strength, and may He (3) humble those who envy you and your enemies in
 shameful degradation - from yearning and ~~loneliness~~ loneliness and longing
 and sorrow at my separation (4) from your noble excellency, and from
 the glance of your fortunate countenance - may God add to your great-
 ness and glory - and how I ask the Creator, (5) may remembrance of
 Him be exalted , that he pave the way and grant a reunion under the
 most joyful circumstances and the most pleasant well-being, for He
 is the All-Hearing and the Answerer of Prayer, (6) who ^{can} ~~is~~ be
 relied upon for this, and who has power to effect it, if God will.

E Your slave kisses your noble hands, and brings to the atten-
 tion of your exalted (7) excellency, that since it happens that ~~me~~ I
 have been delayed (in India) this year, I am not able to leave (for
 Aden) for a number of reasons, (8) which to explain would take (too)
 long, and your slave has resolved not to weary your eminence ~~in~~ with
 my letter, in which I attend upon (9) your excellency. Up to the time
 when the decree in this matter ~~was~~ emanated from the Creator - and
may this also be to the good - your slave (10) had bought

six loads of linen goods,

comprising:

one load of raw material, containing eight scores and eight

"tawb"

comprising :

bleached ~~material~~, mater [ial six] - (11) ^eten/scores and sixteen "tawb"

There is also a pair of "Burdah" garments in these two loads.

The total of the two loads: sixteen [scores] (12) and eighteen "tawb",
comprising:

one load of coverlets, eight scores,
and two other loads (of coverlets), encompassing sixteen
scores. (13) Of these, two scores ~~material~~ are for Sheikh Barakat
b. Musa, and are (so) marked,
also
and two scores/are for Sheikh Abu Sa'id (14) Halfon HaLevi
b. Shemaryah.

And your slave's rubric, entirely in Hebrew, is on the
coverlets (15) except for the four ~~material~~ aforementioned
scores.

This is the sum total of the raw and bleached material,
(namely) twenty-four scores, (16) and twenty-six "tawb", together
with the pair of "Burdah" garments.

The sum total of the three loads of coverlets, less the four
(17) scores ^{allocated} spoken for above, is twenty scores.

The sum total of what belongs to your servant from the
six (18) loads, [thirty-six]//forty-four//scores [...] // and twenty //
and six "tawb", less [...] the four aforementioned scores.

(19) The sum total of the six loads, forty-eight scores.

C Will your exalted eminence be kind enough - if (20) God ordains their safe arrival - to ~~take~~ instruct one of his ~~servants~~ slaves to take it (i.e. the merchandise) to be sold in the "~~the~~ prosperous (21) house", in accordance with your renowned kindness unto all your servants, and ~~the~~ ^{your} flawless ~~care~~ ^{for} solicitude ~~will~~ (22) ^{he} who is absent, more plentifulⁿ than for ~~he~~ ^{him} who is present.

When the price of everything has been set, and the exact sum has been ~~verified~~ ^{checked}, (23) after the deduction of the customs duty and expenses, then one-half of this belongs to your slave, that is, of the value of (24) the six loads. This is because Sheikh Barakat b. Musa invited me (to invest) in one-half of the purchase as a whole, not/a part (thereof), ^(for) ^{and} ~~as~~ I went along with him in this, so that these six loads are owned jointly by him and me.

Will your eminence be kind enough, if he (ie. Barakat) wishes to to sell together, to do so, or, if he wishes ~~(27)~~ to divide it (27) into two equal parts, please oblige him in this, and take half of the goods to your warehouse, for he (28) also asked this.

D Now, to other matters. Your slave has already explained to you in detail (29) about the ten bahars of pepper which you kindly ~~(thought for me)~~ (bought) for me. When the time comes for the arrival of the sh[ip]s, (30) God willing, let the illustrious Sheikh Halaf, the splendor of the pupils, may he be remebered^{re} to the good, take them, and have him pack them in six sacks. If it (i.e. the pepper) will be ~~in~~ in demand, then it will se[ll] ...

MARGIN

(2) Your slave (1) has already explained (2) to him^(i.e. to Halaf) in a letter (3) that I will not what to do with it, so ~~that I will not~~ (4) wearying your endurance by expounding on it.

(5) Now, as for other matters, concerning this (6) other shipment, the one (7) I gave to Sheikh Abu (8) Sa'id Halfon Halevi b. (9) Shemaryah in your presence (10) at your noble residence, (11) consisting of two hundred^{maliki} dinars (12) and also the customs' supervisor's money (?), and sent in the ship (14) "The Fortunate", God willing, for pepper. Now, (16) if God ordains its safe arrival - and may He do so, for His Name's sake - let (19) Sheikh Abu Sa'id (2) Halfon Halevi give [Sheikh] (21) Halaf, may he be remembered to the good, (the pepper) (22) to be sold as well, God willing, (23) and let him expend it on what (24) I have instructed him (25) in a letter I am sending off to him. (26) Your slave fervently hopes ~~that~~ (27) ^{you} that ~~you~~ will aid him with [your] auspicious (28) advice in this matter. I have already (29) written to Sheikh (30) Halaf b. Sheikh Ishaq ~~and~~ (31) a document (32) empowering

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(1) a complete power of attorney (2) to ^{receive} ~~take~~ this (pepper), to take it (3) and sell it, and witnesses (4) have attested it to this effect. (5) This (document) will, God willing, arrive. (6) Your slave's only ^{absolve} purpose (7) in this was to ~~free~~ (8) Sheikh Abu Sa'id Halfon (9) Halevi

of responsibility in this matter, (10) for I have given Sheikh (11) Halaf power to act for me, and receive (goods) (12) ~~from~~ in my name. Thus, there remains nothing (13) on Sheikh Abu Sa'id (14) by way of responsibility in this at all/when he (Barakat) gets it (the pepper), and this was (16) my purpose in ⁽¹⁵⁾ ~~this~~ power of attorney, for the man (Halaf), (18) may he be remembered to the good, would not have (19) withheld it (i.e. absolving him from responsibility) from him (i.e. from Abu Sa'id).

VERSO

(1) But, considering the repercussions, I sought to eliminate any pretext and fear for...

WRITTEN AFTER A SPACE AND NOT ORDERLY IN A STRAIGHT LINE

(2) Raw and bleached material, twenty-four scores, and twenty "tawb" and coverlets...

NOTES

1. "holy one" - Ar. "al-qadis", for 'the Holy One, Blessed be He'.

"Rayyisiya" - 'rayyis' is the Arabic equivalent of the title 'nagid', cf. below, no. 154, ll 26, no. 183, l. 5, and J. Mann, The Jews in Egypt..., II, 328 etc.

This form of polite address, whereby the writer does not call the addressee by name, nor even by his title, but calls him by an abstract concept such as "eminence" (Arabic "hadra" ^{lit.} /"presence"), or "excellency", ll. 6, 9 (Ar. "majlis", ^{lit.} "place of sitting, meeting"), followed by a series of epithets, was the accepted ~~Patimid style~~ style in the Fatimid court and regime, see below, no. 154, opening remarks. In the period we are dealing with, that is, in the third decade of the twelfth century, this phraseology was used only in connection with high-ranking personages. However, as no. 154 demonstrates, by the thirteenth century this practice was followed indiscriminately.

5-6.

For these phrases, see above, no. 24, ll. 5-6.

7.

"since it happens that I have been delayed" - the text has "when there occurred to me", and the word ~~ikann~~ 'when' recurs ~~in~~ at the beginning of l. 9, but these 'when' segments are not followed by ~~complete~~ principal clauses. This anacolouthic form is also found below, no. 23, l. 7.

"to leave" - i.e. 'to leave' the ocean and return to Aden. This manner of speaking is used in Yemen to this day. 'to enter' ^{out} is to set ~~off~~ to ~~the~~ sea and sail to the lands across the sea, while 'to leave' refers to returning to Yemen, cf. no. 32, l. 4, and in the Index to the Introduction. This usage was picked up by the India merchants and the Trustee of the Merchants, Abu Z , a seasoned India traveller, also uses it, no. 83, l. 9, and so too a Cairene family a member of which 'entered' India, no. 174, l. 5.

10. For the basic division of linen goods into "raw (un-
bleached)", Arabic-Persian "^{ham}~~ham~~", and "bleached", "maqsur", cf.
above, no. 1, ll. 10, 12, and in the Index to the Introduction.

"scores" - Ar. "kawraja" (this is the Yemenite
pronunciation, Stace, p. 149, 'kawraja'), cf. above, no. 20A, l. 4.
The word is regularly found today, and so also is the practice with
which it is connected, ~~the~~ trading linen goods ~~in~~ by the score.
This method of numbering by the score was an ancient one in India, cf.
Introduction. Dozy, ~~xx~~ II, p. 497b, does not list this meaning of the
word.

"tawb" - this word, meaning 'garment', has not been
translated since its connotation in the terminology of the India
trade is general, signifying 'one unit of textile', whether this be
a piece of linen, or a piece of wearing apparel, cf. Index to Intro-
duction.

11. There are usually 8 scores in a 'load', cf. ll. 10,

12. The text has been restored in accord with this.

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13. "marked" - Ar. "mu&lama" or "mu&allama". Each bundle
had its '&alama', the rubric of that particular merchant., cf. below,
l. 14, and in the Index to the Introduction.

We must not assume that the reference here is to a
type of linen with an embellished hem, as above, no. 1, ll. 11, ~~size~~
since the writer does not describe the linen goods, but simply lists
their quantity and general type.

** 12. "coverlets" - Ar. "mahabis", cf. above, no. 14, ll.
14, 20, and in the Index to the Introduction.

16. The "tawb", that is, the single ~~pieces~~ pieces, which ~~were not combined into scores, were bundled~~ separately, cf. below, l. 18.

19. Strictly speaking, the 26 single pieces should also have been recapitulated here. However, since they had just been ~~mentioned~~ mentioned in the previous line the writer may have felt that ~~there~~ ~~this was not necessary, cf. above no. 61, verso,~~
 case
l. 1, for a similar ~~reference~~.

20. "one" - Ar. "'ihda", an error, no doubt thought to be 'literary'.

20-21. "the 'prosperous house'" - Ar. "ad-daru 'l-sa'ida", which is the "daru 'l-sa'ada", the "house of prosperity", the exchange of Aden, cf. above, no. 29, l. 31.

21-22. "the ^xact sum has been verified" - Ar. "yatahaqqqa dirham wahid", literally, "when one dirham has been verified", cf. the similar usage in no. 32, l. 41.

25. "as a whole, ~~each (for) himself (thereof)~~" - Ar. "muṣa'ah", that is, the portions belonging to each partner were not marked.

27. "to divide" - i.e., if Barakat wishes to dissolve the partnership and to sell on his ~~own~~ own. As mentioned above, no. 82 ~~contains~~ bears witness to a dissolution of partnership in which Barakat was a party.

29. "which you kindly (bought) for me" - the merchants deposited a down payment with the ^{Representative} ~~Trustee~~ of the Merchants who then ordered pepper for them from India, cf. above, no. 2, l. 10, note.

30. "the splendor of the pupils" - for this title, and for Halaf b. Ishag in general, cf. below, Chapter 5, Part 3, introduction. Naturally, the ^{Representative} ~~Trustee~~ of the Merchants was unable to deal personally with all the affairs of India travellers, and so the latter would vouchsafe the handling of their affairs to merchants in Aden. However, both here and elsewhere we find that the ^{Representative} ~~Trustee~~ of the Merchants (or another merchant) is asked to supervise the activities of a man ~~who~~ to whom the task of ^{filling} ~~completing~~ orders for goods has been given, cf. margin, ll 26-28.

31. Merchandise which arrived from India was repacked in Aden, cf. above, no. 20, A 2, notes, 12, 7.

MARGIN

10. "residence" - here the word "majlis" is not used abstractly as above, ll. 6, 9, in the body of the letter, but ~~refers~~ ^{spacious} occurs in its more literal meaning of the ~~large~~ reception hall in Kaḍmun's home, which was used for business transactions.

12. "the customs supervisor's money" - Ar. "manzar". I take it from 'nazir', the 'supervisor of customs duty'. Perhaps the India merchants so termed the tax which they paid upon leaving the pepper ports.

The matter is in need of further clarification.

13-14. "the ship 'The Fortunate'" - there is no doubt that this ship, like ~~the~~ "The Blessed", cf. above, no. 28, l. 31, verso, l. 5, belonged to Madmun, and for this reason the ship's owner is not named.

31-32. "empowering"- Ar. "mutabbat" ; this word was apparently twice written in error. The page is torn here.

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1-19. "power of attorney" - the writer explains that in point of fact there was no need ~~to~~ for Halaf b. Ishaq to have a power of attorney in order to allow Abu Sa'id Halfon to bring the pepper from India, ^{1. 2} a document which bore witness that he was free of all responsibility after he had ~~delivered it~~ handed over the pepper. However, since the writer knew that Halaf was was scrupulously punctilious, he gave him this power of attorney in order to remove any doubt from his mind.

2. This addition is only a copy from the recto, ll. 15-
was
16, and ~~it~~ probably made to indicate to the copyist to take pains to be accurate at this point, cf. above, p .