

commodities. (Other) goods -- i.e., goods ordered by Indian merchants.

The Arabic Address (the same address, with slight variations, as in 27): 2 $\bar{\text{Ishū}}$ -- The name $\bar{\text{Yijū}}$ was also pronounced and written as $\bar{\text{Yishū}}$, see number 27 in the Hebrew address, and ~~number~~ 62, 1. 1, or as $\bar{\text{Ishū}}$.

Fragments of Two Copies of a letter
from Madmūn to Ben Yijū

26 TS 24.66

27a TS NS J, fol. 5

27b 13 J 7, fol. 13

TS

27c TS Box K 25, frgt. 252

No. 26 is a copy, written by the clerk who wrote numbers 23-24, of the original, numbers 27a-c, which is written by Madmūn. The fifth line of number 27a matches the first line of number 26. Number 27b begins with the last word in line 5 of number 26. It concludes with the second word of line 35 of number 26. The address has been preserved only in number 27a, since the custom was to write the address on the reverse side of the sheet, opposite the beginning, and the beginning, usually containing only polite phrases, was often torn away as not needed, while paper always was in demand for all kinds of purposes, see above.

The clerk worked with great exactitude. There is no

deviation from the original. (However, He did use many more diacritical marks than his master, albeit without any consistency.

The original was written by Maḍmūn carefully and in a more pleasant hand than is usual for him. Deletions, involving the beginning of words, are found in two places only. The writer undoubtedly had accounts before him, from which he copied. We may assume that these accounts were entered in Maḍmūn's ledger, which is mentioned several times in these documents.

No. 26 is written on the same grayish paper as numbers 23-25, but it differs in width (11.3 cm). This would seem to imply that they cut their paper to different sizes, and that it was not bought already cut in sheets suitable for writing purposes. 52 cm. of the length of the sheet are preserved.

The paper is different in number 27 a-c. It appears more brownish, lighter, and smoother than the paper of the other fragments originating from Maḍmūn's office which have been identified up till now. Its width is 10 cm. at the top and 9.5 cm. at the bottom. Its length is 11 cm. plus 25.5 cm. plus 29.5 cm., a total of 66 cm. A space of 12 cm. was left blank on the verso of 27c. Thus, Maḍmūn was not forced to cut short, as he sometimes did for lack of space.

On the lower edge of the verso of 26 the receiver of the letter, Abraham b. Yijū, wrote, in his own hand, a

calendar for the year 1458 of the Era of the Documents, i.e., 1146/7 A.D., for the year 1459, i. e., 1147/8 A.D., and for another year which is difficult to read; most probably it is for the year 1460, i.e., 1148/9 A.D. The same man wrote a calendar for 1461, i.e., 1149/50 A.D., on the edge of number 51 and we possess others from his hand.

Contents of the letter:

- Aa Acknowledgment of a letter and a shipment of pepper from Ben Yijū, through the agency of the shipowner Rāmish, and detailed accounting of what was received for the goods sold, after the deduction of expenses (number 27a, l. 1 -- number 26, l. 15).
- Ab Acknowledgment of a shipment of iron through the agency of the shipowner Ibn Abu 'l-Katā'ib, and detailed accounting of what was received for the goods sold, after the transfer of part of the shipment to whomever designated, and after the deduction of expenses (number 26, ll, 16-39).
- Ac The balance in favor of Ben Yijū.
- Ba The purchase of copper for Ben Yijū, the price and the freight charges in three different ships (ll.40-50).
- Bb Details of various expenditures on behalf of Ben Yijū, and of purchases of copper, lead, and other commodities (ll. 50--verso 17).
- Bc The completion of Ben Yijū's account (verso, ll, 18-19).
- C Acknowledgment of various shipments, and, finally, of gifts from Ben Yijū.

D The shipment of gifts, and best wishes.

In order to lighten the readers' burden, all the accounts contained in this letter have been reduced to a table. The details will be explained in the commentary. It should be kept in mind that a bahār contains 300 roṭl, or pounds, and that the dinar, or gold piece, is divisible into 24 qīrāt⁶, which are combined to an eighth, sixth, fourth, third, or half of a dinar, as the circumstances require. The dinars are, naturally, the ones used in trade in Aden in this period, namely, Malikī dinars, which had the worth of ^{Somewhat more than one third} ~~about one-quarter~~ of the Fatimid dinar, as is evident from various references in the India papers, but had here a higher value.

A The Sale of the Goods sent by Ben Yijū and the Prices
Obtained, after the Deduction of Expenses

I. Pepper -- 12 bahār, from which 45 roṭl were removed, leaving 11 bahār, 255 roṭl. The price: per bahār -- 34 dinars, per roṭl -- 34/300 dinar.

Total: 374 dinars + $\frac{(34 \times 255)}{300} = 28\frac{9}{10}$, rounded out

to $28\frac{5}{6} = 402\frac{5}{6}$ dinars (Malik.)

The expenditures on this shipment:

"Tithes" (i.e., customs)	82 1/4 dinars
Expenses in receiving the goods	4 1/6 dinars
Baskets and porters	<u>1/6 + 1 1/4 dinars</u>
	87 5/6 dinars <u>87 5/6</u>
Balance in favor of Ben Yijū from the pepper shipment	315 dinars
II Iron -- 20 bahār, 120 roṭl	
Amount given to the merchant Joseph	3 bahār, 189 roṭl
Amount given to the merchant Khalaf	<u>2 bahār, 75 roṭl</u>
Total:	5 bahār, 255 roṭl
Amount left for sale: 14 bahār, 165 roṭl	
Price: per bahār -- 17 dinars	
per roṭl 17/300 dinars	
Total received: 238 + (165x17/300 = 9.35 rounded out to 9 1/4) =	
	247 1/4 dinars
Various expenditures on this shipment-	<u>27 1/4 dinars</u>
Balance in favor of Ben Yijū from the iron shipment	220 dinars
Total balance in favor of Ben Yijū =	
220 + 315 dinars = <u>535 dinars</u>	

B Shipments of goods and requested items to
Ben Yijū for the aforementioned sum

I	5 bahar of copper, and expenditures on them	415 dinars (Malik.)
	Hides for packaging them, and the cost of packaging	1 1/2 dinars
	Exit tolls in Aden	4 1/8 dinars
II	Other purchases and expenses:	
	Freight charges for the copper	4 1/2 dinars
	Payment to the captain for the shipments of iron and pepper	2 dinars
	Copper bars	8 dinars
	Dates	2 1/2 + 1/4 dinars
	An Abyssinian hide	2 dinars
	Mats	1 dinar
	A carpet	5 dinars
	Various items of clothing	6 dinars
	Lead	28 1/2 + 1/12 dinars
	Freight charges for the lead	1 dinar
	20 Egyptian Mithqāl, which equal	47 dinars
		<u>7 dinars</u>
	1/4 + 1/8 + 1/12 = 11/24,	535 11/24, rounded out
		to 535 1/3 dinars (Malikī)

However, the 1/3 dinar is not considered by Maḍmūn, who states that with these shipments his account with Ben Yijū for that year is settled.

Translation

Aa (27a, 1. 1) The letter of my lord, the most illustrious elder, has arrived; may God make permanent (2) your well-being, may he guard your life and humble those who envy you. It was (3) a most gladdening letter and a most delightful message. I was happy to learn of your well-being (4) and your prosperous circumstances, and I have entreated God (to grant you) more of every good thing, (5) (26, 1. 1) in his mercy. I noted from what you mentioned (26, 1. 2) in your esteemed letter (6) that you sent (26, 1. 3) some pepper in the ship of the Nākhodā (7) Rāmīsht (26, 1. 4)--twelve bahār of small measure. (8) This has arrived (26, 1. 5) and your servant went to pick it up.

From this is to be deducted (26, 6)--as you mention in your letter--forty (7)-five roṭl, leaving you eleven (8) bahār and two hundred and fifty-five roṭl, the price being (8) thirty-three dinars (per bahār). The (full) value is, (thus), four (10) hundred and three dinars, minus one-sixth.

(11) From this (sum) is to be deducted the "tithe" (i.e. the custom's duty), eighty-two (12) and one quarter dinars, the cost of obtaining the goods, four and one-sixth dinars, (13) the cost of baskets and a porter, one and one-quarter and one-sixth dinars, (14) a total of eighty-eight dinars minus one-sixth, (15) leaving three hundred and fifteen dinars (in your favor).

Ab (16) You mentioned that you sent some refurbished iron in the ship of the Nākhodā (17) Abu 'l-Ḥasan b. Abu 'l-Katā'ib (18)--twenty-one bahār--but (19) the Nākhodā Abū 'Abd Allah, his son, only gave me (20) seventeen bahār of large measure; he stated that (21) the Bānyān (the Indian merchant) whom you asked to take charge of the iron (22) delivered no more than this to him, saying that the rest of (23) the iron was in the highlands and had not yet arrived. In reply, I held him to be under obligation (24), if this were not true, (25) to pay the price (of it), according to the sale-value in Aden. (26) He is to pay my lord this in India.

(27) The iron I received from you in Aden is about twenty (28) bahār and one hundred and twenty roṭl of small measure. (29) From this is to be deducted: for the elder Joseph b. (30) Abraham, three bahār and one hundred and eight (31) roṭl; for Khalaf b. Ishāq, two bahār (32) and one-quarter--a total of five bahār and two hundred (33) and fifty-five roṭl, leaving you four-(34)teen bahār and one hundred and sixty-five roṭl, (35) the price being seventeen dinars (per bahār). Total value: two hundred (36) and forty-seven and one-quarter dinars.

From this is to be deducted (37) the "tithes," the expenses, and the (cost of) the porter, twenty-(38)seven dinars, leaving two hundred (39) and twenty dinars.

Ac Therefore, the sum total coming to you is approximately five hundred (40) and thirty-five dinars.

Ba Your servant bought you (41) three bags of copper (ṣufr), weighing (42) five bahār, at a cost of eighty-three (dinars per bahār). (43) (Total) value: four hundred and fifteen dinars. (44) The number of pieces in each bag is twenty-three. (45) The cost of hides and packing, one and one-half dinars. Exit tolls (46) from the port (of Aden), four and one-eighth dinars. I sent you (47) this in the ship of the Nākhodā Rāmish--(48) one bag--in the ship of al-Muqaddam--one bag--and in the ship of (49) Nambiyar (ani?)--one bag--a total of three bags. Freight charges for (50) this (were) four and one-half dinars.

Bb (Also) charged to you, the registration fee with the (51) boat's captain for the pepper and the iron, two dinars.

No. 26

(1) Also, there are charged to you twenty-five roṭl of copper bars, (2) twenty-eight pieces in number, (3) worth eight dinars; a basket of dates, (4) 115 roṭl, worth two and one-half and one-quarter dinars; (5) two dinars, the cost of an Abyssinian hide; one dinar, the price of ten (6) Berbera mats which are in a package (7) which is marked in Hebrew and Arabic; (8) a ^{zodiac} ~~carpet~~ carpet, worth five dinars, a maqta^c cloth, (9) and two Manārī kerchiefs, worth six dinars--(10) all this with Abū Ghālib, the ship's captain. (11) He also has with him a piece of lead, weighing (12) two hundred and forty-five roṭl, worth twenty-(13)eight and one-half dinars and two qīrāt,

the price (per bahār) being 35 dinars; (14) freight charges for the piece of lead, one dinar. Abū Ghālib, the ship's captain, has with him also a purse in which there are twenty Egyptian Mithqāl (16) worth forty-seven dinars (Maliki). (17) That purse contains (also) seven Malikī dinars.

Bc (18) The total sum: five hundred and thirty-five dinars (19) and one third. This settles my lord's account. (20)

C There also arrived the "eggs" which you sent in the ship of (21) ^{lbn} Abu 'l-Katā'ib, and this was received by the elders Joseph (22) and Khalaf, along the lines of the division which you indicated (23) in your letter.

The betel nuts also arrived, which (24) you sent to your servant, and this is on the balance of (25) my account with your excellency from last year. (26) But the betel nuts were extremely mediocre, both the white (27) and the red ones. There also arrived what you were kind enough (to send), namely four (28) locks and two bowls.

D Your servant has sent you (29) with Abū Ghālib, the ship's captain, two large brazilwood boxes with (30) sugar, and two brazilwood boxes with raisins, and a package with (31) three sets of Egyptian Ṭalḥī paper of the best obtainable quality. Please accept this, my lord, (33) and may you think well of me in your secret thoughts. If you have any (34) need or service (to be done) I would be happy to take care of them. (35) May you have abundant well-being. And Peace.

27a

The Hebrew Address:

- | | | |
|-----|---|-----------------------|
| (1) | The illustrious elder, my lord Abraham | Your servant, Maḏmūn |
| (2) | Ben Yishū--May God preserve your well-being | b. al-Ḥasan b. Bundār |

The Arabic Address, written in the direction of the message, contains exactly the same words with the addition of "the Israelite," and in place of "Yishū" in l. 2: Ishū.

Commentary

26, 3 Nākhoda--ship-owner (Persian).

Rāmisht--The ships of this great merchant are frequently mentioned in these papers. Two inscriptions of this Rāmisht have been preserved at Mecca, one, dated 529/1135, relating the foundation of a hospice, cf. Répertoire des inscriptions arabes, Number 3075 (vol. VIII, pp. 196-7), and the second, his epitaph, from Shaḥbān, 534/April 1140, cf. Répertoire, Number 3099 (vol. VIII, pp. 218-9); see also the Arab historian Ibn al-Athīr, sub anno 532 (ed. Tornberg, Vol. XI, p. 43, ll. 5-9). One of his agents brought back from Canton in a single voyage merchandise of the fabulous value of 500,000 dīnār. In 532/1138, he provided for the covering of the Kaḥba with Chinese silk, Gaston Wiet, "Les marchands d'épices etc.," Cahiers d'histoire égyptiennes, Cairo

1955, p. 85; S. M. Stern, "Rāmīshṭ of Sīrāf, a Merchant Millionaire of the Twelfth Century," Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, April, 1967, pp. 10-14.

26, 4 Of small measure--the relationship between the small and the large measure is clarified by this document, both here and in ll. 20, 27-28. According to these references, 17 bahār (5100 roṭl), of large measure = 20 bahār and 120 roṭl (=6120 roṭl) of small measure. The ratio is about 1.2:1; also in Number 28, l. 17, and Number 58, l. 23.

26, 5-7 There is no explanation for the deduction of 45 roṭl from 12 bahār, or any indication as to who received them. It seems, however, that this is a polite way of referring to the fee of the Representative of the Merchants, namely, Maḍmūn. This payment, about 1.33%, is not much different from that mentioned in ~~Number~~ 4, l. 10, where Maḍmūn's father received one qīrāt out of every two dinars of the price of each piece, that is $1/48$. ¹⁰ ✓

26, 12 Cost of obtaining the goods--4 $1/6$ dinars for goods worth 402 $5/6$ dinars, that is, approximately one percent: apparently a government tax.

26, 13 The baskets are mentioned elsewhere, for example in ~~Number~~ 20, verso, l. 17 and ~~Number~~ 28, l. 18. It seems that pepper and similar commodities were in need of ventilation, and were transferred from the containers in which they had been brought from India to the baskets.

- 23 The Highlands, of course, of India, and not, as above, ~~Number~~ 24, l. 26, of Yemen.
- 29 Joseph b. Abraham, a cousin of Maḍmūn, and prominent merchant.
- 31 Khalaf b. Ishāq, another cousin of Maḍmūn, a philanthropic notable.
- 46 Port of Aden: al furḍah, the customs house of Aden, cf. Löfgren, Aden--in the dictionary, p. 50.
- 47 Rāmisht--See 1.3 above. Either the ship which brought merchandise from India took merchandise on the return trip, or in another ship of the same merchant, ll. 17-19, above.
- 48 Muqaddam--a general term designating a person wielding power; it was the official title of the heads of the Eastern Jewish communities, see S. D. Goitein, A Mediterranean Society, II, pp. 68-75. It is not impossible that the reference here is to a Jewish shipowner, but since the owners of the other two boats bear Indian names, the word Muqaddam may refer to the holder of an Indian office. The ships of Ibn al-Muqaddam are mentioned also in ~~Number~~ 56, l. 17.
- 50 Registration charges--satmī. All merchandise carried in a ship was registered, and after the arrival of the ship the captain received a set fee for this list. The term designated both the list and the fee. From the fact that the value of the pepper and the iron together, before the various deductions, was approximately 800

dinars, we see that the registration fee was about 1/2% of the value of the merchandise.

26, verso

- 3 Basket--qawṣarah, a word found in Aden to this day, see E.V.
~~of~~ Stace, English-Arabic Vocabulary (Aden Colloquial), London.
 1893. p. 17
 s.v. "basket for dates."

- 6 Berbera mats--see Number 24, l. 12, above.

- 8 ~~Broach--on the north-western coast of India. If this~~
~~carpet, which Maḍmūn sent Ben Yijū from Aden to Southern~~
~~India, was really made in Broach, we would have here the~~
~~interesting fact that far-off Aden was the intermediary~~
~~between two ports on the western coast of India.~~
~~However, since there was a land route between Broach and~~
~~Mangalor in southern India (Number 133, ll. 26-35), it~~
~~is hard to believe that the reference here is to an object~~
~~which was actually brought from Broach; the reference is~~
~~probably to a carpet manufactured in 'Broach style,' or~~
~~similar to the type which was made in Broach.~~

- 9 Manārī--Manārah is the name of a locality in south-west
 Muslim Spain, near the city of Sidūnah (Yāqūt, Geographical
Dictionary, p. 648). These woven goods were named after
 that district or perhaps brought from there. A city near
 Saragossa, Spain, also bears this name, Yāqūt, ibid. A

A zodiac, Ar. ḥurūf, a common ornament
 on the floors of churches and synagogues in
 Byzantine times decorated this costly carpet.

- kerchief of the same type was sent from Aden to India according to ~~Number~~ 67, ll. 9, 18-19.
- 10 Abū Ghālib, the ship's captain--v. infra, l. 15, 29. It is not specified whether this captain commanded one of the three ships mentioned above, recto, ll. 47-49, or another ship.
- 11 Lead--needed in the manufacture of copper vessels with which Ben Yijū dealt.
- 15 The Egyptian Mithqāl (or dinar) is here worth only 2.35 Malikī dinars, just as Number 28, l. 32, below.
- 19 One third--Maḍmūn discounts this one third, see recto, ll. 39-40. As was shown, however, in the analysis of the account above, he rounded off small amounts also to the disadvantage of Ben Yijū.
- 20 "Eggs"--either a type of cardamon, or a form in which iron was shipped, ~~Number~~ 66, l. 6; ~~Number~~ 67, l. 29. Arrived--the merchandise was delivered to the Representative of the Merchants who distributed it to those by whom they had been ordered.
- 29 Brazilwood boxes, i.e., made from baqqam, or sappan wood. This wood was one of the main dyeing stuffs, but, as we see here, served also as material for implements.
- 31 Ṭalḥī paper--named after Ṭalḥa b. Ṭāhir, ruler of Khūrasān in north-east Persia, who died in 828, ^{see} cf. Enc. Isl., ^{2 IV, 419,} s.v. "Kāghad." It is interesting that the name of a commodity remained constant for over three hundred years.