

No. 28 A Letter from Maḍmūn to b. Yījū (probably from Aden to India)

Most probably, Summer 1133

U.L.C. T.-S. 20.130

The beginning of the letter is lost and, therefore, the address is missing, since it was customary to write the address on the verso, opposite the beginning of the letter, v. supra, p. . Only the first two lines are missing, but the letter is badly damaged by ~~holes~~ ^{holes,} erasures and smudging. The width is 12.3 cm, i.e. wider than the previous letters. 45 cm. of the length are preserved ; the paper is ~~woolly~~ ^{woolly,} and light-gray.

The ~~script~~ ^{script} bears some resemblance to Maḍmūn's handwriting, but the two hands do not correspond exactly.

The hypothesis that this letter was sent by Maḍmūn to b. Yījū is based on the following facts:

1) The letter was sent from Aden to India, to the two places where b. Yījū was to be found: Mangalor and Pandariyah, cf. ll. 8, 23, 25, and below in the Introduction to Chapter three, p. .

2) here, cf. l. 29, as below in no. 199, verso, l. 1, cf. no. 62, verso, a shipment is delivered to Sheih Abraham b. Fayyūmī, who lived close to b. Yījū, by the agency of the receiver of the letter. ^{Abū Saʿīd}

Thus, there is no doubt that the Nāḥodā, to whom was given a detailed account by ~~the agency of~~ b. Yījū when both were in India, v. infra, no. 61, ll. 3-10, is none other than ^{an Abū Saʿīd b. Maḥfūḍ}, who is also

here
mentioned/twice without his patronymic, ll. 15, 23, 30, 39, verso, 5, 8.

3) ~~XXX~~ We have here precisely the same dealings, order and tone
Madmūn's
which we find in ~~XXX~~ other letters to b. Yijū. Various details recur, e.g.
the ships of the Nāhoda Rāmīst, v. supra no. 26, ll. 3, 47, and infra, no.
~~XX~~ 61, l. 19 or e.g., the commodity " " only /mentioned here, l. 13,
in no. 199, l. 25, and in no. 225, l. 8, which is also a letter ~~XX~~ Madmūn~~XX~~.
from

As regards Madmūn, we hear from other sources that he was accus-
tomed to fit out ships, v. supra, no. 24, verso, l. 13 ff., infra, no. 32,
ll. 22-23, as here, verso, l. 4.

4) As we know, the only letters of Madmūn which have been pre-
served up to the present are those which were addressed to b. Yijū.

v. infra, p. , also.

The contents of the letter are as follows:

A Confirmation of the receipt of a letter and the expression
regret that
of ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ Abraham b. Yijū had suffered difficulties on the sea
(1.1-7).

B Invoice for a load of pepper and " " (ll. 7-22).

C A Shipment of sugar, copper/brass, Egyptian dinars, and
various Yemenite gold coins (ll. 22-37).

D Elucidation of ~~XXXXXX~~ points raised in b. Yijū's previous
letters and expression of regret that the sender is unable to fill some
orders. (ll. 37-56).

E Hints of severe losses suffered by Madmūn, and, it seems, by
the merchants associated with him as well ; news of the fitting out of
a new ship, the "al-Mubarak", which is to sail from Aden to Mangalor in
Southern India (margins, verso, ll. 1-7).

TRANSLATION

[The letter of my lord, the most illustrious Sheikh, arrived - may God make permanent his importance etc.
and bestow upon him]
 (1) the goodness which ^{he has} [destined for him.....and may he] bring low
 [~~XXX~~ those who envy [him]. (2) It was a most gladdening letter and a most delightful message; your servant read it, and was gladdened by his reading of it. (3) ~~XX~~ ^I humbly ask ~~XX~~ Him whose power is exalted [that He] grant a meeting with you, quickly, in (4) the near future, in His mercy, in joyful circumstances and when things are going well.

(5) From what you mentioned - may God preserve your importance - your servant learned about your exhaustion (6) and suffering on the sea (and the likes ^{etc.} of this); I therefore ask God, may He be exalted, that He make the end (turn out) (7) to the good. As for what you mentioned about the pepper which was bought for you, it amounts to (8) thirty bahār ; of this you received by your own hand - may God preserve it - in Aden (9) in the year five hundred and twenty-six^y, fifty-six dinar (10) for four bahārs, leaving ^{you} twenty-six bahār ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~. (From this) is to be deducted for "the share", ~~XXX~~ as is the case with all merchants (12) who have ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ pepper which is bought, after the discount, one bahār, leaving you twenty-five bahār ; (13) for the value of the " " a bahār and two hundred and fifty (sc. rotl), of large measure. Total: (14) twenty six bahār and two hundred and fifty rotl.

From this is to be deducted (15) nine bahars of large measure for ~~for~~ Sheikh Abū Saʿīd b. Maḥfūd, (16) leaving seventeen bahar and two hundred and fifty rotl, (17) that is, twenty-one bahar and seventy rotl of small measure. The "tithes", (18) the baskets and the porter - one hundred and fifty-nine dinars and one-quarter.

(19) I sold him the pepper ~~the~~ ^{at largest} the fullest price which people were selling it, for (20) the price of thirty-seven par bahar. The value, after the auctioneer's fee, (21) is seven hundred and eighty-three dinars, leaving ⁽²²⁾ you six/hundred and twenty-three dinars and one-half and one-quarter.

You owe ~~the~~ (23) the value of the sugar delivered by Sheikh Abū Saʿīd in Mangalor, (24) five dinars. In the ship of the Nahoda Ramist I ⁽²⁵⁾ sent for you/to Pandariya, with the Nahoda Ahmad b. Bakhtiyar a bag of/red ⁽²⁶⁾ "yellow copper"; the number: ten pieces ; the weight: a bahar and one-half ; (27) the value: one hundred and two dinars. Also, they ^{exempted me from} ~~freight charges~~ freight charges. ~~XXXXXX~~ (28) Please get this from the Nahoda Ahmad b. Bakhtiyar, and he has ~~the~~ with him (29) a bag of "yellow copper" for Sheikh Abraham b. Fayyumi also.

^{to} I sent (30)/you with Sheih Abu Saʿīd b. Maḥfud, in the ship of (31) al-Mubarak to Mangalor, may God ordain his welfare, one hundred ~~XXXXXX~~ Egyptian (32) mithqal, worth two hundred and fifty-three dinars, and (I sent) ~~with~~ him (33) two hundred and sixty Zabdi dinars, matching Maliki ^{fine} (sc. dinars) in weight. (34) I have also sent you some/Jabali nisafi coins [.....] (35) a weight of twenty-one dinars and one-half and one-quarter, a total of [.....] (36) [three] six hundred and twenty-three dinars

and one-half and one-quarter] (37) My lord, please
get this from the two aforementioned (people), [.....

As for what] (38) my lord mentioned about getting the
document in his handwriting fr[om] (39) Abu Sa'id, I have already
received this, and as for what you mentioned ab[out] (40) [.....
from me
you did not receive it/in Aden for the value of the pepper,
(41) and my lord's reckoning is wrong - you only imagine
(42)
that you did & I have the correct (sc. account)/since what
is (written) in the ledger is more exact.

And as for what ~~XXXXXX~~^{you} mentioned concerning the
purchase (43) of all the various items, now you know, my
lord, of all the responsibilities I have besides (44) (the
business of) the ships, and this is something which needs time.
Especially this (45) year, no importer came from Zabid until
the ships had set sail, (46) since they ~~XX~~ had remained in
their city to celebrate the holiday, and then set sail from
(47) Zabid after the festival. ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ [Glass] also
is n[ot to be found] in Aden. (48) [.....(51).....]
this [....] if God wills. As for what you mentioned (52) [.....
.....] ~~XXXX~~ silver of the value of the pepper [.....
(53)] the silver, except that it was expensive -
five dirhams (54) [.....] dinars, but I didn't dare
buy him this (55) [~~XXXXXXXX~~ price..... however] ^{at that} the "division"
which I computed from the pepper (56) [.....I thought
ab]out it a great deal, since there had arrived the account
of all

approximately 20 words are missing

MARGIN

to the merchants, however / between me and
 them / that of every one hundred bahars of large measure
 (they receive) ninety /- five bahars. I lost some of my money /
 on ships in this business of / pepper belonging to the merchants /,
 and on the loss of the ships' provisions / for which I paid
 approximately / four thousand dinars /. There has not occurred
 to anyone / such a thing /, never

approximately 10 words are ⁱmissing

VERSO

(1) [.....God], may He be exalted, is the one
 who will give recompense and substitute for what has been lost.
 And after this (2) [.....] paid me two thousand, one hundred
 dinars for the ship, a price (3) [.....] never and did not
 take this, and also took me concerning (4) [.....God],
 may He be ^{exalted} ~~XXXXXX~~. I have fitted out the ship (5) - the Mubarak -
^{to Mangalor}
 which will sail/under the command of Sheikh Abū Saʿīd b. Mahfūd - (6)
 may God ordain his safe arrival -

(7) and whoever has no good in him.

^{to}
 I sent/you with Sheikh (8) Abū Saʿīd b. Mahfūd half a
 basket of dates and a piece of (9) [..... and two bo]xes
 of sugar and raisins. Please be sure to get this, my Lord, (10)
 and may you think of your servant in your innermost thought. Any
^{of yours, (11)} need/or service, ~~XXXXXX~~ I will be ^{glad} ~~XXXX~~ to undertake, and may you
 be granted complete well-being and the mercy of (12) [God, mayne be
 exalted.....] and Peace

F Gifts and greetings (ll. 7-13).

^{account}
The reckonings in ll. 7-36 can be summarised as follows:

~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ A. In b. Yifū's credit

| | | |
|---|-------------------|-------------------------|
| a load of pepper | 30 | bahār |
| less, what was received in exchange in <i>cash</i> | 4 | " |
| less, what was received by the ^{Treasurer of the merchant} Paq. Haṣ. | 1 | " |
| | <hr/> | |
| remainder | 25 | " |
| plus, the value of the " " | 1 | ", 250 rotl |
| less, the share of Sheikh Abū Saʿīd | 9 | " |
| | <hr/> | |
| remainder | 17 | ", 250 ", large measure |
| which is equal to | 21 | ", 70 ", small " |
| sold, with the deduction of the auctioneer's fee, for 783 Malikī dinars | | |
| less the cost of baskets and pōters | 159 $\frac{1}{4}$ | " " |
| | <hr/> | |
| remainder | 623 $\frac{3}{4}$ | " " |

B. Debit

| | | |
|---|----------------------------------|---------------|
| sugar | 5 | Malikī dinars |
| XXXXXXXXXXXX copper/brass | 102 | " |
| 100 Egyptian Mithqāl (dinars) worth | 235 | " |
| the coinage of the city of Zabīd | | |
| 260 dinars of XXXXXXXXXXXX worth | 260 | " |
| several coins of the coinage of the city of | | |
| Dhū 'l- J bla worth | 21 $\frac{1}{2}$ + $\frac{1}{4}$ | " |
| | <hr/> | |
| total | 632 $\frac{3}{4}$ | " |

NOTES

1. Reconstructed according to no. 56, ll. 4-5.
3. "that you come quickly" - when b. Yiju left for India he did not plan to stay there so many years, v. infra, p. .
6. "suffering on the sea etc." - apparently on the journey during from Aden to India and ~~XX~~ his travels in India itself.
7. "the pepper which was bought for you" - i.e. /^{which ~~XXX~~}Madmun/bought for him in India, just as Madmun's father had purchased for his various ~~XXXXXX~~ customers, v. supra, no. 2, l. 10, notes.
9. "in the year 526" - i.e. 526 according to the Muslim calendar. 526 a.h. began on November 23, 1131, and ended on November 11, 1132.
10. b. Yiju received 14 dinars per bahar ; a year later the price was 37 dinars, cf. l. 20. No doubt the ^{reference}~~XXXXXXXX~~ here is to money paid as a down payment towards the purchase of the pepper. Of the pepper which was brought to Aden he took only to the extent which he needed cash on his way to India. *But* the sale of pepper weakened only after b. Yiju had already left Aden. For the "workings" of this trade in the city of Aden, ~~XXX~~ v. infra, no. 29, ll. 25 ff.
- ~~XXX~~ 11. "the share" - in the original, "l-qst" was first written, cf. supra, no. 19, l. 10, ~~XXXXXX~~, corrected to "qst" ; in line 55, below, "qst", see there for context. For his ^{part} various in the purchase of the pepper and its division among the mer- chants the Trustee of the Merchants took 1/30, i.e. 3.33% .

It seems that we are to understand from the words in the margin that ^{the} usually, or, perhaps, in some type of situation ~~XXXXXXXX~~ alluded to in the lost part of the manuscript, he only gave the merchants 95 bahars of every hundred, i.e. he took 5% for himself.

12. "after the discount" - in the original "musamaha", a very common term ; in business a man is obliged to give his colleague a discount.

13. "DRKY" was a commodity which went from west to east, ~~XXXXXX~~ cf. no. 199, l. 25. Thus, b. Yiju must have brought it with him from Aden, when he stayed there in 1131-2.

15. Abu Sa'id b. Mahfu'd was a merchant from Cairo and, like b. Yiju, had come to Aden on his way to India. In the transaction here, it seems that b. Yiju advanced money towards the purchase of pepper on behalf of his friend Abu Sa'id.

19. "the highest price" - 37 dinars as compared with 30 dinars, v. supra, no. 24, verso, 3-5 ; 34 dinars, v. supra, no. 26, l. 9; 23 dinars, infra, no. 29, l. 28, etc.

23. ^{which is to be} "delivered(to you)" - or "which has been delivered etc." or "which will be delivered etc. " , cf. verso, l. 5. b. Yiju had business dealings both in Mangalor and in Pan'dariya, v. infra, p. . These two cities, centrally situated on the western coast of India, had settlements of Jews, especially the latter, cf. Introduction, Chapter on the Cities of India.

25. We see here a Jew sending merchandise with a Muslim on a ship belonging to a Jew. Since there was no postal service, it was only possible to send merchandise if someone undertook

the responsibility for them. Bakhtiyar is a Persian name.

26. 102 dinars; the same quantity of red "yellow copper" appeared in another shipment of Madmun to b. Yiju, cf. no. 61, ll. 11-12, only 90 dinars.

27. "they exempted me from freight charges" - Since Madmun was also a shipowner, they relinquished any claim to freight charges, expecting him to reciprocate (at the proper time.)

29. Abraham b. Fayyumi - v. supra, Introduction to this letter, p. .

31. Xal-Mubarak - this ship belonged to Madmun, cf. verso, l. 4.

32. mithqal - i.e. dinar. The same *rate* above, no. 26, verso, l. 16. cf. Encyclopedia of Islam, s.v. and Vol. I, Index, s.v. Zabid.

33. Zabdi - from the city of Zabid in south-west Yemen ; cf. index to the Introduction.

"matching...in weight" - in the original, "muratala", a word which Lane knows only from one section of the book al-Muwatta, by the legalist Malik b. Anas (8th century).

34. nisafi - this coin, which was minted in the city of Dhu 'l-Jibla, in those days a capital city, was used in trade in Aden, v. infra, no. 29, ll. 44, 46, no. 56, ll. 40, 44, no. 61, l. 10.

[] - here, no doubt, are mentioned a number of coins. ~~XXXXX~~ their value is set according to their weight.

38. "document" - in the original ~~XXXXXX~~ "huja", i.e. "a court decree". b. Yiju was not only a merchant but also learned in

receding 1/2 p. 10

Jewish Law and a Sofer of the Jewish court. The reference here is probably to some litigation in which ~~XXXXXX~~ ^{they were} ~~XXXXXX~~ involved, v. infra, no. 55 b, for if the intention were to a document touching himself, it would not ~~be~~ ^{have been} in his ~~XXXXXX~~ ^{handwriting} ~~XXXXXX~~.
 42. The ledger of the Trustee of the Merchants ~~XXXXXX~~ ^{was} ~~XXXXXX~~ a respected authority, v. supra 13c, l. 11, no. 14, l. 5, and in an official document below, no. 82, l. 3.
 43. "[all]" - in the original, "s'y[r]", cf. index to Introduction.

"the various items" - in the original, "al-tafariq", "the individual things, items", i.e. the different requests for ^{amounts of goods} small/~~XXXX~~ as opposed to the large quantities of other ~~XXXXXX~~ commodities.

"all the responsibilities I have" - Madmun was not only a ship owner and Trustee of the Merchants, but also the Nagid of Yemen and Rosh Qehilot, v. supra.

46-47. Zabid - There have been no Jews living in this important city on the hot coastal plain (v. supra 33) in the last few generations. However, in the period we are dealing with there was a Jewish settlement because of Zabid's importance as a center for trade with India. From here, or, more correctly, from its port, one sailed directly to India without stopping in Aden, although this was en route, v. no. 54, verso, l. 2, no. 58, l. 38 (= no. 59, l. 2). It seems to me that the reference here is to a Jewish rather than ^a Muslim festival.

47. glass - exports of glass from Aden to India are often mentioned in these documents, e.g., no. 56, l. 42, no. 61, l. 7, no. 190, l. 20.

52-54. "expensive" - in the original, "ghala" instead of the correct form "ghaliya". Silver coins (or bars of silver) were, then, expensive in Aden, as in Egypt, v. supra, no. 21, l. 8, infra, no. 61, l. 15.

MARGIN - the merchants paid for 100 bahars and received 95, i.e. the Trustee of the Merchants received 5%, v. supra, l. 11.

400 dinars - a loss of this magnitude, or, indeed, a sum of this size, does not occur in any other document dealing with the ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ Indian trade which we possess.

VERSO -

2. "paid me" - it is unfortunate that the manuscript is so damaged ~~XXXXXX~~ here. It is impossible to know who it was who paid "only" 2100 dinars. Perhaps his ~~XXXXXX~~ partner, the Muslim ruler of Yemen, Balal b. Jarir ? ~~XX~~ cf. no. 32, ll. 24 ff., no. 60, l. 27. Line 3 is also unclear.

8. "half a basket of dates" - in the original, "qawsara", v. ^{versoB} supra, no. ~~XX~~ 26, ~~XXXXXX~~, l. 3. We see here that these baskets had a fixed size.