

I, 33 *Accounts for Dealings by Barakāt Lebdi*

Fustat, January 26, 1132

Bodl. MS. Heb. b. 11 (Cat. 2874, no. 20), fol. 21

Only the lower part (31 cm. long, 18 cm. wide) of the document is preserved. It has the form of a letter: the script on the reverse side is in the opposite direction of that on the recto. This form was probably chosen because the record was intended to be sent to Iṣḥāq al-Nafūsī. He was the most important India trader of Mediterranean Jewish origin represented in the Geniza, although only a few documents related to him have been preserved {II, 44; IV, 15–II, 42} (VI, 26–29).<sup>1</sup>

The various sections of the record are separated from one another by a line or a blank space, as was occasionally done in accounts.

The upper, lost part, had reported how Barakāt sold in India the goods entrusted to him by al-Nafūsī and/or how he changed the specie given to him. The text preserved starts exactly where Barakāt's purchases and actions connected with them are detailed. The goods and currency mentioned in the first section preserved are Indian (lines 1–6).

On his way back, Barakāt passed some time in Aden, as can be deduced from the report of his living expenses and rent for a storeroom and a bungalow there. He sold, purchased and repacked merchandise and paid customs and other dues, as well as freight. In Aden and the three southernmost ports of the Red Sea the currency was the Yemenite Malikī dinar (lines 7–26).

From the Red Sea port Sawākin (still in existence)<sup>2</sup> the accounts were made in Egyptian dinars. In 'Aydhāb, Barakāt delivered all the goods purchased for Iṣḥāq al-Nafūsī to the representative of Ibn al-Ṭuwayr

<sup>1</sup> {Goitein, *Letters*, 247, n. 12: "I have the impression that three different Isaac Nafūsīs appear in the Geniza papers of this period." As here we are dealing with the India trader, undoubtedly Isaac b. Makhlūf al-Nafūsī (as his name appears in VI, 26) is intended. TS NS 224, f. 20 (brought to my attention by Amir Ashur), a fragment not included in Goitein's 'India Book' collection, concerns a business deal between Isaac al-Nafūsī, the India trader, and Adenese associates for 700 dinars worth of lac stored in a local warehouse. The fragment was written and signed by Ḥalfon ha-Levi b. Manasseh and also signed by the Gaon [Maṣliḥ ha-Kohen] b. Solomon (?).

<sup>2</sup> Sawākin is in northeastern Sudan, south of 'Aydhāb. According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica it was founded in the twelfth century as a rival port to 'Aydhāb, where dues were levied on trade. From the Geniza documents we can conclude that Sawākin was founded by the eleventh century. See the discussion in Al-Ṭāhir, "Ports," 57–58. In 1103, the writer of VI, 1 (lines 16–17), states: "We arrived at a city called Sawākin, which is really the most excellent of dwelling places (*sawākin*)."

('Little Bird'), who brought them to the latter's 'house' in Fustat and paid all the expenses for transport and customs (verso, lines 1–11).

The last section, which contains a proper court record, is written by the same scribe (Ḥalfon ha-Levi b. Manasseh) as the accounts, but in far smaller script. It occupies only the left side of the page, leaving about two fifths of it blank, probably for additional notes.<sup>3</sup> Berākhōt (= Abu 'l-Barakāt) b. Joseph Lebdi declares that whatever money had remained in his hands was spent on a house in Fustat recently acquired for al-Nafūsī and that the associated actions, which he took, were on the instructions of Ḥalfon ha-Levi b. Nethanel (chap. 4), al-Nafūsī's representative (lines 12–29).

The background of this document can easily be reconstructed. While on his way out to India, Barakāt met al-Nafūsī in Aden, where the latter had his temporary headquarters (VI, 26, VI, 28). At al-Nafūsī's request, Barakāt made purchases for him in India, but on his way back, like his father Joseph, he had not intended to visit Aden and all the Red Sea ports. Because the goods carried for al-Nafūsī required Barakāt to change his plans, he charged him with the expenses (or part of them) for his sojourn there.

At the top of the fragment, the word 'dirhem' (the Indian specie), written at the end of the part torn away, is visible.

## Translation

## [A. Account]

(1) Purchased with this:	
(2) lac sent in four pieces {alt. tr.: units}, price:	1,000 dirhems;
(3) a small bale of spikenard: <sup>4</sup>	300 dirhems;
(4) three bales and two <i>kawrajas</i> <sup>5</sup> of 'fulled' textiles:	1,200 dirhems

<sup>3</sup> Such as details about the upkeep of al-Nafūsī's house. See the following.

<sup>4</sup> {Arabic *sanbal*. On this spice (also in II, 10, line 3 and II, 48, line 4), see al-Qazwīnī, *Ajā'ib*, 333; Lev and Amar, *Medicinal Substances*, 162.}

<sup>5</sup> A *kawraja* is a score, parcel of 20 units. {Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 5:545, n. 86, vocalizes *kūraja* and states that it is common in Yemen and the documents concerning the India trade. Cf. Pimenta, *Dictionary*, 438.}

(5) 'light goods': <sup>6</sup>	100 dirhems
(6) Total:	2,600 dirhems
(7) The 'fulled' were sold in Aden; the proceeds after deduction of the customs paid for them:	330 Malikī dinars
(8) Customs for the lac:	80 Malikī dinars
(9) Living expenses {alt. tr.: tolls} <sup>7</sup> in Aden, rent for a storage room, an additional one, a bungalow, <sup>8</sup> etc.:	30 dinars
(10) Balance:	220 Malikī dinars
(11) Add to this the proceeds for 'light goods' sold in Aden:	50 dinars
(12) Total:	270 dinars
(13) The lac was packed in Aden in 8 bales <sup>9</sup>	
(14) Bought six <i>bahārs</i> of brazilwood: <sup>10</sup>	100 dinars

<sup>6</sup> Arabic *khiff* (voweled thus). This must have been a very important group of imports from India, as may be seen from the following passage in Löfgren, *Aden*, 63, lines 17–19, which describes the eclipse of the town owing to the rapacity of the Rasūlid ruler Nūr al-Dīn 'Umar b. 'Alī: "In 625 A.H. (1227/8 C.E.) he bought all the pepper of the merchants, all the *hiff* (for *khiff*), the copper, and the *bitr* (= *bitrū*, cast copper {see 201, n. 19}). In this way, he bought, for instance, a *bahār* of pepper for 40 dinars; and forced the Kārim merchants to buy it for 60 dinars; or he bought bronze from the Kārim for 60 dinars and forced the *khiff* merchants to buy it for 80 dinars." From this it appears that *khiff* comprised the spices of small volume and light weight, as opposed to pepper and ginger, which were traded in large sacks of heavy weight. This *khiff* of the India trade corresponded to *saqaṭ* in the Mediterranean area, which comprised spices like spikenard, nutmeg, costus (see below) and similar products. Löfgren, "Glossary," 32, read *khuff*, and translated 'shoes.' But *khuff* is a single shoe, not a collective, and although shoes were imported from India (see II, 10, line 9, where they are called *madāsāt* {Yemenite shoes, called *aqdām*, were sent to Egypt according to II, 61, lines 54–55}), they certainly did not rank with items like pepper and copperware. {For *khiff*, see also III, 48, line 19.

<sup>7</sup> Arabic *mu'na*. See 171–72, n. 23.

<sup>8</sup> Arabic *bilij* (vocalized here *balij*) is a Malayan word designating a cabin or a place parceled off by mats, etc. in a ship {see 577, n. 28}, or a bungalow. Aden is hot, and a bungalow probably was cheaper than a room in a house.

<sup>9</sup> The boats sailing along the Red Sea coast were not as strong as the ships commuting between India and the West. Therefore, in the former the cargo had to be distributed more evenly; perhaps the danger of the need of jettisoning was also greater. {Accordingly, the four 'units' (*qit'as*) mentioned in line 2 were repacked in twice as many 'bales' (*idls*).}

<sup>10</sup> *Baqgam*, brazilwood, bois de campêche, a dyeing material and major item in the international trade between India, Egypt, North Africa, and Spain; see Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 1:532, and Ashtor, *Prix*, 145, nn. 3–10 (where the dinars mentioned were of different values). {The preceding is quoted from Goitein, "Portrait," 462, n. 67, with

(15) Two <i>bahārs</i> of cinnamon: <sup>11</sup>	29 dinars
(16) and five <i>manns</i> of rhubarb: <sup>12</sup>	15 dinars
(17) Total sent from Aden;	
(18) Eight bales of lac, two bags <sup>13</sup> of cinnamon	
(19) Six bags of brazilwood and five <i>manns</i> of rhubarb.	
(20) Balance of the Malikī dinars [[after the packing of the bal...]] after the aforementioned purchases:	
(21) 126 Malikī dinars.	
(22) Spent from this in Aden for	
(23) packing materials, <sup>14</sup> hides, baskets of palm leaves, <sup>15</sup> ropes, and the packer:	12 dinars
(24) Exit toll at the Furḍa: <sup>16</sup>	16 dinars
(25) Ship's freight:	28 dinars
(26) Customs in Bāde', Dahlak, and Nizāla: <sup>17</sup>	38 dinars

bibliographical abbreviations changed; see continuation there. For the medicinal uses of brazilwood, see Lev, *Medicinal Substances*, 207.

<sup>11</sup> Arabic *qirfa*, a common import item from the East in our papers; see Lev and Amar, *Medicinal Substances*, 206.

<sup>12</sup> Arabic *rāwand*, also in line 19. See page 380, n. 9.

<sup>13</sup> Arabic *ṣurra*, here, lines 18 and 19, replacing *bahār*, lines 14–15.

<sup>14</sup> {'Spent (line 22)... packing materials,' Arabic *kharaj... ta'biya*; for *ta'biya* = 'packing materials', cf. I, 6, line 22. Cf. TS 12.632, line 10, *wa-kharaj labu ta'biyat al-matā'... yudhakkir fihī 'imāma* (ed. Gil, *Ishmael*, III, 384, no. 409, where instead of "he produced for him the list of the shipment of clothing... in which he mentioned a turban," translate: 'an expenditure was made for him for packing the textiles... in which he mentioned was a turban').}

<sup>15</sup> The baskets (*qaf'a*, pl. *qifā'*) are mentioned elsewhere, for example in II, 16, line 13 and II, 20, line 18 and II, 23, line 39. It seems that pepper and similar commodities required ventilation; and were transferred from the containers in which they had been brought from India to the baskets.

<sup>16</sup> The customhouse of Aden; cf. Löfgren, "Glossary," 50. {Cf. Piamenta, *Dictionary*, 371; Margariti, *Aden*, 142 ff.

<sup>17</sup> Bāde' (Bādī') is mentioned a few times in the Geniza. It is spelled with short *a* (Bādī') in Tibbetts, *Arab Navigation*, 413. According to VI, 1, it is located between Sawākin and Dahlak. No. VI, 1 (lines 17–18): "We arrived at a city called Bādī' ('cutter'), it is just what its name says (cf. I Sam. 25:25), the most bitter, frightening, miserable place." See the discussion in Al-Ṭāhir, "Ports," 57. Dahlak, a great harbor in those days, is mentioned frequently in our papers. It is an archipelago, opposite Massawa, Eritrea; see Goitein, *Letters*, 210, n. 14. No. VI, 1 (lines 19–20): "We then arrived at a city (*balad*) called Dahlak. Concerning it, the adage, 'But you surpass them all (Prov. 31:29)' can be recited. It is a perilous place (*balad mublik*)." 'Dahlak' is thus associated with *ahlak*, 'ruin, destroy.' A shipwreck at Dahlak is mentioned in VII, 54, line 12; a murder of a traveler upon leaving Dahlak in VI, 17, line 15. Nizāla, lit., 'a station on a journey,' has not been documented elsewhere, as far as I know.

[Verso] (1) In Sawākin:

1 Egyptian *mithqāl*.<sup>18</sup>

(2) The remaining 20 of the *thawbs* (robes) (3) that had been bought were used for the payment of customs. (4) They were sold {alt. tr.: There remained 20 *thawbs* (robes, or: *thawb* units) from all the clothing, which had been purchased, and they were used for the payment of customs; they were sold} in Sawākin<sup>19</sup> for 10 dinars which sum was spent for the payment of customs in 'Aydhāb.

(5) The man who received (the goods of) Ibn al-Ṭuwayr paid in 'Aydhāb the remainder of the second customs in Bāḍe<sup>20</sup> and (6) the balance of the customs in 'Aydhāb.<sup>21</sup> The hiring of the camels {alt. tr.: the camel driver;} and the customs in Qūṣ and Fustat were also paid by him. (7) The goods were brought to the house of Ibn al-Ṭuwayr. He sold of them what was due him (from al-Nafūsī) {alt. tr.: due him for his expenditures}, (8) and the rest remained with him. Not one single dirhem worth of this accrued to me, (9) nor have I received {add: from him} of its proceeds any goods or anything else.

(10) A small sum {alt. tr.: a little/some merchandise}<sup>22</sup> remained in my hands, (11) which was spent on the house bought {lit., 'collected'} for him (al-Nafūsī).

[B. Court record]

(12) Mr. Berākhōt,<sup>23</sup> son of the elder R. Joseph (13) Lebdi—*may he rest in Eden!*—appeared before us and declared that he had dictated this entire (14) account, and that all that remained with him, besides (15) what

<sup>18</sup> The term *mithqāl* is used here for dinar, in order to differentiate the Egyptian currency from the Yemenite. The flat sum of one dinar suggests that the boat did not enter the port. Water and victuals were brought on board, and one or more merchants came up to buy the Indian clothes, the proceeds of which were used later for the payment of customs in 'Aydhāb.

<sup>19</sup> {Robes were sold for payment of customs in Sawākin also according to II, 32, line 36.}

<sup>20</sup> 'Second customs' means perhaps 'exit toll,' as in line 24. Barakāt might have paid them out of his own pocket and was refunded by Ibn al-Ṭuwayr's agent.

<sup>21</sup> The customs in 'Aydhāb amounted to more than 10 Egyptian dinars.

<sup>22</sup> {Arabic *shuway*. *Shay* can mean 'merchandise'; see Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 1:452, n. 1.}

<sup>23</sup> 'Blessings.' For variety's sake, the Hebrew form of the name (Abu 'l-) Barakāt appears here. {The Hebrew form of a name was often preferred in a court record.}

went into<sup>24</sup> the house of Ibn al-Ṭuwayr, was spent on the house (16) belonging to Sheikh Ishāq al-Nafūsī—*may his Rock preserve him!*—which is registered in his name, (17) after it was bought by 'Allūsh {lit., 'which is part of what 'Allūsh bought'} in the name of his brother Ishāq—*may his Rock preserve him!*<sup>25</sup> In this are included (18) 10 dinars, which he (Nafūsī) had promised to the beadle Barakāt, the Kohen, b. (19) 'Ammār.<sup>26</sup> After all this, *nothing worth even a penny* has remained with him (Barakāt Lebdi) (20) from all that had been delivered to him. *We wrote this as* (21) *a confirmation of rights and a proof.* This happened on Tuesday, the seventh of Shevat 1443 (22) *E.D.*<sup>27</sup>

He said that these expenses were made on the instructions of Sheikh (23) Abū Sa'īd, *his honor, great and holy master and lord Halfon ha-Levi—may his Rock preserve him!—son of our lord Nethanel ha-Levi—* (24) *may his memory be blessed!*<sup>28</sup>—the representative of the aforementioned Sheikh Ishāq.<sup>29</sup> Sheikh Abū Sa'īd (25) confirmed that he had ordered these actions, because he had regarded them (26) as beneficial. *We wrote* this too, etc.

<sup>24</sup> Arabic *maḍā fi*, which might mean 'was lost in,' and should perhaps be translated thus. But we have no record about the dealings between Ibn al-Ṭuwayr and al-Nafūsī. {In verso, line 11, *maḍa 'alā*, lit., 'went for.'

<sup>25</sup> In VI, 29, we find Barakāt Lebdi in charge of a house in Fustat belonging to Ishāq al-Nafūsī during the years 1124–26. {'Barakāt' is not mentioned in that fragment, but because of the date, 'al-Lebdi' (line 4) can be identified as him.} But since the house referred to here is described (in 1132!) as bought for him by his brother 'Allūsh ('Lamb,' a common Maghrebi name), probably another building is meant. But Barakāt clearly took interest in this one, too.

<sup>26</sup> This is a gift to a synagogue, in which this person served as a beadle. He is known from a fragmentary court record, TS 12.607, also written by Halfon ha-Levi b. Manasseh, with his Hebrew name Berākhōt b. Amram.

<sup>27</sup> January 26, 1132. {In earlier publications, Goitein ("Last Phase," 22) read the year 1446 E.D. (= 1135 C.E.; when 7 Shevat falls on a Wednesday), and drew some unwarranted conclusions concerning the biography of Halfon ha-Levi b. Nethanel, mentioned in the continuation here.}

<sup>28</sup> Halfon ha-Levi b. Nethanel was a V.I.P., wherefore he is introduced with honorific epithets. He is the subject of chap. 4. {Halfon ha-Levi b. Nethanel served as agent for the Adenese grandees who sent financial assistance to Halfon ha-Levi b. Mannaseh; see II, 33–34, II, 53.

<sup>29</sup> The close association between Halfon ha-Levi b. Nethanel and Ishāq al-Nafūsī is alluded to in IV, 15–II, 42, lines 11, margin, line 6, VI, 26.}

## [Signatures]

(27) Judah ha-Kohen b. Joseph ha-Kohen—*may his end be good!—offspring of Yehōsēf Kohen Sedeq—the memory of the righteous is blessed!*<sup>30</sup>

(28) Zechariah b. Sar Shālōm—*may he rest in Eden!*<sup>31</sup>

(29) ///Halfon ha-Levi b. Manasseh—*may he rest in Eden!!!*

<sup>30</sup> This is Abū Zikrī Kohen, to whom chap. 5 is devoted.

<sup>31</sup> An India trader; see V, 4, margin, line 2, where he travels home in the Kārim flotilla, and VI, 39, lines 19–20, where he is on his way from 'Aydhāb to Fustat; see also the fragmentary VI, 22, line 2. He drowned on a voyage between Aden and India, III, 15, lines 22–25. His father Sar Shālōm Ibn al-Shāmī writes from Aden to Fustat, II, 1, lines 6–7 [see 285, n. 7 on Shāmī], margin, line 6. The full name of this signatory: Zechariah (Arabic [Abū] Zikrī [Yahyā]) b. Sar Shālōm Ibn al-Shāmī. {Abū Zikrī b. al-Shāmī is identified in III, 28a, lines 14, 18, as a *nākhudā*, traveling from Aden to India. For the Kārim flotilla, see 483, n. 28.}

I, 34a *Betrothal between Sitt al-Ahl d. Joseph Lebdi and Her Cousin*

Fustat, November 1118

TS NS 184, fs. 58, 62, 50, 71, 70, 74, 72, 98 (in this order)<sup>1</sup>

A lengthy court record in Halfon ha-Levi b. Manasseh's hand, of which thus far eight fragments have been identified.

Joseph Lebdi had taken his sister and her son, Abraham b. Isaac, into his house, where the latter, while visiting his mother, had frequent opportunity to see his cousin Sitt al-Ahl ('Mistress of the family'). After both Joseph and his sister had died, such visits were no longer good etiquette, but Abraham wished "to remain connected with the house of his uncle."<sup>2</sup> He and two friends, with a notable as spokesman, came to see Joseph's widow and proposed to her daughter Sitt al-Ahl. The widow {Jamī' '[Mistress of] All,' line 11} was reluctant and wished to wait until her son (Abu 'l-Barakāt) would return from a protracted voyage. But the notable was insistent. After having gone so far as to propose, he could not leave without having achieved something; a betrothal should be arranged, while the wedding would take place after Barakāt's return. At this impasse, the mother {agreed, and it was then} suggested that they take up the matter with the girl herself. After {presumably} having heard many laudatory words, Sitt al-Ahl agreed. Abraham, in the presence of his friends and Sitt al-Ahl's mother {and another (young) brother of Sitt al-Ahl (line 22)}, produced two rings of gold and one of silver, as well as five dinars. She accepted the gift and declared: 'I betroth myself to him.'<sup>3</sup> Fourteen months then passed before our document was written. Abraham's friends testify in court that Sitt al-Ahl had accepted his gifts

<sup>1</sup> {See on this document Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 3:31 (no. 11), 73–74, 434, n. 80, 442, no. 20; 4:268, 449, n. 35. I have repositioned some of the fragments, and contrary to what is written there, the document, except for a few words and the signatures, is complete. Subsequently, a few minor adjustments have been made in the following description. Shvitiel and Niessen, *Arabic Manuscripts*, 182, lists TS NS 184, f. 78, as an additional fragment of this contract. That item, however, is a fragment of another document, written by the same scribe, Halfon ha-Levi b. Menasseh, and has no connection to this one.

<sup>2</sup> While Abraham is quoted as having wanted 'to be with them' (line 10), he first said (lines 9–10): 'I desire to be joined with (*ittiṣāl bi-*, often used for marriage) the daughter of my maternal uncle.'

<sup>3</sup> According to Jewish (unlike Islamic) law a girl who comes of age may marry 'whom she likes.' In reality, of course, matters were different. {The bride's recital of this formula, *qad qaddastuhu nafsi*, is quite exceptional and merits further attention.}