

I, 39 *Last Will of Abu 'l-Barakāt b. Abu 'l-Riḍā Lebdi*

Fustat, August 9, 1227

ENA 2558, f. 14

Deathbed declaration of 'Abu 'l-Barakāt b. Joseph, known as Ibn al-Lebdi,¹ entitled *al-shaykh al-sadīd*, the sound, reliable elder,¹ made in the presence of two {or three} of his sons and of the partner in his sugar factory. This large document is damaged to such an extent that no consecutive story can be reconstructed. But several interesting points do emerge. For instance, when reminded that according to Jewish law the firstborn was entitled to a double share (Deuteronomy 21:17), the dying man replied: "I do not prefer one child over another." He and his partner declared that they trusted each other completely; Abu 'l-Barakāt's account books would speak for him after his death.² At the end, a large bag with *ūd*, aromatic wood, was brought in, a purse with gold was put into it;³ the bag was laid into a Rūmī, or European,⁴ chest, which was locked, and the key was put into the hand of the dying man.

¹ Common in that period, but mostly given to physicians and government officials; see, e.g., Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 2:355 (lower officials); 508, sec. 139; 577, n. 30 (physicians); 605, n. 3; 609, n. 11, bottom (officials). {See the further discussion of this honorific, *al-sadīd*, *ibid.*, 5:270-71, 582, nn. 77-80 (on pages 271, 582, n. 79, it is suggested that Maimonides was also called *al-sadīd*, but as shown in Friedman, "Did Maimonides Teach Medicine?" the intended party was evidently Moses b. Perahyā Yijū). Among the India Book documents, it also appears in II, 66, line 5 (a physician); II, 73, line 9 (a Qadi); III, 37, line 2. Also Bilāl b. Jarīr, the governor of Aden, was given this honorific; see the note to II, 28, line 19. A search of *EL*² demonstrates that many Muslim notables were called al-Sadīd, an abbreviation of Sadīd al-Dawla, the *Sadīd* of the State, Sadīd al-Mulk, S. of the Kingdom, or Sadīd al-Dīn, S. of the Faith.

² "Whatever my account books (*daftars*), in my handwriting, contain, in his credit or his debit, will be calculated and acted upon accordingly, and he should be paid whatever the accounting indicates" (lines 23-24). On use of the merchant's account book as legal evidence, see 202, n. 22.}

³ Various sums had been mentioned before, but cannot be safely identified with 'the aforementioned gold' noted here.

⁴ {Arabic Rūm, adj. Rūmī, is defined by Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 1:43: "originally designating Byzantium, but used regularly for Christian Europe and its peoples in general well into the twelfth century." Elsewhere, Goitein translates Rūmī: 'European,' 'Byzantine,' 'Greek' and 'Italian'; see Diem, *Dictionary*, 87-88. Jacoby, "Byzantine Trade," 27-29, documents the continued use, at least through the second half of the thirteenth century, of Rūm for Byzantium or the (Christian) West; sometimes the exact intention can be determined by context.}

ūd is a precious Oriental product, but there is no reason to assume that Abu 'l-Barakāt II brought it himself from the countries of the Indian Ocean. No. I, 40 shows, however, that he traded also in goods other than sugar and sugar products.