

I, 4–5 *Third Session of the Rabbinical Court of Fustat*

Fustat, April 8, 1098

I, 4. ULC Add. 3421

I, 5. Bodl. MS. Heb. d. 66 (Cat. 2878), fol. 64

It is common that parts of a Geniza document are preserved in different libraries (see Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 1:8–9; 3:96). I, 4 is written on ULC Add. 3421v, below I, 2. No. I, 5, is written on verso (!) of the manuscript. On recto is I, 6.

Five months had passed since the opening session of this lawsuit. Clearly the parties waited for the arrival of the consignments expected from Yemen (I, 2v, lines 3–4) or, at least, for a messenger sent by Ḥasan b. Bundār, representative of the merchants in Aden (I, 10–11, 13). When neither arrived, the litigation was renewed.

The session was devoted entirely to the textiles carried by Joseph Lebdi for Jekuthiel (I, 1, lines 5–21; verso, lines 10–13), and some new interesting details emerge. In most cases, however, Lebdi did not remember the details. As we learn from I, 9v, lines 10–11 (June 1098), his accounts were buried beneath the heavy baskets of indigo in Jekuthiel's warehouse.¹

Translation

[I, 4] (1–6) Date, place, parties, and reference to the opening session.

(7) Mr. Joseph said:

Of the textiles given to me I sold in Dahlak forty pieces,² (8) each piece for $\frac{7}{8}$ good dinars. I sold the rest (9) for exactly 60 good dinars. Of these I sold five (10) pieces,³ each piece for two Mālīkī⁴ dinars. A sixth (of a dinar) is to be deducted from these for //customs//, and one *qirāt* [$\frac{1}{24}$ d.] (11) for brokerage.⁵ The exchange rate of the Mālīkī in Aden was 22 for 10 good (Egyptian dinars).

¹ As from here the documents belonging to this lawsuit are not docketed anymore.

² The white, 'raw' (not fulled) kerchiefs mentioned in I, 1, lines 9–10 [there called *ihram*, which is mentioned below, I, 5, line 8].

³ The grayish-blue *fiṭās*, I, 1, 10–11.

⁴ More common: Mālīkī (with short *a*), 'royal.' The value of the Adenese dinar noted here is exceptionally high. [See Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 4:419, n. 366. Lowick, *Coinage*, chaps. 1, 7, "extant *maliki* dinars average 2.38 grammes... of poor quality gold... prolific output of *maliki* dinars at Aden," etc.; 3:262 ff.]

⁵ Referring to the price of each piece. The customs paid amounted to one-twelfth and the brokerage to one-forty-eighth of the price.

(12) Mr. Jekuthiel questioned Mr. Joseph about the number of textiles he had received. He answered: (13) "I remember only the amount of the forty pieces mentioned before."⁶ Then (14) Jekuthiel inquired about the two (matching) half-mantles, which were among the textiles, and the price obtained for them. Joseph replied: [I, 5] (1) "I do not know for how much I sold those. Anyhow, their price is included in the aforementioned 60 dinars." Asked also (2) about the *mulā'a* wrap,⁷ which was among the textiles, he said:

He did not give me a *mulā'a* wrap, but (3) a Dabīqī kerchief of seven cubits,⁸ which I supplied with borders on my own account and sold; (4) the price is included in the total amount of 60 dinars obtained for the textiles.

[(4–11). Questioned about the *fiṭās* Joseph insisted that their prices were included in the total of 60 dinars.]

(12) When asked about the Sūsī Rūsī *fiṭā*,⁹ he replied: "I know that this (13) was among the textiles. I sold it for 30 //good// dinars, one *qirāt* more or less; (14) //included in the 60 (d.)//." Asked also about a complete broad Maghrebi *fiṭā*,¹⁰ he replied: "I sold it; (15) included in the 60 (d.)." When asked about a *muthallath* ('triple-thread' fabric) half-*thawb* (robe),¹¹ he replied:

I know nothing (16) of a *muthallath* ('triple-thread' fabric). It was a piece of cloth, in which the textiles were packed, of Farsī material,¹² stained¹³

⁶ The question obviously concerned the pieces sold in Dahlak.

⁷ I, 1, lines 7–8.

⁸ {'Kerchief,' Arabic *mandil*. For this common item, see references in Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 6:67 (cf. Diem, *Dictionary*, 209); Jacoby, "What We Learn," 85; Rosenthal, *Four Essays*, 63–99; id., "Mandil." 'Of seven cubits,' Arabic *subā'ī*. See page 176, n. 14.]

⁹ See I, 1, line 8.

¹⁰ No. I, 1, line 11, lacks 'broad Maghrebi.'

¹¹ See I, 1, line 12. 'Half-robe,' Arabic *nisf thawb* [see I, 1, lines 11–12, and page 169, n. 11].

¹² A material, as the context here shows, inferior in quality to 'three-thread.' In ENA 3738, f. 11, lines 10–11, a poor merchant orders "ten Farsī and ten white robes, *thawb*." In TS 12.335, line 4, the writer received a bale, *idl*, of Farsī, and sold it well "before the arrival of the ships." Ibid., verso, line 15, he reports, that the 'Master of the Market' in Tyre, Lebanon, had sent (to Alexandria) about fifty bundles, *nizma*, of Farsī for the Qadi 'Imād of Tripoli, Lebanon. Thus, Farsī should be understood as a material (originally) manufactured in the province of Fars ('Persia') Iran. {Perhaps the Arabic can be translated here: "The only *muthallath* ('triple-thread' fabric) of which I know was a piece of cloth, in which the Farsī textiles were packed."}

¹³ Arabic *muṭabba'*, see Dozy, *Supplément*, 2:21b.

(17) and torn. I took something from it and lined with it a leather bag.¹⁴ (18) The remainder is in Aden; a turban of mine is wrapped in it.¹⁵ There was also (19) a loincloth, worth about one Egyptian silver dirhem, (20) which was fastened around the wrapping.¹⁶

The proceedings have been written down, etc.

Written between the lines: {add: 'din.' [I, 5, line 6],} 'good' (I, 5, line 13) 'included in the 60' (line 14). *All confirmed as being correct.*¹⁷ *Crossed out words are not to be taken into account.*¹⁸

Isaac b. R. Samuel—*may he rest in Eden!* /// Hillel b. R. Eli—*may his memory be blessed!*¹⁹ /// Abraham b. Shema'ya, etc.

¹⁴ Arabic *kinf julūd*, leather bag for utensils; the lining is for their protection.

¹⁵ On his way back from India, Joseph Lebdi did not touch Aden. Together with goods, some personal belongings had remained there.

¹⁶ This sounds to us like a sarcastic anticipation of being 'questioned' about such a trifle. But it may reflect the principle *taḥābabū wa-taḥāsabū*, "love each other, but make exact accounts"; see Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 1:183. {The wrapping, Arabic *lifāfa*, is also mentioned in I, 14, line 42; also see II, 44v, line 12. Piamenta, *Dictionary*, 451, defines it as a type of material. Cf. *liffa* in I, 1v, line 20.}

¹⁷ And not added after the documents had been signed. The supralinear 'customs' in I, 4, line 10, is not noted, probably because it is written on another sheet {or was accordingly overlooked}.

¹⁸ The crossed out words are found in I, 5, lines 19–20: "He asked him also about half."

¹⁹ See his signature to I, 2, end, and the accompanying note.

I, 6–7 *Fourth Session of the Rabbinical Court of Fustat*

Fustat, April 12, 1098

I, 6. Bodl. MS. Heb. d. 66 (Cat. 2878), fol. 64

I, 7. Bodl. MS. Heb. d. 66 (Cat. 2878), fol. 65

No. I, 6, is written on recto (!) of the manuscript. On verso is I, 5.

This Monday morning session followed immediately that of I, 4–5, which was held on the preceding Thursday. For regular business, the courts convened only on Mondays and Thursdays (see Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 2:342–43). In this session the questioning of Joseph Lebdi was concluded. The precision of Lebdi's deposition concerning the use of the 20 dinars given to him for transport expenses stands out against his evasiveness with regard to the sale of the textiles, shown in I, 4–5. No doubt he kept the accounts for those cash expenses with him. They totaled 23 dinars. In view of the many changes made by Joseph in the arrangements envisaged by Jekuthiel, it is noteworthy that a representative of the merchants in Fustat could calculate expenses for transport, customs, and other dues through two Nile ports, two Red Sea ports, Aden, and all the way to India with considerable exactness. He was probably aided in this by Joseph Lebdi, who, when undertaking the voyage described in these pages, was no longer a novice in this type of extended ventures.

The data provided in I, 6–7, fortunately complement the statements made in the opening session, I, 1–2; together, they vividly illustrate the realities a medieval trader had to face while en route to India.¹

Translation

[I, 6] (1) *On Monday, the eighth day of the month of Iyyar, 1409 E.D.*, (2) Mr. Jekuthiel, *who is mentioned* on the reverse side of this sheet, appeared in court and sued Mr. Joseph, (3) who is also mentioned together with him (overleaf), for a bale of [[liche]]² dry storax weighing (4) 380 *manns*,

¹ Yet, if compared with the detailed *written* account of the actual expenses for the transport of a bale of purple cloth from Fustat to Tunisia, described in Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 1:339–43, the oral depositions of Joseph Lebdi reproduced here must be regarded as a highly abbreviated summary. Despite the multitude of items, the calculation of the purple-maker sending that consignment was off the mark by only slightly more than one percent; see *ibid.*, 342, n. 12.

² See I, 1, line 21.