

II, 20 Letter from Maḍmūn b. Ḥasan to Abraham Ben Yijū

Aden, 1133

TS 20.130

Only the first two or three lines are missing, but the letter is badly mutilated by holes, water damage, and smudging. The width is 12.3 cm., that is, wider than the previous letters. Of the length, 45 cm. are preserved; the paper is woolly, and light gray. The script is that of Maḍmūn's clerk, as in II, 13–15, but smaller and slightly more cursive.

The beginning of the letter is lost; consequently the address is missing, since it was customary to write the address on the verso, opposite the beginning of the letter. The assumption that it was sent by Maḍmūn to Ben Yijū is based on the following considerations:

- (1) The script. This is not absolute proof; Maḍmūn's clerk might have served another merchant, although that is unlikely.
- (2) The two ports on the west coast of India where Ben Yijū used to live, Mangalore (lines 23, 31, verso, line 5) and Pandarā'inā (line 25 [see note there]), are repeatedly referred to.
- (3) In line 29, a shipment is to be delivered to Abraham b. Fayyūmī, as Ben Yijū does in II, 24v, line 1; cf. III, 22v, lines 1–5.
- (4) There is no doubt that the *nākhudā* Abū Sa'īd to whom Ben Yijū gave a detailed account when both were in India (see II, 26, lines 3–10), is none other than Abū Sa'īd b. Maḥfūz, who is mentioned here, too, without his patronymic, lines 23, 39, and verso, line 13 (together with the patronymic, lines 15, 30, and verso, lines 5, 8).
- (5) We have here precisely the same dealings, order of matters, and tone, which we find in Maḍmūn's other letters to Ben Yijū. Various details recur, e.g., the ships of the *nākhudā* Rāmishṭ (see II, 16, lines 3, 47, and II, 26, line 10), or, e.g., the commodity *drky*, only mentioned here, line 13, in II, 21, line 5, in II, 24, line 25, in II, 27, line 5 {and in II, 30, lines 13–14}, which are also letters from Maḍmūn to Ben Yijū.
- (6) As regards Maḍmūn, we hear from other sources that he used to fit out ships, see II, 14v, line 13 ff., II, 32, lines 22–23, as here, verso, line 4.
- (7) Most or all letters by Maḍmūn sent to India, which have been identified thus far, are addressed to Ben Yijū.¹

¹ {Note that some of the expressions, which appear here, occur elsewhere in Khalaf b. Isaac's correspondence with Ben Yijū, but not Maḍmūn's; see notes to lines 1, 2 and 4. For a phrase peculiar to Maḍmūn's letters, see verso, line 10 and 336, n. 45.}

Summary of the Accounts in sections [B] and [C]

To Ben Yijū's credit:

Pepper bought with his money	30 <i>bahārs</i>
Less cash received by him	–4 <i>bahārs</i>
Less Maḍmūn's commission	–1 <i>bahār</i>
Balance	25 <i>bahārs</i>
Plus the value of the <i>drky</i>	+1 <i>bahār</i> , 250 pounds
Less the share of Sheikh Abū Sa'īd	–9 <i>bahārs</i>

Balance	17 <i>bahārs</i> , 250 pounds, large measure
which is equal to	21 <i>bahārs</i> , 70 pounds, small measure

Sold after deduction of auctioneer's fee for	783 <i>Malikī dinars</i>
Less cost of customs, baskets, porters	–159½ <i>Malikī dinars</i>
Balance	623¾ <i>Malikī dinars</i>

Debit:	
Sugar	5 <i>Malikī dinars</i>
Copper/brass	102 <i>Malikī dinars</i>
100 Egyptian mithqāls (dinars), worth	235 <i>Malikī dinars</i>
260 Zabīdī dinars, worth	260 <i>Malikī dinars</i>
Dhū Jibla dinars, worth	21¾ <i>Malikī dinars</i>
Total:	623¾ <i>Malikī dinars</i>

{For the dating of the letter, see the note to line 9.}

Translation

[A. Receipt of a letter and expression of regret about Ben Yijū's sufferings during his voyage]

[The letter of my lord, the most illustrious sheikh, arrived—may God make permanent your honored position, etc. . . . and bestow upon you] (1) all the gifts [He has destined for you.] {alt. tr.: [May He protect for your sake] (1) that which is most suitable of all He has conferred upon

you.² [...] and may He] crush [those who en]vy [you]! (2) It was a most gladdening letter and a most delightful message; your servant read it and was made happy³ by reading it. (3) I (humbly) ask Him whose power is exalted to grant us in His mercy a reunion quickly, in (4) the near future, under joyful circumstances, when things are going well {alt. tr.: and excellent, pleasant conditions}.⁴

(5) From what you mentioned—may God preserve your honored position!—your servant learned about your troubles (6) and discomfort on the sea⁵ and otherwise; I ask God—may He be exalted!—to make the outcome (7) good.

[B. Accounts for Ben Yijū's pepper and *drky*]

The pepper that had been bought for you,⁶ which you mentioned (in your letter), amounts to (8) thirty *bahārs*; of this you received by your own hand here in Aden—may God preserve it!—(9) in the year 526,⁷ 56 dinars (10) for four *bahārs*,⁸ leaving you 26 *bahārs*. (11) (From this) one

² Complemented according to III, 10, lines 2–5, to which the remnants visible here fit. {Line 1 begins with the words *ṣāliḥ mā aw(lāhu)*. Goitein restored here the preceding words as *wa-manna 'alayhi*; similarly in III, 10, line 4 (see 596, n. 7), he restored *wa-manna*. However, from III, 15, line 8 and IV, 13, line 5, it is clear that the first word is to be restored *wa-ḥarasa*. This phrase has not been found in any of the letters written by Maḍmūn. In the India Book papers I have found it only in these three other letters, all written by Khalaf b. Isaac (III, 10 and III, 15 are both addressed to Ben Yijū).

³ Arabic *masrūr*. This particular expression of joy at reading a letter received appears also in III, 3 (fgt. A), line 3; III, 10, 7; III, 15, line 10; IV, 13, line 8 (all from Khalaf b. Isaac); II, 42–IV, 15, line 2 (from Joseph b. Abraham); IV, 64, line 5; IV, 65, line 3.

⁴ Arabic *muwājaha*... *'alā 'l-aḥwāl al-sār'a wal-umūr al-ḥasana al-qār'a*. *Muwājaha*, 'meeting,' is used by Khalaf b. Isaac in IV, 19 (and by a later Adenese merchant in II, 65, line 8). *Al-sār'a* also means 'calm.' The same rhymed parallel with the former expression, *al-sār'a... al-qār'a*, also appears in II, 56, line 9, written for Maḥrūz b. Jacob by Ben Yijū.

⁵ On the journey from Aden to India. {This presumably refers to Ben Yijū's first journey to India.}

⁶ Maḍmūn had agents and business friends on the west coast of India, who bought pepper for his Mediterranean customers, just as had been done for his father Ḥasan b. Būdār before him; see I, 1v, lines 6–7; I, 2, lines 10–13, and passim in chap. 1.

⁷ The year 526 A.H. = Nov. 23, 1131–Nov. 11, 1132 C.E. Since Maḍmūn closes here the account for the preceding seafaring season, our letter was written in 1133. For 'closing the account,' see Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 1:451, n. 81. {Ben Yijū was established already in India sometime before Oct. 17, 1132; see III, 17.}

⁸ Ben Yijū received 14 dinars per *bahār*; a year later (in 1133) the price was 37 dinars (see line 20). The excessively low price of 14 dinars in 1132 is to be explained by the assumption that the pepper arrived in Aden when the Egyptian merchants had already sailed home. No one would offer pepper (or anything else) for sale at such a time. {Cf. II, 23, lines 23–28.} But Ben Yijū needed that money for his trip to India.

bahār is to be deducted for 'the share,'⁹ as is the case with all merchants who have pepper bought for them, (12) leaving you after the discount¹⁰ 25 *bahārs*; (13) for the value of the *drky*¹¹ a *bahār* and 250 (pounds), of large measure. Total: (14) 26 *bahārs* 250 pounds.

From this the following deductions had to be made: (15) nine *bahārs* of large measure¹² for Sheikh Abū Sa'īd b. Maḥfūz,¹³ (16) leaving 17 *bahārs* and two hundred and fifty pounds, (17) that is, twenty-one *bahārs* and seventy pounds of small measure. The 'ūthe,¹⁴ (18) the baskets of palm leaves, and the porter—159½ dinars.

⁹ Arabic *qist*, the commission taken by Maḍmūn for pepper bought for other merchants in India. It amounted to 5%, see margin, below. The words *qist*, share, and *qust*, costus (see page 256, n. 10), are spelled in the Geniza either with *s* (which is correct), or, for phonetic reasons, with *ṣ*. Here, in line 11, *ṣ* was changed into *s* {or vice versa}, but in line 55 the clerk forgot to make the correction. {The reference to loss (below, page 335) associated with pepper seems to be related to the shipwrecks mentioned there. Accordingly, perhaps *qist* here is to be understood as *taqsit*, the sharing of loss from shipwrecked or jettisoned cargo; see page 163, n. 40.}

¹⁰ Arabic *musāmaha*. Ben Yijū, as a new customer, received a considerable discount; he was charged for thirty *bahārs* only one *bahār* (instead of one-and-a-half, which would have been 5%). Moreover, Maḍmūn certainly recognized that Ben Yijū was a capable and reliable person and, as their correspondence shows, entrusted him with many errands. {For the *samāha* (!), see Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 1:196 ff.}

¹¹ When we learn here that Ben Yijū had imported *drky* to Aden and when Maḍmūn reports in II, 24, line 25, below (a letter sent from Aden to India) that "no *drky* has arrived this year," it is evident that this was a commodity traveling from west to east. The *Mulakhkhas al-Fitan* (see List of Works Cited) notes indeed, *al-drky al-'qrby al-Dahlakī*, imported from Dahlak on the southwestern coast of the Red Sea (communication by R. B. Serjeant). In II, 21, lines 4–5, Maḍmūn sends to Ben Yijū (from Aden to India) "one-and-a-half *bahārs* of *drky*, costing 24½ (Malikā) dinars, inclusive of the cost of the wickerwork basket and the exit toll." In the fragmentary letter II, 27, lines 5–7, the mighty general and businessman Bilāl b. Jarīr, repeatedly Maḍmūn's partner in commercial ventures, buys all the *drky* for himself, and it seems that the merchandise had been sent by the ruler of Dahlak, mentioned ib., line 3. Price and quantity (ca. 450 pounds) show that the *drky* was an important item of the India trade. The manner of packing in a wickerwork basket and the notation of weight (not of the number of pieces) suggest that this was a coarse natural product, not a shipment of textiles.

¹² For the two types of the standard weight *bahār* see 322, n. 4.

¹³ Abū Sa'īd b. Maḥfūz (in Hebrew Ḥalfōn b. Shemaryā) Ibn Jamāhir (or, rather: Jumayhir), mentioned in this letter seven times (lines 15, 23, 30, 39, verso, lines 5, 8, 13) was a prominent Egyptian India trader and public figure. See Goitein, *Letters*, 336. {For this Ibn Jamāhir, see further id., *Yemenites*, 366 (Index), and esp. 69, n. 15, where the Arabic and Hebrew names are identified as referring to the same person; id., *Med. Soc.*, 6:48; II, 7v, line 4, II, 24v, line 17; IV, 15–II, 42, lines 23–24; II, 70, above, pages 149–50.} Since no explanation is given here, the delivery to him of a part of Ben Yijū's pepper (instead of cash) had been prearranged. Abū Sa'īd probably had ordered the pepper sent on to Egypt at the beginning of the next seafaring season.

¹⁴ {Arabic *'ushūr*; see II, 16, line 11 and page 322, n. 6.}

(19) I sold the pepper for you at the highest price obtained by anyone, namely, for (20) 37 (dinars) per *bahār*.¹⁵ The total {alt. tr.: proceeds}, after (the fee of) the auctioneer, (21) is 783 dinars, leaving you (22) 623¼ dinars.

[C. Shipments to him of sugar, copper/brass, Egyptian dinars, and Yemenite gold coins from various mints]

You owe (23) the price of the sugar, which is to be delivered (to you) by Sheikh Abū Sa'īd in Mangalore, (24) five dinars. In the ship of the *nākhudā* Rāmish, I sent for you (25) to Pandarā'inā (Fandarayna)¹⁶ with the *nākhudā* Aḥmad b. Bakhtiyār a bag of (26) red copper;¹⁷ the number: ten pieces; the weight: a *bahār* and a half; (27) the price: 102 dinars. Also, they exempted me from freight charges.¹⁸ (28) Please take delivery of this from the *nākhudā* Aḥmad b. Bakhtiyār.¹⁹ He also has (29) a bag of copper for Sheikh Abraham b. Fayyūmī.²⁰

¹⁵ Other prices at approximately the same time: 34 dinars (II, 16, line 9); 30 dinars (II, 14v, lines 3–5); 23 dinars (II, 23, line 28) {38 dinars (IV, 15–II, 42, line 27); [3]7 dinars (in II, 65, margin, line 4, where it is described as a high price, about 1180); later in 1199, 45 dinars (II, 66v, line 6)}.

¹⁶ Spelled *fnḍrynh*, present day Pantalāyini, south of Cannanore, often mentioned since pepper was exported from there. See Maqbul Ahmad, *India*, 83. {Also identified as Pantalāyini Kollam and Panderani; see Nainar, *Arab Geographers*, 34–35; Tibbetts, *Arab Navigation*, 199, 201, 457, 458; Maqbul Ahmad, "Hind," 406b. Goitein's transcription Pandarā'inā shows the similarity with the modern toponyms (see below). The usual spelling in the Arabic sources is *fnḍrynh* (in Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's account, however, it is spelled with final *ḥ*; see below). Exactly this spelling, *fnḍrynh*, is used elsewhere in the India Book papers (III, 10, line 24; III, 18, sec. A, lines 4, 7; but in sec. E, line 5, it is *fnḍryn*—Abraham Ben Yijū, the writer of that text often spells *tā marbūṭa* with *alif*; for spelling *alif*, i.e., *alif maqṣūra*, for *tā marbūṭa* in Judeo-Arabic texts, see Blau, *Grammar*, 44). Both Nainar and Tibbetts transcribe Fandarāina, rather than Fandarayna. This is not only dissimilar to the assumed modern identifications but is disproved by the spelling here (II, 20, line 25), which suggests that *a* follows *r*.

¹⁷ Arabic *ṣufr*. For the meaning of this term, see page 555, n. 11.

¹⁸ Since Maḍmūn was also a shipowner, the freight for the comparatively small shipment was waived, in the expectation that this favor would be reciprocated occasionally. Ben Yijū is reminded that he owes this saving to Maḍmūn.

¹⁹ Rāmish was the proprietor of the ship and Aḥmad b. Bakhtiyār ('Lucky,' Persian) its captain or overseer-bursar. For other Persians connected with seafaring, see page 206, n. 6. {On Goitein's interpretation that *nākhudā* means here 'overseer-brusar' (purser), see the discussion in page 126. For Bakhtiyār the ship's captain see II, 23, line 43.}

²⁰ See II, 24v, lines 1–2 {and III, 22v, lines 4–5} and accompanying notes, where he is also mentioned.

I sent (30) to you with Sheikh Abū Sa'īd b. Maḥfūz, in the ship (31) al-Mubārak,²¹ to Mangalore—may God ordain his {alt. tr.: its} safe arrival!—100 Egyptian (32) *mithqāls*,²² worth 253 dinars, and also with him (33) 260 Zabīdī dinars, matching Malikī (dinars) in weight.²³ (34) I have also sent you some fine Jiblī *niṣāfi* (half-dinars)²⁴ [...] (35) a weight of 21¼ dinars, a total of [...] (36) [...] 623¼ dinars [...] (37) My lord, please take delivery of this from the two aforementioned (people) [...]

[D. Business from Ben Yijū's previous letters; Maḍmūn regrets that he was unable to fill some orders]

(38) You had mentioned that I would get the legal document signed {alt. tr.: written} by you²⁵ fr[om] (39) Abū Sa'īd. I have already received this. As for what you had mentioned ab[out] (40) [...] that you did not r]eceive it from me in Aden for the value of the pepper, (41) my lord's account is wrong—you only imagine it. I have the list. (42) [What is (written) in the a]ccount book {alt. tr.: ...imagine it. What is written with me [in the a]ccount book} is more exact.²⁶

Concerning your orders to purchase (43) various items,²⁷ you know, my lord, of all the responsibilities I have {alt. tr.: of all my preoccupations}²⁸

²¹ {Maḍmūn's new ship, which sailed the Aden-Mangalore route. See verso, lines 4–6; II, 55, line 45 (see there for the translation in the continuation here 'its'). For the names of this and other Indian Ocean ships, see page 141 (n. 82), 159 (n. 18).}

²² Used here, as in II, 16v, line 15–16, in the sense of (Egyptian) dinars.

²³ On the turbulent history of Zabīd, the capital city of the flat land on the west coast of Yemen, at the time of the writing of this letter, see Chelhod, "Zabīd," 59–63. Matching in weight: Arabic *murātala bil-malikiyya*; see Lane, *Dictionary*, s.v., *ṛṭl*.

²⁴ For Dhū Jibla, then the capital of southern Yemen, see II, 35, III, 31–33, and 38, VII, 64.

²⁵ Arabic *al-ḥujja 'llatī bi-khaṭṭih*, which could also mean 'written by you.' {In my opinion the latter translation is preferable; for 'signed by,' one would expect ... '*alayhā khaṭṭuh*.'} Ben Yijū was an accomplished scholar and calligrapher.

²⁶ Arabic *daftar*. Reading uncertain. Account books were admitted in Jewish (and Muslim) courts of that period as supporting evidence. Cf. I, 13, fol. 67v, line 11. {See 202, n. 22. 'I have the list' translates *wal-thabt 'indi*. Goitein restored *wa-inna mā* at the beginning of line 42, but the lacuna seems too small to have accommodated this phrase. For the alternative translation, which I have suggested, cf. VI, 26 line 3, *wa-huwa mathbūt fi daftarihī*, 'it is written in his (Maḍmūn's) account book.'}

²⁷ Arabic *tafāriq*. {According to Piamenta, *Dictionary*, 373, *tafāriq* is plural of *tafriqa*, meaning retail business, which suggests here: retail items. The term also appears in II, 23, line 50; II, 24, line 23, verso, line 20; II, 46, line 31; III, 10, margin; III, 21a, lines 4, 8.

²⁸ Arabic *ashghāl*. Maḍmūn was also the representative of merchants and Nagid. Cf. II, 26v, line 5, where he also comments on his preoccupation with *ashghāl*. In II, 6v, line 6, we read of the Egyptian Nagid Mevōrākh's preoccupation with the affairs (*ashghāl*) of state.

besides (44) (the business of) the ships, and this is something which takes time. Especially in this (45) year, no imports²⁹ arrived from Zabīd until the ships had sailed (from here), (46) since they had remained in their city to celebrate the holiday, and then {alt. tr.: and will} set sail from (47) Zabīd after the holiday.³⁰ Gl[ass] also is n[ot to be found] in Aden.³¹ (48–50) [...] ³² (51) [...] this [...], God willing. As for what you mentioned (52) [...] to buy silver for the value of the pepper, but nothing has been heard (53) [...] {alt. tr.: (52) [...] about buying} silver from the proceeds of the pepper, nothing prevented me³³ (53) [from buying] the silver, except that it was expensive—five dirhems (weight) (54) [of silver, costing—x] dinar(s), but {alt. tr.: and} I didn't dare to buy you this at that (55) [price.³⁴ As for] the 'share,' which I charged you for the pepper (56) [...], I reduced it a great deal, since the sum of all amounted to [Margin] [...] ³⁵ of the merchants.../There is an agreement between me and them that of every one hundred *bahārs* of large measure (they receive) 95 *bahārs*.³⁶

²⁹ Arabic *jilāb* also means 'small boats'; see the note to II, 29, line 12. Likewise, the word could be vocalized *jallāb*, which means 'wholesale merchant'; see Piamenta, *Dictionary*, 70.

³⁰ Zabīd is situated inland. For its port city of Ghulayfiqa see III, 25. By 'holiday' (Arabic *īd*) certainly a Muslim holiday is intended, namely the festival of the breaking of the fast of Ramaḍān, which, in 1133, fell on July 26. Normally, our letter presumes, the merchants of Zabīd did business in Aden, before sailing to India. That year, because of the delay caused by Ramaḍān, they sailed directly to India. Hence goods manufactured in Zabīd and ordered by Ben Yijū, were not available in Aden that year.

³¹ Glass vessels were sent regularly from Aden to India, either as merchandise or as presents.

³² {The text of these lines is too fragmentary to translate. Perhaps the word *ṭkhhbb* in line 48 is connected with al-Lakhaba, a place not far from Aden where glass was produced; see II, 26, line 7.

³³ For Goitein's *fa-lam yusma'*, I read: *fa-lam yamna'ni*.

³⁴ About the scarcity and hence the high price of silver; see V, 14, line 8. However, in another letter of Maḍmūn to Ben Yijū, he noted that he did send to him silver bars worth about one dinar per five dirhem weights, II, 26, lines 15–16.

³⁵ Approximately 20 words are missing.

³⁶ See the notes to lines 11–12, above. The Mediterranean merchants buying pepper through Maḍmūn paid him for 100 *bahārs*, but received only 95, that is, granted him a commission of 5%.

[E. Losses suffered by Maḍmūn and associates; fitting out of a new ship, *al-Mubārak* (the Blessed), to sail from Aden to Mangalore in southern India]

I incurred losses on ships in this business of pepper belonging to the merchants and on expenses for the ship's equipment, for which I paid {alt. tr.: and for the loss of the tolls³⁷ for the ship that we paid}, approximately 4,000 dinars.³⁸ There has not occurred to anyone such a thing. {alt. tr.: No one ever suffered such a calamity.} And all [...] [Verso] (1) [...] May God], the Exalted, recompense and replace what has been lost! And after this (2) [so-and-so] paid me 2,100 dinars for the ship, a price (3) {alt. tr.: the highest bid³⁹ absolutely [unheard of]}. He did not accept this, but charged me with (4) [...] I asked God], the Exalted, [for guidance and] fitted out the ship (5)—the [Mubāra]k—which will sail to Mangalore under the supervision of Sheikh Abū Sa'īd b. Maḥfūz [lit., 'I outfitted the ship...through the agency of Sheikh...to Mangalore'].⁴¹ (6)—may God ordain his {alt. tr.: its} safe arrival! I have done so dreading that [enemies] (7) and whoever has no good in him would gloat over my misfortune.⁴²

[F. Gifts and greetings]

I sent you with Sheikh (8) Abū Sa'īd b. Maḥfūz half a basket of dates⁴³ and a piece {alt. tr.: unit} of (9) ros[e water]⁴⁴ and two [*rubā*] *īyyas* of

³⁷ {Arabic *mu'an*. See pages 171–72, n. 23.

³⁸ Maliki dinars.

³⁹ I read *thaman* [...] *raqi[ya]* (the latter word was not deciphered by Goitein), for which, cf. Dozy, *Supplément*, 1:550, *raqy* IV: *irqa' al-thaman*, "prix mis par un acheteur."

⁴⁰ It is unfortunate that the beginnings of the first four lines of verso are destroyed. One would like to know who paid 2,100 dinars for the ship; perhaps it was Bilāl b. Jarīr the business partner of Maḍmūn and later ruler of Aden (see the Index).

⁴¹ {Arabic *wa-jahhaztu al-markab...yaday al-shaykh...ilā manjalūr*. It is not clear, whether Abū Sa'īd supervised the sailing, as indicated in Goitein's translation, or was in charge of the merchandise shipped by Maḍmūn and its delivery, as above, lines 29–31, and in the continuation here. On the meaning of *jahhaz*, see 317, n. 29.)

⁴² Maḍmūn wished to show that he was not broken by the great losses incurred. {On gloating over a rival's misfortunes in the Geniza papers, cf. III, 32, lines 23–26, and see Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 5:303–5.}

⁴³ As in II, 16v, line 3. No weight or price, of course is indicated here, since these were presents.

⁴⁴ {Cf. II, 26v, line 12, the same item. Rosewater was imported to India from West Asia; cf. Abraham, *Merchants Guilds*, 178. For its uses, see Lev and Amar, *Medicinal Substances*, 102; Lev, *Medicinal Substances*, 276. For *qit'a*, lit., 'piece' = 'unit,' see page 168, n. 1.}

sugar and raisins. Please be sure to collect this, my lord, (10) and may you think well of your servant!⁴⁵ I shall be glad {alt. tr.: please honor me} to do any errand for you. (11) May you be granted complete well-being and the mercy of (12) [God, and His blessings]! *And peace.*

(13) I sent you with Sheikh Abū Saʿīd a *rubāʿiyya* of soap.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ The same phrase in II, 16v, line 33 {written by Maḍmūn; it has not been found elsewhere in the India Book papers.

⁴⁶ This line is a postscript.} Good soap was precious because it was used for washing clothes, which could easily lose their color if exposed to inferior cleaning agents. Soap was an important article of export from Tunisia to Egypt; it is likely that the soap sent here and in II, 23, line 48; III, 2, margin, line 2, III, 3, line 17; III, 9, line 25, to a Tunisian merchant living in India {Ben Yijū} was made in his native country. {Soap is mentioned by Ben Yijū also in III, 24, line 21; III, 27a, line 12}. The washing of the human body was done with *ushmān* soda ash. See below, 425.

II, 21–24 *Letter from Maḍmūn b. Ḥasan to Abraham Ben Yijū:*
Four Fragments of Three Copies

Aden, {ca.} 1135

II, 21. TS NS J 241

II, 22. TS NS J 240

II, 23. TS 20.137

II, 24. TS NS J 1

No. II, 23, lines 9–22, was published by Goitein, “Kīsh,” with the text transcribed in Arabic characters and translated in English.

The four fragments are connected with one another in the following way:

II, 21, written by Maḍmūn’s clerk (see the introduction to II, 13–15), contains 15½ lines on recto and 10 on verso. The section II, 21, lines 5–16, is identical with II, 22, lines 1–15, which is in the hand of Maḍmūn. No. II, 21v, lines 1–10, the end of the letter, overlaps with II, 24v, lines 12–23, a postscript by Maḍmūn, added to the clean copy II, 24, written by the clerk.¹

II, 23, written by Maḍmūn (50 lines, but missing at the beginning and end), is continued almost immediately in the preserved part of the scribe’s copy II, 24, for the sum of 685 dinars owed by Ben Yijū in II, 23, line 37, is matched by the sums of 653 + 32 dinars owed to him in II, 24, lines 5–6.

Altogether, parts of three copies of the letter have been identified, as follows:

(a1) II, 22. This is a small section of the original written by Maḍmūn that belongs to the opening part of the letter. Although a tiny and much tattered fragment, it is not without value, for the lines 12–18 do not occur in any of the other copies.

Ben Yijū used the blank verso for making notes. Because of the poor state of the manuscript, I did not attempt to decipher them. {These are the same kind of orderly written accounts, only very poorly preserved, as those written on II, 23v, which are presented below as III, 18. One of those written here begins *Ḥisāb ibn khālātī lahu bi-wazn ‘adan khamsīn (?) mithqāl* [...] *btubu minhā fī fāknūr*, “the account of the son of my maternal aunt: To his credit in Adenese weight fifty *mithqāls*, from which I [...] him in Fāknūr (place on the Malabar Coast north of Mangalore; see II, 55, line 36) [...].” The son of Ben Yijū’s maternal aunt is also referred to in III, 18 [E], lines 3–4, 7, where we learn his name: Abu ‘l-Khayr Ibn al-Minqār.}

(a2) II, 23. The main part of the original written by Maḍmūn. Its width is 12.2 cm., almost identical with the width of II, 20. Of its length, 47 cm., comprising 50 lines, have been preserved. There is a gap, perhaps a large

¹ {For sending multiple copies of letters or accounts, see page 9 (n. 23) and below, verso, line 1.