

against [you] in my heart. And you are absolved of blame in the broadest (33) sense of the word,<sup>28</sup> //in this world and the hereafter,// with a pure heart. Likewise, when you write an answer to me, your servant, (34) you should consider me forgiven in this world and in the hereafter. To err is only *human*.<sup>29</sup> (35) By God, my lord, my master, [I, your servant,] was saddened (36) by the paucity of your letters and [...]

[D. Date]

[Margin] (1) Written on the last day of Rajab, (2) year forty-seven.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Arabic *bi-hall wa-awsa' al-hall*.

<sup>29</sup> Arabic *fa'l-khaṣ' lam yakun illā li-vnē ādām*. The Judeo-Arabic-Hebrew wording of this fundamental axiom calls to mind the adage *errare humanum est*, 'to err is human' (cf. Bartlett, *Familiar Quotations*, 133).

<sup>30</sup> See the introduction to the document for the reconstruction of the date.

II, G. *Khalaf b. Isaac b. Bundār, Maḍmūn's Cousin\**

II, 46 *Letter from Khalaf b. Isaac to a Merchant in Egypt: Attack on Aden by the King of Kīsh*

Aden, 1135 {ca. 1136}

TS 18 J 5, f. 5

The following is taken, with slight modifications, from Goitein "Kīsh," 247–57 (on 255 there is a partial publication of the text, transcribed in Arabic characters), for which the brief discussion in Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 5:67–69 should be compared.<sup>1</sup>

Arabic documents containing eyewitness reports on historical events are very rare. They are the more welcome when they complement and illustrate the often very meager literary sources. This is the case with the excerpts from two business letters from the 12th century, one II, 21–24, sent from Aden to India and one, II, 46 from the same town to Cairo. Both passages describe one and the same event: the attack on Aden by a fleet sent by the King of Kīsh with the aim of taking the town or at least a part of it.

Kīsh (Qays)<sup>2</sup> is a small island in the Persian Gulf, situated near the mainland of Iran exactly below 54 E and 26.30 N, being the last island of any size before one reaches the Strait of Hormuz, as one sails from

\* See his letters to Abraham b. Yijū, III, 10–16; Ḥalfon ha-Levi b. Nethanel, IV, {1, 5–8,} 11–14; Abū 'Imrān Mūsā b. Sadaqa Ibn Nufay', VI, 37; 'Allān b. Ḥassūn, VI, 14.

<sup>1</sup> Note that TS 18 J 5, f. 5, in Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 2:588, n. 37, is a misprint for TS 18 J 3, f. 5 and is not related to this document.

<sup>2</sup> This Persian name, which appears today on the maps as Qays, is very differently spelled in Arabic and European sources. See the detailed analysis in Streck, "Qays." In the documents dealing with the events described here, the island is invariably called Kīsh. However, in the literary sources recounting it, the name is spelled *qys* in the narrative and *ks* in the quotation of the words of the sailors coming from that island. This change is obviously intended to show them as speaking Persian. *Q* in *qys* was no doubt pronounced in the Bedouin-South Arabian way as a *g* formed very far back, while *k* in *ks* also represents a *g*, the Persian *g* being written as a *k* with three dots or a stroke superscript, these diacritics, however being often omitted. Thus the actual name of the island probably was 'Guess,' and so indeed it is spelled in some of the accounts of the European travelers who first visited it. See Streck, s.v. A full discussion of the medieval sources on this island is found in Wilson, *The Persian Gulf*, 95–100. {As far as I have seen, the name appears only in II, 23, line 10, and as the pointing of *ψ* indicates there, it was pronounced Kīs (or Kays); see 341, n. 10.}

Iraq along the Persian coast. Its situation made it an ideal maritime stronghold in medieval seafaring conditions and in the 11th century it took the place of Sirāf, the famous emporium of the Abbasid period, as the main centre of commerce between Iraq, Iran, and India—a position which later passed to Hormuz, Bender Abbās and, in the 18th century, Bushire. The geographer Yāqūt, who had visited the island several times on his commercial travels, describes its king as the overlord of that whole sea and as ruler of Oman, and says that he looked like a Persian and dressed like a Dailamite. However, the ruling house of Kīsh was of South Arabian origin, and the king mentioned in II, 23, line 9, had an Arabic name, or at least surname; thus it seems that they adopted the attire of the Buwayhid (Dailamite) rulers of Iraq, the splendor of whose court was emulated by many smaller rulers. Despite the murderous climate of the island (the inconveniences of which were so drastically described by Qazwīnī, 2:167, line 21 ff.), it succeeded, in the 11th and the greater part of the 12th century, in obtaining control of the sea route to India and so attracted a considerable influx of population. Thus, as late as 1176, the Spanish Jewish traveler Benjamin of Tudela reported the presence there of a Jewish community of about 500 families,<sup>3</sup> while the Muslim geographers described it in general terms as a fine, flourishing town.

In these circumstances it is no wonder that the rulers of Kīsh tried to conquer Aden, the great *entrepôt* of the Egyptian, East African, and Indian trade, the port duties of which formed a most lucrative source of revenue. We learn, for example, from the section of II, 46 devoted to business that the duty on pepper, the main Indian commodity, amounted to one-third of its price. In order to illustrate the enormous wealth, which a capable governor of Aden could amass, I give a few details about the estate of the freedman Bilāl b. Jarīr, who administered Aden for the royal house of the Zuray'ids approximately between 1139 and 1151/2.<sup>4</sup> He left, according to 'Umāra al-Yamanī,<sup>5</sup> the famous writer on the history of Yemen, who knew him personally: 650,000 Malīkī (local), and over 300,000 Egyptian, dinars,<sup>6</sup> 1,700 pounds of silver ornaments

<sup>3</sup> {See *Itinerary of Benjamin*, 62.}

<sup>4</sup> Kay, *Yaman*, 72, of the English translation. Ibn al-Mujāwir, *Al-Mustabṣir*, 123, line 19, obviously refers to one of Bilāl's sons.

<sup>5</sup> Kay, op. cit., 80.

<sup>6</sup> At that time one could live in Cairo for a whole month for one dinar. {Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 1:359: one dinar a month was income for a lower middle-class family.}

of all descriptions, merchandise, perfumes, and arms in immeasurable quantities, in addition to 'rarities' from the remotest parts of the world, such as China or North Africa, obviously brought by the merchants as 'presents' to the almighty governor. Half a century earlier (as from 1083), the joint rulers of Aden, the 'Zuray'ids' Mas'ūd and 'Abbās, paid to their overlord, the Ṣulayhī Queen Ḥurra, to whom Aden belonged as part of her dowry, a yearly tribute of about 100,000 dinars, which also may give an indication of the wealth of the town.<sup>7</sup>

Another reason for the attack of the king of Kīsh on Aden may have been the fact that owing to the rapacious character of his rule, much of the Indian trade had been diverted from the sea of Oman to Aden.<sup>8</sup>

The expedition of the king of Kīsh against Aden is described with some detail by Ibn al-Mujāwir (died {some time before} 1291).<sup>9</sup> No date is included in this account, for the story about one of 'the strangest events of the year 545 (= 1150/1),' mentioned on page 125, line 15, has nothing to do with the siege of Aden, but is inserted to illustrate the immense riches treasured in the castle al-Akhḍar {al-Khaḍrā'}, which protected Aden from the sea.<sup>10</sup> However, with the aid of the documents published here, the year of the events can be fixed with considerable certainty.

<sup>7</sup> Kay, op. cit., 66; Strothmann, "Karam," 743. Other details about the tributes paid by the governors of Aden are to be found in Löfgren, *Aden*, 65, line 5 ff.

<sup>8</sup> This is at least what Idrīsī, the famous 12th-century traveler, reports, cf. Wilson, op. cit., 98. {Chakravarti, "Tana," 179, incorrectly cites the Geniza letter edited here as the source for this information. Chakravarti explains there the background for the attack on Aden: the shift of the horse export operation to India from Qays to Aden. Also see Wink, *Al-Hind*, 1:58: "In Qays 'piracy' and 'commerce' were closely related activities."}

<sup>9</sup> Ibn al-Mujāwir, *Al-Mustabṣir*, 124, lines 5–125, line 8, ib., lines 15–126, line 2. This passage is contained also in Löfgren, *Aden*, 43–45. It may be alluded to or discussed by Hunter, *Aden* {I did not find it there}, or Ferrand, "Navigations," 472–83 {it is not there}; cf. Löfgren, *Aden*, 19, n. 3 {I did not find this reference and assume it is a misprint}. However, owing to the well-known present conditions, I am unable to consult these books, which have remained on Mount Scopus {written by Goitein in 1954}. For the same reason I have to be excused for not using Ibn al-Jawzī's *Muntazam* and other sources on general history, which may contain details about the siege of Aden—although this, is not very likely. {On the author and dating of *Al-Mustabṣir*, where the last date is 1228/9, see Smith, *Studies*, chap. 3, 79–80.}

<sup>10</sup> The date itself must be erroneous. For Saba' the Zuray'id, for whom the castle al-Akhḍar was stormed and taken by his freedman Bilāl b. Jarīr, died in 533 (= 1138). {On the location of the al-Khaḍrā' fortress, also known as al-Akhḍar, see Kay, *Yaman*, 67; Serjeant, *Portuguese*, 169, n. G. For the topography, the struggle between the cousins, with reference to II, 51, see Margariti, "Aden," 132 ff.}

As paper was expensive, the recipient of a letter first cut off the introductory part—invariably composed of polite phrases, Bible quotations, etc.—then re-used the paper thus saved for writing accounts, etc., on the back, which was often blank except for the address, and kept the main part in his files for reference. This occurred, for instance, with the two letters, II, 21–24 and II, 46, with the result that neither the names of the senders or addressees, nor the places of mailing or destination, nor the dates {which were usually omitted in any event} have been preserved. However, owing to the great mass of material collected it is possible to restore at least some of the details lost.

Thus, II, 21–24 was certainly sent from Aden to Abraham Ibn Yijū in India; {see there}. That II, 46 was sent from Aden to Cairo {Fustat} is evident from the many persons to whom greetings are extended, a number of whom are known to us as having lived in Cairo {Fustat} or passed through the town at the time of the letter; in addition, this is proved by the nature of the merchandise forwarded with the letter, which consisted mainly of spices and aromatic or dyeing plants, such as pepper, Indian myrobalan (*halīlaj*), Abyssinian cubeb (*fūghira*), lac, saffron (*zarnaba*), Amlaj myrobalan, cassia (*salīkha*) and, as a present, clove. Moreover, as was usual in letters from Aden to Cairo, textiles and vessels of all descriptions and largely of Egyptian manufacture were ordered, in addition to a carefully described *thawb* (robe), no doubt for the writer's own use.<sup>11</sup>

No. II, 46 enables us also to ascertain the year of the attack on Aden. For in it, the sender assures the addressee that he had written to Abū Sa'īd ad-Dimyā'ī—the Arabic name of Ḥalfon ha-Levi b. Nethanel, one of the most prominent Cairene India merchants—to help him in his business, mentioning also two North African merchants, who were at that time in Cairo on their way home from Aden. Now Ḥalfon was in Aden in the spring of 1134 (as can be ascertained from two dated documents),<sup>12</sup> while already in 1136 {or 1137} letters dispatched by him from Cairo or North Africa or Spain or all these places together arrived in that town.<sup>13</sup> On his way back from Aden he had sent from the Suda-

<sup>11</sup> {According to Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 5:68, the clothing and tableware ordered were probably for an impending wedding. Cf. II, 44.}

<sup>12</sup> Nos. V, 2 and VI, 26.

<sup>13</sup> As may be learnt from IV, 12 dispatched from Aden in the autumn of 1137. {Goitein, "Last Phase," 1137, explains that those letters may have been dispatched earlier in 1137. The dates of Ḥalfon's travels will be discussed further in the Introduction to chap. 4.}

nese port 'Aydhāb to his brother, the head of the rabbinical court in Cairo; a letter in which he recommended to him the two North African merchants just alluded to.<sup>14</sup> All this taken together makes it certain that our letter was sent in 1135<sup>15</sup> and this is in complete accordance with the situation described in the Muslim historian's report of the event, to the discussion of which we now turn.

At that time, Aden was held by two 'cousins,' a grandson and a great-grandson respectively of the brothers Mas'ūd and 'Abbās mentioned above. They had been installed by the former rulers of the greater part of Yemen, the Ṣulayḥids, who in their turn nominally recognized the suzerainty of the Fatimids of Egypt. One of the cousins, 'Alī b. Abī 'l-Ghārāt, possessed the castle al-Khaḍrā', which, as said above, commanded the sea and the ports, while the other, Saba' b. Abū Su'ūd, held Ta'ker, which guarded the gates and the entrance to the town from the land. Each received the import and export duties paid at the entrance to the town under his command.<sup>16</sup> This system, although it had then been in force for almost 50 years, was the cause of much strife—and certainly was intended to be so by the overlords of the Zuray'ids.<sup>17</sup> In addition, the town population did not always accept without resistance the yoke of the ruthless extortionists of its riches. Matters became particularly acute when the representatives of the two 'cousins' in Aden came into more or less open conflict. The king of Kīsh rightly regarded this moment as appropriate for an attack on that important town.<sup>18</sup> We give now a résumé of Ibn al-Mujāwir's account of the event, which will be followed by a discussion of the additional information to be gathered from II, 21–24 and II, 46.<sup>19</sup>

According to Ibn al-Mujāwir, the king of Kīsh intended to take the town as a whole from the Zuray'id cousins. Some of the ships sent by

<sup>14</sup> No. IV, 4. {In my opinion that letter was probably written ca. 1131. The two merchants are Abraham Ibn Mu'ṭi and Joseph b. Ezra, below, lines 63–64.}

<sup>15</sup> As noted in the introduction to II, 33–34 (page 379), in 1135 Ḥalfon was apparently in Aden on his way back to Egypt. He probably arrived there late in that year. Our letter is likely to have been written in 1136; see further the discussion below.}

<sup>16</sup> Kay, op. cit., 67. Cf. Ibn al-Mujāwir, *Al-Mustabṣir*, 122, lines 6 and 8, 124, line 4.

<sup>17</sup> 'Zuray'ids' is used here *a fortiori* {the intention seems to be: by extension}, Zuray', being the grandfather of Saba'. This is already the usage of the medieval Muslim historians, e.g. Ibn al-Mujāwir, *Al-Mustabṣir*, 124, line 8, calls the overlords of the castles al-Khaḍrā' and Ta'ker 'The sons of Zuray'', although only one of them actually was a descendant of Zuray'.

<sup>18</sup> {See the introduction to II, 51.}

<sup>19</sup> Cf. II, 48, lines 10 ff.; II, 51, lines 12–20.}

him must have been of types not common in Aden; however, as the text is much mutilated in this place, we had better discuss the Kīsh warships, while considering the additional information to be gathered from the Geniza documents. The aggressors weighed anchor 'under the mountain of Šīra,' which was the usual anchorage for ships arriving at Aden,<sup>20</sup> and sent word to the commander of the two castles to surrender. The commander of al-Khaḍrā', which was, of course, immediately threatened, replied: "I am your slave, the town is your town and you may appoint as governor over it whomsoever you like."<sup>21</sup> On the receipt of this answer, the crews<sup>22</sup> disembarked and feasted on the food and the wine sent to them by the lord of al-Khaḍrā', their commander warning them in vain to beware of a stratagem—for which purpose he recited high-sounding and not very appropriate Arabic verses, quoted in full. The lord of the inland fort Ta'ker took advantage of his cousin's plight and offered to attack the intruders, if the other would cede him al-Khaḍrā'. The latter, 'a man unclean as a thousand relievings of the bowels,' i.e., a coward, accepted that offer—which gave opportunity for the quotation of other Arabic verses somewhat out of place—whereupon the garrison of Ta'ker rushed upon the drunken sailors and cut off the heads of all those who had not heeded the warnings of their commander and returned to their ships. From that time on the place where that slaughter occurred was called Jamājim, i.e., 'skulls.'<sup>23</sup>

One need be no expert in Muslim historiography in order to recognize in this account the stereotyped traits of ancient Arab war stories mixed with some authentic details. The stratagem; the feasting with cups of wine going round—a rather unlikely scene in a Muslim town; the unheeded warning expressed in Arabic verses—although the aggressors obviously spoke Persian (see note 2); the ignominious cowardice of one party—also illustrated by verses; and finally the etiological conclusion:

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Löfgren, *Aden*, 1:65, line 4. Today Šīra is the name of the small island, which protects the outer, eastern, port of Aden, and may be seen on any map of the town.

<sup>21</sup> I.e., he would be prepared to serve them, just as he held the castle at present for his Sulayhid overlord.

<sup>22</sup> In the text: *jāshū*, a Persian word designating sailors, still used in the Persian gulf; cf. Löfgren, *Aden*, 1:44, n. 3, and 2:25. Ibn al-Mujāwir (*Al-Mustabsir*, 100), indeed, reports in his description of Qays (Kīsh) that its prince had neither cavalry nor infantry, all the people of the island being mariners.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Löfgren, *Aden*, 1:45, n. 11. There could hardly be a doubt that the reading is correct. The famous Dayr al-Jamājim, 'The Convent of the Skulls,' in Iraq, the scene of a great battle in 701 C.E., would be a parallel. {Cf. El-Ali, "Dayr al-Jamājim," where the various etymological explanations of the name are noted.

the explanation of a present-day name of a place through a certain detail of the events recounted; all this belongs to the technique of the *Ayyām al-ʿArab* and shows that the story, as we have it, must have been written down a considerable time after the events described.

The situation is, of course, quite different with the accounts given in letters written a few weeks or months after the raising of the siege. It is also characteristic that the letter sent from Aden to India gives us more details concerning the military aspects of the affair—which were of great interest to the addressee, who on his way home had to cross the sea controlled by the king of Kīsh, while the letter to Cairo dwells more on the plight of the inhabitants of the town. In II, 21–24 we learn the name of the king of Kīsh, obviously a man who had only recently succeeded his father (*walad* al-ʿAmīd and not *ibn* al-ʿAmīd), the exact number and type of the warships involved and also the total number of their crews. The letter, like Ibn al-Mujāwir, mentions three types of ships. {See pages 341–42.}

According to II, 21–24 the king of Kīsh wanted to get 'a portion' (*qutʿa*)<sup>24</sup> of Aden, obviously the seaside fort with its profitable port duties—a version which is more realistic than Ibn al-Mujāwir's general remark that he wanted "to take Aden," for he would hardly have been in a position to oust the Zurayʿids also from the inland castle, as he had at his command only 700 men (II, 23, line 13), while the defenders of Aden amounted to 2,000 (II, 46, line 14).

In one point, the literary and the documentary sources agree exactly: in the account of the successful landing of the aggressors and their subsequent disaster, which ended in the 'cutting off of the heads' (II, 46, line 18) of those who did not return in time to their ships. On the other hand, we learn from the letters various facts not registered by Ibn al-Mujāwir, such as that the siege was a prolonged affair (two months, according to II, 46, line 8), because neither of the two parties had sufficient men or equipment to overcome the other,<sup>25</sup> and that the turning point was not the reverse suffered by the landing crew, but the arrival of two merchant ships belonging, to the great merchant Rāmīsh, whose ships are several times mentioned in the documents of this collection.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> No. II, 23, line 10; see 341, n. 24.

<sup>25</sup> See II, 46, line 11.

<sup>26</sup> See pages 145–46.}

The ships were immediately manned with *dūwān*<sup>27</sup> obviously meaning 'regular troops' (II, 23, line 19, corresponding to 'askar in II, 46, line 25)—whereupon the aggressors, who already had suffered much from lack of food and water (II, 23, line 16 and 17), had to retreat. The interesting lesson to be learned from the account common to the two documents is that even a limited naval force was of decisive importance in medieval warfare on the Arabian coast.

This little comparative study of the literary and documentary evidence about a small-scale occurrence—not, however, devoid of historical significance—shows how much our knowledge of the medieval history of the Middle East would increase if the hundreds of thousands of letters and other documents which have been found in Egypt, and many of which have reached European libraries, were made the object of systematic research. As far as the Geniza papers are concerned work is now well in progress.

{Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 5:67, and in his notes to the India Book, does not explain why he identified the writer as Khalaf b. Isaac. As noted in the introduction to III, 10, the handwriting is neither Khalaf's nor that of the scribe who wrote for him III, 11 and 12 (though the latter's hand is similar). In the notes to line 46, we shall see that the letter was in fact not penned by its author but by a copyist, who also made mistakes in his transcription. I assume that the attribution of the document to Khalaf was influenced by a comparison with II, 48 and 51, both of which were written by him and describe the plunder of Aden that accompanied the conflict between the two sultans (see the introduction to II, 51).<sup>28</sup>

Elsewhere in his preliminary papers, Goitein had suggested identifying the recipient of II, 46, as Abū 'Imrān Mūsā b. Ṣedaqā Ibn Nufay', a well-known India trader.<sup>29</sup> Evidence for this might be adduced from lines 54–55, where the writer notes that he had written Ḥalfon ha-Levi b. Nethanel, to request that he assist the recipient in making sales and purchases for him. This corresponds with IV, 12, lines 19–23, written on October 20, 1137, some time after Ibn Nufay's death. Khalaf there informs Ḥalfon that he had previously written him and requested that he provide Ibn Nufay' such assistance. Khalaf further refers to that affair in II, 51, written

<sup>27</sup> In a letter, written in Tarim, Hadhramaut, on December 9, 1953, Dr. R.B. Sargeant informs me that the term *dūwānī* is indeed found in a Yemenite manuscript dealing with tribal law in the sense of 'professional soldier.' (See 342, n. 32.)

<sup>28</sup> In his note to II, 48*v*, lines 30–31, Goitein suggested that the Ṭalī robe whose arrival is acknowledged there, is the one ordered here, line 38.

<sup>29</sup> Below, 594. The identification is not mentioned in the 'New List' and later writings.

a year later, in 1138. This is inconclusive, however, since Ḥalfon's assistance was probably solicited frequently. The conflict between the two cousins and the plunder of Aden described in II, 51 (and in II, 48), evidently followed the attack on Aden by the ruler of Kish, depicted in II, 46.<sup>30</sup>

Verso consists of rough notes, apparently written by the recipient. Because of the irregularities in the handwriting and difficulties in deciphering it, I have not attempted to transcribe the whole text. It contains six entries, which list five separate commodities. The first four commodities are clearly Oriental, and the first three may be identical with items listed in the letter on recto as being shipped to Egypt. The commodities are: a surplus unit (*fadla*) of *hindī* (Indian [myrobalan]);<sup>31</sup> two entries); a surplus unit of saffron (*zarnaba*);<sup>32</sup> a surplus unit of lac (*lakk*); a surplus unit of myrrh; and beer (*mizr*).<sup>33</sup> Each entry lists market price, 'reductions'<sup>34</sup> and weights (*si'r... al-ḥaṭṭ... al-wazn*). Three of them name agents:<sup>35</sup> Sheikh Abū Zikrī,<sup>36</sup> Abraham, a Christian (*naṣrānī*),<sup>37</sup> and Abu 'l-Surūr (?). There are also several lines of what seem to be Coptic numerals and a couple of random words in Arabic script (as *waṣal*, 'arrived').

#### Translation<sup>38</sup>

[A. On a Gentile who refused to give testimony, a truncated passage]

{(1) [...] and refused (2) to give testimony. May the Exalted Creator call them to account!<sup>39</sup> (3) Scripture has already said, "Never trust Gentiles."}<sup>40</sup>

<sup>30</sup> In Goitein's remarks above and in Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 5:69, he assumed that the conflict between the two sultans of Aden was a precursor to the attack by the ruler of Kish. It is likely that conflict between the two sultans was a perennial event, which also preceded the attack. Cf. the introduction to II, 51.

<sup>31</sup> The suggestion that *hindī* is an abbreviation of *halilaj hindī*, 'Indian myrobalan' (see recto, line 32), is found in Goitein's card indices. Another possibility is that *hindī* is a kind of aloes wood; see Tibbetts, *Arabic Texts*, 29.

<sup>32</sup> Here misspelled *zarnaba*; see recto, note to line 34.

<sup>33</sup> Decipherment uncertain.

<sup>34</sup> Perhaps the commission of the representative of the merchants; see 322, n. 5.

<sup>35</sup> Arabic *'alā* apparently is an abbreviation for *'alā yad*, 'carried by.'

<sup>36</sup> Note that according to IV, 12, Abū Zikrī al-Ṣā'igh was one of the two agents who transported goods for Khalaf b. Isaac to Ibn Nufay'.

<sup>37</sup> Spelled *naṣrānī*, with short *a* after *r*.

<sup>38</sup> All of sec. B (lines 3–29) and sec. D, lines 40–41, 42–46, were translated and annotated by Goitein. I translated (and annotated) the rest.

<sup>39</sup> Arabic *ḥasabahum*. The reading is not certain.

<sup>40</sup> Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 2:275 (see *ibid.*, 586, n. 3), cites this passage and comments: "The saying is not found in the Bible, although Ps. 144:8 'Whose mouth speaks lies and whose

## [B. The Attack by the king of Kīsh on Aden]

As to the news from here (4) and all that befell us since you left—to explain all this would take too much space, (5) and even if I filled ten leaves to describe only a part of what befell (6) us, it would not suffice. I shall write concisely, (7) in particular as all our coreligionists, who departed from here, will inform you about what happened (8) and what they heard and saw. In short, we fought {alt. tr.: bore up against} the enemy for two months, (9) the enemy being at sea and we on land. In the town remained (10) neither high nor low {alt. tr.: neither grandee nor commoner}; everybody took refuge in the castles, while below the castles were only (11) empty houses and fighting {alt. tr.: enduring}<sup>41</sup> the enemy; we faced each other {lit., 'they looked at us, and we looked at them'}, but they did not dare (12) to land, while the people of the town had no vessels<sup>42</sup> for attacking them. (13) Thus each was afraid of the other. There assembled in the town about (14) 2,000 men. Had there previously been in the town {add: with them} (even) 500, the (15) people would not have fled from their houses, but they (the soldiers) arrived only when the enemy had already entered the harbor.<sup>43</sup>

(16) The people remained far from their houses,<sup>44</sup> until God overcame the enemy (17) and made the sea bad {alt. tr.: stormy},<sup>45</sup> while they (the enemy) were in Šīra<sup>46</sup> in the morning. They joined battle with (18) the people of the town, a number of them (the enemy) were killed near their (the people's) houses, and their heads were cut off (19), and what

handshake is falsehood' was understood in this sense in the Middle Ages. But that maxim must have been quite common, for I heard it as late as 1949, while visiting the South Arabian port." In 2:586, n. 3, "... *lō emūnā ba-gōyim*. For *lō*, in Aden I heard *ēn*, which is grammatically more correct." This is a Talmudic maxim, BT Hullin 138b, *ēn emūnā ba-gōyim*. I assume the usage with *lō* is based on the similar phrase in Deut. 32:20. Cf. Sifre to Deut., sec. 320: *lō emūn bām... she-ēn bākhem emūnā*.

<sup>41</sup> Arabic *muqāsāb*. The difference in translation is of obvious significance. In the continuation, it is clear that fighting did not take place.

<sup>42</sup> Arabic *jihāz*, fleet.

<sup>43</sup> Arabic *makalla'*, also in line 25. {In II, 23, line 13, *makalla'* 'adan, 'the harbor of Aden,' not to be confused with al-Mukallā, port of Ḥaḍramawt, some 550 km. east of Aden (see van Donzel, "al-Mukallā"). According to Margariti, "Aden," 115, it "appears to have been the routine station for ocean going ships in Aden's harbor."

<sup>44</sup> Arabic *wal-nās qad harabū min buyūtihim*, which could be translated, as a continuation of the preceding: 'when the people had already fled from their houses.'

<sup>45</sup> Arabic *naza'a*, see Dozy, *Supplément*, 2:657 (*nāza'a*).

<sup>46</sup> Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 5:523, n. 98: "the island of Šīra... details in {Löfgren, "'Adan,'" 180-81."

they had brought with them to Šīra was taken as booty, for they (20) had conquered Šīra and stayed there a night and a day, (21) when the disaster befell them and they returned to their ships while our men (22) were on the land.

Finally, Rāmish't's two ships arrived. They (the enemy) (23) tried {alt. tr.: went out towards them to try} to seize them, but the wind was good, so that they were dispersed on the sea (24) to the right and to the left. The two ships entered the port safely, where they were immediately manned (25) with troops. (At this juncture,) the enemy could not do anything more, either in the harbor (26) or in the town.

They retreated behind the mountain (of Šīra), until the wind (27) became favorable for them and they made off. It would take too long to go into detail. In any case they left after (28) having been beaten and suffering heavy losses and humiliation. May God—praise to Him—preserve us from (29) their evil and never show us their faces again!<sup>47</sup>

## [C. Oriental goods to be sold]

{I would like to inform you<sup>48</sup> that (30) I have made a bold demand<sup>49</sup> on your generosity, your good esprit de corps<sup>50</sup> (31) and your virtue,<sup>51</sup> by having shipped to you various (or: some retail) commodities,<sup>52</sup> namely: a bag of pepper (32) weighing 303 pounds, a bag of Indian myrobalan<sup>53</sup> weighing 303 pounds, a bag of (33) Abyssinian cubeb<sup>54</sup> weighing 300 pounds, a bag of lac weighing 300 pounds, (34) a small bag of saffron (*zarnaba*)<sup>55</sup>

<sup>47</sup> {The translation is from Goitein, "Kish," 256-57, with minor changes according to Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 5:67-68.

<sup>48</sup> Lit., 'what you want to know.'

<sup>49</sup> Arabic *ḥamalatnī al-dālla*, lit. 'boldness induces me (to).' With slight variations the phrase appears regularly before requests, usually in the second half of the letter. Instead of *dālla*, we also find *idālā* (e.g., I, 17, line 21) and *dalāla* (e.g., III, 11, line 31).

<sup>50</sup> Arabic *'aṣabiyya*. See Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 2:64.

<sup>51</sup> Arabic *muruwwa*. See Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 5:191-93.

<sup>52</sup> Arabic *tafāriq*; see page 333, n. 27.

<sup>53</sup> Arabic *halilaj*. See 420, n. 20.

<sup>54</sup> Arabic *fāghira*, xanthoxylum (see Maimonides-Meyerhof, no. 307), a pungent berry of a Javan shrub, used in medicine and cookery. See Dols, *Islamic Medicine*, 160, who translates *fāghira* 'Lotus of India.'

<sup>55</sup> So translated in Goitein's remarks in his 1954 article quoted above. The word is spelled here *zarunbā* (with final *alif*), which may be equivalent to *zarunbād*, zodoary, a plant; see Dozy, *Supplément*, 1:589 (*zarunba*); Maimonides, *Lexicography*, ed. Muntner, no. 145, 49 (*zurunabād*). See above concerning the notation on verso.

weighing 90 pounds, a bag of Amlaj myrobalan<sup>56</sup> weighing (35) 60 pounds, a bag of cassia<sup>57</sup> weighing 60 pounds. All are precise (figures).<sup>58</sup>

[D. Orders of clothing and tableware]

(36) I ask of your generosity, your good esprit de corps and your customary performance of (37) kindness, that you sell the shipment sent you<sup>59</sup> for whatever price God, the Exalted, apportions as livelihood,<sup>60</sup> (38) and buy for me (your servant) an exquisite<sup>61</sup> Ṭālī<sup>62</sup> robe, the most exquisite there is, (39) five average, good Ṭālī robes, not mediocre, two pieces of cloth for (40) pillow cases, made by Ibn al-ʿĀsir.<sup>63</sup> The remainder should be with *sharb* {alt. tr.: made of *sharb*}, (41) whether it is a *mulāʿa* wrap, a head cover, *arḍī*, or 'Sevener.'<sup>64</sup> {This should be average merchandise, (42) neither very<sup>65</sup> exquisite nor very inferior.}

Also please buy (43) me six painted platters, made in Miṣr;<sup>66</sup> they should be of middle size, (44) neither very large nor very small; and twenty (regular) bowls (45) and forty small bowls.<sup>67</sup> All should be painted

<sup>56</sup> See 420, n. 18.

<sup>57</sup> Arabic *salikha*, cinnamon bark, cassia bark (Chinese cinnamon tree); see Wehr, *Dictionary*, 421.

<sup>58</sup> Arabic *naqīy*, literally, 'clean.' Goitein notes in his card index that the word is used to indicate the accuracy of what looks like a round figure. Cf., e.g., I, 1, line 22, verso, line 1; II, 48, line 14.

<sup>59</sup> Arabic *rahla-ka*. *Rahl* for a shipment sent to someone is attested in other documents in the India Book.

<sup>60</sup> For this formula, see the discussion in pages 63–65.

<sup>61</sup> Arabic *raffī*, also: fine, delicate.

<sup>62</sup> For Ṭālī linen, see 422, n. 29. As we have already seen, Goitein suggested that the robe ordered here is the one whose arrival is acknowledged in II, 48v, lines 30–31.

<sup>63</sup> Grape presser. See Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 1:92, 428, n. 56, where our document is cited (the 'old number' 149 is misprinted there as 49), and it is noted that this Ibn al-ʿĀsir was the proprietor of a factory of world-famous textiles. ʿĀsir is corrected here from ʿĀṣṣār, which according to Goitein, ib., 92, means 'operated an oil- or wine-press'; evidently the terms are interchangeable.

<sup>64</sup> Lines 40–41 (without the brackets) are translated in Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 4:166. As noted there, *sharb* is an extremely fine and expensive linen; cf. al-Qaddūmī, *Gifts*, 383 (rather than an equivalent of *sharb*, as taken there, *shurūb* is apparently the plural form). On the 'sevener,' *subāʿī*, ordered here, see page 176, n. 14.

<sup>65</sup> Arabic *bi-murra*. Cf. Piamenta, *Dictionary*, 462 (*bi-l-murra*).

<sup>66</sup> Fustat or Egypt.}

<sup>67</sup> Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 4:393, n. 51: *suk(ku)ruja*. {See Dozy, *Supplément*, 1:668: *sukrija*, *sukuruja*; Sadan, "Clerks," 44, n. 68: 'butter dish'; al-Qaddūmī, *Gifts*, 437: "an appetizers' saucer, a starter saucer, a small dish for pickles and the like."}

and their figures and colors should be (46) different.<sup>68</sup> {And (purchase) whatever *k'ḥn* and potions (perhaps read: platters and decanters)<sup>69</sup> are readily available.

Please pack this (47) in two good, strong baskets.<sup>70</sup> Pack the robes in one bundle. (48) If it is easy for you to send it all this year, *good*.<sup>71</sup> (49) If it is difficult to load it all, send me whatever is easy.}

[E. Closing remarks and greetings.]

{(50) Please send me your letter containing happy news about you (51) and your propitious affairs and wishes, together with (52) any need or service your excellency requires. Honor me with this.<sup>72</sup>

I have sent for (53) my lord Makārim a *mann* of cloves.<sup>73</sup> Kindly take delivery of this. (54) I have already written to my lord Sheikh Abū Saʿīd al-Dimyāṭī<sup>74</sup> to kindly (55) assist you in making the sales and purchases.

To you, my excellency—may God protect you!—are sent (56) best wishes for your well-being. Please extend my wishes to my lord Makārim for his well-being. (57) Please extend my best wishes to his excellency, our most illustrious lord the *Rayyis*—*may his grandeur increase* (58) *and his honor be enhanced!*<sup>75</sup>—for his well-being. Please extend my best wishes to

<sup>68</sup> These lines with the order of earthenware are translated and discussed in Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 4:146, 393, n. 51.

<sup>69</sup> Arabic *k'ḥn* (*kāḥin*?) and *sharbāt*. The readings are fairly clear, but both words are difficult. The meaning of *kāḥin* is unknown, and 'potions' hardly fits the context. I suspect that the clerk who copied Khalaf b. Isaac's letter erred in copying the text before him, which may have read something like *ṣuḥūn* (صحن), which he copied صحن; the letters ص and ح and the letters ن and ه are similar in his script), 'platters' (as in line 43) and *sharābiyyāt*, pl. of *sharābiyya* 'vessel for potions,' 'decanter' (for which see Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 4:147–48; Diem, *Dictionary*, 113; al-Qaddūmī, *Gifts*, 333). Such errors by copyists are found in other documents. See, for example, 325, n. 23.

<sup>70</sup> Arabic *qafās*. See 339, n. 10.

<sup>71</sup> In accordance with Arabic syntax, this word is usually not expressed in such a conditional sentence. Here it is written in Hebrew, *harē mūtāv*, introduced by the Arabic conjunction *fā*.

<sup>72</sup> Or translate literally from the end of line 51: "Whatever (*ma'amā*) needs or services your excellency has, honor me with them." For this meaning of *ma'amā* see 484, n. 29. Here, however, *ma'ā* (in *ma'amā*) can function as the preposition 'with.'

<sup>73</sup> This is a gift. Greetings are extended to Makārim in line 56. Several Makārim are mentioned in the India Book papers. The gift sent to Maṣliḥ Gaon in II, 34c, line 1, includes a *mann* of cloves.

<sup>74</sup> Ḥalfon ha-Levi b. Nethanel, to whom chap. 4 is devoted, also mentioned in lines 59–60.

<sup>75</sup> Maṣliḥ ha-Kohen, Head of the Yeshiva in Cairo.

his excellency, my lord (59) the *Prince (sar)* Eli Ibn al-Dimyāṭī<sup>76</sup> and Sheikh Abū Sa'īd (60) his brother, for their well-being. Please extend my best, bountiful wishes to my lord the *Diadem (nēzer)*, our lord's *scribe*<sup>77</sup> (61) and all my lords, the *judges*, the *cantors* and the welfare officials (*farānisa*)<sup>78</sup> and all of (62) our coreligionists the perfumers<sup>79</sup> and our friends and whoever asks for us, (63) for their well-being. And to my lord the most illustrious Sheikh Abū Ishāq Ibn Mu'ī<sup>80</sup> (64) and my lord the most illustrious Sheikh Joseph,<sup>81</sup> his traveling companion (*rafiq*), and my lord Sheikh (65) Barakāt al-Maqdasī (the Jerusalemite), are extended best, bountiful wishes for their well-being. (66) *May your peace, my lord, forever increase and not decrease! And peace.* (67) Also my lord my father<sup>82</sup> greets you with best wishes for your well-being, and your servants (68) my children kiss your hand and greet your excellency with best, (69) bountiful wishes for your well-being. *And peace.* }

<sup>76</sup> As identified in page 424, n. 47, he is Ḥalfon's older brother Eli b. Nethanel ha-Levi, 'The Diadem of the Discerning,' who presided over the High Court of the Palestinian Yeshiva, then seated in Cairo (see Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 5:305).

<sup>77</sup> Identified by Goitein in page 424, n. 47 (commenting on II, 46), as the judge Nathan b. Samuel. See also 424, n. 52, and the introduction to II, 45.

<sup>78</sup> Judeo-Arabic plural for Hebrew *parnās*.

<sup>79</sup> The *'attārs* (perfumers or druggists) were in close business contact with the Yemenites who exported Indian commodities.

<sup>80</sup> Abraham b. Mu'ī, a well-known Moroccan notable; see II, 47, line 13, for his business contacts with Khalaf b. Isaac.

<sup>81</sup> Joseph (Abū Ishāq) b. Ezra, a merchant often mentioned in the India Book papers as Abraham b. Mu'ī's traveling companion.

<sup>82</sup> Khalaf's father, Isaac b. Bundār, apparently died in 1138; see 465, n. 11.}

II, 47 *Letter from Khalaf b. Isaac to Ḥalfon ha-Levi b. Nethanel, 'Aydhāb*  
Aden {ca. 1131}

ENA NS 21, f. 7

Fragment about presents sent to communal officials in the capital of Egypt, accounts (and other details), one referring to the Moroccan notable Abraham b. Mu'ī, prominently mentioned in II, 46 (line 63).

{The top of the letter is torn away. Consequently the address on verso, with the names of the writer and the recipient, is missing. Goitein evidently identified the writer as Khalaf b. Isaac on the basis of his handwriting, known from other documents. As he does elsewhere, Khalaf writes the marginal addition to side a, in (two) straight lines, perpendicular to the body of the text, facing outward, from top to bottom, rather than the usual practice in Geniza letters to write in short slanting lines, from the bottom of the document to the top. The addressee can be identified as Ḥalfon ha-Levi b. Nethanel from the first recipient of gifts to be delivered in Fustat, "my lord your brother, the diadem," undoubtedly Eli ha-Levi b. Nethanel 'Diadem of the Discerning.'<sup>1</sup> Other Fustat dignitaries for whom gifts (all Oriental spices: aromatic wood, civet, cloves) are sent include 'our lord,' viz. the Head of the Palestinian Yeshiva Maṣliāḥ, the *Rayyis* Abu 'l-Najm,<sup>2</sup> the cantors Ḥalfon ha-Levi b. Manasseh and Abū Sa'īd<sup>3</sup> and the banker Abu 'l-Faraj. An order of cinnamon is also mentioned. On his journey from Aden to Fustat, Ḥalfon ha-Levi b. Nethanel evidently was staying temporarily in the Sudanese port town of 'Aydhāb, since Khalaf asks him to send back from there a deep bowl (*barniyya*), if Ḥalfon does not want it, and regards are sent to Ḥalfon's traveling companions for their safe arrival (in Egypt). Ḥalfon writes of being delayed in 'Aydhāb in IV, 4, lines 11–22. We can assume that this document was written during the same period, probably ca. 1131.}

<sup>1</sup> {Goitein apparently made the identification on the basis of 'my lord, his brother' alone, since his rough draft of the transcription does not include the damaged word *al-nezer*, 'the diadem.' For identification of 'the diadem,' see 424, n. 27. Eli died in 1139.

<sup>2</sup> The *Rayyis* Abu 'l-Najm is mentioned as a business associate of Ḥalfon in no. IV, 3, lines 15–16. He appears as a recipient of ten dirhems in a list of payments to community officials from the mid twelfth century (TS NS 321, f. 14; see Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 2:459, no. 70) and as a donor in another contemporary list (ULC Or. 1080 J 2; see *ibid.*, 2:502, no. 113 [There Goitein refers to him as a doctor. I assume this is because he is called *Rayyis*. But this appellation is used for various dignitaries; see page 246 (and note 5).]). Perhaps he was the father of Hillel b. Sādōq, whose son Meir addressed a letter to his three brothers, calling each one of them, *rayyis*, and signing his own name as: Nahray b. Abu 'l-Najm (= Meir b. Hillel): Mosseri VII,200 (ed. Frenkel, "Alexandria," 2:68–69). Hillel b. Sādōq may have been a judge, see Friedman, "Maimonides and Zūṭā," 503, 516–17.

<sup>3</sup> See page 411, n. 17.}