

of the Academy in Cairo Maṣliḥ ha-Kohen (1127–39). Khalaf instructed Ḥalfon in II, 47 (ca. 1131), to deliver two *manns* of aromatic wood, one to Ḥalfon's brother Eli, the President of the Court in Cairo, the other to 'our lord,' undoubtedly Maṣliḥ. The aromatic wood for which our letter lavishes praise and thanks to Khalaf was sent by Ḥalfon as well, and it may refer to the same gift mentioned in II, 47.

Khalaf is addressed with the honorary titles bestowed on him by the Academy, Splendor of the Scholars (*hadar ha-talmidim*) and Favorite of the Academy (*reṣūy ha-yeshivā*),³ rather than his title used by Ḥalfon ha-Levi b. Manasseh in the preceding letter, Delight of the Congregations. Ḥalfon ha-Levi b. Nethanel's titles are Magnificence of the Levites (*hōd ha-lewiyim*) and Beloved of the Academy (*abūv ha-yeshivā*). The writer notes that Ḥalfon praised Khalaf for his loyalty to the Academy and his acceptance of the authority of its Head.

While, as noted above, only the beginning of the letter to Joseph is preserved in this document, it appears to be written in a more restrained and less lavish tone of praise. This may reflect the size of his gift or the role that Joseph played in Yemenite Jewry's aborted revolt against Maṣliḥ's authority ca. 1131.⁴

³ Though the Hebrew title (for this and other *rāṣūys*, see Mann, *Jews*, 1:279) is an appropriate embellishment of *rāṣūy* in Deut. 33:24 and Esther 10:3, it probably is a calque of the Arabic *raḍī*, as in *raḍī al-dīn* (Favorite or Well-pleasing of the Faith).

⁴ For which, see Goitein, *Yemenites*, 58 ff. and the Introduction to chap. 4.

II, H. *Maḥrūz b. Jacob, Son of Maḍmūn's Paternal Aunt**

II, 55 *Letter from Maḥrūz to Abū Zikrī Kohen, Broach*

Mangalore, India, ca. 1145 {ca. 1145–48}

Bodl. MS. Heb. b. 11 (Cat. 2874, no. 21), fol. 22

Ed. Goitein, *Yemenites*, 100–5. The following translation with accompanying introductory remarks and notes is based on Goitein, *Letters*, 62–65. A photograph of recto, a description and partial translation appear in Goitein, "India-Merchants," 37, where the shelf mark is not noted.

A representative of the merchants in the capital of Egypt, stuck in Broach, north of Bombay, after having been captured by pirates, is invited by his brother-in-law in Mangalore, southern India, to join him in his own ship on the way back to Aden.

The writer of this letter, Maḥrūz b. Jacob, was a *nākhudā*, or shipowner, who commuted in his own boat between Aden and India. Occasionally we find him in the capital of Egypt, where his sister was married to the recipient of this letter, Judah b. Joseph ha-Kohen, representative of the merchants there. Judah's own sister was married to Maḍmūn, representative of the merchants in Aden (see page 371). Thus we see that these India traders bolstered their economic positions by carefully arranged family bonds.

Judah b. Joseph ha-Kohen was the grandson of his namesake, the Rāv, or Master [Rabbi], who was so prominent in the Jewish community of Egypt during the second half of the eleventh century. In more elaborate addresses he, like his grandfather, is called 'Scion of the Gaons,' and, like the latter, he himself signs documents with the title 'Scion of Yehōseph (same as Joseph), the righteous priest,' referring to the first member of the family, who, after emigrating from Baghdad to Jerusalem, became president of the High Court there at the end of the tenth century.¹ Such transitions from religious and legal to commercial leadership and vice versa were natural to the bourgeois society of the

* {For Maḥrūz, see Introduction IIB1. The chronological order of the following documents is reversed, approximately: II, 60, II, 59, II, 58, II, 56–57, II, 55.

¹ See Goitein, "*Ha-Rav*"; id., "Additions." Gil, *Palestine*, 1:223 challenged Goitein's conclusion that Abū Zikrī Judah b. Joseph ha-Kohen was the grandson of the Rāv, but he seems to have been unfamiliar with the latter's study: "Additions."

medieval Middle East and common to the three monotheistic religious communities.²

{The seizure by pirates of the ship in which Judah, a.k.a. Abū Zikrī Kohēn, traveled near Tāna, in northern India, calls to mind the rampant piracy outside that port reported by Marco Polo a century and a half later. According to him, there "corsairs have a covenant with the king that he shall get all the horses they capture, and all other plunder shall remain with them."³

Writing was a difficult task for Maḥrūz (see page 488), which is why others wrote most of his letters for him. Abraham Ben Yijū, to whom Maḥmūn had recommended Maḥrūz in II, 30, ca. 1136, wrote this letter. Ben Yijū is known to have been in India until the summer of 1139 and then from 1145–49; see page 648. The apparent reference to the sinking of al-Fawfalī's ship (line 17) suggests that this letter was written during the second period of Ben Yijū's stay in India, but III, 9 written to Ben Yijū while still in India, probably refers to al-Fawfalī (verso, lines 1–2), at a later time; see the introduction to that document (588–89). This suggests that our letter was written ca. 1145–48. The reconstruction will require re-evaluation as the research on Abū Zikrī Kohēn's activities progresses. No. II, 55 seems to have been written after II, 56–57; see the note to line 17.}

Translation

[A. Opening of letter; on Abū Zikrī's captivity by pirates and release]

(1) *In Your Name, O Merciful.*

(2) *Your hand shall prevail over your foes, and all your enemies shall be cut down.*⁴

(3) I am writing to you, my lord and master, my chief, the illustrious elder—(4) may God prolong your life and make permanent your prominent position, (5) may He be for you and with you and guard you in all your affairs! (6) I am writing to you out of a strong longing—may God make us (7) meet together presently {alt. tr.: soon} in the best circum-

² India with its castes might have been different.

³ {See Chakravarti, "Tāna," 176.}

⁴ Mic. 5:8, intended as a good wish for {protection from} the pirates. {As noted II, 13, line 1, the verse appears at the tops of several letters; it is not associated specifically with protection from pirates, the matter dealt with here in the continuation.}

stances in His favor and bounty, (8) God willing, for it is up to Him and it is in His power alone!

(9) I wish to inform you, my lord, that I had previously written to you (10) at Tāna.⁵ Meanwhile, the boat escorting the ship arrived, (11) and its soldiers told us that the ship (12) in which your excellency, my lord, traveled had been seized by pirates,⁶ (13) and I was very sad about this. But afterwards I praised God (14) and thanked Him, when I heard that your life was saved {lit., 'I thanked Him for the safety of (your) life'}.⁷ *Let them praise the Lord for His steadfast love.*⁸ (15) Everything can be replaced except life.⁹ I would indeed like to mention to you, (16) my lord, that your servant had a large shipment in the boat of (17) Fōfalī {read: al-Fawfalī} ('Betel nut merchant'), then God ordained what happened;¹⁰ in the end, (18) however, God compensated me—praise and thanks to Him! Likewise, my lord, (19) do not be sad. God will replace your loss to you soon; you will live, God willing, (20) and God will compensate you many times.¹¹

⁵ Spelled Thana today, "21 miles northeast of Bombay city," Maqbul Ahmad, *India*, 106, and passim (see index). This and the following Indian localities occur also in other Geniza letters. {Since the diacritic is omitted more often than not, the Hebrew letter *t* also represents *th*, and the name may have been pronounced Thāna. Besides this letter, Tāna is also mentioned in VI, 30, line 8. On this important commercial entrepôt, see Chakravarti, "Tāna," 165–67.}

⁶ A smaller vessel serving as a lifeboat and carrying soldiers usually escorted a large, ocean-going ship that carried the freight and passengers. The soldiers stationed on it for the protection of the ship, on which Judah traveled, made off as soon as the pirates made their appearance. {The events could be reconstructed other ways of course, e.g., the sailors jettisoned much of the ship's cargo (see the continuation) in order to make it easier to flee from the pirates; the latter temporarily captured the ship, but were overpowered by the soldiers, who traveled in the smaller boat. The smaller vessel is called a *jalba*, which is common in the Red Sea, but as noted by Margariti, "Aden," 248, seems to appear in the Indian Ocean only here. The use of this term by Maḥrūz might reflect his language rather than local usage; see below the note to line 33. Margariti questions whether this vessel served as a lifeboat. See 341, n. 26.

⁷ Arabic *wa-shakartuhu 'alā salāmat al-ruh*. 'When I heard' is Goitein's explanatory addition to the translation. We need not infer from this that Maḥrūz had first thought that Abū Zikrī had been captured, for example, and was later informed of his safety. There is no evidence that Indian Ocean pirates took captives; see pages 162–63.

⁸ Ps. 107:8. Usually said on such occasions.

⁹ {See the discussion in pages 161–62.}

¹⁰ Everything was lost when the ship sank. {I assume that these losses caused the gloom, which induced Maḥrūz to sail back to India from Aden, rather than return to Egypt, of which he writes in II, 56–57, lines 21–23. If so, the compensation that God gave him for his losses, which he mentions in the continuation here, was the profits he made on that return trip, and accordingly, II, 55 was written after II, 56–67.

¹¹ For the goods lost, when the pirates captured the ship.

[B. Appeal to Abū Zikrī to join Maḥrūz in Mangalore for return trip to Aden]

Your servant had thought (21) that your honor my lord was in Tāna, and I had previously sent (22) letters to the *nākhudā* Tinbū, advising him to pay to my lord (23) 21 [or: as much as 20] *mithqāls*¹² (Egyptian dinars) or more. Afterwards, however, (24) my lord the Sheikh Abu 'l-Qāsim Ibn Qaṭṭān ('Dealer in cotton')¹³ came to Mangalore. (25) I inquired about you, (26) and he told me that your excellency was in Broach.¹⁴ (27) Under all circumstances, please come quickly to Mangalore (28) and do not tarry, for I am waiting here {alt. tr.: delayed} in Mangalore (29) and—God willing—we {alt. tr.: I} shall embark on our {alt. tr.: my} way home¹⁵ as soon as possible {alt. tr.: at the beginning of the season.¹⁶ <<I wanted you to know this.>>}¹⁷ (30) It is better for you to travel from Mangalore with me (31) than to travel in the ships of foreign {alt. tr.: other} people. Please remember (32) that there is no difference between us, my money is yours; it is just the same. (33) The boats¹⁸

¹² Arabic *mithqāl wa-'isbrīn*. The translation in brackets is Goitein's revision, in his later, Hebrew edition. Following Goitein, *Palestinian Jewry*, 339, n. 6, translate: 'some 20.'

¹³ Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 4:170, defines *qaṭṭān*, 'a maker of or trader in cotton' and notes that he did not find any examples of a Jewish *qaṭṭān*. In 404, n. 149, he cites our document as an example of a Muslim *qaṭṭān*. Abu 'l-Qāsim's name identifies him as a Muslim; see Goitein, *ibid.*, 2:605, n. 19. But Abū Sa'd b. Qaṭṭān (as I read his name—without aleph), in IV, 58v, line 46, might have been a Jew; see the note there. The fact that in both cases Qaṭṭān is written without the def. art. *al-* suggests that it functions as a proper name. Ibn al-Zubayr, *Asmā'*, 2189, brings three different names with these consonants, Qaṭṭān, Qūṭṭān, Qūṭān, and only for the first lists 'trader in cotton' as one of the definitions. See further n. 24.

¹⁴ About four days' travel north of Tāna; see Maqbul Ahmad, *India*, 102.

¹⁵ {Arabic *anā* [...] *nakhruj*. As the pronoun proves, the writer intended the singular, and Goitein translated 'I' in the Hebrew edition. For use of the *nqtl* form for 1st pers. sg. imperf., see 743, n. 5. We do not know if Maḥrūz dictated this dialectical form or Ben Yijū wrote it on his own. For *kharaj* in the sense of returning home from the Indian Ocean (cf. line 33), see 372, n. 4.

¹⁶ Arabic *auwal al-zamān*, also in lines 33, 36; see 316, n. 23.

¹⁷ I assume that this marginal addition, not copied by Goitein, belongs here.

¹⁸ Arabic *maṭāyā* [also in line 35, where it is translated 'vessels'], a general word for mounts, riding animals, means of locomotion. The word may mean also carts drawn by oxen. The Middle East, throughout the Islamic period, was practically unfamiliar with any form of carriages and therefore had no word for them; see Rodinson, "*Ajala*." Carts drawn by oxen were common in India, and here possibly reference is made to convoys of them setting out at fixed periods. But see VII, 50, line 5. {Goitein, *Med. Soc.* 1:275 (468, n. 3), in reference to II, 55: "Carriages... are nowhere referred to in the Geniza papers with the possible exception of India (where they were drawn by oxen)." No. VII, 50, probably sent from Aden to Qūš in Upper Egypt, appears in Goitein, *Letters*, 67, where

start presently {alt. tr.: set out¹⁹ at the beginning of the season} from your place, (34) from Kanbāyat,²⁰ and from Tāna; please set out immediately (35) so that you reach Mangalore with the vessels, which (36) will soon be arriving {alt. tr.: make every possible effort to reach Mangalore in the *maṭiyya* vessels, which will be arriving at the beginning of the season} in Malibārāt,²¹ Kayākannūr {read: Fāknūr},²² (37) and Mangalore, God willing. If, my lord, you need (38) any gold, please take it on my account from the *nākhudā* Tinbū, (39) for he is staying in Tāna,²³ and between him and me there are bonds of inseparable (40) friendship and brotherhood.²⁴

maṭiyya is translated 'mount' (in quotation marks), and in note 4: "must denote here a type of boat or its name... [II, 55, line 33] refers to inland India, but here too, boats of a local type could be intended." Goitein, *Yemenites*, 103, n. 18, concludes that the term refers to a type of boat, probably small, which sailed between the western coast ports of India. That a boat is intended is also implied by the expression 'the beginning of the season,' as I translated. *Maṭiyya* (sg.), *maṭāyā* also occurs in II, 27, line 7, II, 31, line 16 (in both cases the term was not deciphered by Goitein), concerning transport of goods (from the west) to Aden. It follows that the term refers to some type of (small) boat used on both sides of the Indian Ocean. On the other hand, as we have seen, *jalba* in line 10, is common in the Red Sea but not in the Indian Ocean (see the note to line 12). Accordingly, it is possible that both of these terms for vessels in II, 55 reflect the Adenese speech of Maḥrūz rather than local usage.

¹⁹ Arabic *takhruj*. For *kharaj*, see the note to line 29.

²⁰ Present day Cambay on the gulf with the same name, still north of Broach.

²¹ Malibār or Manibār is Malabar, but meaning both a region and a place on the southwestern coast of India. {Perhaps vocalize Mulaybārāt; see Tibbetts, *Arab Navigation*, 450.}

²² Kayākannār, explained by Professor A. L. Basham as 'Lesser Cannanore,' *kay* meaning 'lesser' in Tamil, the language spoken in those parts. Not found in any other Geniza paper. {Goitein, "India-Merchants," 37, combined the name with the preceding *l*, which indicates direction, and read 'Lakiyaknor.' The correct reading is Fāknūr/Fākanūr, a place on the Malabar coast north of Mangalore, the traditional capital of Tuḷuva; see Nainar, *Arab Geographers*, 33–34; Tibbetts, *Arab Navigation*, 200, 456 (where the correct spelling Fāknūr, with long *ā* both in English and Arabic appears); Digby, "Maritime Trade," 154: "Bacanore (Fakanor) in Canara"; Chakravarti, "Coastal Trade," 112: "present Barkur up the Sitanadi river." After I deciphered the word here, I also identified the toponym on II, 22v; see the introduction to II, 21–24. Fāknūr/Fākanūr furthermore appears four times in VII, 70 (the last document added by Goitein to the India Book), published posthumously: Goitein, "Portrait"; on Fāknūr, see *ibid.*, 459, nn. 46, 51 (which is to be corrected concerning the spelling in Tibbetts).

²³ Tāna. The text has T(h)āt(h)na.

²⁴ Tinbū, apparently a Hindu. Abu 'l-Qāsim, who was mentioned before (line 24) in deferential terms, was a Muslim. {See the note to line 24.

[C. Pepper sent in Maḏmūn's ship]

(41) You will be pleased to know,²⁵ my lord, that a sum in favor (42) of your excellency remained with me on account {alt. tr.: from the proceeds} of the silk. (43) With it I bought twelve [...], and sixteen large [bahārs] {read: twelve and a half large bahārs}²⁶ pepper for you, (44) and I dispatched this for you under God's protection {read: for you this year}²⁷ from Mangalore (45) with the 'Blessed' ship—may God ordain her safety!²⁸

[D. Summary and greetings]

[Verso] (1) Attached to this letter, (2) is another one in Arabic characters of the same content as this (3) letter; please take notice of this.²⁹ And again, my lord, do not take to (4) heart what you have lost; you have, my lord, (5) praise be to God, plenty to have recourse to and to be compensated with. (6) When life is saved, nothing else matters. {alt tr.: When one is alive and well, everything else can be replaced.}³⁰ (7) {Add: By God,} nor do I need to urge you again to come to (8) Mangalore.

Accept, my lord, profuse regards for your esteemed self (9) and convey profuse regards to the elder Abu Sa'd.

(10) The writer of these lines,³¹ Abraham Ben Yijū, conveys to your excellency (11) copious regards, and those who attend the writing of this

²⁵ Arabic *alladhī tuḥibbu 'ilmahu*. This phrase is repeated in the letters of Ben Yijū (III, 39, line 6, III, 41, line 5), who penned this letter, and obviously reflects his wording.

²⁶ The terms 'large' and 'small' were applied to the *bahār*, usually 300 pounds in our papers. {See 322, n. 4.}

²⁷ As I discovered in Oxford in September 2001, a small piece of the manuscript had been misplaced here, which led to Goitein's erroneous reading of the text. From the text, whose translation I have now supplied, we can deduce that Maḏrūz stayed in India for more than one year.

²⁸ The 'Blessed' {*al-Mubārak*} belonged to Maḏmūn of Aden (see II, 32) and operated between Aden and Mangalore. See II, 20 {line 31;} verso, lines 5–6. {The situation is rather interesting: An Egyptian Jewish trader, doing business in northern India, orders pepper to be shipped to Aden from an Adenese Jewish trader and shipowner, doing business in southern India, who, rather than waiting for the sailing of his own ship, sends it in the ship of a third Jewish trader from Aden. All three had familial and business ties.}

²⁹ See below, n. 31, according to which the letter written in Arabic characters may have been intended for presentation by Abū Zikrī to Tinbū or others as a letter of introduction or recommendation.

³⁰ The writer repeats his remarks on recto, lines 15–20.}

³¹ The letter is a beautiful example of Abraham Yijū's calligraphy. The letter in Arabic characters probably was written by Maḏrūz himself and was destined to be shown,

letter do the same {read: Maymūn, who was present at the writing of this letter, extends greetings}.³²

(12) *May the well-being of my lord increase indefinitely and never decrease!*

[E. Address]

To be delivered to my esteemed lord, the light of my eyes, his honor, our master and lord Judah ha-Kohen, the wise and discerning, the son of his honor, great and holy master and lord Joseph ha-Kohen—may his soul be satiated with pleasures in the Gardens {read: garden} of Eden³³ until he will be quickened at the end of the days!

From his servant Maḏrūz b. Jacob—may he rest in Eden!

Given in trust {alt. tr.: 'Steadfast faithfulness'} (i.e., no fees for delivery).³⁴

if necessary, to his non-Jewish business friends, especially Tinbū. The Hindu shipowner certainly knew Arabic. {Cf. Margariti, "Aden," 255, who notes that this shows that Arabic had become the lingua franca of the western Indian Ocean. Maḏrūz probably manifested his poor penmanship not only in Hebrew script but also in Arabic script, and I assume that Ben Yijū wrote that letter for him as well.}

³² For *ḥaḏar al-kitāb mimman yakbuṣ bil-salām*, I read *ḥaḏar al-kitāb maymūn*, etc. Compare the wording, e.g., in II, 67, margin, lines 4–5; IV, 58, margin at top of page, lines 20–21, in both of which a personal name appears here. This Maymūn is likely to be the same as 'Sheikh Maymūn, the Muslim, the prominent merchant,' with whom Joseph b. Abraham sends goods to Ben Yijū to Mangalore in Maḏrūz's ship (page 564).

³³ Based on the Aramaic Targum to Ezek. 28:13 (on which, see Kasher, "Ezekiel 28:13–19"), this rare blessing for the dead is an interesting addition to the sources on life after death in the Geniza, discussed in Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 5:182 ff., 406 ff., etc. Goitein read *gīnātā*, 'gardens,' for *gīnetā* (sg.).

³⁴ See page 257, n. 13.}