

III, 23 *Fragment of Detailed Accounts Written by Abraham Ben Yijū*

India {apparently 1132–39, 1145–49}

TS NS J 10

These accounts were written in India, as they register Indian products shipped to Adenese merchants and products, from the West, such as tin and oil (see verso, lines 13–14), received from them. {The coinage is also Indian.}

However, in the fragmentary twenty lines of page one, Ben Yijū clearly lists receipt of pepper and of 'smooth,' heavy iron (the expression 'heavy' iron occurs only here, lines 8 and 13), for which freight had been paid by him, in a big and a small ship; cf. the introduction to III, 22. In various instances Ben Yijū gave orders to send commodities to Aden from ports other than the one where he resided; here he assembled merchandise to be shipped to Aden from his homeport. See also verso, line 1.

The other accounts, with the exception of the last, are better preserved and constitute a useful addition to our knowledge of the Indian trade. {For the dates, see the introduction to III, 21.}

## Contents

- [A] Receipt of quantities of pepper and iron (lines 1–20).  
 [B]–[G]. {See the translation.}  
 [H] Fragmentary memo (traces of writing in the opposite direction) on the same sum of 146 (*filī mithqāls*, less two dirhems, which completed account A on the first page (lines 18–19).

## Translation of Sections B–G

[B. Shipments to the Adenese merchants Maḍmūn b. Ḥasan and Joseph b. Abraham through a *nākhudā* Rayḥān]

[Margin] (1) [...] three bags of iron, [[3.]] 340 pieces, weighing 26 [*bahārs*?] (2) [...] which the *nā[khudā]* Rayḥān, God willing, [will deliver] to Sheikh M[āḍmūn...] after safe arrival. (3) [//...b]y the *nākhudā*// a small basket of r[ed] betel nuts, containing 21 p[ieces],<sup>1</sup> which he will

<sup>1</sup> It seems that in the basket of betel nuts some pieces of another product were carried. The betel nuts themselves were traded in thousands; see verso, line 4. {For *qit'a*, lit., 'piece,' used here and in the continuation for 'unit,' see 168, n. 1.}

de]liver to Sheikh [M]aḍmūn after safe arrival, please God. (4) [Like-wise,] the *nākhudā* Rayḥān is carrying [...] baskets of betel nuts, which he will deliver to Sheikh Maḍmūn (5) (after) safe arrival, God willing. Likewise, the *nākhudā* Rayḥān is carrying a basket of copper<sup>2</sup> vessels manufactured for Sheikh Joseph (6) [b. Abraha]m, containing the following seven items: a round tray,<sup>3</sup> a big table jug, a lamp stand, two small table jugs, (7) [a basin and] a ewer.<sup>4</sup> Sheikh Joseph will take delivery of all this from the *nākhudā* Rayḥān, God willing.

## [C. Shipments to the Adenese merchant Khalaf b. Isaac]

[Verso] (1) Also in the small ship,<sup>5</sup> there is a basket carried by Maḍmūn b. Sālim<sup>6</sup> (2) of white betel nuts for Sheikh Khalaf b. Isaac, to be delivered to Sheikh Khalaf.

(3) Also in the small ship, there are two baskets, one of them large, [containing] (4) six {perhaps read: seven} thousand large (?) [nuts?],<sup>7</sup> to be delivered by Ya'q[ū]b b. Joseph.

## [D. Sundry assets]

(5) Sheikh Abū 'Alī Ibn 'Abd Allah al-Miṣrī owes me, on d[elivery]<sup>8</sup> (6) half a *filī mithqāl* and the price of [...]ty<sup>9</sup> *dnḡly*<sup>10</sup> of wheat.

(7) My lord Sheikh ['Abd] al-Laṭīf, *may he be remembered with [b]lessings* [read: [...] b.] Naṭīr (?),<sup>11</sup> owes me five *bahārs* of (8) 'refurbished' [iron], each *bahār* consisting of [...] *farāsila*.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>2</sup> {Arabic *ṣufī*. For the meaning of this term, see 555, n. 11.}

<sup>3</sup> Arabic *ṣinīyya*. {See 209, n. 2.}

<sup>4</sup> For the table jug, see 555, n. 13; the lamp stand, 559, margin; for basin and ewer, 558, line 25. As we see, the same merchant ordered mostly the same vessels.

<sup>5</sup> Other items in the small ship are listed on recto, lines 5 ff. The two ships mentioned in this document had arrived from another port in India and called on Ben Yijū's homeport before sailing to Aden. On larger and smaller ships sailing together, see 341, n. 26.

<sup>6</sup> See III, 22, where this Adenese merchant is engaged in a similar mission.

<sup>7</sup> As betel nuts are sent here, it is highly probable that the effaced word was *habba*, literally 'grain,' but used for a unit of any commodity, especially as the vestiges of a *h* are still visible. Cf. II, 14, lines 7–8, where 2,000 betel nuts were sent to Maḍmūn by Ben Yijū {and the word *habba* is used; cf. 190, n. 27; I, III, 18, sec. C, line 11}.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. line 15.

<sup>9</sup> Any number between 20 and 90 ([...] *ḡn*).

<sup>10</sup> Obviously a local measure for wheat or for grains in general.

<sup>11</sup> {While the decipherment of the name is uncertain, Goitein's reading ['*ba*] *'llyf z'l*] is unlikely, in my opinion. Furthermore, 'Abd al-Laṭīf, a Muslim name, would not normally be followed by the blessing *z'l*.}

<sup>12</sup> As there was a big and a small *bahār* (see II, 16, line 4), the numbers of *farāsila* in a *bahār* differed from one to another; cf. here recto, line 6.

[E. Credits due from the *nākhudā* Maḥrūz and another merchant]

(9) I gave to the *nākhudā* Ma[ḥr]ūz<sup>13</sup> eight *mithqā*[ls also] (10) from my hand into his hand, 32 *mithqāls*. [[ [Likewise, owed me] (11) by Sheikh [Ab]ū 'Alī the Little,<sup>14</sup> as a favor for me {alt. tr.: my fee} a *mithqāl* //I collected in full//. T[otal...]]<sup>15</sup>

## [F. Debts to Maḥrūz]

(12) Due the *nākhudā* Maḥrūz, customs duties [...] (13) a p[iece...] and customs duties for a piece of tin and customs duties for [...] (14) [[and the price of a water skin with oil, one third *filī* and one half *fāj*. (15) His credit: four dirhems less one *fāj* on delivery]].<sup>16</sup>

[G. Balance in favor of the *kārdār*'s brother]

[Margin] (1) Balance due Nair,<sup>17</sup> the brother of the *kārdār*, three *filīyā* dirhems, (2) the remainder of the price of the red and the white betel nuts.

<sup>13</sup> About this Adense notable, see Introduction IIB1.

<sup>14</sup> {Abū 'Alī *al-ṣaghīr*. *Al-ṣaghīr* is hardly a standard byname and was added by Ben Yijū in his private accounts to distinguish the junior Abū 'Alī from another, more senior one. Several Abū 'Alīs were associated with Ben Yijū.}

<sup>15</sup> The line is crossed out, because the money had been paid back. {For *khayritī* (?), 'as a favor for me' (Goitein wrote: 'as a favor on my side,' but I assume this is what he meant), Prof. Werner Diem suggested, in a private communication, to read *kīratī*, to be taken as a plene spelling of *kīratī* = *kīrā'ī* (cf. Dozy, *Supplément*, 2:462a), '(for) my fee'.}

<sup>16</sup> Crossed out, because delivery had taken place. {'On delivery' translates *bi-taslim al-shay* (after which the paper is torn), lit., 'on delivery of the thing/merchandise.' Perhaps restore *bi-taslim al-shay*[*kh*], 'delivered by Shei[*kh*...].'

<sup>17</sup> See 639, n. 17. While the *kārdār* (see III, 18, sec. A, line 2) specialized in cardamom, his brother, as we see here, specialized in betel nuts.

III, 24 *Abraham Ben Yijū's Inventory of Baggage for Journey from India to the West*

India {probably 1140 or 1149}

TS NS 324, f. 114

Detailed list in Ben Yijū's hand of receptacles containing food and other commodities, as well as of certain objects taken with him (on a trip from India to the West).<sup>1</sup>

{The list, almost complete, is written on the verso and blank spots of III, 8. According to the heading it enumerates 'the baskets, sacks, bottles, *fātiyas* and remaining baggage.' Actually at least twelve different kinds of containers and their contents are detailed. Fragile items were packed in hay or straw.<sup>2</sup> It is not clear whether Ben Yijū was on his final journey out of India to Aden or merely traveling there for an extended visit (cf. the list in III, 21, sec. B, which seems to have been written for a relatively short visit). The dates are given according to these two possibilities. The items enumerated presumably represent all of the provisions and accompanying baggage taken on the trip for him and probably for his whole household. The list contains foods; kitchenware, furnishings and other household goods; clothing; metals, viz., iron and copper, including items apparently manufactured in Ben Yijū's workshop, as well as other items. It is a valuable resource for the study of the material civilization and also includes many words, Arabic or Indian, not attested elsewhere, whose exact meaning is yet unclear.

<sup>1</sup> {Goitein's papers preserve this brief description of the document and a draft copy of the Judeo-Arabic text.

<sup>2</sup> For packing for shipping on the high seas, see Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 1:332 ff., where this document is not discussed.