

Abu 'l-Ma'ānī, the Levi, the merchant, known as al-Dajājī<sup>3</sup> appeared before us and deposited his testimony that Abu 'l-Faḍl b. Mukhtār ("Chosen") al-Iskandarī ("Of Alexandria"), known as Ibn [. . .] died in Kalah,<sup>4</sup> which is in the country of. . .<sup>5</sup> He checked and verified this when he visited al-Ma'bar<sup>6</sup> in the country of India. After he had deposited his testimony in our presence, we confided it to writing so that it should serve as a title of right and a proof.

#### 47 DEATH IN INDONESIA

This is the upper left-hand corner of a query submitted to the Nagid Abraham Maimonides.<sup>1</sup> It is translated here for the same reason as the preceding selection.

Fanṣūr, a port on the island of Sumatra, Indonesia, was famous for its export of camphor and is mentioned as such not only by Muslim writers, but also by the famous Venetian traveler Marco Polo. The Fanṣūrī camphor was the best to be had both according to the Geniza documents and the later European sources.<sup>2</sup> No wonder that Jewish traders, too, made the long way from Cairo to Fanṣūr, requiring four months at least.

Jewish Theological Seminary, New York, E. N. Adler Collection,  
ENA 4020 I, f. 55 (?), *India Book* 233.

<sup>3</sup> About this man and the meaning of his names, see no. 45, sec. F, above. It is noteworthy that the son, although already having returned from a trip to India, is not yet styled "the elder."

<sup>4</sup> Kalah (today Kedah) on the west coast of present day Malaysia, is frequently mentioned by Muslim geographers as the main port for the export of tin, but also of camphor, aloe, and other Oriental products. See the extensive article in *EI*<sup>1</sup> s.v., also Sauvaget (cf. n. 1, above).

<sup>5</sup> Partly effaced, which is a pity, for the medieval Arabic name of the Malayan peninsula has not yet been established with certitude. I am still working on the identification.

<sup>6</sup> The Coromandel or southeastern coast of India. Only the upper part of the last three letters of 'l-M'br has been preserved, but no place name in India beginning with 'l-m other than al-Ma'bar is recorded in the Geniza.

<sup>1</sup> Not contained in Abraham Maimuni, *Responsa*, Jerusalem, 1937.

<sup>2</sup> See Heyd, *Commerce du Levant*, II, 592-594.

[What is the legal opinion of . . . . .] our illustrious master and teacher Abraham, the paramount Rav [. . . . .], the leader of our generation, the light of the world—may his glory be enhanced—about this: a man has traveled to the land of India and remained there for about fifteen years. [Before setting out he had appointed] his wife as his legal representative. She maintains herself and her two daughters by work. [. . . . .] Recently a Jewish man has arrived from Aden [and was questioned by another] Jewish man<sup>3</sup> who asked him [about that man who had traveled to India]. The Jew who had arrived from Aden said: we have heard [that he traveled to Fanṣūr and] died in Fanṣūr and that the ruler of that country [had taken his property (?)] . . .]

Can the wife on the basis of this testimony [. . . . .]. (Rest of lines visible. The question was not only whether the wife could marry again, but how much of the property of her late husband she was permitted to take for herself. According to Jewish law, the daughters, not she, were the heirs. But since she had maintained herself [and the children] for fifteen years, which was the duty of the husband, she was clearly entitled to remuneration of the living costs for this long period.)

<sup>3</sup> Many queries were styled in such a general way (without mentioning names) in order to emphasize the purely legal character of the problem.