

of the kind, for dyed purple is not worth a thing in Spain. During my absence on the land<sup>4</sup> someone came to Khiyār<sup>5</sup> and told him that dyed wool was not worth a thing there; so please do not send any.

Send money for the freight and customs and write me who has the papers of the shipment, namely, the paper for the Mānak (customs) house,<sup>6</sup> and that for the commission, for no goods can leave (the city gate for the harbor) unless they have a sign that they are cleared;<sup>7</sup> otherwise one has to pay the dues again. The purple-maker 'Abd al-Raḥmān<sup>8</sup> said he had no papers, except the 2 dinars less one-sixth which you (or, I) have received from Ibn Mu'allā.<sup>9</sup> He said that the wool was worth 6 dinars per Egyptian qinṭār and that it weighed five qinṭārs, which makes 30 dinars, to which will be added the sum you will send for freight and customs. 'Abd al-Raḥmān asked me also to write to you in his name to pay to Ḥasan 1 dinar and 2 qīrāts for the packing.<sup>10</sup>

When you have done what I am asking you to do in this letter, write to 'Abd al-Raḥmān to deliver the wool to me and send me the testimony. For he said to me: "Take the wool as a commenda."<sup>11</sup> I answered: "I shall not accept anything before I receive an answer to what I am writing to him." This is what impeded my accepting delivery from him: I have sworn that I shall not enter into any agreement with anyone in the world unless he makes a legally binding declaration that I am *trustworthy*<sup>12</sup> and that I am free from any *responsibility*. I notify you of this. God is my witness that, had I not given such a binding oath, I would not have written you anything of the kind, for between the two of us there is more trust

<sup>4</sup> Ar. *al-barr*, meaning perhaps the Egyptian *Rif*, or countryside.

<sup>5</sup> Of the various persons bearing this name this one probably was Khiyār b. Zikrī, for his son Zikrī b. Khiyār wrote the letter ULC Or 1080 J 54 to 'Arūs. Another contemporary was Khiyār b. Jacob (TS 10 J 28 f. 12 [dated 1100]).

<sup>6</sup> A customs house of Fustat, where exports were cleared.

<sup>7</sup> Text: *mā yaqdir yakhruj illā [mar]sūm*. See next letter.

<sup>8</sup> A Muslim colleague of 'Arūs, who had carried that "dyed purple" together with his own goods to Alexandria.

<sup>9</sup> The meaning of this clause is not evident.

<sup>10</sup> Text: *tglyg*, which is a scribal error. I assume that *tglyf*—i.e., *taghliḥ*—is intended.

<sup>11</sup> Text: *iqriḍ*, referring to the term *muqārada*.

<sup>12</sup> Meaning not obliged to give an oath under any circumstances.

than exists in the whole world, and I know well that you are more trustworthy than I am myself.

You still owe me 2 gold qīrāts, balance of the price of the [. . .] which I sent you. The son of your sister, 'Allān,<sup>13</sup> wrote to Hilāl<sup>14</sup> to pay me these 2 qīrāts, but he has not done so.

Best regards to you and to those under your care. And most respectful regards to your partner Sibā' ("Lion").

God alone is sufficient for me.<sup>15</sup>

#### 49 A LATER LETTER ON THIS SHIPMENT

TS NS J 197.

I am writing to you . . . from Alexandria. . . <sup>1</sup> Your letter with the testimony has arrived. Had I not been under oath, I would not have troubled you with this. Our friends will convey my excuses to you, namely, that I do not carry a thing for anyone except with this arrangement.

I loaded the wool, although I did not have the exact weight. 'Abd al-Raḥmān said that it weighed five qinṭārs and was worth 30 dinars. I took the expenses for the canvas, the ropes, and the freight from Abū Mūsā Hārūn ("Aaron, father of Moses") Ibn Shammār ("Trader in fennel").<sup>2</sup> I had great trouble in getting the shipment out to the harbor, for its papers had been lost. The two additional pieces which arrived with Hārūn<sup>3</sup> are already on board. The total

<sup>13</sup> Often mentioned in 'Arūs' correspondence. Since 'Arūs had no male offspring, he groomed his sister's son (who probably was married to a daughter of his) as the prospective heir of his firm.

<sup>14</sup> Most likely Hilāl b. Binyām (Benjamin), proprietor of a drugstore in Alexandria, given as an address in no. 50, n. 4, below. Drugstores, then as today, served as landmarks and small bourses. See *Med. Soc.*, II, 261.

<sup>15</sup> This phrase from the Koran was mostly used by Jews from the Maghreb. See above, *passim*.

<sup>1</sup> Seven short lines of the usual phrases.

<sup>2</sup> In TS 8 Ja 1, f. 5 (middle of the eleventh century) a man with this family name lives in al-Mahdiyya.

<sup>3</sup> The aforementioned Aaron, it seems. When mentioning him first the writer had to be exact, since he charged the addressee with a debt to this man.

freight: 6 dinars; I paid here 3 dinars, and the remaining 3 dinars will be paid in Almeria after safe arrival. Please take notice of this. Best regards to you and your partner Abu 'l-Wahsh ("Father of the wild animal").<sup>4</sup>

God alone is sufficient for me.

(Address, on the otherwise blank verso:)

(To) my master and lord Abu 'l-Afrāh, 'Arūs b. Joseph, . . .

(From) his grateful Hilāl b. Joseph, . . .

(As usual, the blank space is filled with lists in 'Arūs' hand, but this time obviously referring to a collection for a public appeal.)

#### 50 SPANISH SHIP SEIZED BY THE EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT

Ca. 1100

Here again two letters refer to the same shipment, but there is no need to translate both, for they were sent more or less simultaneously because of the urgency of the matter. Some details contained in the letter not translated here (Bodl. MS Heb. c 50, f. 19, referred to below with "Bodl.") are used in the comments.

The Egyptian government ordered the Spanish ship to be emptied in order to use it for naval operations in case of necessity, most likely in the war with the Crusaders, who had just arrived on the scene. As was assumed above (no. 48, n. 3), that ship probably was larger and stronger than the other Muslim boats anchoring at that time in Alexandria.

University Library, Cambridge, Taylor-Schechter  
Collection, TS 13 J 27, f. 9.

(Upside down:) Written in the night after the holiday.<sup>1</sup>  
(Six short lines of the usual opening phrases.)

<sup>4</sup> Identical, of course, with "Lion" of no. 48.

<sup>1</sup> Meaning Pentecost (Shavuoth), in May when the ships set sail.

I have just received your note in which you inform me that you have bought a bahār of lac and packed purple. But I must tell you that I cannot take anything from you with me. For when I took leave from you, I was planning to travel to Spain, but when I arrived here, I found that the Andalusian ship was completely emptied on written order from the Sultan.<sup>2</sup> Therefore I boarded a ship going to al-Mahdiyya. If you intend to send your goods to al-Mahdiyya, please send me a message and instruct me before we sail, since I do not think it would be proper on my part to carry your things with me unless you tell me so expressly in your letter. And be not late in writing, for the al-Mahdiyya boats are ready to sail; they have no further business here.<sup>3</sup> Otherwise, your goods might get stuck in Alexandria. Do not send your letter with anyone who you are not sure will deliver it. The best thing is you send it with a mukārī (donkey driver) to the store of Hilāl b. Binyām.<sup>4</sup>

(Short greetings and a note on the recipient's cousin, not completely legible in both letters.)

(Address in Ar. characters:)

This letter should be brought to the Colonnade<sup>5</sup> to the store of 'Arūs.<sup>6</sup> Deliver and be rewarded.

(In Heb. characters, upside down:)

To the illustrious elder 'Arūs, son of R. Joseph, . . .  
From his "son" Zikrī, son of R. Hananel.

#### 51 THE FRUSTRATED JOURNEY OF A BUSINESS FRIEND

The letter is written in the beautiful and regular hand of a trained scribe. Unlike other letters, where the address is put on the

<sup>2</sup> Bodl.: *al-marḳab al-andalusī qad ta'attal bi-ḳitāb min 'ind al-sultān wa-furriḡh jamī' mā fihā.*

<sup>3</sup> Bodl.: *al-marāḳīb al-mahdawīyya qad rājū*, an expression I have not seen before specifically in this sense.

<sup>4</sup> A drugstore. See no. 48, n. 14, above.

<sup>5</sup> Ar. *al-ṣaffayn*. See *Med. Soc.*, 1, 194.

<sup>6</sup> Clearly a landmark known to the muleteers.