

tioned in your letter) with Ibn al-Wazzān ("The Weighmaster"),<sup>18</sup> to whom I have also handed over a letter destined for you.

I gave your letter to the shaykh Abū 'Abdallāh al-Andalusī.<sup>19</sup> I shall settle accounts with him on the freight and take promissory notes from him, if God will, provided he does not put me off.

This very day, the bale of lac and the camel load of myrobalan arrived. In accordance with your instructions, I shall ship the lac to Qayrawān and the myrobalan to Palermo. I have given to 'Abd al-Salām<sup>20</sup> all the specifications concerning our shipments to these cities. May God grant safety to all of them.

I have transmitted your letters to Masarra ("Happiness") and he has already answered you. Let me know what should be done in this matter.

The ships are ready to set sail. They wait only until the heavy warship will be repaired.<sup>21</sup> This is what kept them until this time. May God grant them a safe passage.

God willing, you will receive additional letters from me with all the details and all the news coming in; may God let us hear good news.

I have written this in a hurry on the evening of Friday (Thursday evening);<sup>22</sup> please, my lord, excuse this lack of details. (Added in small letters:) As I have written, I shall inform 'Abd al-Salām about my shipments and I have already informed him about all I have loaded.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>18</sup> A Jewish family name, common throughout the centuries.

<sup>19</sup> This shipowner from Spain (see n. 8, above), had done business with the addressee, but not paid him yet.

<sup>20</sup> A Muslim factotum of the recipient. Larger Jewish businesses, like that of Ibn 'Awkal or the Tustaris, always had among their employees a Muslim, not because they believed in desegregation, but because it was practical, for instance, if a boat carrying shipments for them arrived on a Sabbath. A slave could not be used for such and similar tasks, since a slave was bound to observe the Sabbath like his master. Salām, peace, is one of the names of God.

<sup>21</sup> The convoy of the merchantmen was accompanied by a flotilla of the navy consisting of an *uṣṭūl*, or heavy warship, Greek *stolos*, and light galleys. See no. 70, below.

<sup>22</sup> In the Middle East, the day begins in the evening (cf. Genesis 1:5, etc.: "There was evening and there was morning, one day"). The mail couriers seem to have left Alexandria for Fustat on Friday. See *Med. Soc.*, 1, 287.

<sup>23</sup> The second item listed the expenses (transport to the boat, customs,

I extend kindest greetings to your noble self, to my lords, the elders (the addressee's two brothers), and to my lord, the illustrious elder Abu Sa'īd Sahlawayh b. Ḥayyīm.<sup>24</sup>

(Address, right side:)

(To) his excellency, my lord, the elder Abū Naṣr ("Victorious") al-Faḍl b. Sahl ("Bounty, son of Ease"), al-Dustarī.<sup>25</sup>

(Left side:)

From Ṣadaqa, son of 'Ayyāsh, (may his) s(oul) r(est in peace), who is grateful for his kindnesses.

## 70 NAVAL ESCORT AND OTHER PRECAUTIONS

### *Alexandria to Fustat*

Ca. 1025

This letter, like the preceding one, reflects a war situation: the spring convoy of ships sailing from Alexandria, Egypt, to the West, again is accompanied by a heavy warship and galleys manned with soldiers. But this time, all goods go to Tunisia, none to Sicily. This would fit the crisis of 1025-1027, when the Byzantines invaded the island, which then was in Muslim hands.<sup>1</sup>

One single shipment of 180 bales (sec. C), worth perhaps half a million dollars, is the largest noted by me thus far in the Geniza papers. Its proprietor was the merchant prince Joseph Ibn 'Awkal, the recipient of our letter, about whom the introduction to no. 1,

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freight, considerations for the officials, and sailors, etc.) for each bale and the names of the persons to whom they were entrusted. The first contained descriptions of their content, for goods arriving from Fustat often had to be repacked for the overseas transport.

<sup>24</sup> This great Karaite banker, who is repeatedly mentioned in connection with the Tustaris, must have been a close relative of Abū Naṣr, the addressee, probably his brother-in-law.

<sup>25</sup> With *D* instead of *T*, because polite style derived this family name not from its real origin, Tustar, the Iranian city, but from the Persian word *dastūr*, high dignitary.

<sup>1</sup> A. R. Lewis, *Naval Power and Trade in the Mediterranean, A.D. 500-1100*, Princeton, 1951, pp. 194-196.

above, may be consulted. His representative in Alexandria, the writer of the letter, was a nephew of Mūsā (Moses) Ibn al-Majjānī, whom we have met before and meet here again as Ibn 'Awkal's agent in Qayrawān, then the capital of Tunisia (see no. 1, sec. F). Four other letters to Ibn 'Awkal by this Alexandrian representative have been preserved.<sup>2</sup>

University Library, Cambridge, Taylor-Schechter  
Collection, TS 13 J 17, f. 3.<sup>3</sup>

(Four lines of introduction, which contain also the date: 27th of Iyyar, approximately mid-May.)

#### A. MERCHANTMEN AND WARSHIPS READY FOR SAILING

You know, my lord, from my preceding letters that not a single bale of ours has remained on land and that all the bales in the ships are in the best places. I ask God to guarantee their safe arrival for us.

We have heard pleasing news from the West; for, by God, my lord, there had been many hideous rumors about Qayrawān, and every man added his own version, so that we had been very much upset. I ask God to let us hear good news from them, but we shall have no peace of mind, until their letters have been received, confirming that the city is safe.<sup>4</sup> I ask God that it will be so.

The ships, my lord, are in the last stage of preparations. Not a single soldier charged with their protection has remained on land. They have already loaded their water and provisions and are waiting now for the completion of the warship; they will set it afloat and sail, and the boats (of the merchants) will sail with them (the soldiers). The day after the writing of this letter the galleys<sup>5</sup> will be set afloat, for today they have completed their repair.

<sup>2</sup> In addition to the three noted in *Tarbiz* 36 (1967), 369: BM Or 5563 C 19; Shaked, *Bibliography*, p. 178.

<sup>3</sup> Ed. S. D. Goitein, *Tarbiz* 36 (1967), 372-376, trans. Stillman, *East-West Relations* (see no. 1, n. 5, above), pp. 296-302.

<sup>4</sup> Read *bi-salāmatihā* (in the printed text *t* is omitted). See n. 20, below.

<sup>5</sup> Ar. *al-qaṭā'i*. The galleys, which were propelled by both oars and sails, moved swiftly and therefore could leave some time after the convoy and the heavy warship, *uṣṭūl* (see no. 69, n. 21), or if necessary, before, in order to explore the situation.

#### B. LETTERS SENT IN DIFFERENT BOATS

I wrote to M. Abū Sa'īd Khalaf b. Ya'qūb ("The Fortunate, Substitute, son of Jacob")<sup>6</sup>—may God keep him—a letter in four copies, sending each copy with coreligionists on different boats: namely, one with Salāma Ibn Abī Khalīl on the boat of al-Ba'shūshī;<sup>7</sup> another, on the boat of al-Andalusī,<sup>8</sup> with Sahlān, may God keep him;<sup>9</sup> a third copy, on the boat of Ibn al-Qaddār ("Mr. Potter")<sup>10</sup>—may God keep him—I gave to the owner of the boat, for no Jewish person traveled on it; the fourth, I gave to Salār ("Chieftain, leader"),<sup>11</sup> the "boy" (employee) of Ibn al-Šāhila ("The woman who neighs like a horse"). I instructed all our coreligionists, may God keep them, to watch carefully the seventy bales and one barqalū until they will deliver them in safety into the hands of Khalaf b. Ya'qūb, the Andalusian.<sup>12</sup>

#### C. INSTRUCTIONS TO IBN 'AWKAL'S AGENT IN QAYRAWĀN

I also sent a letter in five copies to Qayrawān, to my mother's brother, may God support him. I copied the letters which I shall send to you, my lord.<sup>13</sup> The letters indicated by you, twelve in all, were given by me to Wad'a ("Cowrie shell"),<sup>14</sup> may God keep him. I shall wrap up the remaining letters and send them with our coreligionists on five different boats.

<sup>6</sup> Representative of merchants in al-Mahdiyya, the port city of Qayrawān. About this prominent Spanish Jew see *Med. Soc.*, II, 60, 61.

<sup>7</sup> In another letter to Ibn 'Awkal (Mosseri L 52, l. 9, *Tarbiz* 37 [1968], 50), this boat wintered in the port of Alexandria and was repaired there. The name is derived from *ba'shūsh*, probably a Maghrebi version of *ba'sūš*, tail, etc.

<sup>8</sup> The Spaniard. See no. 69, n. 8, above.

<sup>9</sup> Possibly Sahlān b. Abraham, leader of the Iraqi Jewish community of Fustat, after the death of his father in 1032. See Mann, *Jews in Egypt*, I, 82-83, and *passim*.

<sup>10</sup> Frequently mentioned.

<sup>11</sup> This Persian word should be spelled Sālār.

<sup>12</sup> A list of persons to whom the various bales had been entrusted was included in one of the preceding letters of the writer, which are referred to at the beginning of paragraph A, above.

<sup>13</sup> Letters which had arrived in Alexandria from abroad were copied before being forwarded to Fustat.

<sup>14</sup> A business agent who was legally a slave.

Likewise, I wrote five letters to M. Abū Zikrī Yaḥyā,<sup>15</sup> may God keep him, and informed him about all I had sent to al-Mahdiyya this year, a total of 179 bales and two barqalūs,<sup>16</sup> specifying the boats, the advances on the freight collected for them, and similar matters. I ask God to mercifully grant them a safe passage.

I have asked my uncle, may God preserve his honored position, to send his son M. Abū Zikrī Yaḥyā to al-Mahdiyya as soon as our bales would arrive, to receive them all, to sell them in al-Mahdiyya during the height of the business season<sup>17</sup> and send all the proceeds to my uncle in Qayrawān. I have asked the latter to buy for my lord all the goods you have ordered, such as lead, wax, brocade, textiles, saffron, etc.

#### D. FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS. CONCLUSION

I have already informed my lord, may God preserve his honored position, that I owed 30 dinars on account of the advances on the freight and that I had taken a *suftaja* of this amount from Ibn 'Abd al-Qudra ("Slave of [God's] Majesty").<sup>18</sup> I also took the 10 dinars which were with Salāma,<sup>19</sup> may God keep him, and made payments with them.

All the ships are ready to sail—may God grant them a safe passage. I intended to send Salāma, when I learned that the ruler of

<sup>15</sup> The son of the uncle of the writer, Mūsā al-Majjānī. The letter translated in no. 18, above, was written by Yaḥyā about fifteen years later.

<sup>16</sup> This shows that another convoy had left Alexandria for Tunisia a very short time before. Ships did not sail before the very end of April.

<sup>17</sup> Ar. *fi naḥs al-mawsim*. Merchants often adopted an opposite course, keeping their goods until later in the year. Intelligence must have reached Alexandria that in the West there was a great demand for Egyptian flax. Perhaps by European traders? This also explains why, despite a threat of war, such huge quantities were shipped.

<sup>18</sup> For *suftaja* see no. 67, n. 1, above. Stillman's rendering "cashier's check" is more to the point than the usual "bill of exchange." The banker Ibn 'Abd al-Qudra, who issued the *suftaja*, was a Muslim.

<sup>19</sup> One of the Ar. names corresponding to Heb. Solomon. The man was a factotum of Ibn 'Awkal.

Qayrawān had been defeated.<sup>20</sup> There was great confusion<sup>21</sup> here in the city and I was afraid that [. . .] and there were many bad rumors. (A few more disconnected words follow; the remainder, probably not more than two or three lines, is torn away. Of the greetings in the margin only the name of Ibn 'Awkal's youngest son, Abū Sa'īd,<sup>22</sup> is preserved.)

(Address, right side:)

To his excellency, my lord, the illustrious elder, Abu 'l-Faraj Joseph, son of Ya'qūb Ibn 'Awkal, (may his) s(oul) r(est in peace). May God make permanent his honored position, eminence, happiness, and prosperity.

(Left side:)

From his servant,<sup>23</sup> Ephraim, son of Ismā'īl, (may his) s(oul) r(est in peace), al-Jawharī.<sup>24</sup> (To be delivered) in his office<sup>25</sup> in Fustat, God willing.

#### 71 SHIPWRECK IN WAR TIME

*From Palermo, Sicily, to Damsīs, Egypt*

Ca. 1025

The writer of this letter had lost everything in shipwreck, and when he finally arrived in Palermo, Sicily, found that part or all of his property had been alienated. His state of utmost privation was aggravated by the Byzantine attack on Sicily, which threatened

<sup>20</sup> The rumors referred to here and in sec. A, above, were well founded. The mighty Berber tribe of the Zenāta (or Zanāta) had launched formidable attacks against the ruler of Tunisia, but were finally defeated in the course of the Muslim year ending in March 1025 (see Idris, *Zirides*, p. 162). The travelers arriving in Alexandria with the first boats which had sailed from al-Mahdiyya, brought the good tidings.

<sup>21</sup> The manuscript has *dahj* (see Dozy, *Supplément*, 1, 465b), which is related to the more common *dahsh*.

<sup>22</sup> His name occurs also in Bodl. Libr. MS Heb. d 80, f. 43v in the fragment of a legal document in Ar. characters.

<sup>23</sup> Absolutely exceptional.

<sup>24</sup> Dealer in gems, a family name.

<sup>25</sup> See no. 1, introduction, above. Ar. *bi-majlisihī*, lit., the place where one sits and receives guests. Meaning probably: not to his home.