

Rough copies of two memos, written by Ben Yijū in Aden about transactions

with the Nāḥodā (ship's owner) Abū ^cAbdallah ibn (Abu) 'l-Katā'ib

No. 66 - concerning goods brought from India

No. 67 - concerning goods sent there, as well as about sums due to the Nāḥodā for
the transport of the goods mentioned in No. 66

University Library Cambridge Or 1080 J 95 (verso)

For the description of the ms., see No. 65. No. 67 is written upside down to No. 66. A blank space of about seven lines has been left between the two. In No. 66, the beginnings of ll. 1-7 were torn away, but not much is lost.

The Nāḥodā Abū ^cAbdallah ibn Abu 'l-Katā'ib was drowned on his way from Aden to India in 1146, cf. above No. 208(60x), ll. 18-25. We find him doing business together with his father Abu 'l-Ḥasan here, No. 67, ll. 26 and 31, just as above No. 26, l. 19. The terminus ad quem of Nos. 66-7 is, therefore, summer 1146. As, however, Ben Yijū was at that time in India, see No. 58 and 59a-b, and had been established there for many years, these statements must have been written before that year. As we have many letters written to B.Y. from Aden to India during the years 1133-1140 and again from 1145-1148, it is feasible to assume that he paid a visit to Aden in the early forties of the twelfth century and that these memos were written at that time.

While the honorific name Abu 'l-Ḥasan was very common among Jews at that time, Abu ^cAbdallah is seldom found, if at all, cf. University Library Cambridge T. - S. 16.179 and 13 J 17, fol. 2. On the other hand, the name Abu 'l-Katā'ib was borne

by a Muslim savant of the thirteenth century, cf. Al-Kutubī, Fawāt al-Wafayāt, Bulāq, II, p. 128. Thus, it is most probable that these merchants were Muslims.

These memos are very instructive concerning various aspects of the Indian trade.

Translation of No. 66

(1) The Nāḥodā Abū ^c Abdallah.

(2) Due to him eight bahār pepper in one consignment. (3) Price fifty-six mitqāl. Furthermore twenty-two (4) mitqāl on account of specified goods. (((Due to him))) (5) Due to him also the price of two bahārs iron (((and of two bahārs))) (6) (and of ...) two hundred "eggs" sixteen mitqāl. (7) Total ninety-four mitqāl. (8) Due to him ((eleven)) mitqāls and a half for goods specified in a second (9) account. The two totals together one hundred and five (10) mitqāls and a half. (11) Paid to him one hundred and eighty-six mitqāls. Balance (12) owed by him eighty mitqāls and one half.

C o m m e n t a r y

2 The Nāḥodā had brought from India to Aden eight bahārs, i.e. 2400 ratls of pepper in one consignment, Ar. ^c idl, literally (camel's) load. This quantity exceeds, of course, by far the weight which can be carried by a camel. In No. 32, l. 33, an ^c idl consists of 500 ratls.

3 A bahār pepper costs here at arrival at Aden $\frac{56}{8} = 7$ mitqāls. From a comparison of No. 67, l. 9 with ll. 19-20, it is evident that the rate of exchange of the local Malikī dīnār against the mitqāl was, at that time, 1:2,5. Thus, the price of a

bahār pepper at arrival was 17 1/2 Maliki dīnār. In 1133, as No. 28, ll. 9, 10 and 20 show, a bahār pepper cost at arrival in Aden 14 d. and was sold, while outgoing for Egypt, for 37 d.

4 specified goods - Ar. tafārīq. While the standard goods, such as pepper, iron or cardamom, appeared in the main account, other merchandise, which was handled in smaller quantities, was specified in separate accounts. Cf. No. 28, l. 43; No. 29, l. 50; No. 199 (29x), l. 14.

6 "eggs" - See above No. 26 verso, l. 20. For the identification of this commodity, it is important that it is reckoned together with iron under one and the same heading here and in No. 67, l. 29. Here, the "eggs" are numbered: 200 and x (perhaps 6); in No. 67, l. 29, their weight is given as one bahār.

11 The account is correct. Most probably, Ben Yijū had handed over in India to the Nāḥodā the amount of 186 mitqāl, but the latter had found only merchandise of the value of 105 1/2 m. worth-while buying. B.Y. and the Nāḥodā certainly travelled on different ships, because they set out from different ports.

No. 67

A. (I) List of commodities handed over to the Nāḥodā for transport to India.

The nature and quantities of the items listed indicate that they were destined not for selling, but for B.Y.'s household in the wider sense of the word and for presents. The list of prices, ll. 12-21, was destined either for purposes of identification, or because the ship's owner had taken upon himself to refund their value in case they were lost. The contents of this document clearly indicates that B.Y. was in Aden only for a short visit. The prices are given in l. 9 and ll. 13ff. in fīliyā (Indian) mitqāls, which is natural, as the commodities

6/1, p. 10

about

perhaps for ~~some~~ ⁴⁰ ibarion silk

a silk band with ~~40~~ ⁶⁰ silver ⁱⁿ 5 bell,

some can produce in. L. H. J., see

seigneur X, 102

were transported to India. It seems that the Indian mitqāl was approximately of the same value as the Egyptian, for here its exchange ratio for the Adenese Malikī dīnār is 1:2,5, while the Egyptian mostly was 1:2,35 (No. 26 verso 16; No. 28, l. 32) or 1:2,3 (No. 81, l. 23), but also 1:3,5 (No. 29, ll. 35-36; No. 30 and 61 margin). See Vol. I, ch. "Money."

T r a n s l a t i o n

(1) Handed over by me to (2) ((the Nāhodā)) Abū ((^CA))bdallah ibn al-Katā'ib (3) three water-skins of melted butter and (4) two other water-skins; two sets of large-sized paper; (5) four cushions, two of Zanzibar type (6) and two of new miḥbas; ten (7) beryl stones; two farāsila garlic; (8) a bleached fūṭa wrapper, worth (9) three and a half dīnār //and a quarter// from Aden; a Manāri fūṭa (10) worth a fīlī mitqāl; *sikkam will?* a sack (11) containing forty silver-beads, five little bells.

A. (II) Prices of the commodities listed above.

(12) Price of the five water-skins with melted butter, three fīlī (13) mitqāls. Price of the two sets of paper, one m. (14) Price of the four cushions, one half of a mitqāl. (15) Price of two farāsilas garlic, a quarter m. (17) Price of the silver-beads and the bells, (18) a half and a quarter. Price of the Manāri fūṭa, (19) one m. Price of the woolen, bleached fūṭa, (20) one m. and a half. Total nine m. (21) less one quarter.

B. Payments due to the Nāhodā for the transport of the goods listed in No. 66 from India to Aden

(22) Pepper

(23) (((Due to him .. mitqāls for freight after the Bārbaza (24) (((and he re-

ceived))) and due to him also)))

(25) Due to him freight for eight bahārs pepper, less (26) one bahār duties paid for his father (27) and one bahār Bārbazā; balance due to him, six (28) mitqāls.

Due to him freight for two bahārs iron (29) and one bahār "eggs" three mitqāls, including the customs.

(30) Total nine mitqāls. He owes^e freight (31) for one bahār iron belonging to his father.

C o m m e n t a r y

3 Melted butter (ghee) is one of the most common victuals of Yemen and obviously was cherished by the Jewish craftsmen engaged in B.Y.'s workshop in India, see No. 64B, l. 9, where one Joseph receives a certain quantity of it.

Now, ghee is also extremely popular in India and was even exported from there already in Roman times, see Sir George Watt, The Commercial Products of India, p. 478. Thus, it is strange that it is sent here to India. The reason for this could be hardly religious, as the very strict Yemenite Jews - as far as I know - eat, without scruples, sammāh, or clarified butter, prepared by Muslims. Thus, the import of ghee to India possibly was a matter of taste. May be that in the regions of the Malabar coast, ghee was made from buffalo milk, while the Jews (and certainly also the Muslims and Christians), who came from the West, were accustomed to ghee from cows.

"If carefully enclosed in skins, while still hot, (ghee) may be preserved for many years without requiring the aid of salt or other preservatives," Watt, ib., p.

479. There was, therefore, no difficulty in sending quantities of it from Yemen to India.

4 paper - Ar. girtaṣ (for girtās), which originally designed papyrus in Ar. In 1. 13, the more common kāḡad is used instead. About the enormous need for paper in India, where none was produced at that time, see No. 24, l. 20.

5 cushions - Ar. maḡādid. This form is Magribī colloquial, cf. Vocabularium, quoted by Dozy, Supplement II, 353a.

As Zanzibar is famous for its leathergoods and not for textiles, most probably ^hcushions covered with leather are meant here.

For the mihbas textiles, which, according to our documents, were going both from West to East and vice versa, see Vol. I, Index.

6 new - In those times, when the textiles were of a high quality and handed over from one generation to the next, it was emphasized, when a material was new. In the Geniza, many lists of trousseaus have been preserved, in which similar statements occur, which shows that the brides often got clothes worn before.

7 Beryl - Of the three meanings of the word bizādī, given by Dozy, Supplement I, 81a, according to a twelfth century vocabulary of Spanish Jewish origin, obviously the second is intended here. For here, as in that vocabulary, bizādī is defined by ḥajar, "stone," and bizādī has the meaning beryl also in Persian, cf. the Persian-Engl. dictionaries of Johnson and Steingass.

Garlic is used by the Jews of the High Yemen sparingly and only for cooking, while those of Southern Yemen consume it frequently in its natural state. The considerable quantity mentioned here seems to indicate that it was intended not only for B.Y.'s

household, but for the people working in his factory as well.

8 a bleached fūṭa wrapper - See above No. 1, l. 12. Below, l. 19, it is described as a bleached goat-wool fūṭa. A cloth¹²⁰⁵ of exactly the same description was sent to B.Y., while in India, from Aden by Madmūn, cf. No. 29, l. 49, as well as by Joseph b. Abraham, No. 55, l. 15 (in the latter case, the word "bleached" is not used).

9 Here, the price of the fūṭa is given in (Malikī) dīnārs - 3 3/4, to which below, l. 20, correspond 1 1/2 mitqāls, i.e. a ratio of 2,5:1.

Two Manārī fūṭas, obviously a Spanish material, see above No. 26 verso, l. 9, were sent to B.Y. by Madmūn, see ib. Thus, this kind of clothing must have been quite popular among the Westerners living in India at that time. The price of those sent by Madmūn was three Malikī dīnārs per piece. The price here, according to the exchange rate calculated from l. 20, would be 2 1/2 dīnārs.

10 a sack - Ar. ibrzm; perhaps from Persian barzam, see Johnson, Pers.-Engl. Dict.

229a. or ibrizm = ibrizm, silk, a silk band with silver bells.

11 little bells - Ar. jalājil, perhaps for a robe of Ben Yijū's little daughter.

Such bells (obviously of silver) constituted part of a trousseau of a bride from Mahalla in Lower Egypt according to ms. University Library Cambridge T. - S. 12.125 verso, l. 7.

A. (III) The Prices of the Commodities (ll. 12-21)

In two cases, ll. 8-10, the writer had already stated the prices and repeats them afterwards, ll. 18-20. However, this is only a rough copy, in which no neat exactness is to be expected.

13 paper - Ar. kāḡad, with dots on both g and d; g should not bear a dot, as the

writer puts a dot on the ^H Hebrew letter g, in order to show that it should be pronounced j, e.g. ll. 3, 6, 9, 11. Such inconsistencies are, however, not infrequent.

It is noteworthy that Ben Yijū pronounced d^h and not d.

If we assume that dast, as modern dasta, normally designed a set of twelve - although No. 54, l. 24, hardly would speak of "a dast of twelve sheets," if it always was composed of that number, twenty-four sheets would have cost one dīnār. In No. 58, l. 42, thirty sheets were of the same price. Of course, size and quality varied widely.

20-1 The total of the prices enumerated in ll. 12-20 is 8 1/4 and not 8 3/4 m. The reading of all the numbers given is sure.

B. Payments due to the Nāḥodā

23-4 Crossed out; "after the Bārbazā" obviously means that for the iron sent in B. package - cf. No. 60, l. 38 - freight had been paid in advance in India.

26 The pepper belonged to B.Y., see No. 66, l. 2, but a sum equivalent to the freight of one bahār had been paid by B.Y. to Ibn al-Katā'ib's father. The word rasm (duties) seems to have been added later and with another ink.

27 This shows that for one bahār, costing seven mitqāls, a freight of one m. was paid for the transport from India to Aden.