

Account, written in Ben Yijū's hand, specifying how the two Adenese merchants Halaf b. Isaac and Joseph b. Abraham were to be compensated for lost consignments

Around 1150

University Library Cambridge T.-S. 8.19 recto (originally verso)

For a description of the ms., see above the Introduction to Nos. 58-59a-b. The account was written on the backside of No. 59b.

Ben Yijū's handwriting is known so far from nineteen (or 20, see below) pieces, as follows:

Nine accounts and other statements, mostly written on the backside of letters received or on narrow strips of paper: Nos. 63-7, 200(67x), 223-6 (72x-b, c, d).

Three letters, two by himself, Nos. 68 and 73, and one dictated to him by a business friend out in India, No. 133.

Four poems, three by himself, Nos. 41, 42, 44 and one copied on verso of 59a, see above, Introduction to 58-59, p. .

Three calenders for Jewish years corresponding to 1146-9 (verso of No. 26), 1149-50 (verso of No. 51) and 1153-6 (University Library Cambridge T.-S. 10 K 20, fr. 1, published by J. Mann, *Jews in Egypt and Palestine*, II, 291-2, who could not, of course, identify the writer).

B.Y.'s script is that of a trained scribe: clear, strong, and graceful, and is so much similar to the handwriting used in court records that one wonders whether the highly official document No. 87 (Aden 1134) was

not written by him. He certainly came of a family of scribes, see No. 56, p. 23.

The nineteen pieces enumerated above differ widely as to the size, cursiveness and forms of their letters and represent thus an interesting object of study for the palaeographer and even the graphologist. In the poems Nos. 41-2, the script is almost square and a little stiff; in the accounts, especially those written on narrow strips, it is cursive and hasty; between these extremes we find the calenders and letters, the former copied perhaps with a little more care than the latter. Our No. 63 is a case by itself. Ll. 1-12 are written in large bold letters, with much space between the lines. The postscriptum in ll. 14-7 is much more compressed and irregular.

*might be reconstructed*

The background of this account ~~is to be~~ *reconstructed* as follows:

Although No. 59, on whose back the account is written, was sent from Aden to India, there can be no doubt that this account was made in Yemen, almost certainly in Zabīd, the port of which was Ġulaifiqa. A ship carrying a cargo of pepper and cardamom for the two Adenese merchants on Ben Yijū's risk, as well as a load of iron for the latter, foundered off Ġulaifiqa. The pepper and cardamom were lost, the iron, or at least the part specified here, was salvaged. The Adenese merchants had to be compensated. It is interesting that this was not done in money, but in kind, probably because merchandise delivered promised additional profit.

Obviously, the first four bahār had been salvaged and sent on to Aden,

while an additional one bahār had been saved from the water later and had remained, at the time when Ben Yijū made the account, in Ġulaifiqa.

As the text is a little involved, a table showing the account in full is given first.

Remember: one bahār (abridged b.) = 300 raṭl (abr. r.) mitqāl, abr. m.

Due to Ḥalaf, for pepper 1 b. 14 r. of iron

for cardamom, 2m. worth 120 r.

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Ḥalaf total 1 b. 134 r.

Due to Joseph, for pepper 1 b. 75 r.

for cardamom, 4 m. worth 240 r.

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Joseph total 2 b. 15 r.

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Total Ḥalaf and Joseph 3 b. 149 r. of iron, worth 17 1/2 m.

Balance for Ben Yijū 1 b. 151 r.

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Total 5 b.

This had been the calculation, not what actually had been sent to Aden. For only four, not five b. had been available. Thus, each of the three merchants got one-fifth less the sums calculated above. As stated in the post-

scriptum, the fifth due to them from the b. iron remaining in Ġulaifiqa amounted to the following sums:

Ḥalaf	87 <u>r.</u>
Isaac	123
Ben Yijū	90
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Total	300 <u>r.</u> = 1 <u>b.</u>

From ll. 6 and 11, it is evident that a b. iron was worth five m. It is interesting that reckoning is made here not in local dīnārs, but in Egyptian mitqāls, the reason being most probably that the merchandise was on its way to Egypt and had so to say already left the local market of Yemen.

No quantities of the goods lost are given; the value is indicated only for the cardamom, not for the pepper. However, as the price of the iron, which <sup>had</sup> ~~is~~ to compensate for the lost goods, is known, it is simple to find the value of the pepper: for Ḥalaf 5 1/4 m., for Joseph 6 1/4 m. Most probably, this was not the total value of the goods sent, but only the percentage, which Ben Yijū, according to the agreement, had to refund.

#### T r a n s l a t i o n

(1) For the value of the pepper, which was in Ġulaifiqa, (go) (2) to Sheikh Ḥalaf b. Isaac, of the 4 b. Kūfī iron, which had been (3) in the perished new ship of Ibn al-Muqaddam, 1 b. Kūfī iron (4) and fourteen r. For the value of the pepper, which was in Ġulaifiqa, (go) to Sheikh Joseph

(5) b. Ibrahim 1 b. and a quarter //Kūfī iron// (which had been) in the new ship belonging to Ibn al-Muqaddam, (6) the perished. To him go also for 4 m., the value of the cardamom, two hundred (7) and forty r. Total two b. and 15 r. (8) To Sheikh Ḥalaf also for two m., the value of the cardamom, 120 r. of the (9) Kūfī iron. Total for him 1 b. and 134 r. (10) This makes the total for both 3 b. and a half of that iron (11) to the value of 17 and a half m. Balance for me (12) 1 b. and a half and 1 r. One b. remained, which is still to be distributed to all of us.

(13) (Left blank)

(14) Sent: one thousand and two hundred r. (of iron). Remaining: three hundred r. (15) Due to Sheikh Joseph from the remaining //b.// iron 100 r. and twenty-three r. (16) and to Sheikh Ḥalaf 87 r., total two hundred and ten r., and for me ninety (17) r. Total 300 r.

#### C o m m e n t a r y

2 Kūfī iron - About the various types of iron in the Indian trade, see vol. I, s.v.

3 the perished new ship of Ibn al-Muqaddam - For the old ship of the same man also foundered, see No. 54, l. 13.