

Fragment of detailed Accounts Written by Ben Yijū in India

Between 1133 and 1149

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The right lower corner of a sheet, which originally was about 11,5 cm broad. Its longest preserved stretch contains about 17,5 cm. Thin, brown paper. It is a mere scrap, irregularly torn to pieces and damaged by large holes. The writing has been effaced in a number of places. Page one was completely covered with writing, including seven lines written on the margin; on verso, the main account is continued in four lines, followed by five additional entries, of which the fourth was written in smaller letters on the margin and the fifth, of which very little is preserved, upside down.

These accounts were written in India, as Indian products are being sent in them to Adenese merchants and Western products, such as tin and oil, see verso, ll. 13-4, are received from them.

However, in the completely destroyed twenty lines of page one, Ben Yijū clearly lists receipt of pepper and of "smooth," heavy iron (the expression "heavy" iron occurs only here, ll. 8 and 13), for which freight had been paid by him, in a big and a small ship, cf. the Introduction to No. 62. While we had found in various instances before that B.Y. gave orders to send commodities to Aden from ports other than the one where he resided, we see here that for shipping merchandise to Aden, he assembled it in his homeport. See also verso, l. 1.

The other accounts, with the exception of the last, are better preserved and constitute a useful addition to our knowledge of the Indian trade.

C o n t e n t s

- A. Receipt of quantities of pepper and iron. (ll. 1-20)
- B. Sendings to the Adenese merchants, Maḍmūn and Joseph b. Abraham, through a Nāḥodā, Raiḥān. (margin, ll. 1-7)
- C. Sendings to the Adenese merchant, Ḥalaf b. Isaac, through two merchants listed. (verso, ll. 1-4)
- D. Sundry assets. (ll. 5-8)
- E. Dues from the Nāḥodā Maḥrūz and another merchant. (ll. 9-11)
- F. Debts to Maḥrūz. (ll. 12-15)
- G. Balance in favor of the Kārdār's brother. (margin)
- H. Fragmentary mentioning of the same sum of 146 (fīlī) mitqāls, less two dirhams, which completed the account on the first page, ll. 18-9. (Traces of writing in upside down direction).

Translation of Sections B-G

Margin

(1) ... three consignments of iron, three hundred and forty pieces, weight twenty-six ((bahār?)) (2)which the Nā((ḥodā)) Raiḥān, if God will, shall deliver to Sheikh M((aḍmūn)) after arrival. (3) ((...Likewise)) a small basket of r((ed)) betel-nut, containing twenty-one ((... he shall de))liver to Sheikh ((M))aḍmūn after arrival //if God will// (4) ((..Likewise,)) Nāḥodā Raiḥān is carrying ((...)) baskets of betel-nut, which he shall deliver to Sheikh Maḍmūn (5) after arrival, if God will. Likewise, Nāḥodā Raiḥān is carrying a basket of bronze vessels made for Sheikh Joseph (6) ((b. Abraha))m, containing seven pieces

as follows: a round tray, a big "table-jug," a lampstand, two small "table-jugs," a basin, and a cwer. Of all this shall Sheikh Joseph take delivery from the Nāḥodā^{kh} Raiḥān, if God will.

C Verso

(1) Also in the small ship, there is a basket carried by Maḥmūd b. Sālim (2) of w((hite)) betel-nut for Sheikh Ḥalaf^{kh} b. Isaac, which shall be delivered to him.

(3) Also in the small ship, there are two baskets, one of them big, ((containing)) (4) six (or: seven) thousand ((nuts)), of which he (i.e. Ḥalaf^{kh}) shall take delivery from Ja((cob)) b. Joseph.

D (5) Sheikh Abū^c Alī ibn^c Abdallah al-Miṣrī owes me, after d((elivery)) (6) half a fīlī mitqāl... ((an^d...))ty DNGLY wheat.

(7) My master Sheikh ((^cAbd)) al-Laṭīf, m(ay he be remembered with) b(lessings), owns^e me five bahār (8) "refurbished" iron, each bahār consisting of ((...)) farāsila.

E (9) I gave to the Nāḥodā^{kh} M((ahr))iz eight mitq^h((āls)) (10) from my hand into his hand, and thirty two mitqāls ((..... Likewise, owned to me (11) by Sheikh Ab))ū^c Alī the Little, as a favor on my side //cashed back// T((otal?...))

F (12) Due to the Nāḥodā^{kh} Mahrūz, customs duties (13) ((for.....)) and for a piece of tin and for... (14) (((and the price of a skin with oil, one third of a fīlī and a half fāj. (15) Due to him four dirham less one fāj (((after delivery))).

G Verso margin

(1) Balance to Nā'ir, the brother of the Kārdār, three fīliyā dirhams (2) as well as the price of the red and the white betel-nut.

C o m m e n t a r y

3 It seems that in the basket of betel-nuts, some pieces of another product were carried. The betel-nuts themselves were traded in thousands, see verso, l. 4.

6 a round tray - Ar. ṣīniya. A picture showing its use in Lane, Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians, p. 147. Above, No. 15, l. 1, a tray made of silver was pawned in Cairo. For the "table-jug", see No. 51, l. 29, the lampstand, *ib.*, margin, for basin and ewer, *ib.*, l. 25. As we see, mostly the same vessels were ordered by the same merchant

Verso

1 also in the small ship - Cf. recto l. 5. It clearly appears from here that the two ships mentioned in this document had arrived from another port in India and called on Ben Yijū's home port, before sailing to Aden.

Maḡmūn b. Sālīm - See No. 62, where this Adenese merchant is engaged in a similar mission.

4 ((nuts)) - As betel-nuts are sent here, it is highly probable that the effaced word was ḥabba, grain, unit of any commodity, especially as the vestiges of a ḥ are still visible. Cf. No. 24, ll. 7-8, where 2000 betel-nuts were sent to Maḡmūn by B.Y.

5 after d((elivery)) - Cf. l. 15.

6))ty - Ar.))īn, any number between 20 and 90.

DNGLY - obviously a local measure for wheat or grains in general.

8 As there was a big and a small bahār, see No. 26, l. 4, the numbers of farāsila in a bahār differed from one to another, cf. here recto, l. 6.

9 Maḥrūz - About this Adenese notable, whose name occurs frequently in our papers, see the Introduction to No. 133.

11 Abū^c Alī, etc. - Crossed out, because the money had been paid back.

15 Crossed out, because delivery had taken place.

Verso margin

1 Nā'ir - See No. 64B, l. 6. Just as the Kārdār, see No. 64E, l. 1, specialized in cardamom, thus his brother, as we see here, in betel-nut.