

Statement of Halfon's Assets and Liabilities,

Made by his Correspondent in Aden,

*Kh b*  
Halaf b. Isaac.

*(around 1140)*

University Library, Cambridge, T.-S. Box (Bills and Lists) J1, No. 53.

30 x 18 cm

Rough and fibrous paper, originally of a very light color, but now mostly dark brown. Preserved almost in its entirety.

Written in Halaf's own, most beautiful, hand, known so far  
*twelve* ~~eleven~~ through ~~ten~~ samples. Cf. above No. 56, Introduction. Between line 17, which concludes the enumeration of the assets, and line 18, where the expenses begin, a line is left blank. 33 lines, filling the whole page.

It is highly probable that this statement once accompanied the letter, of which the fragment No. 92 has been preserved. For the size and quality of the paper are the same in both cases and so are the scripts (for Halaf's handwriting, as is natural, varies slightly at different times and is especially adapted to the size of the paper on which he writes). In addition, the statement does not bear the usual superscription, "In Your name, O Merciful", but opens with the simple heading:

"Account of my lord, the Sheikh Abū Sa'īd Halfon b. Netan'āl".

Letter No. 92 was written around 1140, cf. ib.

Contents of No. 81

- by
- A. List of Assets, mostly items sent ~~on account~~ of Halfon from India to Aden. (Lines 1-17)

The prices are given in the currency of Aden, the Maliki Dīnār (abbreviated: d.), consisting of 24 q[īrāt] (abbreviated: q.). See above No. 20, Introduction, and Index s.v. Malikī.

The textiles were traded in Kauraja (K.), bales consisting of twenty Taub, (T.), which does not mean simply 'a robe', but a unit of textiles. See above No. 31, l. 10, Notes and Index s.v. Taub.

<u>Line</u>	<u>Merchandise</u>	<u>d.</u>	<u>q.</u>
	1. <u>Textiles</u> (from India)		
2	8 K. and 8 T., altogether 168 pieces of <u>Maqsūr</u> , bleached material	198	14
3-4	10 K., less 3 1/2 T., altogether 196 1/2 pieces of <u>Mihbas</u> , pl. <u>Mahābis</u> fabric ("coverlets") and 4 K. and 4 T., altogether 84 pieces of <u>Hām</u> , unbleached material ("calico")	321	(1/4) = 16
	2. <u>Pepper</u>		
5	6 <u>Bahār</u> at the price of 37 d.	222	
6	6 " and 166 <u>Raṭl</u> "after the falling off (of the price)" at 36 d.	236	
7	10 <u>Bahār</u> "from the Sheikh Maḍmūn" (at 37 d.)	370	
	3. <u>Cash</u>		
8	"Brought back from India by Sheikh Abī Sa'īd"	30	
	4. <u>Other Textiles</u> (probably partly local and partly brought from the West)		
9	31 <u>Fūṭa</u>	15	19

raw  
not finished

280 1/2

finished

81/3

lines

## Merchandise

d. q.

11	2 <u>Sharābiya</u> , linen cloth	3	2
12	1/8 of a bag of musk	4	12
13	10 <u>Mitqāls</u> (small weight) Loose, <u>natar</u> , musk	18	
14	8 <u>Hūmāsiyas</u> of musk	11	
	6. <u>Smaller Quantities of Textiles</u>		
15	6 Wrappers, <u>Lifāfa</u> , pl. <u>Lafā'if</u>	4	10
16	<sup>4 r</sup> An defined quantity of cotton	2	(1/2 =) 12
"	2 <u>Mabbas</u> , see above l. 3	2	
17	"TOTAL"	1469d.	17 q.

B. Expenses, Harj, incurred for the wares listed and for new onespurchased to be sent to India. (Lines 18-32)

lines

## Items

d. q.

1. Custom Duties and other Expenses for the Wares Sold

18	Customs, <u>'Ushūr</u> , literally Tithes, for the Pepper "which is from Abū Sa'id", see l. 8	96	
19	<u>'Ushūr</u> for the textiles listed in ll. 3-4	64	(1/2 + 1/4 d.=) 18
20	" for 4 <u>Hūmāsiya</u> musk and 10 <u>Mitqāl</u>	2	(1/3 d.=) 8
21	One-half of Customs duties for 19 <u>Hūmāsiya</u> musk and 10 <u>Mitqāl</u> "which were in the leather bottle"	2	

2. Items sent to India

22	Silver (most probably Vessels) Weight 2319 Dirham (literally "497 less 2", namely Qīrāt:)	496	22
23	100 Egyptian <u>Mitqāl</u> (coins)	230	

81/4

<u>Lines</u>	<u>Items</u>	<u>d.</u>	<u>q.</u>
24	6 1/2 <u>Bai'ah</u> (unit) of corals at the price of 35 d.	225	(1/2=) 12
25	" "after a reduction and a discount"		
"	1 <u>Bai'ah</u> at 65 d.	65	
	3. <u>Smaller Expenses for the items sold</u>		
26	Rent of store room	1	(1/2=) 12
"	Mats for the store room		(1/4=) 6
27	Brushing ("Combing") of the <u>Burd</u> cloaks	2	-
"	" " <u>Fūṭa's</u>	1	-
28	<u>Satmī</u> (payment to the captain for listing goods carried by him) for the pepper	-	8
"	<u>Satmī</u> for the textiles (1 d. less 1/6)	-	20
29	Brokerage for the pepper	2	
"	Weighing of " " ( <u>Niṣāfī</u> = 1/2 d.; see note) - <sup>it</sup>		12
	4. <u>Smaller Expenses for the <del>Items</del> sent to India</u>		
29-30	Polishing (?) <u>Mibhāj</u> of the corals; hides and nails for their packing	-	14
	Freight of the corals	10	-
	5. <u>Cash</u> (sent to India)		
31	100 <u>Malikī</u> and <u>Zabīd</u> d.	100	-
	TOTAL	1297	124
32	"TOTAL"	1302	1/4
33-34	"Balance for future transactions" ( <u>birasm al-'āqiba</u> )	+ 167	13

34

C. There remained unsold;

2 Burda cloaks

17 Humāsiya musk

35

"The pepper which is with the writer."

The account concludes:

36

"May my lord take notice of this! And Peace!"

Comments

NOTES

lines

2-4

The textiles "Bleached", Mabhas, and "Unbleached" were common articles of export from India, see above 31, 10-14. Customs were paid for them, see below 1. 19, and they are mentioned here together with pepper and cash brought back from India.

The fact that the quantity of "Bleached" occurring here (8 Kauraja 8 Taub) is exactly the same as the one for "Unbleached" in 31, 10, most probably is merely accidental.

One sees that a piece of these textiles fetched in Aden an average price of <sup>slightly</sup> ~~a little~~ more than one Maliki Dīnār.

5-7

The price of 37 (Malikī) Dīnār for pepper in Aden at that time also above No. 28, 1. 20. Other prices 23 d., above No. 29, 1. 20, 30 d., above No. 24, 11. 3-5; 34 d., above No. 26, 1. 9. See further Index: Pepper, prices.

After the "falling off of the price", ba'd al-naqs: Abu Sa'id (see below, line 18) had brought two shipments of pepper from India on account of Halfon. These shipments were not unpacked in Aden, but sold as they were. After having disposed of the first, at the price

Lines

of 37 d., the writer hoped to secure a higher one for the second, and left it over for some time, as the prices were expected to go up at the end of the summer, when the ships set sail for Egypt, see above No. 28, l. 23-28. The writer refers to "the falling off" as something known to the addressee; for there was continuous going and coming between Aden and Cairo. The bearer of the letter certainly also was a merchant who was able to inform Halfon about the market conditions in Aden.

The sum of 236 d. ( $6 \times 36 = 216 + \frac{36}{300} \times 166$ ) is slightly rounded up from 235.92.

7 Maḍmūn, the representative of the (Jewish) merchants in Aden had acquired pepper for Halfon, but entrusted the writer with its selling. As no customs are charged here (see l. 18), Maḍmūn certainly had sent to Halfon a separate account.

8 Abū Sa'īd, most probably is identical with Abū Sa'īd Halfon Hallēvī b. Shemayyah Ibn Jamāhir, a prominent India trader at that time, who finally perished in the sea near Aden, see above No. 31, l. 13-14, No. 35, l. 2ff. and Introduction to No. 35. The balance of 30 d. brought back from India obviously was too small a sum for purchasing a reasonable quantity of goods there.

9-11 For these textiles no customs duties are listed below. They may have been brought earlier from Egypt or produced locally in Aden.

Egyptian Fūṭas and Sharabīyas are sent from Aden to India in No. 61, l. 5. Yemen was famous for its Burd cloaks, see Serjeant, Islamic

Textiles, Ars Islamica 13-14, p. 76, and a Burda made locally (in Aden) is mentioned in No. 166, l. 11. ~~However~~, Burda's were also sent from India to Aden, see No. 31, l. 16.

10 The second letter in WBR, wabar, was taken by me first as a K. However, the reading is sure; cf. a similar form of B in al-bahār, l. 5.

Wabar originally meant camel's hair, and if the cloaks were made in Aden, the meaning would fit. Later on, wabar was used also for furs of different animals, such as beaver, sable and squirrel, see Yāqūt, Geograph. 1, 113, Serjeant, Islamic Textiles, Ars Islamica, 15-16, 74, note 18. However, as Burda's were <sup>not furs, but</sup> woven cloths and as the price obtained was only about 1 d. and a half, it stands to reason, that the textiles in question were indeed black cloaks made of camel's hair in Arabia itself.

12-14 See ll. 20-21 below. Musk was sold in glass flasks, qārūra, see above No. 16, l. 16; No. 156, l. 42, or leather bottles, nāfija (Persian nāfe) here, l. 12, to which technical term the more general batṭa in l. 21 refers. Very small quantities, as those listed here, were sold loose, natar, according to weight. 10 Mitqāl are 46.8 grms, one Egyptian M. being 4.68 grm., see W. Hinz, Isl. Masse und Gewichte, Leiden, 1955, p. 4.

15

Lifāfa, wrapper, denotes both a garment, cf. No. 50, l. 12, and the material used for covering a package, cf. No. 5, l. 20, which refers to No. 1, l. 12. Here, certainly, a garment is intended.

18

The customs duties were computed according to weight and ~~the~~ not according to the prices obtained, ~~the~~ description of the goods.

A Bahār of pepper, as we see here, was charged, on arrival from India to Aden, with a payment of 8 d. (96: (6+6) = 12). The fractions of a Bahār, l. 6, obviously were disregarded). This is exactly the tariff, which, according to Ibn Mujāwir (ed. Löfgren, Leiden, 1951, 140, l. 3 = Löfgren, Aden im Mittelalter, Leiden, 1936, 59, l. 1), was introduced by the Jew Ḥalaf Nihawendī, under the Zurai'ids, the dynasty ruling Yemen in the time of our letter. It is highly probable that this Ḥalaf is none else than the writer of our letter; for a few years earlier, in 1135, the tariff was 7 d. per Bahār, see above No. 29, l. 38 and No. 26, l. 7-8, 11. There, by the way, the fractions of a Bahār were also charged.

19

The tariff for the textiles also seems to be in our document pretty much the same as that reported by the Arab historian, Ibn Mujāwir. Unfortunately, he does not list the first of the three



items mentioned above, ll. 2-4, Maqsūr (bleached). He gives for the "coverlets", Maḥābis, 4 Dīnārs per Kauraja, and the calico, which he calls Hāmhindī, "Indian unbleached", 2 1/2 (Ibn Mujāwir, ed. Löfgren, p. 141, ll. 8-10= Aden im Mittelalter 60, l. 12-61, l. 1). Thus we have:

10 Kauraja, less 3 1/2 <u>Taub</u> coverlets, approx.	39,2 d.
4 " and 4 <u>T.</u> Indian Calico	<u>10,5</u>
	49,7 d.

The total of customs duties for the textiles was 64 3/4, which leaves a balance of about 15 d. If we assume that the duty of a Kauraja of Maqsūr or unbleached was 2 d., then 8 Kauraja and 8 T. would require a duty of 16,8 d., which is not much different from the balance computed above.

20-21

The other 4 Humāsiya's (see above l. 14) obviously were included in the "one half of the customs duties for 19 H. which were in the leather bottle". The other half obviously was paid by Halfon's partner, who owned 7/8 of the bag of musk, cf. l. 12.

22

It is almost certain that 'silver' denotes here silver ornaments and vessels, or ingot, but not coins, cf. No. 1, ll. 13-18, referred to in Nos. 7, 13, 14; No. 143, l. 13. For ingot (hajar) cf. No. 33, l. 10; No. 61, l. 15 and v., l. 2.

In No. 61, l. 15, which was sent in 1134 approximately, 605 Ḍirham silver cost, in Aden, 124 d.; i.e. one Ḍirham<sup>e</sup> about 4,88 d. Here, a lower price was obtained, about 4,67 d.

An Egyptian Dirham, which is certainly intended here, weighed 3,125 grms., see Hinz, *Isl. Masse und Gewichte*, p. 3.

24 The Bai'ah, the unit used for the coral trade, was, according to Dimashqī Maḥāsīn al-Tijāra, Cairo 1318 H., p. 17, ten and a half Egyptian Raṭl, i.e. 4,725 kg. (see Hinz, *Isl. Masse und Gewichte*, 29).

The great difference in the prices is also testified by Dimashqī, 17. The best sort is listed by him at the price of 20 (Egypt.) Dinars, which would correspond to 70 Malīkī Dinars according to the "official" course.

25 "After a reduction and a discount", ba'd al-ḥaṭṭ wal-musāmaha, usual in bargaining, see above No. 28, l. 12. The corresponding Mediterranean expression, ba'd al-ju'l wal-samāha, Bodleian Library ms. Heb. e98, fol. 64b, 4-6-7-8-9, etc. (al-Mahdiyya, Tunisia, 1046).

27 For the "brushing" or airing of textiles, see above No. 6, l. 25.

28 For the Satmi, see above No. 26, l. 50.

29 *Mibhāj*

Obviously, the dīnārs of Aden (Malikī) and those of Zabīd, the capital of the western Tihama, or coastal plain of Yemen, had the same value. Otherwise, the number of the coins in each of the two currencies would have been given separately, and in No. 28, l. 33, it is stated expressly that the two were equivalent.

#### Import of This Document

This is an account winding up one year's business done in Aden for Halfon, while he was far away in Spain, North Africa or Egypt. Cf. No. 92. A similar account, made at the end of the year's business season, "when the ships sailed", is the document Bodleian Library Ms. Hebr. e98, f. 64-65, mentioned above. Besides Halaf b. Isaac, from whom also Nos. 90, 91 and 92 emanated, Halfon had other business correspondents in Aden: Maḍmūn, here, l. 7, and passim, and Joseph b. Abraham, No. 93; and as Halaf complains in No. 91v., l. 8-9, that others in Aden received letters from Halfon, while he did not, he perhaps was not the most active of H.'s business friends in Aden.

In the light of these facts, the <sup>3</sup> ~~(2)~~ volumes and <sup>2</sup> ~~(1)~~ nature of the transactions listed here, have to be evaluated. The goods are the usual staples of the Indian trade: pepper (828 out of 1469 d.) and textiles (totalling 569 d.), with a small quantity of musk in addition. The total of 1469 d. does not comprise all the business done by Halaf for Halfon, as he did not sell the pepper acquired by him for his Cair<sup>e</sup> friend, perhaps because the price went down, see l. 6.

No charge is made for Halaf's labors. The stationary--unlike the travelling--merchant did business for his friends abroad without remuneration, but on the basis of reciprocity, as we actually learn from Halaf's letters to Halfon, especially 91.

As one could live at that time in Aden on 2 Maliḩī Dīnārs a month, see No. 29, l. 3, the sums mentioned here are by no means negligible, especially if one considers that Halaf was only one of Halfon's correspondents and perhaps not the most important, <sup>one</sup> see above. It is interesting to learn that almost the whole proceeds were immediately invested in new transactions to be made in India. Besides corals--less than one-third of the value of the shipment--only precious metals: gold coins and silver (ingot or vessels) were used for that purpose.