

9. A Fifteenth Century Partnership in
Cheese-Production

The currency referred to in this contract, "half-dirhems", was set into circulation in May, 1415 by the Mamluk sultan Mu'ayyad, see Popper, Egypt and Syria, 1957, pp. 56-57, and Paul Balog, "History of the Dirhem in Egypt," Revue Numismatique, sixième serie, Vol. 3 (1961), 138-139. This, together with the script and style of this interesting document, place it in the fifteenth century. Still it contains elements from the most ancient Jewish and Islamic sources of the laws of partnership.

The beginning and end and the ^{greater} ~~larger~~ part ^(the text of) of the last four lines ^{are} ~~is~~ lost. But all the essential conditions of the partnership are preserved. See also Med. Soc. I, p. 367.

TS 8 J 27, f. 11 (13 11.).

A partnership was concluded between master¹ Raḍī, son of the late² 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Raḍī, and master Yeshū'ā Dukhān³ in the manufacture of cheese and similar products. Raḍī will be in the workshop⁴ and Dukhān in the store. Whatever God will let them earn and acquire - under any circumstances, and even were it an object found on the floor - will be divided between them in equal shares. Likewise the expediture,⁵ losses, hisba,⁶ personal expenses, and the rent for the two stores and the workshop will be shared by them equally, with the exception that the aforem(entioned) Raḍī has renounced to his aforem(entioned) partner (claims) with regard to damages to the boiler and to the water containers.⁷

They agreed that Dukhān will give Raḍī 1,000 half-silvers upon conclusion of the partnership as against⁸ 50 hundred weights of hālūm⁹ cheese.

The closing of the accounts¹⁰ will be made by Raḍī.

R[adī received from Dukhān 800] halves, leaving a balance of 200 h[alves,

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of which 160 will be paid] on the next Purim holiday, as first installment and then 4[0 halves on the following Passover.¹¹ And] each of them will act in g[ood faith and make every effort required for this partnership].

NOTES

- 1) Ar. mu'allim, lit., "teacher", in the Later Middle Ages and today used as a title for a craftsman.
- 2) Ar. marhūm, lit., "the one on whom God may have mercy". This form, common also at present, is not found in the Geniza before 1250.
- 3) A family name, still common among Jews from Tunisia and Algeria, and, according to Eisenbeth, Afrique du Nord, p. 120, derived from the names of various places in those countries. The word means "smoke".
- 4) Ar. qā'a, lit., "ground floor".
- 5) Ar. kulaf, probably used here in the sense of working expenses (as in K 15, f. 123), as opposed to masārīf, personal expenses.
- 6) Payment to the muhtasib, or market superintendent^{mt}, not known to me from other Geniza papers, but much complained of as a heavy imposition ⁱⁿ on later Jewish sources.
- 7) Ar. halla and zila', not read by me in other Geniza papers.
- 8) Ar. taht shīl, lit. "against taking", also a late expression.
- 9) This salted cheese was an Egyptian specialty, known already from ancient Islamic papyri, see Albert Dietrich, Arabische Briefe ans der Papyrussammlung der Hamburger Staats - und Universitäts - Bibliothek, pp. 104-108 (ninth century).
- 10) About this term, which implied also the settling of debts, see Med. Soc. I, p. 208.
- 11) Holidays were terms for payment in Jewish and Muslim society as well as in Christian Europe. For Passover (four weeks after Purim), the text

Notes

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- 11) might have had Pentecost (another seven weeks). But since only four per cent of the total sum were still owed, a shorter period is more likely.