

ACCOUNTS FOR THE TRANSPORT OF A BALE OF PURPLE CLOTH
FROM OLD CAIRO TO SFAX, TUNISIA (AROUND 1100)

Freer Gallery, Washington,
No. XXXVI

Text in Gottheil-
Worrell, pp. 164-6

(This document is particularly instructive, as it contains no less than fifty eight details concerning one single shipment. In most of the other accounts preserved in the Geniza only the major expenses and proceeds are listed.

A full discussion of the text translated here, which may serve as a commentary to it, is found in MEDITERRANEAN SOCIETY, chapter ~~XX~~^{XV} (11). Our translation differs widely and almost in every sentence from the version accompanying the published text. In many cases, the reasons for our deviation are self-evident; in others, the interested reader is advised to use the explanations in MEDITERRANEAN SOCIETY and the Annotations provided here.)

I(n your) name.

Account for the elder Abu 'l-Afrāḥ, son of Joseph.

I have received from you, my lord, a bale of purple (cloth). Weight: 4 and a half and a quarter hundredweights^a. Price per hundredweight: 14. Total value: 66 and a quarter dinars. I have also received one half and a quarter dinar for the packer, the ropes and the hides. Likewise 5 dinars for the expenses. The total 72 dinars.

The following expenses are to be deducted from this:

Transport to the (Nile) boat: 1^b. Tip for the sailors: 1. Dues paid at the arsenal: Half a dinar. Sealing (of the consignment), official money-changer, proprietor's mark on the patch and payment to Abu Muhammad: an

eighth dinar. Coverings¹: 1-1/2. Porters: 2-1/2. Spit^c: 1/4. Controller of weight²: 1/8.

The following expenses were made in Rosetta:

Freight for the boat: an eighth dinar. Dues: a quarter (of a dinar), a sixth and a grain.^d Transit permit for one shipment: 1. Use of landing space: 1/4. Clerk: 1/2 and 1/8. Bread for the camel driver and the guards: 1/4 and 1/8. Ferry: 1. Three guardsmen: 1/2 and 1/4.

Transit permit for one shipment at the Sidriyya Gate: 1-1/2. A pot: 1/4. Lodging for two nights, guarding (the bale), a water-jug, the gate keepers and inspectors, (illegible), a present,³ the rolling and carrying (of the bale) to the storage warehouse: 3-1/2 and 1/4. Hire of one camel: a sixth (dinar) and a quarter qirāṭ. For the officials of the Diwān^e: one dinar and 15-1/2 qirāṭs. Packer: 1/2 and 1/4. Ben 'Ain al-Daula: 1-1/2. Porters: 5. (Storing the bale in the) Cou⁴ (of the storage warehouse): 1-1/2. Fasteners⁴: 2-1/2. Transport to the place of embarkation: 1/2 and 1/4. The gate keepers and inspectors, gratuity to the fasteners and payment to the scribe of the place of embarkation: 1-1/2 and 1/8. Tip to the sailors: 2. Gratuity to the warden⁵: 1/4. "Advance" (on the freight for) the ship: one dinar.

Total silver spent: 22-1/2 qirāṭs^f; gold: 4 dinars exactly. Received from you for expenses: 5 dinars. Balance in your favor: one and half qirāṭs.

Account of goods sold: One bale of purple (cloth), sold for 60 dinars a hundredweight. Its weight - in the storehouse of the representative (of the merchants) - : 474 (pounds). Tare: 30. For the Sultan and the young men⁶: 3-1/2. Balance: 440-1/2. Price: 264 1/6 and 1/8.

Expenses deducted from this:

Commission: $6\frac{1}{2}$ and $\frac{1}{8}$ dinars. Sale's tax: 7 d. and 1 qirāṭ.

For the young man and the Sultan: one and a half dinars, and a quarter and an eighth. A water-jug: a half and an eighth (dirham). Due at the gate: one and a third dinar. Transport (from the ship to the warehouse): a quarter dinar. The remainder of the freight: 3 dinars and one qirāṭ. Transport (from the warehouse) to the caravansary: a quarter dinar. Present instead of the gold to be paid to the customs house⁷: Payment for a storeroom: a quarter dinar.

Total: $21\frac{1}{2}$ (dinars) and one qirāṭ.

The following was brought by Ali ^{c - (of the merchants)} the representative⁸: Weight during buying and selling: two and a half hundredweights and one pound. Price (per hundredweight²), obtained after all due effort made⁶: 55. Total proceeds: 248.

To be deducted from this: the $21\frac{1}{2}$ (dinars) and one q., as charged by Ali^c, the representative (of the merchants). Likewise, the price of the oil: $22\frac{1}{2}$. Freight and expenses (for the dispatch of the oil to be sent from Tunisia to Egypt): $6\frac{1}{2}$ dinars. For Sfax currency: two dinars. Total: $52\frac{1}{6}$ and $\frac{1}{8}$.

Balance: ...less $\frac{1}{6}$ and $\frac{1}{8}$. Out of this I bought 67 dinars less one sixth in Marrākush currency, 3 of them less 6 grains being worth one mithqāl. Their number: 68 and a quarter dinars and a chip.⁹

NOTES

- a. On the method of expressing fractions in the Geniza papers see *MEDITERRANEAN SOCIETY*, p. . As we learn later on, the weight of the bale was not 475, but 474 pounds. Therefore, its value is noted here as 66-1/4, and not 66-1/2 dinars, as one would expect according to the figures given.
- b. All figures given in the following refer to silver dirhams, except where dinars and fractions of them are mentioned expressly.
- c. Since utensils for personal use, such as a water-jug and a pot, are listed later on among the expenses, it is not impossible here that a spit for roasting meat is intended. It may be, however, that some technical term is referred to, which, so far, is without parallel in the Geniza records.
- d. A grain is 1/72 of a dinar.
- e. The custom house.
- f. The qirāṭs represent, of course, gold currency and are used here as mere money of account. The total amount of silver money spent was 31-3/4 dirhams.
- g. A common formula, which was appropriate here, since a price of only 55 dinars per hundredweight was obtained, as opposed to 60 mentioned before.

COMMENTS

1. Coverings: ma'adhira, a hitherto unknown plural of mi'dhar. If read as mu'adhara, the word would mean "pretext", perhaps a technical term not yet found elsewhere.

2. Controller of weight: amin, cf. Dozy, Supplement I, p. 38b. Mostly, a wazzan or weigher, is mentioned in the accounts at this juncture.

3. A present: risala, cf. Dozy I, p. 526a. The word designates also a consignment entrusted to another merchant, cf. India book, Index. Perhaps, a small additional fee was collected from the carrier.

4. "Fasteners": maqqaṭa, from mīqāṭ, a rope.

5. Warden: naqīb, a representative of a guild or class of merchants, who acted as advisor to the supervisor of the markets, cf. Dozy p. 707b.

6. Young men: sibyān, *employees, cf. Chapter II* perhaps members of a local militia, like their contemporaries, the ahdāth of the East, cf. Claude Cahen, *Mouvements populaires et autonomisme urbain*, Leiden 1959, Index s.v.

7. The text is doubtful; the word hml (himl, load, or hamal, lamb) is perhaps an erroneous repetition from the previous line.

8. This passage seems to deal with another bale of purple cloth, which was brought from Egypt not by the writer of the account, but by the representative of the merchants of Sfax. The figures in this passage do not tally with each other.

9. A little piece of gold chipped off from a dinar.